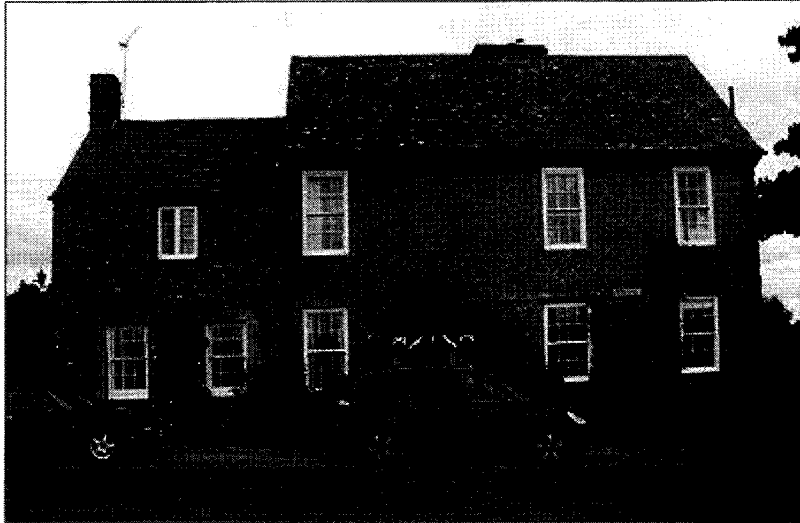




STEEPLE ASTON VILLAGE ARCHIVE

Grange Farm House - Reconstructing its past

Recently, at the kind invitation of its current owners, Rupert and Emily Davis, members of SAVA visited Grange Farm, north of Middle Aston, accompanied by Paul Clark from Oxfordshire Buildings Record. The aim of the visit was to attempt to understand the architectural history of the house, as part of SAVA's ongoing work in looking closely at our village buildings.



This article focuses on the front range of the current house (shown left), which faces due south and consists of two distinct sections, a larger eastern section, with a smaller, later, extension to the west.

Close inspection of the front wall at ground level shows this to be continuous across the facade, with identical quoins on each end. By contrast, there is clear evidence of rebuilding on top of earlier stonework on the gable end and the rear wall of the lower extension. Visible high up on the western gable end of the roof of the taller section are the cut ends of the purlins (the long

timbers that traverse the length of the roof). This all suggests the original house occupied the same footprint as now but with a uniform height across the structure.

The front elevation of the taller range shows evidence that the windows have been rearranged, the previous arrangement consisting of a window above the front door with 3 windows to its right on each storey. In the attic, the timbers of the front slope of the roof show evidence of previous dormer windows, one over the front door and another over the original 2nd bay (these locations having no pegs in the purlin-rafter joints). The straight gable end, rather than a hipped roof, dates the original house to around 1720. Houses of this period usually exhibited a high degree of symmetry so this arrangement would be expected to be mirrored to the left of the front door. This would have resulted in the original house having an impressive 7-bay frontage with 3 dormer windows, and two large chimneys. My re-creation of how this may have looked is shown below.



What caused the house to be altered so much? The rebuilt stonework in the lower section suggests a possible disaster befell this part of the house. There is no evidence of a fire so a collapse of the structure seems more likely, possibly from subsidence. There is evidence elsewhere to support this. The second chimney may well have fallen in such a collapse. After loss of such a large section of the house, it appears the owners remodelled the structure to make best use of the remaining space, moving windows to reflect their internal changes. The western end was rebuilt at a later date (somewhere in

the period 1780-1840). We concluded that the structural disaster probably occurred quite early in the history of this interesting house.