

RESEARCH REPORT SERIES no. 26-2013

# APETHORPE HALL, APETHORPE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RECORD OF OPENING UP: VOLUME FIVE

HISTORIC BUILDING REPORT

Nick Hill



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## **SUMMARY**

This report is a record of various individual features uncovered during repair works at Apethorpe Hall in 2012, mainly to the central hall range. Most of these features are of late medieval date, and contribute insights to the early development of the house. The features recorded include: three blocked or lost medieval doorways; a roof structure with unusual carpenter's marks drawn onto the timbers with a red crayon; a raking brace which provides evidence of the early timber structure below the Matted Passage, further details of the oak stud wall of c.1692 to the Matted Passage, and an unbonded wall junction to the south end of the range, indicating that the detached block in this position once extended further to the south.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

The drawings were prepared by Rodney Melville & Partners.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The report was edited by Kathryn Morrison and the layout was prepared by Martin Jeffs.

## **ARCHIVE LOCATION**

This report will be deposited in the English Heritage Archive, Swindon.

## **DATE OF INVESTIGATION**

Opening up and survey work were carried out in 2011-12.

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Apethorpe Hall

Apethorpe Hall is a Grade I listed country house, located in north-east Northamptonshire. The oldest parts of the house, including the hall, were erected by the courtier Sir Guy Wolstan in the late 15th century. Additions were made at various times in the course of the 16th century, and in the early 1560s Sir Walter Mildmay remodelled the house to provide state apartments. This paid off, as Queen Elizabeth I visited in 1566, initiating a long royal association with the property.

King James I visited Apethorpe on numerous occasions. In 1622, he ordered the new owner, Sir Francis Fane, soon to become the 1st Earl of Westmorland, to extend and refurbish the state apartments. The sequence of fine rooms created by Fane in 1622-24 is located in the south and east ranges. These rooms retain elaborate plasterwork ceilings and carved stone fireplaces; they are of supreme historical, artistic and architectural importance.

Plans to remodel the house as a Palladian palace with two vast domes were prepared around 1740 by the 7th Earl, John Fane, and his architect, Roger Morris. This scheme was never fully realised, but resulted in some significant alterations. Then, in the mid-19th century, the Stamford architects Bryan and Edward Browning made various additions and alterations, including the erection of a loggia and conservatory against the south front, and the rearrangement of the 17th-century loggia in the east range.

In 1904, the impoverished Westmorlands sold the estate to Leonard Brassey, who engaged Sir Reginald Blomfield to undertake a great deal of work on the house and gardens. In 1949, Brassey sold the house to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton; it became an approved school, and later a community school. Alterations, most reversible, were made to fit the house for this purpose, initially in 1949-50, and later in the mid-1970s. The school closed in 1982.

## 1.2 The role of English Heritage at Apethorpe Hall

After the closure of the school, Apethorpe Hall was sold, but the new owner lived elsewhere and neglected the property, which was deemed a 'building at risk'. Following the issue of several urgent works notices, the house was subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order in 2004. It was handed over by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to English Heritage, which assumed responsibility for instituting a phased programme of repairs and securing a viable future for the property.

### **I.3 Recently Uncovered Features**

Features uncovered during previous phases of the repair programme have already been published. These are:

Kathryn Morrison, 'Record of Areas Opened up Prior to Phase I Repairs' EH Research Department Report Series no. 30-2006

Claire Martin, 'Record of Opening up, Volume Two', EH Research Department Report Series no. 4-2008

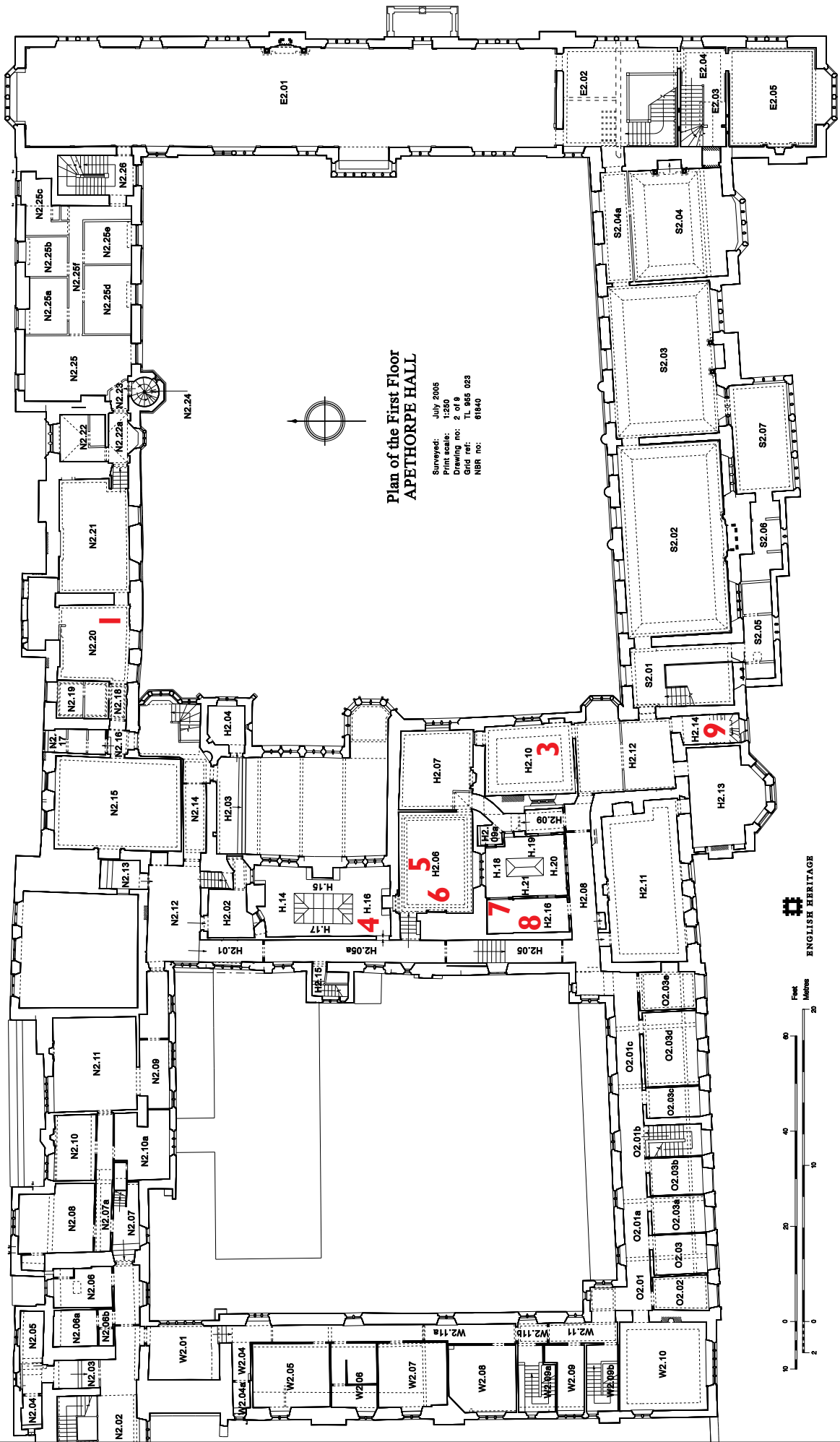
Hannah Waugh, 'Record of Opening up, Volume Three', EH Research Department Report Series no. 79-2009

Nick Hill, 'North Gatehouse Roof', EH Research Report Series no. 17-2013

Nick Hill, 'Opening up, Volume Four', EH Research Report Series no. 18-2013

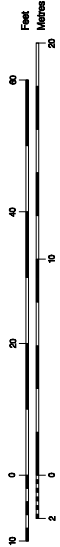
Nick Hill, 'Dovecote Roof', EH Research Report Series no. 19-2013

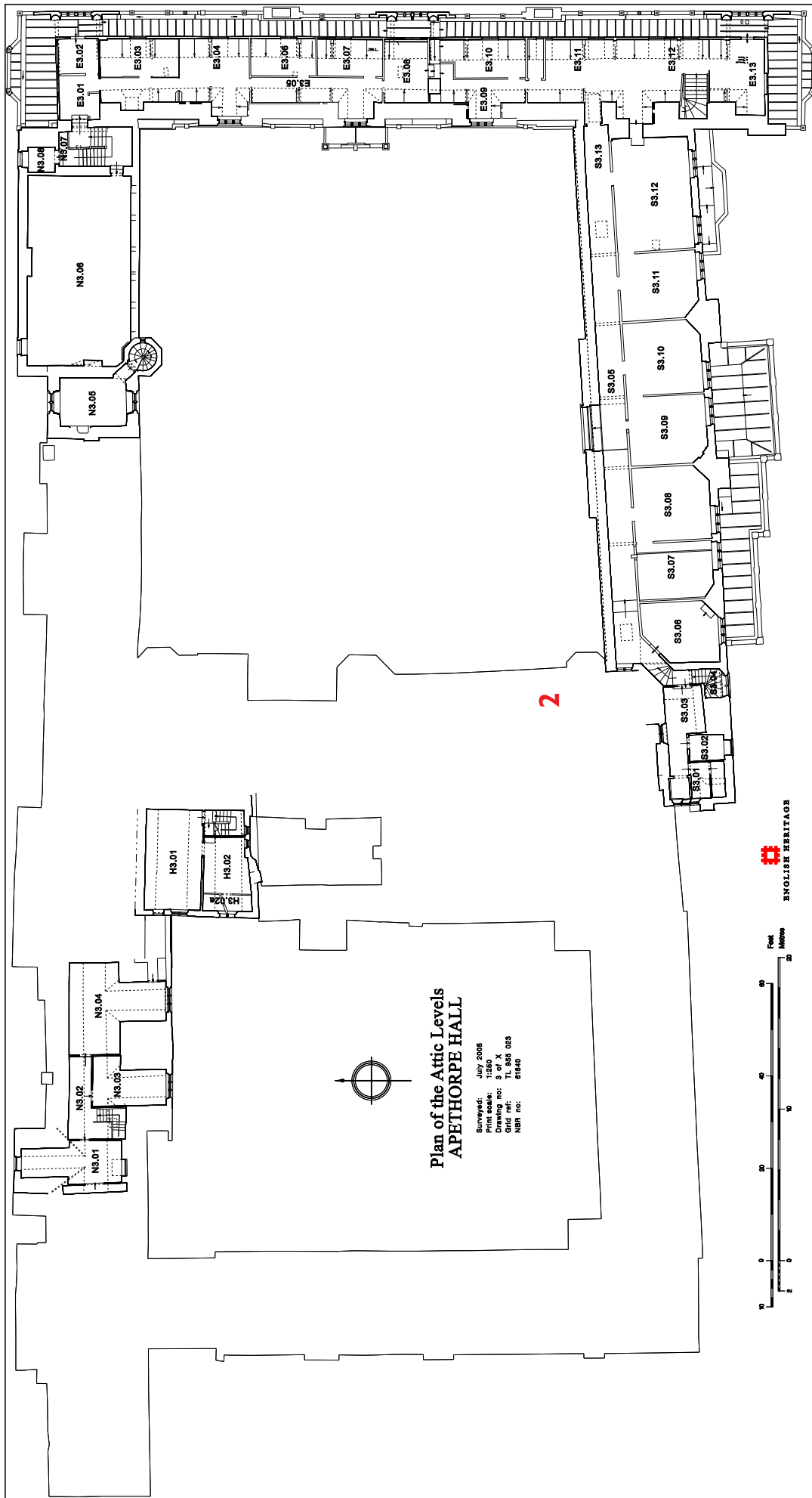
Where relevant, individually numbered features are located by reference to room numbers assigned by English Heritage (see annotated floor plans).



Plan of the First Floor  
 APETHORPE HALL

Surveyed: July 2005  
 Print scale: 1:250  
 Drawing no: 2 of 9  
 Grid ref: TL 965 023  
 NBR no: 61940





## AREAS OPENED UP

No.1

**Feature:**

Medieval door jamb

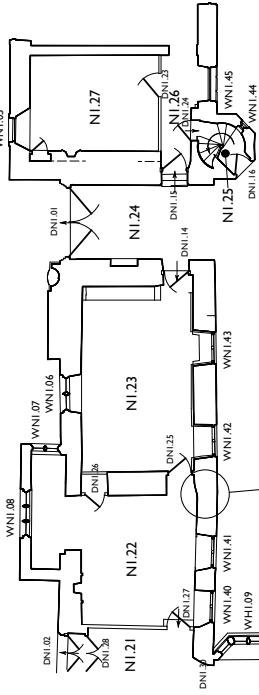
**Location:**

North range first-floor doorway connecting the two panelled rooms NI.22 and NI.23.

**Description:**

Removal of panelling to the east wall south end around the existing doorway revealed a stone door jamb with a cut-off section of the original arched head. The jamb has a rebate to the rear east face and a chamfer to the front west face. The chamfer stop at the foot of the jamb is damaged and has no identifiable pattern. There are two original heavy iron pintle hinges. The shape of the arch head cannot be determined, but the surviving section is consistent with the four-centred door heads elsewhere of this type. The adjoining rubble walling has thin lime plaster and the stonework of the door jamb is whitewashed.

The orientation of the door indicates that NI.23 was approached from NI.22, rather than vice versa.



**Key Plan**

Exposed reveal



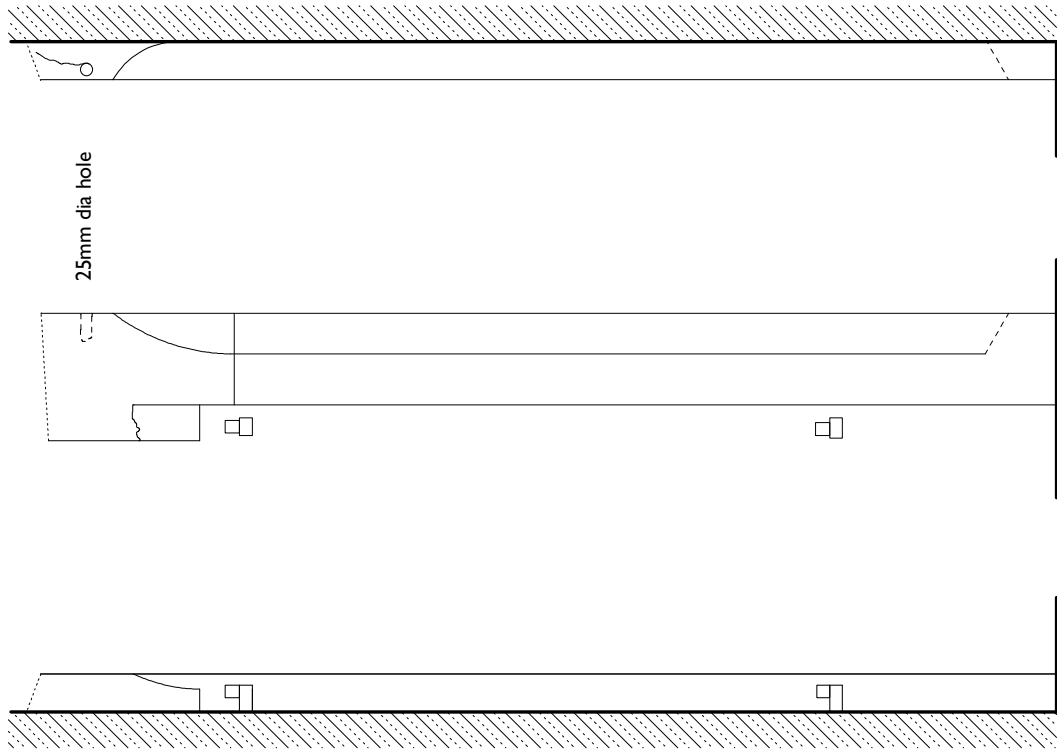
**Upper pintle**



**Lower pintle**



**General view**

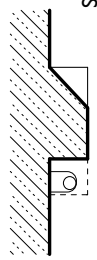


25mm dia hole

**West Face**

**North Face**

**East Face**



**Plan**

1m

Scale 1:10

**REVISIONS**

**NOTE**

1. This drawing is copyright.
2. All dimensions must be checked on site before proceeding.
3. Dimensions of new work are to be adjusted to suit the existing building where necessary. Do not assume that the existing structure or details are plumb, square or level.
4. The contractor must report any discrepancies to the architect before proceeding.

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Project Apethorpe Hall, Northamptonshire  
Phase 2 Repairs - Hall Range Completion

Drawing Pinteltes exposed adjacent to DNI.25

Scale	1:10@A3	Job No	5990
Date	May 2012	Drawg No	463
Drawn	ddk/sjp	Rev	-

## No.2

### Feature:

Roof structure, with red carpenter's marks

### Location:

Roof structure over H2.10/2.12 ('Lobby' and 'Little Orange Bedroom' on 1858 plan), also referred to as the 'Parlour Wing'.

### Description:

This roof structure has been tree-ring dated to c.1470-95 (samples APT-A13-22). It is of A-frame, clasped purlin type, designed to create a barrel-vaulted plaster ceiling to the room below (H2.10/2.12). Fourteen trusses with full arch-bracing to the collar for the barrel vault alternate with coupled rafters, without collars or bracing. There is no ridge. All joints are morticed and pegged. The timber is generally neatly cut, square, mainly sawn, with some outer faces axed. There are no chamfers to the timbers – the whole of this structure was designed from the outset to be hidden by a plaster vault. The arch braces have nails from the previous plaster vault, which must have been of oak lath, not reed, as it spans c.1m between the arch-braced trusses. The original nails are of handmade historic type, c.25mm long, with a four-sided taper to the shaft and rose heads. The south section over H2.12 still has a plaster vault, but this is later, of reed, with softwood formers nailed on to the intermediate rafters for fuller support – of later 18th or earlier 19th-century date. The vaulted roof structure is the same as that over the original Great Chamber, H2.06-7 (which has a dendro-date of c.1474-98).

During stripping for replacement of roof coverings in 2012, it became apparent that this roof has an extensive series of carpenter's assembly marks. These are mainly made with a red crayon/pencil, rather than the normal incised marks, though some incised marks are also present. The marks are found on the face side of the trusses, to the north side, except for the last truss T14 at the north end, where the marks are on the south side. The marks occur at the joint of the rafter, arch brace and collar, on all three members (though absent or missing to some members) and on the joints to both the east and west sides of the trusses. The red marks are quite crudely drawn, varying in size from c.15mm to c.150mm across. The formation of the marks indicates that they were made with some sort of crayon, pencil or piece of red material, which had a reasonably sharp tip – not painted on with a brush. The marks have both straight and curved/circular lines, of matching pattern to the relevant three members. Except for one set of marks formed as a 'V', the marks do not have any numerical design, unlike most incised marks.

The adjoining Great Chamber roof has marks which are generally incised, of scribed type, though a few red marks also survive.



*Fig 2.1 Red carpenter's marks to roof over H2.10/2.12.*



*Fig 2.2 Red carpenter's marks to roof over H2.10/2.12.*



*Fig 2.3 Close-up of red carpenter's mark to roof over H2.10/2.12.*



### No.3

#### Feature:

Early timber door jamb and partition

#### Location:

South east corner of H2.10 (first floor of hall range parlour block)

#### Description:

Removal of the existing door surround revealed an early timber door jamb to the east side of the current doorway. Of unpainted oak, c.100mm wide x 70mm thick, with 25mm chamfer to north side. The south face has probably been partly cut back, with no visible evidence for a rebate or hinges. At the door head, there are the remains of a mortice 195mm tall by 25mm wide for a tenoned door head. An important feature is that this door head had an angled joint, set about 25mm into the jamb at the base, and flush with the jamb at the top. Evidence survives for two peg fixings to the joint. The head is completely missing, though the 195mm height suggests it was of arched shape, not flat. At the foot, there was a cill member (now missing), jointed to the door jamb with a tenon and single peg. The surviving mortice shoulder in the door jamb is 80mm above floor level, showing that the cill was at least 80mm tall. The height of the doorway from floor level to underside of door head was 1660mm.

Above the door, removal of the existing doorway architrave revealed part of the stud partition which accompanied this doorway. The door jamb continues up as a stud, and two further oak studs were visible, c.100mm wide by 70mm thick, with cut-off feet. The infill panels between the studs have vertical cleft oak laths set at the centre line, with 70mm thick mud daub applied to either side, finished flush with the oak studs. The mud mix includes hay. No surface finish survives on the infill or the studs. The sides of the studs are plain, with no rebate or groove to receive the mud infill.

The doorway and stud partition are likely to date from the late 15th or 16th century. Mud and stud partitions of similar construction are found in vernacular house in the area in the 17th century, but this feature is probably rather earlier. The evidence indicates that there was a partition separating the two sections of the first-floor room over the parlour from an early date. The location of the partition also relates to the corridor leading west from this area, with the partition probably earlier than or contemporary with the corridor.



*Fig 3.1 Remains of early door frame to south-east corner of H2.10, from the north side.*



*Fig 3.2 Front view of mortice for doorway lintel, with angled joint.*



*Fig 3.3 Side view of mortice for doorway lintel.*



*Fig 3.4 Partition over the head of the doorway, with oak studs and mud infill panels.*



*Fig 3.5 Detail of studs and mud infill panel over doorway.*

## No.4

### Feature:

Timber structure with raking brace

### Location:

Hall range H2.05a: the doorway leading east off the Matted Passage onto the internal flat roof to west of the hall.

### Description:

Opening up at the threshold of this doorway revealed an old oak cill plate (150mm wide x 180mm deep). This is part of the timber structure of this section of the building, as it has four oak first floor joists, running west-east jointed into its west face, with haunched soffit tenons, with no pegs to the joints. The joists are of oak c.110mm wide x 80mm deep (varying dimensions). In the top surface of the oak cill is a shallow round-ended mortice (80mm long x 30mm wide) for an upright stud (showing there was a timber-framed wall here, and no doorway).

The particular feature of interest is that on the east face of the cill there is a raking brace, of softwood, 145mm x 45mm. It is crudely lap-jointed to the cill and fixed with two large hand-made nails (not oak pegs). The brace projects around 25mm from the face of the cill, so would not have been flush with normal timber infill panels, though it was presumably covered up in some way. The lower part of the brace was not visible, and

may well have been removed during later alterations. The existence of a brace here indicates that the ground floor had timber posts, to which such a raking brace would fit. The fact that the brace is pine, not oak, and the crude jointing, indicates that this is a later repair, not an original brace. But it indicates that the ground floor would originally have had timber posts, and that this type of structure survived until the 18th or earlier 19th century, the probable date of the softwood brace and nailed joint.



Fig 4.1 View of doorway off H2.05a.





Fig 4.2 Oak cill with raking brace.



Fig 4.3 Detail of raking brace, fixed with nails.

## No.5

### Feature:

Medieval stone doorway

### Location:

At the north west corner of the original Great Chamber, hall range H2.06.

### Description:

This feature was opened up in 2006 and previously recorded – see 'Record of Areas Opened up Prior to Phase I Repairs' EH Research Department Report Series no. 30-2006 No 24. Details are noted again here, prior to covering up.

The doorway has heavily moulded stone jambs to the inner south face, with an arched head, partly cut away, with whitewashed finish. Not enough of the surrounding fabric is visible to determine whether the doorway is original or a later insertion. The brick blocking to the doorway, which forms part of an inserted chimneystack, has bricks of 70-75mm in height. Externally, the stone jambs are only partly visible, but differ to each side. The east side has shorter, wider quoins, while the west side has long, thin quoins. No moulding is visible on the exposed outer reveal. This outer face was clearly less important than the internal face.



*Fig 5.1 Doorway to Great Chamber.*



*Fig 5.2 Doorway head.*



*Fig 5.3 Masonry over door head – no evidence visible as to whether the doorway is inserted or in situ..*



## No.6

### Feature:

Brick door jamb

### Location:

At the north west corner of the original Great Chamber, hall range H2.06 – the doorway leading west into the Matted Passage.

### Description:

The south jamb of this doorway has been exposed by partial removal of plaster: The corner is of bricks, 65mm high, set in lime mortar. These bricks may be of 18th or early 19th-century date, rather than the 75mm high bricks seen in later 19th century work. The doorway has clearly been formed, or re-formed, at this date.



*Fig 6.1 Doorway to west wall of Great Chamber.*



*Fig 6.2 Detail of brick door jamb.*

## No.7

### Feature:

Stone quoins

### Location:

North wall of H2.16

### Description:

Good limestone quoins, from first-floor level to ceiling height, were exposed beneath a plasterboard covering. This indicates the location of the external south west corner of the Great Chamber cross-wing. The outer corner was 1680mm from the inner west face of the east wall of H2.16. This indicates that the chimneystack at the west gable here projects beyond the main face (and corner) of the west gable wall.



Fig 7.1 North wall to H2.16.



*Fig 7.2 Stone quoins to north wall of H2.16*

## No.8

### Feature:

Oak stud wall

### Location:

H2.16, west wall

### Description:

This was exposed and recorded earlier in 2006 (see 'Record of Areas Opened up Prior to Phase 1 Repairs' EH Research Department Report Series no. 30-2006 No 23), but further details are noted here before covering up. The whole length of the west wall has been exposed except for c.1.5m at the north end. Vertical oak studs (varying dimensions, eg 110 x70mm) of very irregular curving shape, tenoned at the head to an oak plate (170mm wide by 120mm deep). No cill is visible. Near the centre, just north of the modern stud wall to the toilet doorway (now removed), is a main post, 180mm wide x 150mm thick. The studs are set back c.80mm from the face of the plate, and the post is set back only 10mm, so it seems this was designed to be left exposed (as seen in the nearby surviving stud walling). The oak rafters are birds-mouthed to the wall plate.

The timbers were previously sampled for tree-ring dating (samples APT A146-148 & A271-277). Three studs (one to the north, two towards the south) had firm felling dates of 1691, 1682 and 1691. Tree-ring dates of 1688, 1690 and 1692 were also obtained from the rafters of the roof of the Matted Passage (APT A39-46). As the whole structure is all of a single phase, this probably dates from c.1692.



Fig 8.1 West wall of H2.16, south end.





*Fig 8.2 West wall of H2.16, centre.*



*Fig 8.3 West wall of H2.16 - wallplate.*



*Fig 8.4 West wall of H2.16, north end.*



*Fig 8.5 West wall of H2.16, central post, with stud set back from face.*



## No.9

### Feature:

Wall junction

### Location:

H2.14 Stair, south-east corner, also to the 2nd floor above, S3.04

### Description:

The junction of the east wall and south wall around first-floor level has been exposed by removal of plaster. The walling has coursed rubble stonework, the south wall abutting the east wall with a straight joint. There is a mixture of clay and lime mortar. In the east wall at 1st floor level, 650mm north of the south-east corner, there is a cut-off oak floor joist, 200mm wide x 140mm deep, which clearly pre-dates the c.1560 stair (dendro-dated to 1559, ref APT A81-84). The joist sits on a 60mm deep oak plate in the wall. The oak lintel over the window in the south wall is a piece of oak 390mm wide x 120mm deep, with 170mm cut out of its width, and bearing into the east wall. This may also be part, perhaps re-used, of the earlier floor structure, though it is set a little lower than the cut-off joist.

The junction of the east wall and south wall was also exposed at 2nd floor level by removal of plaster. Here the two walls are fully bonded together, in good lime mortar.

This shows that the east wall is earlier than the south wall, which may previously have been further south. The earlier phase pre-dates the c.1560 oak newel stair.



Fig 9.1 Junction of south and east walls to H2.14 stair.



*Fig 9.2 Detail of wall junction to H2.14 stair.*



*Fig 9.3 Junction of south and east walls to S3.04 – stair at second floor.*



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