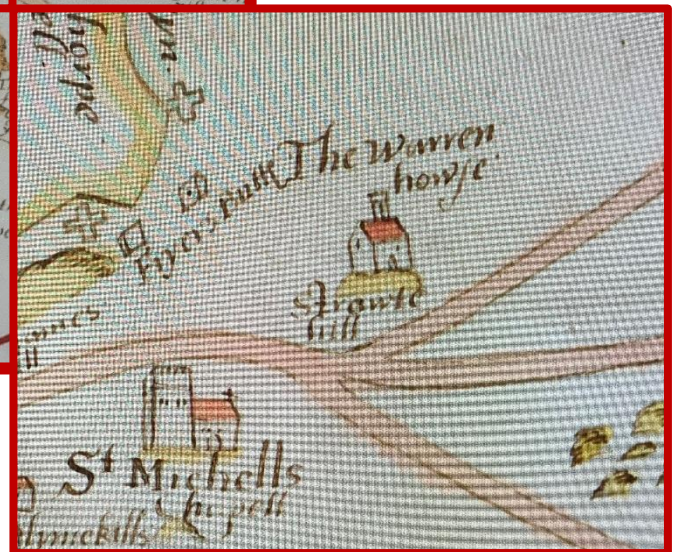
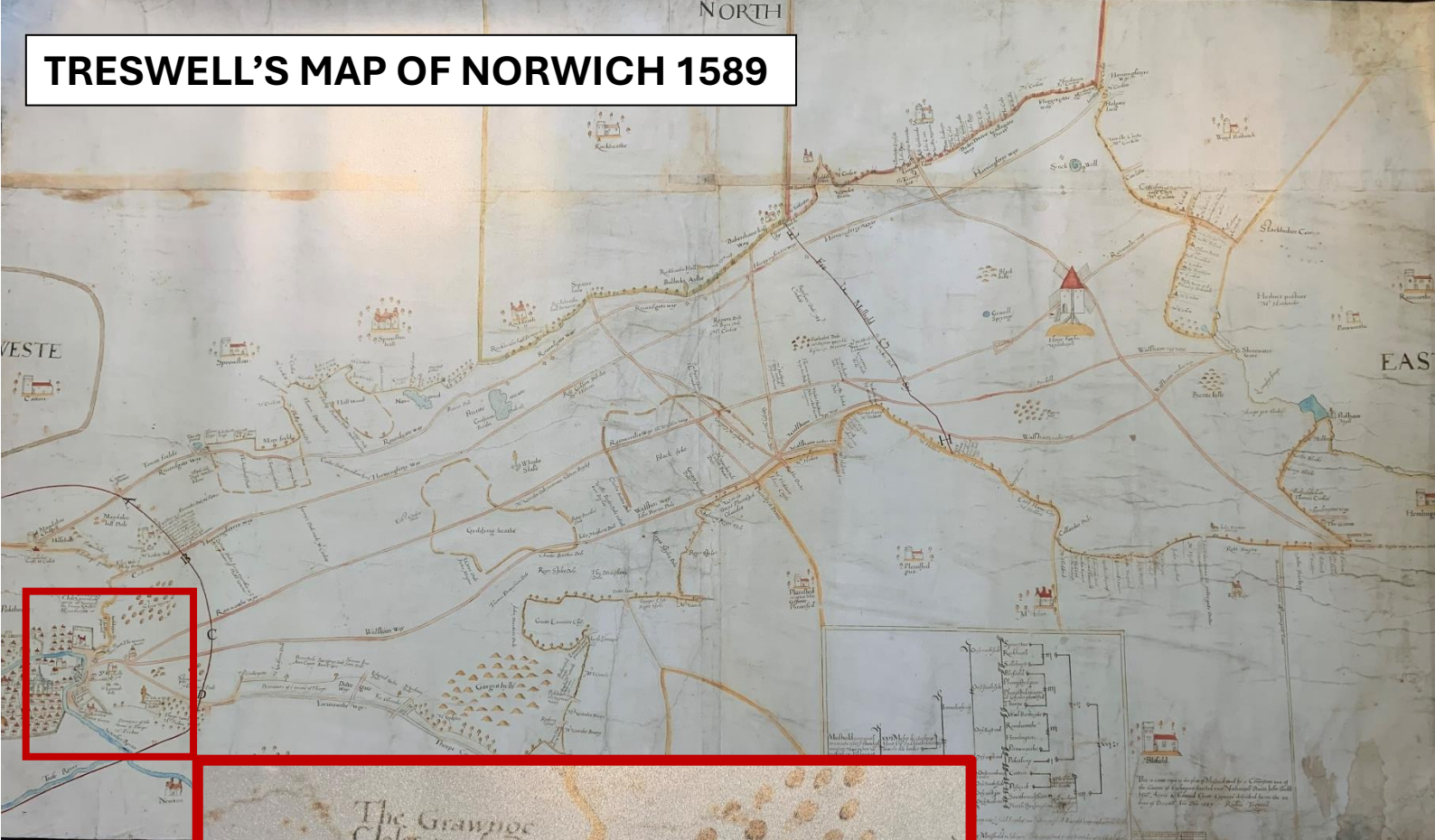


TRESWELL'S MAP OF NORWICH 1589



The Warrenhouse

143 Kett's Hill, Norwich

HERITAGE STATEMENT

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Compiled by Frances Woodgate MA(Hons) March ADPPA

For Ms. Christine Tacon

December 2024



INTRODUCTION

'The Warrenhouse' is a charming dwelling atop Kett's Hill on the outskirts of Norwich City Centre. Believed to date from the 16th century, the oldest part of 'The Warrenhouse' was a simple hall with a bed chamber over. The property was for some time the sole residential building on the hill, accompanied only by the church of St Michael¹ (now a ruin) a short distance away on the opposite side of the road. It was therefore a notable local landmark, which would have become more visibly prominent as the trees were thinned out on the skyline of the hill.

Very few warren houses survive even as ruins, but they were once familiar enough for Shakespeare to assume knowledge of them among his audience. Describing a lonely lover in 'Much Ado About Nothing' as being '*as melancholy as a lodge in a warren*'.² The warren lodges were often located in isolation within the rural landscape. In medieval times, the site of 'The Warrenhouse' was far more rural, situated outside the city walls and when Mousehold Heath was still a vast tract of rural land. Urban growth has hidden the building's former rural situation.

The remains of a small number of warren lodges survive in the vast Breckland area around Thetford, Norfolk, which once supported as many as 26 warrens, "19 of which date from the 1300s"³ having their origins with the monastic priories founded by the Normans.

LOCATION

The site is situated at 143 Kett's Hill, Norwich, NR1 4HD and is identified on the map below:



Map of Norwich
City Centre

¹ Built by Bishop Herbert de Losinga pre 1119 AD. Now known as Kett's Castle

² 'The Warren House, Kimbolton, Cambridgeshire', Caroline Stanford. p3. Referencing Shakespeare's 'Much Ado about Nothing', Act 2 scene 1, line 193, Benedick describing Count Claudio.

³ [High Lodge Heritage - Landscape - The Rabbit Warren of High Lodge \(fotf.org.uk\)](http://fotf.org.uk)

'The Warrenhouse' shares a party wall with 145 Kett's Hill as can be seen on the aerial image below:



The Warrenhouse outlined in red, and the property boundary outlined in white. Aerial image © Google Maps

'The Warrenhouse' is set within a landscaped cottage garden, raised up from the Kett's Hill road and bounded by retaining and free-standing flint and brick walls. The building is situated at the bend in the road and oriented to have a sunny aspect facing south west. To the east of the site, the road is very straight and heads out towards other settlements to the east and ultimately the coast.

LISTING DESCRIPTION

Listed Grade II in 1972, 'The Warrenhouse' (No. 143 Kett's Hill) is a building of national importance with an intriguing history and a variety of heritage values. The building has three main phases of development, which relate to changes in its ownership and use.

The listing description is included below.

Official List Entry

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Heritage Category: | Listed Building |
| Grade: | II |
| List Entry Number: | 1292271 |
| Date first listed: | 05-Jun-1972 |
| List Entry Name: | 143, KETTS HILL |
| Statutory Address 1: | 143, KETTS HILL |

National Grid Reference: **TG 24452 09132**

Listing NGR: **TG2445209132**

This List entry helps identify the building designated at this address for its special architectural or historic interest.

Unless the List entry states otherwise, it includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building.

For these purposes, to be included within the curtilage of the building, the object or structure must have formed part of the land since before 1st July 1948.

Details

TG 20 NW KETTS HILL (north side) 4/411 5.6.72. No. 143. - II House. Mid C19. Roughcast; 2-span pantiled roof. Victorian Gothic style. 2 storeys; 3 first-floor windows to facade at right-angles to street. Projecting porch in centre has C20 half-glazed door under a pantiled roof with casement windows in the side walls. Most casement windows have lattice glazing bars under crude wooden drip moulds. Plain rendered wall to left. 2 similar ground-floor windows facing Kett's Hill. The house is set back high above the street.

BACKGROUND

WARRENS

The Norman Kings brought with them the concept of Forest Law and hunting rights. An early manuscript written in Latin held by the Norfolk Record Office, DCN 41/16, is a proclamation of the Bishop of Thetford's right to hunt and warren in a number of districts within Norfolk and Suffolk:



“William the King as well all; the reeves of Norfolk and Suffolk be satisfied that the Bishop of Thetford may have their warrens and in my firm peace. That is to say the right of [free] warren of Hoxne, and of Toft [Monk's Priory], and of Blofield, and of Homersfield, and of Beighton, and of Thornditch. And run of the goat and the boar. Chigwell.” *Dated to c. 1090*

“In 1090 or 1091, Herbert de Losinga became the Bishop of Thetford. He received the appointment having paid the king a sum of £1,900, as part of a deal in which Herbert's father was made Abbot of New Minster, Winchester.”⁴ It would make sense that this manuscript relates to the start of Herbert de Losinga's bishopric in Thetford. It is not known if the sum of £1,900 paid to King William II included the fee for the licence to warren, but it would seem plausible that it did.

In feudal times, monarchs held superior title to all land in their kingdom. Kings granted territories to noblemen selected at their pleasure, charging them to cultivate a food surplus above subsistence to support the non-productive but essential central government. As tenants-in-chief, these high-aristocratic “lords of the land” divided their domains into holdings for sub-tenants, in return for fees and services.⁵

The short statement on the above manuscript confirms that hunting and warrening (here ‘to warren’ meaning managing and breeding small game, namely goats and boar) rights were active in the region more than 900 years ago. Thorp Manor, where The Warrenhouse is situated, is part of the Blofield Hundred. The first Bishop of Norwich, Herbert Losinga of Normandy, relocated his see from Thetford to Norwich in 1094 and laid the foundation stone of Norwich Cathedral in 1095. Bishop Herbert was granted ‘the right to free warren’ on Mousehold Heath by King Henry I in the year 1101 AD. At the time, the term ‘right to warren’ referred more generally to hunting although later become synonymous with the keeping of rabbits in ‘warrens’ as managed hunting parks evolved with warrens integrated into the landscape, and lodges were required for processing the hunted animals.

⁴ Quennell, C. H. B. (1898). [The Cathedral Church of Norwich](#). Bell's Cathedrals. London: George Bell and Sons. p6

⁵ [Glossary of Medieval Land Holding Terms – BOMC \(magnacharta.com\)](#)

“The right of warren was related to the forests and the king’s control of them through forest law. The forests included moorland, pasture, agricultural land and even villages but not all forest was royal demesne.

To have the right of warren meant that a person could hunt freely except where restrictions were imposed. A monastery could be given a grant of warren limited to its own lands or it could be given general [free] warren, allowing the community the right to hunt not only in its demesne but in the warrens of other landowners.

The right of warren covered the red deer, the fallow deer, the roe and the wild boar. The other animals i.e. hares, rabbits, foxes, wolves, wildcats, partridges and pheasants, could be hunted without warren but still required the king’s licence.”⁶

To receive a licence from the king required a person to be in favour with the king and to afford to pay for the king’s licence. This meant that hunting was a pursuit reserved for royalty, the nobility and the clergy.

Rabbits are not native to Britain. Their bones have been discovered on Roman sites in southern and eastern England, and we know that the Romans valued rabbits for both their fur and their meat. But they seem to have died out here after the Romans left – there is no Old English word for rabbit. It was the Normans who reintroduced them in the late 11th or 12th century. Ill-adapted to the English climate and easy prey for native predators, rabbits (or coneys, as mature rabbits were then known) had to be kept in special areas or warrens – often walled or fenced to prevent them from escaping. Their rarity meant that their meat was prized as a delicacy, while their fur was used for trimming clothes. In the 13th century one rabbit was worth more than a workman’s daily wage.⁷

The priories and abbeys in the region were predominantly of the Benedictine Order brought over with the Normans. The monks had to be self-sufficient and provide food for themselves from the land. They had a sophisticated system for agricultural and farming that included milling, managing fish ponds and livestock. One of the reasons that the monks chose to keep rabbits, is that rabbit meat was not considered red meat and could be eaten during Lent when many foods were prohibited. Rabbit meat was also available throughout the year – particularly useful in the winter when food sources were scarce – owing to the prolific rate of breeding, and was a good source of lean protein. Rabbits originated in the warmer climes of Spain, and needed extra care and protection to survive in the colder, damper conditions in Great Britain. Warrens were created to provide shelter for the rabbits and protection from predators, as well as for ease of access when trapping them. Keeping the rabbits in enclosures assisted in the management of breeding and controlling the population. The knowledge of warrening was therefore likely disseminated through the priories and then spread to the nobility following changes in land ownership instigated by the Crown, especially at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII.

Following the Norman Conquest in the latter half of the 11th century and until the eighteenth century, the rarity of rabbits made them valuable commodities that would have generated a significant income. ‘Such was the value and status of the rabbit, the warrener was one of the

⁶ ‘The Monastic Patronage of King Henry II in England 1154-1189’ Academic Thesis by Amanda M. Martinson, University of St. Andrew. 2008. P124

⁷ [Rabbits, Warreners and Thetford Warren Lodge | English Heritage \(english-heritage.org.uk\)](https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/thetford-warren-lodge/) Article by Katy Carter

highest paid manorial officials.⁸ As part of his management of the warren, the warrener had to trap the rabbits needed to supply his manorial lord's household; sell to markets to make a profit and also to keep the stock healthy and prevent over-population. The trapping took place in the late autumn and in the winter when the fur was at its thickest.⁹

The first Bishop of Norwich, Herbert Losinga of Normandy, relocated his see from Thetford to Norwich in 1094 and laid the foundation stone of Norwich Cathedral in 1095. He also built St Leonards' Priory, and the Church of St Michael located near 'The Warrenhouse'. Bishop Herbert was granted 'the right to free warren' on Mousehold Heath by King Henry I in the year 1101 AD. At the time, the term 'right to warren' referred more generally to hunting although later became synonymous with the keeping of rabbits in 'warrens' as managed hunting parks evolved with warrens integrated into the landscape, and lodges were required for processing the hunted animals.

'Four thousand rabbits were provided for the banquet that followed the installation of George Neville as Archbishop of York in 1465. Rabbit fur was used to trim luxury robes and cloaks, especially if it was black or silver-grey. Henry VI had a nightshirt lined with black rabbit fur and the monks of Thetford Priory gave Katherine of Aragon (first wife of Henry VIII) a gift of rabbit fur trimmings for her gowns when she visited them in 1513.'¹⁰

The Bishop would have wanted to ensure the supply of valuable rabbit meat and fur was well controlled and protected. The Bishop thus provided a suitable property to house his valued servant, the warrener, overseer of the rabbit warren, in order for him to operate what was effectively an early type of rural industry undertaken for the church. "The warrener had to judge the condition of his stock, regulate the number of bucks to does, organise extra labour for the autumn and winter culls, protect the coneys from extremes of weather and consider the economics of the market for his produce, once the needs of his manorial master's household had been met."¹¹



Rabbits came to be regarded as evidence of a manorial lord's legal and social superiority. In 1381, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, had his warren at Methwold attacked during the Peasants' Revolt and a rabbit was strung up on the gate of St Alban's Abbey, monasteries being the owners of many of the warrens.

Catching rabbits, in a 15th-century French manuscript© Bibliothèque nationale de France

⁸ [Meeting the last full-time warrener and rabbit catcher in Britain | Great British Life](#)

⁹ [High Lodge Heritage - Human Heritage - The Rabbit Warren of High Lodge \(fotf.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁰ [High Lodge Heritage - Landscape - The Rabbit Warren of High Lodge \(fotf.org.uk\)](#)

¹¹ [High Lodge Heritage - Human Heritage - The Rabbit Warren of High Lodge \(fotf.org.uk\)](#)

An inquisition at Methwold in 1522 noted that “much of the Come of the said londe destroyed yerely with Conyes which be so greatly encreased.” At Freckenham in 1551 the rabbits were described as “increasing and multiplying on the common land” (Suffolk Ipswich RO HD1538/113-204) and in 1582 many were killed by the villagers, who were then fined as a punishment. Rabbit damage to crops was cited as a source of friction in Kett’s Rebellion of 1549 and the demands included “We pray that no man under the degree of [word missing] shall keep any conies upon any freehold or copyhold unless he pale them in so that it shall not be to the commons’ annoyance.”¹²

It was the launch of a second enclosure commission on 8 July 1549 that was the immediate spark for the uprising in East Anglia. During traditional celebrations associated with the dissolved abbey in the rural Norfolk town of Wymondham, crowds marched into surrounding fields to dismantle hedges and fences. Some of these fences were on land belonging to Robert Kett a local yeoman farmer. Rather than objecting to the destruction of his property, Kett agreed with the rioters that the enclosures should be removed and offered to lead them 'in defense of their common libertie' (*Holinshead Chronicles* as quoted in Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England*. Palgrave, 2001, p. 63). The rebels marched ten miles towards the city of Norwich, destroying other enclosures along the way. While the city authorities refused the rebels entry, the poor people of Norwich were quick to make common cause with their rural neighbours, having recently been engaged in conflicts over the enclosure of common land within the city. In choosing Mousehold Heath as the location for their camp, the rebels were further alluding to these issues. Mousehold was itself a vast tract of common land (originally stretching all the way from the city to the coast), which was increasingly subject to enclosure. The very act of occupying that land was a symbolic enactment of the common rights being demanded. In addition, Mousehold had also been the site of a rebel encampment 60 years previously at the time of the Peasants' Revolt, further strengthening its symbolic significance.¹³

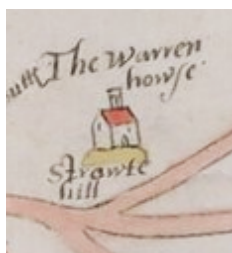
The symbolic selection of Mousehold Heath and the nearby site of Mount Surrey by Robert Kett and the rebels for their defiant stand against enclosure lends credence to the likelihood that the building was standing at the time of the rebellion in 1549. The naming of the building ‘The Warren Howse’ on the 1589 Treswell map, along with the three landmarks associated with Kett’s rebellion ‘Oke [oak]of Reformation’, ‘St Michael’s Chapell’ and ‘St.Leonard’s now called Mount Surrey’ places the building in local context. It is noteworthy that the other principal sites on the map are the Cathedral and the ‘Grawnge Closes’ associated with the Bishop and the Prior of Norwich Cathedral respectively, and the property of the lord of the manor of Thorpe, Mr. Paston. As a title on the map, ‘The Warren Howse’ indicates it is either the most significant or the only warren house associated with Norwich. The Warrenhouse site may well have been long established at the time the map was drawn.

On the 1589 Treswell Map, the building is shown in the style of domestic architecture, not castle architecture, which indicates that the building was a residence year round, not just in use as a lodge to process animals or host hunting parties at the time of the rabbit cull. ‘The Warrenhowse’ is identified by name and shown with a double chimney. This indicates that the upper bed chamber had a hearth as well as the hall below. The double chimney was a signifier of the status and importance of the resident, as chimneys were costly to construct. Most

¹² The Internal Archaeology of the Breckland Warrens, The Breckland Society, 2017. p29 citing <http://www.kettsociety.org.uk/ketts-29-demands/4586375343>

¹³ [Kett's Rebellion 1549 | Wastes and Strays | Newcastle University \(ncl.ac.uk\)](#)

dwelling would only have had one hearth on the ground floor and one single chimney flue. There are many buildings on the map that are a comparable size to 'The Warrenhouse' but are left unnamed. It was therefore a well-known, and possibly long standing (with medieval origins), local property, the status of which merited it being identified on the map at that time.



Extract from the Treswell Map of 1589 © Norfolk Record Office

'Over centuries the rabbit population expanded well beyond the confines of the warren, ranging unchecked throughout much of Britain. Rabbits are sociable creatures and prolific breeders, with a gestation period of 29-35 days, a litter of three to seven kittens, and up to eight litters in a season. The male buck rabbit is sexually mature at four months and the doe between three and five.'¹⁴ This means that a single female rabbit can produce between twenty and fifty kittens a year, with 75% of the offspring also able to reproduce within the same year. It is clear to see how the rabbit population can grow exponentially if not managed.

The monastic orders would have managed the rabbit population to feed their community, often including the local poor, and, after fulfilling their obligation of supplying the royal court, would have had a useful income from selling surplus meat and the furs. These luxury commodities were heavily guarded from poachers, for whom the financial gains were irresistible. "On the demesne at Brandon in Suffolk, rabbit sales as a percentage of manorial income rose from a negligible sum between 1300-49; to 21% of income 1350-99, to a massive 40% between 1386-7. Another renowned warren was at Methwold, especially famous for its prized black pelts and supplying 9,450 rabbits to London in 1390. Lundy too is still known for its black rabbits."¹⁵

"The inclusion of rabbit meat in feasts and celebrations highlighted its role in the social rituals that were central to medieval communal life. The rearing and hunting of rabbits were activities that often had ceremonial elements attached to them, reflecting broader social customs and traditions. The warren itself, as a managed landscape, was a space where social hierarchies were enacted and reinforced, with exclusive hunting parties or feasting events serving as displays of wealth and power. The practices surrounding rabbit hunting and feasting were imbued with ritualistic significance, often intertwined with the social codes and etiquettes of the time."¹⁶

Enclosure of the land by the landowners from the 16th century onwards enabled controlled breeding of rabbits, and warrens were selective in their breeding for different colour pelts and larger sized rabbits for meat. It is probable that through acts of poaching, rabbits escaped into the wild and quickly spread throughout the countryside. Rabbits are a nuisance in large numbers, destroying crops and damaging forest plantations, causing expensive losses for those working the land. By the 18th and 19th centuries, the scale of rabbit warrens had expanded well beyond monastic subsistence farming to a full blown specialised rural industry

¹⁴ Opsit.

¹⁵ Caroline Stanford, 'The Warren House History Album', The Landmark Trust, 2012-2014. p72

¹⁶ [Medieval Pillow Mounds, What Are They? - RuralHistoria](#)

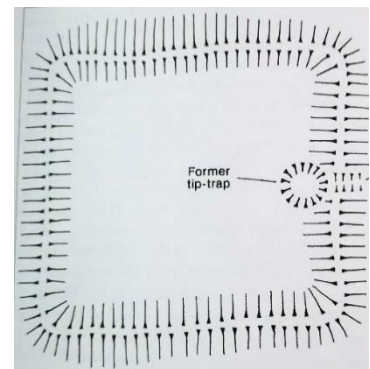
involving warreners, skimmers, tanners and hatters to process large numbers of rabbits and rabbit fur goods for profit at the behest of the wealthy landowners.

This map of 1859 shows the pillow mound earthworks associated with rabbit warrening and suggesting that 'The Warrenhouse' served a large warren that covered a considerable acreage:



Artificial banks and pillow mounds associated with warrens for breeding rabbits within the large red circle and 'The Warrenhouse' within the small red circle

The scale of the earthwork banks and mounds is impressive and would suggest a large number of rabbits were being bred at the site. The round feature next to the rectangular bank formation may be a 'tip trap', based on this diagram by Tom Williamson from p100 of his book "Rabbits, Warrens & Archaeology":



With regards to tools of the trade, the warrener used long stakes with small sized shovels for accurate digging out of tunnels and chambers:



Image of 19th century warrener's shovels © Country Home Antiques

“With the passing of the Ground Game Act in 1880, rabbits lost their exclusive and protected status and there was less reason to confine them in warrens. At the same time, cheap imports of rabbit meat and skins began to come in from Europe. Fashions changed too and profits fell.”¹⁷

‘Such was the damage to crops countrywide, the government passed the Prevention of Damage by Rabbits Act 1939. By the 1950s the government estimated 60million rabbits were causing £50 million worth of damage.’¹⁸ Warreners were thus engaged in catching rabbits and removing them from farmland areas.



Warreners, probably at Barnham, Suffolk, in the early 20th century© Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service; www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk, via English Heritage

‘In 1953 myxomatosis reached Britain, devastating the rabbit population. Estimates suggest that barely 600,000 animals remained. This catastrophic demise left little work for the rabbit catcher. The commercial rabbit meat and fur trade struggled on for a few more years, but reverence for the rabbit evaporated.’¹⁹ The role of the warrener was no longer in widespread demand and the skills ceased to be passed on to the next generation.

SETTING

The site features a flint faced bank addressing the adjacent road, which is a rare feature –

“The perimeter banks of Thetford Warren survive only in part, and mostly where they are also the parish and county boundary. However, the most striking feature of the banks is on the western boundary where, in sections as long as 100 metres, the side of the bank facing into the warren has been faced with flints.

This flint facing was also discovered on the external elevation of the perimeter bank immediately to the north of the site of Reed Fen Lodge.

Thetford Warren is the only warren where this use of flint facing has been found so far.”²⁰

The flint retaining wall to the southern side of The Warren House at Kett’s Hill is therefore a further indication of the original use of the site as a warren and is an important historic feature:

¹⁷ [High Lodge Heritage - Landscape - What happened to the Warren and the Rabbits? \(fotf.org.uk\)](http://HighLodgeHeritage.com/Landscape-What-happened-to-the-Warren-and-the-Rabbits/)

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ [Thetford Warren – The Breckland Society \(brecksoc.org.uk\)](http://TheBrecklandSociety.org.uk/)



View of the flint wall to The Warrenhouse, 143 Kett's Hill, from the southern side of Kett's Hill

If the flint faced wall at Thetford Warren Lodge and the flint faced wall at The Warrenhouse Kett's Hill are contemporaneous, this would suggest that both sites could date from the 1300s, even if the buildings themselves are later.

The flint wall at The Warrenhouse appears to have been modified, as a vertical movement joint is visible in the middle of the wall. Works to regrade the slope and improve the road access were undertaken during the building of HM Prison Norwich, which may have been the time when this modification occurred.

The flint wall appears to serve a retaining wall function at The Warrenhouse in addition to possibly keeping the rabbits out of the warrener's own garden. Dating of flint walls is also challenging, however as an early vernacular material in the East Anglian region, the presence of a flint wall could indicate an early date.

At the Priory of St. Leonards, which has a strong association with The Warrenhouse through the Bishop's ownership, the precinct wall was built in flint:



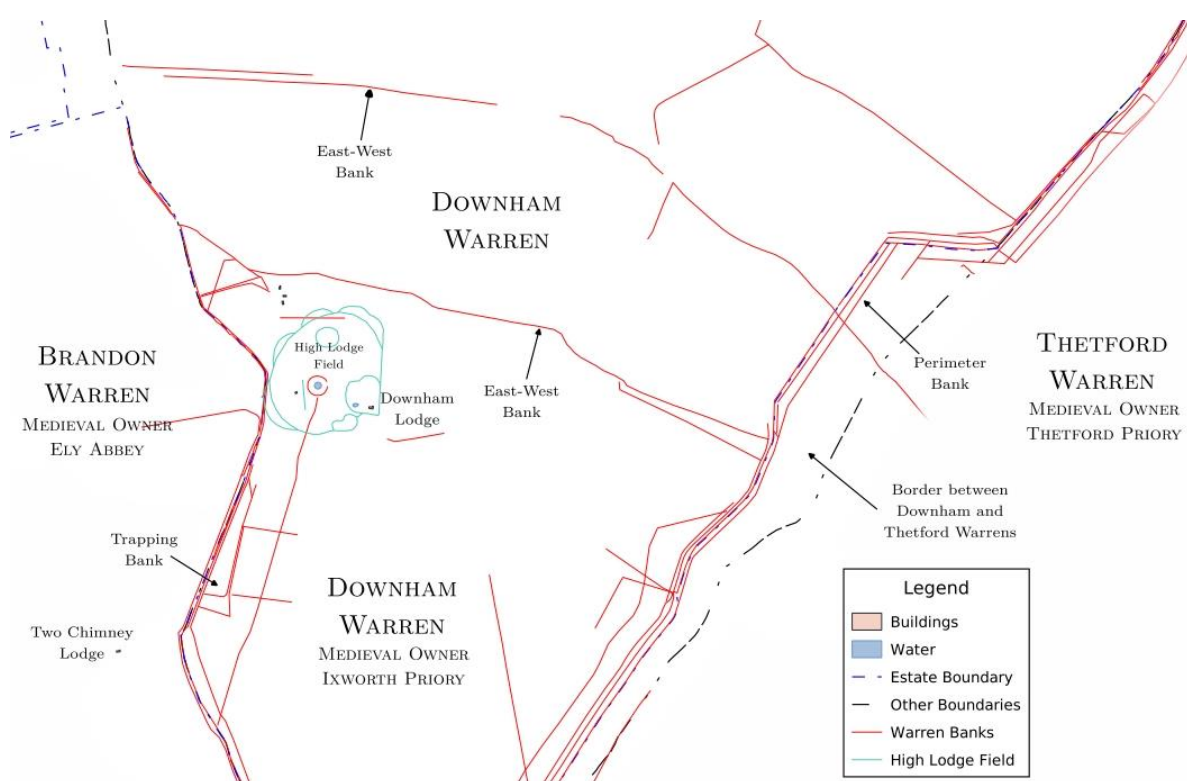
*Standing remains of St. Leonard's Priory precinct wall
© George Plunkett*

The walls were likely an early feature of the Priory to keep animals of the forest and heath out of their gardens, as well as providing security for their property and defining its extent. The Priory walls are illustrated on the Treswell map of 1589 so were extant at that time, and could be of considerable age as the Priory was founded in 1101. It is interesting to note the brickwork at the righthand edge of the photograph, as it matches the English bond in The Warrenhouse attic space.

LOCAL AND WIDER CONTEXT

As an example of a warren house, albeit much altered and extended, No.143 Kett's Hill sits within a rich history of the building type within the region. The Breckland area of Norfolk, to the west of Norwich, was the largest habitat ideally suited to the warrening of rabbits, and Mousehold Heath in Norwich was a smaller area yet similarly well suited.

The following map relates to Downham Warren in the Breckland area of Norfolk. It is interesting to note that the warrens were all in the ownership of local priories in the medieval period:



*Downham Warren Estate Map, from "Hidden History of High Lodge"*²¹

In the case of the Warren House on Kett's Hill in Norwich, the site belonged to the Bishop of Norwich and was probably manned on his behalf by the Prior of St. Leonard's Priory, the Priory having been founded by the first Bishop of Norwich, Herbert de Losinga.

There are over 26 warrens scattered across the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks²², however the buildings of only a handful of these survive as more than ruins.

²¹ [High Lodge Heritage - Landscape - The Warren Banks of High Lodge \(fottf.org.uk\)](http://HighLodgeHeritage.org.uk) Friends of Thetford Forest

²² [Warrens Project – The Breckland Society \(brecksoc.org.uk\)](http://WarrensProject.org.uk)

A chronology of known warrens in the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks as recorded by The Breckland Society is summarised below, with dates relating to 143 Kett's Hill added in for context – dates with references to Lodge buildings are in **bold**:

Chronology of the Warrens in the Norfolk/Suffolk Brecks

- 1090 William II grant to warren for Bishop Herbert of Thetford in Norfolk & Suffolk districts
- 1094 Bishop Herbet de Losinga translates his see from Thetford to Norwich
- 1101** Henry I grant of free warren at Mousehold to Bishop Herbert de Losinga of Norwich
- 1252 Brandon Warren (Ely Abbey) earliest date
- 1253 Right to warren granted to Thomas de Ickeworth (Wangford)
- 1275 Beachamwell Warren
- 1309** Two lodges described at Eriswell Warren
- 1323 Mildenhall Warren
- 1365** Lakenheath Warren had a timber lodge
- 1365 Wangford Warren
- 1382** Brandon Warren Lodge (Ely Abbey)
- 1385 Building of a bank at Wangford Warren²³
- 1386** Brandon Warren Lodge rebuilt
- 1387** Lakenheath Warren lodge was replaced with a stone building
- 1398-99 Cow Tower constructed in Norwich
- c. 1400** Thetford Warren Lodge, Breckland Forest, Thetford (Our Lady's Priory, Thetford)
- 1413** Records show repairs to Methwold Warren Lodge
- 1413 Broomhill/Weeting Warren
- 1413 Santon Warren
- 1440** Downham Warren High Lodge (Ixworth Priory)
- e.15th c** Mildenhall Warren Lodge
- 1476** Ickburgh/Langford Lodge lease
- 1499** Santon Warren Lodge repaired
- 1514** Thetford Warren Lodge – most substantial surviving lodge
- 1589** The Warren Howse, Kett's Hill featured on Treswell Map of Norwich
- 1595** Beachamwell Warren Lodge first mentioned in probate records
- 1618 Elveden Warren
- 1778 Santon Downham Warren identified on an estate map
- 1783** Wordwell Warren Lodge
- 1802** High Wrong Lodge, Thetford Warren, OS map
- 1883** Reed Fen Lodge, Thetford Warren, OS map

²³ [High Lodge Heritage - Landscape - The Warren Banks of High Lodge \(fottf.org.uk\)](http://fottf.org.uk)

HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

MAP REGRESSION

The development of the building and its immediate environs is explored in a chronological order through the following sequence of historic maps.

Site Context



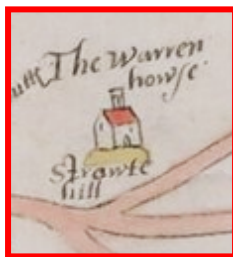
This illustrative map of 1572 does not show The Warrenhouse building, perhaps too small to draw at this scale, but it does show the nearby Church of St. Michael and Priory of St. Leonards. It has been included as it illustrates the rural nature of the landscape outside the city walls of Norwich, the hilly portion behind the two windmills corresponding to the site. An indication of the site's location is circled.

Cartographic Record of The Warrenhouse



1) 1589 Treswell Map, © Norfolk Record Office

The Treswell map shows the Warrenhouse on its own little green hill, suggesting that it was sited on a raised mound. 'The Warren Lodge was the workplace and the dwelling place of the warrener. Built on the highest point of the warren to give him the best view across it, it also gave him protection against poachers'.²⁴ 'The Warren howse' is named on the map, signifying its importance to the local community and that it was recognised as a local landmark building.



The hill is labelled 'Strawte Hill'. The term 'strawte' is linguistically associated with 'straight' and is a reference to the Roman road, now named Plumstead Road (B1140), which is indeed a very straight Roman road. Therefore, this site may have been selected as it was on an existing trade route at the edge of the heath.

'The Warrenhowse' is identified by name and shown with a double chimney. This indicates that the upper bed chamber had a hearth as well as the hall below. The double chimney was a signifier of the status and importance of the resident, as chimneys were costly to construct. Most dwellings would have had only one hearth on the ground floor and one single chimney flue. There are many buildings on the map that are of a similar size to 'The Warrenhowse' but are left unnamed. It was therefore a well-known, and possibly long standing (with medieval origins), local property, the status of which merited it being identified on the map at that time. The Right Reverend Edmund Scambler was the Bishop of Norwich at the time Treswell made the map.

²⁴ [High Lodge Heritage - Landscape - The Rabbit Warren of High Lodge \(fottf.org.uk\)](http://HighLodgeHeritage.com/Landscape/TheRabbitWarrenofHighLodge)

This simple drawing by Treswell conveys several key pieces of information about The Warrenhouse:

- The building was on raised ground in a rural landscape
- The building was of a single structural bay with a gable
- The building had two hearths shown by the double chimney, indicating status
- The building's name confirmed its use
- The building stood in isolation at the time, no other residences in the immediate vicinity, only the churches and priories with which it was associated through its ownership by the Bishop

The hill 'The Warrenhouse' stands on was known as St. James' Hill (the church of that name being located at the lower end of the road) but later became known as Kett's Hill as a reminder of the rebellion led by yeoman Robert Kett in 1549, in which the rebels were objecting against the enclosure (by local landowners whether of the gentry or the clergy) of the common lands that they had been using for grazing, supply of small game, other foraged foods and firewood. The lives and livelihoods of everyday folk relied upon access to these areas of common land, and after failed negotiations with the government authorities the rebels took to arms with Kett as their leader. The uprising took place over an extended period of time, commencing on 12 July and ending on 23 August. An estimated 16-20 thousand men camped on Mousehold Heath before heading down to battle within the city walls of Norwich. 2-3 thousand of those men lost their lives when eventually they were overthrown by the Earl of Warwick's troops. Robert Kett paid the ultimate price for his role in the rebellion when he was hung on the wall of Norwich Castle for treason.



2) Map dated 1600 by John Darby, © Norfolk Record Office.

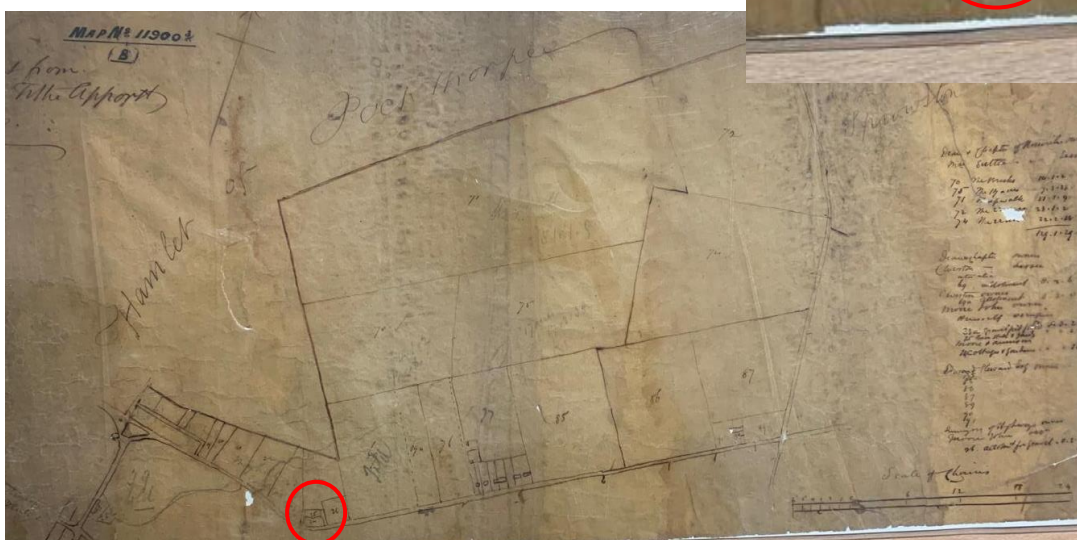


The building is simply referred to as 'Lodge', its purpose self-evident in its rural setting. It's status is apparent as it is included alongside the Bishop's gate, Plumstead Chapel (St. Michael's) and St. Leonards, all founded by the Bishopric.

The wording to the field behind references 'Sheepes' so shepherding and warrening were both occurring around the site.



The portrait in the bottom left of the map may well be of a warrener, with his dog, smock, boots, hat and long staff – see page 17.



3) 1718 Map based on the Thorpe Tithe Apportionment Map, with detail enlarged above

The key beside the plan lists the following text against plots 24, 25 and 26:

John Moore – owner , Ann ‘illegible’ – occupier:

23a gravel pit

25 barn stable and yards

Moore and avowson:

24 cottage and garden – The Warrenhouse, occupied by his prior/officer

Burgess of ‘illegible’ – owner :

Moore John occupier

26 accommodation for gravel

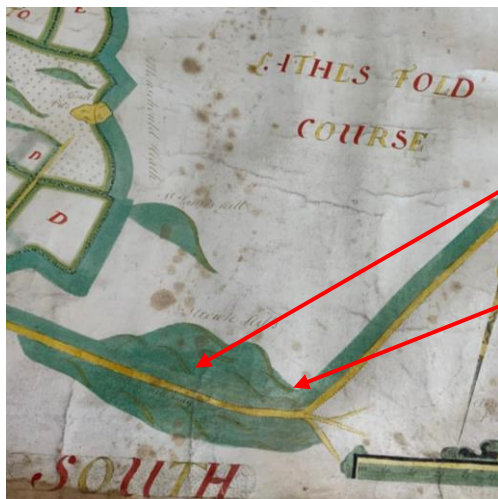
John Moore was Bishop of Ely 1707-1714 and Bishop of Norwich 1691-1707

John Moore appeared to own plots 23, 24, 25 but was not the occupier, he used plot 26 for gravel.

Plot 26 was owned by the Dean and Chapter, later allocated for accommodation to the Bishop’s Land Steward



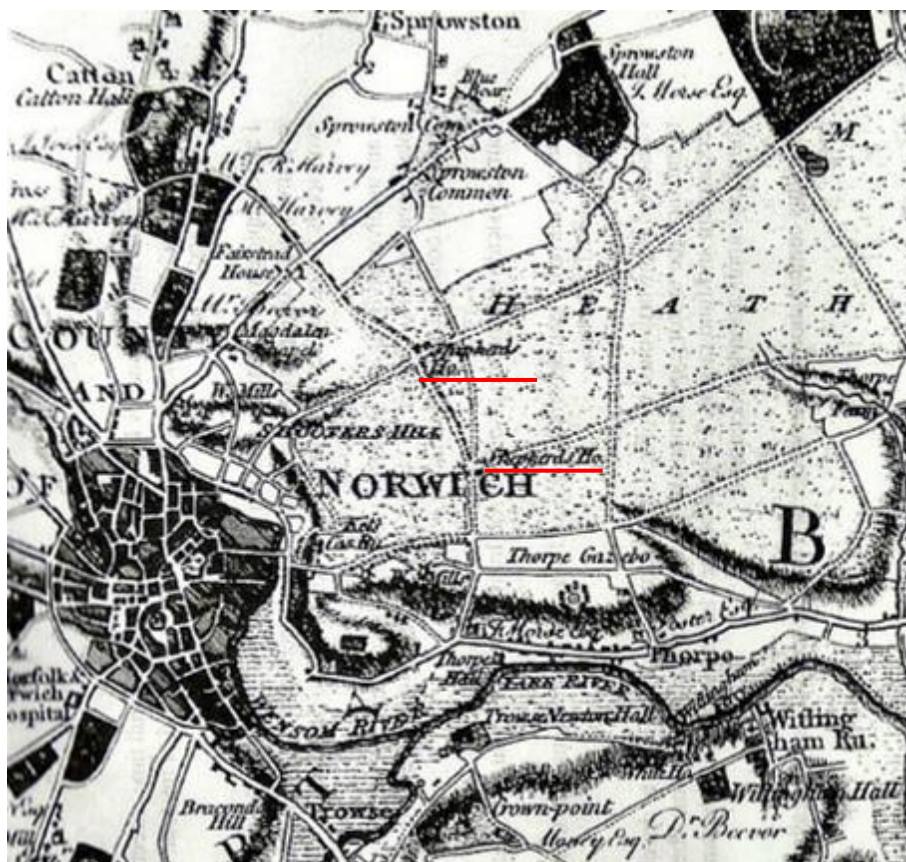
- 4) Map dated 1730 with the location of the site circled in red. Although this map does not show the building, it labels the site as being part of the ‘Lathes Fold Course’. This relates to the Lathes estate or Grange in the ownership of the Holy Trinity, which was the priory associated with the monks of Norwich Cathedral and in the ownership of the Bishop of Norwich. A further point of interest, is the green mounds labelled ‘strawte hills’ which may relate to the mounds of the warren:



Strawte hills

The Warrenhouse site

On the 1797 map of Norwich, it is interesting to note that Thorpe Hall (the Bishop of Norwich's rural summer home) and Kett's Castle Ruin were annotated along with two properties named 'shepherd's house' near to the site of No. 143. But the Warrenhouse at No. 143 was not noted. This may reflect the shift away from the trade in rabbit meat and furs towards the trade in wool as the esteemed pastoral industry of the time. The hill is also referred to as 'shooters hill' on the map which may refer to its association for hunting game, possibly even hunting parties that were fashionable in the period. It may also relate to the fact a rifle range is shown on the heath on the map of 1897:



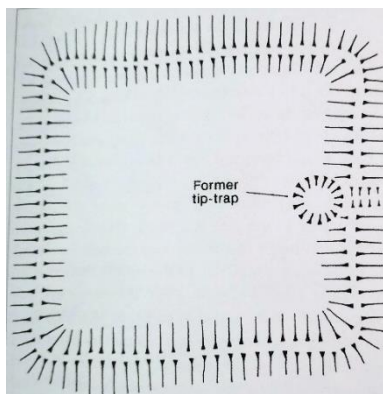
5) 1797 Ordnance Survey map with two 'Shepherd's Ho[uses]' references, underlined in red

However, of significance on the map of 1859 is the landscape detail:



Artificial banks and pillow mounds associated with warrens for breeding rabbits within the large red circle, The Warrenhouse location within the small red circle.

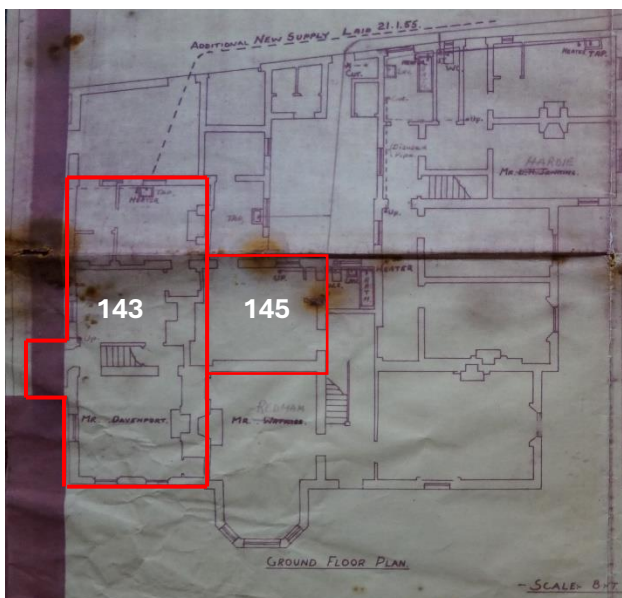
The scale of the earthwork banks and mounds is impressive and would suggest a large number of rabbits were being bred at the site. The round feature next to the rectangular bank formation may be a 'tip trap', based on this diagram by Tom Williamson from p100 of his book "Rabbits, Warrens & Archaeology":





8) This 1878 map shows the Warrenhouse with an extension to the east side, and farm buildings to the north. At this date, the range of farm buildings were separate structures – by 1880 they had been joined by an extension at the west end.

Comparing the outline of the building to an engineer's plan of the water supply from 1955, this outline corresponds to the following footprint within the adjoining 'Bishop's Steward's House' at No.143:

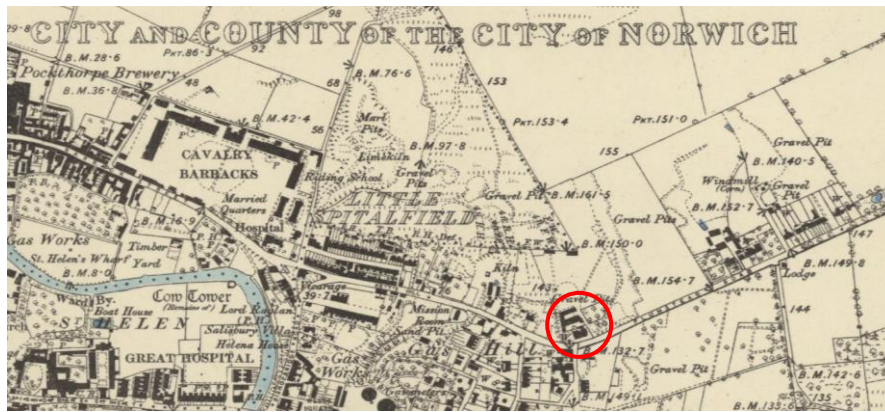


Water engineer's plan of 1955



View of the elevation of 145

The remainder of the footprint, including the angled bay window, was an extension, possibly in a couple of phases, that was present on the 1880 map. The large bay window to the main elevation and the crenelations give the building status, with a stylistic nod towards rural hunting lodges.

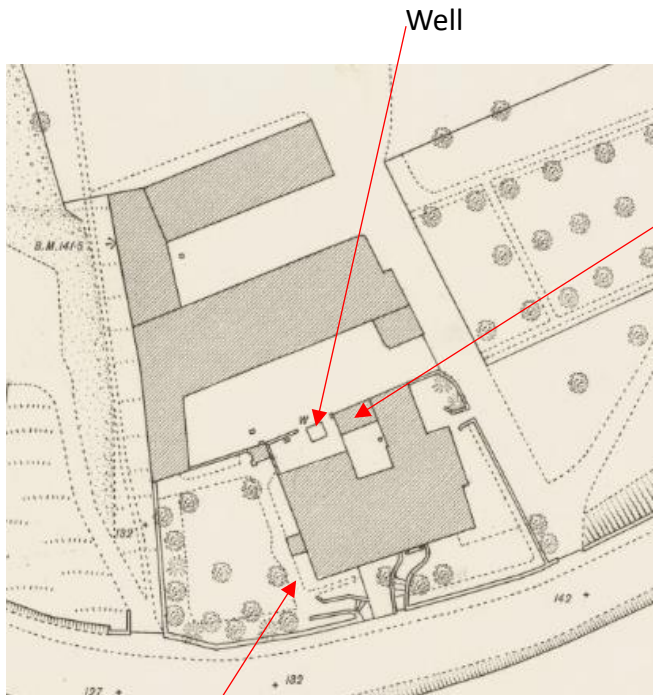


- 9) This map from 1880 shows more detail, and No.143 has been extended so that the conjoined buildings The Warrenhouse at No.145 and No.143 form a 'U' shape with a courtyard between:



- 10) By 1885, an additional extension has been added to No.145 (at the tip of the 'U' shape) almost closing the courtyard. The scale of this map shows the planting around the buildings, with an orchard to the northeast, and a possible remnant of a pillow mound to the former warren to the south of the orchard – the outline of which is visible on the map of 1880 above. 'Pillow mound' is the term given to an artificial mound created by the warrener for the rabbits to burrow in. Sometimes taking the form of long banks, or round/rectangular shaped mounds, pillow mounds were distinctive raised features in the landscape.

Within the courtyard to the north of No.143 The Warrenhouse, is a square labelled 'W' for well. A water source on site was a valuable resource and its presence may have been a factor in the selection of the location for The Warrenhouse:



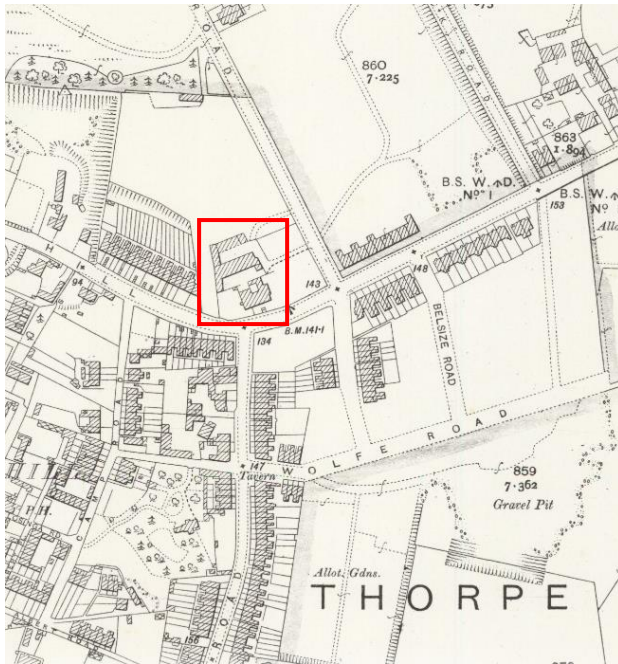
Latest extension to the building

The porch to the west side of The Warrenhouse is now visible on the map. It was not shown on the map of 1878 or 1880, so this may date the porch to between 1881 and 1885.

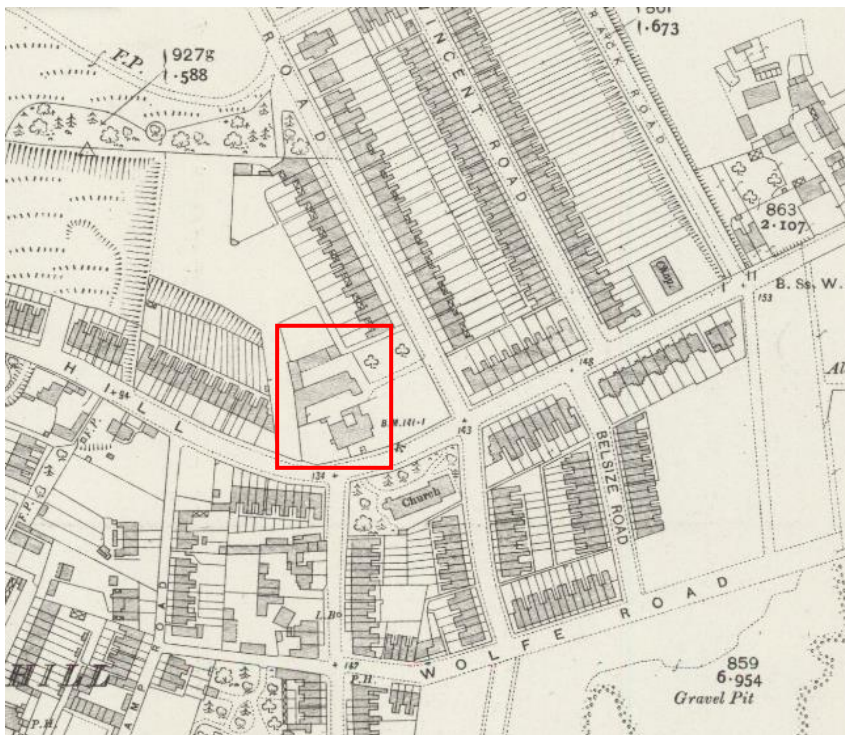
Porch



- 11) The map of 1897 is of too large a scale to show the building outline in detail, but confirms it is still present. To the north of the site is a label 'Rifle Range' which may relate to the hill being referred to as 'Shooters Hill'



12) By 1905 the land across the road to the south of the site had been developed for housing, and the terraced housing to the west of the site increased



13) By 1912, housing development to the northeast of the site along Britannia Road and Vincent Road was extensive, with an increase in the housing density to the south and the building of the Church immediately opposite plus a Chapel a short distance to the east.



- 14) *The 1926 map shows a few additional houses to Wolfe Road and behind the terraces to the west of the site. It would appear that the northern range of farm buildings had been removed by this time.*

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The warrener's house on Mousehold Heath evolved over time and changed ownership to become a farmhouse with an outhouse privy, then the home of the housekeeper to the later adjoining and internally connected residence at No.145, before finally being separated off once more as a private residence. It grew from being a property of only two rooms to a well-appointed home, comprising three bedrooms and two reception rooms, plus an indoor bathroom and a kitchen with an adjoining pantry-cum-utility room. One of the surviving cupboards to the first floor reveals where there had been an access point through to the neighbouring property for the resident housekeeper to service the accommodation at No. 145. There would have been a similar access door on the ground floor in the lobby to the dining room/kitchen. These access doors have long been blocked up; however their presence is evidenced by the plan layout at the boundary wall between The Warrenhouse and No. 145.

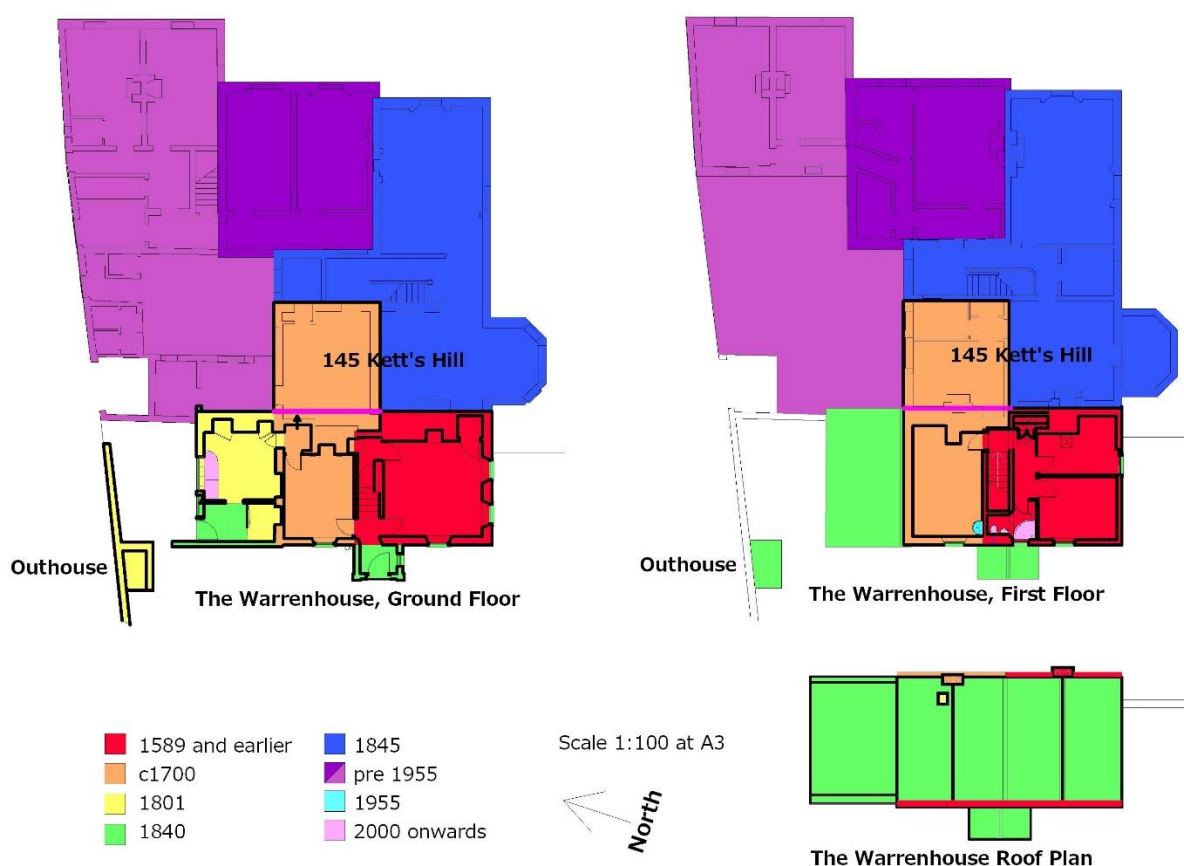
With regards to an indicative timeline for the development of the building, the following list has been compiled, starting with the Treswell map of 1589 as the earliest documentary evidence for the date of The Warrenhouse:

- 1589 Map 1) 'The Warrenhowse' – a hall cottage with a bed chamber over, with two hearths one to each floor) and a double chimney.
- 1718 Map 3) showing the ownership of the plots of land in the ownership of the Dean and Chapter.
- 1801 The enclosure of Mousehold Heath, by which time the property had doubled in size and was functioning as a farmhouse with a range of farm buildings to the northside. A dairy was attached to, and had a doorway through, the garden boundary wall at the northeast corner.
- 1840 Major refurbishment and reroofing, addition of the single storey outshut, addition of cast iron lattice windows, new staircase, division of eastern bedroom into two smaller bedrooms.
- 1873 Map 7) shows The Warrenhouse with an extension centred on the east side.

- 1884 No. 145 had been added to the east of The Warrenhouse, absorbing the extension noted in 1873, the Outhouse privy is also evident on the Ordnance Survey map.
- 1955 Proposals for the addition of water supply and installation of internal fitted bathrooms to No. 143, and No. 145 which was now subdivided into 4 individual flats.
- 2000 The Warrenhouse was re-rendered: owner at the time, Peter Thorn, said that the original phase (living room bay) was brick and flint, the second phase just in brick.

Below are colour coded Phasing Plans to visually describe the different construction phases of 'The Warrenhouse' and the adjoining building 145 Kett's Hill based on the information available during the writing of this report. The magenta line across the orange phase indicates the property boundary line between 'The Warrenhouse' and 145 Kett's Hill, the extension to the east of 'The Warrenhouse later' being incorporated into 145 Kett's Hill.

The Warrenhouse: Phasing Plans



Dating the Building

The original built fabric of The Warrenhouse is not obvious on visual inspection, the building having been substantially added to, re-roofed and the external elevations rendered. However, the description given in research papers written by Paul Welter found at the property describe brick and flint walls to the original structural bay (the living room bay) and just brick to the second phase (the dining room bay). This was evidenced when the building was re-rendered in the year 2000.

It is probable that at the time the building was re-roofed, most likely when the second structural bay was added, the original timber framed roof structure was lost. Inside the attic space, original exposed brickwork to the gables and chimneys is visible. The brickwork to the southern gable – the original structural bay – appears early in date without a regular bond pattern, and is different to that in the northern gable – second phase – which shows English Cross Bond, identifying them as separate phases of construction.



Original bay (over beds 2 +3/living room)



Second phase bay (over bedroom 1/dining room)

The brickwork to the original bay looks to have been consolidated with English Cross Bond at the eaves during a later building phase and/or reroofing. The Bishop would have had early use of brick, before the material became widely available for vernacular usage, and the incorporation of flint in the original bay (not visible in the photograph) may also suggest an early date for the original phase, archaeological records show the flint boundary walls at Thetford were dated to 1300.

The Flemish bond in the rear garden boundary wall would have a date of 1600 onwards, when English Cross Bond was losing popularity:



Flemish bond to garden wall: Headers and stretchers alternate in each course, with staggered joints

Despite the lack of visible historic fabric from the original cottage, the plan form remains with the thickness of the early walls evident, and there are charming features evidencing the other periods of the property's development.

These historic features of architectural interest are:

- Cast iron lattice windows to Living Room, Dining Room, Bedroom 1 and Bedroom 3
- Panelled 18th century door with small crown glass window to the single storey outshut
- Timber hood moulds over the windows to the principal elevations and porch
- Attractively carved and pierced Victorian barge boards to the gables and porch

It is noted that the attractive lattice windows to the Dining Room, Living Room and Bedroom 1 include small yellow quarries which indicate the expense of silver staining, perhaps replicating and replacing earlier windows in enlarged openings.

Prior research into The Warrenhouse by Paul Welter dated the insertion of the cast iron windows to 1840. An opportunity to gentrify the principal elevation would have been afforded and it certainly appears that the window positions were purposefully symmetrical in their placement, where they may have been less regularly arranged previously. The rendering of the exterior has made it difficult to identify changes in the pattern of openings. However, there are locations on the elevation where hood mouldings have been replaced and appear to have changed in size and or position. The ecclesiastical patronage of the building would have facilitated the use of more and larger windows than those available to the general population, so it is possible that the window openings were previously of a similar size. The inclusion of yellow stained-glass quarries to the perimeter of the windows may be a nod to the ecclesiastical origins of the building, and it can be speculated that the 1840s windows were in some way replicating earlier leaded windows.

Taking into account all of the factors explored above, and in the previous sections of this report and the documentary evidence currently available, it is known that the oldest bay of The Warrenhouse building was standing in 1589 and that it had likely been standing for a considerable amount of time at that point owing to the age of the other buildings also featured on the map. The flint faced retaining wall suggests the site was in use for warrening in the 1300s, as it shares this feature with Thetford Warren Lodge that has been dated through recent archaeological survey work. Both Thetford and Mousehold heath sites had rights of warren granted by the King of the time to the Bishop in 1090 and 1101 respectively for which documentary evidence survives.

It is therefore reasonable to state that The Warrenhouse site therefore has historical context dating back to the 12th century, with the building itself dating from 16th century date or earlier, with later phases dating to 1801 and 1840.

Warren Lodge Typology

With the early association of Bishop Herbert de Losinga with the site of St. Leonard's Priory and Mount Surrey – later Kett's Castle, it is plausible that The Warrenhouse incorporates or replaces an earlier medieval warren lodge structure.

Warren houses tend to share a broad typology: tall, two-storey, single chamber structures built in lonely and commanding spots, often south facing since rabbits prefer warmer slopes. They had one or more fireplaces from a very early date for such features, several windows for surveying surrounding countryside and a well nearby. The ground floor was often strengthened or fortified, since it was here that valuable carcasses and pelts were stored. A spiral stair, often in the south-west corner and with one or more windows overlooking the warren slope, led to the first floor, where the warrener lived.²⁵



Ground floor fireplaces at The Warren House, Kimbolton before restoration - left, and 'The Warrenhouse' 143 Kett's Hill, Norwich - right. Both have brick fireplaces on the end wall with a substantial ceiling beam over and a cupboard to the righthand side. Photo credits, left: © Caroline Stanford, 'The Warren House History Album', The Landmark Trust, 2012-2014; right: Frances Woodgate

Former resident of The Warrenhouse, Paul Welter, has described the living room as having 'a massive inglenook fireplace' and also said that there is a chain hanging within the chimney over the hearth. In the photograph of Kimbolton Warren House above, it is clear that the large inglenook fireplace was later infilled, and it is likely that the same thing happened to the fireplace in The Warrenhouse in Norwich when its use as warren lodge ceased. The generous fireplace would have been used in the processing of rabbit skins and perhaps the smoking or

²⁵ Williamson, Rabbits, Warrens & Archaeology (Stroud, 2007) p14. Citation from 'The Warren House, Kimbolton, Cambridgeshire: a rare & interesting survival, Caroline Stanford, published in Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society, Volume 58, 2014. p63

cooking of the carcasses. The brickwork has been painted black, presumably to give the impression of a cast iron surround that would have been fashionable from the 18th century.



Chain which may have been used for hanging large pots over the fire; the shaft is wide for a large hearth, narrowing higher up

Chain in the living room chimney shaft – photo © Christine Tacon

The Warren House at Kimbolton, Cambridgeshire, has a larger floor plan, measuring approximately 26ft x 16ft (5m x 8m) and is set within a vast landscape, set apart from Kimbolton Castle by approximately 920m. It was thought to be “an 18th-century eye-catcher for Kimbolton Castle, aligned precisely with the Duchess’s bedroom in the castle below”²⁶ and its indicative date of 1673 is a century later than the first phase of 143 Kett’s Hill, which dates from 1589 and earlier. However, the increase in size whilst retaining similar features supports the concept of a building typology and may reflect the shift towards a more commercial rural industry in rabbit keeping at Kimbolton. The Warren House Kimbolton is a very rare example of an extant timber framed warren house, whereas The Warrenhouse at 143 Kett’s Hill is of masonry. Both were purpose built to function as the home and workplace of the warrener for their respective patrons.

‘Brandon Warren was owned by the Bishop of Ely and in existence by 1252 when manorial accounts record income from the sale of rabbits, the Brandon warreners having contracts with London merchants.[PRO SC61304/23-36]’²⁷. There is a detailed account of the construction of Brandon Warren Lodge, Norfolk, in 1382 in the Brandon Manor Account Records:

'14 foot long and 12 foot wide to start from a firm foundation ... the walls shall be 20 foot high ... the first chamber shall be 12 feet high from ground level, the second chamber 8 feet high'. Free-stone as necessary;); 160 cartloads of stone and 1 scraper for collecting the stones; dug chalk; dug clunch for walling, dug sand; 5 poplar boards; 100 nails; 1 Estonian board for making a bar to close the door; whitewash and 24 hurdles for making a fence. Last of all in the Account is 'present given to the masons, by command of the chief steward, 4d'.²⁸

The original bay of The Warrenhouse in Norwich is similar in dimension to that at Brandon, the floor plan measuring approximately 15 ft x 12ft, though with a lower ceiling height of

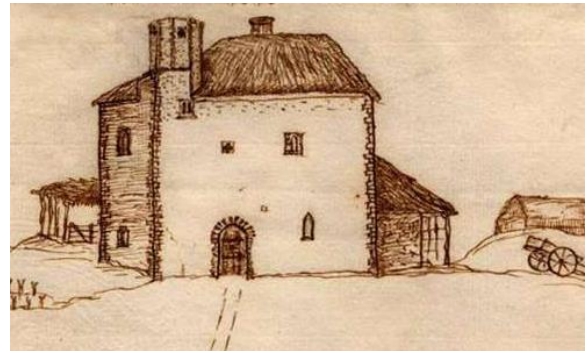
²⁶ Caroline Stanford, ‘The Warren House History Album’, The Landmark Trust, 2012-2014. p7

²⁷ [Brandon – The Breckland Society \(brecsoc.org.uk\)](http://www.brecsoc.org.uk)

²⁸ [High Lodge Heritage - Landscape - The Warren Lodge of High Lodge \(fotf.org.uk\)](http://www.fotf.org.uk)

approximately 8ft. The additional headroom at Brandon may have allowed carcasses of other larger game to be hung from the ceiling, with The Warrenhouse in Norwich perhaps being only for rabbits. The Warrenhouse may have managed a smaller warren on Mousehold Heath. The Breckland area is a far more extensive area of heathland and could therefore have supported a much larger rabbit population. The warren house or warren lodge buildings required to process a larger rabbit population may have been built with more defensive features given the more remote siting of the lodges compared to at Mousehold, in order to protect the large number of valuable rabbit carcasses and furs stored within them.

Thetford Warren Lodge is the most complete surviving building of its type on the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks. It has the appearance of a small castle, of defensive construction with thick masonry walls and small window openings:



Thetford Warren Lodge, Norfolk © English Heritage, and drawing of Thetford Warren Lodge by Thomas Martin, 1740

The drawing of Thetford Warren Lodge in 1740 by Thomas Martin shows a lookout tower located at the corner of the building. It is possible that the existing shower room at The Warrenhouse may have been the location for a similar feature – the walls are thickened in this location.

The Warrenhouse on Kett's Hill may have been afforded some protection from poachers by the city guards with artillery in Cow Tower, built in 1398-1399, which was strategically placed at the foot of Kett's Hill:



Photograph of Cow Tower, © Norwich 360

One of the earliest purpose-built artillery blockhouses in England, Cow Tower was built to control a strategic point in Norwich's city defences, to house guns and a garrison of gunners to defend the approach to the city across the River Wensum. Its height of over 15 metres (49 feet) was necessary to overlook the high ground on the opposite bank.²⁹

The high ground on the opposite bank was Mousehold Heath, and the site of 143 Kett's Hill. "Built on a hill, Norwich was of strategic importance to the invading Saxons, Romans and Normans"³⁰ so the inhabitants needed to protect the main access points through the city walls.

The range of artillery guns at the time was between 300m and 600m which placed The Warrenhouse, at 528m away from Cow Tower, within firing range. With defensive cover from the city guards, the building may not have required the level of defensive architecture present in the more remote warren lodges such as Thetford Warren Lodge and others in the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks.

²⁹ [History of Cow Tower | English Heritage \(english-heritage.org.uk\)](https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/cow-tower/)

³⁰ [Compare Norwich 23 \(oldmapsonline.org\)](https://www.oldmapsonline.org/)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following Ratings have been used when evaluation the significance of 'The Warrenhouse':

Low, Medium, High, Exceptional, Neutral, Intrusive

HERITAGE VALUES

Evidential value

- Survival of original material

Whilst the visible evidence of original material is limited, the thickness of the walls and the exposed brickwork in the attic spaces enable the main body of the building to be divided into two distinct phases. The single storey outshot is a third phase of construction and includes an attractive exterior door typical of the period. The chimneys have been rebuilt and the upper hearth blocked up, however the floor plan still shows there were two hearths in the first phases of the building. The roof structure and roof covering have been replaced, albeit the roof finish may be using the same material if the red colouring of the roofs in the 1589 Treswell map is an accurate portrayal.

As an example of a warren house, No.143 is an important survivor evidencing a number of building features that are consistent with the building typology:

- deep ceiling beam (bressummer) spanning lengthwise over the ground floor chamber
- walls thicker at ground floor level than at first floor level for defense but also for timber floor structure to sit on and span across,
- a hearth to each floor level
- an isolated building located in a wooded heath habitat
- the building being orientated towards the sunny southern aspect preferred by rabbits
- a working garden, evidenced by a well on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map

- Evidence of original use

The naming of the building as "The Warrenhowse" on the 1589 map alludes to its use as a place of work and residence for the episcopal warrener in the 16th century. It is the only building of its type identified on the map, and as such it had status within the locality.

Two practical or functional features of the warrener's craft that are evident include hooks for hanging skins to dry within the cupboard on the landing, and the $\frac{3}{4}$ height door under the stairs which is where the warren dog would have been secured at night-time.

Fragments of clay smoking pipes unearthed during weeding and garden maintenance are numerous and were collected by former building owner Peter Thorn. This style of pipe was commonly smoked by rural folk in the 17th and 18th centuries, with use peaking from 1680 to 1700. An attractive carved stone statue of a rabbit was also discovered in the garden.

Taking into account the survival of original material and the evidence of its original use, The Warrenhouse is considered to have **High Evidential Value**.

Historical Value

- Illustrative value

‘The Warrenhouse’ illustrates how buildings adapt and evolve over time with its changes in use, changes in ownership and development phases.

The major refurbishment and extension of the property in the first half of the 1800s represented it as a Victorian Gothic residence. The porch was centred on the elevation and the window openings aligned for a symmetrical principal elevation as was the stylistic preference of the time. It is probable that the placement of architectural features would originally have been prioritised on a practical rather than aesthetic basis. The window openings were likely enlarged as part of the remodelling. The addition of the ornamental barge boards was a stylistic refinement that illustrates the aesthetic sensibilities of the time.

This later remodelling gives the building a visual charm, however it masks the original character and purpose of the property.

For these reasons, ‘The Warrenhouse’ is considered to have **Medium Illustrative Value**.

- Associative value

‘The Warrenhouse’ is associated with the see of the Bishop of Norwich going back centuries. In the medieval period, Norwich was the second largest city in the country after London and this can largely be attributed to the Norman influence and investment in the built fabric of the city that commenced with Bishop Herbert de Losinga from 1095 onwards.

The building is also closely associated with Kett’s rebellion, a historic event of national significance that took place in 1549, through its location on Kett’s Hill and its proximity to Mousehold Heath and Surrey Mount (former site of St. Michael’s chapel), Kett’s headquarters during the rebellion.

By name, the building is associated with its original purpose as home to the warrener of the Bishop of Norwich, which has ensured its legacy and original purpose prevailed through the annals of time.

The building is therefore considered to have **High Associative Value**.

Aesthetic Value

The Victorian Gothic style and architectural features of The Warrenhouse are attractive without being overly fussy or ornate. The barge boards have smooth, flowing curves that stand out nicely against the rendered walls. A distinctive lozenge and square design lends charm to the leaded lights on the principal elevations, the mixed geometry of the two shapes having more visual interest than one repeated shape. The yellow stained-glass quarries to the perimeter of the windows to the principal elevations add visual interest, especially internally when the sunlight is passing through them. Timber hood moulds over the windows provide definition to the openings as well as a useful weathering detail.

Flanked by a high, flint and brick boundary and retaining walls in an elevated position, and with a generous sized south facing garden for its location close to the city centre, the setting

of the building is visually pleasing with a number of mature trees adding interest to the landscaping. Although the building is set back from the road, it nevertheless has a presence in the streetscape and is legible as one of the oldest buildings on the road.

The building is therefore considered to be of **High Aesthetic Value**.

Communal Value

-Symbolic Value

Whilst heavily altered in its current form, 'The Warrenhouse' is nevertheless symbolic of a traditional rural industry that operated across the region for generations. Although the building has not retained its original use, its site and environs place it firmly within the historic context of the development of Norwich and the use of the land to further societal progress. Its location on the edge of the Mousehold Heath common lands meant it sat within a landscape that was a vital resource to the local population, as well as one that was harnessed by the Bishop of Norwich to fund the activities of his see.

In addition to being at the centre of Kett's encampment during the rebellion in 1549, 'Mousehold had also been the site of a rebel encampment 60 years previously at the time of the Peasants' Revolt, further strengthening its symbolic significance'.³¹ Whilst the Warrenhouse was not specifically mentioned, it was nevertheless part of the changing social context of the common lands around Norwich and their enclosure by the clergy and gentry.

The Warrenhouse is therefore considered to have **Medium Symbolic Value**.

- Social Value

The Warrenhouse linked the rural industry of warrening to the running of City affairs through the Bishop of Norwich. The influence of the clergy on the development of Norwich from the late 11th century onwards was profound, with a significant architectural legacy alongside strong relationships with the monarchy.

As a physical historical record of the episcopal estate of the Bishop of Norwich, with the siting of the building within the encampment of Kett's rebellion, and its later alterations and changes in use, The Warrenhouse tells the story of societal changes in and around Norwich.

The inclusion of 'The Warrenhouse on the Treswell map of 1589 tells of the social importance of the building. 'As melancholy as a lodge in a warren' – so Benedick describes Count Claudio in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.³² Shakespeare's choice to use the warren lodge in this context demonstrates it was widely understood by the populace that warren houses stood isolated in the landscape. The building form was therefore recognisable to the common person and had a role within the rural community that was understood by wider society.

For these reasons, The Warrenhouse is considered to have **High Social Value**.

³¹ [Kett's Rebellion 1549 | Wastes and Strays | Newcastle University \(ncl.ac.uk\)](#) Dr Rachel Hammersley, June 2020

³² [Rabbits, Warreners and Thetford Warren Lodge | English Heritage \(english-heritage.org.uk\)](#) by Katy Carter

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

Externally, the appearance of 'The Warrenhouse' as an attractive Victorian Gothic residence belies its original purpose and built form. Through a survey of the building and desktop research, it has been possible to uncover the story of the building and place it in its true historical context as a building dating back to the 16th century, possibly with earlier origins. This research confirms that the building does indeed merit its statutory designation as a Grade II Listed Building and is considered to be a building of national importance based on its significance and heritage values. The Warrenhouse is important within the region as it forms a part of the story of the warren industry in East Anglia. It is also significant for its role within the episcopal estate, with the Bishopric of Norwich exerting a notable influence on the development of both the city of Norwich and the wider county of Norfolk over the centuries through a variety of building projects and ecclesiastical work.

The significance of the building is primarily related to its evidential value, associative value, aesthetic value and social value all having a rating of 'high'. The Warrenhouse also has illustrative value and symbolic value at a 'medium' rating. The original use as a working warren house places the building within a relatively small number of surviving examples of what was once an important rural industry and economic activity. Generations of warreners bequeathed the tools of their trade to the next generation and skills were handed down through families. Countryside management is less widely understood in modern times as the vast majority of the population live in urban areas. Indeed, the once large tract of land forming Mousehold Heath has mostly been absorbed into the urban expansion of Norwich city centre and so the setting of 'The Warrenhouse' is unrecognisable from its isolated setting on the Treswell Map of 1589. Despite this urban development, 'The Warrenhouse' retains a good-sized, south facing garden, which is unusual so close to the city centre. It is important that the garden is retained and treated as a listed setting for of the listed building, as the garden setting is intrinsically linked to its historic context as warrens required a south facing aspect. The flint faced retaining boundary wall, outdoor privy and the free-standing boundary wall are all important curtilage structures and should be retained and conserved.

The building is currently in good condition, and it is important that it be well maintained so that its built fabric, heritage values and significance can be conserved and retained for the long-term future. The best way to retain significance is to ensure that the building is continually inhabited, and by a resident(s) who understands the importance of the building from a heritage perspective, respecting that any maintenance work must of a suitable standard, and appropriate specification – noting that listed building consent may need to be sought for certain maintenance activities – so that the historic built fabric can be preserved and the building in general is conserved.

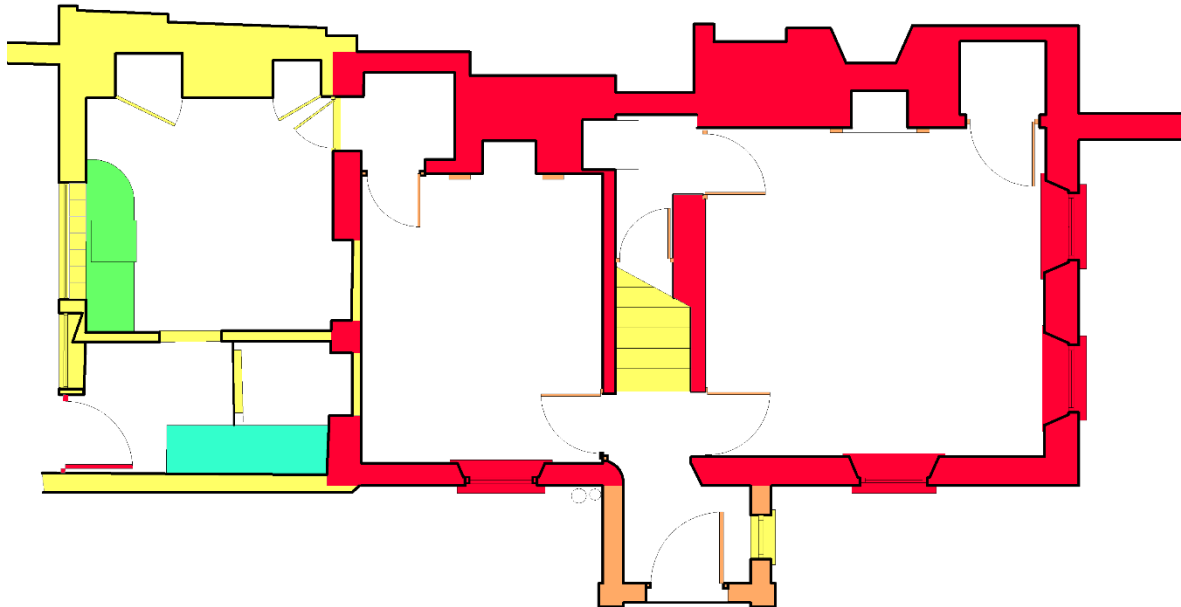
Overall, 'The Warrenhouse' is considered to be a building of **Exceptional Local Significance, High Regional Significance** and **Medium National Significance**.

SIGNIFICANCE DRAWINGS

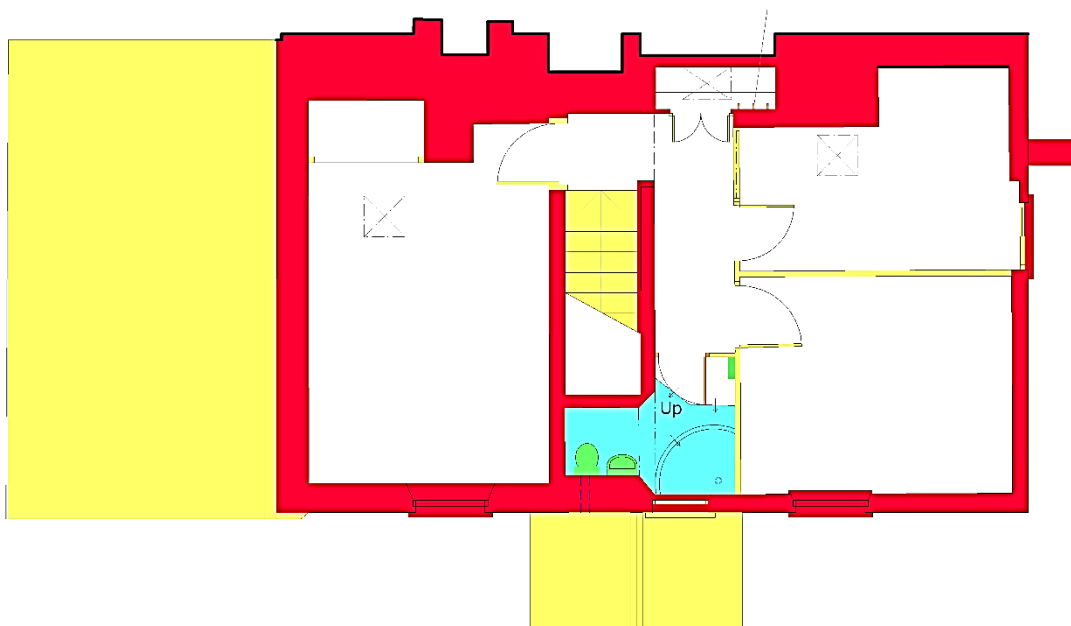
Significance Plans

Significance Grading

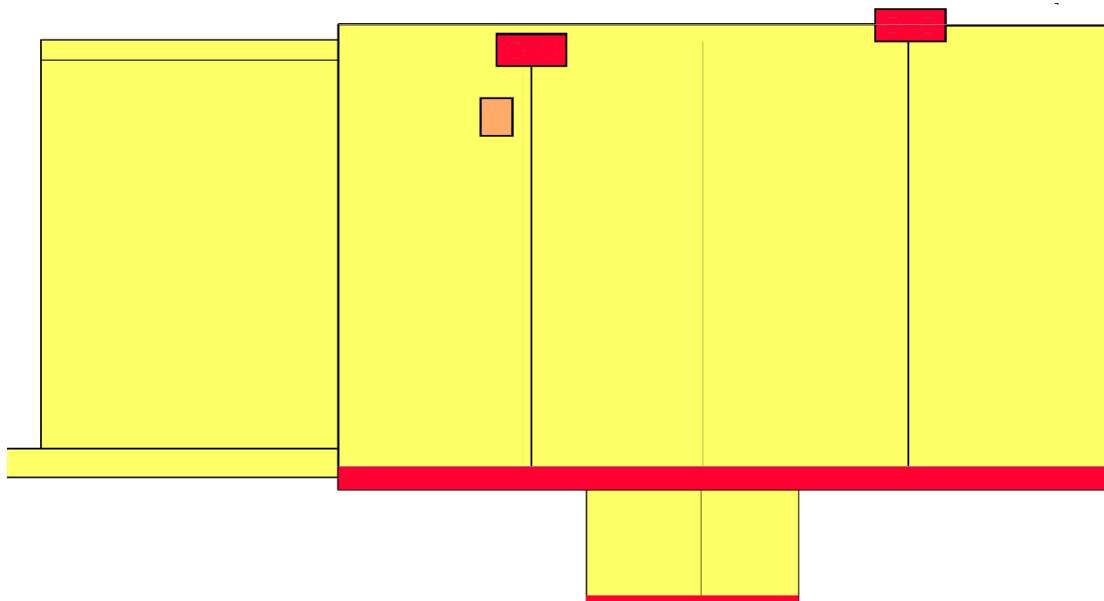
| | |
|--------|-----------|
| High | Neutral |
| Medium | Intrusive |
| Low | |



Ground Floor Plan

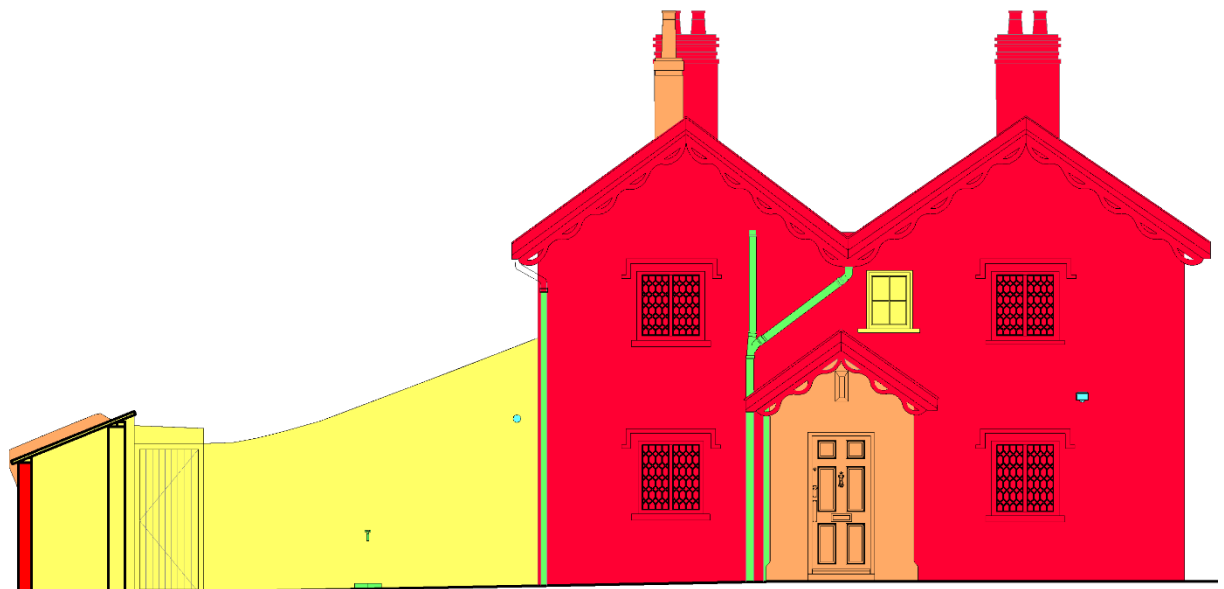


First Floor Plan

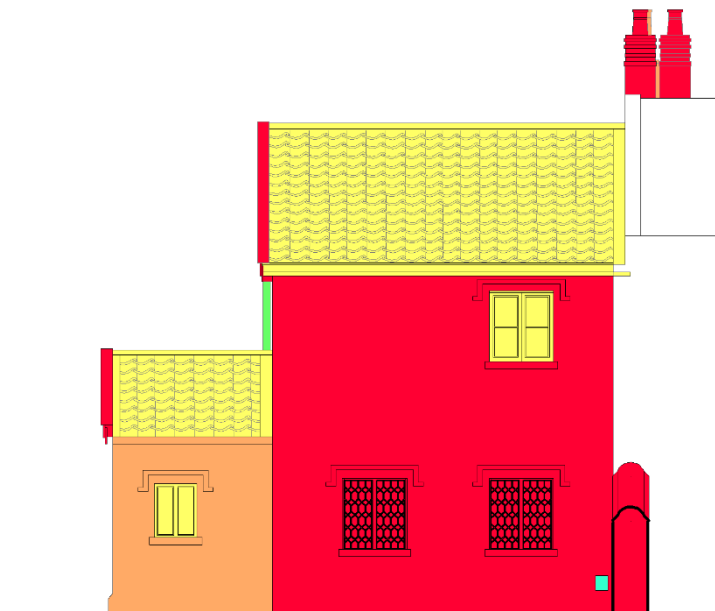


Roof Plan

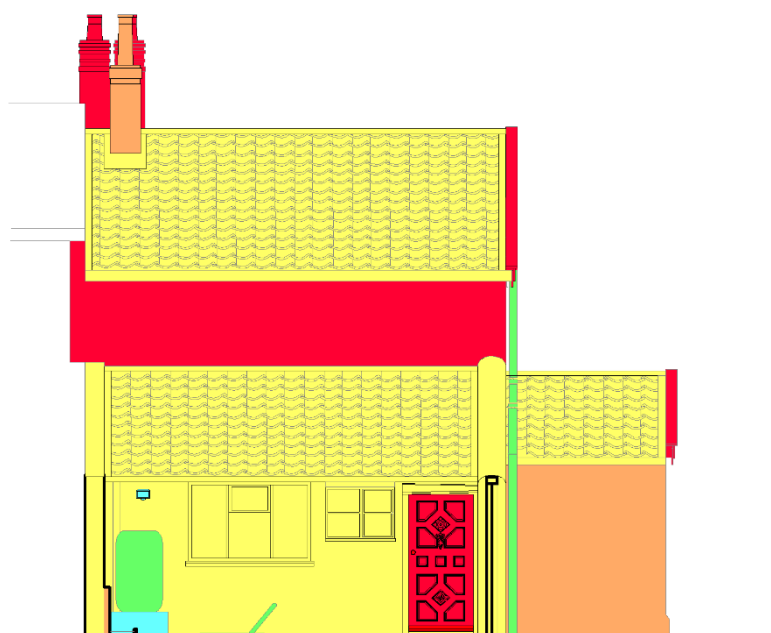
Significance Elevations



Principal Elevation



Elevation to Kett's Hill road



Elevation to courtyard

It is recommended that the Statement of Significance and accompanying drawings be shared with the Norfolk Record Office as well as the resident(s) living in the building so that the knowledge uncovered can be disseminated to interested and responsible parties.

This statement has been prepared with much appreciated input from the Thorpe Hamlet History Society, with whom a hard copy will be shared. The Friends of Norwich Cathedral have expressed an interest in a talk on the building and its history, offering a further opportunity to share the story of 'The Warrenhouse' with a wider audience.

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

RISKS

Occupation of the building is required to maintain the building in good condition and conserve its historic fabric and significance, yet the existing kitchen and bathroom facilities do not meet modern living standards.

The size and quality of the existing accommodation for the bathroom and kitchen are sub-standard for modern living. Without improving those facilities, it would be difficult to attract a new owner for the property.

The current configuration of the kitchen and bathroom amenities is only sufficient for one person, or at the most two people, despite the property having three bedrooms. A property of this size with a garden would make a wonderful family home, though without suitable kitchen and bathroom amenities the property cannot support family use.

There are trip hazards within the property that present barriers to inclusive accessibility and prevent the building performing as a lifetime home.

There are raised timber thresholds to the lobby accessing the kitchen, the doorway between the kitchen and utility room, and within the utility room. The stepped area within the shower room to accommodate the shower trap and waste pipe is awkward in shape. These level changes within rooms present trip hazards and physical barriers for those with impaired mobility or vision. These features detract from the optimal use of the building and accessibility, reducing the viability of it as a lifetime home.

Inappropriate intervention is harmful to historic buildings

Intervention to listed buildings needs to be done with diligence by suitably qualified and experienced specialists to ensure that any interventions deemed necessary to enhance the building's performance do not risk harm to the significance or historic character of the building.

Alterations to the physical fabric of the historic building must be kept to a minimum and be demonstrated to be justifiable in terms of the long-term benefits to the building and its users.

Statutory Consent is required for works to enhance the building

Whenever Statutory Consent is required for works to listed buildings and heritage assets, there is a risk that applications for consent may not be successful and therefore that the desired works cannot be implemented.

It is a criminal offence to undertake works on a listed building without gaining statutory consent. Listed Building Consent must be in place before any works commence, and any conditions pertaining to the permission must be satisfactorily discharged.

The risk of not obtaining consent is mitigated through researching and studying the building thoroughly in order to understand its heritage values, significance and special character, before determining the nature of the proposed interventions.

Summary of Risks

To secure long term viable occupation, the kitchen and bathroom facilities need to be enhanced and the threshold levels addressed for improved accessibility, amenity and hygiene.

Proposals for the building and any future works need to be on the basis of minimal intervention and executed using sound conservation principles by suitably qualified and experienced individuals who understand how to care for the built fabric and preserve the building's significance.

OPPORTUNITIES

There is a great opportunity to considerably improve the amenities within the property with a small number of selective and carefully considered interventions.

By understanding the historical development of the building and its significance, informed decisions can be made about how best to enhance the performance and amenity of the building as a residence in modern times with minimal intervention and in a manner that seeks to enhance the quality of the internal accommodation whilst conserving significance.

Retaining the existing function of rooms preserves the other spaces intact, whereas relocating the amenities into larger rooms would be detrimental to the historic fabric and also to the legibility of the building's former uses.

Both the bathroom and the kitchen were not part of the original property and were later additions that enhanced the amenities for the residents of the building commensurate with the quality of facilities available at those times. As such, there is both precedent and opportunity for enhancing the amenities within these spaces of the building.

There is scope to provide a more inclusive dwelling that can support an increased number of occupants through selective enhancements of the building layout and facilities. In particular, removing trip hazards, providing a downstairs loo and upgrading the kitchen and bathroom provision to meet modern standards of living. Furthermore, by making the right alterations, the property can become a life-time home, providing accommodation suitable for the very young through to the elderly and also supporting users who may have physical or visual impairments.

The historical development and changes of use of the building are not obvious on first inspection. Legibility of the building's history can be improved and shared through visual cues in the building and its setting, and also through sharing the research into the building's history.

The proposed removal of raised thresholds and level changes within the building will considerably enhance the long-term amenity of the spaces and improve the accessibility for

future residents. Whilst these level changes are physical markers of how the space has been subdivided or adapted, their removal does not mean that their presence will be lost entirely. The positions of the raised thresholds can be visually recorded within the new floor finishes so that the previous layout can still be legible and understood.

Through the research undertaken to support the listed building consent application, a greater knowledge and understanding of the story of the building and its historic context within local and regional building types can be shared for the benefit of those using the building and any interested parties locally. Local history and building development are intrinsic to place shaping, and The Warrenhouse presents an exciting opportunity to discuss social history across a span of 900 years. Therefore, it is proposed to make this document available to Norfolk Record Office and local history and archaeology groups for furthering the interests of local individuals and researchers in the locality.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A search of the Historic England databases yields only 7 surviving listed buildings identified as 'Warren Lodges' in the country. It is believed The Warrenhouse is the only one that remains in domestic occupation, and this is the principal reason behind its survival – the built fabric was adapted to enable continued use. This illustrates the rarity of the building typology, to which a number of factors have probably contributed: the isolated location of the buildings within the rural landscape meaning they fall into disrepair once vacated; the lack of demand for rabbit meat and fur leading to the dying out of the role of the warrener as a rural custodian; the characteristics of the building typology being specifically suited to a particular function that do not lend themselves to easy adaptation for alternative uses without extending the building – as mostly functional buildings, the aesthetics were of less importance than security and utility in the older examples. Later lodges to parkland estates combined the utilitarian function with an aesthetic function such as an 'eyecatcher' as well as emblematic status symbol. Social change is the main driver for the warren lodges being vacated and becoming redundant.

It is most fortuitous then, that, unassuming in its outward appearance, The Warrenhouse at 143 Kett's Hill, survives as a complete building. Although it has been heavily altered and extended, it retains a number of important features that illustrate its original use:

- Near square plan form of the typical dimensions of warren lodges
- Two storey building with a hearth on both floors, with a double chimney flue
- A deep ceiling beam over the ground floor chamber
- Thick masonry walls to the ground floor for defensive purposes
- Orientation of the building to the southern aspect preferred by rabbits
- Windows strategically placed to watch over the southern aspect
- A position on high ground for surveillance and with sloped terrain for drainage of the warren
- Surviving cupboards and storage areas for all the equipment (nets, traps, warrener's shovels etc.), carcasses and the warrener's dog
- Survival of large inglenook fireplace behind existing finishes to the living room with chain within the flue for hanging items over the fire – referenced by former owner Paul Welter

The early association of The Warrenhouse site with Bishop Herbert de Losinga likely meant that whilst the 16th century building may have seemed rural and remote to the old medieval city of Norwich when first built, subsequent development over the centuries has brought the city boundary out to meet the site. Being closer to the enlarged city prevented the building being lost and forgotten in the rural landscape when its original use ended, and its physical location and setting with a good-sized garden helped ensured its adaptation and continued use. The ecclesiastical patronage of the building is surely a factor too, as wealthy landowners, the Bishop of Norwich and the Dean and Chapter would have invested in and cared for the property whilst it was in their ownership. Once in private ownership, the building continued to be occupied and maintained.

With the benefit of the knowledge uncovered and assimilated in the writing of this report, it is now possible to appreciate The Warrenhouse as an important surviving example of a warren house. It's very nature as the house for the prior or warrener is retained in its name, signifying

it was occupied as a house from early times, not just as a lodge used for hunting parties or the seasonal culls; it was purposefully built as a home for a warrener, and the first warreners would have been priors from St. Leonard's Priory a short distance away.

The Warrenhouse building and site are of special historic interest, reflected in the grade II listed status of the building. Now that new light has been shed on that special historic interest through setting it within the context of the building typology and local history, The Warrenhouse can be better conserved for the long-term future. The critical part of securing its future is to continue the tradition that started at the turn of the 19th century: maintaining the building in residential occupation. The building has survived because it was adapted as required to suit use as a farmhouse, then as a housekeeper's residence with access into the neighbouring property at 145 Kett's Hill, before becoming a private residence once more with the addition of plumbed bathroom. The key to longevity for this heritage asset will be to enable The Warrenhouse building to continue to adapt as required to keep it occupied for generations to come. The knowledge shared in this report will help to ensure that any future proposals are properly informed by an understanding of the significance and special features of the property, the boundary walls and garden, which must be protected and conserved so that the heritage values are respected, retained and enhanced. Any future proposals will require input from a suitably qualified and experienced heritage professional and listed building consent sought for any works that make physical changes to the historic fabric.

The Warrenhouse is a fascinating building that is associated with episcopal warrening rights dating from the turn of the 12th century and incorporates physical elements dating back to 1589 or earlier: with the right maintenance and continued occupation, it could well last several centuries more.

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W. rex ang. Un. ann. 7 omib; ppositis de norfolc 7 sudfolc sat
Facere ut eps de reford habeat Warennas suas quietas. 7 in
mea firma pace. Videlicet Warennas de h; a; 7 de humber
fella. & de tofta. & de blafolda 7 blaitona. 7 de tornedys. t.
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