

NATLAND HALL, NATLAND, KENDAL, CUMBRIA

Additional Archaeological Building Recording



Client: Dale Rennard

NGR: 351975 489242

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Greenlane Archaeology Ltd,
2 Albrights Yard, Theatre Street,
Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 7AQ

Tel: 01229 588 500
Email: info@greenlancearchaeology.co.uk
Web: www.greenlancearchaeology.co.uk

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Non-Technical Summary

Following a fire at Natland Hall, Natland, Kendal, Cumbria the Conservation Officer for South Lakeland District Council requested that further archaeological building recording, following on from a full building recording carried out in 2012, be carried out prior to repairs of the affected areas. Greenlane Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the building recording, which was undertaken in May 2013.

Natland Hall potentially has medieval origins but the bulk of the standing building is probably of 17th century date. Its earliest recorded inhabitant is Allan Prickett, the first recorder for Kendal, and it appears to have been used as a non-conformist academy in the late 17th century. The previous building recording revealed that much of the present structure is probably of 17th century date, with an early phase of alteration involving the insertion of a staircase at the south end, the original having been in a projecting block on the west side. Later alterations included changes to the windows and the addition of outshuts along the west side.

The additional building recording was concentrated on the fireplace in one of the main ground floor rooms (G6). This revealed that this had gone through a number of alterations, the opening having been gradually reduced in size from the 17th century, although an apparent blocked opening of uncertain purpose was also present in the west side. Elsewhere evidence for changes was more limited, although an alcove formed alongside the smoke hood on the first floor (Room F4) was also clearly blocked at a very late date.

The work revealed some further details about the development of the building, particularly the ground floor fireplace, although the potential blocked doorway on the west side is more difficult to explain without further investigation.

Acknowledgements

Greenlane Archaeology would like to thank Dale Rennard for commissioning the project and providing information and useful comments on the features exposed. Additional thanks are due Charles Blakett-Ord at Blakett-Ord Conservation Architecture and Dave Tyler at Jack in the Green Lime for their information and assistance with the project.

The additional building recording was carried out by Dan Elsworth, who also produced the report. The illustrations were produced by Tom Mace, and the report was edited by Jo Dawson. The project managed by Dan Elsworth.

1. Introduction

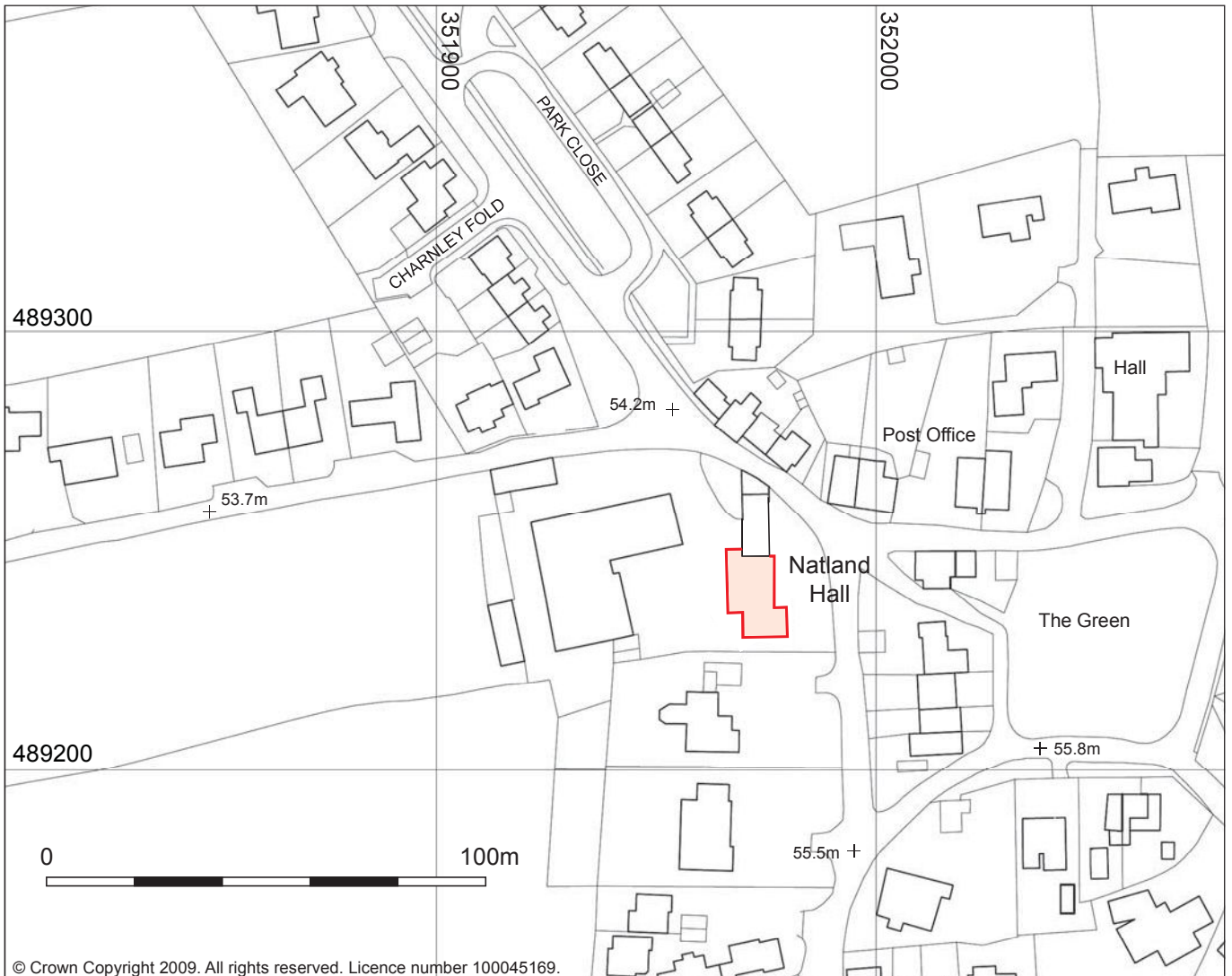
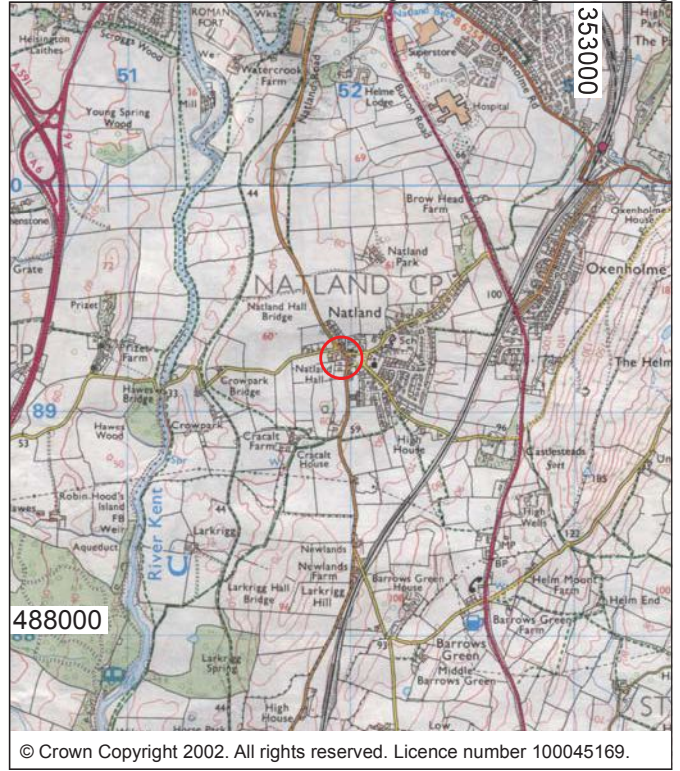
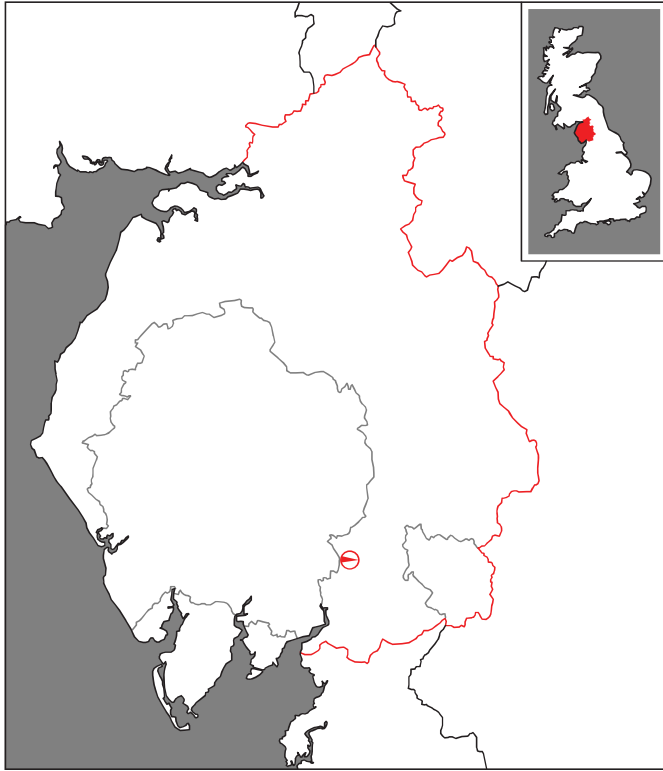
1.1 Circumstances of the Project

1.1.1 Following a fire, which substantially damaged parts of the main flue, at Natland Hall, Natland, Kendal, Cumbria (NGR 351975 489242) a programme of repair was agreed with the Conservation Officer. A request was made, however, that a record of the affected areas be carried out as original elements of the fabric had been exposed during repair. Greenlane Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the additional recording by Dale Rennard (hereafter 'the client'), and the work was done in May 2013.

1.1.2 A full archaeological recording of the building had previously been carried out by Greenlane Archaeology (Greenlane Archaeology 2012). This revealed that the majority of the building is probably of 17th century date, although earlier fabric is possible, and that it was modified at an early date perhaps in association with its suggested use as an academy. It was later extended and further altered.

1.2 Location, Geology, and Topography

1.2.1 Natland Hall is situated on the north-west edge of the village of Natland, which is approximately 3km south of the centre of Kendal (Ordnance Survey 2002). The surrounding landscape generally comprises well-managed farmland, principally pasture, interspersed with areas of woodland (Countryside Commission 1998, 70). The underlying solid geology is dominated by Bannisdale slates and Coniston grits of the Silurian period (Moseley 1978, plate 1) and is typically overlain by glacially derived boulder clay (Countryside Commission 1998, 66). The hall is located close to the centre of the village at approximately 55m above sea level (Figure 1).



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Client: Dale Rennard

Figure 1: Site location

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2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The building investigation comprised three separate elements intended to provide a suitable record of the structure, in line with English Heritage standards (English Heritage 2006) and the guidelines of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008a). In addition a desk-based assessment had been carried out as part of the previous building recording in accordance with IfA guidelines (IfA 2008b), and a suitable archive was compiled to provide a permanent record of the project and its results in accordance with English Heritage and IfA guidelines (English Heritage 1991; Brown 2007).

2.2 Building Recording

2.2.1 The additional building recording was carried out to English Heritage Level-2 type standards (English Heritage 2006), which is a relatively low level of investigation intended to record the form, function and phasing of the building, without incorporating in detail the results of the desk-based assessment. The recording comprised the following elements:

- **Written record:** descriptive records of all of the affected parts of the building were made using Greenlane Archaeology *pro forma* record sheets;
- **Photographs:** photographs in both 35mm colour and colour digital format were taken of the affected parts of the building and further photographs were taken during the opening out of the fireplace by the client. A selection of the colour digital photographs is included in this report, and the remaining photographs are in the project archive;
- **Drawings:** drawings were produced by hand-annotation of printed plots of the drawings produced by Greenlane Archaeology during the previous piece of work and comprise:
 - i. floor plans of the areas examined at a scale of 1:100;

2.3 Archive

2.3.1 A comprehensive archive of the project has been produced in accordance with the project design and current IfA and English Heritage guidelines (Brown 2007; English Heritage 1991). The paper and digital archive and a copy of this report will be deposited in the Cumbria Archive Centre in Kendal on completion of the project. A digital copy of this report will be supplied to the client so it can be submitted to the Conservation Officer at South Lakeland District Council, a paper copy will be provided to the client, and one will be retained by Greenlane Archaeology. In addition a digital copy of the report will also be supplied to the Cumbria Historic Environment Record (HER) in Kendal, via the Historic Environment Officer, and a digital record of the project will be made on the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) scheme.

3. Site History

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The history of the building was examined in detail as part of the original building recording (Greenlane Archaeology 2012), and had been considered during previous archaeological work on the site (OA North 2005; Greenlane Archaeology 2009). A summary of the information revealed during this previous work is provided here.

3.2 Site History

3.2.1 Natland Hall appears to have early origins; it is recorded as being the customary court of Natland, which connects it with a chapel recorded at the court in 1246. This connects it to a number of notable local families, although it is difficult to be certain that they lived in a building at Natland Hall. The earliest person named in connection with Natland Hall is Allan Prickett, the first recorder for Kendal, in 1672/3. His ancestors do appear to have acquired land and property in Natland from Sir Thomas Strickland and members of the same family are recorded in Natland from the 16th century. It is not clear whether Allan Prickett was living in Natland at this time, however, as he is listed in the hearth tax of the 1670s as having properties at a number of places, while a 'Mr Franklin' (*sic*) is recorded as having six hearths in Natland, a number that corresponds much better with Natland Hall. The property passed out of the Prickett family by the 18th century before coming to the Shippard family, who were also well established in Natland. They retained it for some time, before it came to WW Carus Wilson, perhaps through marriage, in the 19th century. His death at the end of the 19th century and the death of the purchaser following that led to it passing through several families during the 20th century, by which time, if not before, it had reverted to a farmhouse. Some descriptions of the rooms within the building exist; a possible one from 1771 and one in sales particulars from 1938, which are consistent with the large size of the present building.

3.2.2 The previous building recording revealed that while there is potentially medieval fabric remaining in the west wall, this is difficult to be certain of. The majority of the building seems to belong to the 17th century, with a considerable number of fireplaces organised around a complex arrangement of smoke hoods and masonry flues, the former unusually extending over several floors and the stairs in the projecting block on the west side. Slightly later, but still either in the 17th or early 18th century, the present staircase was added by removing a section out of one of the original rooms. The original staircase probably still existed, suggesting that this was carried out in order to control access around the different parts of the building. Later alterations were made in the 18th to early 20th century, including modifications to the windows and the addition of a brick flue within one of the smoke hoods, and also the construction of additional outshuts along the west side. Later alterations were largely confined to reorganising the internal arrangement of the south end of the building, which became a separate dwelling.

4. Additional Building Recording

4.1 Arrangement

4.1.1 The majority of the work following the fire was focussed around exposing the fireplace in Room G6, although elements of the flue on the floors above were also exposed. In addition, small areas of plaster had also been removed in the adjoining hall (Room G8), which revealed some further features of interest.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 **Room G6:** the large fireplace on the north side of the room had been entirely exposed, with the modern fire and associated elements removed as well as the cupboard door and surround to the east. This revealed the scar for three shelves within the cupboard, which had multiple pieces of timber comprising the lintel, the southern and largest of which had plaster on the north side suggesting that this area had originally formed an open space also leading into the flue or smoke hood above. The fireplace proper to the west has the remains of a dressed square surround, probably of 18th century date, although the east jamb had been removed (Plate 1) and re-used as a lintel for one of the later fireplaces. The west side, behind this, is partially infilled but with its east side finished with quoins including re-used dressed masonry (Plate 2). This in turn butts a return to the west, which is plastered. The east side of the fireplace has iron rings set into timber built into the wall, which originally no doubt held a fire crane (Plate 3). The floor of the fireplace has the remnants of cobbles and stone flags (Plate 4), the former of which appear to run below the blocking masonry to the west. The floor to the south, extending into the room, is concrete, although evidently originally with flags on top. Although not evident during the additional recording, it is apparent that there were at least two phases of later blocking within the fireplace (Dale Rennard and Dave Tyler pers comm. Plate 5), which no doubt corresponded to later periods of alteration.



Plate 1 (left): General view of the fireplace as exposed

Plate 2 (right): West side of fireplace showing quoins and plaster



Plate 3 (left): East side of the fireplace showing iron hooks

Plate 4 (right): Base of fireplace showing stone flags



Plate 5: Remodelled fireplace set within blocking (photograph by Dale Rennard)

4.2.2 **Room G8:** along the east side of the corridor, adjacent to the chimney breast in Room G6, small areas of plaster had been removed. These revealed an apparent opening, 1m wide, blocked with stone in lime mortar (Plate 6). Its lintel had not been exposed so it is not clear how tall it was. It is not clear if this represents a doorway, although its position would seem to preclude this as it would enter the back of the chimney. It is possible that it is therefore simply a cupboard or wall-press although the possibility of it representing a doorway leading into a blocked cellar is conceivable; the stonework in the flue above is sloping at this point, which would fit such an idea. The removal of plaster along the south edge of this opening, adjacent to the beam, also showed more detail of the beam, and that it was apparently not a single piece running continuously across the room with a section cut out as initially thought, but a separate piece raised on timbers set into the east and west walls (Plate 7).



Plate 6 (left): Blocked area on east side of Room G8

Plate 7 (right): Blocking adjacent to beam on east side of Room G8 showing arrangement of beams

4.2.3 **Room F3:** the interior of the smoke hood was exposed on the east side of the corridor (Plate 8). It was difficult to view in detail although it was apparent that the west side was at least partially lined with slate (Plate 9). Some of the joists and beams were exposed below the floorboards although only small sections were visible and little information could be gained as a result.



Plate 8 (left): Exposed smoke hood in Room F3

Plate 9 (right): Detail of slate lining in smoke hood, visible in Room F3

4.2.4 **Room F4:** the stud wall on the west side of the north elevation has been broken out at the base, revealing that this is actually quite a late addition covering what must have originally been an open alcove between the wall to the west, the smoke hood to the north, and the solid masonry chimney to the east. The posts of the smoke hood and the base rail are exposed and the walls within the alcove are finished with plaster and paint with the floorboards continuing into this space (Plate 10). In addition, the planks forming the back of the cupboard in the north-east side of Room F4 have been removed revealing the smoke hood behind (Plate 11).



Plate 10 (left): Wall broken through in Room F4

Plate 11 (right): Planks broken through into smoke hood in Room F4

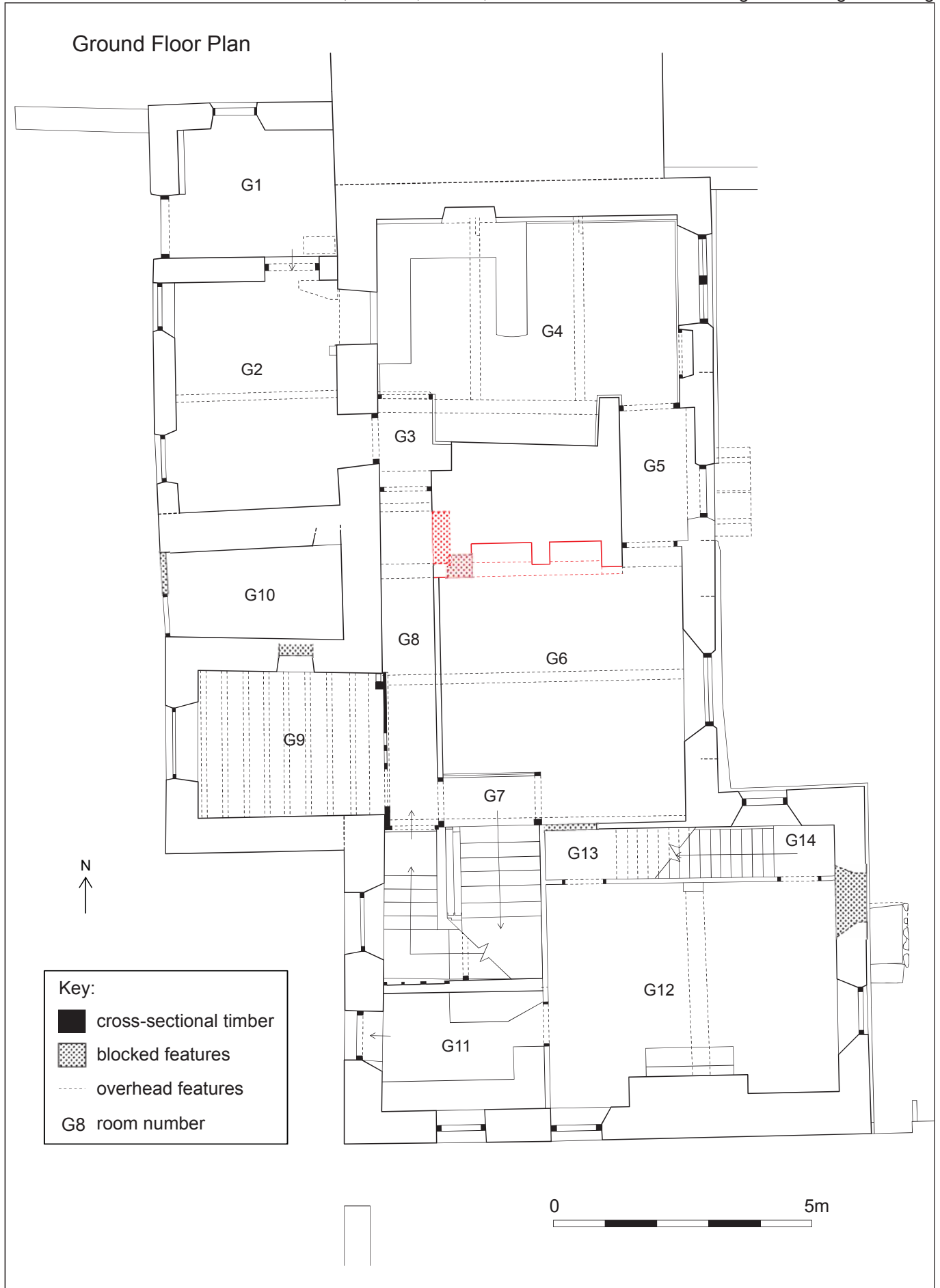
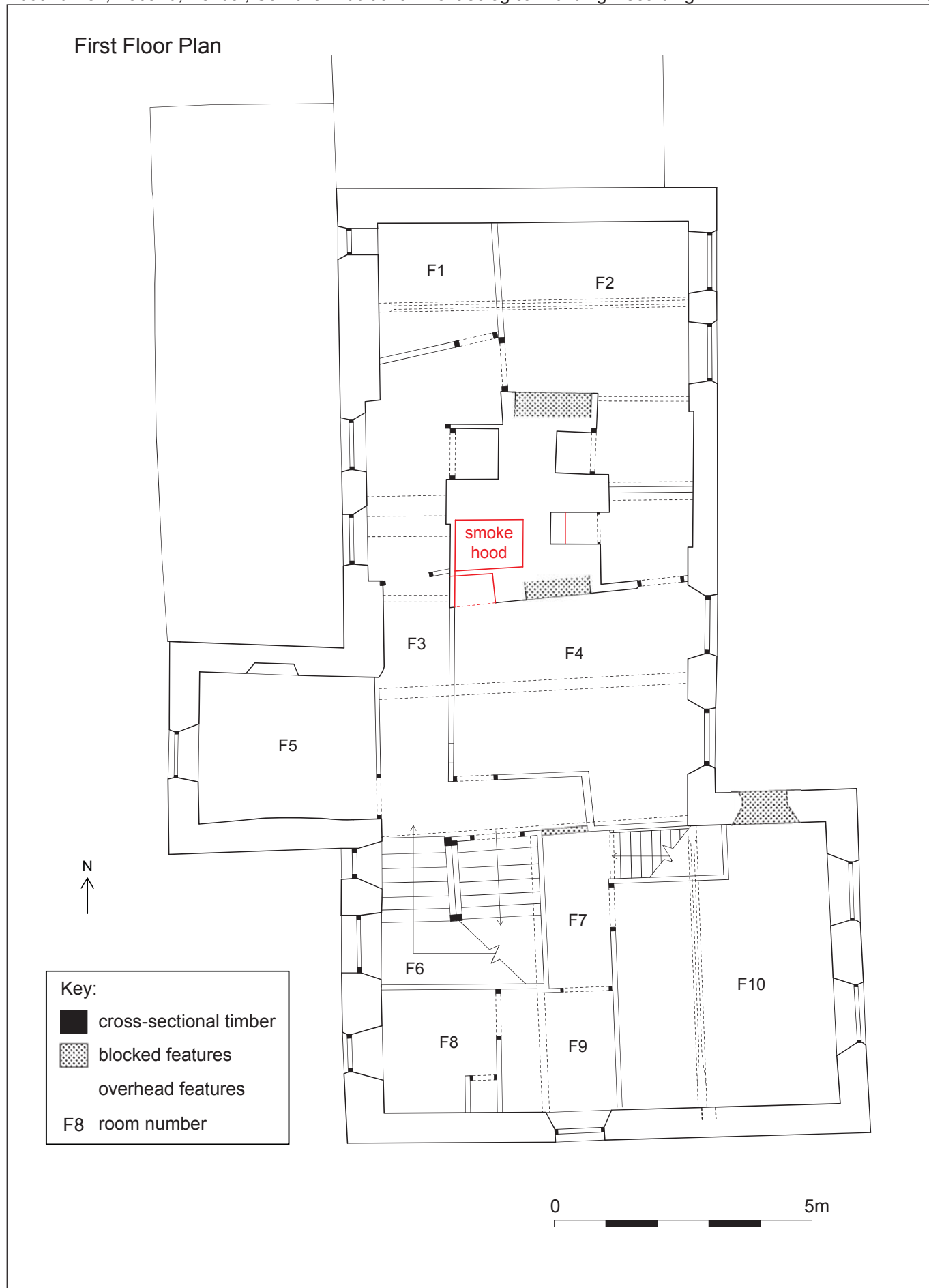


Figure 2: Ground floor plan showing newly exposed features in red



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Figure 3: First floor plan showing newly exposed features in red

5. Discussion

5.1 Phasing

5.1.1 **Introduction:** the additional building recording revealed a number of features of interest, mostly relating to the development of the fireplace in Room G6. This shows several phases of development, whereas the other features identified relate largely to Phase 1.

5.1.2 **Phase 1 (17th century):** although it was not fully opened out and later blocking remained on the west side, the earliest phase of the fireplace seems to have been an extremely wide opening, extending across much of the width of the room by incorporating the cupboard on the east side. The fire at this time would probably have been supported on a free-standing grate or fire dogs. The arrangement on the west side is less clear, as the apparent blocked doorway in Room G8 would have entered the side. It is possible, given the sloping angle of the flue above this that this doorway actually led to a cellar that was subsequently blocked but without further evidence this remains supposition. Alternatively the 'doorway' in G8 may simply have been an alcove or wall press.

5.1.3 **Phase 2 (18th or early 19th century):** the fireplace as it was recorded was probably essentially at the arrangement it had in the 18th or early 19th century, the style of the surround suggesting a date in that period. This fireplace was clearly reduced from the original size, but still quite large, and included a cupboard on the east side. The fireplace at this time would also have been on a free-standing grate or fire dogs, but with iron cranes extending across it to hold cooking pots and similar items.

5.1.4 **Phase 3 (later 19th century):** the fireplace was clearly modified again, with the addition of bricks and other material to infill the space of the Phase 2 fireplace to form a smaller hearth. This probably represents the reversion of the fireplace to an entirely domestic use and so household cooking must have been carried out elsewhere.

5.1.5 **Phase 4 (20th century):** the fireplace was ultimately modified again in the later 20th century, with the addition of stone cladding, the partial reduction in size of the cupboard at the east end, and the insertion of the gas fire that was present during the previous building recording. On the first floor it appears that the alcove to the west of the flue in Room F4 was covered at this time with stud walling, although it is not clear why.

5.2 Conclusion

5.2.1 The small-scale nature of the additional building recording has, perhaps inevitably, provided limited further information while at the same time raising more questions. It has, however, shown that the fireplace in G6 went through a number of substantial changes, with the opening being gradually reduced in size, probably as a result of this room acquiring a more 'polite' function and another room, presumably G4, becoming the main focus of cooking and food preparation.

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