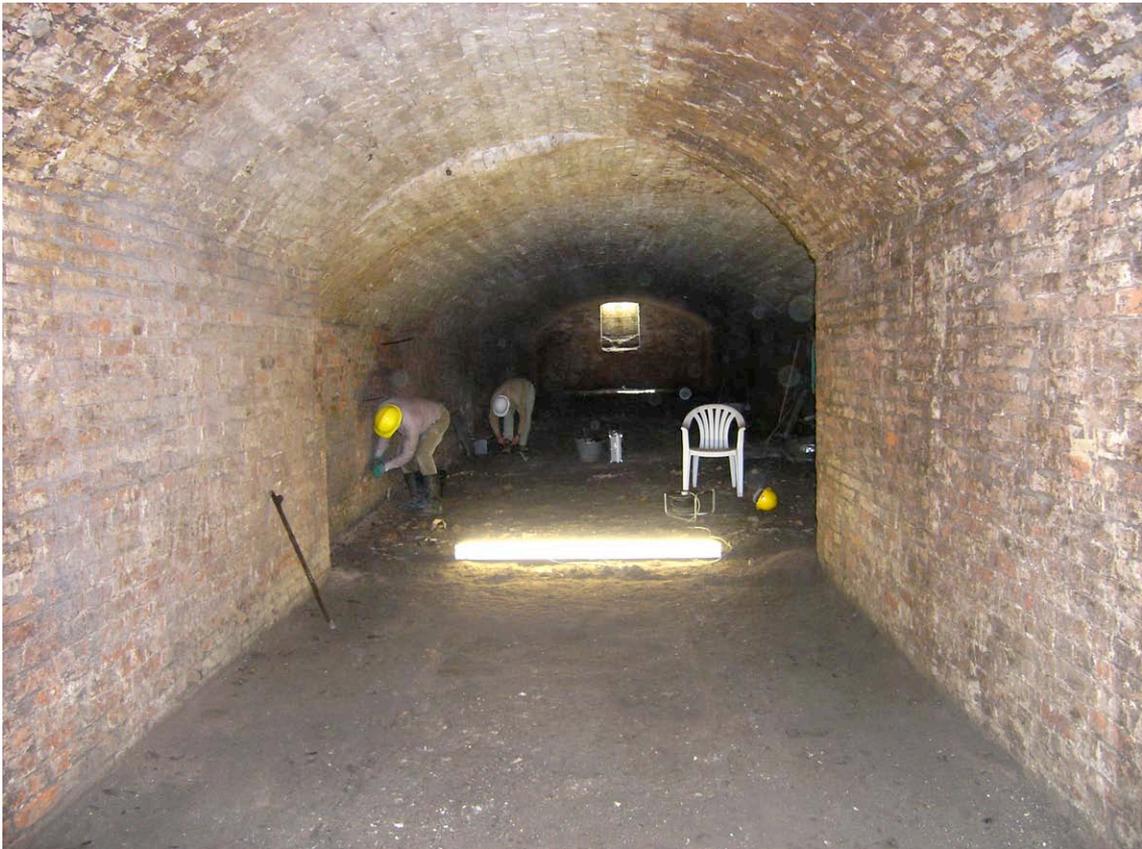


**COURT HOUSE CELLAR, 6 FORDINGTON GREEN,
FORDINGTON, DORCHESTER, DORSET**
Building Survey and Recording



Report No. 53223/5/1

July 2006

**COURT HOUSE CELLAR, 6 FORDINGTON GREEN,
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Building Survey and Recording, July 2006**

Prepared for:

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Court House Cellar, 6 Fordington Green, Fordington, Dorchester, Dorset

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SUMMARY

A large brick cellar beneath the garden of Greenhill House, 6 Fordington Green, Dorchester was the subject of a rapid survey by Terrain Archaeology in July 2006. The cellar comprised two brick vaults, one smaller and slightly offset from the centreline of the other, but both are likely to be of one period of construction. The west end has been blocked, indicating the cellar originally continued further to the west. There is an entrance and a chute to the south and another opening to the east. The west part has a cobbled and stone flag floor, but the east part may have had its floor removed.

Documentary evidence suggests that the cellar was constructed in 1810 by William Bower, as part of a brew house. The brew house was demolished in the second half of the 19th century. Part of a Roman cemetery was found during the construction of the cellar.

INTRODUCTION

Mr and Mrs Parkhurst contacted Dorset County Council to see if anyone wished to examine and record a cellar situated beneath their garden, in which they proposed to lay a concrete floor. Following an initial visit by Peter Bellamy, the cellar was surveyed and photographed by Steven Tatler on the 11th July with a short visit on the 12th July 2006.

The cellar lies beneath the garden of Greenhill House, 6 Fordington Green, Fordington, Dorchester, Dorset, at Ordnance Survey NGR SY69789053 (Figure 1).

Greenhill House is a Grade II Listed Building and the cellar may lie within the curtilage.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and cooperation of Claire Pinder and Steve Wallis (Dorset County Council), Kathryn Attrill, (West Dorset District Council) and, in particular, Mr and Mrs Parkhurst, who provided much interesting information and made us very welcome on their property.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following account is based on a rapid scan of secondary sources and some recent primary sources kindly provided by Mr Brian Parkhurst, to outline the main history of the site from the late 18th century. The analysis of the site is complicated by the changing boundaries.

Simpson's 1779 Map of the Manor of Fordington shows the area of the cellar as a garden in front of what was known as the Court House. The cellar was constructed as part of a brew-house in 1810, as described by the Rev. R. G. Bartelot (1915, 27).

"Mr Bower lived at the old Court House – now Victoria Place – where the Shorto family, of which his mother was the last representative, had lived before him. Both families had been long associated with the famous brewing trade of Dorchester. In the year 1811, as our rate books shew, Mr. Bower was charged double the rate he had been charge in 1810. No doubt this was because he had built his large brew-house

with cellar beneath; eventually Mr. Eldridge succeeded to this property whence it came to the Masons and Dorchester Brewery."

During the digging of the cellar, part of a Roman cemetery was discovered, as described by a local antiquary, Robert Bryer ...

"From this garden, William Bower, Esq. (the possessor) had occasion, in the summer of 1810, to remove a large quantity of earth, for the purpose of erecting some extensive buildings. The space opened was about ninety-two feet in length from the north-west to south-east, and forty-three feet wide; the greatest depth dug out was about thirteen feet; but the land lying on a gradual ascent towards the north-west, this depth was not uniform through the whole extent. In this excavation was observed, first a light black earth, for about two feet; next a brown marle, with chalk at of one foot; then entirely chalk. On throwing out the chalk, human skeletons were found in great numbers: certainly not less than an hundred, together with numerous urns of various forms and sizes, many fragments of others, and of paterae were also discovered. [...] Mr Bower caused the remains of the bones to be collected together. They filled a very large butt and were buried in an adjoining garden belonging to him. (Bryer 1815).

William Bower was a brewer at Fordington Brewery located in High Street, Fordington in 1792 (Young 1986). The brew house is shown on the 1844 Fordington Tithe Map (Figure 4). William Bower died in 1829 and the property was acquired by Charles Eldridge, who was listed as landowner and occupier of the Court House in the 1844 Tithe apportionment. Charles Eldridge died in 1846. The property passed to Alfred Mason who went into partnership with Sarah Eldridge in 1850, forming Eldridge & Mason (Young 1986). Mason retired in 1870 (Seekings 1988), but the date at which the property passed from him was not determined in this present research.

The date the brew house building was demolished is not known, but it was before 1888, when the site is depicted as a garden on the 1888 Ordnance Survey 1:500 map.

The area of the cellar, Greenhill House, and a large parcel of land to the north was owned by Edward Maber, of 1 Victoria Villas by the end of the 19th century. Maber died in 1902 and the property passed to Henry Symonds and Alfred Empson, his trustees and executors. By 1912, Arthur Symonds is the sole trustee and upon his death in that year, the property was purchased by John Steeds. The property remained in the Steed family until the granddaughter, Mrs Hayward, sold Greenhill House and its garden to Mr H. Watts in 1986. The house and garden was purchased by Mr and Mrs Parkhurst in 1993.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The cellar was surveyed to record its basic structure and define any anomalies or additions that may indicate its historical use.

METHODS

The building recording works were carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings and other structures* (1996, as revised).

The archaeological recording works comprising a measured hand-drawn survey and photographic survey of the internal elevations of the cellar. The results of this survey are detailed in this report.

In addition, a small sondage was excavated through the debris to expose the floor of the main part of the cellar, on the east side of the entrance. The debris was also cleared from the edge of the floor at the junction between the two vaults.

SITE CONDITIONS AND ACCESSIBILITY

The cellar was accessed through the remains of a WWII air raid shelter down moderately sloping stone steps and through an entrance in the south wall. The western end of the cellar had been cleared of debris down to the existing floor level whilst in the rest of the cellar debris had been spread across the floor to a depth of up to 0.15 m. The walls and barrel vault were in the process of being cleaned but basic structural elements could be seen.

STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION

Introduction

The cellar is a bipartite brick-built barrel vault structure and lies roughly NW–SE underneath the whole length of the garden of Greenhill House (Figure 1). The eastern end was along the line of the garden wall on the east side of the garden and the western end continued beyond the garden beneath the access track behind the property. A small sondage was excavated over the cellar in the east edge of this track by AC archaeology in March 2006. This revealed fill containing ash, building debris and 19th century pottery, to a depth of over 0.9 m. Excavation was halted before any structural elements were exposed (Cox 2006).

The main part of the cellar lies to the east and measures 22.4 m long by 4.8 m wide, with an entrance in the south side. There is also a blocked chute on the south side and another opening in the east end with a ventilation grille in the pavement on Fordington Green. There is a straight joint between the two vaults and the western part of the cellar is narrower and slightly offset, measuring 4.8 m wide. It survives for a length of 6.3 m and has been blocked at the west end. The cellar probably originally continued for about another four metres beyond this blocking (Figure 2).

The construction of both vaults of the cellar is similar comprising local handmade bricks (size 9 by 3½ by 2½ inches) bonded with lime mortar. The bricks are laid in a rather irregular bond with mainly stretchers and occasional headers. The walls and vault are covered in limewash, which was in the process of being cleaned off at the time of the survey.

The details of the two parts of the cellar are described separately below.

West Vault

West elevation

The existing west end wall of the cellar is clearly not the original west end of the cellar. It is covered in limewash, so not all details are presently visible. There is a brick partition on the south side of the elevation, which appears to be an original division within the cellar. The northern part of the elevation has been blocked with mortared irregular limestone or chalk rubble (Figure 3, Plate 2). At the apex of the vault is a small rectangular hole that rises up obliquely through the blocking and vaulting. This may have been constructed to take a chimney from a stove or similar. In the northern corner a small patch of chalk bedrock was visible.

North elevation

The north wall of the West Vault is of one build and has a straight joint with the East Vault. Chalk bedrock is visible at the base of the wall at its west end.

South elevation

The south wall of the West Vault was of a single build, except, perhaps at the east end where there was a slight irregularity about 0.25 m from the corner, which may indicate that the corner had been rebuilt (Plate 3). There were two possible wall scars at 1.90 m and 4.10 m from the west end, which may indicate the position of former partitions within this part of the cellar. No trace of these partitions could be found on the floor of the cellar.

East elevation

At the east end, the north and south walls turn outwards and there is a straight joint with the north and south walls of the East Vault. A number of the bricks in the barrel vaulting project slightly, perhaps to help key into the East Vault. There is a slight irregularity in the south part of the wall, perhaps indicating that the SE corner had been rebuilt or repaired at some time.

Floor

The floor of the West Vault survives intact and had been covered in a thick layer of ash and coal dust. Around the edge, was a flint cobbled surface with a brick retaining kerb (Plate 4). In the northwest corner, the cobbles were disturbed and the chalk bedrock was exposed. The brick kerb was also disturbed and displaced in the west end. In the centre, the floor was of large stone flags, a number of which are cracked and broken. The floor sounded hollow beneath the flags in the eastern part.

In the southern part, there were the remains of a brick footing for a stub wall, about 3.8 m from the west end (Figure 2). This footing did not correspond with any scar on the south wall or ceiling.

Vault

The brick vaulting was covered in limewash and appeared to be of a single phase construction.

East Vault

North elevation

The north wall of the East Vault appears to be of one build and has a straight joint with the West Vault. It is bonded into the east elevation. About 10.2 m from the east end was an irregular area of mortared brick, 1.4 m high and 0.8 m wide, which either represents a repair or the infilling of a wall scar from an internal partition (Figure 3, Plate 5). A number of metal shelf brackets survive along this wall, but may not be original fixtures.

East elevation

The eastern end wall of the cellar was bonded into the north and south walls. In the middle of the wall was a rectangular opening. This was 1.15 m wide and 1.4 m high, set about 1.25 m above floor level. The lip of the opening is damaged and broken and has been blocked to form a light in the pavement, protected by an iron grating (Plate 6). This is anchored by a chain and a length of wire to a square-sectioned bar set into the brickwork. This opening may have been a loading bay.

South elevation

The south wall is bonded into the east wall and has a straight joint at the west end. It is of a single period of construction. The entrance to the cellar is situated in the western third of the south wall (Figure 2, Plate 7). Its east side is very worn and damaged through heavy use. The cellar is accessed by a straight stair of twelve brick steps with limestone treads. The lowest step lies directly on the chalk bedrock. At the top of the steps, a low rectangular superstructure roofed in corrugated

iron sheeting and concrete; to form an air raid shelter had been constructed. To the west of the entrance, the wall bulges out noticeably for a length of about 3.8 m.

In the eastern third, about eight metres from the east end of the cellar, is a coal chute, 0.7 m wide, with a sloping mortar base. This chute had been blocked with mortared chalk rubble.

About six metres from the east end is an irregular patch of stone and mortar infill, one metre high and 0.9 m wide, which represents either a repair or the infilling of a wall scar from a demolished dividing wall. A number of metal shelving brackets survived on the wall.

Floor

Two small sondages were excavated through the debris overlying the floor. Both revealed chalk bedrock at the base. No flooring material was found overlying the chalk, but from observing the height of the floor in the West Vault and the level of the bedrock, it is possible that originally it had a flagstone floor, which would have resulted in a level floor across the whole length of the cellar. If the cellar did originally have a stone floor, this may have been removed when the brew house was demolished.

Vault

The barrel vault ceiling is constructed from mortared brick. There are two breaks in the vaulting (at seven and fourteen metres from the east end of the cellar), which may indicate that the vault was constructed in three stages. The vault is covered in limewash.

CONCLUSIONS

The cellar was constructed by William Bower in 1810 as part of a brew house, probably for Fordington Brewery. Part of a large Roman cemetery was discovered during the digging of the cellar. The superstructure of the brew house was demolished during the second half of the 19th century.

Although the cellar is constructed as two separate, offset, vaults, it is likely that it is a single period construction, though the western part appears to have been constructed first. The west end of the cellar is blocked and originally continued beyond its present limit to the west, though precisely how far is not known. The stone flag and cobbled floor survived intact in the west vault. The floor in the east vault may have originally been of stone flags, which have been removed.

The cellar appears to have been well used, judging from the wear on the edge of the openings, probably functioning as a store for the brewery. The west vault appears to have had a boiler or stove inserted into it after the west end had been blocked. This may post-date its use as a brewery.

The entrance to the cellar was adapted as an air-raid shelter in World War II.

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- | | | |
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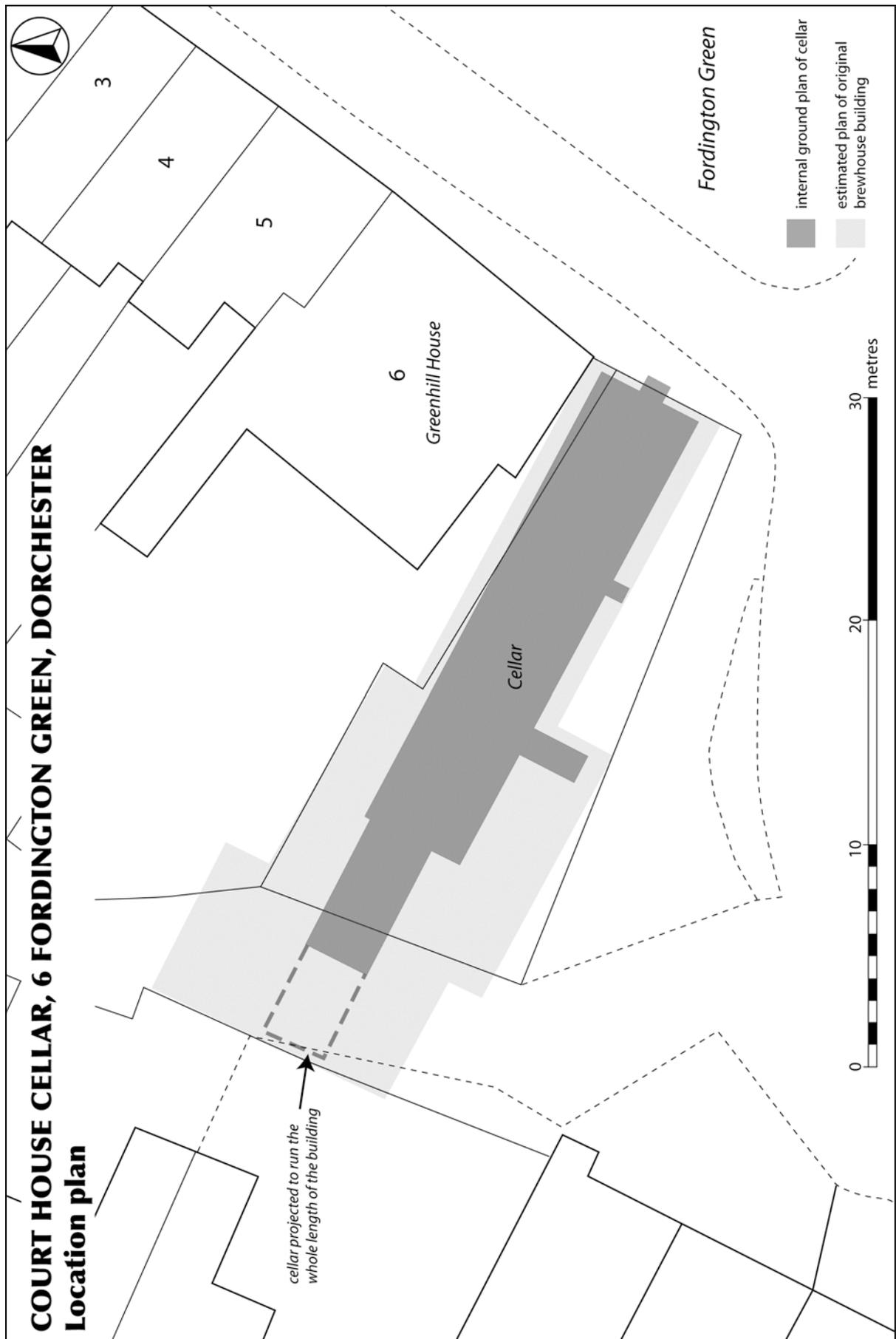


Figure 1: Location map

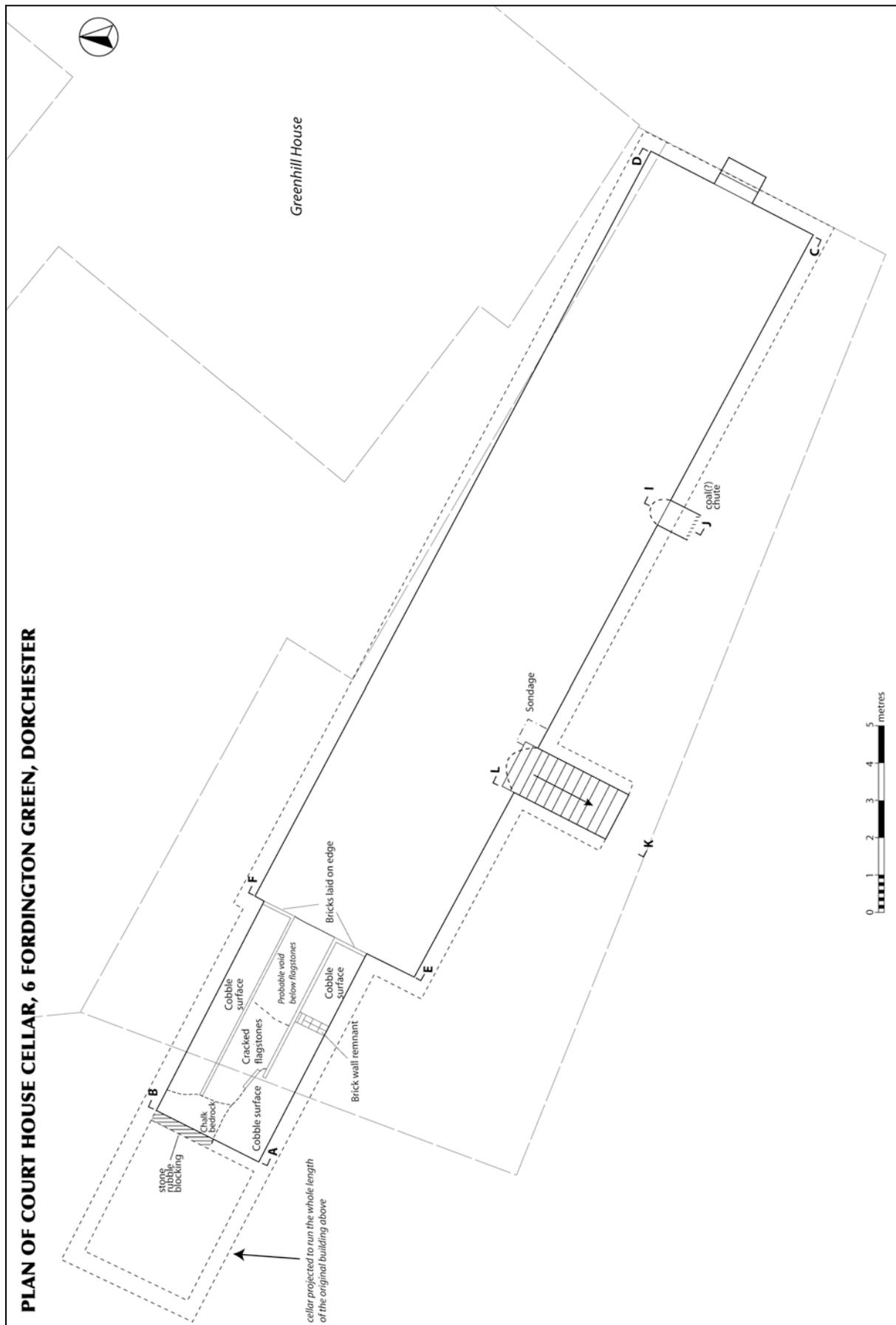


Figure 2: Plan of cellar, and showing approximate location of property boundaries above.

COURT HOUSE CELLAR, 6 FORDINGTON GREEN, DORCHESTER
Selected elevations and sections

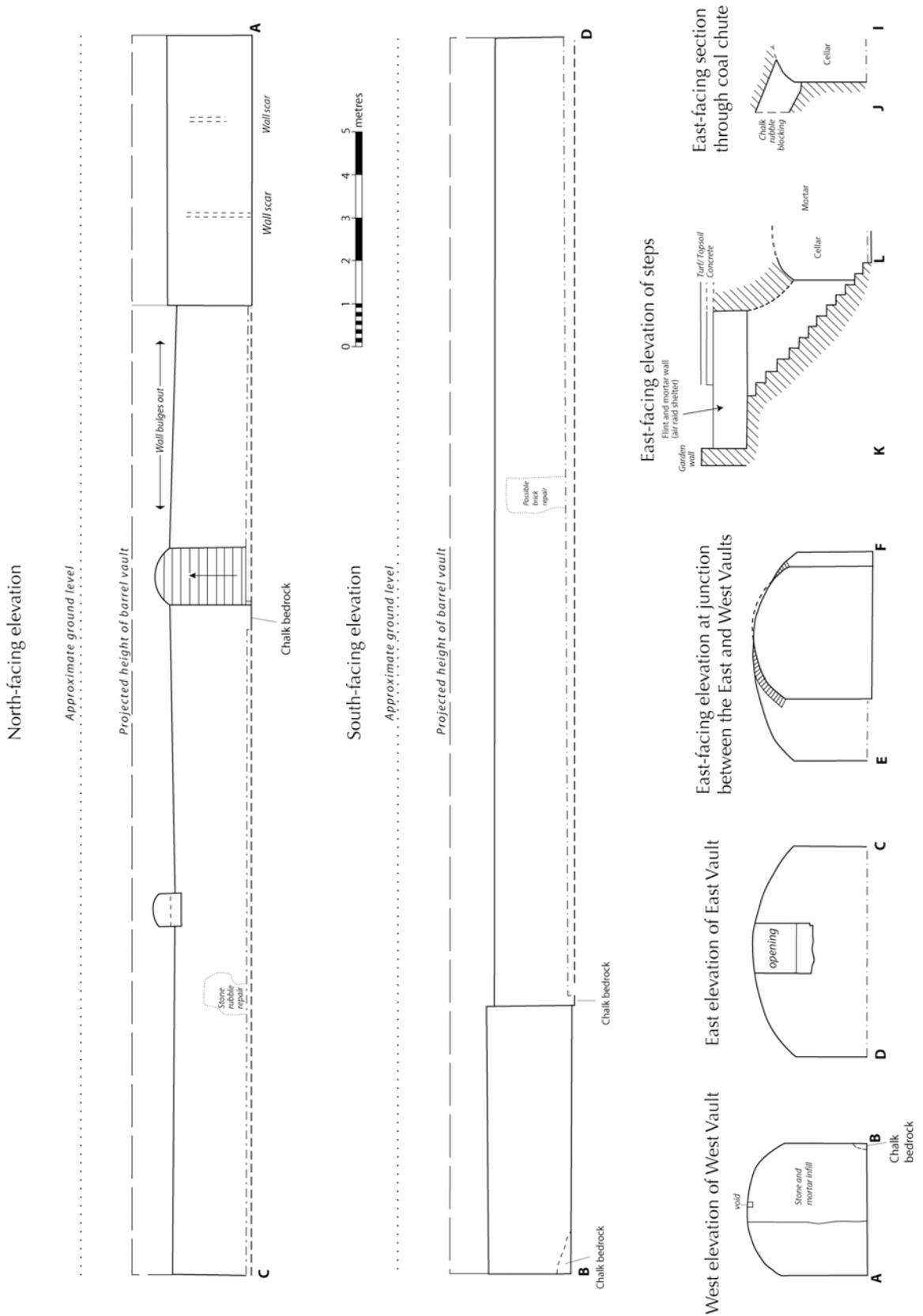


Figure 3: Selected elevations and sections

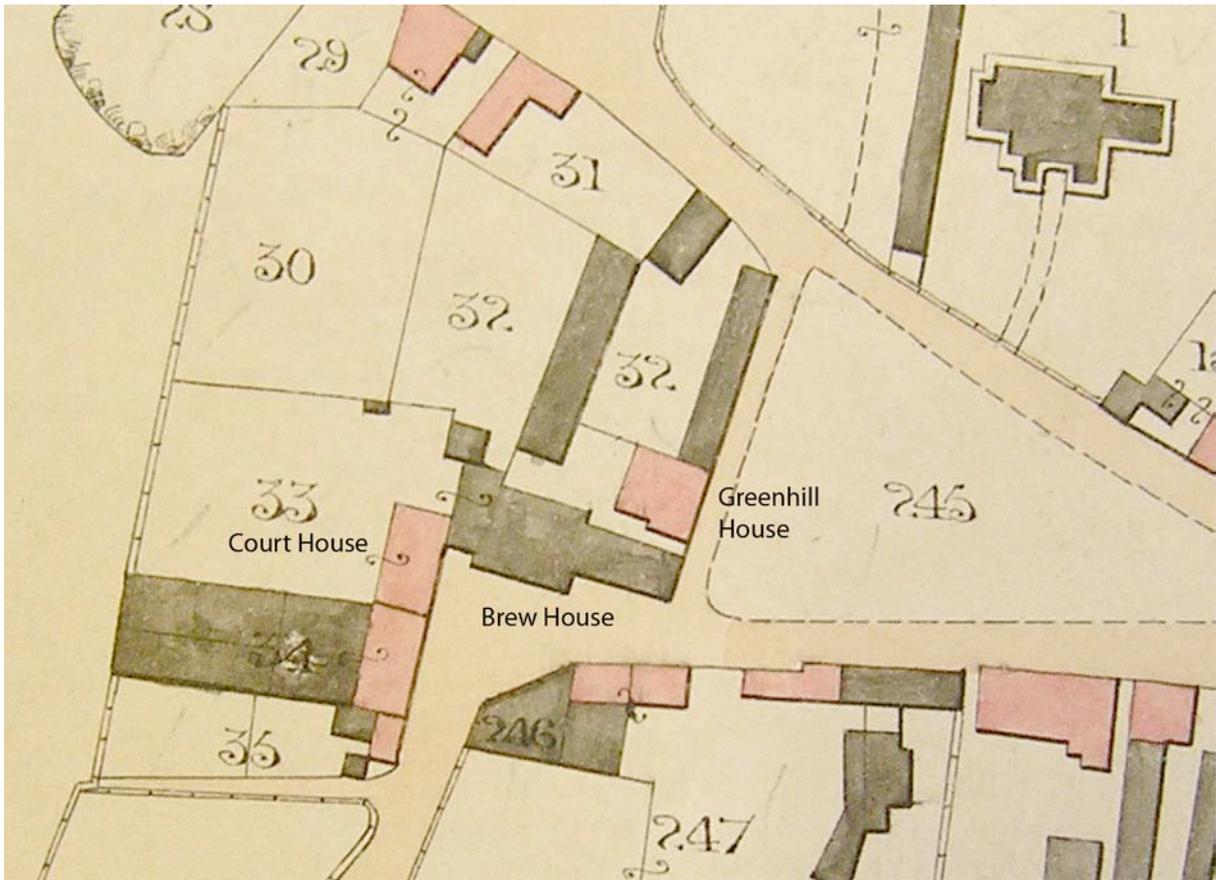


Figure 4: Extract from 1844 Fordington Tithe Map (© Dorset Archives Service)



Plate 1: General view of cellar, looking westwards.



Plate 2: West elevation of West Vault.

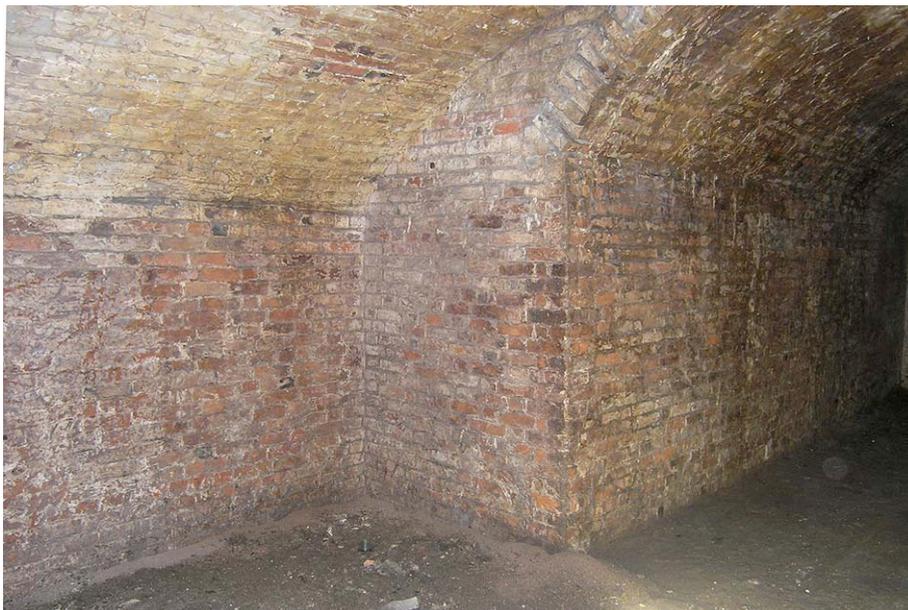


Plate 3: South elevation of West Vault and junction with south side of East Vault.



Plate 4: Detail of floor of West Vault, looking west.



Plate 5: General view of East Vault, looking eastwards.



Plate 6: Detail of east end of cellar



Plate 7: Detail view of steps up.



Plate 8: Detail view of steps down.



Plate 9: Coal chute.