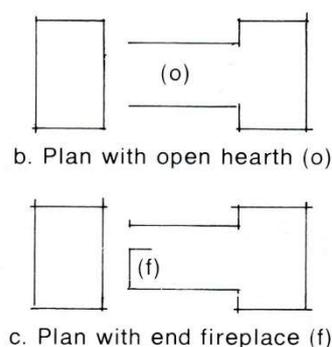
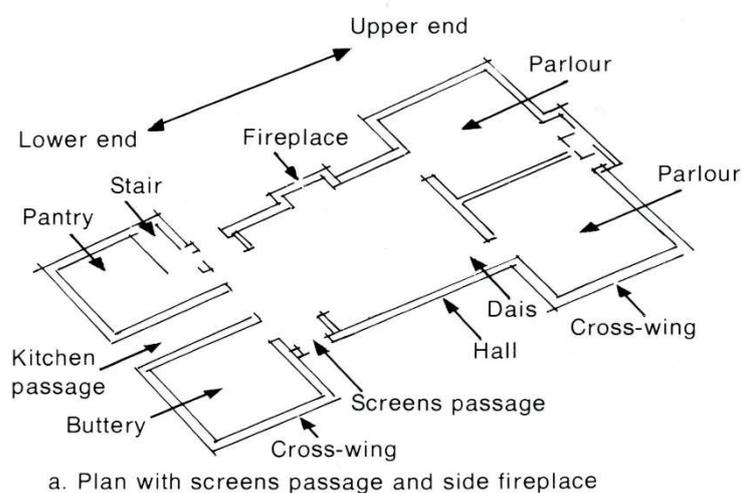


WHADDON FACT SHEET

No.2 – HISTORIC HOUSES

Hall Houses

In Fact Sheet No.1 reference was made to the number of medieval Manor houses that once existed in Whaddon. All these medieval Manor houses in the village would have been in the form of hall houses. While today we may think of a hall as just a passageway linking the front door to the staircase, in medieval times a hall meant something quite different. It was a large, double height space and open into the roof, where the majority of day-to-day living and entertaining took place. Hall houses were occupied by relatively wealthy families, who would have had a number of servants and employees, and they would all have lived communally in this one great space – privacy at that time was not considered important, and a room of your own was unheard of!



Plan showing a typical layout for a hall house, with variations on fireplace location

A hall house would be entered at one end of the hall, where there would usually be a screened passage to protect the hall from draughts. This cross-passage, sometimes referred to as a 'screens passage' would extend the full width of the hall and have a second door to the outside on the back elevation. Off this passage, on the opposite side from the hall, would be the service rooms, comprising kitchen, pantry and buttery where the food and drink were stored and the meals prepared. Sometimes these service rooms would be contained within a sideways extension to the hall, but often they would be located within a cross wing set at right angles to the hall, which projected forward of the hall. At the opposite end of the hall from the screens passage would be a raised dais, where the landowner, his family and guests would sit. This was called the 'upper end' of the hall, while the end nearest the service rooms was referred to as the 'lower end'. Some hall houses had a second cross wing beyond the upper end of the hall, which contain rooms for the family's private use (called parlours), with bed chambers on a first floor above.

Early halls would have had a fire lit on an open, central hearth, but with no chimney for the smoke, which was left to find its own way up and out through gaps in the roof. Later on fireplaces, with proper chimneys, were introduced to control the smoke and improve the living conditions in the hall. These fireplaces were located either at the mid-point on the back wall of the hall, or backing on to the screen of the cross passage so that they faced

down the length of the hall towards the dais. In a number of old hall houses it is possible to still find smoke-blackened roof timbers which indicated that once the hall would have had an open central hearth without a chimney. In Whaddon there are smoke-blackened timbers within the roof structures at both Rectory Farm and Whaddon Grange.



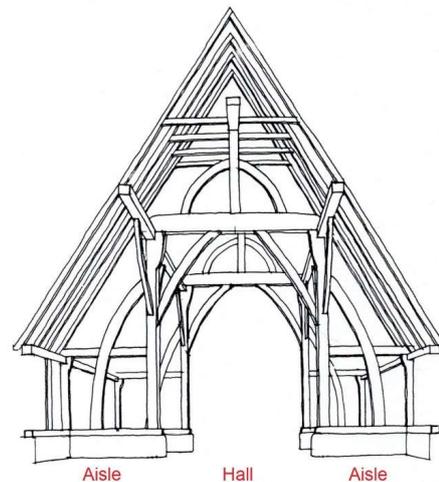
A sketch of the interior of a 15th century hall at Peasenhall, Suffolk – looking towards the lower end

Rectory Farm has been much altered and extended over the nearly 700 years since it was first built. Like many hall houses it had a first floor inserted within the hall in the 17th century, along with a new staircase and two chimney stacks serving fireplaces in the new bedrooms. One of these fireplaces is dated 1633. In the late 18th/ early 19th centuries parts of the space between the two projecting cross-wings was infilled and, subsequently, in the 20th century it was subdivided into two houses.

Whaddon Grange at Dyers Green is another old hall house, and dates from the late 14th century. The original three-bay hall (ie its length is made up of three structural bays) was extensively modified in the early 16th century with the addition of cross-wings and two sets of tall chimneys incorporating octagonal shafts, taking the smoke from fireplaces with moulded brick hearths. The house was further extended on the north side in the 18th century. It was converted to a farmhouse by the Wimpole Estate in the early 18th century, then sold with the farm to the County Council in 1913, before becoming a private residence after the construction of a modern replacement farmhouse.

The earliest surviving hall house in Whaddon is Rectory Farm. This dates back to about 1340, when it was built as the Rectory, or home for the parish priest, and this building is therefore nearly as old as the church. The Rectory is recorded in a document dated 1359, which granted St George's Chapel Windsor the right to appoint the priest at Whaddon, and that patronage still exists today (so St George's Chapel will again be involved in the appointment of our new vicar).

The hall at Rectory Farm was originally an 'aisled hall', and its roof would have extended down over aisles either side of the higher central hall, something like in the sketch section below.



Sketch section through an aisled hall



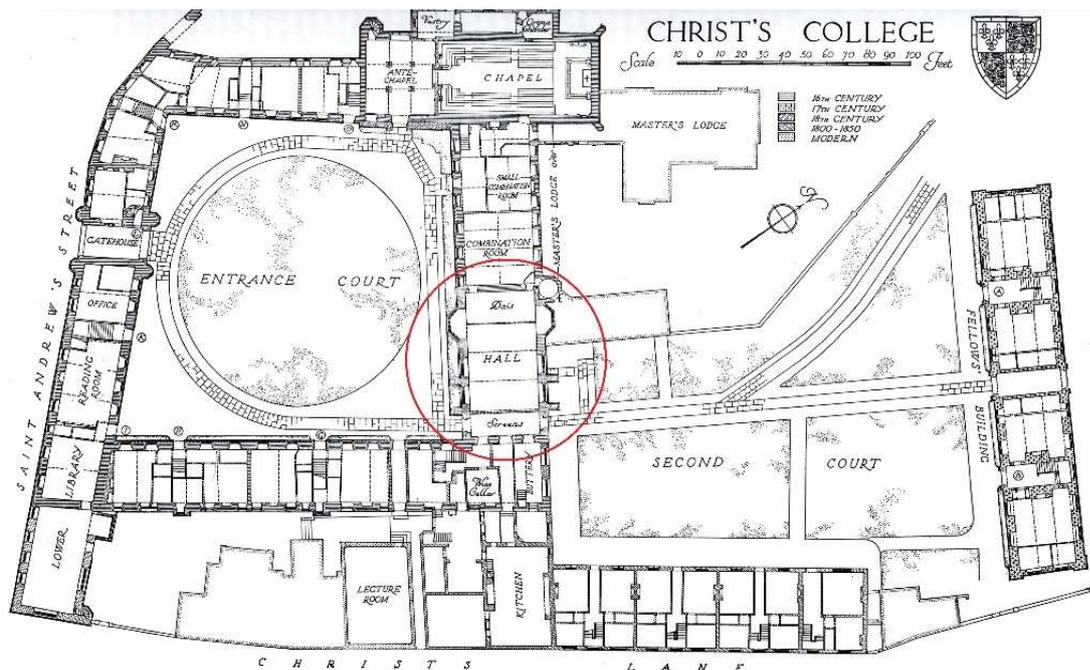
The south front to Whaddon Grange, with 16th century chimneys and cross-wings



Chestnut Tree Farmhouse from the south

Chestnut Tree Farmhouse on Meldreth Road is a further surviving late medieval hall house, with a single cross-wing on the west side of the original hall. A first floor was introduced in the late 17th century and an extension was added at the east end of the hall in the early 20th century. It is sited immediately north of a tributary of the River Cam that formed the northern boundary of the Great Green or Common, some way back from the line of 19th and 20th century houses that today front on to Meldreth Road.

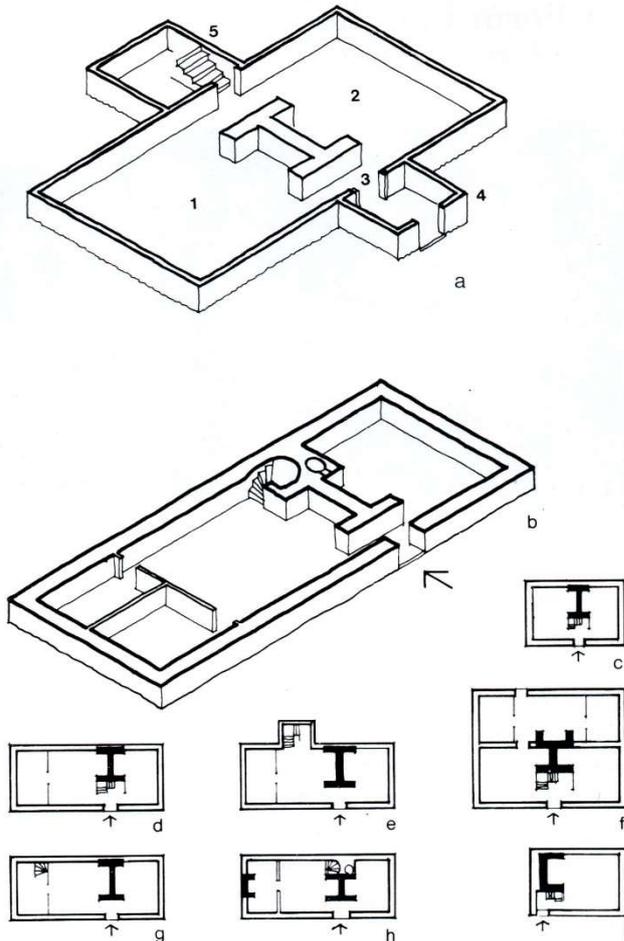
Since most hall houses have had a first floor inserted within their halls, it is now not so easy to get a picture of how a hall might have looked. However, the halls at many Cambridge Colleges also replicate the arrangements found in medieval hall houses. Peterhouse College is the earliest of the Cambridge Colleges and was founded in 1280. Its hall dates from the late 13th century and, not surprisingly, when the College came to build a place for the members of the college to meet and dine, they adopted the model of a hall house, complete with a raised dais at the upper end for the College Principal and senior members and a screen passage at the lower end, with the buttery and kitchen beyond. This then became the model for all the other early Colleges. In normal times, and away from exams, it is possible to visit Christ's College (at no cost!) and to walk through their 'screens passage' and to peer into their hall – all very *Harry Potterish*!



Plan of Christ's College showing location of Hall and Screens Passage

Baffle-Entry Houses

The smaller surviving houses and cottages in Whaddon date from the 17th century and later. A common house type from this period is the 'Baffle-entry' house, also known as a 'Lobby-entry' house, and a number of older houses and cottages in Whaddon conform to this type.

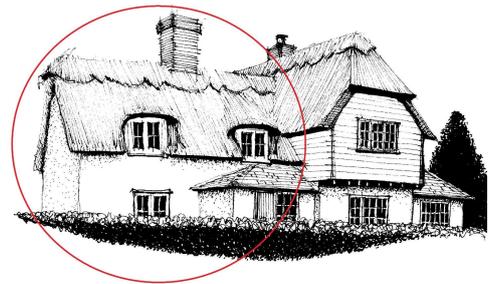


Typical Baffle-entry house types



College Farm – Baffle-entry house from 17th Century

A baffle-entry house has its front door opening into small lobby on the side of a pair of back-to-back fireplaces that served two rooms, a hall - though this was a simple room and not open to the roof (1 in the plan to the left), and a parlour (2 in the plan). There are a number of variations to the plan type, and the house might have a third room added beyond the hall. This could be unheated, or might have a fireplace with a gable chimney stack (h in the small plans to the left).

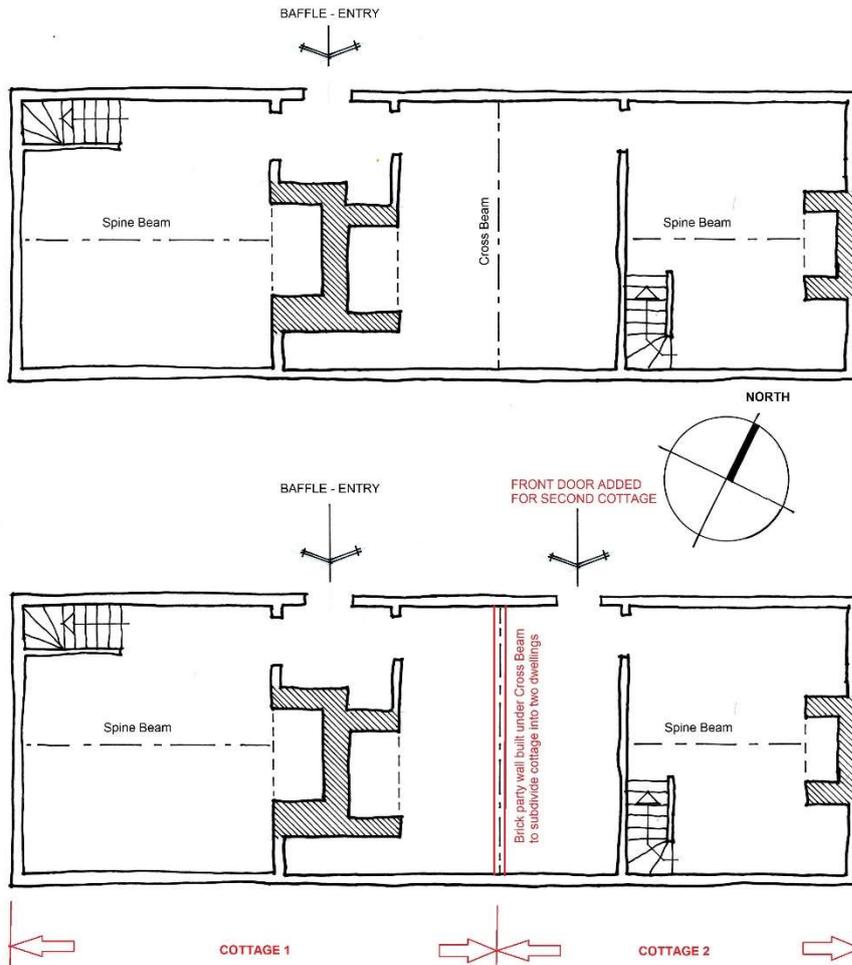


15 Bridge Street, Whaddon

The oldest part of 15 Bridge Street (circled in red above) would have been a simple, baffle-entry cottage with a hall and parlour either side of its central chimney stack and two bedrooms within the roof.

A larger house that was also built on the baffle-entry plan-form is *College Farm*, on Church Street. This house was originally called Christ's College Farm, denoting that it was in that College's ownership. The house dates from the early 17th Century and is three rooms wide, with vertical sliding sash windows on the ground floor and horizontal sliding sashes to the first floor.

Baffle-entry houses can always be identified by having their front door in-line with the chimney on the roof.



White Cottage at Dyers Green also started its life as a Baffle-entry cottage, with three rooms on the ground floor; two heated by the back-to-back hearths linked to the central chimney stack, and the third room heated from a fireplace served by a chimney on the end gable. The cottage was later subdivided into two small dwellings, with a brick wall built down the middle of the central room (the former hall). Later still it was returned to a single dwelling and the original baffle entry door was infilled and replaced with a window.

Sketch plans of White Cottage, showing its original baffle-entry and later subdivision.

Terraced Cottages



Terrace of late 17th Century cottages on Church Street incorporating the School House

There are two surviving terraces of late 17th or early 18th Century cottages in Whaddon, both on Church Street. Nos 126, 128 and 130 include the School House, which is believed to have served as the village school from 1846 until the new school opposite opened in 1875 (what is now the village hall). The school room was enlarged in 1869 so that it could also serve as a temporary church while repairs and refurbishment were undertaken at St Mary's, and in 1873 there were 23 boys and 21 girls attending the day school.

The second terrace, is now a single property, Rose Cottage (adjacent to St Mary's Close), but this started life as a terrace of four small, one-up one-down, cottages. Three of the former front doors have been infilled, but their locations are still visible in the exposed timber frame to the front elevation (and marked on the photograph below). Each cottage had a single chimney stack, one on each gable, and a double stack in the middle of the terrace serving a cottage on either side.



Rose Cottage, Church Street – originally a terrace of four small one-up one-down cottages

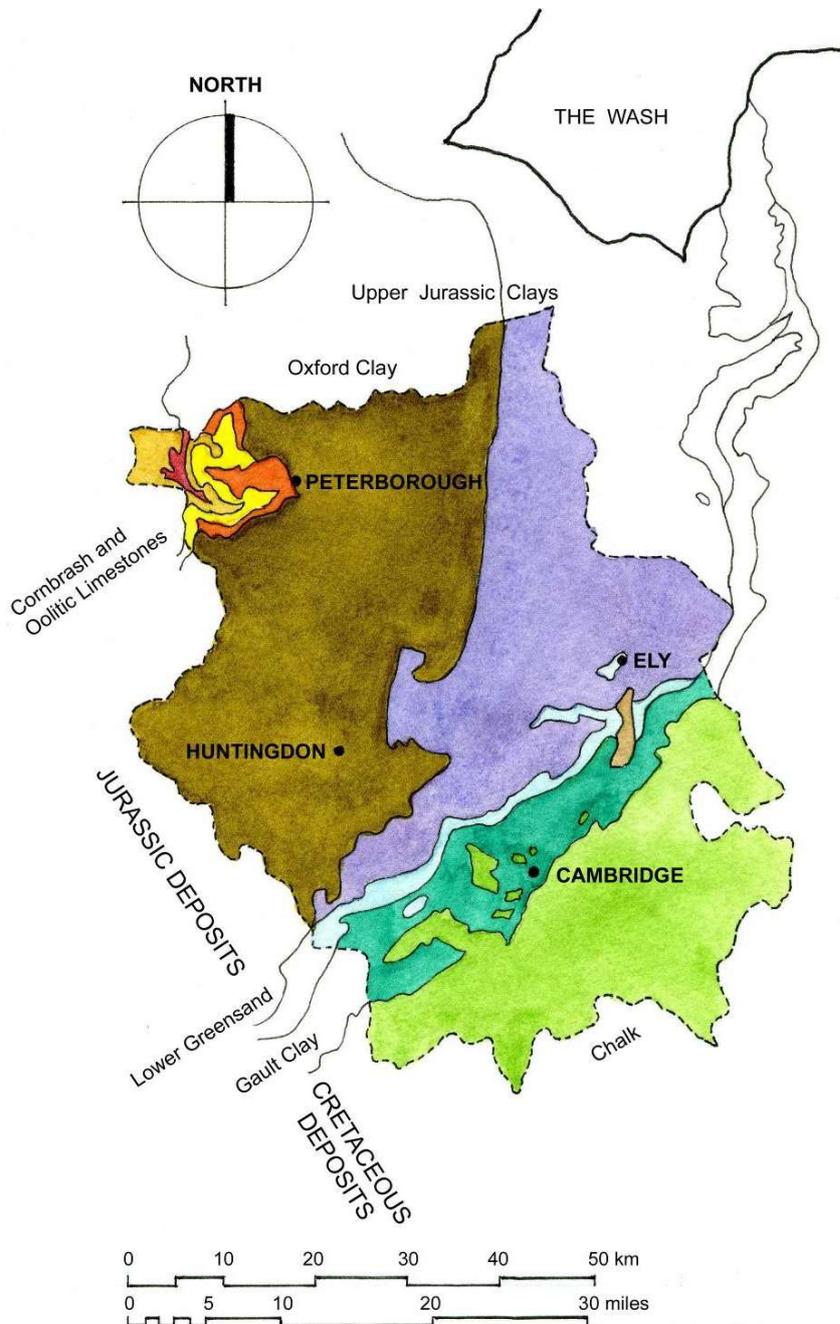
Building Materials

Building materials are heavy and historically it was not easy to move heavy building materials by horse and cart on poor quality roads. It wasn't until the coming of the railways in the middle of the 19th Century that it first became feasible for mass-produced building materials to be moved around the country, and cheaply produced Welsh slate quickly became a widely adopted roofing material in the latter part of the Victorian period. However, it wasn't until reliable road haulage was introduced in the interwar period that it really became viable to move heavy goods easily and cost effectively across the country. Therefore, historically it was only the very wealthy who could consider building houses with building materials imported from another part of the country. The vast majority of houses had to be built with whatever building materials could be found in their locality.

Geology

The geology of an area heavily influences what building materials are available. North and west of a line running diagonally across England, roughly from the Humber estuary to the Severn estuary, there is good quality stone readily available for building. But south and east of that line the geology is mainly made up of clays or chalk, and chalk is too soft to use as a building stone. The clay can be fired in kilns to make bricks and roofing tiles, and the art of

brick and tile making was first introduced into England by the Romans. However, as the Roman Empire fell into decline and the Romans withdrew from England, so the art of brickmaking was lost, and it had to be re-learned from the Low-Countries (Holland and Belgium). Brickmaking was reintroduced first into East Anglia during the early years of the 14th Century via established trade routes across the North Sea, and gradually over the next century that knowledge spread more widely. At first bricks were expensive to produce, with relatively high failure rates, so except for the most wealthy, brickwork was used sparingly, for building such things as chimneys and fireplaces. It was only later, during the 18th and 19th centuries, that the cost of brick manufacture really dropped, and brickwork became a universally affordable building material.



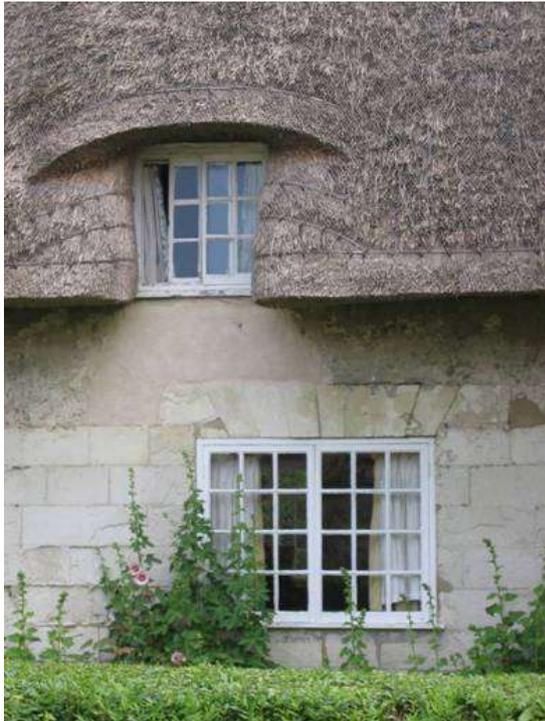
The map (left) shows the geology of Cambridgeshire. It is broadly made up of deposits from two Geological Periods, the Jurassic and the Cretaceous Periods.

The Jurassic deposits are older, and cover roughly the north-western half of the county. They are primarily made up of clays, and the deposit known as Oxford Clay (khaki brown on the map) is particularly good for brick making.

The Cretaceous deposits in the south-east of the county include a narrow band of Greensand – a sandstone that is suitable for building, a band of clay (Gault Clay) which is again good for brick making, and a broad band of chalk (pale green on the map). While chalk is too soft to use as a building stone, there are outcrops of an impure form of chalk called *Clunch*, which though still soft, can be used for building.

Map of the Geology of Cambridgeshire

Whaddon sits on the chalk deposits in the southwest of Cambridgeshire and, before brickwork became both available and affordable, the only suitable building material readily available was timber. As a result all early houses are built of timber frame, with a lime render finish to the outside. The quality of timber available in this part of England was not as good as the oak from the large forests in the Midlands and elsewhere, so there was less opportunity to express the timber frame decoratively. The frame visible on the outside of Rose Cottage would, originally, have been encased in laths and render. Laths are strips of thin timber nailed to the outside face of the frame, with a slight gap between adjacent laths to provide a key for the lime render. If you look carefully at the exposed timbers on the front of Rose Cottage you can see the nail holes where the laths were fixed in place.



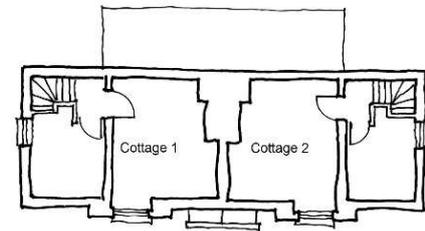
Cottage built of clunch in Newton

Clunch from within the chalk deposits was generally only used in higher status buildings, such churches, and at Whaddon church the internal columns are made from clunch. The windows, including the fine stone tracery, were also originally made of clunch, but due to weathering this eroded over time, and in the Victorian restorations of 1869 the windows were renewed in harder wearing limestone (quarried near Peterborough). I am aware of one cottage in the village of Newton (near Little Shelford), and another in Haslingfield, which have their external walls made of clunch, but they are the exceptions that proves the rule!

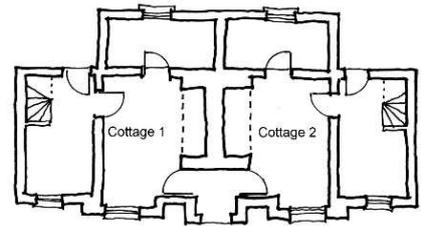
As previously noted, brickwork was initially only used for chimneys and the like. The colour of the bricks depended on the source of the clay used in their manufacture. The Oxford Clay from adjacent Bedfordshire and the north-western part of Cambridgeshire produces rich red bricks, while the Gault Clay from the narrow band that runs diagonally through the southern part of the county produces creamy white or yellow bricks.

Roofs on early houses are generally of thatch or plain tile. Tiles were more expensive to make, and therefore they tended to be used on the larger, more important houses, including hall houses, though these too might initially have been thatched. Thatch is made of straw, a by-product from the wheat grown in the fields. It was therefore both cheap and readily available, and was widely used on cottages and also for roofing barns and other agricultural buildings. Some early churches were thatched, and the church at Rampton, to the west of Cottenham, is still thatched. Thatch needs to be renewed at regular intervals and, after World War II, it became increasingly common to re-thatch using water reed imported from Norfolk rather than straw, because reed thatch has a greater life expectancy than straw thatch. Also, straw for thatching needs to be of a certain length, and new varieties of wheat developed since the war have a shorter length of straw to make the wheat less vulnerable to damage by wind, and easier to harvest. It is therefore necessary to now grow specific types of wheat to produce the long straw needed for thatching. Reed thatched roofs have a crisper appearance than straw thatch, and the depth of thatch is also thinner. That is because, when re-thatching in reed, all the old thatch is removed and replaced, whereas with straw only the weathered upper layer of straw is removed, so the thatch tends to thicken with each re-thatching. The two types of thatch are visible on Church Street in Whaddon. No 132 Church Street is roofed in Norfolk water reed, whereas the next door terrace, comprising Nos 126, 128 and 130 Church Street, is roofed in traditional long-straw.

Later Houses



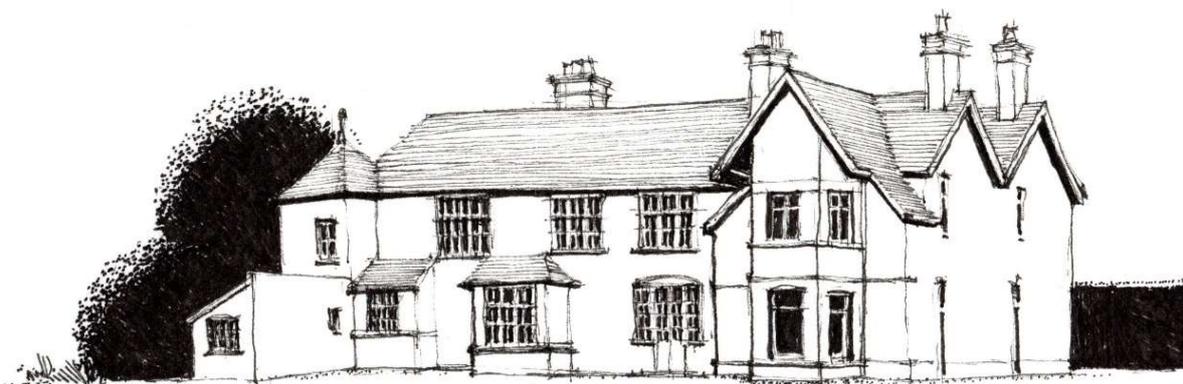
First Floor



Ground Floor

Keepers Cottage Bridge Street; former pair of estate cottages Sketch plans when first built

By the 19th Century much of the land around Whaddon was under the control of the Wimpole Estate and, in the second half of nineteenth century, two pairs of estate workers cottages were built in Bridge Street with a third pair built in Church Street. They all followed a similar pattern that mirrored the other six pairs of cottages built by the estate in Wimpole village. They are built in yellow gault clay brickwork and, when first built, had an open, shared porch containing two front doors set either side of a central chimney stack. The cottages were originally two-up two-down, with a lean-to scullery at the rear, and only one room on each floor had a fireplace. A degree of thought went into their appearance and the detailing of the brickwork, which incorporates raised brick quoins at the corners and label moulds over the windows. Either side of the shared porch are projecting bays to the principal rooms, and on the tall central chimney stack each of the four shafts is separately expressed. All of these cottages have since undergone varying degrees of change, including sizable extensions.



The former Vicarage adjacent to the Church burnt down in 1904 and was replaced in 1905 by a new Vicarage (see above) designed by William Fawcett, a Cambridge Architect and Surveyor to the Diocese of Ely. This Edwardian house is built of gault clay brickwork under a red plain tile roof. It ceased to be the Vicarage in 1952, when the Parish of Whaddon joined with Bassingbourn, and was subsequently offered for sale in 1958.