Undated watercolour view of the western side of the house.

COLES FARM, WILTSHIRE

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

RC/6564 - October 2025

ADAM ARCHITECTURE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been provided to summarise the historical origins and architectural development of Coles Farm in Alcombe, Wiltshire. This document aims to identify the major phases of development and alterations to the house and its grounds. This information will directly inform proposals for restoration and alterations by ADAM Architecture, on behalf of our clients. This will help to ensure that any future proposals put forward are sympathetic to the historical structure and significance of the building and its setting.

This report has been compiled on behalf of our clients by ADAM Architecture's architectural historian Dr. Helen Lawrence-Beaton. A documentary history of the building has been pieced together based upon careful analysis of available records within various local and national archives. This includes the Wiltshire and Swindon Archives and Historic England Archives, as well as local history literature, published books and articles.

This document has aimed to summarise the development of the house and its broad landscape setting. This is shown visually in a series of phasing plans at the end of this document, showing the major periods of change and their effects upon the layout of the building. The findings of this analysis are brought together in the 'Assessment of Significance' at pages [?] of this document.

There are also several key texts that have been consulted as part of this research, and which are referred to in this report. These include:

- James Tunstall, *Rambles about Bath and its neighbourhood, (1848)*
- S. John Elyard, *Some Old Wiltshire Homes* (1894)
- Alice Dryden, *Memorials of Old Wiltshire* (1906)
- Allan Fea, *Nooks & Corners of Old England*, (1907)
- John Alfred Gotch, *The growth of the English house; a short history of its architectural development from 1100 to 1800* (1909)

LOCATION AND SETTING

Coles Farm is located approximately 1.8km north-west of the village of Box, and 8.2km north-east of the city of Bath. Today, the main entrance to the estate is from the public country lane to the north. There is also a secondary entrance on the same road which approaches the house via a long private drive that leads through the orchard.

The Coles Farm Estate includes the main house and several outbuildings including a long former cowshed, a stable and coach house, a double carport, and a large modern greenhouse. The surrounding buildings are typically large, detached, residential properties. Many of these are historical farm buildings, some of which are still occupied for agricultural use.

Entrance to the former farmyard from the road. The walls and gates were constructed in the late twentieth century. In the background is the nineteenth-century stable and coach house.

The secondary access to the house further to the west, that winds through the old orchard to the north-western side of the house.

2.0 HERITAGE CONTEXT AND SETTING

Coles Farm was Grade II* listed in 1960. This signifies it as a building of high significance. The listing description is included here as follows:

COLES FARMHOUSE

List entry Number: 1022715
County: Wiltshire
District: Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)
Parish: Box
Grade: II*
Date first listed: 20-Dec-1960
Listing NGR: SU4583476985
Statutory Address: PAINSWICK LODGE

Details:

ST 86 NW BOX ALCOMBE

2/2 Coles Farmhouse

*20 12 60 II**

House, dated 1648 and 1685, rubble stone with stone tiled roof, coped gables and paired diagonal end wall stacks. Two and a half storeys with additional attic, L plan. Recessed ovolo-moulded mullion windows. East front with 2 gables, each with single light over 3-light window, both with hoodmoulds. First floor, two 2- light windows to left under single hoodmould, ground floor 3-light each side of 2-light window, replacing door, continuous hoodmould stepped; over the 2-light window. C20 lean-to to right connecting with C20 projecting gabled single storey kitchen. Left gable dated PW 1646, right gable E/W/S 1685. South gable end is paired with south gable on rear wing. Hipped dormer between gables. Attic blank keyed oval over 2-light window with hood to left gable, first floor 3-light with hood and relieving arch to left, 2-light with hood to centre and 2-light with hood to right side. Ground floor: 4-light with king-mullion has relieving arch left, centre 2-light window, under linked hoodmoulds. Plank door in moulded Tudor- arched surround with imposts, keystone and hoodmould to right side. Left side has moulded plinth stepped over two 2-light basement windows. West gable end, coped gable, blank oval in apex, 2-light attic window with dripstone, 3-light first floor window with hood and relieving arch and 4-light ground floor window with dripcourse stepped over window. North side-wall paired diagonal stacks, single light and 2-light window with hoodmoulds to first floor, similar windows below with stepped dripcourse. To left 3 stepped stair lights with hoodmould. Rear of main front has gable with 3- light attic window and hood, 2 first floor 2-lights with continuous hood and ground floor door in moulded doorcase with single light to left and 2-light-to right, all with hoods. North end gable has attached outbuilding with ground floor single light and hood to left of stone steps up to upper door flanked by small 4-light pointed vent loops. Above left vent loop, a late medieval 2-light small window with ogee heads to lights. West side has one ground floor 2-light ovolo-moulded window with hood. To left of gable-end a reset Tudor-arched doorcase with hood.

Interior has chamfered and stopped beams, large north end elliptical arched chamfered stone fireplace and south end Tudor- arched moulded fireplace with moulded shelf. Dog-leg stair with flat balusters and acorn finial newel posts. South-west room has C17 plaster frieze of griffins flanking shields and plaster decoration to ceiling. Fine C17 stone fireplace with fluting in frieze and shield spandrels, but not the same fireplace with in frieze fluting and sheild spandels, but not same fireplace as illustrated in late C19 engraving by H.Hall, Archit. Assoc. SketchBook, 3rd set, Vol.7; (N.M.R.). Further Tudor-arched stone fireplaces upstairs. House belonged to the Webb family from c1633.

Listing NGR: ST8111369201

The house today broadly comprises an L-shaped structure built in rubble stone with a stone tiled roof and the chimney set diagonally. There are parapets to the verges of the roof and to the dormer gables. The windows across the house are ovolo-moulded mullions with hood moulds over.

Facing the road is the north-eastern elevation, which has two prominent gables each containing date stones, the details of which will be discussed in this document. This range is thought to be the earliest part of the house, dating from the early 1600s. Each gable contains a single light over a 3-light mullioned window. At first floor level are two 2-light windows to the left under a single hood mould, and two 2-light windows and a single light opening under a single hood mould to the right. At ground floor level there are two 3-light windows to each side of a 2-light window - a modern insertion of the mid-twentieth century, all under a continuous hood mould. To the far right hand side of this elevation is a late twentieth-century passage extension, which links to an old outbuilding, converted into the kitchen in the twentieth century, and a lower height ex-agricultural outbuilding. The stone wall facing the road appears to date from the twentieth century, replacing an earlier hedge.

The north-eastern elevation, facing towards the road, thought to be the earliest phase of the building.

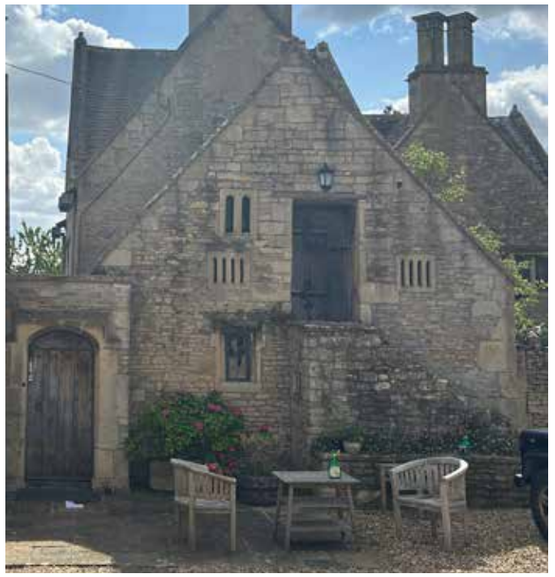
The north-western elevation faces onto the entrance drive. Adjacent to the access gates is the former outbuilding (now the kitchen). This is attached to the main house by a twentieth-century entrance door and lobby. Adjoining this, at the end of the main house, is a one-and-a-half-storey former agricultural building. The main elevation to the south-west has two sets of 4-light lancet windows and a larger 2-light lancet window with hollow spandrels. An external stone staircase leads up to a first floor doorway. The original use of this structure is much debated but it possibly originated as a granary with a hayloft over. It has since been converted into a utility space, with a dressing room over, attached via a modern passage from one of the bedrooms in the main house.

View from the road towards the former outbuilding attached to the north-eastern facade. This outbuilding was converted into the kitchen in the late twentieth-century.

View of the former outbuilding, now a Kitchen, taken from the south-west, with the twentieth-century entry door to the right.

A long wall runs across the garden from the former granary towards the southern boundary, separating the former outbuildings from the gardens of the main farmhouse. Inserted into this wall are three blocked windows, the probable remnants of a former building on the site, discussed later in this document. The ground level behind the windows to the north-west has been considerably raised in recent years.

2.0 HERITAGE CONTEXT AND SETTING



Left: Detail of the former agricultural building to the south-west, thought to have originated as a granary with a hayloft over. It is now a utility room with dressing room over. To the left is the modern door into the entrance lobby.

Below: The south-west facing, rear of the wing fronting the road, with the former granary to the left and the 'parlour wing' projecting to the far right.

The south-western elevation of the main house is gabled, containing a 3-light mullioned window at second floor level. At second floor level are two 2-light windows under one hood mould. At ground floor level is a part glazed door providing access to the dining room, thought to be the old kitchen of the house. To one side is a single light, and to the right is a small recess and a 2-light mullioned window, all under hood moulds.

Projecting to the south-west behind the main, earlier house is a rear wing, generally referred to as the 'parlour wing' in this document. This wing is a slightly later addition to the earlier range, thought to have been constructed around c.1645-49. The north-west elevation of the wings contains a series of five stepped windows that correspond with the staircase within. To the right are two 2-light mullions, both with hood moulds, at ground and first floor level. The end, south-west facing elevation is gabled, with a blind oval window and 2-light mullion at second floor level. The 3-light window below has a hood mould over and a relieving arch. The ground floor 4-light king mullion window to the parlour is a twentieth-century replacement but it retains its original relieving arch over. The hood mould over the window runs around the entire ground floor as a string course and there is a stone plinth running around the entirety of the wing.

View of the north-western and south-western elevations of the 'parlour wing' that extends to the south-west of the earlier core.

The south-eastern elevation of the house is discussed in detail in this document. The left hand side of the elevation forms part of the parlour wing of c.1645. The gable contains a blind oval window and 2-light mullion at second floor level, a 3-light mullion with a relieving arch over at first-floor level, and a 4-light king mullion window with relieving arch at ground floor level. Underneath are two, 2-light windows with the plinth stepped over, and relieving arches above, both lighting the basement space under the parlour. The hood mould over the ground floor window extends around the ground floor windows as a string course. At the centre of the elevation are two, 2-light windows at ground and first floor level. To the right is the end gable of the original long range facing the road. This has a 2-light mullioned window at first floor level, and a door set in a moulded Tudor- arched surround with imposts, keystone and hood mould. As discussed later in this document, this door may have been moved from its original location further along the elevation.

View of the south-eastern elevation.

To the south-west of the main house is a detached former farm building, which is open-sided to the south-east. This seems to have originated as a type of cowshed but was modernised in the late twentieth-century for use as a dedicated pool building. The end bays to the open-sided elevation were infilled at that time. A swimming pool was constructed on the lawn adjacent to the outbuilding in the 1970s but has since been infilled. To the rear of the long ex-cowshed is a small modern garage extension, on the site of an earlier store. This adjoins a further modern, open-sided shelter/store.

To the north-west of the main house is a further detached outbuilding, comprising a nineteenth-century stable and coach house. This retains some internal fixtures and fittings from its original use. To the rear of

2.0 HERITAGE CONTEXT AND SETTING

this building is a modern carport. Stone boundary walls surround the site, largely modern in construction but on the lines of the historic boundary.

The former cowshed facing to the south-east, which would originally had two more open bays to either end of the existing building. The lawn in front was the site of a swimming pool in the 1970s and the building was converted to use as a dedicated pool house at that time.

View from the adjoining field towards the largely rebuilt stone boundary wall adjoining the former cowshed.

Left: The modern garage to the rear of the former cowshed.

The south-eastern elevation of the nineteenth-century stable and coach house, adjacent to the boundary with the road. This building is now in domestic use.

The modern cowshed to the rear of the stables and coach house, now in domestic use.

Coles Farm is a seemingly complex property, although the broad footprint of the main house comprises only two main phases of development in the seventeenth century. In summary, this document proposes the following key periods in the history of Coles Farm:

EARLY 1600s

A single building range appears to have been constructed on the existing site in the early 1600s, comprising the range facing the road to the north-east and containing a hall and kitchen with bed chambers over. The property is bought by local yeoman farmer Peter Webb, probably in the 1630s.

1640s - EXPANSION OF THE FARMHOUSE

During the 1640s, Peter Webb constructed a new parlour wing to the rear of the original house, aggrandising the property to befit his rising status. A new entrance was created on the south-eastern front, leading into a new stair hall and an elaborately decorated parlour. A new granary with hayloft over was likely built on the north-west end of the older range at the same time.

A TENANTED FARM

The property remains under Webb ownership, but is leased to tenant farmer for a substantial period. Early nineteenth-century maps show the presence of a long cowshed in the farmyard to facilitate dairy farming, and a further outbuilding close to the road. A new stable and coach house is built in the mid-nineteenth century

LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY DECLINE

The property remains in the Webb family but becomes vacant and enters a period of decline. Much of the panelling and interior detailing from the house is lost due to decay.

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY REVIVAL

After complex legal issues are resolved, the farm is finally sold and the new owner restores it to a habitable condition. The Moger family purchase the property in the 1930s and remove several of the ground floor partitions to suit their lifestyle of lavish entertaining. A tennis court is created to the very north-west of the grounds, and some of the former agricultural outbuildings are demolished.

MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY ALTERATIONS BY THE MORLEYS

Robin Morley purchases the farm in the 1950s and makes several alterations, including the addition of a new entrance door and lobby to the north-west, linking the house to the outbuilding close to the road. Morley may also have altered the parlour window, replaced the north-eastern door with a window, and moved the doorway to its existing position on the south-eastern facade.

1970s ALTERATIONS BY LADY DE CHAIR

Lady Juliet de Chair purchases the farm in 1972 and makes several alterations, possibly including the removal of part of the original decoration in the parlour. The division between the hall and old kitchen is reinstated, and a new kitchen installed in the northern outbuilding. A new, single-storey passage is constructed on the north-eastern facade, linking the kitchen to the main house. A swimming pool is constructed in the grounds and the former cowshed converted to use as a pool house.

PRESENT DAY

Coles Farm is bought by our clients, who wish to understand the evolution of the building, and to embark upon sensitive restorations and alterations to the house and landscape.

3.0 EARLY HISTORY AND CONSTRUCTION

Coles Farm is complex property, comprising a series of building phases that range in date from the early 1600s to the 1970s. Their function also developed and evolved over the centuries.

As discussed in the introduction to this document, several local histories were published at around the turn of the nineteenth century, which shed light on the origins of the property.

The Victorian antiquarian, Elyard, noted in his publication *Some Old Wiltshire Homes* of 1894, that the farmhouse was built by a Peter Webb, who bought land at Coles and Rudloe in around 1633, possibly from the Hungerford family estate. Traditionally, it is therefore thought that is was Peter Webb who erected the core of the existing building in around 1646, due to the presence of a cartouche in the left gable end on the elevation clearly marked 'PW 1646' after Peter Webb. The name 'Coles' appears to be older still, and possibly derives from a previous owner of the land, believed to be a Robert Cole in 1362. The site therefore, has a long history of ownership as part of a farm.

Certainly, Webb appears to have been an important local figure, and the family became one of the most significant in the village. There are records of the family in the area in the late 1500s, when three children are recorded in the parish register as being baptised in Ditteridge: John Webb on 25 March 1584, William Webb on 11 June 1587, and Peter Webb on 8 May 1589. The Peter Webb recorded there is likely to be the same farmer who built Coles farmhouse. Peter Webb Junior was baptised in Box on 15 December 1617, with a further nine baptisms recorded for children of Peter Webb Senior between 1618 and 1637. Presumably, prior to the construction of Coles Farm, the Webbs lived in an earlier, medieval farmhouse on one of the plots of land that they owned, but there is no evidence remaining of the property. A rate and valuation list of 1628 shows Peter Webb Senior as a major landowner in Box and Ditteridge, paying rates of £72 for his farms and land in Box (the fifth highest out of 56 people listed) and his son, (also Peter) paying £8 for land in Ditteridge (the sixth highest in the list).

A few publications state that Coles Farm was the dower house of nearby Cheney Court. This cannot be entirely dismissed and it may have been used in this way for a period, but no documentary evidence has been found to suggest that it was built for this purpose. Coles also does not appear to have been a manor house in the formal sense. Instead, the property always appears to have been a farmhouse, but for a yeoman farmer with higher social aspirations. Such farmers were typically a class of landowner who cultivated their own land, and sat hierarchically between the peasantry and the gentry. They could often hold a significant position in rural society, akin to a gentleman.

View of the large watercolour map of the manors of 'Hayselbury: Box; And: Ditchredg: Taken Ano 1626 by me Abrah. Alen'. The key pieces of land owned by Webb and labeled as 'Coales' are highlighted to the north-east, and the existing site of Coles House on the opposite side of the road is also highlighted. The detail (left) shows a house or farm building on the existing site. (Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre Ref: 318/2H)

Coles House likely represents the architectural aspirations of this class of Tudor farmer in Wiltshire society, demonstrating his wish to climb the local ranks and make a mark on local society. Peter Webb probably borrowed heavily to invest in land around Ditteridge, some of which he would have farmed personally, with other lands let out to tenants to bring in further income.

Detailed evidence of the Webb's land ownership comes in the form of Abraham Allen's map of the manors of 'Haiselbury, Box and Ditchridge', dated 1626. This map identifies plots and fields by field name and owner, with the parish of each field indicated by coloured spots. It also provides broad pictorial depictions of some of the larger properties of the parish, including the nearby Cheney Court and its prominent barn.

Several plots of land in the north-western part of the parish are labelled as the property of 'Pee-tare Webb', indicating that the family owned significant portions of land around Ditteridge. This included a large field of just over nine acres labelled as 'Coales' on the opposite site of the road to the north-east of the present Coles Farm. The site is shown adjoining the farmland labelled as 'Curts Bushnell'. A slightly later, updated copy of the map, produced by Francis Allen, 1630, shows the same building details, but with the plot to the south of the site marked as a 'bushell' owned by W Curtis.

It is therefore, unclear if part of the existing Coles Farm house was constructed by this time, that is to say, *earlier* than 1645. The historian Pamela Slocombe in her investigations into Coles Farm in the 1980s, stated that the front of the house was always the south-eastern elevation, and that the entire 'L' shape of the of the building was constructed in one phase in the 1640s. However, there was certainly a building of some type shown on the site by Allen (see inset), but that it was not yet in the ownership of Webb. This suggests that Webb may already have owned a house in part of the field called 'Coales' to the north, but that, possibly in the 1630s, he bought a small, existing farm across the road in which to live and make the most of the spectacular views. This land may have included a building that Peter Webb set about extending, and therefore could be the original core of the existing house.

3.0 EARLY HISTORY AND CONSTRUCTION

Standing building evidence appears to support this theory. The original, earliest part house on the site would have comprised only the range facing north-east towards the road, the gables of which contain the two date-stones (see figure below). This wing would have contained a kitchen to the west (now the dining room) and a hall to the east (now a living room). Therefore, although the left hand gable on this range contains the datestone marked 'PW 1646', this cartouche may have simply been added to commemorate the commencement of Webb's alterations to the house, and not the construction of the earlier range.

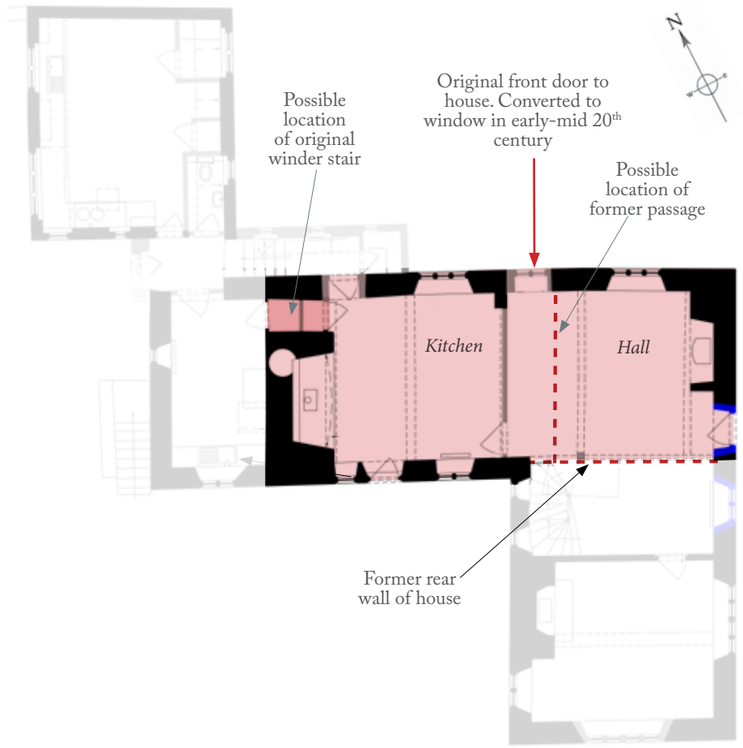
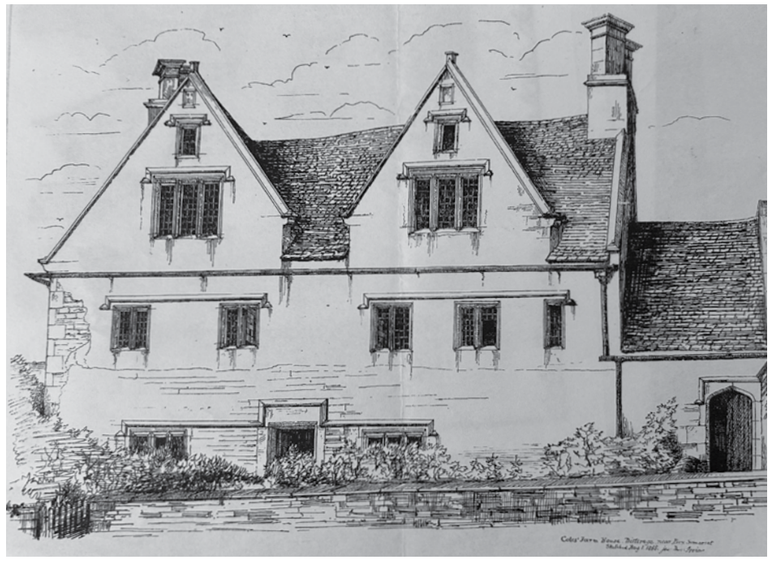


Diagram highlighting the original core of the house, which may have been on the site when Peter Webb purchased it in the 1630s. The front door would have been facing the road.

At that time, it seems likely that the north-eastern elevation was the front facade of the house. An engraving from the early-twentieth century shows a doorway on the north-eastern elevation facing the road, since converted to a window in the twentieth century. When first constructed, the hall may have been separated from the main front door by a passage, which would have led to the rear of the house, roughly on the site of the existing stair. Prior to this time, the stair was likely a simple winder stair, possibly located to the west, by the old kitchen fireplace. The engraving also shows a gate set within the wall to the road, and the original doorway to the granary to the far right, discussed later in this document.



Engraving of 1868 showing the north-eastern elevation facing towards the road, and the former doorway with a hood mould over. There also appears to be a gate to the left of the image, suggesting there was access from the road. The original entrance to the granary can be seen to the far right.

Left: Modern photo showing the blocked doorway on the north-eastern front, now a window to the hall.

There are two end-wall fireplaces remaining in the house from this early period of construction, contained within the old kitchen and hall. Both of these are recorded in the publication *Period House Fixtures and Fittings 1300-1900* by Linda Hall (England's Living History, Countryside Books, 2005). The fireplace in the kitchen was a distinctive type with a wide segmental stone arch, known as a 'Yorkshire Arch', spanning the opening. This type of fireplace was prevalent in Yorkshire but also in the Wiltshire and Gloucestershire area, and this feature fits with a proposed date of construction in the first half of the 1600s. A similar example can be found at Hill House Farm in Box.

The segmental arched fireplace in the old Kitchen of the house to the west of the existing dining room.

The more formal stone fireplace with depressed arch, located in the original hall to the house.

This original core of the farmhouse appears to have been extended, presumably in around 1646, by Peter Webb. At this time, it seems likely that the rear wing was added, containing the parlour with its distinctive plasterwork, as well as the cellar, and a separate stair hall, all located to the rear of the earlier north-eastern range. This created the broad L-shape of the property that is on site today. The cellar was built underneath the new parlour, and accessed under the new staircase.

3.0 EARLY HISTORY AND CONSTRUCTION

At the introduction of this new wing, it seems likely that the main entrance to the house was switched to the south-eastern facade. Internally, the front door would have led into a stair-hall, leading to the existing staircase with its distinctive splat balusters. The parlour, to the left of the main entrance, would have been the finest room in the house, reserved for receiving guests. To the right of the front door would have been the hall with the old doorway retained to the north-east, with a wall dividing the space from the stairway.

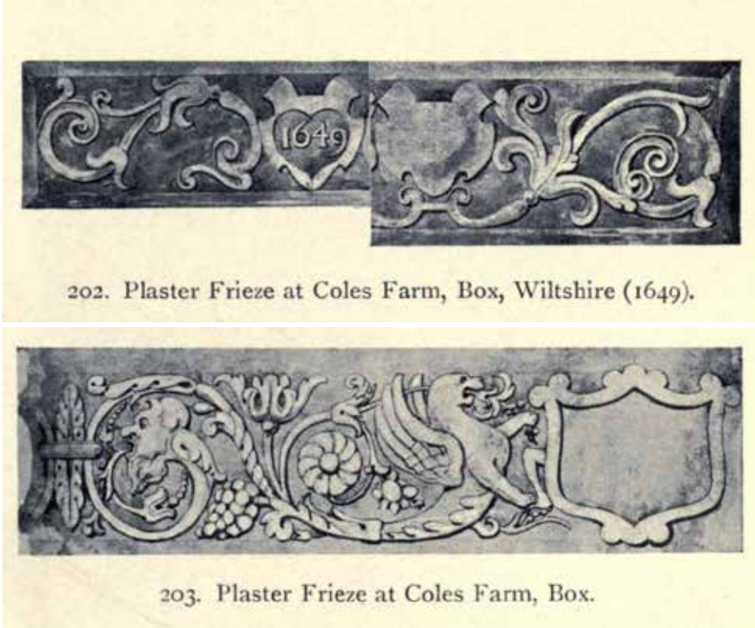
Modern photo of the south-eastern facade showing the end gable of the slightly earlier, north-eastern range to the right, and the parlour wing addition of c.1645 to the left.

Detail of the south-eastern facade showing the plinth around the parlour wing that stops at the junction with the earlier range.

There is also a clear indication of where the earlier, north-eastern range parlour wing was conjoined with the slightly later parlour wing; a plinth extends around the entirety of the parlour range and stops just before the doorway into the hall on the south-eastern elevation, suggesting that it was a slightly later addition, rather than the whole range of buildings being built contiguously.

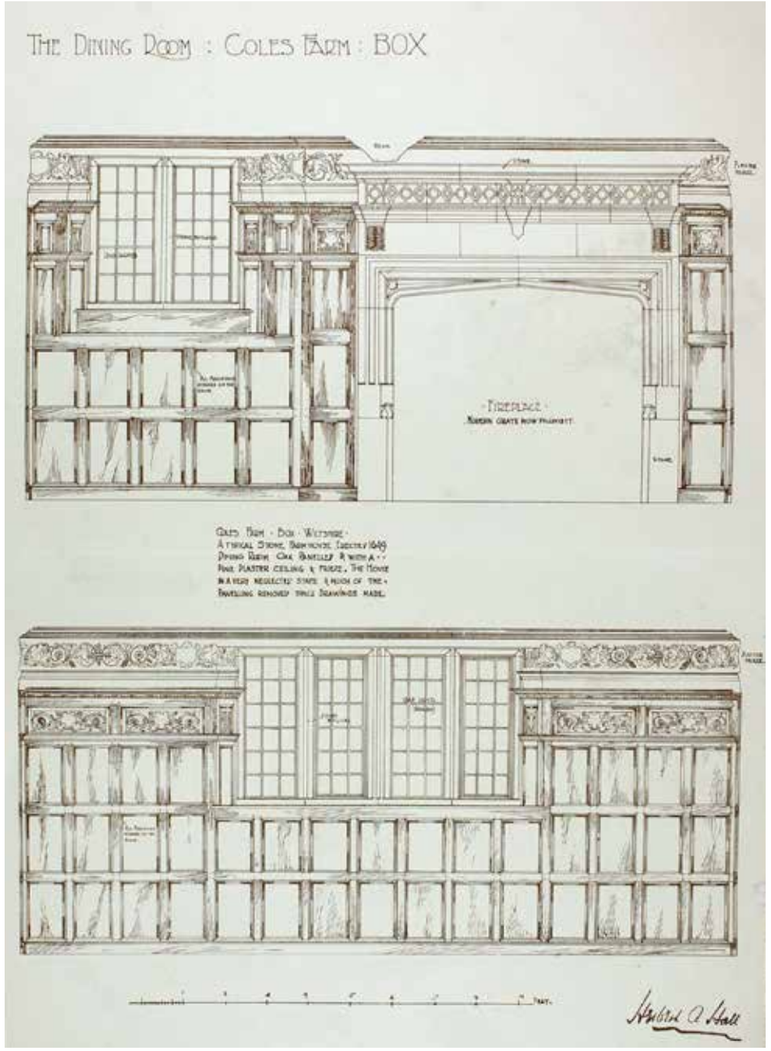
This phasing is supported by various pieces of evidence in the parlour itself. Part of the decoration of the parlour was removed in the twentieth century, but a drawing of the space (then referred to as the Dining Room) was made by Herbert Hall in the late-nineteenth century, recording its appearance before the room was modifed. The drawings were published in 1903 in the *Architectural Association Sketchbook,* Series 3, Vol. 7. Hall's notes on the drawing state that the building was erected in 1649, the date apparently being inscribed upon part of the decoration in the room.

This is supported by details in a book by John Alfred Gotch (1852-1942), published in 1909 and entitled *The growth of the English house; a short history of its architectural development from 1100 to 1800.* This includes two details from the decoration in situ at Coles. The details comprise a section of the 'plaster frieze' at Coles Farm, clearly dated 1649. The second image is a section of the existing plasterwork frieze.



Details from Gotch's book of 1909, which contains details of the decoration of the Parlour, including part of the removed frieze, which was dated 1649.

A further watercolour view, currently in the house at Coles, shows the interior of this room as a historic reconstruction, with figures staged in the room in historical costume. The style of the writing in the mount



Drawings of the Dining Room (the Parlour), made by Herbert Hall in the late 1800s and published in 1903, showing the room before part of the decoration was removed.

underneath suggests that the image likely dates from the very late 1800s and may have been painted at the same time that Herbert Hall made his detailed drawings. Although the figures and furniture in the room are clearly historic staging, the details of the room fittings can be accepted as fairly accurate, particularly when viewed in conjunction with Hall's detailed drawings and Gotch's detail studies. The dated panel shown by Gotch appears to relate to the upper section of panelling shown in the watercolour and Hall's view that was later removed. A further, undated view shows the parlour and fireplace and the complete decoration; the dress of the seated lady suggests a late nineteenth-century date, perhaps around the same time as Herbert Hall's drawing.

3.0 EARLY HISTORY AND CONSTRUCTION

A view of the parlour, currently hanging at Coles Farm, showing the interior with its original, complete decoration. The dated panel shown in the Gotch publication appears to relate to the upper section of paneling that was later removed.

A further, undated view of the parlour, likely from the late nineteenth century.

This evidence clearly dates the parlour decoration to 1649, suggesting that Webb made his additions to the existing house between 1646 and 1649, aggrandizing the property and making it suitable for a yeoman of his stature.

There has also been speculation as to the original location of the main doorway on the south-eastern elevation. The engraving included in Elyards' publication of 1894 shows the south-eastern elevation with the doorway placed centrally, on the site of the existing window opposite the staircase. Today, the door is to the right, the window to the left. The Elyard engraving shows with a 2-light mullioned window at first floor level. To the right of the view is the existing first floor window in the earlier range, set at a lower level, in its existing position. The Elyard view is relatively detailed, clearly showing the windows of the parlour range with their relieving arches. A second image is a drawing dated 1905, which appears to be less accurate. The doorway is shown in its existing position, although the window levels are wrong and the building is not wide enough.

The view of the south-eastern elevation, included in S. John Elyard's publication Some Old Wiltshire Homes in 1894. This appears to suggest that the existing doorway was originally located at the centre of the facade on the site of an existing window.

This presents the possibility that the existing door on the south-eastern elevation doorway was originally further westwards than today and was moved in the twentieth century, with a window inserted in the former opening. There are no definite signs within the stonework of the door being moved, but the wall in this area could have been carefully relaid and the existing hood moulds retained in situ. Presumably, there would originally have been a step up to the doorway over the plinth, still visible even if the doorway had been moved. This possible earlier location is shown on the phasing plans included in this document. However, without documentary evidence, this possible change may be hard to prove categorically.

The Granary on the western elevation may also have been added in 1645. Various commentators have speculated that this may have been some sort of chapel due to the ecclesiastical style on one of the windows, but its form and location at the lower status end of the house, adjoining the old kitchen, suggests a farm related use such as a granary or store with a hayloft over,

A second view of the elevation, made in 1905, by Rev. S. Ogilby Baker, generally considered a rather unreliable artist, and it can be assumed that the drawing is less than accurate in its detailing.

accessed via the existing flight of external stone steps. The window is possibly a reuse from another building. Originally, this space would have had a separate access from the north-eastern elevation, as shown on the 1868 engraving of the house. The doorway was removed as part of the later, 1970s works, when a new passage was created on the north-eastern side of the house.

The right gable on the north-eastern elevation also features a cartouche, which is clearly marked 'W' with 'E/S 1685' directly underneath. Despite extensive research, it has not been possible at this time to identify the owners to which the inscription refers; however, the initials likely indicate the date of a marriage within the Webb family.

Modern view of the former agricultural building on the western end of the house (left), with steps up to the hayloft. The ground floor access to the space would originally have been via a door on the north-eastern facade, show in the 1868 engraving (right).

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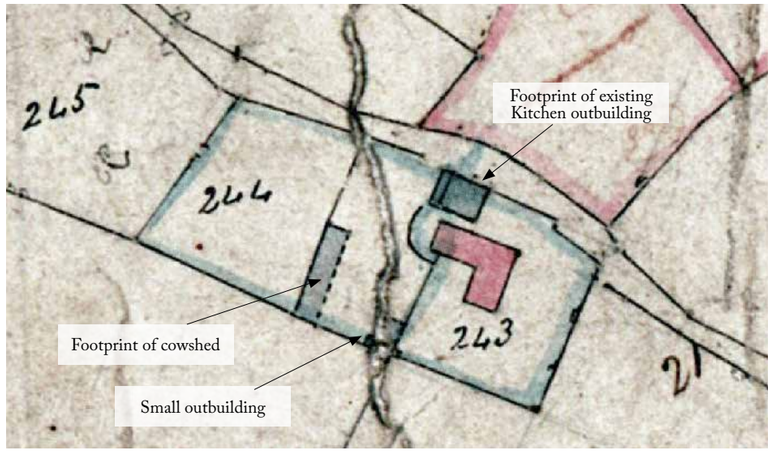
Whilst the family's Rudloe property was sold off, it appears as though Coles Farm remained in the Webb family for a substantial period, although from at least the 1800s, it was leased out to various tenants. The next available documentary evidence of the farm dates from the 1787 map of Wiltshire by John Andrews and Andrew Drury. This clearly indicates 'Coals Farm' but frustratingly, no buildings are shown; only the buildings at the neighbouring Hulberts Farm are detailed.

The Andrews and Drury map of Wiltshire of 1787, which shows the name 'Coals farm' but does depict the buildings on the site.

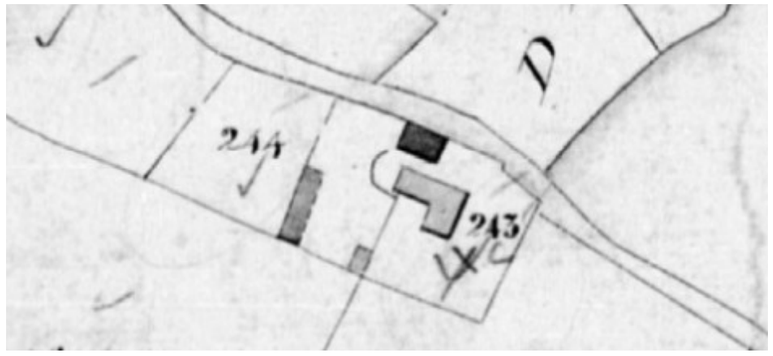
Certainly, by the early nineteenth century, the Webbs still owned Coles Farm but were not resident there, choosing instead to let the property to tenant farmers. A Mr Thomas Rawlings, moved to Coles Farm around 1825, with his first wife Mary, and their two children. A survey of all the lands in the parish of Box made in 1827, shows that Thomas paid an annual rent of £67.5s.0d to 'Mr Webb' for Coles Farm. Thomas' wife Mary died in 1828, and he remained at Coles with his children. The 1841 census records Rawlings, a farmer (aged 55), as resident there with his second wife, Emma, and 6 children in total. Emma was the daughter of John and Elizabeth Hobbs, farming neighbours at Alcombe, Ditteridge.

The tithe map and apportionment of 1838 confirms this, showing Coles Farm in the ownership of Edward Webb, but occupied by a Thomas Rawlings, a farmer. Plot 243 is described as the 'House, Offices and Garden', with 244 as Stable and paddock. Piece 145 is shown as a 'young orchard'. There is also a plot of land (235a) on the opposite side of the road to the east, containing a large building and described as the Barn and Barton. The large plot adjoining, (235) is named as Webb's Piece.

Crucially, the map shows the broad L-shaped footprint of the main house much as today, and as it had been since the mid-late seventeenth century. Around the granary on the western elevation the curved outline of a yard



The tithe map of 1838 showing Coles Farm (top) with a detail of the farm house and the surrounding farm buildings (above).



Another version of the tithe map, also dated 1838, which more clearly shows the outbuilding to the south.

is marked, and to the north, there is a large outbuilding; this appears to be the same outbuilding on site today, that was converted to a kitchen in the late-twentieth century. There appears to be an outshot or lean-to on the western facade.

Also shown on the tithe map is the footprint of the existing outbuilding to the west, the dotted outline to the east indicating that it was always an open-sided structure. In a later nineteenth-century advert, this is described as a cow-shed. This type of shelter shed, sometimes known as a skilling, would have provided shelter for cattle who were generally kept outside all year round, and would have opened up onto a foldyard. It may have contained additional spaces such as a grain store or milking shed. This building was significantly altered in the late-twentieth century, but this map confirms that it has its origins in the early-nineteenth century. Shown to the east, along the garden boundary, is another smaller outbuilding. The building sits along a crease in the map, but another copy of the tithe map from the same date shows this more clearly. The structure is relatively small and its use is unknown.

Thomas Rawlings died in 1845. His widow, Emma, was only 33 years of age when he died, and she appears to have given up the tenancy of Coles Farm after her husband's death – she moved with their children to Alcombe and was described in the 1851 census as a 'Retired Farmer', before moving to Bath, where her occupation was recorded in 1861 as a 'Farmer's widow'.

The 1851 census records that the new tenant of Coles Farm after the Rawlings was George Ross, a Scottish Clergyman, living in the house with his son and seven servants. For a short period therefore, Coles was not used solely as a working farm. Little is known about Ross, but the description of his occupation as 'not having care of souls' implies that he was an ordained clergyman but was without any pastoral duties in the parish at that time. His age of just 21 suggests that he was yet to secure patronage and may have been involved in another occupation such as religious teaching. This fits with a description in the book *'Rambles about Bath and its neighbourhood'* published in 1848, by James Tunstall, which mentioned that Coles Farm contained '*some good chimney pieces, is a gable-roofed building, belonging to the family of Webb, whose ancestor built it in 1645;* ***it is now let as summer lodgings.***'

However, Ross' tenancy was short and by 1861, the Rawlings family had come back to Coles. Thomas Rawlings' eldest daughter, Mary Ann, had married Humphrey Edwin Hobbs in 1849 in Bristol. The 1851 census shows them living at Alcombe, farming 40 acres, but by 1861 they had returned to Coles Farm and were farming 140 acres, employing four men and two boys. There were seven members of the Hobbs family living in the household, plus one servant. Remarkably, portraits of Humphrey and Mary Ann survive, although to date, no photographs of the farmhouse from this period have been found in archives. It was however, during their tenancy that the sketch was made of the north-eastern elevation facing the road, dated 1 August 1868.

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Portraits of Humphrey Edwin Hobbs and Mary Jane Hobbs, who farmed at Coles in the 1860s and 1870s. They later moved to the farm at Cheney Court.

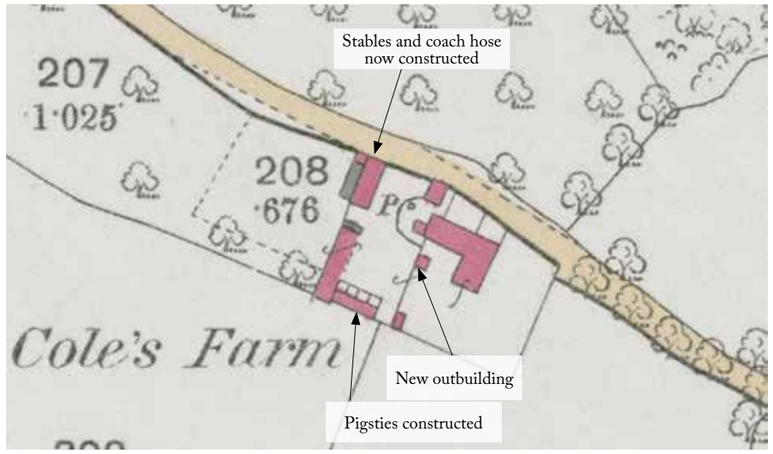
The Hobbs family were still farming at Coles in 1871, but by 1881, the family had moved to the nearby Cheney Court Farm. The new tenant in 1881 was Albert Horsell, a Farmer of 67 acres, with eleven in the household. He was followed in 1891 by James Giddings, a Farmer, in a smaller household of four.

A newspaper extract from 1894, advertises the farm to let with immediate possession. Coles Farm was described in the advert as a dairy farm, comprising *'a convenient Dwelling-house and Out-buildings, containing 41a. Or 26pr, of warmly sheltered Pasture, and 26a or 33prd. of good healthy Arable Land.'*

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 provides the first detailed map evidence of the farm since the tithe map of the late 1830s. The maps shows the property as 'Cole's Farm' with the L-shape of the main farmhouse clearly visible, as well as the steps up to the granary on the western end. The same curved yard shown on the tithe map features once more, as does the outbuilding adjoining the road to the north. A water pump is indicated in the yard. The map suggests that there was a clear division in the landscape, on the site of the existing wall running across the garden, to demarcate the gardens of the farmhouse from the wider farm yards to the west.

To the south-west of the house, the open-sided shed is shown, with a small outshot at its northern end. In a later nineteenth-century sales advert, this is described as an apple store at the end of the cowshed. Also shown in situ is a new range of buildings adjoining the cowshed at a right angle, running along the southern boundary of the garden. The layout with small pens to the north suggest that this was certainly a pigsty.

The small outbuilding to the south of the house is still in situ, and there is another new, small building located close to the house. Built into the



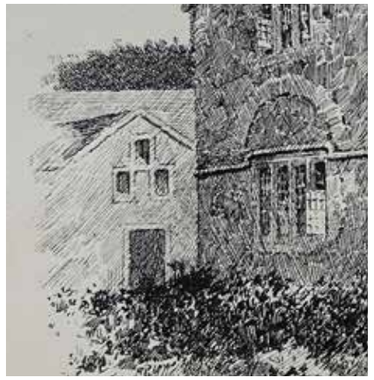
Above: The first edition Ordnance Survey map of Coles Farm from 1885, which shows the layout of the site and outbuildings in detail.

Left: One of the remnants of stone in the terrace wall running through the garden. These are possible remnants of windows from an outbuilding, that were inserted into the wall after demolition.

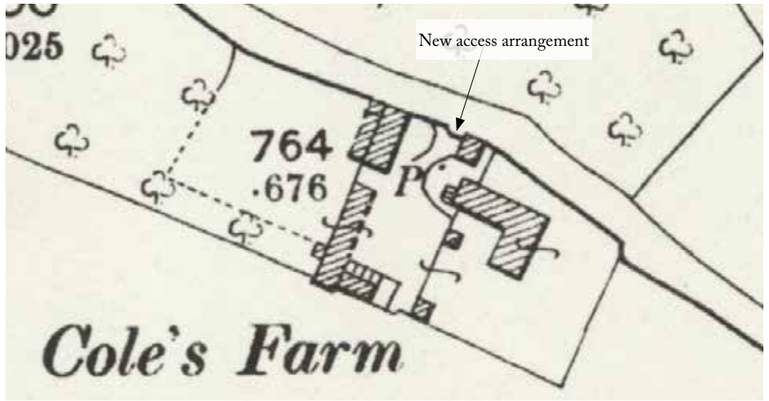
wall running across the garden today, there are remnants of a former building, with pieces of stonework built in. These are possibly fragments of that former building, reused within the terrace wall. These fragments may originate from that building, after it was demolished in the 1930s.

Perhaps most noticeably, the stables have been built in their existing location to the north-west of the main house. This clearly dates the stable building to between 1838 and 1885. The building is show as a long range with one end to the road, and a lean-to addition on the western side. The building contains remnants of stall fittings which seem to correspond to a mid-nineteenth-century date.

The engraved view in Elyard's publication of 1894 provides a glimpse of one of the farm outbuildings. Behind the parlour wing of the house, the gable end of a building is shown with a central doorway and a distinctive arrangement of three windows above. It is unclear what the purpose of this building is. It is possibly the small building close to the house, as it seems to be the wrong angle to show the end of the stable. A 1980s photograph of the garden wall with less foliage clearly shows a range of ex-situ stones mounted into the wall. Whilst it could simply be a coincidence, these stones are arranged in a very similar format to those shown in the engraving, and may be remnants of the building after it was demolished in the twentieth century.



Detail of the engraving included in S. John Elyard's publication Some Old Wiltshire Homes in 1894 (left). This shows the gable end of a building to the rear of the parlour wing. Could the remnants of this building have been incorporated into the garden wall at Coles (right)?



The first revision Ordnance Survey map of Coles Farm from 1899, which shows a new access layout from the road.

The next available Ordnance Survey map of 1899 shows little change to the site. However, there is now a more formal entrance shown leading from the road to the north into the central yard. An indenture document contained within the Webb archives records that in 1897, the farm was recorded as comprising the *'farm house together with garden, orchard, stable, coach-house, cowshed, pigstye and yard thereto adjoining.'*

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, various pieces of evidence suggest that Coles Farm had gone into decline; this tallies with the lettings advert of 1894, suggesting that the property was vacant, and the fact that, in both the 1901 and 1911 censuses, the house was recorded as uninhabited. It was in 1894 that Elyard published his book *Some Old*

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Wiltshire Homes, which contains valuable commentary about Coles Farm and its history. Elyard noted that by this time:

> *'Externally but few alterations have been made in the building, but the greater part of the interior has been modernised, though a little original panelling and plaster work remain on the walls and ceilings of some rooms.'*

The drawings of the parlour previously discussed were made by Herbert Hall in the late nineteenth century, and the detail he recorded suggests that the house was still in reasonable condition at that time. However, his drawings were not published until 1903 and by that time, the drawing was annotated:

> *'Coles Farm – Box – Wiltshire*
>
> *A typical stone farmhouse erected 1649*
>
> *Dining Room Oak panelled with a fine plaster ceiling and frieze.* ***The house in a very neglected state & much of the panelling removed since drawings made****.'*

It is unclear whether Hall's remark about the removal of panelling was specifically related to the parlour, or more widely across the house; the latter seems more likely.

A book by Allan Fea, entitled *Nooks & Corners of Old England*, published in 1907, contained another description of the house. This supports the notion that the house originally contained more panelled rooms, other than the parlour, and also underlines that the house was rapidly falling into decay:

> *'On the other side of the Great Bath Road is Cheney Court, another gabled mansion which has been of importance in its day, and within half a mile, Coles Farm, a smaller building, alas! fast falling to decay. Its windows are broken and its panelled rooms are open to the weather. We ploughed our way through a garden, or what was once a garden, waist-high with weeds, to a Tudor doorway whose door presumably was more accustomed to be open than closed. At the foot of the staircase was a little wicket gate leading to the capacious cellars. Somebody had scrawled above an ancient fireplace close by, a plea against wanton mischief; but that was the only sign that anybody was interested in the place. But we learned something from an intelligent farmer who was picking apples in one of the surrounding orchards. It was very sad, he said, but so it had remained for years. The owner was abroad, and though various people had tried to buy it, there were legal difficulties which prevented it. "But why not find a tenant?" we asked. "That would surely be better than allowing it to fall to pieces!" He shook his head. "Tis too far gone," he said, "and there's no money to put it in repair." So Coles Farm, situated in the midst of lovely hills and orchards, gives the cold shoulder to many a willing tenant.'*

Local anecdotes also report children entering the house and using the old panelling to make a fire in the cellar. Despite being empty, the house

An undated watercolour view of the western end of the house, likely dating from the turn of the twentieth century.

became the setting of a literary work - a novel called *The Rose-Spinner,* by Mary Deane, published in 1904. This also mentions that Coles Farm was in a very poor state (although the story was set in 1720).

A further watercolour view, still held within the house, provides further evidence of the property in a decaying state (see above and image on the document cover). The clothing worn by the figures in the view appears to fit with a date of the late 1800s/early 1900s. The view is taken from the yard to the west of the granary, and appears to show the house in a semi-derelict condition. The granary is shown much as today, but with an additional chimney set at its south-western corner.

To the far right is a building with its roof falling in - this is presumably the smaller structure close to the house shown in the 1885 and 1899 maps. The outbuilding that was to be converted into the existing Kitchen in the later twentieth century, is shown to the far left of the image. There is also a glimpse of the north-eastern elevation. This tallies with the 1868 engraving, showing the original doorway into the hall, and also the old doorway leading into the granary.

Documents uncovered in Wiltshire archives record that after the death of Anthony Edward Webb in 1885, shares of the house were allocated to several members of the Webb and the Perham family - presumably a family brought into the arrangement by marriage - the result of a complicated series of mortgages, a divorce, and several transfers of deeds in the late 1800s and early 1900s. This complicated ownership may explain why the property was so difficult to sell, and lends credence to the 1907 recollection by a local farmer that there had been 'legal difficulties' that had prevented a sale.

Finally, in 1913, the 'Land and premises known as Coles farm' were sold after all the members of the Webb family had transfered their ownership to William Edward Perham Esq. The purchaser was a Mr William Frank Locock. It had previously been thought that the farm passed out of the Webb family in the 1930s, but it appears to have been considerably earlier. It seems likely that it was William Locock who was responsible for the renovation of the house in the 1910s, or at least it being brought up to a liveable condition. Certainly by the time of the publication *Highways & Byways in Wiltshire* in August 1914, comment is made of a beautiful room on the ground floor with rich panelling and a plaster ceiling, and no mention is made of any neglect. Soon after the farm was purchased by Locock, most of the land originally held by the Webbs on the northern side of the main road, was sold out of the ownership of the farm for the first time.

By the time of the 1919 Ordnance Survey map, some changes are shown on the site. The pigsty adjoining the cowshed is shown unshaded, which usually indicated that the building was disused. The building to the edge of the property boundary to the south had been entirely demolished; this all indicates that change was certainly afoot at the farm. Perhaps the most noticeable change was that the property is not recorded as Coles Farm but as 'Old Farm', perhaps a move towards creating a more romantic vision of the seventeenth-century farmhouse.

The 1919 Ordnance Survey map of 'Old Farm', which shows that the pigsties were disused and the southern outbuilding had been demolished. A new oil tank is shown to the west.

Major change occurred in 1928 when the property was sold to William and Kate Moger. The Mogers enjoyed entertaining on a large scale and demolished an internal wall to allow more room for a large party they gave in 1938. This was the wall opposite the fireplace in the hall, separating the hall from the old kitchen (the existing dining room). The wall has since been reinstated. Records suggest that plans were drawn up in 1933 for alterations to the stables at Coles Farm, perhaps for conversion to garages. This is recorded as the work of Sir Harold Brakspear 1870-1934, a well known restoration architect of the time, but it is unclear if the work was executed.

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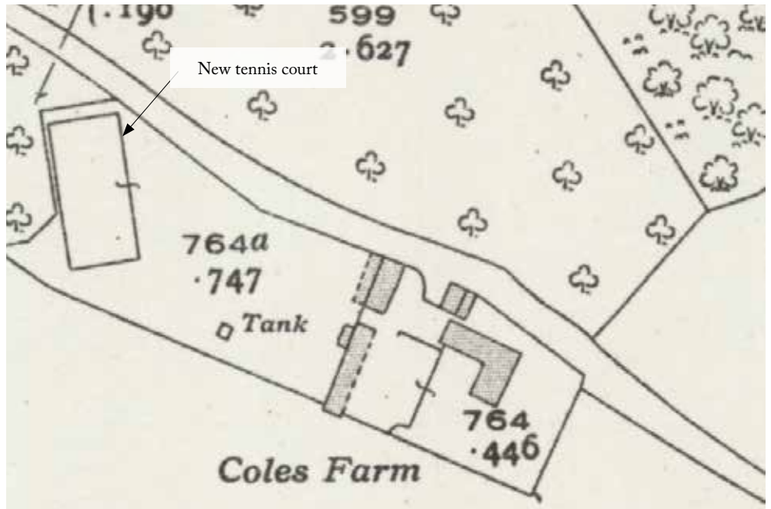
It is also thought to have been under the Moger's ownership that the fireplace in the parlour was removed and replaced with the existing replica. Local rumours recall that a wealthy American visited the family in the 1930s, admired the original fireplace and bought it to ship back to America, but there is no documentary evidence to corroborate this. Attempts have been made to track down the fireplace's location today, but to no avail. The existing fireplace is certainly a twentieth century replacement similar to the one shown in Hall's drawing but with simplified details.

Left: The existing fire surround in the parlour. This is a modern replacement of the original that was recorded in the space in Herbert Hall's drawings of the early 20th century.



The 1936 Ordnance Survey map showing the name returned to Coles Farm and the pigsties and small outbuildings in the garden demolished.

The 1936 Ordnance survey map shows no change to the main house, but clearly shows a large tennis court created by the Mogers to the far west of the grounds (since removed) created across the site of the existing driveway.

A report on the property in 1950, prepared before the sale of the house, mentions that the external walls of the house *'still retain some of the external plaster with which they would all originally have been covered... there is much to be said for the replacement of the external plaster'*. This is also evident in the 1868 engraving of the house which shows some of the stonework exposed under a crumbling layer of render. It also notes that 'the end wall of the S.E. or Drawing Room wing has recently been re-built.' It is unclear if the 'end wall' refers to that facing south-west or south-east; it could relate to the replacement of the main window in the parlour, or perhaps this could have been the time that the door was moved northwards along the elevation to its existing position.

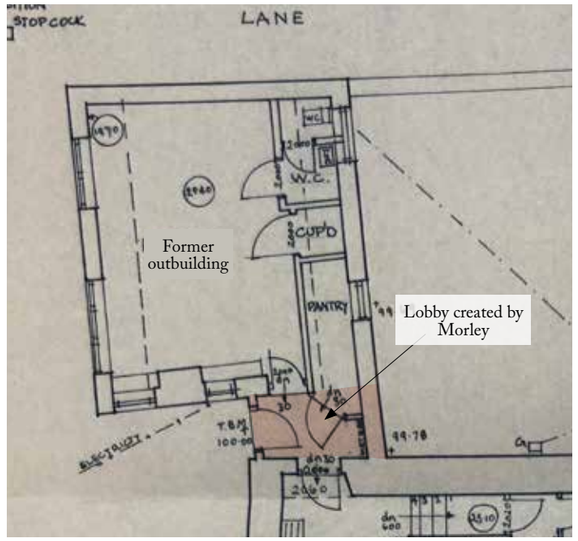
The report also mentions that at that time, the facade towards the road had 'bulged outwards' due to the some repairs that had been made 'somewhat clumsily' on the south-eastern front. The report recommends either replacing the external plaster to hide the repairs, or that something should be done *'to make the patches tidier'*. The new areas of walling were apparently *'too deeply raked out'*, and the ground floor windows on the south-west side were of a *'proportion unknown in the seventeenth century.'* This certainly suggests that the parlour window had been altered by this time. This all suggests that significant repairs and changes to the parlour wing of the house had already been made by this time, including replacement of the south-west window.

Internally, the report noted that the division taken down by the Mogers had not yet been reinstated between the existing hall and the old kitchen. It also reveals that the walls were not plastered at this time. The hall had reportedly been *'formed by throwing two or three rooms into one,'* but that *'Re-division should not be a difficult matter since there are fireplaces at each end and it would be an improvement to plaster the walls'*.

Another point in the report notes that the outbuilding close to the house (today the kitchen) was *'a large room with a fireplace for a servant with a WC and lavatory wardrobe adjoining. The fuel store forms part of the same building.'* This suggests that the outbuilding was used as servants' quarters at that time, and the granary was possibly used as a fuel store.

The Mogers sold the property in 1950 to a Mr Robin Morley. Documentary evidence of changes made by Morley are limited, with records in Wiltshire archives relating only to a planning application for a new worker's cottage on the farm in 1947. However, one major change that the Morleys appear to have made was the creation of a small lobby to link the main house and outbuilding close to the road. A new entrance was created by closing in the gap between the outbuilding near the yard entrance and the main house. This involved creating the existing doorway onto the yard between the two buildings.

An 'as existing' from 1972, just after the house had been sold by Morley, shows this lobby built, with the doorway facing westwards, onto the former yard. The small lobby led into the outbuilding, off which a cupboard and WC were set, and also a small pantry accessed from the lobby. The



Left: 'As existing' survey drawing of 1972 showing the alterations that Robin Morley made, connecting the outbuilding to the main house via a small lobby.

Modern view of the western side of the house, with the doorway and lobby created by Morley to link the main house and the outbuilding to the north.

work was undertaken by Oswald S Brakspear, son of Sir Harold who had worked for the Moger family, and who continued the practice after his father's death. It is possible that the original external doorway to the old granary was reset and used as the outside door to the south-west.

An advertisement for the sale of the house from 1972 confirms these changes, the photo providing a glimpse of the doorway and lobby between the house and the outbuilding. The advert also shows the existing wall running between the granary and the main house, across the garden, making clear the traditional separation between the domestic farmhouse and the wider agricultural farmyard.

4.0 LATER HISTORY

Photograph from the 1972 sales advert (top) showing some of the changes made by Robert Morley. The photo confirms that Morley created the lobby and new door between the outbuilding and main house (see inset detail, left). It also shows that the existing window had been installed into the parlour, replacing the one shown in Herbert Hall's drawing (see inset detail, right).

The photo also shows that by this time, Morley had replaced the window on the south-western elevation of the parlour wing. This was shown by Herbert Hall in the late nineteenth-century sketches of the rooms as a much squatter, mullioned window. Morley owned the property until July 1972 when it was auctioned for £85,000.

Modern photograph of the south-western to the parlour, likely replaced by Robert Morley after 1950.

5.0 LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY ALTERATIONS

The new owner in 1972 was Ann Juliet Dorothea Maud Fitzwilliam better known as Lady Juliet de Chair, who purchased the property after her divorce from Victor Hervey, 6th Marquess of Bristol. In 1974 she married Somerset Struben de Chair.

Said to be fabulously wealthy, the couple owned many properties but Coles was special to Lady Juliet. Traditionally, it is thought to have been Lady Juliet who removed the highest run of panelling in the former Parlour at this time, although there is no evidence to confirm this. The photograph of this room in the auction catalogue of July 1972 apparently showed the panelling at its original height, but unfortunately a copy of this catalogue is not contained in archives and cannot, to date, be located.

Upon taking ownership of the property, Lady Juliet de Chair employed the architects Peter Blair and Peter Curd to draw up plans for alterations. The architects' files from the Blair and Curd works are stored at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, and have been analysed whilst compiling this document. These include survey drawings of the house as existing in 1972; these are included on the following page.

The survey drawings (see following page) provide an interesting snapshot of the layout of the house by that time. Some suggestions as to future room uses are included in the drawings, which still depict the house as Morley left it. At this point, the former doorway in to the hall had already been converted into a window, confirming that it was Morley who made this change. Morley's entrance lobby to the west, discussed in the previous section, can also be seen in situ. At this time, there was an additional subdivision at the western end of the old kitchen, enclosing the fireplace which at that time, contained the main boiler. This small room then led into the adjoining pantry contained within the old granary.

As part of the modernisation work in 1972 under Lady Juliet de Chair, the former outbuilding to the north was converted into the main kitchen to the house, a use which continues today. The small rooms along its eastern edge were removed and a new larger, recess and WC constructed. The entrance lobby built by Morley was retained, providing access into the new WC.

In addition, a new passageway was built on the north-eastern side of the house to provide an access from the outbuilding through to the old kitchen and thence to the hall. A new opening was created in the old outer wall of the house to provide access from the passage into the old kitchen. The granary was maintained as a pantry but with a new subdivision to create a small lobby, with access via a set of steps to the adjoining old kitchen, by now used as a dining room. At this time, the original doorway into the granary shown on the 1868 engraving and the turn of the century watercolour was removed. Alterations to the first and second floors were relatively minimal, largely involving the installation of new bathroom fittings and cupboards. The roof guttering was replaced at this time and the lead gutter boxes feature Lady Juliet's initials and the date of 1974.

A major change implemented by the de Chairs was the creation of a new swimming pool, set close to the old-open sided cowshed. This included a mosaic of a falcon on the floor of the pool. The name of the property was also changed for a brief period to 'Falconers'. It is alleged that Lady Juliet said she could not call the house 'Coles Farm' because her father's gardener was called Coles, but this rumour cannot be substantiated. The former cowshed adjacent to the pool was adapted with the architects' notes recording that the *'opening to the first bay on the right'* was to be *'filled with natural stone'* in order to *'balance up with the other end'*, and an entrance doorway was to be constructed *'into the oil tank room'*. A new space was to be created under the first right hand side truss for pool filter equipment.

An aerial photograph from the 1970s shows the pool in situ and also the alterations being made to the entrance passage between the house and kitchen - a flat roof can still be seen. The entrance drive is also on a different layout, with an open yard to the road and a curved wall to one side of the stable. There is also a hedge and an opening for a gateway shown on the north-east boundary to the road, seemingly with no walling along the roadside.

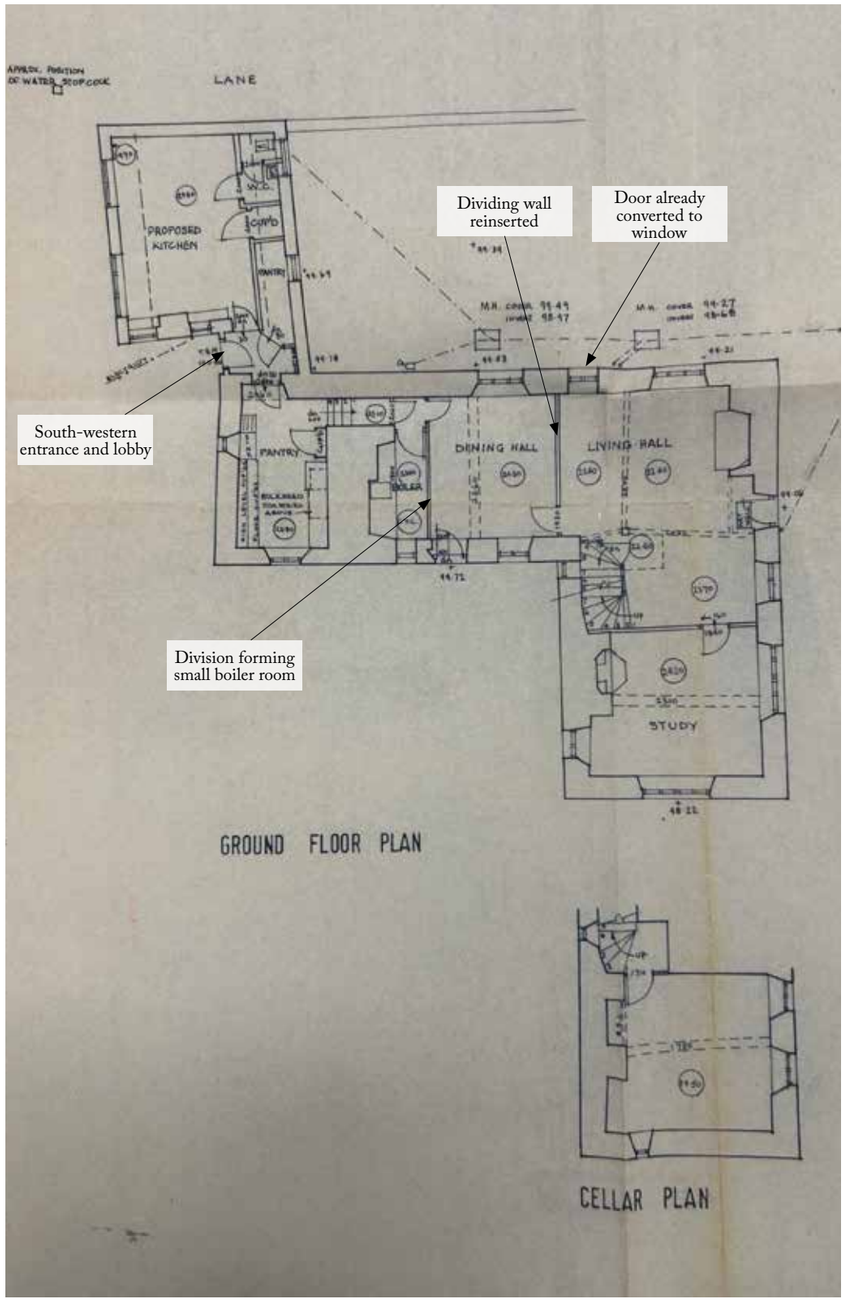
Modern view of the passage linking between the western doorway, the Kitchen and the main house, installed c.1973 by Lady Juliet.

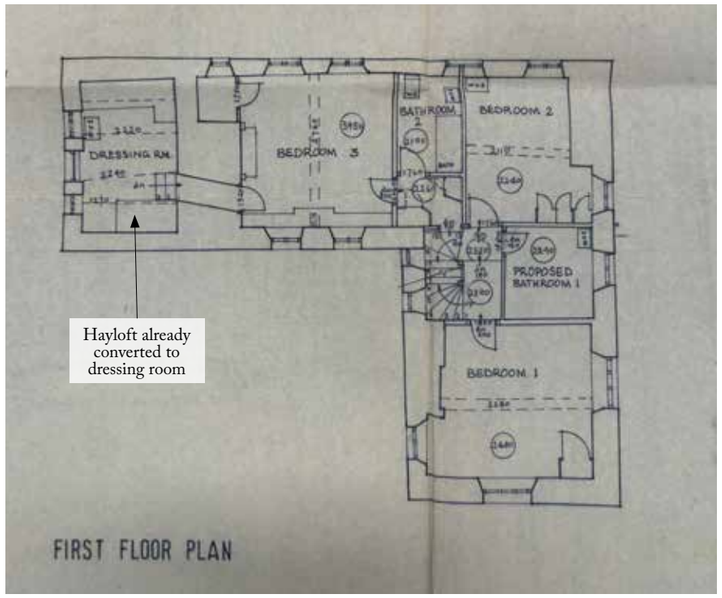
Modern interior view of the 1973 passageway leading from the western entrance door added by Morley, down to the dining room (the old kitchen).

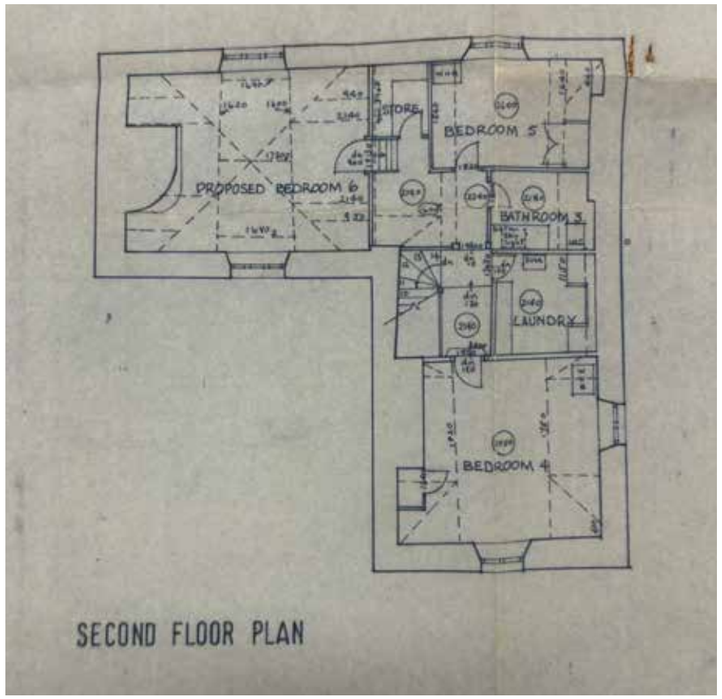
Modern photo showing one of the lead hoppers to the downpipes, installed by Lady de Chair in 1974.

Aerial view of c.1973 showing the works in progress and the creation of the new swimming pool.

5.0 LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY ALTERATIONS







The complete set of the 'as existing' survey plans from 1972, recording the layout of the house after Robin Morley's ownerhip.

Lady Juliet and her husband Mr Somerset de Chair sold the house in 1981. The sales particulars from that time, shown on the following page, record the appearance of the property after their substantial alterations. The most noticeable difference to today is the presence of the swimming pool externally, and internally, the stone walls were still exposed within the hall and dining room. The kitchen installed by Lady Juliet in the old outbuilding is shown in one of the photographs.

The house was bought in 1981 by Colin Marshall and his wife. Colin Marshall apparently mentioned that he thought the door on the south-eastern elevation had been moved by Mr Robin Morley. The Marshalls only owned the property for a short while and sold it in 1982 to Mr and Mrs Lambert, who changed the name of the property back to Coles Farm. The house then reverted back to the Morley family, who had previously lived at the property in the mid-twentieth century. Our clients purchased Coles Farm from Mr and Mrs Morley in 2025.

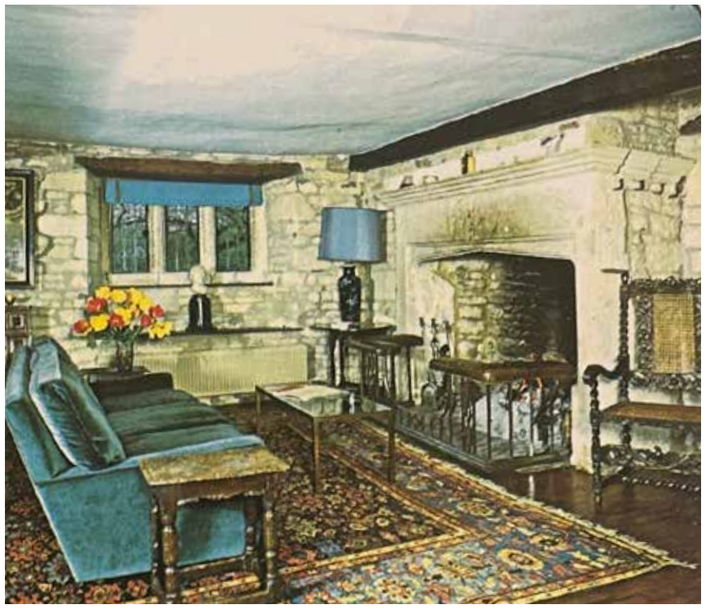
More recent alterations had included the internal plastering of the stone walls in the hall and dining room, the installation of a new Kitchen in the former outbuilding and the opening out of the Pantry/utility in the old granary.

In the later 1980s, analysis of the buildings were carried out by Pamela Slocombe, author of several books on vernacular architecture in Wiltshire. Her notes on the building are stored at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre and her findings have been taken into account in this document. Slocombe also took a number of photographs of the property at that time, which are included at the end of this document.

5.0 LATE TWENTIETH -CENTURY ALTERATIONS

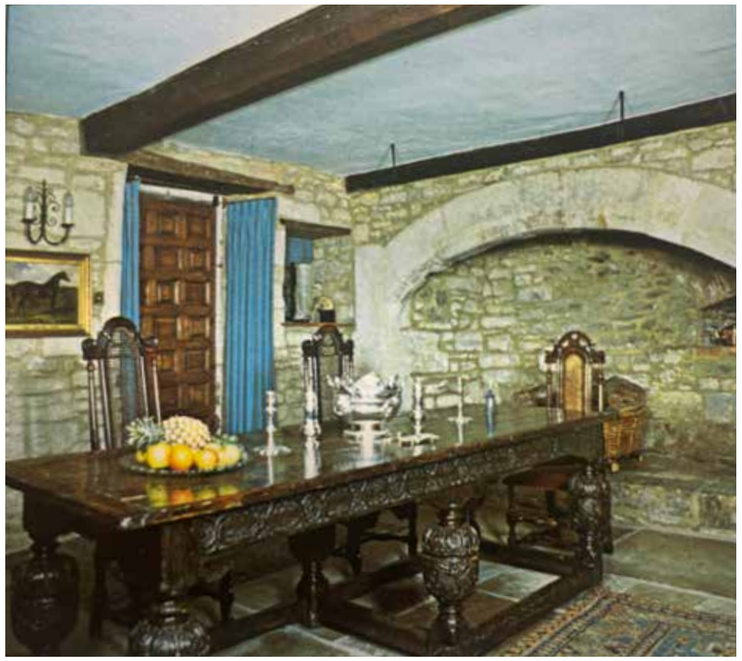
SALES PARTICULARS OF 1981

View across the gardens showing the swimming pool installed by Lady Juliet de Chair



Internal view of the hall with the stone walls left exposed.

Internal view of the bedroom over the hall.

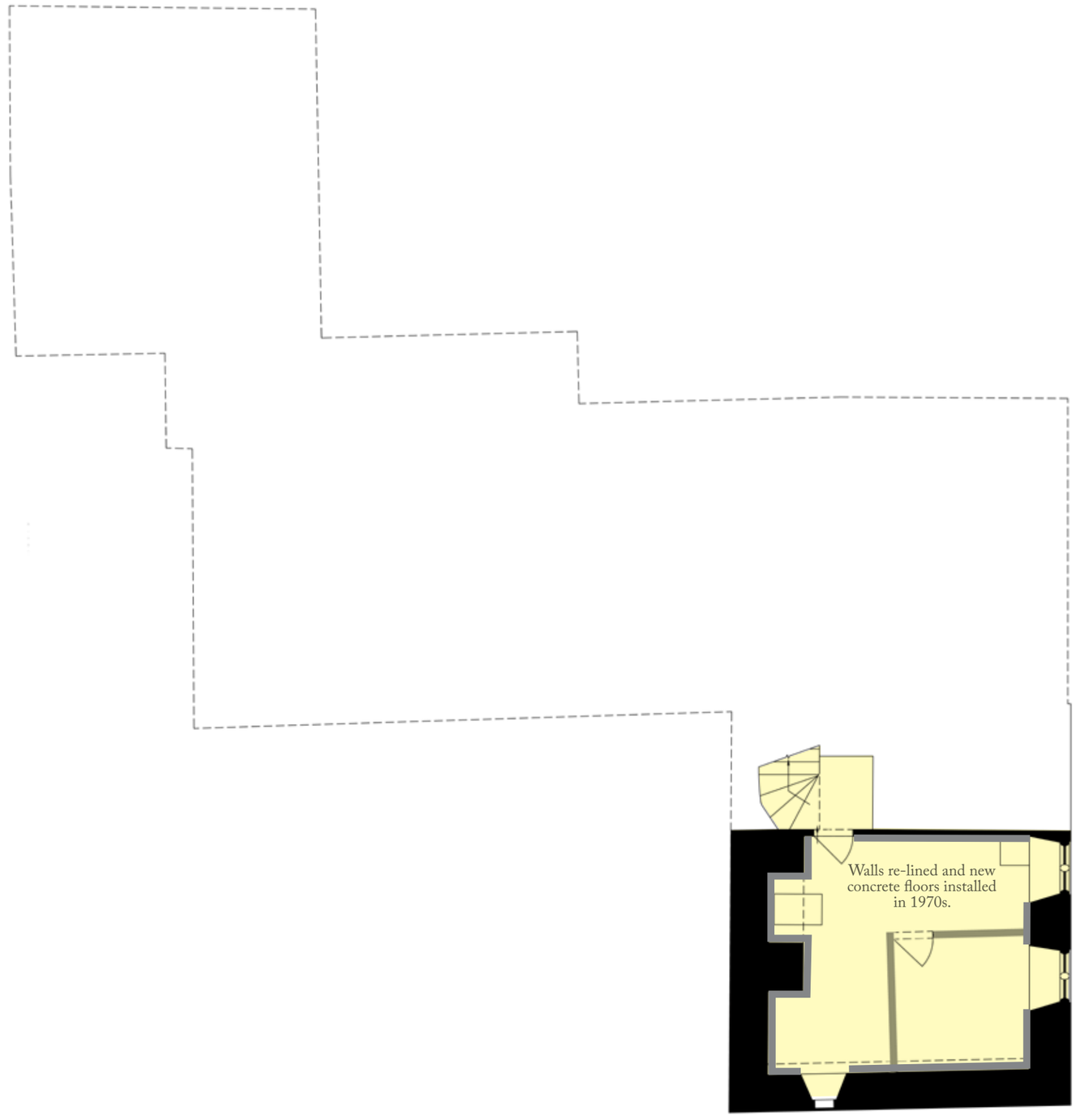


Internal view of the old kitchen, by now used as a dining room and like the hall, with stone wall left exposed.

Internal view of the Parlour, now with a section of decoration removed between the panelling and the plasterwork.

The 1970s kitchen installed in the old outbuilding by Lady Juliet.

6.0 PHASING DIAGRAMS - BASEMENT



KEY

Early 1600s - Original core of house built on site and purchased by Peter Webb (hatched lines indicate demolitions)

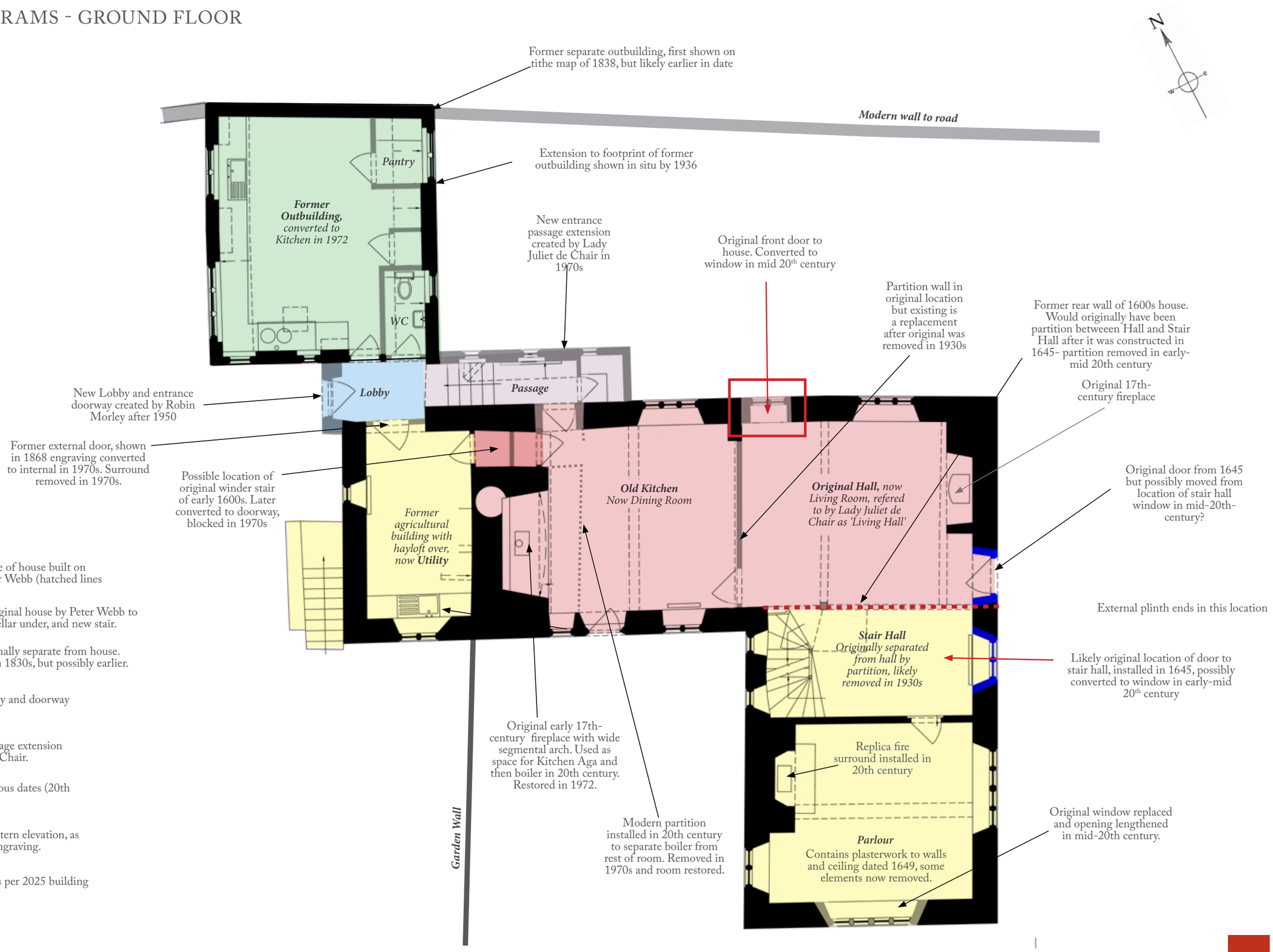
1645-49 - Additions to original house by Peter Webb to create parlour wing with cellar under, and new stair.

Other modern alterations of the 20th century - various dates.

Existing fabric as per 2025 building survey

ADAM

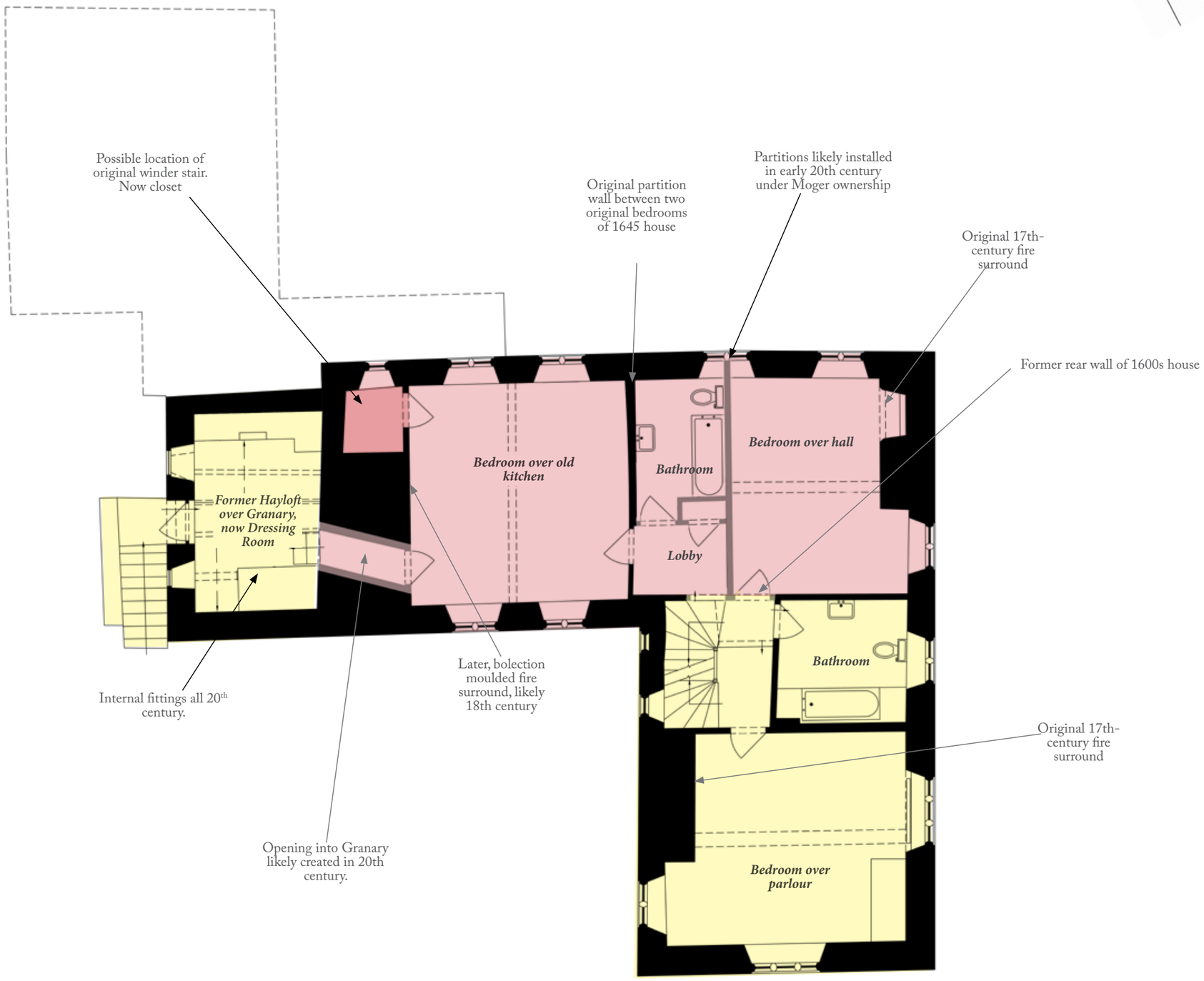
6.0 PHASING DIAGRAMS - GROUND FLOOR



KEY

- **Early 1600s -** Original core of house built on site and purchased by Peter Webb (hatched lines indicate demolitions)
- **1645-49 -** Additions to original house by Peter Webb to create parlour wing with cellar under, and new stair.
- **1800s -** Outbuilding, originally separate from house. First shown on mapping in 1830s, but possibly earlier. Altered in 20th century.
- **1950s -** New entrance lobby and doorway installed by Robin Morely
- **1970s -** New entrance passage extension installed by Lady Juliet de Chair.
- Known modern fabric various dates (20th century)
- Potential alterations on eastern elevation, as suggested by evidence of engraving.
- Existing historical fabric as per 2025 building survey

6.0 PHASING DIAGRAMS - FIRST FLOOR



KEY

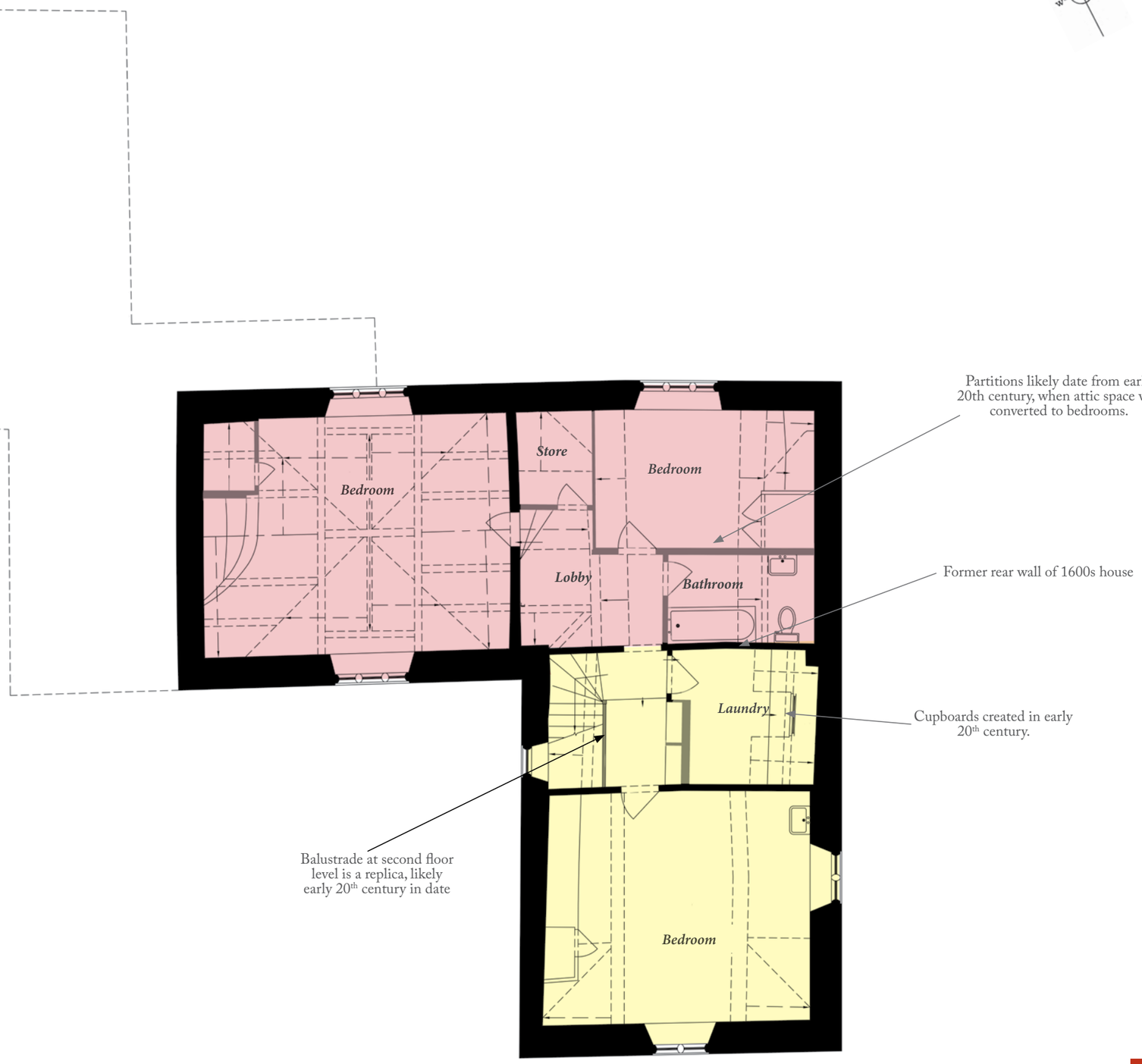
Early 1600s - Original core of house built on site and purchased by Peter Webb (hatched lines indicate demolitions)

1645-49 - Additions to original house by Peter Webb to create parlour wing with cellar under, and new stair.

Known modern fabric various dates (20th century)

Existing historical fabric as per 2025 building survey

6.0 PHASING DIAGRAMS - SECOND FLOOR



KEY

Early 1600s - Original core of house built on site and purchased by Peter Webb (hatched lines indicate demolitions)

1645-49 - Additions to original house by Peter Webb to create parlour wing with cellar under, and new stair.

Known modern fabric various dates (20th century)

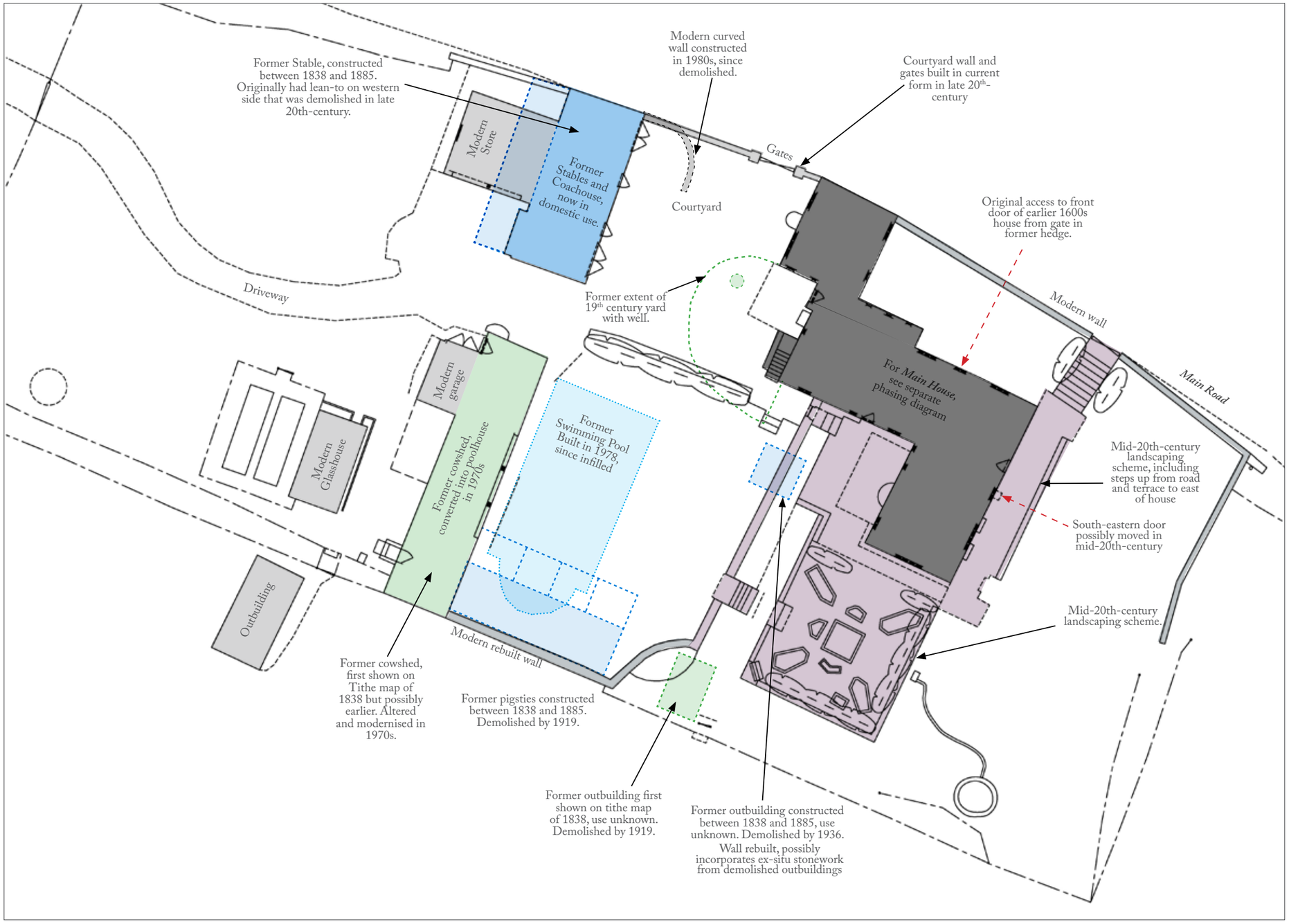
Existing historical fabric as per 2025 building survey

ADAM

6.0 PHASING DIAGRAMS - SITE PHASING

KEY

- Buildings first shown on Tithe map of 1838 (hatched lines indicate buildings since demolished)
- Buildings first shown on OS map of 1855 (hatched lines indicate buildings since demolished)
- Circa mid-20th-century landscaping scheme
- Existing modern buildings
- Swimming pool of 1978, since infilled



7.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

METHODOLOGY

Historical research has been conducted into the history of the Coles Farm in order to understand its origins and development.

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the statutory approach to the management of historic buildings. Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF - revised 5 September 2023) states that:

> 'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.....'

Significance is defined in the NPPF Glossary as:

> 'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.'

Paragraph 195 of the NPPF states that:

> 'Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.'

Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2, '*Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*' (March 2015) states that understanding the nature of significance is important for understanding the need for, and best means of, conservation. Understanding the extent of that significance leads to a better understanding of how adaptable a heritage asset may be and provides the essential guide as to how policies should be applied. Understanding the extent of that significance is also important because this can, among other things, lead to a better understanding of how adaptable the asset may be and therefore improve viability and the prospects for long term conservation.

As such, the following Statement of Significance appraisal will evaluate Coles Farm against Historic England's criteria set out in their Advice Note 12, '*Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets*' (2019). In this note, it describes the various interests as follows:

- **Archaeological interest**
  There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
- **Architectural and artistic interest**
  These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can rise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and the creation of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.
- **Historical interest**
  An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

These interests are generally used by ADAM Architecture to assess the significance of heritage assets, largely due to their easily understandable nature to the public and professionals alike.

7.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Designations

Coles Farm was Grade II* listed in 1960 and so is regarded as a building of significance in a national context. The surrounding gardens are not included on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England. The listing building description is included in Section 2 of this document. Neither the stables or the former cowshed are mentioned in the description and they are not individually listed, but are included within the curtilage of the listed farmhouse.

Analysis

The interests described previously have been used to assess the historical significance of Coles Farm, as follows:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

- Map evidence and other documentary sources suggest that the site of Coles Farm has a long history, with evidence of a house on the site from at least the early-seventeenth century. The core fabric of this house remains on site today. Across the site, there has been extensive rebuilding, with various farm structures and outbuildings constructed and demolished over time. There is in theory therefore, some potential for below ground evidence, particularly in the gardens to the south where maps show evidence of previous farm structures.

- However, the nature of the site as containing subsidiary agricultural buildings with less substantial foundations, means that it is likely that little fabric of archaeological importance remains on the site. In addition, part of the gardens were occupied by a large swimming pool, constructed in the 1970s (since infilled), which may have destroyed much below-ground evidence. Twentieth-century building works around the kitchen and former granary may also have destroyed evidence. As a result, the archaeological interest of the site overall is considered relatively low.

ARCHITECTURAL AND ARTISTIC INTEREST

- The main farmhouse on the site is a good example of a yeoman's farmhouse created in the seventeenth century. The farmhouse originated as a single range facing north-east, that was then enlarged and aggrandised by Peter Webb around 1645, in order to express his social aspirations. This formed the broad L-shaped structure that remains on site today. Coles Farmhouse was not, therefore, designed as a high-status gentry property, but holds some relatively high architectural significance in its traditional, vernacular appearance and higher level of architectural detailing associated with its use as a yeoman farmer's residence.

- As has been noted in the 1980s investigations into the house, the exterior of the property largely retains its seventeenth-century appearance and footprint, albeit with some possible modern alterations and additions that are discussed in detail in this document. The chief significance of the building today stems from the preservation of this original footprint and broad external building form, with no major alterations or demotions to the principal building since the 1600s.

- Internally, the house has undergone far more alterations, which have been challenging to decipher due to a lack of recording. The evidence that does survive, suggests that the house originally had far more internal decoration and panelling throughout, that sadly, was lost during a period of decline at the turn of the twentieth century. However, most of the decoration within the parlour has survived, albeit with one upper section removed and the fireplace having been replaced. This decoration is of high significance as a record of Peter Webb's broader, lost interior treatment that may have been seen more widely across the building.

- Largely undocumented alterations in the twentieth century, and the removal of original internal walls, has made the original plan form harder to read today. However, the building's evolution and original plan form is still discernible via careful standing building analysis, and future opening up works may reveal more details of the building's early history and architecture. This may, perhaps, enable the proposed phasing put forward in this document to be confirmed or updated.

- Other key internal survivals today include the end chimney stacks to the original range facing north-east, and the surviving fireplaces at both ground and first-floor levels. The arched fireplace to the old kitchen is of particularly unusual vernacular type and is of high significance. The existing, seventeenth-century staircase is also an important survival, of high significance. The balusters at second floor level date from the twentieth century when the attic rooms were converted into formal residential accommodation, and this section of the stair is therefore of lesser significance. The basement, whilst it retains its plan form and some internal finishes, was re-lined in the twentieth century.

- The former agricultural structure on the north-western end of the house, thought to have originated as a granary and hayloft, is also of higher architectural interest. The interior of this space is much altered and modernised but externally, it remains an interesting architectural composition, particularly in its window openings.

- The outbuildings within the ground are less architecturally significant. The former stables and coach house building dates from the nineteenth century, and has undergone some alterations for modern use as garaging. However, internally, it retains some original fixtures and fittings related to its former use, and these are important reminders of the origins of Coles as a farmstead. The fittings are not however, particularly unusual in their type or detailing.

- The former cowshed is less architecturally significant due to the twentieth-century alterations to adapt it for use as a pool building. Today, its significance lies in its overall footprint and appearance that has its origins in farm use. The original, open-sided character of the building was however, eroded by the closing up of the outer bays in the late twentieth-century.

- HISTORICAL INTEREST

- The survival of the basic footprint of the house without any major additions or demolitions since the seventeenth century, means that the core of the farmhouse generally has high historical value. The original internal layout is less readable to the modern viewer due to alterations and undocumented wall removals, but still speaks of the way in which the original owner, Peter Webb, wished to convey an image of his growing status as a yeoman farmer. The remaining decoration in the parlour, and the original fireplaces that survive in the house, are important as the remaining decorative elements associated with the original period of construction.

- Some of the windows appear to have been replaced in the twentieth century, the most notable example being the enlarged parlour window that dates from the twentieth century, in a revivalist style.

- Later changes to the property in the twentieth century, including the creation of a kitchen in a former outbuilding, reflect the move away from farming at Coles. The changes were relatively sympathetic in style and the materials used. However, some of the alterations, including the creation of the passageway to the north-east have impacted upon the original, seventeenth-century fabric, for example, in the moving of the door to the former granary.

- Over the centuries, Coles evolved as a farmstead, and the layout and appearance of the outbuildings and garden represents the changes in farming throughout centuries. The footprint of the main farm yard is still tangible, due to the survival of the stables and former cowshed, at least in broad form and footprint. As such, the layout of the grounds hold some moderate historical significance as an example of a traditional Wiltshire farm that has evolved over the centuries.

- The house was bought and extended by Peter Webb in the early-mid seventeenth century, and the property stayed within the Webb family until the early twentieth-century. As such it has a strong historical connection to the family and its descendants.

- Coles was an active farm until the late-nineteenth century, and as such, it has a degree of local interest. The farmstead holds some minor significance in providing employment for previous generations of the local community, some of whom may have personal family connections to the house.

APPENDIX: 1980s PHOTOGRAPHS (WILTSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD)

View of the north-eastern elevation from the road.

View of the former agricultural building and mid century-lobby on the north-western elevation

Additional view of the former agricultural building on the north-western elevation

View of the north-eastern elevation from the road.

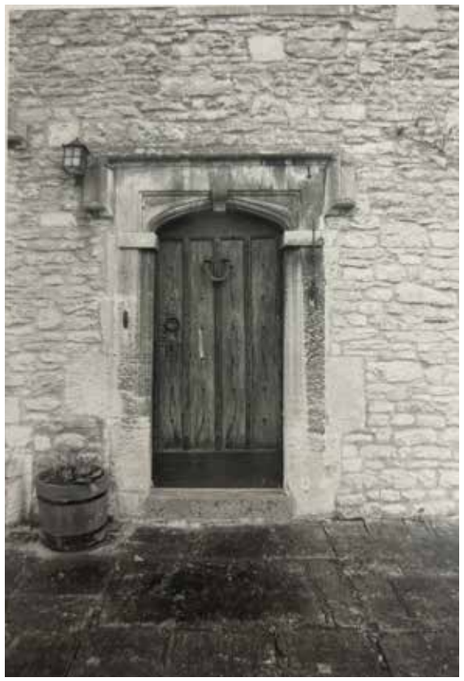
Additional view of the north-eastern elevation from the road.

View of the farmhouse from the west.

APPENDIX: 1980s PHOTOGRAPHS (WILTSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD)

View of the south-eastern elevation from the garden.

View of the garden wall from the south-west. These stones are possibly remnants from the former outbuilding that was on the site.



Detail of the doorway on the south-eastern elevation, possibly moved from its original location to the west.

Detail of the window openings on the former agricultural building (possibly a granary with hayloft over).

Detail of the window at the angle of the older wing with the 1645 range.

Interior detail of the staircase at first floor level.

APPENDIX: 1980s PHOTOGRAPHS (WILTSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD)

Internal view of the fireplace in the old kitchen.

Internal view of the fireplace in the hall.

Detail view of the fireplace in the hall.

Detail view of the door to the parlour.

View of the modern, replacement fireplace to the parlour.

View of the fireplace to the chamber over the hall.

APPENDIX: 1980s PHOTOGRAPHS (WILTSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD)

Internal view of the chimney stack at first floor level on the south-eastern wall.

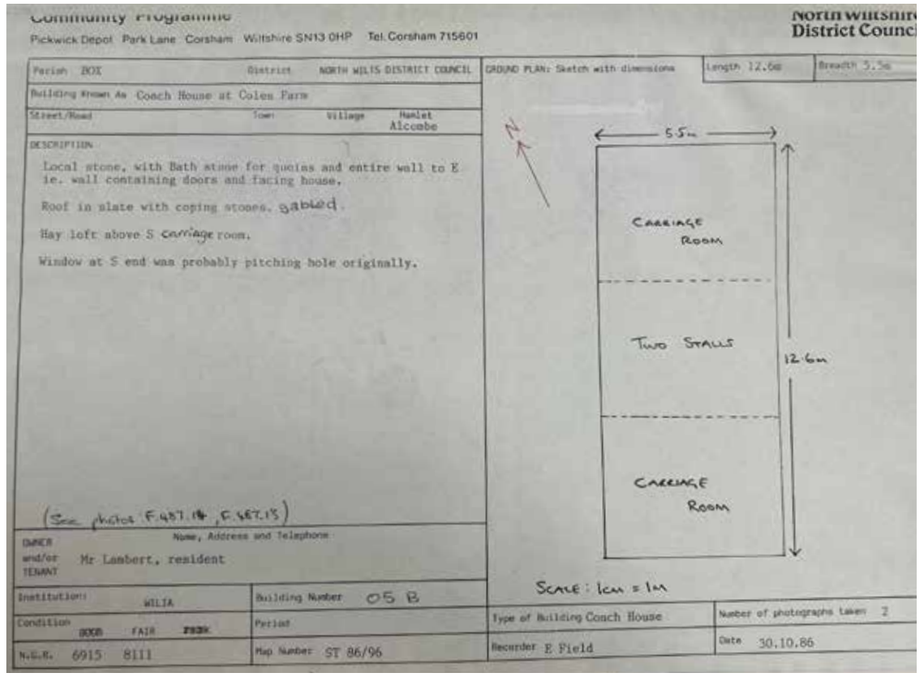
Internal view of the roof over the staircase.

Extended collar trusses within the roof.

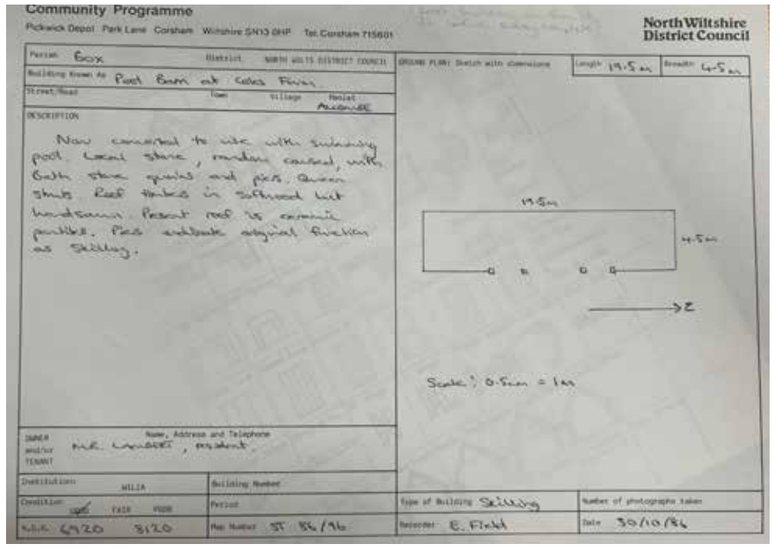
Extended collar trusses within the roof.

View of the roof space from the south-east.

APPENDIX: 1980s PHOTOGRAPHS (WILTSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD)



Photographs of the coach house and stables and a brief assessment of the interior layout from 1986.



A brief assessment of the interior layout of the old Cow Shed from 1986. (NB. No photographs were taken).