

Conservation 2002 in Nottinghamshire

The Nottinghamshire Building Preservation Trust Ltd.

Introduction

Following a long delay we are happy to be able to bring this new look Newsletter to our members, and hope that you will consider it worth the wait.

On a sad note we pass on the news of the death of Michael Adlington, who had been the Trust's chairman since 1991. We are sure that all the members of the Trust will share with us as we pass on our condolences to his widow and family. Like all good chairmen, Michael's contribution to the work of the Trust has been substantial, and we have only really touched on this in his obituary on page 2, but we hope it acts as a happy reminder of his influence.

Other articles in this edition include 'New Uses for Newark Buildings' written by Stewart Squires who recently retired as the head of Newark and Sherwood District Council's building conservation section. This is followed by an extensive article covering the most recent Trust project at the timber frame cottage in Styrup, near Blyth.

There are also short articles including part 5 of the 'of Locks' for which we thank Val Olifent and an article about the Old White Hart in Newark by Dr John Samuels.

Anyone interested in joining the Trust will find our contact information on the back page. All subscriptions go towards projects like Yews Farmhouse (see page 3) repairing and restoring the county's old buildings, but we also run special visits and social events. We are keen to build on our successes and would particularly like to hear from students and newly qualified people looking to get involved and gain experience in the heritage and conservation sectors.

New Uses for Newark Buildings

Anyone who has visited Newark in recent years cannot have helped noticing work going on to several of the older buildings alongside the River Trent. Economic regeneration in Newark has been a success and conservation in Newark has been a success and conservation led, as one might expect in this ancient and attractive town.

March 2002 saw the ending of a six year regeneration programme. Funding came from the Government, Nottinghamshire County Council, the Newark and Sherwood District Council, English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery and the private sector. The main effect of this, as seen by the visitor today, has been the repair of many old buildings together with improvements to their surroundings.

When old buildings become redundant it is important to ensure that they have a new economic use or they will be lost. Newark's success has been to find those new uses. The Castle Station, Listed Grade II, of 1846, is now a pub and the adjacent former Stationmasters House, also Grade II, of c1870, a Day Nursery. On the Town Wharf the former Wharf Café, Grade II, is now a pizza restaurant, the adjacent unlisted warehouse of c1890 houses 19 flats. The Ossington, Listed Grade II*, has also been converted



The 'flagship' restoration of Kiln Warehouse

to flats and a restaurant. The old Cattle Market site is now an arena and market, with children's play area and car parking. Two of its buildings, both unlisted, have been retained. The former bar and toilet now houses a café and toilets and has had its clock tower replaced. What was the Keepers Cottage is now a Youth Café.

The flagship building project has to be the former Kiln Warehouse, built originally as a Maltings. This is believed to be the earliest surviving mass concrete building in the country. Built in 1857 it is Listed Grade II*. It had stood as a roofless ruin supported by scaffolding since a

disastrous fire in 1992. The solution here was not to restore but to create a new building within and rising out of the repaired shell. Now called The Kiln, it provides office accommodation, including the Area Offices of the owners, British Waterways. This one project alone cost in the region of £2,000,000.

There have been major improvements to the appearance of the surroundings of the buildings as well. The creation of the Riverside Park, including the old Cattle Market already referred to, enabled the removal of the car park from the river opposite Newark Castle. The foil to the Castle curtain wall is now landscaped with a small amphitheatre alongside the water. Public performances now have the Castle as their backdrop and can be climaxed by firework displays from within the Castle grounds.

The Castle grounds themselves have been restored to their Victorian splendour. This has included the construction of a Bandstand, included within the original design but never built.

The river towpath between the Kiln and the Trent Bridge has been landscaped and resurfaced. A new towpath



View from the old Cattle Market after restoration.

bridge under Trent Bridge keeps pedestrians away from the traffic and links directly into the Riverside Park. The Trent Bridge itself, Grade II, dating from 1775, has been floodlit and has copies of its original parapet lights reinstated.

Michael Adlington: Chairman NBPT 1991 - 2002

It is with deep regret that we record the death of our Chairman, Michael Adlington, who died suddenly on 21st June, having been a member of the Trust since 1987, and our Chairman for the past eleven years; our longest serving Chairman.

Michael was a conscientious and genial Chairman with great enthusiasm for all the activities of the Trust, and a great love of local buildings, large and small, ranging from the towering 16th century Manor Lodge, Worksop, of which he said recently, rather enigmatically, that he had "fond memories", down to the tiny, derelict gate lodge at Drakeholes, overlooking a picturesque stretch of the Chesterfield Canal; Michael was also a lover of canals, and was a member of the Chesterfield Canal Society.

He was a big man, both in a physical sense, and in the breadth of his knowledge, experience and service to his community. Educated at Nottingham High School and Keble College, Oxford, he became a solicitor with his own practice, serving also as a Parish and Borough Councillor, and as a Mayor of Rushcliffe.



He chaired our meetings with a mixture of old world charm, dignity, order, and a sharp sense of humour. Building preservation can have its humorous side, not least when a covenant was discovered forbidding the sale of Yews Farmhouse to "any person owning more than one dog, cat or bird", our prospective purchaser had two dogs!

Michael was kind and tolerant, calm and polite in all situations; he had great presence but did not take himself too seriously. We shall long remember our warm and genial Chairman... and his love of hiscuits!

Graham Beaumont, 10 Sept, 2002.

Saga

The Trust was recently contacted by SAGA and asked to give its support to their application for the rights to broadcast a new radio station on 106.6FM. We hope you agree that there seemed to be potential for collaboration with a broadcaster that aims their product at the over 50's. It is due to commence broadcasting early in 2003, but in the meantime it can be heard in other regions on the same wavelength.

Yews Farmhouse, Main Street, Styrrup

In the first of two articles we will be telling the story of the most recent Trust project. In this edition we will mainly describe the architectural discoveries and significance of the building. Next time will describe some of the later history of the building and its conservation.

Introduction

Yews farmhouse is a modest but interesting timber-framed, two-storey building, dating from the 17th century and located on the Main Street in Styrrup next to the Victorian public house. Styrrup is a small village in the far North of Nottinghamshire just off the A1, even further North than Blyth, the next stop is Yorkshire. The farmhouse sits at the back of the footpath with no front garden, fronting part of a group of former agricultural buildings. It was offered to the Trust by its owner in the summer of 1999, following several years unoccupied and after unsuccessful attempts to sell the property.

It must be acknowledged that the previous owner was very helpful during the negotiations to purchase the property. Negotiations were held with the owner during 1999 and the Trust resolved to purchase Yews in the Spring of 2000. Applications were made for grant aid towards the refurbishment costs although no assistance was offered and the project has been financed by the Trust from its own funds.

Investigation works were carried out by the Trust and, following partial refurbishment carried out to safeguard the future of the building, it was sold recently on the open market. The current owner has indicated a wish to complete the refurbishment works, but intends to take the time to do this in a proper manner. There is still much to do before Yews will be comfortable home.

Investigations

Investigations

Investigation into the history was commenced at the end of 1999. A tree ring analysis of the oak frame was carried out by members of the University of Nottingham in 1999. Ten of the samples could be combined, including one sample with bark still intact, and revealed an exact felling date of AD 1656 for the main timber frame. Thus the date given in the listed building description of 'C16' was proved to be too early.

Detailed investigation and recording of the details was carried out by Graham Beaumont, assisted by Jason Mordan. In May 2001 an inspection of the oak frame was also made by Chris Miners, a timber building specialist, who was able to confirm that the timber frame was in good condition.

The Timber Frame

Yews Farmhouse is a two bay timber frame building,

later clad in brick. There is a single storey stone built addition to the east end, running at right angles and extending a few feet beyond the line of the back wall. The house is sited at the front of its plot with the long side facing the street, rather than 'gable-end-on'. On investigation the timbers were identified as oak, some were visible internally, partially obscured with paint and paper decoration and other timbers had been covered with lath and plaster finish. Where possible and without damaging original finishes these internal coverings were removed to allow the air to reach the original timbers to aid their 'breathing'.

The wall frame

Immediately to the right of the present front door, a main post (post 2) had been covered by a wooden plank. At the left-hand end of the building post 3 is exposed and has III marked in Roman numerals carved at the top. At first it was thought possible that the timber frame may originally have extended further to the east but 3 feet from the top of post 3 a diagonal trench in the face carries the end of a corner brace, proving that this was the end of the building; if the building had continued beyond this post there would have been mortices in both sides of the post for braces either side, as there are at post 2.

At the ground level near the bottom of post 3 are the remains of a mortice and peg hole where the end of the sill beam was originally jointed into the side of the post. A trench and peg hole in the face of post 2 near its base suggest that this sill beam was probably a single piece of timber, over 30ft long (like the wall plate above), halved and pegged near its centre into post 2. This arrangement, where the posts are not tenoned into the sill beam, indicate that the posts originally continued down below the sill and were supported by large pad stones. These pad stones are evident below each post at the front, and a probable pad stone was identified during limited archaeological investigation at the rear. Front post 11 appears from the inside to have been sawn through about a foot above the original stone and is now supported on brick infill.

Interestingly this type of interrupted sill beam and original stone and is now supported on brick infill.

Interestingly this type of interrupted sill beam and pad stone arrangement is described as belonging to the northern school of carpentry by Brunskill and is not at all common in Nottinghamshire.

Since the present two bays are the full extent of the original building, this presents a comparatively narrow street front compared with its depth. Bay one measures 15ft along the street and bay two, which has the fireplace, is about 16ft long, but the depth of the house is nearly 18ft. The house is therefore quite deceptive, as it feels much bigger once inside, than it looks from the outside (a bit like Dr. Who's tardis!).

The Roof

At the west end the original hipped roof still survives inside the roof space, but is now hidden from view externally by a gable wall of 4" inch brickwork added at a later date. When the feet of rafters were exposed along



View of Yews Farmhouse from the front (left-hand side) and rear (right-hand side) before restoration. Note that it now has a gable wall at the west end (furthest from the front door) which hides the original hip arrangement from view.



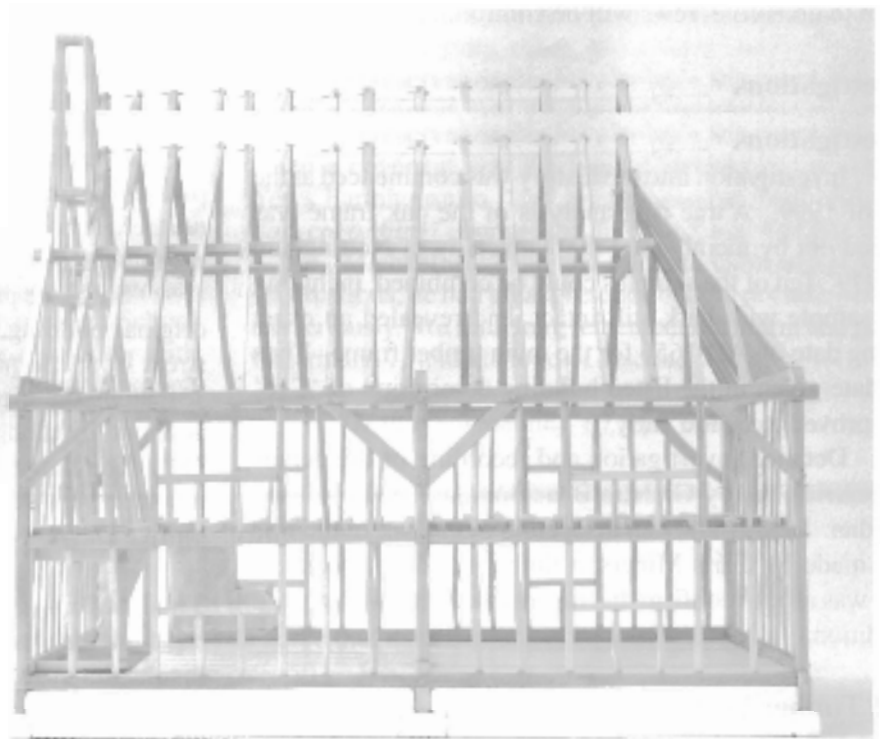
The rafters are marked at their feet with Roman numerals from I to XIII. This one is marked XIII.



This photograph was taken from inside the roof space in the void between the original hip slope and the present end gable of the west end.

This photograph is of Graham Beaumont's scale model of the farmhouse. It shows the original timber frame arrangement very clearly, especially the original hip rafters of the west end. This view of the model compares with the photograph of the house above on the left.

Note that the front door is not shown on the model as it is believed to be a later insertion.



the whole of the south side of the main roof, it could be seen that there are no principal rafters tenoned into the tops of the tie beams, instead all the rafters are roughly the same size and independent of the tie beams. This is then a 'rafter roof' as opposed to a 'post and truss' roof.

Unusually the rafters are numbered at the foot rather than the top, the marks running from I to XIII starting from the hipped (west) end, but not including any of the short rafters that form the hip itself. There are four collars connecting the rafters numbered I, V, VIII and XII. None of the rafter, except the ones with the four collars are pegged at the foot to the wallplate. The three rafters across the end wall, forming the hip, are pegged to tie beam I at the foot and at the top to an additional, high level collar between the pair of rafters numbered I.

The side purlins are clasped between the collars and the rafters; they are formed of two lengths which overlap at rafter-couple VIII. The overlapping ends are simply tapered where they meet and are not jointed or pegged together. One would usually expect the purlins to be joined together with the usual scarf joint, as has been observed at other timber frame buildings. Similarly none of the rafters are pegged to the purlins, so overall the roof construction might be described as labour-saving. Despite the lack of finer detail the roof has lasted 346 years, and the pantile roof, which it had when the Trust purchased the building, was probably only the second roof covering it had ever had!

At the hip (west) end of the roof space there is an unusual mud platform at a level above the present lath and plaster ceiling. This was inspected by John Hurd, a mud conservator, in 2001 and is possibly an original feature, a

sleeping platform or apple store perhaps. The present lath and plaster ceiling is not original to the timber frame and may date to the Victorian period, when fireplaces were also inserted into the upstairs bedrooms. Originally then, the first floor was open to the rafters and the mud sleeping platform, or store, must have been accessed by ladder.

Mud infill panels

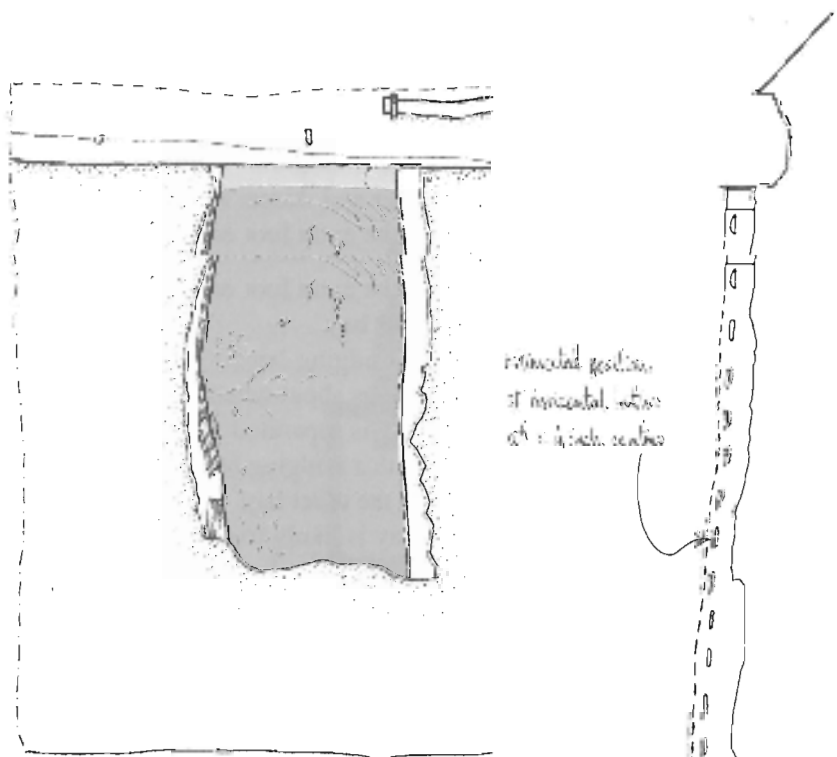
During the initial investigations several areas of original daub panelling were found hidden behind failing lime wash, plaster and paint on the inside, and by the brick cladding from the outside. These provided an excellent opportunity to identify the type of technique originally used to fill the panels between the oak frame.

Areas of straw and small pebbles could be seen in the daub and the marks of the original workman's fingers were clearly apparent, indicating that the material was literally applied by hand. The daub had been applied to riven laths that were nailed across the face of the roughly prepared studs (some still had bark on) which had been jambed between the main horizontal timbers of the frame.

On close inspection, John Hurd spotted that the remains of iron nails on the face of post two indicated that the laths had originally been nailed across the whole of the front. It can therefore be seen that the timber frame was probably almost completely covered by a daub render when it was first built. This reminds us that the modern image of an exposed timber frame with 'wattle and daub' infill panels is not an accurate picture of the Nottinghamshire tradition. In fact there is very little evidence that 'wattle' was ever used on the timber frame buildings in this county.



The mud infill panel discovered behind an area of failed plaster and paint. It is located on the west end wall in the first floor room at the front of the house. Originally the outer side would have been exposed but it is now enclosed behind the brick gable wall.



These two drawings show the wall at 1:20 scale, the section (on the right) shows the approximate location of the riven laths onto which the daub is applied. These laths were set about 4 inches apart judging by the nail evidence seen on post 2.



These two views of Graham's scale model show the likely original arrangement of the east end of the house. There was probably a timber framed firehood over the inglenook fireplace and a ladder access to the first floor. It is also thought that the present door is not the first and that the entrance would have originally been to the rear.

The Floors and chimney

The upper floors were reed and plaster for the most part, except at the east end where a small area of wooden planking, rather than reed, had been used as the base for the plaster. At this end the bridging beam of the floor had been cut, and then extended again so that it rested on the present brick fireplace.

It is clear that this east end was always a gable end and that it must have housed the original fireplace, but the original arrangement for transferring the smoke out of the roof has been obscured by the more recent fireplace and chimney. The evidence from the planks beneath the reed and plaster floor and the truncated bridging beam lead us to believe that the original chimney was probably an inglenook, with a fire-hood of timber and daub. The inglenook would have been much wider and deeper than the present fireplace and accounts for the extra foot or so of length. The inglenook would have been much wider and deeper than the present fireplace and accounts for the extra foot or so length of this bay compared to the other bay.

The arrangement of first floor bridging beams in the western bay has raised some questions about whether this floor is original. Presently this bay is separated into two rooms on the ground floor each with a bridging beam roughly half the section of the beam in the other bay. The modern staircase – that is within this bay is likely to have replaced a ladder that may have been in a different location.

The floors of the ground floor rooms were all quarry tiles laid straight on to compacted sand (which is the natural subsoil of the area). The floor level of the back room at the west end had at some time been lowered and contained an unusual cold table of polished stone, indicating that this room had most recently been used as a larder.

Summary

Yews Farmhouse is a wonderful survival of C17th timber frame building that contrasts with the timber frame

technology of the earlier, Medieval period. It was built towards the end of the great age of timber building, several centuries beyond the real high point of the craft displayed in buildings like The Gables, South Muskham and The White Hart, Newark. It is a truly 'vernacular' building in the strictest sense of the word, utilising all sorts of local materials, such as the local stone for the padstones, oak for the frame and mud, probably from the very site of the building, for the daub.

At first the design appears unusual, being quite short and wide, and its roof gives the impression of economy, however, it must have functioned very efficiently. Its size makes the very most of a narrow plot without having to set the building end on to the street (which was no longer fashionable by the C17th). The roof cleverly incorporates a hip at one end and a gable at the other, so by allowing principal rafters and extra wind braces to be omitted without compromising its overall strength.

Its date of AD 1656, means the building falls into one of the 'hot spots' of timber frame building activity highlighted by tree-ring dating results from the county. Other buildings of very similar date include: Lowdham old Hall (1652); 103 Station Street, Misterton (1653); and 1 Soar Lane, Sutton Bonnington (1652). These buildings all differ considerably in their design and technology and remind us that the world of timber frame buildings was a very broad one, open to many local and regional variations and fashions.

In the next edition, we will tell the story of the later development of Yews Farmhouse and describe the work that the Trust carried out to conserve and refurbish it.

G. Beaumont, J. Mordan and A. Wahlers

The Harry Johnson Awards 2002

The awards are made in recognition of good new design in historically sensitive areas and high quality restoration of historic buildings. One award in each of these two categories is given. This year's shortlist was:

1. Winthorpe Community Centre - new building.
2. 36 Church Street, Kirkby-in-Ashfield - restoration.
3. The Lych Gate, St. Mary's Bingham - restoration.
4. New Rectory, Willford - new building.
5. Barn at Orston - new building
6. The old Court House, Bingham - restoration

The two winners are:

A. For The Best Restoration of an Old Building in a Village Setting:

36 Church Street, Kirkby-in-Ashfield

This farmhouse was built in 1738 and later converted into a shop and local post office. It was once divided into 6 dwellings and is now in twoparts.

The house is constructed in Bullwell and local stone with reed and lime ash upper floors. The whole structure has been restored to a high standard including removing the render and lime wash and replacing the modern windows with a more appropriate style.

It was a very hands-on project and the owners are to be congratulated on an excellent restoration result.

The Scheme was proposed by Kirkby and District Conservation Society and the work carried out by P J Lilley Ltd, builders and owners of the property. The consultants were Jeffrey Keays Associates of Lambley.

B. For The Best New Building in a Village Setting:

Wheelwright Barn, Hill Road, Orston

(This new dwellings and garage is built around the

Wheelwright Barn, Hill Road, Orston

(This new dwellings and garage is built around the remains of an old vernacular farm building. The building retains the original clay pantiles and echoes the character of the former building.



The Key to the Problem

Part 5: Screw-Key locks

Another Mechanism used mainly in padlocks utilises a screw key. This works on the same principle as a nut and bolt. As shown in fig.1, a hollow shouldered key with interior thread grips a screw surrounded by a helical spring. The free end of the spring is attached to a washer which has an extension piece. When the key has been turned up to its shoulder, continued turning further withdraws the screw against the pressure of the spring and releases the shackle of the padlock.

This mechanism was adopted for use in handcuffs and other restraints, the entry for the key often being guarded by a small screwed cover which could only be removed by an extension on the bow of the key. These keys are very distinctive.

The same principle could also be reversed (see fig. 2) with the key being externally threaded and entering an internally screwed tube.

Yet again, these are primitive "low tech" locks, although many have ingenious secret movements which must be completed before the keyhole can be exposed and the mechanism operated.

Val. Olifent

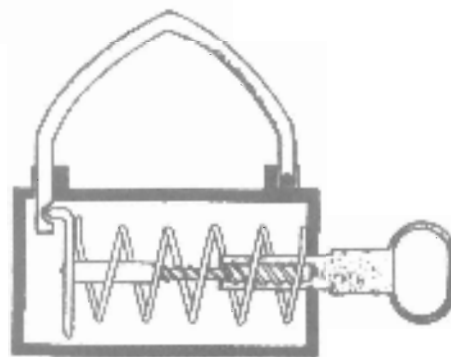


Figure 1

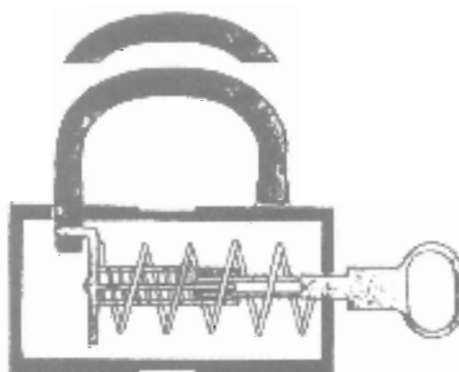


Figure 2

WANTED URGENTLY

New and existing members to help out with the Trust's activities, such as: the web site; the news letter; social events; and other projects. See back page for contact information.

The Old White Hart, Newark

The Old White Hart in Newark Market Place is an outstanding example of a medieval inn, and also of good conservation practice. Recognised since the 19th century as an interesting example of timber frame construction, it is described by Pevsner as "one of the paramount examples of late fifteenth century timber-framed architecture in Britain". Yet by the mid 1970s it was sadly neglected and there was even talk of its demolition.

Already, in 1972, F.W.B. Charles had undertaken a detailed structural survey describing the building's principal phases. Dr Philip Dixon and Professor Malcolm Todd had also carried out archaeological excavations in 1974 within part of the building. Together these showed that not only was the standing building of great importance but below it were significant buried medieval remains.

Eventually the building was acquired by the Nottingham Building Society and largely restored by them in 1979-80. Immediately prior to this, more extensive archaeological investigations were undertaken by Dr John Samuels.

During the restoration work the project architect, Philip Siddall of Guy St John Taylor and Associates, kept detailed records of the revealed structure and any alterations. Dendrochronological samples were taken by Nottingham University Tree Ring Dating Laboratory.

The results of the surveys and the excavations were published in the Transactions of the Thoroton Society in 1998 together with a detailed account of the building's recorded history by Adrian Henstock.

The Old White Hart in fact consists of three principal structures: the late C15th front range facing onto the Market Place with its impressive decorative elevation; a C14th wing adjacent to the front range and a C14th hall adjacent and to the rear. The archaeological excavations showed that beneath the standing buildings was a series of earlier buildings dating back to the C12th or early C13th. Before this the site was open ground which has intriguing ramifications for the location and origin of Saxon Newark.

The architectural survey by F.W.B. Charles presents an interesting sequence:

- 1a** c.1320 - first three bays of the present south range, incorporating an open hall with crown post roof. Dated by dendrochronology.
- 1b** Early C14th - east range of two storeys.
- 2a** c.1463 - present front range of three storeys, facing the Market Place. Dated by dendrochronology.
- 2b** Late C15th - upper floor inserted into the open hall of the south range.
- 3a** Late C16th - stair turret added to connect the north and east ranges and the gallery added to the rear of the north range.
- 3b** Late C16th - south range extended southwards by two bays.



The c.1463 Front Range as it looks restored today

Unfortunately it was later alterations to the buildings, particularly Victorian modifications which caused the later structural problems which were treated by the restoration work in 1979. Life has been added to the bare bones of the archaeological and structural analysis by Adrian Henstock's very readable account of the Old White Hart's history. His title 'A Very Old Crasey House' is taken from the innkeeper's dispute during the Civil War when, in 1643, he claimed the inn was hit by cannon fire. Using a variety of historical sources including an inventory of 1703, Adrian Henstock has shown the range of information available if one knows where to look.

Restoration of the Old White Hart was an important turning point in attitudes to conservation in Newark but it also demonstrates how sympathetic conservation and viable economic use can work together.

John Samuels BA, PHD, FSA, MIFA

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