

Hermitage Farm

Froghall Road, Ipstones Bank, Froghall,
Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST10 2HQ



**Supporting Statement for Proposed Replacement windows with
historically accurate wooden double-glazed units.**

June 2022

1.0 Introduction and Site Description

1.1 The site that is the subject of this proposal constitutes a grade II listed stone farmhouse. The farm is a 132-acre mixed livestock farm (102 acres owned, 30 acres leased) lying between Froghall and Ipstones and overlooking the wooded Churnet Valley in the Staffordshire Moorlands. Both the main farmyard complex and the isolated barn have 17th century origins, altered in the 19th and 20th centuries and built of coursed, dressed and dressed red sandstone.

1.2 The farm sits on a prominent sandstone plateau, which rises to a strong ridge further north, near Ipstones, known as Ipstones Edge. The River Churnet runs to the south-west of the farm and the B5053 (Froghall Road) forms the boundary on the east side. Extensive woodland adjoins the farm to the west and south (Ruelow Wood) and east (Moseymoor, Foxt and Cloughhead Woods). A smaller block of woodland to the north might possibly correspond with an old game covert formerly known as ‘Hermitage Thicket’, although it is marked on an 1879 map as the site of an old quarry. The old hamlet of Froghall lies about 0.48 miles to the south and the centre of the village of Ipstones is 1.25 miles away to the north.

1.3 Ruelow, Moseymoor and Cloughhead Woods form parts of the extensive Churnet Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). There are three grade II statutory listed buildings on the site, including the Hermitage (farmhouse) itself, the barn 20 metres to the north (the subject of this planning and listed building consent application) and another barn 300 metres to the north. The house, which was listed as long ago as May 1953, is built from coursed, dressed and squared red sandstone of ashlar quality, with a tiled roof and brick chimneystack rising from the central roof valley. It is described as being of the late 17th or early 18th century, with mid-19th century alterations and additions. It is of two distinct parts, with the front range thought to be attempting an appearance in keeping with 18th-century fashion and the rear range harking back to traditional forms and detailing of the 16th century. The official listing description for the barn covered by this application (listed in December 1986) runs as follows:

“Farmhouse. Late C17 or early C18 with mid-C19 alterations and additions. Coursed dressed and squared red sandstone of ashlar quality; tiled roof; verge parapets with pitched copings. Brick stack in centre valley. Plan of 2 parallel ranges, entrance front of 2 storeys and 2 windows; 3-light block mullioned small-pane casements, entrance marginally to left of centre with heavy lintel incised into an ogee arch with a circle in the tympanum. Garden front has 5- and 3-light chamfered mullion windows (5-light to first floor left) labelled to ground floor, French casement inserted to right and lower addition to right end. The house appears of reasonably homogenous construction; the entrance front obviously making an attempt at C18 fashion, whilst the rear has the more typical and archaic details of C16 derivation.”

2.0 Details of Proposed Development

2.2 The only external alterations proposed to the listed farmhouse are to replace the mixture of current Windows (various, Metal, UPVC, Single- and double-glazed wood units). With all matching wooden double-glazed units of a historic design that will be more sympathetic to the historic nature of the house

3.0 Heritage Statement

Origins

3.1 The site has ancient origins, having belonged to the Manor of Ipstones until its sale in 1649. The farm was subsequently sold to Michael Bradshaw in 1651. In the Ipstones parish register for

1656 the spelling was ‘Armitage’ and apparently this pronunciation is still used by some local people. The name ‘Hermitage’ was probably adopted in the sense of a ‘secluded retreat’, rather than implying that it was actually the abode of a hermit in a religious sense. The modern spelling is used on Yates’s map of Staffordshire published in 1775. Although the official listing description does not date the present farmhouse and barns earlier than the late 17th century, Faith Cleverdon’s PhD thesis of 2002 entitled *Landscape with Buildings: A North Staffordshire Study Based on the Medieval Parish of Leek, Volume 2* dates the south pile of the double-pile farmhouse to around 1600, reading it as a parlour cross-wing. She believes the north pile was added in the 18th century, with both parts using stone sourced from the adjacent farmland. In the 20th century, the present ‘ingle nook’ in the main parlour was added, with the old triple hearth removed from the kitchen and the kitchen fireplace’s bressummer raised.

Josiah Fernihough

3.2 It has not proved possible to trace the owners or occupiers after Michael Bradshaw until Josiah Fernihough, a timber merchant, was the owner in the 1790s. Josiah was born in Ipstones about 1738 and married Catherine Oulsnam at Ipstones in April 1770. His daughter Maria was born at the Hermitage in November 1792, so he probably lived there at least from the time of his marriage and probably before that. He died in February 1804.

3.3 His son, also Josiah, was born in 1771, married his wife Charlotte in 1790 and died in June 1844 at the age of 72. His gravestone in the churchyard at Ipstones states that he was “of Froghall”. It is known that he, too, lived at the Hermitage, also working as a timber merchant, as he is mentioned in a notice to the creditors and debtors of Jeremiah Fernihough (joiner and shopkeeper of Ipstones), printed in the *Staffordshire Advertiser* for 3rd January 1807. It seems he was also a farmer for a time, since an auction advertisement in the same newspaper, dated 9th March 1822, stated that Josiah Fernyhough [*sic*] of the Hermitage was “declining” (giving up) the farming business and selling off his livestock (dairy cows, pigs and horses), equipment and implements, dairy and brewing utensils, furniture and kitchen requisites.

3.4 Five years later, Josiah Fernihough of Froghall, “timber merchant, dealer and chapman”, was declared bankrupt (*Staffordshire Advertiser*, 9th June 1827). It took several years for his financial affairs to be sorted out. He was still living in the vicinity in 1830, when a petition of several trustees to execute Acts for repairing the road between Cheadle and Leek and to the road above Froghall Bridge was published in a volume of Parliamentary Papers for February 1830. This stated:

*“...if power were given to alter or vary the Line of the said Road from a certain dwelling-house at Frogall [*sic*], in the parish of Ipstones, now in the occupation of Josiah Fernihough, along or through several closes of land, parcel of a certain Farm, called The Hermitage Farm, and to join or communicate with the present Road at or near the northern end of one of the said closes, called the Far Cow Pasture;...”*

Interestingly, William White’s Derbyshire Directory of 1834 has Josiah in charge of a ‘beer house’ at Froghall. The farmers listed there included James and John Fernihough, as well as Richard and William Scarratt, but the names of their farms were not stated.

3.5 Nearby Ruelow Wood was described in an advertisement for timber sales appearing in the *Staffordshire Gazette* for 11th January 1840, under the auspices of Mr. Weston of the Shawe Estate, presumably acting as agent for the Beech family, who were Lords of the Manor of Kingsley and owners of much land there and in Ipstones parish at that time.

“The Ruelow Wood is justly celebrated for its magnificent Oak Timber, great part of which is calculated for ship building and other select purposes; many of the Trees contain upwards of 100 feet each, the shafts being of great length, particularly straight, and abounding in cleft; whilst for texture and durability it may challenge a comparison with any Oak in the Kingdom. The Ash, which is remarkably clear and tough, is also of large dimensions, many of the shafts running upwards of 60 feet in length...the Ruelow Wood occupies a declivity, at the immediate foot of which runs the CAULDON CANAL, which communicates with that of the TRENT and MERSEY, so that the whole of the above described Timber may be put on board of boats at a trifling cost.”

3.6 The second Josiah’s son James married Anne Scarratt in April 1811, establishing a link with that family, members of which were later tenants at the Hermitage Farm. The Fernihoughs of Ipstones can be traced back to at least May 1571, when the marriage of Alice Fernihough was recorded in the parish register. Charles Fernihough gifted the land on which the Ipstones Edge School was built in 1751 and Edward Fernihough was the minister at Ipstones Church in 1788. It is possible that members of this family occupied the Hermitage from an early date, perhaps around the turn of the 18th century.

Richard & Thomas Scarratt

3.7 It would appear that the Scarratts had taken over as farmers at the Hermitage by the early 1830s. Certainly, in the 1841 census, Richard and Hannah Scarratt were living there, both aged 55, together with son Thomas (aged 15), three young agricultural labourers and two domestic servants. Thomas had taken over as farmer at the Hermitage by the time of Kelly’s 1850 Directory of Staffordshire, which also lists William Scarratt at Petty Fields Farm, Josiah Fernihough farming at ‘Winkhill Lound’, Mary Fernihough at Bottom House Farm, William Fernihough at Park Farm, John Fernihough at Lady Edge Farm, James Fernyhough at New House Farm and William Fernyhough at Booths Farm. It is clear that the Fernihough/Fernyhough family had strong farming roots in this area. Around this time, James Beech, as Lord of Kingsley Manor, held a considerable area of land in the Moseymoore Valley, including Hermitage Farm and Ruelow Wood. The 1851 census lists 25-year-old Thomas Scarratt as farming 112 acres at the Hermitage, employing one man and one boy. Other members of the household included his mother Hannah (now a widow, aged 66), two uncles and three servants. The *Derby Mercury* for 30th November 1853 carried an article about Thomas’s successful capture of a goose thief on his farm.

3.8 In the 1861 census, Thomas was still at the Hermitage, farming 150 acres, aged 36, and assisted by his uncle, Richard Ball (aged 47), together with six live-in servants, including a waggoner, ‘cow boy’, shepherd, errand boy (?), dairy maid and house maid. The address is given as “Hall Riddings” rather than the Hermitage, but several other entries are similarly labelled. In February 1864, Thomas married Frances Fernihough of New House, Ipstones.¹ Harrod’s Staffordshire Directory for 1870 listed many farmers in Ipstones parish, but without naming any of the farms. The list included Charlotte and Thomas Scarratt, adding that Thomas was also a landowner. Josiah, Mary, Philip and William Fernyhough were also listed, the first three being landowners. The 1871 census listed Thomas and Frances at the Hermitage, aged 45 and 33 respectively. The farm was now 132 acres. The couple had five young children, three farm servants and one general servant. Two cousins (one a Fernihough) were also staying with them at the time.

3.9 In the 1873 Return of Owners of Land, Thomas was recorded as owning over 32 acres of land in Ipstones parish, with a gross estimated rental value of £80 per annum. The rest of his land at the Hermitage was presumably rented from the Shawe Estate. On 7th April 1876, the *Staffordshire*

¹*Staffordshire Advertiser*, 13/2/1864

Sentinel made reference to the ‘Hermitage Thicket’, two miles from Froghall Station, in a hunting report. This name does not appear on any known map of the locality, but its possible identification has been postulated in paragraph 1.2 above. Another article in the same newspaper, dated 18th September 1880, described James Beech, the ‘squire’ of Kingsley. He was a keen but cautious huntsman and sportsman who was very proud of the greyhounds he bred and who rarely travelled beyond the bounds of his own estate. He employed gamekeepers in Ruelow and Hazels Woods, who were stationed at every point where poachers might try to strike. At the end of his life, he bought an estate at Clifton, near Bristol, and built a large house there, only to die soon after moving into it. He was buried in the family vault at Kingsley in November 1828, aged 63.

3.10 The 1881 census again recorded Thomas and Frances Scarratt (aged 55 and 42) at the Hermitage, the farm now amounting to 140 acres. They had five children and four servants living with them. By 1891, Thomas (aged 65) was a widower, but four of his children were still living at home, now all in their twenties and probably helping to run the farm. There were also three visitors and four servants. Thomas was still at the Hermitage in 1896, when he appeared in Kelly’s Staffordshire Directory. He died in 1897 and his son Thomas took over the farm. On 19th March 1898, the *Leek Post & Times* announced that Thomas Scarratt Junior of The Hermitage had been elected to the general committee of the Leek and District Agricultural & Horticultural Society. The 1901 census lists Thomas, aged 38, as both a farmer and land agent, at the Hermitage, together with his wife Ann (39), four-year-old daughter Mary and four servants, including a cowman, waggoner, housekeeper and one general servant.

Bennett Fallows

3.11 However, by 1904, Kelly’s Directory listed Bennett Fallows as the new tenant farmer at ‘The Hermitage’. By the time of the 1911 census, he was aged 49 and was living at Hermitage Farm with his wife Emily (46), sons Bennett and George (19 and 17, both also working on the farm), daughter Gertrude (16, doing the dairy work on the farm) and 18-year-old servant Thomas Large, the cowman. The farmhouse was said to have eight principal rooms (excluding bathrooms, scullery, landings, lobbies and closets). Bennett was still there in 1921 but was said to be jointly occupying ‘Hall Farm’ at Ipstones with George Austin by 1922 (*Staffordshire Advertiser*, 15/4/1922). He was at Booth’s Hall Farm by September 1928.

3.12 The Hermitage has had a tradition of being haunted since the time the Fallows arrived there. Anthony Poulton-Smith’s book *Paranormal Staffordshire* (2009) relates how a reporter for a Matlock newspaper travelled over the county border to the Hermitage in the early stages of the First World War to investigate claims of ghostly noises described by several residents and visitors to the house. Colonel Beech and his tenant Bennett Fallow(e)s are both mentioned, but it was said to be the previous owner that was the ghost – presumably referring to Thomas Scarratt Senior, who had died in 1897. According to the story, he had acquired a reputation for miserliness, had a permanently bent back, was never seen without his top hat, and was disliked by all who knew him. Local legend had it that he had amassed a small fortune. The Fallows family were convinced his ghost remained in the house.

3.13 Though no-one saw anything, they felt draughts and heard rustling sounds when using the stairs. Mrs. Fallows’ brother, Edward Wheeldon, once visited with his wife, but they were unable to sleep because they said they could hear someone running up and down the stairs all night long. They tried to call out to the others in the house, but could not make themselves heard. In 1916, a servant girl claimed she often heard ghostly screams from beneath her bedroom window. Bennett’s cousin Richard Fallows stayed one night and said he heard the American organ playing a familiar tune in

the sitting room, though no-one had been downstairs at the time. One evening, the family heard a tremendous clatter of falling planks and went outside with lanterns to investigate, only to find not a single plank out of place. Jane Fallows felt “the unmistakable touch of a human hand against her face.” The ghost supposedly preferred to cause disruption at Easter, Whitsun, Christmas, haymaking time and at the summer and winter solstices!

3.14 Another ghostly tradition concerns a large black dog, the size of a donkey and with glowing red eyes, said to be seen from time to time in the road near the Hermitage. This story was also recounted in the Rev. F. Brighton’s *The Tale of Ipstones* (1937), W.P. Witcutt’s *Notes on Staffordshire Folk-Lore* (1942) and Jennifer Westwood & Jacqueline Simpson’s *The Lore of the Land* (2005), besides other books published in recent years. The dog, sometimes known as the ‘Padfoot’ or ‘Boggart’, appeared both near Hermitage Farm and beside Indefont Well in Ipstones, though his chief role was apparently to guard graves.

Douglas Beech and the Shawe Estate

3.15 As mentioned above, the land at and around Hermitage Farm was once leased from the Beech family of The Shawe, Kingsley, which (as Lords of the Manor of Kingsley) owned much of Froghall and the lower ‘Mosey Moor’ (Moseymoore) valley, along with Hermitage Farm and Ruelow Wood. Much of the Shawe Estate was sold from September 1919, upon the death of Rowland John Beech; the lots included Hermitage Farm and the woods (272 acres), as well as Booth Hall Farm (181 acres). The Beech family archives record that Captain Douglas C. M. Beech sold ‘The Shawe’ and all the tenanted farms soon after he inherited them from his father Rowland, preferring the family’s other house at Brandon Hall, near Coventry, where he and his brother could hunt with the Atherstone Hounds “in excellent hunting country”.² The purchasers of the 272 acres of farmland, woodland and game coverts at the Hermitage were Thomas Bolton & Sons, who paid £4,500 for it, with Bennett Fallows as the sitting tenant farmer. Thomas Bolton & Sons were brass and copper miners and manufacturers, based in nearby Cheadle from 1852 until 1961; they ran a Copper Wire Works at Froghall, a short distance south of Hermitage Farm, and another at Oakamoor, about two miles downstream. The company finally went into liquidation in 2014.

Churnet Valley Iron Ore

3.16 The Churnet Valley has long been known for its deposits of a red earthy or ‘brown’ hematite iron ore (a hydrated oxide of iron), which occurs in a distinct layer. It is composed of approximately one-half peroxide and a third of more of metal. In the Hermitage locality, a seam five to six feet above what was once known as ‘First Grit’ and now as ‘Woodhead Hill Sandstone’ exists some 120 feet below the Crabtree coal seam. The deposit is found in an area that is roughly elliptical in shape, with an east-west axis three miles long and a north-south axis of one mile. This area includes the Mosey Moor (Moseymoore) Valley and the Ipstones Park district. There is a yellow or orange tinge to the stone found in the Lower Mosey Moor valley. The hematite ore area was under the control of four main groups of landowners and their lessees by the mid-19th century. The first of these was James Beech (as described in the preceding paragraph), who held the land on the Kingsley or west bank of the River Churnet, as far as the Dalespink, separating it from the Consall Hall Estate. He also held a considerable piece at the eastern end of the area, known as the Lower Mosey Moor Valley, which – as mentioned above – included Hermitage Farm and Ruelow Wood.

² Source: <http://kingsleyremembers1914.org.uk/?p=135>

3.17 The earliest lease agreement was signed by James Beech of The Shawe and William Eli Bowers on 22nd June 1854, concerning “*All that Mine, Vein, Bed of mineral substance called red ore iron stone within certain estates of the said James Beech, situate in the Parishes of Kingsley, Checkley and Ipstones for the term of thirty years*”. This lease included the Beech property near Froghall, the lower Mosey Moor Valley and, on the north-east bank of the Churnet, Ruelow Wood and Hermitage Farm. Bowers found stone of very good quality cropped out at about 18 inches thick in Hazles Wood, level with the base of Raven Rocks and opposite Consall Flint Mill. On the Mosey Moor property, he sank a shaft close by the stream, near the spot where a colour mill later stood. The stone here, which was darker in colour, was carted in the early months to a new wharf that had been established on the Caldon Canal at the start of the new Froghall walk.³

3.18 By the 9th October 1854, Robert Massey of the Paddock Farm, Ipstones [a short distance to the north of Hermitage Farm] had leased to Edward Hambly and three partners in the iron trade the ironstone and coal lying under most of his land, with royalties to be paid at a rate of one shilling per ton for ironstone and 6d for coal. This company was later called the Froghall Iron Ore Company. West of the Hermitage, a short, sharp incline and tramway was used in Ruelow Wood, where the stone quarried was part of the Beech/Bowers agreement. This was given the name ‘Cherry Eye Incline’ and was under concession to the Bettanys. The Cherry Eye Mine, high up in Ruelow Wood, was the last ironstone mine to continue operating in the Churnet Valley. The Forrester family, and later also Tom Bettany, took the mine concession from Beech and Bowers and managed to make a success of the venture until their lease expired in 1907.⁴ Bridge No. 53 on the Caldon Canal is still known as ‘Cherry Eye Bridge’; it led up to the site of the mine. The stone extracted from the Cherry Eye Mine was latterly used for paint making, due to its excellent red colour and quality.⁵

The Beardmores and Barlows

3.19 It has not proved possible to establish from Internet archival sources who occupied the farm between 1928 and 1980, but the present farmer advises that the farmers prior to 1980 were the Beardmores, who were related to the Fallows. The Barlow family acquired Hermitage Farm in 1980, concentrating on beef, sheep and poultry production, with some arable crops. The present farmer still has a herd of around 160 beef cattle at the Hermitage. The family began taking in bed and breakfast guests from 1985 and set up an agricultural contracting business in 1991. A hilltop barn, north of the main farm building group, had been redundant since 1984 but was listed, grade II, in December 1986, and was restored and converted to a residential property in 2005-06. The curtilage listed farm building range just north of the farm house has also been in use as self-catering holiday cottages since permission was granted for this in 1999.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The only external alterations proposed to the listed farmhouse are to replace the mixture of current Windows (various, Metal, UPVC, Single- and double-glazed wood units). With all matching wooden double-glazed units of a historic design that will be more sympathetic to the historic nature of the house