

River Stort. Mr Laing's report on State of Buildings at Bishops Stortford.

12th April 1870

Received by Lee Conservancy Board 24th May 1870

Having examined the several buildings at Bishops Stortford belonging to the Rivers Stort Navigation, I beg leave to state that they comprise a large dwelling house with Stables, Conservatories &c known as Wharf House; a two-storey brick building upon the Wharf, divided into 10 Compartments which were originally used as Granaries; two large Coal Sheds; a group of wood buildings at Hockerill Cut; other groups or blocks of wood buildings known as Old Row; - and in South Street, some wood buildings with a Superintendent's house, a dwelling house adjoining the same, and two cottages.

Wharf House is a modern brick building slated and coated externally with cement. At present the whole may be said to be in good repair, but there are some cracks in the walls, and these, it is probable, may increase as the house stands upon a yielding soil. A portion of the garden wall is much out of repair, apparently from the defective nature of the ground; part of it has had to be taken down recently and rebuilt. The Conservatories, Stables and Outbuildings are in a good state.

The two-storey building divided into Granaries, upon the Wharf, is about 150 feet in length, brick built and tiled. The outer walls are of sufficient thickness, but the partitions within are only of timber, boarded. In the main, this building is in substantial repair, but partly from the absence of internal cross walls and partly from the want of firmness in the soil, the front wall is, in places, somewhat out of the upright; and in the rear are two cracks, one of them extending from the foundations to the roof. These, however, are not serious at present, but if they are due, as is likely, to the softness of the ground, they may be expected to become worse. Many of the facing bricks in this building have perished but this does not much affect the stability of the structure as the walls are of good substance.

One of the Coal Sheds lies near the Brick Granary. It is built of Timber, boarded on the outside, with a Roof partly supported upon Iron Columns and slated. The whole of the Shed is in good repair, though of slight construction.

The other Coal Shed, lying on the opposite side of the Cut, is built of brick and has a tiled roof. The brick wall at the back of this Shed is much dilapidated and will at no distant time have to be taken down and rebuilt. The sides of the Shed are in a sounder state, but consisting of a perishable sort of brick, will soon require a general course of reparation.

The Buildings at Hockerill Cut are in three blocks; built of timber, boarded externally, standing on brick foundations and having tiled Roofs. All of these, being old buildings, are, from the nature of their construction, somewhat out of repair, though in the main they may be said to be in a substantial state. The brick foundations require the insertion of some new bricks in places, and some of the pointing is defective; the external boarding in parts requires renewal, some of the tiling is loose, and the lathing defective.

Old Row is a double row of buildings of considerable length with a roadway between. On the West side of the roadway next the Cut, the buildings stand in detached blocks; but a

continuous line of building occupies the East side of the Roadway. The detached buildings next the water are similar to those at Hockerill Cut, vizt. of Timber, with outside boarding upon brick foundations, and tiled roofs; and the statement above written as to the present condition of the Hockerill Cut buildings applies also to the detached Granaries in Old Row, vizt. slightly defective foundations, sides and roof, but on the whole substantial.

The line of building on the East side of Old Row, in point of construction, is mainly similar to the wood granaries. The sides are of brick noggin boarded externally and the roof tiled. In one point of this line of building and about the middle of its length, the sides and roof have fallen out of the upright to a considerable extent. That part of the building which leans is upwards of 50 feet long and a total reconstruction to that extent will soon become necessary. In other parts the brick foundation is defective, the outside boarding and tiling also requiring some repair.

The Granaries in South Street are of Timber, covered outside with boarding, lath'd and plastered within and the roof tiled. All these Granaries are, as to their state of repair, much in the same condition as those at Hockerill Cut and Old Row. The roofs of several of them have been completely stripped and are under repair, and if it should ever be required to restore them to their former use (the storing of Grain, &c) it would be requisite to reinstate the lath and plasterwork nearly throughout. The studs (or upright timbers) have, in many places, become decayed at the foot, and these it would also be needful to replace with new.

The Superintendent's House near the Granaries in South Street is an old, lath and plaster building in fair condition, but needs painting externally.

The Dwelling house adjoining the above being nearly new is in complete repair.

The two Cottages in South Street are old and of lath and plaster, with tiled roofs. On the whole the sides are in a sound state of repair, but parts of the tiling require to be stripped and relaid.

George E. Laing, Archt.
1, Raymond Buildings
London

April 12th 1870