

HULLETTS FARMHOUSE,
PILGRIMS HATCH, BRENTWOOD
WORKS REQUIRED TO HISTORIC
BUILDING



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March 2016

DESCRIPTION

Hulletts Farmhouse is a Grade II-listed timber-framed, rendered, two-storey house dating from the fifteenth and late sixteenth century. The earlier, fifteenth century block, originally incorporating a medieval hall, runs north to south, with the late-sixteenth century range added to it at right angles to make an L-shaped plan. Both blocks have intersecting 50-degree hipped roofs clad in pegtiles. A late sixteenth-century stair tower with lean-to roof sits in the angle between the two main wings, and at the same date a central, six-shafted chimney stack was inserted in the fifteenth-century block.



Stair tower (left) and second chimney stack



Central six-shafted chimney stack

A second chimney stack of contemporary date, but rebuilt in the nineteenth century, sits in the angle between the stair tower and the late sixteenth-century wing.

On the north side of the fifteenth-century block is a large, two-storey lean-to extension added in the eighteenth century. It is timber-framed and rendered on two sides, with white-painted weatherboarding on the east side, and a roof clad in bitumen felt tiles continuing the north-facing hip of the main roof. The eastern flank is occupied by a single-storey painted, brick-built outshot, with buttresses, of nineteenth century date, whose roof is also clad in bitumen felt tiles.



18th century lean-to extension



19th century brick outshot

Also in the nineteenth century a central corridor was created at the junction of the two original builds leading to a central front door on the south elevation. Surmounting the front door is a large, gabled porch of more recent date.



South elevation with porch and 18th century sash windows

Most of the external walls sit on brick plinths and retain their original lime plaster rendering, but the stair tower and lower part of the second chimney stack were recently re-clad in cement render and machine-made clay roof tiles. The principal elevations retain their eighteenth-century small-paned sash windows. The stair tower has nineteenth-century casements in an eighteenth-century frame, whilst the eighteenth-century lean-to and the nineteenth-century outshot have twentieth century casements with top lights. External doors are all of modern date, but there are many internal doors of early date with blacksmith's ironmongery.

For a fuller description, please refer to the description in the Statutory List.

EXTERIOR

There are signs of damp in a number of locations around the perimeter of the building, due to the brick plinth being below external ground level.



Gully formed in attempt to keep damp from brick plinth

The existing tarmac path around the building should be removed and the ground level reduced by at least 150mm. Any replacement path should be kept at least 1m from the building and the intervening space filled with a french drain backfilled with shingle, the drain pipe to be slightly below the level of the plinth footing, but not so close as to undermine it. A paving slab should be loosely laid in the shingle in front of each external door. Rendering should be removed from the plinths, and the brickwork repaired using lime mortar, and any replacement bricks to be soft reds. At the same time the sole plate of the timber frame should be checked for rot, and if necessary any decayed sections should be replaced in new, seasoned oak. The lime rendering to the external walls appears largely intact, though there are localised cracks and spalling. Any masonry paint should be removed and decayed render raked out. These areas should then be filled with lime plaster and the whole wall surface skimmed and lime-washed.



Surface deterioration of lime render



Cement render on stair tower

There are also signs of damp within the stair tower and adjacent to the second chimney stack. The recently applied cement render and lathing should be removed and replaced by lime render on split-chestnut lathing. The weatherboarding and the painted brickwork to the outshot appear sound and can be left.

A major source of damp is the central chimney stack in the fifteenth-century wing. The six shafts above the roof level have been cement rendered, and there appears to be no flashing onto the roof tiles. The cement render should be carefully removed, and the stack repaired and restored to its original appearance using soft red, Tudor-size bricks where bricks need replacement, and lime mortar. The stack should then be lead-flashed on to the roof tiles. The second chimney stack should also be repointed in lime mortar and lead-flashed on to the roof and walls.

The tiles on the main roof appear sound, but should be removed in order to check and if necessary replace battens and sarking felt. Any defective tiles

should be replaced with secondhand pegtiles. The roof of the stair tower, recently re-clad in machine-made clay tiles, is too shallow in pitch for clay tiles to work effectively, and should be re-covered in Welsh slates. Insulation and sarking felt should be checked and upgraded if necessary. The bitumen felt tiles should be removed from the lean-to and outshot roofs and replaced by Welsh slates, taking the opportunity to insert sarking felt and upgrade insulation.



Shallow pitch of stair tower roof



Lean-to roof and missing gutter

Gutters and downpipes appear to be intact and functioning, apart from the lean-to, where the gutter and downpipe are missing, though the gutter brackets and bottom down-pipe connection are still in place. These should be reinstated.

Sash windows, and the stair tower casement, should be stripped of paint and carefully repaired to full functioning condition. Any rotten sections of frame, cill or surround should be cut out and new wood of identical profile pieced in. Existing glass should as far as possible be retained. Twentieth-century windows should also be retained and repaired or, if preferred, the casements and top lights may be replaced by larger paned casements simply divided at the mid point, similar to the stair tower window.

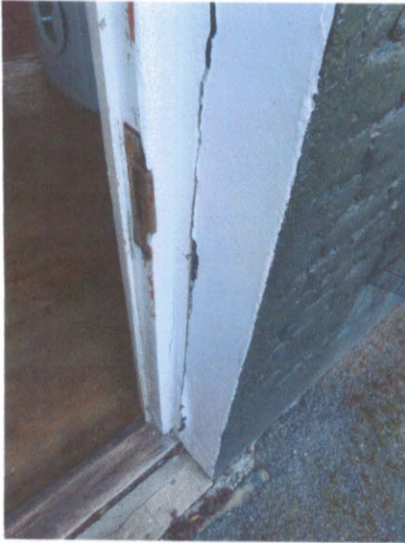


Sash windows to be repaired

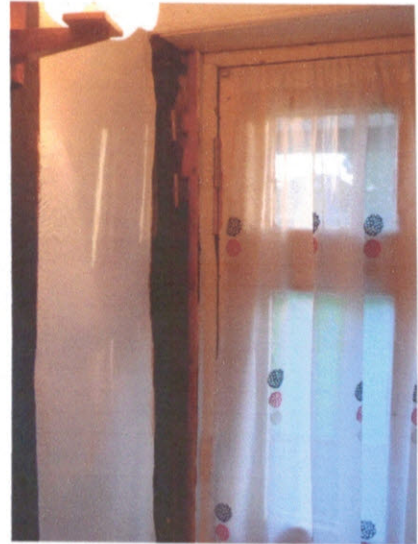


20th century windows to be repaired or replaced

When the ground level has been reduced, the opportunity should be taken of repairing or replacing the cills of external doors and providing water bars and draft proofing. Some making good is required around the frame of the kitchen door in the outshot and the front door on the south elevation. Apart from that, all external doors should be retained.



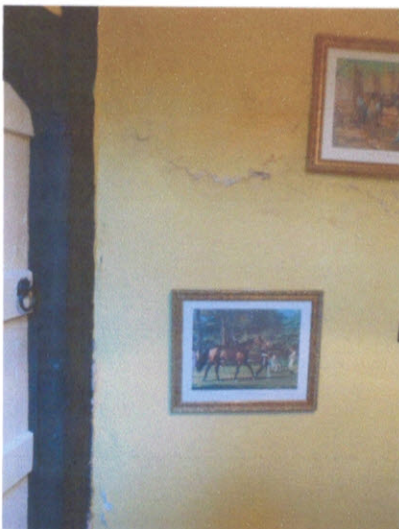
Kitchen door in outshot



Front door on south elevation

INTERIOR

Once the chimney stacks have been repaired and the external ground level lowered, and the walls allowed to dry out, defective plasterwork should be hacked off from previous damp patches and repaired in lime plaster.



Damp plaster on main chimney breast



Damp plaster on second chimney breast

Wallpaper and ceiling paper should be stripped off to check the condition of the plaster underneath and make good where necessary. The Artex and plasterboard ceiling over the stair tower should be removed, insulated and replaced with lime plaster on laths. The black paint on exposed timbers should be completely removed with chemical poultice and scrubbing brush and the surface treated with beeswax.



Typical black-painted timbers in stair tower

Most of the fireplaces are attractive and should be retained. These should be checked to ensure they function safely and that there are no leaks. However, the fireplace in the rear living room in the lean-to should be removed and the original fireplace behind opened up to bressumer level, and the brickwork made good. The artificial stone fireplace in the front living room should be removed and replaced by a fireplace similar to that in the front dining room.



Fireplace in rear living room to be opened up – note damp chimney breast



Fireplace in front living room to be replaced – note damp chimney breast

Internal doors are all of early date and of interest and should be retained, together with their blacksmith's ironmongery.

Secondary double glazing should be provided to all windows, taking care that opening divisions coincide with those of the windows themselves.

The loft should be insulated between and over ceiling joists to a depth of 240mm with sheepswool-rich insulation, taking care ventilation paths are not blocked.

Carpet should be removed throughout, and the state of underlying floor finishes checked. Flagstone floors should be repointed where necessary. The suspended timber floor in the front dining room should be checked for rot, any necessary repairs made, and cross-ventilation ensured.

SERVICES

The house will need rewiring, but this should be done reusing any sound wiring runs that are buried in walls, and using the floor and ceiling voids to minimise unsightly surface cable runs.

A hot-water central heating system should be provided, again using floor voids to minimise surface pipe runs. Any new boiler should use one of the existing chimney flues rather than a balanced flue outlet.