

Notes on the History of Hovells

Some members of the Ickleton Society visited Hovells in April 2011 at the kind invitation of Richard and Rosemary Herbert. Photographs are included in the archive collection. Additional photographs were taken by Professor Martin Morris.

In January 2012, Sheila Birch, Rachel Radford and Martin Morris reviewed the photographs and the 1949 listing by the RCHM and discussed the possible history of the building. Tentative conclusions are that it was originally 2 houses. This is supported by deeds found amongst those for land acquired by Valence Farm in 1865 which had previously been part of "Turtles" farm.

The timbers on the street frontage, the internal layout at first floor level and timbers in the roof space suggest that there were 2 separate houses with 2 separate frames which have then been joined together.

At the north end, the cross wing was one house. This would have been storied at the front, possibly with a shop on the street frontage and a small open hall to the rear. The north wall bows outwards quite significantly at first floor level and this may have been caused by the removal of tie beams when the floor and chimney were inserted. The room at the rear was added later and was previously referred to as a brewhouse.

The southern end, which fronts the street, appears to have been a separate house with service rooms at the southernmost end and the northern part possibly being an open hall. There is no smoke blackening of the roof timbers above this room but the timbers appear to have been renewed at some point.

At first floor level, there is a slight 'dog leg' on the landing where the 2 buildings meet as the room divisions do not quite line up. The roof space for the cross wing is separate and intact as it would have been for a separate building. A small way through to it has been made from the southern part of the building. Richard Herbert mentioned that its thatch is still in place below the tiles.

The 1949 listing notes that the southern most part ie the former service rooms and what would have been a screens passage next to them, were a separate cottage at that time. This is supported by local knowledge (David Lilley) and the photograph taken by the RCHM in 1949 (A285) and sale particulars from the 1960s at D1090a.

The deeds for Valence Farm fields that are in the Ickleton Society archives include the 1865 auction details for a farm called "Turtles" (D785) and the deeds for that land from May 1719 to 1865 (D719). As the farm was only split up and sold off in lots in 1865, Turtles and Hovells are included in all the deeds to 1861. The references to the houses are more or less the same throughout with only some slight variations in wording eg

"All that customary messuage or tenement called Hovells with all houses, buildings and appurtenances to the said messuage belonging situate in Ickleton aforesaid together with one garden adjoining. And also to all that part of a tenement called Turtles, called the Parlour and Kitchen with the appurtenances to the said messuage called Hovells adjoining"

"All that my customary messuage or house I now dwell in called Hovells with Turtles adjoining otherwise called the Parlour and Kitchen with all the yards, gardens and orchard adjoining....."

"All that part of a tenement called Turtles called the Parlour and Kitchen with the appurtenances to the said messuage called Hovells adjoining"

This seems to fit with our tentative conclusions, with the cross wing at the northern end possibly being "Turtles" while the street frontage was possibly "Hovells". They were in single ownership by 1719.

Rachel Radford

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