

# The Landmark Trust

## FIELD HOUSE History Album



**Written by Charlotte Haslam  
1988, updated 2006  
Re-presented in 2016**

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## **BASIC DETAILS**

**Built before 1839**

**Enlarged between 1840-1870**

**Altered again before 1881-2**

**Left to the Landmark Trust by Miss Eileen Jenkins 1985**

**Architect for Landmark: Philip Jebb**

**Builders: Ernest Ireland Ltd**

**Work completed 1987**

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**Field House today probably represents the development of an earlier, more humble dwelling.**

## Summary

Field House, for a long time known as Hampton Field Farm appears to be a straightforward Cotswold stone house, dating, at a guess, from about 1830 or 1840. Its simple name may in part be the faintest echo of the great medieval open fields, held by the lord and farmed in strips by his villeins. Landmark's restoration work revealed the remains of earlier staircases showing there to have been at one time three or four small dwellings here, forming a U shape, overlooking a small yard. Their outlines, one room up and one room down can be seen quite clearly on the plan of the house. The yard was later filled in to form a central hall, and the existing rather grander staircase inserted. At the same time, doorways were knocked through from one room to another, to form a single house. This came to be called Field House, as shown on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map, and was farmhouse to Hampton Field Farm, to which the surrounding fields belonged.

The Tithe Map of 1839 for the parish of Minchinhampton shows a slightly different shaped house with no outbuildings and the accompanying schedule shows the owner as a John Fowles. It is possible that this house was a much smaller building, standing roughly where the range containing the dining room and part of the sitting room is now, with the well-made cellars underneath – indicating that it was something more than a humble cottage even at this time. To this, in the 1840s perhaps, two wings were added, and at the same time the original house was itself divided into two further dwellings, but for what purpose, charitable or industrial, remains a mystery - although with the weaving industry so important in this area, it could have been connected with that. In any case, within a generation Field House became a single dwelling.

There is a tradition that a building has stood on the site of Field House for several centuries, and that the vaulted cellars are all that remain of it. This seems not to have been the case, however, because on another map of the parish of Minchinhampton, drawn in 1803, only fields are marked. The only houses in the immediate area to have existed at this date are Crackstone Farm and Peaches Farm, slightly to the north of Hampton Fields, and Aston Farm to the south-east, in the neighbouring parish of Avening. The reason for a hamlet growing up here soon afterwards lies partly in the history of agriculture at this period, and partly in the history of the manor of Minchinhampton itself.

For centuries the wealth in the Cotswolds came from sheep rearing and arable farming, chiefly grain. The arable land of the manor was concentrated in three large open fields, each consisting of some hundreds of acres, subdivided into strips, held directly by the lord of the manor or by individual tenants. The strips were made up of the characteristic wide 'ridge and furrow' formed by medieval ploughs, which are still to be seen in fields here and there, undulating under the later turf.

The enclosures of the 16th and 18th centuries subdivided some of the fields including the Hampton Field whose southwest corner is shown as three fields on the 1803 map, marked as Pasture, Field and Arable. Parcels of land were sold off allowing the hamlet of Hampton Fields to come into existence, and the farm called Matchless Farm too, all of which appear on the 1839 map. It was an obvious place for a settlement, on a crossroads that had been in existence since at least 1584, and with the old main road from Minchinhampton to Avening and Tetbury, which had been upgraded to become a Turnpike Road in 1758, passing through it.

## **Minchinhampton and Avening Manors**

The earliest owners of the lands on which Field House stands were nuns from the Abbey of Caen. The name Minchinhampton derives from the Old English for Nuns' (munechene) Hampton. The manors of Minchinhampton and Avening parishes were then a single unit and remained so until the early 19th century. By the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539 the lands were owned by Syon Abbey in Middlesex, after which they passed to the Windsor family. By the mid-18th century, the Sheppard family, were the new owners. In the 1770s, they built a new house for themselves at Gatcombe Park, replacing the old manor house in Minchinhampton itself. Financial difficulties forced the family to sell the Avening estate in 1812 to the Playnes, of Longfords Mill, Avening. Two years later the Minchinhampton, or Gatcombe, estate was sold as well, to David Ricardo, an economist and author.

The Ricardos, remodelled Gatcombe Park and bought back as much of the estate as they could before selling it to Samuel Courtauld just before the Second World War who later left it to his son-in-law, R. A. Butler (RAB), 'the Prime Minister that wasn't,' and famous Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. It was he who sold it in his turn to Her Majesty the Queen, to be the home of the Princess Royal and her family.

## **Restoration**

Over the years various alterations and additions had been made to Field House, including a grandiose porch and a lean-to conservatory on the west side. These were removed, and a rather simpler passage/porch building made, in local materials. The coach-house was given a new arch, and a partition taken down, so that it could be used as a garage. The cement rendering of north wall was removed and its two bathroom windows were reset to be level with each other.

On the west front, a new door opening was made, with a window over it, centred on the gable above. The stone surrounds for both of these were new, the design copied from those on the south side of the house. The two small windows on either side of the new door, however, were moved from the demolished porch. New leaded panes were put in all of these, and in the two upper windows on the south front into which plate glass had been inserted.

Inside the only alteration was to divide up the dining room again, and to have a long sitting room on the south side of the house instead, by opening up the partition between the two rooms there. The fireplace at the south end of the former dining room was blocked up, and the surround moved to be in the present dining room. Most of the joinery in the house was in good condition, with wide elm floorboards throughout, and only two new doors were needed. The lower flight of the staircase was also renewed, with a new mahogany handrail as well. The alcove bookcases in the sitting room are new. Upstairs, no alterations were made at all, except to insert wooden fireplace surrounds, which were found in the stables, into the two east bedrooms.

Field House was left to us by Miss Eileen Jenkins in 1985. Nothing in it is disagreeable to look at, from the overall design to the minor details. A house such as this can tell us as much about the attitude of our forebears to their surroundings as any building where the great craftsmen or artists of the day were employed.

## Introduction

Field House, for a long time known as Hampton Field Farm appears to be a straightforward Cotswold stone house, dating, at a guess, from about 1830 or 1840. Its simple name may in part be the faintest echo of the great medieval open fields, held by the lord and farmed in strips by his villeins. But the reality is more complicated than that. When the building work was going on the remains of some small subsidiary staircases were found, in the dining room and sitting room, showing there to have been at one time three or four small dwellings here, forming a U shape, overlooking a small yard. Their outlines, one room up and one room down, can be seen quite clearly on the plan of the house. The yard was later filled in to form a central hall, and the existing rather grander staircase inserted. At the same time, doorways were knocked through from one room to another, to form a single house. This came to be called Field House, and was farmhouse to Hampton Field Farm, to which the surrounding fields belonged.

This change had certainly taken place by 1881-2, when the area was first surveyed for the Ordnance Survey, on whose map of 1884 it is marked as Field House; and it appears to have the same ground plan as the existing building. But it was also, apparently, a single dwelling in 1839, when the Tithe Map for the parish of Minchinhampton was drawn up, because the House and Garden in 'Morris Tying', (the name of the field in which Field House stands) is listed in the accompanying schedule as being owned and occupied by John Fowles, and there is no indication of it being anything other than an ordinary dwelling.

The building shown on the Tithe Map is different in shape however, and has no outbuildings - which are generally shown on other properties round about if they existed - so it is possible that John Fowles' house was a much smaller building, standing roughly where the range containing the dining room and part of the sitting room is now, with the well-made cellars underneath - and these would indicate that it was even at this time something more than a humble cottage.

To this, in the 1840s perhaps, two wings were added, and at the same time the original house was itself divided into two further dwellings, but for what purpose, charitable or industrial, remains a mystery - although with the weaving industry long being a main income producer in this area, it could have been connected with that in some way. Whatever they were, within a generation these small dwellings were no longer required, and the transformation into Field House was carried out.

There is a tradition that a building has stood on the site of Field House for several centuries, and that the vaulted cellars are all that remain of it. This seems not to have been the case, however, because on another map of the parish of Minchinhampton, drawn in 1803, no houses at all are marked in the area, only fields. The only houses in the immediate area to have existed at this date are Crackstone Farm and Peaches Farm, slightly to the north of Hampton Fields, and Aston Farm to the south-east, in the neighbouring parish of Avening. The reason for a hamlet growing up here soon afterwards lies partly in the history of agriculture at this period, and partly in the history of the manor of Minchinhampton itself.

### Minchinhampton and Avening

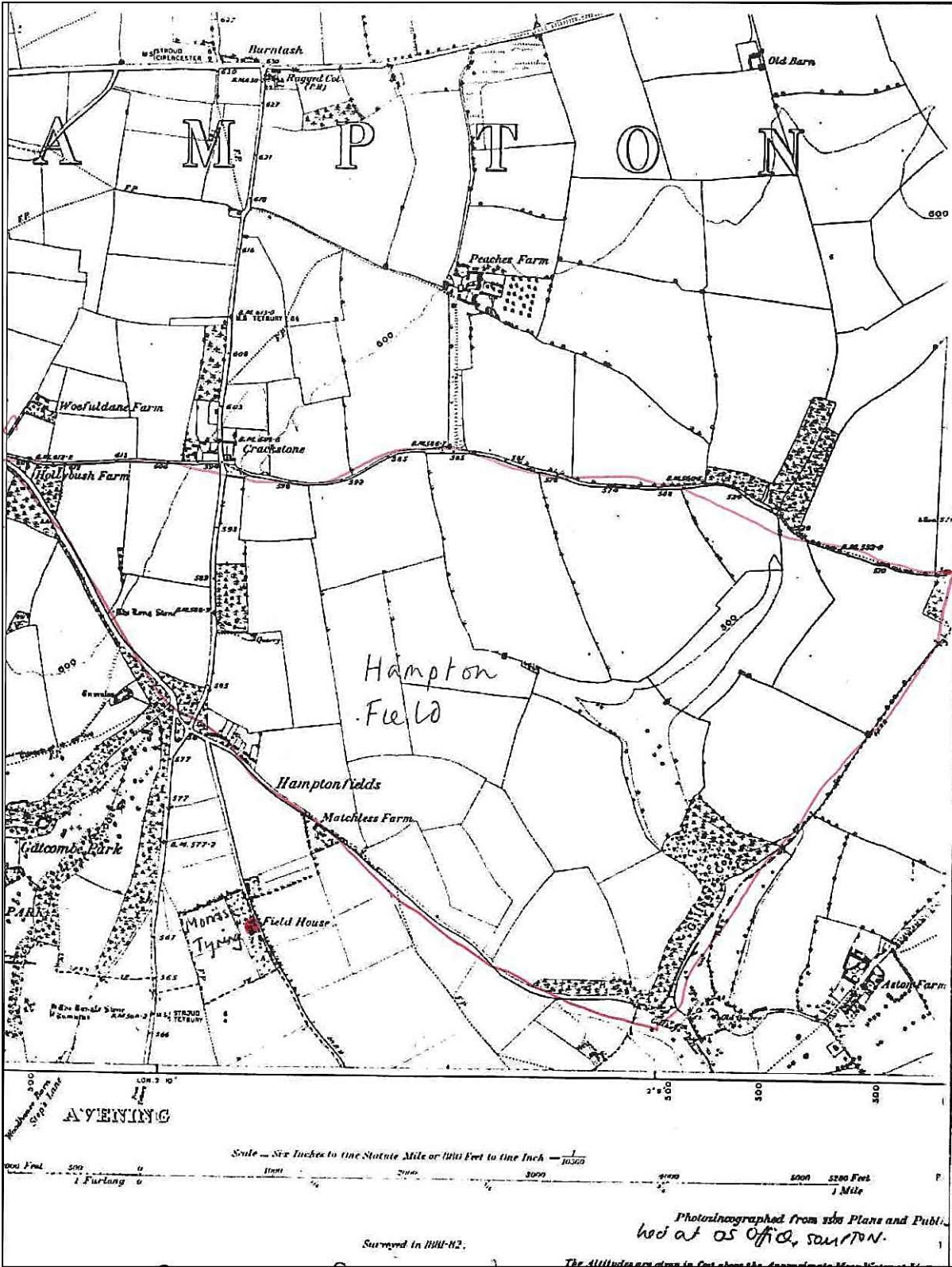
Field house lies in the hamlet of Hampton Fields, near the boundary of Minchinhampton and Avenings parishes. The manors of Minchinhampton and Avening had from the earliest Middle Ages formed a single unit, and this remained so until the early 19th century when they became two separate parishes. When united, their earliest owners were the nuns of the Abbey of Caen in Northern France- the name Minchinhampton derives from the Old English for Nuns' (munechene) Hampton. Later, after the 'alien', or foreign, priories were closed down in 1414, it was held by the Crown for a time, before being granted to Syon Abbey in Middlesex, who held it until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539, when it passed once again to the Crown.



In 1542 Henry VIII forced Lord Windsor, whose house at Stanwell in Middlesex he coveted, to exchange this for Minchinhampton and Avening. The Windsor family owned the two manors for the next hundred years or so, until in 1656 they sold both properties to Philip Sheppard. The Sheppards had recently moved to Gloucestershire from near London, and they were to be the largest landowners in the district for the next 150 years.

In the 1770s, they built a new house for themselves at Gatcombe Park, replacing the old manor house in Minchinhampton itself. The expense of this put a severe financial burden on the estate, but this would have been surmountable if it had not been compounded in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by the extravagance of the Philip Sheppard of that time. Outlying farms were sold off to cover his debts, but this was not enough, and in 1812 the Avening estate was sold to the Playnes, of Longfords Mill, Avening. Two years later the Minchinhampton, or Gatcombe, estate was sold as well, to David Ricardo, author of *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* - an economist who actually succeeded in making a fortune for himself.

The Ricardos, besides employing George Basevi to remodel Gatcombe Park, spent the next twenty years buying back as much of the original estate as they could. They owned Gatcombe until just before the Second World War, when they sold the estate to Samuel Courtauld, who later left it to his son-in-law, RA Butler (RAB), the Prime Minister that wasn't, and famous Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. It was he who sold it in his turn to Her Majesty the Queen, to be the home of the Princess Royal and her family.



Ordnance Survey map of 1884 showing Field House at the bottom left.

## Some Agricultural History

In the Middle Ages and on into the 17th and 18th centuries the principal sources of agricultural income in this part of the Cotswolds came from the rearing of sheep for wool and the growing of grain, in varying proportions. The sheep were grazed mainly on the Downs, and partly on Minchinhampton Common, where the cattle belonging to the manor were also taken to graze. Pigs were another important food source, feeding off the acorns and beechmast of the woods which covered large areas of the manor until the 16th century at least.

The arable land of the manor was concentrated in three large open fields, each consisting of some hundreds of acres, subdivided into strips, held directly by the lord of the manor or by individual tenants. The strips were made up of the characteristic wide 'ridge and furrow' formed by medieval ploughs, which are still to be seen in fields here and there, undulating under the later turf.

The enclosures of the 16th century do not seem to have affected this area to any great extent, but in the south of the parish of Minchinhampton at least, the great South Field was subdivided into Gatcombe or Longstone Field (from the prehistoric monument there) and, it seems, Hampton Field. These still existed right into the 19th century, with a variety of tenants and owners but 18th-century enclosures had nibbled at their edges, so that on the 1803 map there are three categories of land shown in the parish: Pasture, Field and Arable.

Both the latter would have been under the plough, and the individual strips are in fact drawn in, but the term Arable is clearly used to denote smaller fields, 'enclosed' by walls and farmed by a single tenant.

So although Hampton Field is mainly one large open area, in its south west corner are three fields which are marked as arable, two to the east of the Minchinhampton/Avening road, and one to the west, and one of these is the same as the Morris Tynning named on the Tithe Map, presumably taking its name from the farmer who did the enclosing. In 1803 these fields still belonged to the Gatcombe estate, although they were farmed by a tenant, but they were obvious candidates for sale by Philip Sheppard soon afterwards, when he was seeking ways to pay off his debts. And they were not among those which the Ricardo family later bought back, remaining in separate ownership in 1839.

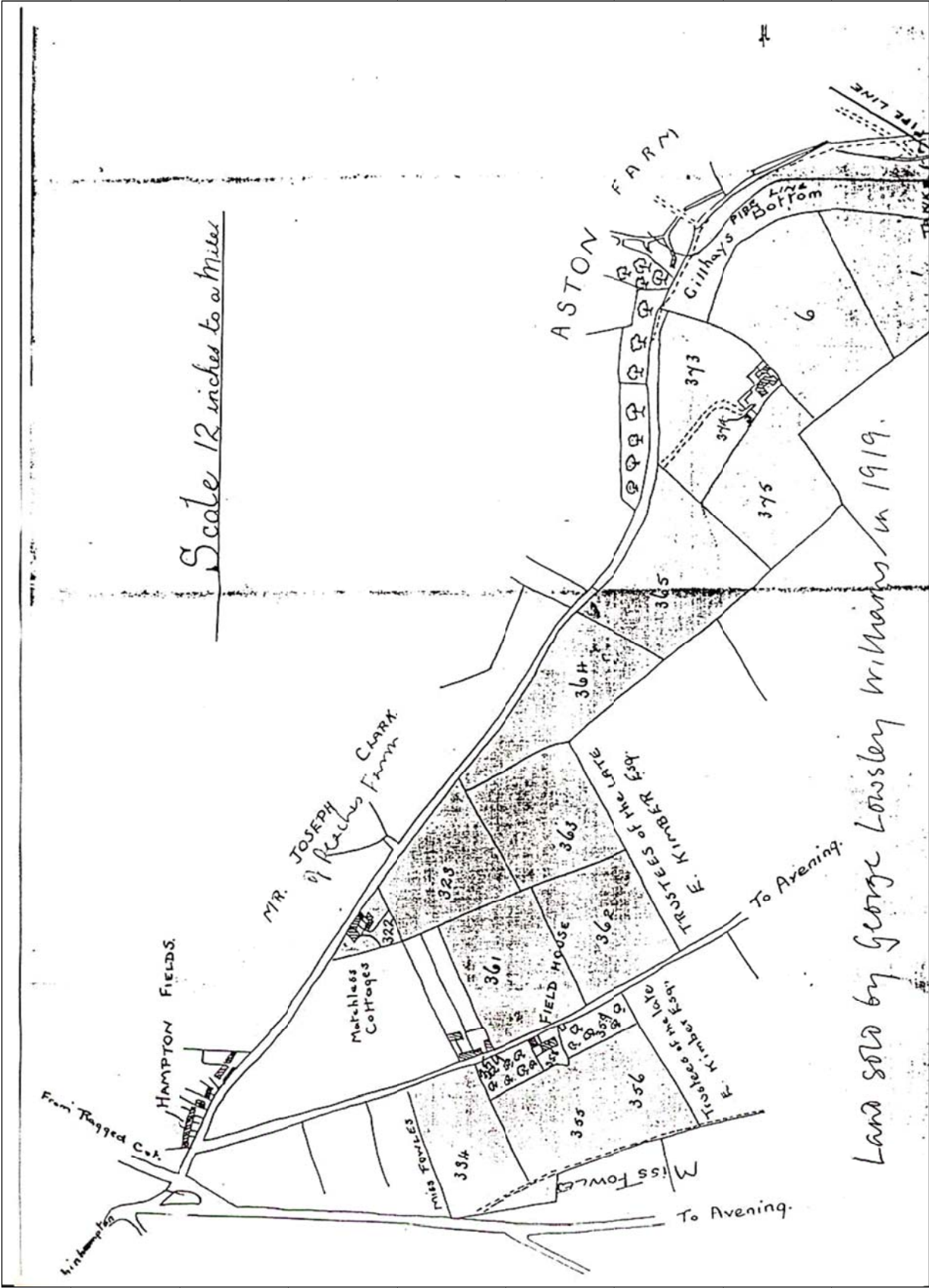
Other parcels of land seem to have been sold off in this area, allowing the hamlet of Hampton Fields to come into existence, and the farm called Matchless Farm too, all of which appear on the 1839 map. It was an obvious place for a settlement, on a crossroads that had been in existence since at least 1584, and with the old main road from Minchinhampton to Avening and Tetbury, which had been upgraded to become a Turnpike Road in 1758, passing through it.

## Different Owners

The Fowles family, who owned Field House by the time that the 1839 Tithe Map was drawn up, seem to have bought several plots of land at Hampton Fields, since three others of that name appear on the Schedule besides John Fowles, although he is the only one to both own and occupy his property. A Trade Directory of 1876 lists members of the same family as tailors and bakers in Minchinhampton, so it may be that they were simply investing in the land as a sideline, and were not farmers themselves. A Miss Fowles still owned a field to the north of Field House in 1919.

At some date after the Tithe Map Survey of 1839 and before 1890 a change of ownership had taken place however. In 1890 Hampton Field Farm, with other lands, was inherited by George Hoole Lowsley Williams, of Chavanage House near Tetbury, from his great-aunt Miss Harriet Lowsley. The Lowsley family had owned land in the area from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Joseph Lowsley bought Aston Farm, consisting of 987 acres in the parishes of Avening and Minchinhampton. It had once been part of the Manor of Avening, but had been sold in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the Drivers, who had already been tenants there for over a hundred years, and who sold it on themselves in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The northern boundary of Aston Farm touches Hampton Field at Gillhays Bottom. The Lowsleys subsequently bought Lowesmore as well, which had once been in the same estate as Aston; and according to the family pedigree they also owned land in the parishes of Saperton, Frampton Mansell and Tarleton, in addition to Mugmore House to the west of Minchinhampton.

All this property was inherited on the death their father John by Joseph's granddaughters, Harriet and Mary Lowsley. Of the two sisters, only Mary married, and George Lowsley Williams was her grandson; when, on Harriet's death, he inherited her property as well, the divided Lowsley estates were reunited, and joined to that of Chavanage, which had been bought by his parents in 1891 from



the heirs of the Stephens family. Hampton Field Farm must have been acquired by the Lowsley sisters to round off their property, and was indeed probably created by them, since the various fields that later belonged to it were previously under a number of different tenancies, and could only have been drawn together into one property by its new owners. A possible date for this is 1868, the date of an unspecified indenture referred to in a later conveyance - and this would give us the most likely date for converting the four small dwellings into one new farmhouse, with stables and outbuildings.

### Later History

In 1919 (the date of the conveyance already mentioned), George Lowsley Williams sold his farms in this part of Minchinhampton and Avening. Hampton Field Farm and Matchless Farm were sold as one, consisting of 76 acres. Aston and Lowesmore Farms went at the same time.

Hampton Field and Matchless Farms were bought by Mr Ernest Harman, Innkeeper of Avening. The land was let to a tenant, Thomas Witchell, but it seems that Mr Harman intended it for his son Albert, because it was he who was farming there when Mr Harman made his will shortly before his death in 1937. Albert Harman lived at Matchless Farm, and it seems that for some time, perhaps even before the sale in 1919, Field House has not been needed as a farmhouse, and had been let to tenants. Certainly in 1926 it was leased for 5 years, at £60 p.a. to Thomas Knox Angus, Esq, of Minchinhampton, in succession to a previous tenant, Elizabeth Lawrenson.

In his will, in fact, Mr Harman left Field House itself, and two or three fields round it, not to his son Albert but to his daughter, Florence May Howley. She continued to lease it to Mr Knox Angus, and she and her husband also kept an inn in Avening, so they are unlikely ever to have lived in the house, especially since in 1945 Mrs Howley sold it to Francis John Hind Esq. It was probably Mr Hind who

laid out the garden, filling it with fragments of ornamental stonework. He in his turn sold it in 1961 to Miss Eileen Jenkins, who left it on her death in 1985 to the Landmark Trust - the transfer was completed a year later.



**Eileen Jenkins**



## Miss Jenkins

Miss Eileen Jenkins, who left Field House to the Landmark Trust, has been described to us by one of her cousins, who wrote of her:

'The Jenkins were a big family and there were many cousins, all of whom were either talented, extroverted, or eccentric - but none of them were dull! Eileen Jenkins was eccentric to say the least. She was a countrywoman, loved animals - especially donkeys, dogs and horses and would have been a splendid vet or animal farmer. She never married or ever intimated that she might even have been interested. She liked old things - old houses; old furniture; old pictures; etc. but she had little interest in her own appearance or such mundane occupations as cooking or housekeeping.

After her parents died in the 1940s, EJ continued to live for a while in a lovely old house at Ledbury, Worcestershire. I do not know why she moved to Minchinhampton except that she had always expressed a fondness for the Cotswolds. For about 15 years or so, she had an attractive house on Rodborough Common. She rented fields for her animals from local farmers but when these were developed for 'nasty little houses' (5 bedrooms in an acre of garden!) she was outraged and it was then that she moved to Field House.

Although EJ was or became very fond of Field House, I think she was initially attracted by the land that went with it and by getting away from the suburban development of Rodborough Common. She was a great gardener, but essentially a 'practical' gardener, and she grew things more for their use than their beauty. Her main interest lay in her considerable vegetable garden rather than flower borders while the very large orchard was enclosed so that hens, geese and ducks could run free.

EJ was greatly to be admired for her readiness to have a try at anything within her considerable strength.'



Miss Jenkin's mother, Ellen Evans, in 1885.



**Eileen Jenkins, aged 2½, with her parents and her sister Muriel, in 1903.**



June 1914



Eileen Jenkins in 1916, demonstrating her affection for animals at a young age.



**Miss Jenkins's donkeys**



**Outside Field House**



**The west side of Field House in about 1970.**

## Renovation and Repair of Field House

Over the years various alterations and additions had been made to Field House, such as a rather grandiose porch, joining the former coach-house to the main building, and a lean-to conservatory on the west side. Some of the leaded glass in the windows had been replaced by plate glass. Inside a long dining room had been formed by removing the partition between the two rooms on the east side of the house.

We felt that the building would look better if the additions were removed, and a rather simpler passage/porch building made, in local materials. The coach-house was given a new arch, and a partition taken down, so that it could be used as a garage.

The north wall, where it projects, was rendered in cement; this was taken off, and the stonework behind repaired and re-pointed.

Apart from this the only work that was done to the exterior was to improve the arrangement of the windows. The two windows on the north side, lighting the bathrooms, were reformed to be level with each other. Some small windows lighting the attics were blocked, and on the west front, a new door opening was made, with a window over it, centred on the gable above (a plumb line was hung down to make sure that the measurement was accurate). The stone surrounds for both of these were new, the design copied from those on the south side of the house. The two small windows on either side of the new door, however, were moved from the demolished porch. New leaded panes were put in all of these, and in the two upper windows on the south front into which plate glass had been inserted.



Field House in 1987





Inside the only alteration was to divide up the dining room again, and to have a long sitting room on the south side of the house instead, by opening up the partition between the two rooms there. The fireplace at the south end of the former dining room was blocked up, and the surround moved to be in the present dining room.

Most of the joinery in the house was in good condition, with wide elm floorboards throughout, and only two new doors were needed. The lower flight of the staircase was also renewed, with a new mahogany handrail as well. The alcove bookcases in the sitting room are new.

Upstairs, no alterations were made at all, except to insert wooden fireplace surrounds, which were found in the stables, into the two east bedrooms.

Field House is not a house of great architectural or historical distinction, but it is well built, its gables and drip moulds squarely within the vernacular tradition of the Cotswold limestone belt. Nothing in it is disagreeable to look at, from the overall design to the minor details. A house such as this can tell us as much about the attitude of our forebears to their surroundings as any building where the great craftsmen or artists of the day were employed.



**Work on the west front, with a new door and window added.**



The following extract was sent to us by Betty Spencer in 1992:

**'Field House, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire**

Today I was shown The Landmark Book for 1989 including the house named above where I was born in 1912.

At this time it was a farmhouse – the land being farmed by my Father – Snowden Spencer – who rented it from the Lowsley family living then as now at Chavenage. He took the tenancy over from my mother's uncle, Jessie Hale – who I believe had been a baker in nearby Cherington. He certainly left behind a long oak table – the oak we were told was from a tree cut on the farm and the legs from a yew tree in Cherington church yard. This table is still in the family but in another part of the country.

Across the road there was a path through the field to a yard and shed called 'Matchless' & another yard and barn also rented was called 'Norm', this overlooked Cherington lake, known to us as children as 'The Fish Pond' – full of water lilies then.

At this time there was a duck pond in the corner of the bottom orchard. The garden had a high wall and there was a three seater earth closet in the garden.

There was an open yard and a pump where now I believe is a cloakroom.

About twenty years or so ago, I happened to meet a member of the Lowsley Williams family who said that she understood that 'Field House', now a private house, was for sale.

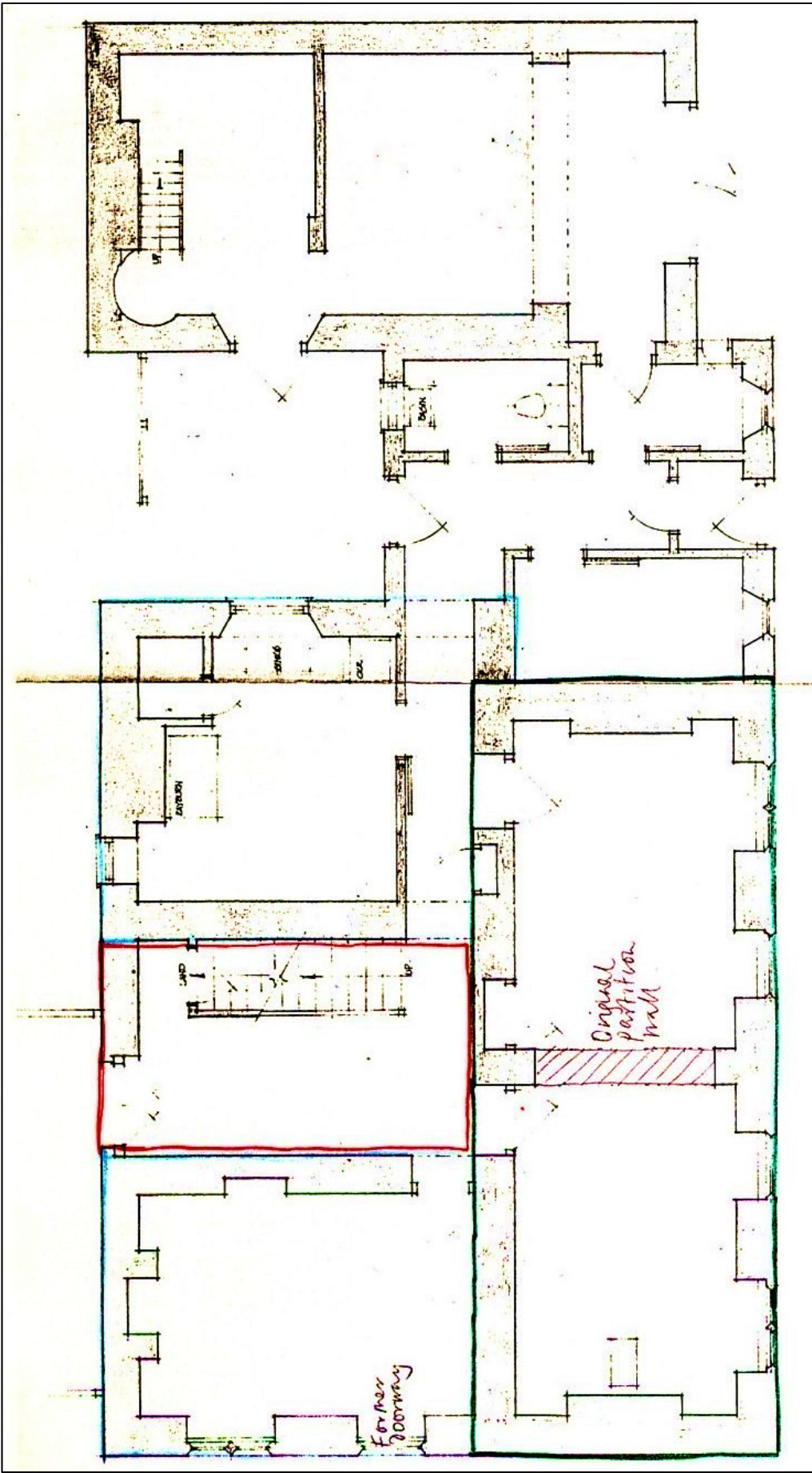
Shortly afterwards I met Miss Jenkins, then rather upset because the house where she lived on Minchinhampton common was being surrounded by new building.

I mentioned Field House to her and said I understood it was for sale. She was very interested. Within a few weeks I met her again – she was thrilled and said that she was buying Field House. She absolutely loved it and I was so pleased that it had fallen into her hands.

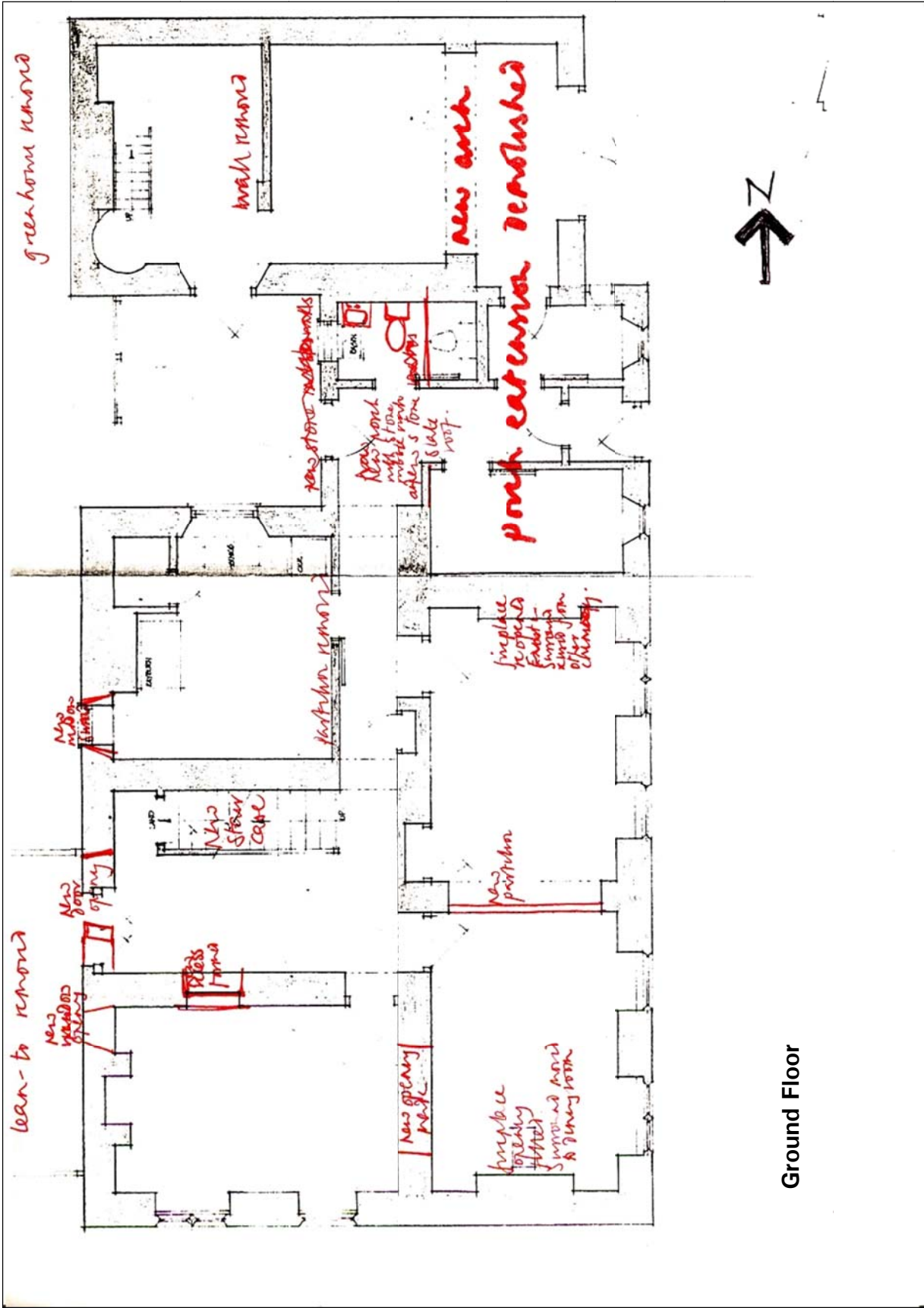
I used to visit her there and later she told me that she was leaving it the Landmark Society and I felt grateful that it was going to be preserved.

I left Field House when I was 5, and it was some while before I visited it again.'

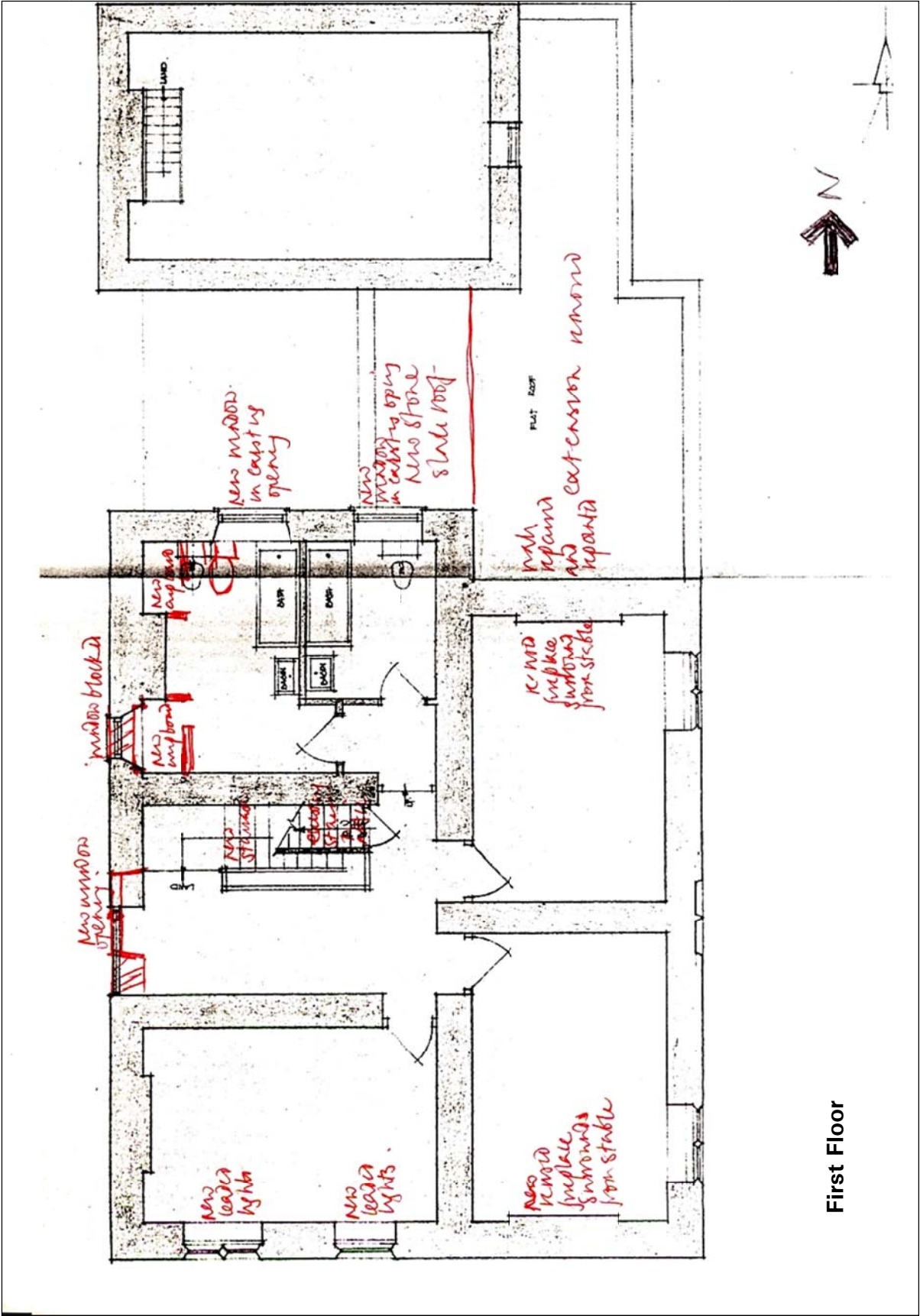
Betty Spencer  
4/2/92



Outline of John Fowles' house in green. Wings added later in blue. Filled in courtyard in red. Sketch to show possible development of Field House from a small two room building in 1839 to four small single room dwellings in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, to farmhouse by 1881.



Ground Floor



First Floor