

**Building recording
at Wulfruna Court and Grange Court,
Dale Street,
Wolverhampton**

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Introduction

Building recording was undertaken at Wulfruna Court and Grange Court (SO 90850 98190 and SO 90805 98125; Fig 1) at the request of Sue Whitehouse of Wolverhampton City Council. The project was undertaken in advance of proposed demolition of the two blocks of flats.

Brief background to the site

The map evidence

The Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map of 1973 (Fig 2) shows Wulfruna Court, Grange Court and their associated utility areas in their present configuration.

Documentary evidence relating to the flats

A booklet published by the then County Borough of Wolverhampton (County Borough of Wolverhampton 1958) briefly describes the flats and other buildings on the Graiseley Estate.

Dale Street (Fig 7) was the first redevelopment of a central area to be undertaken by the Wolverhampton Corporation since the war and it was the first all-electric scheme of its kind in the Borough. Work was begun on the site in 1956 and was anticipated to be completed in 1960.

General description

The eight-storey blocks of flats (Fig 6) provided a total of 112 dwellings. The accommodation and rents, exclusive of rates and water charges, for the one bedroom flats was 26 shillings (£1.30). The tenants were drawn from families displaced from other redevelopment areas and transfers from other Corporation houses and from applicants in priority groups on various waiting lists.

The eight-storey blocks had reinforced concrete frames, floors and flat roofs and were clad with brickwork and concrete. The floors between the flats were of reinforced concrete and suitably insulated to prevent the transmission of sound from one flat to another. Heat losses were reduced by lining the roofs and external walls with heat insulating materials. All the plumbing was collected into internal ducts.

Each block had one passenger lift which served all the floors and access to the individual flats was provided by a continuous public deck which connected staircases at each end of the block. Private balconies were provided to all living rooms in the flats.

The living room, kitchen, and hall in every flat had thermostatically controlled electric under-floor heating and in each living room an electric fire set in a decorative tiled surround was provided as an additional or alternative form of heating in that room.

Each flat was fitted with an insulated hot water storage cylinder containing an immersion heater which was also controlled by a thermostat.

Electricity for floor warming and water heating was cheaper if it was used between 7pm and 7am and between 1pm and 3pm; these being the two set 'off-peak' periods when it was not being absorbed by industry, and the installations in this scheme were designed to use current only during these periods.

Provided amenities

Each eight-storey block was fitted with communal television aerials and amplifiers from which there were connections to plugs in all the living rooms. The blocks were also wired for Rediffusion services.

Refuse from the flats was removed by the use of chutes with hoppers at each floor level of the eight-storey blocks. The chutes were built into the structure at each end of the access decks. The chutes discharged the refuse into large containers which were emptied by the Corporation's Cleansing Department with special equipment.

Communal laundries were equipped with electric washing machines, 'hydro-extractors' (spin dryers) and drying cabinets. Drying areas were also provided. The use of the laundries was included in the rent, except for the drying cabinets, which tenants could operate by a slot meter at 3d (1.5p) per hour per cabinet.

The estate was managed by a resident Superintendent, whose main duties included the collection of rents, maintenance of lawns and assistance of tenants generally under the direction of the housing manager.

Evidence that all was not well at the flats is provided by a number of articles published in the local newspaper, the Express and Star, over a number of years.

Even before the flats were completed at least one councillor of the County Borough of Wolverhampton, Mrs Mair Cattell, disagreed with her party's plan for an additional subsidy for the flats (Express and Star 4/12/57). Mrs Cattell unsuccessfully opposed the committee's proposal to charge an average rent of £1 7s 6d (£1.38) for the flats when an economic rent was thought to be £3 7s 10d (£3.39). This situation had been anticipated by Maitland (1952) who had noted that multi-storey flats were experimental, and he thought it extremely unlikely that the rents charged could in any way hope to be economic.

Some difficulty seems to have been experienced by the council in filling the flats. A letter was sent to all council house tenants asking if they wished to be considered for one of the flats (Express and Star 19/12/57). Weekly rentals, which included rates, payable on a 50 week basis varied from 33s 10d (£1.69) for a one bedroom flat on the second floor of a three storey block to 38s 10d (£1.94) for a 2 bedroomed flat on the ground floor of a 3 storey block. However, a report a few weeks later (Express and Star 27/01/58) suggested that only about 40 tenants of Wolverhampton council houses had asked to be considered for one of the new flats in Dale Street. Mr M C Barton, the housing manager, said that no difficulty was anticipated in filling the flats. The tenants would probably be people displaced from slum clearance areas or those already among the 5000 on the town's housing list. Reports that most tenants had replied objecting to living in a flat were denied by Mr Barton. He said that they had not been asked for their observations at all. Explaining why so few tenants had applied for the new flats he said that 'in his experience people who already live in houses are shy of moving to flats'.

At the formal opening of the flats, Sir Charles Wheeler, President of the Royal Academy of Arts said that he would always have a soft spot for the Victorian house with its 'little backyard and garden'. However, he acknowledged the modern necessity of multi-storey flats (Express and Star 21/10/58). He said:

I am a Victorian and I am not altogether sure that the absence of the little backyard and a little garden is an advantage. But we have to move with the times. Dale Street was now part of the new world, a world where a healthy spirit - in a healthy body - was as always vital. The new flats would breed these qualities as the little house did in the Victorian era.

In the same article, Alderman H E Lane, chairman of the Wolverhampton Housing Committee, said that in planning the Dale Street scheme they had been determined to select the very best features that modern science and art could make available. He said that:

We believe that future generations will judge us not on the quantity of houses we have built but on the quality. I do not say that it ideal for every type of family, neither would I wish to see large numbers of children living in multi-storey flats. What I do say, however, is that there is a big demand for this type of accommodation and now that local authorities are turning their attention more to the housing of small families, it fulfils a much needed function.

Early in 1959 the development's name was no longer seen to be fashionable. The title 'Dale Street', said Councillor Mordecai James, was dull and unimaginative and should never have been given to the area in the beginning (Express and Star 10/4/59). The association was to be registered as 'Graiseley Estate Tenants' Association' and the town's housing committee asked to follow suit.

Mr S C Dineage of the Wolverhampton sub-area staff of the Midlands Electricity Board said that the all-electric homes on the Graiseley Estate were helping to reduce the town's smog (Express and Star 11/12/59). An expert on under-floor heating, he said that Wolverhampton had pioneered this sort of central heating in the Midlands. He was of the opinion that this trend would continue as the age of electricity derived from nuclear energy developed.

During the summer of 1960, housewives in the flats on the Graiseley Estate complained that the artificial drying facilities provided were inferior to outside drying - especially for babies' nappies (Express and Star 28/8/60). A washing rota was apparently in force. Each flat was allowed one hour for washing and one for drying each week. However, nappies needed washing every day and the housewives said that there was no alternative but to dry them on the balcony, even though there was a rule forbidding it.

By way of response, Mr Mordecai James, chairman of the Dale Street flats Tenants Association said:

We are a proud people here at the flats. We have no intention of allowing washing to be exhibited in full view of the new market. Such things should be kept private.

Mr M C Barton, the housing manager, was apparently already tackling the problem. He said:

We intend to carry out a test to determine the efficiency of artificial drying compared with drying out of doors. Until these tests have been completed no action can be taken.

Presumably a decision was reached in favour of at least some provision for traditional methods of drying clothes, as areas set aside for clothes lines were recorded by this project (see below).

A month later, at a meeting of the Graiseley Estate Tenants' Association Alderman Hale said that Wolverhampton Council had agreed to change the name of the buildings to Wulfruna Court and Grange Court (Express and Star 29/9/60).

Responding to complaints about football being played on the grass forecourts, he said that this should be stopped and an investigation would be made. On the question of ventilation and condensation in winter, he said that steps were being taken to alleviate this problem. Mr Barton dealt with complaints about drying facilities. Mr Barton explained that when the blocks of flats were designed the advice of experts was taken on a number of things, this issue among them. Mr Barton said that the complaint that there were insufficient drying cabinets would be investigated and, if necessary, additional cabinets would be fitted.

In the Express and Star (edition of 6/1/61) it was noted that with flats came problems which did not arise when building ordinary houses and some of these problems were human ones. Mr J P Macey, Birmingham's housing manager whose opinion had been sought, said that there was a danger of turning young people in high flats into cave dwellers. This related to the difficulty of supervising young children in the garden areas from a flat on the upper floors. According to Mr M C Barton, Wolverhampton's housing manager, the corporation had avoided putting families with young children into them. He felt that community spirit (eg rotas to supervise young children) was the best way of overcoming this problem.

He also said that the underfloor electric heating had proved to be surprisingly inexpensive to run - costing an average (over the year) of 3s 3d (17p) per week for the one-bedroom flats and 4s 11d (25p) a week for the two-bedroom ones. Britain was, of course, still to experience the coldest winter

since 1740, that of 1962-3, not to mention the 'Winter of Discontent' of 1978–1979, during which there were widespread strikes and repeated interruption of services.

Complaints regarding excessive dampness, draughts, inefficient underfloor heating and various other faults were made with respect to the 11 storey flats on the Graisleley Estate (Express and Star 20/2/61). These were explained as 'teething troubles' by Mr M C Barton. Reports were received of mildew on wet walls.

By the mid-1980s the problems experienced on the estate were of a different nature altogether. It was reported that the Graisleley Estate was being turned into a ghetto for prostitution, drug dealing and all-night parties (Express and Star 16/8/86). Once a municipal showcase, the estate was being destroyed by anti-social and immoral activities.

It was reported that prostitutes, pimps, Hell's Angels and drug dealers had been allowed onto the estate.

John Mellor, chairman of the Graisleley Ward Conservative Association was reported as saying that this used to be the best kept housing estate in Wolverhampton (Express and Star 11/9/86). Now in one flat there was a large pool table where people gathered and drink was sold. The flat next door was being used as a brothel with a noisy game machine.

A spokesman for the Council's housing department said that there was no reason why young and unsuitable people should not be in the flats. He said that people applied to [the Council] for houses and [the Council] had to house them as best they could. He went on to say that this particular problem wasn't too bad. This sort of thing is going on all over the place where tenants were not conforming with the tenancy conditions and the laws of the land.

In the early 1990s it was reported that plans to bring in a concierge system on the Graisleley estate had been welcomed (Express and Star 7/10/92).

Analysis

The documentary research

Documentary research took place on 25th June at the Wolverhampton Archives Service and on the 28th June at the University of Birmingham library. Some material was also provided by the Regeneration and Environment section of Wolverhampton City Council.

The fieldwork

Fieldwork took place on the 26th and 27th June and the 13 July 2007 in the areas indicated on Fig 2. The fieldwork comprised recording of the buildings anticipated to be demolished and their immediate curtilage comprising, in the main, areas associated with the drying of laundry and storage.

The building recording

Only microfilm copies of the original plans and elevations of the flats have survived (Figs 6 and 7). The microfilmed drawings include no clear details of the internal layout of the Wulfruna Court or Grange Court flats or their associated utility buildings. Plans were therefore drawn of these elements of the flats, taking into account visible evidence, such as marks on floors and walls and surviving original features. This enabled a partial reconstruction of their original form and use.

Wulfruna Court

Several flats on a number of different floors of Wulfruna Court (Fig 8) were visited in order to determine any recurring themes and what was typical. It was soon found that the flats were laid out in two similar, but distinct designs (according to the design of the hall) and both were in 'left' and 'right hand' versions (according to the relative position of the living room, bedroom and balcony; Figs 3.1 and 3.2). Each alternate floor was occupied by flats of a single design (alternately left and right handed).

The utility area of Wulfruna Court was recorded (Fig 3.3). This comprised a laundry and superintendent's office (to which no access could be obtained), rows of small storage rooms and areas dedicated to drying of clothes.

Grange Court

Access to the flats in Grange Court (Fig 9) was more restricted as those flats that were unoccupied had been secured against vandalism with steel sheets secured with masonry nails into the concrete or brick structure. It was possible to obtain access to a small number of them in the interval between the few remaining tenants leaving and the flats being secured in this fashion. No differences were noted between the Grange Court flats and those of Wulfruna Court. However, access to an 'end of deck access' flat was obtained. (Fig 5.1). In this position the kitchen window was not placed in front of the sink, overlooking the deck, but in the end elevation of the building.

The windows in both Grange Court and Wulfruna Court were identical. Originally, the windows were steel framed, single glazed and made on a modular form. The kitchen and the bedroom were the same: two side-hung opening main lights, a top-hung opening fanlight and a fixed central light (Fig 22). The bathroom had one side-hung opening main light, a top-hung opening fanlight and a fixed side light. In the lounge the original windows had been replaced with a double glazed wooden frame comprising three fixed fan lights, one main light, one side-hung opening light and a glazed door to the balcony (Fig 23). The entrance door from the deck access comprised a glazing panel in top third with a fixed fanlight above (Fig 24).

The Grange court utility area was recorded (Fig 5.2). This had all the same elements as the Wulfruna Court example, save for the superintendent's office, and the layout was a little different. The laundry was accessible and this was recorded (Figs 5.3, 17 and 18).

Very few of the original features survived. However, marks on the quarry tile floor and the walls clearly indicated where machinery and other facilities had formerly been secured and it was possible to reconstruct the earlier arrangement with some degree of confidence (Fig 5.3). It was clear that there had been two butler style sinks against the east and west walls, discharging into an open channel that ran around the southern side of the room. The three washing machines, located between the sinks must also have discharged into this channel. On the western side of the room, in front of the access door, was a spin dryer. Against the northern wall were six drying cabinets (Figs 19 and 20), three of which survive. An incinerator for the disposal of female hygiene items (Fig 21) was secured to the western wall.

The remainder of the laundry block is taken up by a store cupboard in the laundry itself and another separate room, presumed to be a store room, which also contained electric meters and related equipment.

Commentary

For comparative information the Journals of the Royal Institute of British Architects for the late 1940s through to the early 1960s were consulted. The Wulfruna and Grange Court flats and their associated facilities will be compared with information derived from these sources to determine to what extent they were typical of their kind.

In the post-World War II period there was a severe shortage of housing and schools (Meredith 1950). Post-war housing began with the erection of temporary pre-fabricated accommodation and a simultaneous programme of permanent housing.

It was appreciated that, notwithstanding the urgent need for additional and replacement housing, flats were not a universal solution. Where space allowed it was generally agreed that the house with its own garden was the most suitable dwelling for a larger family, particularly where there were growing children (Armstrong 1947). This view was reflected in the remarks of Sir Charles Wheeler upon the occasion of the opening of the flats, reported in the Express and Star in the edition of 21st October 1958 (see above).

Non-traditional construction methods had to be employed for these blocks of flats (Powell and Moya 1952). The taller blocks were built in reinforced concrete 'box frame' construction, as were those at Wulfruna and Grange Court and with 7 inch (0.170m) thick main walls and spine walls and 6 inch (0.147m) thick floors. These walls seem somewhat thinner than those employed at Wulfruna and Grange Court but no comment can be made regarding the thickness of the floors. Sound insulation between floors was provided by cork pads beneath tongued and grooved boarding in living rooms and bedrooms. Horizontal sound insulation between flats was achieved by arranging bedrooms to adjoin bedrooms in adjacent flats. This was the arrangement at Wulfruna Court. Most blocks of flats were of reinforced concrete column and beam construction and the author (Craig 1956) felt that in the immediate future this was likely to be the predominant form of construction for this type of structure. This was the case at Wulfruna and Grange Courts. Also, most blocks had steel framed windows as do Wulfruna and Grange Courts (Craig 1956). The windows are single glazed and made on a modular form. The kitchen and bedroom (Fig 23) windows are the same: two side-hung opening main lights, a top-hung opening fanlight and a fixed central light. The bathroom has one side-hung opening main light, a top-hung opening fanlight and a fixed side light. The living room has what must be a replacement, double glazed wooden frame (Fig 24). This has three fixed fan lights, one main light, one side-hung opening light and a glazed door to the balcony. The entrance door (Fig 25) has a glazing panel in its top third with a fixed fanlight above.

When the framed façade has a pattern based on a rectangular grid there is generally an even horizontal progression across the façade between the columns and an even vertical progression between the windows and panels. The eye also tends to move diagonally across the façade from corner to corner and in a building type that does not need very wide windows and one where room types are repeated, such as a block of flats, there are possibilities for aesthetic display (Gibberd 1952). This philosophy appear to have been adopted at Wulfruna and Grange Courts (Fig 6).

Blocks of flats fall into several well-known types which vary principally according to the type of access. The deck access type (Figs 9 and 10), of which Wulfruna and Grange Court are examples, are served from a horizontal external deck at each floor level (Armstrong 1947). This arrangement, suitable for one and two room flatlets, is popular on the grounds of simple planning and economical building. It normally has few other virtues and should, in general, only be used where the site considerations demand that a block must run east to west. The side of the building with the bedrooms and living rooms (ie the opposite side to the deck access) is then usually orientated to the south. This is not the case with Wulfruna and Grange Courts which run, more or less, north to south, the bedrooms and living rooms facing east.

In terms of structural costs a block of flats of five floors in height was the most economical to build and it was the general practice, before World War II, to adopt this design. These five floors, at the same time, represented about the limit of human endurance in stair climbing.

Possibly one of the greatest amenity advances since the end of the pre-war slum clearance campaign was inherent in Part III of the First Schedule of the Housing Act 1946 (Armstrong 1947). Here for the first time were established Exchequer and Rate contributions which were designed to allow for the provision of passenger lifts in buildings over three floors in height. The advent of the subsidized lift was a factor which was likely to have the strongest effect upon determining the frequency with which one or other of the flat forms was used in practice and upon its detail planning.

The greater the number of flats that could be served by the same lift, and subsidized in respect of it, the more attractive did the subsidy become. It is probable that there was a strong inducement to use plan forms which in other respects had fewer advantages. In other words, one could expect to see the adoption of deck access planning for buildings over three floors in height in preference to others with acknowledged superior virtues. This is a possible explanation for the adoption of the deck access model and the height of the blocks (see below) at Wulfruna and Grange Courts.

Economics also influenced the height of the blocks of flats. At this period, structural costs rose steeply much above six or seven floors and this tended to limit heights to around eight floors or less. Eight floors is the height of Wulfruna and Grange Court.

It was believed that the deck access type, when used, should be limited in length to six or eight units of the one and two room type. Wulfruna and Grange Courts have seven flats per floor. The flats should be so planned that in no case should habitable rooms overlook the access balconies. This is true of Wulfruna and Grange Courts.

In the flats themselves the need for built-in cupboards and convenient kitchen equipment was acknowledged at this time (Armstrong 1947). Where rooms were not unlimited in size it was appreciated that a squarish shape (a square has a length to breadth ratio of 1 to 1) increased the sense of space and allowed greater freedom in the arrangement of furniture. The living rooms and bedrooms at Wulfruna Court have a length to breadth ratio of 1.18 to 1 and 1.33 to 1 respectively. It was felt that flats on upper floors should be provided with their own balcony with a sunny aspect. Each flat at Wulfruna and Grange Courts has its own balcony which faces east. Perhaps the intention was that this would make it easier for the tenants to rise in the morning. Balconies less than 40 sq ft (3.7 sq m) in area were considered to be of little use and those at Wulfruna and Grange Courts are 69 sq ft (6.5 sq m) in area.

In the majority of blocks, balconies were inset; the greater protection and privacy which this kind of balcony afforded was felt to be generally appreciated (Craig 1956). This was not followed at Wulfruna and Grange Courts. The construction of the balcony fronts presented many problems. Solid balustrades were thought to be the cheapest to maintain and possibly to build but tended to be ponderous in appearance. It was thought desirable that children should be able to see out and down without climbing the balustrade, but at the same time an upstand was required to prevent objects rolling over the edge.

The provision of suitable clothes washing facilities was felt to be worth careful consideration. The estate laundry was seen to have the following main advantages:

- The building owner was concerned with the upkeep of a small number of comparatively expensive and efficient fittings as against the maintenance of a large number of less efficient ones.
- The housewife's task was lightened by the provision of facilities which it would be quite uneconomic to install in each flat.

There was, in general seen to be a shortage of storage space within flats which could not satisfactorily be replaced by the provision of tenants' stores on the ground floor or elsewhere (Craig 1956). Such stores were thought to be suitable only for bicycles and similar less 'personal' items. At Wulfruna and Grange Courts only a very limited amount of additional storage space was provided in the utility areas.

A domestic scale in the laundry building was seen to be desirable. Lighting had to be good and colours cheerful. The washing section should be divided into cubicles for privacy, each with its own window. Each cubicle would allow of some 20 users per five-day week, so that a dozen cubicles would serve about 240 dwellings. It is not possible to comment on the original decoration of the Wulfruna Court laundry building, but the other criteria appear not to have been adopted.

It was acknowledged that the estate laundry had some disadvantages. The housewife had to do her laundry at certain pre-arranged times, which was an inconvenience if she had small children. This proved to be the case at Wulfruna and Grange Courts. In an article published in the Express and Star (edition of 28/8/60), each flat was allowed one hour for washing and one for drying each week (see above). It was thought (Armstrong 1947) that the housewife would, in any case, wash the baby linen in the flat. This certainly proved to be the case at Wulfruna and Grange Courts, although the consequence, that she would dry them on the balcony, was not anticipated. By 1956, when Wulfruna and Grange Courts were being built it was appreciated that the most important provision was that of drying facilities (Craig 1956).

Refuse disposal was acknowledged to be one of the most difficult problems facing the architect (Armstrong 1947). The rubbish chute was the most commonly adopted solution, with a self-closing

hopper at each floor level (Fig 13) discharging at ground level into a chamber containing a removable refuse bin (Fig 14). This was the solution at Wulfruna and Grange Courts. On the whole these chutes were found to work very satisfactorily if they were properly designed. At Wulfruna and Grange Courts this system continues in use, presumably indicating that it was satisfactory. It was noted later (Craig 1956) that the hopper doors on the refuse disposal system were often inadequate in size and were noisy. It is unknown if this was the case at Wulfruna and Grange Courts. In most cases the refuse chutes were provided in the vicinity of the lift or stairs and this was the case at Wulfruna and Grange Courts.

By the time that construction work had started on the flats, the use of the ground floors for tenant accommodation was going out of favour (Craig 1956). While in the great majority of blocks, small flats occupied most of the ground floor area and while this may have been strictly the most economical use of the space, ground floor dwellings in large blocks were almost inevitably noisy and lacking in privacy. There was much to commend the practice, more common on the continent, of putting stores and ancillary or communal rooms, or even shops and offices on the ground floor. In addition, by leaving ground floors partially open, two most important and hitherto neglected facilities could be provided, namely covered space for parking and children's play. Wulfruna and Grange Courts were designed too early for this to be appreciated.

Summary

Building recording was undertaken at Wulfruna and Grange Courts, Dale Street, Wolverhampton. The layout of the flats and associated utility areas and buildings was surveyed and original surviving features recorded.

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Acknowledgements

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Archive

The archive consists of:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 6 | Annotated scale drawings |
| 1 | CD-ROM |

Appendix 1: Copy of the brief

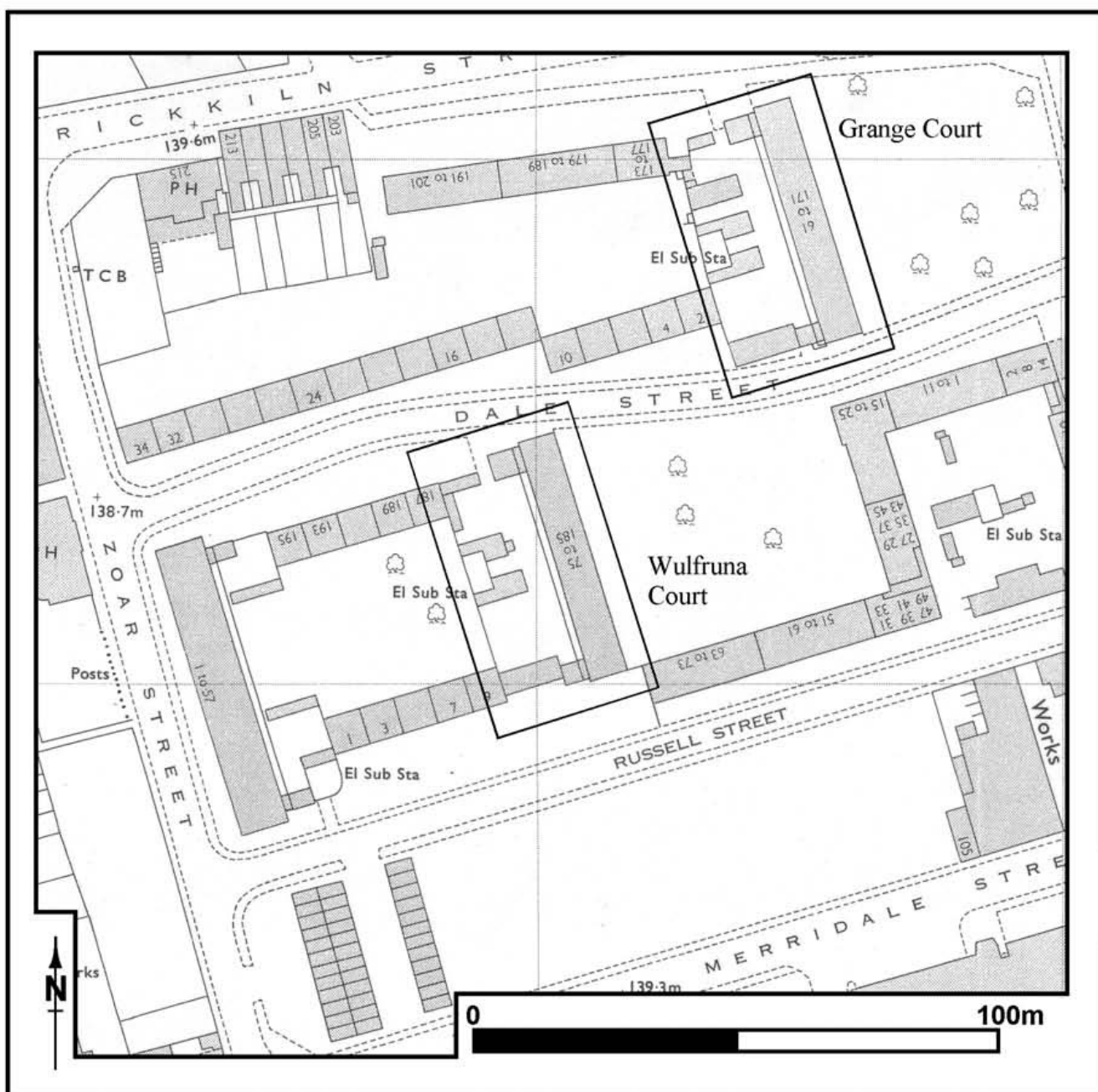
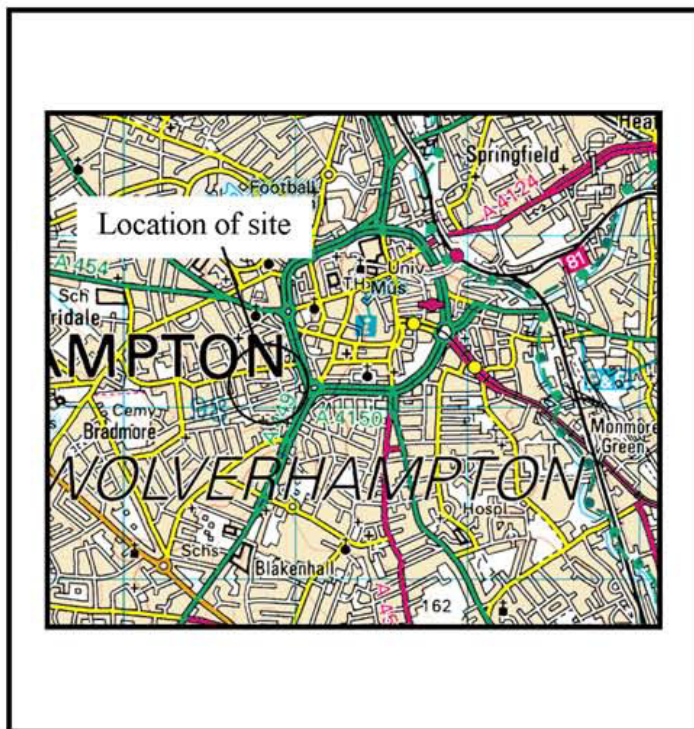
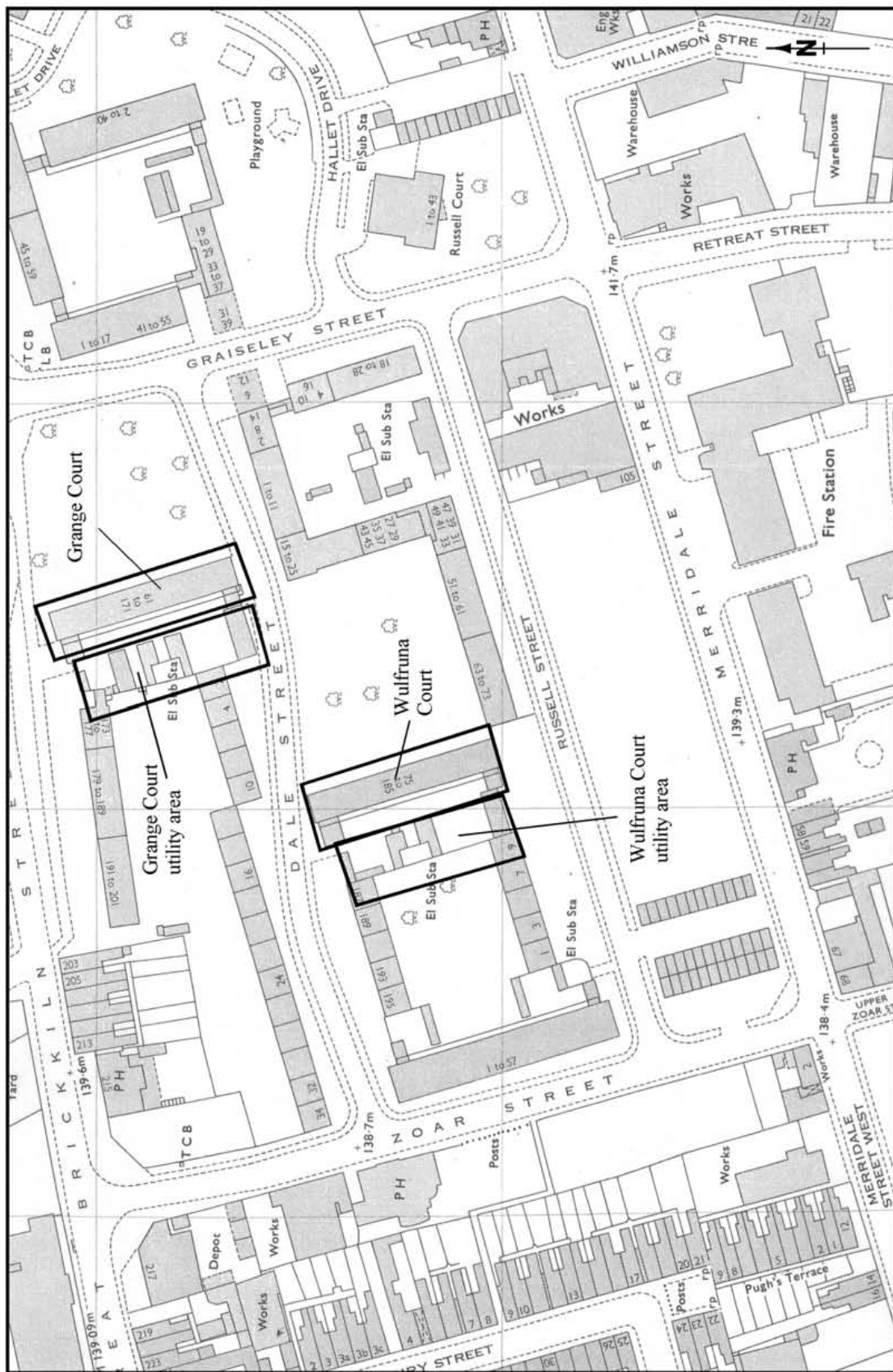


Fig 1: Location of site



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Fig 2: Areas of recording

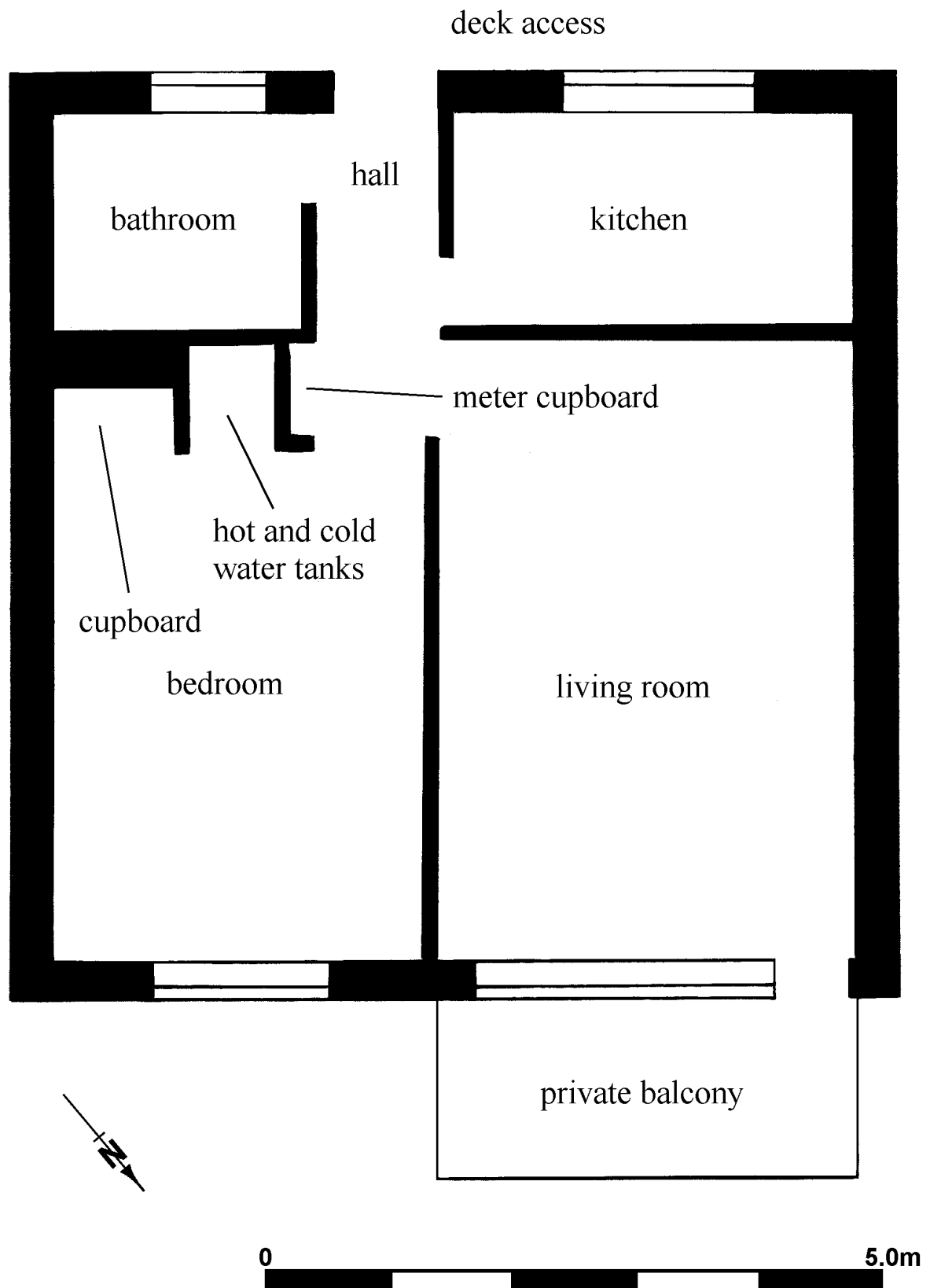


Fig 3.1: Wulfruna court; flat type 1

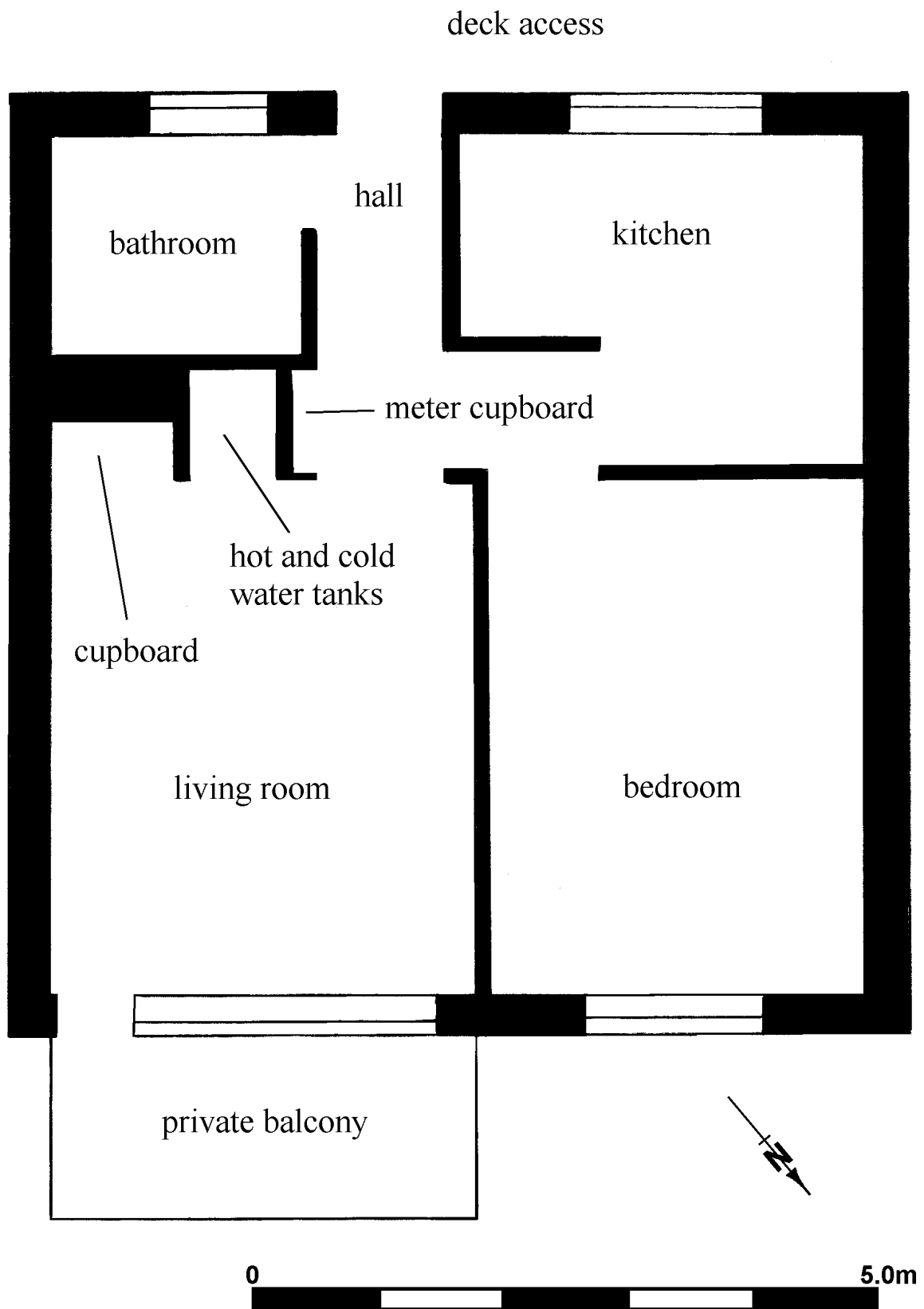


Fig 3.2: Wulfruna court; flat type 2

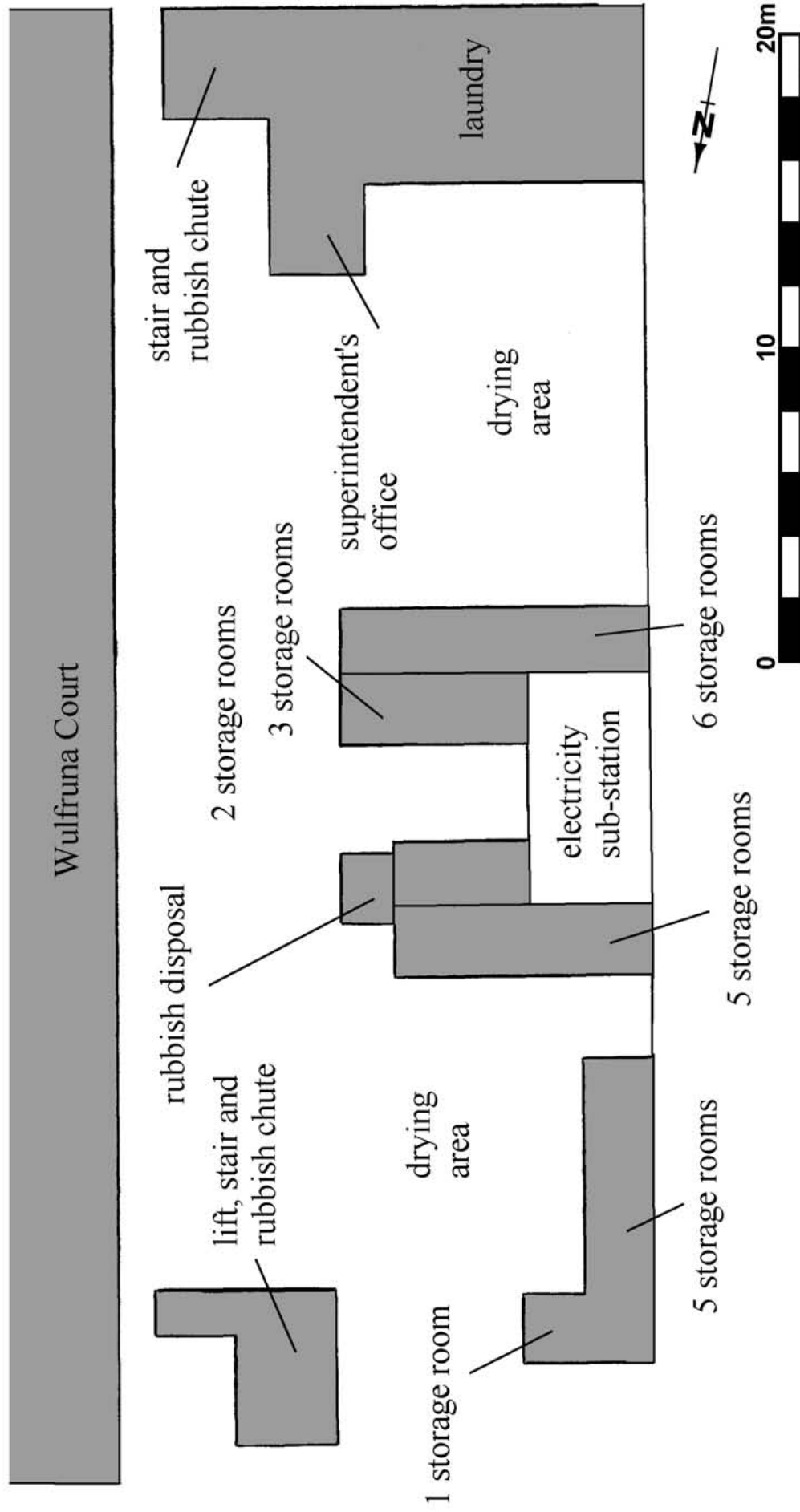


Fig 3.3: Wulfruna court; utility area

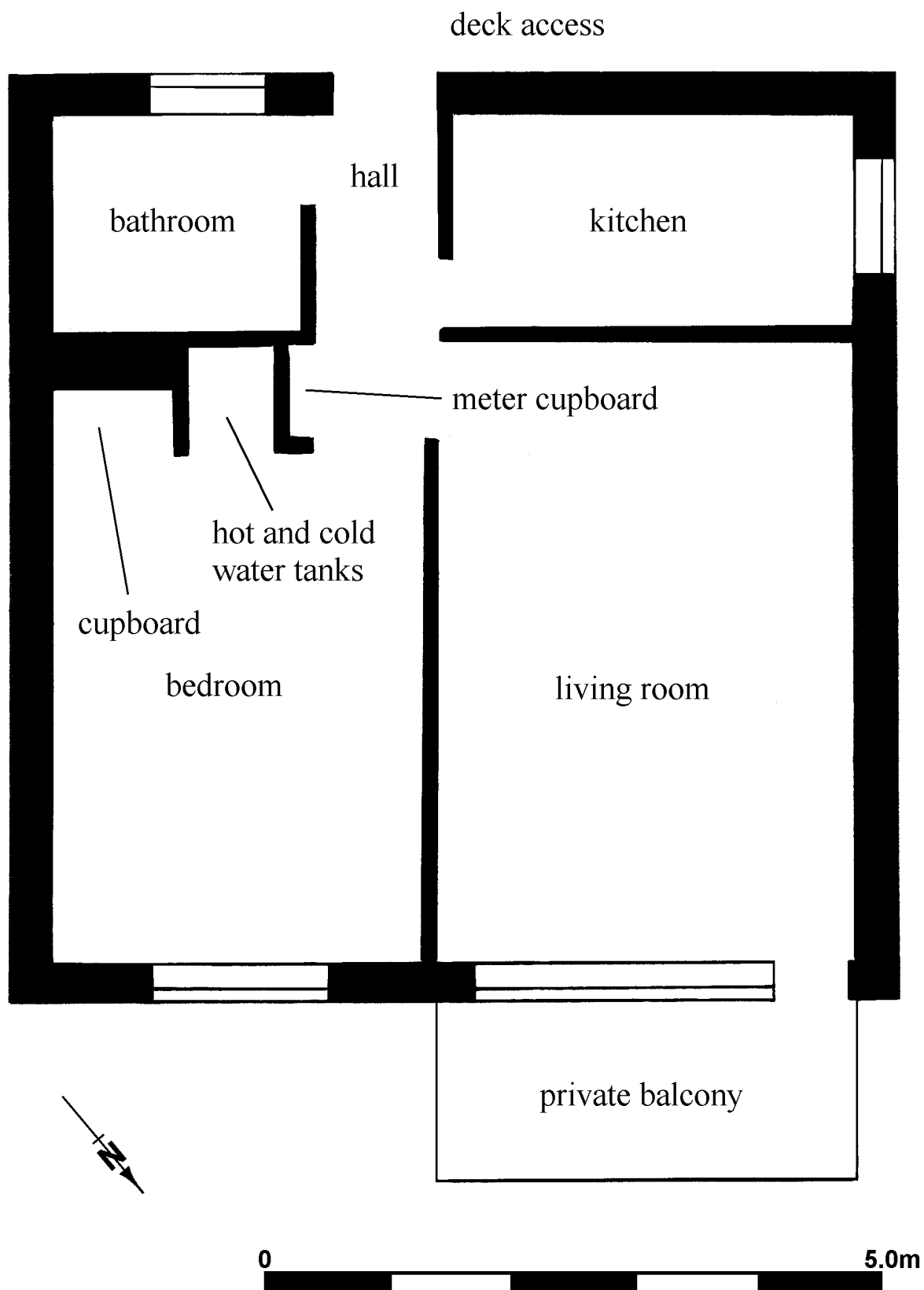


Fig 4.1: Grange court; flat type 3

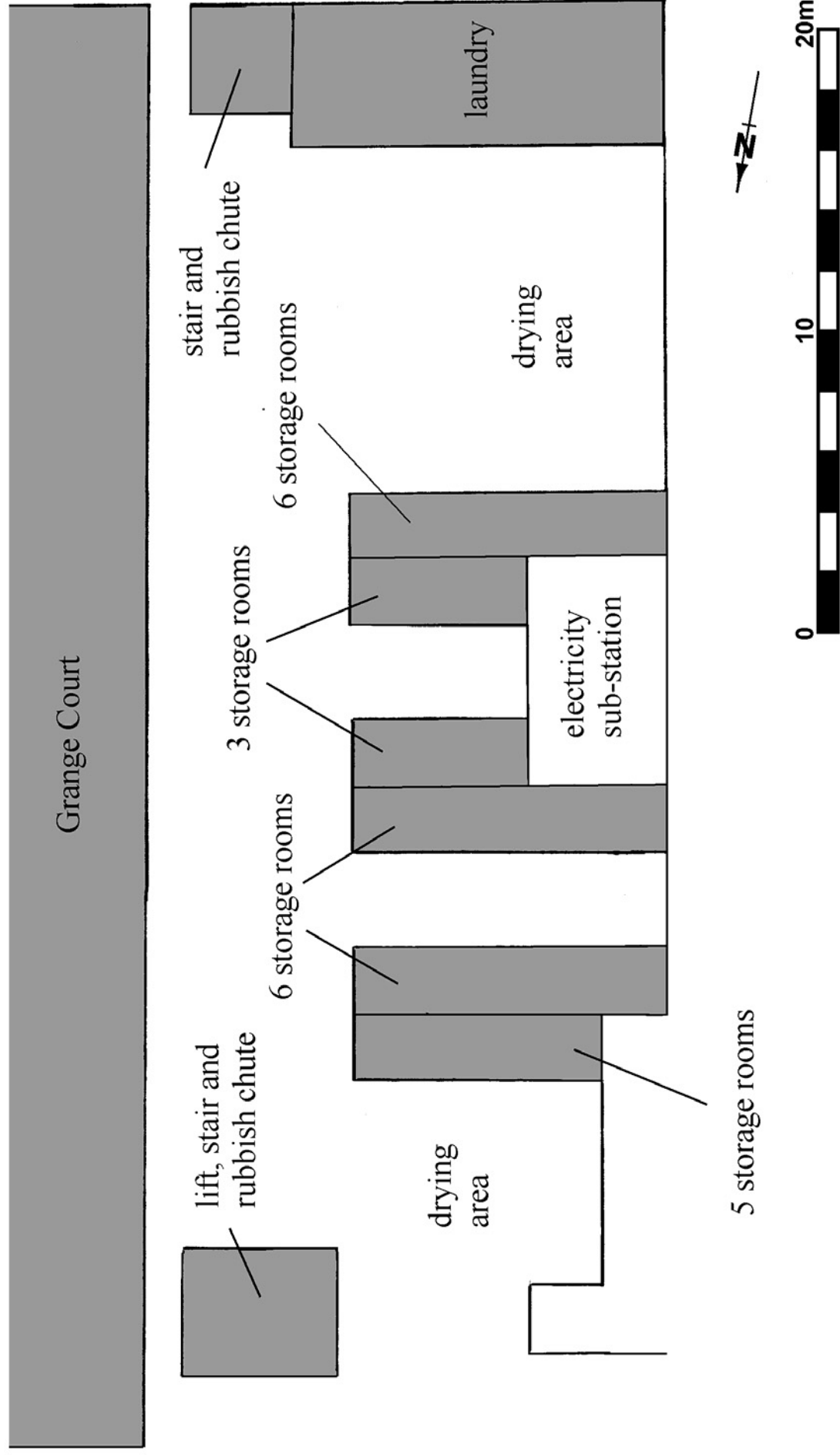


Fig 4.2: Grange court; utility area

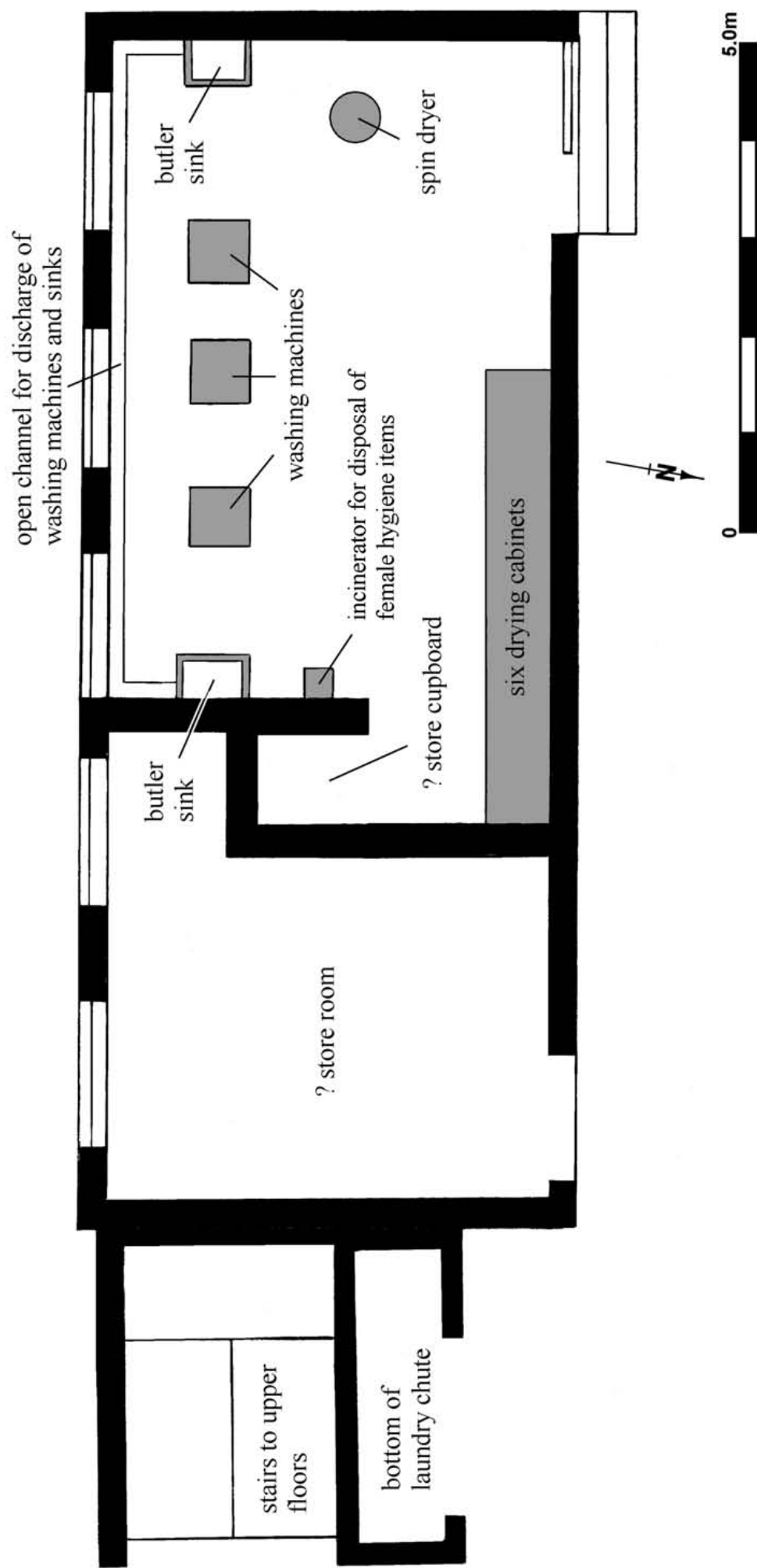
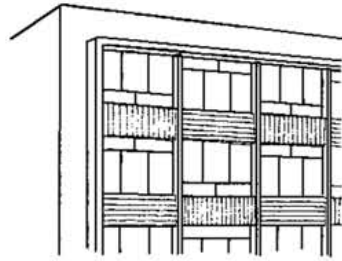
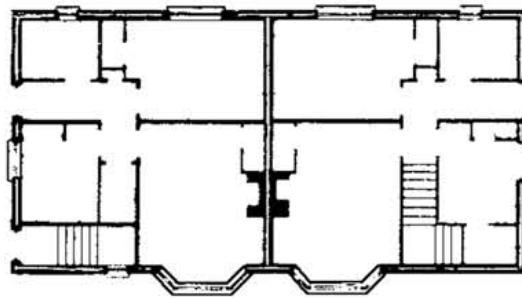



Fig 4.3: Grange court; laundry



after Gibberd 1952

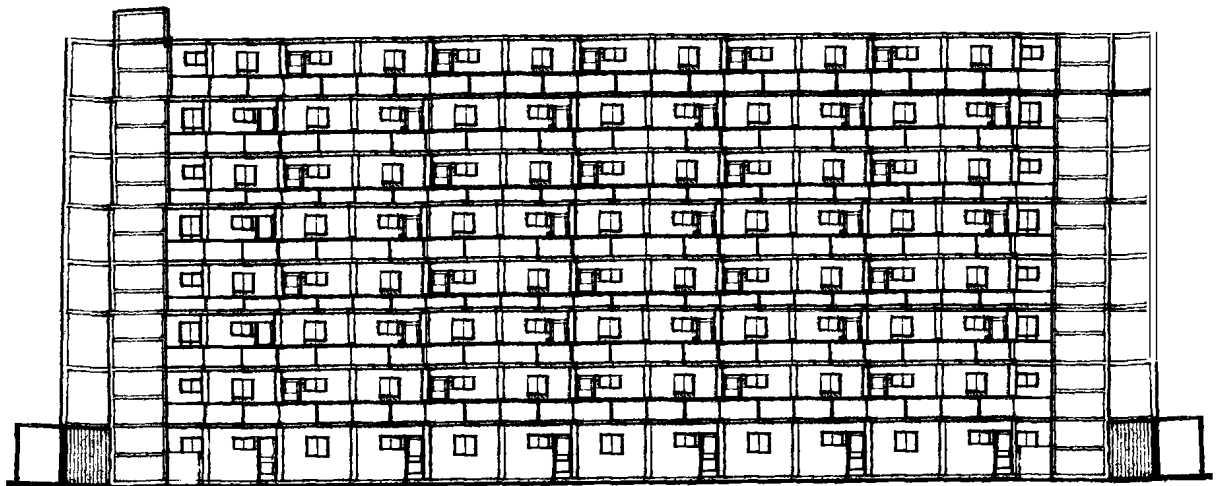
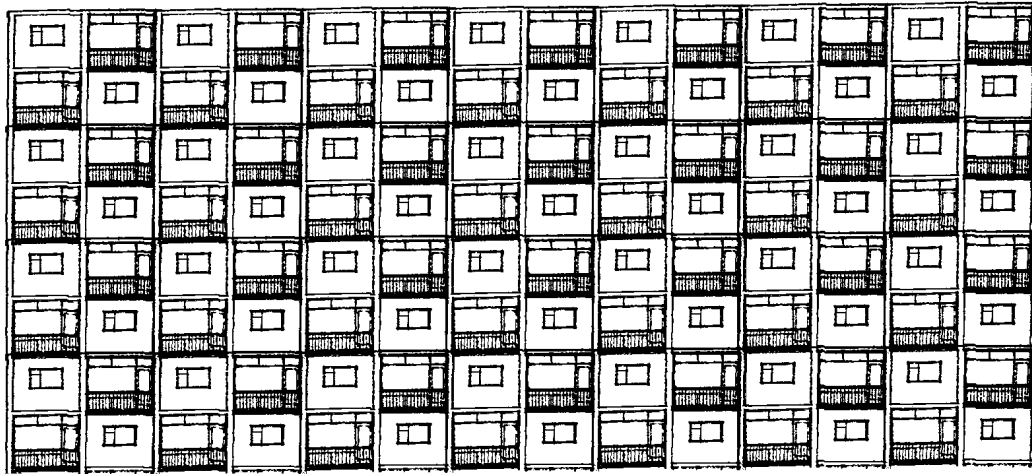


0 10 20 30 feet

A horizontal scale bar with four segments, corresponding to the markings 0, 10, 20, and 30 feet.

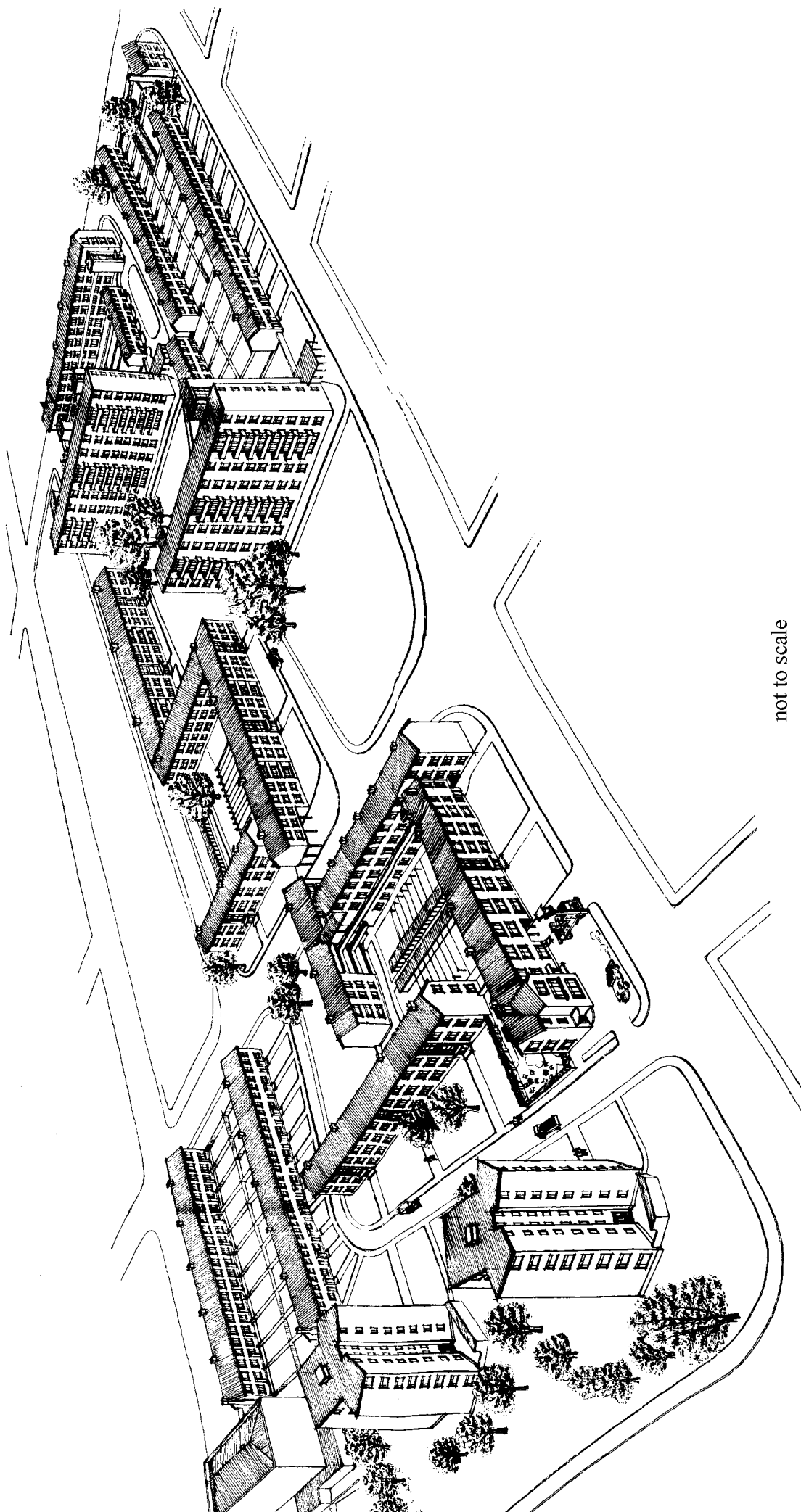
after Meredith 1950

Fig 5: Comparative information



not to scale

Fig 6: Architects' elevations of Wulfruna and Grange Court



not to scale

Fig 7: Architects' aerial view of the Graiseley Estate



Fig 8: Wulfruna Court from Grange Court



Fig 9: Grange Court from Wulfruna Court



Fig 10: Deck access, Grange Court



Fig 11: Utility area, Grange Court





Fig 14: Bottom of chute



Fig 15: Example of original fire surround, Wulfruna Court



Fig 16: Example of original underfloor heating control, Wulfruna Court



Fig 17: Laundry; Grange Court



Fig 18: Laundry; Grange Court



Fig 19: Drying cabinets; Grange Court



Fig 20: Detail of drying cabinet, Grange Court



Fig 21: Incinerator for disposal of female hygiene items



Fig 22: Typical kitchen and bedroom window; Grange Court



Fig 23: Typical lounge window; Grange Court



Fig 24: Typical front door, Grange Court

Brief for Building Recording Grange Court and Wulfruna Court, Graiseley Estate, Wolverhampton

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Wolverhampton City Council Neighbourhood Renewal Service has recently produced a Masterplan to bring forward proposals for the regeneration of the Graiseley Estate which was developed following slum clearance of the area in the mid 1950s. The Estate includes a mixture of tower blocks, maisonettes and two deck-access blocks.
- 1.2 Wulfruna and Grange Courts were built in c1955/6 and as such were the first high rise flats in Wolverhampton and may be some of the first post-war deck-access flats to be built nationally. In November 2001 the two blocks were added to the Wolverhampton Local List.
- 1.3 The Graiseley Estate Masterplan recommends the demolition of the two deck-access blocks because of their poor structural condition and high costs of refurbishment required to bring the accommodation up to Decent Homes Standard. Other buildings on the estate have been or will be retained and refurbished. This is unfortunate since the Deck-access buildings are the most historically and architecturally interesting buildings on the site.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The Graiseley Estate is located to the south-west of Wolverhampton City Centre to the outside of the ring-road which forms the estate's eastern boundary. Grange and Wulfruna Courts are located at NGR 390850 298190 and NGR 390805 298125 respectively. (Post codes are WV3 OPL and WV3 OPE).
- 2.2 Wulfruna Court and Grange Court are deck access blocks constructed in the mid 1950s using a reinforced concrete frame. They are 8 storeys high and contain mainly one-bedroomed flats and each has a range of single storey associated service buildings.

3. Specific requirements

- 3.1 The purpose of the work is to record the building ahead of demolition and to assess its significance* see note below.
- 3.2 The work should comprise:
 - (1) Documentary study of the history of the site. The Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies Library, Staffordshire Record Office and any other relevant archives should be consulted. * Note that an architectural assessment of the buildings which will assess their

historical interest and significance in the national context is being commissioned separately from an architectural historian specialising in this period. The research required to fulfil the requirements of this brief will concentrate on the local historical background.

- (2) Analysis and recording of the building to a level equivalent to Level 2/3 as defined by English Heritage (*Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice*, EH 2006).
- (3) The recording should comprise a plan or plans showing the general layout and different phases (if any are identified) of the buildings and their internal arrangements, a written description and photographs.
- (4) The Wolverhampton Conservation Officer and the Black Country Archaeologist should be given the opportunity to discuss the results of the analysis and recording on site with the contractor undertaking the recording during the recording work.
- (5) Production of an illustrated report upon Stages 1-4.

4. General conditions

- 4.1 The work should be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced building recording specialists, with an interest in / experience of recording 20th century buildings.
- 4.2 An appropriate recording strategy should be used and the method and justification for this stated in the report.
- 4.3 The code of conduct, standards and guidance of the Institute of Field Archaeologists should be adhered to. The buildings analysis should also adhere to the guidance issued by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (*Analysis and Recording for the Conservation and Control of Works to Historic Buildings*, ALGAO 1997) and English Heritage (*Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice*, EH 2006).
- 4.4 A specification for the work required should be prepared by the contractor and agreed with the sponsor and the local planning authority before the work commences. It is advisable to submit a draft of the specification to the Black Country Archaeologist before the submission of a tender in order to ensure that the work proposed meets the requirement of the brief.
- 4.5 On completion of the work the site archive, including digital photographs on disk, should be deposited with an appropriate museum/public archive. In this case archives should be deposited with

the Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies service (tel: 01902 552480).

4.6 Copies of all reports should be provided to the LPA, Wolverhampton archives and Local Studies service and the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record (2 copies). The report will normally become a publicly accessible part of the BCSMR within 6 months of completion. A digital copy of the report, preferably in PDF format, should be provided to the BCSMR.

4.7 Reports should contain the following information:

- Location, aims and methodology
- Results of documentary research
- A written summary of the findings together with appropriate illustrations, which should be related to the national grid.
- Photographic record linked to annotated plans of the site.
- List of sources consulted and their full titles/reference numbers
- A copy of the brief

4.8 On completion of the work an OASIS record form should be completed and a summary report should be sent for publication in West Midlands Archaeology and any other appropriate local or national journal.

4.9 Health and Safety

It is the responsibility of the contractor to ensure that all work is carried out in accordance with relevant Health and Safety regulations.

Site procedures should be in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual of the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers

4.10 Monitoring

The work will be monitored by the Black Country Archaeologist and the Wolverhampton Conservation Officer, on behalf of the Council. At least five working days notice of commencement of any fieldwork should be given to the Black Country Archaeologist.

Prepared on 18th May 2007 by Mike Shaw, Black Country Archaeologist & Sue Whitehouse, Wolverhampton City council

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