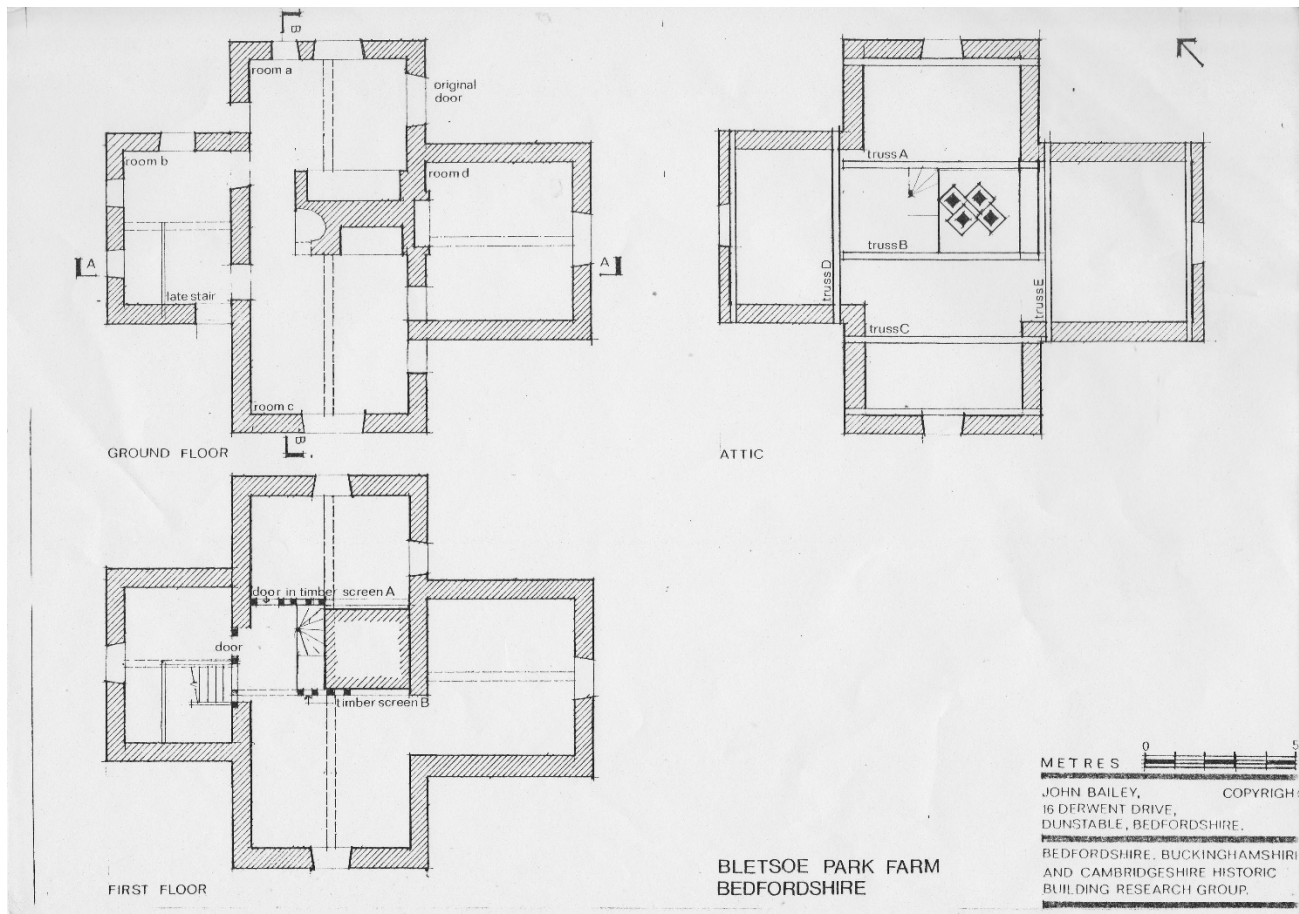


Park Farmhouse, Bletsoe

Survey of 1979 by John Bailey; historical notes from Beds Archives and Records Service



(David Baker)



(John Bailey)

16 Derwent Drive,
Dunstable,
Bedfordshire

BLETSOE PARK FARM

A brief survey was made of the building in August 1979 during modernisation work.

The building lies to the north of Bletsoe village on the road leading to Riseley.

The core of the original early seventeenth century building is of local limestone with later additions added onto the outside in brick.

In the limited time available it was only possible to survey the original stone structure. It was not possible to analyse the building in complete detail as much was hidden by later work. The two drawings with this report show the main form and structural design.

Originally the building was cruciform in plan with ground, first and attic floors.

The main arm of the building runs east-west. From each side of this main arm there projects a wing of the same height. These wings are slightly asymmetrical to achieve a more satisfactory arrangement of access around the central chimney core.

The arrangement of the hearths around this four chimney stack are shown on the ground floor plan. A hearth serves each of the three principal ground floor rooms a, d and c. A third unheated room 'b' off the passage running down the side of the stack we can assume was a service room. At the north west side of the chimney stack is a newell stair running from first floor to attic. From the evidence of rebuild on the west corner of the stack at ground floor level it would seem that this stair originally continued down to ground floor level. The new stair in room 'b' appears to have been added when an oven was located at the north side of the stack blocking the route of a stair from ground level.

The precise location of doors and windows at ground floor level is difficult to determine as large Victorian windows have been added and new door openings link to the added rooms. We feel that there was one entry to the building in the south-east side of room 'a'. The door position in the north side of the room 'd' is also in its original position.

At first floor level the various rooms and stair lobby are divided off by stud partitions. The principal partitions A & B relate directly to the prime structural trusses A & B in the attic which effectively form a chimney bay.

These two partitions formed a lobby at first floor level at the north west side of the stack which was entered from a newall stair from ground floor with a similar stair rising to attic. From this lobby there were three doors to the adjoining wings. The door to the north east wing served in-situ. Windows at first floor were located at the end of the four arms. In addition a timber window with ovolo mouldings survives in the south east wall of the north east wing.

At attic level there were four rooms with windows at the end of the arms of the cross.

The main north east/south west element of the building has the two main trusses A & B either side of the chimney and a truss at either end. In addition there is truss C to reduce the long span at the west end. The trusses are clasped purlin with arched collar braces. The principal rafters recline above the purlins.

The hearths and lower section of the chimneys are built from stone but the four chimney shafts are from a local red brick.

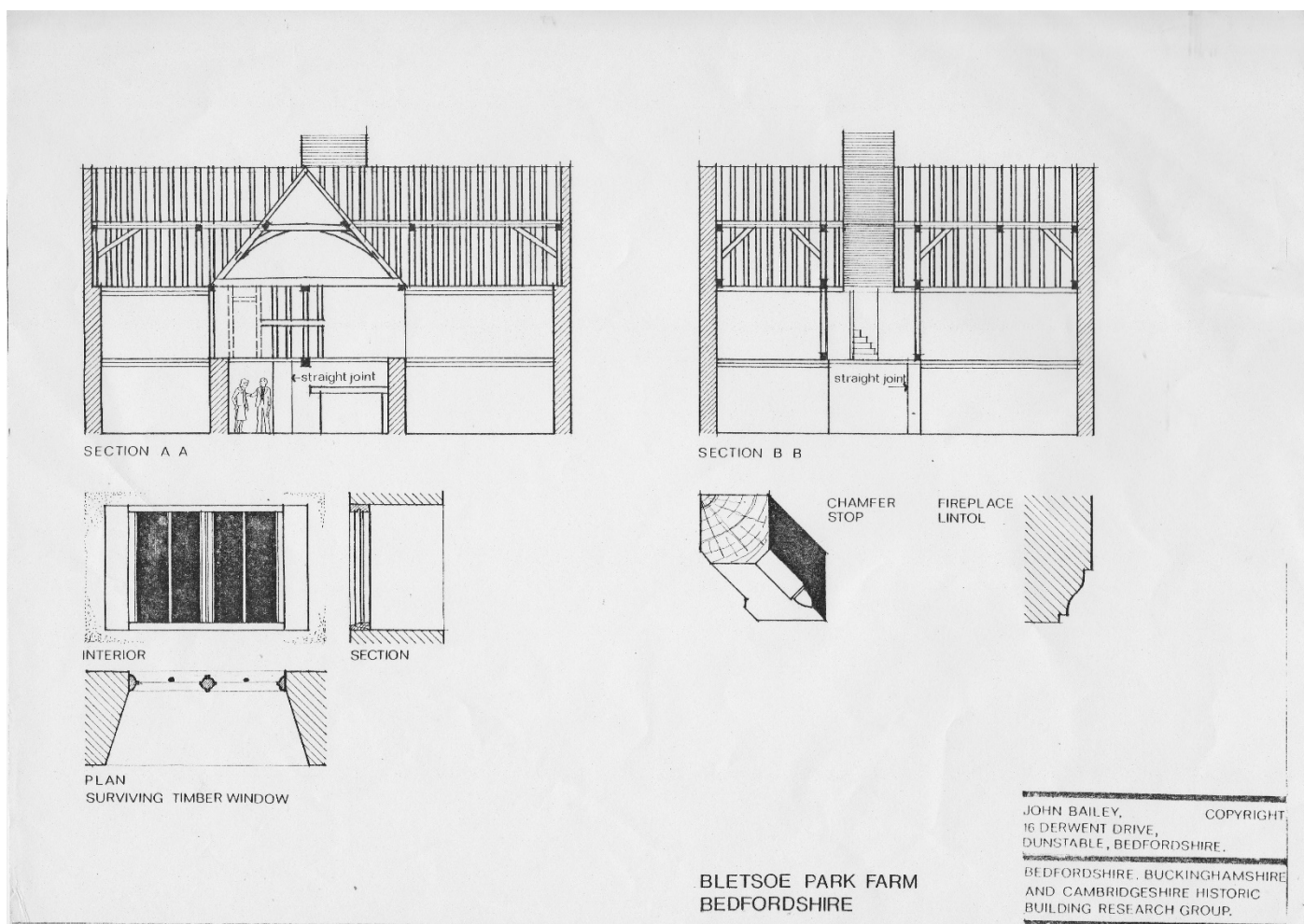
Bletsoe lies on the eastern edge of the outcrop of limestone and is one of the villages in the area where a mixture of stone, timber framing and clay walling is used.

It is thought that this particular building may have been a hunting lodge to the adjacent estate.

John Bailey

Surveyed August 1979

John Bailey
Beth Davis
Maxene Miller



(John Bailey)

From the *Bletsoe* pages of the Community Archives by the Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service at <http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityArchives/Bletsoe/ParkFarmBletsoe.aspx>

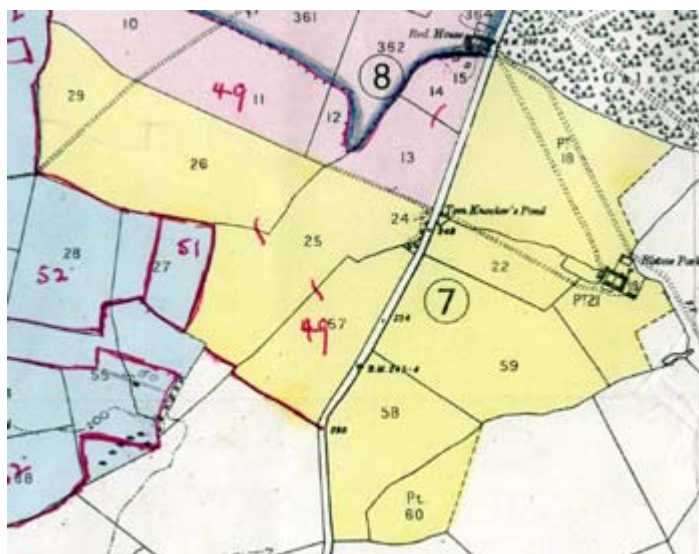
Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service holds a highly detailed survey of the Bedfordshire lands of Richard Wade-Gery of Bushmead Priory conducted between 1623 and 1628 [WG10] which has been transcribed and is available in the search room library [CRT110/34]. The survey includes details of "Parke Magna" or Great Park on which, presumably, today's Park Farm is based. At that date it was farmed directly by Lord St John as part of the demesne lands of the manor. The land, a total of 443 acres, 2 roods and 20 poles, was given as:

- Croleys Passage or Close of one acre, one rood, twenty poles;
- The Lodge Keeper's cottage with garden and backside containing three roods;
- The Great Lawne of one hundred and ninety five acres, one rood;
- Crowe Coppy, a wood of twenty acres. This, along with the other woods below may, in part be the modern Galsey Wood;
- Overlay Coppye, woodland of ten acres, three roods;
- Netherley Coppye, woodland of twelve acres, three roods, twenty poles;
- Fryar Wigges Coppye, woodland of fourteen acres, three roods, twenty poles;
- Hedgerowecopp, woodland of four acres;
- The Barn Lawn of twenty acres, two roods;
- Lodge Quarter of twenty four acres, twenty poles;
- Garnshawe of fifty seven acres, three roods, twenty poles;
- Hogge Coppye, woodland of fourteen acres;
- Grayes Spinney of two acres, three roods;
- Newe Pasture of twenty five acres, one rood, twenty poles;
- Bushy Close of seventeen acres, one rood;
- "the little close taken out of the said Bushy Close" of three roods, twenty poles.

Park Farmhouse was listed by English Heritage in August 1987 as Grade II, of special interest. It is described as: "A substantial isolated early 17th century farmhouse with 19th century additions and renovations". It is built of coursed limestone rubble and some local brick in a chequer pattern with light headers and an old clay tile roof. The house is in a cruciform plan with a central double-sided chimney having four square brick stacks set diagonally. It has two storeys and attics and single storey extensions in the angles of the cross plan. The Department noted: "Probably former Park Keeper's Lodge" - the Lodge Keeper's Cottage noted above, unless it is the Park keeper's Cottage noted as occupied by William Lybbytt, along with ten acres, three roods, ten poles of land in the 1624 survey.

The terms of the Rating and Valuation Act 1925 required every piece of land and building in the country to be valued to determine its rateable value. Most of Bedfordshire was valued in 1927. The valuer visiting Park Farm noted that it was owned by Lord Saint John and occupied by Christopher Ingle who paid £250 per annum rent, which had been fixed about 1919, having previously been £160 per annum since 1900. The farm comprised 234 acres and the valuer commented: "House water from pump, [farm] buildings from pond, rabbits spoil all grass. Farm well - Galsey Wood a nuisance, rabbits. Grass none too good. Land heavy".

The farmhouse comprised a dining room, a drawing room, a kitchen, scullery, dairy and parlour downstairs with a conservatory outside; upstairs were six bedrooms and an attic above them. The farm buildings comprised three groups, the first contained: a wood barn; two piggeries; a loose box; an eight stall stable; a calf pen and seven cow stalls; a barn with a loft over; an elevator shed. The second group comprised two old hovels. The third group contained: a four bay open shed; five cow stalls; a loose box with a manger; two three bay hovels; a four bay hovel; a two stall nag stable; a coach house; a trap house; a hen house; a two bay cart shed; an implement shed; a mill house and six hen houses. The valuer noted that they were chiefly of brick and slate construction.



Bletsoe Park Farm shown in yellow in 1950 [X392/21/2]

Park Farm, along with was put up for sale by the Saint John family in 1950, along with Red House Farm and Bourne End Farm. The particulars [X392/21/2] described an: "attractive old house, built of brick with tiled roof and having oak beams". It comprised a tiled hall with a small room adjoining, a drawing room with French windows, and a dining room on the ground floor. the first floor comprised three double and one single bedrooms whilst the second floor had three attic bedrooms and a boxroom. "The Domestic Offices" comprised kitchen, scullery, dairy, pantry and cellar". An earth closet, flower and kitchen gardens and a small orchard lay outside.

The farm comprised 113.885 acres of arable, 44.07 acres of grass, a 0.428 acre copse and 1.681 acres surrounding the farm buildings. These were manly built round a central yard in four divisions as follows: "brick and slate Garage; Two-stall Stable; Three-bay Open Shelter; Calf Box; Loose Box; Barn with concrete floor; Granary with bins; Fodder House with Loft over; Cowsheds for eight and 2 with feeding passages; timber and corrugated iron four bay Shelter; carthorse Stable for six; Fodder House; Loose Box; three-bay timber and corrugated iron Shelter; Two Pig Pens; Two Store Sheds; Rick Yard; Fowl House; Tractor Shed; five bay lean-to Implement Shed; three-bay brick, slated and corrugated-iron Implement Shed; Grinding House".