

Fields House
Grindleton, Lancashire:
Historic Buildings Assessment Report

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FIELDS HOUSE, GRINDLETON, LANCASHIRE:

HISTORIC BUILDINGS ASSESSMENT REPORT

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Gatty, as owners of the grade II listed Fields House and its outbuildings, to assist with the preparation of a scheme for alterations. It is intended to provide background historical information on the site together with an account of the buildings' history and development, together with an assessment of the relative significance of their various parts, and is based on a site visit made on 5 February 2016.

2 Location

- 2.1 Fields House stands at NGR: SD 76647 45505, 700m to the east of Grindleton village, on the north-west side of the River Ribble, and in Ribble Valley Borough. The site is reached via its own lane off Sawley Road and in addition to the house and its outbuildings, also contains a large barn to the west, though this is now in separate ownership and is not covered by this report.

3 Designations

- 3.1 Fields House has been listed as a building of special architectural or historic interest, at grade II, since 1984¹. It is identified in the list as "Fields Farmhouse", and the accompanying description reads:
- "House, 1759. Squared watershot sandstone with slate roof. Double- pile plan with end stacks. Symmetrical composition of 2 storeys and 2 bays with chamfered quoins. Windows have architraves but no mullions remaining. The stone porch has a door with plain stone surround with a blank semi-circular head rising under an open pediment on Tuscan pilasters. Above is a plaque with moulded cornice, having the following inscribed on a raised and fielded panel with shouldered round head: 'Ralph Horner Martha George Horner 1759'. Shaped stone gutter brackets, and gable copings. At the rear is a stair window with plain stone surround and semi-circular head with keystone and impost blocks, and 4 2-light windows with plain stone surrounds and square mullions."
- 3.2 The site lies outside the Grindleton conservation area and the Forest of Bowland AONB, and an enquiry to the Lancashire Historic Environment Record, for any further information on the site, has proved negative.

¹ National Heritage List no: 1362299 <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1362299>

4 Historical background

- 4.1 There can be little doubt that the date of 1759 given on the plaque on the front of Fields House is the date at which it was built, and it seems very likely that this was the first settlement on the site. Ralph Horner, whose name appears on it, was baptised in 1708 and married Martha Brogden, with whom he had five children, although only two of them (George, born c.1744 and Martha, born c.1754), survived to adulthood. Ralph was described as a yeoman and acquired a considerable amount of property in and around Grindleton during his life, including part of Swinglehurst's tenement in 1736, as well as holdings in West Bradford and Dovesike in 1751. In 1752 he lived at Stonehill, Grindleton, but it would appear that he established the new home for himself at the Fields shortly afterwards.
- 4.2 Ralph's son George married Susan Atkinson and went on to become a wealthy individual who became known as a gentleman (socially superior to a yeoman, and suggesting he no longer had to undertake day-to-day farming duties himself), and in 1783 a detailed survey was made of his extensive property, though it appears he went on to increase his estate until his death in the early 19th century.²
- 4.3 The 1783 survey³ is very useful here in that the title page of the document is illustrated with an image of the buildings at Fields House at that time (figure 1 below), implying that this was George's home and the seat of his estate. It also includes a map of the estate, showing the Fields House buildings in outline. In these, the house itself appears much as it does today, though the windows then had mullions and were tripartite, but it was at that time still detached from the outbuildings, which then comprised only the two storey trap house flanked by a pair of lean-tos, at least one of which is thought to have been an earth closet. Also depicted is the modestly walled front garden and orchard.
- 4.4 The Ordnance Survey recorded that a change had taken place at the buildings by 1847 (figure 2), in that house and outbuildings had been linked, though this is not acknowledged on the Grindleton tithe map of 1848 (figure 3), perhaps because it was copied from an earlier map or was not concerned with such accuracy. There was no change recorded by the Ordnance Survey in their 1884 survey (figure 4), or apparently in their 1907 revision at 1:2500 scale (figure 5), though more detail is visible in the latter.

² <http://www.bgwaters.co.uk/grindleton.htm>

³ *A Survey of the Lands within Grindleton... belonging to George Horner. By M Oddie 1783* Yorkshire Archaeological Society Archives, MD335/1/4/3/14 (currently transferring to Leeds University)
<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/rd/2a9eb3db-5632-400b-84ba-d8b8d55bb4c0>

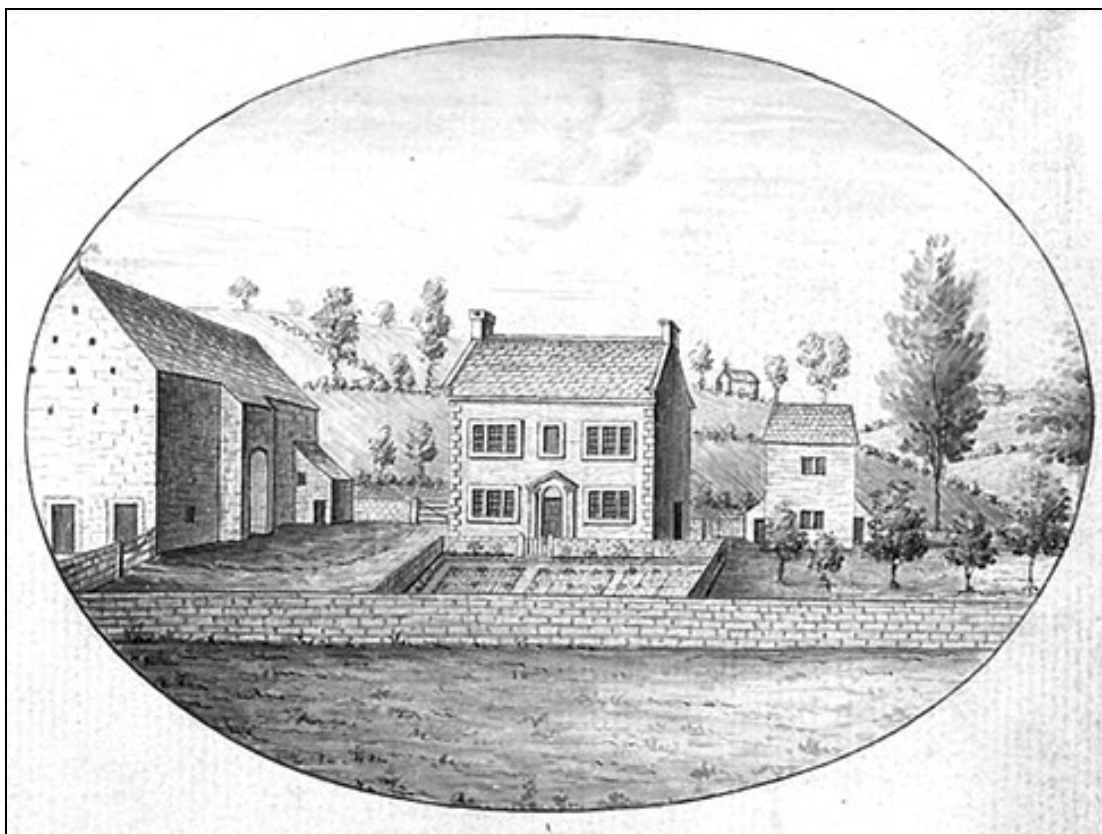


Figure 1: 1783 illustration of the house, with barn to west and outbuildings to east



Figure 2: Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:10560 map, surveyed 1847⁴

⁴ Yorkshire, sheet 182, published 1850

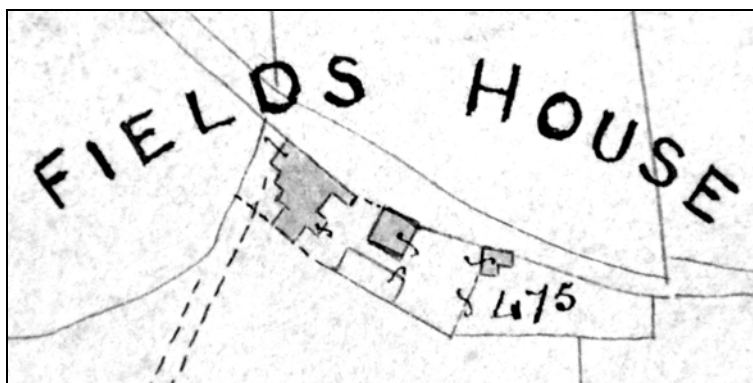


Figure 3: Grindleton tithe map, 1848⁵



Figure 4: Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:10560 map, surveyed 1884⁶

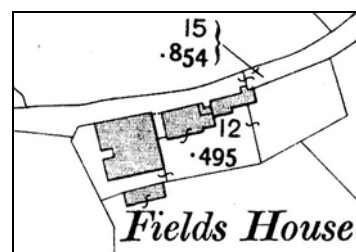


Figure 5: Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, revised 1907⁷

- 4.5 The tithe schedule of c.1848 recorded that Fields House was owned by the trustees of the late Ralph Horner Brown (George's nephew), and occupied by Isaac Bleazard, who farmed about 56 acres, almost all of it pasture or meadow, which shows that the holding had slipped down the social scale, from the home of a gentleman to that of a tenant farmer.

⁵ *Map of the Township of Grindleton constructed for the tithe commutation by S A Dawson 1848*
Lancashire Archives PR 3031/4/3

⁶ Yorkshire, sheet 182, published 1890

⁷ Yorkshire, sheet 182.8, published 1908

5 Summary description of the buildings

House

- 5.1 As the listed building description notes, the house is built from squared, watershot sandstone and has a symmetrical composition, which comprises a central entrance flanked by a single window of equal size to either side, on both ground and first floors. This arrangement is very much in keeping with the architectural fashion of the mid 18th century, manifested in the numerous “Georgian” farmhouses found throughout much of the country, though the regularity and conformation to pattern book designs is not complete: the front porch is offset slightly to the east (right), and the builder was also constrained by the use of approximately square but tripartite windows with mullions (all now removed, with modern window frames in their places), rather than sash windows with their vertical emphasis⁸. However classical motifs have been more closely adhered to in other respects, in the form of the porch with open pediment, and the chamfered quoins. The gable stacks appear unaltered along with the kneelers and gable copings, but the present blue slate roof no doubt replaced an original covering of local stone slate.
- 5.2 Set back from the front elevation at the right-hand side is a single storey, mid 19th century addition of one bay, with blue slate roof and modern eaves brackets and chimney stack.
- 5.3 The rear elevation is of more modest, slobbered rubble, and contains a mixture of vernacular and classical features, including a narrow and rather low stair window with semi-circular arch, but the other windows are plainer, and have square, flat-faced mullions more in keeping with local tradition; the small lean-to porch at the east end is an early addition of uncertain date (but post-1783). The gables are both rendered, but at attic level each has two blocked windows, indicated by the air bricks and in one case a projecting stone sill, however no windows appear in the east gable on the 1783 drawing.
- 5.4 Although essentially a double-pile house with four rooms to each floor, the house is unusual in plan-form in lacking a central entrance hall, but the otherwise common drawback of direct entry to one front room is avoided by the provision of a small three-sided lobby, which the shallow porch partly accommodates. From this there is an equal choice of entry into either of the front rooms, of which the east one would have been the main living room historically, and the west one the parlour. There are six-panel pine doors with plain recessed panels to both rooms (D1 and D2), probably original, but slightly different in their details, and

⁸ Horizontal holes are visible in the window jambs, presumably to hold iron bars to attach the glazing

this inconsistency can be observed in the other internal ground floor doors, and suggests an unfamiliar approach to the joinery. The living room is almost entirely modern in appearance (the Victorian style fireplace appears to be a reproduction) and its ceiling has been raised by some 450mm; it communicates directly with the kitchen to the rear via a doorway through an unusually thick spine wall, and there is no suggestion that this is not the original arrangement. In contrast, the parlour has its two original chamfered oak ceiling beams, and the four panel oak door to the rear hall (D3) is also likely to be original (note the “shadows” of L-hinges on the rear face), though it contrasts with those to the front lobby. The matching door from the kitchen (D4) is of pine and appears to be a later copy of D3. Opposite it, D5 is a good example of a false panelled door, no doubt original to the house.

- 5.5 Apart from these doors, the rear of the ground floor displays few historic features. Between kitchen and the former scullery/pantry is the late 20th century timber half-turn staircase, in approximately the same position as its predecessor but probably with a different profile. Its location here in the middle of the building gives the house a centralised circulation, though the lack of a front stair hall shows how traditional ideas about house planning pervaded the design, which can be seen as transitional between vernacular and polite. The stair window is effectively too small and too low for the staircase and contrasts with the much taller “ladder” windows which some other houses of a similar date in the district display⁹.
- 5.6 An upper flight of stairs to the attic floor has been removed in its entirety; there is no evidence that this was provided with its own rear stair window and must have relied on light from the attic gable windows. With the exception of some window details, the present first floor is wholly modern in appearance, though the main room divisions have been preserved. Alterations at this level include the raised floor and ceiling in the south-east room, accompanied by the apparent severing of the tie beam, the loss of historic fireplaces and doors, and the insertion of a partition to create a fifth room.
- 5.7 The attic was cursorily viewed through a ceiling hatch in the bathroom, and little could be seen of it, though the purlin visible in this part of the roof is machine-sawn softwood and has clearly been replaced in the late 19th or 20th century.
- 5.8 The 19th century small domestic extension adjoining the present living room now forms part of the ground floor accommodation and its interior appears very much modern, though it is not clear whether the rather rustic ceiling beams are part of

⁹ eg Moor House, Ribchester (now demolished) and Marl Hill House, Cow Ark

the historic fabric. Its original function may have been as a second kitchen or wash-house.

Other outbuildings

- 5.9 The two storey building which was formerly detached, but is now linked, was built as a “trap house” for storing a light horse-drawn vehicle, to judge from the canted north-west corner with its wide doorway, positioned thus to allow access from the narrow lane down which the farm is reached; it possibly also contained stabling for a pony. It is of a much plainer quality than the house, being of random or poorly coursed rubble with projecting throughstones, and it has a modern blue slate roof. The front has two small, formerly two-light windows with plain gritstone surrounds (as on the 1783 illustration), and an inserted doorway under a timber lintel. The rear has a small, formerly shuttered opening which may have served a stable inside the outbuilding. There is also an external stair at the west side to a gable door for the upper floor; to judge from the 1783 illustration the stairs themselves are post-1783 so previously there may simply have been an internal ladder to what was probably a feed loft or granary.
- 5.10 The ground floor of this outbuilding forms a single space without distinctive features, and the upper floor has been replaced along with the purlins (the latter in steel), so that this interior is not of interest on either level. There is no evidence for there having been any chimney, so a purely equestrian, transport and storage function is most likely for it, when it was first built.
- 5.11 To the east end of the two storey building is a small adjoining range of other outbuildings, likely to be early 19th century. They include an earth closet with arched opening to the south, which replaced that shown in 1783, to judge from the traces of the predecessor’s roof which can be seen within the east side of the two storey building. A store (currently coal-shed) occupies the adjacent space and has a rebuilt or inserted doorway in the rear wall, and beyond it is another store with a poultry loft over, with external steps to the north side.

6 Assessment of heritage values and statement of significance

- 6.1 In accordance with the assessment of significance as established by English Heritage’s (now Historic England) *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance*, Fields House can be seen to have the following heritage values.

Evidential Value

Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity¹⁰

- 6.2 Fields House has only low evidential value, because of the wide extent of internal alteration and removal of historic fixtures and fittings both in the house itself and the outbuildings, and it can be argued that its evidential value is largely confined to the exteriors, though the house plan form itself is also valuable.

Historical Value

Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative.¹¹

- 6.3 Fields House scores more highly in this regard: the exterior of the house and particularly the frontage illustrates well the architectural fashion at the wealthy yeoman level of society in the mid to late 18th century and the transition from traditional to pattern book motifs. It also has known association with a family who are well documented.

Aesthetic Value

Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.¹²

- 6.4 The aesthetic value of the site is also largely confined to the front elevation, which has itself been degraded by the removal of mullions from the windows: views from the rear and sides are not of particular value.

Communal Value

Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.¹³

- 6.5 Communal value for the site is thought to be low, as the site has an outlying location and is not widely known as a site of particular interest.

Particular aspects of significance

- 6.6 Fields House is significant as a mid to late 18th century farmhouse established on a new site by a local farmer who was emerging from the yeoman class.

¹⁰ English Heritage 2008 *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance* p28

¹¹ English Heritage 2008 *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance* p28

¹² English Heritage 2008 *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance* p30

¹³ English Heritage 2008 *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance* p30

However, on the basis of the individual values assessed above, the significance of the site is limited and arises chiefly from the following aspects:

- The setting of the house, including the modest garden walls, when viewed from the front
- The dated and inscribed stone of 1759
- The other, unaltered components of the front elevation
- The historic plan form of the house
- A small number of internal doors on the ground floor only
- The group value of the associated outbuildings, although these are not of particular merit in themselves

Negative aspects

6.7 A number of negative aspects can be identified which detract from the buildings' significance:

- The front windows of the house, which lack their original mullions
- The extensively modern interior of the house, from which most internal joinery and original fireplaces appear to have been removed, including both original staircases, and all first floor doors
- The apparently modern replacement of much of the roof structure
- The modern construction and appearance of the first floor in the trap house



Photo 1: Front elevations of house and main outbuildings



Photo 2: Detail of date-stone



Photo 3: Rear elevation of house



Photo 4: Added porch at rear of house



Photo 5: Six panel door D1 in living room



Photo 6: False panelled door D5 to
pantry/scullery



Photo 7: Modern staircase and original rear window opening (frame replaced)



Photo 8: Front elevation of trap house with inserted doorway



Photo 9: Main, rear entrance to trap house



Photo 10: Outside, rear steps to first floor of trap house



Photo 11: Rear elevation of later outbuildings to east of house

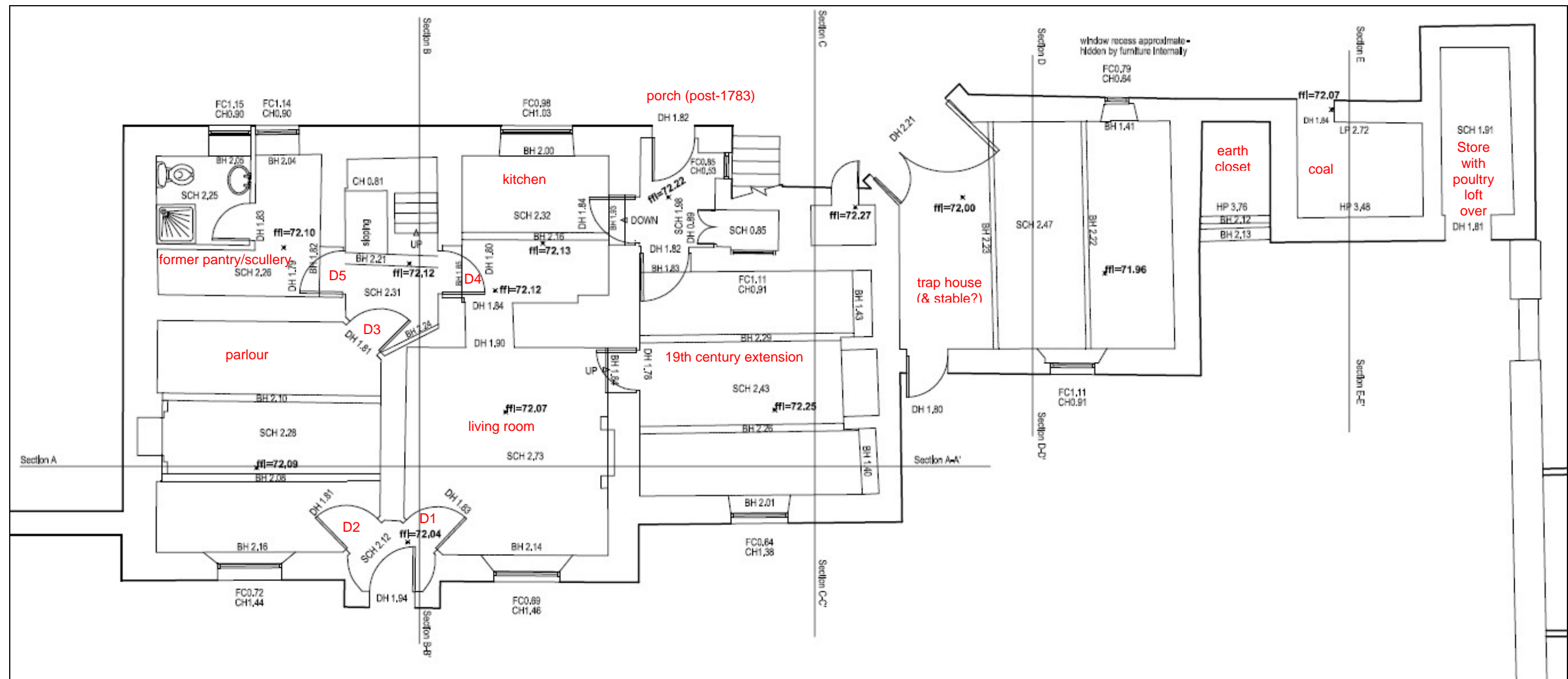


Figure 6: Ground floor plan
(Ian Pawson Ltd)

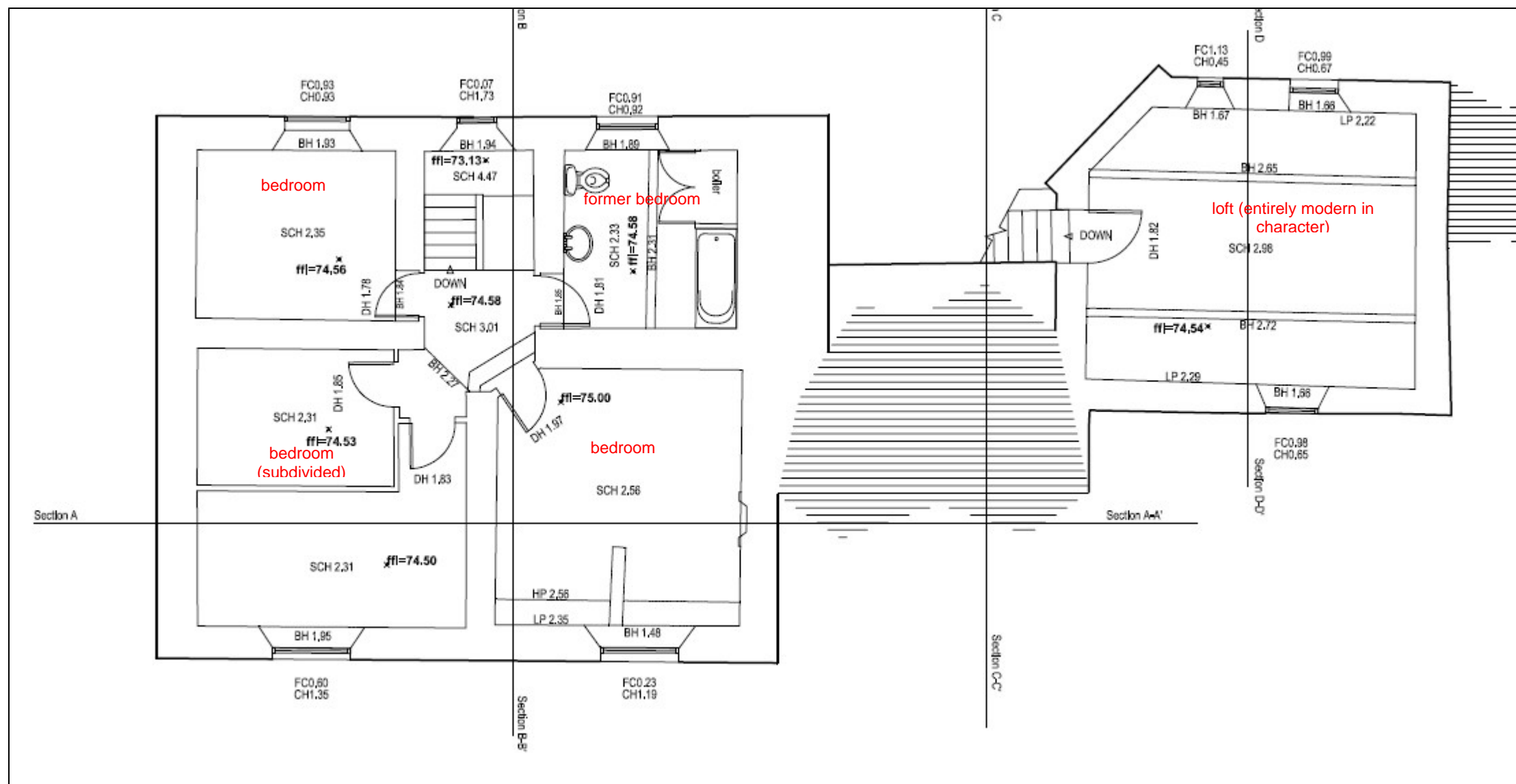


Figure 7: First floor plan
(Ian Pawson Ltd)