

**Summary of works: Archaeological monitoring and  
recording in North Range, Halswell House,  
Goathurst, Somerset**



*on behalf of  
the client*

**Report No. 22-32**

**Project No. 1373**

**November 2022**



# OAKFORD ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeological Groundworks and Historic Buildings

44 Hazel Road,  
Wonford  
Exeter,  
Devon  
EX2 6HN  
tel: 07834 591406  
e-mail: [info@oakfordarch.co.uk](mailto:info@oakfordarch.co.uk)  
web: [www.oakfordarch.co.uk](http://www.oakfordarch.co.uk)

---

## AUTHOR

MFR Steinmetzer

---

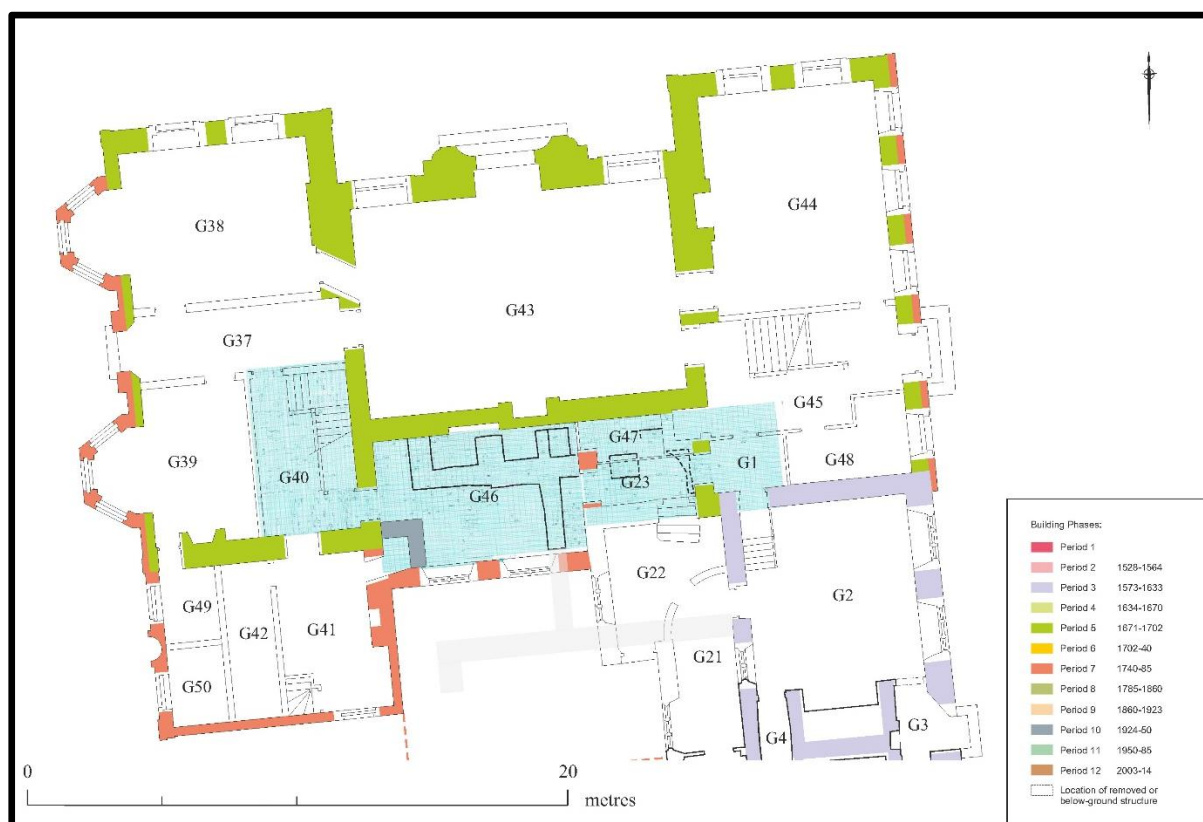
Report No 22-32

Revision: 01  
Date: November 2022

West elevation of North Range.



The work exposed the remains of an earlier building within G46 and G23. Consisting of a large, unmortared Morte slate rubble wall with possible buttresses or walls on the north side and a contemporary cross wall, this has been interpreted as the remains of the medieval North Range. Although the building has been extensively robbed enough evidence survives to suggest that the range probably had a north porch. This is in line with the north porch of the South Range, suggesting the range originally had a cross-passage. The porch was later demolished, and a new wall built a short distance to the east. It is unclear from the limited information available what form this new structure took. What is clear is that it was floored, a remnant of mortar bedding surviving above the earlier north porch wall. Along the north side of the wall the remains of three possible buttresses or walls were identified. The central buttress, in line with the cross wall is likely to be contemporary with the north wall, their foundations overlapping, while the others may be later additions. Finally, the central buttress showed evidence of partial rebuilding.



Remains of the earlier North Range.

Internally, the earliest floor of the medieval north range was a beaten earth floor located immediately above the truncated natural subsoil. This was sealed underneath a shallow levelling deposit which was in turn overlain by a light yellowish white lime mortar bedding for a tiled floor. A small area of the pavement survived, consisting of 15<sup>th</sup>-early 16<sup>th</sup> century plain green glazed earthenware tiles, as well as ham stone and limestone pavers. The pavement was laid at a slight angle to the north wall with all the tiles heavily worn and fragmentary. The level of the floor was only marginally higher (0.12m) than the floor in the South Range. While two rows of the tiled flooring may be original, the rest was relaid or repaired at a later date, including the ham- and limestone pavers. A line of possible North Curry greensand floor slabs was inserted along the northern edge of the room, with a small gap between the pavement and the north wall. This might suggest perhaps that the original lime plaster had, by this period

been replaced with wooden panelling, and that the flooring was inserted up to the edge of the latter.



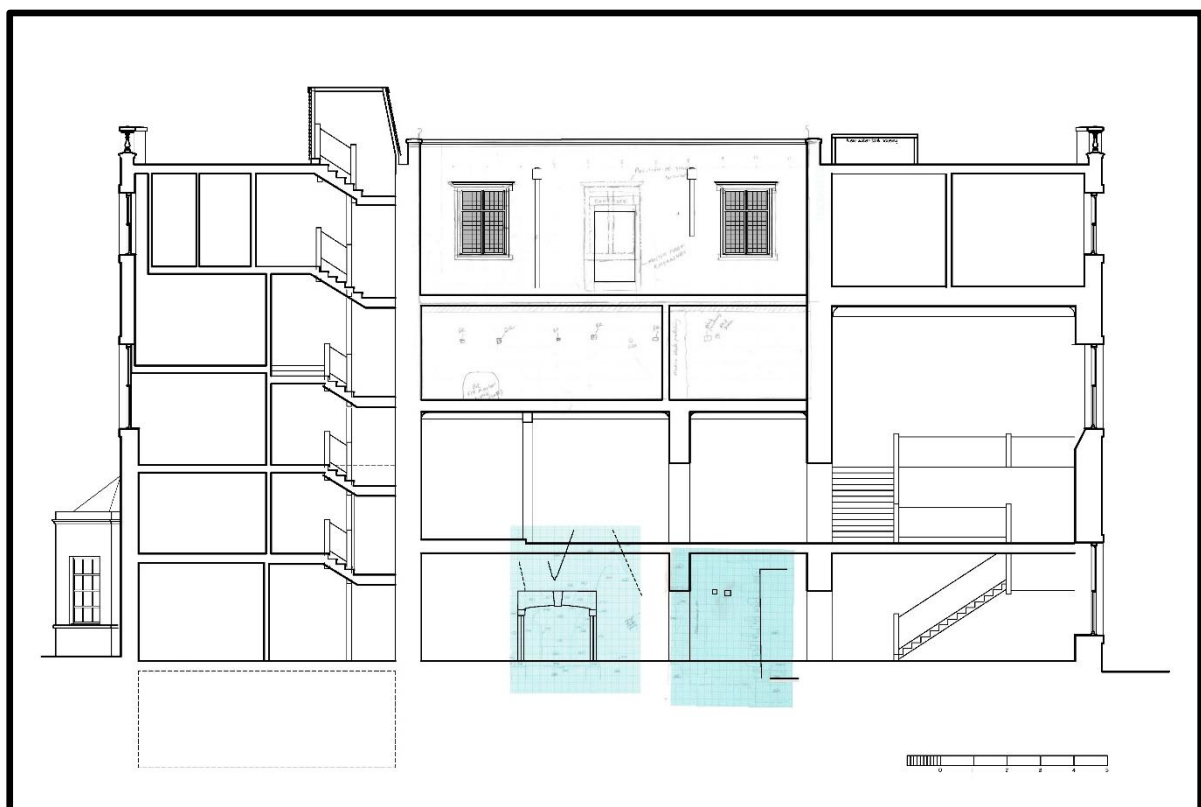
General view of Room G46 showing the remains of the earlier north range. 1m and 2m scales. Looking east.

A small area of later floor repair, bedded in a white lime mortar, and utilising both earlier floor-tiles and a single possible Low Countries red earthenware tile (late 15<sup>th</sup>-early 16<sup>th</sup> century),



butted up to the stone border. In addition to the 28 15<sup>th</sup>-early 16<sup>th</sup> century tile fragments recovered from the overlying demolition deposit, a single 15<sup>th</sup>-early 16<sup>th</sup> century decorated red earthenware tile (Lowe 2003, No. 124) was also retrieved. Further dating evidence was retrieved between the western buttress and the rebuilt north structure. The context of the deposit is not immediately apparent, being located immediately above natural subsoil and butting up against walls to the west, south and east. This deposit contained a large quantity of roofing slate and ridge tile. The earliest had a dark brown glaze with high moulded peaks and dating to the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century, while both the green and yellow/green glazed ridge tile had low moulded peaks and dated to the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century. The presence of three different types might perhaps suggest a construction date for the early north range sometime in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century, with a major phase of repairs or remodeling perhaps in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century.

Despite the works, the limited exposure of historic building fabric means that the sequence of development following the demolition of the earlier north range is unclear at this stage. The discovery of a large fireplace in the north elevation of G46, pre-dating the later brick alterations, and the suggestion that the north and west walls in G46 are later than the north wall, suggests that the North Range was perhaps gradually altered and expanded, rather than wholesale rebuilt immediately to the north of the earlier range. The relationship with the fireplace on the north side of the wall in G43 is unclear.



Cross-section through North Range showing earlier fireplace in G46, large doorway and lower floor level in G47, and earlier observations in T4 and F21.

The works has also identified a large doorway in the north wall in G47. The full eastern extent of this opening is unclear at the moment, although the level of the threshold suggests that the floor was originally lower in this part of the house. The position of the opening and the lower floor level is matched by the opening identified in the wall on the south side of corridor G23. It is unclear at this stage whether the two walls are contemporary. In addition, the height of the

door opening matches the doorway between G43 and G45, although whether the two relate to contemporary building activity is again unclear.

At the eastern end the limited excavations within G1 showed that the south wall is part of the East Range kitchen. This is abutted on the western side by the wall forming the eastern wing of the later North Range. The only date currently for the kitchen is from a single purlin on the east side of the roof tentatively dated to c.1602, although whether this relates to the construction of the kitchen, or a phase of roof repair is unclear. Neither is the development of the kitchen in relation to elements of the earlier and later North Ranges fully understood at this moment. While there is clearly a gap between the South Range and the East Range kitchen it is unclear whether there was also a similar gap to the north. If in the future the small alcove on the western side of G46 were to be stripped crucial new evidence may be identified that might allow us to more fully understand the development of the eastern part of the North Range.

Finally, during the reconstruction of the house between 1923-6 a large number of earlier windows throughout the east and south ranges were replaced. These were destroyed and used as hardcore for the new concrete floors in G1 and G40, with a total of 155 architectural fragments recovered. These have been recorded, photographed and stored in the on-site archaeology store.



General view of north elevation of the south wall in G40 showing the relieving arch within the wall construction and the vault roof. 0.5m scale. Looking southwest.

The work also confirmed that the western wing of the later North Range was basemented from the beginning. The north elevation of the south wall defining G40 showed the contemporary



relieving arch within the wall construction, while the vaults, although they abutted both the south and east walls, were on balance likely to be contemporary with these. In addition, a further 35 architectural fragments were recovered from a post-fire deposit identical to the one identified in G1.



General view of the opening between G49 and G39 showing the earlier projecting brickwork to the right and the later arched opening (centre). 2m scale. Looking north.



Finally, building recording was carried out in G49 and within the doorway to G39 to the north. This revealed the remains of an earlier brick wall inserted into the south elevation of the north wall. This is part of a possible earlier building range extending south and east, rather than a later chimneystack, although whether this was originally an external wall, or an internal partition is uncertain. Neither is it clear whether the opening into G39 existed at this period. The curved brick ceiling with contemporary timbers for affixing wooden panelling is later in date.

The records, including context sheets, architectural record sheets, drawings and digital photographs will be digitised and added to the existing physical and digital archive in line with ADS guidelines, and the results of the work will, in due course, be published.

Marc Steinmetzer *MCI/fA*