

STABLES AT HILLERSDON HOUSE, CULLOMPTON, DEVON

(NGR SS 99605 08009)

Results of historic building recording

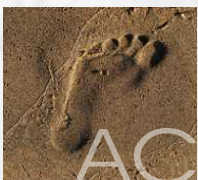
Mid Devon District Council planning reference
21/00834/LBC

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Document No: ACD2583/2/1

Revised October 2021



archaeology

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Client	Private owner
Report Number	ACD2583/2/1
Date	1 October 2021
Status	Version 1
Report Author(s)	Stella De-Villiers
Contributions	Andrew Passmore
Checked by	Paul Rainbird
Approved by	Andrew Passmore

The recording was commissioned by the private owner through their agents Louise Crossman Architects, and managed for them by Andrew Wilson, and for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The fieldwork was carried out by Stella De-Villiers. The report, including illustrations, was prepared by Stella De-Villiers.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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Summary

An historic building record of the stable block at Hillersdon House, Cullompton, Devon (SS 99605 08009) was prepared by AC archaeology in September 2021 in advance of internal and external alterations to parts of the building. The stable block is a Grade II Listed Building.

The building was constructed in the late 1840s when the associated Hillersdon House was also rebuilt. It has a C-shaped plan, and historically comprised stables in each side wing with coach houses and accommodation in between, and with first-floor haylofts over the stables that flanked grooms' accommodation.

The building was slightly extended, at first-floor level, at the turn of the 20th century, and the internal arrangement at first-floor level has been altered in the recent past. However, despite these changes and the loss of fixtures and fittings the original layout, including novel lightwells serving the stables, can still be visualised.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document sets out the results of historic building recording, undertaken by AC archaeology on 3 September 2021, of the Stable Block at Hillersdon House, Cullompton, Devon EX15 1LS (SS 99605 08009; Fig. 1). The investigations were commissioned by the private owner through their agents Louise Crossman Architects, and had been requested by the Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET) in their consultation response to a Listed Building Consent application (Mid Devon District Council reference 21/00834/LBC) for 'internal and external alterations and conversion of stable block for domestic use incidental to the main dwelling'. No formal site-specific brief was provided.

1.2 Hillersdon House is located approximately 2.2km northwest of Cullompton and is set within extensive parkland. The stables are situated to the north of the main house. The building comprises two former stables and two garages on the ground floor, and first-floor residential accommodation, some of which has been recently refurbished. It is situated at the rear of a terrace (with the house located towards the front of the terrace) on a promontory at a height of 125m above Ordnance Datum. In the wider landscape the land drops broadly down to the south to an unnamed stream. The underlying geology consists of Permian breccia of the Cadbury Breccia Formation, which on the higher ground to the north of the main house is overlaid by Quaternary Regolith (British Geological Survey online viewer 2021).

Designations

1.3 The stable block is a Grade II Listed Building (National Heritage List for England entry 1105931; Devon Historic Environment Record entry MDV89096), under the name 'Stable Block 50 Metres North Of Hillersdon House'. The following description was prepared in 1986 when the building was designated:

Former stables to Hillersdon House. Probably 1848 by Samuel Beazley. Red brick under gabled-end slate roof. Main range with cross wings and central polygonal porch under hipped roof; dentilled cornice throughout; 2 axial stacks with brick shafts. Front: Main range with 2 upper windows, 1 a 12-pane hornless sash; porch with 12-pane hornless sash windows; large carriage entrances to either side with sliding wooden doors; wings with entrances on inner face; plat band; 16 pane hornless sash windows to 1st floor, lunettes to ground; the gable walls treated as pediments, dentilled, with 10 pigeon nesting boxes in each. Temporary corrugated iron shelter abuts front of left-hand wing.

The scheme

- 1.4 The scheme comprises the conversion of the western ground-floor former stable into a gym with a shower room and the insertion of new garage doors within the former coach houses. A void at first-floor level above the gym will be retained but relined.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Figs 2-3)

- 2.1 Louise Crossman Architects prepared a *Design, Access and Heritage Statement* in April 2021 that included an historical background to the building. This is summarised below and supplemented by additional information from cartographic sources.
- 2.2 There are records of settled existence at Hillersdon dating to back to Domesday, although the current landscape of Hillersdon dates to the later post-medieval period. Following the sale of the property in 1825 significant building and landscape programmes were instigated. However, a further change of ownership to William C. Grant around 1847 prompted the construction of a new house and surrounding buildings and structures following designs by Samuel Beazley, an architect best known for his work on theatres. The stable block with integral coach house formed part of this mid 19th-century scheme. It was constructed with a C-shaped plan, comprising stabling in each wing with coach houses in between and with first-floor haylofts and grooms' accommodation.
- 2.3 The Cullompton tithe map of 1842 (Fig. 2) records the estate prior to William C. Grant's changes. The main house is shown to the northwest of the current house and has a H-shaped plan. There is a small rectangular structure in the location of the current stable block, and a larger L-shaped building to the north. They are all situated within plot 187. The accompanying apportionment of 1839 records that the plot was owned by Robert Baker and occupied by Daniel Roberts; it was described as 'Mansion House, Offices and Shrubbery'.
- 2.4 The First Edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1889 (Fig. 3) records the new house and stable block, along with changes to the landscape of the estate. The stable block faces southeast overlooking the rear of the house and the surrounding grounds. The map records its C-shaped plan (with a central projection), and an open-fronted canopy between the two wings. The Second Edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1905 (not illustrated) depicts a small rear extension on the northwest side of the stable block.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The scheme will include changes to the external character of the stable block, and internal alterations that will alter the layout of the building, obscuring currently visible finishes and floors, and will alter the character of western stable wing and associated lightwell. The main aim of the investigations therefore was to prepare an historic building record of the exterior and the western half of the building prior to works commencing.
- 3.2 It is proposed that a future Listed Building Consent application will be submitted relating to alterations at both ground- and first-floor levels within the eastern stable wing. The investigations therefore expanded on the survey of the western stable wing to include the eastern stable wing, both internally and externally, providing a fuller record of the overall building.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The recording was undertaken in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (De-Villiers 2021), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (revised 2020), and the AC archaeology *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*. It was also prepared in accordance with the guidance set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (Historic England 2016), and was undertaken to an enhanced level 1 record in accordance with the requirements of the DCHET.

4.2 The recording comprised the following:

- A basic written description of the stable block;
- A photographic record comprising a colour digital record (see Fig. 5 for the location of all individual photographs); and
- As existing floor plans were annotated and updated to show the location of observed historic fabric and fixtures and fittings, along with information on the phasing and development of the building, and the location of photographs.

4.3 The recently refurbished first-floor residential accommodation was excluded from the survey.

5. BUILDING SURVEY (Fig 4; Plates 1-14)

5.1 The building is a two-storeyed structure, aligned northeast to southwest, and is surrounded on all but the southeast side by a stone retaining wall, and with a walkway at ground-floor level. Views of the house and the grounds from the stables are obscured by intervening mature vegetation within a belt of woodland between the historic carriage drive and a rear access to the main house (see Fig. 3).

Exterior description and the open garages

5.2 The stable block is built of red brick laid in Flemish Bond with fine mortar joints. Externally, there is a brick plinth at ground level that is finished with render. All the openings have arched brick heads, of varying forms. The central section has a hipped roof with the projecting end wings having gabled roofs. These have been recently repaired, and all have slate finishes. Three brick chimney stacks serving the central section rise above the ridge.

5.3 The main façade is to the southeast (Plate 1). The projecting bays have lunette windows fitted with fixed wooden casements on the ground floor. Above these, at first-floor level, is a rendered plat band; this continues around all the elevations. However, on the northwest elevation it is not rendered but of exposed brick. On the first floor are single eight-over-eight pane hornless sash windows. Above these, at eaves level, is a line of brick dentil detailing, which continues around all the other elevations of the building. There is further dentil detailing within the upper part of the gables along with groups of 10 pigeonholes, each with a slate perch, arranged in a triangular layout.

5.4 The ground-floor yard in front of the central section and between the side wings is covered with a flat roof. The front edge is supported on four timber posts on stone pads. The surface of this yard is laid with stone setts defined by stone kerbing along the front, and further blocks forming a threshold on the line of historic doors (Plate 2).

In the east garage they incorporate four small but taller blocks that contain sockets for the original (now removed) doors to the coach houses (and later garages). Iron fittings for catches on each pair of doors also survive (Plate 3). Within the garages there are four rows of flagstones for the wheels of pairs of carriages to run on, with brickwork set in a herringbone pattern in between.

- 5.5** The walls within the garages are constructed of poorer quality brickwork than the external elevations, and feature larger mortar joints. The walls between the garages and stables incorporate large stable doors to the front (opening from the yard) with lights of 10 panes over. To the rear of these are downpipes integrated into the masonry. Within, and at the front of, the garages there are wide doorways which have been infilled with brick and beyond at the rear there are single doorways (Plate 4). The doorway in the east garage retains its original simple four-panel door (Plate 5). Between the garages is a three-sided central bay. This has a central doorway with light over and single six-over-six pane sash windows to either side. These are late 20th-century replacements dating from the conversion of the western first-floor area into residential use. In the rear section of the central bay there are former doorways into the adjacent garages that have been infilled with brick. On the first floor of the central section there are three six-over-six pane hornless sash windows, located over the two garages and within the central bay.
- 5.6** On the ground floor of the rear, northwest elevation are round-headed arched windows fitted with wooden casements with hinged upper panes at each end. Adjacent to these are stable doors with 10-pane lights over. In the centre are two upper-hinged wooden casement windows, each of six small panes (Plate 6). On the first floor are three eight-over-eight pane hornless sash windows located within the central and western part of the elevation (Plate 7). There is a bridge to access a pair of wooden doors located in the centre of the wall. This has a metal balustrade. At the west end is a 20th-century extension at the first-floor level of the main building. In its northwest elevation there is a one-over-one pane horned sash window and a wooden door accessed via a flight of four brick and stone steps up from the service yard to the north. The extension has a slightly pitched modern replacement slate roof.
- 5.7** The northeast elevation formerly had an attached small lean to. This has been removed leaving a roof scar and paint on the wall (Plate 8). On the first floor, set toward the rear of the building, are two, one-over-one pane horned sash windows with a further eight-over-eight pane hornless sash window in the extension. There are no openings in the southwest elevation.

Internal description

East stable

- 5.8** This wing has a stone sett surface, but within the area of the looseboxes it has been largely replaced with larger rectangular flagstones and bricks. There are drains within and along the front of the looseboxes. The walls are largely of exposed brick but there are small sections of wooden panelling surviving on the lower sections of the northwest, southwest and southeast walls. This was presumably originally present on all the walls. The double height lightwell along the southwest third of the wing has wooden tongue and groove panelling and the ceiling to the east of this, over the looseboxes, is of plasterboard (Plate 9). The first floor is supported on three timber posts that also form structural elements of the looseboxes. Originally there were two looseboxes, each capable of housing two horses. However, only the southeast loosebox survives and is constructed of wooden boards. It contains a refitted replacement plank and batten door (Plate 10). The length of partition between the two

looseboxes incorporates an upper section with curved rail and iron bars below. Within the loosebox, in one of the piers in the northeast wall is an iron fitting, possibly a vent. The post in the centre of the removed southern loosebox retains pintles for the door. All manger fittings have been removed.

West stable

- 5.9 The floor, lightwell and ceiling are of the same form as the east stable described above (Plates 11-12), and there is also an iron fitting in one of the piers on the southwest wall. An area of cement patching on the floor is marked with the date '1951', but generally the original setts survive better than in the east stable, with good evidence for original and later drainage. The majority of the lower section of the southwest wall is rendered; no wooden panelling survives. No stable partitions remain, although sockets for rails supporting the panelling are visible on the vertical timber posts that hold up the ceiling.

East end of the first floor

- 5.10 This has a modern finish throughout with modern flooring, plastered walls and ceilings. All the fittings are modern, including doors, their architraves, the bathroom and kitchen (Plate 13). The modern layout is set around the original lightwell, and incorporates the turn of the 20th century extension at the rear. The only early feature is an original wooden panelled door into the lightwell on its north side; this has an iron latch (Plate 14).

The remainder of the first floor and historic grooms' accommodation

- 5.11 This area was not surveyed, and the following description is based on an analysis of the floor plans. The former west hayloft has been subdivided, with the accommodation again set around the original lightwell. There is access from the wing into the central section of the building. Here the arrangement has also been altered, but originally there must have been three heated rooms, presumably bedrooms/private living space for grooms, accessed via a rear corridor, from where there was access via the bridge to the service yard north of the building. A staircase opposite the external door provides access from the ground floor. On this lower level there was a larger, heated room – presumably a kitchen – with a smaller (?tack) room to the rear.

6. DISCUSSION, by Andrew Passmore

- 6.1 The stable block was a purpose-built structure located slightly away from Hillersdon House in a service area including the Barton farm. It forms part of the late 1840s changes to the estate including the rebuilding of the house and associated structures. When constructed, the building would have been visible on the approach from the carriage drive to the northeast of the house, and this is reflected in its architecture, specifically the design of the southeast façade. However, it was not a key landscape feature, and historic maps (e.g. Fig. 3) and analysis of the wider parkland (Colvin and Moggridge 2012, section 4.21) show that it was situated behind a mound planted with evergreen trees, which once mature (as today) would have obscured views towards the building from the house and its main approach.

- 6.2 The design was up to date incorporating stabling with haylofts, coach houses and grooms' accommodation. The internal design was also contemporary with fittings comprising looseboxes rather than open stables. It was nevertheless modest, with stabling probably for only 8 horses. This perhaps reflects the stabling of horses for specific uses such as coach-horses or hunting-horses, rather than those used in association with the farm who may have been stabled elsewhere. The inclusion of lightwells is a novel approach to the issue of bringing natural light into the stables,

which was restricted by the building's position terraced into the hillside and design with adjacent coach houses. These spaces also provided access from the haylofts to the stables.

- 6.3** The building has undergone some changes to its layout during its 170-year history, including the addition of a late 19th- or early 20th-century extension at first-floor level over the rear walkway. The first floor has been altered in the more recent past, but retains its broad original layout, which is still clearly identifiable. With changes in transport (from horse and carriages to cars) the use of the building has altered and many original fixtures and fittings have been removed, including looseboxes and the coach house doors.

7. OASIS ENTRY AND ARCHIVE

- 7.1** An OASIS entry has been created using the unique identified 429514, and includes a digital copy of this report.
- 7.2** A digital archive has been compiled in accordance with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) standards, guidelines and the AC archaeology *Data Management Plan for Digital Archives* (Coles 2018), and will be deposited with the ADS within three months of the acceptance of this report by the DCHET.

8. SOURCES CONSULTED

British Geological Survey online viewer, www.bgs.ac.uk

Coles, C., 2018, *AC archaeology Data Management Plan for Digital Archives*. In-house AC archaeology technical document.

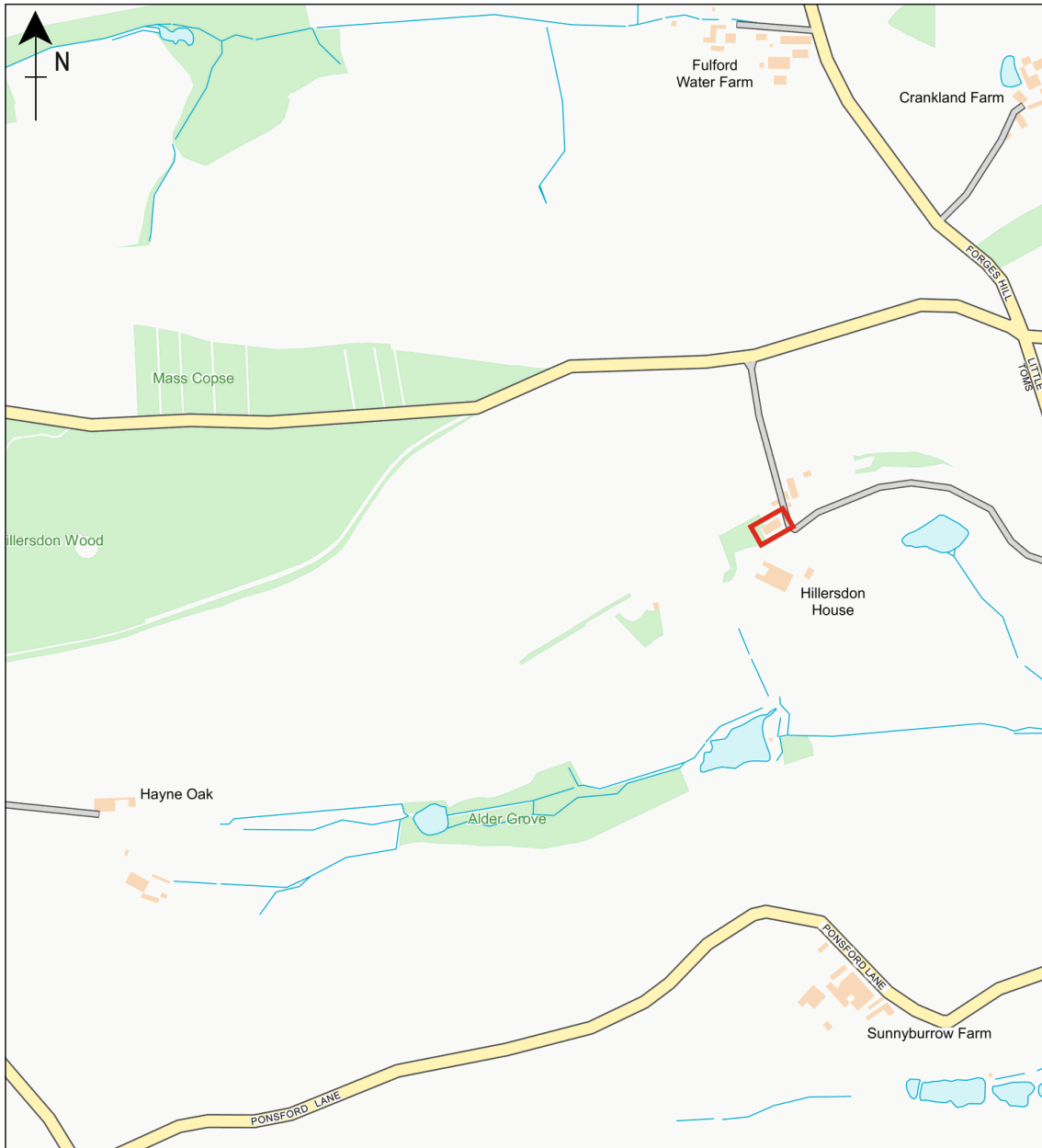
Colvin and Moggridge, 2012. *Hillersdon House, Cullompton, Devon EX15 1LS, Appendix 4 Archival Review of Landscape History*. Lechlade: Colvin and Moggridge.

Cullompton tithe map, 1842, and apportionment, 1839

De-Villiers, S., 2021. *Stables at Hillersdon House, Cullompton, Devon, (NGR SS 99605 08009), Written Scheme of Investigation for historic building recording, Mid Devon District Council planning reference 21/00834/LBC, AC archaeology doc. no. ACD2583/1/0.*

National Heritage List for England, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

Ordnance Survey 25-inch Devonshire map sheet LVII.I
First Edition, surveyed 1888, published 1889
Second Edition, revised 1903, published 1905



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Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright 2015. All rights reserved. Licence number 100022432

Scale 1:10,000@A4

PROJECT

Stables at Hillersdon House, Cullompton, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location

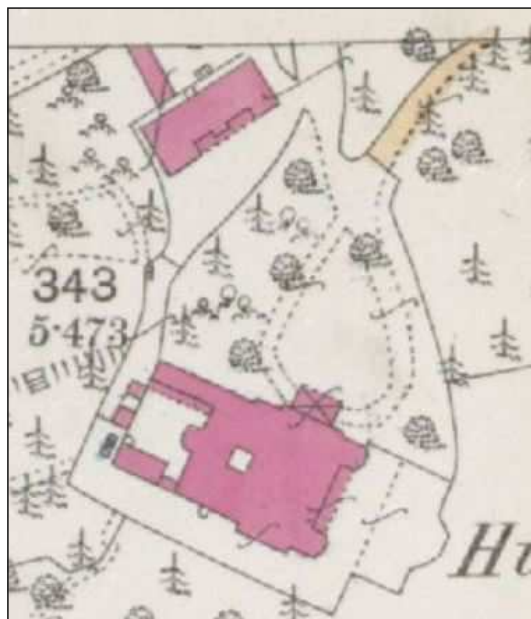


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Stables at Hillersdon House, Cullompton, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 2: Extract from the
Cullompton tithe map, 1842



PROJECT

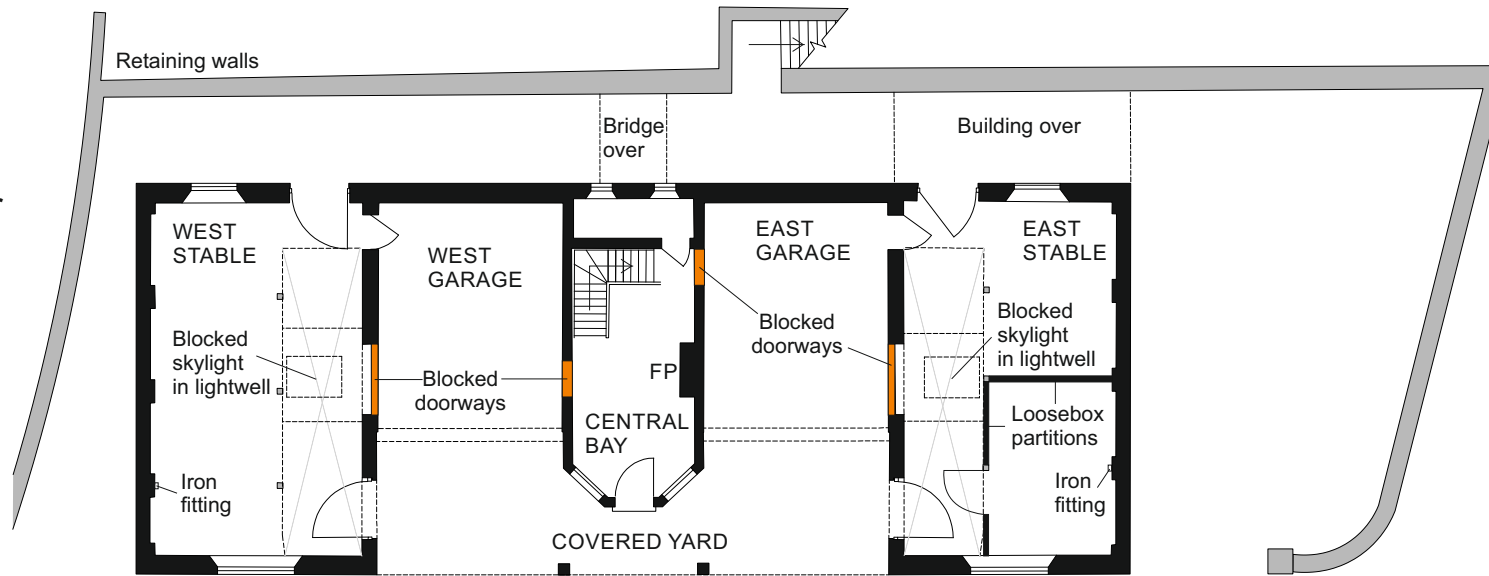
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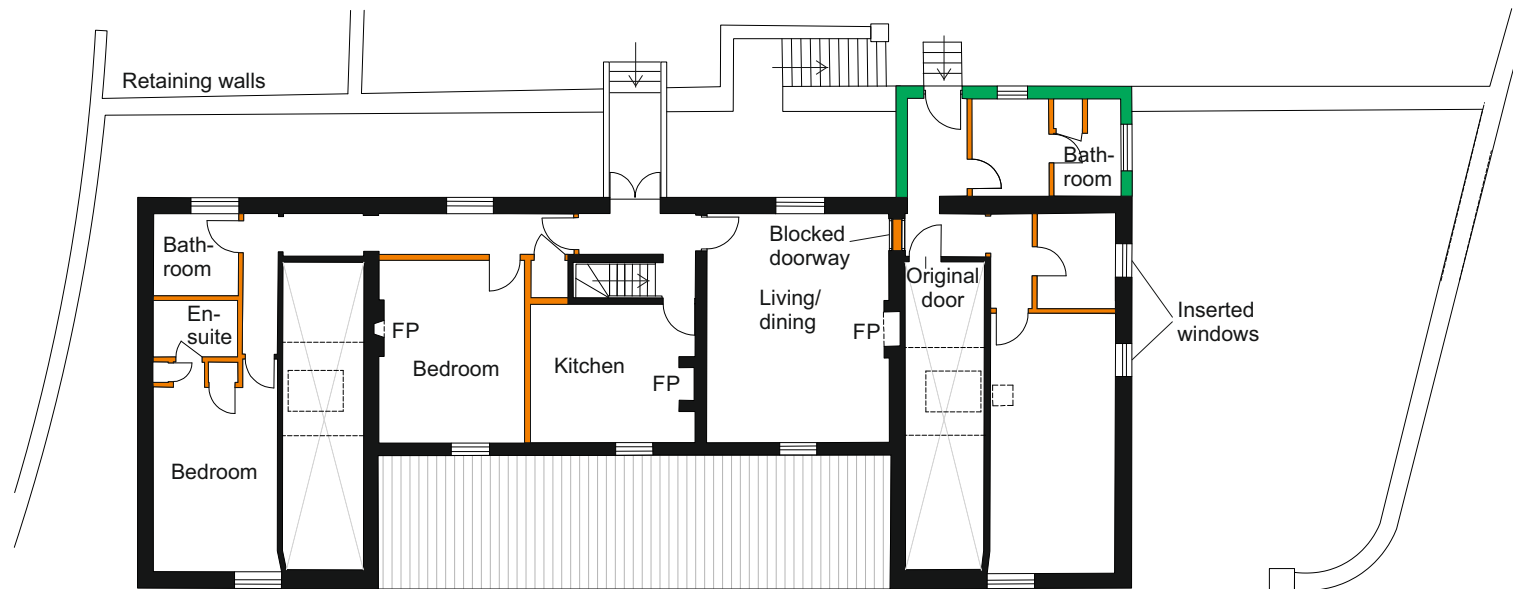
Fig. 3: Extract from the First Edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, 1889



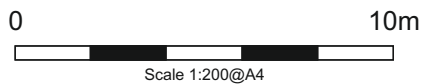
Ground floor



First floor



- Mid 19th century
- Late 19th/early 20th century
- Late 20th century
- FP Fireplace (or site of)



PROJECT

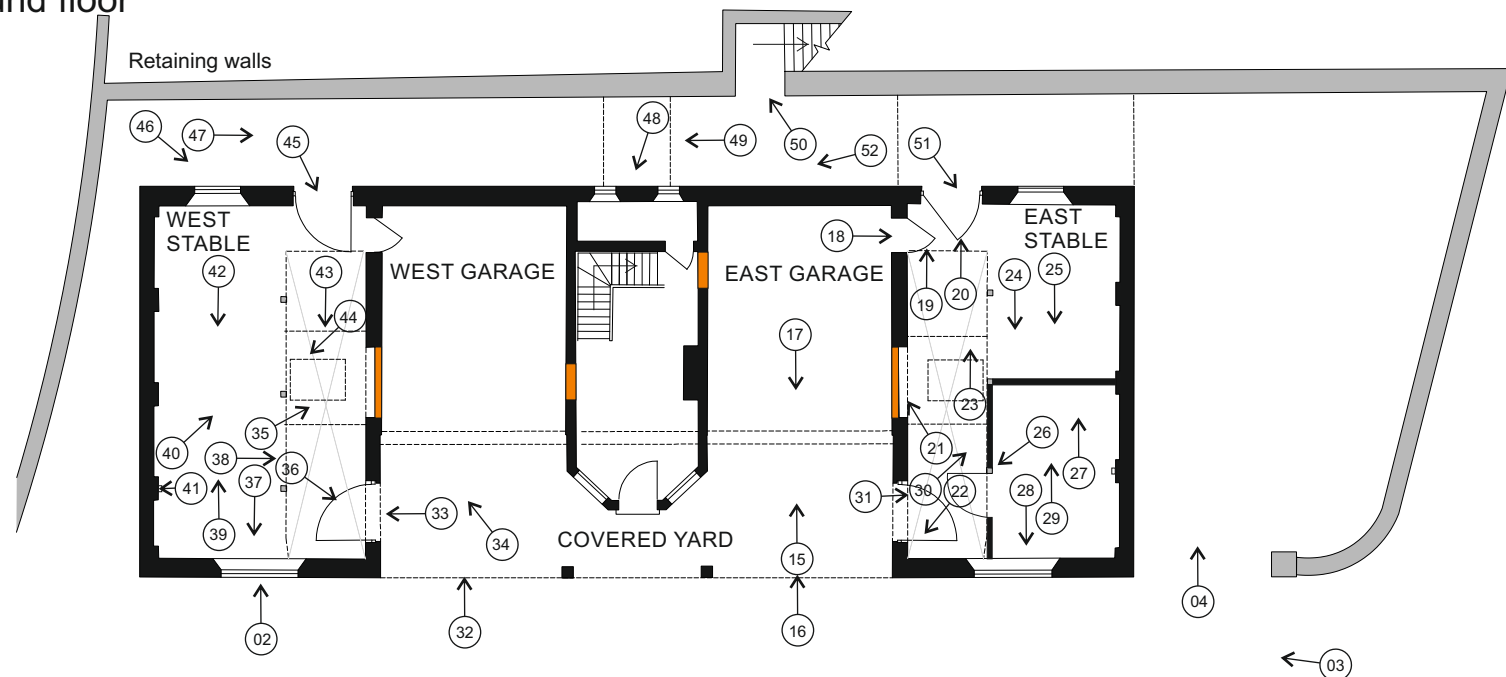
Stables at Hillersdon House, Cullompton, Devon

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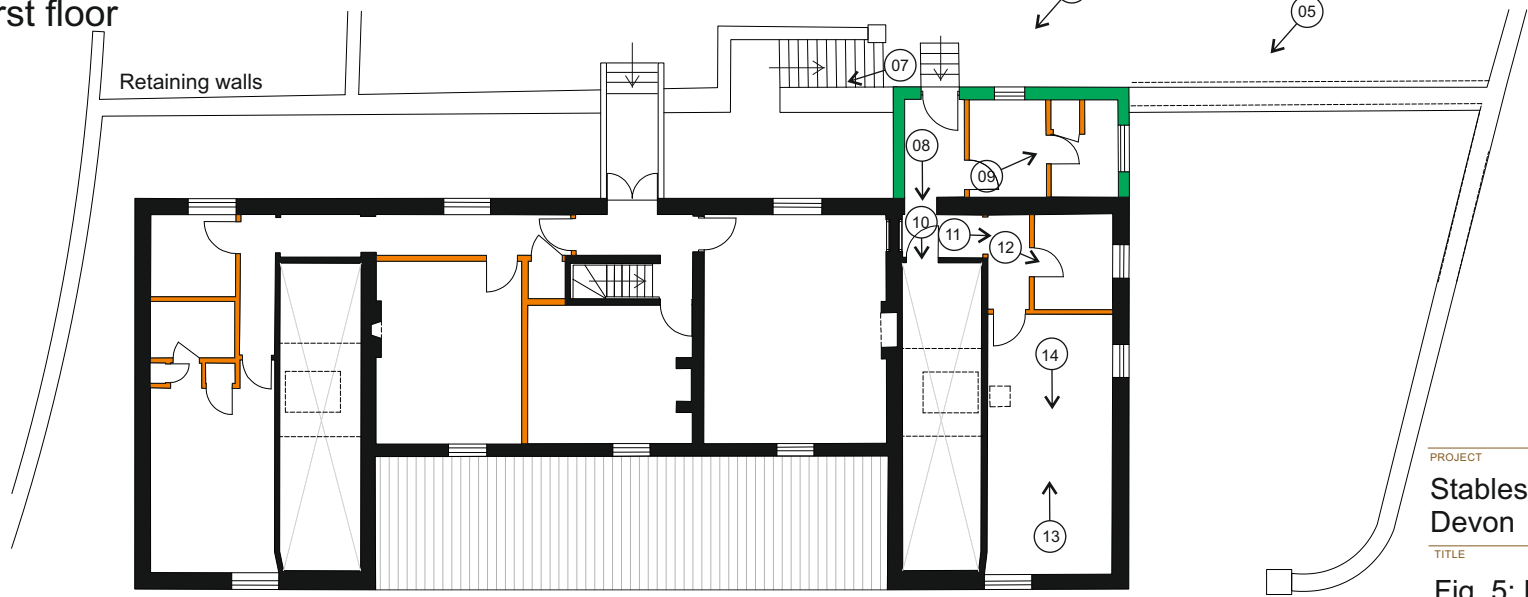
Fig. 4: Phased floor plans



Ground floor



First floor



- Mid 19th century
- Late 19th/early 20th century
- Late 20th century



PROJECT
Stables at Hillersdon House, Cullompton, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 5: Location of photographs





Plate 1: Southeast elevation, looking north (1m scale)



Plate 2: East garage, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 3: Door fixtures surviving in the floor of the east garage, looking southeast (1m scale)



Plate 4: Wall between the west garage and stable, showing the arrangement of doorways (1m scale)



Plate 5: Original four-panel door in the east garage, looking north (1m scale)

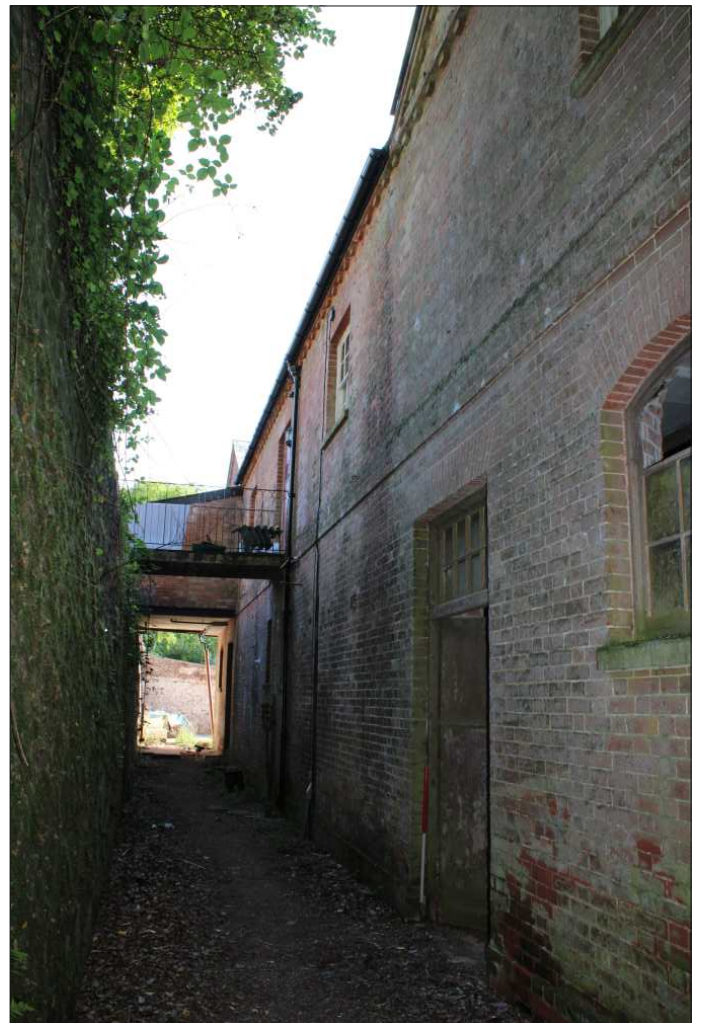


Plate 6: Northwest elevation, looking east (1m scale)



Plate 7: Northwest elevation, looking southeast (1m scale)



Plate 8: Northeast elevation, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 9: East stable, looking north (1m scale)



Plate 10: East stable, looking southeast (1m scale)



Plate 11: West stable, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 12: West stable, looking southeast (1m scale)



Plate 13: Kitchen on first floor, showing modern finishes and fittings, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 14: Original door into the lightwell on the first floor, looking southeast (1m scale)

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