



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY HISTORIC BUILDINGS GROUP

A step by step guide to writing a building report

Having completed the measured survey and drawings, it is time to put together all the findings into a written report. If you have used the historic building group recording forms, then these will suffice, or will provide all the information for a more formal report. You would need a more structured report if you intend to publish.

There are many different ways to put together a building report. This is one suggested format, but there are others. What is included depends to some extent on the individual building and the level of detail required (see EH guidelines for description of levels 1-4).

SUGGESTED HEADINGS

Summary

A brief paragraph summarising the report contents

1. Site location

Include a map and a description of the location with full address and NGR. It might be helpful to include some details about the settlement and its history, as this gives context to the building's history

2. Statutory designation

Only relevant if the building is listed

3. Survey record

Say how, why and when the survey was carried out, plus the names of the survey team. Include the EH level of recording if relevant (see reference list)

4. Description of building

Describe the following aspects:

- The landscape setting e.g. orientation on plot, relationship to any roads, gardens, out-buildings
- Each of the exterior elevations, including construction materials
- The exterior of the roof, including chimneys
- The interior rooms. It is usual to describe on a room by room basis, noting interesting and significant features.
- The roof space

Remember that it is not necessary to describe everything (it could get rather dull!) and sometimes it is better to include photographs or refer to the drawings...a picture speaks a thousand words.

4. Documentary evidence

Include here evidence from other sources which shed light on the history of the building, e.g.:

- Title deeds
- Historic maps
- Tithe and enclosure records
- Probate records
- Census data
- HER entries
- Planning Department records

5. Interpretation

This is the fun part! This is the section in which you try to interpret the survey results and documentary evidence, and attempt to work out when the building was constructed, the different phases of construction or alteration and perhaps something about its function and its former residents. Precise dating can be very difficult and sometimes impossible, especially for vernacular dwellings which may have few dateable features and little in the way of documents or records. It can be worth sketching the different phases of the building or including a sketch with the time periods in different colours.

Remember that this might be the only record made of your building and few other people will be in a better position to interpret its history. If the drawings and descriptions are clear then it will allow other interpretations to be made, all of which will add to our overall knowledge.

6. Acknowledgements

It is good to thank those people who have helped with the survey such as the householder.

7. References

List any reference materials used including original documents (primary sources) such as historic maps and title deeds, and secondary sources (published materials referred to).

Include the drawings and any useful photographs. The drawings are often put in as appendices, whilst the photographs are better placed into the body of the writing at appropriate points.

References:

Hutton, B. 1986. *Recording Standing Buildings*. The British Archaeological Trust

Swallow P, Dallas R, Jackson S and Watt D. 2004 (2nd edition)
Measurement and Recording of Historic Buildings. Shaftesbury: Donhead Publishing.

Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice.
Swindon: English Heritage (2006)

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