

Peter Bell

Historic Building Consultancy

Specialist adviser in the historic built environment

Listed buildings and conservation areas: heritage planning: appeals: research: litigation:
expert witness: building recording

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Alterations at Dormers, Bessels Green Lane, Bessels Green TN13 2PT



Peter Bell BA (Hons.) MA (Cons.) PDD (Cons.) IHBC
Youngs Farm, Lower Hardres, Canterbury, Kent, CT4 5PG
07749 463298 Peter@Bell.uk.com

CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION & SCOPE OF REPORT	3
2.0	DESCRIPTION OF DORMERS AND ASSESSMENT OF ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE	5
	Assessment of heritage significance	5
	Summary of Heritage significance	7
3.0	DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ALTERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT OF THEIR HERITAGE IMPACT	9
	Description of the proposed alterations	9
4.0	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	14
	APPENDIX 1: Personal statement by the applicant	15
	APPENDIX 2: Map regression	18

FIGURES

Figure 1: Approved plan showing the location of the glazed screens

PLATES

Plate 1: Front elevation
Plate 2: Rear elevation
Plate 3: Rear view of first floor bathroom extension with retained closet
Plate 4 and 5: French doors on the north and west elevation of bedroom 3
Plate 6 and 7: Glazed cellar door in place of balustrades

© Peter Bell Historic Building Consultancy
No part of this report is to be copied in any way without prior written consent

1.0 INTRODUCTION & SCOPE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This heritage statement has been prepared by Peter Bell Historic Building Consultancy on behalf of Rod and Parm Jarman.
- 1.2 The purpose of the heritage statement is to identify and describe the heritage significance of Dormers which is a Grade II listed building, and to assess the effects on significance arising from alterations which were carried out in 2011 and 2012. It deals with heritage-specific matters relating to significance, character and appearance.
- 1.3 The alterations are limited to the rear and the interior of the building and include the following: alterations to the rear elevation and family bathroom; alterations to the side and rear windows to bedroom 3; alterations to the cellar stairs; removal of glazed screens in the kitchen/family room; and removal of tile-hanging to expose the original timber framing in the rear gable.
- 1.4 The alterations were carried out in 2011 and 2012, so the application for listed building consent is retrospective. Appendix 1 includes a statement by the applicant explaining how the variations to the 2011 consents (ref 11/01395/LBCALT and SE/11/01305/LBCALT) came about, in full consultation with the Conservation Officer.
- 1.5 This Heritage Statement is written to comply with paragraph 207 of the *National Planning Policy Framework 2025* (NPPF) and the accompanying *National Planning Policy Guidance* (NPPG) which jointly set out the requirements for applicants to describe the significance of heritage assets affected by alterations, using appropriate expertise where necessary.
- 1.6 Such an approach is also identified as best practice in *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2*, Historic England, (2015) and *Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets, Historic England Advice Note 12* (2019).
- 1.7 The NPPF makes it clear that the level of detail in the assessment of heritage significance should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on its significance.
- 1.8 A brief description of the building and its history is provided by way of context in section 2.0. The assessment of the building's significance has been informed by

cartographic evidence, but most importantly by a detailed inspection and analysis of the building itself.

- 1.9 As well as being a Grade II listed building, Dormers forms part of a group with other listed and non-listed buildings in the Bessels Green Conservation Area.
- 1.10 The Heritage Statement should be read in conjunction with drawings and other supporting information by Wyatt Glass Architects.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF DORMERS AND ASSESSMENT OF ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

- 2.1 This section provides a brief description of Dormers, its architecture and its key features, in sufficient detail to understand its heritage significance. Its intention is to provide a background and context for the alterations which are the subject of the application for listed building consent. Understanding significance is the first step in establishing the extent to which a listed building can absorb change whilst sustaining its heritage significance.
- 2.2 'Significance' lies at the heart of heritage conservation planning policy and is defined in the NPPF as "the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting." In the case of Dormers, heritage significance derives primarily from its special architectural and historic interest. It is these characteristics that gave rise to its statutory listing.
- 2.3 The description below provides a brief description of the architecture, history and phasing of the building. It concludes with a summary of Dormers' heritage significance.

Assessment of heritage significance

- 2.4 Dormers (and Dormers Cottage) were added to the statutory list on 16 January 1975, Grade II. The list description is typically brief, as follows:

"Large private house with C18 core but having early-mid C19 right extensions of two storeys, two windows with late C19 bay windows; and C19 weatherboarded coach houses to right. The original C18 part of the house is roughcast. Two storeys, moulded eaves and gutter with ridge tile roof and two pedimented dormers. C18 moulded cornice above first floor windows. Various odd C18 sash windows with bars. C19 tiled projecting bay on ground floor and various C19 and modern square paned casements.

The King's Head Public House, Dormers, and garden wall Heath Cottage and Bessels Cottage form a group."

- 2.5 As is often the case, the listing surveyor did not inspect the interior or the rear of the house as the description is intended primarily for identification purposes and not as a record of all the building's noteworthy features.
- 2.6 Architectural analysis reveals that Dormers consists of two main phases of construction (**plate 1**). The two phases are reflected in the architecture of the front elevation: the left part is a mid-18th century rendered Georgian elevation with two storeys and attics, a steeply pitched peg tile roof, and a deep cornice. Most but not all of the Georgian windows have been altered and a square bay window added, but there is no doubt that this was once a polite symmetrical Georgian elevation with a central entrance in the position of the later bay window. In the third quarter of the 19th century (the list description suggests early to mid-19th century) a substantial extension was added to the right in a vernacular revival Arts and Crafts style with a hipped slate roof above a tile-hung first floor and a rendered ground floor. Internally the extension provided a more imposing entrance hallway, a grand staircase and a music salon.



Plate 1: Front elevation showing the original Georgian elevation (left) and the mid-to-late 19th century extension (right)

- 2.7 Contemporary with the north extension, the house was also extended at the rear, completely concealing the rear of the original Georgian House (**plate 2**). The resulting rear elevation is a lively mix of gabled and hipped architectural elements reflecting the complexity and function of the rooms within. Such an approach owes much to the principles of the Gothic Revival. However, the extensive use of tile

hanging, mullioned bay windows with small-paned windows and exposed timber framing is all attributable to the Arts and Crafts movement.



Plate 2: Rear elevation

- 2.8 Map regression (at **appendix 1**) illustrates that all the extensions were in place by the first edition Ordnance Survey map in 1871. The footprint of the house remained substantially unaltered during the 20th and 21st centuries.
- 2.9 The interior underwent similarly radical changes during the mid-to-late 19th century. The quality of the internal fittings is of surprisingly high standard. The grand staircase, the fire surrounds and the doors and door surrounds are all of an unusually high standard. The use of William De Morgan tiles in one of the elaborate fire surrounds is just one example of the calibre of the internal details.
- 2.10 As one might expect, the more functional service rooms are located at the rear of the house in the area now occupied by the kitchen and family rooms.

Summary of Heritage significance

- 2.11 Unusually, the heritage significance of Dormers derives primarily from its 19th century phase of development rather than its earlier Georgian core. That is not to say that its Georgian building is not significant, but it was so altered in 19th century that much of its Georgian elegance and symmetry, its period detailing and even its planform, has been lost or concealed.

- 2.12 It is the narrative created by the two main phases of construction that is of particular interest. It provides evidence of changing aspirations in the way the owners lived. The expansion and gentrification of what was originally a relatively modest Georgian house into a more substantial country house set in its own grounds with stables, gardens and glasshouses provides evidence of how the growing middle classes aspired to the country house ideal, the English country seat, but at a more modest scale.
- 2.13 Internally, the Arts and Crafts and Queen Anne revival interior features are particularly noteworthy.
- 2.14 Externally, Dormers and Dormer Cottage form part of a particularly pleasing and picturesque group of buildings which define the west side of Bessels Green. As such it makes a significant contribution to the special architectural and historic character of the Bessels Green Conservation Area. Its setting and its group value contribute to its special interest.
- 2.15 The use of locally produced building materials such as bricks and handmade clay tiles provides evidence of a time when most materials were locally sourced. Although in common use at the time, they make a significant contribution to local character and distinctiveness. They also provide evidence of traditional construction techniques and developments in craft and manufacturing skills over time.
- 2.16 The building's heritage significance is formally recognised in its statutory designation as a Grade II listed building.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ALTERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT OF THEIR HERITAGE IMPACT

3.1 Local planning authorities are required to consider the impact of proposed alterations on the significance of heritage assets in order to minimise any conflict between the proposals and the conservation of the heritage asset (NPPF 208). Heritage impact is defined as the impact proposed alterations have on the significance of any heritage assets or their settings.

3.2 This section describes the alterations which were made at Dormers back in 2011 and assesses the impact they have on the heritage significance of the listed building.

Description of the proposed alterations

3.3 The alterations comprise five separate elements: 1) alterations to the family bathroom; 2) alterations to the side and rear windows to bedroom three; 3) alterations to the cellar stairs; 4) removal of a glazed screens in the kitchen/family room; and 5) removal of tile hanging to expose timber framing in the rear gable. Each is described below with an assessment of its heritage impact.

1) Alterations to the family bathroom

3.4 The most significant departure from the 2011 consents was the alteration to the family bathroom. During the implementation of the consents in 2011/12 it became clear that the rear first floor wall was in very poor condition. The tile hanging was heavily decayed and bedded on cement mortar, consequently the softwood stud wall was in poor condition. However, the main issue was that it lacked structural support at first floor level and urgent action was required to stabilise the building.

3.5 The solution that was agreed between the structural engineer, the building inspector and the Conservation Officer was to move the first floor wall rearward (by approximately 1.2m) to align with a structural beam, effectively making the bathroom larger (**plate 3**).

3.6 Changes which arose as a direct result of the realignment of the rear wall included the retention of the small closet (rather than its demolition which had been approved) which was adapted to give access onto the balcony; relocation of the bathroom door to provide direct access to bedroom 3 rather than from the landing; and a reduction in the size of the approved lantern light on the flat roof.



Plate 3: Rear view of first floor bathroom extension with retained closet (left) and bathroom (right)

3.7 Externally, the modest extension was designed to complement the design and the roof form of the existing closet. Its architectural form and materials add to the varied mix of building forms which characterise the rear elevation of the listed building. Loss of a section of the stud wall was considered essential by those present at the time in order to achieve structural stability and achieve the conservation aims.

2) Alterations to the side and rear windows of bedroom 3

3.8 Replacement windows to bedroom 3 were approved in the 2011 consents. However, during the course of the alterations in 2011/12, the rear (west) and the side (north) windows (**plates 4 and 5**) were changed to French doors, providing access on to the flat roof/balcony.



Plates 4 and 5: French doors on the north (left) and west elevation of bedroom 3

- 3.9 As there is no consistency to the window/door types on the rear elevation, the change from casement windows to French doors has little or no impact upon the eclectic character of the rear elevation.

3) Alterations to the cellar stairs

- 3.10 The 2011 approvals provided for new handrails and a gate either side of the cellar stairs.
- 3.11 During the works the applicants omitted the approved handrails in favour of a glazed door in the plane of the floor (**plates 6 and 7**). This elegant solution retains the visible presence and legibility of the cellar staircase whilst creating an unimpeded openness to the space.



Plates 6 and 7: Glazed cellar door in place of balustrades and gate

3.12 This simpler solution avoids the risk of the modern balustrades competing with and potentially devaluing the significance of the elegant Georgian balustrade and newel post. The Georgian staircase is perhaps the most significant survival from the Georgian house and is located just a couple of metres from the cellar stairs. As such, the heritage impact of the change is positive.

4) Removal of glazed screens and doors in the family room

3.13 The 2011 permission included glazed screens around the room called “quiet area” on the approved plans (**figure 1**). The screens were installed in accordance with the consent but were later removed to create a more open-plan space and improved circulation.

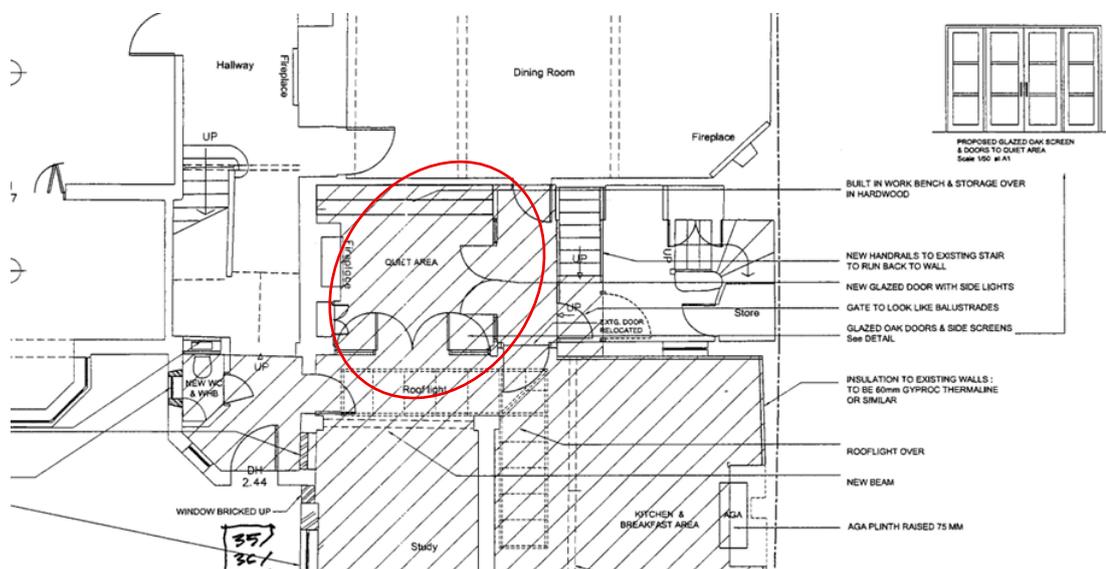


Figure 1: Approved plan showing the location of the glazed screens installed in 2011/12

3.14 The application seeks to regularise the removal of the modern glazed screens and doors which were installed in accordance with the 2011 consents but later removed.

3.15 The screens/doors, which were off-the-shelf items purchased from Wicks, were of no intrinsic value and arguably detracted from the quality of the interior. Although they marked the position of earlier walls, their removal achieved better openness and improved circulation.

5) Removal of tile-hanging to expose timber framing in the rear gable

3.16 As part of the 2011/12 conservation works, deteriorated tile hanging was stripped off the rear elevation. The removal of the tile hanging from the rear gable above

bedroom 3 revealed the original black and white truss which was originally intended to be exposed (**plate 8**).



Plate 8: The gable feature which was uncovered during the 2011/12 restoration

- 3.17 In consultation with the Conservation Officer it was agreed that the timber framing within the gable should be left exposed to reveal the original feature and restore the original appearance of the elevation. The application seeks to regularise the position.
- 3.18 The heritage impact of removing the tile hanging and restoring the decorative gable was positive.

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Dormers is a Grade II listed building which falls within the Bessels Green Conservation Area. Its heritage significance lies in the narrative created by its two distinct phases of construction. The polite 18th century house is still apparent from the front, but it was substantially altered and extended during the mid-to-late 19th century in the Arts and Crafts style. Internal fittings such as fire surrounds, staircases, panelling and door surrounds, some in Queen Anne Revival style, are particularly noteworthy.
- 4.2 The house was unoccupied and fell into disrepair by the turn of the 21st century. It was sensitively restored and brought back to life by the current owners. They secured consent for a wide-ranging package of improvements and conservation works in 2011 and proceeded to carry out the alterations and repairs in 2011 and 2012. All the works were closely supervised and agreed with the Ms. Nicky Twort who was Conservation Officer at the time. The works were also professionally supervised by Martin Bush Architect, Garry Gabriel Structural Engineers, and Greendor Building Inspectors.
- 4.3 As is often the case, the scope of work had to change for a variety of reasons during the works, particularly in response to structural issues. Some alterations which were agreed verbally at the time with the Conservation Officer at the time were never documented. Consequently, the purpose of this application is to regularise those alterations, all of which are at the rear of the listed building or in what were the service rooms at the rear of the house.
- 4.4 All the changes are consistent with the conservation of the listed building and they have no impact on the character of the conservation area. They have been carefully executed with respect for the historic fabric and the special character of the listed building.
- 4.5 As such, the proposals comply with policies aimed at conserving and enhancing the historic environment contained in the NPPF, the NPPG and the Adopted Local Plan which jointly require that great weight be given to the conservation of heritage assets when considering the impact of proposed alterations. Most importantly the proposals comply with the statutory duty set out in Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

APPENDIX 1: PERSONAL STATEMENT BY THE APPLICANT

Personal Statement of Recollection and Professional Involvement

Rod Jarman QPM OStJ

11th November 2025

Context and Condition of the Property

When I purchased *Dormers* in 2010, the property had been vacant for nearly a decade. It was in serious disrepair — suffering from damp, rot, insect infestation, and multiple structural issues, including instability to the rear wall and floors, and damage to the external finishes. The project that followed was not cosmetic; it was a necessary restoration of a building at risk.

Given the listed status of the property and its location within the Bessels Green Conservation Area, all works were planned and executed with professional oversight and in continuous communication with Sevenoaks District Council.

Professional Team and Oversight

Throughout the restoration, I was supported by a full professional team:

- **Architect:** *Martin Bush*
- **Structural Engineer:** *Gary Gabriel Associates* (Gary Gabriel and colleagues)
- **Building Control Agents:** *Greendor*, operating under the authority of Sevenoaks District Council
- **Conservation Officer:** *Ms. Nicky (Nicola) Twort*

Ms. Twort attended site on several occasions and was in regular discussion with our architect and building control representatives. She provided guidance on materials, finishes, and methods to ensure the works respected the building's character while addressing the urgent conservation and safety issues.

Restoration and Structural Works

During 2011, as the principal works progressed under Listed Building Consent 11/02067/DETAIL, several issues were identified that required structural reconsideration and on-site decisions. These included the failing rear wall, the deteriorated window frames, and widespread decay to the rear tile-hung elevation caused by birds and squirrels nesting in the attic void.

Rear Wall and Bathroom Area

The bathroom formed part of a larger section of work completed under the listed consent. As the external wall was opened, it became clear that it did not sit on a structural wall or beam, leaving the rear of the building vulnerable to movement. This discovery led to discussions between myself, *Martin Bush*, *Gary Gabriel Associates*, and *Greendor*. We sought the advice of Ms. Twort, who agreed that repositioning the wall slightly outward—so that it would rest on the principal beam below—was the most appropriate conservation solution. She accepted this approach as sensible and low impact, noting that it was at the rear of the building and would not affect the listed façade or the view from the Green.

At the same time, we agreed that the bathroom doorway could be relocated from the landing to the main bedroom to accommodate the revised structure and to reveal more of the original Georgian staircase, which had previously been obscured. The bathroom has continued to function as the family bathroom, as originally intended. All works on this were completed in 2011/12

Windows and Rear Tile-Hung Elevation

We held several discussions with the Conservation Officer regarding the rear windows and the tile-hung elevation, which had been severely damaged by water and infestation. There was a gap about 50cm square through the tile and wall into the loft. When the tiles were removed, a fine earlier façade was revealed beneath. Ms. Twort considered this a positive discovery and encouraged reinstatement using appropriate treated timbers and like-for-like tiles.

We also discussed the large first-floor rear window, which was replaced using handmade hardwood units as part of the consented works. These were agreed to be acceptable due to their rear location and quality of workmanship.

Later, when some further windows were replaced, we believed these fell under the same approval and did not revisit the documentation. On reflection, this was an oversight, and we now seek to regularise this aspect through retrospective consent.

Focus of Conservation Oversight

During this period, much of the Conservation Officer's attention was understandably focused on the front façade and setting — including the pebble dash removal, structural repairs to the front wall, and the Beech tree in the front garden, all of which required detailed discussion and separate permissions.

At the same time, Building Control and the Conservation Officer maintained oversight of the internal and rear works. Given the scale of restoration and the number of parallel approvals, there was ongoing engagement between all professionals to ensure safety, authenticity, and compliance.

Cellar Entrance

One small issue remains unresolved: the balustrade around the cellar entrance at the bottom of the rear staircase. This was subject to condition in the original application which has not previously been addressed.

Originally, we intended to install a traditional balustrade, but after trial and error, none were satisfactory in safety or appearance. Ultimately, we installed an automatic glass floor door, which improved light and safety and allowed the staircase to be fully revealed.

This change was not separately notified but aligns with the spirit of the original condition and should now be regularised.

Summary of My Recollection

- All major works were carried out under professional direction and with Sevenoaks Council's knowledge and oversight.
- Every significant variation was discussed with the Conservation Officer, particularly where structural safety or material conservation was at stake.
- The rear of the property, where these changes occurred, is not visible from public areas and forms part of a low-significance service range of the house.

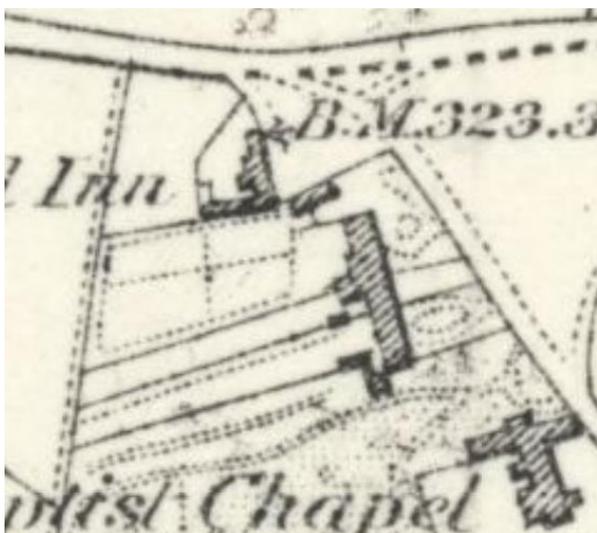
- The front and main façades—the focus of the listing—remain exactly as approved and have been repaired and preserved.
- Any discrepancies between the as-built condition and the approved drawings arose from on-site conservation decisions taken in good faith, and never from any intent to deviate from the approved design.

I trust this statement will assist the heritage and planning professionals in understanding the background and the genuine conservation intent that underpinned every decision made during the restoration of *Dormers*.

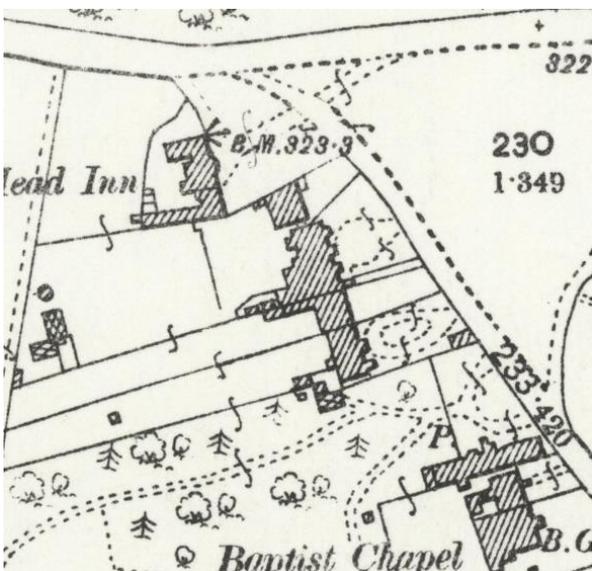
Rod Jarman QPM OStJ

FICPEM FICM

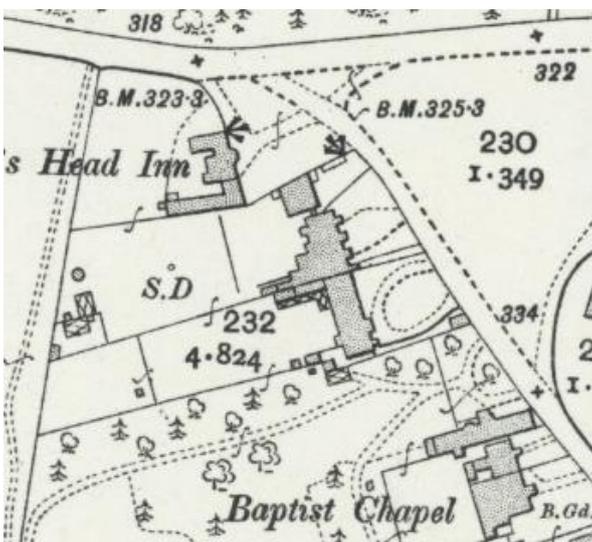
APPENDIX 2: MAP REGRESSION



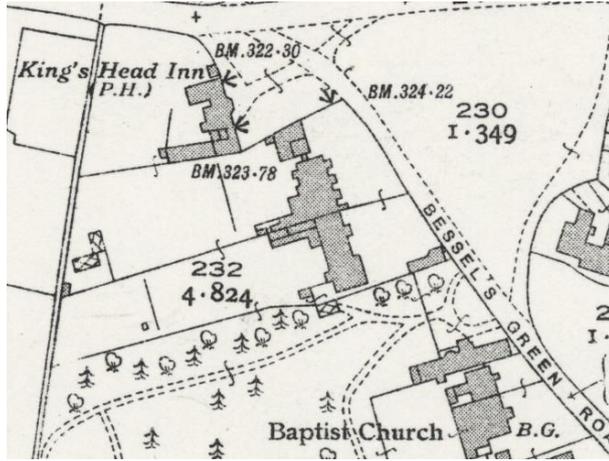
6" Ordnance survey map surveyed 1871 published 1869



25" Ordnance Survey map surveyed 1895 published 1896



25" Ordnance Survey map surveyed 1907 published 1909



25" Ordnance Survey map surveyed 1936 published 1938