

Harwich The Guildhall/Town Hall, 11 Church Street.

List Entry Number: 1298482

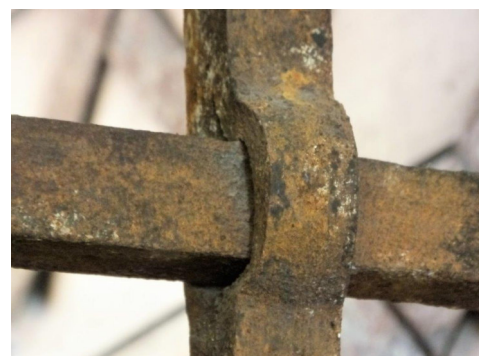
Grid Reference: TM 26056 32584

The initial investigation of The Guild Hall (Town Hall) was to see if there was any possible fabric that could be identified as part of the Bear Inn and therefore pre 1673. It might be suggested that the brick frontage dates to the major changes involved in converting the first floor to be an impressive council chamber

It is clear that the building has been extended and adapted from a 17th century structure that could represent a hall and crosswing. At ground floor level the surviving internal frame is of pine with the transverse and axial beams having quadrant mouldings with lamb's tongue stops and end notch, a typical 17th century detail especially in the first half of that century. A later brick stack has been intruded into the hall against the rear wall which backs onto another in a possible position for a lateral hall stack.



Pine frame visible in entrance hall. Wall is division between cross wing frame and hall



Inserted fireplace with later iron grilles when the rear room was converted to a lock-up.



The first floor has been heavily modified to provide the Council Chamber by the removal of the dividing partition between hall and cross wing and insertion of columns and changes to level of ceiling height. The axial beam mirrors that visible on the ground floor. All original frame at this level is covered.

At second floor level part of the partition between hall and crosswing is exposed. The timber-frame is of pine with the studs tenoned into un-pegged mortises in the wall plate. A chamfered axial beam has been axe converted and has pegged joints for five floor joists. As the ceiling is plastered the joist profile could not be determined. Peg holes in the rear wall plate gave a pattern of two studs either side of a central window/door.

The roof, now of hipped style has been reconfigured. There is a mix of timbers mainly from a good quality butt purlin roof with chiselled carpenter's marks and some graffiti visible. These timbers most likely from original roof.



Carpenters assembly mark 8 (VIII) for mortise on original axe converted roof timber. The other mortise with 10 (X) also has some graffiti adjacent to the joint.

CELLAR

The cellar is now accessed from the rear by brick winder stairs in the later 18th century extension. The cellar extends under the frontage range comprising of the hall and N crosswing. The brickwork is in English bond with narrow bricks similar to those in the cellars of 14-16 Church Street.



Mortises to the soffit of the transverse beam show that the space was originally divided by a pegged stud partition that equates to the same division as the ground floor plan. The room formed under the N crosswing has been adapted to provide a lockable unit.



An axial beam, contemporary to the build spans the S section with square section joists housed with soffit tenon diminished haunch joints whilst that to the north has a reused medieval beam with crenellated moulding and many reused joists.



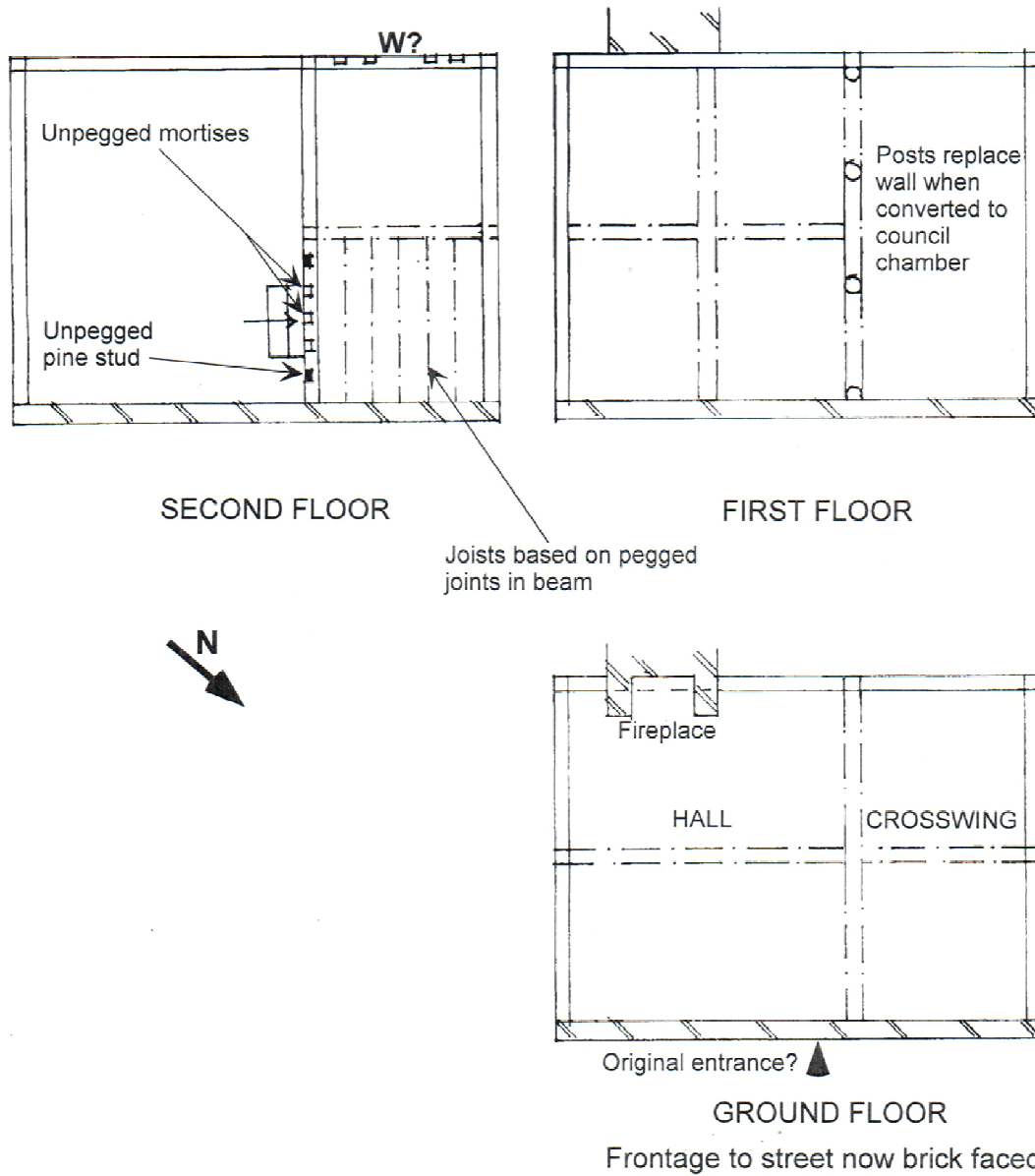
Later openings in the front wall provide light and that under the hall range could have been used as a coal hole. Close to this opening is a board, not in-situ with carved names and the date 1726. The names have been transcribed as CHARLE BROCHARE DE CALAIS and ANTOINE HONOREE.



Elphin & Brenda Watkin. November/December 2019
Cellar added May 2020

The Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich

Hipped roof contains reused timbers from a framed side purlin roof with principal rafters. Some carpenters marks and some graffiti



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