

**Lyddington Manor History Society
Historic Building Survey**

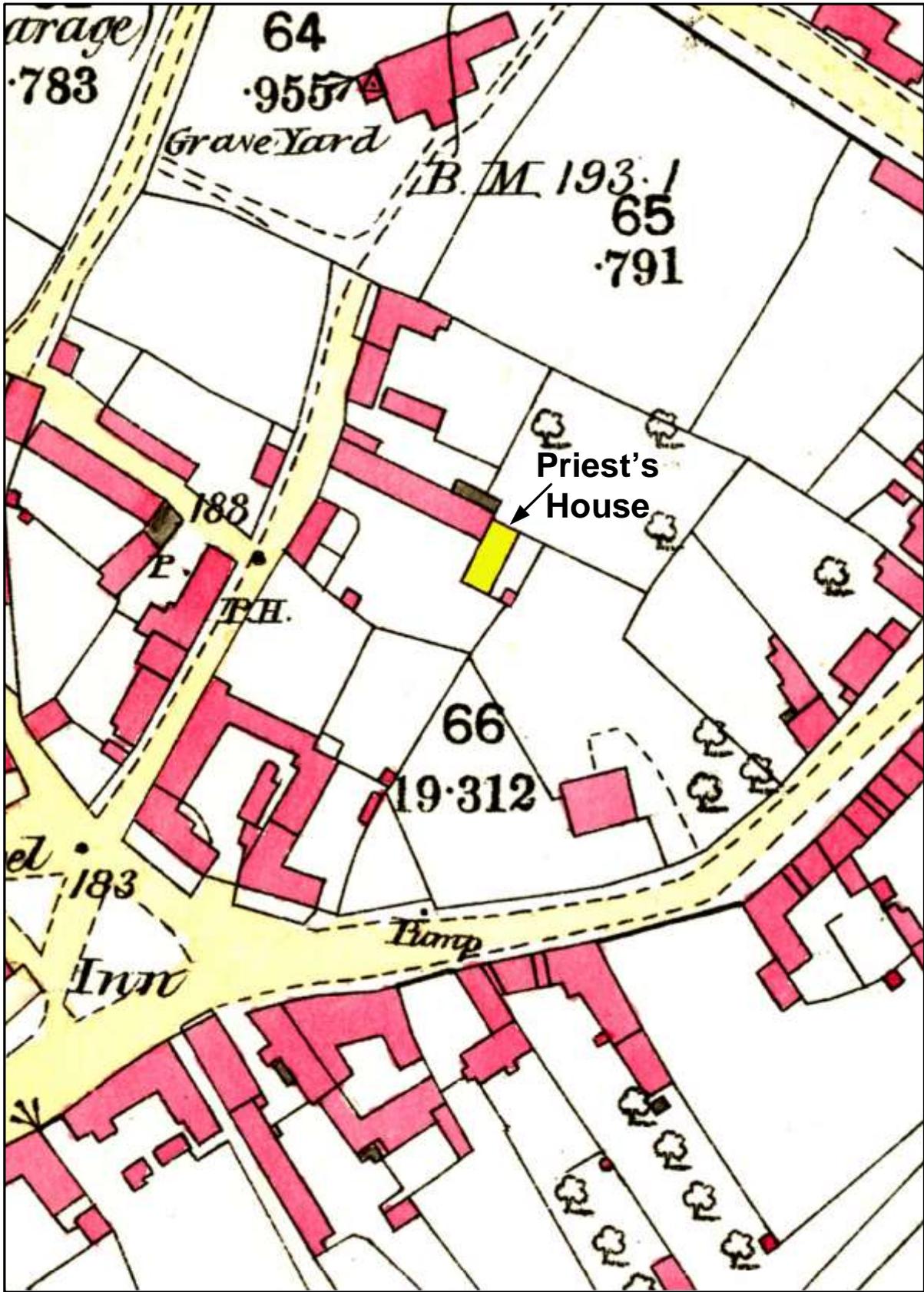
**Priest's House, Church Close
Caldecott, Rutland**



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Location Map – Priest's House, Caldecott
(OS First Edition 1886)

HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY REPORT

THE PRIEST'S HOUSE, CALDECOTT

Survey

Date(s) of survey: 27 June 2011
Surveyed by: Nick Hill

Summary

This is a high-quality house probably dating from the first half of the 17th century, with an unusual lobby-entry plan form. On the ground floor there is a hall and parlour, separated by a large central chimneystack, with two main bedchambers (both unheated) on the first floor. The masonry is of excellent quality, with precisely laid alternating courses of ironstone and limestone, and many moulded stone windows. The floor structures at first and second floor level are also original and of good quality, though the roof trusses resemble those found in houses of lesser status or later date. The location of the house, set well back from the street frontage, and with the farmyard at the front, is very unusual in the area.

Site

OS Ref: SP868936

Orientation: For report purposes, the main front is taken as facing W.

The location of the house is highly unusual, being set a considerable distance back from the street frontage. As the Enclosure Map of 1800 shows, it was accessed from Church Close, with a large yard in front, and slightly smaller area to the rear.

Materials

Coursed rubble stone, with alternating courses of ironstone and limestone; dressings of limestone, but quoins of ironstone; roofing of Welsh slate.

External features

Two storeys. Front W wall is partly covered by later outbuilding and porch. The porch, behind which is the centrally-set front doorway, is a modern addition, though it has stone walls, gable parapet and low-pitched roof of Welsh slate. To S of the porch is a 3-light ovolo-moulded window with cavetto-moulded cornice. A similar 3-light window is set symmetrically above, on the first floor. On the N side of the porch is a blocked doorway opening, with irregular ironstone jamb blocks to the L and plain timber lintel; the R jamb is covered by the porch. Two small single-light stone windows to first floor, ovolo-moulded with cavetto cornice.

Central two-flue chimneystack, limestone ashlar. Splayed plinth with unusual rounded moulding to front edge. Two separate flues above plinth, with architrave above. The architrave has two stepped fasciae, with shallow concave moulding. The upper part of the chimney (which would have had a plain frieze and moulded cornice) has been lost, replaced with a plain blocking course.

S gable is blank except for modern inserted timber window to second floor. The upper gable has moulded corbels, kneelers and gable parapet, with roll-moulded apex. The corbels have an unusual moulding, a bold ogee with a lower roll-mould, the whole with a slight taper from top to bottom. Many ironstone quoins have been replaced recently.

E rear wall has 3-light window to ground floor S and a 4-light window to N, both with same moulding as elsewhere. Between these windows on the ground floor is a smaller window with stone jambs; the masonry and modern plain lintel indicate this is an enlargement of an earlier, smaller in-gable window. On the first floor, two modern timber windows, with large irregular stone jambs to the S and modern stone jambs to the N; these seem to have been smaller windows originally, and of timber with stone jambs, not the stone-moulded type used elsewhere. Between the first floor windows is a tiny window with ironstone jambs and round-arched head.

N gable has stripe-work except for a section of limestone rubble around first floor level, where the end of a first floor beam can also be seen. Upper gable as to S, with moulded corbels and gable parapet. Inserted window to first floor, with earlier opening to second floor.

Plan

Two-room plan with large central chimneystack and lobby entry. The N room with the large fireplace was the hall, with the parlour to the S. The original position of the front doorway is unclear, as there is a blocked doorway, as well as the current doorway. But both of these opened against the stack. The stack is set back to the E, probably allowing space for an original winder stair in the lobby entry area.

Internal features

Ground floor

N room (hall) has large in-gable fireplace with fine beam, 4-centred moulded arch. Burnt, curved stonework to the E fireback indicates a former copper or bake-oven; two large iron brackets survive. Spine beam with deep (120mm) chamfers, big ogee stops. Original joists with small chamfers, haunched tenon joints to spine beam. To NE, mortices survive in the spine beam and window lintel for original joists, but a trimmer was later placed here (probably for an inserted stair), with later joists running N-S.

The W wall of the hall (subdivided by a modern stair and partition) has a blocked small stone window (limestone, probably ovolo-moulded as elsewhere). N of this is an odd recess with a splayed jamb, whose date and purpose is unclear, but is probably a later insertion. In the NW corner is a doorway, presumably a modern insertion.

S room (parlour) has a good-sized limestone fireplace with 4-centred moulded arch, and moulded jambs with high-set stops. Spine beam with large chamfers (85mm), no stops to N and square-cut seating to S. Original joists, as to the hall. In the NE corner is an oddly located diagonal trimmer. This is an insertion, but its purpose is unclear.

The front doorway (now inside the porch) has an oak frame with 4-centred arch head, pegged joints and old iron pintle hinges. It seems unlikely to be the original 17th century doorframe, and may date from the early 19th century.

First floor

First floor has two main chambers originally, with various modern partitions. Each chamber has a transverse ceiling beam (the roof truss tie-beam), with chamfers and big ogee stops, and good quality original joists for the attic floor above. The N chamber has a so-called 'priest's hole', a small cupboard at the E side of the central chimneystack. This is in fact just a small closet, set about 1m above first floor level (to clear the large ingle fireplace below), and lit by the tiny round-arched stone window. It has an early oak door frame with pegged joints. In the NW corner, evidence indicates there was another small window, with a stone jamb visible from the outer W side.

The first floor had no fireplaces. An oak beam at the SW corner of the chimneystack has mortices for a former timber partition. This would have separated the original stair from the S chamber, though the doorway opening seems to have been only 650mm wide.

Roof structure

Two trusses with tie-beams and collars. Truss T1 to N has principal rafters with curved feet, but truss T2 principals are straight. Crude dovetail-lapped collars with skew pegs. Apex has scissors crossing with square-cut seating for ridge (now missing) and skew pegs. Trenches to the back of principal rafters for 2 sets of purlins (now missing). Later over-roofing of 20th century in softwood. No original rafters or purlins remain. Possible burn marks to truss T2 – check further.

Outbuildings/Additions

An extension was added to the NW – not shown on the 1800 enclosure map or the 1844 tithe map, but there was a building here on the 1886 1st edition OS map. Now single-storey with stone walls and Welsh slate roof. The W section has ironstone/limestone stripe-work, and large ironstone quoins to a large barn-door type opening. The E section seems to be a recent rebuilding. No early features are visible inside.

The extension abuts at the W end against an earlier farmyard building, shown on the 1800 Enclosure Map. This appears to have been a large barn, with fine stripe-work masonry to the front E gable and S wall. It seems to have been re-formed in the 19th century, perhaps extended to the E, and fitted with a Welsh slate roof at around 30° pitch. (The barn is in separate ownership and was not inspected in detail.)

Date and development

The following features suggest a date for the original construction of c.1610-50: cavetto-moulded cornices to the windows; 4-centred arches to ground floor fireplaces; chimneystack details; lack of fireplaces to first floor.

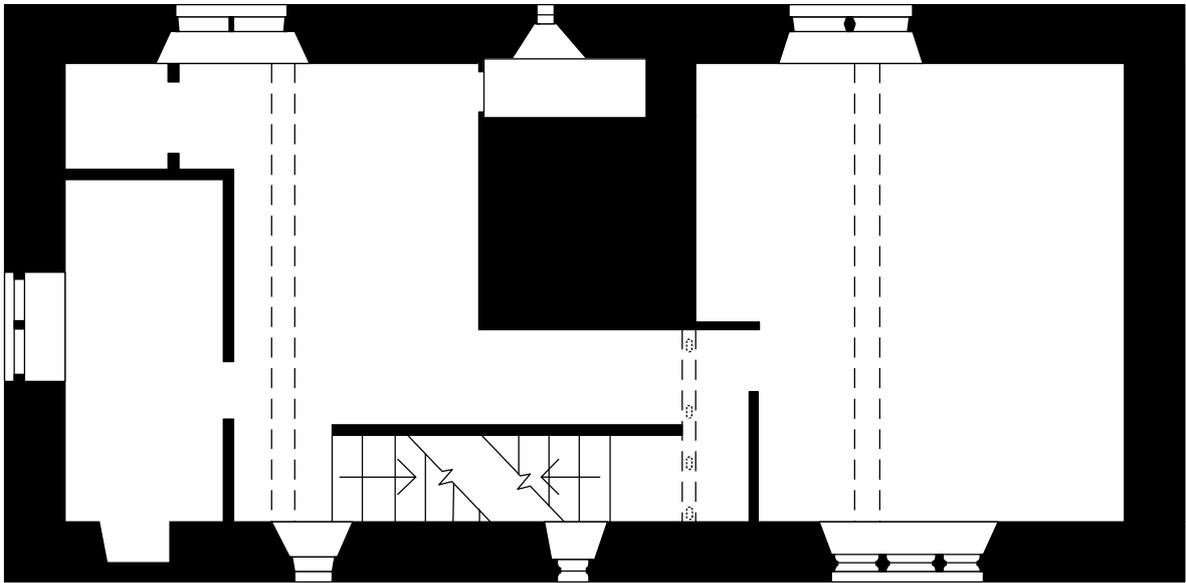
The lobby-entry plan, with large central chimneystack, is unusual in the area, and quite an advanced type, if before c.1650. The masonry is of very high quality, with precisely laid stripe-work, a high number of moulded stone windows and gable corbels of sophisticated design. The carpentry to the floor frames at first and second floor levels is also of high quality. This contrasts strangely with the roof structure, where crude lap-jointing is used. Other good quality houses of this period have roofs with tenoned collars and purlins, and generally have a tenoned apex with no ridge. The attic, despite having a high quality floor frame, was probably used only for storage, perhaps with small windows at the gable ends – or no lighting at all.

The location of the house, with its farmyard at the front rather than to the rear, would have meant that there was less need for a back door, as was normally provided in local houses of the earlier 17th century, which had a cross-passage plan.

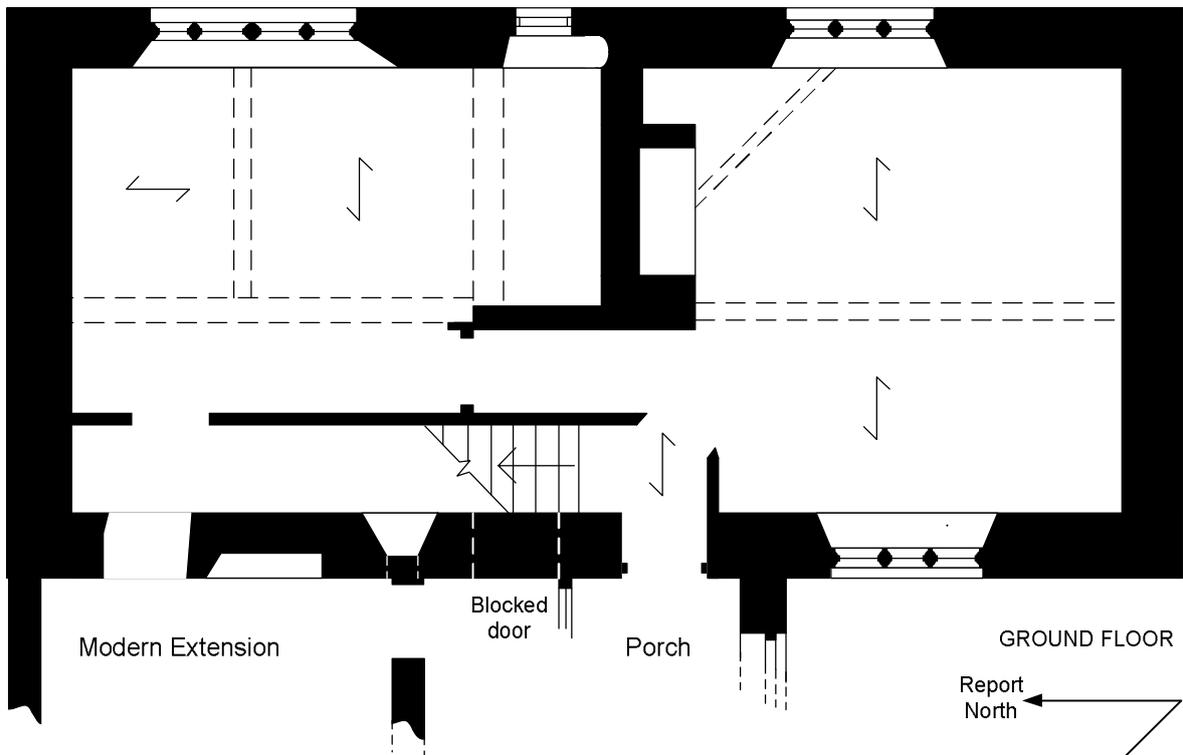
The main stone-mullioned windows are well positioned to light the principal rooms. The hall has a large 4-light window to the east, and the parlour has good 3-light windows to either side. The best bedchamber, to the south, has the only mullioned window on the first floor. All this is straightforward, but there are a quite a number of single-light windows in the north part of the west wall, whose purpose is unclear. Perhaps there were some internal partitions here, though no evidence is now visible. The two first floor windows on the east side are also unexpected, as they seem to have been original openings, but with windows of timber, not moulded stone. The closet to the north chamber, with its raised floor level and tiny stone window is a very unusual feature, but carefully designed.

The original house probably had a tight winder stair located in the lobby-entry area. The inserted trimmer in the hall suggests that a more spacious stair was later added here, and subsequently removed when the current modern stair was constructed.

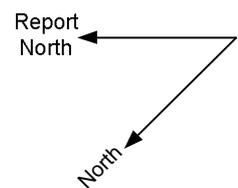
2nd October 2011



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



PRIEST'S HOUSE, CALDECOTT





View from south-west



The west front



The rear east



The north gable



The hall, with inglenook fireplace



The parlour, with stone fireplace



The cupboard to the first floor north bedroom



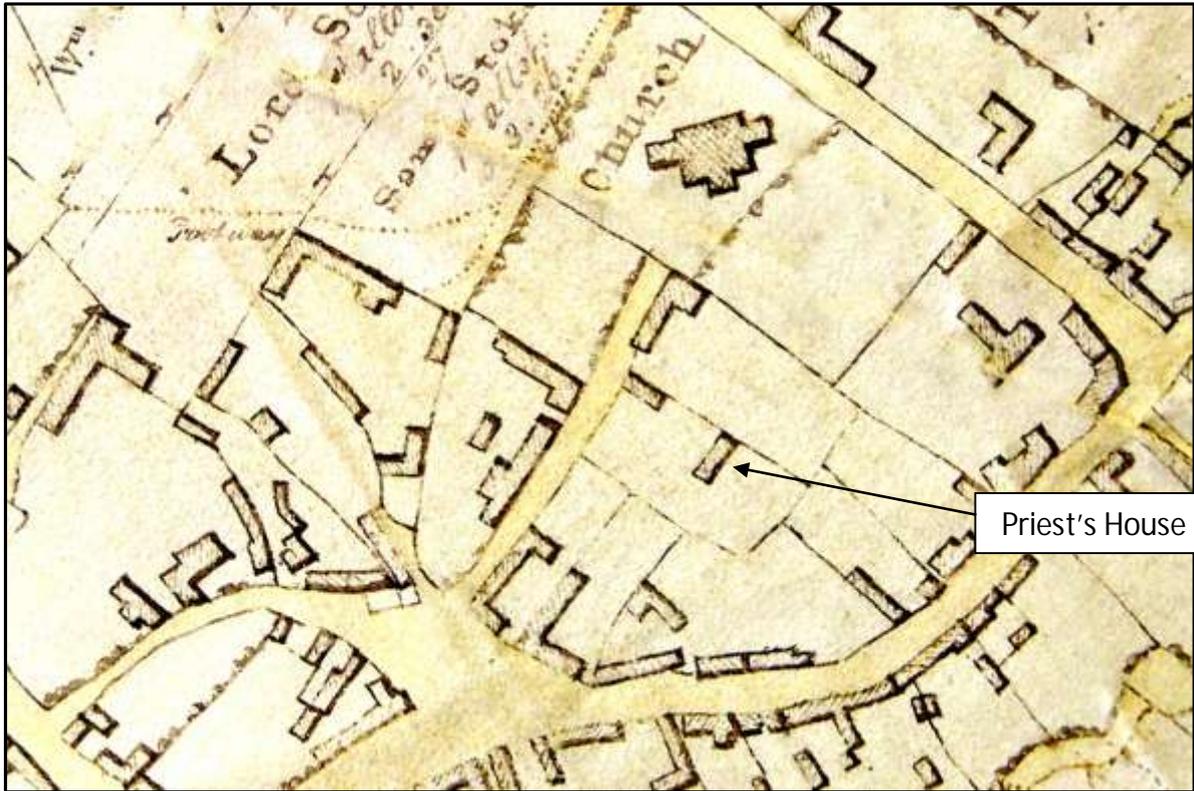
Details of roof truss T1 to north



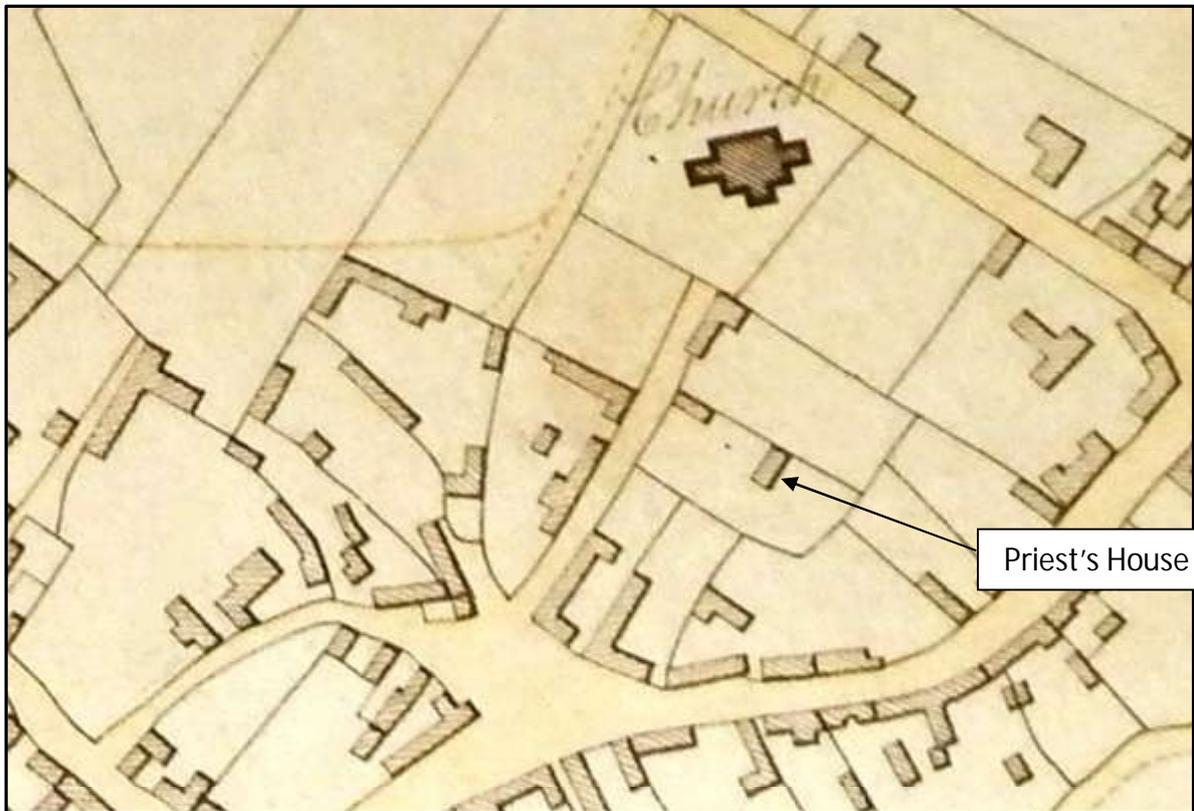
The first floor south bedroom, looking south-west



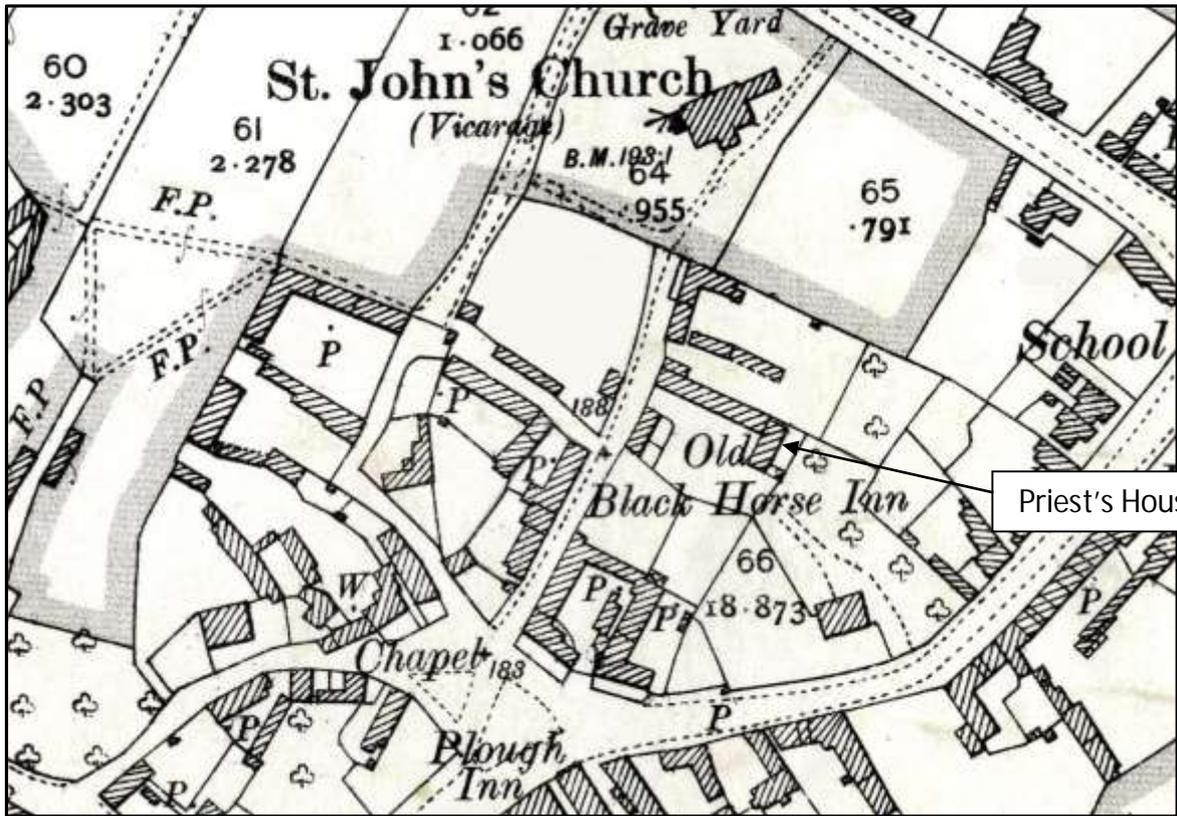
The barn to the west



Caldecott Enclosure Map - 1800



Caldecott Tithe Map - 1850



Caldecott – OS Second Edition 1904