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ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING
INVESTIGATION
ALFORD MANOR HOUSE
ALFORD



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Conservation
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Highways & Planning
Directorate

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING
INVESTIGATION
ALFORD MANOR HOUSE
ALFORD**

SITE CODE: AMH02

NGR: TF 4534 7603

REPORT

February 2002

On behalf of:

ANDERSON AND GLENN
Yew Tree Nurseries
Frampton West
Boston
PE20 1RQ

Client:

ALFORD AND DISTRICT CIVIC TRUST LTD
Alford Manor House
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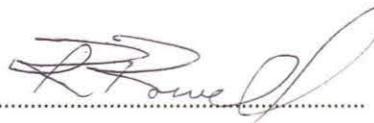

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Adam Nash BSc


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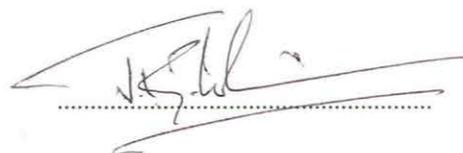
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Summary

This report presents the results of a programme of building recording and analysis undertaken on Alford Manor House, Alford, Lincolnshire by the Historic Buildings Section of Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd, between the 10th July and 26th November 2002. The work was undertaken in preparation for and during the 'opening up' of parts of the house and has provided new insights into the history of the building.

Various hypotheses have been put forward to explain the development and date of the house. It has been suggested that one wing and the centre range was constructed in the 1540s and a further wing subsequently added. Furthermore, it has been described as a timber-framed mud and stud structure which has been subsequently encased in brick in the 1660s. However, this report concludes that the building is largely of one build, of composite timber and brick construction, and dates to the early 17th century.

Acknowledgements

The Historic Buildings Section of Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd would like to thank Alford and District Civic Trust, Mary Anderson (Anderson and Glenn), John Sutton, Beryl Lott (Lincolnshire County Council) and Peter Tasker for their cooperation, assistance and support during this project.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document presents the results of a preliminary programme of building recording and analysis undertaken on Alford Manor House, Alford, Lincolnshire by the Historic Buildings Section of Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd on behalf of the Alford and District Civic Trust. This programme was undertaken in preparation for and during the 'opening up' of parts of the building. The recording was carried out between the 10th July and 26th November 2002.

1.1 LOCATION AND LAND USE

The town of Alford lies on the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds and the Marshland of east Lincolnshire, within the administrative area of East Lindsey. Alford Manor House (NGR TF 4534 7603) is situated towards the centre of the town along West Street, with Park Lane running along its east side (Figure 1). To the west of the house is an area of gravel (forming a car park for the museum) interspersed with trees. The river, now canalised and known as the Wold Grift Drain, forms the property's west boundary. To the north of the house is a garden, beyond which are fields.

The house is run by the Alford and District Civic Trust as a museum of Alford and the surrounding area. The house, three storeys in height, consists of two cross wings to either side of a central range. It is constructed primarily of brick and is, for the most part, roofed by thatch.

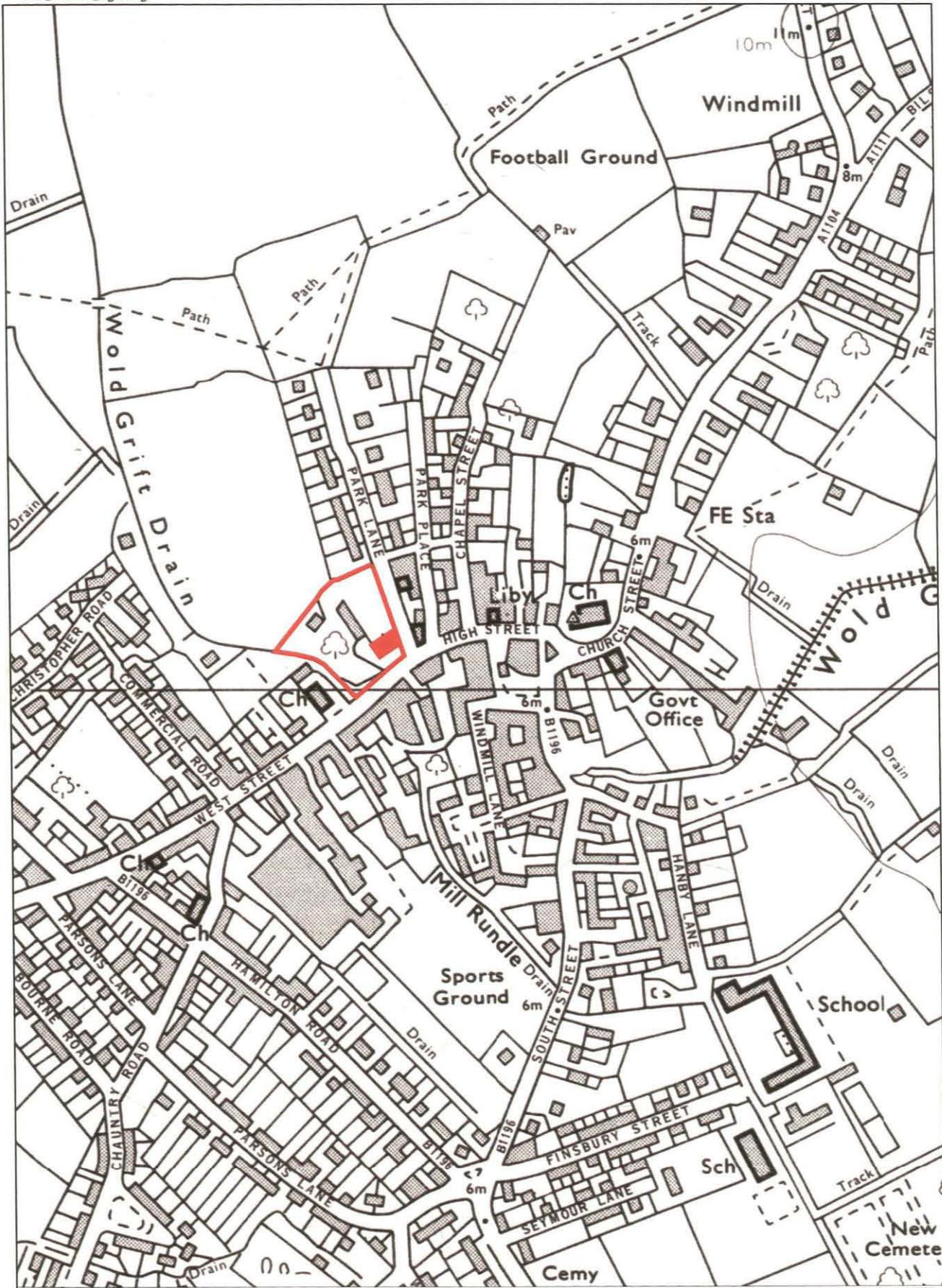
1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the building survey was to obtain a preliminary understanding of the manor house's history and development, and to provide data which will aid and inform renovation and repair. The immediate aim of this study was to identify areas of the house where 'opening up' works would be likely to uncover useful structural information, and to subsequently record any features which were exposed.

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The town of Alford takes its name from a ford that once crossed the brook now known as the Wold Grift Drain. The name 'Alford' was derived from 'old ford' or 'alder ford' (the ford surrounded by alder trees), or from 'eau ford' (the ford crossing stream) (Dudding 1930). Alford is mentioned in the Domesday book and had its first church towards the end of the 12th century.

It was during the medieval period that Alford developed into a market town. John Leland visited Alford some time in the first half of the 16th century and described Alford as 'a modest market town in the Low Lindsey marshland. The town is entirely roofed with thatch and reed, and is served by a small brook' (Chandler 1993, 304). It was on the west edge of the old medieval town that Alford Manor House was built.



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Location map

Scale 1:5000



Figure 1



It has been thought that the manor house was built in the 16th century by Thomas Tothby of Tothby Manor as a timber-framed building (Cooke 1988, 40) in an H-shaped plan, conforming to the typical layout of a hall between a high-status solar wing and a low status service wing. The house is then believed to have passed into the ownership of William Cawley, who subsequently sold it to Sir Robert Christopher. Many of the histories of Alford suppose that Sir Christopher, having bought the timber-framed house, then encased it in brick c.1661 (typical of such histories are Cooke 1988; Cousins 2000; Hallgarth 1978).

Timber framing is extremely rare in Lincolnshire, especially in the more rural areas of the county. The main vernacular form of timber framing in Lincolnshire is 'mud and stud'. This form of construction was economical in its use of timber, and was usually used for low-status housing. A mud and stud house typically consisted of slender timbers forming a frame, with wooden laths nailed onto a mid-rail and then covered with a mud and straw mix. Typically, a mud and stud house was one and a half storeys high with a central hearth and lobby entrance (Cousins 2000). It is, therefore, perhaps surprising that Maurice Barley (Barley 1952) classified the substantial three-storeyed Alford Manor House as an example of mud and stud construction. The description of the house as an unusual example of a high status mud and stud building has remained since Barley first suggested it, and is included in the very recent gazetteer of mud and stud buildings in Cousins' book *Lincolnshire Buildings in the Mud and Stud Tradition* (2000).

From documentary records, it is only possible to trace the house and its owner with any certainty as far back as Sir Robert Christopher (late 17th century). However, it is likely that Sir Christopher bought the house from another Alford resident, William Cawley, as it is stated in Sir Christopher's will that he did '...bequeath unto my dear daughter the Lady Sherard all that my Capital Messuage in Alford with all my land there which I purchased of William Cowley Esq. and his wife...' (LA, NWII/5/A/2).

In many of the histories of Alford and Lincolnshire, it is assumed that the original owner of Alford Manor House was Thomas Tothby of Tothby Manor, who subsequently sold the property to William Cawley. It was Dudding's comprehensive book *History of the Parish and Manors of Alford* (1930) which first mentioned that Alford Manor House was built and owned by Thomas Tothby. This has since been accepted as fact; however, as Dudding did not provide a reference for this piece of information, it cannot be verified.

The Tothbys were an ancient and influential family in Alford throughout the medieval period, and Sir Christopher's will also mentions that he bought land in Alford from a 'Mr Touthebye'. The family had long owned Tothby manor as well as other local manors, and it is possible that they owned a high-status house in Alford from which to manage all manorial business, which would have originally have been managed from the other smaller manor houses. Dudding (1930) hypothesises that in the late 16th century, the Tothby family fell on hard times and thus had to sell off parts of their once-large estate.

However, there is no direct evidence, documentary or otherwise, that Alford Manor House was connected with the Tothby's. To confuse matters, many members of the Tothby family were named

Thomas, and with no firm date for the property's construction, it is difficult to identify which individual was supposed to have 'built' Alford Manor House.

It is important to note that Alford Manor House was not, in fact, the manor house of Alford Manor. Like many Lincolnshire towns and villages, Alford did not consist of one single manor but was made up of several, some of which were in existence before the Norman Conquest, when the town of Alford came into being (Barley 1952). The five most ancient manors associated with Alford were the manor of Alford, the manor of Alford with Well, the manor of Rigsby with Tothby, and the manor of Saleby with Tothby (Dunning 1930, 4). Alford Manor House was never connected with the two purely Alford manors (the manor of Alford and the manor of Alford with Well), but could be regarded as the manor house of Sir Robert Christopher's combined manors of Rigsby, Ailby and Tothby, which he purchased in the mid-17th century (Dunning 1930, 2).

Sir Robert Christopher came from a branch of the Christopher family originating from the north of England around County Durham, which had, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, moved south to Stoke Prior, Worcestershire (Burke 1900, 295). His grandfather had moved to Lincoln in the 16th century. After his grandfather's death in 1590, his father, Peter, had moved to Thoresthorpe (about a mile and a half north of Alford). Robert Christopher himself was baptised at Saleby on the 9th May 1606. *Circa* 1615, the Christopher family moved to Lincoln. The father, Peter, appears to have died by 1628 (Dunning 1930, 70).

Robert Christopher became a lawyer and rose in social rank, becoming escheator and magistrate for Lincolnshire. He married Elizabeth Sneath at Spalding on the 8th July 1638 (*ibid.*), and they had one child, Elizabeth, who was baptised at Alford on 26th June 1641. Robert amassed a sizeable fortune which he invested in real estate in East Lincolnshire, buying out families that had fallen on hard times, such as the Tothbys and the Cawleys (*ibid.*). It would appear that Robert Christopher had become a self-styled 'lord of the manor' and had bought in Alford a high-status house for his own manor house (even though each of the manors he owned already had an ancient manor house).

During the English Civil War, Robert Christopher fought on the side of Charles I (Burke 1900, 1189). For this he was rewarded, after the restoration of Charles II, by being made a Knight Bachelor at Whitehall on 7th January 1661 (Shaw 1971). It has been suggested, based on stylistic grounds, that it was around this date that the original timber-framed building was encased in brick. The use of brick in this period is usually seen as a display of high social status and wealth, due to the expense of purchasing the large amount of bricks needed for the construction of a house. Certainly, Sir Robert seems to have been constantly trying to improve his family's status. After his death in 1668, he left money to Alford Grammar School, a centre of civic pride in Alford since its foundation in 1576, further funds for the construction of almshouses in Alford, and yet more funds for the repair of St Wilfred's chancel and the erection of a great alabaster tomb carrying an effigy of himself and his wife. Again, this could be interpreted as an ostentatious statement on Sir Robert's wealth and social status. The tomb mentions that Robert Christopher's only heir, Elizabeth, was married to 'Bennet Lord Sherrard of Stapleford in the county of Leicestershire'. Lord Sherrard was the second baron of Market

Harborough.

It is not surprising, given the Christopher family's constant attempts to rise up the social hierarchy, that Sir Robert's grandson became the first earl of Market Harborough, Leicestershire; his granddaughter, Elizabeth, married Edward Viscount Irwin and his other granddaughter, Lucy, married John Manners the Duke of Rutland.

Alford Manor House appears to have been inherited by Lucy, and stayed in the possession of the Manners family for some time. Alford Manor House may have been too small as a residence for the Manners family, and was probably let out to tenants. When Lucy's husband died, she bought the manor of Bloxholme and went to live in the newly-built hall there. Lucy died in 1751 and left her property, including Alford Manor House, to her son, Lord Robert Manners. When he died in 1782, he was succeeded by his eldest son, also named Robert, who became a general following the Battle of Waterloo. After his death in 1827, the lands in Alford passed to his brother, George Manners, then to his sister, Lucy, and then to his grand-niece, Mary Hamilton Nisbet (daughter of General Manners' sister, Mary) on the condition that her husband (also called Robert) took the surname Christopher. The land in Alford then passed on to Mary's daughter, also called Mary, who married Henry Ogilvy. Henry Ogilvy assumed the names of Hamilton Nisbet as well as his own, but dropped the name Christopher.

It was while General Manners owned Alford Manor House that a land agent, John Higgins, came to work for him. John Higgins had been connected with the Manners family for a long period of time, working not only for General Manners, but also for George Manners and R A Christopher (Beastall 1978, 97). Higgins lived in Alford Manor House during the 1820s and it was during this period that many alterations to the house were undertaken, such as some of the rear extensions and the estate office extension to the east wing. Also at this time, the house was divided into two separate properties, with the hall and main bedchamber partitioned roughly down the centre. Higgins rose to fame and fortune in the town of Alford in a manner which almost echoed that of Sir Robert Christopher. Like Sir Robert, John Higgins was a patron of the church (he donated the east window of the chancel in 1870) and of the local grammar school. As Beastall (1978, 98) sums up, 'the agent for non-resident landlords, John Higgins had been in the parishes with which he was most closely associated, the substitute for a squire'.

In 1915, Mary Nisbet Hamilton sold the house to Walter Hugh Rawnsley of Well House, and the property was subsequently let to the Botham family. However, in 1958, Alford Manor House was purchased by Dorothy Higgins, granddaughter of John Higgins. Dorothy sold the house to the Alford Civic Trust in 1967. The house was then turned into a folk museum depicting the recent past of Alford and the surrounding area. Some alterations were made, including re-wiring, the opening up of the hall and fireplace in the northeast kitchen, the removal of some of the 19th century partitions, the insertion of a central front door, and the reinsertion of ground- and first-floor windows. In 1969, the roof was repaired and rethatched, at which time some of the original timbers were removed and a new roof was built over what remained of the original. The roof was rethatched again in 1983.

2.0 FIELDWORK PROCEDURE

Hand-drawn architects plans of all three floors, the front, rear and side elevations, and a central section of Alford Manor House were digitised in AutoCAD and enhanced on site. Corrections were made to show features of archaeological significance, such as straight joints in the exterior brickwork and the position of internal timbers. On-site written notes were made of observations resulting from the fieldwork. 35mm colour and monochrome photography was used to record elevations and any archaeological features of note, while digital photography was used for report illustration purposes.

Where exposed during the 'opening up works', residual thatching materials were sampled, and each sample source was located on the drawn record. These samples have been sent to a thatching specialist, J B Letts (University of Reading), for analysis.

A scheme of timber sampling was also undertaken by a dendrochronologist, R Howard (University of Nottingham). Samples were taken from a selection of timbers throughout the building in order to provide a range of dates for both initial construction and subsequent alterations. The report on this work had not been issued at the time of writing.

In order for the structural engineers to establish the nature and condition of the building foundations, four trial holes, approximately 1m x 1m, were excavated by the contractors around the perimeter of the building. Although not archaeologically excavated, they were inspected for archaeological deposits and features. The results were then incorporated into the drawn and written record.

3.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

3.1 EXTERNAL ELEVATIONS

3.1.1 South elevation

The south elevation (Figure 2, Plate 1) represents the front facade of the building and is constructed mainly from brick. It consists of two projecting gabled wings to either side of a central range. The components of the elevation have been broken down and discussed separately below.

The south elevations of the east and west wings are very similar. The entirety is composed of brickwork in English Bond. The cross wings project 1.9m forward of the central section of the house. Both wings consist of three floors: ground floor, first floor and attic, with a gabled thatched roof above. The ground floor includes two twelve-pane hung-sash windows with segmental brick arches and



Plate 1 South elevation



South elevation

Scale 1:100

Figure 2

stone sills. The windows are placed symmetrically apart. Across the base of the elevations, at sill level, runs a brick plinth with a chamfered top.

A brick sill band, constructed from a row of stretchers above a row of headers, separates the ground and first floors. The two windows at first-floor level are of a similar arrangement to those on the ground floors, being only slightly smaller in size and having thinner segmental brick arches. At attic level there is a single nine-pane hung-sash window with a shallow brick segmental arch centred in the gable. At both first-floor and attic levels, the windows display straight joints to either side which denote position of the jambs of earlier windows. Unlike the east wing, however, the west wing has a further stringcourse separating the first and attic floors, while the east wing has tumbled-in brickwork kneelers which are not present to the west. The east wing also has a change in brick bond at the apex of its gable, indicating repair work.

To the west side of the west wing is a later two-storey extension. From the change in bonding from English bond to English garden wall bond halfway up, it appears that it was originally one storey high and had a window facing south. The original outshut may have been constructed as early as the 18th century. The size and style of the bricks indicate that the addition of the first floor probably took place in the 19th century, and the blocking of the window in the early 20th century.

To the east of the east gable is the south facade of the land estate offices, constructed in the mid-19th century. The ground floor includes a two-light window, the lower light having six panes, the upper light three. The first floor has a similar window. At ground level, the eastern corner of the wall is slightly chamfered, while at first-floor level, the corner is corbelled out over the ground floor. Over the building is a lean-to roof.

The brick plinth with the chamfered top also runs across the central range of Alford Manor House. The majority of the brickwork of this section of the south elevation is of Flemish bond. The central entrance to the house consists of a six-panelled timber door below a timber broken-bed pediment, all of which is modern. Flanking the door are two twelve-pane hung-sash windows with soldier arches above. The east window has tiles forming a sill. Straight joints around both of the windows denote the position of earlier doorways.

A stringcourse constructed from two rows of stretchers separates the ground and first floors. The first floor has three twelve-pane hung-sash windows arranged symmetrically, the central window being of slightly larger dimensions than those which flank it. Below eaves level is a wooden brace, under which is some quarry tile patching, both a result of attempts to correct structural problems with this facade, such as the bowing out of the wall above the eastern first-floor window.

A 19th century fire insurance plaque in the shape of a phoenix is positioned at first-floor level between the central and west windows.

3.1.2 North elevation

The north elevation (Figure 3) is constructed from brick and also consists of two projecting wings to either side of a central range. Unlike on the south, however, the individual parts of the north elevation are quite different.

The gabled west wing projects north of the central section. The brick plinth continues around the base of the south elevation of the west wing, above which is a centred two-light window under a timber lintel, each light consisting of twenty-four panes. Straight joints to either side of the window indicate the position of an earlier and much larger opening. To either side of the elevation, at ground-floor level, are cracks made by the underlying timber frame moving and splitting the brickwork. There is a single twelve-pane hung-sash window with a timber lintel at first-floor level, set centrally. To either side of its sill, a change in brickwork denotes extensive repair which appear to have involved the rebuilding of almost the entire wing elevation above ground level.

At attic level, there is a single two-light casement window, with eighteen panes per light. At the base of the gable is tumbled-in brickwork. The gable retains three iron tie-plates, with three further tie-plates between the attic and first floors and another above the ground-floor window. Rising above the ridge of the roof is a wide chimney stack, the lower portion of which is constructed from bricks of a similar type to those found towards the base of the west wing's ground floor. However, the upper section of the stack is constructed from bricks of a more recent type, indicating that the chimney stack has either been rebuilt or raised in height.

An extension to the west of the west wing has a two-pane ground-floor window and a two-light casement window at first-floor level. A change in brick bonding above the ground-floor window shows the height of the original building before the addition of an upper storey.

The central section of the north elevation includes two modern toilet blocks positioned to either side of a rear entrance. Each projects from the central section to the same depth as its adjacent wing. Above the rear entrance, at first-floor level, is another extension, covered by a flat roof and lit by a single three-light casement window, with six panes per casement. The eastern half of the central section includes a continuation of the brick offset at its base. Set into the brick offset are two windows which light the cellar. Above the brick plinth are two two-light casement windows of six panes each, both with segmental brick arches constructed from a single row of headers.

A change in brick type reveals that the first floor is a later addition to this part of the building. The first floor has a brick offset just above sill level, but unlike the offset at ground-floor level, this offset displays no chamfer. However, to the west of the first-floor window, the offset is capped by sloping tiles. The first-floor is lit by a nine-pane casement window. This extension also has a flat roof, though it stands further forward than that to the west.

Rising between the flat roofed extensions and the pitched roof of the main central range is another



- straight joint —
- timber —
- tile —
- stone —
- mortar —
- iron —
- lead —

North elevation

Scale 1:100

Figure 3

chimney stack. At eaves level, the stack is narrowed using tumbled-in brickwork. The chimney rises to the same height as the other chimneys. The central stack, however, is thinner than the chimneys which flank it, carrying only two flues instead of four.

On the east wing, the brick plinth continues around the base of the elevation and is chamfered at its eastern end. The chamfer is cut by a vertical joint which may represent the eastern side of an earlier ground-floor window. Along the rest of the offset, however, no chamfer is visible. The current window is a four-light casement under a segmental brick arch, with nine panes in the two lower lights and three panes in the two upper lights. To the west of the window is an early 20th century porch which includes a four-pane window with a label mould above.



Plate 2 Exposed end of wall plate (centre of view), north wall, east wing

At first-floor level, two twelve-pane hung-sash windows are set symmetrically. A second brick offset, also with a chamfered top, runs just above sill level, and is covered by lead flashing to the east of the eastern window. A small section of the offset to the west of the west window has no chamfering, and may indicate the position of an earlier, possibly original, window. Straight joints above the windows may also denote the position of a large lintel, since removed. At the western and eastern limits of the elevation are patches of render covering the wall plates which

penetrate the north wall of the east wing. Some of the render on the west has come away, revealing the timber (Plate 2). The projection of both of the wall plates was probably intended to support the lower ends of barge boards.

A subtle change in brick type shows that the elevation relating to attic level was constructed at a different date to the ground and first floors. The attic is lit by one nine-pane casement window set centrally. A further change in brick type, 0.5m below the line of the roof, relates to the heightening of the gable. This suggests that originally, all four gables may have been much more squat in appearance. These later alterations have tumbled-in brickwork towards their base. A chimney stack rises up above the ridge of the wing's roof. As is the case with the westernmost chimney stack, the upper portion of the stack appears to be a more recent addition.

To the east of the east gable is an extension of mid-19th century offices. A straight joint to the west of the down-pipe indicates the construction of the extension against the east wing. The ground floor has a two-light casement window to the west, a plank door in the centre and a four-panelled door to the east. All three openings are set under segmental brick arches. The northeast corner of this building is chamfered at ground-floor level, and corbelled out at first-floor level. A strip of lead flashing covers an offset at sill level on the first floor. The first floor is lit by a four-light casement window, with six

panes to each casement, below the apex of a slate roof. Two iron tie-plates are found above the window.

3.1.3 West elevation

The west elevation of Alford Manor House (Figure 4) can be divided into two parts. The northern half of the elevation is taken up with the outshut. This includes one six-paned window at ground-floor level which may be an insertion, as a straight joint runs down its north side. Directly above the window the coursing changes from English bond to English garden wall bond, illustrating the addition of an extra storey in the 19th century. There are no windows at first-floor level.

The southern part of the west elevation includes a brick plinth with chamfered top running across its base. The plinth is offset 1.5m from the south corner, sloping by -0.35m. Directly above the offset, a straight joint runs from the plinth up to eaves level. To the south of this joint, and terminating against it, a stringcourse between the ground and first floors continues from the south elevation (Plate 3), thereby suggesting that the straight joint is a result of the remodelling of the south elevation of the west wing. At ground-floor level are a further three straight joints running parallel to one another, which may indicate the position of an original window, subsequently half-blocked, and the insertion of a taller, more classical, window, since removed. At first-floor level, another straight joint is found to the immediate south of the outshut, indicating the position of another blocked window which lit a closet in the southwest room on the first floor (Room F1). A straight joint relating to a corresponding window jamb is visible in the outshut at first-floor level (Room F18).



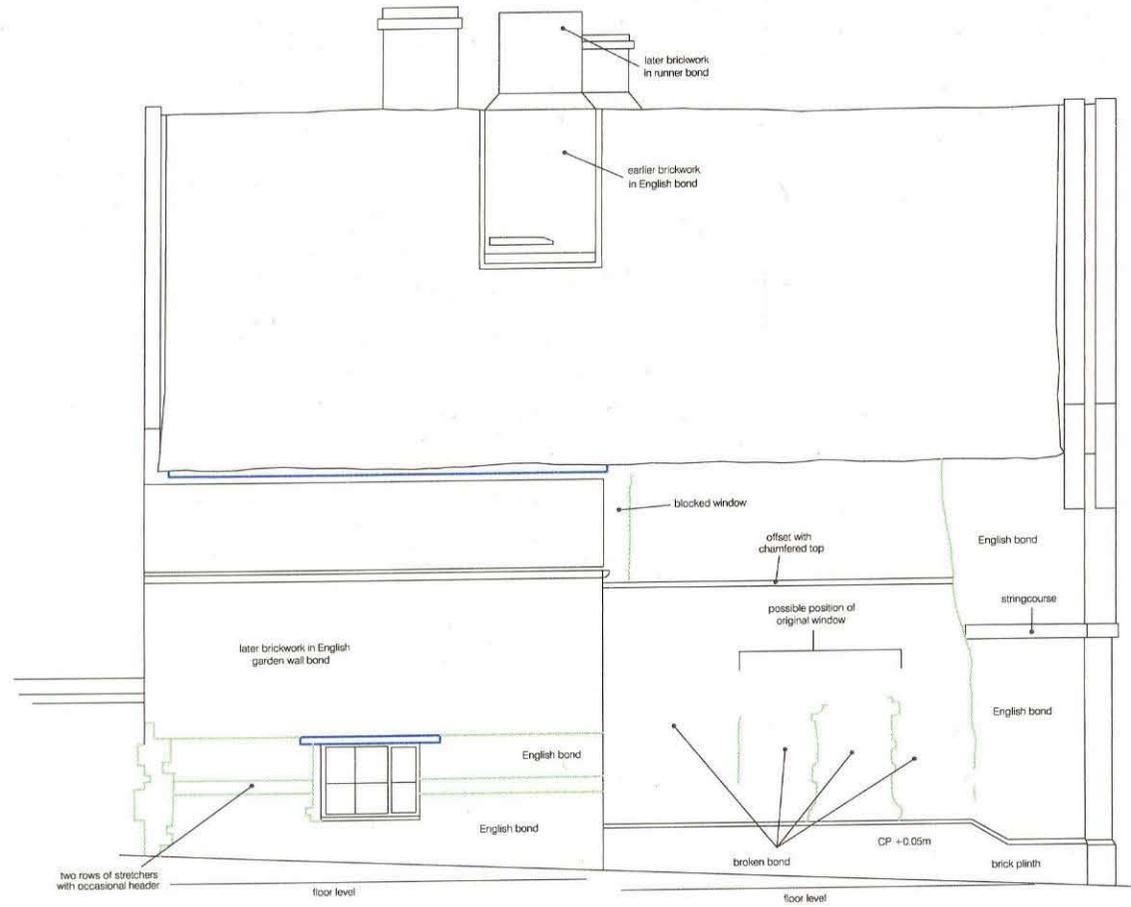
Plate 3 South end of west elevation (scale 0.5m)

3.1.4 East elevation

The east elevation (Figure 5, Plate 4) is represented by the land estate offices. The south half of this elevation has no openings, and is of one and a half stories with a slate lean-to roof. The northern half of the elevation has a single ten-pane window under a segmental brick arch at ground-floor level, and a Yorkshire



Plate 4 East elevation



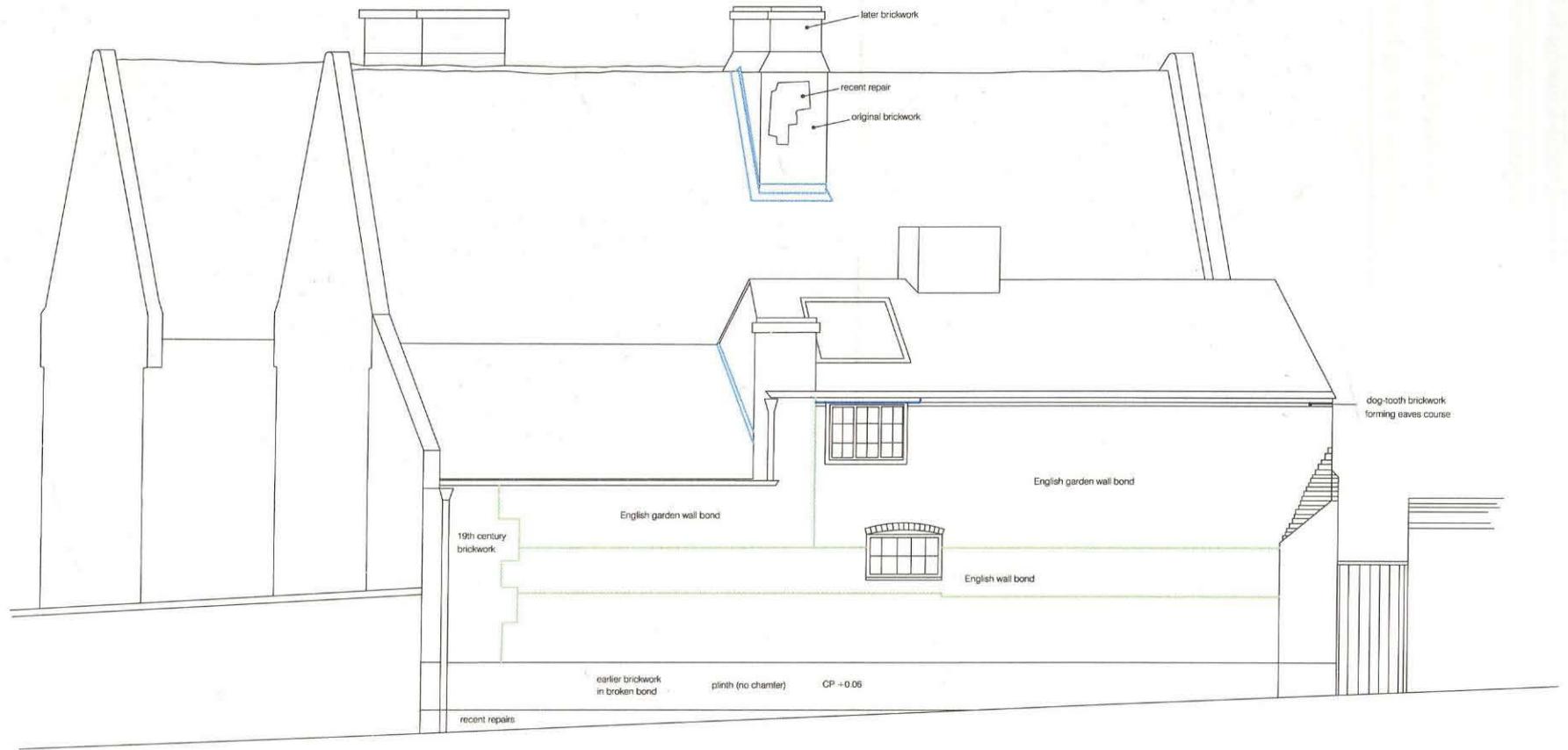
timber ———
 straight joint ———

West elevation

Scale 1:100

Figure 4





East elevation

Scale 1:100

Figure 5



sliding sash window with three lights of six panes each lighting the first floor. The northern corner of the wall at ground-floor level is chamfered, but corbels out above. Dog-tooth brickwork forms an eaves course below a pitched roof across this part of the elevation.

Several changes in brick coursing reveals that this elevation is not all of one date; it is probable that the lower half of the wall formed part of the original boundary wall, subsequently heightened in stages. A vertical break to the south may indicate a late 19th century rebuilding of the southeast corner.

3.2 INTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS

Alford Manor House is divided into three main levels: ground floor, first floor, and attic. Each floor and its associated rooms is discussed separately below. Room numbers correspond with numbering on the architect's plans (see Figures 6, 8 and 14).

3.2.1 Ground floor

Room G1

This room (Figure 6) has a moulded ceiling cornice of the early 19th century. A bridging beam, aligned north-south, has been encased in a moulding of the same period. In light of observations made in other rooms (see below), it is assumed that a 17th century moulding is concealed by the boxing. Although both the moulded dado and picture rails appear to be more recent replacements, the deep, moulded skirting board appears to be part of the early 19th century scheme. Likewise, the door opening in the east wall has an early 19th century architrave and six-panel door with furniture, although the internal face of the door has had a fireproof panel nailed to its surface. Two windows in the south elevation have moulded architraves, panelled embrasures and interior shutters. The north wall has recesses flanking a fireplace which have had their upper parts converted into display cabinets (of recent date), but the arched heads of the recesses are mid-19th century date. The fireplace surround is of fine moulded marble and the fire opening has been framed with Delft tiles of the 18th century.



Plate 5 Exposed brickwork after plaster removal, Room G1, southwest corner (scale 0.5m)

Removal of a strip of plaster from the southwest corner of Room G1 was undertaken to establish the form and sequence of construction in this part of the building as implied by the external elevation. It was hoped that such exposure would reveal further timber posts in this area. Instead, the exposed fabric demonstrated that the west wall had been internally thickened with brick, tile and timber binders (Plate 5), probably to reinforce the structure. A timber fixing and pipe for a gas fitting were also exposed.

Room G19

The northwest room (Figure 6) is reached via a passage running across the rear of the western staircase. The door opening has a moulded architrave and six-panel door of the late 18th or early 19th century. The room is floored with stock-brick.



Plate 6 Fireplace in Room G16

A very large fireplace in the south wall has a timber lintel with chamfer and stops (Plate 6). The fireplace is brick-lined, although the fire back includes large amounts of replacement brick. Two arches span the fire hood and back, with dwarf walls above, effectively dividing the lower part of the flue into three segments. An arch-headed recess built into the fire back was probably used for keeping tobacco or salt dry.

The west wall of the room has exposed brickwork. A timber post, resting on a stone pad and flush with the surrounding brickwork, runs the height of the room.

An inserted doorway through the west wall leads to a 19th century laundry, but as the external elevation reveals that 19th century work involved the heightening of an existing structure, it is likely that a service building had been established here by the 18th century.

A 19th century lift has been inserted against the west wall, enclosed with timber panelling.

The north wall has a two-light window divided by a timber mullion, each light containing twenty-four panes. The lights appear to be a recent replacements, but the proportions of the opening suggest that it was formerly occupied by a pair of sash windows of late 17th or early 18th century date. The lintel is formed by a chamfered timber beam.

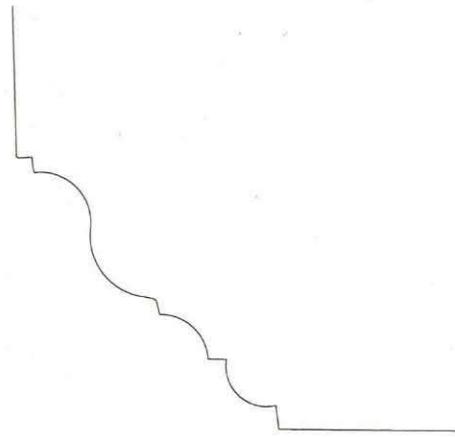
A bridging beam running north to south has chamfers and diamond stops. The north end of the beam has been cut, and then extended with packing timber, presumably when the new window arrangement was inserted.

Room G3

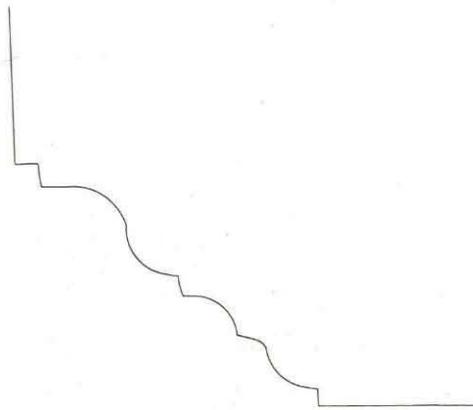
Room G3 (Figure 6), formerly a hall, has a large fireplace set in a chimney breast against the north wall. The brickwork used to construct the chimney breast has been bonded using a buff coloured mortar with large chalk inclusions. The fireplace is framed by a large timber lintel with a moulded chamfer and



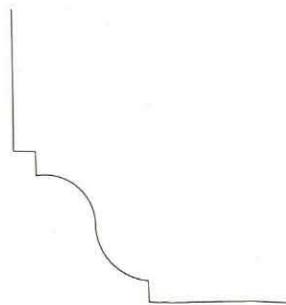
Plate 7 Moulding and stop on fireplace lintel, Room G3 (scale 0.25m)



beam across ceiling of
'best bed chamber'
(Room F3)



beam across the ceiling of
entrance hall
(Room G3)



fireplace lintel in
entrance hall
(Room G3)

chamfer stops (Figure 7, Plate 7), the chamfer being carried (without the moulding detail) down the brick jambs. Set within the brickwork of the fireback, 1.5m above the hearth stone, is an iron crook. The position of a further crook is implied, at the same height, by scarring in the brickwork. The flue has been sealed over and it was not possible to inspect its internal arrangements. A pair of posts flank the fireplace, the fireplace and chimney breast effectively occupying one bay of the hall.

The south wall has a window and door opening; both associated moulded architraves appear to date to the 19th century, or are good copies. The six-panel front door is modern. The window has panelled reveals and shutters, all of which appear to be modern.

The room is spanned by a bridging beam running east to west. The beam is heavily moulded and stops are visible at either end (Plate 8). The west end of the beam is supported on a jowled timber post - a further post probably supports the east end of the beam, but this is not exposed. The moulding detail compares favourably with that on the lintel of the fireplace (Figure 7), indicating a contemporary date.



Plate 8 Moulded bridging beam supported on post, Room G8, west wall (scale 0.25m) G3.

Elements of the 19th century refitting of this room survive in the form of deeply moulded skirting around the western side of the hall - identical in profile to that around the southwest room (Room G1). This contrasts with the eastern side of the room, which has a low skirting with a simple half-roll moulding, coupled with tongue and groove panelling to picture rail height. The differences in treatment from east and west reflects the subdivision of this part of the house in the 19th century. Further evidence for this can be seen in the bridging beam which runs east to west, a mark midway along its length indicating the position of the partition wall.

Room G11

The south wall of this room (Figure 6) features a large fireplace with a long timber lintel, chamfered with squared stops. The form of the fireplace is similar to that in the northwest room (Room G19), although slightly smaller. The flue to the fire has been blocked, so it could not be established if the flue has been treated in the same manner.

The east wall includes an exposed timber post with no visible pegging, suggesting that it does not articulate with any other timbers at this level. To the north of the post is a blocked window opening, constructed within the brickwork. Although no mullions are visible within the blocking, the proportions are consistent with a window of the 16th or first half of the 17th century. An investigation of the external face of the east wall (within Room G10) was undertaken in order to locate the blocking of this window. Although it was established that the external face of the wall had been extensively refaced in brick at ground-floor level, the precise location of the window opening was obscured.

At the southern end of the east wall, a door opening has been forced through to provide access to the 19th century eastern extension. In addition, a further doorway has been forced through the southern wall, creating a corridor to the southeast room and the southern portion of the 19th century wing. This space originally formed a closet, reached only from the southeast room. It is possible that the closet was lit by a window in the east wall, since altered to a further door opening.

The north wall of Room G11 has a large two-light window (twelve panes per light) which appears to be a modern replacement for a double sash. However, there is some evidence remaining in this elevation to indicate the original arrangement. Posts remain in the northwest and northeast corners of the room. Both have jowled heads and pairs of close-set peg holes (south face) located 0.5m below the current ceiling height. The orientation, spacing and height of the peg holes imply that there must have been a wall plate running the width of the gable wall. This would have served to support the north end of the bridging beam (see below), and would have formed the lintel of the original windows. It is probable that this arrangement existed in the north and south gables of both wings.

The bridging beam spans the kitchen from north to south. The beam is chamfered with diamond stops at the southern end - the stops of the northern end are presumably buried within the wall. This would have occurred when the wall plate was removed and the new window forms were inserted.

To the west, the stub of a partition wall remains, containing an original timber post. Originally, this feature ran the whole length of the west side of the kitchen, forming a cross passage. The length of the passage can be traced in the contrast between the stone flags which floored the passage, and the stock brick floor of the rest of the kitchen.

Rooms G13, G14 and Cellar

This northern projection to the central range (Figure 6) appears to have been a two-storey structure, consisting of basement and ground floor. The basement was reached via a door beneath the current east stairs. At ground-floor level, the buttery and pantry were entered from the kitchen passage. Both floors have chamfered and stopped bridging beams.

Room G4

Like the southwest example (Room G1), this room (Figure 6) has been the subject of early 19th century refitting, as well as more recent refurbishment. It has a deeply moulded ceiling cornice of the early 19th century, and a deep moulded skirting of similar date. The dado rail is a modern replacement. The northwest and northeast corners of the room have panelled doors. That in the northwest corner originally led to the kitchen passage, allowing the room to be directly served by the kitchen. Although the northeast door now leads to an additional kitchen passage, this originally formed a closet.

On the basis of the position of a post at first-floor level, it had been conjectured that another post would be located in a corresponding position midway along this wall. A small opening cut into the plaster work of the east wall confirmed this hypothesis.

3.2.2 First floor

Room F1

This room (Figure 8) is entered from the north through an original door opening. In the northwest corner is a closet, since converted into a cupboard, and originally lit by a window in the west wall. This has since been blocked, but can be seen externally and the position of its blocking can be felt internally in the plaster work. Roughly centred in the north wall is a blocked fireplace, the hearth stone for which remains exposed.

The west wall has been covered by a 19th century stud wall, and two narrow slots were cut into this order to determine the presence or absence of any timber framing. It was established that a postulated timber post had been replaced with a brick pier, presumably as part of the same repair and reinforcement works observed on the ground floor. There are no features of note in the south wall other than two sash windows.

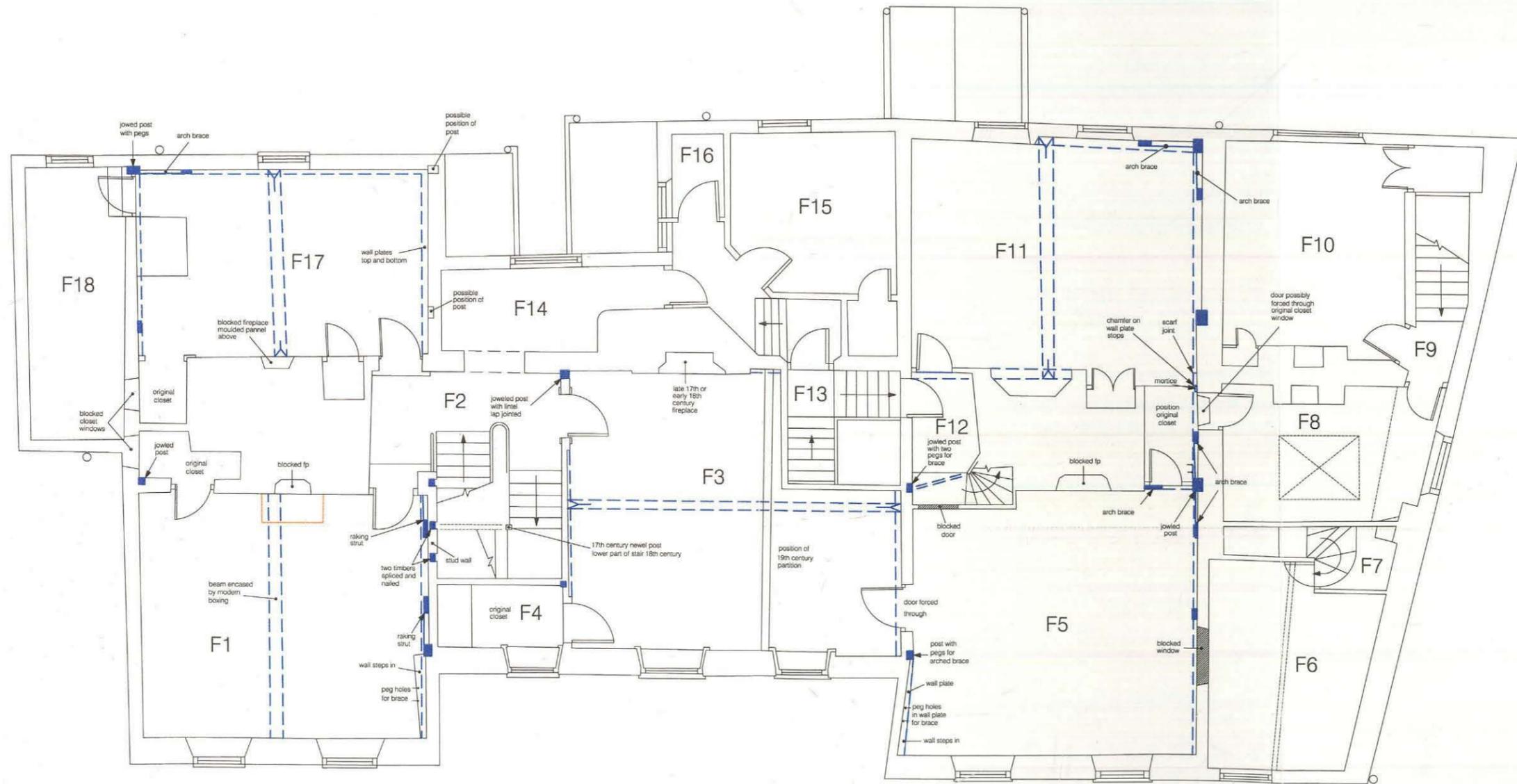


Plate 9 Timber framing, Room F1, east wall

The east wall contains a significant amount of exposed timber framing (Plate 9). A wall plate runs the length of the wall at ceiling height, probably supporting the joists of the floor above and also the east side of the roof structure covering the west wing. The north end of the plate is supported on a post, with bracing. A mid-post is braced to the wall plate. A further post must have been provided at the south end of the plate, the mortice for which remains, but this has since been removed.

A bridging beam runs north to south, supporting the ceiling. This was boxed-in in the late 19th or early 20th century. Removal of a small area of the boxing, and examination of the beam from the floor above, revealed that the beam is finely moulded, with traces of a historic paint scheme in white and blue/green, and with a later scheme of red applied on top. Although the full moulding profile was not obtainable, the general form was identified as a $\frac{1}{4}$ roll, $\frac{1}{4}$ hollow chamfer, $\frac{1}{4}$ roll.

The floorboards were removed to permit an examination of the floor structure. This consists of a bridging beam running north to south with joists tenoned into it (Figure 9). The other ends of the joists are housed directly in the brickwork forming the east and west walls. As observed elsewhere in the house, the floor is provided with springing by means of sub-joists, set on packing pieces on top of the main joists. However, in contrast to the technique deployed elsewhere, the sub-joists are mounted on alternate joists only. Peg holes in the sub-joists indicate the fixing points for the original floor covering. The upper surfaces of the joists retain carpenters' marks, in the form of Roman numerals. Where visible, these appear to follow a coherent sequence from the south, the western side being indicated by a *versus* mark, although there appears to have been some redistribution of joists around those numbered X and XI. The rear surface of the ceiling over the ground-floor room (G1) was



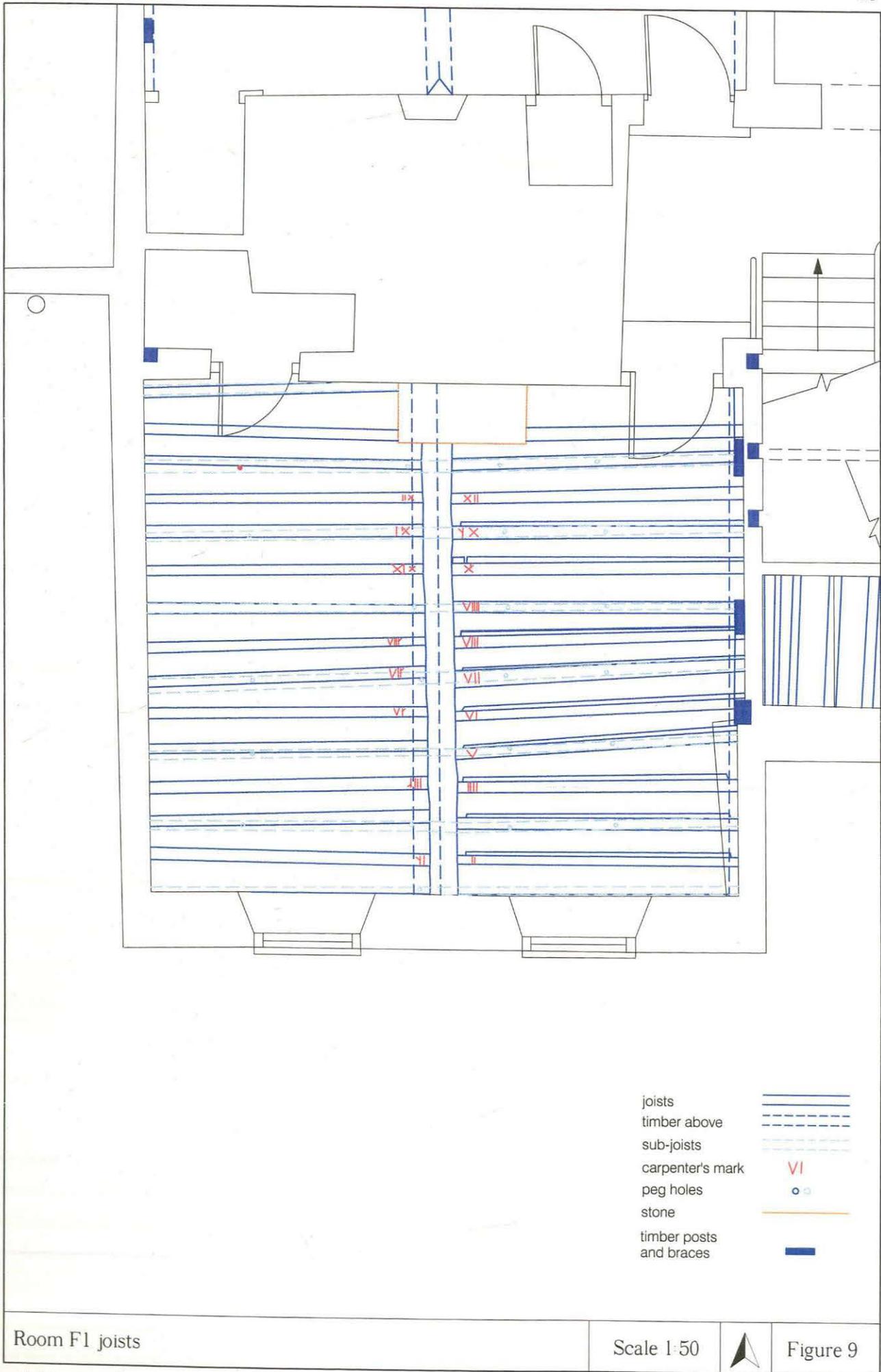
timber uprights
 timber beams
 timber above
 stone

First-floor plan

Scale 1:100



Figure 8



Room F1 joists

Scale 1:50



Figure 9



exposed, its reed and plaster construction suggesting that it is original.

Room F17

This room (Figure 8) is entered from a door opening to the south, accessed from the west stair landing (F2). The south wall includes a large panelled chimney breast. Prior to the recent works, the fireplace had been blocked with a hardboard panel - this was removed to expose the fireplace (Plate 10). The cast iron insert appears to be of 18th century date. The head of the fireplace is formed in brick, and is both arched and chamfered. However, the jamb of an earlier fireplace was also exposed, visible as a vertical junction in the brickwork to the east of the current fireplace (Plate 10). This would imply a much bigger fire opening, more consistent with a 17th century date.



Plate 10 Exposed fireplace in Room F17, south wall (scale 1.0m)

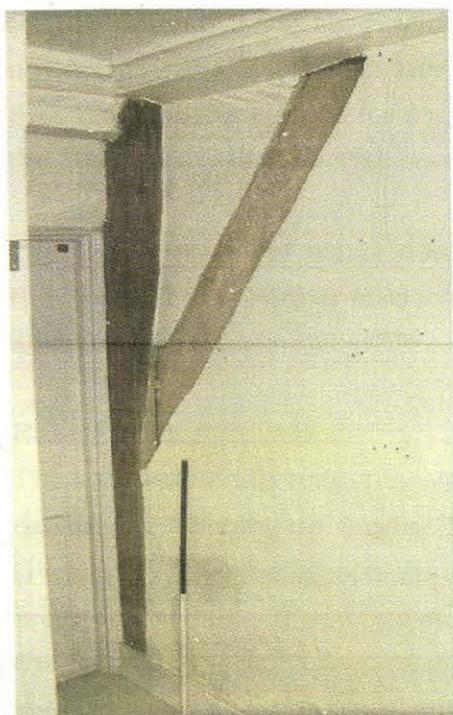


Plate 11 Exposed arch brace in Room F17 (scale 1.0m)

Like the southwest room, the northwest room was provided with a closet in its southwest corner. This was lit by a tall narrow window in the west wall, the blocking of which could be observed in the 19th century extension to the west. Much of the west wall is obscured by modern boarding and by a small lift contained within a timber enclosure, but a timber post is partially exposed in the northwest corner. The post has some evidence for pegging which appears to relate to a former brace between the post and the wall plate along the west elevation. This wall plate acted as a support for the joists of the floor above and for the west side of the roof structure over the west wing. A further set of peg holes relates to an arch brace in the north wall, the 'shadow' of which has been identified prior to the 'opening up' works. This was subsequently exposed (Plate 11) and appears to mirror the arrangement in the east wing at this level. Although the internal fabric of the north wall was not exposed, the evidence from the exterior indicates that it has been heavily rebuilt at this level.

The floor boarding was not lifted in this room, as the floor structure was already exposed on the ground floor (Room G19). It was therefore not possible to examine the upper surfaces of the joists to check for carpenters' marks. The lack of a sprung floor in this room may indicate that it did not have a high-status function.

Room F3

This central room (Figure 8) can be entered from doorways in both the east and west walls. The west doorway is the original entrance to the room, reached from what was the principal stair in the original layout of the house. The marked change in floor level between Rooms F3 and F5 to the southeast suggests that the eastern door opening is a later insertion.

Most of the detailing in this room dates to the 18th century. A finely moulded bridging beam (Figure 7) spans the room running east to west. The chamfer stop at the west end is exposed, while its eastern companion is presumed to be buried within the 18th century ceiling cornice. A mark on the underside of the beam indicates the position of a 19th century partition; the floor boarding also retains a clear mark of the position of this division. A closet (Room F4) is reached through a door in the southwest corner, and has since been converted into a cupboard. Its presence and the original means of access to this room suggest that Room F3 was originally the highest-status bedchamber of the house.

The floorboards were lifted to permit an examination of the floor structure (Figure 10). This revealed the bridging beam running east to west (visible from the ground floor). Floor joists are tenoned into the beam, while the south ends of the southern joists are housed within the brickwork forming the south elevation. It was not possible to inspect the north ends of the north joists. Sub-joists sit on the upper surfaces, and although they appear to be additions rather than an original feature, the fact that they respect the projection for the extended eastern stair suggests that they were probably added in the 19th century to correct for bowing in the floor.

Only three carpenters' marks were identified on the joists, all of which are on the side, as opposed to the upper, faces. Further marks may be present on the upper faces, but would be obscured by the added sub-joists.

Room F5

The east wall of this room (Figure 8) was covered with modern plasterboard, which was removed during the 'opening-up' works. This exposed further timber framing and other significant details (Figure 11). The framing consists of two posts, at the north and centre of the elevation. A further post is implied at the south end by a redundant mortice in the under surface of the wall plate which spans the length of the wall. A brace springs from the northern post and is jointed into the wall plate. At the south end, a further brace, mirroring that to the north, is implied by an area of tile infill.

The exposure of this elevation allowed an examination of the form of the original brickwork at first-floor level. Midway up the wall, the brickwork has a chamfered offset of 0.04m, thinning the wall above it. This corresponds with the height of the external chamfered offset, also of 0.04m. This constructional feature appears to have been originally carried around the entire building, effectively thinning the wall above this level by 0.08m - the approximate width of a brick. It appears that it was intended that the thinner wall was compensated by a more extensive use of timber framing in the upper half storey.

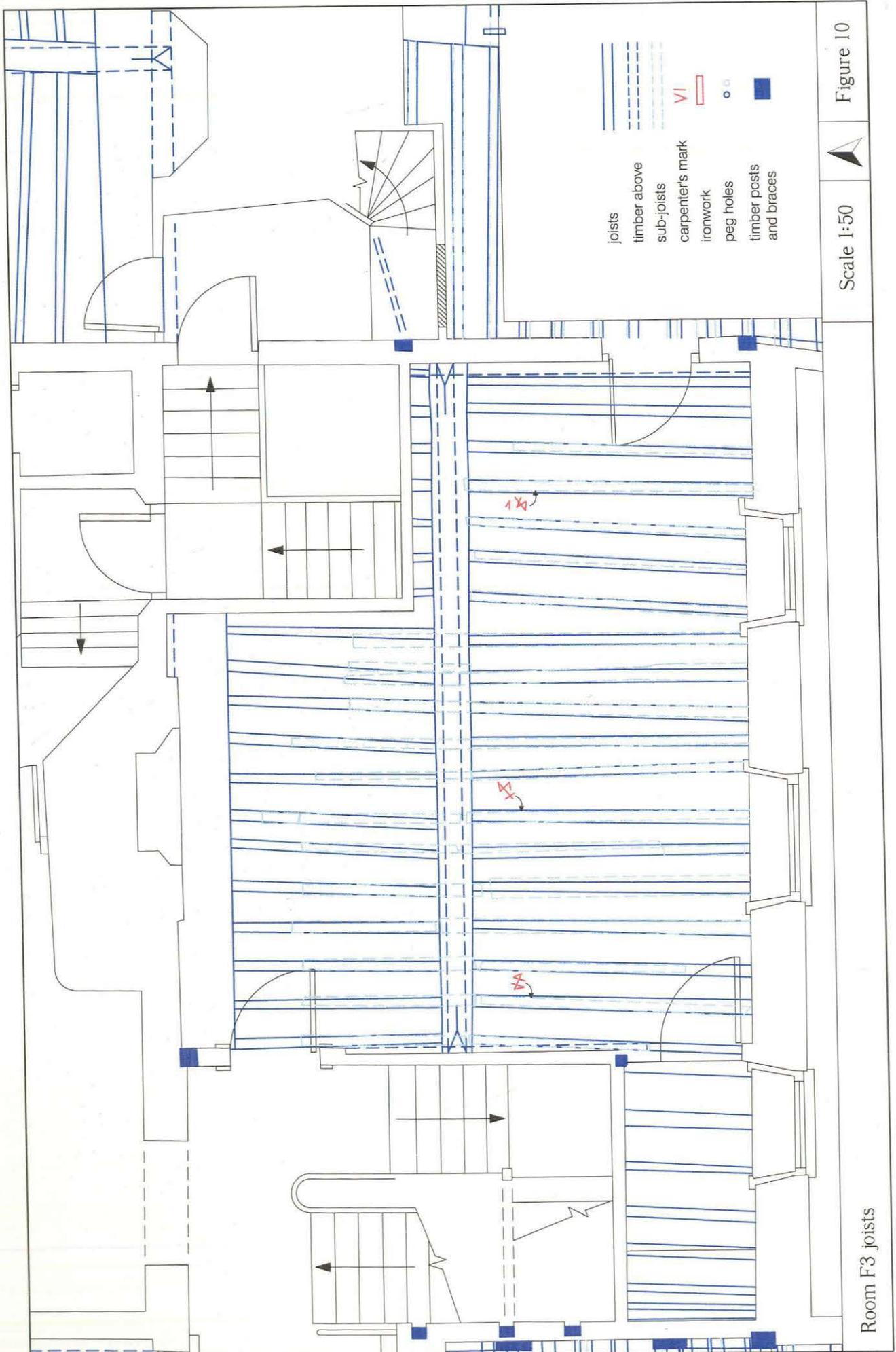


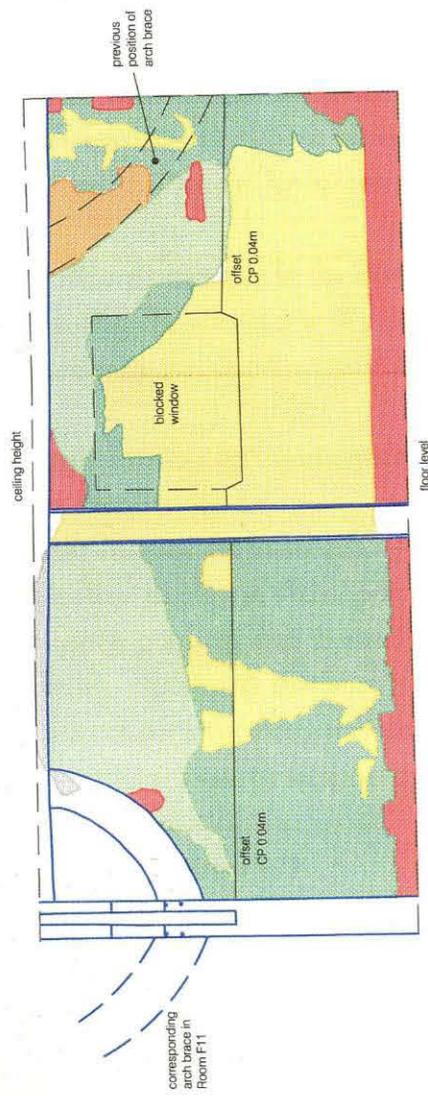
Figure 10



Scale 1:50

Room F3 joists





-  exposed brickwork
-  timber
-  earlier render
-  later render
-  wallpaper
-  fire damage
-  quarry tiles

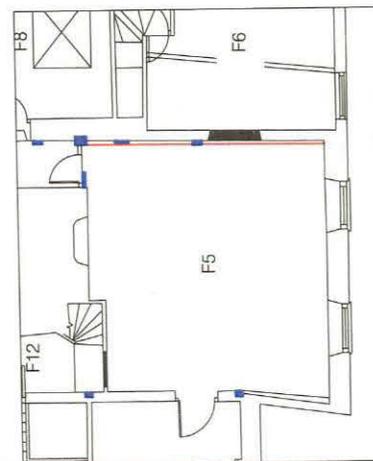


Figure 11

Scale 1:50

Schematic of materials in Room F5 east wall



A blocked window was identified in the fabric of the brickwork, its sill being provided by the offset. All of the first-floor windows appear to have been arranged in this fashion. There is no evidence for mullions and transoms formed in brick, and since it is likely that such features would have been retained in any blocking, it appears, instead, that the window frame and any division of its lights were of timber. The blocked window also provides evidence for the earliest internal wall finish. Above the level of the offset is an area of horse hair plaster which respects the dimensions of the blocked window. A later plaster render covered much of the lower part of the wall and also extended across the window opening, indicating that the window had been blocked when it was applied. Areas of block-printed wallpaper remain across much of the elevation, possibly of late 18th or early 19th century date.

Any features in the north wall are currently masked by modern plasterboard. It is highly likely that the boarding masks the position of an original fireplace which would have heated the room. Likewise, a door opening in the northwest corner has been blocked with boarding - this would have been the original access to the room from the 'lesser', or eastern, stair.

The west wall has further modern boarding in the northwest corner, but timber framing is exposed at the southern end. The framing consists of a wall plate and a single post, although a further post is implied in the southwest corner by a redundant mortice in the underside of the wall plate.

The floorboards were removed to allow an examination of the floor structure. As with the other floor structures in the wings, this consists of a bridging beam running north to south, with joists tenoned into it (Figure 12). The other ends of the joists are housed directly into the brickwork forming the walls. The joists carry carpenters' marks on their upper faces, numbered using Roman numerals, but there is no discernible sequence, possibly due to a redistribution of joists during the replacement of the ceiling of the room below. Sub-joists run above the main joists, supported on chocks on the bridging beam and on additional packing along their length. Modest timber hangers are nailed to the joists to support the replacement ceiling of the room below.

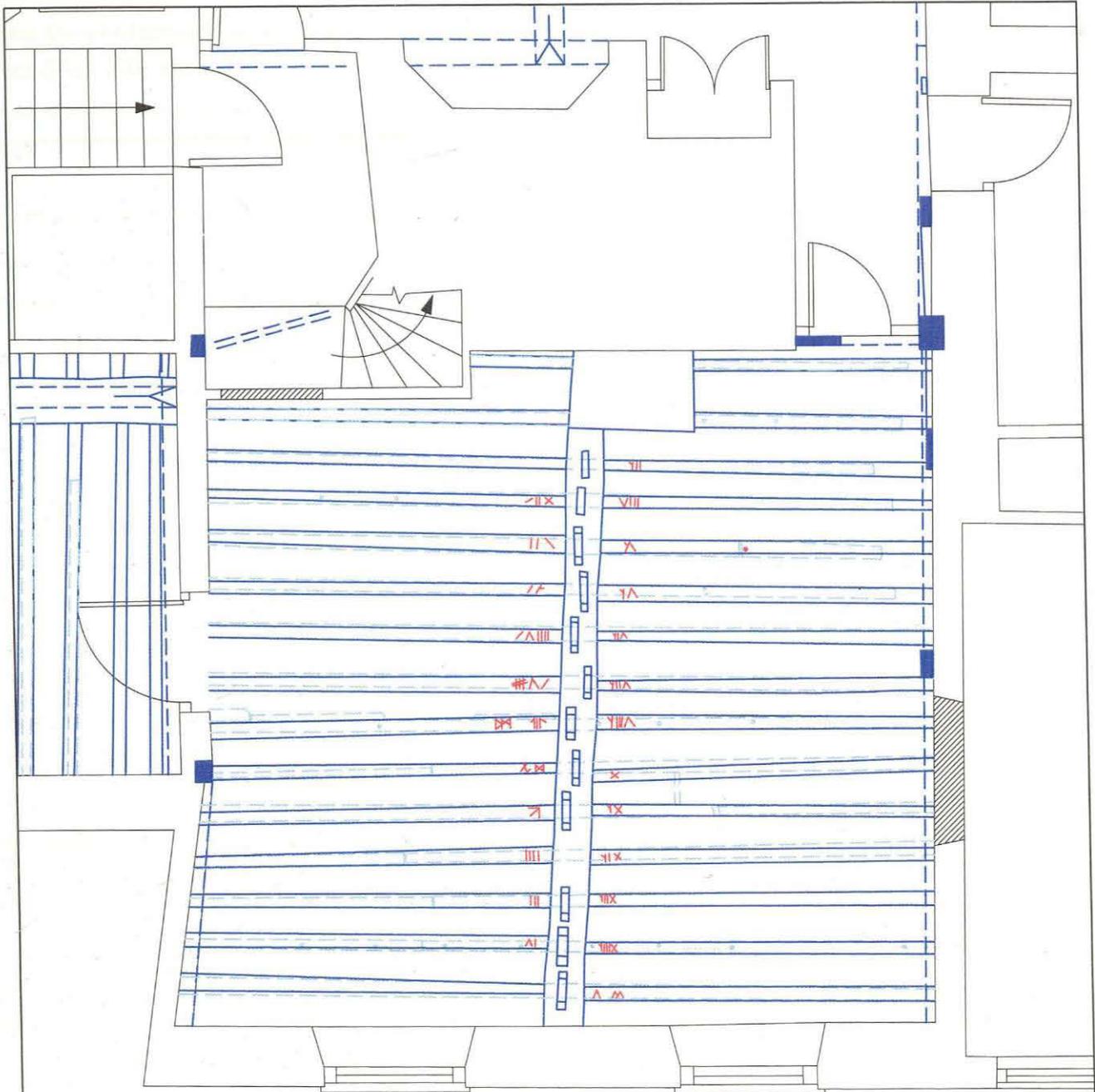


Plate 12 Former location of closet in Room F11 (looking south)

Room F11

Most of the timber framing of the east wall of this room is exposed. The spacing of timber posts is similar to that in Room F5, and braces remain at both north and south ends. A further brace is exposed in the east corner of the north elevation. The position of the offset within the brickwork can be discerned beneath the heavy plastering, and can be traced around into the north elevation; however, the west end of this is obscured by modern plasterboard boxing.

The south wall retains an original fireplace which is formed in brick and surmounted by a timber lintel. A chamfer on the lintel is carried down the brick jambs. A similar fireplace may survive



- joists 
- timber above sub-joists 
- carpenter's mark 
- peg holes 
- chocks 
- timber posts and braces 

Room F5 joists

Scale 1:50



Figure 12



under the plasterboard in Room F5. The southeast corner of the room was formerly occupied by a closet (Plate 12), concealed from the rest of the room by a door, but another doorway has since been forced through the rear into Room F5. The window opening which lit the closet from the east has been extended to form a doorway into the 19th century wing.

The floorboards in this room were lifted to allow an inspection of the floor structure (Figure 13). A bridging beam spans the room north to south, having a chamfer and stops at either end. The floor structure follows the pattern observed in other rooms, with joists jointed into the central beam and set within the brickwork of the east and west walls. This floor was subjected to modification in the 19th century, and includes a sand fill, presumably to provide sound- and fire-proofing.

3.2.3 Attic floor

Room A1

The floorboards in this room (Figure 14) were removed to allow an examination of the floor structure. This revealed a central bridging beam running north to south, with joists running east to west (Figure 15). The joists are tenoned into the bridging beam, but are not pegged or nailed. Although the other ends were not available for inspection, it is assumed that they articulate with the wall plates. The southern end of the bridging beam terminates in a wall plate, while the northern end is housed within the brickwork of the chimney. The southern wall plate retains two mortices on its upper face, and it is likely that there are further mortices along its length, but these are either obscured or, as the front and upper faces of the wall plate are badly decayed, now missing. The mortices were intended for studs, suggesting that the gable wall from the wall plate to the ridge was of timber.

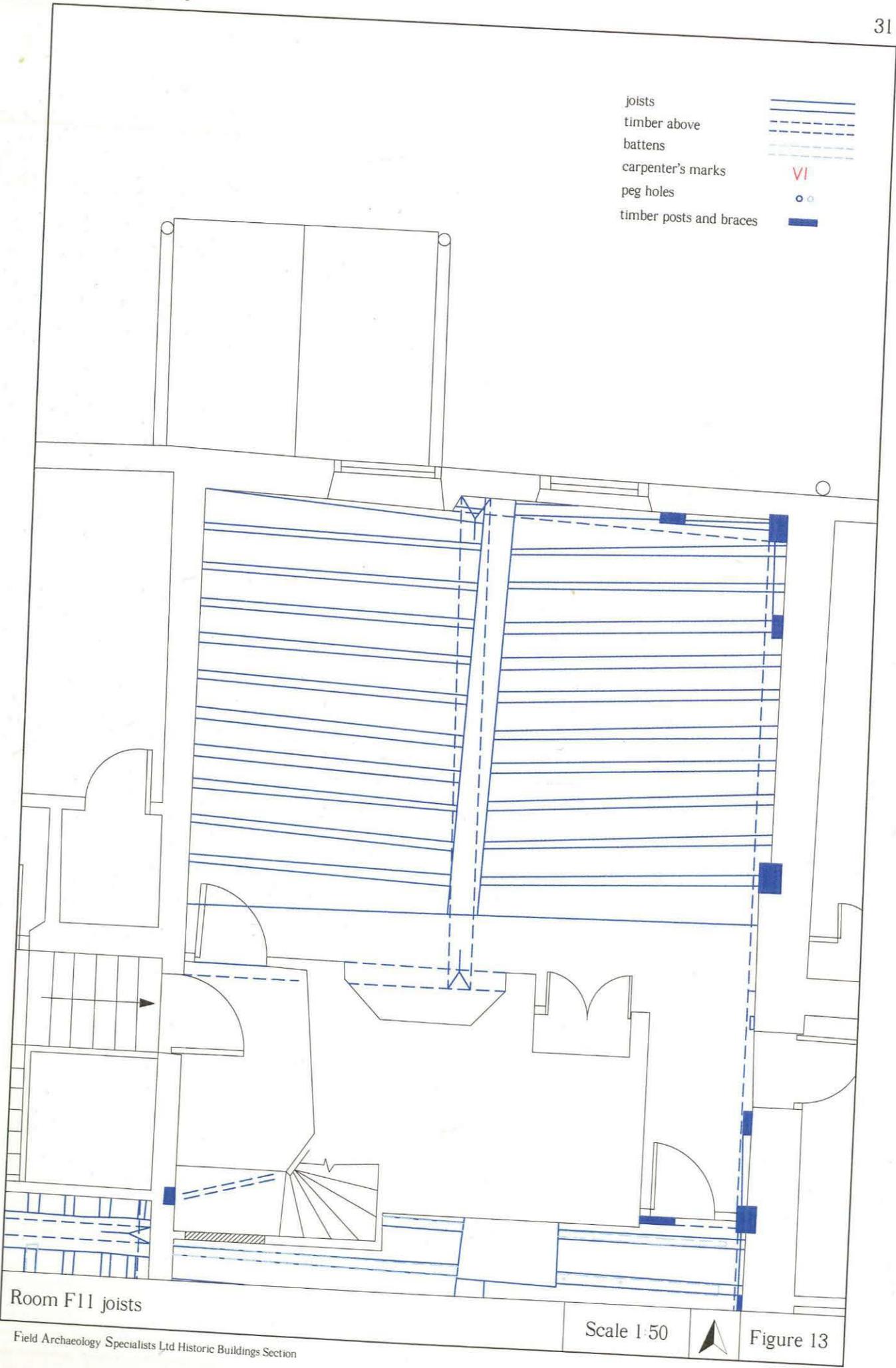
Resting on the joists via packing pieces, and on the upper surface of the bridging beam, are thinner sub-joists. Peg holes running in north-south alignments were noted on some of the sub-joists, presumably serving to fix the original floorboards. The sub-joists, or springs, are therefore more likely to have provided a properly sprung floor.

A close examination of the joists revealed a sequence of carpenters' marks in Arabic numerals on the upper surfaces, formed using a combination of circular stamps and incised lines. All of the marks observed indicate that the joists are numbered sequentially, starting with 1 at the south end, to the east of the bridging beam, through to 27 on the west side. Number 19 was omitted from the sequence, probably during initial construction.

The beam, described above as retaining traces of a historic paint scheme over a $\frac{1}{4}$ roll, $\frac{1}{4}$ hollow chamfer, $\frac{1}{4}$ roll profile, also retains an offset cut into its upper surface along its eastern edge. Although this appears to have been intended as a seating for floorboards, this seems unlikely, as it was only on one side of the beam, and would imply that the remainder of the room was unfloored.

The upper surface of the first-floor ceiling was determined to be of lathe and plaster construction, indicating that the ceiling was replaced in the 19th century. However, the height of the original ceiling

- joists 
- timber above 
- battens 
- carpenter's marks 
- peg holes 
- timber posts and braces 



Room F11 joists

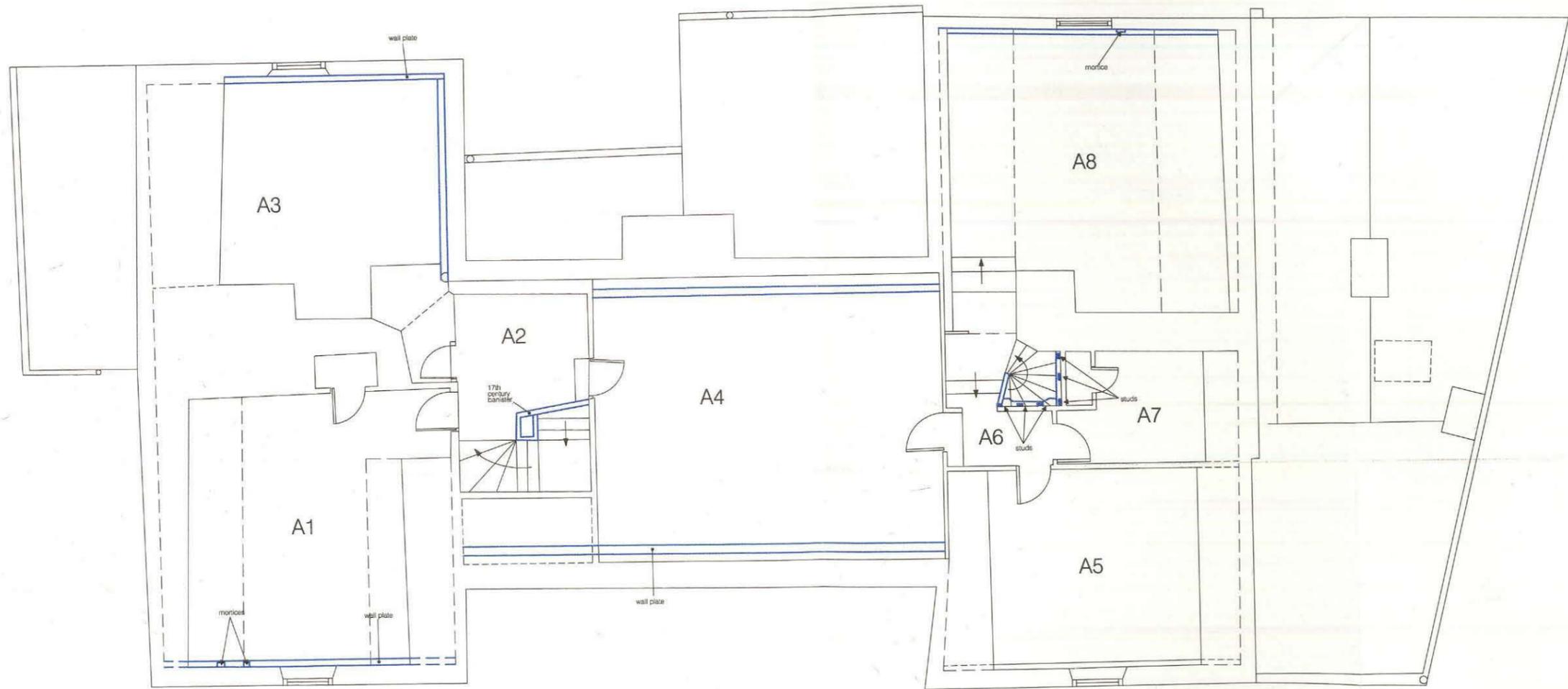
Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd Historic Buildings Section

Scale 1:50



Figure 13





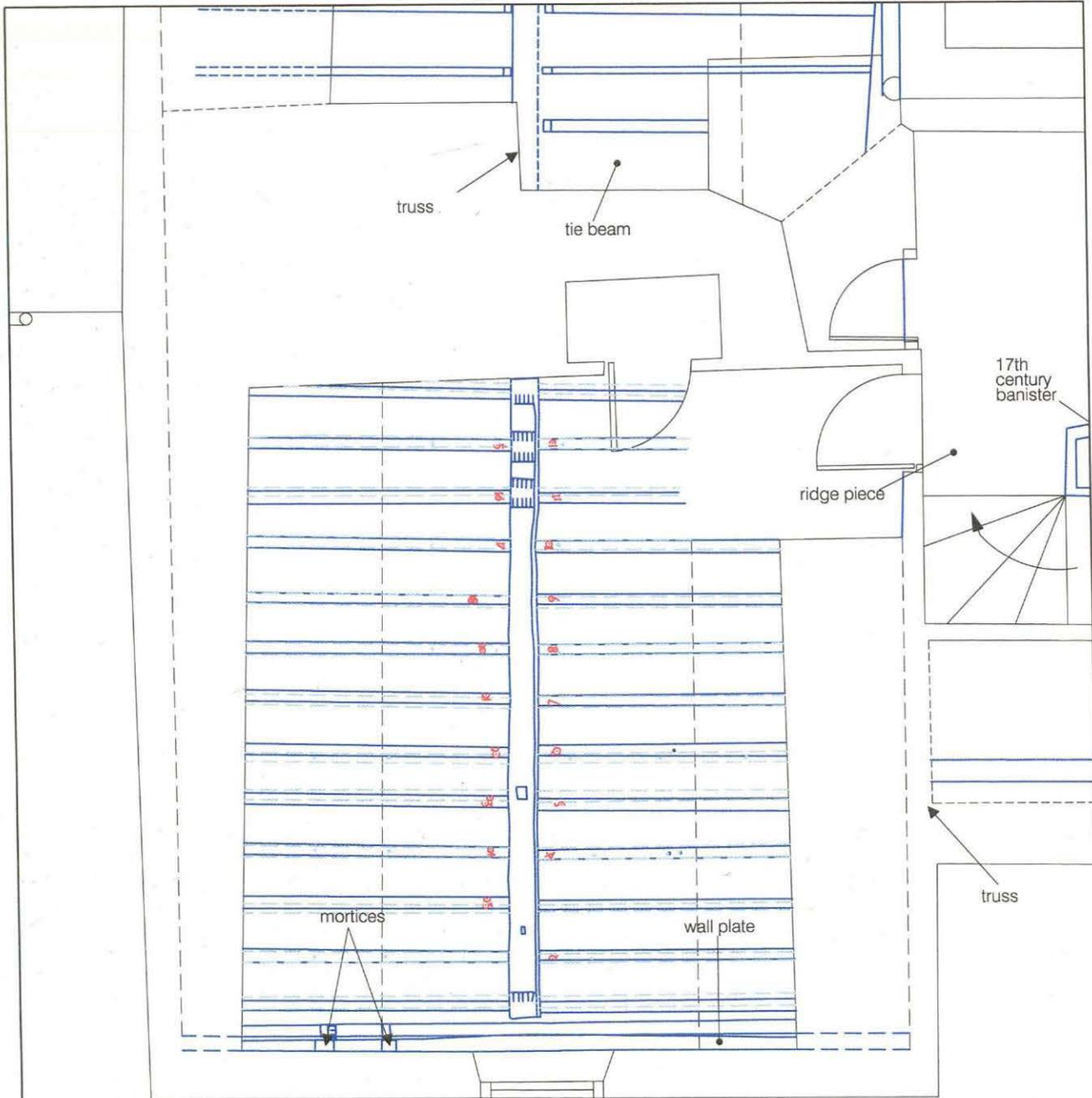
Attic plan

Scale 1:100



Figure 14





- joists
- timber above
- sub-joists
- carpenter's mark VI
- peg holes

Room A1 joists

Scale 1:50



Figure 15



can be established from the bridging beam, which retains a trace of limewash along the lower part of its vertical faces.

Room A3

This room (Figure 14) is entered from the west stair landing. The floorboards were removed to allow an examination of the floor structure (Figure 16). Interestingly, there is no evidence that this floor was provided with the sprung arrangement seen elsewhere in the house. Many of the joists are unseated from their sockets in the bridging beam.

The bridging beam has chamfers cut along both east and west upper edges. These are stopped 2.19m from the north end, leaving over 1.50m of the beam unchamfered. Since there is no further evidence which might indicate that this timber has been reused, it appears that it was originally intended for another part of the house.

A careful examination of the ends of the joists which terminate in the bridging beam revealed no evidence for carpenters' marks.

Neither this room nor any other room in the attic appears to have been provided with a fireplace.

Room A2 (the staircase)

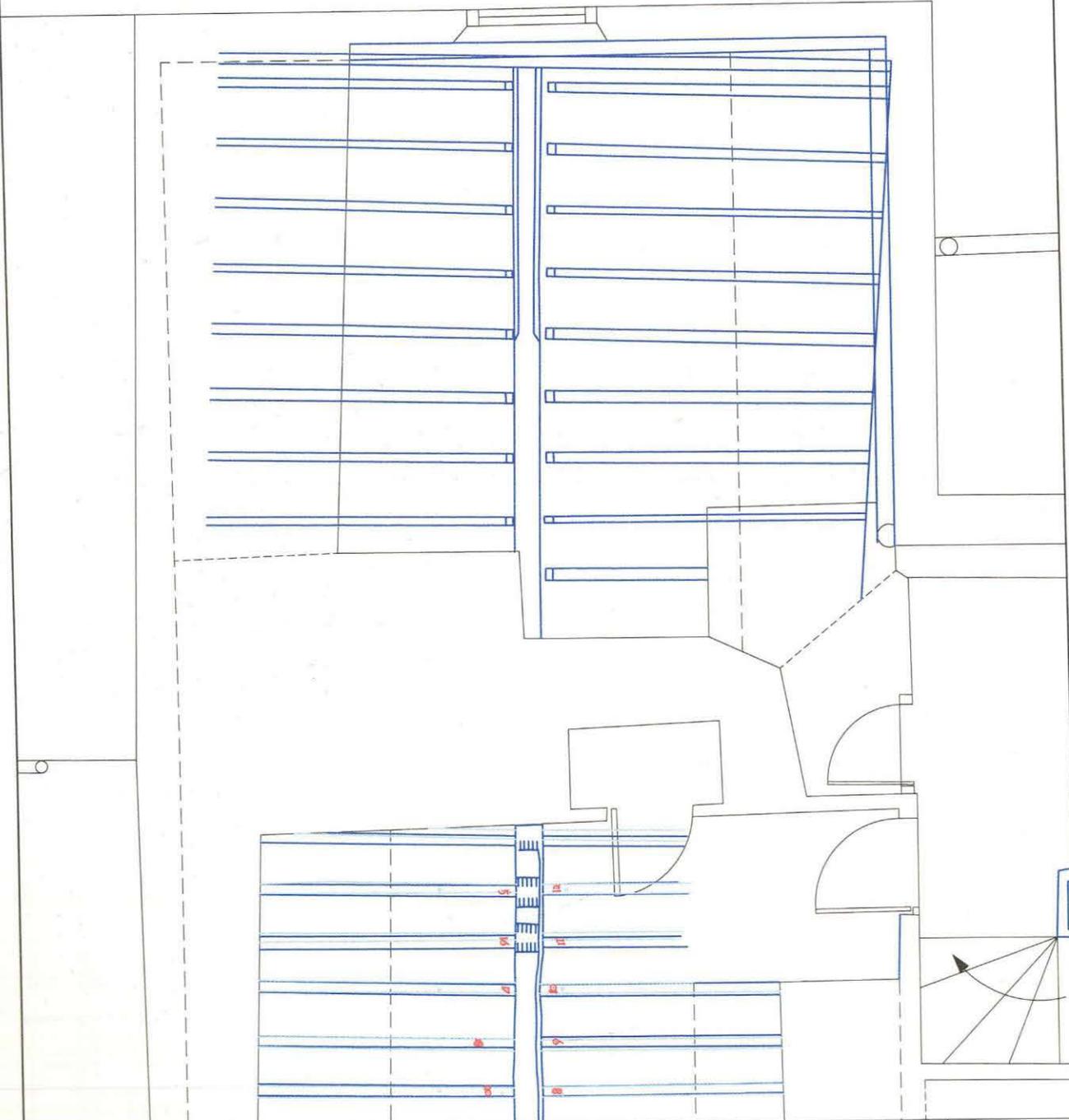
The staircase at second-floor level (Figure 14) forms the earliest surviving part of the stair. This uppermost portion retains a faceted ball finial on a faceted newel posts, which, although not tightly dateable, are of late 16th to 17th century date. The next newel down has an acorn-shaped finial more typical of the 17th century. The handrails of the stair at this level and above have pegged joints. The remainder of the stair to the ground floor is of early 19th century date.

Room A8

This room (Figure 14) is entered via a door opening from the eastern stair landing (Figure 14). At this level, the stair also provided access to a further room to the south. An additional door opening has been forced through into the centre range; this, however, did not form part of the original arrangement.

The floorboards in this room may be the only original boards surviving in the house, but they are not *in situ*. They were removed during the present programme to permit an examination of the floor structure (Figure 17). The floor is constructed in a similar fashion to that of the northwest room (Room A3), including the exclusion of the sprung arrangement seen elsewhere in the house. A careful examination of the ends of the joists which terminate in the bridging beam revealed no evidence for carpenters' marks. Unlike the northwest room, however, all the joists remain firmly seated in the bridging beam, and are additionally secured by single nails driven through the joints. Iron strapping has also been used for the same purpose approximately midway along the length of the beam. The south end of the bridging beam is seated on a brick offset formed on the chimney breast, while the northern is secured on the gable wall plate. Removal of some of the under-floor debris exposed the

joists 
sub-joists 
carpenter's mark 

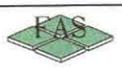


Room A3 joists

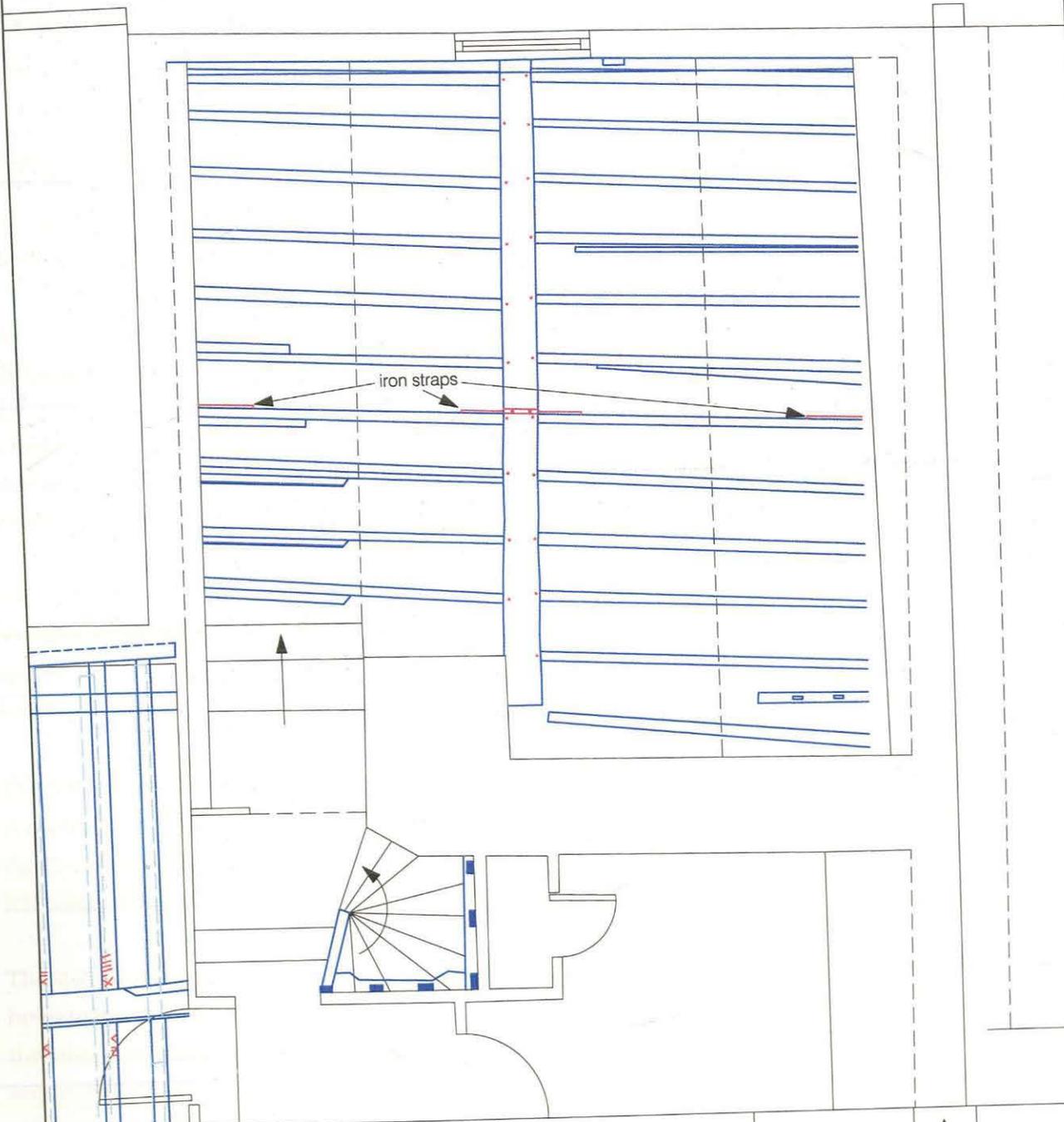
Scale 1:50



Figure 16



- joists 
- timber over 
- sub-joists 
- timber uprights 
- carpenter's mark 
- ironwork 
- peg hole 
- iron nail 



Room A8 joists

Scale 1:50



Figure 17



rear face of a lathe and plaster ceiling for the first floor, which appears to be of 19th century date.

Room A5

The floorboards in this room (Figure 13) were removed to allow an examination of the floor structure (Figure 18). This consists of a bridging beam running north to south, with joists jointed into either side. Not all of the upper surfaces of the joists were available for inspection, but those which were have inscribed carpenters' marks, taking the form of Roman numerals, which do not seem to represent a coherent numbering sequence.

The boxing which obscured the wall plate in the south wall was removed. The exposed wall plate provides some of the best evidence for the original external treatment of the south gable wall. Along the upper surface, towards the southern edge, are a series of mortice holes. These have clearly been used, some still retaining the stubs of tenons. Their presence demonstrates clearly that the gables were originally formed with timber studding.

Room A4

This attic room (Figure 13, Plate 13) is currently entered from doorways to both east and west. The change in floor level between the east wing and the central range suggests that the eastern doorway has been inserted. This is confirmed by the 1964 survey of the house by B P Bates, which omits the door opening in this wall. In contrast, the west door appears to be original, including its panelled door. The door has been provided with a small circular opening near its bottom edge with a sliding shutter - presumably for a 'mouser'.

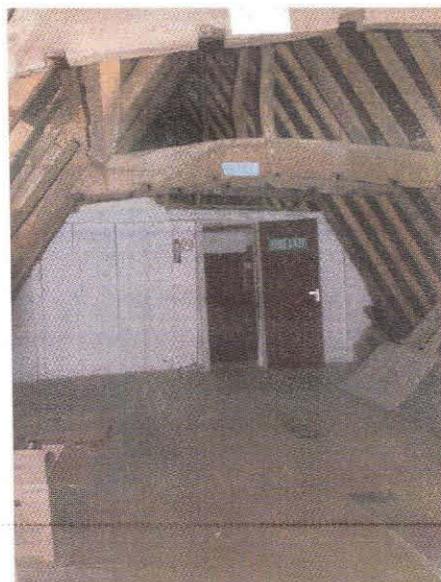
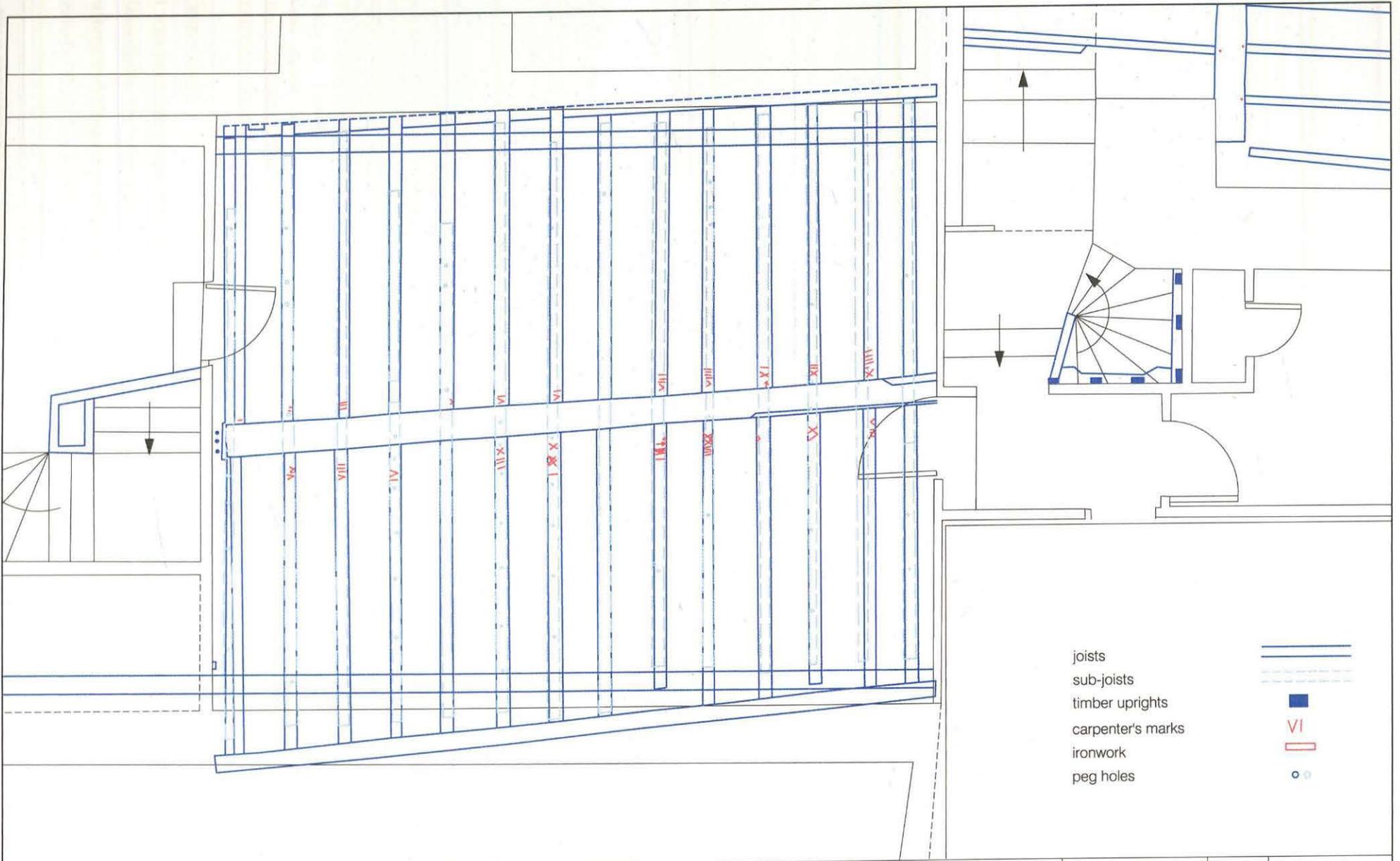


Plate 13 Central attic room (Room A4) before removal of floorboards, looking east

Some residual reed and plaster undersealing of the roof structure remains, suggesting a more domestic function than is currently appreciated. However, as in every other attic room, the lack of a fireplace precludes a high-status function.

The floorboards in this room were removed to permit an examination of the floor structure (Figure 19). A central bridging beam runs east to west, with joists jointed into it and resting on wall plates along the heads of the north and south walls. Wall movement and extensive decay of the wall plates have left some of the joists unsupported at one end.

The sprung floor arrangement seen elsewhere in the house was also used in this floor structure. Peg holes in the 'springs' (sub-joists) were presumably intended for fixing the floorboards. Where visible, the joists carry carpenters' marks on their upper surfaces, in the form of Roman numerals and starting sequentially from the northwest joist. However, there is again some incoherence in the numbering sequence, suggesting that some reshuffling has taken place either during or following the building's



Room A4 joists

Scale 1:50



Figure 19



construction.

The upper surface of the first-floor ceiling is visible. The east end is of reed and plaster construction, contrasting with the west end, which was of later lathe and plaster. The difference in materials reflects the subdivision of the house in the 19th century, and the subsequent replacement of one part of the ceiling.

3.2.4 Roof structures

West wing

It was not possible to inspect the southern end of the roof structure as it was fully undersealed. However, inspection hatches were available to examine the northern portion of the roof (Figure 20), and much of the side lathe and plaster panelling had been removed historically.

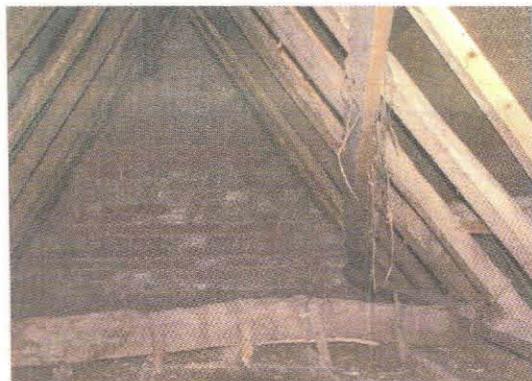


Plate 14 Roof structure of west wing



Plate 15 Lower part of roof structure in west gable, looking southeast (original common rafters, wall plate and secondary common rafters)

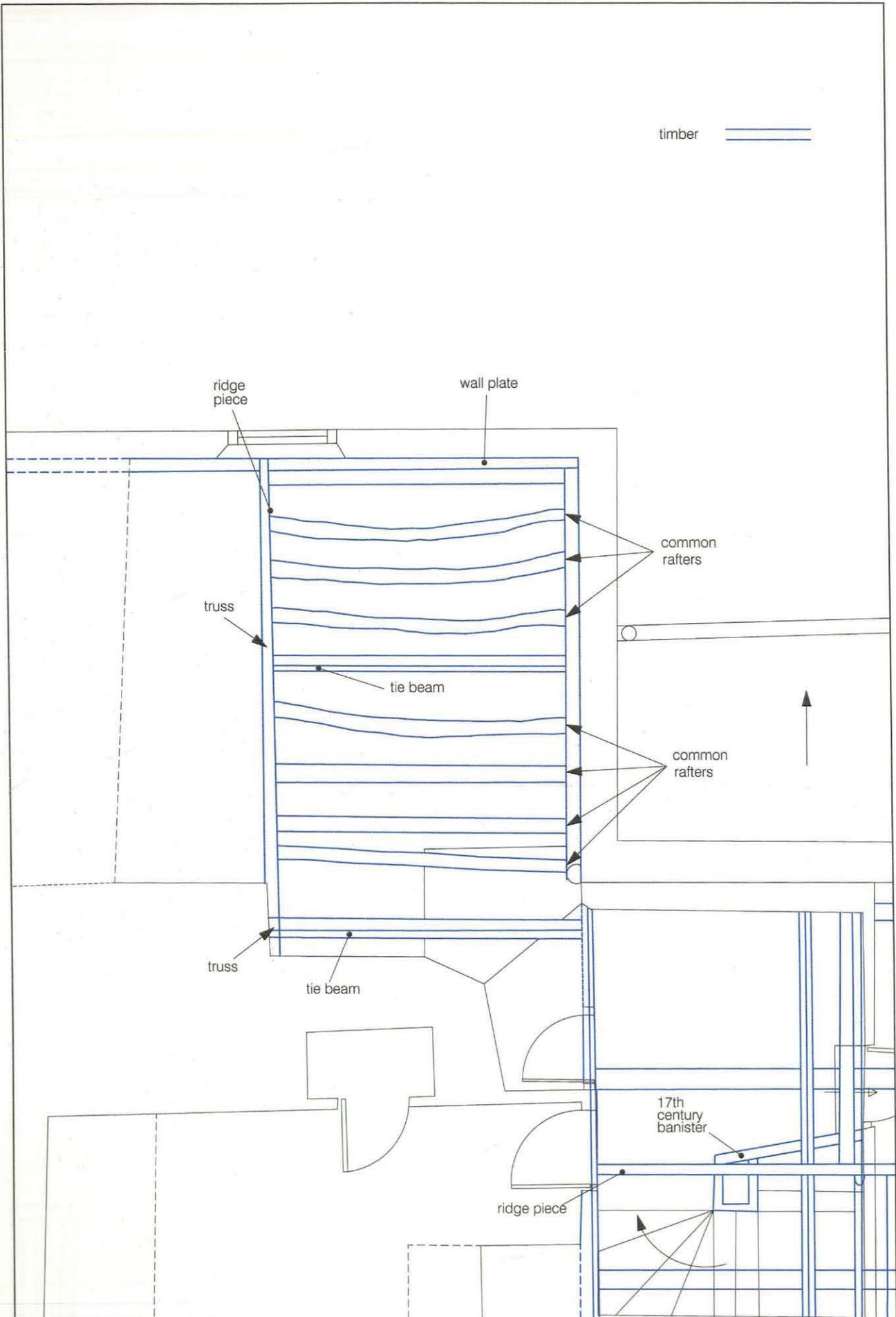
The roof form is of simple and light construction (Plates 14 and 15). A basic A-frame is formed by common rafters, set directly onto the wall plates. A wall plate acts as a tie beam at the north end of the roof. The frame is further tied by collars, with clasped purlins. An additional collar would have been located in the gable wall, but this has since been removed - presumably when the upper part of the gable wall was rebuilt in brick. The rafters clasping the purlins with the collars would normally be of greater size (a principal rafter) than those adjacent, but this is not the case at Alford. Little additional tying is provided.

If the joists of the attic floor had been better secured into the bridging beam, further resistance to the spreading effect of the roof would have been provided. The ceiling joists of the attic are secured by hangers from the collars (see Plate 14) - these are of very modest dimensions.

Additional purlins and common rafters have been erected on top of the original roof structure as part of a recent repair. Similar work appears to have been carried out on all of the roof structures of the house.

Centre range

It was possible to examine the roof structure over this portion of the house in some detail (Figure 21). Essentially, the roof takes the same form as that above the west wing, consisting of collars, common rafters and clasped purlins supported on wall plates to the north and south. The wall plates, in turn, transfer their loads directly onto a series of posts at first-floor level. The positions of four posts are



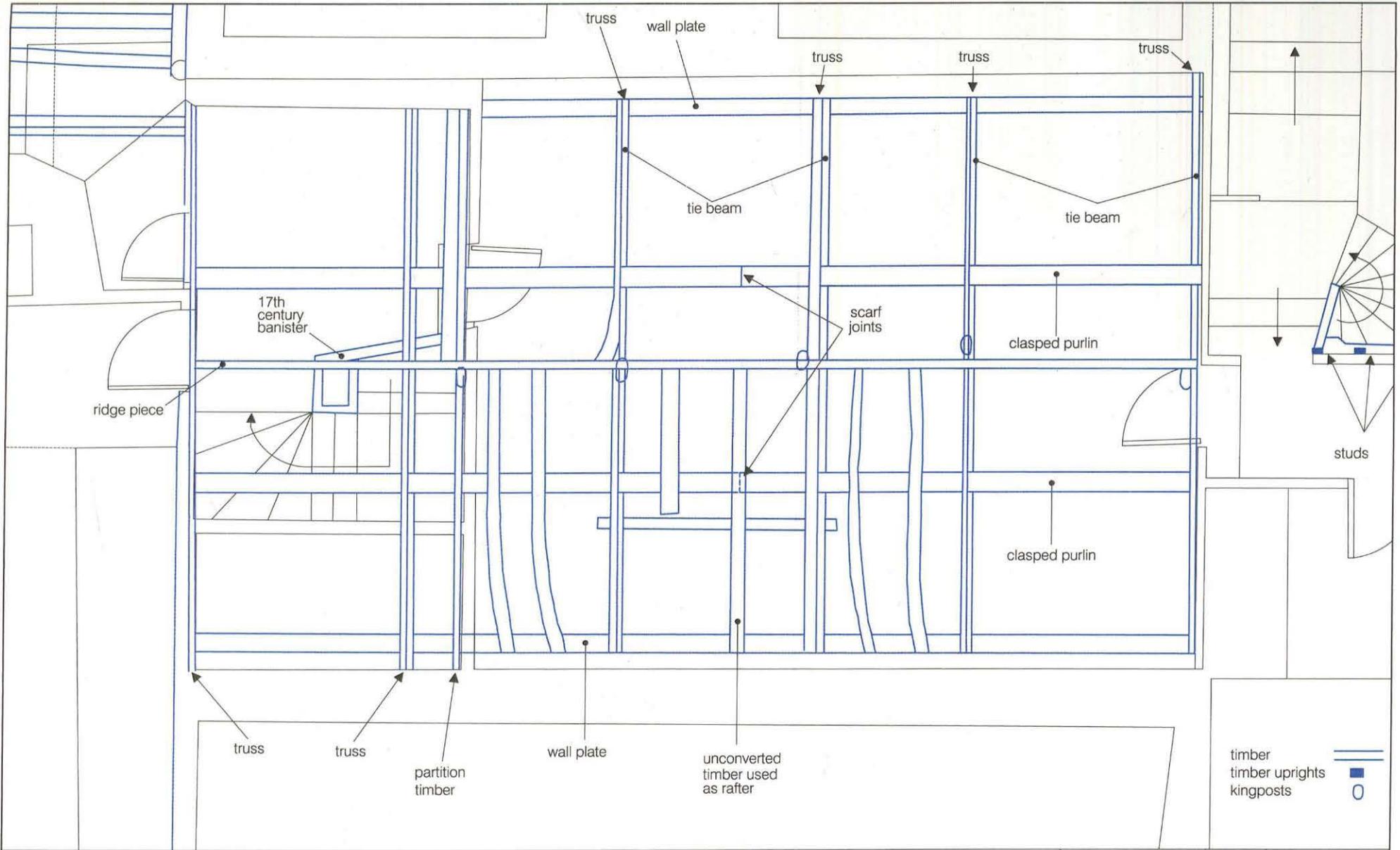
Roof structure above Room A3

Scale 1:50



Figure 20





Roof structure above Room A4

Scale 1:50



Figure 21





Plate 16 Bridle scarf joint on purlin



Plate 17 Levelling mark on collar

known along the north wall. It is assumed that the same number existed along the south facade, although all appear to have since been removed. The purlins are formed from lengths of timber linked with bridle scarf joints (Plate 16), most showing some sign of movement.

The collars are provided with a series of cuts intended to support timbers for the under-ceiling of the roof. Unlike the roof structures of medieval buildings, it was never intended that the roof structure of this building be on display to the occupants of the house.

Few carpenters' marks were identified on the timbers, apart from numbering on the bridle scarf joints of the purlins and levelling marks on the collars associated with the trenched purlins (Plate 17).

The roof structure has received some historic modification including the insertion of crude king posts of unconverted timber. These are nailed into position. Like the other roofs of the house, new elements have been introduced

above the original structure.

East wing

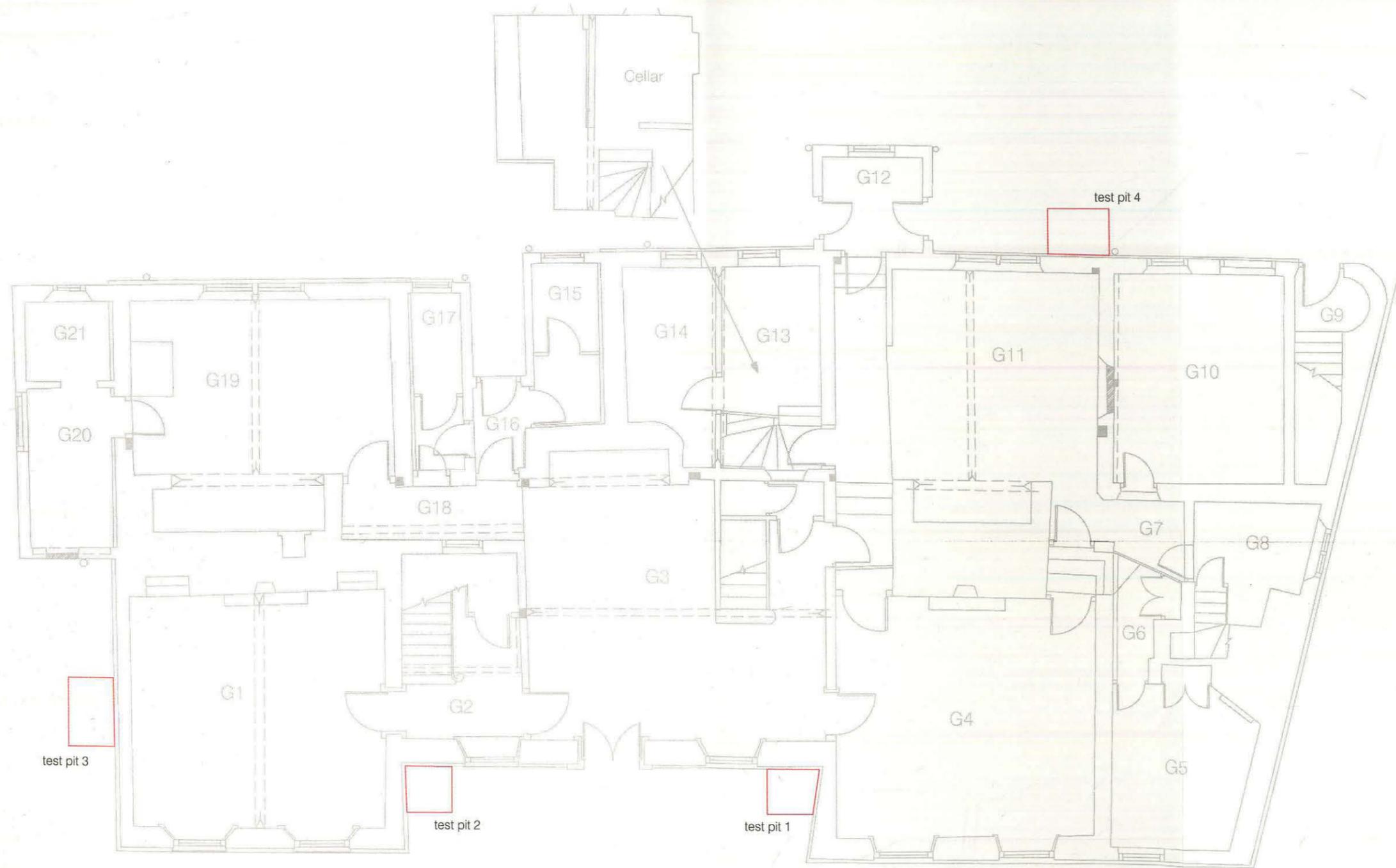
Below collar height, the roof structure retains its undersealing and it was not possible to inspect it in any detail. However, a view through ceiling hatches indicates that the structure is identical to that above the west wing.

Mortar Samples

During the 'opening up' works, some areas of dense cement pointing were removed, providing the opportunity to examine and compare the underlying mortar types. The ground floor of the north elevations of the east and west wings both used a buff-coloured, very sandy, soft lime mortar. This mortar was the bonding agent used in the areas which were identified as forming the original build. This contrasted with the mortar used at ground-floor level in the south elevation of the west wing, which, although also buff-coloured and soft, had very large chalk inclusions.

3.3 TEST PITS

Four test pits, measuring approximately 1m x 1m, were excavated to a variable depth around the perimeter of the house (Figure 22). In all cases, the excavations revealed that the footings were constructed in brick, with some variation in depth and form of construction.

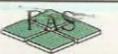


Test pit positions

Scale 1:100



Figure 22



Test pit 1 was excavated at the junction between the east wing and central range against the south elevation. Surprisingly, the foundations extended to a depth of little more than 0.2m, on both elevations.

Test pit 2 was excavated at the junction between the west wing and central range against the south elevation. The footings of the central range were of slight depth as observed in Test pit 1. However, those of the west wing were constructed to a greater depth and were formed of stepped bricks courses.

Test pit 3 was excavated against the west elevation of the west wing along the line of a clear break in the fabric above. The footings extended to a depth of c.0.5m to the south, sloping upwards to the north. The junction observed in the superstructure was not carried through into the footings, suggesting that the footings must predate any alterations to the elevation.

Test pit 4 was cut against the north elevation of the east wing, where cracks and junctions in the fabric of the ground could be observed. The exposed footings consisted of stepped brickwork extending to a depth of at least c.0.5m. No junctions were observed in the subsurface fabric. During excavation a quantity of loose building rubble was encountered, consisting mainly of brick fragments (predominantly 19th century stock brick). This appears to have been part of a recent attempt to create a French drain.

The highly mixed nature of the deposits in all trial holes indicates that the ground has been the subjected to recent disturbance. The great variation in the depth of the footings cannot be explained in terms of different building phases of the superstructure. It is more likely that the original builders excavated foundation trenches through the sub-soil until they encountered firmer clay deposits. Therefore the variation in the depth of the footings reflects the underlying topography of the local geology.

4.0 DISCUSSION

4.1 STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

4.1.1 Construction in brick

Two theories have been circulated to explain the construction of Alford Manor House. One suggests that the building was originally a timber-framed structure, which was subsequently encased in brick. An alternative sees the house as a part of the Lincolnshire 'mud and stud' building tradition, the mud and stud being subsequently replaced with brick. During this programme of building investigation, both hypotheses have been proven to be incorrect. All of the evidence from the building thus far observed indicates that structurally, Alford Manor House is of composite timber and brick construction.

Brick was first introduced to Lincolnshire during the 14th century, as an alternative to stone in the construction of mass walling. Its appearance remained focussed upon the east of England, yet even here its development was isolated and localised, confined to areas in East Yorkshire, Hertfordshire and Lincolnshire itself (Brunskill 1997, 115). Its production remained at a local level, often being confined to the building site itself. This led to a wide variety of brick sizes and colours, and it is not surprising that when it first appeared, determined attempts were made at disguising its use; brickwork was regularly encased in plaster and incised in imitation of expensive stonework.

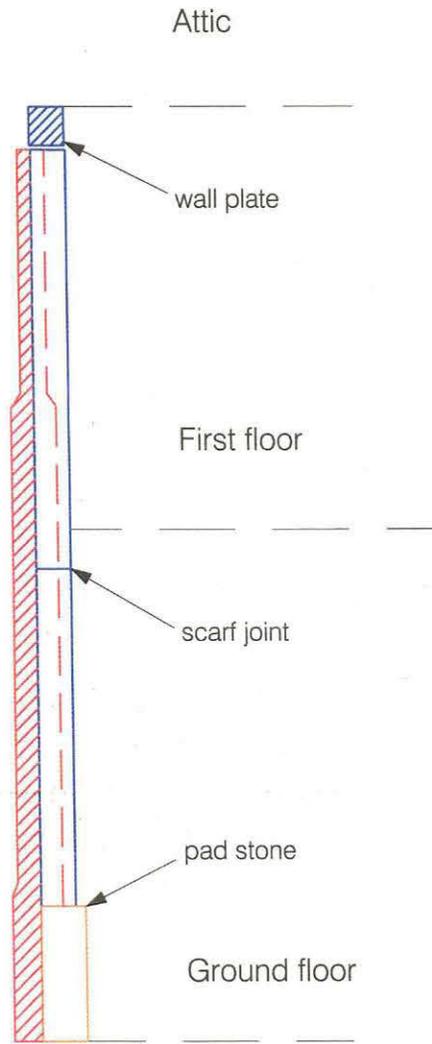
However, this new material had a versatility only seen in the highest levels of stone masonry, allowing it to be used throughout a building in walls, doors and even in spiral staircases and vaulted ceilings, through the use of cut and moulded bricks. Thus the structural emphasis was soon replaced by a desire for decorative brickwork, and high-status buildings such as Tattershall Castle (1434-5) and Thornton Abbey (late 14th century) represent imposing structures within the Lincolnshire landscape.

The introduction of brick lower down the social scale is, currently, more difficult to trace. While previously it had been socially isolated, being confined to the highest levels of society, by the 16th century, it was beginning to appear in lower-class buildings. For the smaller vernacular building, its appearance was, once again, more of a necessity than a direct choice. There was a certain degree of emulation from the burgeoning middle classes; however, its arrival also coincided with a dwindling supply of stone and timber. It is perhaps for this reason that many examples are seen in combination with other building materials, particularly timber.

4.1.2 The structure of Alford Manor House

Each wing consists of a total of ten posts (five per side) which rise to the full (eaves) height of the building, forming four bays. There are no wall plates in the long walls until eaves height. The short or gable walls had wall plates at each floor level, with the exception of the ground floor. Those at attic level remain, while those at first-floor level appear to have been removed in both the south and north elevations. These plates would have acted as ties for the corner posts, and provided support to the bridging beams which appear on every floor. The subsequent removal of the first-floor wall plates might account for the spread and cracking of the walls observed in the corners of the wings on the north elevation. The rebuilding of the south elevations would have masked this effect.

The posts do not consist of a single length of timber, but rather of two timbers scarfed together. Although the precise form of the scarf joints was not exposed at any point in the investigation, an edge-halved scarf seems likely. All of the posts are all seated on masonry blocks, effectively acting as pad stones, built within the brick-work of the walls. The height of the masonry blocks in relation to the external brick plinth means that the posts 'spring' from the level of the plinth (Figure 23). This measure was presumably intended to prevent the bottom of the timbers suffering excessive damp and subsequent decay - a measure which appears to have been largely successful.



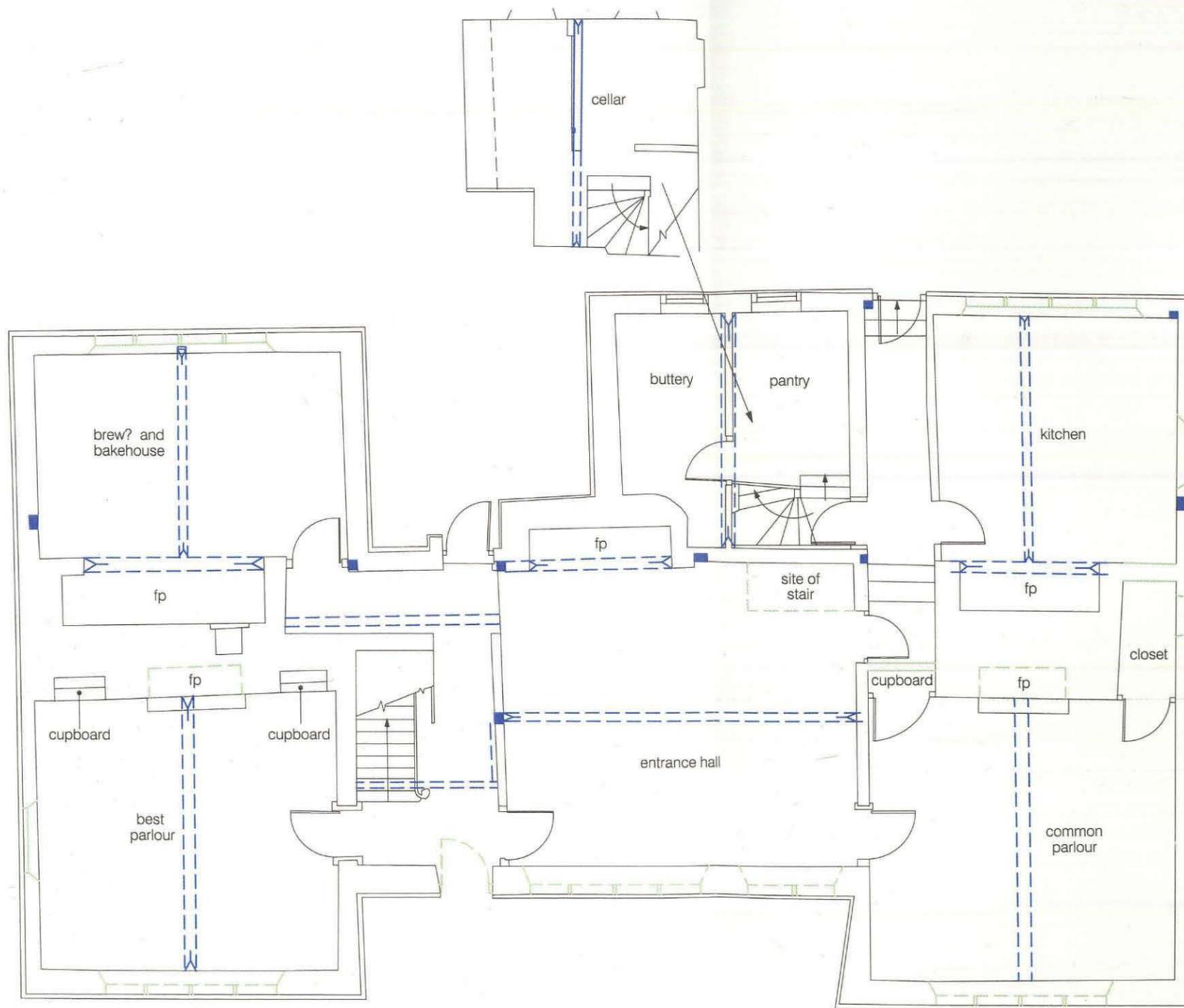
brick ———
timber ———
stone ———

Conjectural cross section through west wall

Scale 1:50

Figure 23





timber above
 timber uprights
 reconstruction
 conjectural reconstruction

Conjectured original ground-floor domestic plan

Scale 1:100



Figure 24



4.2 ALFORD MANOR HOUSE IN THE 17TH CENTURY

4.2.1 Domestic planning in the 16th and 17th centuries

Alford Manor House was constructed at the end of a period of innovation in the spatial planning of domestic architecture. Typically, the late medieval vernacular house included an open-hall with two-storeyed bays or cross-wings at each end. There was a strict hierarchical division in the domestic function of these cross-wings. One wing, entered from the 'low-end' of the hall, contained the services (kitchen, buttery and pantry); the other wing, entered from the 'high-end' of the hall, contained the high-status private rooms. The house would have been entered at the 'low-end' of the hall, often *via* a screens passage.

By the 16th century, newly erected houses were becoming wholly two-storeyed, and existing houses were being converted, with the insertion of an upper floor in the hall. The two-storeyed arrangement effectively diminished the importance of the hall. This change was coupled by the development of the parlour or withdrawing room, located at the 'high-end' of the hall beneath the solar, which provided an alternative dining space to the hall. The hall was therefore decreasing in importance, and ultimately, was downsized to the small vestibule found in houses today. By the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the position of the main entrance had become more fluid, being often found at the 'high-end' of the hall, or centrally positioned, providing direct access to either hall or parlour. In some cases, a double entrance was provided, particularly if there was a second parlour. In the same period, the outshut or lean-to service aisle became a regular feature, often under a 'catslide' roof and located to the rear of the hall (Wood 1965, 219). This period also saw the three-storey house becoming particularly common. The third storey was used to provide attic bedrooms, usually of lower status than those below. The domestic function and planning of the rooms within Alford Manor House have to be seen in the light of these changes.

4.2.2 Ground floor

In view of the number of stairs included in the original plan, it is probable that Alford Manor House had a double entrance arrangement. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that the hall (Room G3) ever served as more than a prestigious entrance and staircase hall.

Room G1 to the southwest almost certainly served as the 'best parlour' of the house (Figure 24). The origins of the parlour can be traced from the medieval period, when such a room would have marked the 'high end' of the house, often at ground-floor level. Typically in the late medieval period, the high end stair would have been located either within it or adjacent to it in a lobby (Wood 1965, 133). The lobby configuration became more popular in the 16th century and can be observed at Alford. The principal function of the parlour was as a withdrawing room where the family would sit and dine. In the medieval period, this room might also have contained a bed, but by the mid-16th century, this usage was becoming uncommon. By the mid-16th century, to emphasise the parlour's more restricted role for entertaining and eating, it was often referred to as a 'dining parlour' (Cooper 1999, 289). The

Alford example was provided with easy access from both the entrance hall and the stairs leading to the highest status bedchambers of the house. Further evidence for the status of this room was identified from the level of ornamentation on the now-covered bridging beam which spanned the room.

The presence of a large fireplace in the northwest room (Room G19) has led to the suggestion that this room was a kitchen. However, this interpretation is problematic, as there is a further room in the house discussed below (Room G11) which can more suitably be interpreted as a kitchen.

Large fireplaces are also found in brew and bakehouses. Brewhouses are generally not included in the main body of the house because of the associated smell, although a 1620 ground plan of an unknown house by Bernhard Dinninghoff does include the inclusion such a room within one of the cross-wings (Cooper 1999, 295). However, it was more common to include a bakehouse in the body of the house, often referred to as the 'pastry'. If the ground-floor room was a bakehouse, it is likely that the fire would be lit for much of the day, providing constant heat to the room above. Uniquely within Alford Manor house, this room does not include any evidence for a ceiling, the floorboards and joists of the room above being exposed.

Further services consisted of the kitchen (Room G11) and the lean-to outshut to the north of the hall which contained the buttery and pantry (Figure 24). The kitchen included a passageway along its western side, part of which remains, which provided access to the buttery and pantry, to the main body of the house and to the gardens to the rear of the house. This reflects the typical medieval arrangement of a 'screens passage', translated into the needs of a 17th century plan. The cellar, beneath the buttery and pantry, appears originally to have been accessed only *via* a door beneath the east stairs, which was blocked with the extension of the stair in the 19th century.

The southeast room (Room G4) appears to have been a 'common' or 'low' parlour. The low parlour is a development seen in house plans from the mid-16th century. Such rooms were often located at the 'low end' of the house, and were, therefore, much less prestigious room than a best parlour. Its function within the household was also more fluid, being used both for additional guest accommodation (containing a bed), as well as for informal eating and sitting. Low-end parlours were also known as 'winter parlours', being close to both the warmth of the kitchen and the dining convenience which this provided (Cooper 1999, 291). Roger North, writing on architecture in 1690, suggested that the common parlour should '...be layd neer the offices, and back entrance...' and that '...nothing is more usefull here than closets, cupboards, and presses, for the laying by books, swords, cloaks, and other things...' (North 1981, 137-8). The Alford common parlour was principally reached by the existing door opening from the low end of the entrance hall, providing easy access to the kitchen, service passage and rear entrance. A closet appears to have been located in its northeast corner and a cupboard in the northwest, both features which North recommended in his treatise.

4.2.3 First floor

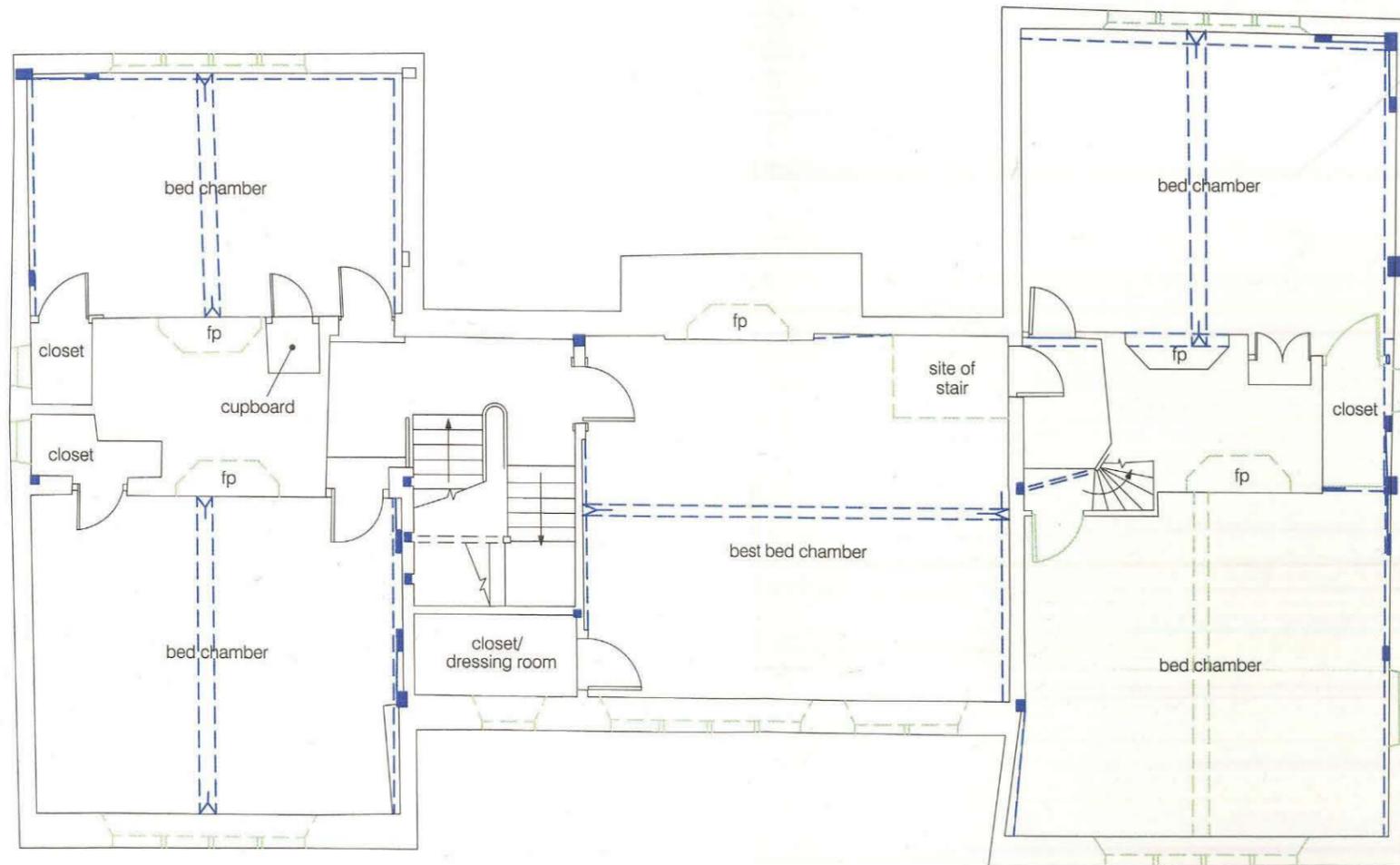
The first floor of the house is dominated by bedchambers. In the medieval period, the main bedchambers of the house would have been shared, and supplied with garderobes. From the middle of the 16th century, however, there was a steady decline in the provision of garderobes, linked to the increased use of the close stool. Cooper (1999, 298) has explained this transition as being due to a change in manners; if a bedchamber was shared by several members of the family, the garderobe provided a degree of privacy. But as bedchambers were increasingly occupied by only single members of the family or guests, the close stool in a closet provided a more than adequate level of privacy. However, it seems likely that as the use of bedchambers as sitting rooms declined (this function being provided by the plethora of parlours), it liberated the entire bedchamber for more private needs.

Although a key function of the closet was to accommodate the close stool, it was also used for the storage of clothes, valuables, and in the larger closets, linen, hangings and surplus furniture. Large closets could also act as dressing rooms and servants' bedchambers. There is only one closet at Alford which could have served the latter functions, being that associated with the room above the entrance hall (Room F4).

The first floor was originally accessed by means of two stairs, placed at either end of the entrance hall. The east stair was a more modest arrangement than the west, reflecting the status of the rooms to which it provided access. As discussed above, the lower part of the east stair has received some alteration since its original construction, but it would have followed the current general form. At first-floor level, the stairs originally provided access to two rooms (Figure 25).

The northwest and southwest rooms were both originally bedchambers, each provided with a closet lit by a small window. The bedchamber (Room F1) to the southwest appears to have been of higher status, the finely moulded and painted beam implying a higher level of decoration than found in the northwest room (Room F17). The room above the entrance hall also appears to have been a bedchamber, probably of the highest status in the entire house. Originally it was entered only from the west stair and had a closet in the southwest corner. A house of slightly later date is more likely to have a dining room in this location, but there is extensive provision for this on the ground floor at Alford.

In the period in which Alford was constructed, the function of a room in this location was changing. The medieval arrangement, with a hall open to the roof, would have placed the great chamber at the high end of the hall, above the parlour. However, with the introduction of the single-storey hall in the 16th century, it became more common to place the great chamber above the hall. In the 16th century, the great chamber had a dual function, being used for both eating and sleeping, and typical furnishings would have included a table for dining as well as a good-quality bed (Cooper 1999, 293). The function of this room became more polarised by the mid-17th century, providing either a best bedchamber or dining room. The Alford example, however, appears to have been conceived along



timber above
 timber uprights
 reconstruction
 conjectural reconstruction

Conjectured original first-floor domestic plan

Scale 1:100



Figure 25



the traditional model of dual function, although there is some evidence to suggest that it was subsequently converted to single use as a dining chamber.

The eastern, or back, stair provided access to further bedchambers at first-floor level (Figure 25). The northeast bedchamber (F11) was provided with a closet in its southeast corner. The location of the closet in the southeast room (F5) is uncertain, if indeed it was provided with one at all. No further rooms were accessed by the east stair at this level. These two bedchambers would have been occupied by guests or lesser members of the family. In addition, the back stair would have provided access to the chamber above the entrance hall - a discreet means of servicing one of the highest-status chambers in the house. The precise arrangement, however, has been obscured by the replacement of the lower part of the east stair in the 19th century.

4.2.4 Attic floor

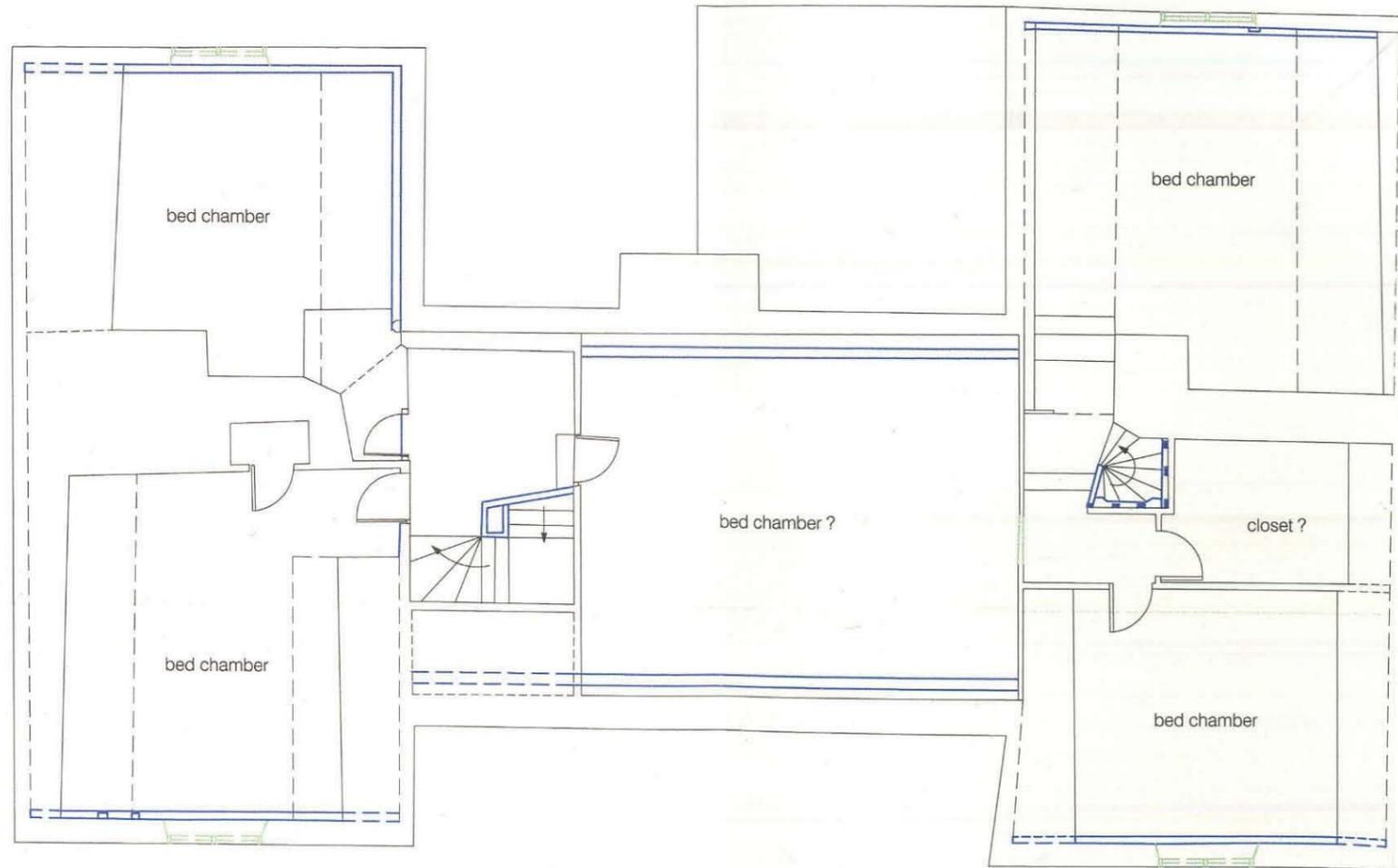
The attic rooms were reached *via* the upper runs of the east and west stairs. Both stairs at this level were of modest proportions. The west stair provided access to three rooms: the southwest (Room A1), the northwest (Room A3) and the centre range (Room A4) (Figure 26). With windows provided in the gable walls, it is likely that the southwest and northwest rooms acted as supplementary bedchambers to those below, although clearly of more modest status. It is more difficult to identify the function of the central room at this level. No evidence remains to indicate whether this room was provided with any natural lighting, such as dormer windows. However, as originally this room could only be accessed from the high-status western stair, a function associated with inner core of the family seems likely. The eastern stairs provided access to two further bedchambers in the northeast and southeast rooms. As the lowest status bedchambers of the house, they are likely to have been occupied by servants.

From these observations, a clearer picture of the domestic layout of the house has begun to emerge. The eastern side of the house contained services, accommodation for guests and servants, while the western side of the house provided the high-status accommodation for the family. These two areas of the house only converged in the entrance hall, an arrangement that still reflected the medieval hierarchical division of a household.

4.2.5 Reconstruction

Some features of the late medieval house lent themselves to the development of the fully-storeyed house. The two most prominent were the jettied upper floor and the gable surmounting a wing. In his consideration of Hertfordshire houses, Smith (1992, 95) observed that by the second half of the 16th century, it was rare to find both features combined in the same house. In the case of Alford, gables surmounting the wings were chosen, reflecting the functional need for domestic attic space.

On the basis of the evidence established so far, a reconstruction of the appearance of the facades of the building can be attempted. There is conclusive evidence for the form of the east elevation of the east



timber uprights ■
reconstruction —
conjectural reconstruction - - -

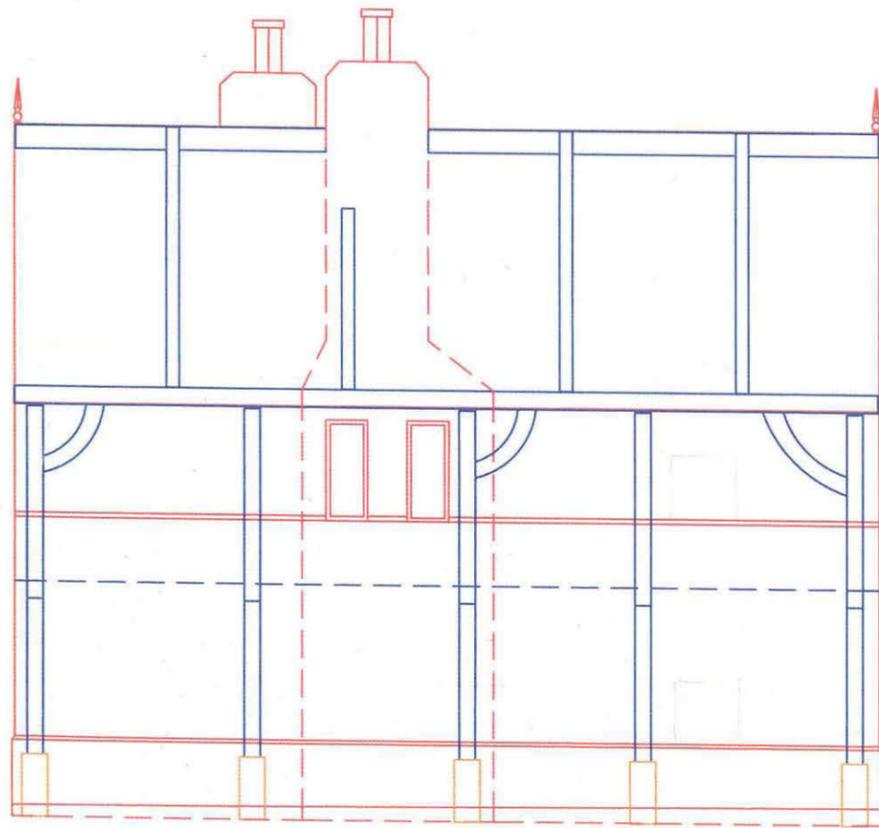
Conjectured original attic domestic plan

Scale 1:100

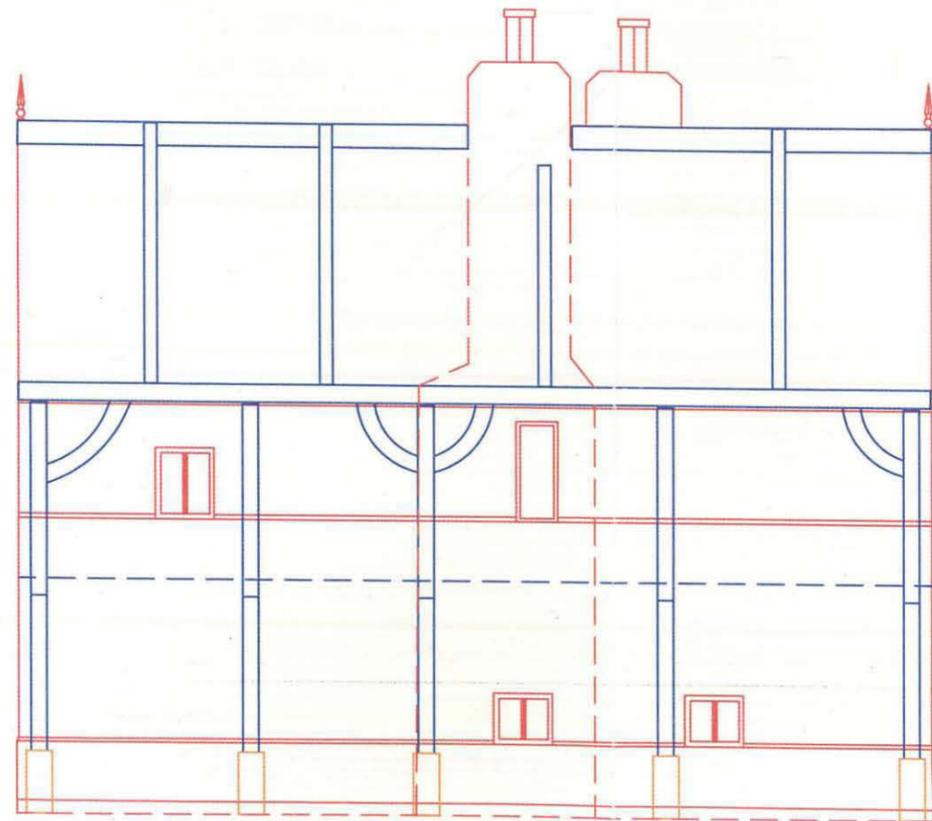


Figure 26





west side of west wing



east side of east wing

timber ———
 padstones ———
 conjectured ———
 external ———
 elevation ———



wing and for the west elevation of the west wing (Figure 26). In both cases, although there are further possible openings which have not yet been located, the character of these elevations is unproblematic. Both had modest window openings at first-floor level, with sills formed by the mid-floor offset in the brickwork. Tall, narrow window openings lit closets, while shorter, wider openings provided lighting for the principle rooms in the wings. A similar arrangement was used at ground-floor level, with the sills of the openings formed by the brick plinth. Neither elevation would have presented any significant areas of timber framing other than the frames of the windows.

The reconstruction of the south elevation remains the most speculative, as the entire facade has been rebuilt piecemeal. The height and form of the brick plinth and brick offset at first-floor level can be assumed from the other facades. The form of the wing gables can be established from the remaining wall plates at second-floor level, and mortices discovered within these housed the framework for the windows. The forward position of the mortices on the gable wall plates suggests that the timber studding was exposed, and has been represented as such in the reconstruction drawings (Figure 28). The form and position of the wing openings is based on observations in the north elevation.

The form of the centre range is slightly more problematic, and three possibilities have been presented (Figures 29, 30 and 31). Whether there was a single or a double entrance arrangement remains uncertain, but both configurations would have been possible in the 17th century. The form of window openings on the centre range can be taken from those reconstructed in the wings. At least one small window is implied to light the closet at first-floor level. Other windows, lighting some of the largest spaces in the house, would have been proportionally larger.

4.2.6 Date and sequence of construction

Sufficient archaeological evidence remains in the house to date the building to between 1590 and 1620. However, dendrochronology has permitted further refinement of both the initial construction date and subsequent dates of alterations. The majority of timbers sampled provided a felling date of 1611 (English Heritage Centre for Archaeology Report - forthcoming), indicating that the building was erected in 1611 or shortly thereafter. The spread of samples throughout the building demonstrates that the 1611 date can be applied to the hall range, both wings and all associated roof structures. However, two dating anomalies occur. A bridging beam in the outshut provided a date of 1672-74, and the bridging beam spanning Room F3 provided a date of 1664. As suggested above, the domestic function of this room was in a period of transition, and the later date of the beam perhaps indicates that the room's function had become fossilised as a dining chamber rather than a bed chamber during Robert Christopher's occupation, requiring some structural alterations. It is possible that elements of the south facade were being rebuilt at the same time, reflecting changes in the domestic use of rooms.

The date obtained from the outshut (1672-4) post-dates Robert Christopher's death in 1668. The plan of the house should have included a buttery and pantry in this location from its initial construction in 1611. Therefore, it seems likely that, rather than being a new addition, this portion of the building was being remodelled in 1672-4. The logical interpretation is one of conversion from a single-storey



Reconstruction of timber framing at gable ends of cross wing

Scale 1:50

Figure 28



Conjectural reconstruction of north and south elevations 1

Scale 1:100

Figure 29



timber ——— blue ———
conjectured external elevation ——— red ———
stone ——— orange ———

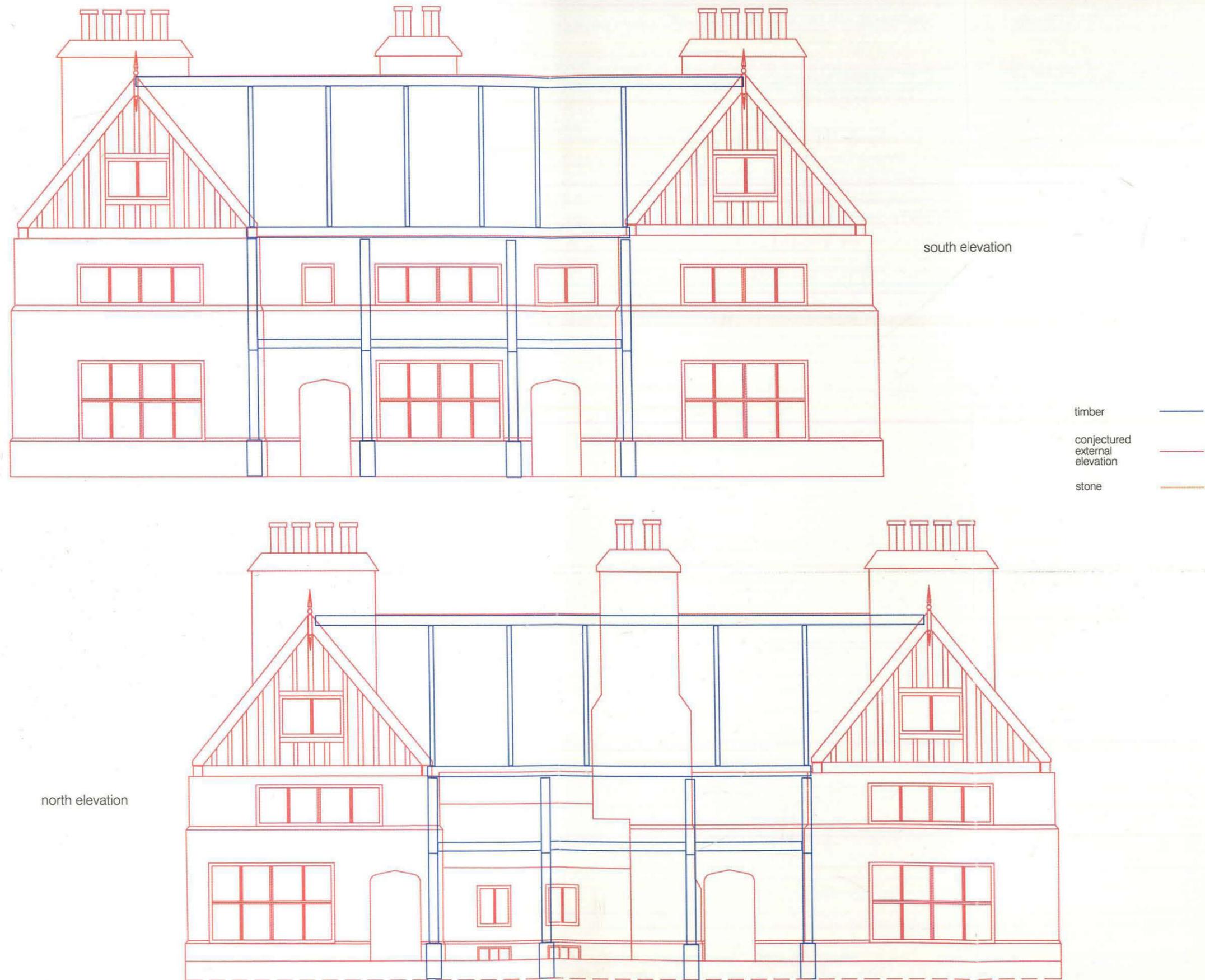


Conjectural reconstruction of north and south elevations 2

Scale 1:100

Figure 30





Conjectural reconstruction of north and south elevations 3

Scale 1:100

Figure 31

structure (consisting of a buttery and pantry) to a two-storey structure providing a cellar.

4.3 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The archaeological investigation of Alford Manor House has provided significant information on three major themes: the manner of construction, the date of construction, and the nature of domestic planning in a period of transition. On the basis of visible carpenter's marks, the construction methods used, and the results of dendrochronological sampling, the building was erected relatively quickly. The builders' selection of a composite timber and brick construction type appears to have been facilitated this quick construction, with some savings in expenditure. Although this building method has been recognized in other parts of England from the mid-17th century, Alford is the first example identified in Lincolnshire, and it predates the majority of examples found elsewhere.

On the basis of its domestic planning, the building technology employed, the architectural detailing, and on the results of dendrochronology, Alford Manor House appears to have been erected in 1611 or shortly thereafter. Some remodelling of the house took place in the late 17th century, and the front facade was subsequently replaced in stages as structural problems emerged in the composite timber and brick construction of the original build. In the 18th and 19th centuries, additions were made to the core of the house, the fenestration scheme was altered, and the interiors were remodelled, masking much of the original arrangement. However, the fact that so much of the original layout can still be read in the fabric of the building emphasizes Alford's significance.

Alford Manor House still retains significant unexplored archaeology which should be taken into account during the repair and refurbishment of the building. The 'opening up' works revealed that the building retains evidence for original decorative schemes, and these are likely to be encountered in any disturbance of the interiors. The house includes recent plasterboarding and surface renderings; disturbance or removal of these will reveal more structural features and additional archaeological details. Further sub-surface floor intervention is likely to uncover important information on room layout and function. Finally, it is likely that any below-ground intervention within the grounds surrounding the house will reveal more about post-medieval landscaping and use, including the presence and nature of any gardens to the north of the house.

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