CPAT Report No. 1454-2

Plas Uchaf, Whitford, Flintshire

Building Survey and Watching Brief





Client name: Mostyn Estates Ltd

CPAT Project No: 2159

Project Name: Plas Uchaf
Grid Reference: SJ1390479243
County/LPA: Flintshire
Planning Application: 054261

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Summary

A building survey was undertaken in October 2016 to record Plas Uchaf, near Whitford, in connection with an application for retrospective listed building consent for refurbishments.

Plas Uchaf is a large, complex house which is listed grade II*. It was probably established as a dower house for the Mostyn family, earliest phase dating from the mid-16th century. The house was enlarged and remodelled in 1603 with the addition of an adjoining, three-storey parlour wing. Over the following centuries the house was extended further with the addition of a kitchen range, a granary range and other outbuildings.

A watching brief undertaken in August 2017 during internal works and limited external groundworks, and also in September 2018 during external groundworks.

Crynodeb

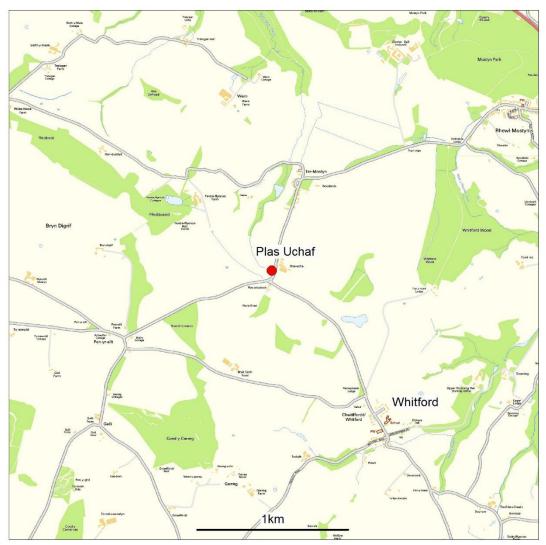
Ymgymerwyd ag arolwg adeilad ym mis Hydref 2016 i gofnodi Plas Uchaf, ger Chwitffordd, mewn cysylltiad â chais am ganiatâd adeilad rhestredig ôl-weithredol ar gyfer gwaith ailwampio.

Mae Plas Uchaf yn dŷ mawr, cymhleth sy'n adeilad rhestredig gradd II*. Fe'i sefydlwyd, mae'n debyg, fel tŷ agweddi ar gyfer y teulu Mostyn, ac mae ei gyfnod cynharaf yn dyddio o ganol yr 16eg ganrif. Gwnaed y tŷ yn fwy a'i ailfodelu ym 1603, gan ychwanegu asgell parlwr cyffiniol â thri llawr. Dros y canrifoedd wedyn fe estynnwyd y tŷ ymhellach gan ychwanegu rhesaid cegin, rhesaid granar ac adeiladau allan eraill.

Ymgymerwyd â briff gwylio ym mis Awst 2017 yn ystod gwaith mewnol a gwaith paratoi allanol cyfyngedig, a hefyd ym mis Medi 2018 yn ystod gwaith paratoi allanol.

1 Introduction

1.1. The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Mostyn Estates Ltd to undertake a programme of building recording and a watching brief in connection with an application (No 054261) for retrospective listed building consent for refurbishments to Plas Uchaf, near Whitford (SJ 13904 79243). Plas Uchaf is a large, complex house which is listed grade II* (listing no. 337; PRN 25043).



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Fig. 1 Location of Plas Uchaf

- 1.2. Consent was granted for the works with the inclusion of the following conditions which relate to archaeology and built heritage:
 - 5. No development of any kind shall commence until the applicant has secured the implementation of a Level 2 (English Heritage Specification Understanding Historic Buildings, 2006) archaeological study in accordance with an approved written scheme of investigation. A copy of the report shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the Development Control

Archaeologist, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, 41 Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7RR tel: 01938 553670.

REASON: In order to afford the opportunity for the recording the historical/architectural interest of the building, in accordance with policy HE8 of the Flintshire Unitary Development Plan

13. The developer shall ensure that a suitably qualified archaeological contractor is present during any new works to the walls on the top floor on an intermittent watching brief basis to make sure newly revealed historic fabric is recorded. The archaeological watching brief must meet the standards laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs. The Local Planning Authority will be informed in writing, at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the development, of the name of the said archaeological contractor. A copy of the resulting report should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the Development Control Archaeologist, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (41 Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7RR Email: markwalters@cpat.org.uk Tel: 01938 553670). After approval by the Local Planning Authority, a copy of the report and resulting archiveshould also be sent to the Historic Environment Record Officer, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust for inclusion in the regional Historic Environment Record.

REASON: To safeguard the identification and recording of features of historic and/or archaeological interest associated with the fabric of the building and so comply with policy HE8 of the Flintshire Unitary Development Plan.

15. The developer shall ensure that a suitably qualified archaeological contractor is present if at any stage in the future the current internal ground floors, either wood, tile or concrete, are to be taken up in order to determine whether any of the 16th - 18th century floors and ground plan survive so that an archaeological watching brief can be conducted. The archaeological watching brief must meet the standards laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs. The Local Planning Authority will be informed in writing, at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the development, of the name of the said archaeological contractor. A copy of the resulting report should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the Development Control Archaeologist, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (41 Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7RR Email: markwalters@cpat.org.uk Tel: 01938 553670). After approval by the Local Planning Authority, a copy of the report and resulting archive should also be sent to the Historic Environment Record.

REASON: To secure preservation by record of any archaeological remains which may be revealed during ground excavations for the consented development and so comply with policy HE8 of the Flintshire Unitary Development Plan.

16. The developer shall ensure that a suitably qualified archaeological contractor is present during the undertaking of any ground works in the development area so that an archaeological watching brief can be conducted.

The archaeological watching brief must meet the standards laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs. The Local Planning Authority will be informed in writing, at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the development, of the name of the said archaeological contractor. A copy of the resulting report should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the Development Control Archaeologist, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (41 Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7RR Email: markwalters@cpat.org.uk Tel: 01938 553670). After approval by the Local Planning Authority, a copy of the report and resulting archive should also be sent to the Historic Environment Record Officer, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust for inclusion in the regional Historic Environment Record.

REASON: To secure preservation by record of any archaeological remains which may be revealed during ground excavations for the consented development and so comply with policy HE2 of the Flintshire Unitary Development Plan.

1.3. This report presents the results of the building survey undertaken in compliance with Condition 5.

2 Historic background

- 2.1. The history of Plas Uchaf has been outlined in some detail by Purcells in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the application for listed building consent and this is reproduced below more or less in full.
- 2.2. There has been a building on the site of Plas Uchaf from at least as early as the mid16th century. From this time to the present day Plas Uchaf has formed an integral part
 of the Mostyn family's Flintshire estate. By the 16th century the Mostyns had emerged
 as one of the most prominent gentry families in the region, with considerable
 landholdings situated right across north Wales. The family's primary powerbase was
 Mostyn Hall in the parish of Whitford, Flintshire. All indications point to Plas Ucha
 being established as a dower house in the early-mid 16th century. Situated within the
 township of Mostyn, along the road heading south from Mostyn Hall, it is likely that
 Plas Uchaf ('upper mansion') was named in geographical relation to the family's
 primary residence.
- 2.3. The earliest known reference to Plas Uchaf dates to 1541 when it was mentioned (as 'le hier place' and 'the hyer place') in documents relating to the marriage settlement of William Mostyn (c.1521-76), son and heir apparent to Thomas Mostyn (c.1490-1558), the head of the family.8 William married Margaret, daughter of Robert ap Hywel of Oswestry, and Plas Ucha was identified as forming part of her dower or jointure. It was mentioned again in 1563 (as 'heyr place'), this time in relation to the jointure or dower of Ursula (d.1576), the wife of Sir Thomas Mostyn (c.1542-1618), son and heir apparent to the abovementioned William.
- 2.4. Sir Thomas' son and heir, Sir Roger Mostyn (c.1568-1642) and his wife Mary (c.1582-1653), daughter of Sir John Wynn of Gwydir, utilised Plas Uchaf as one of their residences between their marriage in 1596 and the death of Sir Thomas in 1618. It was

Sir Roger Mostyn and his wife Mary who were responsible for undertaking considerable alterations to the structure in c.1603 and it is their initials ('RM' and 'MM') and conjoined coats-of-arms which can be seen above the first floor fireplace.



Fig. 2 The coat of arms above the first-floor fireplace. Photo CPAT 4232-0054

2.5. The couple's marriage in 1596 brought together two of the most prominent families in north Wales and the event was celebrated in verse by at least ten Welsh praise poets. Siôn Mawddwy referred to the marriage as the coming together of the:

Mab i'r llew am bower Llyr (Son of the lion for the power of Lear) A Chreirwy, merch yr eryr. (And Creirwy, the daughter of the eagle)

- 2.6. The lion related to the coat-of-arms of Tudur Trefor, whom the Mostyns claimed descent from (Per bend sinister Ermine and Ermines, a lion rampant Or), whereas the eagle related to the three eagles in the heraldic shield assigned to Owain Gwynedd, the principal ancestor claimed by the Wynns of Gwydir (Vert, three eagles displayed in fess Or). The Plas Uchaf roundel with 1603 date represents the earliest surviving visual manifestation of Siôn Mawddwy's couplet. Depictions of the lion and the eagle were to later feature as a prominent component of dynastic display at Sir Thomas Mostyn's funeral and in the fabric of Mostyn Hall, Waen Farm, Whitford Church and Gwydir.
- 2.7. In 1639, Sir Roger Mostyn by this time long resident at Mostyn Hall leased part of Plas Uchaf to a carpenter named Joseph Grimes of Yellow Greave, Derbyshire, and his wife Isabel. The lease document refers to 'rooms beinge part of the hall or messuage called Plas Ucha, distinguished by the names of, the kitchen, the room over it, the little butterie between the kitchen and the hall, the ould brewhouse, outhouses and buildings called little new stable and the cowhouse'. Grimes was to pay 5 shillings in addition to 12d. a year and was required: 'uppon the request of the said Sir Roger Mostyn, or reasonable notice given to the said Joseph Grimes, to doe and

accomplish with his best endeavours all such work or works which hee shalbe required and which hee can performe and doe unto the said Sir Roger Mostyn and his heires, hee the said Sir Roger Mostyn and his heires paying unto the said Joseph his wages for the same, and giving and allowing unto the said Joseph one barell of coale every weeke for his fire duringe the said terme'.

- 2.8. Joseph Grimes died in 1684. In his last will and testament of 1679 he described himself as of 'Plas Ucha' and provided instructions to Sir Roger Mostyn, 1st Bart. (c.1624-90) to ensure the wellbeing of his wife Margaret and young daughter Elizabeth. Although part of Plas Uchaf was occupied by Grimes for much of the mid-17th century, the Mostyn family continued to use it as secondary residence. The 'messuage or mancion house ... called Place Ucha' was set aside as part of the dower or jointure of Mary Bulkeley (d.1662), second wife of Sir Roger Mostyn, 1st Bart. And, according to inscriptions made by Mary in her Book of Common Prayer, their eldest daughter, Elizabeth, 'was borne att halfe an hower past five of the clocke in the afternoon, being Saturday the 22nd of December 1649 att Plas Ucha nere Mostyn'.
- 2.9. In his History of the Parishes of Whitford and Holywell, Thomas Pennant recollected the staunch Royalist stance adopted by the 1st Bart. during the Civil War, stating that 'his house at Mostyn was plundered and stripped, so that he was obliged to retire to a small house called Plas-ycha, about a mile distant from Mostyn'. Mostyn Hall was indeed briefly captured by Parliamentarian forces in November 1643, but suffered no serious damage. A Hearth Tax assessment of 1664 recorded five chimneys at 'Y Place Ucha', with Sir Roger Mostyn, 1st Bart. listed as the owner. Across the 18th and 19th centuries the house, adjoining farmyard and farmlands appear to have been leased to a series of tenant farmers; see for example the last will and testaments of Peter Booley (d.1785), John and Elizabeth Jones (d.1791 and 1810), Mary Brechin (d.1826) and John Powell Jones (d.1857), who all identified themselves as being of Plas Uchaf.
- 2.10. The farm's Labour Books for the years 1805, 1812 and 1843 point to significant agricultural activity, whereas the 19th century Census returns provide further indications of the link between the house and farm. In 1871 Alfred Parry was the tenant, with responsibility for farming 472 acres; three domestic servants, in addition to six farm servants were listed as being resident at Plas Uchaf. Twenty years later John Owens was the tenant, and in addition to his family the house provided accommodation for three general servants, a dairy maid, cowman and three agricultural labourers. Writing to Lord Mostyn in the 1940s, Chief Agent George Alfred Humphreys described Plas Uchaf as 'the most important farm at Mostyn and whoever went there [as tenant] would have to be a man competent to take a lead among the farmers on the estate and in the neighbourhood'. The house has been vacant since the death of its last tenant.

3 Methodology

- 3.1. The building survey was conducted in October 2016 in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (2014) and *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment* (2014).
- 3.2. The survey took the form of a Level 2 building survey as defined by Historic England 2016 *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice.* This level of survey is intended to create a descriptive record of the building, and included:
 - Description and photographic record of the exterior and the interior
 - conclusions regarding the building's development and use, but without discussing in detail the evidence on which these conclusions are based
 - A plan and sometimes other drawings but the drawn record will normally not be comprehensive.
- 3.3. The drawn record utilised existing drawings, which were checked and annotated as appropriate to produce:
 - Floor plans, including the position of structural or architectural detail and fixtures and fittings
 - Phase plans showing the development of the structure
- 3.4. The photographic survey was conducted using digital photography with a resolution of 12 megapixels to include:
 - general views
 - external appearance
 - internal views
 - elevations and structural detail
 - overall appearance
 - fixtures, fittings etc
- 3.5. The watching brief was conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).

4 Building Survey

4.1. The following building chronology is based on that suggested by RCAHMW, but with some modifications. It is clear, however, that the phasing is more complex than that portrayed here, although this could only be clarified further through detailed investigation. This conjectural phasing is illustrated in Fig. 22, while plans, elevations and sections of the building are presented in Figs 23-28.



Fig. 3 The south-west elevation of the 16th-century range. Photo CPAT 4246-0001

Phase 1.

- 4.2. 16th century. The core of the house is a storeyed hall with lateral chimney, cross-passage and outer room. This house-type is well represented in north-east Wales. The original doorway, on the north-west side of the chimney, is recorded as having a round arch but has since been infilled and replaced by a window (WG04). On the opposite side of the hall a second round arched doorway, which leads to the Phase 2 extension, has been suggested as providing evidence for a former cross passage, although the two doorways are not exactly opposite each other.
- 4.3. The hall has a blocked fireplace, while the ceiling has a chamfered cross beam, with another running along the dividing wall between this room and what is now a bathroom, but was called the 'butterie' in 1639.
- 4.4. On the first floor the principal chamber also has chamfered cross beams, one of which runs along the later partition wall between the chamber and a hall and bathroom. The large fireplace is completely infilled.
- 4.5. The second floor is divided into two rooms, now accessed via a landing within the Phase 2 extension, but originally connected by a central doorway, now blocked, in the dividing wall. The principal room features a partially exposed arched-braced

truss with arched ceiling to match. A fireplace in the southern corner of the room is disused, the chimney above having been removed. The smaller room has a blocked window on the north-west wall.

4.6. Externally, the lateral chimney has been reduced in height and capped, while the north-east elevation contains several of the original stone-mullioned windows, most of which are now blocked. The south-east gable wall has wide window openings (WG06, WF05 and WF02) under segmental heads on all three floors, which replaced the four-light mullioned windows depicted by Ingleby. The tall chimney stack in the southern corner, also depicted by Ingleby, is no longer present.

Phase 2.

- 4.7. 1603. In a characteristic second phase a large parlour wing with stair was added on the south-west side of the hall. The wing is dated by the inscription on the first-floor chamber fireplace (see below).
- 4.8. The ground floor is now accessed from outside by a late-19th- or early-20th-century brick porch, leading to a stairhall with quarry tiled floor. The original entrance to this range would have been via the putative cross passage in the 16th-century range. A bay window with French doors also leads directly into the parlour. This room has two exposed, chamfered, cross beams with ogee stops and chisel marks. To the right of the bay window, in the corner of the room, is a later cast-iron fireplace insert and surround with slate mantelpiece which is set into a larger stone predecessor. There is a small service room leading off the parlour which also provides access to the 17th-century stair turret which still provides access to each floor.
- 4.9. The staircase which rises from the stairhall has been remade in the 19th century but retains its Jacobean character and leads to a small landing, to the left of which is a panelled door opening into the chamber situated above the ground floor parlour. An ovolo moulded beam in the chamber over the hall suggests a general early 17th-century refurbishment. As with the room below, the fireplace here is set at an angle and similarly features a cast-iron fireplace insert and surround with slate mantelpiece and earlier stone hearth. Supported by a moulded sill, an overmantle display in plaster bears an ornate heraldic design: a roundel bearing the arms of Tudur Trefor (for Mostyn) conjoined with those of Owain Gwynedd (for Wynn of Gwydir), flanked by obelisks and including the inscription 'RM', 'MM' (for Sir Roger and Mary Mostyn) and date '1603' (Fig. 2). The en-suite in the corner of the room is a modern addition. A small services room to the north-west of the chamber originally had a connecting door, but this is now blocked with access being provided directly from the stair turret via a contemporary entrance with an arched doorframe.

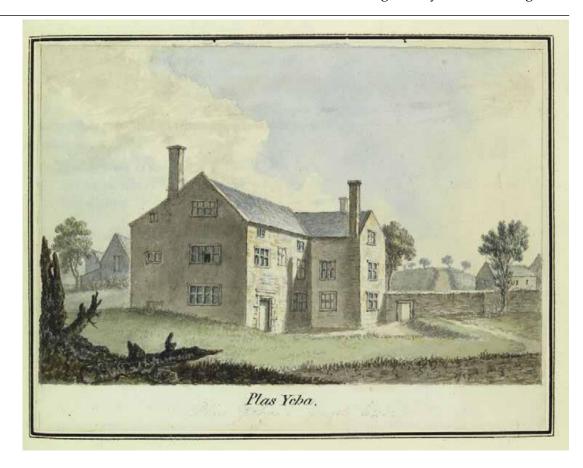


Fig. 4 Undated 18th-century water colour undated featured in Thomas Pennant's extra-illustrated volumes of Tours in Wales, held by the National Library of Wales



Fig. 5 Plas Uchaf today, viewed from a similar angle. Photo CPAT 4246-0011

4.10. The second floor has the same layout as those below, with a main chamber containing a fireplace in the corner. The connecting door into what is an adjoining attic room is blocked, but retains the original doorframe.



Fig. 6 The blocked dorrway on the second floor of the 17th-century range. Photo CPAT 4246-0073

Phase 3

4.11. 17th/18th century. In the third phase the lower end of the early house was extended with the construction of a two-storey range A square-headed door with an ornate mullioned frame provided access and is depicted by Ingleby in 1796 (Fig. 7), covered by a two-storey double-gabled stone porch with a central two-light window and a tall chimney stack to the right. The porch was open to the ground floor and supported by a bulky stone column to the left and square pillar to the right.

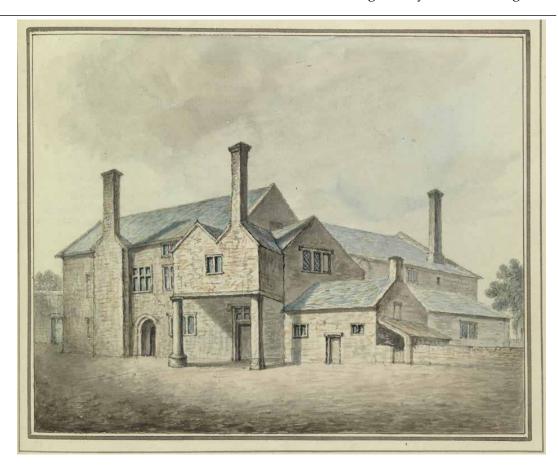


Fig. 7 Watercolour by John Ingleby, dated 1796, featured in Thomas Pennant's extra-illustrated volumes of *Tours in Wales*, held by the National Library of Wales

4.12. Ingleby shows a long outshut against the rear wall of the Phase 2 range, together with a single-storey building with a small chimney on the end of the Phase 3 range, both of which were probably added later in the 18th century.

Phase 4

4.13. Late 18th or early 19th century? The Phase 3 range was later extended to replace the single-storey outbuilding shown by Ingleby. This formed a kitchen with a large lateral chimney the evidence for which is a vertical joint in the external masonry adjacent to the present porch which replaced the original with a two-storey single-gabled version in brick, supported on the projecting corner with a chamfered timber post with ogee stops and two ornate cusped brackets.

Phase 5

4.14. 19th century. A range was added to the side of the kitchen, encompassing the lateral chimney and comprising a service room with fireplace on the ground floor and a granary on the first floor, accessed via an external stair. Later additions include a lean-to against the north-west wall of the granary range, further outbuildings, now demolished, and a more polite entrance which was contrived on the east side between hall and parlour.



Fig. 8 The 19th-century granary range. Photo CPAT 4246-0020

5 Watching brief

- 5.1. A watching brief was maintained on 29-30 August 2017 during the removal of internal plaster in Room G14 on the ground floor, and plaster and ceilings on the second floor, together with limited external groundworks. Internally, the works revealed a number of former openings and other features which were not readily apparent at the time the building survey was conducted.
- 5.2. On the ground floor the works revealed the original fireplace, which was partly reopened, together with a substantial beam above this, which also formed a lintel above an adjacent window (see Fig. 9).
- 5.3. On the second floor the removal of plaster revealed a blocked window in room S06 and also demonstrated that the upper part of this wall, at least internally, had been rebuilt using concrete blocks (Fig. 11).
- 5.4. In Room S03 the removal of plaster on the south-eastern wall revealed substantial displacement of the masonry, as well as a blocked window (Fig. 12). The position of a former coat of arms was also exposed above the door (Fig. 13), while the removal of the ceiling allowed recording to be undertaken on the original roof truss (Figs 14-15). The opportunity was also taken to record the roof truss in Room S06 (Fig. 15).



Fig 9 The original fireplace opening in Room G14. Photo CPAT 4404-0002



Fig. 10 Exposed south-west wallin Room G14. Photo CPAT 4404-0006



Fig. 11 Exposed walling in Room S06. Photo CPAT 4404-0011



Fig. 12 Exposed walling in Room S03 showing substantial displacement of masonry, with a blocked window to the right of the crack. Photo CPAT 4404-0024



Fig. 13 Position of coat of arms above the door in Room S03. Photo CPAT 4404-0045



Fig. 14 Original roof truss in Room S03. Photo CPAT 4404-0034

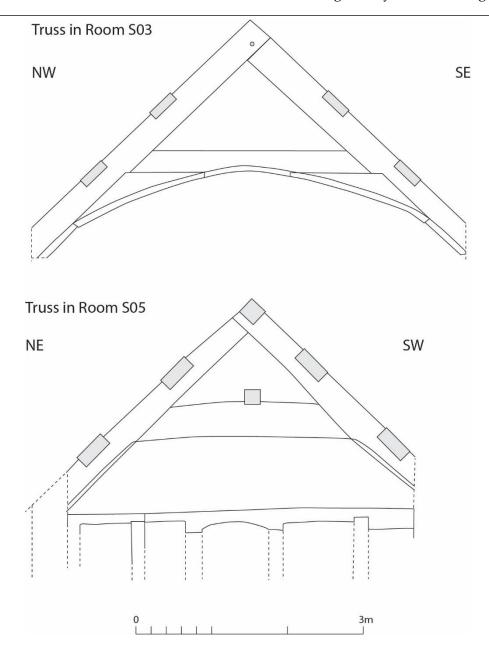


Fig. 15 Roof trusses exposed in Rooms S03 and S05

5.5. Groundworks associated with a new external drain between windows WG03 and WG04 were monitored, although this revealed nothing of archaeological significance (Figs 16-17; see Fig. 19 for location).





Figs 16-17 Grounds for a new drain. Photo CPAT 4404-0023 and 0022

- 5.6. A watching brief was also maintained during the excavation of foundations adjacent to the rear lean-to building on 17 September 2018. This revealed evidence for former outbuildings and a culvert (Fig. 18).
- 5.7. The basal course of a stone-built outbuilding were identified immediately below the current ground level. The outline of the building is shown on Fig. 23, although the groundworks only revealed part of the north-eastern wall and an internal division (Fig. 19), together with part of a brick floor. An active brick-arched culvert (Fig. 20) was revealed running beneath the building, while a second culvert, which had a stone-slabbed top, was uncovered further to the north (Fig. 21).

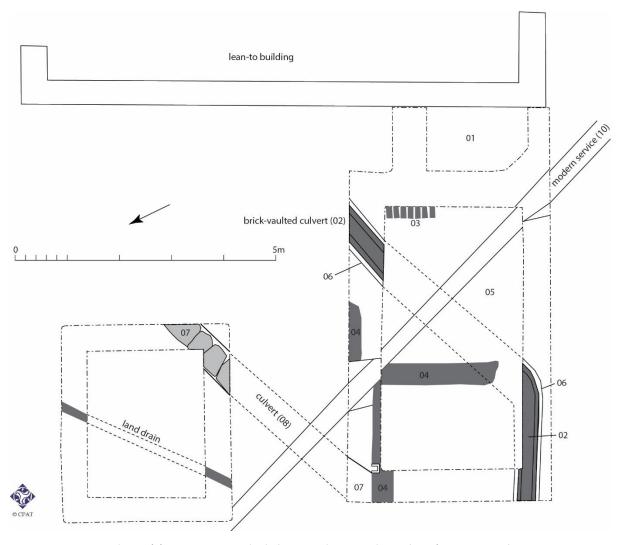


Fig. 18 Plan of features revealed during the watching brief in September 2018



Fig. 19 The internal dividing wall within the outbuilding. Photo CPAT 4563-0013



Fig. 20 The brick-arched culvert with the basal remains of the outbuilding wall to the left. Photo CPAT 4563-0009

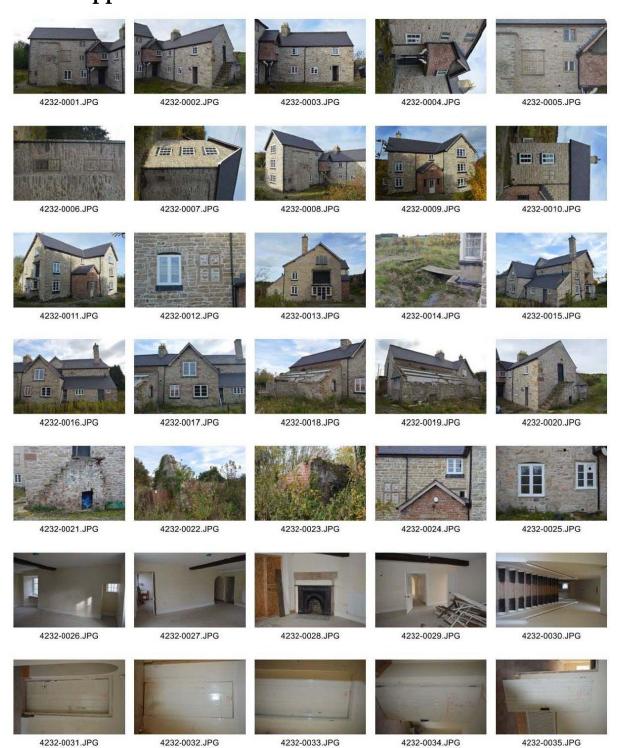


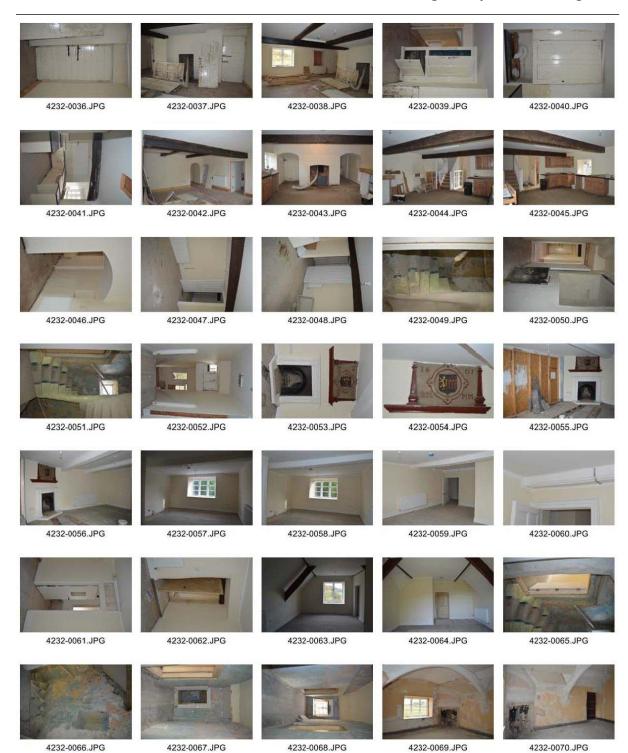
Fig. 21 The stone-slabbed top of the second culvert. Photo CPAT 4563-0021

6 Conclusions

- 6.1. A level 2 building survey has been conducted on behalf of Mostyn Estates Ltd to record Plas Uchaf, near Whitford (SJ 13904 79243), in connection with an application (No 054261) for retrospective listed building consent for refurbishments.
- 6.2. Plas Uchaf is a large, complex house which is listed grade II*. The phasing is not clear but the earliest phase is likely to date from mid-16th century and all indications point to Plas Uchaf being established as a dower house for the Mostyn family. The house was enlarged and remodelled in 1603 with the addition of an adjoining, three-storey parlour wing, which contains a coat of arms the first-floor chamber bearing the letters RM and MM, referring to Roger and Mary Mostyn. Over the following centuries the house was extended further with the addition of a kitchen range, a granary range, outshuts and other outbuildings.
- 6.3. The building survey provided a comprehensive record of the building, documenting the changes which have already been made as part of the current programme of renovation, as well as augmenting the description and phasing of the house.
- 6.4. Further architectural details were recorded in August 2017 as part of a watching brief during the removal of internal plaster within one of the ground-floor rooms and three rooms on the second floor.

Appendix 1: Contact Prints - films 4246 and 4404







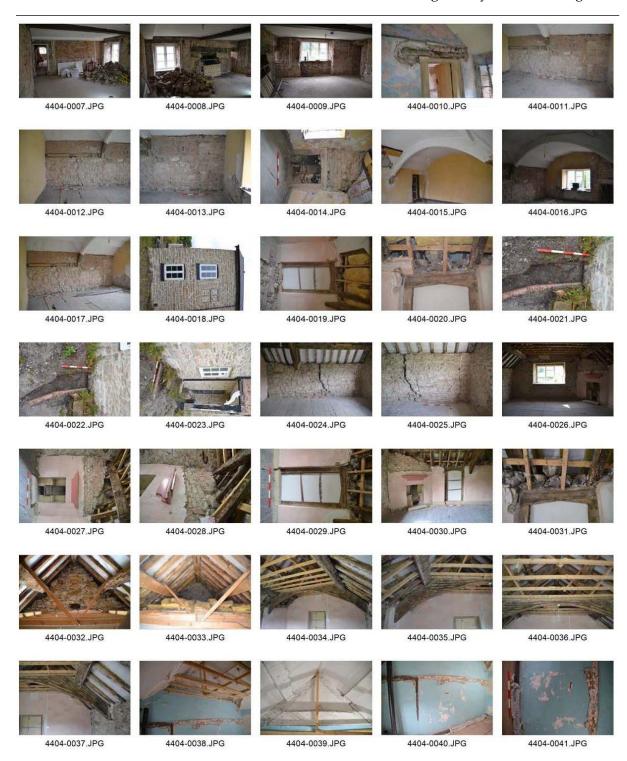






Fig. 22 Conjectural phasing of Plas Uchaf (base on a survey by Purcell)

