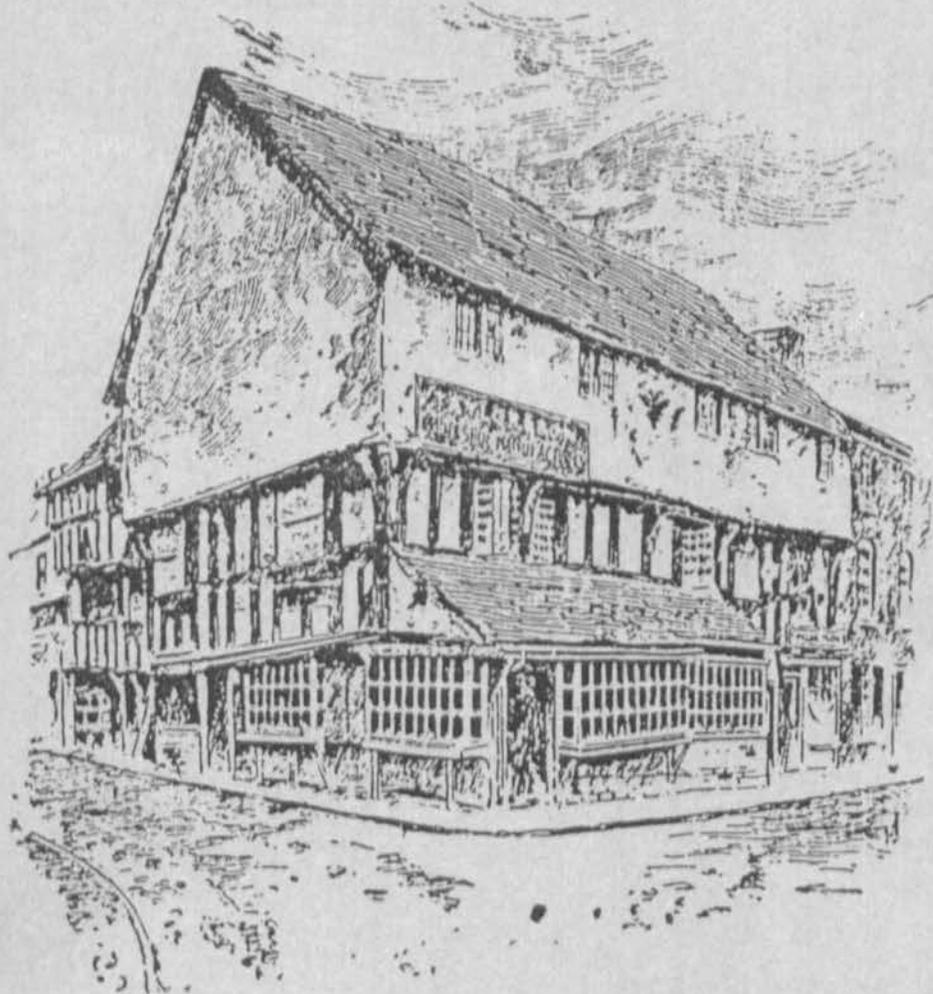


LLWYD MANSION OSWESTRY



A Survey by
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
December 1987

A SURVEY OF LLWYD MANSION, OSWESTRY, SHROPSHIRE

by

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Floor Plan

'Not large, the structure was splayed out and rambling, so that the building looked as if its owners had at some period taken the place to pieces, section by section, then put it together again, not always in correct proportions.'

A. Powell 1964. The Valley of Bones, p.143-144

Introduction

This description could well apply to Llwyd Mansion, Oswestry (Grid Ref. SJ 292299), a building which dominates the area known as The Cross in the town centre, at the junction of Bailey Street and Cross Street. Despite its eccentric elegance and evident antiquity, Llwyd Mansion has attracted little attention from architectural historians.

In December 1987 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned by Legal and General Assurance, through the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (England), to undertake a detailed survey of the building and to examine any surviving documentation in order to produce an interpretation of the structure's history. In presenting the results of this survey the evidence from the examination of the present building, from illustrative material that throws light on changes to the original structure, and from relevant documentation, will be considered in such a way as to both display the nature and extent of the evidence in each case and to allow independent consideration of the synthetic interpretation then offered.

The Building Survey (Figures 2-16)

Floor Plans (Figures 2,3)

The interior of the building is plain and severe with no noteworthy fixtures or fittings in situ. It consists of three floors and a cellar, the plan varying from floor to floor by reason of the provision of jetties at first and second storey level, these being most pronounced on the long, south elevation that faces onto Cross Street.

The cellar is irregular in plan (Figure 2), and of some depth; it lies under the western part of the building, only its southern wall bearing any direct relation to the ground floor plan above, this being parallel to the Cross Street frontage. It would appear originally to have been rectangular in plan, measuring 4.40 metres (east-west) by 3.50 metres (north-south). It is reached by a set of wooden steps, concealed by a trapdoor in the floor of the ground-floor room.

The ground floor is open-plan (Figure 2) and consists of a long room, c. 6.50 metres deep (north-south) in the west and tapering, due to the angled back wall, to 5.50 metres in the east. An arcade post in timber (Figure 5) is jointed into a tie-beam at head height which acts as a support for a wooden staircase at the western end of the room, giving access to the second floor. Access into the building at ground level is by two doorways, one in the angle of the south and west walls, the other, larger, door at the eastern end of the south wall. Both the street frontages are pierced by a series of almost continuous windows. The back, north, wall is built almost entirely of rendered brick while a projection at the north-east corner carries a stair up to the second floor, with a toilet built on the first landing and is quite obviously the most recent addition to the building. The timber framing of the east wall is now exposed (Figure 9), the panels between the timbers being infilled with brick. A number of modern brick trusses have been inserted at this level (see architect's plans).

The first floor is once again undivided and somewhat characterless (Figure 2). It is lit by two windows in the west wall and five in the long south wall; the timber framing is exposed along both of these faces whereas at ground floor level it had been largely destroyed. There is no access from first to second floor.

The second floor is divided into three rooms. Access into the first room in the east is gained via a staircase from the ground floor at the north-east corner, and from there the other two rooms are reached (Figure 2). The first room is lit by a single window in the south wall, the larger second room by two in the same wall face and the third room by two windows, one in each of the south and west wall faces. The third room is noteworthy for the fact that heavy braces extend out from the wall frame into the room, though they do not block the passage into the eastern end of the room. A chipboard ceiling has recently been inserted across the two eastern rooms and part of the westernmost room.

Elevations (Figures 15,16)

Only two elevations are now presented to view. The Bailey Street, west elevation, (Figure 16) displays the gable-end of the structure, the whole, with the exception of the ground floor with its more-or-less continuous shop window, being timber framed with close studding and a number of angled braces. This elevation is divided at first-floor level by a substantial bressumer that carries out a jettied second floor. In the central lower part, under the gable, is a small wooden panel with four, cut-out, quatrefoil panels.

The long, Cross Street, elevation (Figure 15) again is timber framed with studding and rails but the stressing of the horizontal with bressumers is here much more pronounced. On the ground floor, vertical oak pillars break up the monotony of the shop front, and above, at first-floor level, are three, large windows with pronounced projecting sills, (these had also been noted at first-floor level on the west elevation) and, most notably, a fine, elaborate and intricate window divided up into four lancet shaped lights; in the spandrel between each light are more cut-out panels forming

the head of the window frame. The windows on the upper face are largely characterless. Towards the western end of the building is a circular plaque displaying a two-headed eagle and the inscription LLWYD MANSION 1604.

The Roof and Framing (Figures 4-13)

For the purposes of description the beam sets have been numbered 1-6, No.1 being the western gable end and No.6 the eastern end. The terminology employed is that recommended by Cordingley. The roof, as it now exists, is of the Butt-Purlin Tie-Beam Truss type, Cordingley Type V (Cordingley 1961, Figs. 11,12), and is an elaborate version of his sub-type V4b. In this construction the main, frame posts support a substantial, arched tie-beam into which are jointed the principal rafters which form the truss, these being further strengthened by a collar-beam and a pair of queen struts. Two sets of pairs of angled braces, one above the tie-beam and another above the collar, give further support. The truss acts as both a principal and common rafter, the butt-side purlins being in pairs to support the common rafter couples which vary in their thickness. The ridge purlin sits in the angle formed by the principal rafters. Short, cusped braces in pairs link the upper side purlins to the collar-beams and the lower to the tie-beams. The roof construction is consistent for beam sets Nos.2-6, indeed the carpenters' marks recorded for these beams indicate contemporaneity; No.2 [//, variant //, ✱ in centre of tie-beam]; No.3 [///, no variant, X in centre of tie-beam]; No.4 [////, variant ////]; No.5 [/, variant /]. There are no marks on the eastern end set (No.6) nor on No.1 to the west. While No.6 is structurally identical to Nos.2-5, No.1 is strikingly different. While the trusses of No.1 are at the same 40 degree angle as the others they are not connected by the side purlin sets to No.2; indeed, these purlins end with a chamfer stop on the east side of No.2, with a Jones Type 1A die-out stop (Jones 1971, 12). Two stout, square-sectioned beams, running east-west and attached to the underside of the tie-beam by iron collars, link beam-sets No.1 and No.2 and side purlins of a different type carry the common rafter-couples westwards beyond beam-set No.2.

The timber framing and door arrangements that form the screens at second-floor level, extending down from the tie-beams of sets Nos.3 and 5, appear much altered - as especially evinced by the numerous empty dowel holes in No.3 and inserted repair timbers - but there is no reason to suppose that these screens are not contemporary with the main part of the roof structure.

This leaves for discussion the timbers exposed at ground- and first-floor level. Those belonging to the framing of sets Nos. 3,4,5 have either been removed or are obscured by the extensive alterations that have taken place along the north wall of the building. However, much of the lower framing associated with No.2 has survived and it is immediately apparent from the style of the carpentry that this lower timberwork bears no resemblance to that visible on the first floor and in the roof. So little remains that it is difficult to understand in isolation. A plain, vertical post rising from ground-floor level is jointed into a horizontal tie-beam and the joint strengthened by two arch braces. A matching brace survives on the north wall at the same height and an empty dowel betrays the position of another on the south wall. Rising from the tie-beam is a much more elaborate vertical member, with chamfered sides and a moulded capital. This capital has another post jointed into its top but this is cut off and obscured by the floor separating the first and second storeys. A brace is again present against the north wall but none is visible in a matching position on the south wall. These arcade posts are intriguing but any arched timbers would have been expected to spring from a timber carrying up the line of the chamfered arcade post to a roof tie-beam and, of course, such a timber is now not present and the argument is entering the realms of speculation. Empty dowel-holes along the lower tie-beam suggests the fixing of a wooden staircase here, more or less in the position of the present stair. The timbers that form the ground and first floors of Set No.6 (the eastern end of the building) are again noticeably different from the upper timberwork and are remarkably rough-hewn and unfinished; there is no doubt that such timbers were never intended to be so stripped bare. Their seemingly ramshackle alignment, contrasted with the well-coursed, horizontal infilling of the panels between the beams, produces an effect akin to that produced by op-art and to certain works of Bridget Riley -

contrasting horizontals and verticals jockeying for attention. A recent brick truss hides activity at the side of the south wall, and the only noteworthy feature is on the first floor where timbers suggest there has been a window opening in the bottom half of the third panel to the north. At the western gable-end, as will be demonstrated below, the whole facade must be treated with the greatest suspicion. Though much of the timberwork at first-floor level, especially that of the windows, resembles that in the eastern gable, the timberwork above, with its numerous empty dowels, sockets and joints, with obvious repairs, replacements and inconsistencies, sows doubts, creates suspicions and questions the antiquity of the present arrangement.

Brickwork

There are a number of areas within the house where building in brick has taken place. Leaving aside the stack trusses inserted on the ground floor and the fabric at the shop-front, and the accretion at the north-west corner of the building, discussion will be concentrated on the infilling of the panels on the eastern gable end. Infill panels in timber-framed buildings are easy prey to damp and rot and were seldom replaced with panels of the same material; they were more commonly filled in with brick moggling (McCann 1987, 106). The original make-up of the Llwyd Mansion panels can be seen in one exposed section of an internal screen where crossed wattles are daubed over with a mixture of clay, pebbles, straw and horsehair. Measurements of the bricks shows that there are four different types of brick used for infilling in the gable and that they never appear mixed together within a panel, suggesting that each size/type of brick represents a different episode of repair. Bricks of 1.1/2 inch thickness are used to fill in all the panels at ground-floor level, and those to the south and centre at second-floor height. Three panels of 1.3/4 inch-thick bricks occupy the centre of the wall on the first floor. Bricks of 2 inches infill the sides at first- and second-floor level and one panel to the north above the tie-beam. The rest of the infill above the tie-beam is of 3 inch-thick bricks.

It has been stated that 'many different sizes of fabric brick were used up to the Elizabethan period when a rough standardisation seems to have occurred at about 9 by 4.1/2 by 2 inches' (Wright 1972, 43) and that 'from the middle of the reign of Henry VIII there was a general tendency to increase the thickness of 2.1/4 inches. This thickness (established by the Charter of 1571) persisted until towards the end of the 17th century when bricks of 2.1/2 inches became general' (Lloyd 1925, 11). These statements can only hint at a general dating of the infill panels.

Illustrative Material (Figures 17-21)

Unusually for a town of its size with so many buildings of interest, Oswestry has largely escaped the attention of the early draughtsman and illustrator and it is only from the later nineteenth century onwards that Llywd Mansion receives attention and then principally from the photographer. An illustration from some time in the period 1860-1875 (Figure 17 - full reference to source given in list of illustrations) shows a splendid view of the building looking somewhat sprawling and dilapidated. The whole of the Cross Street frontage at second-floor level and the equivalent and upper part of the Bailey Street gable is windowless and rendered. This probably took place in the eighteenth century to avoid the paying of window tax, a ruse employed by many householders at the time. A shop sign and a decorative eagle, different to the eagle sign today and positioned in a different place, are the only other noteworthy features on the drawing above first-floor level. There are no windows on the gable above the second bressumer and four windows on the Cross Street second floor, differently spaced to the ones today, though that at the eastern end may be in the same position. The lower floors are almost unrecognisable; the shop front windows jut out onto the narrow pavement and there are four doorways visible, one doubtless for private rather than commercial use. The gable timberwork at first-floor level is similar to of that today, though of the two boarded-up or shuttered windows here, the northern one appears to be in a more northerly position. A very pronounced post-and-rib support stands between the bressumers at the south-west corner of the building. Much of the first-floor timber, at the west and central end of the building, is obscured by a lean-to roof that covers the bowed shop-fronts along Cross Street but it can be seen that the arrangement and style of the windows is very different to that of today; unfortunately the vantage point of the artist is such that no conclusion on the most elaborate window now present can be made as it is partly boarded-up. A photograph (Figure 18) taken at roughly the same time shows a view concentrated more on the Cross Street frontage. Worth noting is the timber-framed and jettied three-storeyed building just visible at right angles to (and joined to?) Llywd Mansion in Bailey Street and very similar

in style; unfortunately, no detailed close-ups or individual illustrations and photographs of this building have yet been found.

The next photograph of 1875, (Figure 19) shows Llwyd Mansion, again from the south-west, and the transformation is startling; the building has been completely renovated, as have the buildings and shops next to it in Cross Street. Indeed the timber-framed building in Cross Street has been completely demolished and a sober brick and stone building built in its stead. The shop fronts have been completely refitted and have retreated inwards from the pavement to be flush with the main wall faces. Three doors are visible, only one, at the east end of the Cross Street frontage, being as formerly. The rendering has been completely stripped off the upper storeys and gable and the timberwork looks much as it does today. The arrangement of windows on the first floor is as today, with all boards removed and the intricate window on Cross Street now clearly visible. The windows in the gable are now present while only three to the east are present on the first floor along Cross Street. There appear to be two separate shop fronts, one with a canvas awning, and so the downstairs space may well have been partitioned at this time. It can be noted now how the roof line of the building next to Llwyd Mansion in Cross Street has been substantially altered and raised to usurp the previously dominating status of the timber-framed building next door.

The next three photographs in the series, all undated (Pryce Jones n.d.), show that up to the present time little or nothing has been altered externally save the arrangement of the shop frontages onto Cross Street and Bailey Street. The final, drastic alterations to the shop fronts, before the present campaign of refitting, can be seen in the 'before-and-after' shots of the building (Figures 20) taken in 1950-1951. It will be seen on these pictures that an inscription has now been added to the eagle plaque, and, indeed, with the exception of the replacement of this large square plaque with a less ostentatious circular example (with an extended inscription), little else on the facades above shop level has been changed.

Documentation

"Renovation is better than destruction, as it was out of the question to expect to see this fine old building truthfully 'restored', and preserved as a local museum, we are delighted to see that the next best thing has been done, in it's preservation by Mr. Stanley Leighton."

Bye-Gones. April 1876

In Sources for the History of Houses John Harvey wrote that ... 'houses of outstanding architectural interest, of all dates, have generally been the subject of published studies.' (Harvey 1974, 6) but this present study reflects the previous omission of Llwyd Mansion and the place that this building has now assumed as a symbol of historic Oswestry.

One may have expected the historical evidence concerning the house to have been commensurate with a building of some status. However, this has not proved to be the case, a fact which may reflect the general irregularity of the compilation of records in Britain. In the second half of the nineteenth century the volume of documentation increased dramatically with the Victorian expansion of local government and with the growth of antiquarian local history and it is to this period that most of the primary records concerning Llwyd Mansion belong. The periods when Llwyd Mansion is well documented correspond closely with the periods of greatest development in Oswestry itself.

There is not sufficient primary evidence available to be able to state conclusively who built Llwyd Mansion, and if, as the present plaque suggests, it was indeed built in 1604. Photographic records of the house prior to its restoration in 1875, show that this plaque does not appear to be original, in that neither the date, nor the title Llwyd Mansion are visible underneath the emblem of the double-headed eagle.

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There are two conflicting schools of thought in the local histories of Oswestry as to who built the house. It is highly probable that a Lloyd commissioned it; however as the records of the corporation of Oswestry show: "at this time (1603) there were Lloyds of Llanforda, of Aston, of Llwyn-y-maen, of Drenewydd; of the borough of Oswestry, and Maesbury." (S. Leighton 1880, 101). Local historians have maintained that either the Lloyds of Llanforda or of Llwyn-y-maen were responsible for building the mansion. The importance of this debate lies in what it can tell us about the use of the house. The contending branches of the Lloyd family had only separated a generation prior to the early seventeenth century, and indeed probably merged again, if only briefly, in the 1640's when their respective widower and widow married after the demise of their spouses. Again in the seventeenth century, the governorship of the royal forces of Oswestry swapped branches, which probably again highlights a close coincidence of interest.

The proposition that Richard Lloyd of Llwyn-y-maen built Llwyd Mansion, is based on the fact that in the early 1600's he was Governor Colonel of Oswestry Castle. Therefore it can be assumed he had the money, and possibly the need, of a town house.

The Llanforda branch's claim to the building of the house is through John Lloyd II of Llanforda, who inherited this new Lloyd estate when his father John I died in 1603. It is possible that this newly-established branch had a greater interest in the wool trade of Oswestry than the older-established and landed Llwyn-y-maen branch; indeed the growth of its fortunes is coincidental with the growth of the fortunes of Oswestry itself. The fact that John Lloyd of Llanforda was a leading citizen of Oswestry is evidenced by his signing of a letter to the Earl of Suffolk, the newly appointed lord of Oswestry, in November 1603 (Leighton 1880, 101-102).

Despite all this speculation it must be stressed that there is not a single primary source document traceable to any time before the nineteenth century connected with Llwyd Mansion. A line of ownership, tenancy and commercial use of the building from about 1850 to 1906 is given in a local history (Watkin 1920) and this seems to be generally reliable when checked against the census and Kelly's directory for 1870 and 1905.

Watkin states that the first occupier that can be traced is Joseph Salter, who, among other trades, was the printer of 'A Collection of Psalms' published in 1789 (Bye-Gones May 18, 1918). Salter was succeeded by George Higham, gunsmith, who retired in 1854, and whose son moved out shortly afterwards. The owner of the property around this time was Dr. E.D. Bennion, who sold it to Mrs. Fanny Dean. However there is no primary evidence to support this transfer and sale.

Both the census and directory confirm the next tenant: one John Taylor, shoemaker, who seems to have occupied the building from 1854 to 1875. Also in occupation were his wife Elizabeth, daughters Martha, Mary and Sarah, and son Alfred. In 1871, only Mr. Taylor, his wife, and Ellen

Morris, a servant, were in residence. The census also lists John and Jane Morgan, hairdressers, and it is likely that the building was divided in some way between 1861 and 1871.

In 1875 Llwyd Mansion was purchased by Mr. Stanley Leighton of Sweeney Hall, who initiated a major renovation programme. Bye-Gones, the newspaper for Wales and the Border Counties, notes in April 1876, in reference to Llwyd Mansion, "renovation is better than destruction, and as it was out of the question to expect to see this fine old building truthfully 'restored' and preserved as a museum, we are glad to see the next best thing done, in its' preservation by Mr. Stanley Leighton. The finest bit of work (the front of the second house) is lost to us, but the portions that do remain have been preserved in great taste by Mr. Chaplin (the builder), and we congratulate the owner on his architect." (Bye-Gones April 1876).

Leighton was a noted local historian, and in addition produced three volumes of architectural sketches of the Oswestry area. Also at this time there appears to have been a growth of interest in old Oswestry, possibly engendered by the encroachment of Victorian industrial development, and another antiquarian, 'H.W.G.', Bye-Gones correspondent for Oswestry, began a written study of the buildings of Oswestry, stung into action by a similar article on Welshpool, and anxious that Oswestry should not be left behind in the heritage stakes.

This antiquarian scholarship probably provided architectural and historical models for the renovation of Llwyd Mansion; indeed the name and certainly the plaque with inscription probably originated at this stage. Watkin quotes Leighton's sketches as recording the fact that during redevelopment Bailey Street was widened, and that the adjoining gable end of the house was shortened; however 'the timbers from the gable end were replaced in their exact position' onto the truncated end of the house, while the basement was entirely rebuilt. Unfortunately no substantial account of this change has survived, nor can any records of the builders/architects, 'Morris, Chaplin and Corney' be traced. After renovation the building

appears to have gone back to commercial usage, with a succession of tenants. 'Upon completion, the front portion (in Cross Street) was taken by the Midland Banking Company, ... and Mr. George Dutton ... grocer of Chester, opened No.1, Bailey Street. No.3, Cross Street (Wyleys) forms part of Llwyd Mansion, and after the renovation in 1876, was taken by Mr. W.F. Plimmer, brazier, who ... was succeeded by the People's Tea Co., ... Then followed Frisby Bros., Boot Dealers, and Mr. Jacob Herr, who died in 1900.' (Watkin 1920, 215-216). In the 1950's the building was again renovated, with great attention paid to historical detail. This work was under the supervision of Leonard Multon, architect, and an account of the work describes the interior which 'has been entirely replanned, provided with fitting and workrooms and modern cloakroom accommodation.' Beams were exposed internally and steel joists and supports fitted. Replacement timbers were inserted into the external fabric where necessary, 'this new work ... has been adzed and stained to make this indistinguishable from the original timbering.' New shop fronts were added. (The Architect and Building News, September 6th, 1951.) The owners at the time were Messrs. Bradleys, a drapery company, but it has not been possible to trace the line of tenants from that given by Watkin up to that of the Bradleys. Llwyd Mansion is now a symbol of historic Oswestry, a product of the seventeenth century prosperity from the wool monopoly or landed interests. It has developed a slightly misleading historical stature, partly through chance, surviving fire and industrial development, but also through the attentions of the late-nineteenth-century antiquaries of Oswestry, and the careful work of the building restorers.

Discussion and Dating

There is no doubt, considering the independent testimony of the building itself, of illustrations and photographs, and of documentation, that the building known as Llwyd Mansion has a far more complex history than many previous commentators have assumed. Pevsner merely alluded to the date plaque without further comment (Pevsner 1958). Many of the accounts of historians are based on received opinion and again, on the plaque with LLWYD MANSION 1604 written around the double-headed eagle symbol. The present plaque is not an original but was provided as part of the 1875 renovation; it replaces one seemingly without inscription. Watkin, writing in 1920, states that the date 1604 is there (Watkin 1920, 213) but pre-renovation illustrations show that a double-headed eagle symbol without a date was placed on the central upper storey above Cross Street. It is this that may possibly be taken for what Rigold has called 'integral' dating evidence, 'in which the indication of date, not necessarily a year, is attached to part of the building and may be taken as reliable for that part' (Rigold 1971, 10). It is known that such an eagle is the coat of arms of the Lloyd family and through the writings of various local historians the name Llwyd Mansion has become attached to the building. In fact, the name only seems to have become common around the time of the 1875 renovation and the ownership of the house by Stanley Leighton. Leighton, who lived at Sweeney Hall, was a reputable local historian and indeed was responsible for the transcription and publication of many of the records of the corporation of Oswestry. Leighton himself states that 'the folio volume of Edward Lloyds letters is now at Sweeney Hall' (Leighton 1884, 67), Edward Lloyd being the last of the family (of either branch), and it is possible that he had researched the history of the Lloyd connection with the house though never published any account. Certainly, by the time Watkin publishes his well-researched account of owners and tenants in 1920, he can make no reference to any certain documentary links before c.1850 and no collections of Lloyd family papers are now locatable.

As to the building itself, documentation tells of two major renovations prior to the present campaign, in 1875 and in 1951, though there have doubtless been numerous minor changes, especially at shop-floor level and along the street frontages. Both major renovations took the antiquity of the structure into account; that in 1951 attempted to maintain 'the character of the timber construction of the original building ... the new work has been executed in the best tradition of English craftsmanship (The Architect and Building News, September 6th, 1951, 263); that in 1875, undertaken at a time 'before it was either pleasurable or profitable' to restore buildings in character, involved the taking down of the whole west end of the building to enable Bailey Street to be widened and according to Leighton (Leighton, n.d., 47) the timbers were then replaced. It is stated, somewhat unclearly, by Watkin that 'Mr. Leighton offered land for the widening of Bailey Street, provided his right to build upon the extreme foundation of the building was not interfered with, and he was allowed to carry the gable-end over Bailey Street, in order to preserve the character of the house there and the front in Cross Street' (Watkin 1920, 215). It will also be recalled that the house next to Llwyd Mansion in Bailey Street, 'the finest bit of work' according to the Bye-Gones correspondent, was at this time totally demolished. There can be no doubt that a certain portion of the west end of Llwyd Mansion has been removed, to the west of beam set no.2 in the roof, and that the gable-end has been relocated and awkwardly re-attached to the rest of the structure, and this was probably done in 1875.

The removal of the plaster rendering from the upper storeys presumably revealed 'original' timberwork and features but so skilled has been the insertion of stained timbers to replace rotted members on the lower levels (and not easily seen without reference to photographs of different periods) that suspicion is aroused about some of the more interesting features apparent (and formerly hidden?) on the immediate post-renovation pictures. Firstly the quatrefoil panel on the gable-end appears today rather recent; it may have replaced an earlier such panel under the rendering or it may be a 'tasteful' addition. Such cut-out decoration is in keeping with late-sixteenth- to early-seventeenth-century facades (as, for instance, at

Smithills Hall, Bolton, Lancashire (Mercer 1975, Plate 85), houses on Wyle Cop, Shrewsbury (Forrest 1911, plate facing p.8), Sherar's Mansion, Shrewsbury (Summerson 1953, fig. 64) etc.) and is generally thought of as being an integral part of the western 'black and white' tradition.

The windows in the upper part of the gable-end and those at first-floor level are also worthy of discussion. The pre-restoration photograph shows boards or shutters over two first-floor windows under the gable and over the position now occupied by the traceried four-light window. This latter window, from an examination of the surround, would appear from all the evidence to be in situ though there is a modern frame arrangement behind it. Such fine, intricate, wooden windows are rare survivals indeed and a local parallel can be found at the so-called Henry Tudor House on Wyle Cop, Shrewsbury, again with four lights and tracery in the head, original to the house according to one authority (Smith 1953, 280-281), a later insertion according to another (Forrest 1911, 79). One other four-light example with tracery head is known to the writers, from Floris House, Oakham, Rutland, assigned by one authority to the late fourteenth century (Barley 1986, 42 Fig. 15B). Therefore this Oswestry window is likely to be late fifteenth century, if not actually earlier, and will help to phase the part of the building in which it occurs but this will be discussed further below. The next windows to be considered are the five at first-floor level with elaborate projecting, moulded, bases to the frame. Similar windows can be seen at Gibbons Mansion, Wyle cop, Shrewsbury (Smith 1953, pl.130), and Butcher's Row, Shrewsbury (Wood 1965, 221, Fig.68) and they could date from the later sixteenth or early seventeenth century though the suspicion that one or two of them were remodelled during the Leighton renovation still remains. The windows on the second story are all relatively characterless and modern, probably including the large one under the quatrefoil panel. The final window is the small single-light window with two mullion rods on the Cross Street frontage at first floor level; this may have been plastered over at the same time as the upper parts of the house for its style is more likely to be seventeenth century.

The timber framing itself must now be considered. It can be seen that on the two street-side elevations, timber has been used decoratively to produce an aesthetically pleasing facade; there is no such lavish use of timber noticeable on the eastern gable-end for it was not one of the 'display' sides of the building. Such usage is common, difficult to date closely, and is known as close studding, and, where a horizontal bar divides the verticals, as close studding with a middle rail. That such an expensive method of building was employed in the later medieval and early post-medieval period, for these timbers are in no way structural, was for pure ostentation (Mercer 1975, 118), and indeed 'wherever more than one type of framing occurs on a building, close studding is usually found on the most important walls and other forms on those which mattered less' (Mercer 1975, 119) as happened at Austerson Old Hall, Cheshire where only the parlour end of the house was close studded (Mercer 1975, Pl.40). The closer spacing of the studding towards the east end of the Cross Street elevation, and the presence here at first-floor level of not only the earliest and most elaborate window but of no fewer than three large and one small window, suggests that this was at one stage the most important room on the first floor. There is also a horizontal break in the style of the studding and the timbers employed above first-floor level, though the closeness of the second-storey studding at the eastern end of the Cross Street front shows that it still remained pre-eminent in status.

The differences in the studding between first- and second-floor levels, the presence of an in situ medieval window, and the already noted discrepancies between the upper timber work of the tie-beam and above on trusses Nos. 2 and 6, and a much altered remnant of No. 1 shows that there are two main phases of construction in the building, and these will now be considered. 'Individually, the private house is a reflection of necessity or status' (Munby 1987, 156) but it must also be considered in relation to the fortunes of the town in which it stands, and in relation to wider architectural trends.

As far as is discernible, the first timber-framed house on the site consisted of two floors - that at ground level having all features now

removed save the arcade post of a probable screens passage - and there was probably also a cellar at the west end of the building. At first-floor level there was a hall at the east end, probably open to the roof; no evidence for a solar, over the screens passage and partly protruding into the hall as is often found, survives. The plans of medieval English town houses have been studied in great detail and that of the Oswestry house falls into the category known as the 'parallel' type, in which the hall lies parallel to the street (Pantin 1962-63, 203). Examples given by Pantin show that often the ground floor was occupied by a shop or shops, though it cannot usually be told 'whether the shop was actually used by the inhabitants of the house. But it was certainly very common for shops to be let off separately, or even to form separate freeholds' (Pantin 1962-63, 208). How such a frontage would have appeared is difficult to state though original features of the late fifteenth century survived at Butcher's Row, Shrewsbury (Wood 1965, Fig. 68), and in a strange form at The Rows, Chester (Lawson and Smith 1957) while a sixteenth century drawing gives a fine idea of the appearance of such shops (Charles and Down, 1970-72, Plate 8). Too little survives of this first phase to confidently say any further, though an examination of comparative plans of parallel town houses shows that often a subsidiary range or wing, in which chambers, service rooms, kitchens etc. could again exist over shops, runs off at right angles from the hall range, creating a courtyard in the angle of their meeting. The fact that a range of timber-framed buildings, of which we possess few details as they were demolished in 1875, stood in such a position to the Oswestry House and were considered as part of the same complex, and that an open area behind the hall range can be demonstrated to have been only gradually filled in, suggests that such a model is possible for the first house on the site.

This house may have been constructed in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, and reflect the growth of the Welsh wool and drapery trade which did so much to shape Oswestry. Indeed, in the Elizabethan period the town started to expand, enjoying the renewed legal status of its monopoly on the Welsh wool market after the 1570s. However, this monopoly came to be viewed with increasing suspicion by parliament, which favoured the

operation of a more free market as a means of restricting the size of the Royal purse, and by the growing Shrewsbury Drapers Association for more chauvinistic reasons. These problems culminated in the withdrawal of the monopoly in 1621 and the consequent decline of Oswestry as the market moved to Shrewsbury.

It was during the boom years of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that the second phase of building took place, probably under the aegis of the Lloyd family. It would seem that the roof was removed from the existing house, an extra storey constructed, and the gables raised, before reroofing took place. The east end of the building was still seen as the most important, but the hall was now closed in and three chambers created above. The screens passage would appear to have been left while it can be assumed that the ground floor was still used for shops. Whether the timber-framed building next door in Bailey Street was now constructed or whether, more likely, it already existed and was now altered, cannot be said. Such three-storey houses with jetties, and often with decorative framing and detail, are typical of merchants houses of the period and numerous examples can be seen in Shrewsbury, as at Ireland's Mansion which dates from c.1575 (Airs 1982, 95) or Sherar's Mansion of c.1570 (Summerson 1953, 98). In Oswestry, Llwyd Mansion is a unique survival.

Finally, the brick infilling of the east gable-end suggests that it had been exposed to the elements - and unprotected, at least at ground-floor level, by jetties - until the eighteenth century when the final period of brick infill probably took place and large area of the outer face were rendered.

Summary

A survey of the building in central Oswestry known as Llwyd Mansion, revealed two principal periods of construction. Fragmentary evidence suggests that a sizeable medieval house, possibly with a service range and courtyard, was drastically altered in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century with the addition of an extra storey and new roof. The building seems to have always housed shops at street level but constant refittings have destroyed all but the most recent features here. A basic documentary search failed to find any primary sources relating to the building before the nineteenth century and nothing to confirm (or deny) the popular attribution of the later construction to the Lloyd Family in 1604. Illustrations of the property before its renovation in 1875 show that some liberties may have since been taken with historical truth.

I.M. FERRIS

S. LITHERLAND

March 12th, 1988

Acknowledgements

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Figure 1 Location map. Oswestry town centre
[Ordnance Survey 1980]

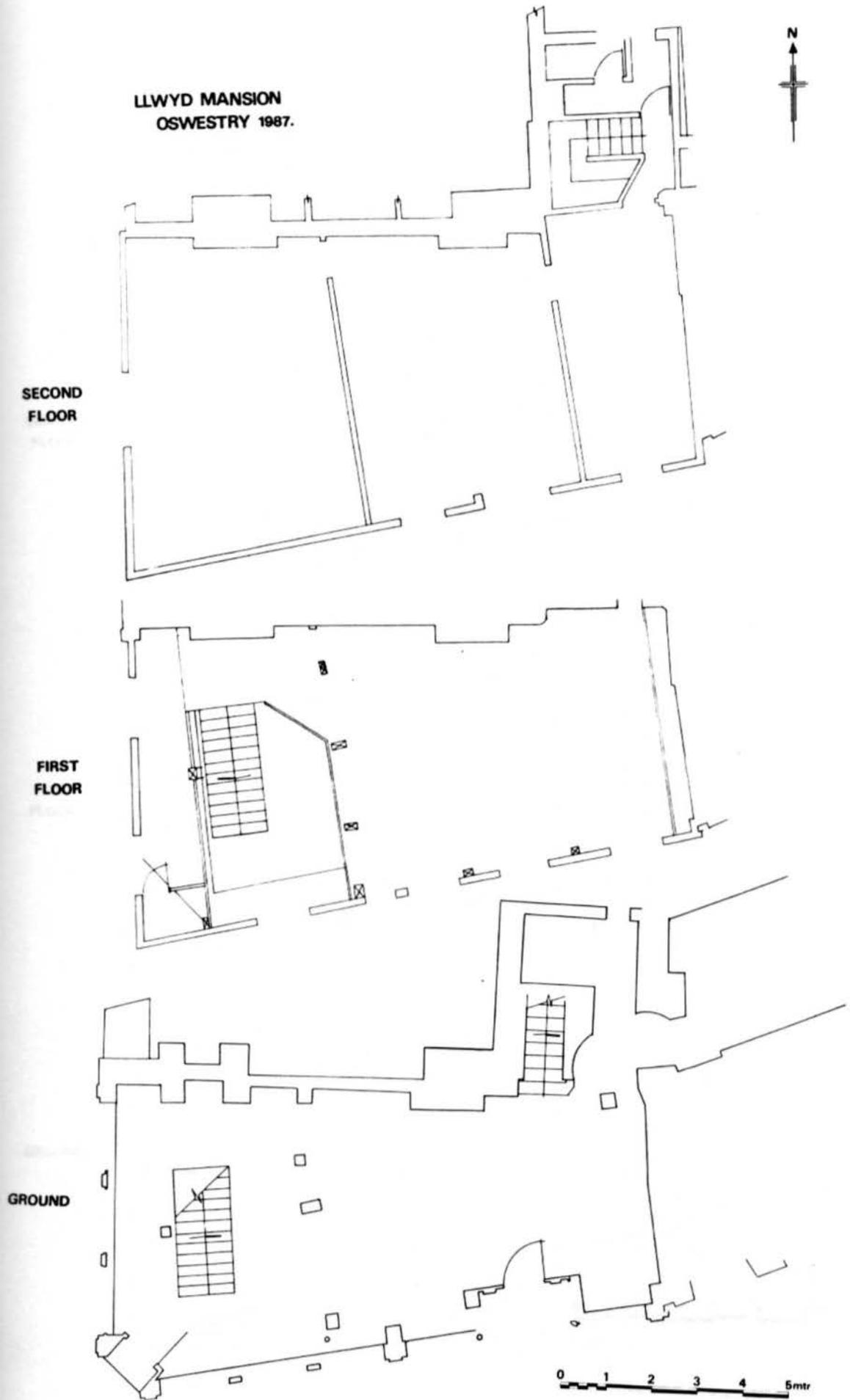
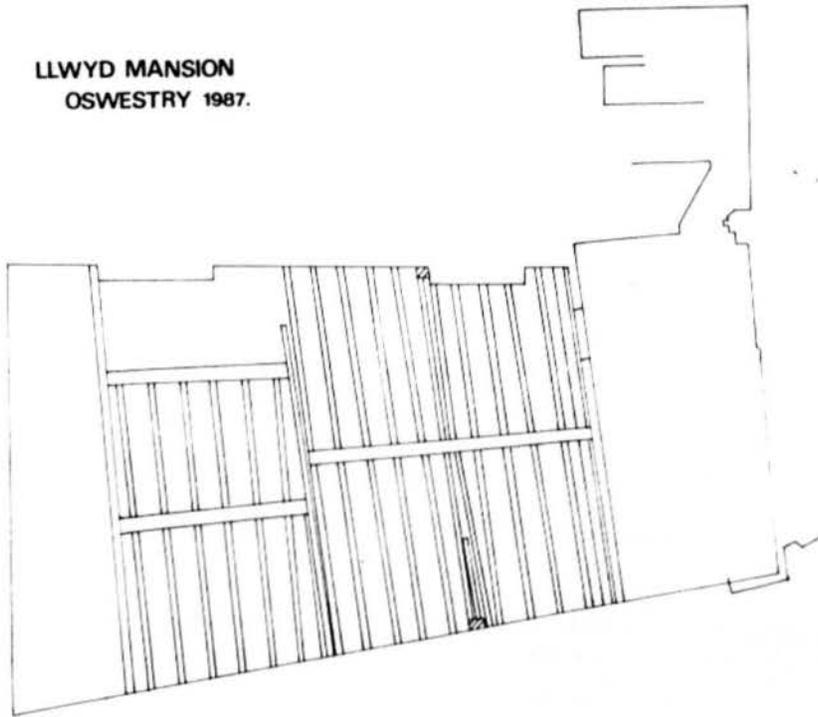


Figure 2 Floor Plans. Internal arrangements - A. Mirza

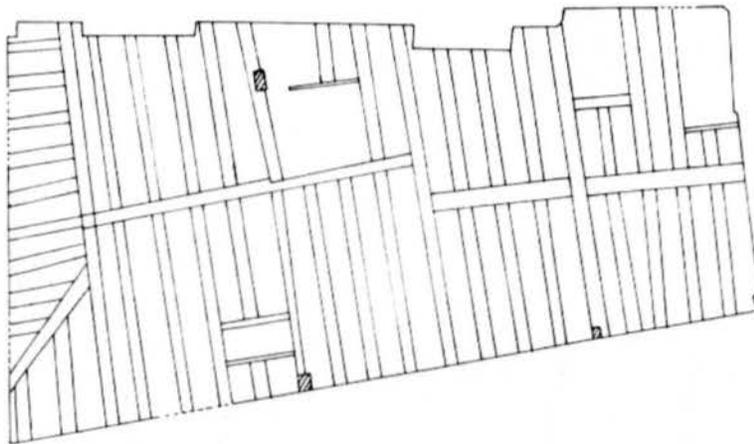
LLWYD MANSION
OSWESTRY 1987.



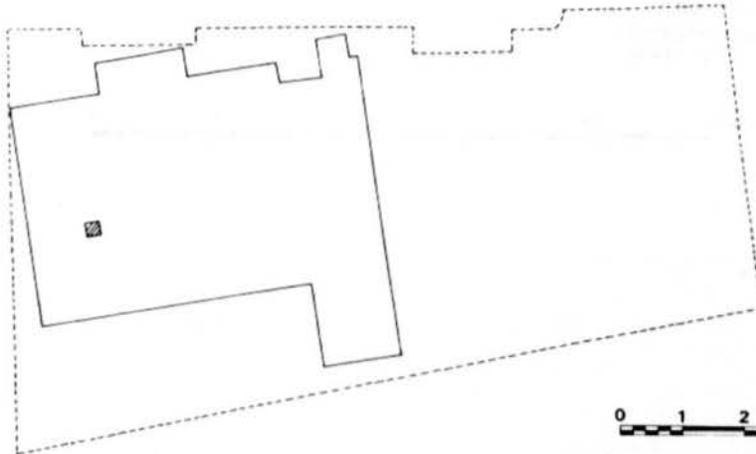
SECOND
FLOOR



FIRST
FLOOR

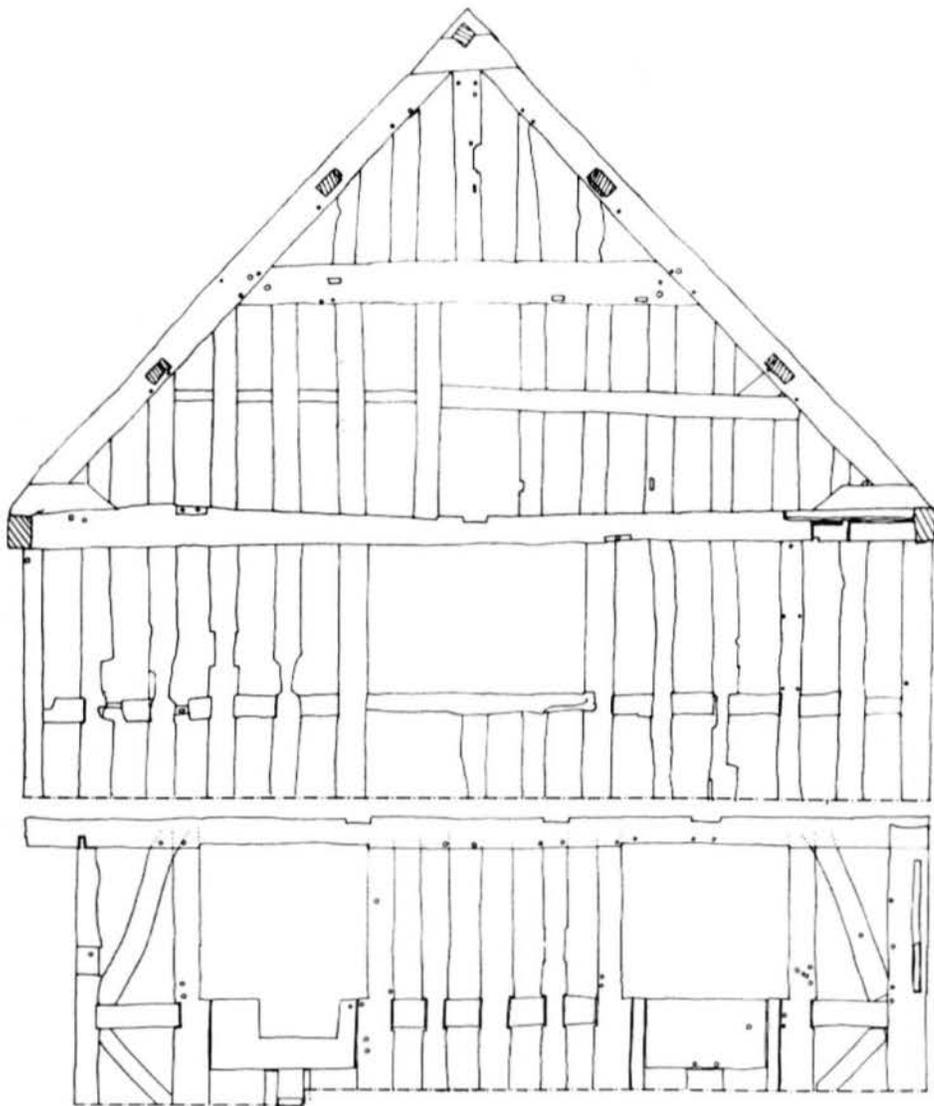


GROUND



0 1 2 3 4 5mtr

Figure 3 Floor Plans. Floor joists - A. Mirza



LLWYD MANSION
OSWESTRY 1987.
BEAM SET 1

0 1 2 3 4 5mtr

Figure 4 Roof. Truss No.1 [Archive] - J. Sterenberg et al.

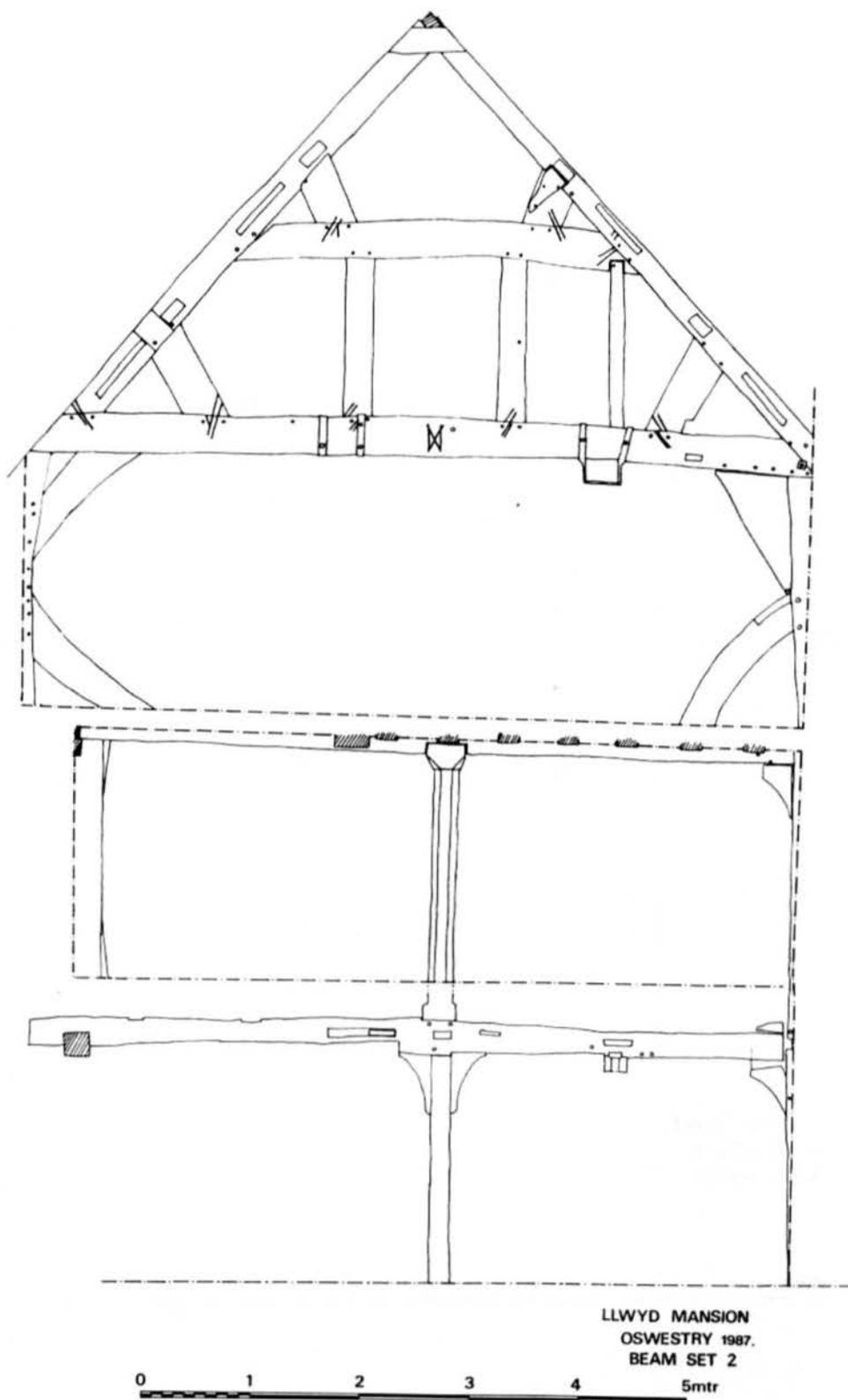
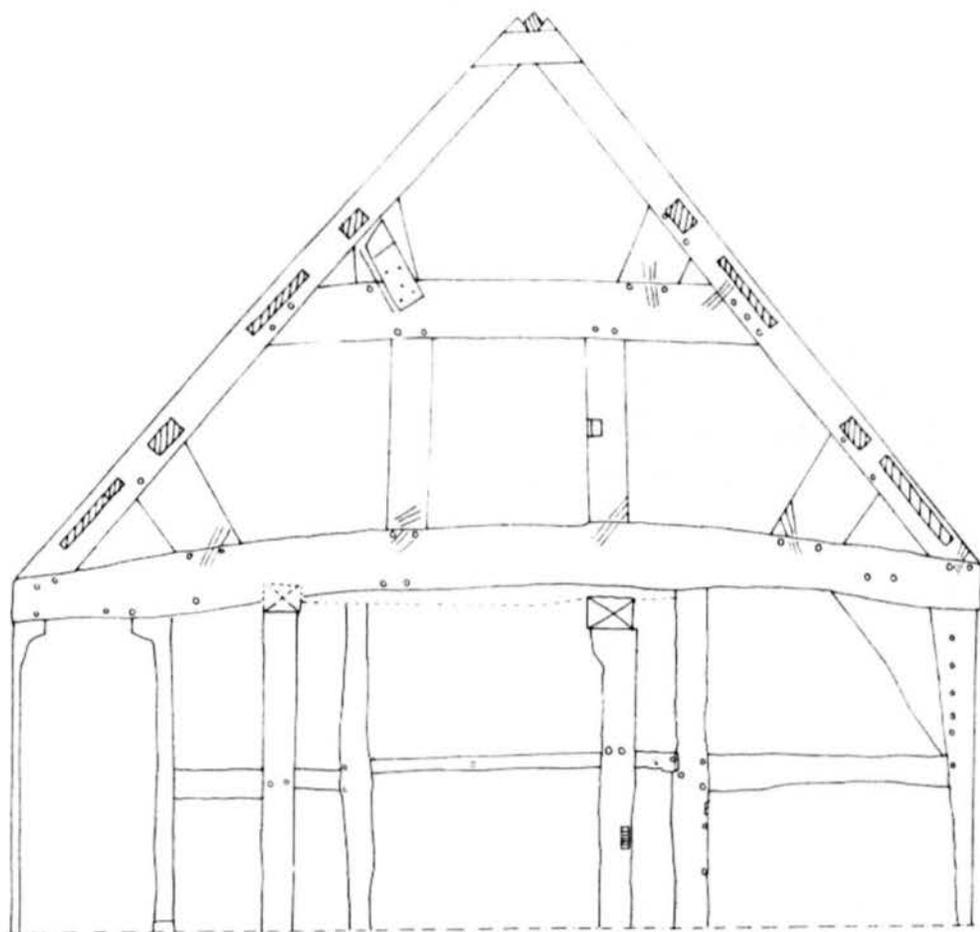


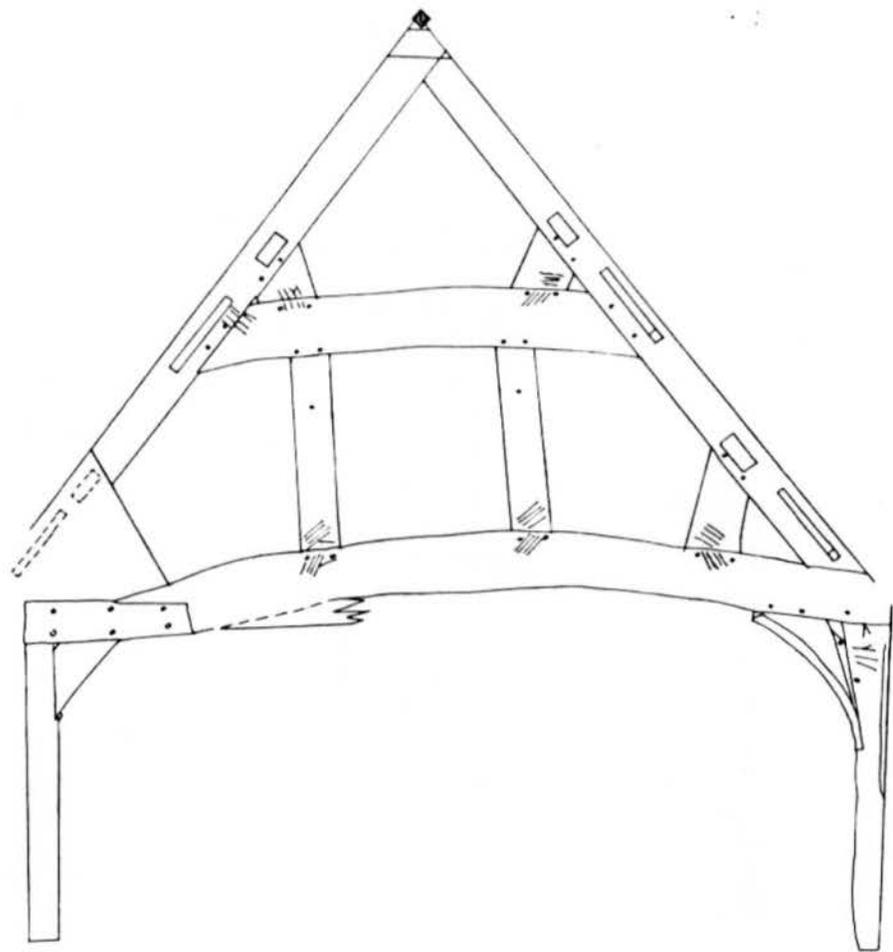
Figure 5 Roof. Truss No.2 [Archive] - J. Sterenberg et al.



LLWYD MANSION
OSWESTRY 1987.
BEAM SET 3



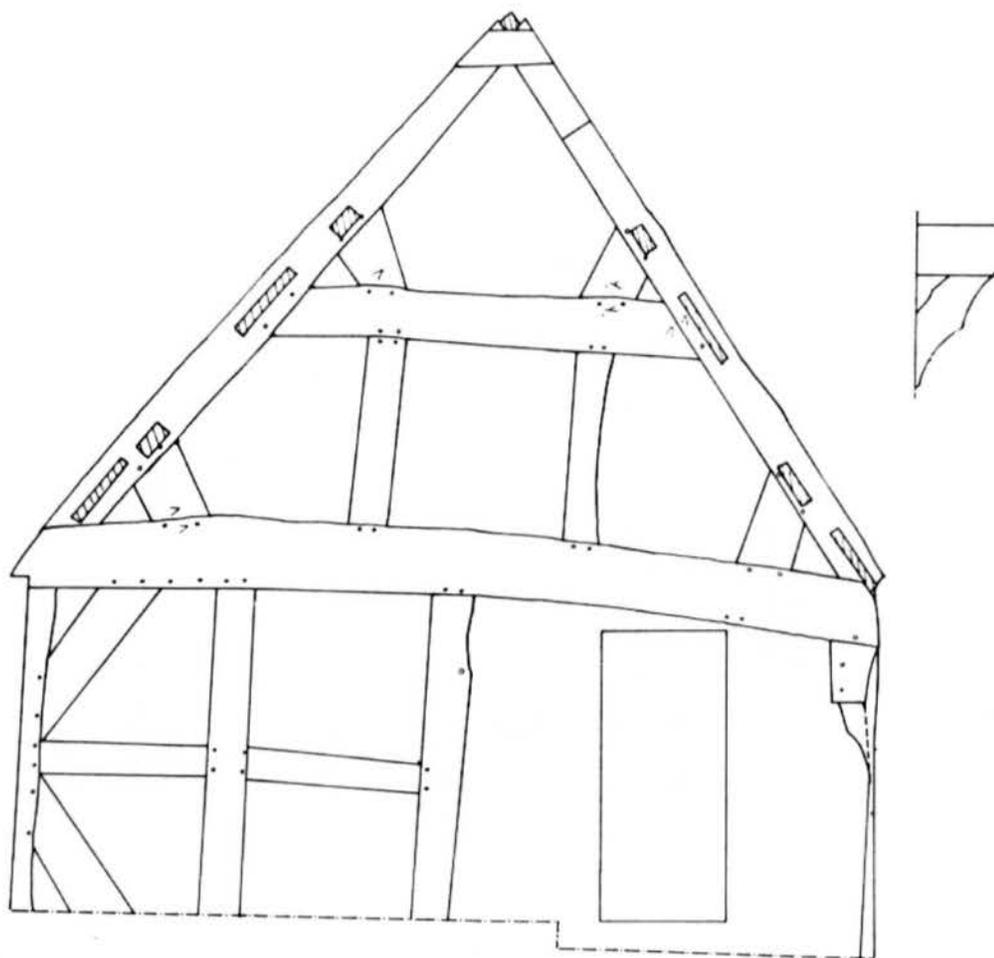
Figure 6 Roof. Truss No.3 [Archive] - J. Sterenberg et al.



LLWYD MANSION
OSWESTRY 1987.
BEAM SET 4



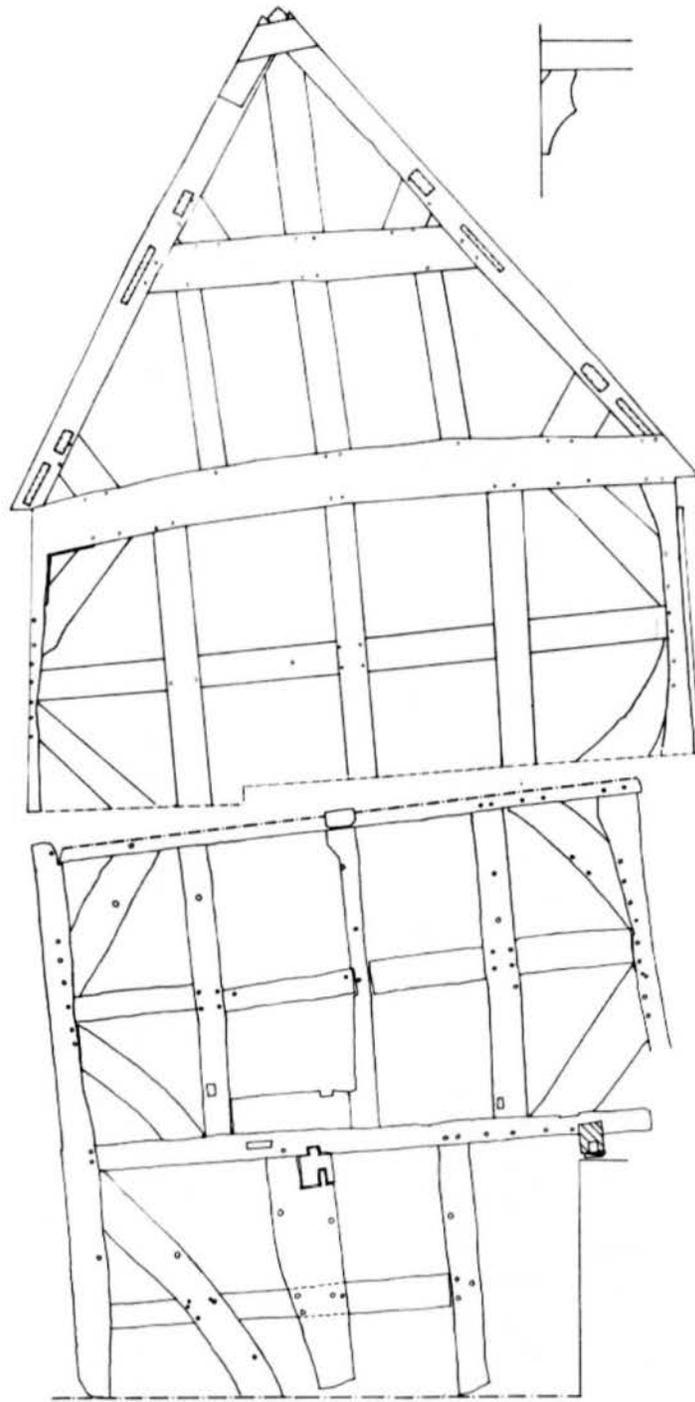
Figure 7 Roof. Truss No.4 [Archive] - J. Sterenberg et al.



LLWYD MANSION
OSWESTRY 1987.
BEAM SET 5



Figure 8 Roof. Truss No.5 [Archive] - J. Sterenberg et al.

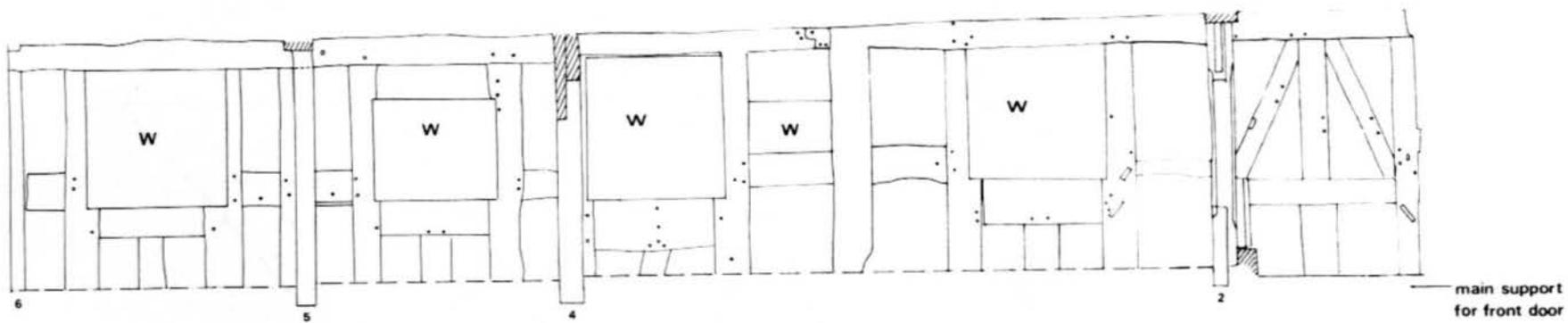
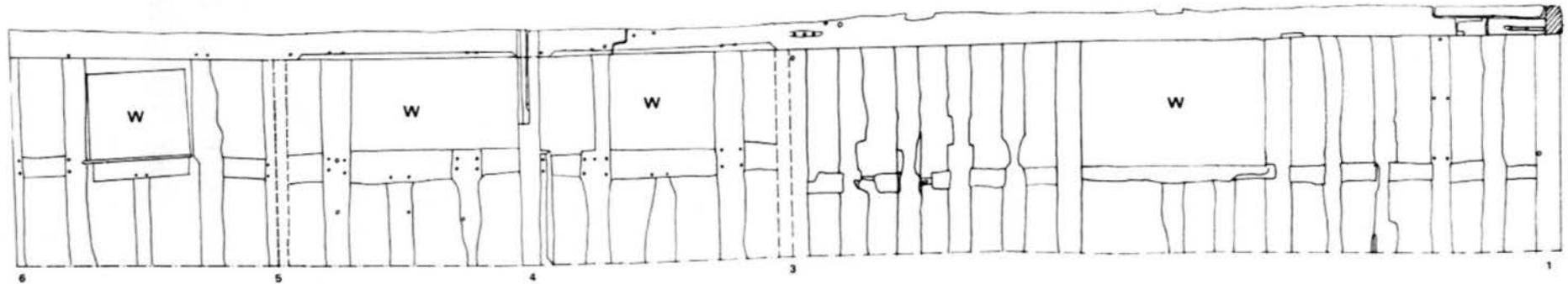


LLWYD MANSION
OSWESTRY 1987.
BEAM SET 6

0 1 2 3 4 5mtr

Figure 9 Roof. Truss No.6 [Archive] - J. Sterenberg et al.

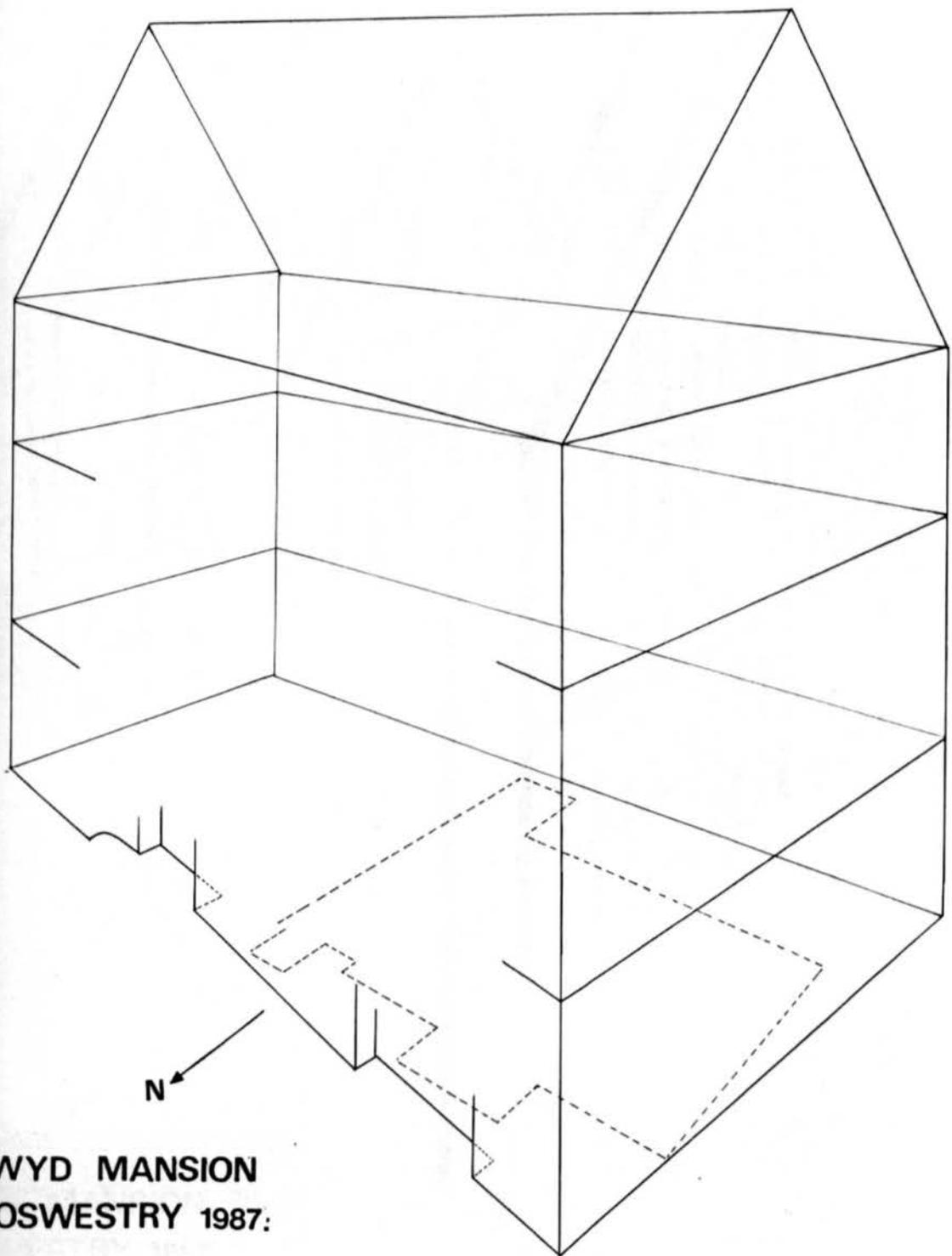
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OSWESTRY 1987.



W - window

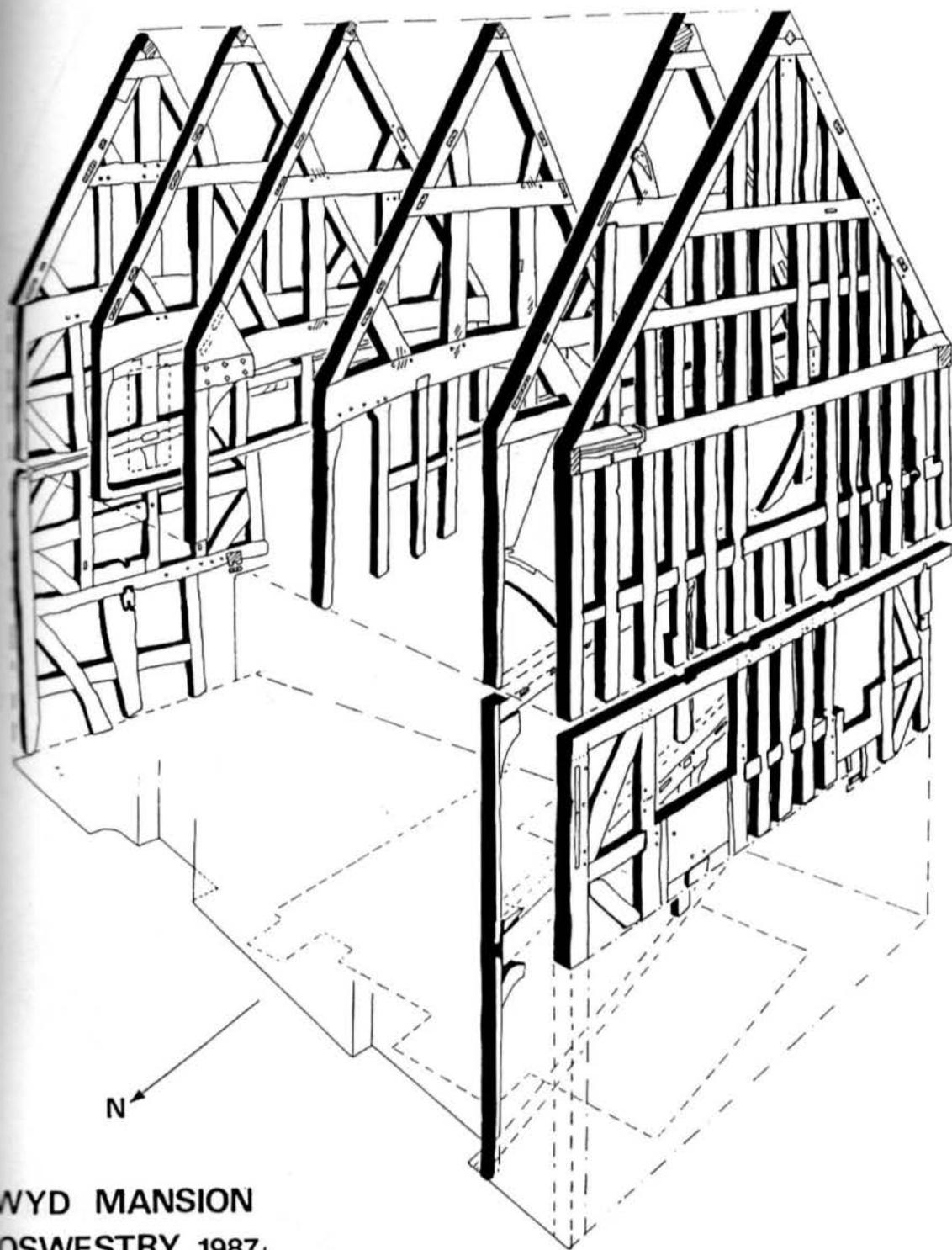


Figure 10 Framing. Southern elevation [Archive] - J. Sterenberg et al.



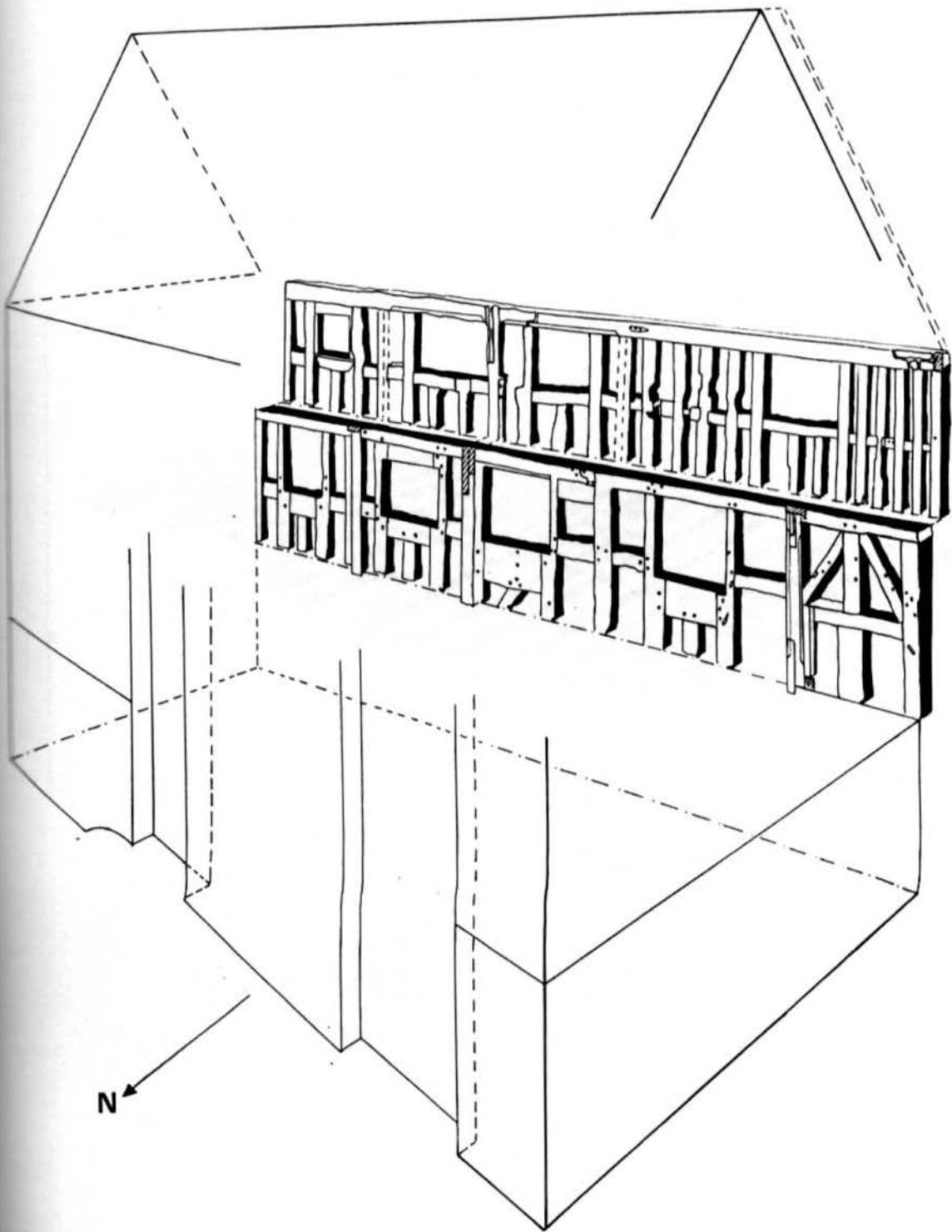
LLWYD MANSION
OSWESTRY 1987:

Figure 11 Projection of building outline - A. Mirza



ELWYD MANSION
OSWESTRY 1987:

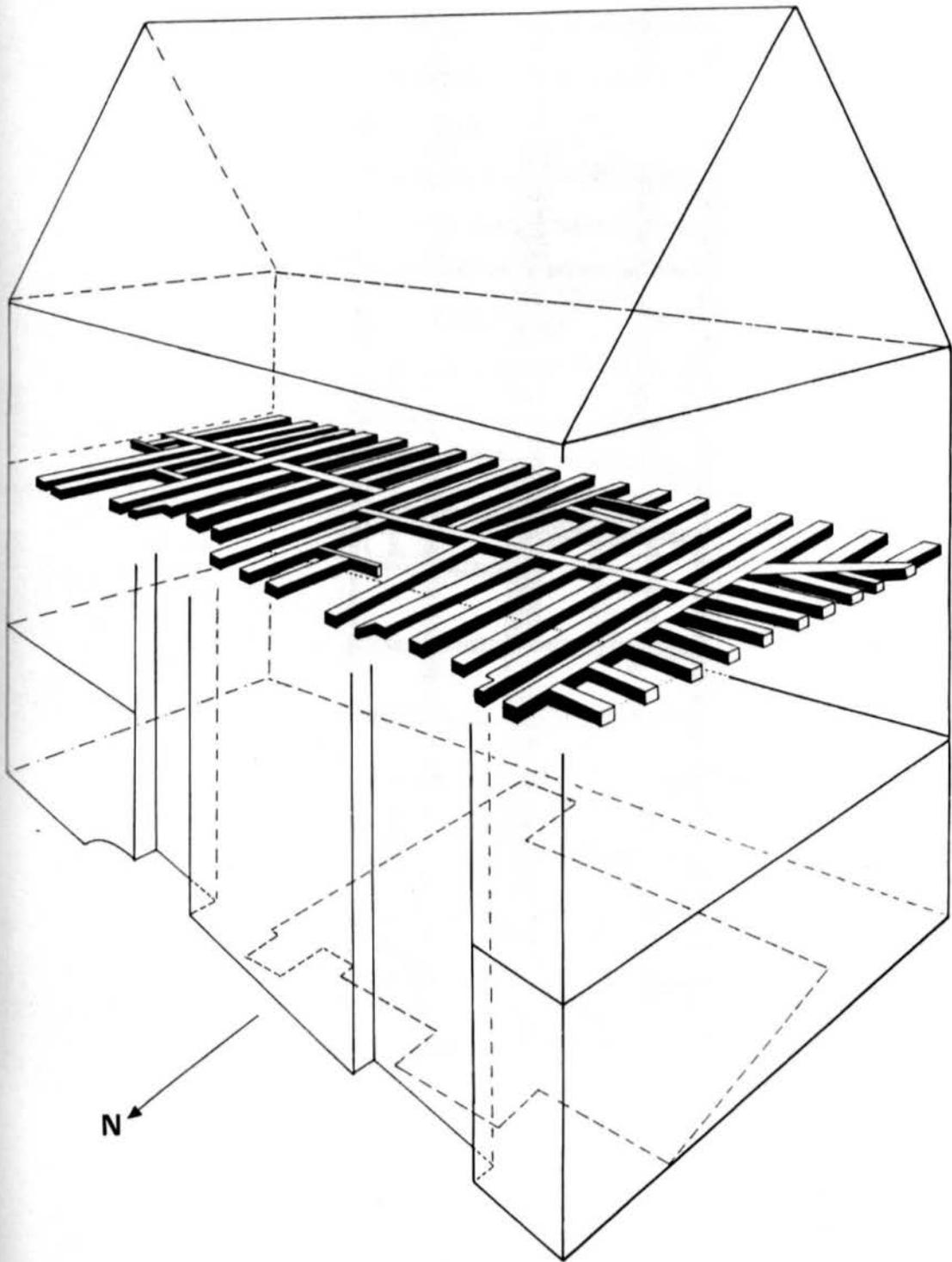
Figure 12 Projection of roof structure - A. Mirza



LLWYD MANSION
OSWESTRY 1987.

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Figure 13 Projection of framing in southern elevation - A. Mirza

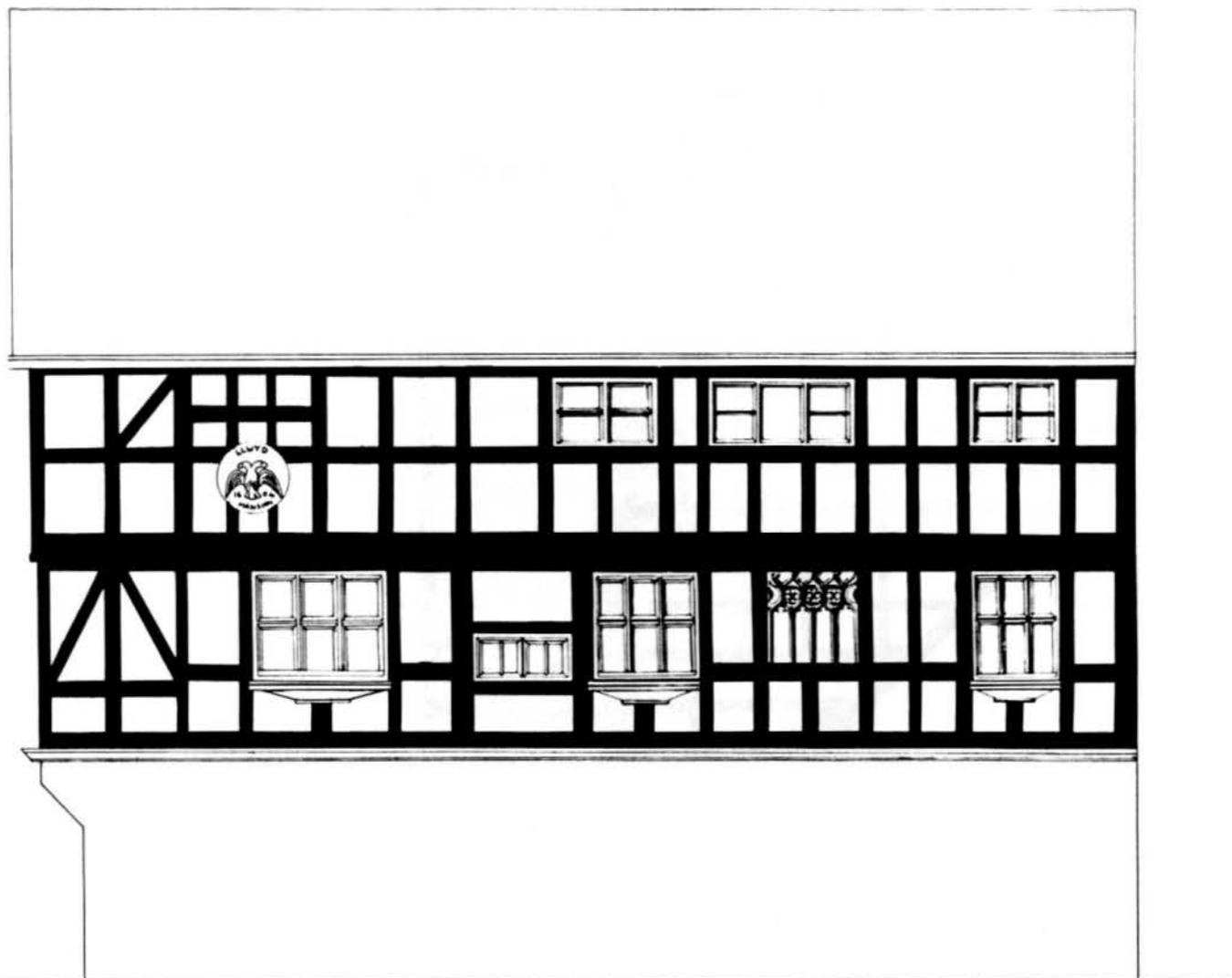


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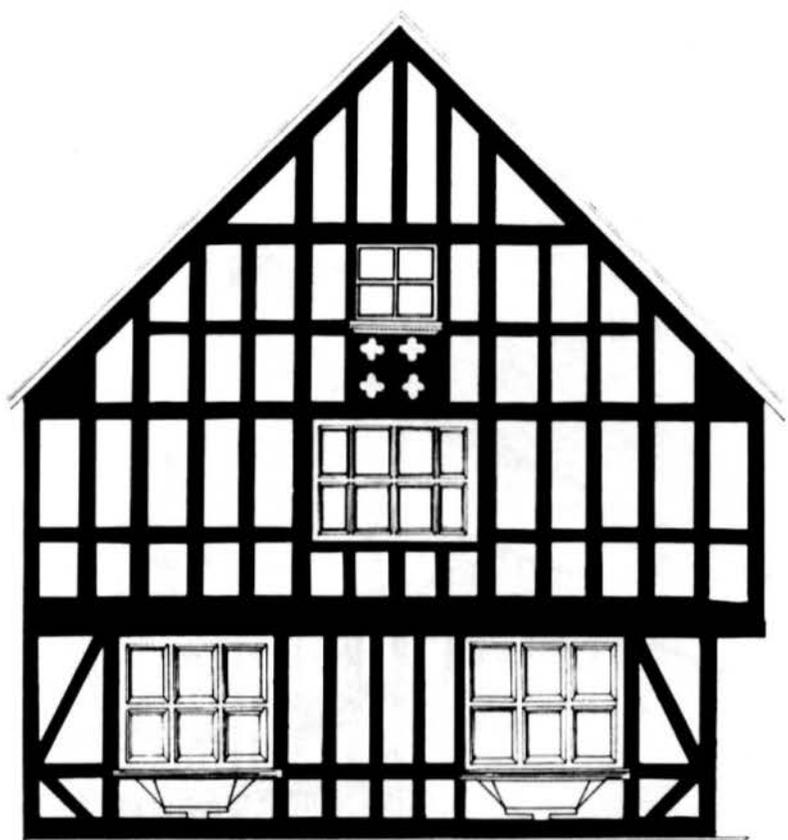
Figure 14 Projection of floor joists - A. Mirza

LLWYD MANSION
OSWESTRY 1987.



Cross Street Elevation

Figure 15 Southern elevation onto Cross Street - A. Mirza



LLWYD MANSION
OSWESTRY 1987.

Bailey Street Elevation



Figure 17 Drawing of Llwyd Mansion before 1875 renovation.
[Source Watkin 1920, 212]

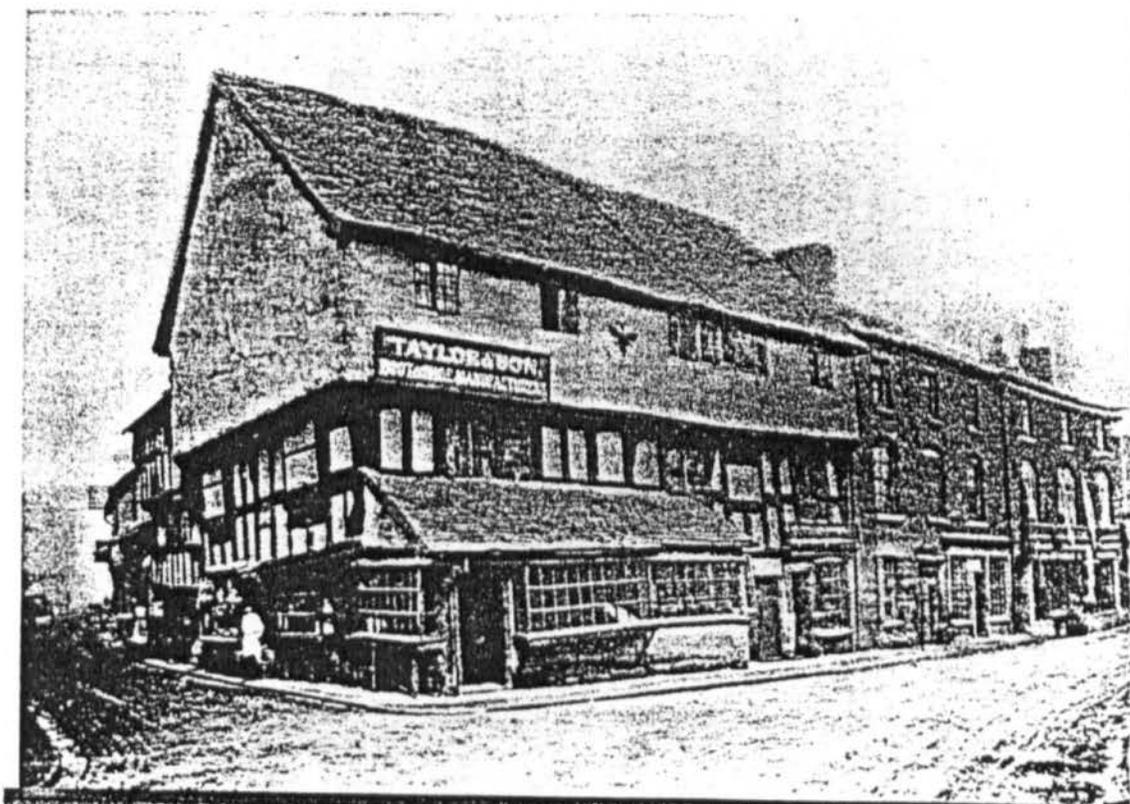


Figure 18 Photograph of Llwyd Mansion before 1875 renovation.
[Source Mitchell n.d., 54]



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[Source Mitchell n.d., 63]



Figure 20 Photographs of Llywd Mansion before and after 1951 renovation.
[Source The Architect and Building News, 6.9.51]



Figure 21 Photograph, 1987, of elaborate window in south elevation.