



The Old Smithy,  
Commercial Road, Tideswell  
Historical Building Survey  
ArcHeritage 2017

**Old Smithy, Commercial Road, Tideswell:  
Historical Building Survey**

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## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Hartley Construction has received planning consent for the conversion of a derelict former smithy on Commercial Road, Tideswell into a holiday let. Permission was conditional on a programme of historic building recording, the equivalent of a Level 2 building survey (as defined by Historic England), having been first carried out and the results submitted to and approved in writing by the Peak District National Park Authority. The building is located within Tideswell Conservation Area and is within the Peak District National Park. It is not a listed building, but is considered to contribute to the historic character of the Conservation Area.

Historic map evidence suggests that the smithy was built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century on the site of an earlier building depicted in 1821. It appears to have been purpose-built as a workshop, most likely a smithy from the start. The building has a long association with the Sellers family, who were recorded as blacksmiths at the site from at least 1891 to the 1960s. Prior to this, it may have been occupied by Robert Lomas.

The smithy is a single-storey structure of local limestone random rubble construction, with a pitched roof with Welsh slates on the north side and corrugated iron on the south. The building is of irregular plan and is set on a gentle slope, with a pitched floor inside. There are four timber-framed windows of varying size, one in a former doorway in the east wall, another where wooden shutters may have been previously. The wide street entrance has a pair of sliding doors. A functional two-unit plan is evident from the internal flooring, with a gently sloping wooden shoeing bay at the north end and a flatter stone slab working area at the south end. The latter includes a hearth extending out from the west wall, a free-standing work-bench with attached vice and shelving above, and a hard stone base for a metal water trough. There is a depression in the floor where a wooden block once supported the anvil.

The hearth is built of stone and brick and appears to be of reduced length, originally having been long enough to perhaps carry out heavy work such as heating tyres for wagon wheels. A raised platform outside the south end of the building may be where they were fitted. The hearth may have collapsed at the north end and was then propped up by a brick pillar. Curiously, the hearth opening is framed by some architectural pieces, including a long fireplace lintel. These may have come from one of two nearby old public houses that were lost in 1937 and 1958. These might be worth retaining within the building's proposed new interior.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an historical building survey of the Old Smithy, Commercial Road, Tideswell, Derbyshire. The survey was required as a condition on planning permission for conversion of the derelict former smithy into a holiday let, including the construction of a single-storey extension to the rear of the property, as well as alterations to the entrances, fenestration and interior of the existing structure. The Peak District National Park Authority's Senior Conservation Archaeologist requested a Level 2 building survey, as defined by Historic England, to record the fabric, layout and contents of the former smithy prior to any alterations being carried out. ArcHeritage were commissioned by Hartley Consulting to undertake the survey.

## 2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The site is a derelict former smithy or workshop situated on Commercial Road, Tideswell, Derbyshire (NGR SK 1534 7577; Figure 1). It is a single-storey building of rubble limestone construction with a pitched roof, with a wide sliding door in its northwest elevation, fronting onto Commercial Road. The southwest side of the smithy abuts an adjacent single-storey shop. The building has a very limited curtilage comprising small yard areas to the rear (southeast) and side (northeast), shared with the adjacent cottage to the northeast.

The site is located within Tideswell Conservation Area and is within the Peak District National Park. It is not a listed building, but is considered to contribute to the historic character of the Conservation Area.

## 3 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Aims

The aims of the building recording were:

- to determine the character, importance and date of the building;
- to provide information that will enable the building to be placed within its local, regional, and national context;
- to provide a thorough record of the fabric and features of the building.

The main research questions associated with the recording works were:

- What is the date of construction of the building?
- What are the construction methods and materials?
- Is there any evidence for alterations to the building?
- Are there surviving structural details, fixtures and fittings relating the former uses of the building?
- Are there any documentary sources relating to the construction and use of the building?

## 3.2 Methodology

The survey was guided by the WSI prepared by ArcHeritage (2017) and Historic England's *Understanding Historic Buildings* publication (2016), for a Level 2 descriptive record.

The site was visited on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017. The building was recorded by photography and measured drawings, within the constraints of being found to contain a quantity of discarded domestic and timber materials (Plate 11). Areas of the interior found to be inaccessible because of this are shown on the site plan (Figure 4). This report provides a detailed site plan at a scale of 1:50, together with modifications to the existing architect's long axis through-section and east elevation drawing (at the same scale).

The site recording was followed by rapid desk-based research of documentary sources, involving online sources and a visit to the Local Studies section of Bakewell Library. Prior to this, sources at Derbyshire Record Office had also been consulted.

The report is divided into sections with historic background information, a detailed description of the building and a conclusion. Pre-existing architect's drawings are included (Figure 3) along with a new plan at a scale of 1:50 (Figure 4) and a drawing with relevant modifications and additions to the existing long through-section and the eastern side elevation (Figure 5). There are 20 plates that show the building in use and to illustrate points raised in the text.

The report is accompanied by a CDROM with an archive of 71 digital photographs, divided by folder between external and internal views. There is also a plan showing the viewpoints from which they were taken. A field archive consisting of all primary written documents, plans and photographs will be deposited with Derbyshire Record Office. Digital photographs will be archived with the Archaeology Data Service.

## 4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site is within an area defined as the historic medieval core of Tideswell in the 2001 Extensive Urban Survey. In the medieval period Tideswell was at the southern edge of the Royal Forest of the Peak and a Royal residence or hunting lodge may have been located there (Stroud 2001, 5). The substantial church of St John to the northeast of the site was constructed in the 14th century after Tideswell became an independent parish, having previously been part of the parish of Hope. An earlier chapel of ease was recorded at Tideswell, which may also have been located in the vicinity of Commercial Road (Stroud 2001, 15).

A weekly market and annual fair were granted in 1251 (Coates 1965). The market is likely to have been held in the area to the southwest of the church, and at least part of Commercial Road was formerly known as The Shambles, suggesting the presence of butchers' shops in the vicinity in the medieval period (Stroud 2001, 13-14). There is little published information relating to the medieval settlement, but it appears to have been a major settlement within the High Peak wapentake (Stroud 2001, 13). Both wool and lead mining were important aspects of the town's medieval and post-medieval economy.

A building is shown in its approximate location on the 1821 Tideswell Enclosure map. This map was the first to show the village in some detail and it appears that there were relatively few buildings then standing at the north-east end of Commercial Road. The section of the map shown in Figure 2 depicts the church to the northwest of the site and part the Cross Dagers



public house to the east. Between these there is a large building (the George Hotel), with an outbuilding, possibly stables, and only three buildings on the south side of Commercial Road. The approximate position of the Old Smithy is indicated on the map. The building shown hereabouts is larger than the smithy and slightly to the east, and most likely was taken down during the 19<sup>th</sup> century when a series of new buildings sprung up along the road frontage.

Although the area is shown as developed on the 1852 Tideswell township map, this does not depict any details of the buildings in this area. It does show that the route of Church Lane to the south of the site had been altered to its current location by 1852, whereas in 1821 the road took a more direct route to the church, running further to the west of the site.

The First Edition 25 inch to 1 mile Ordnance Survey map of 1880 shows an almost fully developed street frontage, with the Old Smithy building and the present-day cottage to the east (Figure 2). The smithy building is shown as narrower than on later editions of the map and it seems that this may be due to the surveyor exaggerating the (still existing) gap between the building's west side and the neighbouring boundary; later maps actually fail to show this narrow gap.

The building is first indicated as a smithy on the 1922 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 2); however, records suggest that the building was first used as a smithy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with both it and the cottage to the east appearing to have been associated with the Sellers family (also spelt Sellars). As late as the 1960s, the smithy was being used by blacksmith Joe Sellers (born c.1896), photographs of whom are shown here in Plates 2 and 3 (from Hill, 2007). He had followed the same trade as his father Leonard (born c.1870), who is listed as a blacksmith on Commercial Road in the censuses of 1891 and 1901. In the former, he is listed as living at the same abode as his father Joseph (born c.1834), a shoemaker, and his mother Mary. This is likely to have been the adjacent cottage, where the later Joe and his family are known to have lived. According to Hill (2007), Leonard Sellers learnt his trade from Fred Lomas, a blacksmith based at the Peacock Inn buildings on Queen Street. This is mistaken, for Leonard will have learnt his trade from Fred's father Robert Lomas (born c.1854), listed in 1891 as blacksmith and publican of the Peacock Inn, Ash Lane; the 1898 map shows a smithy that he is likely to have used. In 1891 Tideswell had six blacksmiths in all. In 1881, Lomas was living close-by on Church Street, and it is possible that he was then using the Commercial Road smithy that his apprentice Leonard Sellers later took over.

Four blacksmiths are recorded in the 1881 census, none of whom were living on Commercial Road. Joseph Sellars is listed there as a shoemaker and although it is possible that the smithy building was then a workshop used by Sellars, the 1880 map evidence suggests otherwise (Figure 2). This depicts the rear yard as fully enclosed and the space between the building and the cottage fenced off from the road. The census gives Sellars' neighbour as Hannah Gregory, a dressmaker, who is unlikely to have had use for a workshop.

Prior to this it is difficult to determine the occupation or use of the two buildings, as the Commercial Road street name is not present in the 1871 census or in Harrod's Directory of 1870. It may have been seen as an extension of Church Street. Nevertheless, the map and the limited documentary evidence suggests that the Old Smithy was probably constructed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 5 BUILDING RECORDING RESULTS

The Old Smithy is a single-storey structure of local limestone random rubble construction, with a small repair of brickwork on part of the north wall (Plate 12). It has a pitched roof with Welsh slates on the north side and corrugated iron on the south side. A stone chimney rises above the roof from the back wall (Plate 8). The building is of irregular plan and is set on a gentle slope, with the land rising more steeply behind the rear yard (see Figures 4 and 5). It is 8.2m (27ft) long and tapers from a width of 4.85m (16ft) at the south end to 4.25m (14ft) at the north end. The walls vary in thickness between 45-60cm (1½-2ft) and internally the building workspace averages a length roughly twice the width. A functional two-unit plan is reflected in the flooring; this is discussed further below.

On the north street frontage there is a pair of sliding doors of differing width and a small window to the side (Plates 5 and 6). On the east side facing the cottage there are two wooden-framed windows. The first from the road, a 6-pane window, has been put into a former doorway, infilled below the window sill (Plate 7). The second 16-pane window appears to have replaced a shallower opening which may have housed shutters to help alter lighting and air flow to the hearth behind it. This is suggested by shoulders on the recessed side walling on the interior (Plate 13). The south side has a centrally-placed pair of 6-pane windows (Plates 8, 9), whilst the west side is an unbroken wall with a very rough exterior (Plate 10). The building has a very limited curtilage comprising a small yard area to the rear, the west part of which is raised, and to the side a narrow yard shared with the adjacent cottage.

The interior of the building was found to still retain the blacksmith's hearth, a work-bench, some shelving and much of the flooring. The work-bench is 1.8m (6ft) long and still standing in the southeast corner with some shelving for tools and materials above and on the side wall (Plate 14). An attached vice has a leg to provide stability and allow for heavy work.

The single hearth projects out from the east wall and a flue rises behind it to a chimney above. The hearth is built from both stone and brick, with re-used architectural pieces framing the top and base of the opening (Plate 15). One of these re-used pieces appears to be the long lintel of a fireplace and it is possible these fragments came from a demolished nearby building. The hearth was originally longer, as shown by a dark stain on the west wall (Plate 16). With a width of 1.35m (4½ft), the length was reduced from 2.25m (7½ft) to 1.5m (5ft). The presence of a roughly-made brick pillar, along concrete and timber boarding at the sides, suggests that the north end of the hearth had probably collapsed. This had evidently occurred during the smithy's use, as in Plate 3 Joe Sellers can be seen standing beside the shortened hearth. A roughly-hewn opening in the back wall reinforces the impression that the hearth was not of the finest construction (Plate 17). It is not evident where the bellows would have been situated.

The original size of the hearth is similar to that found in Llawr-y-glyn Smithy (now re-erected at the Welsh Folk Museum), which is thought to have been capable of being used for the heaviest work such as the heating of tyres (Williams-Davies 1991, 22). A platform 45cm (1½ft) high is visible in the Tideswell smithy's rear yard on the south side of the building, next to the window (Plate 9). This is where tyreing may have taken place, with wagons entering the yard area from Church Lane. Two stone blocks by the window may have been used for this purpose.

The area of the floor that could be cleared during the survey revealed two distinct spaces. The wide entrance on Commercial Road leads into a sloping wooden floor made up of 10 inch (25cm) wide planks (Plate 18). Long north-south running planks are flanked at both ends by east-west ones (see plan Figure 4). This was the shoeing bay, similar to one depicted in the artist's impression in Plate 4. It was not possible to see if tethering rings had been set into the west wall.

The timber floor occupies exactly half the length of the interior. It is slightly stepped at the south end where a higher stone floor starts (Figure 5). This is made up of rectangular flagstones which show serious signs of wear close to the hearth. The stone is completely missing from a roughly circular area (Plate 18) where the anvil can be seen in Plate 3. Anvils were usually set on a wooden stump (commonly of elm) to allow for a certain bounce (McDougall 2013, 17) and this would explain the resulting depression in the floor. Next to the east wall there is a line of six smaller but thicker stones which indicate a base for something, most likely to support a metal water trough for quenching hot metal (Plate 20).

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

Map evidence suggests that the Old Smithy was most likely built in the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as buildings gradually infilled open spaces between the church and the Cross Daggers Inn. There is no structural evidence to show that it incorporates part of an earlier building depicted as being close to the site in 1821. It appears to have been built specifically as a workshop, which partly explains its irregular shape and unsophisticated vernacular character. On the 1880 Ordnance Survey map it is shown as a separate property, with no clear association with the neighbouring cottage. It was situated close to the edge of the village, at a road junction, and was separated from other buildings, with its hearth and chimney next to a still open space (things to be considered when there is a fire risk). These factors suggest that it may have been a smithy from the outset, probably for the use by a blacksmith living nearby but not necessarily next door. One of the four blacksmiths in Tideswell in 1881 was Robert Lomas, his address then given as Church Street. He almost certainly trained Leonard Sellers who as a youth lived in the cottage next door. It seems plausible that Lomas worked at the smithy from the late 1870s and during most of the 1880s. Who may have used the building (if it existed), prior to him is unknown.

The smithy probably went out of use in the late 1960s, as Joe Sellers was the last person to use the building. He was born in 1896, was an apprentice blacksmith in his youth, and no doubt retired not long after the photographs of him shown in Hill's book were taken. For much of his working life he will have typically been both a smith and a farrier, for most smiths spent a large part of their time (some more than half) shoeing horses (Williams-Davies 1991, 17), and the timber floor evidence supports this. Many blacksmiths closed in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, since few heavy horses were still in work on farms and recreational horse-riding had not yet grown enough to provide sufficient replacement demand. Llawr-y-Glyn Smithy, mentioned above, also closed in 1963.

Whilst the Old Smithy in Tideswell appears to have ceased work as a smithy since the 1960s and has probably stood empty since then, it has retained its internal features and Joe Sellers's working environment (albeit now hidden beneath more recent materials). It is one of a

vanishing class of building, one that historically had no distinct and repeatable vernacular style, whilst serving an important part of the rural economy. This report and the archive of photographs comprise a 'preservation by record' of the building.

As a redundant building, it is only fitting that it has now found a new use as a holiday let. The interior in particular will need to be redesigned for modern convenience. It is of interest that the hearth contains several architectural pieces, including what appears to be a long lintel to a fireplace. These pieces have evidently been recycled from elsewhere and it is possible that they came from either the nearby Cross Daggers public house, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century building that burnt down in 1937, or the King's Head Inn, demolished in 1958. It might be worth considering a further re-use of one or more of these pieces within the new interior.

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### Historic mapping

Tideswell Parliamentary Enclosure map 1821 (DRO D4752/1).

Tideswell town plan, 1852 (DRO D4752/2-3).

OS 25 inch: 1 mile maps (sheet Derbyshire 16/9) 1880, 1898 & 1922.

OS 1:2500 map, 1972.

## FIGURES





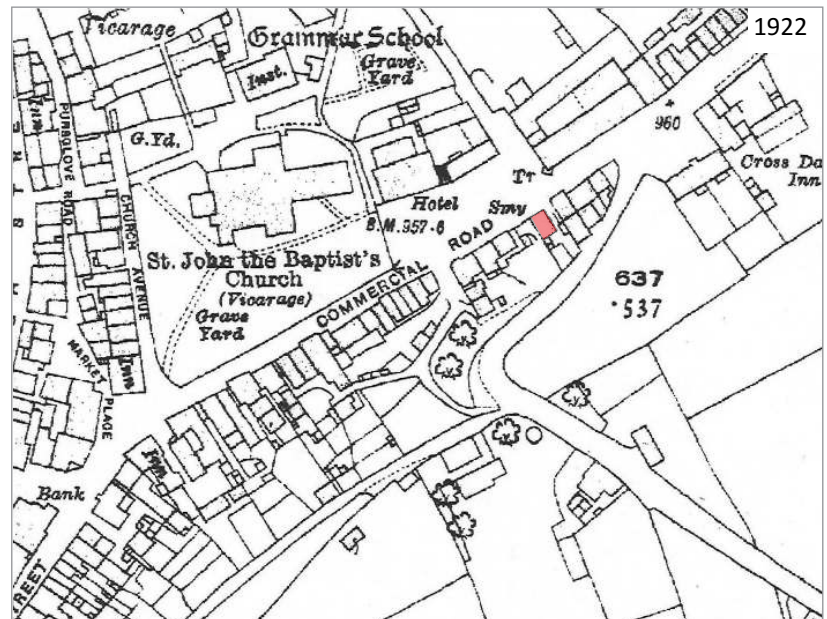
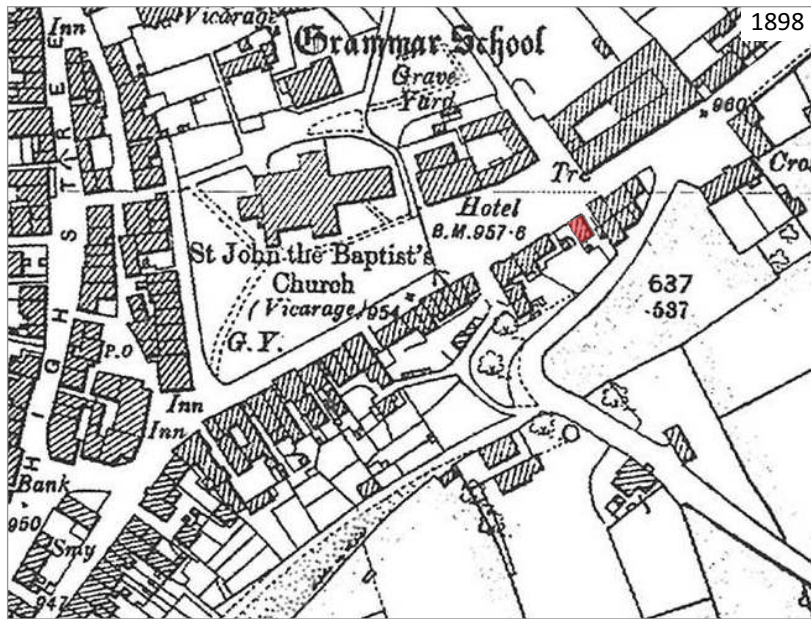
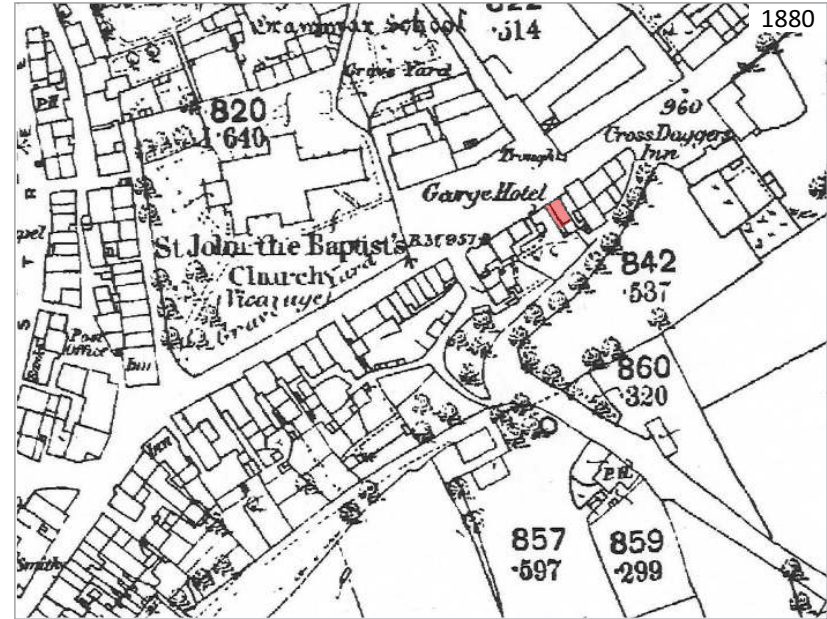
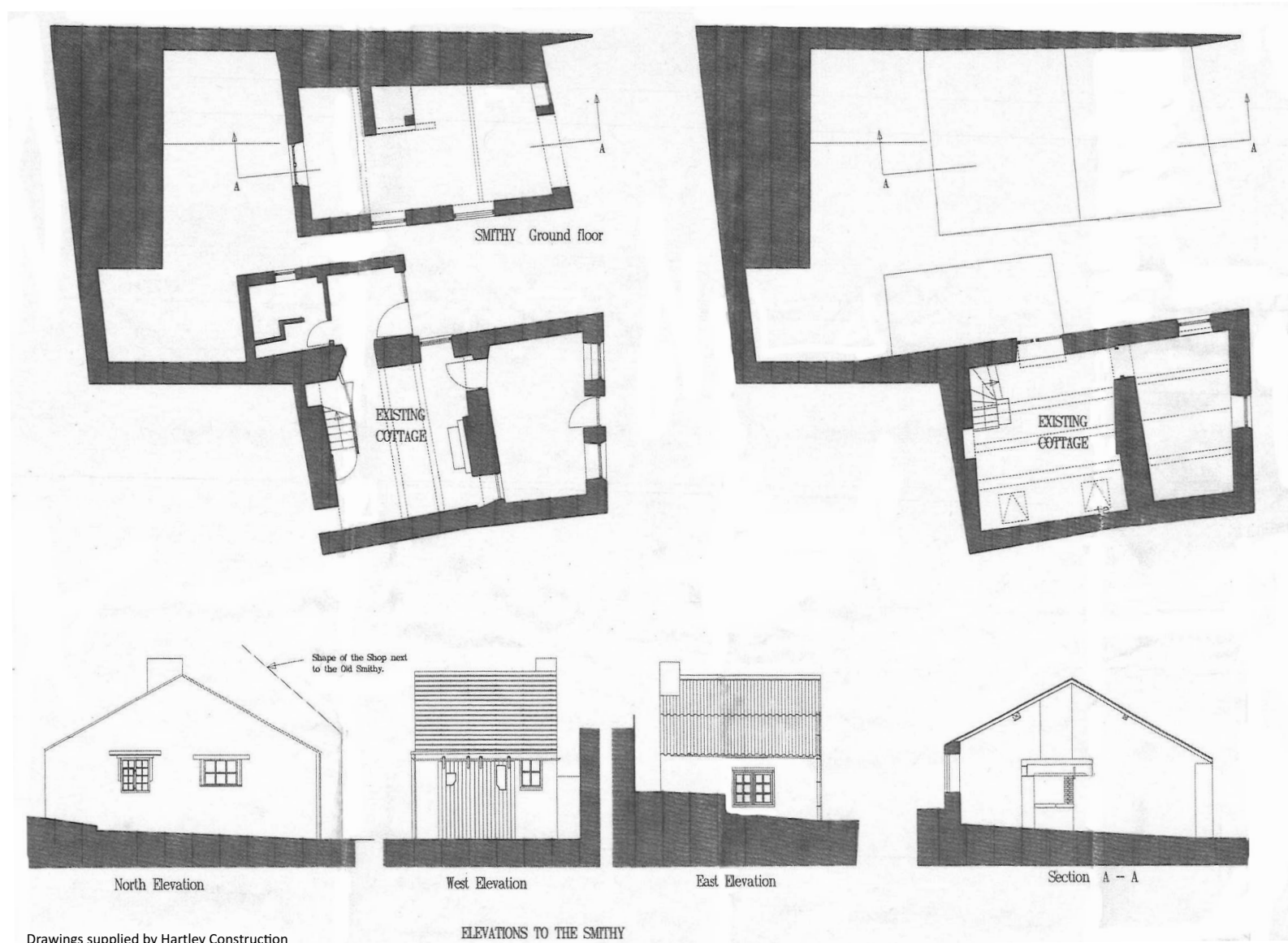


Figure 2: Historic mapping 1821-1922



Drawings supplied by Hartley Construction

**Figure 3:** Existing plan and elevations



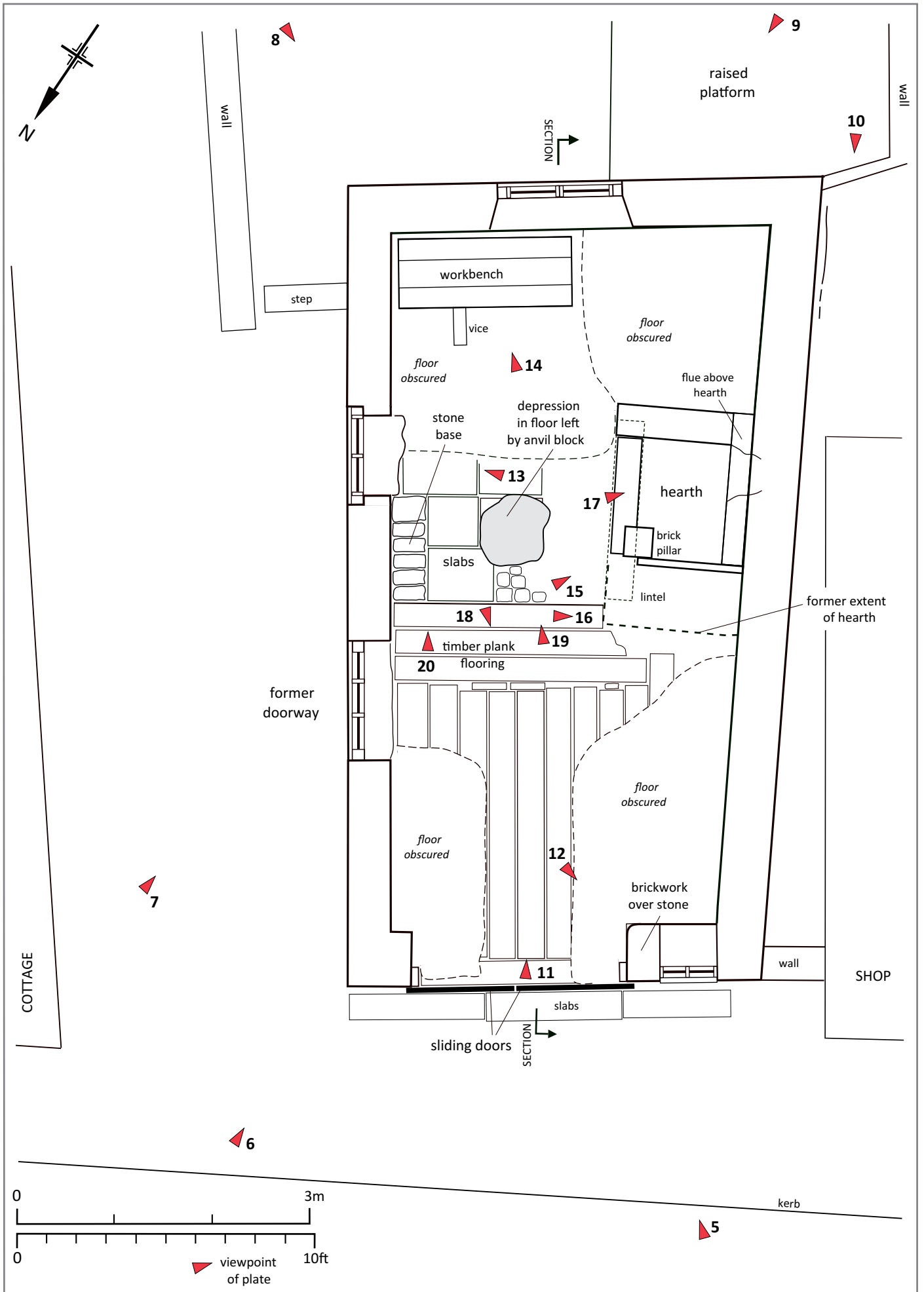
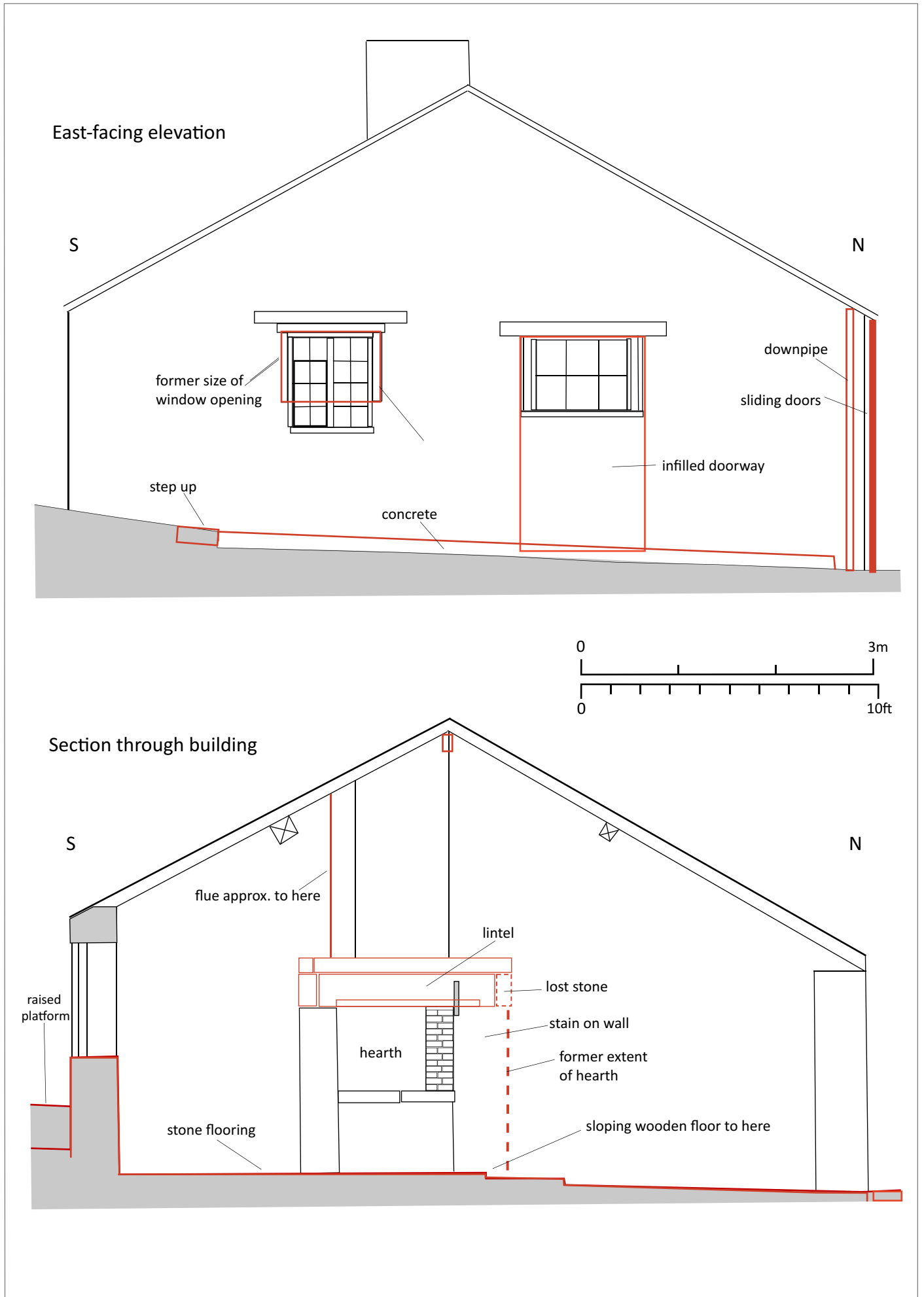


Figure 4: Plan of building (scale 1:50)



**Figure 5:** Amended east-facing elevation and through-section (scale 1:50)

**PLATES**

Plate 1: An early 20<sup>th</sup>-century postcard view down Commercial Road showing a wagon outside the blacksmith's



Plate 2: Blacksmith Joe Sellers shoeing a horse outside the smithy in the 1960s  
(Reproduced from Hill 2007)



Plate 3: Blacksmith Joe Sellers working at his anvil in front of the hearth in the 1960s  
(Reproduced from Hill 2007)



Plate 4: A scene similar to the inside of the Commercial Road smithy with shoeing taking place close to the hearth and anvil





Plate 5: Frontage of the former smithy and the owner's cottage on Commercial Road



Plate 6: View of the former smithy, looking south



Plate 7: Enlarged window to left and, to right, a partly infilled former doorway in the east elevation





Plate 8: East and south sides, together with a view of the roof and chimney



Plate 9: South side with external raised platform in foreground



Plate 10: Roughly faced walling on the west side, with a narrow gap to the neighbouring property





Plate 11: The debris-filled interior of the former smithy, as found in February 2017



Plate 12: Internal walling by main entrance





Plate 13: Recessed window opening with shoulders for former high window



Plate 14: Work-bench with attached vice and shelving above



Plate 15: Hearth, showing reused stone lintel and support brickwork



Plate 16: Dark stain on wall indicating the original extent of the hearth





Plate 17: Inner view of hearth



Plate 18: Sloping wooden flooring between the street entrance and the middle of the smithy



Plate 19: Worn away part of the slab flooring near the hearth (to right) where the support block for the anvil had been set





Plate 20: Line of hard stones set against east wall, probably the base for a water trough

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AH882-35	Detail of window in infilled doorway, east side	Northeast	
AH882-36	Detail of altered window, east side	East	13
AH882-37	Detail of altered window, east side	Northeast	
AH882-38	Shelving over workbench in east corner	East	
AH882-39	Workbench in east corner	South	
AH882-40	Workbench in east corner	Southeast	14
AH882-41	Detail of workbench	Southeast	

Photo ID	Description	Direction	Plate no
AH882-42	Detail of shelving	Southeast	
AH882-43	Detail of roof structure & upper walling	North	
AH882-44	Detail of roof structure & upper walling	Southeast	
AH882-45	Detail of roof structure & upper walling	Southwest	
AH882-46	Detail of roof structure & upper walling	West	
AH882-47	Hearth	South	
AH882-48	Hearth	South	15
AH882-49	Flue over hearth	South	
AH882-50	Upper part of hearth structure	South	
AH882-51	Staining on wall showing former extent of hearth	Southwest	
AH882-52	Staining on wall showing former extent of hearth	Southwest	16
AH882-53	Hearth interior	Southwest	
AH882-54	Upper walling and roof structure above hearth	Southwest	
AH882-55	Upper walling and roof structure above hearth	Southwest	
AH882-56	Hearth interior	West	
AH882-57	Hearth interior	South	
AH882-58	Hearth interior	South	17
AH882-59	Hearth interior - view up chimney	South	
AH882-60	Detail of hearth base	Southeast	
AH882-61	Detail of wooden shoeing floor	Northwest	
AH882-62	Detail of wooden shoeing floor	Northwest	18
AH882-63	Detail of wooden shoeing floor at entrance	Northwest	
AH882-64	Detail of floor north of hearth	West	
AH882-65	Detail of wooden shoeing floor	Northeast	
AH882-66	Stone floor area possibly the location of a former metal trough	Southeast	
AH882-67	Stone floor area possibly the location of a former metal trough	Southeast	20
AH882-68	Detail of stone floor area at south end, with gap for anvil base	East	
AH882-69	Detail of gap for anvil base in stone floor area	Southeast	19
AH882-70	Detail of gap for anvil base in stone floor area	Northeast	
AH882-71	Stone floor area possibly the location of a former metal trough	East	

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