The Landmark Trust

OBRISS FARMHOUSE
History Album

Researched by Charlotte Haslam and Alastair Dick-Cleland

Written by Alastair Dick-Cleland, 1997

Re-presented in 2016

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BASIC DETAILS

Built:	**c.1550**
Last owner:	**Mrs. Helena Cooper**
Bequeathed to the Landmark Trust by the executors of Helena Cooper:	**1990**
Architect:	**Peregrine Bryant**
Archaeologist:	**David Martin**
Builders:	**Head and Southon, Lingfield**
Site Foreman:	**Ted Pape**
Roof Tiler:	**Clive Whitby**
Quantity Surveyors:	**Bare, Leaning and Bare**
Furnished:	**February 1996**

Contents

From the logbook

Obriss Farm

Summary

Obriss Farm was given to the Landmark Trust in 1990 by the executors of Mrs Helena Cooper, Mrs Cooper had inherited the farm from her father, who bought it in the 1920s. While neither actually farmed Obriss themselves, both took a close interest in it and in the way it was run by their tenants. As pressure mounted on farmers to rely more and more on chemicals and to industrialise their production, so Obriss, run along traditional lines, became a precious reminder of different values. Its fields remained unsprayed and wildlife thrived.

Mrs Cooper was keen that this aspect of Obriss should be preserved, but also wished for the buildings to be repaired and cared for and enjoyed. It was for this reason that her executors chose the Landmark Trust as its new guardian as a charity that specialises in the rescue and repair of buildings of historic and architectural interest.

Managing a farm is not a typical task for Landmark, so the fields are let for pasture. Another solution was needed for the woods, which make up nearly a third of the farm. Landmark has entered into a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme for the management of the 160 acres of farm including the woodland and is reinvigorating and replanting various areas.

The buildings of Obriss Farm

Obriss is typical of the small mixed farms which were formed in this area in the Tudor and Elizabethan era by yeomen, some freeholders, some tenants of larger landowners. Such farms were often the result of enclosing the large open fields of the medieval period, and this seems to have been the case at Obriss. A field to the north-east of the house has the clear `ridge and furrow' pattern left by medieval ploughs. The farm straddles the parish border of Brasted and Westerham and its own boundaries, and those of its fields, have probably changed little in the last two or three hundred years.

The earliest building dates from between 1550 and 1600. This is the timber-framed bakehouse which stands behind the farmhouse. Examination by archaeologist David Martin revealed that this is in origin a detached kitchen, a rare survival of a once common building type. It was once about twice the size it is now, and probably served a combined use not only as a kitchen but as a bakehouse and brewhouse as well, with storage rooms and possibly some accommodation for servants. In the 19th century, when its brick chimney was added, it was used as a bakehouse and washhouse, and possibly a smokehouse, smoking bacon from this and neighbouring farms.

The front part of the farmhouse itself, which is timber-framed, is also thought to date from before 1600, although it has been added to and altered since. The character of the house as it is now, with its parlour and large kitchen, belongs more to the early 19th century.

The farm buildings are only sketched in on the tithe map of 1844 but none seem to be shown in front of the house. These only appear in 1870, when the first 6 inches to the mile Ordnance Survey map was made. They consist of stables and cowhouse on the right (as seen from the house), and a wool store on the left. South of the track there was formerly a cartshed, and slightly further away is the great threshing barn, which was probably built in the early 17th century.

Until 1921, Obriss was part of the Chartwell estate, which was broken up for sale just before the main house was bought by future prime minister, Winston Churchill, in November 1922. Chartwell is now in the care of the National Trust.

Restoration of the buildings

The most urgent task in 1992 was the repair of the great threshing barn, which was near to collapse. This, and some work carried out on the other farm buildings, exhausted the funds available at that time. In 1995 Landmark was able to start work on the house itself, and to complete the repair of the buildings round the yard, and the bakehouse situated behind the main house.

The house needed some structural work, where the sole plate had rotted at the east end and along the front. The roof was railed on new battens and insulation, and the tilehanging on the back and sides of the house renewed, using a mixture of old and new handmade tiles. The walls were repointed using a lime-and-sand mortar to match some areas of old mortar that survived. Windows from the 1920s were replaced with ones of a more sympathetic design.

Inside, restoration was kept to a minimum. Some replastering was needed, and the creation of two new bathrooms and a new kitchen. A second stair, inserted at a time when the house was divided into two cottages, was removed and the floor made up with new oak boards. The sitting room and bedroom above were painted in colours of which traces were found on the walls, using traditional distempers.

A grant for the work was received from the Raymond and Blanche Lawson Charitable Trust. The work was carried out under the supervision of the architect Peregrine Bryant by Head and Southon of Lingfield, and Clive Whitby, roof tiler. The house was furnished in January 1996. Support for work on the farm has also been given by the Countryside Commission under the Countryside Stewardship scheme. Two ponds were cleaned and there is an ongoing programme of relaying hedges. An orchard was replanted around 2010.

Introduction

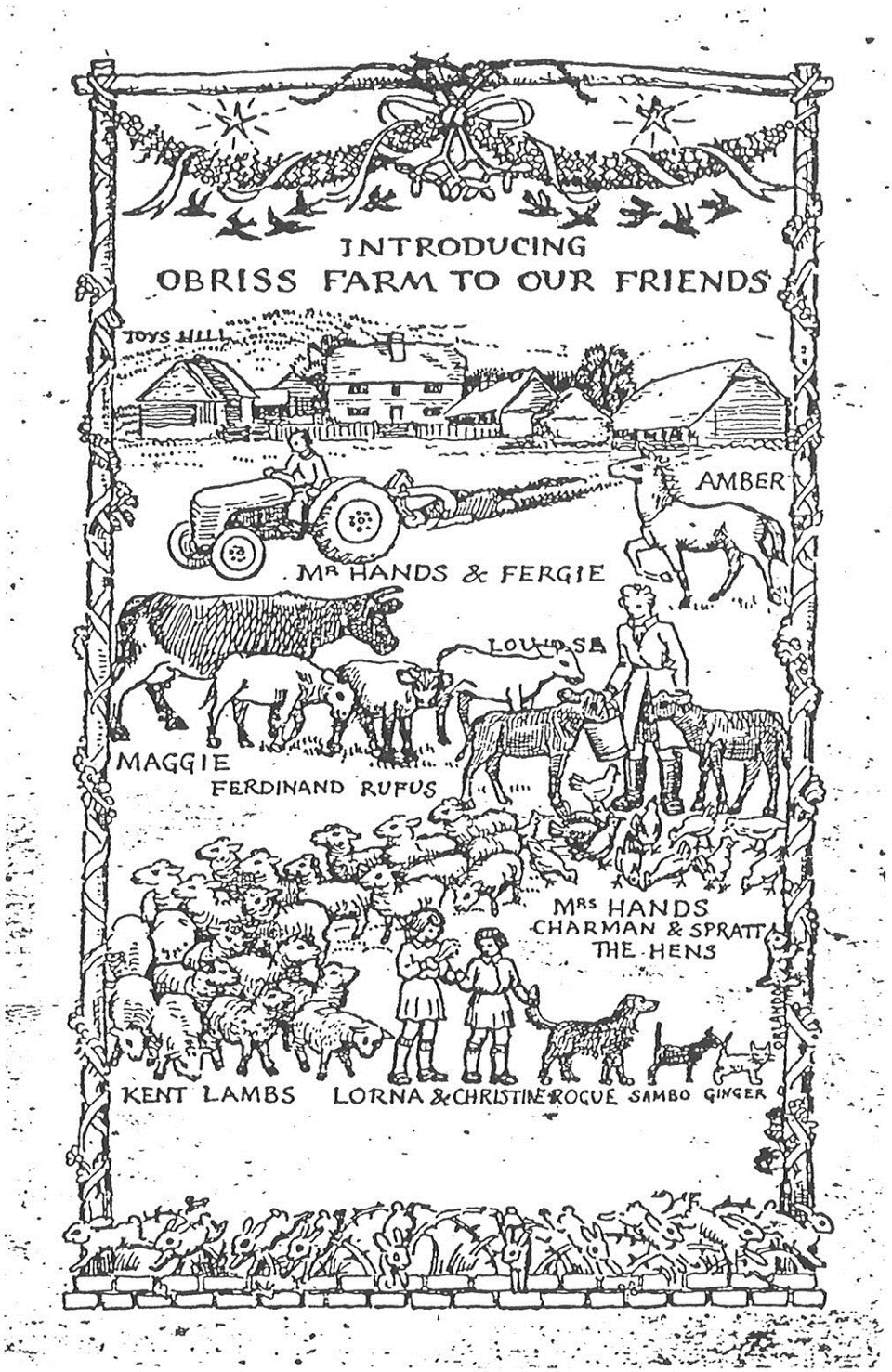
Obriss is an unspoilt farmstead in the wooded part of the Weald on the lower southern slopes of Toys Hill. The farm sits just below a belt of Lower Greensand and much of the land is Wealden clay. It sits astride the parishes of Westerham and Brasted and has small irregularly shaped-hedged fields typical of the Weald.

Obriss is marked, though not named, in the map of the area in Edward Hasted's *History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, Vol. III 1797.

Obriss Farm was given to the Landmark Trust in 1990 by the executors of Mrs Helena Cooper. Mrs Cooper had inherited the farm from her father, who bought it in the 1920s. While neither actually farmed Obriss themselves, both took a close interest in it, and in the way it was run by their tenants. As pressure mounted on farmers to rely more and more on chemicals and to industrialise their production, so Obriss, run along traditional lines, became a precious reminder of different values. Its fields remained unsprayed and wildlife thrived.

Mrs Cooper was keen that this aspect of Obriss should be preserved, but also wished for the buildings to be repaired and cared for – and enjoyed. It was for this reason that her executors opted for the Landmark Trust as its new guardian.

Managing a farm was a new experience for Landmark. When we acquired Obriss in 1990, it was let to a young farming contractor, who left in 1992. The fields are now let for pasture to a farmer whose family have farmed in the area for many years. Another solution was needed for the woods, which make up nearly a third of the farm. Landmark has entered into a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme for the management of the farm, including the woodland, and will reinvigorate and replant various areas.



A design by Mrs Cooper's husband. Mrs Cooper was the last owner of Obriss Farmhouse before the Landmark Trust took it over its upkeep in 1990.

The buildings of Obriss Farm

Obriss is typical of the small mixed farms which were formed in this area in the Tudor and Elizabethan periods by yeomen – some freeholders, some tenants of larger landowners. Such farms were often the result of enclosing the large open fields of the medieval period, and this seems to have been the case at Obriss. A field to the northeast of the house has the clear 'ridge and furrow' pattern left by medieval ploughs. The farm's own boundaries, and those of its fields, have probably changed little in the last two or three hundred years.

Kentish rural settlement and field patterns were already established by the beginning of the 14th century in a form that has remained basically unchanged to the present day. A dispersed settlement of small hamlets and isolated farmsteads was the norm for the Weald, encouraged by the inheritance system followed in Kent called 'gavelkind'. Instead of the more normal system of primogeniture where the eldest son inherits all the land, under gavelkind the land was divided up equally between all sons. The typical 15th century farm was small and compact – some 66 per cent were of 10 acres or less. Today, Obriss is 160 acres of farm including woodland.

The earliest building dates from between 1550 and 1600. This is the timber-framed bakehouse that stands behind the farmhouse. Examination by the archaeologist David Martin has revealed that this is in origin a detached kitchen, a rare survival of a once common building type. It was about twice the size it is now and probably served not only as a kitchen, but as a bakehouse and brewhouse as well, with storage rooms and possibly some accommodation for servants. In the 19th century, when its brick chimney was added, it was used as a bakehouse and washhouse, and possibly a smokehouse, smoking bacon from this and neighbouring farms.

The front part of the farmhouse itself, which is timber-framed, is also thought to date from before 1600, although it has been added to and altered since. Originally it would probably have been timber-framed on all four sides, and only one room deep. The chimneystack is contemporary with the first phase of the house, as by the mid-16th century, the yeoman farmers of Kent had abandoned the open halls of their forefathers, and if building from new, they would enjoy the benefits of an enclosed hearth from the outset. At the same time, many Kentish houses that previously been open-halled, now had a stack inserted for the first time. This allowed for the flooring over of the hall to provide extra accommodation or storage. The change was sometimes marked by the insertion of a large gabled dormer, perhaps marked with the date, to light the attic space above.

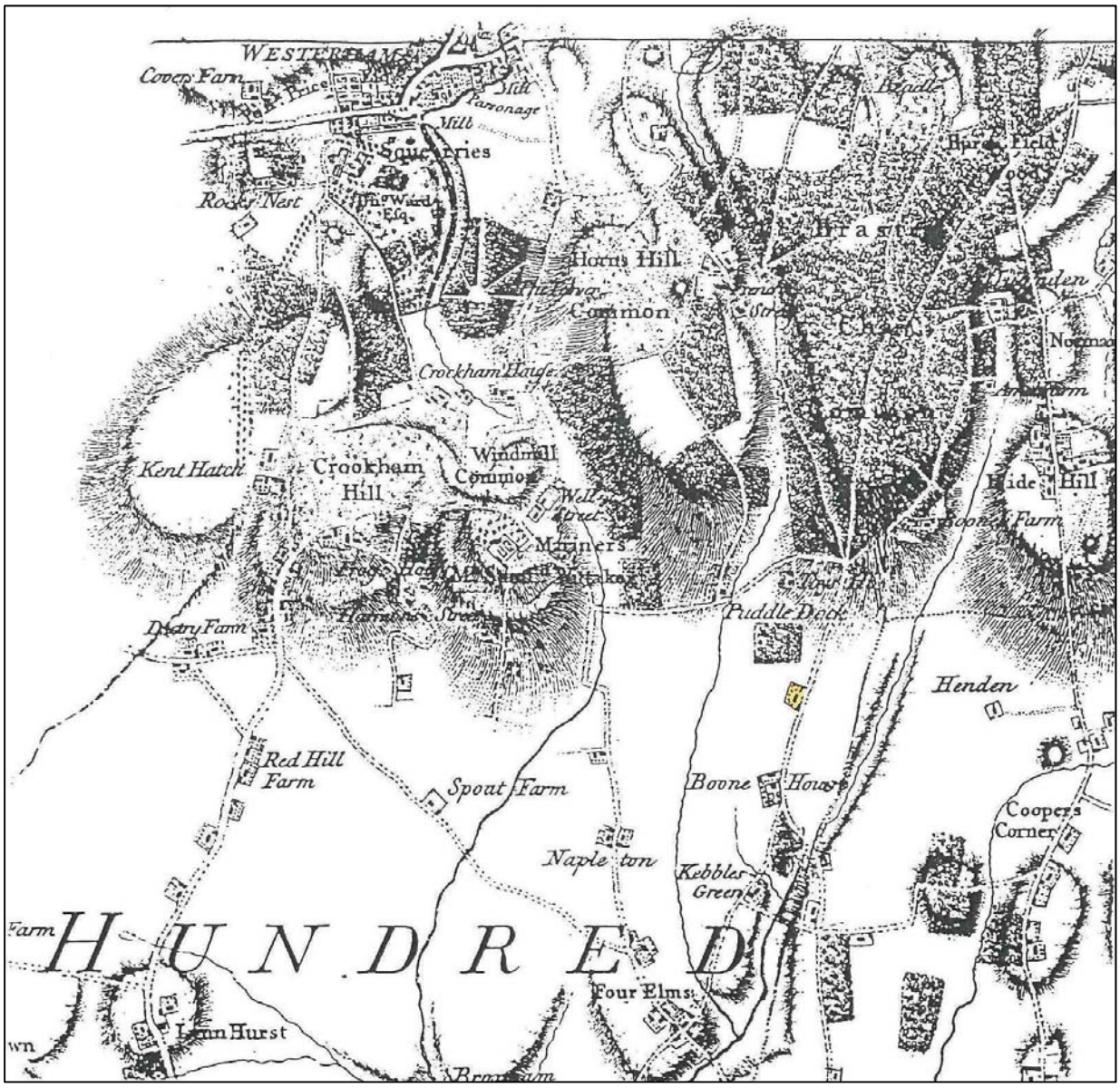
Entry would have been, as now, into the small lobby in front of the end of the stack. The two ground floor rooms would be known as the hall (to the left from the front), by now evolving into the farmhouse kitchen that it is today, and to the right, the parlour, a room reserved for the private use of the family as opposed to any servants or labourers. The better quality of the ceiling joists may reflect this division.

The kitchen, deliberately detached because of the risk of fire, would obviously have been that much further away from the back of the house than it is now. It is also possible that originally Obriss would have been thatched, although tiles were used surprisingly early on farmhouses in Kent. Although the manufacture of bricks and tiles is in principle very similar, bricks do not generally appear in vernacular buildings, apart from the chimneystacks, until the mid-17th century or so – a reflection of the prevalence of supplies of good oak for house building. Over time, the timber-frame and especially the infill panels would decay, a problem commonly dealt with in this part of the world by adding a skin of hung tiling. A particularly bad piece of the frame might be completely replaced in brick. And if the owner felt that his timber-framed house was now looking rather

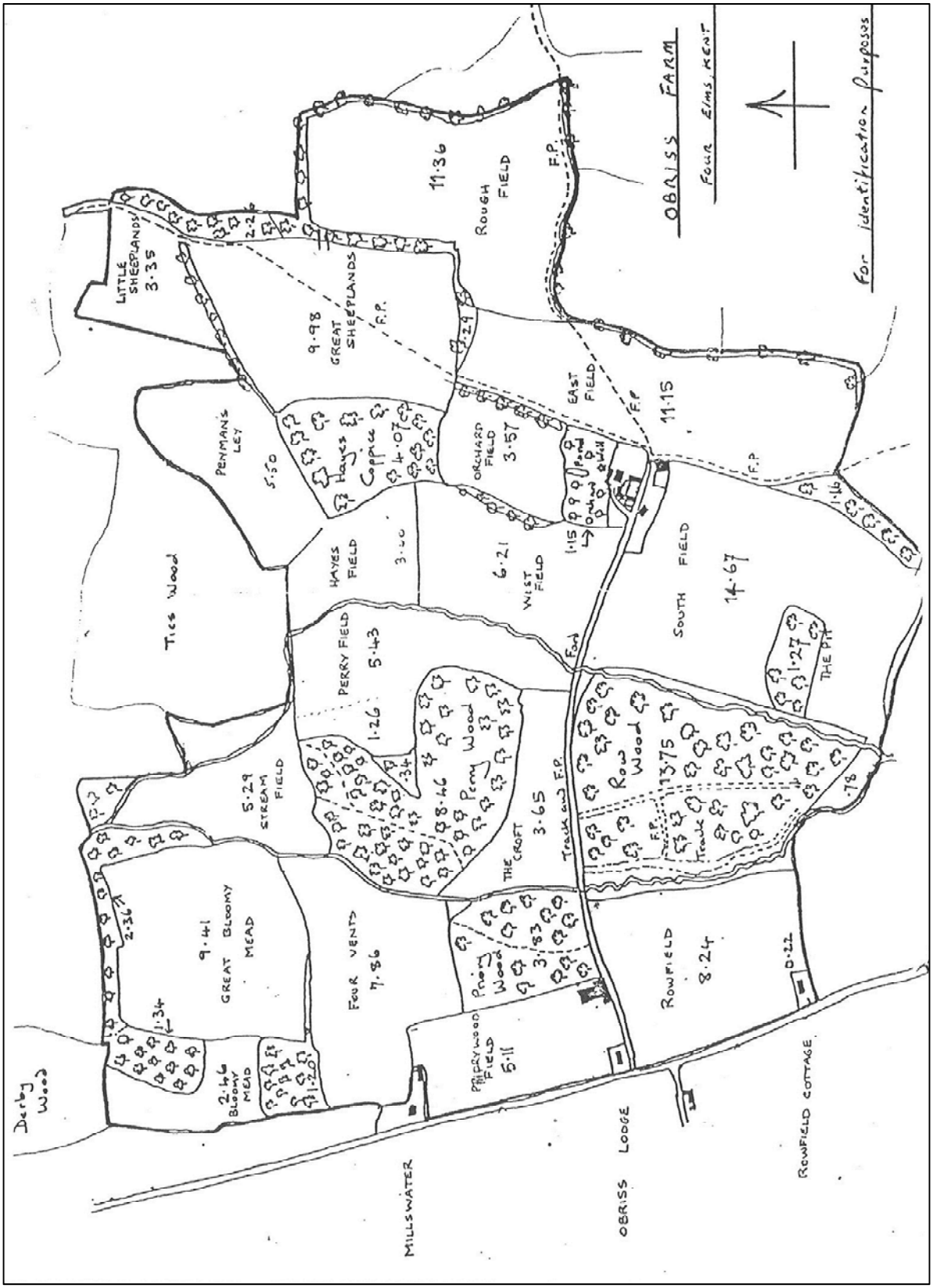
unfashionable, then brick, together with more modern windows, could also be used to provide a new facade. This may have happened at Obriss.
With the increase in specialisation in domestic tasks, it became common to add extensions to the rear of farmhouses. These were often to provide extra space on the ground floor only, and this could be done by extending the roof pitch almost down to ground level to produce the happily named 'catslide' roof. At Obriss, accommodation on the first floor was gained by the alternative approach of adding a parallel block roofed under three gables. The character of the house as it is now, with its parlour and large kitchen, belongs more to the early 19th century.

In 1844, when a map was made for apportioning the tithes in the two parishes, Obriss and adjoining farms belonged to a Mr Eyre, as heir to one Charles Parker. The tenant was William Bowra. The farm consisted of a mixture of arable land and pasture or meadow, with some orchards and hop gardens as well. The woods occupied the same area that they do now.

The farm buildings are only sketched in on the 1844 tithe map, but none seem to be shown in front of the house. These only appear in 1870, when the first 6 inches to the mile Ordnance Survey map was made. They consist of stables and cowhouse on the right (as seen from the house), and a wool store on the left. South of the track there was formerly a cartshed, and slightly further away is the great threshing barn, which was probably built in the early 17th century.



Drury and Andrews' County Map of Kent, 1742.



A sketch map from 1986, showing the names of the fields and woods.

Photographs of Obriss Farm before restoration

Obriss Farmhouse prior to renovation, 1991.

The cow-byre with attached shed prior to renovation, 1991.

The chimney of the bakehouse (now reduced) and the demolished privy.

The bakehouse interior.

The 17th-century threshing barn in 1991.

The 17th-century threshing barn.

The cow byre with attached shed.

The wool store.

The demolished cartshed.

The repairs at Obriss Farm

The most urgent task in 1992 was the repair of the great threshing barn, which was near to collapse. This, and some work carried out on the other farm buildings, exhausted the funds available at that time. It was not until 1995 that Landmark was able to start work on the house itself, and to complete the repair of the bakehouse behind the house, and the buildings round the yard.

Unlike many Landmarks, the farmhouse itself required relatively little work. The house needed some structural work, where the sole plate or bottom horizontal beam to which vertical posts were attached, had rotted at the east end and along the front. The roof was retiled on new battens and insulation. Replacement sprockets were fitted – these project beyond the face of the wall which allow the lower courses of tiles to lay at a shallower pitch, enhancing the traditional look. Tilehanging on the back and sides of the house renewed, using a mixture of old and new handmade tiles. The underlying timber frame was found to be in good condition. The walls were repointed using a lime and sand mortar to match some areas of old mortar that survived. The 1920s windows were replaced with ones of a more sympathetic design of 3 x 5 leaded lights in oak frames. Pieces of tile were carefully cut to fill the space between the top of the window and the underside of the brick arch. A new sewage treatment plant was installed in the old orchard and an underground gas tank was put down below the barns.

Inside, restoration was kept to a minimum. Some re-plastering, using haired lime plaster on chestnut laths, was needed, and the creation of two new bathrooms and a new kitchen. A second stair, inserted in what is now the rear lobby, at a time when the house was divided into two cottages, was removed and the floor made up with new oak boards. The sitting room and bedroom above were painted in colours of which traces were found on the walls, using traditional distempers. The dado panelling was added to the dining room.

The east elevation before the first floor window was reinstated.

The back hall with the second staircase now removed.

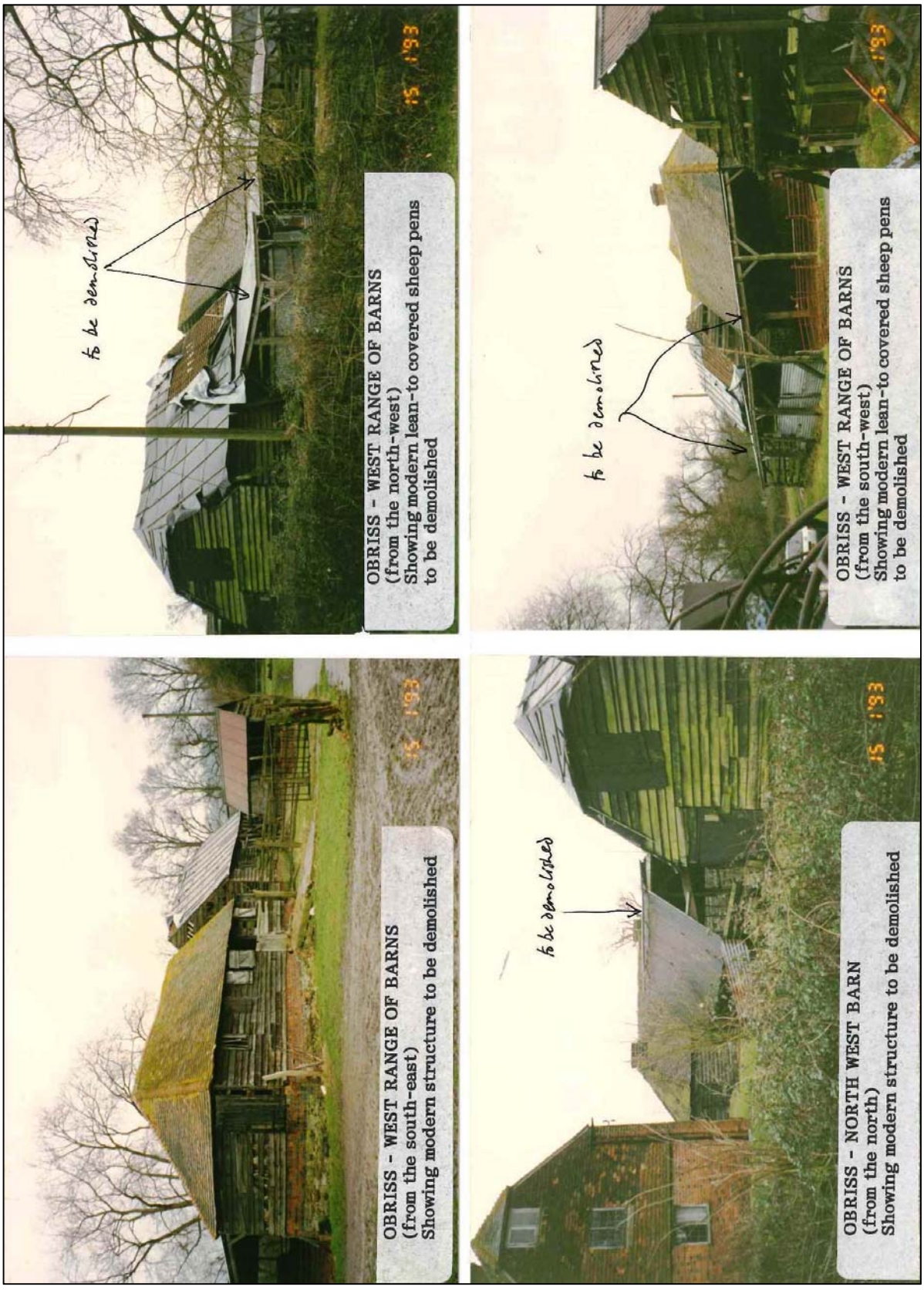
All the barns and the bakehouse were retiled and had their weatherboarding renewed or repaired, and then coated in black bitumastic paint. Below the west barn, a wagon shed that was in very poor condition was demolished. The northwest barn had to be taken down and rebuilt, reusing as much of the old timber as possible. The chimney and hearth of the smokehouse were structurally unsound, and so the lean-to privy was demolished, and the stack reduced in height. Steel ties have been inserted to add strength. A lean-to shed at the west end was also removed, as were several other corrugated iron sheds.

The attic room.

The south wall of the single bedroom was originally an outside wall. The framing shows the position of the earlier window. (RCHME)

The fireplace in the south-east bedroom.

Photographs from Peregrine Bryant, pre-restoration




OBRISS - THE WAGON SHED
(to be demolished)
OBRISS - THE WAGON SHED
(to be demolished)
OBRISS - THE BAKE HOUSE (SMOKERY)
From the north-west
OBRISS - THE BAKE HOUSE (SMOKERY)
West Eleveation
Showing modern lean-to to be demolished
to be demolished

The work was carried out under the supervision of the architect Peregrine Bryant by Head and Southon of Lingfield, and Clive Whitby, roof tiler. The house was furnished in January 1996. A grant for the work was received from the Raymond and Blanche Lawson Charitable Trust. Support for work on the farm has also been given by the Countryside Commission under the Countryside Stewardship scheme. Two ponds have been cleaned and there is an ongoing programme of relaying hedges. An orchard was replanted in 2010.

The newly planted orchard, August 2010.

The owners of Obriss Farm

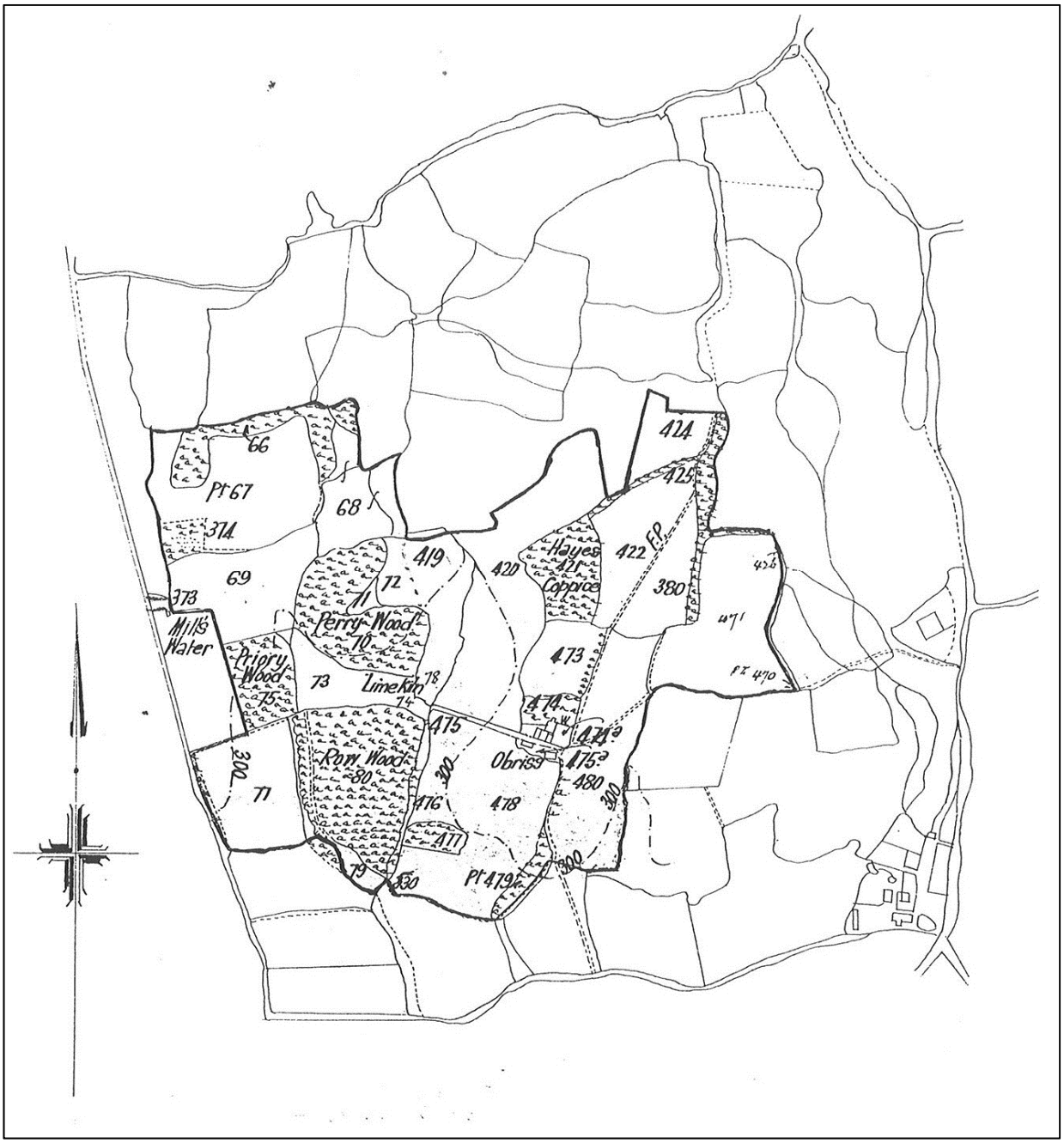
In 1848 the Chartwell Estate was purchased by John Campbell Colquhoun and it remained in his family until 1922. Obriss was part of this estate. We know that in 1855 William Brown was the (tenant) farmer.

In 1870 John Campbell Colquhoun died and Reverend John Erskine Campbell Colquhoun took up residence at Chartwell. John Brown, probably the son of William, is recorded as the farmer in 1878. In 1898 a lease for Chartwell Farm and O'Briss Farm was agreed between the Reverend and Messrs William Heasman and William Samuel Heasman.

The farms are described in the lease as consisting of 'a Farmhouse, Cottages, Barn, Outhouses, Stables and other premises, with 287 acres of land now in the occupation of the Landlord'. The schedule of land forming part of the lease is at the back of this album.

The two 'O'Briss Cottages' were to be let only on weekly tenancies, and so it is clear that the farmhouse had already been divided by this time. The lead tenants were to live in Chartwell Farmhouse, which was 'not to be occupied by labourers', and nor was the tenant to 'shut up or desert the same without written consent'. O'Briss Farm comprised 121 acres of the total, the same as today.

In 1917 Reverend Colquhoun died and Archibald Colquhoun took up residence at Chartwell. Archibald was a bachelor and when he died the property passed to William Colquhoun, son of John Erskine. However, William was of unsound mind, and acting on his behalf, his brother, Captain Colquhoun, agreed to the sale of the Chartwell Estate and of the farms which formed part of it.



The 1922 map forming part of the lease between Archibald Colquhoun and Willem van Bruyn.

In 1921 the Colquhouns duly put the 816-acre Chartwell Estate up for sale. The sales particulars describe 'Pleasure Grounds, Azaleas, Cryptomeria japonica, Araucaria imbricata, Cedars and Wellingtonia as well as fine forest trees, belts of beech and other woodlands'. The terraced gardens 'have Tennis Court, Orchard and Boating Lake of ¾ acre and heather thatched Boat House. Kitchen Gardens surrounded by yew clipped hedge'. Most of the estate sold, but the lot of 80 acres that included the mansion and Obriss Farm failed to reach its reserve price of £6,500.

The two cottages and other buildings on the holding, known as Mill's Water, with a little over 5 acres was sold for £380 to Jessie Grace Southon, wife of Charles Southon. One of these cottages was let to Amos Kemp and the other to William Samuel Heasman.

A sale went through in August 1922 to Willem van Oosterwijk Bruyn for 'all that farmhouse, land, hereditaments, buildings and premises known as Obriss Farm'. It totalled some 156 acres, and was bought for £2,100. Mr van Bruyn, a member of the London Stock Exchange, presumably acquired the farm with the Heasmans still as tenants.

In 1922 Winston Churchill lost his seat in the House of Commons. In November he bought the remaining part of the Chartwell Estate including the main house for £5,000, rather less than the original reserve price. Mr van Bruyn had purchased Obriss Farm just months earlier and the two men were readily able to come to an agreement, as Churchill did not want Obriss. Mr van Bruyn carried out a thorough overhaul of Obriss farmhouse in the 1920s. In 1932 Mr van Bruyn died and Obriss was left to his wife, Helen. When she died in 1946, Obriss went to their daughter, Wilhelmina Helena Cooper, married to Francis John Caedmon Cooper.

Chartwell became Churchill's and his wife Clementine's principal home for the rest of his life, where he hosted many high powered social weekends and derived

much strength and respite during the dark years of World War II. When it became clear to the Churchills in 1946 that they could no longer afford to run Chartwell, a consortium of wealthy businessmen bought the house in gratitude for Churchill's service to the nation. When he died in 1965, Clementine gave the property to the National Trust.

In 1966 Mrs Cooper bought the field called Mill's Water from the executors of Miss Southon for £500, thus reuniting this parcel of land with the farm, since its separation from Obriss back in 1922. The house on the Mill's Water acreage had been sold ten years earlier, in 1956, to a Vivian Milroy.

Mrs Cooper took a close interest in the way Obriss was farmed and continued to run it along traditional lines without the use of chemicals and pesticides. The fields remained unsprayed and wildlife thrived. She was keen that this aspect of Obriss should be preserved, but also wished for the buildings to be repaired and cared for and enjoyed. When Mrs Cooper died in 1990, it was for this reason that her executors opted for the Landmark Trust as the farmstead's new guardian, confident that the Trust would protect not just the buildings but also their setting amid traditionally farmed land.

A year in the life of Obriss Farm

All the land at Obriss that is not woodland is used for sheep farming, and artificial fertilizers are kept to a minimum, in accordance with Stewardship schemes. Landscape maintenance and improvements are ongoing, including hedge laying, fencing and tree work. Improvements will continue to be made with the aim of returning Obriss to a 'textbook' Wealden Farm.

January: The ewes are 'in lamb' (pregnant), and in six to eight weeks the lambs will be born. The ewes require supplementary feeding with 'cake' to build up their strength.

February: The first lambs are due at the end of this month and the ewes are 'crutched' (cleaned up around the rear) and dosed prior to this. Most ewes bear one or two lambs, for an average reckoning of one and a half lambs per ewe. Ewes can become stuck on their backs during labour, and this is known as being 'mislaid'. The fields with the old medieval ridge and furrow pattern can make this more likely, so the sheep are kept out of these fields. Checking on the flock is known as 'lookering'.

March: The farm is now in the full swing of lambing. All the new lambs will have their tails docked (a tight band clamped to the tail so that it withers and drops off, for later health and hygiene) and navels sprayed, and the males will be castrated except for a few exceptionally strong looking ones that will be left to become rams. This is all done within the first week of the lamb's life. Although enjoyable for visitors, bottle-feeding lambs is hard work, and is avoided if possible by ensuring that the ewes are well fed so that they can make sufficient milk of their own, even if they have twins. Occasionally a lamb becomes orphaned and it is then known as a 'sock', but if quick action is taken it may be adopted or 'set to' by another ewe.

April: This month sees the end of the late lambers. All the ewes are drenched and crutched again. Any barren ewes are unlikely to breed again and so they are sold. On average a ewe is kept for four or five years. Any lambs over six weeks are drenched to prevent worms.

May: Every four weeks the lambs are drenched, and they and the ewes are sprayed for blow-fly. A start is made on running the stock through a footbath.

June: Contractors arrive to shear the ewes – the lambs will not be shorn until next year. Each sheep will be shorn in little more than one minute. The 'grader' comes to the farm to advise which lambs are now fat enough to go for sale to become new-season English lamb.

July: All the pastures are mown and tidied.

August: A second check is made for blow-fly.

September: The wool, that until now has been stored on the farm, is now sold, going off to Ashford in Kent for grading and thence up to Bradford for spinning and possible weaving. Wool from black sheep is worth rather less, as it cannot be dyed. The lambs are 'drafted off' (separated) from their mothers, and more are sold. Any ewes suffering from problems such as poor teeth or mastitis are culled. Dipping would normally be done at this time of year.

October: More lambs are sold and 'tupping' time begins when the rams are introduced to the ewes. The gestation period is 142 days.

November and December: These winter months are used to tidy the farm and check and repair all the fencing.

Bluebells beneath a copse planted with native species.

Oberice Farm apiary

The apiary site can be seen from the first gate into the field on the right as you go back down the lane just past the farm buildings. The apiary uses the spelling for Obriss Farm (Oberice) shown on the earliest Ordnance Survey maps, published in 1819.

There are usually six colonies of bees kept in modern, single-walled 'National' hives, looked after by our current beekeeper, John Williams. Sometimes during the summer months, smaller hives can be seen housing small 'nucleus' colonies used for raising new queen bees. The bees find plenty to forage around Obriss, collecting nectar and pollen from flowers in the hedgerows and woodland, as well as from nearby gardens around Chartwell and Toys Hill.

John Williams's tutor was Francis Cooper who started beekeeping in the early part of the 20th century. He kept bees at Obriss from the 1940s and John Williams looked after the bees for Mrs Cooper after Francis died in 1980. The apiary is visited weekly throughout the spring and summer to ensure that all is well with the bees.

Honey is harvested two or three times a year, during 'good' seasons, from the end of May to the end of July. The honey is sold at Larratt's on the High Street in Westerham.

Charcoal burning

History

The woods at Obriss have been managed for decades as coppiced woodland, a technique dating back to at least medieval times, where the trees are cut down to their base every seven to twelve years. This does not kill the tree but causes it to produce many fast-growing shoots used for a wide range of traditional products, including roofing battens, laths for plasterwork, hurdles for fencing and sheep pens, as well as for charcoal. By using these coppicing methods, timber can be harvested perpetually from such woods in a completely sustainable way.

Charcoal has played a crucial role in the history of the Weald, where Obriss Farm sits. Before the coking of coal was invented at Ironbridge in the 18th century, charcoal was the only means of producing temperatures high enough to smelt iron, a process which occurred widely throughout this part of south-east England. Indeed, for several centuries the Wealden region was the major iron-producing centre of England, having taken over from the Forest of Dean. Contemporary descriptions of the area at the time describe the burning furnaces used to extract the iron from its ore, and the incessant banging of the hammers in the mills.

Traditional woods used for this ancient woodland craft were oak, beech, ash and alder. Charcoal burning declined rapidly between the two World Wars, and as a result, the great storm of October 1987 caused tremendous damage to the woodland of the south of England, as many of these woods had not been properly managed for years. The coppiced boles were carrying a heavy head of timber, which meant that they were unable to resist the fierce storm winds.

The traditional production of wood charcoal is slowly seeing an increase, not least because of the modern demand for barbecues. However, currently, much of the charcoal on sale in England is imported.

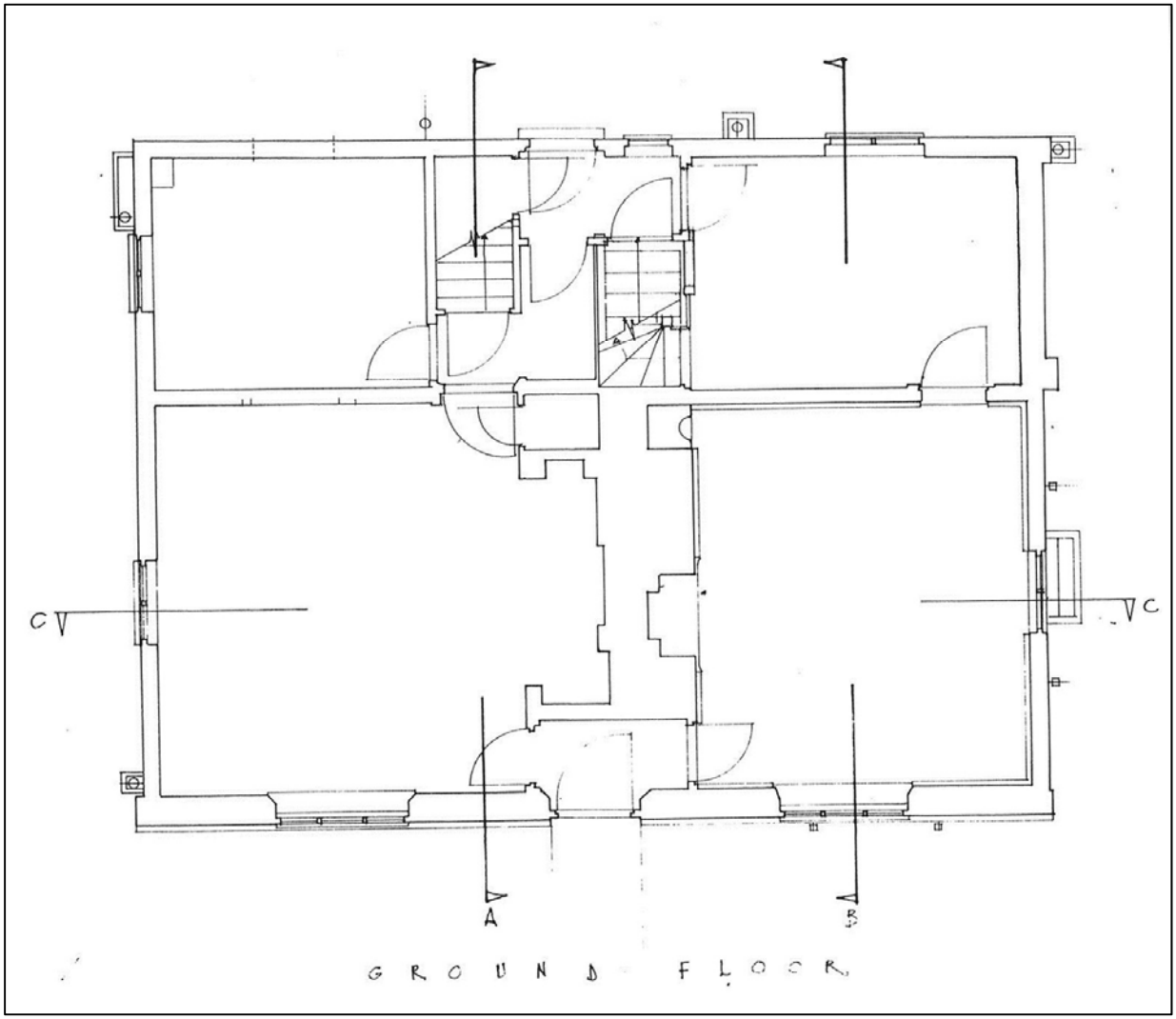
Charcoal production

The timber is cut into lengths of approximately four feet and stacked to season. Once dry, the logs were then stacked into clamps and then covered in ‘turves’ or peat. This clamp would then be fired, carefully limiting the air supply, so that wood is ‘baked’ to charcoal rather than being burned away to ash. Today, the same process is carried out in large steel kilns similar to giant woodstoves. The resultant lumpwood charcoal is almost pure carbon and weight for weight it is better than the best anthracite (mineral coal) as a clean source of heat.

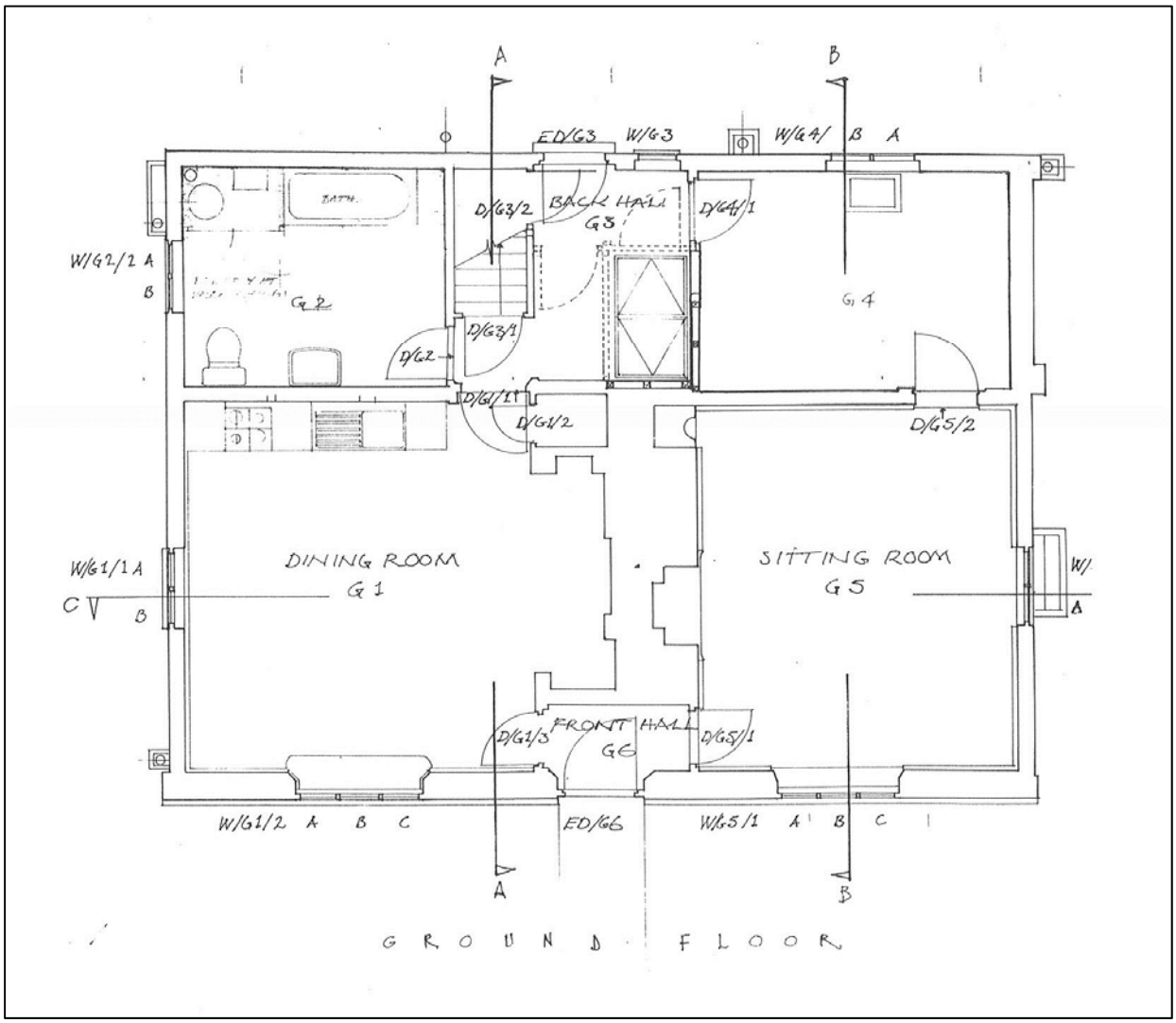
O'BRISS FARM, PARISHES OF BRASTED AND WESTERHAM, Schedule

No. on Ordinance Acreage Plan	*Name of Field*	*Parish*	*Cultivation*	*A. r. p*
67	*Gt. Broomy Field and Broomy Mead*	*Westerham*	*Pasture*	*11 3 24*
68	*Perry mead*	*do.*	*Pasture*	*5 0 34*
69	*Long Meadow*	*do.*	*Pasture*	*7 3 25*
71		*do.*		
72	*Perry Field*	*do.*	*Pasture*	*6 3 31*
419		*Brasted*		
73	*Square Croft*	*Westerham*	*Rough Pasture*	*3 3 12*
77	*Row Field*	*Westerham*	*Arable*	*8 1 34*
373	*2 Cottage*	*Brasted*		*1 8*
374		*do.*	*Wood*	*1 0 34*
420	*Flats New Meadow &c.*	*do.*	*Pasture*	*14 3 7*
422	*Gt. Sheeplands*	*do.*	*Pasture*	*10 2 32*
424	*Little do.*	*do.*	*Pasture*	*3 1 11*
471	*Little Great Oak Field*	*do.*	*Arable*	*11 1 27*
473	*The Grove*	*Brasted*	*Pasture*	*3 2 12*
474	*Orchard*	*do.*	*Orchard*	*1 3 7*
475	*Buildings &c. &c.*	*do.*		*3 30*
477		*do.*	*Wood*	*1 0 35*
478	*Little & Gt. Pit Field & South Fd.*	*do.*	*Pasture*	*14 2 30*
479		*do.*	*Wood*	*1 1 5*
480	*Upper & Lower East Field*	*do.*	*Arable*	*11 0 20*
1146 (old plan)	*Row Field Croft*	*do.*	*Pasture*	*2 35*
			TOTAL	*121 1 13*

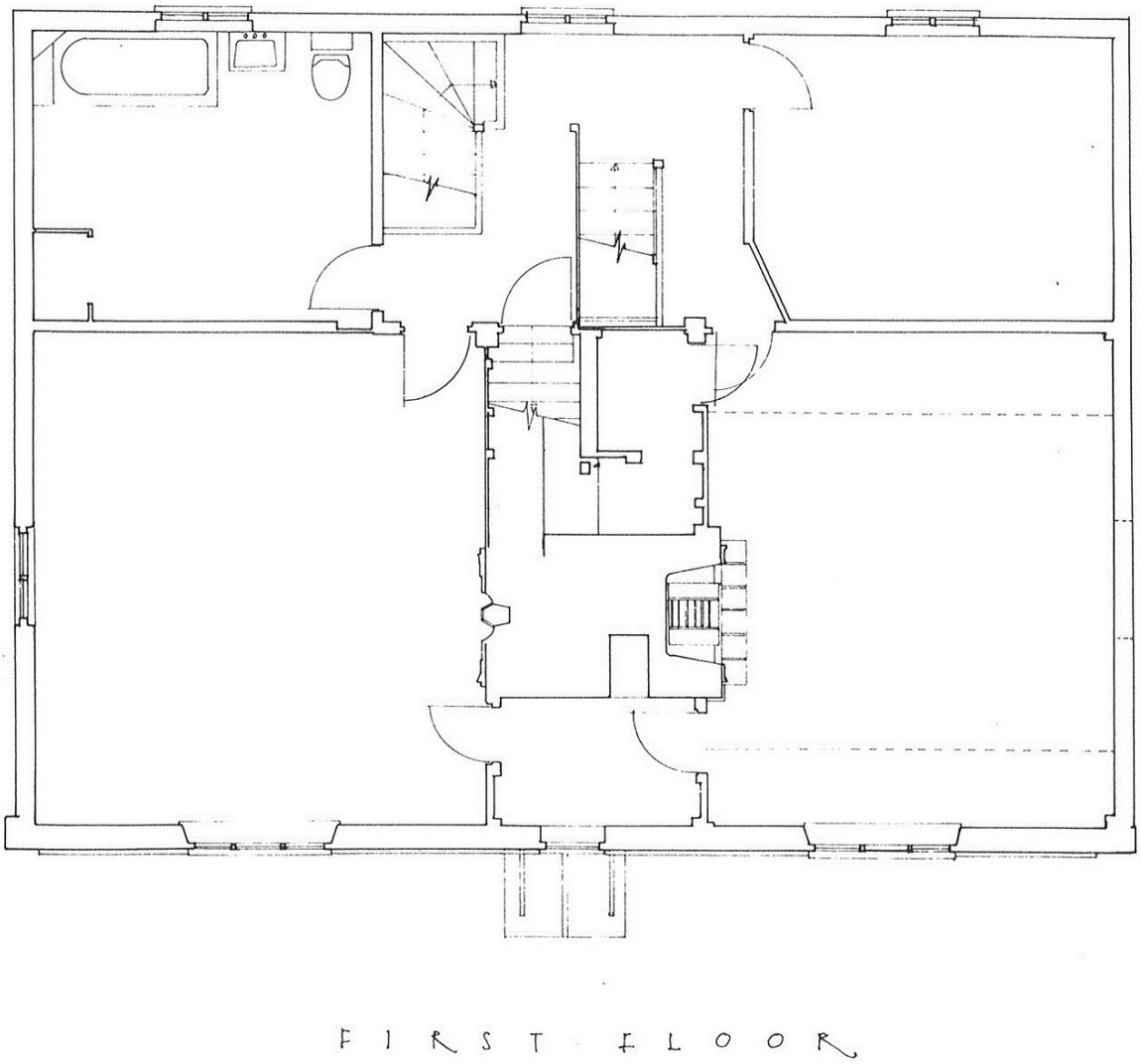
The schedule of land that formed part of the lease between the Reverend John Colquhoun, and William Heasman and William Samuel Heasman, April 1898.



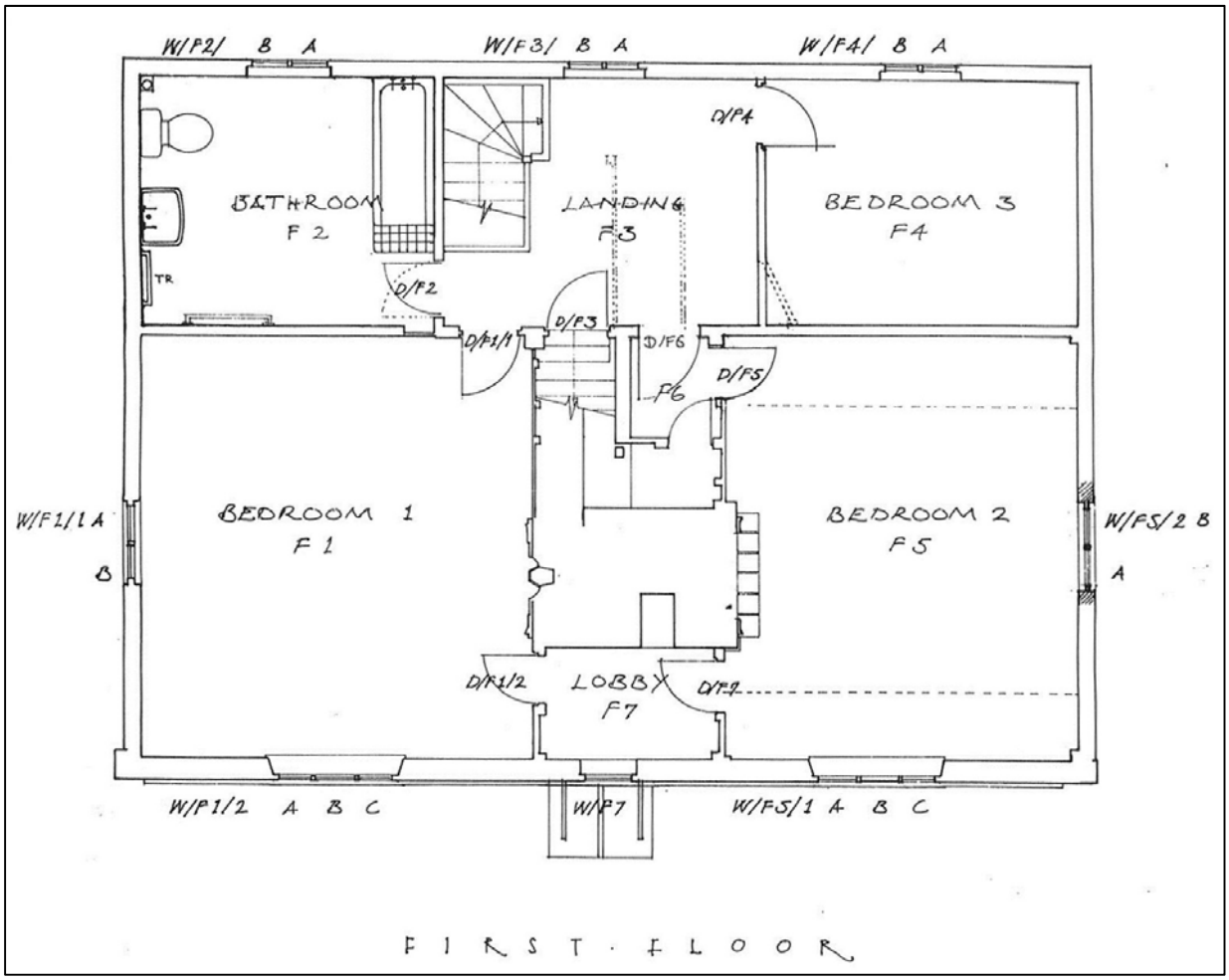
Ground floor
Before



Ground floor
After



First floor
Before



First floor
After

BRIEF OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE DETACHED OUT BUILDING LOCATED TO THE REAR OF OBRISS FARM, CHARTWELL, KENT.

At the request of Peregrine Bryant, acting on behalf of The Landmark Trust, the detached structure at the rear of Obriss Farmhouse was briefly inspected on 10th August 1995. The purpose of this inspection was to give a view as to the structure's age and original purpose and to make recommendations as to whether further archaeological recording would be worthwhile.

The building is situated across a narrow open yard or passage immediately to the rear of the farmhouse, to which it is set parallel. It is a two-bay, two-storeyed structure served at the eastern end by a single-flue fireplace located within a 19th century lean-to. A large bread oven is incorporated into the southern jamb of the fireplace, whilst towards the northern side is a built-in water-boiling furnace or 'copper'. A small room is divided off from the north-western corner by a 19th century partition, but otherwise the ground floor area is occupied by a single space, as too is the upper chamber, which remains open to the roof. The building is fully timber-framed. The furnace and oven incorporated into the fireplace show the 19th century use of the building to have been that of a combined wash-house/brewhouse and bakehouse. Soot staining on the timbers of the upper chamber (including the 19th century timbers) may indicate that smoking was also carried on within the building.

The origin of the structure is much earlier than the 19th century, for the main frame, roof and most of the first floor joisting belong to the 16th century. Furthermore, mortices in the outer faces of the end frame, together with stave holes in the soffite of the cut off ends of the plate indicate that the structure has lost at least one bay from either end and, when built, was of four or more bays in length. Some timbers within the western wall have been replaced, as too have some of the joists, but otherwise the frame of the surviving section is very complete. The timberwork was originally exposed to view within the external walls, the framing of which was infilled with large daub panels divided from one another by studs. At the upper level the walls are stiffened by headbraces, inset slightly so as to be masked from view on the principal face of the wall. The bracing in the side wall is in one direction - being sited at the western end of each bay - so as to prevent the frame from racking towards the west. That no bracing was incorporated to prevent eastward raking implies that a chimney on the site of the existing stack was always intended and was utilized to give the frame stability. Although the present chimney is largely of 19th century date, the base of the oven is clearly of antiquity.

The roof is of queen stud and clasped-side-purlin construction with indisputable evidence of partial two-way windbracing - only one brace survives *in situ*. As with the side walls, here too the windbracing was only partial, with the windbracing on the western side of the central truss omitted.

On the first floor the surviving two bays always formed a single chamber, and there was no direct access from it to the lost bays at either end. The chamber was open to the roof and incorporated a plain, unbraced central truss. There is some evidence for unglazed windows lighting the chamber, but the degree of lighting was always minimal. On the ground floor there is stave hole evidence for a partition beneath the crossbeam of the central truss, dividing the space into two rooms. The location of the inter-connecting doorway can be recognized. At this level too there is evidence for unglazed windows.

As to which period within the 16th century the structure belongs, the evidence is conflicting. On balance a date after 1550 is preferred. The structure is very competently framed and, although plain, the timbers are of good quality and scantling. For a number of reasons, it can be shown that

Outbuilding at Obriss Farm, Chartwell, Kent *cont.*

it was not built as a dwelling, though a domestic use is suggested by the extant oven base. Almost certainly it was built as a 'kitchen' - or at least that is the name by which buildings were known at the time. It has only recently become evident that such buildings were once common in the south-east of England. Furthermore, they were not single-storeyed, single-roomed structures as might at first be thought, but multi-roomed structures which fulfilled a number of service and accommodation functions of which the principal was cooking. **For further details regarding detached kitchens see the attached overview.**

Although once common, such buildings are now very rare and are still inadequately understood. Although a comprehensive archaeological survey of the Obriss structure would probably not be an economical proposition, it is strongly recommended that the structure be adequately recorded and interpreted. Apart from the academic worth of such a survey, the results would surely be of interest to those hiring the property.

David Martin FSA MIFA
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6th September 1995

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES - BUILDINGS

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF EAST SUSSEX

David & Barbara Martin

Element: - DETACHED KITCHENS
Section: 1 OVERVIEW

File Ref: HBES/DESIGN/KITCH/1

First issued 1977. *Update 4 issued April 1995*

- DETACHED KITCHENS - - OVERVIEW -

SYNOPSIS: *It can be demonstrated that, after houses and barns, detached kitchens were once the most common building type present in the landscape of south-east England, yet today very few examples survive. Those which do mainly date from the period 1450-1550 and are surprisingly large and complex. They range in length from two to four bays and usually have more than one ground floor room and at least one, often two or more upper chambers. Although all incorporate non-standard features, in general appearance the surviving examples closely resemble small houses. It is often only their location, close to the rear of a main house of more standard layout, which indicates their true function. Documentary evidence suggests that, in addition to the kitchen itself, the buildings housed such service rooms as bakehouses, and milkhouses. The upper chambers gave extra storage and accommodation.*

It should be stressed that those kitchens which survive are likely to represent the larger, more elaborate examples. Many of those which have been lost may have been nothing more than single-roomed, single-storeyed outhouses. Yet the fact cannot be ignored that there would have been a considerable difference in status between those households with, and those without detached kitchens, despite the surviving houses being of similar size and layout. The importance of the detached kitchen in relation to vernacular studies should not be underestimated.

1. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF DETACHED KITCHENS

It is normally assumed that detached kitchens were only commonplace on monastic and manorial sites. However, historical sources suggest that during the late medieval and tudor times many vernacular households in the south-east of England incorporated such a building. The following analysis is primarily confined to a small area at the eastern end of the county of Sussex, but probably illustrates the norm. Recently other researchers have recognized surviving detached kitchens in Essex, Hampshire and Kent.

Just how common such buildings once were is illustrated by the particularly detailed survey of Robertsbridge Manor made in 1567 [published in full in *Sussex Record Society* XLVII (1944)]. This mentions a total of 123 messuages (excluding a small number of cottages and tenements) mainly located within the township of Robertsbridge and the parishes of Ewhurst, Northiam, Burwash and Ticehurst. Of these, 43 had detached kitchens; over one in three. There is a noticeable variation between the figures for the township of Robertsbridge and the rural areas. Of the 48 houses within Robertsbridge only eight (17%) are mentioned as having kitchens, whereas in the rural areas this total rises to 41%. Only upon holdings of less than 15 acres were kitchens rare: they are mentioned on 48% of holdings above that size. **Based upon the above it can be argued that during the mid 16th century, in this part of Sussex at least, detached kitchens were the most common building type after houses and barns.**

A similar survey of the rural manor of Hammerden in Ticehurst taken in 1618 mentions 69 messuages, but in this instance only eight had detached kitchens. These statistics support the hypothesis that such buildings experienced rapid destruction as they fell redundant during the late 16th century, a theory which is further supported by presentments in the court rolls. The Hammerden court rolls indicate that during this period some tenants sought permission from the lord of Hammerden to destroy their kitchens. Thus in September 1560 Robert Anoke obtained licence to devastate one old kitchen, whilst in March 1563 Thomas Manser permitted a kitchen to fall and devastate, and in September 1568 a licence was granted to Anthony Hunt to demolish an old kitchen on 'Rouleghe' - present day Rowley. After this opening spate of three cases in eight years, the records are silent as to the destruction of kitchens, the only exception being an isolated reference to a licence granted to John Umfrey to 'demolish

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an ancient kitchen on Tallowes' (Upper Tollhurst) in 1609. The general lack of references after 1568 may indicate how commonplace such destructions had become, though alternatively it may merely reflect a less stringent exercising of manorial control over building repairs - the point has not as yet been checked. In general, the court rolls of other manors show a similar situation regarding the destruction of kitchens.

It is likely that already by 1567 the popularity of the detached kitchen was on the wane. This may explain the dearth of such buildings within the wealthy township of Robertsbridge. For example, although 23,25 High Street, Robertsbridge (a high-quality continuous jettied building of *c*1520) was probably initially constructed with a detached kitchen, an attached rear kitchen was soon afterwards added to the house. During the same period attached kitchens appear also to have been added at Henhurst (now Parkhill) and Westdown, both in Burwash and both listed in the 1567 Robertsbridge manorial survey without detached kitchens.

2. THE LAYOUT OF SURVIVING DETACHED KITCHENS

Very few examples of vernacular detached kitchens survive. One at Little Brook, Crowborough exists today as a shed in front of the house, but usually they are now incorporated into rear wings, or demoted to use as an oasthouse, a type of building which was becoming more commonplace at precisely the same time as kitchens were falling redundant.

From surviving monastic examples one might expect detached kitchens to take the form of a single room, square in plan and open throughout its height. A building of this type behind Slatters in Mount Street, Battle, was initially identified as such a structure, but subsequent building works showed it to have been much later than originally thought, and to have had an entirely clean roof: it is now thought more likely to have been a late-17th-century slaughter house. However, the example at Little Brook, Crowborough does comply with this general design.

In all over a dozen examples of detached kitchens have now been identified in eastern Sussex by the authors, and others are suspected. Only Little Brook is of the one-room plan. **The others are of 2-4 bays and typically measured 7.9 - 11.6 m (26' - 38') long by 5.2 - 6.4 m (17' - 21') wide. Apart from an open area in the vicinity of the hearth, all are two storeyed with at least one, and usually two upper chambers.** A medieval arrangement which is emerging as typical is a building in which a two bay 'kitchen' room has one bay open to the roof with a chamber over the second bay. In addition there was a further ground floor room (in some instances more than one) having a chamber above. At 12-13 High Street, Battle, the upper chamber beyond the kitchen was sub-divided by a longitudinal partition. In some instances a gallery ran across the open bay linking the chambers. By the post-medieval period the open bay had developed into a smoke-bay. **In both appearance and area of accommodation these structures closely resemble small houses.** Indeed many kitchens have in the past been cited as examples of the so called 'unit system' where two equal status, independent houses (perhaps initially occupied by two brothers, or by father and son) shared the same holding. The kitchen at Comphurst, Wartling has close studding and a continuous jetty fitted with a moulded fascia, though internally it is very plain.

It is often only the location of these structures close to the rear of a main house of more standard layout which indicates there true function. In some examples the internal arrangement of the kitchen indicates very clearly its subservience to the main dwelling. At Comphurst a wide passage led through the service rooms of the kitchen to give direct access to the house. The same is true at Darwell Beech, Mountfield, whilst at The Mermaid, Rye, a rear wing within the main house is itself fitted with a long passage so as to give convenient access to the kitchen beyond. In this instance the kitchen was largely rebuilt as an attached structure during the late 16th century.

3. RE-ASSESSMENT OF THE EXISTING DATA

Given the house-like appearance of detached kitchens it is worth re-assessing existing records to ascertain whether any kitchens have been wrongly classified as houses. A small three-bay mid-16th century smoke-bay structure at Grovelye, Warbleton was recorded in 1979 as a small dwelling. Subsequent historical research by Dr Elizabeth Doff has shown that the house upon this holding was considered to be a 'Capital Messuage'. Such a description does not equate with the recorded structure, which, it is now considered, is far more likely to have been constructed as a detached kitchen serving a now demolished house. Likewise, in the same year Darwell Beech, Mountfield was recorded as an example of the unit system. Only during the building's dismantling was the subservient nature of the south-eas-