

# WHY DID EDWARD PENN BUILD ONLY HALF A HOUSE?

A HISTORIC BUILDING ANALYSIS OF SHELL HOUSE, HEDGERLEY

PETER JOHN MARSDEN

*Shell House in Hedgerley is odd: an asymmetrical house built in the late seventeenth century, when symmetry was the ruling fashion. A detailed survey by Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society members indicates that it was asymmetrical from the start – a ‘half-house’ whose internal plan shows how the services of a larger symmetrical plan were ‘shoehorned in’ to cope with reduced circumstances. How did its owner, Edward Penn, come to this place of ‘ambition thwarted’? Documentary research reveals how his inheritance of nearby Chalfont House was ‘seized’ by King Charles II, given to the infamous Judge Jeffreys, and led Edward into a series of expensive – and ultimately futile – court cases.*

Around the year 1679 Edward Penn built a house for himself in the village of Hedgerley in South Buckinghamshire. Outwardly fashionable, in the latest ‘Renaissance’ style of the late seventeenth century, it was, however, only half of what that style expected. ‘Shell House’ as Edward Penn’s house is now named, is of brick, with tall casement windows, leaded-lights, timber mullions and transoms, a panelled front door framed by Ionic brick pilasters, and a heavy eaves cornice with prominent wooden corbels. Since 1955 it has been Listed Grade II\*.<sup>1</sup> This description would fit hundreds of fashionable houses of the late seventeenth century, with only minor variations.<sup>2</sup> Not far away on the edge of Burnham Beeches stands Leys Farmhouse in a very similar style, though it has suffered from greater modernisation (Fig. 1). The design similarities between Shell House and the Manor House at South Littleton in Worcestershire (Fig. 2) are even more striking, with the same eaves, windows, door and doorcase, panelled chimney and moulded-brick string course. Further north in Buckinghamshire and at the top of the social scale is Winslow Hall (Fig. 3), which shares with Shell House the same disposition of windows, eaves cornice with corbels and brick panelled chimneys, on a much grander scale. Winslow Hall is dated 1700 and has an unconfirmed attribution to the architect Sir Christopher Wren.<sup>3</sup>

There is one critical difference. The main eleva-

tion at Winslow Hall, South Littleton Manor, Leys Farmhouse and other Renaissance-style houses is symmetrical, balanced around a central doorway. Symmetry is a central principle of the Renaissance style, imported from Europe to inform the design of England’s great houses in the late 16th century.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century this symmetrical style had become the fashion for upper and ‘middling sort’ residences across the country.<sup>5</sup> The elements of the Renaissance style – plans, elevations, decorative features – would be in a builder’s



FIGURE 1 Leys Farmhouse, Thomkins Lane, Burnham, South Bucks (English Heritage Listed Building number 1124484) (photo: Carl Shillito, Images of England, record 43919)



FIGURE 2 The Manor House, South Littleton, Wychavon, Worcestershire (EH listed building 1081265). (photo: Peter Harnwell, Images of England, record 147670)



FIGURE 3 Winslow Hall, Winslow, Bucks (EH listed building 1279357) (photo: courtesy of Bucks County Council 'Photographs of Buckinghamshire' Collection)

'pattern book' for his clients to choose.

Shell House is not symmetrical and its seventeenth-century part represents only half of the typical plan of the period.<sup>6</sup> We would expect it to be twice its present size, with its main rooms spaced behind a symmetrical front and with a large central hallway (compare Figs 4 & 5). Instead it is a curious mixture of the symmetrical and asymmetrical. Approaching the house from the centre of Hedgerley village, the south elevation (Fig. 6) is fashionably symmetrical. Nearing the entrance to the house, which faces west onto the road, you would expect an even more impressive show. And you would not be disappointed. The same tall, regular Renaissance windows, with heavy eaves cornice and unifying brick string course carried round from the south front, is taken a step higher by an ornate front doorway (Fig. 7) at the top of a flight of steps, with a panelled double-leaf door framed by Ionic pilasters in contrasting brickwork and crowned by a flat leaded hood carried on carved brackets.

The ornate doorway should be the impressive central focus of a symmetrical facade, but it is not. Instead the entrance elevation of Shell House is severely asymmetrical (Fig. 8). Ignoring the single-storey extension on its north side (to the left) added in 1902, the front door, far from being central, is against the north-west corner of the seventeenth-

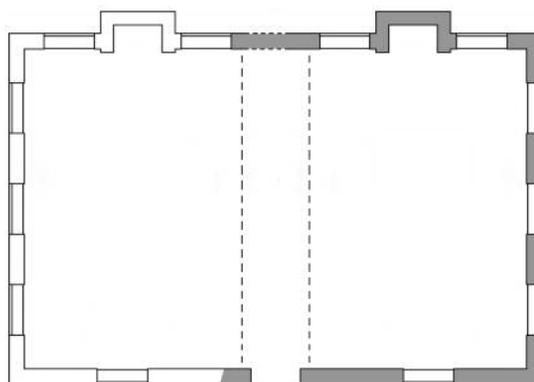


FIGURE 4 A conventional symmetrical ground-floor plan in the Renaissance style of the late 17th century (shading shows the known 17th-century fabric at Shell House).

century building. The single ground-floor window is set to its right, unbalanced. If we superimpose the front elevation of Shell House (Fig. 8) on that of South Littleton (Fig. 2) it is clear that Shell House is only half the house we would expect. What happened to the missing half of Shell house? We need to know whether it was built but later demolished, whether plans changed part-way through construction, or whether Edward Penn

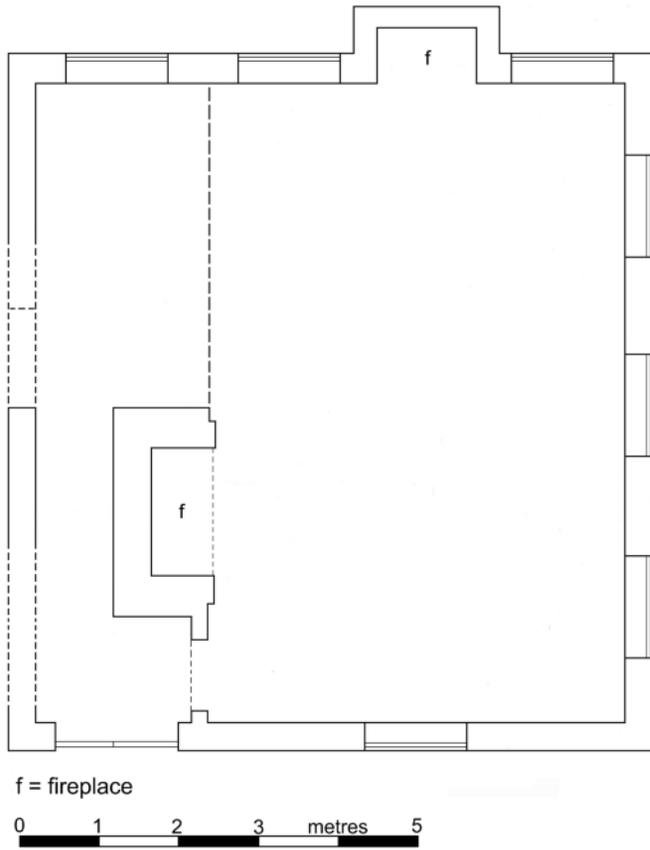


FIGURE 5 Ground-floor plan of the 17th-century section of Shell House, with later additions removed for clarity



FIGURE 6 The south elevation of Shell House (photo: Michael Rice)

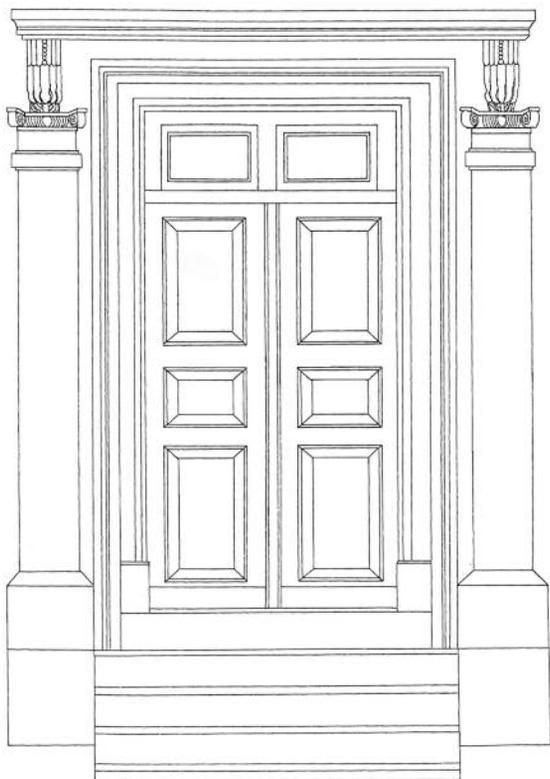


FIGURE 7 A scale drawing of the main door of Shell House by Linda Paine, part of a submission for the Town Planning Institute Intermediate Examination 1968, in the possession of Donald Vincent

intended this curious half-house from the beginning.

A survey was carried out in Spring and Summer 2009 at Shell House by five members of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society's Historic Buildings Group, with the help of its current owner, Donald Vincent.<sup>7</sup> This article presents the process of historic building analysis: the succession of observation, survey, discovery, interpretation, research and analysis enabling us to read the historic clues in our environment and, without archaeological excavation, adding significantly to our understanding of the historical record and helping to tease out the puzzle of Edward Penn's half-house.

### Is Shell House the remnant of a larger building?

One possibility is that the northern half of an original fully symmetrical Renaissance building was destroyed by fire or dilapidation, leaving the half-house visible today. Such events leave blackened or even scorched timbers, replaced joists and rafters, changes to the roof structure and replacement brickwork, particularly where existing walls had to be adapted to the reduced rebuilding plan. The survey found none of these things. The building's main roof structure and timbers are consistent with a single build. A few joists have been replaced, but most are known repairs from the 1940s when a World War II bomb landed in the garden, blowing out windows and bringing down ceilings.<sup>8</sup>

The considerable amount of replacement brickwork in the two-storey north elevation of the house is what would be expected if the northern half of a larger house had been removed, but most is consistent with work done when the single-storey northern extension was added in 1902. This work has largely obscured evidence for the original configuration of this north elevation. If the northern half of a larger symmetrical building had been demolished there would be rebuilt brickwork at the north-west and north-east corners of the reconstructed building. Yet there is no sign of this. Above the 1902 extension work, the seventeenth-century brickwork of the entrance facade is consistent and uninterrupted. On this evidence of timbers and brickwork, we can be confident that the asymmetrical state of Shell House is not the result of later partial destruction and rebuilding.

A second possibility is that Edward Penn set out to build a larger house along the lines of the Manor House at South Littleton, but was forced to scale this down by changed personal or financial circumstances. If building work had already started, traces of this change of plan might be visible in Shell House today which might show whether work had started on a larger building, and at what stage it was scaled back. However, the roof structure – plain oak framing of rafters and joists held together by oak pegs – sits symmetrically on the brick external walls, matching the 'half house' that it serves. The roof is of a single design and a single build, showing no signs of adaptation or truncation. Any change of plan during construction had to have taken place at an early stage and be visible in the construction of the lower walls. If the seventeenth-



FIGURE 8 The main entrance elevation of Shell House (photo: Michael Rice). The single-storey section to the left, with its ornate gable end, was added in 1902

century builders had started to raise the walls for a larger house, the two-storey northern elevation would have been constructed as an internal wall. The survey evidence is against this. Throughout Shell House internal walls are between 190mm and 200mm thick, while external walls narrow as they rise through the storeys, 480mm thick in the cellar, 375mm at ground-floor level, 270mm at first floor and 190mm above that. Measurements taken at various places on the northern elevation point to its construction as an external wall from the start.

Thus building work cannot have progressed beyond the foundation stage before any change of plan and any foundations for a larger, symmetrical building would lie today beneath the 1902 extension. The cellar underlies the main living rooms of the original house, with no access to areas beneath the entrance lobby, stairs and 1902 extension, though hollow wooden floors by the head of the cellar steps and under today's dining room indicate

that there are voids beneath these areas. However, no records of the 1902 work have been found, and the survey team were unable to investigate the house foundations by excavation.<sup>9</sup>

There is no evidence for any change of plan before work had risen much above foundation level, and no clues so far to answer the question why Edward Penn chose to building an asymmetrical 'half house' in an age when symmetry was king, and whether he chose an asymmetrical design from the start or adapted a larger symmetrical plan. To answer this question we must turn again to the survey.

#### **How was this 'half house' built? Evidence from the survey**

Externally, Shell House appears a high-status building. Apart from the curious asymmetry of the entrance elevation the proportion and style of the house would have set it at the forefront of architec-

tural fashion, alongside grander houses such as Winslow Hall. More than 300 years after it was built it is still today the most architecturally notable building in Hedgerley village, with its decorative brickwork of red stretchers and glazed blue headers in a typical Buckinghamshire style.

The interior is different as the ground floor plan shows (Fig. 9). Instead of the spacious high-status hallway we would expect behind the ornate and impressive front door, there is only a narrow lobby. Immediately ahead, the area that might have been the hallway is cut in half by the side view of a huge chimney stack, leaving a narrow restricted space which has contained the stairs since the 1902 extension.

Contrasting high- and low-status features continue throughout the building. Turning right the parlour, a large room with tall leaded-light windows faces south across the garden towards the village and west towards the road. In an original full-house design (e.g. Fig. 4) this room would have spanned the whole south elevation, more than 17 feet wide and 25 feet long (5.35m x 7.96m), heated by the large fireplace at the back of the house, and would have had no fewer than six tall windows. Evidence for this is in Shell House today. With such beautiful seventeenth-century proportions we might expect an ornate plasterwork ceiling, but there is none. This could be because of changes during its 330-year history. The ceilings brought

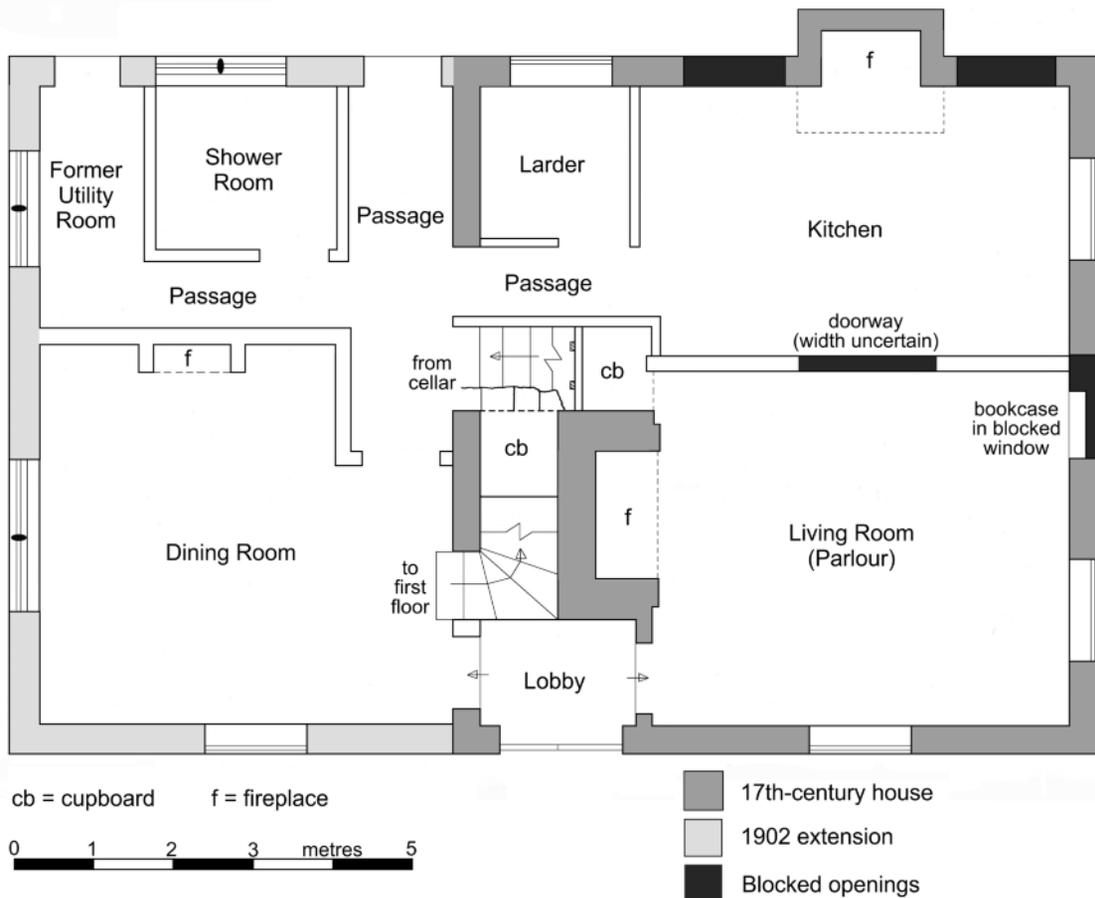


FIGURE 9 The ground-floor plan of Shell House as it is today; the 17th-century building is to the right, with the 1902 extension on the left

down by the World War II bomb were not of ornate plasterwork,<sup>10</sup> but the house lost status and was in multiple occupancy during the nineteenth century, which would have brought changes. To analyse the original building of Shell House we must filter out later changes. Plasterwork aside, it is notable that the internal woodwork at Shell House – doorcases and window frames – is of plain mouldings, without any carving or other decoration. The lack of decorative woodwork is clearly original.

In the corner of the parlour furthest from the door (Fig. 9) is a curiously narrow bookcase that has been built into the alcove left by a blocked-up window, evidence that what might have been a ‘Grand Parlour’ has been divided. An internal wall separates the now smaller parlour or living room from what is today the kitchen, cutting across the central window of the south front and blocking it. At its other end this wall obstructs access to a cupboard.

The evidence that the division of the ground floor is original lies in the massive brick chimney stack whose side-view is visible in the entrance lobby, compressing what might have been a spacious hall. This chimney serves the fireplace that heats the parlour, with a heavily moulded wooden surround of undoubtedly later date, and a brickwork fireback that has been replaced in the past 50 years. But chimney and fireplace were only necessary because of the dividing wall which cut the parlour off from the warmth of the rear chimney and its fireplace. It was clearly part of the original build, positioned internally, not on an outside wall. It rises from the cellar through three floors to the roof, serving four fireplaces. To insert it later would have required structural changes at every level, of which there is no sign. If the central chimney is original, so is the division of the room. Shell House never had a ‘Grand Parlour’.

This dividing wall is also curious in that a

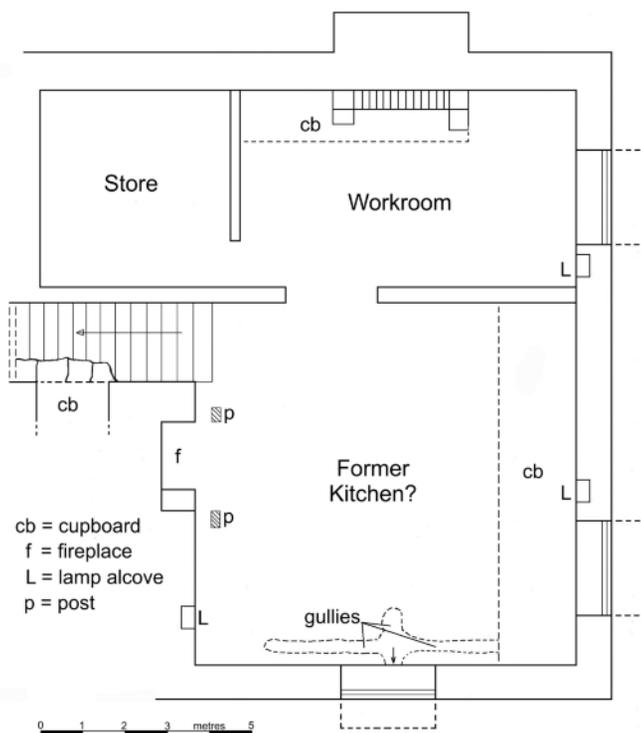


FIGURE 10 Cellar plan, Shell House

similar brick wall divides the cellar below (Fig. 10) and structurally it would make sense to build one wall immediately above the other. However the wall on the ground floor is 27 inches (700mm) closer to the front of the house than that in the cellar below, its curious position requiring the blocking-up of a window and obstruction of a cupboard.

Before considering this, however, the other ground floor and cellar rooms require attention. The dividing rear wall of the parlour once had a wide central doorway. This has long been blocked-up and today is papered over. Decoration work has revealed that the 900mm-wide opening was bridged by a heavy oak lintel,<sup>11</sup> suggesting that the doorway was original.

The room beyond this doorway is today the kitchen (Fig. 9), lit by a single, south-facing window and plainly decorated, but with one very interesting feature attached to the wall high above the fireplace opening, the upper section of an Elizabethan or Jacobean wooden ‘strapwork’ chimney-piece (Fig. 11). The strapwork style of decorative woodcarving was fashionable in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Examples include one bearing the arms of the Dukes of Norfolk in the London Charterhouse, and another from Albyns in Essex dating from the 1620s and preserved in the Geffrye Museum in Shoreditch, East London.<sup>12</sup>

Sadly the remaining section of the chimney-piece at Shell House, stripped of 400 years of accumulated paintwork, is in poor condition but would originally have stretched from floor to ceiling. Now only the top 2ft remains. Except for marks in the floor indicating the extent of its original hearth, all other signs of the former fireplace have been removed or plastered over. This remnant is enormously significant, since a strapwork chimney-

piece of this size was a high-status object. Predating the house by at least half a century, it must have been brought by Edward Penn from a previous dwelling, and would have been highly valued. Its presence here, and the now-blocked wide doorway from the parlour, suggest that the current kitchen would have been the seventeenth-century dining room. The presence of such an unusual object at Shell House deepens the high-status/low-status contradiction of the building because, apart from this survival from the age of Elizabeth I, the room shows no signs of any other decoration.

The partition walls of the larder and kitchen passage are of narrow tongue-and-groove boarding, probably put up in the early twentieth-century, and show no earlier features. The rest of the ground floor was added in 1902 when the house was extended and the staircase between the ground and first floors rebuilt.

On the other hand the cellar (Figs 10 & 12) is part of the original house. Although today used mainly for storage, this was the main working area of the seventeenth-century house and was in habitable use for a long time, with little alteration beyond the insertion of wooden partitions. Its unplastered brick walls, exposed joists and floors of old worn brick are low-status; its large open fireplace with a heavy oak bressumer beam is cottage-style; its low room-height is sufficient for working but no more. This cellar area, of equal size with the higher-status rooms immediately above, was lit by the sunken window-shafts around its walls, their positions matching those of the tall, elegant windows on the floor above. By night a series of alcoves in the walls would have held tallow candles or oil lamps. There would also have been the flames of the open fire – for this was the seventeenth-century kitchen.



FIGURE 11 Part of the late 16th or early 17th-century strapwork chimney-piece in the kitchen at Shell House (Photo: Michael Rice)



FIGURE 12 The cellar fireplace and stairs (photo: Michael Rice)

In the worn brickwork of the floor are shallow gullies, leading to a drainage hole in the wall, to take away the slops. The brickwork of the open fireplace has over the years first been added to, then cut back. There is evidence of an earlier bread oven, while two oak posts at each corner were added to support the hearthstone of the room above after the house was shaken by the World War II bomb.<sup>13</sup>

That this cellar-kitchen fireplace was built into the central chimney stack below the parlour, rather than that at the rear, is another sign of changed plans. Examination of the rear chimney stack at cellar level reveals a plain brick arch on brick piers coming forward from the wall to support the dining-room hearth above. These piers have been extended at a later date by a further brick's length, perhaps to give extra support for an iron range when the dining room became a kitchen. This rear

chimney stack was never intended to include a fireplace at cellar level. In a larger fully symmetrical house there would have been no cellar fireplace because the kitchen would have been on the ground floor. When a change of plan required a cellar kitchen, its fireplace had to be provided elsewhere.

#### **Upstairs... The puzzle of the missing stairs**

This reconstruction of the seventeenth-century Shell House leaves the particular puzzle of how the three main rooms and four storeys of the house linked together and how food was carried from the cellar kitchen to the dining room. Where were the stairs between ground and first floors in the seventeenth century? Today, access both down to the cellar and up to the first floor is from the 1902 extension. In both places the original stairs have been removed or modified.

In the symmetrical Renaissance-style house that Shell House might have been, the main staircase would have risen from a spacious central hallway. This space did not exist in the half-house that Edward Penn built, so where was the main staircase? Today's ground-to-first-floor staircase opens off the 1902 dining room, turns left to cross behind the main parlour chimney, then turns right to reach the first-floor landing. Its woodwork dates it to 1902. But across the back of the chimney is a narrow brick shelf that was there to support first-floor joists, indicating that the staircase was not originally in this position. The seventeenth-century stairs between the first and second floors are still in place (Figs 13 & 14), but there is no grand staircase to match the high-status exterior of the house; rather a simple cottage-style 'winder'. Logically, the missing seventeenth-century staircase leading up from the ground floor should be immediately below the surviving winder stair between first and second floors. Such a matching flight would have risen from today's kitchen passage, turning through 180 degrees to reach the first-floor landing exactly where the 1902 stairs do today (Fig. 15).

Two other surviving features in the present house support this suggestion. Firstly, the dividing wall between the kitchen passage and the cellar steps is not brick, as might be expected, but a 90mm stud partition, matching the construction of the central partition in the surviving winder staircase on the floor above. Secondly, the upper flight of the 1902 staircase, where it joins the first-floor landing, is supported from below by the back of the cupboard in the north-east corner of the parlour (Fig. 9). Examination of the woodwork of this cupboard shows that it is original: its base is made from floorboards that match those of the seventeenth-century parlour; its back, which rises to support the underside of the stairs and is visible from the cellar steps, includes two old oak posts or studs, probably of seventeenth-century date. That the builders left this supporting structure intact in 1902 suggests that the upper flight of the present staircase is a surviving section of the original seventeenth-century winder – and exactly where we would expect it to be.

This evidence indicates that the original seventeenth-century house had a single winding staircase around a solid central partition rising through three floors, lit by windows in the north wall of the house, rather than an open-well staircase with



FIGURE 13 The 'winder' stairs between the first and second floors of Shell House (photo: Michael Rice)

carved newel posts and balusters matching the high-status Renaissance exterior of the house. This strengthens the high-status/low-status conundrum.<sup>14</sup> Its tapered steps show that it was intentionally built to fit a small space. In Edward Penn's half-house, space was at a premium.

#### **Downstairs... What about the servants?**

The cellar steps are probably still in their seventeenth-century position, to the right of the cellar-kitchen fireplace, an appropriate position for the period.<sup>15</sup> Of the eleven steps, the bottom seven are of equal height (165mm), and though the brick treads have been renewed at some point, they are an even flight. Above this point there is a jumble of brickwork of various sizes, materials and ages (Fig.

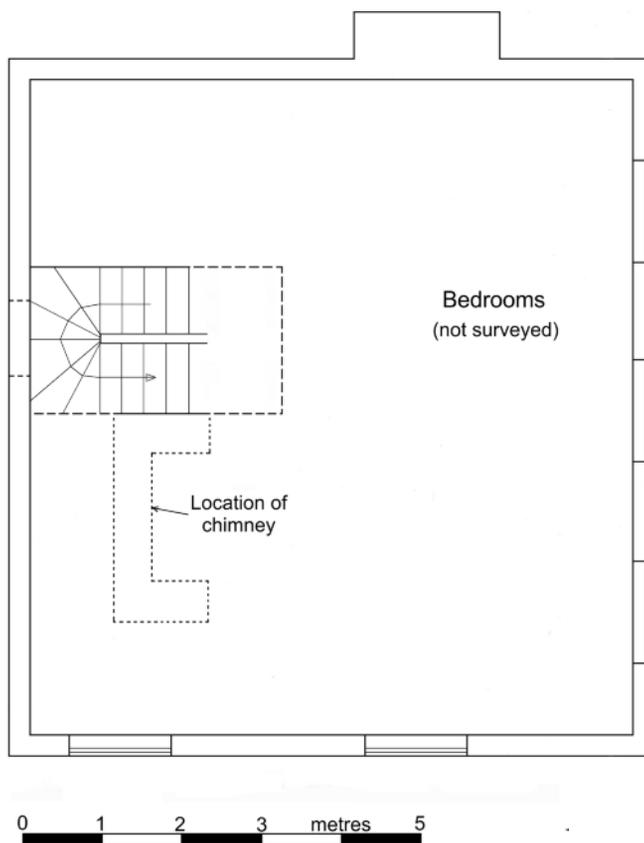


FIGURE 14 Plan showing the position of the staircase between the first and second floors

16). Three of the top four steps are 190mm high; the fourth, up to the passageway of 1902, is 170mm. To their left is a cupboard which since 1902 has been under the main stairs; in front of it is an uneven series of uncoordinated brick ledges, overlapping the top four steps. This jumble of brickwork is difficult to interpret – but it suggests that these cellar steps have been altered, probably more than once.

Today this single straight flight opens into the 1902 passageway, but in the original seventeenth-century plan, this would have made them accessible only from outside the building, and while this is not impossible – separately built kitchens were common in medieval times<sup>16</sup> – by the seventeenth century an internal access route was more likely. Edward Penn’s servants based in the cellar-kitchen

would need access to three areas in their work: to the front door to receive visitors; to the dining room and parlour to wait on the family and guests; and to the stairs to service the bedrooms and other upper rooms. How was this achieved within the reduced space of Edward Penn’s half-house?

Two pieces of evidence may help tease out a solution. First, the inserted central chimney stack did not take up all the space that might have been a wide hallway. Today the area behind this chimney stack is filled by the 1902 staircase, but in the seventeenth century there would have been space for a narrow passage running from the entrance lobby towards the back of the house. A short flight of steps would be all that was needed to connect this passage to the cellar steps, and hence to the kitchen (Fig. 17). This passage would have given

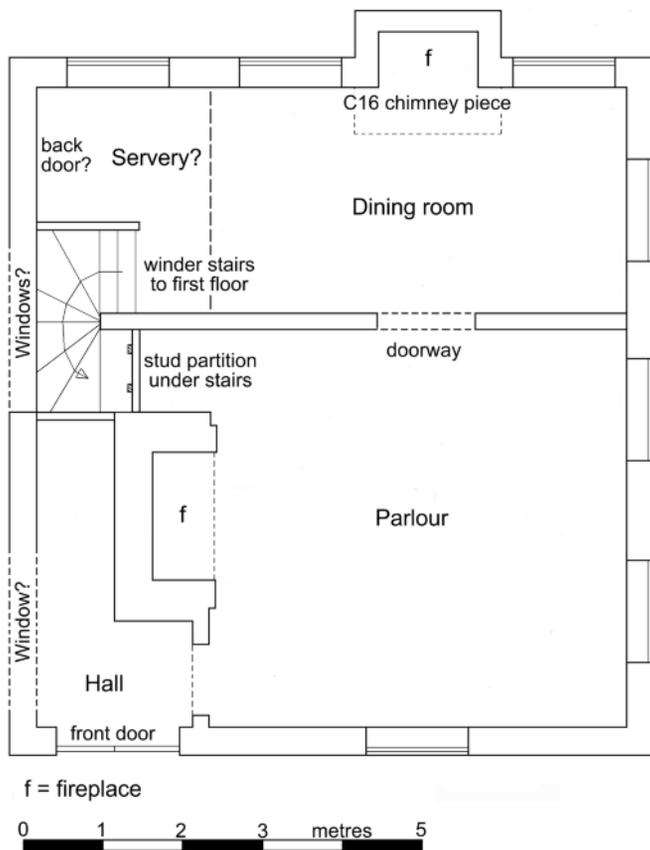


FIGURE 15 Deduced plan of original stairs to first floor

the servants access to the whole of the house, passing through the parlour to reach the dining room and stairs. In a medieval house this was entirely acceptable, but by the late seventeenth-century it was increasingly considered intrusive upon the family's private space in the parlour.

A second short flight of steps turning to the right from the cellar towards the back of the house might have avoided this, but the survey showed that the original brickwork on that side of the cellar steps remained undisturbed, and the seventeenth-century winder staircase would have been in the way. A second piece of evidence is the Hedgerley Tithe Map of 1842 which shows an outline of Shell House with a small extension on its northern side (Fig. 18)<sup>17</sup> that was still there in 1901, on the plan attached to a Deed of Sale (Fig. 19).<sup>18</sup>

Today the area is occupied by the larger 1902

extension. The most logical explanation of the extension on the 1842 Tithe Map is that it was a covered way between the head of the cellar steps and the back of the house, resolving that awkward route through the parlour (Fig. 20) and also explaining the surviving section of hollow wooden floor at the head of the cellar steps. An anomaly in the 1902 extension supports this deduction. The passage from the new 1902 dining room to the rear of the house does not start in the corner of the room but instead opens from a door part-way between the foot of the stairs and the cellar steps, at a point aligned with no other feature (Fig. 9). This odd position suggests that the 1902 plan was influenced by an earlier structure, such as the small extension shown on the 1842 Tithe Map. This small side extension was added before 1842, but was it there originally? The jumbled brickwork at the head of



FIGURE 16 The cellar steps with, on the left, the curious jumble of brickwork (photo: Michael Rice)

the cellar steps seems too complex to be the result of a single change in 1902. This brickwork is difficult to interpret, but seems to indicate that the small side extension was not part of the original building, but was added later to improve access between the cellar-kitchen and the rest of the house.

#### **Planned asymmetry or a compromise?**

The evidence revealed by our survey helps us evaluate whether Edward Penn chose an asymmetrical design from the start, or adapted a larger symmetrical plan, and at what point the final design decision was made. High-status country houses such as Winslow Hall and South Littleton Manor always display a symmetrical front, but they had space to spare. Asymmetrical houses were built in the same style as Shell House in towns, and particularly London after the Great Fire of 1666, but as units in a terrace, where their individual asymmetry was

concealed within the symmetry of the terrace.<sup>19</sup> An asymmetrical plan for a town house in Edward Penn's chosen style would certainly have been available to him from the pattern books of London builders, but building such a house in the country was strange. No terraced house design could have included the impressive southern garden elevation of Shell House, facing the village with its original six tall windows, except in an urban house with a side garden.

The survey of Shell House reveals compromises in design which could not have resulted from a plan that was intentionally asymmetrical. Four of these stand out:

- The obstruction of the entrance hallway by the inserted chimney stack, reducing it to the status of a lobby;
- The odd position of the dividing wall between parlour and dining room, blocking a window and obstructing a cupboard;
- The clumsy truncation of the entrance elevation tight against one side of the front door;
- The unusual access to the cellar-kitchen, providing no easy internal route through to the dining room and the rest of the house.

These features, visible in the house today, are evidence that Edward Penn and his builders started from a larger symmetrical house design, but for some reason adapted it to fit the required accommodation into a smaller space.

At what point was this decision made? Our survey showed that the cellar section of the rear chimney stack must have been built *before* it was decided that the kitchen would be in the cellar – and would need a fireplace. If this interpretation is correct, then Edward Penn's decision to cut back the size of his house was made after the cellar section of this rear chimney stack – and therefore at least the foundations and cellar storey of the house – had been built.

#### **The original plan of the house**

The ground-floor plan that this evidence produces for Shell House soon after it was built in the late seventeenth century is shown in Fig. 21. The symmetrical and larger house plan (Fig. 4) has been intentionally reduced to produce the half-house that was built for Edward Penn. To get a workable dwelling from the larger plan required considerable

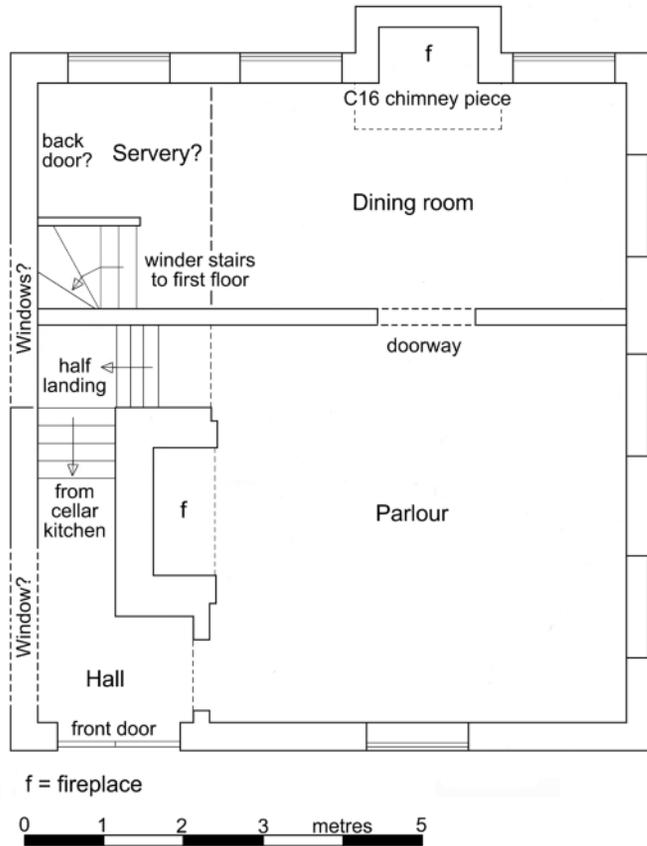


FIGURE 17 Deduced ground-floor plan showing original access passage and steps to the cellar-kitchen

adaptation. Services from the unbuilt northern half were shoehorned into a smaller space. An effort to retain the spaciousness of parlour and dining room was at the cost of severely restricting the hall and stairs.

Although the house was only built to a half-plan, money was spent on high-status proportions and decoration of the exterior, even ensuring that the inserted parlour chimney was panelled to match that at the rear of the house. Internally, funds were used more sparingly, with no decorative plasterwork in parlour or dining room while the only decorative woodwork was a chimneypiece brought from another house. The dividing wall between parlour and living room was perhaps oddly positioned – structurally incorrect, blocking a window

and obstructing a cupboard – to accommodate an oversized dining table and chairs from elsewhere.

These 'high-status' rooms are not mean – the parlour is 17ft by 14ft, the dining room 17ft by 11ft – but their high-status elements come either from their structural proportion or from furniture. Elsewhere in the house expense was sparing: the hall was reduced to a lobby; the staircase was a cottage-style winder; the working areas of the house were relegated to the cellar, with bare brickwork and open joists.

This suggests a story of ambition slighted, of Edward Penn planning a larger house with six grand windows facing the village to declare its status, a symmetrical entrance elevation facing the road to welcome visitors and, no doubt, the

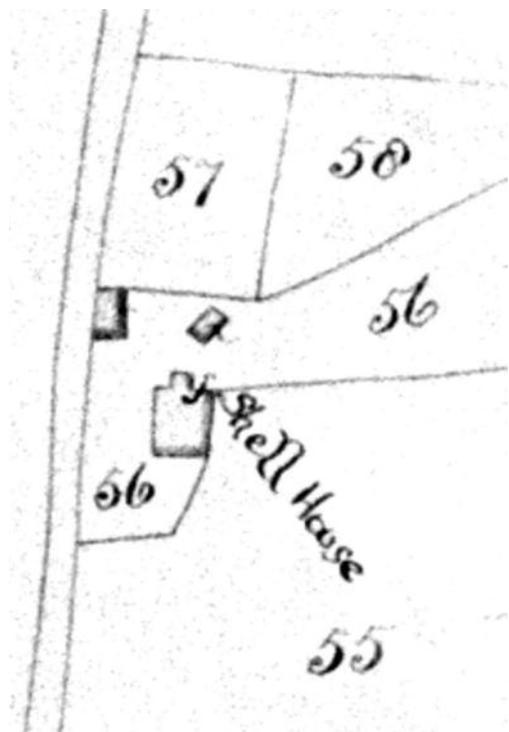


FIGURE 18 The outline of Shell House as it appears on the Hedgerley Tithe Map, 1842

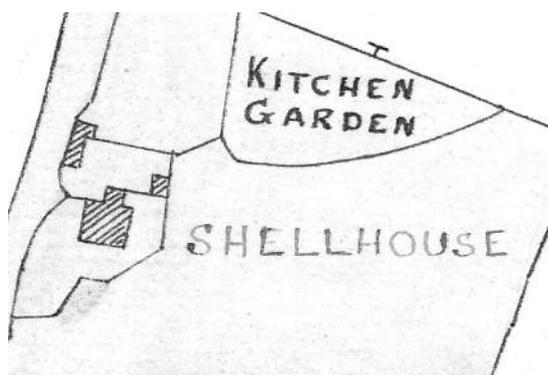


FIGURE 19 The outline of Shell House in the 1901 Deed of Sale

spacious internal arrangements and decorations to match this exterior. In changed circumstances a decision was made to build half the house – the important half, facing the village – maintaining its

high-status proportions, but to compromise on its interior. The space assigned for a ‘grand parlour’ was divided to provide a dining room, the kitchen relegated to the cellar, and a second chimney inserted to serve both these and upstairs bedrooms. Entrance lobby, stairs and cellar access were squeezed into the remaining space, and there was no money for decoration. Move in the old furniture and make do.

The evidence from Shell House today tells us what happened, but it does not tell us why. For that we must turn to Edward Penn and the history of the late seventeenth century. But first let us trace the history of Shell House over the past 300 years.

### 300 years of Shell House: Relating the survey to the documents

The physical and architectural survey helps show how Shell house in Hedgerley was constructed. Its subsequent history derives from documentary records of Hedgerley parish and of house ownership, mainly in the Buckinghamshire County Archives in Aylesbury. The account book kept by the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor shows that Edward Penn paid the first recorded poor rate for the house in 1679: it was 3d, three old pennies.<sup>20</sup> This money was spent to support the parish poor: the sick, aged, and unfortunate. In terms of average earnings this is equivalent to around £20 today.<sup>21</sup> Edward paid this 3d rate for the following two years: in 1682 the sum was increased to 4d, but it was paid by one Thomas Sexton. From 1683 Edward Penn paid this higher rate every year until 1708. Poor rates were assessed on a property and might be paid by the owner or occupier, or even by someone else on their behalf; an agent or lawyer for example, or the holder of an intervening lease. If an owner was not living in the property, payment was made by the tenant, or might be shared out among several tenants or sub-tenants.

Edward Penn was recorded as paying the poor rate for the house in 1679, but this does not necessarily mean he was living there. He is originally referred to as ‘Edward Penn of Great Missenden’, which is nine miles north of Hedgerley, but his son ‘Marmaduke Penne’ was baptised only two miles away in Fulmer Church on 3 August 1665.<sup>22</sup> Both these references most likely pre-date Edward’s arrival in Hedgerley, but he must have been living in the village before 1686, because in that year he was himself nominated to serve as Overseer of the

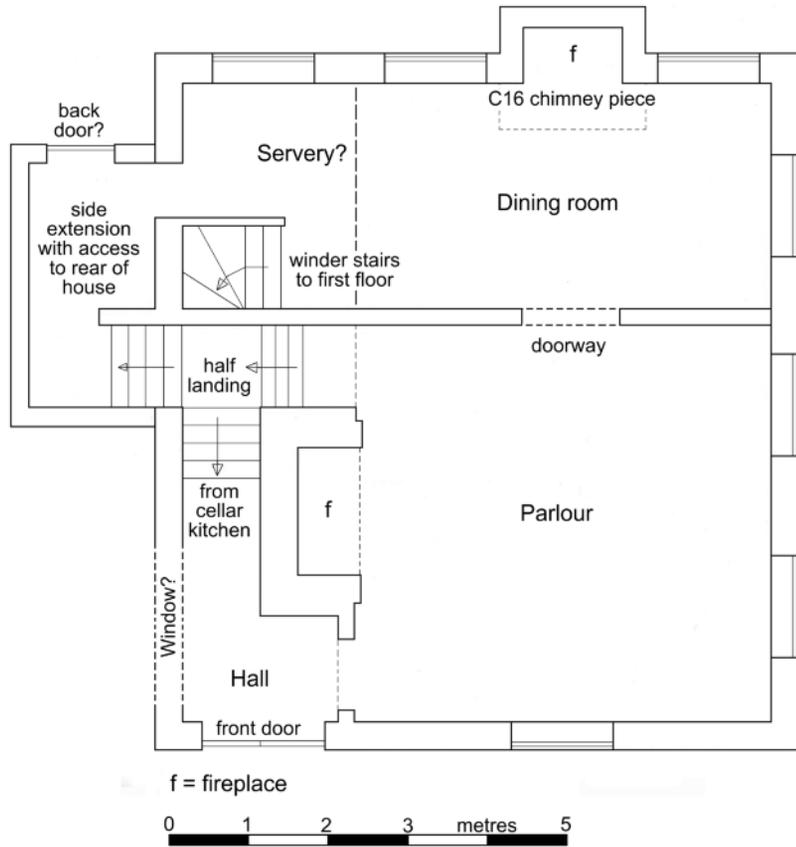


FIGURE 20 Deduced ground-floor plan after addition of a side extension to give more direct covered access between the cellar-kitchen and the dining room

Poor. The nomination in the Overseers' Account Book describes him as 'Edward Penn of this parish of Hedgerley'.<sup>23</sup>

In 1688, Edward and his wife Margaret are stated in court records to be in possession of the Manor of Brudenells, whose 'principal messuage' or manor house was Chalfont House in the neighbouring parish of Chalfont St Peter, three miles to the north-east.<sup>24</sup> However, their possession was disputed (to which we will return later), and Edward and his wife Margaret were in Hedgerley before 1694, when he was again nominated as Overseer of the Poor.<sup>25</sup>

Edward, despite the foray northwards to Chalfont House, considered himself resident at the house in Hedgerley. In an Indenture dated 28 September 1699 he described himself as 'Edward

Penn of Hedgerley', and transferred the property 'now in the possession and occupation of the said Edward Penn' for the sum of £150 'to Marmaduke Penn of Arborfield, son and heir apparent of the said Edward Penn Gent[leman]'. This indenture tells us something else new: that the property includes 'two closes of arable land' containing 5 acres in all.<sup>26</sup> Although ownership of the house has now passed to Marmaduke Penn, we can conclude that Edward and Margaret continued to live there, because Edward is still paying the poor rate in Hedgerley until 1708.<sup>27</sup>

Edward Penn probably died in 1708, for his son Marmaduke paid the Hedgerley poor rate the following year.<sup>28</sup> Margaret outlived her husband, for in 1709 she was witness to a Will in the neighbouring parish of Hedgerley Dean.<sup>29</sup> Marmaduke

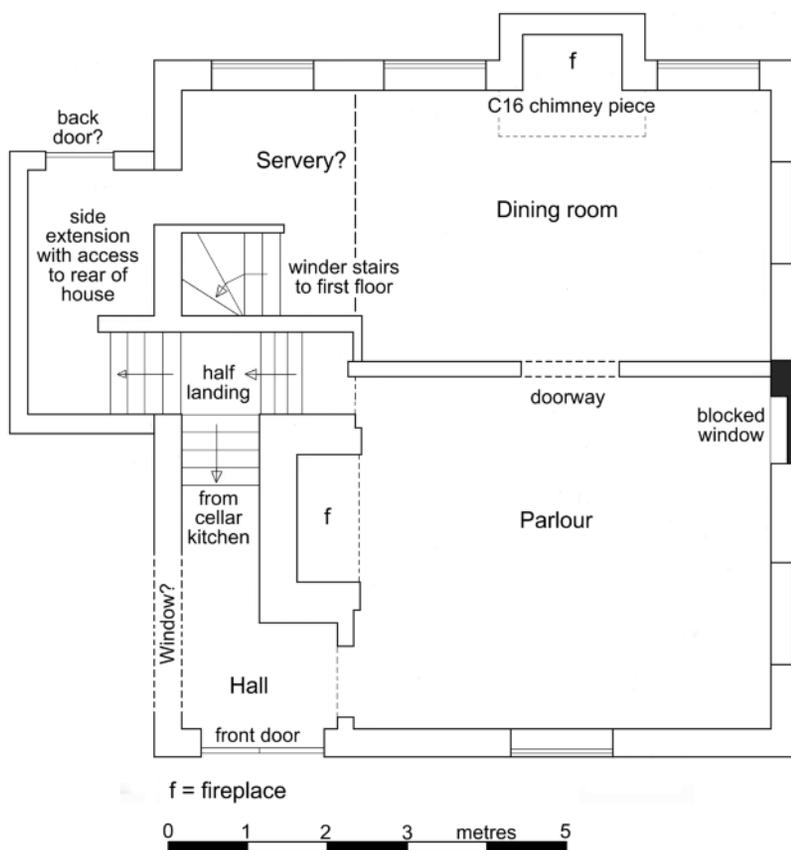


FIGURE 21 The ground-floor plan of Shell House after the puzzling removal of the dividing wall between Parlour and Dining Room 2ft to the west, impeding both a window (right) and cupboard (left)

Penn had been still living at home with his parents in the house in Hedgerley in 1692, for in the Easter Session of that year he was sworn in as a 'petty constable and tithingman' for the village.<sup>30</sup> By 1699, when his father transferred the house to him, he was living in Arborfield, a village 20 miles to the west, near Wokingham in Berkshire. The overseers' records tell us that he had moved back to Hedgerley by 1710, because that year he was nominated as an Overseer of the Poor. How long Marmaduke stayed in Hedgerley we do not know for certain. He paid the poor rate for the house only until 1718, when responsibility passed to Robert Bramley, who lived in the house in Hedgerley as a tenant for the next 40 years.<sup>31</sup> During that time Marmaduke lived elsewhere, using Shell House as a source of income. Other documents give a

glimpse of local financial dealings, showing that Marmaduke borrowed money secured on the house. A Mortgage Indenture dated 4 February 1717 transferred the house from Marmaduke to Elizabeth Turner, widow ('by the name of Elizabeth Grove, widow') for £50.<sup>32</sup> A second indenture dated 24 June 1728 transferred the mortgage to 'Susann Reddington, of New Windsor in the County of Berkshire, spinster', again for £50, but within two years she had died, and it was assigned 'by Henry Reddington ... to Ann Reddington, his sister, as executor for their mother Susann Reddington'.

The house is described in the Indenture as 'That message or tenement with the appurtenances wherein he the said Marmaduke Penn dwelt and now Robert Brambleby (sic) situate and being in

five acres more or less also lying and being in Hedgerley and then and now being in the possession of the said Robert Brambleby and all houses, outhouses, ways, waters, gardens, banksides, commons, advantages and appurtenances.' It has 'two closes of land'.<sup>33</sup> The document confirms that the house in Hedgerley was set in five acres, divided into two fields, and that Robert Bramley lived there. In 1742 it appears that Ann Redington was repaid by Robert Bramley, who then himself lent the same sum to Marmaduke on 29<sup>th</sup> September.<sup>34</sup> By this mortgage for £50 Marmaduke has signed the house over to his own tenant, Robert Bramley, now described as a 'Gardiner', in return for 'the yearly rent of one pepper corn at the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel'. The 1000-year term and peppercorn were another legal formality, because the document allows for the redemption of the mortgage by a payment of £51 5s 'on 25 March following'.<sup>35</sup>

From this we learn the important fact that Robert Bramley was a 'gardener', in other words a market gardener, and we know he had 'two closes' of around five acres. The market for the sale of fruit and vegetables to towns was well-established by this time. Beaconsfield and Windsor were growing in size, while London is accessible by 'the Oxford Road' to the north of the parish, or by water along the Thames, five miles to its south. Joan Thirsk, the historian of rural England, described how the house and its two fields would have looked at this time: 'The land required was small, and every foot was profitably used; fruit trees separated the beds of vegetables. The towns which devoured the produce readily supplied dung for the next season's crops. In short, horticulture was ideally suited to [small-holders] with little land, no capital, but plenty of family labour and easy access to a town. Four or five acres used in this way, declared John Houghton, would sometimes maintain a family better and employ more labourers than fifty acres of other land.'<sup>36</sup>

In London, 'Billingsgate remained the chief river port for landing vegetables for the City markets. Regular sailings left Queenhithe with manure for Maidenhead, Windsor, Chertsey and Kingston. Coming home the boats brought fruit and vegetables for the London markets. The hygienic conditions of such transport might well have been questioned, but serious observers such as Evelyn in his *Fumifugium* (1661) concentrated

more on the evils of coal dust from chimneys...'<sup>37</sup>

It is also worth noting that the house in Hedgerley is coming down in the world. We do not know how Edward Penn 'Gentleman' made his money, but only a reasonably wealthy man could afford a house of such style and proportion, even if he did eventually build only half of it and had to skimp on decoration. Its second owner too described himself as 'Marmaduke Penn, Gentleman'. But Robert Bramley the market gardener was clearly 'trade', with all the class distinctions that this carried in eighteenth-century England.

However, trade was doing better than gentility. Gentleman Marmaduke borrowed money against the house he owned from his tradesman tenant Robert Bramley, who was clearly prospering. The £50 he loaned to Marmaduke is equivalent to £77,420 today, substantial spare cash for a 'gardiner' with only five acres.<sup>38</sup>

Marmaduke Penn owned the house that his father had built for less than two more years, selling it on 15 June 1744 to 'Sir Nathaniel Curzon of Keddleston in the County of Derby' noting it was 'now or late in the occupation of Robert Bramley, his undertenants or assigns.'<sup>39</sup> Sir Nathaniel redeemed Bramley's mortgage on the house, paying him £52 5s, and also agreed to make a payment of £30 'yearly and every year during the natural life of the said Marmaduke Penn' in return 'for the absolute purchase' of the house 'after the death of the said Marmaduke Penn'.<sup>40</sup> Marmaduke Penn was by now 78 years old and the deal ensured his income in old age: a pension equivalent to just over £44,000 a year in today's values.<sup>41</sup> Marmaduke collected this pension for seven years, dying in October 1750 at Little Missenden,<sup>42</sup> so the total cost of the house and its five acres of ground to Sir Nathaniel was £262 5s, in today's values around £385,525.<sup>43</sup> For Sir Nathaniel, the purchase of the house in Hedgerley was a profitable investment: Robert Bramley, 'Gardiner', continued to live there, paying the parish poor rate until 1760.<sup>44</sup> Shell House brought rental income to the Curzon estate for 157 years.<sup>45</sup>

Sir Nathaniel and Marmaduke were probably related, and may have been cousins. Sir Nathaniel's grandfather, through his mother Sarah, was named William Penn,<sup>46</sup> and came from the village of Penn itself, six miles to the north-west of Hedgerley.<sup>47</sup> In Penn House, the seat of the Curzon family today, there is a seventeenth-century portrait whose other-

wise unnamed subject is described as ‘Father of Marmaduke Penn’, and is probably a portrait of Edward Penn of Shell House.<sup>48</sup>

In 1744 the deeds of the house were filed with other Curzon legal documents, later the estate of the Earls Howe, and survive today among the Howe Manuscripts in the Buckinghamshire County archive. But the house in Hedgerley now became just one property among many in the Curzon Estate list, a source of rental income or to raise larger sums on mortgage, but not singled out.<sup>49</sup> It was around 65 years old, and beginning to age.

It is time to return to the survey to see how and whether this was reflected in the construction. An examination of the house’s rear or eastern elevation shows that windows have been blocked up on each side of the original dining-room fireplace. These tall windows, matching those on the garden and entrance elevations of the house, would have been of good quality when put in. Only their deterioration would have justified the cost of having them blocked up. Indeed these two windows are something of a puzzle, another factor in the high-status/low-status conundrum of the house since these two windows were just feet away from the steeply rising hillside at the back of the house, where they had no view and would receive very little light.

It is likely that the original house plan came from a seventeenth-century builder’s ‘pattern book’ which took no account of local topography. The builder simply ‘built to plan’. The windows were certainly not blocked up when the house was built, because the moulded architrave of the remaining strapwork chimneypiece, high on the wall in today’s kitchen, was cut away at each end to fit between the windows.

Other upstairs windows have also been blocked in, and one can be dated because when opened up in 1972 it was ‘found to contain the original wooden frame which had been boarded over and plastered. Over the wood had been pasted an old journal and fragments of this adhering to the overlying plaster described two forthcoming eclipses of the sun over the Pacific. This dates the journal to 1799’.<sup>50</sup> That these windows were blocked was a sign that money was scarce, was not being spent on maintenance, and the tenant wished to avoid the recent imposition of a tax on windows. This further step down in the world for the house was confirmed in 1803, when the parish records

revealed that the property was in multiple occupancy,<sup>51</sup> though it is not clear whether the house or its land had been divided.

Under the Curzons, the farmer John Rangecroft took over the tenancy in 1784. In 1802 he paid the poor rate of £1 1s 0d (one guinea), but the following year his contribution was reduced to 12s 6d. The balance of the one guinea due was made up by James Wells, who paid 4s 6d, and Humphrey Williamson, who paid 4s 0d. These sub-tenants were most likely families, not individuals, for when James Wells disappeared from the record in 1806 Mrs Martha Wells, probably his widow, took over his 4s 6d payment. That year the name ‘Shell House’ appeared for the first time.<sup>52</sup>

John Rangecroft continued to hold the main tenancy, but other tenants came and went. Humphrey Williamson stayed only one year, Daniel Pond for five (1804–1809), Thomas Puzey appeared in 1810. It was a time of instability. Martha Wells’ entry for January 1811 reads ‘Mrs Wells for Shell House 4s 6d Not paid’, then in 1812 ‘Part of Shell House – Empty’, indicating that it was the house that was now shared, but she returned, paying 8s later in the year.<sup>53</sup> However, there is no sign that the house had been physically divided. There was no second staircase, for instance.

The 1841 Census shows seven people living at Shell House:

|                   |    |                                     |
|-------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| ‘John Raingecroft | 85 | farmer                              |
| Mary Crouch       | 55 |                                     |
| William Roper     | 8  |                                     |
| Harriet Roper     | 5  |                                     |
| Lucy Cork         | 60 |                                     |
| William Cork      | 25 | Agricultural labourer               |
| James Cork        | 15 | Agricultural labourer <sup>54</sup> |

How should we read this? The Cork family are relatively easy: a widow of 60 with her two sons. But the widely differing ages and surnames of the others tell a different story: Mary Crouch may well have been the housekeeper for the now aged John Rangecroft, but the children William and Harriet could have been his or her grandchildren, or orphans in their care. The age gaps tell us of a time when disease was more common, medical treatment less effective, early mortality all too likely, and ‘one-parent family’ was a reality frequently enforced by circumstance.

The Census also provides a glimpse of the domestic economy at Shell House. Even at the age of 85, John Rangecroft still described himself as a farmer. He had weathered the agricultural crisis by increasing his acreage: the Tithe map of that time shows that as well as the five acres around Shell House he farmed two fields running along Village Lane to the north, a total of 19 acres.<sup>55</sup> The two agricultural labourers in the house, William and James Cork, may have been his employees.

The women of the household may have contributed to its income. Set into the parlour floor, but now hidden, is an anchor point, perhaps for a loom or other domestic machinery, and the wooden boards of the floor are considerably worn.<sup>56</sup> This is difficult to date, but it certainly indicates a change in the room's use and status since the days of Edward Penn. His parlour had become a workshop.

There were other changes. The house had always had its own water supply taken from a spring higher up the steep hillside behind the house and directed into several cisterns, then through a filter to a well in the gravelled area on the north side of the house. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries water was carried from this well into the house in buckets. A more sophisticated system was added, probably in the late nineteenth century, which pumped water from the well to two iron tanks high up on the second floor of the house, in a cupboard off the north-east corner of the back bedroom. From there it could be piped around the house. A vertical wooden housing, still in place on the rear, eastern wall of the building, used to contain a level indicator, presumably so that the servants would know when to do some more pumping. By the mid-twentieth century the iron tanks were in poor condition and were removed.<sup>57</sup>

In November 1901 the Curzon Estate sold Shell House to Ellen Emily Stevenson, who then held the Hedgerley Park estate to the east of the village.<sup>58</sup> The purchase price, given in the 1910 Valuation Survey (colloquially known as 'Lloyd George's Domesday'), was £700. The house still had the five acres first recorded by Edward Penn in 1699, now described as an orchard, garden and grassland.<sup>59</sup>

Ellen Stevenson immediately spent £1,000 on extending the house.<sup>60</sup> Externally the style, proportion and size of the single-storey northern extension that she added indicate that her architects had themselves come to the conclusion that Edward Penn's seventeenth-century building was only 'half

a house'. Their ground-floor plan and west elevation for the new extension were designed to complete the symmetry that Shell House had been lacking for more than 200 years, with brickwork, windows, string course and rear chimney stack all built to match those of the original house, mirroring its seventeenth-century high-status style.

But the symmetry was not completed. The extension, unlike the seventeenth-century original, has no second storey. In its place an ornate, shaped gable in curved brickwork carries a masonry plaque proclaiming the date '1902'. By this gable the architects showed that they have dated the original building to the late seventeenth century, for that is when such gables were in fashion, part of the wave of popularity for things 'Dutch' or 'Flemish' after the accession of William of Orange to the English throne in 1688.<sup>61</sup>

Oddly, considering Edward Penn's failure 200 years earlier, the 1902 extension may not have been completed to its original plan. Examination of the north elevation of the house, above the 1902 extension, shows that the majority of its brickwork does not match that of the rest of the seventeenth-century house. This suggests that the whole of this wall was rebuilt at first-floor level in 1902, but if the plan was only single-storey, why was the rebuild to a higher level? Another clue is that the 8-inch ceiling joists of the 1902 extension are of heavier construction than necessary for the loft space of a single-storey building.<sup>62</sup> Given the professional architectural quality of the building, the joists' extra strength indicate that they were expected to carry a second storey. If this evidence is correct, then it is ironic that the house appears to have been left uncompleted twice.

The 1902 extension added a new dining room, new stairs with more convenient access, and rear boiler and utility rooms (Fig. 9). The north wall of the entrance lobby was knocked through, giving access across the front of the house. A new passage in place of the old winder stairs led through to the kitchen and another incorporated the cellar door. The date of all this work is confirmed by an engraved signature on a glazed panel above the door between dining room and passage, which reads 'J Rolfe, Beaconsfield 1903', the glazier who did the work.

The 1910 Valuation Survey actually surveyed Shell House in 18 December 1912, by which time it had changed hands again: the owner was Mrs M

N Norris, the tenant ‘Samuel Figgis Esq’. With a new extension, Shell House had come up in the world again: from Edward Penn ‘Gentleman’ to Samuel Figgis ‘Esquire’.

Since then the changes at Shell House have been minor. During the Second World War ‘a string of bombs was dropped across Slade Farm, one falling in the garden to the south of Shell House. This shattered many windows and brought down ceilings, but fortunately caused no major damage.’<sup>63</sup> A piece of shrapnel from the bomb is embedded in the wall above the front door.<sup>64</sup> During the twentieth century, repair and maintenance work has contributed to restoring and retaining the historic features of Shell House rather than changing them.

### ‘Meddle not in the affairs of kings’

A summary of the results of the survey of Shell House and the history of its ownership and occupation examined suggests:

- The original plan was to build Shell House as a larger, fully symmetrical, high-status house in the Renaissance style of the seventeenth century.
- Work was started on its foundations and cellar.
- A conscious decision was made to reduce this plan and the house was actually built to only half the originally planned size.
- Externally this house retained its high-status style and standard of construction, but internally compromises were made, sometimes with clumsy results.
- The size and decoration of the two high-status rooms, parlour and dining room, was reduced.
- The kitchen, stairs and other service areas were shoe-horned into whatever space was left.

This work does not tell us *why* Shell House was built in this way. Some clues lie in the story of the man who had the house built, Edward Penn, and his financial circumstances. Among the various legal documents in the Curzon Papers concerning Shell House is a three-page note headed: ‘This writing relates to Chalfont House: Edward Penn’.<sup>73</sup> (See Appendix C for a full transcript of this document. In the account that follows, plain line references refer to lines in this transcript) Although it is clearly a set of notes, the document is set out in semi-legal format and at one point is addressed to ‘Madam’ (line 78) so the document may originally have been written for Edward’s wife Margaret.

The document relates to a dispute ‘concerning Chalfont House’ between Edward Penn and the executors of ‘the late Lord Jeffreys’ which came to trial ‘at the Exchequer Barr 3 May 1695’ (lines 1-2). The note itself is undated but was clearly written some time after the event, because the writer appends the words ‘(as to what I can remember)’ to his first paragraph (line 2).

Edward Penn and Sir George Jeffreys were neighbours and fellow parishioners in Hedgerley. In 1679 Penn paid 3d poor rate while Jeffreys paid 1s 6d; six times as much, indicating the relative sizes of their properties.<sup>66</sup> Three years earlier, Jeffreys had bought ‘the ancestral home of the Bulstrode family, a large old house ... standing in the estate called Hedgerley Bulstrode or Hedgerley Park.’<sup>67</sup> It was the largest property in Hedgerley. The overseers’ accounts also chart the relative social status of the two men. Edward Penn, as a member of the local gentry, was a signatory to the accounts from 1684 onwards, but Sir George moved in much higher circles, described as ‘The Lord Jeffreys’ in 1686, then ‘My Lord Chancellor’ in 1688.<sup>68</sup>

George Jeffreys was a lawyer and rising star at the court of King Charles II, who used both influence and the profits of office to accumulate estates in and around Hedgerley. By 1676 he already owned Hedgerley Bulstrode and ‘the little house’ at Gerrards Cross, adding the estate of Fulmer Heath by marriage in 1679 and buying the Grange at Chalfont St Peter. In 1686 he also bought the manor of Temple Bulstrode, then called Grange House.<sup>69</sup> Finally in 1688 he was granted by King James II the manor of Brudenells in the parish of Chalfont St Peter, with its manor house of Chalfont House.<sup>70</sup> This last acquisition brought Jeffreys into immediate and direct conflict with Edward Penn because ‘in the same year [1688] Edward Penn and Margaret his wife are stated to have held the manor’ of Brudenells.<sup>71</sup>

The grant of 1688 brought to a head a dispute over Chalfont House and its manor that had been running for 13 years. Edward Penn’s notes chart its course, though it began 37 years earlier when Chalfont House and the manor of Brudenells were held by Mrs Frances Allen, widow of Sir Thomas Allen.<sup>72</sup> Brudenells was one of two manors in Chalfont St Peter, the neighbouring parish and village to the north of Hedgerley. Its manor house, Chalfont House, stood to the south of the village

above the banks of the river Misbourne in an estate that was still 400 acres in 1925, and is today a public park and golf course. With the manor would have come various rights and properties.

Edward's notes on Chalfont House state that in 1651 Frances Allen made a legal settlement 'by deed' granting Chalfont House and its manor 'to Mrs Sarah Penn', the mother of Edward Penn, reserving the property to herself and 'to such husband as she should marry' during their lifetimes. The deed also grants the house and manor 'to Mr Edward Penn in tayle remainder to Mr William Penn' (lines (5-9)).<sup>73</sup> To confirm this settlement Mrs Allen 'makes a lease to Mr W Penn and Mr Long for 100 years if she so long live': in other words, for her lifetime. Long before we find Edward's name in the Hedgerley overseers' accounts in 1679, Edward Penn was a man with expectations, the heir to an important estate in neighbouring Chalfont St Peter.

However, Frances Allen remarried and her new husband, Sir Dudley Rowse (or Rewse), was appointed as the king's 'Receiver of Royal Aid for the Treasurer of the Navy in the County of Oxford'. He collected the money, but neglected to pay it to the treasury and was eventually arrested owing the king £18,889. He was soon at liberty but died at Chalfont St Peter in 1675, still owing the king a large sum of money.<sup>74</sup>

Edward's notes play this down, saying simply that 'Sir D Rowse enters into two bonds to the king' (line 26). More important is that 'he [Rowse] and his wife die, she leaving no issue afterward' (line 27). Mrs Sarah Penn received her settlement of Brudenells and Chalfont House, and when she dies this passes to Edward (lines 28-9). But kings do not like to let large sums of their money disappear, and Charles II was certainly no exception. 'In 1683: By inquisition the estate is seized into the king's hands as the estate of Sir D Rowse. Mr Edward Penn enters into recognition and takes the profits and traverses [challenges] the inquisition' (lines 30-2). In the meantime, however, Charles grants the Manor of Brudenells 'and diverse land' to James Herbert 'to hold till the king's debt be paid' (lines 33-5). This does not mean that Edward and his wife Margaret were evicted from Chalfont House, because they were stated to have still 'held' the manor of Brudenells five years later in 1688.<sup>75</sup> However, Edward would certainly have lost the income from the manor, and James Herbert would

have required some payment in return for the house. By 1683, as we know, Edward was also paying poor rates for the property in Hedgerley.

But something else also happened in 1683. Among the deeds in the Curzon Papers is a 'Bill of Obligation' dated 17 March 1683 given by 'Sir George Jeffreys, Bart, to Edward Penn of Chalfont and Margaret his wife', by which Jeffreys agrees to pay £2,500 within 3 months in return for the conveyance of 'certain manors, lands and tenements with the appurtenances to the above' to Sir G Jeffreys. The document is signed 'Geo Jeffreys'.<sup>76</sup>

This confirms that Edward Penn was in legal possession of Chalfont House in 1683, and demonstrates that Jeffreys was still expanding his estates, and could pay well: £2,500 in 1683 is equivalent to just under £3.8 million in today's values.<sup>77</sup> The unnamed property in question is probably Chalfont House and the manor of Brudenells: the sum is too high for the Hedgerley house.

If George Jeffreys had paid Edward Penn the £2,500 it would have made him a wealthy man, but we do not know whether Jeffreys paid up. The document is a 'Bill of Obligation', not an indenture of sale, which would surely have been recorded in Edward Penn's 'notes', while any receipt would be among Jeffreys' papers. If the deal concerned the 'manors, lands and tenements' of Chalfont House and Brudenells, it would have fallen by the wayside when Brudenells was 'seized into the king's hands' later that same year of 1683.

But Edward Penn's 'notes' mention another agreement: that Jeffreys 'hath ... a mortgage of 1000 yeares from E Penn and his Executors' (lines 49-51). With his purchase stymied by the king's action, perhaps Jeffreys saw a mortgage of Edward Penn's interest as a useful 'foot in the door' in the meantime. Edward's notes give no value for the mortgage, but with the property seized by the king, Jeffreys would have paid nowhere near £2,500.

Jeffreys was a powerful and wealthy man, wielding considerable influence with the king. In August 1678 he had entertained King Charles II and the king's mistress Louise de Kerouaille at his mansion of Bulstrode in Hedgerley. Soon afterwards, Charles persuaded the aldermen of London to appoint Jeffreys as Recorder of London, against strong opposition. These were turbulent times for the monarchy, with 'bitter political conflict between the king's government and the Whig opposition ... whose prime objective was the exclusion of the

king's Catholic brother James from the succession' to the throne.<sup>78</sup> Jeffreys was a strong supporter of the king, and was richly rewarded for this.

When the aldermen eventually voted Jeffreys out as Recorder, Charles made him Lord Lieutenant of London instead. By 1683 he was not only Lord Chief Justice but also powerful locally 'in the king's interest' as High Steward of Wycombe and Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire. He was not a man to cross.

When Charles II died in 1685 and the Catholic James II became king, the Duke of Monmouth, the eldest illegitimate son of Charles II, landed at Lyme Regis in Dorset and declared himself king. He collected an army of around 3,000-4,000 men, captured Taunton, but was defeated by James' forces at Sedgemoor, with 1300 or more rebels killed and the same number captured, tried and many executed or transported and sold as labourers in the plantations. Monmouth was captured and executed.<sup>79</sup>

James II chose George Jeffreys to exact his revenge on the West Country, and this landowner from Hedgerley became the infamous 'Judge Jeffreys' who conducted the 'Bloody Assizes' at Winchester, Salisbury, Dorchester, Taunton and Wells. In Taunton, 144 men were hanged and their bodies displayed around the county so that people understood what happened to those who rebelled against the king. 'The country looks, as one passes, already like a shambles' wrote a loyal Tory from Taunton.<sup>80</sup> A shambles was a butcher's slaughterhouse.

Edward Penn had a different quarrel with the king, and used the courts to defend his possession of Brudenells and Chalfont House. 'Tempore James II. The cause came to tryall on a special verdict' (Notes on Chalfont House, lines 39-40). There were two points. The first was whether 'the deed' (presumably that of Frances Allen in favour of Sarah Penn) was or was not 'enrolled', meaning legally registered. 'The second whether Mr Penn ought to be relieved and should not have his *monstrance de droit*.' (lines 42-5). Edward was challenging the king's right to seize Brudenells, because a *monstrans de droit* is a petition by which a subject may recover property from the Crown. Sadly for Edward 'judgement was given against him on both points...' (line 46). This lost him Chalfont House and any income from the manor of Brudenells, as well as the considerable expense of such a case.

Jeffreys returned from his Bloody Assizes to be appointed Lord Chancellor by James, and became a leader of the king's inner cabinet. In 1688 James and his queen were entertained by Jeffreys at Bulstrode in Hedgerley,<sup>81</sup> and James granted him the manor of Brudenells with Chalfont House.<sup>82</sup> However, time was running out for them both. James' pro-Catholic policies had alienated too many of his former supporters. When his son-in-law, the Protestant William of Orange, landed at Torbay and marched towards London, James' armies disintegrated. He fled to France.<sup>83</sup> Jeffreys too tried to flee: 'He managed to board a ship at Wapping, but unfortunately he landed in order to have a last drink at a public house called the Red Cow and was captured and taken to the Tower of London'.<sup>84</sup> He died there of natural causes in April 1689.

This came too late for Edward Penn, for 'The late Lord Jeffreys hath a grant of the whole from King James and likewise a mortgage of 1000 years from E Penn and his executors ... being this ejectment in which a special verdict was found' (lines 49-52). With the accession of the new king, William III, Edward made a further attempt to recover Chalfont House, for the notes are headed 'In the tryall at the Exchequer Barr 3 May 1695 concerning Chalfont House'. At this trial the executors of 'the late Lord Jeffreys' based their case on 'the patents of title' by James II granting the property to George Jeffreys.<sup>85</sup> Edward's argument is that neither the deed granting the manor to his mother Sarah nor the lease that accompanied it were ever explicitly revoked by anything that followed, that this had been done before Sir Dudley Rowse 'entered into the king's bonds', and that with 'no assignment of [Sir Dudley Rowse's] bonds or debt' to the manor of Brudenells it should not have been seized into the king's hands (lines 64 and following). He also sought to invalidate the king's grants because of a confusion of parishes: they name Chalfont St Giles, though some lands are in Iver and Chalfont House itself is in Chalfont St Peter (lines 34-5, 60-1 and 72-5).

Whatever his arguments, however, in practice Edward was asking King William, through the Court of the Exchequer, to overturn the actions of his predecessor (and father-in-law) King James. The document concludes: '...but this deed being for natural love's affection, the court would not admit it to be set against the king's title' (lines 89-92).

### **How did Edward Penn's story affect the construction of Shell House?**

Two patterns in this chain of events are important: Edward's places of residence and the state of his finances. Edward was paying poor rate for his property in Hedgerley in 1679, but it is not clear where he was actually living. The note of Edward's challenge suggests that he and his wife Margaret were at Chalfont House before it was 'seized into the king's hands' in 1683, but in the following year he signed the Hedgerley overseers' accounts, and he was described as 'Edward Penn of this parish of Hedgerley' when nominated as an overseer himself in 1686. He and Margaret may have been in possession of Chalfont House in 1688, but were probably not living there. After that they almost certainly lived in the house in Hedgerley, because Edward, in his deed of transfer to his son Marmaduke in 1699, described himself as 'Edward Penn of Hedgerley'.

What of his finances? He might have become very well off in 1683, because he held 'manors, lands and tenements' that George Jeffreys considered to be worth £2,500. But it seems unlikely that Edward ever received this money, and that year the manor of Brudenells was seized by the king, Charles II, and granted to James Herbert. Both Edward's income and his financial credibility would have been seriously affected. The mortgage from Jeffreys would have given him some funds, but nowhere near the sum he would have expected from the intended sale.

During the reign of James II, Edward lost his claim at court, and his legal costs would have been high. In 1688 the king's direct grant of Brudenells to Jeffreys would have robbed Edward of any remaining income from the estate. Finally, in 1695 Edward lost another case in the Court of the Exchequer; where we can only guess at what the legal fees were. So Edward's finances first ran into trouble in 1683, with further hits in 1688 and 1695.

Putting these pieces together, it seems likely that Edward Penn planned his large, fashionably symmetrical manor house in the Renaissance style during his years of prosperity. The plan was perhaps originally intended as a replacement for the medieval building of Chalfont House in the Misbourne valley, where its eastern windows would not have faced a steep hillside. As Edward became aware of the king's interest in Brudenells and Chalfont House, the building site was switched to his other property in Hedgerley.

To summarise this hypothesis, the foundations for the house were laid in Hedgerley. When Edward's income was cut heavily in 1683 the floor plan of the house was reduced and the service areas of the house had to be shoe-horned in at minimum cost. There was no money for decoration. Did the highest-status object in the house – the Elizabethan or Jacobean strapwork chimneypiece – come from Chalfont House with Edward and Margaret when they were forced to move out?

One figure in the records may confirm this chain of events. The Hedgerley overseers' account book shows that Edward Penn paid the poor rate for the house in Hedgerley from 1679 to 1681. In 1682, the rate was paid by 'Thomas Sexton' and rose from 3d to 4d, though it remained unchanged for the other properties in the parish. Work on Edward Penn's property, in the judgement of the parish overseers, had increased its rateable value.

This may indicate that building work started on Edward Penn's new house in 1682, with Thomas Sexton as his builder. With work on an expensive new house in progress, and £2,500 expected from George Jeffreys to pay for it, all must have seemed set fair for Edward Penn. But in 1683, with the sale to Jeffreys uncompleted and the house part-built, the king seized the manor of Brudenells and Chalfont House. The result was the half-house that the survey has revealed at Shell House today.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is indebted to the following:

- In particular to Donald Vincent, for his knowledge of Hedgerley and Shell House, which have made a considerable contribution to this article, for his well-informed stewardship of the house, and his hospitality during our survey;
- to Michael Rice, for his photographs and his knowledge of the history of Hedgerley;
- to Honor Lewington, for help with transcription of Edward Penn's Notes on Chalfont House;
- finally to Hilary Stainer, Andrew Muir and Marian Miller for their part in the survey and documentary research.
- to John Broad for his helpful editorial suggestions and to Bob Zeepvat for digitising the drawings;

All drawings are by the author, unless otherwise acknowledged.

APPENDIX A: OCCUPIERS

The occupiers of the house can be traced from 1679 to 1825 in the account books of the Hedgerley Parish Overseers of the Poor<sup>86</sup> which show that rates for the support of the poor of the parish were paid by:

|                 |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Edward Penn     | 1679–1681                |
| Thomas Sexton   | 1682                     |
| Edward Penn     | 1683–1708                |
| Marmaduke Penn  | 1709–1718                |
| Robert Bramley  | 1719–1760                |
| John Shenton    | 1760(?)–1772             |
| (Thomas Reading | 1773–1779)               |
| (‘The Parsnidge | 1780–1781) <sup>87</sup> |
| John Harrington | 1782–1783                |
| John Rangecroft | 1784–1847                |

The overseers’ accounts end in 1825, but the 1841 Census shows ‘John Raingecroft’ still living at ‘Shell Farm’ and he was most likely still there when he died in 1847 at the age of 92. During John Rangecroft’s tenure parts of the house were sub-let and occupied by:<sup>88</sup>

|                     |           |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Humphrey Williamson | 1803      |
| James Wells         | 1803–1805 |
| Daniel Pond         | 1804–1809 |
| Martha Wells        | 1806–1812 |
| Thomas Puzey        | 1810      |

In 1811, however, Martha Wells’ entry in the overseers’ book is marked ‘Not Paid’. The first entry of 1812 then reads ‘Part of Shell House – Empty’ before Martha Wells reappears later in the year.<sup>89</sup> The 1841 Census shows ‘Shell Farm’ occupied by:<sup>90</sup>

|                  |    |                       |
|------------------|----|-----------------------|
| John Raingecroft | 85 | farmer                |
| Mary Crouch      | 55 |                       |
| William Roper    | 8  |                       |
| Harriet Roper    | 5  |                       |
| Lucy Cork        | 60 |                       |
| William Cork     | 25 | Agricultural Labourer |
| James Cork       | 15 | Agricultural Labourer |

After John Rangecroft’s death the house was occupied on the following dates by:<sup>91</sup>

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| William Morrison Finlayson              | 1854, 1864 and 1869 |
| George Mills                            | 1877–1895           |
| Charlotte Goddard                       | 1901                |
| Hugh Latham                             | 1903–1906           |
| Ina Beatrice Latham (widow to Hugh)     | 1909                |
| Samuel Figgis                           | 1911, 1915 and 1920 |
| J Evelyn Clark                          | 1924                |
| Major Arthur Wilberforce                |                     |
| (great-grandson of William Wilberforce) | 1928                |
| Nigel Law                               | 1931                |
| Christopher Childs                      | 1935                |

|                       |               |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Eva Childs, widow     | 1936 and 1938 |
| John S Miller         | 1939          |
| Mr Robertson          | 1941–1944     |
| Dr John Hosking       | 1944–1945     |
| Dr A Helen Hosking    | 1946–1955     |
| Donald Vincent        | 1947–         |
| (current owner, 2010) |               |

## APPENDIX B: OWNERS

The ownership of Shell House up to 1901 can be traced through documents held in the Buckinghamshire County Archive<sup>92</sup> and by Donald Vincent, its current owner:<sup>93</sup>

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Edward Penn   | ?1679–1699 |
| Marmaduke Penn  | 1699–1744  |
| Sir Nathaniel Curzon, 4th baronet<br>(then the Curzon Estate) | 1744–1901  |
| Ellen Emily Stevenson<br>(then the Hedgerley Park Estate)     | 1901–1956  |
| Donald Vincent  | 1956–      |

## APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIPT OF EDWARD PENN'S NOTES ON CHALFONT HOUSE

Bucks MS AR94/80/1122

[1r]

[*Written on the outside fold*]

This writing relates to Chalfont house

---

Edw. Penn

[1v]

1. In the tryall at y<sup>e</sup> Exchequer Barr 3<sup>o</sup> May 1695 Concerning
2. Chalfont House Etc (As to what I remember) y<sup>e</sup> case was
3. Ejectm[en]t: 3 demises, y<sup>e</sup> first from y<sup>e</sup> late L[or]d Jefferies Executors
4. The plaintiffs [*interlined*] \first/ lesso[r's] title
5. 1651 M[istres]s Frances Allen widd[ow], by deed and fine, limits the p[re]misses
6. . . to herselfe for her life, rem[ainder] to such husband as she should
7. . . marry for his life, rem[ainder] to her issue, rem[ainder] to M[istres]s Sarah
8. . . Penn for her life, rem[ainder] to Mr Edward Penn in Tayle
9. . . rem[ainder] to Mr William Penn in fee with a power for her,
10. . . whilst sole by any writing w[ith] 3 witnesses, to
11. . . revoke & limitt other uses & w[ith] another power
12. . . during her Coverture to revoke y<sup>e</sup> estate limited to
13. . . her husband & afterwards
14. 1651 she being still sole makes a lease to Mr W Penn & Mr
15. . . Long for 100 years if she soe long live upon trusts
16. . . & afterwards
17. 1651 she being sole by a deed grants etc. y<sup>e</sup> p[re]misses
18. . . to other p[er]sons (not named in y<sup>e</sup> lease for 100 yeares)
19. . . in f<sup>o</sup>ee but noe liverye inrollm[en]t or attornem[en]t on

- 20.. this deed but both these last deeds were signed and  
 21.. sealed in p[re]sence of 3 witnesses as y<sup>e</sup> p[ro]visoe of  
 22.. revocacion directed, & after  
 23.. She marries S[ir] D Rouse & he & she levy two fines  
 24.. & make severall Conveyances of the p[re]misses & in  
 25.. one y<sup>e</sup> fee simple is limited to S[ir] D Rouse  
 26.. S[ir] D Rouse entred into 2 bonds to y<sup>e</sup> king & he & his  
 27.. wife dye she leaving noe issue & afterwards  
 28.. Mrs Sarah Penn enters and enjoys to her death &  
 29.. after, Mr Ed[ward] Penn enters & about  
 30. 1683 by inquisicion y<sup>e</sup> estate is seized into y<sup>e</sup> king's hands as the  
 31.. estate of S[ir] D Rouse. Mr E Penn enters into recogn[izance]  
 32.. & takes y<sup>e</sup> profitts & traverses y<sup>e</sup> inquisicion  
 33.. y<sup>e</sup> King Ch[arles] y<sup>e</sup> 2<sup>d</sup> gr[an]ts to James Herbert Esq[ui]re y<sup>e</sup> Man[or]s  
 34.. of Brudenells & divers lands &c naming them in y<sup>e</sup>  
 35.. parish of Chalfont St Giles (to hold till y<sup>e</sup> king's  
 36.. debt be paid) (But y<sup>e</sup> bonds are not assigned) & ~~but~~ y<sup>e</sup>  
 37.. parish of Iver in (wh[ich] are divers lands, butt parcell of y<sup>e</sup>  
 38.. manor of Brudenelles is not named  
 [2r]  
 39. Tempore Ja[mes] 2<sup>di</sup>  
 40.. y<sup>e</sup> cause came to tryall & on a speciall verdict  
 41.. there were two points y<sup>e</sup>  
 42. First was whether y<sup>e</sup> deed on w[hich] was noe attornement  
 43.. livery or inrollment amounted to a revocacion y<sup>e</sup>  
 44. 2<sup>d</sup> whether Mr Penn ought to be relieved & should  
 45.. have not had his 'monstrance de droit'  
 46.. Judgem[en]t was given ag[ains]t him on both points by  
 47.. Sirs Milton Heath & Jenner but Sir E Atkins  
 48.. on y<sup>e</sup> first point was for Mr Penn.  
 49.. y<sup>e</sup> late Lord Jefferies hath a grant of y<sup>e</sup> whole  
 50.. from king James & likewise a mortgage of 1000  
 51.. yeares from E Penn & his Executors being this  
 52.. Ejectment in w[hich] a speciall [*interlined*] \verdict/ was found & in it  
 53.. are found  
 54.. y<sup>e</sup> deed w[ith] y<sup>e</sup> powers of revocacion p[ro]ut [?prout]  
 55.. y<sup>e</sup> other deeds in 1651 [*interlined*] \but noe livery &c/ & y<sup>e</sup> other deeds & fines after  
 56.. Frances Allens Coverture [?prout]  
 57.. y<sup>e</sup> death of Sir D Rouse & of Frances w[ith]out issue  
 58.. & of Sarah Penn & the life of E Penn & him to be  
 59.. y<sup>e</sup> same person y<sup>e</sup> extent & both grants y<sup>e</sup> will of y<sup>e</sup>  
 60.. L[ord] Jefferies, and y<sup>e</sup> mortgage & that Iver & Chalfont  
 61.. are distinct parishes [*interlined*] \but y<sup>e</sup> lands in Iver be parcell of y<sup>e</sup> Manor/  
 & that Sarah Penn to her  
 62.. death & after E Penn took y<sup>e</sup> profits &c soe y<sup>t</sup> now  
 63.. there wilbe 2 or 3 points  
 64.. whether y<sup>e</sup> first uses be revoked (as to y<sup>e</sup> lease for 100  
 65.. yeares if she soe long lived y<sup>e</sup> Court hold to be noe  
 66.. suspencion of her power butt [*interlined*] \as/ a revocacion 'pro tanto' &  
 67.. that she might revoke 'pro residue' & y<sup>e</sup> other deed  
 68.. hath noe expresse words of revocacion in it neither

- 69.. any livery &c another point wilbe, if the same be a  
 70.. revocacion, whether Mr Herberts grant be good in  
 71.. whole or in part, there is noe assignm[en]t of y<sup>e</sup> bonds or  
 72.. debt, butt if good as to y<sup>t</sup> whether y<sup>e</sup> lands in Iver  
 73.. pass<sup>t</sup> through y<sup>e</sup> same be parcel of y<sup>e</sup> Manors  
 [2v]  
 74.. which manor is well granted, butt then after is added  
 75.. within y<sup>e</sup> parish of Chalfont; the defendant did & will struggle  
 76.. to avoid y<sup>e</sup> ejectm[en]t as ill brought, y<sup>e</sup> estate having been seized  
 77.. into y<sup>e</sup> king's hands & noe amoveas manum  
 78. Madam  
 I never saw any of y<sup>e</sup> writings or briefs butt this  
 79.. being only what I observed att y<sup>e</sup> tryall possibly  
 80.. may be short & not give you full satisfacion & on[?e]  
 81.. was named as one lessor in regards of a morgage  
 82.. made by Sir D Rouse & his wife Frances in Consideracion  
 83.. of naturall love w[hich] they bore to Mr Edward Penn  
 84.. unto Mr Wm Penn, of y<sup>e</sup> lands in Iver to raise £100 [*interlined*] for Edward Penn/  
 85.. w[hich] was made before Sir D Rouse entred into y<sup>e</sup> king's  
 86.. bonds w[hich] mortgage Mr Penn assigned (but not on  
 87.. y<sup>e</sup> land to y<sup>e</sup> late L[ord] Jefferies) & you being Executor  
 88.. to Mr Wm Penn they used your name, butt this  
 89.. deed being fr[om?] naturall love & affeccion the Co[ur]t  
 90.. would not admitt it to be sett up against  
 91.. y<sup>e</sup> king's title.

## NOTES

1. Shell House, Hedgerley, is English Heritage Listed Building Number 1124399. See URL: [http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results\\_Single.aspx?uid=1124399&resourceID=5](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=1124399&resourceID=5)
2. Pamela Cunnington, *How Old is Your House?* (London 1988) pages 66–7.
3. See George Eland, 'The Building of Winslow Hall', in *Recs Bucks* 11.7 (1926), 406–9.
4. Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (1978), 88 (New Haven and London).
5. See, for instance, Edward Roberts *et al*, *Hampshire Houses 1250–1700* (2003), 175 & fig. 7.39.
6. The first known record of Shell House is an entry dated 1679 in the Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor (manuscript PR99/11/3 in the Buckinghamshire County Archive in Aylesbury – henceforth 'Bucks MS'). However there are two qualifications to this date: first that 1679 is the first entry in the book, so the house may have been built before that; secondly that the poor rate was payable on property, so Edward Penn's 1679 assessment may have been on the land alone or even on an earlier house on the same site. Core samples were taken from various original timbers in the house on 2 October for 2009 for dendrochronological analysis, but results were inconclusive due to a shortage of other local 17th-century core samples for comparison. As further local samples are taken, dendro-analysis may eventually yield a scientific building date for the house.
7. The survey was carried out by Marian Miller, Peter Marsden, Andrew Muir, Michael Rice and Hilary Stainer, backed by the knowledge of Shell House accumulated by Donald Vincent, who has lived there since 1947, purchasing the house in 1956. Copies of the survey notes and scale drawings have been deposited in the Library of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society in Aylesbury and with the Hedgerley Historical Society.
8. Donald Vincent, pers. comm. Donald made these repairs himself soon after moving into

- Shell House in 1947.
9. At Donald Vincent's request the survey was non-intrusive. Private bedrooms on the first and second floors were not viewed; there was no removal of panelling or floor boards, and no archaeological excavation.
  10. Donald Vincent, pers. comm.
  11. Donald Vincent, pers. comm.
  12. Donald Vincent, 'Shell House', in Michael Rice (ed.), *A South Buckinghamshire Village: The History of Hedgerley* (2006), 73 (Hedgerley Historical Society).
  13. Donald Vincent, pers. comm.
  14. See Cunnington 1988, 74, fig. 15a.
  15. For types of staircase and their dates see Cunnington 1988, 80–2, and R W Brunskill, *Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture* (Revised edition, 1987), 120–1 (London).
  16. See Roberts *et al* 2003, 156. Though separately built kitchens were common in medieval times, they were rare in new-build houses by the late 17th century.
  17. Hedgerley Tithe Map of 1842 (copy in the possession of Michael Rice).
  18. Deed of sale dated 5 December 1901, from the fourth Earl Howe to Ellen Emily Stevenson, held by Donald Vincent, the current owner of Shell House.
  19. See, for instance, the terrace of houses in Clapham pictured in Lionel Esher, *The Glory of the English House* (1991), 108 (London).
  20. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entry for 1679.
  21. All modern values given in this article were calculated using the historical values calculator on the 'Measuring Worth' website at URL: <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/>.
  22. Research by Donald Vincent, pers. comm.
  23. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entry for 1686.
  24. 'Parishes: Chalfont St Peter', *A History of the County of Buckingham* Victoria County History vol. 3, henceforth VCH Bucks 3 (1925), 193–198, para. 16. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42545>. VCH gives its sources for this in Footnote 64: Feet of Fines Buckinghamshire, Hilary Term 3 James II, and Recovery Rolls, Trinity Term 4 James II, membrane 201.
  25. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entry for 1694.
  26. Bucks MS AR94/80/1122, Indenture dated 28 September 1699. In terms of average earnings, £150 in 1699 was equivalent to around £250,000 today – but it should be noted that house valuations in the late 20th century far outstripped wages, and the transfer in this case was between father and son, not on the open market.
  27. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entries for 1699–1708.
  28. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entry for 1709.
  29. Research by Donald Vincent, personal communication.
  30. William le Hardy (editor) *County of Buckingham: Calendar to the Sessions Records, vol. 1: 1678–1694*, 420.
  31. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entry for 1719.
  32. In terms of average earnings, £50 in 1717 was equivalent to around £77,600 today, calculated via URL: <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/>.
  33. Bucks MS AR94/80/1122, Indenture dated 24 June 1728.
  34. *ibid.*
  35. Bucks MS AR94/80/1122, Agreement dated 29 September 1742.
  36. Joan Thirsk, *The Rural Economy of England* (1984), 199–200 (London).
  37. Rosemary Weinstein, 'London's Market Gardens in the Early Modern Period' in Mireille Galinou (ed.) *London's Pride: The Glorious History of the Capital's Gardens* (1990), 94 (London).
  38. Calculation via URL: <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/>.
  39. Bucks MS AR94/80/1122, Lease dated 15 June 1744.
  40. Bucks MS AR94/80/1122, Agreement dated 15 June 1744.
  41. In terms of average earnings, £30 in 1744 was equivalent to £44,102 today – calculated via URL: <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/>.

42. Bucks MS PR149/1/2, Little Missenden Parish Records, 'Buryings 1750': 'October 20 Mr Marmaduke Penn of Hedgerley in the County of Bucks'.
43. Seven years' pension at £30 per year, plus £52 5s to redeem Bramley's mortgage, making £262 5s. Modern equivalent of £385,525 calculated in terms of average earnings via URL: <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/>.
44. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entries for 1644–1660.
45. The Curzon Estate owned Shell House from 1744 until 1901: the deed of purchase is Bucks MS AR94/80/1122; that of sale is held by Donald Vincent, the current owner of Shell House.
46. Care should be taken here. This is not the famous William Penn who is credited as founder of Pennsylvania, nor his father, Admiral Sir William Penn. Penn has always been a common local surname in south Buckinghamshire because of the village, while William has long been popular as an English first name.
47. Arthur Collins, *Peerage of England* (1812 edition) vol. 7, 298–99 (London), quoting the monument in the church at Kedleston in Derbyshire where Sarah is buried.
48. Donald Vincent, pers. comm. from correspondence with the present Earl Howe in 2010.
49. See for instance Bucks MS AR94/80/8, an 1852 mortgage of the Curzon Estate where the entry for Hedgerley mentions the fields of the Shell House property but not the house itself.
50. Vincent in Rice (2006), 72.
51. A full list of known occupiers is given in Appendix A, and owners in Appendix B.
52. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entries for 1784, 1802–3 and 1806.
53. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entries for 1811–1812.
54. 1841 Census quoted by Vincent (2006), 73.
55. *ibid.*
56. Donald Vincent, pers. comm.
57. Donald Vincent, pers. comm.
58. Deed of sale dated 5 December 1901, from the fourth Earl Howe to Ellen Emily Stevenson, held by Donald Vincent, the current owner of Shell House.
59. 1910 Valuation Survey in the National Archives, Kew: Field Book IR58/76196. The £700 purchase price is equivalent to around £300,000 today, calculated by average earnings at URL: <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/>.
60. 1910 Valuation Survey in the National Archives, Kew: Field Book IR58/76196. The £1,000 cost of extending and refurbishing the house is equivalent to around £431,000 today, calculated by average earnings at URL: <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/>.
61. Philippa Lewis, *Details: A Guide to House Design in Britain* (2003), 340 & fig. 73 (London).
62. Donald Vincent, pers. comm.
63. Vincent in Rice (2006), 74.
64. Donald Vincent, pers. comm.
65. Bucks MS AR94/80/1122, Notes on Chalfont House. A full transcript is given in Appendix C. The events related in the following paragraphs are based on this manuscript, except where an alternative source is cited.
66. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entry for 1679.
67. Colin Le Messurier, 'Hedgerley's Most Notorious Resident', in Rice (2006), 61.
68. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entries for 1684–1688.
69. Messurier in Rice (2006), 63.
70. *VCH Bucks* 3, 193–198, para. 16. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42545>. VCH gives its source for this in Footnote 63: Patents 4 James II, part viii, membrane 17.
71. *VCH Bucks* 3, 193–198, para. 16. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42545>. VCH gives its source for this in Footnote 64: Feet of Fines Buckinghamshire, Hilary Term 3 James II, and Recovery Rolls, Trinity Term 4 James II, membrane 201.
72. *VCH Bucks* 3, 193–198, para. 16. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42545>. VCH gives its source for this in Footnote 60: Feet of Fines Buckinghamshire, Trinity Term 1651.
73. William Penn (lines 9, 14, 85 and 89) remains

- unidentified but, because the inheritance is entailed from Edward to William (lines 8-9), the most logical conclusion is that William was Edward's son. If so, William did not live to inherit – as seems to be implied by the words 'you being Executorx to Mr Wm Penn' (lines 88–9).
74. Edmonds, *A History of Chalfont St Peter and Gerrards Cross* (1968), 44 (This was a huge debt, equivalent today to £2.4 million by the retail prices index, nearly £30 million by average earnings calculations – see URL: <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/> ); VCH Bucks 3, 193–198. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42545>.
  75. VCH Bucks 3, 193–198, para. 16. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42545>.
  76. Bucks MS AR94/80/1122, Bill of Obligation dated 17 March 1783.
  77. Calculated in terms of average earnings via URL: <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/> .
  78. This account of Jeffreys rise to power is taken from Le Messurier in Rice (2006), 61–3.
  79. Paul Seaward, *The Restoration 1660–1688* (1991), 126–7 (London).
  80. Quoted in Maurice Ashley, *England in the Seventeenth Century*, 3rd ed. (1967), 169 (Harmondsworth).
  81. Le Messurier in Rice (2006), 63–4.
  82. VCH Bucks 3, 193–198, para. 16. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42545>.
  83. Seaward (1991), 138.
  84. A M Baker, *The History of Bulstrode* (2003), 119–120 (Gerrards Cross).
  85. Cited as Patents 4 James II, part viii, membrane 17 in VCH Bucks 3, 193–198, para. 16. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42545>.
  86. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entries for 1679–1825; also cited by Vincent in Rice (2006), 73–4.
  87. Thomas Reading the parson paid the poor rate for both the Parsonage and that built by Edward Penn, which was next-door. When Thomas Reading died in 1778, the next two years' payment of the poor rate was simply recorded as 'the Parsnidge' (Parsonage). There is no record of who was living at Edward Penn's house during the years 1773–1781.
  88. Vincent in Rice (2006), 73.
  89. Bucks MS PR99/11/3, Account Book of the Hedgerley Overseers of the Poor, entries for 1811–1812.
  90. Donald Vincent in Rice (2006), 73.
  91. *ibid.*
  92. Bucks MS AR94/80/1122, various documents.
  93. Deed of sale dated 5 December 1901, from the fourth Earl Howe to Ellen Emily Stevenson, held by Donald Vincent, the current owner of Shell House.