Conservation of historic wall decorations

Heritage statement

Hunter's Moon Cottage, 8 The Street, Shoreham by Sea BN43 5NJ

Schedule of works

1. Temporarily remove sections of lath and plaster walls in upstairs rooms to facilitate recording and conservation of historic wall coverings discovered behind these walls.
2. Insert a hardwood-framed UV filtering glass panel in one room, to enable display and monitoring of remnants of the historic wall covering

Archaeology, history and character

(*This is a brief summary. More detail is provided in a previous heritage statement for Listed Building Consent to remove a partition wall AWDM/1878/19*)

Hunter's Moon is a flint-faced and timber framed semi-detached cottage with a thatched roof which forms a mirrored pair with No 9 Holly Cottage on the west side of The Street in Old Shoreham, facing south east. It is one of few remaining historic houses in Old Shoreham. It was originally set in open farmland but is now surrounded by suburban housing development resulting from the 20th century expansion of New Shoreham. [1]The building was Grade II listed in 1971 and is in the Old Shoreham Conservation Area, established in 1993.

The house was built in the late 16th century as a five-bay box-framed building, with a central three-flued brick chimney[2]. The cottage was modified in the 18th century with the north and east facing walls completely replaced at ground floor level by field flint walls, with brick door and window surrounds.[3] At first floor level the flintwork is a façade over the remains of the timber frame. The original timber wall on the west side is still fully-framed, and is an internal wall protected from weathering by a single story outshot which is thought to be part of the original construction.

Externally the cottage appears as an 18th century thatched cottage. A modern porch was built on the west wall in 1974, and a linked single-storey extension added to the north of the cottage in 1975, both with planning permission[4]. The extension is set back and subordinate to the cottage.

Internally the 16th century framing and brickwork are visible in places but most of the interior walls and ceilings are Victorian-era lath and plaster or plaster over brick. In places, the Victorian plasterwork has been replaced or overlaid with modern plasterboard and studwork.

Justification and principles for the proposed works

1. Consent was granted in November 2019 for external and internal repairs and alterations to reinstate some historical features, remove recent works that are not sympathetic and improve the building. (See AWDM/0677/19). These works are currently underway. They include removing fitted cupboards, sanitaryware and storage tanks with associated water supply and waste pipework. in two upstairs rooms,

2. These rooms were lined with plaster in the 19th century. Lath-and-plaster stud walls and ceilings were constructed inside the original frame creating voids of varying depths which conceal the original walls (See figure 1). Removing the modern cupboards and fittings revealed fragments of historic wall decoration, visible through holes in the lath-and-plaster that were created for pipework in the mid 20th century.

3. After consulting with Adur's Conservation Officer we made two openings in the lath-and-plaster, enabling investigation, cleaning and some repairs within the voids. This revealed further wallpapers which we photographed in situ and sent to the Wealden Buildings Study Group and a recognised wallpaper expert[5].

Both advised that the decorations were likely to be late 18th or early 19th century block wallpaper and of possible historic interest. Subsequently we commissioned a specialist from Lincoln Conservation to assess the

historical significance of the papers and make recommendations on their conservation. Her report is provided as a separate document to accompany this application

4. The assessor advised that the wallpapers were of an early date (late 18th to mid 19th c); in generally good condition; and of mid--to-high significance. For conservation purposes she recommended that:
   a) The wallpaper should be conserved in situ where possible
   b) Surface dirt should be removed using a soft bush and a smoke sponge.
   c) Wallpaper that has come away from the wall at the top edge should be reattached using a suitable adhesive. Otherwise, loose paper should not be reattached to the wall
   d) Small tears should be consolidated using Japanese tissue and a suitable adhesive.
   e) Fragments which have become completely detached from the wall should be removed, and stored flat between acid free card or paper, protected from the light.
   f) Exposure to light for the remaining fragments should be minimised by reinstating the stud wall, or by installing UV-filtering glass in line with the stud wall to maintain ventilation.

5. We have since removed and stored the detached fragments which comprise a large sample of wallpaper 2 and all that remains of wallpaper 5 (as numbered in the report). We also intend to:
   a) Clean the wallpapers where we can reach them following the conservation advice in the report
   b) Reinstate the stud wall in Bedroom 2, North, concealing the papers again and conserving them in the same environment that has protected them for at least a century
   c) Install a removable UV-filtering 240mm x 1200mm glass panel in Bedroom 1 in a hardwood frame. The frame will be the same dimensions as the aperture that we have made in the lath-and-plaster wall. The resulting glazed section of wall will display samples of the historic fabric which cannot be viewed anywhere else in the cottage, including:
      - A section of the 16th c timber frame with early lime-washed decoration
      - A 16th c wattle and daub panel within the timber frame
      - Two of the oldest historic wallpapers (Wallpapers 1 and 2 in the report)
      - The 19th century lath-and-plaster stud walls

      The glass panel will enable us to monitor the condition of these decorations and gain access if necessary, for further conservation work.

Conclusion

Listed Building Consent is sought, for the permanent removal of a 1200 x 300mm section of lath and plaster wall in Bedroom 1 (south) and installation of a framed panel of UV filtering glass in place of this wall section, The panel will display and protect historic wall decorations that have been revealed during alteration and repair works. It will also provide access to these decorations for further conservation if necessary.

Consent is also sought for removal and conservation of fragments of the wall coverings that have become detached from the wall as a result of failure of the supporting substrate.

These actions will help to display the overall development history of the cottage; assist in maintenance; enable further assessment of the historic decorations; and ensure that future occupants are aware of their existence.

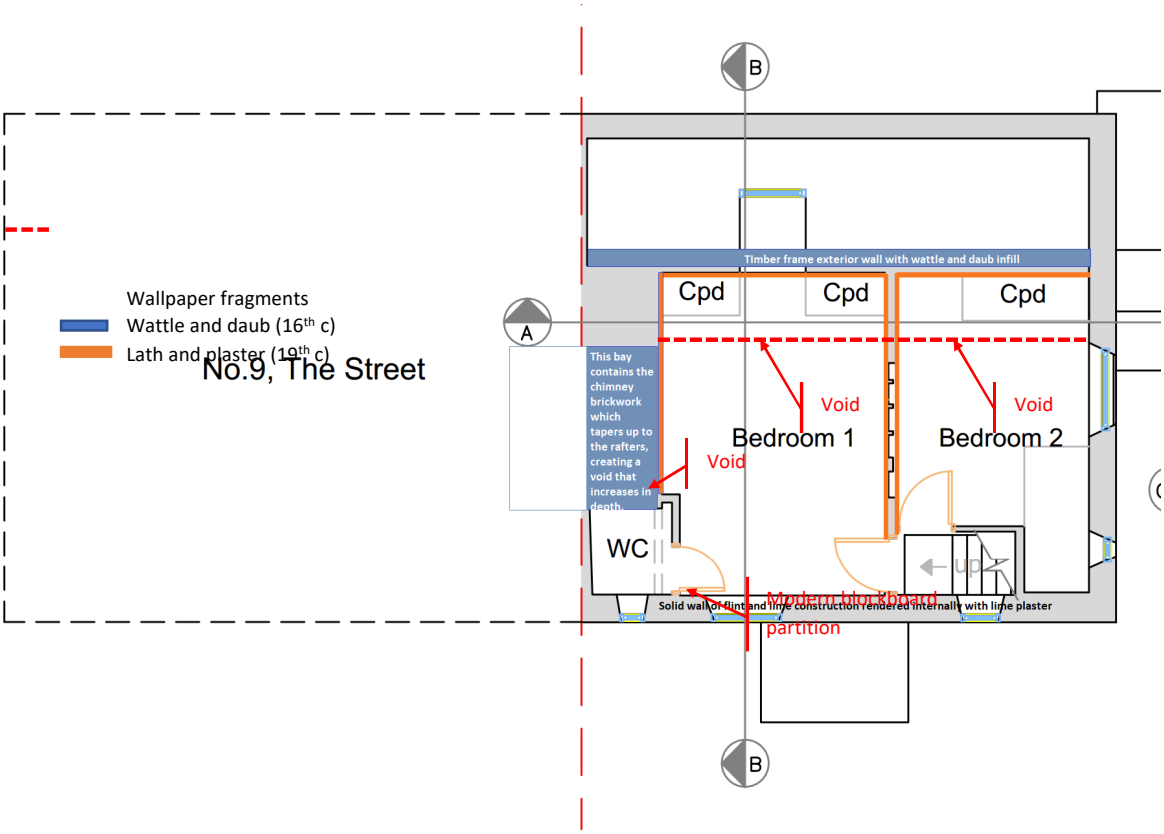

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Figure 1 First floor plan as of Jan 2020 (cupboards have since been removed as part of approved repairs and alterations)

[1] The building is shown with fields to the north, west and south in a Buckingham Estate map of 1801, the Tithe Records of 1816 and the Ordnance Survey map of 1912 . A small farmyard faced the cottage on the east side of The Street, which has now been replaced by the entrance to Adur Avenue.

[2] This construction date is the opinion of the Wealden Building Study Group who made a site visit to Hunter's Moon Cottage and Holly Cottage in July 2019. Their opinion is based on brick sizes and the use of heavy mid-rails in the timber framing. It corroborates anecdotal information from previous owners that the cottage dates back to 1560.

[3] A keystone on the north ground floor window carries the date 1716 and the initials TA and EA, which may refer to Thomas and Elisabeth Austen who are named in the Court Records for Old Shoreham as owners of the cottage in 1734.

[4] SU/277/73/LB – Front porch revised plans Permitted 1973; SU/20/75/LB – Extension with bedroom and bathroom Permitted 1975

[5] Allyson McDermott is a recognised authority on historic wallpapers. Her advice based on photographs was that *"The fragments would appear all to be rather lovely hand blocked wallpapers printed onto a good quality linen paper. One of the designs probably dates to c 1830/40"* and the location of a second fragment *"would place it early 19th or late 18thc"*. Her general advice on conservation was that *"Any papers surviving from these periods are a precious resource and should be preserved if possible. These are all hand block printed papers, printed in water based distemper and are beautiful examples of the decoration of the time, the taste of the occupants and the status of the interior.*

"If it were possible to take samples for preservation and display, that would be wonderful, but even if that proves difficult without major structural intervention, the investigation and recording you have carried out to date is already a valuable resource."