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**Historical Building Report
on
Frith Farm – The Outbuildings
Frith Lane
Wickwar
South Gloucestershire**

**August 2011
by
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I am extremely grateful to the staff of Gloucestershire Records Office and Yate Heritage Centre and I am particularly grateful for the very kind help of local historian Mrs Mary Isaac who has generously shared her research of Frith Farm with me and to Linda Hall for her expertise and generosity in sharing her research and allowing me to use her 1975 photographs of Frith Farm. Her survey of Frith Farm from her book *The Rural Houses of North Avon and South Gloucestershire 1400-1720*, 1983, appears in Appendix I. The current owners Donald and Suzanne Duke have kindly made available plans and photographs taken in 1994, which are used in this report. All photographs are by Kay Ross of McLaughlin Ross llp in August 2011 unless otherwise stated.

Location

Frith Farm is located on the north side of Frith Lane, to the south of the town of Wickwar. Now in Wickwar parish, it was originally in Yate Parish until the 1980s. Frith Lane is off the main Chipping Sodbury road between Yate and Wickwar and runs westwards to Hall End. The farm outbuildings which form the subject of this report are ranged around the periphery of the yard.



1. Bakehouse/Brewery & Garage 1
2. Garage 2
3. Single Storey Barn
4. Cattle shed
5. Remainder of 'L' shaped complex

Introduction

There are a number of outbuildings surrounding the former farmyard at Frith Farm, most in a poor, if not hazardous, structural state. Some of the buildings do not appear on either of the 1840s maps (1) and most appear to have been built, or rebuilt, in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century, if not later. A few, largely rebuilt, outbuildings now used for storage [5] remain along the north east side of the yard, all that is left of a large 'L' shaped complex which ran around the north and east corner of the yard. The free standing single storey barn [3] directly north of the house appears to be that shown on every available 19th century map, on the north-western end of the 'L' shaped range. A further building remains to the west of this building, almost entirely demolished.

The 1840s maps (1) show a rectangular building running east-west where the current bakehouse and adjacent garage are located [1]. The current arrangement, two smaller rectangular buildings running north-south with a smaller structure on the southern end of both buildings, first appears on the 1882 OS map and the 1889 sales map (2). By this time there is a large pond with rectangular reservoir at its northern end to the east of the gateway to the farm. The concreted yard shows evidence of different periods of usage. The long cattle shed to the west of the house dates from this time, replacing a single square structure [4].

The original buildings would have been constructed of local stone, with stone or tiled roofs. The 1889 sales catalogue describes the buildings as being in good repair, and the plan certainly appears to show a neat group of outbuildings around the main yard. Later 19th century building and repairs were carried out in brick, the stone and brick garage [2] dating from between 1903 and 1921. Later still, concrete, breeze blocks and corrugated iron were used to repair the existing buildings, and all but one are now in a derelict state. The only usable building is the barn [3] directly north of the farmhouse, rebuilt with stone, reroofed and lined with timber cladding, a concrete floor and the interior rendered, with weatherproof doors.



Garage 1 with bakehouse [1] behind to south-east of the farmhouse



Barn [3] with boundary wall running north from the farmhouse; Barn to left with gap along original north wing of 'L' shaped complex;



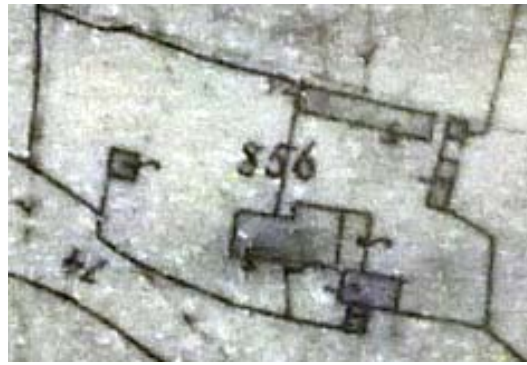
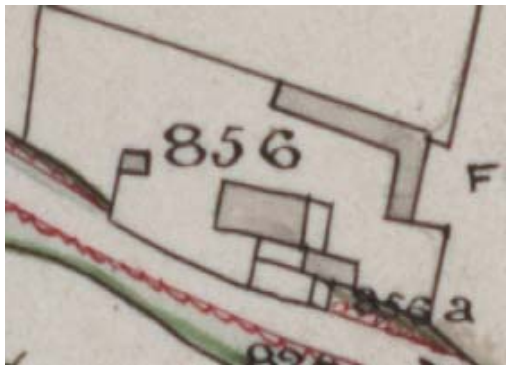


Looking south across yard; Looking west to Barn [3]

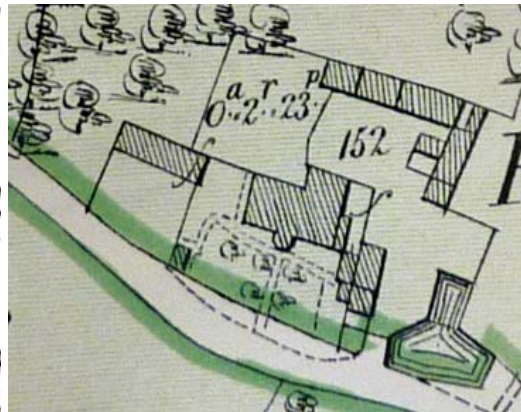
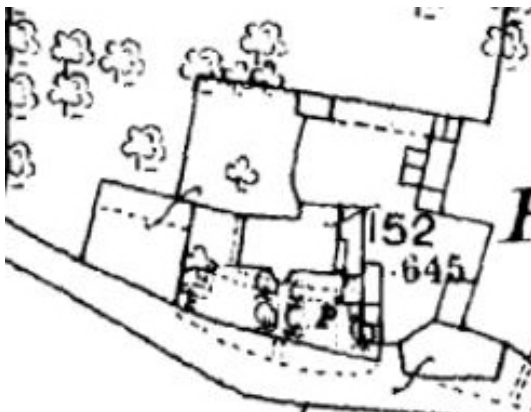


Looking south and north at remains of 'L' shaped complex and Garage 2 [2]

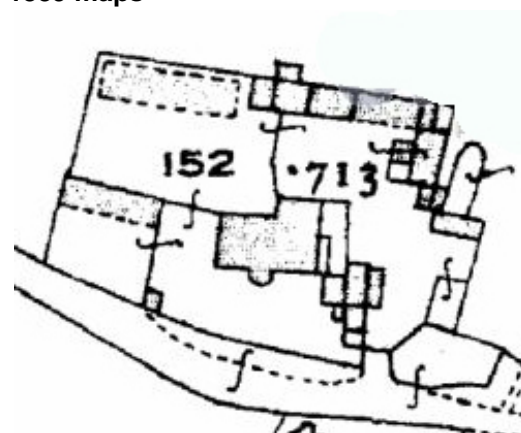
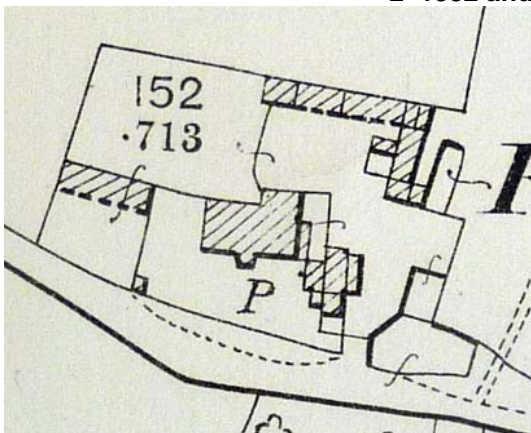




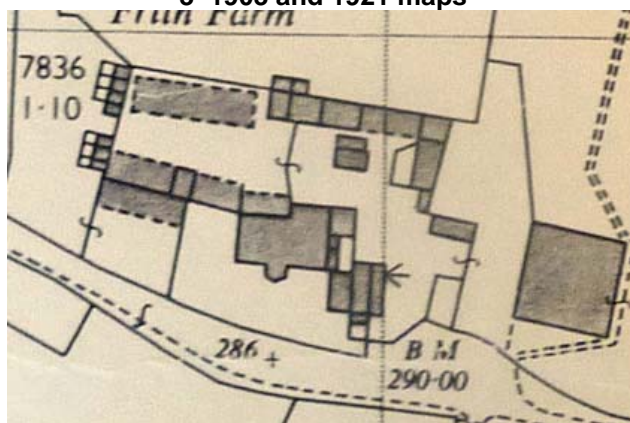
1 1841 and 1844 maps



2 1882 and 1889 maps



3 1903 and 1921 maps



4 1967 map

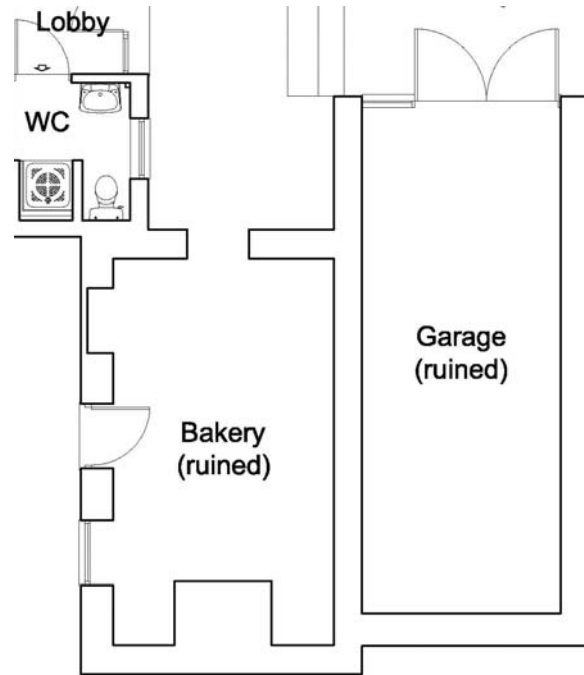
The Bakehouse/Bakehouse [1]

The 1 or possibly 1 ½ storey bakehouse/brewhouse built against the south-east corner of the house has lost its low-pitched double Roman roof (L Hall:1975) in the last 20 years. Built of rubble with a projecting oven, the walls, overgrown with ivy, are structurally unsound. The south wall beside the chimney has collapsed and the west wall is leaning about 18 inches out of true, held in place by the mass of ivy. None of the roof truss and timbers remains, but in 1975 Linda Hall noted

Single truss has bolted cottar, diagonal ridge, plated yoke, one pair purlins with tusk tenons.

This structure appears to date from the second half of the 19th century, built in tandem with the adjacent garage, sharing a party wall (5). An earlier building ran across the site of the 2 adjacent buildings in the 1840s. A bakehouse or brewhouse would have been an important part of the farm, brewing taking place seasonally whilst baking would be a far more regular activity. It is also probable that it was used for washing as well; many such buildings were multi-functional by the end of the 19th century. The 1889 sales details mention only outbuildings but although there is no specific mention of a bakehouse, it is certainly the one which remains today. The projecting stone oven is just visible on the southern side of the exterior wall. The 1882 map (2) confirms the location of the pump on the corner of the brewhouse, which would have required a regular supply of water.

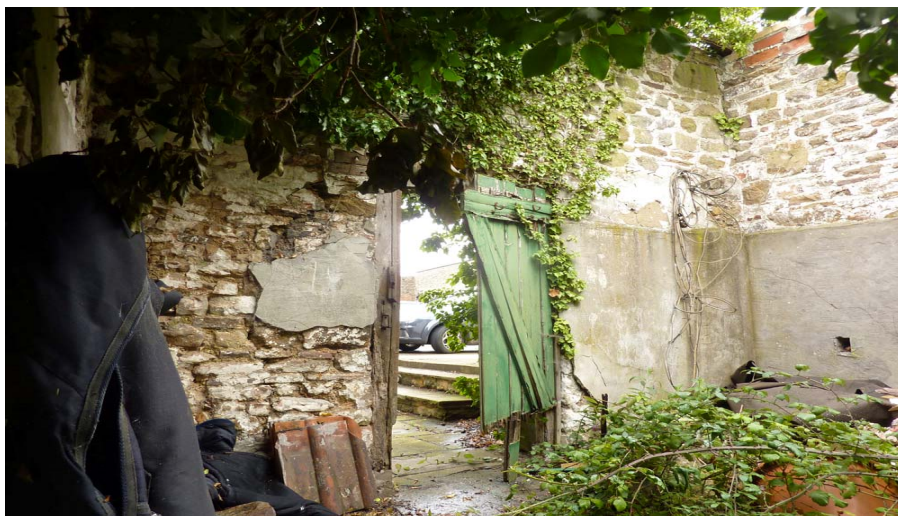
The walls are of rubblestone, rendered up to ceiling level; whilst there are no signs of an upper floor, the walls are just high enough for this to have been a 1 ½ storey building. There are at least 2 courses of later brickwork along the top of parts of the wall. There may well have been a small loft area originally. The remains of the fireplace and chimney stack are extant in the southern wall, the lintel a re-used timber with mortice holes. Both plank doors, in the north and west walls remain, though in poor state. It was not possible to enter the building itself, and much of it is covered with thick ivy. Along the exterior south wall is the remains of a square stone structure and a raised stone trough.



5 Plan of Bakehouse and Garage 1 2011



North entrance into the Bakehouse & Garage 1; doorway and interior



Interior rendered up to door level level; remains of fireplace with re-used timber lintel



Garage 1 [1]

The garage, for which there is little indication of the original purpose, was built alongside the bakehouse, sharing the party wall. The timber garage doors and cladding over are in poor state and it was not possible to either open the doors or enter the building. What was visible within the weed and ivy grown interior were stone walls and the remains of timber trusses. The depth of the ivy made it difficult to ascertain how much of the stone walls remain, although that along the west perimeter is intact.



Garage north front; interior with collapsed roof truss & stone trough and former structure to south of the 2 buildings



Garage 2 [2]

The largely brick built garage on the north-east side was built between 1903 and 1921, incorporating an existing stone boundary wall on the north and east side. It was built below the southern end of the 'L' shaped complex. The roof is clay tiles and the pair of garage doors are similar to those of Garage 1. Probably built as a garage, it may have housed tractors or other farm machinery. The brick south wall is coming away from the rest of the structure and it was not possible to enter or to open the doors. The rear has a narrow separate store with a high window in the east gable.



Garage 1 looking north and west





Garage 1 looking west along north wall; looking east





Garage 2 interior with original roof structure; rear store

Single Storey Storage Barn [3]

This rubble stone building appears on all the 19th century maps, including the 1840s ones, and originally formed the westernmost building of the 'L' shaped complex. Probably late 18th/early 19th in date, a boundary wall still runs between this building and the north front of the house. The buildings to the east have fallen into ruin but a boundary wall with the remains of other structures runs westwards. The earlier straight vertical edge of the building can still be detected in the boundary wall on the northern side.

The roof has clearly been rebuilt above eaves level at the rear, and the line of a lower roof exists on the south front. This front has new timber and metal stable doors with a modern timber lintel. Two pintles for a gate remain embedded towards the front of the east wall. The rear doorway has been blocked up to form an unglazed opening. The roof is tiled with new clay tiles. The interior has been rendered more recently, with a ventilation panel above the southern doors. The roof is clad in timber boarding, making it dry and serviceable, although there is a damp patch above the doorway. It is currently in use as a storage facility.



Barn looking south towards Farmhouse; south and east fronts





Interior looking south towards Farmhouse; looking north-west; timber clad roof



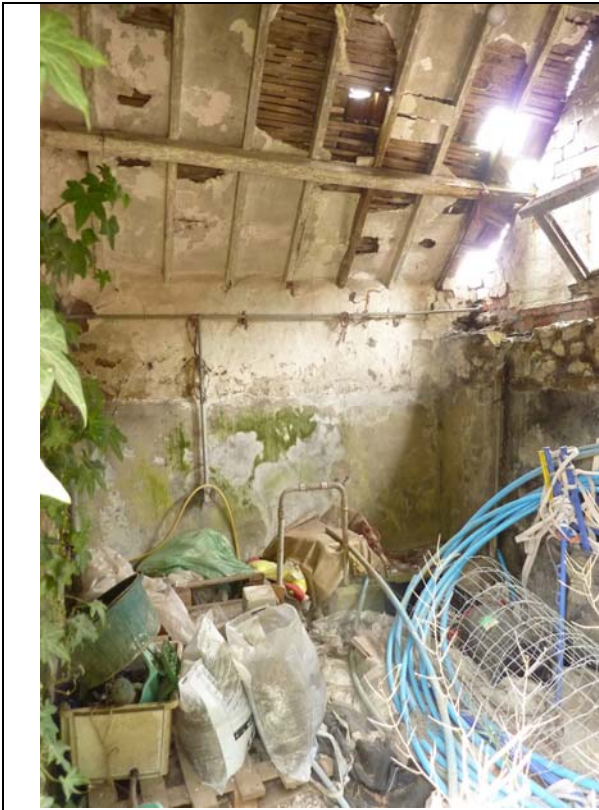
Remaining 'L' Shaped Complex [5]

The jumble of stone structures that remain around the north-eastern corner of the yard have been substantially rebuilt over the years, patched up with whatever practical materials were to hand, as with many farm buildings. Since it ceased to be a working farm, the buildings have been used for storage and have fallen into disrepair. Roofing has been replaced with corrugated iron, concrete blocks, re-used bricks and cement render used to repair walls. Some of the buildings' walls have been reduced in height to low stone walls with soldier stone cappings. Internally, one or two have been rendered to a height of about 3 feet. None of the roofs appear to have retained original timber trusses or floor coverings. The concrete yard floor shows signs of a variety of uses and temporary structures.



Outbuildings and yard looking south and south-west



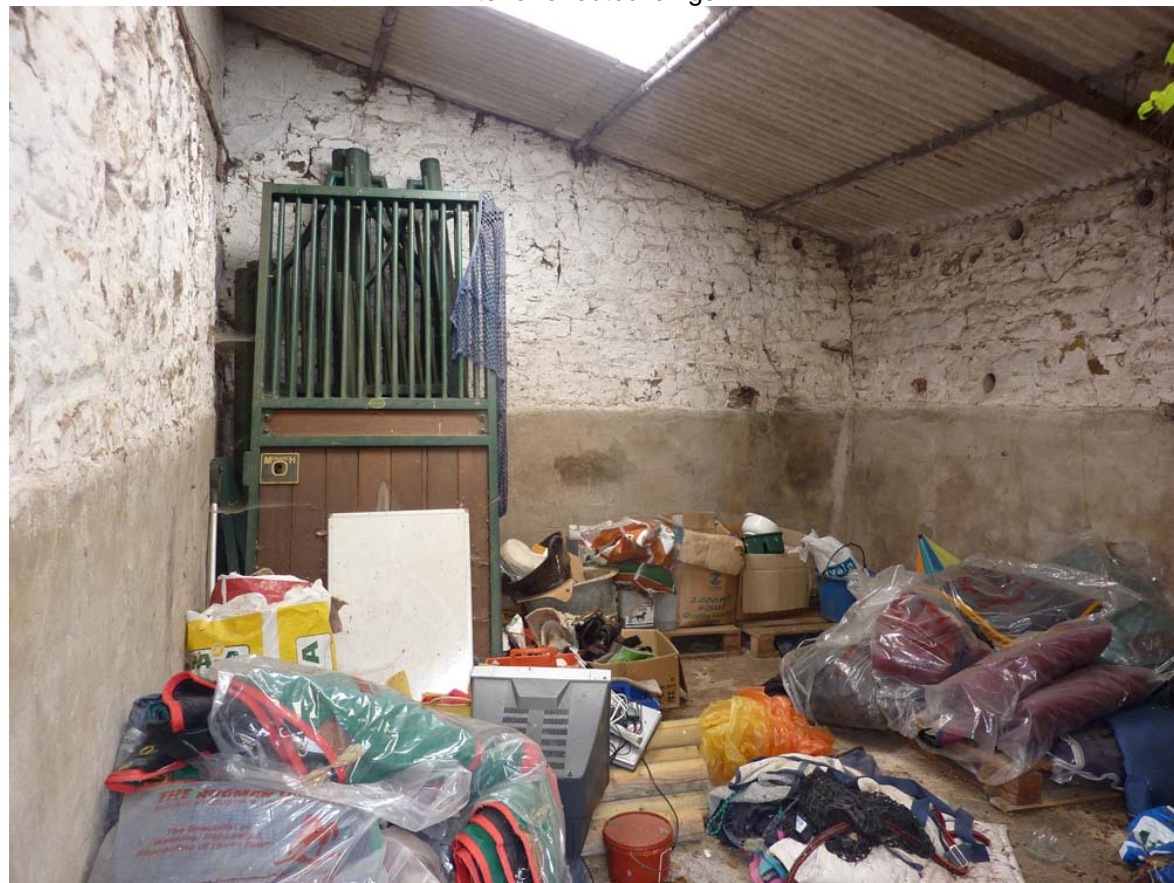


Interior of outbuildings





Interior of outbuildings





Interior of outbuildings; detail of patched up external walls



Cattle shed [4]

The cattle shed is the only outbuilding, other than Garage 2, to retain its original roof trusses and its roof intact. Located to the west of the house, this long stone building has a partially timber clad west gable. Open along the south front with stone pillars supporting the tile roof, there is a board door in the north wall onto the former yard. This long open-sided building dates from the second half of the 19th century (2), replacing an earlier small square structure on the site. The marks on the underside of the trusses and rafters indicate there was a lath ceiling at one time.



South open front of cattle shed



Cattle shed looking north and north-west



Summary

The outbuildings once formed the perimeter of the working farmyard, many built in the second half of the 19th century when the farm was flourishing. The 1889 sales catalogue described them as being in good condition. With the exception of the barn to the north of the house [3], all have fallen into varying degrees of disrepair and are used as storage, if at all. However, despite losing their original roofs and some walls, many of them do still retain original rubble stone walls and are recognisable as the outbuildings shown on earlier OS maps.

The bakehouse/brewhouse retains its walls to eaves height, even though the roof has fallen in since 1975. The south wall beside the chimney has collapsed and the west wall is leaning precariously. The adjoining garage [1] is in a worse condition. There is also the low wall of a further unidentified structure running across the back of the 2 buildings to the south. The bakehouse also retains its fireplace with re-used timber lintel and the chimney stack, the projecting oven still visible on the south wall. Render remains on the walls to a height of about 3 feet and it is possible that there was a loft. Two doorways and a window remain.

The brick garage [2], built c1920, incorporates two earlier stone boundary walls forming the north and east walls. There is a further storage room across the east wall. The building is in a hazardous state, the brick wall coming away, but appears to have been purpose built as a garage. The double Roman tile roof and trusses are intact. The barn to the north of the house [3] is probably one of the earliest buildings, extant in the 1840s. The roof gables have clearly been rebuilt, the rear wall, with a vertical straight join between, continuing westwards to incorporate a further ruined building. The barn has been re-roofed and timber clad internally with a new stable door and partially blocked opening in the rear wall.

The farmyard remains behind the farmhouse and together with the remaining buildings [4] and [5], retain the late 18th - 19th century footprint of the working farm buildings grouped around the yard. The stone would have been quarried locally and sufficient remains in the ruinous outbuildings to re-use in the rebuilding of any of the standing buildings. Whilst they add significance to the property as a former working farm and farmhouse, these buildings are clearly no longer functional as farm buildings. The property ceased to be a working farm over 20 years ago and whilst the owners breed horses, they have erected larger purpose built structures at a distance from the yard. The buildings, which retain sufficient structure to be identified on earlier maps, should surely be retained and rebuilt to provide some other function, rather than being left to deteriorate further. Clearly their use as specific farm buildings is redundant, but the stone buildings would still complement the farmhouse itself in some other guise.

The bakehouse/brewery [1] is no longer functional as such and nor would it be appropriate to recreate it as such, but it does retain a fireplace and stack, as well as doors and other openings, which could be adapted for 21st century use. As with the farmhouse, all these buildings have evolved over several centuries, adapted to the requirements of generations of yeomen and farmers. The barn to the north is in the best condition of all the buildings, but along with the brick built garage and the other outbuildings, it has been rebuilt, probably more than once.

Their footprint still forms a significant grouping around the former yard and whilst some of the buildings are no more than shells with few remaining stone walls, others retain the walls and material to create new sustainable buildings with new functions. Whilst the main brick wall of the Garage [2] is falling away from the rest of the structure, it could be rebuilt using some of the spare stone to match the 2 existing walls. These viable standing buildings should not be allowed to disintegrate further, but unless a new use is found for some of them, it is unlikely that it would be financially feasible to repair them merely for storage. Whilst there are few original features of the farm buildings left, the historic footprint could be retained by sympathetic rebuilding.