

SOUTH WRAXALL MANOR WILTSHIRE

archaeological assessment of refurbishment proposals

April - May 2002

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Project

- 1.1.1 This document presents an assessment of the archaeological implications of refurbishment and internal alterations proposed for South Wraxall Manor in Wiltshire. The assessment has been commissioned on behalf of the owners by *Simon Morray Jones*, architects, to support applications for planning permission and listed building consent.
- 1.1.2 The assessment has been prepared by Michael Heaton BTech PgDip MIFA IHBC, an archaeologist specialising in the analysis of historic buildings in the south-west of England, on the basis of primary and secondary historic sources publicly available during April and May 2002, and in accordance with the published guidances of the *Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers* (ALGAO, 1997) and the *Institute of Field Archaeologists* (IFA, 2000). Though necessarily comprising chronological analysis and historical consideration, the assessment does not purport to be a narrative history nor an architectural analysis of South Wraxall Manor. Rather, it is presented as a reasoned assessment of the extent and nature of historic fabric surviving within the site, and the likely impact thereon of the proposed alterations and refurbishments.
- 1.1.3 The following pages present a definition of the site, its geographic setting and statutory status, and a summary of its historical setting; methodological statements and list of sources; a summary of the 'received' chronological development of the buildings, a summary of recorded interventions (detail in Appendix 2) and a description of non-recorded interventions indicated by graphic and photographic sources cross-referenced to reproductions of the graphic materials. The report concludes with assessments of the material impact of the proposed works, the historical significance of affected fabric, and considerations of the methodological efficacy of the work.
- 1.1.4 The assessment considers only the material impact of the proposed works, not their aesthetics nor contextual desirability. In this regard, particularly, the author does not consider the addition of material to be materially deleterious, as long as it is reversible and its extent distinct or clearly recorded. To avoid the possibility of redesign rendering detailed feature-specific conclusions redundant, the final assessments concentrate primarily on the nature of the existing fabric and the generality of the refurbishment proposals. Detailed, point-by-point impact assessments are given for the major demolitions, but minor works such as services etc. are dealt with as generalities.

1.2 The Site, its Situation and Status

Figures 1 and 2

- 1.2.1 South Wraxall is in the District of West Wiltshire, approximately 4km north of Bradford-on-Avon. It is a nucleated village situated at the head of a broad, south-east facing re-entrant valley in the south slopes of the Cotswold Hills, set within an undulating, elevated landscape of plateaux and steep-sided valleys, formed by the Bristol Avon and its tributaries, many of which issue from perched water tables within the sandwich of clays and Oolitic limestone that characterise the margins of the Cotswold Hills.

1.2.2 South Wraxall Manor is situated 500m north of the village, on the south bank of a tributary stream close to its point of issue. It comprises two blocks of conjoined buildings within formal gardens, with the separate Manor Farm a further 150m to the north. A full description of the buildings and their layout has been prepared by *English Heritage* (DoE, 1988) a copy of which is presented as Appendix 1 at the end of this report, and further details are presented later in this report. For the purposes of introduction, however, it is pertinent to summarise the layout of the site (Figure 2). It comprises two groups of buildings: the House and Butler's Cottage/Stables, separated by approximately 25m. The house comprises six principal conjoined two-storey blocks, all but one of which share a common east-west alignment, forming three sides of a rectangular courtyard open to the west and entered through a gatehouse in the southern side. Each of the blocks is divided internally into three or four cells/rooms on two floors. The Butler's Cottage/Stables group comprises five conjoined blocks, the majority of which are single cells and of only one storey, though there is greater internal subdivision within Butler's Cottage itself. The disposition of these blocks, their internal cells and the nomenclature adopted for the rest of this report are illustrated on Figure 2.

1.2.3 All the buildings within the site are Listed Buildings, and are accorded Grade 1 status in the *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest* (DoE, 1988). The House, its principal fixtures and fittings, and the gate posts are described in detail in the list, whilst the Butler's Cottage/Stables block is included in the listing by virtue of its enclosure within the curtilage of the House (Suddard and Hargreaves, 1996). The building group is also included within the *Lower - and South-Wraxall Conservation Area* (WWDC, 1997).

1.3 Historical background

Figures 3 and 4

1.3.1 South Wraxall Manor is one of England's principal historic houses, and one of only a handful that, until very recently, have remained in the ownership of the originating family. It encompasses exemplars of Medieval, Elizabethan and Jacobean work, and has accordingly been the subject of academic and antiquarian study since the 16th century. Ironically, whilst continuity of ownership has undoubtedly enhanced the survival of its fabric, its untroubled history has resulted in a paucity of the legal documentation that, at other sites, assists historical analysis. Nonetheless there is a considerable volume of published antiquarian analysis dating from the early years of the 19th century which, though secondary, provide a series of reliable 'baseline' surveys upon which to base chronologies of the House, and there are smaller quantities of primary data from the mid 17th century onwards held at the *Wiltshire Records Office* and *Devizes Museum*.

1.3.2 The outlines of the site's development have been addressed by a number of published histories; principally Walker (1838), Ponting (1881), Chitty (1889 and 1893), Gotch (1901), Garner and Stratton (1910) and more recently Parker (2001). Summaries also appear in the illustrated vignettes of *Country Life* (1898 - 1904), the topographies of Leland (c. 1546) and Colt-Hoare (1825), the shorter entries in the *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* and *The Victoria County History*, and the architectural analyses of Wood (1965) and Pevsner (1975). A digest of this material is presented in Section 3 and in Appendix 2, and parts of Walker's survey of 1835 (published 1838) are presented as Figure 3. These works describe the evolution of the house and the fortunes of its owners and tenants, and explain some of its more curious features - such as a niched masonry projection into the Drawing Room. Walker's survey, in consciously emulating the works of Pugin, also included detailed measured drawings of all the architectural details then visible.

1.3.3 Neither the initial form nor construction date of South Wraxall Manor are known with any certainty. The Long family who owned it at the time of Leland's visit in 1542 (Chandler, 1993) had been established as landowners and political figures in the county since 1426, and on that basis most authors ascribe the house an early 15th century foundation. Camden, also writing in the 16th century (Chitty, 1889), is alone in querying this origin, on

the basis of the etymology of the family name; he considered the name to have been adopted by a scion of the 'House of Preux' already resident in what had been a manor of the Abbey of Shaftesbury since the 13th century. Irrespective of its possible 13th C antecedents, all published chronologies follow that of Walker (1838) who considered the house to have commenced in the latest 14th or early 15th C, enlarged and added to considerably in the 16th C, joined into a single structure in the 18th prior to a prolonged period of abandonment following the death in 1814 of Katherine, the last member of the family, that preceded and extended beyond Walker's survey (Figure 3). During that period the house was used as a school by a Dr Knight, who carried out many '*deleterious alterations*', later rectified by the Rood Ashton branch of the Long family, who had inherited the house. It was towards the end of this period of abandonment and tenancy that Charles Ponting conducted a survey (Figure 3), the recommendations of which formed the basis for much repair and alteration in the later 19th and early 20th centuries. Further extensive renovations and alterations were effected by an industrious Colonel Richardson who assumed the tenancy from 1895 to his death 1935. From 1935 until its sale in 1999 the House was occupied by members of the Rood Ashton branch of the Long family, who had owned it since the death of the spinster Katherine.

1.4 Archaeological potential

- 1.4.1 The House and, to a lesser extent, the Butler's Cottage/Stables block, are an architectural palimpsest of Medieval, Tudor, Jacobean and 18th century fabric of National importance onto which imitative work of 19th and 20th century date has been added. It has been the subject of detailed antiquarian and architectural analysis (above) during which much of its visible detail has been recorded and the current architects have prepared detailed accurate measured surveys and photographic records of the entire building group. Nonetheless, despite this veritable library of source material, much ambiguity remains with regard to the date and form of the original foundation and the exact chronological and spatial relationships between many of the individual cells.
- 1.4.2 The archaeological potential of the buildings rest primarily in the hidden fabric such as earlier floors and hearths that indicate changing patterns of building use, redundant wall foundations, structural relationships between foundations, and altered openings that articulate changing circulation patterns. Whilst the archaeological potential of broad expanses of walling might not be compromised by the insertion of new openings, for example, excavation of new service conduits between adjoining foundations or between foundations and their associated floors might remove archaeologically critical stratigraphic and structural relationships.
- 1.4.3 Whilst no assessment, as defined below, can definitively predict exactly where such features exist, comparison of the development and use of a building and its type with the known extent of destructive interventions can indicate where such features are likely to survive and - equally importantly - where they cannot have survived. In the absence of detailed and verifiable documentary sources, removal or alteration of superficially insignificant fabric here might therefore reasonably be assumed to be archaeologically deleterious, unless demonstrated otherwise.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Definition

2.1.1 An archaeological assessment has been defined as:

"An assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a specified area or site....., consisting of a collation of existing written and graphic information in order to identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known or potential archaeological resource in a local, regional or national context as appropriate" (IFA, 2000)

"...a thorough review of all existing archaeological information relating to an area potentially affected by proposals for development, stopping short of further data collection and synthesis through primary research including fieldwork." (ALGAO, 1993)

2.1.2 The purpose of the assessment is to identify, as far as is possible, the nature, extent and date of construction/insertion of the existing fabric of the site. This is predicated on the assumption that the bulk of the fabric is of 15th, 16th and 17th century date, to which alterations and repairs have been effected over the subsequent centuries.

2.1.3 There is a wealth of popular and anecdotal historical material alluding to South Wraxall Manor, little of which can be materially corroborated and much is contradictory. The assessment concentrates on identifying verifiable material accretions and alterations to the fabric of the site, and as such does not purport to be a detailed narrative history of it.

2.2 Sources

2.2.1 The following sources have been consulted for primary and secondary data pertaining to the history of construction and alteration of South Wraxall Manor:

English Heritage, Saville Row, London
National Monuments Record Centre, Kemble Drive, Swindon
Wiltshire Central Reference Library, County Hall, Trowbridge
Wiltshire Building Record, County Hall, Trowbridge
Wiltshire Records Office, County Hall, Trowbridge
Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, Devizes
Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record, County Hall, Trowbridge
The British Library
Bath Central Reference Library
Bath University Library
The site itself
The current owners and their architects
Published sources held by the author

2.3 Data assessment and report format

2.3.1 All sources consulted are listed in the bibliography. Secondary historical sources have been summarised above and are described in greater detail in Appendix 2 and in the following text passages. Statutory descriptions created by *English Heritage* are presented unaltered in Appendix 1. Primary data held by *Wiltshire Records Office* and *Devizes Museum* has been screened to identify material likely to be verifiable on-site, specifically documentary and graphic references to work done to the site and especially those in which quantities are cited, and is listed chronologically in Appendix 2.

2.3.2 The following texts present a digest of the primary data in order of verifiability; published, archival and implied, augmented by copies of historic maps and plans, and concludes with a text and graphic archaeological assessment of the existing fabric and the likely impact of the proposed works. For the purposes of description, the various parts of the buildings have been assigned alphabetic references. As variation to the detail of the

proposals is inevitable, the conclusions concentrate on the existing, rather than the proposed, fabric.

- 2.3.3 The work has not created new primary data, and as such there is no depositable archive as defined by *The Institute of Field Archaeologists* (IFA, 2000) or *English Heritage* (EH, 1991).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Outline of site development 15th C - 21st C

Figures 3 - 5

- 3.1.1 The development of the house up until the major works initiated in 1895 has been outlined by Walker (1838) and Ponting (1881) on the basis of architectural style and the documentary sources available at the time, and there is no reason to contest the broad outlines of their analyses. Though Ponting queries some of Walker's detailed chronology, there is no substantive disagreement between the two over relative chronology and general development of the house. Unfortunately, neither address the stables or the garden pavilions nor, clearly, could they address works done in the later 19th and 20th centuries. Their respective surveys of the building at 1838 and 1881 are presented here as Figure 3, and a phase plan based on their analyses augmented by details of later work is presented as Figure 5. Copies of the 1837 Tithes Survey and the Ordnance Survey sheets covering the period 1886 - 1924, on which the broad outlines of the 19th and early 20th developments can be seen, are presented on Figure 4. Detailed transcriptions of Walker and Ponting's observations and reasoning are presented in Appendix 2, the following is a summary only.
- 3.1.2 Leaving aside the possibility of a 13th century origin, both and all subsequent authors consider the present fabric to have been initiated in the latest 14th or early 15th century as an 'L'-shaped block formed by the Hall (A), Buttery (D) to the north linked by oriels and external stairs in the south-west, north-east and north-west external corners of the Hall, and Parlour (B) and Kitchen (C) to the south. The northward extensions of the Oriel walls, though not present now, were visible as 'old foundations' in the floor at the time of Walker's survey (Figure 3), as were the foundations of the south-western stair in the north-west corner of cell B. Broadly contemporaneous was the kernel (E) of the separate northern range of offices.
- 3.1.3 In the early 16th C Sir Thomas Long added the southern end of the Gatehouse (F) followed by eastward extension (G) of the Buttery in the mid 16th C. The Buttery wing was extended, again, northwards and westwards at the end of the 16th C to create the present ornately plastered Drawing Room (G), together with insertion of the lateral stack in the Hall (A), and extension eastwards of the southern (H) and northern (L) ranges.
- 3.1.4 Though not addressed by any of the published histories, the Butler's Cottage/Stables block appears to have been the subject of a rental agreement of 1656 (See Appendix 2) in that it refers to two groups of stable buildings, one of which was a range of buildings adjoining the west side of the Gatehouse that were painted by Buckler in 1808 but had been demolished by 1838 (Figure 6). The present north end of the Gatehouse is formed, in part, by remnants of the demolished block. By the end of the 17th century the courtyards formed by the eastward extensions of the north and south ranges had been adorned by loggia.
- 3.1.5 The present layout of the House, of a single conjoined agglomeration, appears to have become established by the 18th C and thereafter, apart from the additions in the 20th C, the layout of the House has not changed significantly. The garden pavilion (P) adjacent to Butler's Cottage is stylistically 18th C and must have preceded construction of Butler's Cottage (by which it is cut). Butler's Cottage had been raised to a first floor building by 1808 when Buckler included it in the background of his view of the south elevations of the house (Figure 6), but the Workshop post-dated the 1924 Ordnance Survey (Figure 4). The last resident member of the Long family - a spinster named Katherine - died in 1814, and thereafter the House lay empty or short-term tenanted until 1895 when Richardson assumed the tenancy. Richardson added an entire new wing (O) to the northern side of the house, inserted bay windows in the south (K) elevation of the southern wing and moved its north-eastern elevation out to meet the 17th C loggia, and extended the ground floor of (G) northwards in a similar manner. He also created a through passage from

north to south avoiding the Hall by making new openings and corner oriels between cells (L), (M) and (D), and added the cellared boiler room extension to the east side of the Hall.

- 3.1.6 Garden construction is not addressed by any of the documentary sources, except for short references in the biography of A.W.E Long who occupied the house shortly before WWII and is recorded as making modest alterations (Long, 1921) to the furniture and walling. The NMR albums contain one view of the rear of the house from the north, looking through a pair of Carolean-style gate piers (AL0410/019/0). The parterre in the western courtyard post-dates the photographs of 1895 (see below), and is of 1930's style, whilst across the rest of the grounds only paths and walls are shown on the 1924 Ordnance Survey plans. It is likely, therefore, that the hard landscaping of the gardens is of later 20th century but pre-WWII date.

3.2 Recorded interventions

- 3.2.1 In addition to the demolitions and other disturbances necessitated by the construction phases described above, there is evidence of other, destructive, modifications to pre-existent fabric, mainly from the mid 19th century onwards. The last of these, by Richardson, are recorded in detail on 'proposed' and 'as built' surveys prepared by his architects and by photographic records (Figure 8), the remainder are alluded to by contract documents and can be verified by photographic evidence (Figure 7) and inspection of the existing fabric. The interventions, described in detail in Appendix 2, are summarised below and their positions indicated on Figures 7 - 12
- 3.2.2 In 1860, following nearly 40 years of vacancy and short term tenancy, estimates for substantial repair works to the Stables/Butler's Cottage and the House were obtained and the work paid for and countersigned at an unspecified later date. The bills that survive refer to the dormer being added to the south elevation of the Stables and the entire roof and most of the ceilings of the Stables being rebuilt. In the House, a courtyard door in the north-west corner of the 'Small Parlour' (B) - next to the entrance porch - was blocked and replaced by the present window after an 1869 photograph of the courtyard (Figure 7), and the 'front' wall of the stone staircase to the Porters Lodge over the Gatehouse was dismantled and re-built. The entire floor (beams and boards) and all the wall panelling of the 'Old Parlour' (G) were removed and replacements fitted, and the house was replastered and painted and/or papered throughout and much of the glazing repaired.
- 3.2.3 Extensive repair works were carried out approximately 20-30 years later following a survey by Ponting, that led to his article in *The Reliquary*, on behalf of a Mr Medicote of Westbury (who might have been considering purchase, or might have been leasing the house). Although there is no countersigned estimates or bills for the works that Ponting recommended, photographic evidence (Figure 7) and observations of the present fabric indicate that it was done (Figure 8-11). Ponting's recommendations led to the complete rebuilding of the north gable of the Gatehouse and the adjoining elevation of Cell (K) as far as the lateral stack, and the complete rebuilding of their respective roofs. Comparison of the 1869 and 1891 photographs (Figure 7) indicates that this resulted in the loss of a door in the north elevation of (K) and that all the roofs of the courtyard buildings, including the Hall, were at least re-covered at this time, if not completely re-built. Ponting also recommended strengthening of the badly deflected wall plates over the Withdrawing Room (D, 1st floor) and strengthening of the ceiling beams between that room and Cell (M) that were "*supporting the Jacobean roof extensions*", and the floor beams over the cellar below the Buttery (D). He observed that the colonnades of Cell (L) had been infilled resulting in "*drawing-down of the foundations*" and deflection of the masonry above; he recommended that these be dismantled and rebuilt with stone lintels (as now existing) implying that the originals were not of stone and that the whole of these assemblies date from that operation (alternatively, he may have been referring to the internal lintels which are timber, possibly suggesting his work was not initiated). Other works of this period were later alluded to by Richardson during a visit by the *Somerset Archaeological and*

Natural History Society in 1914; in defending his own alterations, Richardson mentioned unsympathetic works done by an earlier 'architect' who, "in restoring the Hall made the mistake of arranging a Minstrels Gallery over the Screen and in so doing removed the old staircase, while he put a window in over the screen." Buckler's 1808 view of the south gable of the Hall (Figure 6) shows a subsidiary gable or smaller building against it, suggesting that insertion of the gable window in the Hall, which must have post-dated or accompanied removal of that structure, post-dated 1808. Evidence of the work to the Gallery Stair in the north-west corner of cell B is visible immediately inside the Entrance Porch on the south side of the passage, comprising an archaic winder stair and opening into the chamber over the porch, detailed in ashlar stonework, overlying the round base of an earlier winder stair. It is likely that Richardson's comments referred to this work.

3.3 Interventions implied in graphic and photographic sources Figures 7-15

- 3.3.1 Comparison of the details portrayed in the principal graphic and photographic historic records of the buildings, spanning the 19th century, imply significant but otherwise unrecorded modification of the layout and fabric of the buildings during that time. Comparison of Buckler's, Walker's and Ponting's views and their surveys indicate considerable modification to the window and door openings throughout the House, some of which can be matched to documentary references, but primarily in the courtyard elevations which have received the bulk of antiquarian attention. Contemporaneous photographic evidence also indicates that much of the internal fixtures and fittings were re-located during the later 19th century; the linen fold panelling and decorated fire surround recorded in Singers 1891 photograph (Figure 8, top left) had been re-located from the upstairs of Cell K where it had been photographed *in situ* in 1885 (NMRC AL/0394/01/02, not reproducible) 'before alterations'. A selection of the historic photographic sources are presented on Figures 7-8 and the extent of affected fabric indicated on Figures 9-14; the following is a summary of the more significant observations.
- 3.3.2 Figure 9 illustrates the southern elevations: The two first floor windows to the northern range in the north east corner of the courtyard are clearly not those recorded by Walker (Figures 3 and 6), whilst the first floor window at the west end of the northern range and the blocking of the easternmost window (encompassed by extension of Withdrawing Room gable) also post-dates his surveys. The blocking of door openings and insertion of windows in the south elevation of the northern range took place between Walker's and Ponting's surveys of 1838 and 1881 - probably during the 1860 campaign. Richardson's bay-window extension to the Library replaced a canted-bay window considered to have been "modern" by Walker in 1838. Figure 8 records the extent of fabric removal involved in his insertion, indicating that the whole of the wall was taken down and rebuilt. It would be reasonable to conclude that all the additions and insertions of this date involved similar extents of demolition. Internally (Figure 14) the southern range has lost stairs in Cells K, (recorded by Walker, cf. Figure 3; and photographed in 1885, NMR AL0384/01/02), B and H, and has had internal walls and a straight stair inserted in the Cell K since Ponting's survey of 1881. Similarly, the archaic winder stair in the north wall of Cell B, and indeed all the ashlar masonry within which it is set, post-dates Walker and, possibly, Ponting (but see reference to Minstrels Gallery above).
- 3.3.3 Figure 10 illustrates the western elevations: The side door into the gatehouse has been the subject of repeated antiquation; blocked in 1808 it had been re-opened by 1838, only to be closed again by 1881, by which time the door within the gateway into the Library had also been blocked up. The northern end of the Gatehouse is a relic of the Stables wing (J) demolished 1808-1838, the north elevation and roof of which were completely rebuilt 1881-1895. The south-facing Oriel of the Gatehouse had a conical coped roof when Walker drew it in 1835-8, not present in 1808 and not present now. The small window immediately south of the entrance porch to the Hall was inserted into an earlier blocked door opening shortly after 1869 (Figure 7) and is certainly the work referred to in the 1860

contract (above). The existing garden terrace/parterre post-dates the 1891 photographs; at its base the ground level has been raised by approximately 1.5m above the natural slope, and there is likely to have been some associated 'cut and fill' level reduction across the south end of the courtyard.

- 3.3.4 Figure 11 illustrates the northern elevations: The principal intervention is to the north elevation of the Gatehouse, which, between 1869 and 1895, was completely demolished and rebuilt including the dormer gable and the entirety of the roof structures above - close inspection of the photographs indicates that the individual masonry blocks have been relaid and the profiles of the roofs and dormers all changed. Comparison between Walker's plan (Figure 3) and the present layout also suggests that rebuilding included the lateral stack in the north elevation of Cell K. In addition to forming the present gateway and altering the eaves details of the whole group, the rebuilding removed all trace of the north door into Cell K.
- 3.3.5 Figure 12 illustrates the eastern elevation. Though the subject of little photographic recording, Ponting's plans indicate that his correspondence (above) concerning the loggia was referring principally to the north-facing openings, but also that the east facing piers were free-standing at the end of the 19th century. Both Walker and Ponting record a bread oven at the east end of the southern range, that has since been replaced with a simple stack.

3.4 Archaeological observations

Figures 9 - 15

- 3.4.1 Observation of the existing fabric indicates modifications not alluded to in the available primary or secondary sources. These are illustrated on Figures 9-15 and are summarised below. Material evidence of modification to the House is considerable. Though most is already represented by the primary and secondary sources summarised above, there are features not alluded to elsewhere.
- 3.4.2 Visible in the south elevations (Figure 9); the front corner buttresses to the Gatehouse are different in profile to those recorded by Buckler and those at the north end were added by Richardson, breaks in wall fabric adjacent to the transomed window of the Study indicate the extent of fabric removal occasioned by the insertion of that 'modern' feature shortly before Walker's survey (above) whilst the smaller window immediately east of it is also an insertion, all the buttresses are later additions, whilst other breaks in wall fabric in the centre of the extended Kitchen block that do not correspond to the accepted pattern of development possibly allude to extensive but unrecorded wall rebuilding here. The south elevation of Cell (G) - the Dining Room has had one 18th century window completely removed and blocked up after Ponting's survey. The internal elevations of the Gatehouse display variations in fabric and orientation that allude interpretation in the context of a single-episode construction.
- 3.4.3 Visible in the west elevations (Figure 10); is a straight joint close to the junction between the oriel and the southern return of the gabled extensions of Cell D. Whilst clearly indicating the original northern extent of the oriel prior to the westward extension of the Dining Room/Drawing Room block, the implications of the height of this feature are less clear, for it stops some way short of the parapet, possibly alluding to an earlier stage in the development of this elevation of the building, or the position of buttress removed to facilitate the westward extensions.
- 3.4.4 Visible at the upper east end of the north elevations (Figure 11) of the Gatehouse block is the formerly external corbelled base of the first floor chimney stack of Cell B, now partly obscured by the adjoining elevation of Cell K. On the other, eastern, side of the house, enclosed within the walkway over the Loggia (I) are indications of a former wallhead and dormer detailing in the north (outer) face of the first floor elevations of Cells B and C. These details are interrupted by the existing door openings and appear as an intermittent

course of thin slabs, several of which deflect upwards to form a distinct pitch either side of a door opening, comparable to the eaves detail of the demolished stable block on the diagonally opposite side of the Gatehouse recorded by Buckler (Figure 6). Below this, on the ground floor, the north east corner of Cell B encompasses at least two phases of a modified door opening, one of which incorporates part of a cushion-capital pier.

- 3.4.5 Visible in the east elevations (Figure 12); in addition to Richardson's extensions to the north sides of the south and north ranges are an 18th C friezed window in the first floor gable of Cell G that has been blocked with ashlar in antiquity, and a blocked door-height opening at the north end of the Hall oriel, almost completely obscured by the adjoining south wall of Cell G. The latter is of considerable significance, as it potentially indicates the original point of entry to the oriel stair leading to the medieval Solar.
- 3.4.6 Butler's Cottage and the Stables block (Figure 13) have undergone considerable modification, much of it attested by archival sources described above. Variations in fabric indicate that most of the ground floor windows, the paired double doors and the single doors in the east end of the south elevation have been inserted into pre-existent wall fabric with the resultant loss of much original fabric. Furthermore, as the first floor windows of Butler's Cottage appear to be integral to the surrounding fabric, it would be reasonable to conclude that the first floor has been added to an earlier ground floor building; i.e. the western end of the Stables. The stair turret against the south elevation, in a different fabric, post-dates the raising of the first floor, as does the upper floor of the flat roof rear extension. All the copings and kneelers have been replaced. Internally, the stables steps to the loft/first floor have been re-positioned into a crudely trimmed opening in the ceiling joists, possibly to accommodate the late 19th C proprietary cast iron stalls.

4 ASSESSMENT

4.1 Extent of historic survival

Figures 14 -15

- 4.1.1 Evidence of change and modification in a building of this antiquity is not, in itself, significant. That the building has evolved over 500 years by a process of accretion and expansion is self-evident, and does not need further analysis here. A detailed chronological development is presented on Figure 4 and has been summarised above, but without detailed archaeological investigation of the structural relationships between the component parts, any chronology of this building group will remain speculative and subject to intermittent review. Establishing chronologies is a tool of archaeological impact assessment, not the end product. Recognising that the entire fabric of the building is of significance by virtue of the 'listing' of even one part of it (Suddard and Hargreaves, 1997), and that chronological indicators are less meaningful than cultural ones, the present assessment is predicated on the assumption that, at this site, fabric of 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and early 19th century date, or earlier, is historically significant; that fabric of mid to late 19th century date is less so; and that fabric of 20th century date is not archaeologically significant.
- 4.1.2 On the basis of that value judgement, the extents of 'significant' fabric and later interventions are collated below and summarised graphically on Figures 14 and 15.. The drawings are self-explanatory; grey and dark grey areas indicate the minimum extent of fabric replaced in the mid 19th century and the late 19th - early 20th century respectively.
- 4.1.3 Photographic evidence (Figures 7-8) indicates that demolitions undertaken as part of the late 19th century and early 20th century alterations extended considerably further than the immediate edges of the features inserted, and also involved re-location of fixtures such as panelling and fire surrounds. This was clearly the case with the bay window added to Cell K, and appears to have been the base with the bay extension to Cell G, where the return of the ostensibly 'original' gable now abuts the side of the stack. It would be reasonable to assume, therefore, that these works replaced entirely the structural entities affected. The works initiated in the last years of the 19th century on Ponting's advice appear to have been extended considerably beyond the features he identified; in replacing the Gatehouse lintel with the present masonry arch, the entire north elevation and roof of Cell K and the Gatehouse were entirely rebuilt, resulting in the loss of one door opening and apparent adjustment to the stack. It would also be reasonably to conclude, therefore, that the other works recommended by Ponting - roof strengthening over Cells D and G, rebuilding of the Loggia to Cell G etc., - were executed with similar vigour.
- 4.1.4 The works specified in 1860 appear, on photographic evidence, not to have been carried out - or at least completed - until after 1869. As the house appears to have been vacant during that period, and not providing income for the owners, repair works would probably have been kept to the minimum necessary to maintain structural integrity and weather resistance. Nonetheless, the entire floor and all wall panelling of Cell K was replaced - suggesting either a failed roof overhead or a non-domestic use - at least one door blocking altered, and one wall of the Gatehouse re-built. The latter is assumed, here, to have been the outer wall. Additionally, and significantly, the bills indicate that the rest of the building was re-plastered, painted and papered throughout. It is unlikely, therefore, that much of the existing internal wall finishes pre-date that episode. Unattributed work to the adjacent Screen and Gallery stairs at the south-west corner of the Hall (A) probably also belongs to this episode, as do the various ashlar infilling of doors and windows throughout the building group.
- 4.1.5 All other fabric - except wall finishes, chimney tops, roof coverings and many of the principal roof timbers - should be assumed to be 15th - 18th century date. In addition to the visible and upstanding components of this fabric, it should be assumed that each set of walls will be associated with earlier floor levels below the present, some of which will contain hearths and may in turn seal earlier foundations and floor levels. The fabric of

such floors - unless of encaustic tiles or similar typologically distinct materials - is of less importance than the relationships between them and their associated walls. This is particularly the case at wall junctions, where the relationship between floors and wall footings will invariably indicate the construction sequence in a way that is not apparent above ground.

- 4.1.6 Additionally, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the southern range (J) demolished 1808 - 1838 might be earlier in origin than the rest of the building, possibly the 13th century foundation alluded to by Camden and other authors. Whilst academic disputation is not the purpose of this assessment, the interpretation does have ramifications for the attribution of archaeological significance. The wing (J) demolished after Buckler's 1808 visit (Figure 6) must have predated the early 16th century construction of the gatehouse; it is inconceivable that a later building would have been constructed up against the rear of the gatehouse in the arrangement illustrated by Buckler, with its lower elevations 'eating' into the weight bearing walls of the gatehouse. The opposite is more logical, requiring the upper walls of the gatehouse to have been extended back over the central stack and an inserted cross-wall of what was referred to in the 1654/60 rental agreements (Appendix 2) as the *'Great Stables. Woodhouse...Little Stables...on the south side of the said mansion'*. This would account for the odd position of the gatehouse relative to the rest of the building group. The stack within Cell J shown by Buckler no longer survives, so the walls adjacent to it must have been rebuilt since then, accounting for the otherwise inexplicable variations in wall thickness and alignment in the internal elevations of the Gatehouse.
- 4.1.7 Not so easily verifiable by the evidence available, is the date of its construction. Assuming Cell J was a late 15th century or earlier wing, observations of the spatial layout of the rest of the surviving buildings allow for cautious re-analysis of Walker's and Ponting's chronologies. The ostensibly primary 'Hall' building (A, B, C and D) is unsatisfactory as a unitary building, even without Cell C sticking out of one side; the east walls of the three central cells are not co-aligned, giving a nonsensical dog-leg in what would have been an external elevation at one time, and neither the northern or southern cells are satisfactory as Service wings. Furthermore, the 'Hall' building is mis-aligned with all other components of the house.
- 4.1.8 An alternative analysis might have Cell J with its co-aligned extension (K) as the original core of the building, to which all other components have been added, including the Gatehouse added to a strengthened cross-passage. The latter would explain for the variations in wall fabric within the Gatehouse. The building developed from this kernel, the oldest parts of which - having been relegated to ancillary use by the mid 17th century - finally became unsustainable by 1808-1838 and were demolished, leaving the Gatehouse 'high and dry'.

4.2 Likely impact of the proposals.

- 4.2.1 The detail of the proposed refurbishments are being presented by the architects. Though likely to be modified in detail during the application process, the following categories of works would be necessary, grouped below in order of potential material impact:

Landscape, foundation and services groundworks
Insertion of new openings and other demolitions
Replacement/Upgrading of fixtures and fittings
Upgrading and installing of services
Blocking of existing openings and addition of new fabric.

4.2.2 Groundworks.

- a. Excavation of footings for the new boiler plant will disturb deposits immediately proximate to, and possibly contiguous with, the foundations of the northern range. However, the

northern and eastern halves of the proposed footprint is likely to have already been heavily disturbed during construction of the 20th century northern range. The effective area of new excavation is likely, therefore, to be less than 2m x 2m in extent. The archaeological impact of this would be potentially significant but minimal in extent, and could be mitigated by controlled archaeological excavation and recording of effected deposits. Prior evaluation of the impact could only be effected by trial excavation, which would be as destructive as the construction excavations.

- b. Construction of new steps, retaining walls and access ramps at the rear (N) of the 20th century northern range will be located within partially terraced ground distant from historically significant structures. The archaeological impact is likely to be negligible.
- c. Construction of a ramped disabled access from the south of the courtyard will be likely to expose - but not significantly disturb - foundations and internal details of the stables block demolished 1808-1838. This is a potentially significant part of the building group but the archaeological integrity of the uppermost deposits is likely to have already been significantly compromised during demolition and subsequent landscaping. The archaeological impact of construction would therefore be less than might otherwise have been the case, and could be mitigated by observation and recording of deposits exposed during construction.
- d. Excavation of service conduits will be of varying impact, depending on exact location and proximity to pre-20th century fabric and the junctions between them. Services located within the courtyard and parterre are unlikely to disturb significant deposits unless excavated deeper than 1.5m. However, the proposed lines of services exiting the south side of the northern range and the west side of the Hall range all pass through or immediately adjacent to significant wall junctions: Excavation in these positions would be likely to remove significant archaeological relationships and should, if possible, be avoided. If re-location of the services is not possible, excavation should be accompanied by archaeological observation and detailed recording of the foundations exposed. The proposed lines of services exiting the south side of the southern range and the Gatehouse are less critical, but internal connections will cut through the foundation/floor relationships. Whilst no internal excavations are indicated by the architects proposals, it is pertinent to state that any internal excavations especially those adjacent to present or former wall lines that might be proposed will potentially disturb significant archaeological deposits and relationships, and should be re-located or observed as above. The proposed services excavations adjacent to the Butler's Cottage/Stables block are unlikely to disturb significant deposits or relationships.

4.2.3 Insertions and demolitions

- a. Within the ground floor of the house, demolition of existing fabric is proposed for seven localities: Five are former openings blocked or partially blocked during the later 19th or early 20th centuries - including the Kitchen loggia which is now largely of L.19th C build; one is a door opening blocked by 1838 (SW corner of North Range); and one is a new opening to be cut into 20th century wall fabric (Link passage to south of Boiler Room turret). None of the fabric affected is of archaeological significance, the works would restore former circulation patterns and would not deleteriously affect adjacent historic fabric. There would be no archaeological impact associated with these items.
- b. Within the first floor of the house, demolition is proposed for one locality; the 'Crittall' window in the rear elevation of the North range. Removal of this feature would not affect archaeologically significant deposits.
- c. Within the ground floor of the Butler's Cottage/Stables block, demolition is proposed for four localities. Removal of the existing door in the west side of the Workshop would affect only a later modification to late 19th century fabric, and would not therefore be

archaeologically deleterious; insertion of a double door in the rear elevation of the Stables would affect potentially 17th or 18th wall fabric, but the affected fabric is un-featured and constitutes a relatively small proportion of the existing fabric, so might be considered to be of low archaeological potential. Insertion of a double door in the south wall of the Pavilion would remove a significant proportion of the fabric of what is probably a 17th or 18th century garden structure related to the main building group. Although the fabric encompasses no readily apparent detail, combined with the adjacent opening - which is likely to be of late 19th century date - it would remove approximately 10% of the surviving historic fabric of the Pavilion and might therefore be considered archaeologically deleterious. Re-use or widening of the existing opening would be less deleterious. Replacement of the existing window and door assembly in the rear elevation of the Kitchen lean-to would affect only joinery of generic machine-cut profile and would not, therefore, be archaeologically deleterious.

- d. Within the first floor of the Butler's Cottage/Stables block, demolition is proposed for one locality - the Kitchen extension and adjoining wall of the rear elevation. Demolition of the extension would affect only 20th century fabric and would not, therefore, be archaeologically deleterious. The adjacent elevation is of 18th century date, at the latest, and the proposed opening would remove approximately 11% of the fabric of that structure. Though the fabric is un-featured, removal might be considered archaeologically deleterious. Re-use or widening of the existing opening would be less so.

4.2.4 Removal of fixtures and fittings

- a. Removal and replacement of fixtures and fittings within the house is restricted to upgrading of fire doors, removal of 20th C cupboards and fixed seating, and removal of door and window assemblies and one staircase within the northern range, which are of generic late 19th or 20th century forms. Removal of the majority of these items would not be archaeologically deleterious. Upgrading of doors and windows and their frames within the Hall and Southern ranges - particularly if it required complete replacement of items in the Drawing Room and Dining Room - would affect integral components of larger artistic entities. However, it is likely that many of these features are not in their original positions - certainly much of the panelling and decorative carpentry of the first floor, and the stairs, in the South Wing have been relocated since the later 19th century. Removal of these features might be considered aesthetically deleterious, but would be less so archaeologically. This impact could be mitigated by prior detailed photographic recording and long term storage or re-use on-site.
- b. Removal and replacement of fixtures and fittings in the Butler's Cottage/Stables block is restricted to demolition of internal stud partitions in both building, stairs in the Stables, and re-positioning of some of the stalls in the Stables. Stud partitions, the positions of which are recorded, are of 19th or 20th century date and as such are not inherently archaeologically significant; the stairs in the Stables are un-featured assemblies and are not in their original positions, and as such are not archaeologically significant; the stalls are late 19th or 20th century industrially produced proprietary items (c.f. Worsley, 2000), likely to have been re-positioned frequently, the greater part of which will be retained. The stairs and stalls have been recorded photographically and planned; removal or re-positioning of these items would not be archaeologically deleterious.

4.2.5 Upgrading and installing of services

- a. Details of non-mains services within the buildings have not been finalised, but it is understood that existing runs will be used as far as is possible. Detailed inspection of historic services has not been (can not be) undertaken at this stage.

4.2.6 Blocking of existing openings and addition of new fabric.

- b. Within the House, blocking of five existing door openings on the ground floor and one on the first floor are proposed; none are proposed for the Butler's Cottage/Stable block. In all cases, the openings are of late 19th or 20th century date. One alone encompasses earlier fabric - at the east end of the Loggia (I) in the south range which is framed by a stone Bolection moulding of 17th century form. However, this feature has been incorporated in fabric of otherwise 20th century date and is, as such, not of archaeological significance. Blocking of existing openings does not remove or otherwise disturb existing fabric and as such is not archaeologically deleterious unless it necessitates removal of historically significant fixtures or fittings. In none of the cases above would this be the case.

4.3 Opinion

- 4.3.1 On the basis of the information available, it would be reasonable to conclude that the works proposed are conservative and minimally intrusive. With the exemption of new openings in the rear elevations of the Butler's Cottage/Stable block and in the Pavilion, and provisional service connections at external wall faces in the courtyard, none would affect historically significant fabric.
- 4.3.2 Furthermore, if executed, the modest groundworks proposed would afford opportunity for resolving some of the chronological ambiguities of South Wraxall Manor.

4.4 Methodology

- 4.4.1 Prior assessment of the archaeological impact of refurbishment proposals to Grade I listed building is in accordance with planning policies affecting stewardship of the historic environment, articulated locally in Policy C10 of the *West Wiltshire District Plan* (WWDC, 1997) and nationally in *Planning Policy Guidance 14: Planning and the Historic Environment* (DoE, 1994).
- 4.4.2 The assessment has been prepared by a qualified archaeologist specialising in the analysis of historic buildings, in accordance with the *Standards and Guidances* of the *Institute of Field Archaeologists* (IFA, 2000) and the guidances of *English Heritage* (Clarke, 2001). It is based on analysis of publicly available primary and secondary sources and a detailed inspection of the accessible fabric and layout of the buildings from an archaeological perspective.
- 4.4.2 Whilst the chronological conclusions arrived at can not be expected to replicate the accuracy achievable through intrusive investigation, the broad chronological parameters necessary for an assessment of impact have been identified, and those of earlier authors reconsidered. Specifically, the assessment has identified considerable fabric removal during the later 19th century which has already compromised the archaeological integrity of large parts of the building group.
- 4.4.3 Within the constraints operative on antiquarian sources and non-intrusive investigation, the conclusions are presented as generally accurate, if fallible in detail.

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