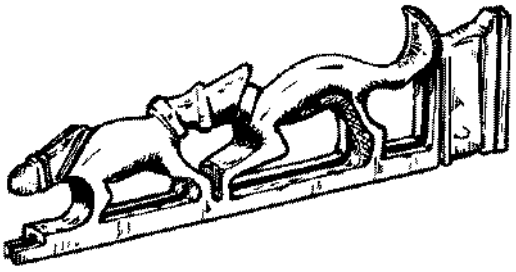
Ampthill & District Archaeological



& Local History Society

40 & 42 High Street Toddington

A Brief Photographic Survey

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Toftrees: 40 & 42 High Street Toddington.

These semi-detached properties were listed in 1980 by the Department of the Environment as Grade 11, of special interest. They were described as originally built in the 17th century, the buildings are of white-washed rough cast and brick, with a clay tile roof.

The present owners of the houses Mr. & Mrs. J. Little invited me to look round No 42 and take some photographs in 2003. There was a tenant in No 40 at that time. In 2008 I was able to photograph inside No 40 as it had become vacant and was able to see an object of archaeological interest the owner had found when repairing the wall at the top of the cellar steps in No 42. This report contains the photographs taken during the visits, I have taken the opportunity to see if the date ascribed to the house was accurate and compared it with other properties in the immediate area which have been published.



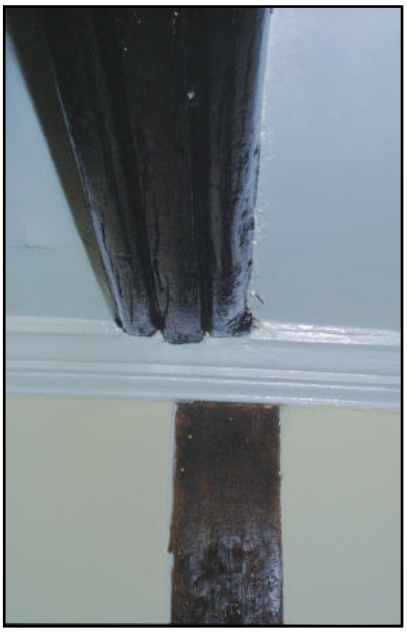
Ph 1. Front Elevation of the houses, with a single cross wing on Number 42. Number 40 is partially hidden by the hedge. The roof line between the two houses appears consistent but the height of the cross wing ridge is lower. The chimney stack in the main house is obviously shared with Number 40.



Ph 2. Front and side elevation of the cross wing, the timber frame is typical of a 17th century house.



Ph 3. Rear of cross wing, Number 42. The chimney stack does not adjoin the main house.



Ph 4. Main beam in lounge, of late 16th century form.



Ph 5. Bookcase in sitting room of Georgian style.



Ph 6. Exposed timber in the sitting room, the main beam is typical 17th century.



Ph 7. Vertical timber of almost half cruck post proportions at top of stairs.



Ph 8. Cross wing bedroom wall with possible evidence of a raised ceiling.



Ph 9. Cross wing bedroom wind braces.



Ph 10. Cross wing bedroom wind braces.



Ph 11. Bedroom wall abutting the chimney, the cupboard door has late 17th century style hinges.

Significant features in Number 40.



Ph 12. An unusual projection on the front corner of number 40. This houses the bottom of a newel staircase



Ph 13. Landing at top the newel staircase. Heavy timber beams above a casement window.



Ph 14. Casement window, cockspur catch with matching stay - Early 18th c.



Ph 15. Heavy timber brace on the landing.



Ph 16. Plank and batten door.
Spear head strap hinge. Early 18th c.



Ph 17. Plank and batten door, with
Spear head strap hinge. Early 18th c.

Unusual artifact found under foundation of Number 42.



Ph 17. Lounge wall in number 42 with Georgian style boards forming a dado. The door leads to the cellar which is below the cross wing.



Ph 18. Top of cellar steps, above the "modern" brickwork. The sole plate of the lounge wall can be seen supported by rubble.



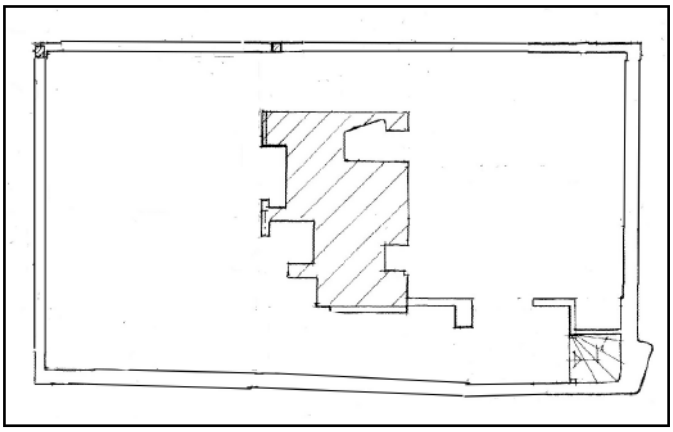
Ph 19. Cleaning away the rubble exposed the back of the lounge dado boards and a dressed piece of Totternhoe Stone under the sole plate.



Ph 20. The Totternhoe Stone was found to be a part of a window jamb from a gothic window. It's size suggests it came from a church.

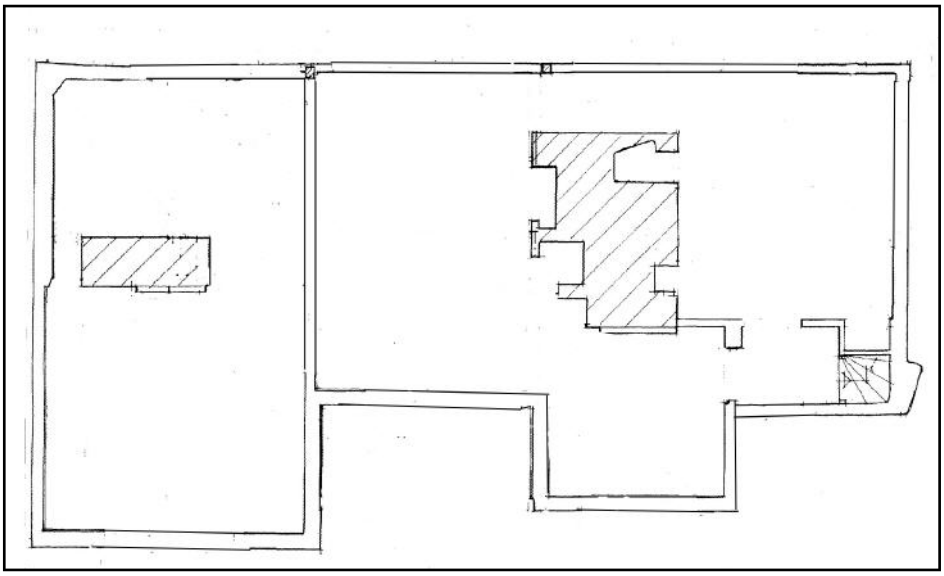
Suggested Development of Toftrees Toddington.

Fig 1. Phase 1



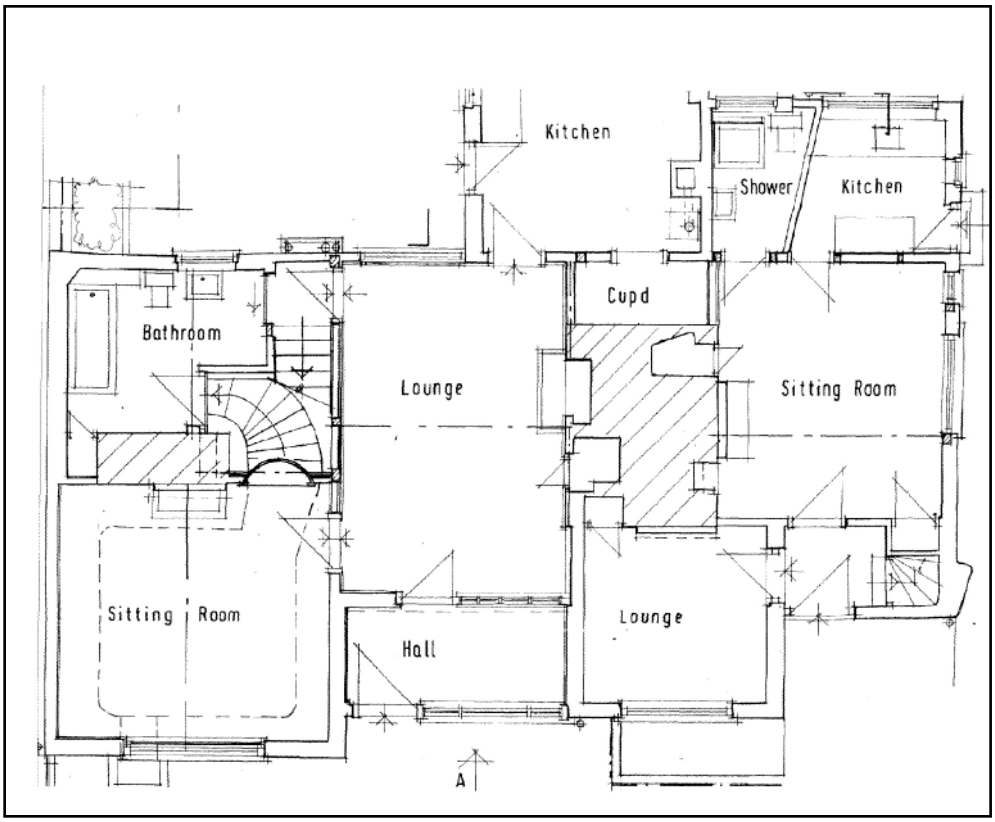
The massive chimney stack combined with a newel staircase built into the wall suggests work of the 16th century. If the building had been an earlier hall house, then the staircase would almost certainly have been part of the chimney stack. The equally massive vertical timber **Pho 7.** at the junction between the cross wing and the suggested original house is significant as it would have been the main corner of the earlier construction.

Fig 2. Phase 2



The single cross wing is of typical 17th century style with its own chimney stack, lighter construction than that of phase 1. The addition of the lounge in No 40 was probably built at the same time.

Fig 3. Phase 3



The Architect's ground floor drawing circa 1950 shows the general layout of the building today. It is semidetached with a further extension at the rear of No 40 for a kitchen and shower room, this would have been built when the property was divided into two. The hall is an obvious recent addition.



Map 1. Toddington is extremely fortunate to have a Ralph Agas map of Cheney's Palace and Estate as it was in 1581, a detail from the map (above) just covers the site of Toftrees and shows a rectangular building which could be the first stage of the suggested development. When the detail is superimposed on a modern aerial photo **Ph 21.** the amazing accuracy of the map is revealed.



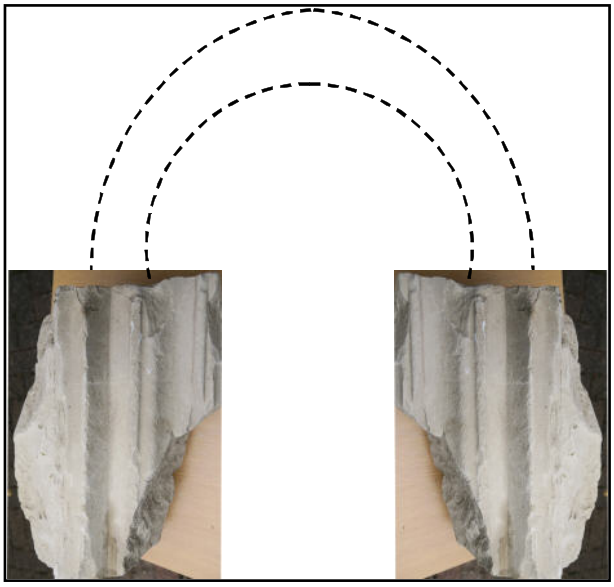
Ph. 21. An overlay of the 1581 Ralph Agas map centred on the church shows an amazing accuracy of roads and building layouts. The early buildings on the High Street suggest they were there when the map was produced or at the very least the housing plots were the same.

Significance of the Totternhoe Stone artifact.



Ph 22. Toddington Parish church of St. George.

Ph 23. Window jamb. (photo laterally inverted for illustration purposes).



Ph 24. Window jamb shown in suggested position (actual photo).

The carved Totternhoe Stone block is obviously from an ecclesiastic building, its shape suggests it was part of a gothic window jamb, the carving is crisp and clean. Precise dating is not possible, but the depth of cut suggests it was probably 14th century. The house where it was found is close to the magnificent Toddington church of St. George, which had Aisles added to the Nave in the 15th century, this would have necessitated the destruction of the earlier windows. Unfortunately, this artifact cannot be used to date the house as a number of renovations to the church over the years involved removing window tracery, so it is possible the original house walls could have been undermined during the digging out of the cellar, note the modern brickwork by the cellar steps, (**Ph 19.**) with the block apparently supporting the sole plate.

Conclusions

It was a great pleasure to look over this lovely house and be allowed to take photographs, it must be said that the visits were relatively brief and other items of interest are indubitably there but the photographs together with the architects ground plan give a fair indication that the earliest part of the building originated in the 16th century. The position of the house when compared with the Agas map reinforces that view. The major alteration was the cross wing which is typical of the 17th century with extensive timber construction of lighter weight. Cupboard doors and window fittings reflect a house in constant use and development.

A view of a report by Mr. Allan Higgs on Number 28 High Street showed timbers similar to those of Number 40, he has gathered in depth information on his building both architectural and historical which confirms it to be 16th century in origin. It is also clearly shows on the Agas Map .

The discovery of the Totternhoe stone tracery was a bonus, it is indubitably of ecclesiastic origin and the church of St George is only a short distance away. Alterations to the church, for example the addition of Aisles in the 15th century, plus many alterations through the years would have meant the destruction of earlier windows, making the availability of such artifacts possible. The insertion of the stone in the foundations of number 42 could have been at any time.

Acknowledgements and References.

I am very grateful to Mr. & Mrs. J. Little for allowing me to take photographs in their house.

Map 1. A detail from: Toddington - Cheney's Palace and Ralph Agas' map of 1581.
Ralph Agas, the Elizabethan surveyor, was commissioned by Henry Cheney to survey his estate at Toddington in 1581. The resulting map measured 11 ft 4 in. x 8 ft 6 in. and is one of the finest extant early field system maps, showing buildings and other features in meticulous detail. It is now held by the British Library.

All photographs were taken by the author except for **Ph 21.** taken from Google Earth Pro with the Agar Map of 1581 superimposed.

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