

**Historic building recording of a cellar at Bentfield
Green Farmhouse, Bentfield Green, Stansted
Mountfitchet, CM24 8TH**

February 2022



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fieldwork by Sarah Veasey

**commissioned by
David Jones (Alun Design Consultancy)
on behalf of
The homeowner**

CAT project ref.: 2022/02a
NGR: TL 50458 25433 (c)
Planning reference: UTT/21/1102/LB
Museum accession code: SAFWM:2022.7
ECC code: BGSM22
OASIS project id: colchest3-504313



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CAT Report 1790
March 2022

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1 Summary

A programme of historic building recording was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust on a cellar at Bentfield Green Farmhouse, Bentfield Green, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex. Bentfield Green Farmhouse is Grade II listed and dated to the 18th century. The cellar is brick built and contains a brick arch supported on piers against the northern wall. ~~and~~ an original bridging beam survives in the centre of the ceiling.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report of a historic building recording carried out on the cellar of Bentfield Green Farmhouse, Bentfield Green, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex. The recording work was commissioned by the homeowner and was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in February 2022. The site is located on an area of common land in the village of Stansted Mountfitchet at NGR TL 50458 25433 (Fig 1).

A planning application (planning ref. UTT/21/1102/LB) was submitted to Uttlesford District Council in March 2021 for *proposed cellar alterations to form a recreation room*.

In response to this application, the Place Services Historic Environment Advisor (HEA) recommended to the council that a Historic England building recording be made of the cellar prior to the conversion works (ECC 2022). This recommendation was given based on the main house's Historic England grade II listed status. The recommendation was based on the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2019).

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the building recording was prepared by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT 2022) and agreed with the HEA. All work was carried out in accordance with this WSI.

All work was carried out according to standards and practices contained in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (2014a), *Standard and guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (2014b), *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (Historic England 2015), *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) and *Research and Archaeology Revised: A Revised Framework for the East of England* (EAA 24). In addition, the guidelines contained in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (Historic England 2016) were followed.

3 Aims

The aim of the building recording was to provide a detailed record and assessment of the outbuilding prior to its conversion. The building recording was carried out to Level 2 (Historic England 2016) which is defined as:

"...a descriptive record, made in similar circumstances to Level 1 but when more information is needed. It may be made of a building which is judged not to require a more detailed record, or it may serve to gather data for a wider project. Both the exterior and interior of the building will be seen, described and photographed. The examination of the building will produce an analysis of its development and use and the record will include the conclusions reached, but it will not discuss in detail the evidence on which this analysis is based. A plan and sometimes other drawings may be made but the drawn record will normally not be comprehensive and may be tailored to the scope of a wider project."

In particular the record considered the:

- Plan form of the site.
- Materials and method of construction.
- Date(s) of the structure.
- Original function and layout.
- Original and later fixtures and fittings.
- Significance of the site in its immediate local context.

4 Methodology

The following are included in this report:

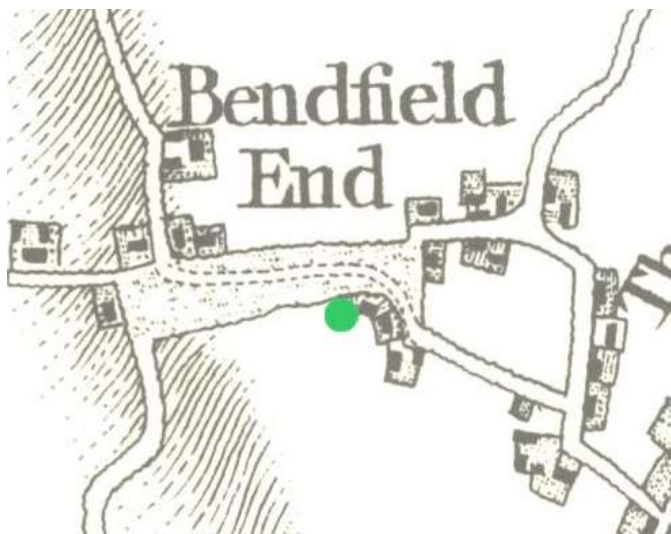
- A documentary, cartographic and pictorial survey of the evidence pertaining to the history and evolution of the site.
- A large-scale block plan of the site.
- Annotated and phased floor-plan of the building at a scale of 1:50.
- A description of the building. The description addresses features such as materials, dimensions, method of construction and phasing.
- A photographic record, comprising digital photographs of both general shots and individual features. Selected examples of the photographic record are clearly tied into the drawn record and reproduced as fully annotated photographic plates supporting the text. The photographic record is accompanied by a photographic register detailing location and direction of shot (Appendix 1).

5 Historical background (Fig 1)

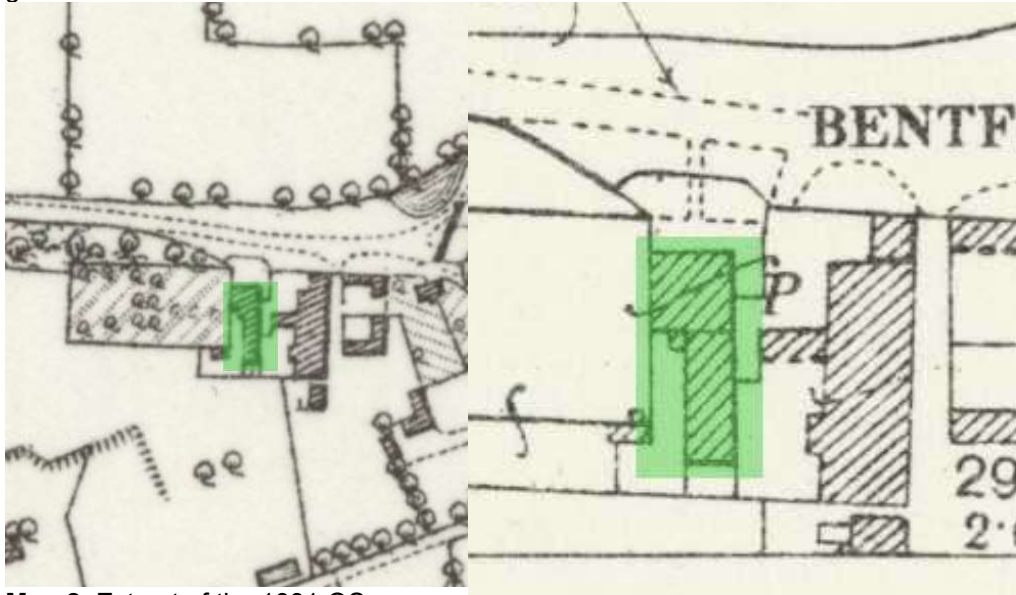
The following background includes extracts of the Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessed via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

Bentfield Green Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building (NHLE 1221309) situated within the Bentfield Green Conservation Area. It is an eighteenth-century two-storey red brick house with parapet and modern additions. It has a symmetrical façade of three bays with 6/6 vertical sliding sash windows with a central doorway. The double-pitched roof is covered with plain tiles. A wing extends to the south, which also has a plain tile roof.

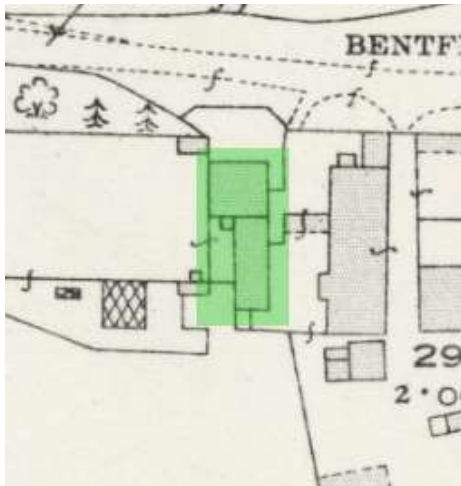
While there are buildings present in the sites location on the 1777 Chapman and André map it is unclear whether these represent Bentfield Farmhouse (Map 1). The house is present on the 1875 OS map (Map 2). The size and shape of Bentfield Green Farmhouse remains largely unchanged until a modern extension was added in 2015.



Map 1 Extract of the 1777 Chapman and André map. Site location highlighted in green.



Map 2 Extract of the 1881 OS map. Bentfield Green Farmhouse highlighted in green.



Map 3 Extract of the 1896 OS map. Bentfield Green Farmhouse highlighted in green.



Map 4 Extract of the 1920 OS map. Bentfield Green Farmhouse highlighted in green.

Map 5 Extract of the 1951 OS Map. Bentfield Green Farmhouse highlighted in green.

6 Building recording descriptive record (Fig 2)

The cellar is approximately 6m by 5m and is located below the lounge and hall of the house. The walls are constructed of red brick (brick measurement: 230 x 60 x 100mm) laid in English-bond and are covered in a thick coat of white paint. There is a modern concrete skim on the lower 0.92m of the walls, also painted white. The floor is modern concrete.

A brick arch is located on the northern wall. The arch is supported on straight brick piers. While it is clear the bricks used to construct the arch are not incorporated into the cellar wall, it is unclear if the rest of the structure is built into the wall or not. The arch also has a concrete skim on the outer surfaces, similar to the rest of the cellar walls. There is damage to the eastern side of the structure and at the top of the arch.



Photograph 1 Interior of cellar. Photograph taken facing east.



Photograph 2 Interior shot of cellar. Photograph taken facing south-west.

To the west of the arch is a modern staircase, which leads up into the kitchen of the house. The stairs are constructed from modern red brick with a timber tread. A modern cupboard is located in the north-west corner.

The eastern wall has a single timber door, which opens onto a set of external concrete steps. A modern sump pump is also present the south-west corner.

The southern wall has a single-light fixed inserted window with a timber lintel. The majority of the rest of this wall is obscured by modern cupboards. The western wall is a plain brick wall.

One original north-south bridging beam is present, which is supported by a modern post. A later bridging beam is located to the west of the original beam, and is supported by two modern posts. This beam does not extend to the full width of the room due to the staircase and cellar entrance.



Photograph 3 Detail of the arch. Photograph taken facing north.



Photograph 4 Detail of interior stairs. Photograph taken facing north.



Photograph 5 Detail of window. Photograph taken facing south.



Photograph 6 Detail of original bridging beam. Photograph taken facing south-west.



Photograph 7 Detail of eastern door. Photograph taken facing east.

7 Discussion

The 18th century saw the meeting of the medieval and modern worlds, where the majority of people still lived and worked on the land but improvements in agriculture and industry were bringing new benefits, mainly to the aristocracy who lavished their wealth upon country houses and urban properties (Yorke, 2008).

Georgian houses are typically large with an elegant, symmetrical façade. The layout of the domestic house changed subtly over the Georgian period, with homeowners looking to keep a more respectable distance between the family and the servants. This meant many houses were built with a kitchen and/or scullery in a full depth cellar. Rather than entering through the main door, the staff could climb down the main steps in the area at the front or side which permitted light and air to enter these subterranean spaces (Yorke, 2012).

To build a house with a cellar it is necessary to find a well-drained piece of land. After digging down to depth the cellar walls would have been constructed using brick or stone. The floors may have then been built-up and levelled using crushed stone or sand and then paved with flagstones or bricks (Maybank, 2008).

The exterior of Bentfield Green Farmhouse is very typically Georgian, with a large symmetrical frontage with a plain parapet. The layout of the house is conventional for a Georgian house – with large reception rooms on the ground floor and a number of bedrooms on the first floor. In comparison the cellar is relatively small in size, perhaps indicating that its original purpose was merely for storage. However, due to the access

from both inside the house and outside the house use as a small kitchen area cannot be ruled out.

From the exterior it can be seen that the chimney has four chimney pots, an indication that there would have been four working fireplaces as part of this chimney. Typically, the fireplaces would have been located back-to-back on an interior wall. Two fireplaces are still open today, in the kitchen and in the bedroom above the kitchen (Homeowner, *pers comm*). It is likely that the other two fireplaces would have been located in the rooms adjacent to the kitchen and bedroom. It seems likely, then, that the arch in the cellar has never been used as a fireplace.

It is unclear whether the structure of the arch is incorporated into the walls of the cellar. If the cellar is original to the building, then it was simply built to provide strength to the chimney breast and fireplaces on the ground and first floors. If the cellar is a later addition, then the piers and arch were inserted to prevent the collapse of the existing chimney stack. Intrusive work to the existing brickwork and the removal of the many layers of white paint would be needed to answer this question definitively.

8 Acknowledgements

Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to thank David Jones (Alun Design Consultancy) for commissioning and the homeowner for funding the historic building recording. The recording was carried out by Sarah Veasey. Figures are by Sarah Veasey, based on original architects drawings by Alun Design Consultancy Ltd. The project was monitored by Katie Lee-Smith for Essex County Council. The text was reviewed by Philip Crummy, director of CAT.

9 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

CAT	2022	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an historic building recording of a cellar at Bentfield Green Farmhouse, Bentfield Green, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex, CM24 8TH</i> by S Veasey
CIfA	2014a (updated 2019)	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
CIfA	2014b (updated 2019)	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures</i>
MHCLG	2019	<i>National planning policy framework</i>
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> East Anglian Archaeological occasional papers 14 by D. Gurney
EAA 24	2011	<i>Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeological occasional papers 24 by M Medlycott
ECCPS	2022	<i>Brief for Historic Building Recording at Bentfield Green farm, Stansted</i> By K Lee-Smith
Historic England	2015	<i>MoRPHE: Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i>
Historic England	2016	<i>Understanding Historic Buildings. A guide to good recording practice</i>
Maybank, G	2008	'Damp Below Ground' in <i>The Building Conservation Directory 2008</i>
T Yorke	2008	<i>British Architectural Styles: An Easy Reference Guide</i>
T Yorke	2012	<i>British Interior House Styles: An Easy Reference Guide</i>

10 Abbreviations and glossary

binding-beam	a large timber running from post-to-post and providing intermediate support to floor-joists
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by the ECC
ERO	Essex Records Office
English-bond	a brickwork bond created from alternate courses of headers and stretchers
Georgian	the reigns of kings George I - IV and William IV, from 1714 to 1837
HE	Historic Environment
header	a brick laid at right-angles to the face of the wall, i.e. widthways
joist	a horizontal timber that supports floorboards above. Will sometimes carry boarded or plastered ceilings
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	O nline A ccess to the I ndex of A rchaeological I nvestigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
post	in wall frames vertical members which rise the full height of the frame, being either principal posts at the bay divisions or intermediate posts within the bay
stretcher	a brick laid parallel to the face of the wall, i.e. lengthways

11 Archive deposition

The archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Saffron Waldon museum under accession code SAFWM:2022.7.

12 Contents of archive

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:
The report (CAT Report 1790)
Original site record (plans and notes)
Site digital photos and log

Digital record

The CAT WSI
The report (CAT Report 1790)
Digital plans
Site digital photos and log

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Distribution list

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EHER



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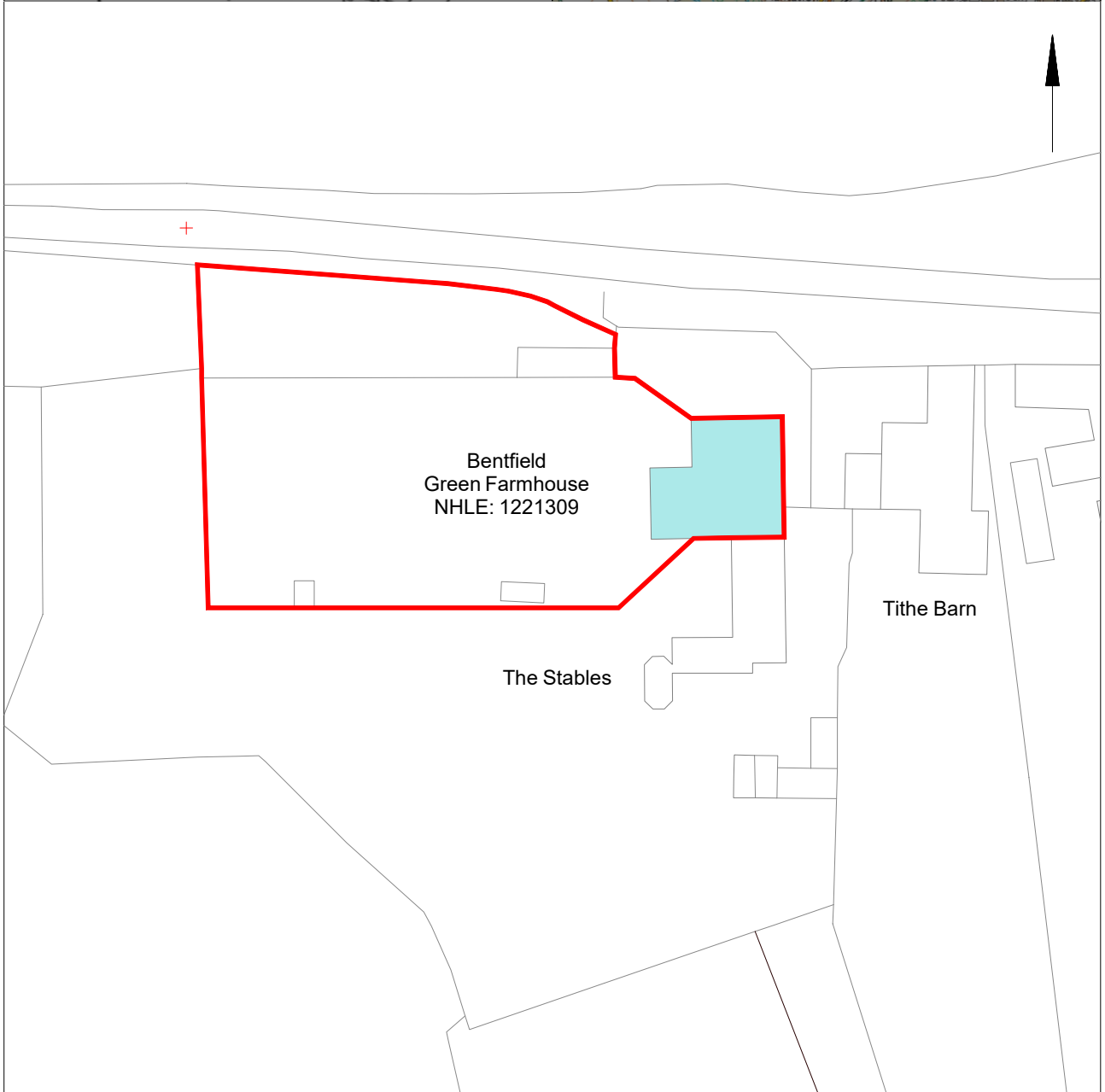
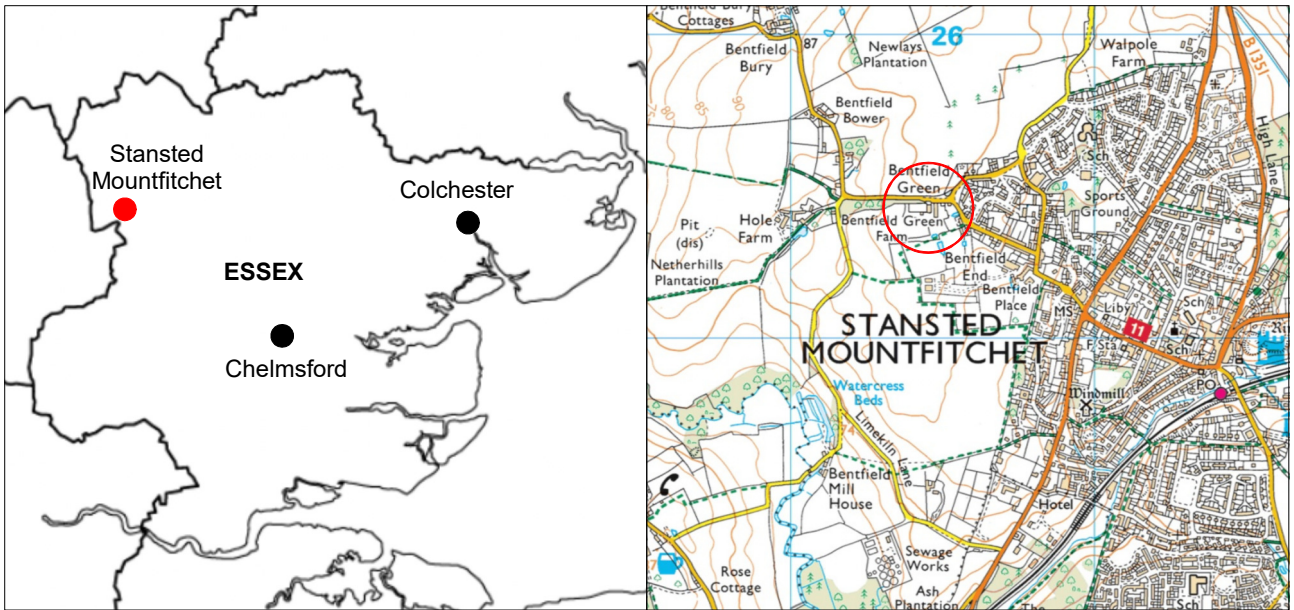
email: sv@catuk.org

checked by: Philip Crummy
date:

Appendix 1:

Full digital photographic record

SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Interior shot of cellar. Photograph taken facing south-west
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Interior shot of cellar. Photograph taken facing south south-west
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Interior shot of cellar. Photograph taken facing north-east
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Interior shot of cellar. Photograph taken facing north north-east.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail shot of damage to fireplace. Photograph taken facing north-west.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of bricks in damaged area of fireplace arch. Photograph taken facing north-west.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of arch. Photograph taken facing north.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of arch. Photograph taken facing north.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of arch. Photograph taken facing north-east.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of arch. Photograph taken facing north-east.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of arch. Photograph taken facing north-east.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Interior shot of cellar. Photograph taken facing east.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of interior stairs. Photograph taken facing north.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of interior stairs. Photograph taken facing north.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of window. Photograph taken facing south.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of fireplace. Photograph taken facing north-west.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of fireplace. Photograph taken facing north.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of timber lintel above window. Photograph taken facing south.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of original bridging beam. Photograph taken facing south-west.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Interior entrance to cellar. Photograph taken facing south.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of mortices in door frame. Photograph taken north.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of modern sump pump area. Photograph taken facing south.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of interior timber above external door. Photograph taken facing east south-east.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of interior of external door. Photograph taken facing east.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Detail of fireplace. Photograph taken facing north.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Exterior of Bentfield Green Farmhouse. Photograph taken facing south.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Exterior shot of Bentfield Green Farmhouse. Photograph taken facing south-west.
SAFWM2022.7_BGSM22_Photo	Exterior of Bentfield Green Farmhouse. Photograph taken facing south-east.



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Fig 1 Site location.



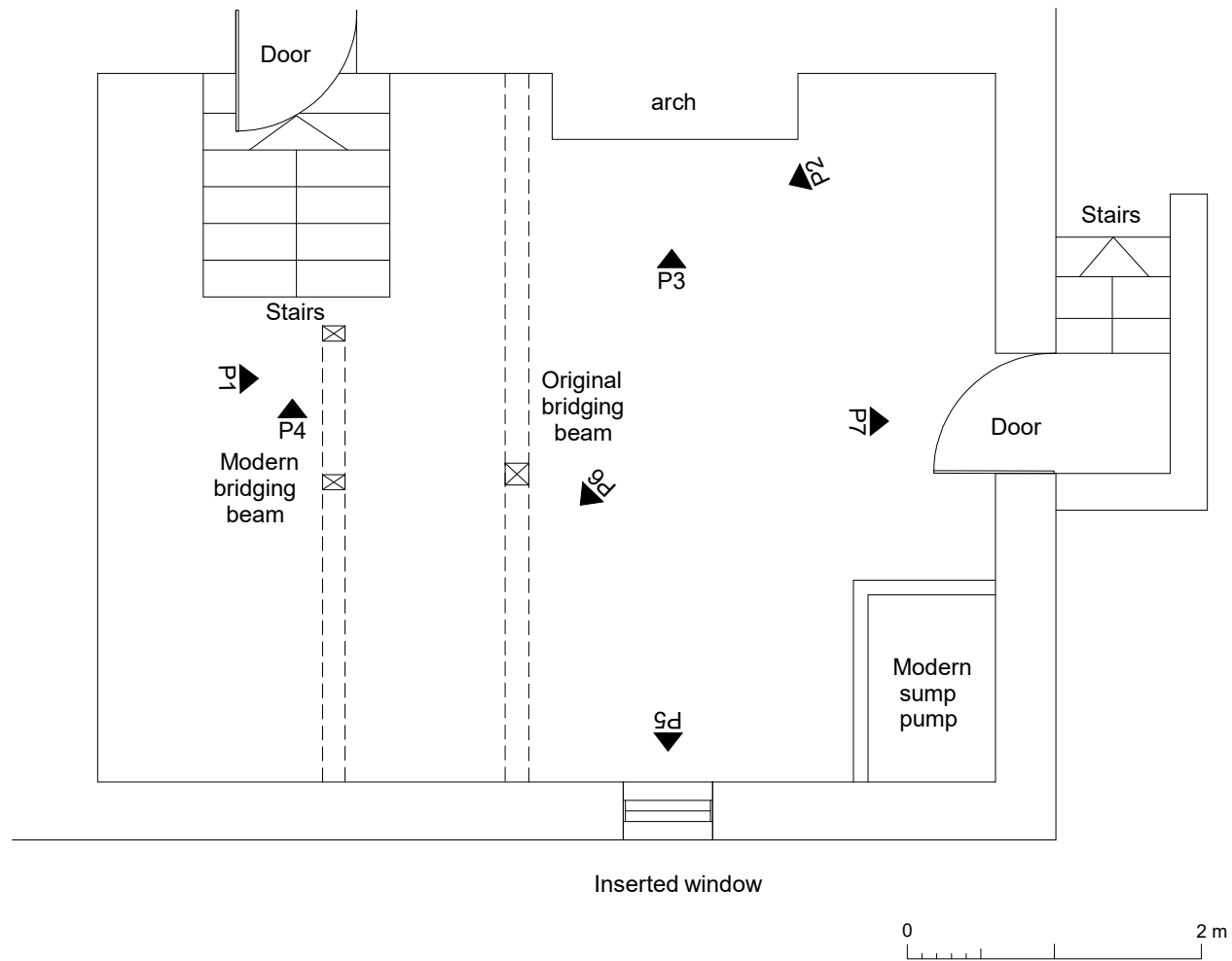


Fig 2 Cellar floor plan. Location and direction of photographs reproduced in text shown.