

# A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvements

TR010044

Volume 9

## 9.18 Brook Cottages Technical Note

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Rule 8(1)(k)

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**The Infrastructure Planning  
(Examination Procedure) Rules 2010**

**A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet  
improvements  
Development Consent Order 202[ ]**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This Technical Note has been prepared by Highways England (the Applicant) following a joint meeting held on 23 June 2021 with Historic England and Bedford Borough Council concerning the effects of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvement Scheme (the Scheme) on Brook Cottages, a Grade II listed building comprising two cottages.
- 1.1.2 At the meeting, Historic England asked the Applicant to undertake further analysis of Brook Cottages. This was carried out during a non-intrusive visual inspection of Brook Cottages on 23 July 2021. The purpose of the visit was to obtain further details regarding the condition of the structure, and to supplement the findings of an earlier heritage appraisal undertaken in March 2018 (the outcomes of which are reported in the Brook Cottages Heritage Appraisal **[APP-178]**).
- 1.1.3 Historic England requested that the Applicant submit the findings of its visual inspection into the Examination. This Technical Note accordingly responds to this request and reports those findings.

## 1.2 Analysis

- 1.2.1 The Brook Cottages Heritage Appraisal **[APP-178]** undertaken in March 2018 involved a rapid visual survey to undertake an initial assessment of the cottages.
- 1.2.2 At the time of undertaking the visual inspection of the property on 23 July 2021, No. 2 Brook Cottages was vacant which enabled a more in-depth survey. No. 1 Brook Cottages was still occupied; therefore, only a rapid visual inspection was possible. No intrusive survey was undertaken as part of the visit as permission from the landowner had not been granted.

## 2 Research

- 2.1.1 The research undertaken for the Brook Cottages Heritage Appraisal [**APP-178**], as well as further research conducted for this report, concluded that Brook Cottages was constructed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as labourers' cottages for Bridge Farm, located to the north of the building, within Chawston village. The first map depiction of Brook Cottages comes with the first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) of 1882. This shows the cottages alongside the Great North Road. The Great North Road is an historic route, in parts following the alignment of a Roman road. The road was certainly in place when the cottages were constructed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.1.2 Earlier maps, notably the Roxton Tithe map of 1813 (see **Figure 2-1**) and Roxton Park Estate map of 1850 (see **Figure 2-2**), do not depict the cottages; however, they do show the Great North Road following its present alignment. They also show that much of the surrounding land was owned by the Cambridge Colleges, presumably rented out as agricultural land. Not only are the cottages not shown, but little else appears, with the exception of some scattered buildings along Chawston Lane, including Bridge Farm. The omission of Brook Cottages is likely to be due to the ownerships reflected rather than an accurate depiction of what existed. The fact that Bridge Farm is depicted in the ownership of Susan Rugeley, while the plot of land upon which Brook Cottages stands was owned by James Ford, does suggest that there was no link between the two at this stage.

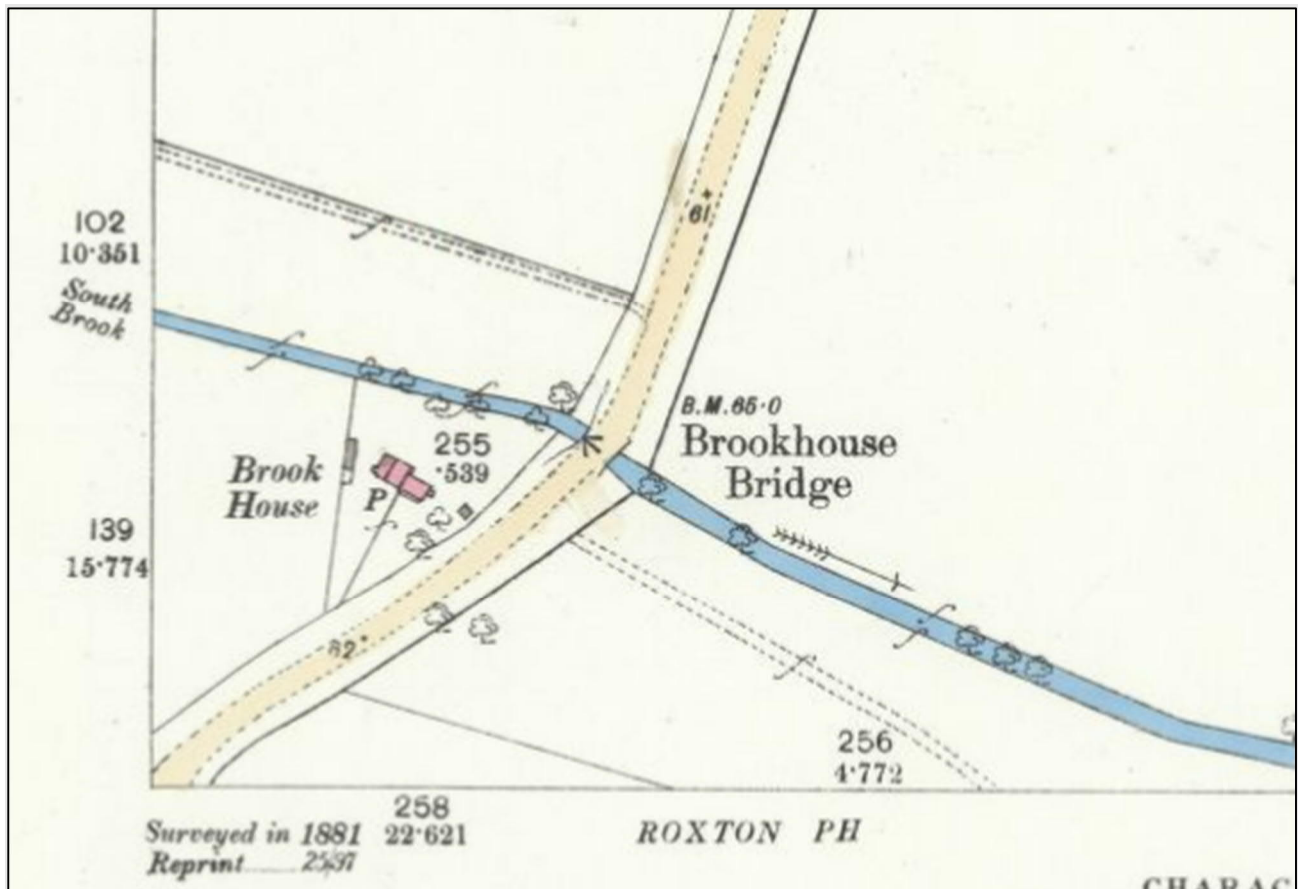


Figure 2-1: Roxton Tithe map of 1813



**Figure 2-2: Roxton Park Estate map of 1850**

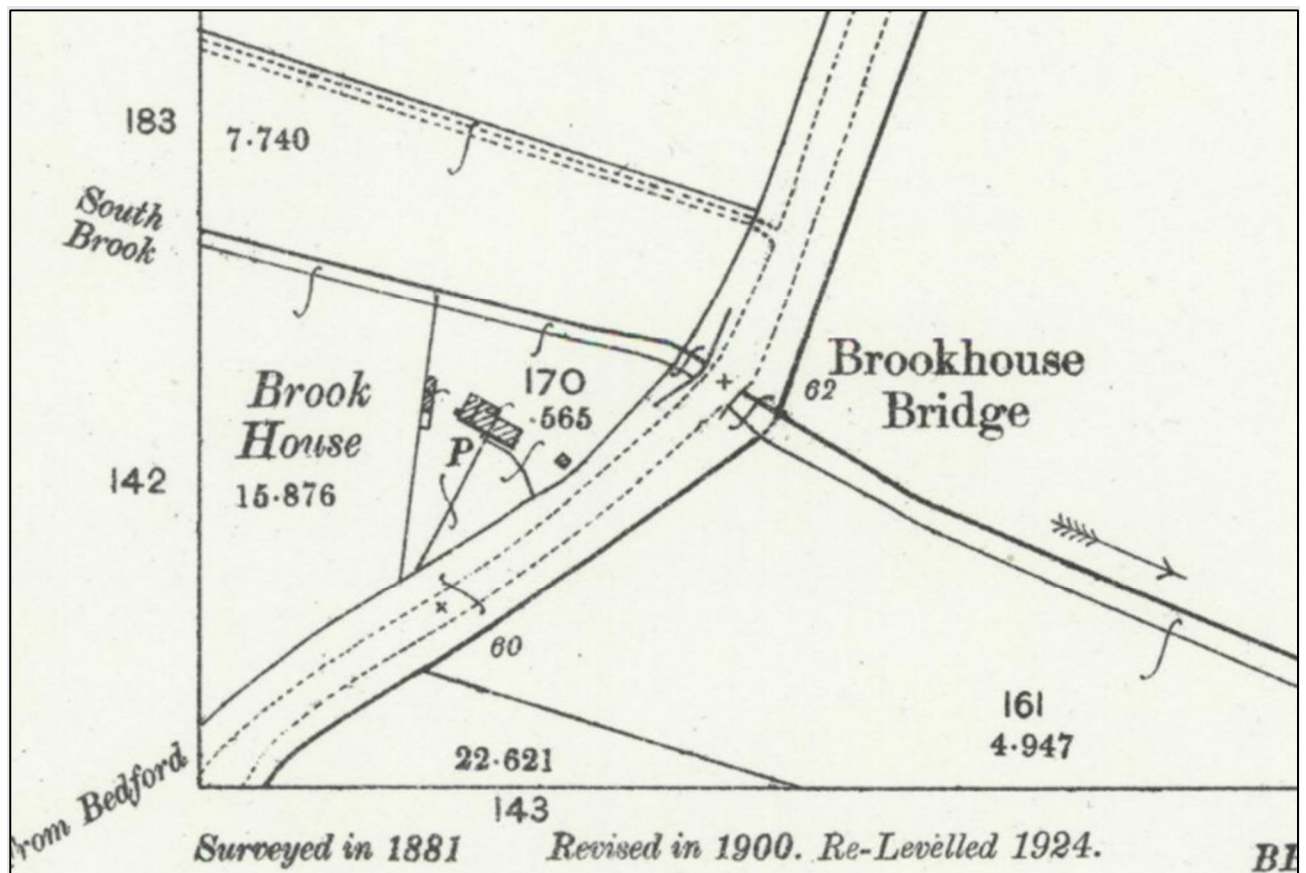
- 2.1.3 On the 1882 Ordnance Survey (OS) map (see **Figure 2-3**), the building is labelled as Brook House but is clearly shown divided into three properties set within a triangular piece of land roughly following the existing plot. The division in the properties suggests that No.1 Brook Cottages was the larger of the three, occupying its present footprint. No.2 in contrast was divided into two properties. This is supported by the physical evidence (described below). In addition, No.2 also appears to project further north than No.1. This may suggest that the rear outshut is at least 19<sup>th</sup> century in date.



**Figure 2-3: 1882 Ordnance Survey map**

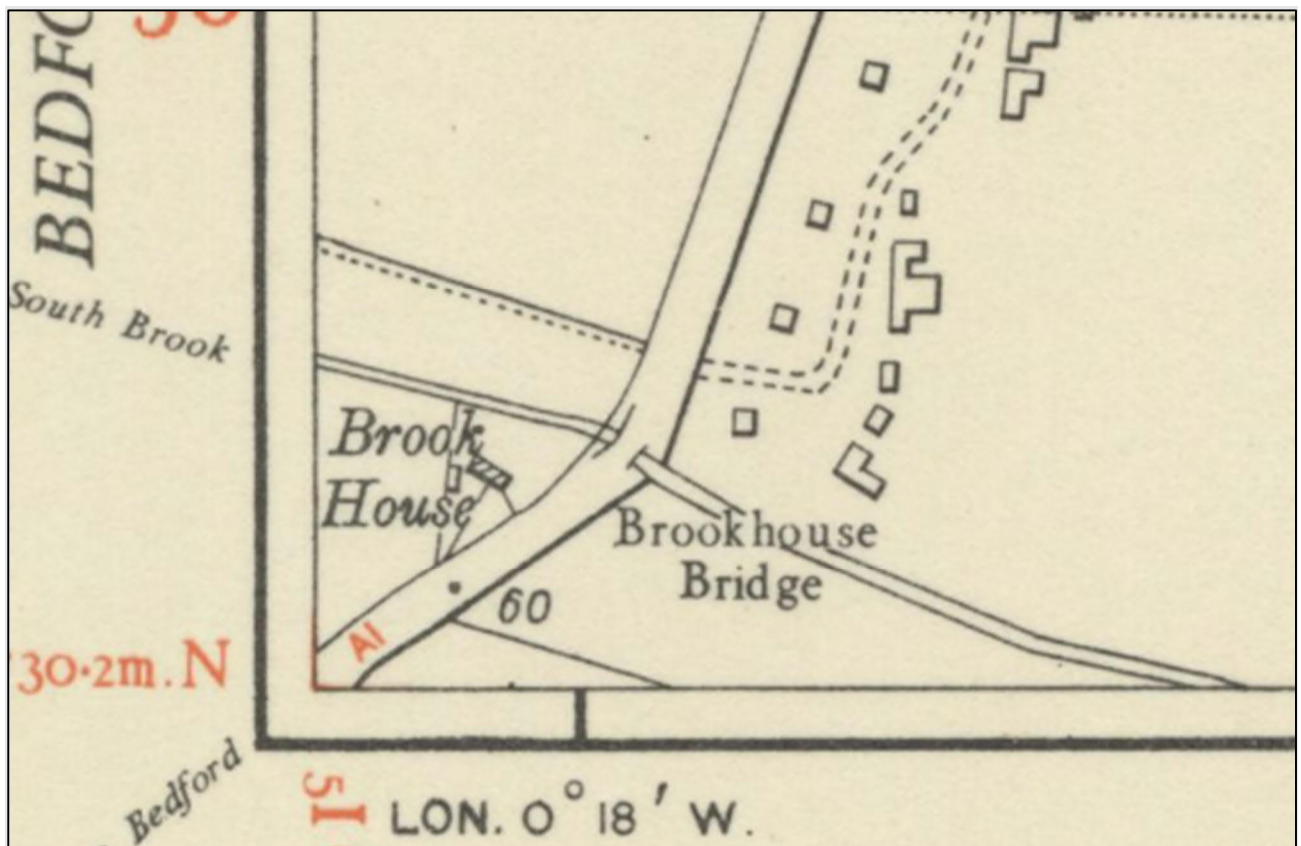
2.1.4 The 1882 OS map also shows that the proximity to the main road has changed, with Brook House shown set further away than it is from the existing A1 dual carriageway. The brook ('South Brook') to the north is clearly shown with Brookhouse Bridge carrying the Great North Road over it to the east. Bridge Farm is shown to the northwest, surrounded by fields and set back from the road, which later became the A1. There is no clear link between the two.





**Figure 2-4: 1900 Ordnance Survey map**

- 2.1.5 The arrangement had not changed by the drafting of the second edition of the OS map in 1900 (see **Figure 2-4**). However, the record of the building under the Rating and Valuation Act of 1925 identifies the building as two dwellings owned by Harry A Dalton, the farmer at Bridge Farm. At this date it was divided into two dwellings with pigsty and store barn also on the plot (since removed). The building remains in the ownership of the Dalton family who have confirmed the association with Bridge Farm. The cottage was provided for farm labourers and fell within the farmland which stretched east as far as the river.
- 2.1.6 By 1950 (see **Figure 2-5**), new buildings appeared to the east of the Great North Road, but Brook House remained isolated within an area of open fields.
- 2.1.7 It is not until 1968 that any significant change appears. By this date, upgrades have been undertaken to the main road which has been brought closer to the cottage. As part of this, the Black Cat Roundabout and services had also been constructed. The cottage remains labelled as Brook House, with Brook house Bridge to the north, but a footpath from Bridge House had been diverted to enter Brook House from the north.



**Figure 2-5: 1950 Ordnance Survey map**

- 2.1.8 The upgrade to the Great North Road (to become the A1) took place in the 1960s. While this retained the relationship with Bridge Farm to the northwest, it changed the character of the setting of Brook Cottages. The road encroached upon the gardens, removing a strip along the eastern edge, bringing the traffic closer to the building. The introduction of the dual carriageway also increased the amount of traffic, resulting in increased noise and visual intrusions into the setting of the cottages.
- 2.1.9 The existing A1 is very busy with high levels of moving traffic, resulting in significant aural intrusion to both the interior and the exterior of Brook Cottages. The increased traffic has also resulted in increased local air pollution, which is likely to have led to a decline in the condition of the building fabric (to be confirmed through the proposed intrusive survey).
- 2.1.10 To the north of the plot the vegetation has also increased with dense planting alongside the brook, continuing to the west. Much of this planting, particularly to the south of Brook Cottages, is effective in screening it from the industrial site which was constructed in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century on former open fields.

## 3 Visual Inspection

- 3.1.1 Currently, Brook Cottages is a pair of cottages dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The listing description<sup>1</sup> identifies them as “*colour washed rough cast over timber frame. Single storey plus attics with a half-hipped thatched roof containing four dormers with 2-light casements*”. It also notes “*plank doors to both cottages, with 20<sup>th</sup> century pantiled gabled porch. One red brick double ridge stack at divide, external stacks to both gable ends. Various 20<sup>th</sup> century one storey additions are noted to the rear*”.
- 3.1.2 The Applicant’s visual inspection undertaken on 23 July 2021 confirmed the overall form of Brook Cottages, with the following enhancements (described below).
- 3.1.3 The south façade contains two entrance doors, both of 20<sup>th</sup> century plank wood construction in stable door style (Plate 1). The entrance door to No.2 has a 20<sup>th</sup> century pantile gabled porch. Each door is off-centre, providing access directly into a room rather than an entrance hall. Within No.2 there is evidence in the external render for a blocked doorway adjacent to the west window, supporting the evidence that this was originally two dwellings (Plate 2). No such evidence is present to No.1. Each cottage has two windows to each floor. These are early 20<sup>th</sup> century 6-light wooden casements. These windows are repeated at first floor as eaves (‘eyebrow’) windows (i.e. sitting on the top of the wall). Under each window is a sloping sill board.
- 3.1.4 Also notable on the south elevation are the remains of a centrally placed water pump (Plates 3 and 4). Some cement repair has been made where the pump has been removed from the wall; however, a small patch of lost render above reveals part of the timber frame with evidence for lath and daub infill present. It also shows the use of nails to fix the horizontal rail to the upright.
- 3.1.5 The gable ends feature battered stacks (Plates 5 and 6). That to the east is flanked by an inserted fixed window and has been rebuilt in red brick. The chimneys rise above the half-hipped roof. In addition to the gable stacks is a central chimney. All three only provide heat to the ground floor.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1311862>

- 3.1.6 The rear (north) elevation represents a collection of brick outshots added variously throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 7). The earliest, probably dating to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, are to No. 2 and are single storey under sloping pantile roofs (Plate 8). These house the kitchens internally. Each have a combination of fixed timber windows suggesting different phases of insertion. Centrally placed between these are later bathroom extensions. These project further than the kitchens with roofs which slope perpendicular to them. Those to No.1 and No.2 appear to have been constructed at different dates.
- 3.1.7 There are no windows to the upper floor in the rear elevation.
- 3.1.8 From an external inspection the thatch appears to be long straw, consistent with Bedfordshire tradition. The ornamental block ridge detail is also common to the eastern thatch tradition.
- 3.1.9 Internally, both cottages follow the same plan form. They are entered directly into one of two ground-floor rooms, with a second room leading directly off. These occupy the original footprint of the building. The first room also provides access to the rear extensions with a kitchen running east-west and a bathroom projection. The stairs are arranged along the rear elevation and lead directly into an upstairs room. Leading off from the first is a second bedroom.
- 3.1.10 No. 2 Brook Cottages was vacant at the time of visit; therefore, greater detail was gained in its arrangement and surviving features. The cottage is accessed into the eastern room. This appears to be the most intact. Within the eastern elevation is a large inglenook fireplace with timber lintel. A smaller fireplace has been inserted and subsequently a wood burning stove added with brick hearth (Plate 9). To the north is a brick lined bread oven with intact iron door and brick and plaster projection (Plates 10 to 12). To the south side of the fireplace is a narrow cupboard (Plate 13). Within this is evidence of the external wall construction with visible sill plate with roughly hewn close-studding. Horizontal rails on this framing appear to have been applied later, although the exposure of a larger proportion of the frame would be required to confirm this. A wall post is also visible, as is the support beam for the first floor, although it is not clear due to access restrictions if this is integrated or a ledge.
- 3.1.11 On the north elevation there is a, probably, inserted door and window giving access to the kitchen in the later outshot (Plate 14). The stair is also located on this wall in the northwest corner of the room within a plank board enclosure (Plate 15). The stair is quarter turn and an under-stair cupboard reveals a simple plank construction (Plate 17). Within the stairwell the frame is visible with thin close studs and intermediate beam (Plate 16).

- 3.1.12 The doorway into the second room is inserted. The sill reveals empty mortices, supporting the theory that No.2 was originally two cottages (Plate 18). The room itself is a single open space with inserted fireplace in the west elevation (Plate 19). To the east of the window in the south elevation there is some evidence of a former doorway, although it is not clear. Further evidence for separation is located in the northeast corner where the plasterwork in the ceiling is different, suggesting the possible location of a former stair (Plate 20). Within the ceiling is a central cross beam and the wall plates are visible to south and north. In the north elevation is an inserted doorway into the rear extension. The extension itself has modern kitchen fittings, although was predominantly used as a store to the west end. Of note is the brick floor, with a distinct change in level to access the later bathroom extension (Plate 21).
- 3.1.13 The upper floor is divided into two rooms, directly accessed from each other. The main bedroom is to the east (Plate 22). The large chimney breast is evident in the east elevation, although there is no evidence of a fireplace (Plate 23). A small cupboard flanks this to the north. This provides the best evidence of the roof structure with closely spaced common rafters carried over the wall plate (Plate 24). However, the junction between the two is concealed by plaster. The purlins are also not visible.
- 3.1.14 A four-panel door leads into the second bedroom (Plate 25). The arrangement of this matches the first, but without the chimney breast. Lifting the carpet also revealed a wooden floor (Plate 26).
- 3.1.15 No.1 Brook Cottages was still in occupation at the time of the Applicant's visit and only a limited visual survey could be undertaken. The arrangement matched No. 2 Brook Cottages. Notable differences are the absence of any mortices in the adjoining doorway at ground-floor level, suggesting that this cottage was never subdivided. The stair is also slightly different with access from the main room to the west, but the stair itself, and its enclosure, are located in the second room.

## 4 Photography

4.1.1 Plates 1 to 29 present photographs of the interior and exterior of Brook Cottages taken during the Applicant's visual survey and inspection.

### Plate

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1

South façade with No.1 to the east and No.2 to the west

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Plate

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- 2 Western bay of south façade showing window arrangement. To the right of the window is evidence for a former entrance door suggesting this was once two dwellings.

Plate

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3 Remains of water pump attached to south façade. Area of cement repair below.



Plate

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4      Damage caused by removal of pump showing remains of horizontal beam and lath and daub infill.

Plate

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5

West gable elevation with external chimney

Plate

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6

East gable elevation with external chimney and inserted window.

Plate

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- 
- 7 Rear (north) elevation showing outshots. The central projections house the sanitary facilities and are of a later date to the flanking catslide extensions.

Plate



8

Detail of outshot to No.2

Plate



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9

Fireplace in main room to No.2 with inserted fireplace and stove

Plate

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10

Bread oven in No.2

Plate

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11

Door detail to bread oven in No.2



Plate



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12

Interior of bread oven in No.2 with later gas pipes running through

Plate

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13

Framing detail visible in cupboard to south of fireplace in No.2

Plate



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14

Inserted door and window into kitchen extension of No.2

Plate

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15

Stair enclosure in No.2

Plate



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16

Detail of framing visible in stairwell of No.2

Plate

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17

Under stairs cupboard in No.2 showing stair construction

Plate

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- 18 Threshold to second ground-floor room in No.2. Cill beam contains empty mortices supporting evidence that this was previously two dwellings.

Plate



19

Second ground-floor room to No.2



Plate

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20

Patched area in ceiling of No.2 suggesting location of former stair

Plate

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21

Brick floor to outshot in No.2

Plate



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22

Upstairs main room to No.2

Plate

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23

Projecting chimney breast to No. 2

Plate

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24 Framing detail visible in cupboard to north of chimney breast in no.2. Shows purlins and wall plate.

Plate

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25

Panel door to second bedroom in No.2

Plate

