

**Documents concerning the age of
The Nebb, Flixton-by-Lowestoft**

The map below was surveyed in 1614 by the new owner of the estate. When he died in 1652, the map was searched for, found, but was unusable because of damp and mildew. So they redrew from the survey notebooks; the redrawn map had the date 1652, which I had assumed till quite recently was the survey date. So the Nebb was certainly there in 1614.

The map has a number of interesting features:

- The road and track pattern is identical to what exists today.
- no houses are shown at the head of the lane (farhouse/ Warren Anne etc)
- the Coy house has now completely disappeared
- Nabb house indicates that it was reasonably substantial
- Flixton Water is the same shape as now but has 12 decoy arms (now gone)
- All the land in the 17th precinct has its area and the details of its owner – except the Nabb House (unfortunately)



This map provides the only thing known for certain about the Nebb – that there was a building on this site in 1614

Some hypotheses about the Nebb by Cherry Baden-Powell, 1994

1. I believe that this house was originally a half-timbered construction of 5 bays. The obvious remains of this are the beams and joists in the main sitting room and part of the kitchen, and the shape of the floor plan.
2. The house was lengthened at both ends by construction of brick walls and gable ends (around 1700 probably: tumbling bricks in parapets. This may have been done to provide a second sitting room and a separate kitchen (early 18th C aspirations often required such a change) or to enable the house to be divided.
3. Front and back walls of house were replaced with brick work later 18th C or early 19th C. At this time the house was divided into 3 judging by windows and doors (&outshot?
4. Central chimney and 2 back-to-back fireplaces rebuilt, or built in new position, probably when external long walls rebuilt. Details of inglenook seats mysterious. Date unclear, but brickwork looks 18th C, as does rest of brickwork
5. Generally: the house was probably originally a farmhouse of some scale in oak, & may have had an extensive outshot all along N. Side, + larger rooms (less divided up that they are now) on ground floor.

Hard evidence now required!

Time line for the Nebb (by Piers Nicholson, October 2016)

This timeline attempts to give plausible explanations for a number of puzzling features about the construction of the Nebb, including

- (a) Why is the fluted beam in the sitting room so much more elaborate than any of the others?
- (b) Why is the dividing wall between the kitchen and bathroom made of closely spaced timber rather than just a simple partition?
- (c) Why was the dividing line between the two cottages different on the ground floor and the first floor (where it was halfway across the sitting room)?
- (d) Why is one of the beams supported centre-span on a door lintel?

Phase 1 - ?1550 - a single house

Typical small medieval house extending from present kitchen/bathroom partition which has substantial vertical timbers and thus was probably the original western end wall to a line four feet in from the present eastern end wall

Western end – pantry and staircase much as present, with bedroom over

And second bedroom over half of hall (partition resting on fluted beam)

Centre section – hall open to the rafters with central hearth – no chimney

Eastern end – possibly a parlour or part of hall

Answer to (a) - because it is the only beam left from the original house

Answer to (b) – because it was the timber framed end wall of the original house

Phase 2 - ?1650 – major improvement - two houses - ?extended family

Western end – extended 12? ft to west to form present kitchen with two beams, and end wall incorporating a fire place and bread oven.

Centre section – new brick chimney built over hearth, two new beams inserted either side of new chimney, and remaining upper storey of hall converted to bedroom. (Note: this accounts for curious division of houses on first floor, with the new floored bedroom at the eastern end allocated to the eastern house even though it is over the sitting room belonging to the western house)

Eastern end – existing timber end wall demolished and replaced by new brick end wall.

Answer to (c) – because the original house did not have a floor over the eastern end of the sitting room, so the new room created there was allocated as a second bedroom to the eastern house. (the western house already had three)

Phase 3 - ?1750 – houses fall out of use by gentry, so divided into three labourers cottages.

Western cottage has kitchen, pantry and staircase on ground floor, with 2 bedrooms over and 3rd bedroom over half of present sitting room (maintaining previous 2 house division), but no longer has its front door, so a new one has to be provided in the kitchen.

Answer to (d) The only space available on the south wall is under the beam.

Middle cottage has entrance on south side in space now occupied by French windows

Middle cottage has present sitting room, with staircase in “blank room” on south side of chimney, and one bedroom over half of the sitting room

Eastern cottage has entrance door in the doorway now leading into the small sitting room. This cottage had small sitting room, staircase and one bedroom over.

Phase 4 - ?1850 – more building work and divided into two cottages again.

Lean-to outhouse built on north side to provide kitchen and larder to eastern cottage. Small range installed in what used to be doorway to middle cottage.

Installation of corrugated iron porch over door to Western cottage. Large open fireplaces bricked up and small Victorian coal-burning grate fitted

Building now divided:

Western cottage has kitchen, pantry staircase and sitting room on ground floor

Same three bedrooms on first floor

Eastern cottage has new larder and kitchen and old sitting room on ground floor, existing bedroom on first floor, together with additional bedroom ex- middle cottage on the first floor

Phase 5 – 1960 – Removal of bread oven from small cottage, installation of kitchen unit, oven, fridge, gas water heater in kitchen

Conversion of pantry in Western cottage to bathroom, and installation of septic tank

Installation of French windows in place of old bricked up doorway in sitting room.

Conversion of kitchen in Eastern cottage to bathroom, range removed and turned into a cupboard.

Installation of gas lighting throughout and of gas wall heaters on ground floor

Both cottages in common ownership for the first time for centuries but continue to be separated

Phase 6 – 1970s – Renewal of roof timbers destroyed by woodworm and of thatch.

Opening up of both fireplaces, and installation of wood burning stoves.

Removal of porch to Western cottage

Creation of doorway between the two cottages on the upper floor

Phase 7 – 1980s – More modifications

Creation of passage on ground floor between the two cottages.

Creating of three new windows to match existing on south side.

Martin Bridge 14 July 2018 – his report (extracts)

(Introduction) There are a number of beams across the width of the building and a substantial and a substantial two-hearth fireplace and chimney about two-thirds along the central axis. The main beam over the western hearth has many marks upon it, some resembling interlocked M's, often associated with the 1600's and a moulded beam across the central living room with elaborate mouldings

(Results and discussion) Details of the samples and their locations are given in the Appendix. Several timbers, e.g. those on the North side of the fireplace, were deemed unsuitable for dating, having too few rings. The wallplate at the east end was found to be of pine, and, although a sample was taken, this single 60 year long sequence did not date. The 'knees' on the first floor at the west end were found to be of elm. Of the samples taken, those from the moulded central beam and the western beam of the living room were found to have too few rings for analysis.

Three samples matched each other, two from the kitchen at the west end of the building, and a beam from the eastern room on the ground floor matched each other (Table 2) and were probably from trees all felled at the same time. The two kitchen beams were converted from trees felled in winter 1740/41, the beam from the east end room having a likely felling date range incorporating this date. Figs 1&2 show the matching between these three ring series.

Given the likely older origin of the building, this dates an important phase of development of the building, possibly representing the insertion or replacement of a floor.

30 July - comments on the beam from 2 colleagues

(from John Walker) Get a lot of roll milled ceiling joists in Suffolk, particularly in the North from the 1400's to at least the third quarter of the 1500's. An example is attached from the Abbey Farmhouse, Hoxne, mid-1500's house.

(from Dan Miles) Well, I would agree, 1500's sounds good, certainly not 1700's. Early 1500's. Comparable dated example of joists with this style of moulding which spring to mind are St. Aylotts in Saffron Walden (1500-1) and Paycocks, Coggeshall (1509)

(from Tim Howson, conservation officer in Essex and knowledgeable enthusiast)
"We have attached detail from St. Osyth showing a similar form of moulding structure. With soffit tenon diminished haunch which we usually put in this area after 1500. This when looking at the building we had put into the first quarter of C16. I have also noticed in Norwich much use of roll mouldings in the early 1500's

He also recommended "Fixtures and Fittings in Dated Houses 1567-1763 by L. Hall