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THE BRIGANTIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE

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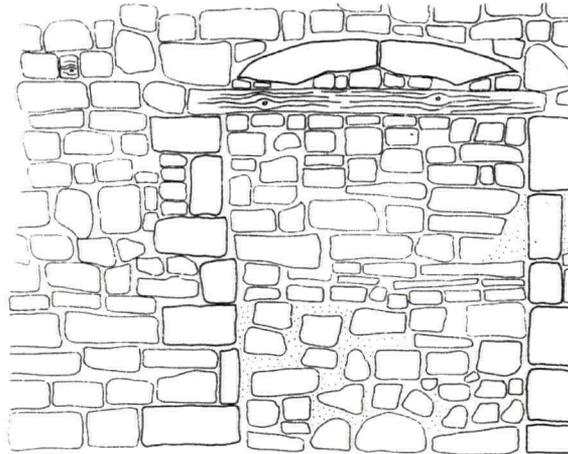


OLD HALL, BARDEN
(SE 142 934)
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING, FEBRUARY 1999

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A report to John G. Hills



24,ii,1999

OLD HALL, BARDEN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING, FEBRUARY 1999.

1. Instructions were received from John G. Hills, estate agents, to carry out archaeological recording in advance of the extensive refurbishment of Old Hall farmhouse, Barden, near Leyburn (SE 142 934), a Grade II* Listed Building. This work was required to discharge a planning condition.

2. Fieldwork was carried out by Percival Turnbull and Deborah Walsh, of this Practice, on the 16th of February, 1999. At this time, all internal plaster had been removed from the ground floor, and several modern stud partitions stripped out, exposing several features hitherto concealed. It is understood that, apart from small-scale repairs, works are to be confined to the ground floor. Recording work was restricted to internal features in the lower storey, which will again be hidden by new plaster, and to such external features as are likely to be damaged or which are of particular importance in illustrating the history of the building. Photographs and other archive material will be deposited with the North Yorkshire Sites and Monuments Record.

BACKGROUND: BARDEN OLD HALL

3. The house is believed to be the capital messuage occupied from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries by the family of Eggescliffe (*VCH*, 246). It appears also to have been one of the two manor houses in the village after this time, when the lordship was divided.

4. The mediaeval origins of Old Hall have long been recognised: the building has been described as of 'the first quarter of the fifteenth century, or perhaps earlier' (*VCH*), and as 'perhaps early C15' (Listing description, perhaps drawing on *VCH*). The building has long been in use as a farmhouse, and has seen some recent alterations: there are several modern windows, and the house has been recently re-roofed (there seems to be no surviving trace of the original roof timbers). There are several points of difference between the brief description given by the *Victoria County History*, published in 1914, and the Listing description of 1967 (which, with regard to visible external features, is still fairly accurate).

DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING (Letters in brackets refer to Fig. 1)

THE HALL BLOCK

5. Barden Old Hall is a house of two storeys, built in a 'T' plan. Of the two ranges, that aligned north-south is the main Hall range. This shows signs of having been increased in height: there is a change in the coursing of the masonry about half a storey below the level of the eaves, above which the stones used are rather smaller. It is possible that this increase in height was associated with the conversion of an original open hall to a two-storey range. At the level of the change in character of the walling may be seen in a couple of places on the

west side of the hall block (and also on the southern face of the cross-wing to the south) pieces of very decayed timber (currently causing some structural problems): it is possible that these are the remains of an original wall-plate, with the later additional courses of masonry laid directly upon them.

6. The northern end of the hall block has been entirely rebuilt from a point about 1.25 metres above ground level. Below this level, the north wall is bonded into the east and west sides of the block: above, there are straight, unbonded joints. The original lower courses project slightly below the rebuilt wall: above, the more recent masonry contains large, flat slabs of a slaty stone (perhaps re-used broken roof slabs which are a feature of all the recent rebuilding and blocking at Old Hall, but which are absent from the earlier parts of the structure. The fact that the northern end of the building had been demolished is mentioned by *VCH*, suggesting that it was then a fairly recent event. The integrity of the surviving lower courses of the original wall with the sides of the block denies any possibility that there was once an original cross-wing on this northern end. A single, small ground-floor window in this northern wall is of no historical interest.

7. There is some indication that the hall block might be earlier in date than the cross-wing. The southern end of the west wall of the hall, inside the western half of the cross-wing, retains at a high level some cut and dressed sandstone blocks (A) which resemble quoins: they best make sense as the original external south-west corner of the hall, onto which the service wing has later been added. This sequence would also account for the otherwise unnecessary thickness of the wall between hall and cross-wing, east of this point. Unfortunately, no clear relationship between the two parts of the building could be discerned at their junction on the eastern side of the house.

8. The western side of the hall block has three blocked doorways (B-D), which are service doors to the original screens passage of the mediaeval hall. Only two are mentioned by *VCH* and by the Listing description: the southernmost (D) seems until now to have escaped notice, although three, rather than two, screens doors would be more usual. The identification of these doors as the screens seems beyond doubt, and implies the former existence of a service building to the west. No trace of this can be seen.

9. At the northern end is a blocked doorway (B), which has always been visible on the external wall face. It is wide, with gritstone external facings which feature a four-centred arch with a pronounced, rounded hollow chamfer to the arris. The quality of this masonry is very high. The newly-exposed internal side of this door shows remains of different style and material (Fig. 2): a moulded arch of yellow sandstone with an ogival head, presumably earlier in date than the external dressings. Below this has been inserted a lintel of oak (the sequence is discussed at 10 below).

10. The central screens door (C) shows a more complex sequence. Externally, no real trace survives of the original head, although the masonry above the door does show some signs of disturbance (Fig. 3). The interior aspect,

however (Fig. 4), shows the remains of the same sort of sandstone, ogee-headed arch as was seen at (B). The blocked door may be seen quite clearly, with original, rather eroded sandstone dressings to the jamb on the north side. To the south of this has been inserted a window, partly destroying the south side of the original door. It is very nearly square-headed, with dressings of the same gritstone, and with the same hollow chamfer, as on the northern screens door at (B). Very similar windows (in the same material) at Marrick Priory are dated to the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and such a date seems reasonable here, too. The northern side of the window has been damaged by the insertion of an oak lintel, below which is more blocking material of a phase of door with newer, uneroded sandstone dressings to the southern jamb. The sequence, therefore, is:

- (i) Construction of the original, central, screens door with sandstone ogival head.
- (ii) Blocking of the door.
- (iii) Insertion of window with gritstone facings.
- (iv) Blocking of the window and insertion of new door with timber lintel and new sandstone jamb on the south side.
- (v) Final blocking of the door.

11. Of the southernmost screens door (D), nothing could be seen but the rectangular outline of an opening of the appropriate size. Although it has not previously been remarked, this blocked opening is, in fact, clearly visible on the external face.

12. A further blocked entrance to the hall block could be seen at the north end of the east side (E), where a door has been filled in and replaced by a modern window. No detail of the door has survived.

13. To the south of this is a small blocked window, squarish in shape, plain, of a single small light and probably seventeenth century in date. This feature is not mentioned in the Listing description, and appears to have been hitherto hidden behind a thick growth of creeper, which has now been removed.

14. The modern entrance to the hall block, in the centre of the east side, appears to be a modern (nineteenth century) insertion, rather crudely bodedged through the mediaeval wall. To the south is a modern, three-light window which has been there at least since 1967, but which replaces a window of three ogee-headed lights, still extant in 1914. The splays of fine dressed sandstone survive.

15. There appears to have been a further ground-floor window in the south-east corner of the hall block (G). There is little trace of this: internally, it has been converted into a cupboard, but the southern jamb may be seen of a window which was slightly larger than the cupboard. Externally, the wall at this

point shows signs of disturbance, but no detail may be made out. The description in *VCH* mentions a window (blocked by 1914) of two lights, with a square moulded label: this was almost certainly the window which has been lost here.

16. Internally, the hall block is divided by an internal wall to the north of the modern entrance passage. This is not an original wall, and is not bonded in to the mediaeval masonry. The southern end of the block has been much damaged by the insertion of a fireplace and chimney stack: it is unlikely that much original masonry survives. It is possible that this was the location of a newel stair to give access to the upper floor after conversion of the hall: certainly, the present stair arrangements seem to be entirely modern, and an old stair-well might be considered a suitable place for the insertion of a chimney stack.

17. The beams which support the upper floor of the hall block, like those of the cross-wing, are of oak, and impressively and richly moulded, with run-off chamfers and sophisticated beading. Joists and other timbers are also chamfered. This work presumably belongs to the period at which the building was converted from an open hall, probably in the early seventeenth century.

THE CROSS WING

18. The cross-wing is now divided into two large ground-floor rooms. The dividing wall (which has a blocked door at its northern end) is not an early feature: it is not bonded into the main walls, and conceals one of the large moulded beams which are believed to be of seventeenth-century date. There is no trace of earlier partitions but, since these are likely to have been of stud, it is unsurprising that nothing should survive. The cross-wing is built at a slightly lower level than the hall block, and there are single steps up from the two connecting doors.

19. The most obvious feature of this wing is the fine, four-light, gritstone mullioned window in the eastern part of the south side. It has a hood-mould with square, moulded labels, and appears to have been of the same style as the smaller window, now lost, at (G). There are indications that a window of similar dimensions existed in the upper storey, directly above this four-light window. This clearly represents a major period of renovation and alteration: the window is of seventeenth-century type, but the square labels are generally an early feature and a date at the beginning of the century might be appropriate (indeed, *VCH* suggests a sixteenth-century date, which is not necessarily too early).

20. On the internal face of the eastern wall, current works have revealed a large early fireplace (Fig. 5). A huge oak lintel is supported by jambs of sandstone, the lowest parts of which are elaborately chamfered. These obviously represent the earliest period of the fireplace, and a mediaeval date is entirely plausible. Blockings of brick and stone indicate the progressive reduction of the hearth until the present small modern fireplace was inserted: an area left as a cupboard on the north side has recently been filled with breeze blocks. A substantial external stack on the east wall of the wing confirms the early origin of

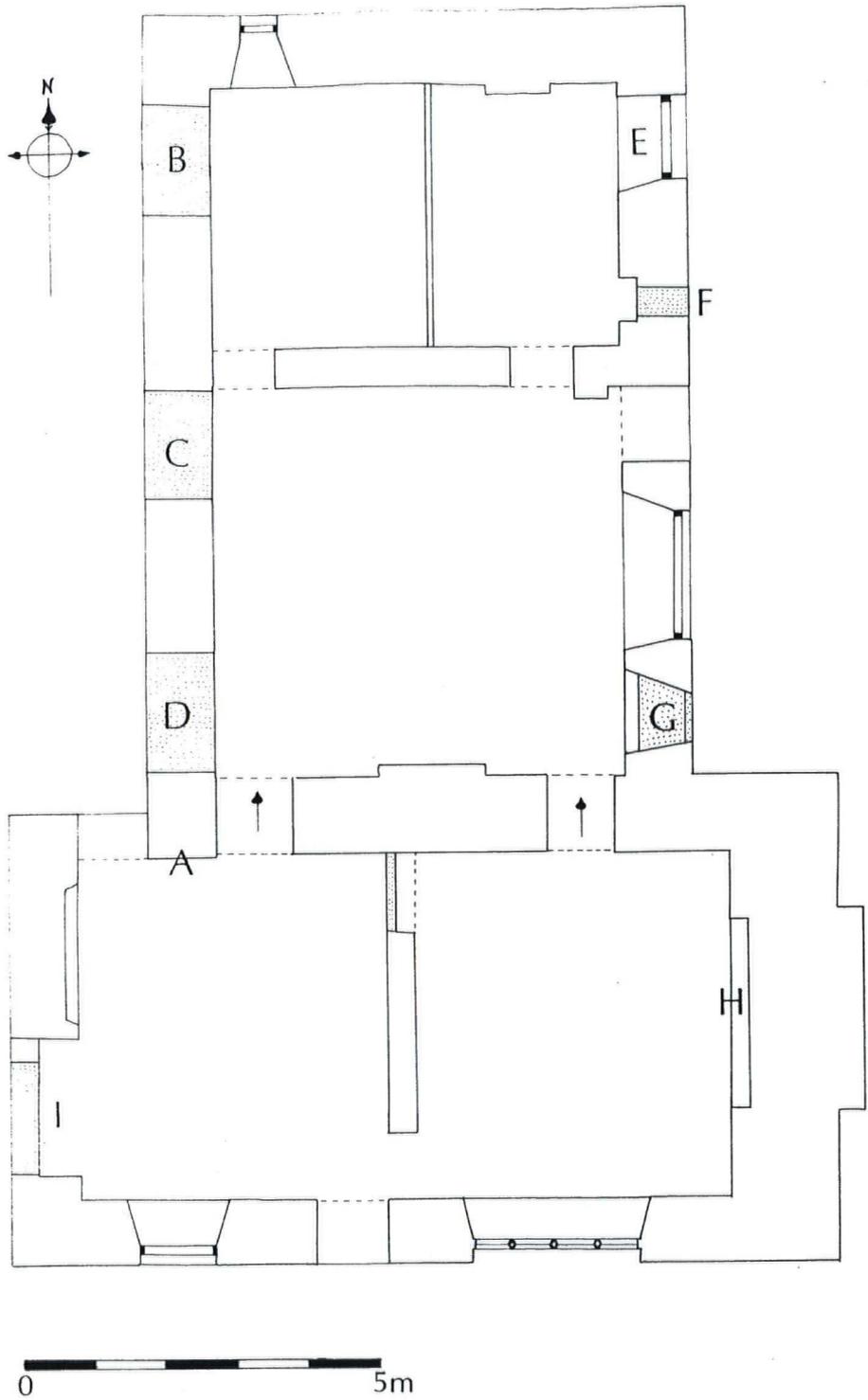
the fireplace, and adds to the suggestion that this part of the cross-wing was the original kitchen.

21. Another large fireplace, of much more recent origin, has been built in the western end of the wing. To the south of this is a large recess (I), used for a cupboard: it has originated as another blocked door. Virtually nothing of this can be seen on the inside, but removal of external render has exposed the edge of the blocking on its southern side, where a jamb would have been. In the northern part of the opening are the very mutilated remains of a sandstone window (Fig. 6), with a cusped head of late mediaeval type. This area was rather obscured when examined, but it appears that the window has been inserted into the blocking of the door, in which case the door too is mediaeval, and probably belongs to the original construction of the cross-wing.

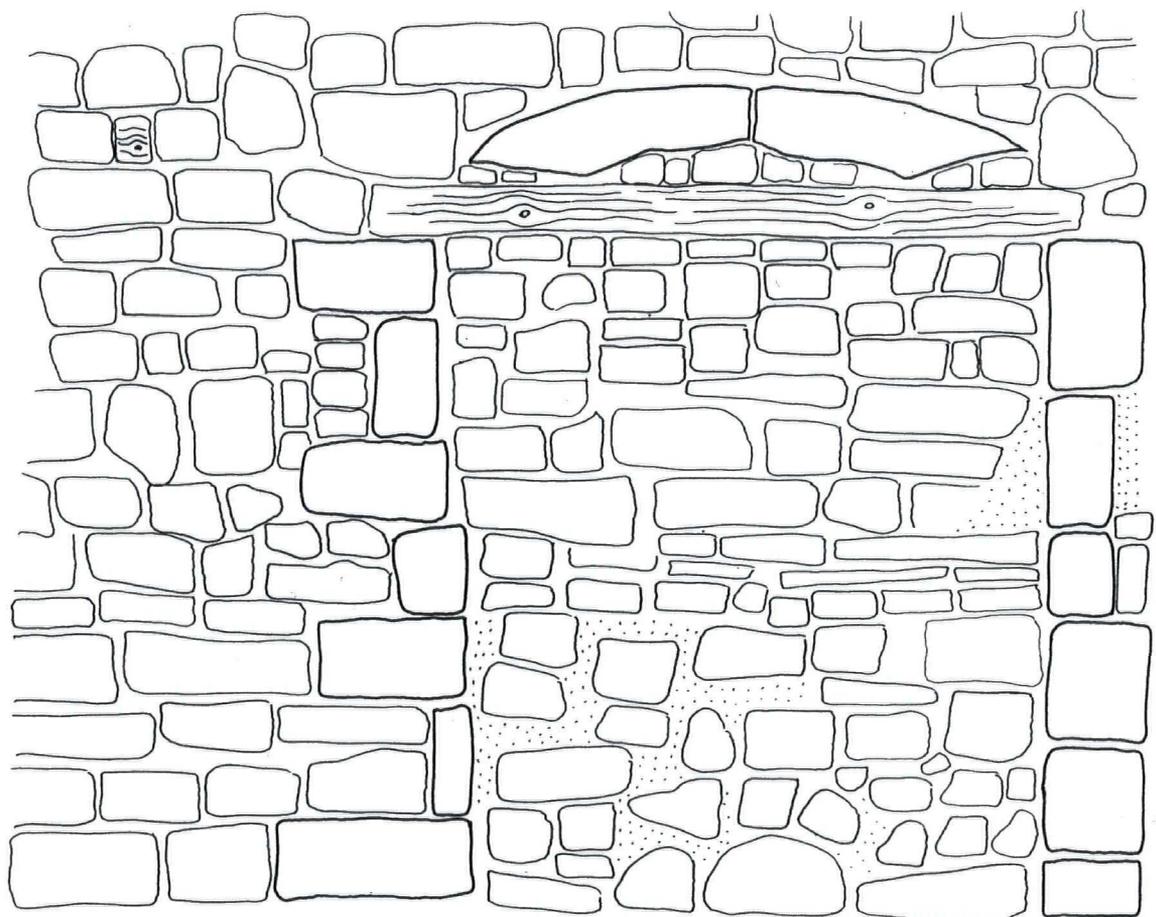
SUMMARY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSE

22. The earliest construction at Old Hall, Barden is difficult to date: the earliest individual feature seems to be the rather flat, ogival head inside the northern screens door (B), for which the early fifteenth-century date usually associated with the house seems consistent. The basic form of the open hall is, however, very venerable, and an earlier origin for Old Hall cannot be discounted. The sequence of events, then, appears to be:

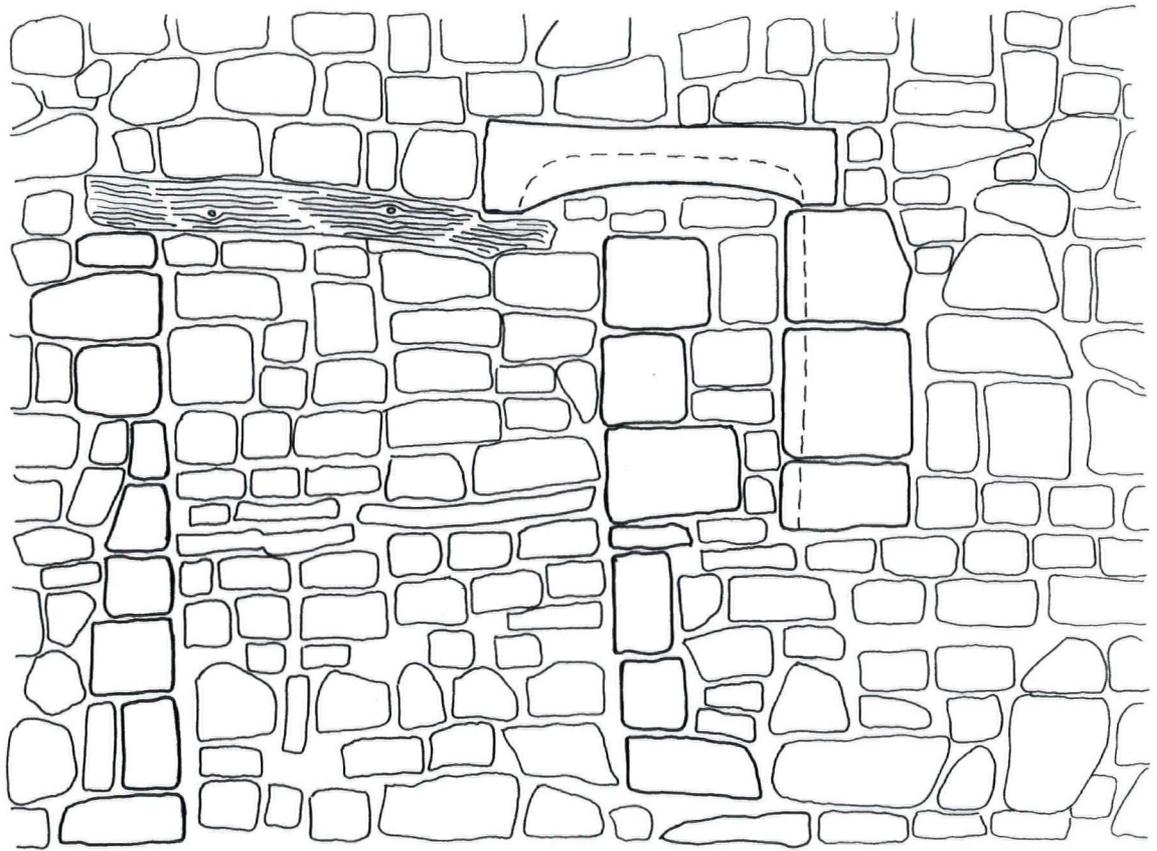
- (i) Construction of the hall block shortly after 1400. The position of the screens doors strongly suggests a service wing of some sort on the western side.
- (ii) Construction of the cross-wing to the south. This was presumably a service wing, and may well have made an earlier service block redundant. This therefore seems to be a suitable occasion for the demolition of the putative western block, with the blocking of the two southern screens doors, the substitution for one of them of a window, and the refurbishment of the northern screens door. A date shortly before 1500 is possible, though rather at odds with the mutilated window at (I)
- (iii) At a later date, and for some reason, the blocked screens doors were unblocked (using timber lintels), and then blocked again.
- (iv) There is no objective reason why the conversion of the hall to a two-storeyed house needs to be put earlier than the late sixteenth century, the earliest possible date for the mullioned windows. Such a date seems consistent with the moulded beams.
- (v) There is evidence for a major refurbishment in the earlier nineteenth century (including a datestone above the south door, '1831'), and considerable piecemeal alteration and replacement in the twentieth.



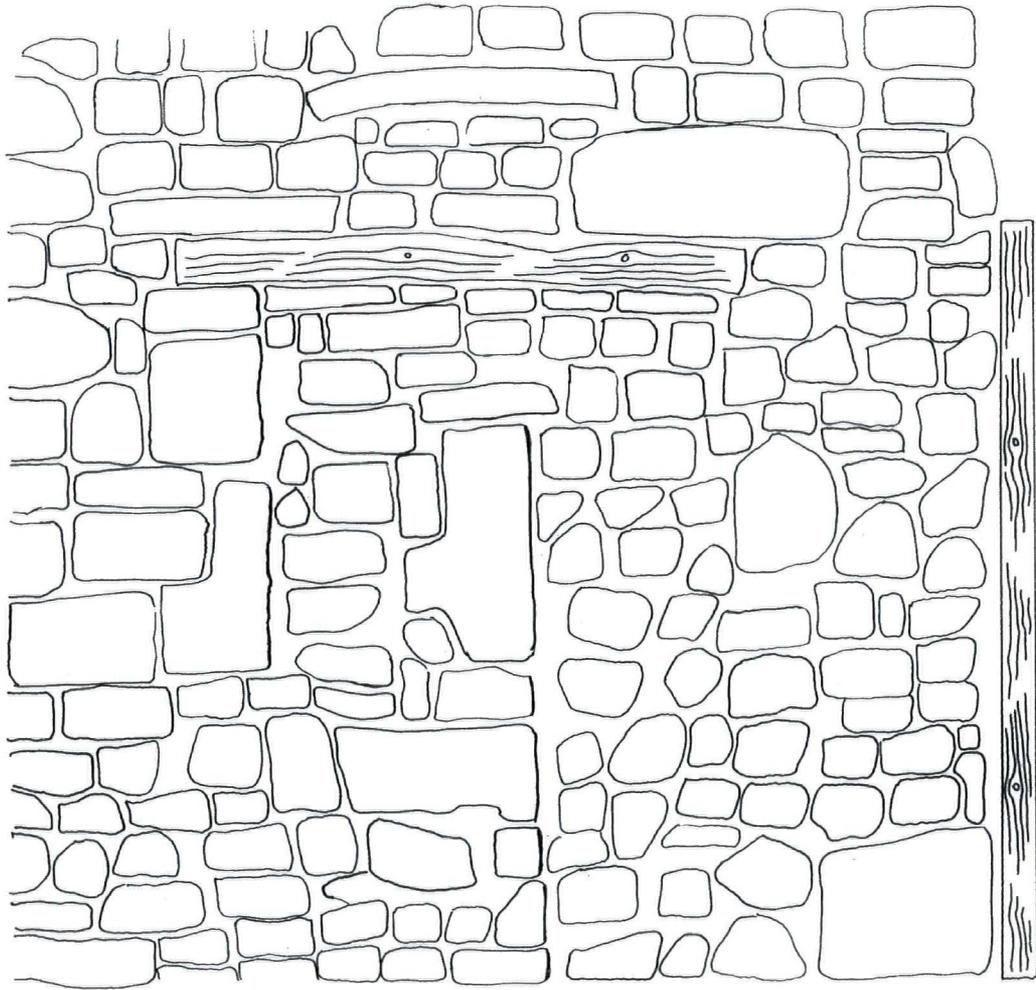
The Brigantia Archaeological Practice
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Fig. 1
Ground Plan



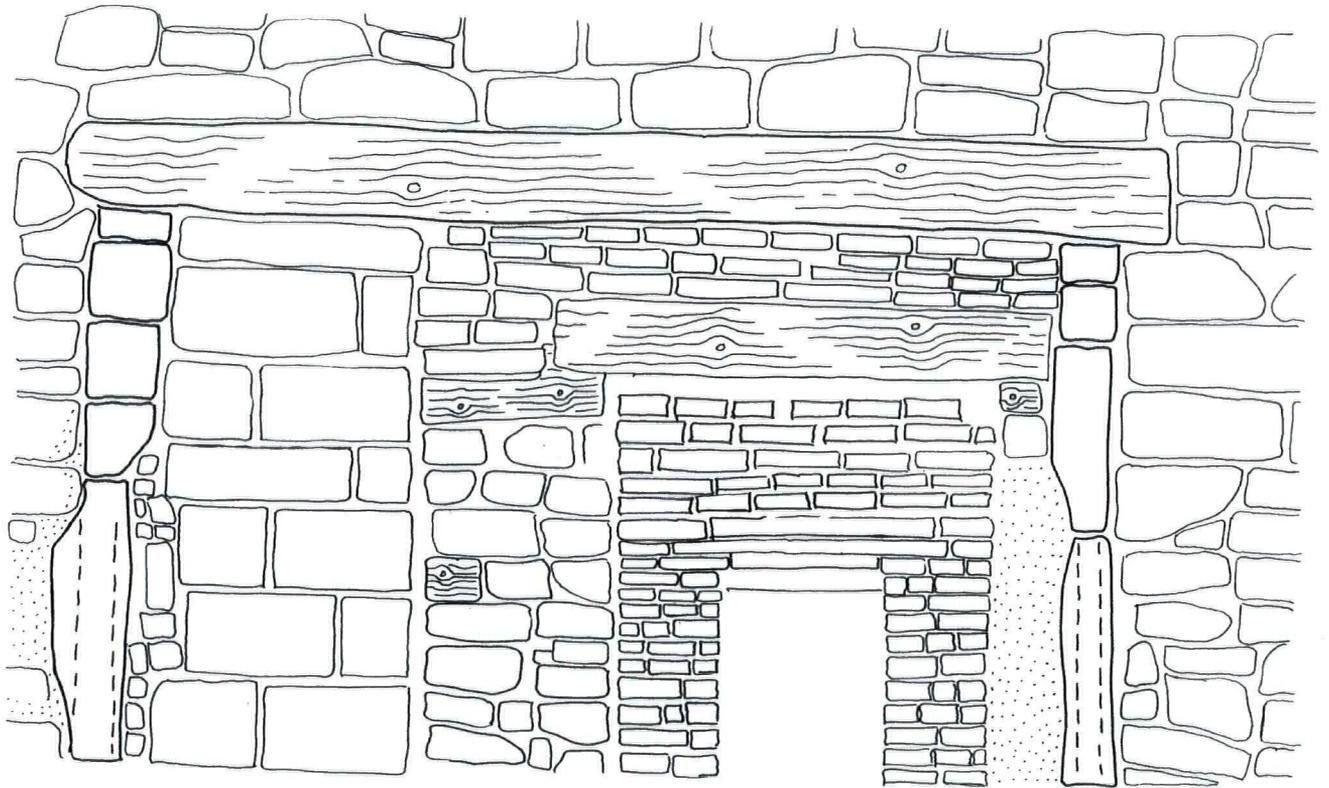
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Fig. 2
Northern screens door, internal
Scale 1:20



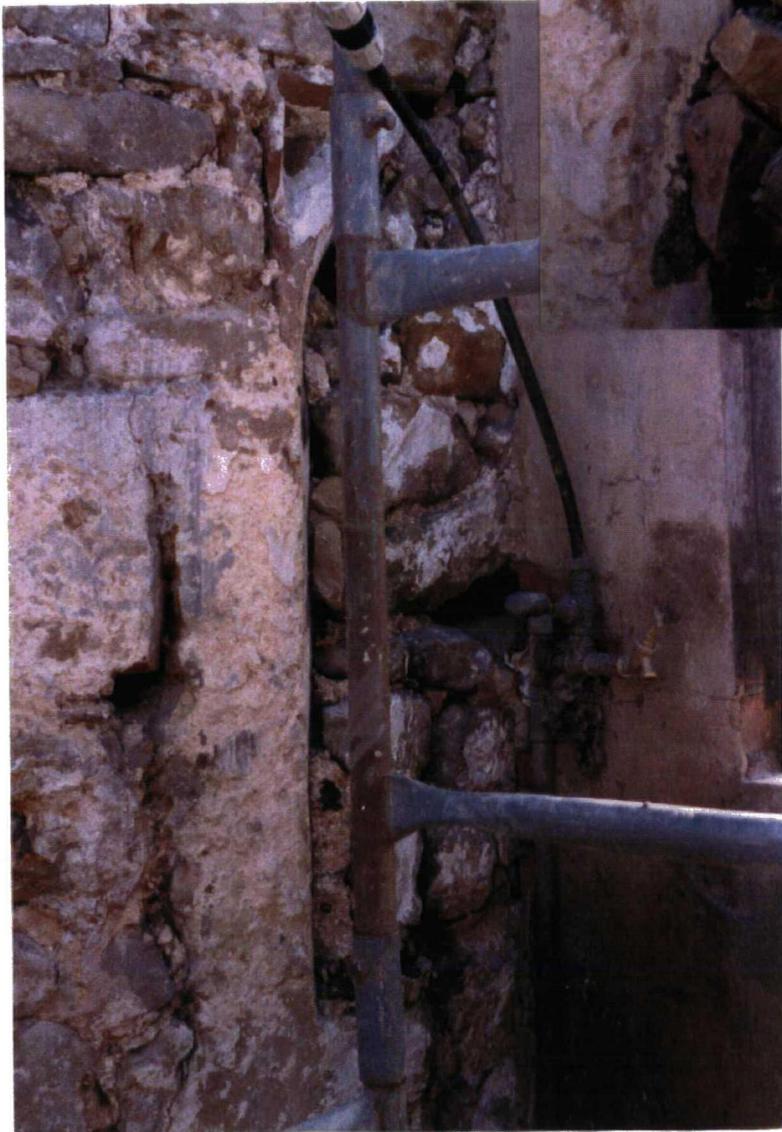
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Fig. 3
Middle screens door, external
Scale 1:20



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Fig. 4
Middle screens door, internal
Scale 1:20



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Old Hall, Barden
Fig. 5
Fireplace in cross-wing
Scale 1:20

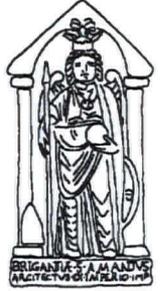


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Fig. 6
Blocked window on west side of cross-wing

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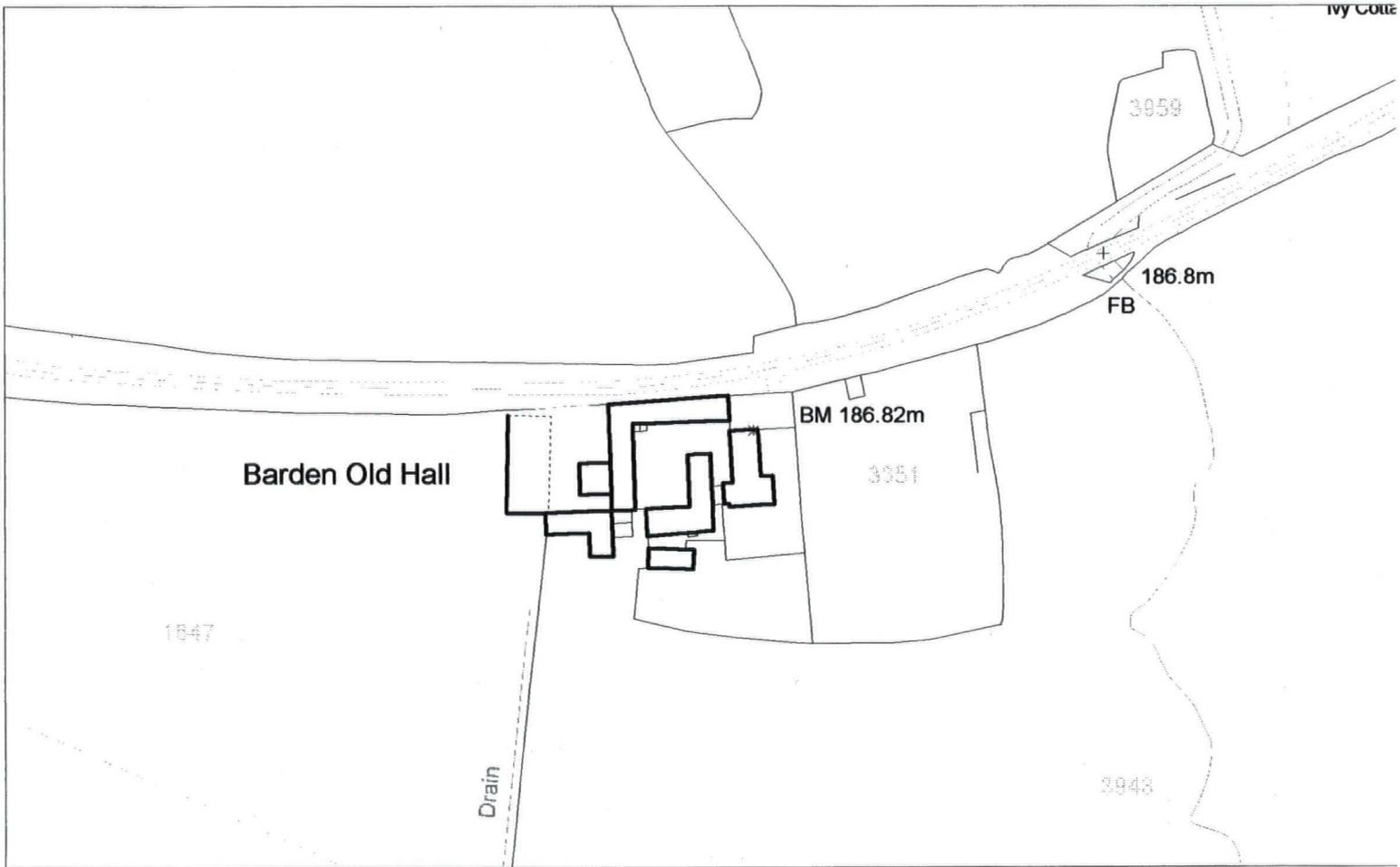
Sorry - no compliments slips!

All the best,

Percival



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