

THE RAPE OF HASTINGS ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

Incorporating
Hastings Area Archaeological Papers

REPORT NO. 377

BURWASH - THE BELL INN NGR TQ 67662477

NB:- At present no historical research has been undertaken regarding this property.

THE BUILDING

PERIOD A (medieval)

As it stands, the structure contains three basic historical periods of development, though the present building almost certainly started life as a medieval hall house. All that survives of this are its 17 cm x 10 cm straight rafters halved for collars, these having been reused over the main range when it was rebuilt in the early 17th century (period C). Judging from the rafters, it would appear that the original house was of about the same ground floor dimensions as the rebuilt period C range (ie 10.05 m x 6.75 m), indeed from the slight size of the eastern bay the original medieval layout may well have been duplicated. It is possible, however, that the medieval house had already lost its parlour bay by the date that it was rebuilt, for to the west of the period C reconstructed range is a period B parlour crosswing of mid-late 16th century date. It may be, of course, that this was an extension to a medieval house with a terminal hall, though rebuilt parlour bays are by no means an uncommon phenomenon.

To summarise, from the rafter evidence it is clear

that the original medieval house was well built and that in all probabilities it was either of c10.05 m x 6.75 m (33'0" x 22'2") with a two bay terminal hall and eastern two storeyed bay; or one bay longer incorporating the usual two bay hall flanked by a single bay service and parlour. To say more than this would be pure speculation.

PERIOD B (mid-late 16th C)

The period at which time either the western end was rebuilt or added to form a parlour crosswing. It is constructed in two bays and measures 4.60 m wide (E-W) by 7.31 m long (N-S) (15'1" x 24'0").

At both levels the range was divided into two rooms, that in the front (southern) bay being both the larger and more important. On the ground floor this room has a neat ovolo moulded central girder, and was clearly the parlour. On the first floor the two rooms were linked by a centrally set doorway in the cross partition¹.

The roof terminals were formerly gabled, that at the front was cut back during period E and the rear gable is now enveloped by the period D rear extension². It is in the rear gable that the only section of external wall framing survives. Here, high in the gable head, is a small section of close vertical studding³ whilst below the collar is evidence for a former window with planted on frame, thus showing that from its construction the roof contained either an attic or garret. The rear gable retains an over hanging verge, but appears not to have had a bargeboard. The roof itself is of queenpost, side purlin and windbrace type, the principal rafters being notched for the purlins.

PERIOD C (early 17th C)

A relatively short time after the parlour end was rebuilt (or built) the remainder of the house was reconstructed, complete with a single bay rear range. The works generally are similar to those of period B, but the carpentry generally is of poorer quality with considerable use of sap wood. The hall has an ovolo moulded central girder to its ceiling complete with plain, shaped shield stops. The same feature is also found in the hall chamber, but here flat triangular stops have been utilized. The chimney heating the hall and parlour is of uncertain date, having been much altered and masked by modern coverings. A door with dropped head in the rear wall of the hall chamber gave access into the rear wing. This range has few features of note, though a three pane ovolo moulded glazed window was recently discovered in the eastern wall at first floor level⁴.

The attics are now reached by a newel staircase to the

north of the chimney, though this appears to date from period D⁵. Of 'S' plan with a central newel, the upper section also incorporates two opposing straight flights giving access to the main garrets and parlour garret respectively. The roofs which have hiplet terminals⁶ are of side purlin, queenpost and windbraced type, the windbraces to the main range being exceptionally deep. Most of the rafters in the main range are reused from the medieval roof.

Although little wall framing remains visible, all period C work appears to be of small square panel type with interrupted mid rails.

PERIOD D (mid-late 17th C)

A period of expansion at which time the parlour crosswing was extended to the rear by three bays. These extensions incorporate additional service rooms on the ground floor, one on either side of a four flue stack located in the central bay. The southern of the two rooms acted as a bake house/kitchen with a wide inglenook incorporating an oven to the east. The room extends into a contemporary leanto which runs along the eastern side of the range. The rear room also has an inglenook, though this is fitted with side seats; the function of the room is uncertain. Unlike the kitchen/bakehouse this room is divided from the side leanto. Both sections of the leanto are fitted with a ceiling. Both upper chambers were heated by the main stack, whilst above, the roof space was utilized as garrets accessible via a stair ladder set adjacent to the chimney. As with the period C work, the wall infill framing is of small square panel type with interrupted mid rails, though here the principal posts have late style jowels. The gable roof is of butt purlin type with high set collars. The two main bays are divided by an intermediate truss and although the butt purlins to the chimney bay are set low, those on either side are not staggered.

Note:- At the eastern end of the north wall at first floor level there appears to be a blocked doorway. If this is so, then it implies an external entry to this chamber. The range did not formerly extend further northwards, as is clear from the verge construction.

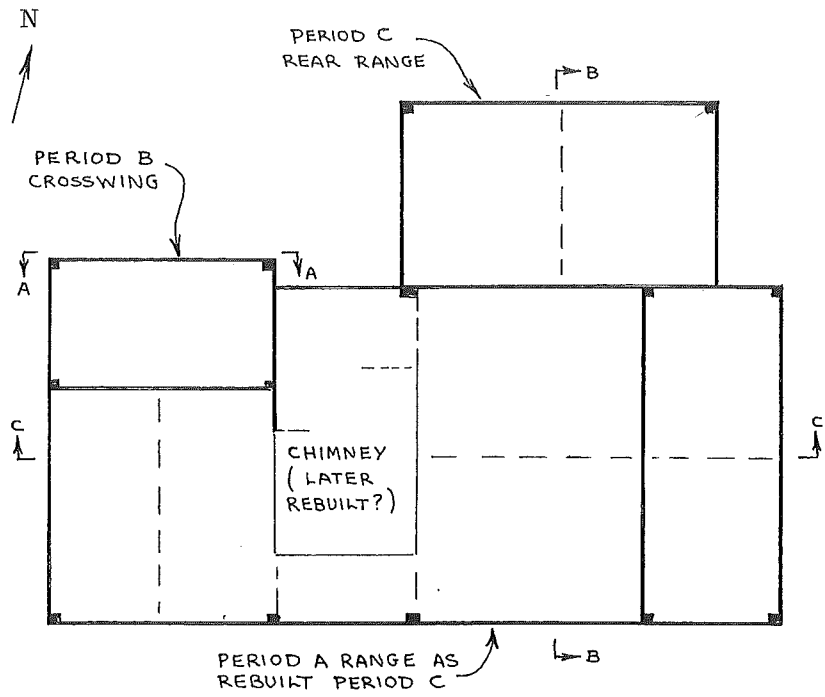
PERIOD E (18th-20th C)

The building has been extensively altered during modern times and much of the original internal framing is now covered by modern wall coverings. The most important of the period E alterations are represented by a false front of brick, the eaves of which are set considerably higher than formerly. The existing roof has been retained, though fillets have been planted onto the rafters in order to allow for the raised eaves. At this time former front gable to the parlour crosswing was removed and the

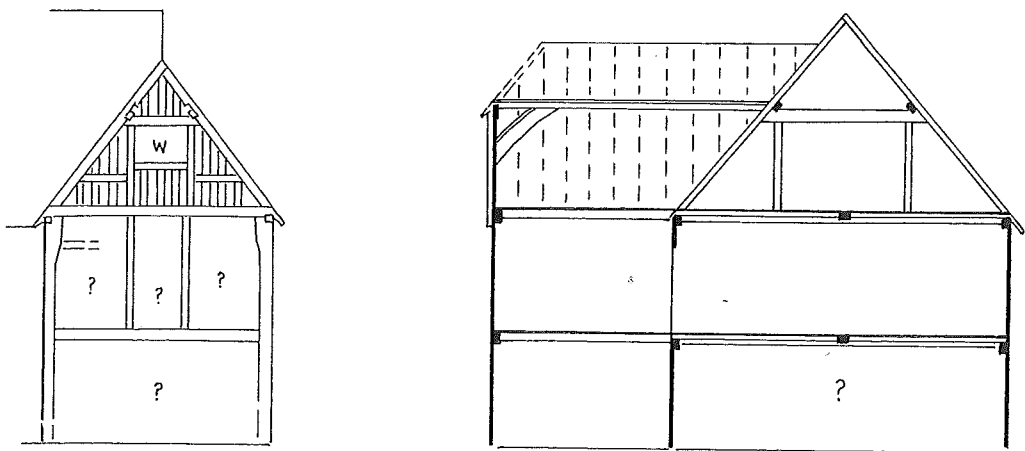
roofline carried through flush with that of the main range, thus removing all signs of the crosswing from the exterior. The other major alteration was made to the stack. This has been recapped and, at ground floor level, has had a passage way pushed through it. At both ground and first floor level the former hall and hall chamber has been sized down by moving the eastern partition westwards, this having been done in order to increase the size of the otherwise diminutive eastern room and chamber.

FOOTNOTES

1. Door evidenced by mortices.
2. Former front gable evidenced by the fact that the layer boards where the period C range meets the crosswing are still insitu. These would not be required if the front slope of the roofs had been flush as now.
3. The only other visible framing being slight evidence for large centrally set windows in the N and S wall, flanked possibly by smaller openings.
4. Discovered during re-cladding works in 1978 and now covered by weatherboarding.
5. The stairs are only accessible from between the crosswing and rear range, an area which was probably external during period C.
6. The terminal in the rear range has been reconstructed as a gable.

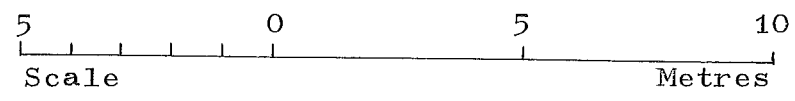


GROUND PLAN



A-A

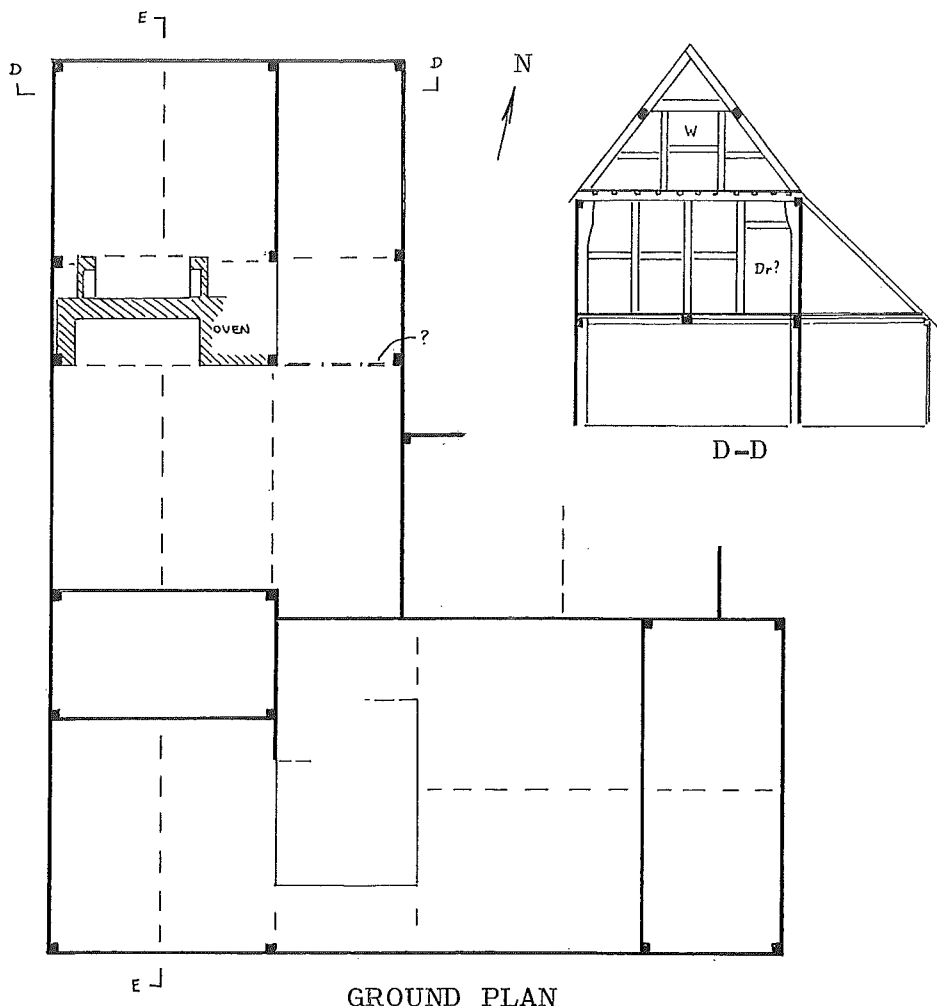
B-B



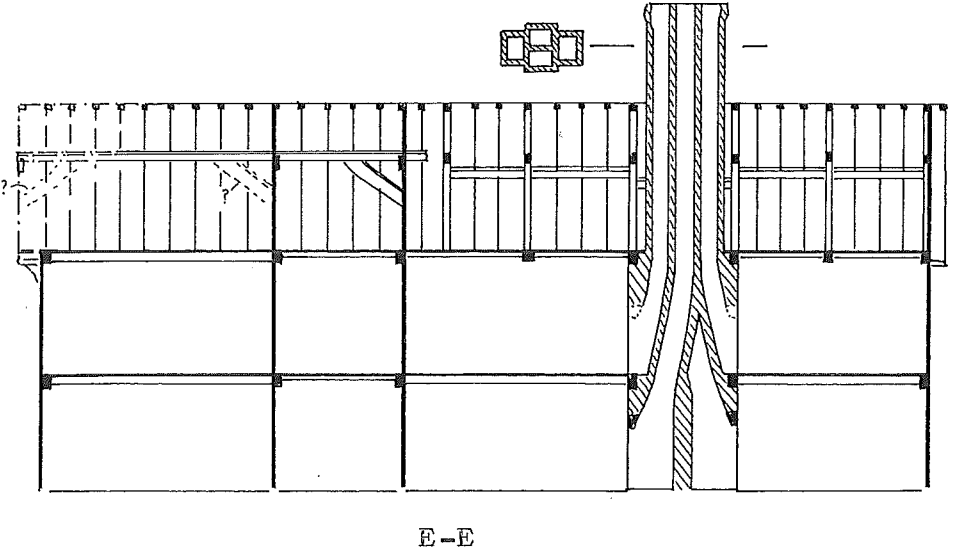
BURWASH - BELL INN, HIGH ST.

PERIODS B & C

377/1 - 1979

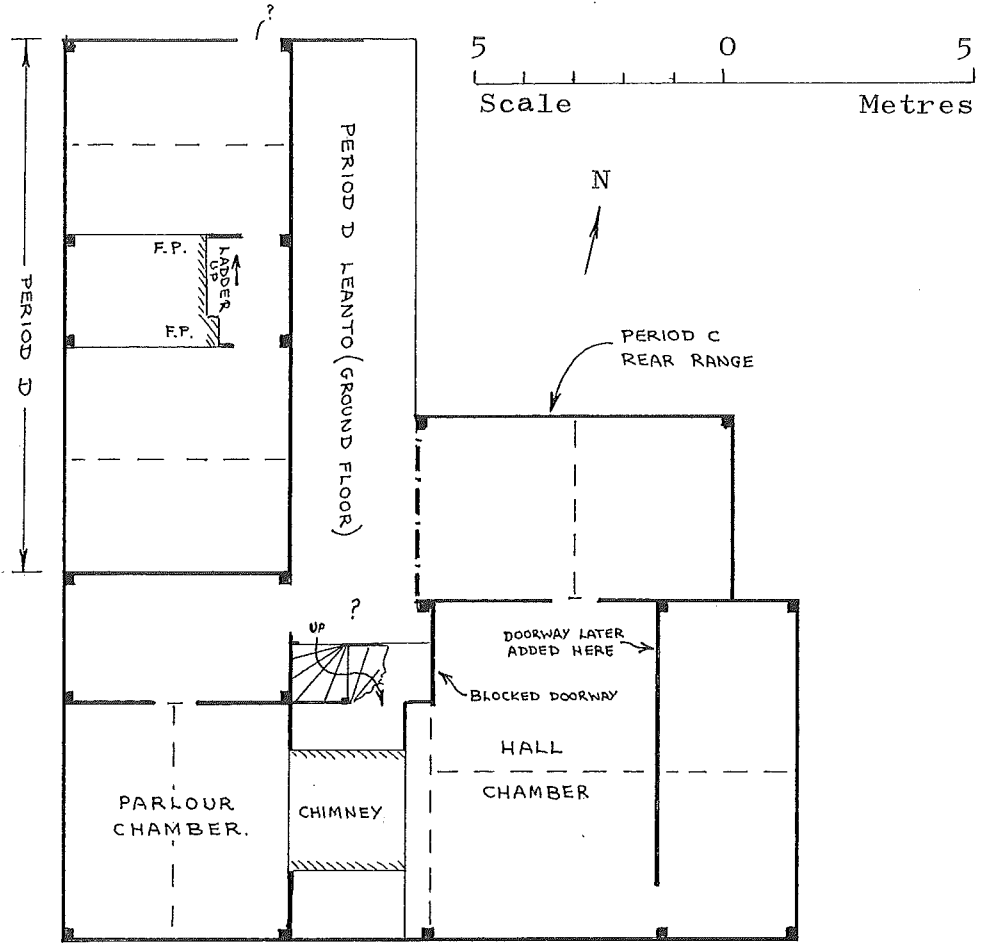


GROUND PLAN

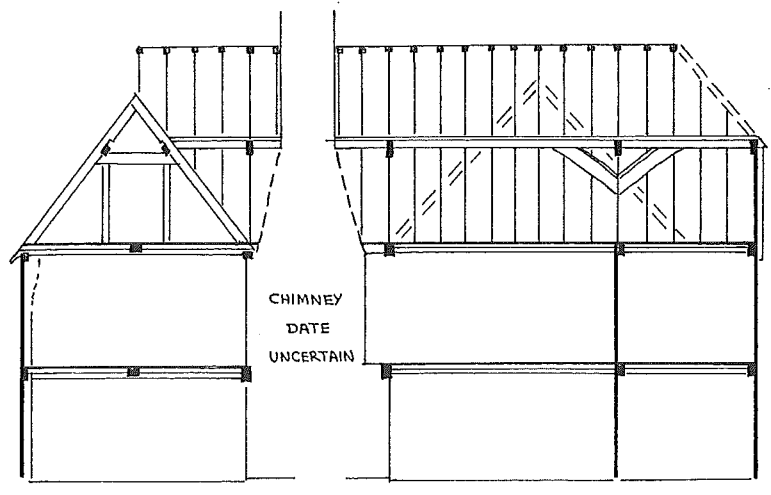


BURWASH - BELL INN, HIGH ST.

PERIOD D
377/2 - 1979



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



C-C

BURWASH - BELL INN, HIGH ST. PERIOD D

377/3 - 1979