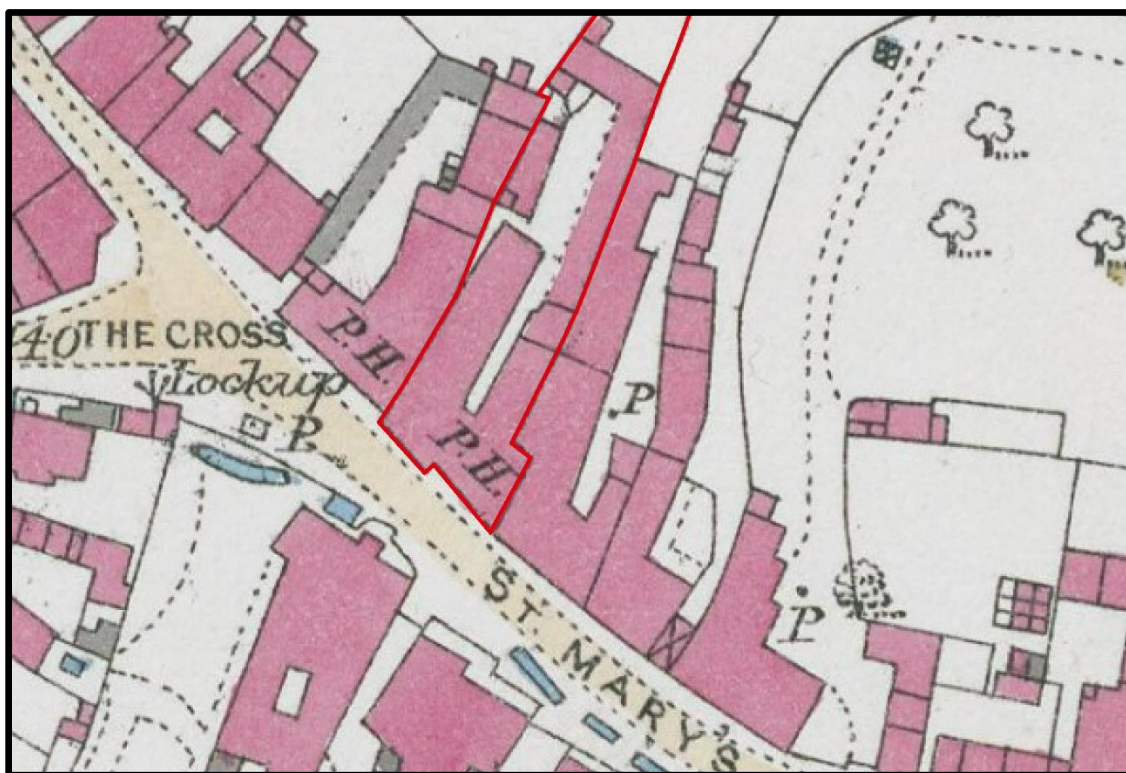




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## Historic building assessment at The Rose and Crown, Nether Stowey, Somerset



*on behalf of  
the client*

**Report No. 22-36**

**Project No. 1958**

**December 2022**



# OAKFORD ARCHAEOLOGY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared for Alina Wisnicka (Alina Wisnicka Ltd) on behalf of the client and sets out the results of historic building assessment carried out by Oakford Archaeology (OA) in June 2022 at The Rose and Crown, Nether Stowey, Somerset (ST 1923 3971). The work was carried out as part of supporting documentation prepared for an upcoming planning application to be submitted to Sedgemoor District Council (SDC). The work, which comprises a description of the building fabric, its layout, features, dating and development, was commissioned on the advice of Mark Lidster, the SDC Conservation Officer.

The site survey was entirely non-invasive, and it is likely that building works will uncover historic information which might refine or even alter the conclusions contained in this report.

### 1.1 The site

The house, formerly an inn, is a Grade II Listed Building (1237393) which occupies a wide plot on the north-east side of St Mary's Street (Fig. 1). The house presents a two-storey asymmetrical rendered façade under a pitched slated roof running parallel with the street. The complex includes three ranges, all of a single room in depth: the main frontage is the south range, which is divided by an off-centre carriageway. This provides access to a narrow yard flanked by further two-storey rear ranges to east and west. The remains of a rectangular outbuilding and a long, narrow, formerly open-fronted shed lie further north, against the western and eastern boundary respectively, and beyond this is a long garden occupying a narrow, curving plot. The property is flanked on both its west and east sides by substantial historic properties in separate ownership, occupying similar, long, narrow, tenements.

The archaeological work was commissioned on behalf of the new owners of the property, which had become very dilapidated and ceased trading as a public house. It is in need of a sympathetic new use. The present report is submitted as part of supporting documentation for an upcoming Planning and Listed Building application for the conversion of the building to residential use as a private house with associated family annexes.

## 2. AIMS

The aims of the project were to provide a description of the fabric of the building, its layout, features, dating and development prior to the development, and to disseminate the results of the investigation by appropriate reporting and deposition of the archive in a public repository.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The work was undertaken in June 2022 by Oakford Archaeology, in accordance with specifications applicable to Level 2-3 in the English Heritage 2006 document *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practices*. The building recording consisted of:

- A detailed written description of the buildings and more general record of the main building.
- A detailed photographic record of the buildings in colour (digital) format, and a basic record of the main building.

- A limited drawn record of the buildings, consisting of annotation of, and additions to, the architect's 'as existing' plans and elevations, to show the locations of any fixtures and fittings, building breaks, blocked openings or architectural detail.

#### 4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By Alina Wisnicka, John Pickering and Marc Steinmetzer

##### 4.1 General background

The site lies in an area where limited evidence for prehistoric activity has been previously identified. It is currently assumed that the town is located on or near the line of a major prehistoric routeway leading to the main pass over the Quantocks and the historic settlement at Crowcombe beyond. It is possible that the castle was built on the site of a pre-Conquest earthwork of possible prehistoric date, while aerial photography has identified possible prehistoric enclosures in the fields east of Stowey Court.<sup>1</sup> The density of prehistoric activity increases to the west of the town, with the Iron Age fort at Dowsborough some 1 ½ miles west of Nether Stowey.

Little is known of the development of the area around Nether Stowey in the Romano-British and early Saxon periods. The town derives its name from the Old English *stan weg* meaning stone or paved road, the *herepath* or military road which crossed the River Parrett at Combwich and extended over the Quantocks between the estate centres at Cannington and Williton.<sup>2</sup> According to Greswell there was still a lane known as *Stow Here Pat* leading onto the Quantocks west of Nether Stowey in the post-medieval period.<sup>3 4</sup>

There may have been several small settlements and a possible minster at Nether Stowey in the later Saxon period. The latter is in part based on the disputed identification of an estate at *Bodesleghe*, which was in the possession of a priest at Domesday, with the more securely documented early settlement at Budley.<sup>5</sup> This village was situated between Nether Stowey church and modern Whitnell, where *Budley* fields lay in the post-medieval period, and is the explanation for the somewhat detached position of the church, which may have continued in use when the settlement shifted.<sup>6</sup> Almost immediately to the east of the site, however, historic maps (See figs 4 and 5) show a large circular enclosure, which has defined the curiously distorted form of the tenement plots in this part of the town, and a rectangular one alongside it containing the historic vicarage. Circular enclosures of this type are often associated with early church sites, manorial complexes, siege castles or other highly significant topographical features.<sup>7</sup> Although both enclosures lie outside the present site area they have significantly influenced the layout and possibly the development of the existing buildings and the site may preserve peripheral archaeological remains relating to the enclosures.

By the 11<sup>th</sup> century the manor of *Stalwei* formed part of the estates of Earl Harold Godwinson,<sup>8</sup> and two thegns, Alward and Oswald.<sup>9</sup> Following the Norman reorganisation of the land

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<sup>1</sup> Gathercole 2003.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Greswell 1897.

<sup>4</sup> Gathercole 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Siraut 1985; Bond 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Gathercole 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Compare Winkleigh, Devon, where the modestly-sized town retains the sites of two Norman mottes.

<sup>8</sup> Thorn and Thorn 1980, 35,11.

<sup>9</sup> Thorn and Thorn 1980, 35,12.

holdings after the Conquest (recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086), and the death of Harold at Hastings, the manor was granted to Alfred d'Epaignes, with both Alward and Oswald continuing as Alfred's tenants.

The early castle at Over Stowey was apparently abandoned in favour of a new site at Nether Stowey.<sup>10</sup> The earliest known documentary reference to Stowey Castle comes from a charter dated before 1154.<sup>11</sup> However, it may have been founded on an earlier, fortified site of pre-Conquest date which was possibly developed by William fitz Odo during the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The presence of the castle and the abandonment of nearby Budley resulted in the continued growth of the settlement. Part of the settlement may have been planned with a borough created as early as 1157-8 and certainly by 1225, when it was represented at the eyre,<sup>12</sup> while a charter of 1274 referred to the *ancient* borough. In 1304 John de Columbers received a grant of a market on Tuesdays and a yearly two-day fair in September and two years later 26 burgage plots were recorded in the centre of the town.<sup>13</sup>

The borough taxation in 1334 gave the lowest total of all the Somerset boroughs, while the castle fell into disuse during the late medieval period. Much of the stone was probably taken to the manor for the building of James Tuchet, 7th Baron Audley's new manor house. However, following his involvement in the failed Cornish rebellion in 1497 and subsequent execution on Tower Hill, the partly-constructed mansion was allowed to fall into ruin. His son finished the house and Nether Stowey continued to be a centre for small-scale industry and a commercially important market throughout the post-medieval period. The town still had its market and fair in 1791 when Collinson visited, but was only a *reputed borough*, and had the alternative name of Market Stowey in 1795. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the town briefly became, due to the friendship between Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Poole, a meeting place for many of the great thinkers of the time, including Robert Southey, John Thelwall, Humphry Davy, the Wedgwoods, Charles Lamb, William and Dorothy Wordsworth.<sup>14</sup>

The town experienced a small population boom in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and Bragg's 1840 called it a small market town. By the 1860s this had trailed off and Nether Stowey was being described as a former market town - though it retained a large population of retailers, professionals and craftsmen.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.2 The Rose and Crown

The earliest reference suggests that an inn, named the *Crown*, serving travellers and the local community, was first opened on the Bridgwater to Watchet Road in 1597. It was to become one of five inns or public houses in Nether Stowey. The *Swan* was recorded as early as 1647, but by 1743 it had been renamed the *Globe*. Located on the opposite side of St Mary's Road to the *Crown* it eventually closed in c.1850; the building surviving as the Clock House. The *Three Mariners* is mentioned for the first time in 1691, although it closed less than a century later in 1786, while the *George*, immediately to the north of the *Rose and Crown*, had opened by 1804. the *First and Last*, first recorded by name in 1871, was still in business in 1981 at the north end

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<sup>10</sup> Dunning 1981.

<sup>11</sup> Renn 1973.

<sup>12</sup> Dunning 1981.

<sup>13</sup> Siraut 1985.

<sup>14</sup> Dunning 1981; Gathercole 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Dunning 1981.



of Lime Street, while Coleridge's Cottage, opposite the *First and Last*, was a public house for a time, and the *Bakers Arms* was recorded in Castle Street in 1871 and 1881.<sup>16</sup>

The *Crown* is mentioned in detail for the first time in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century when the poet John Taylor (1580–1653) complained of its bad service. Having placed his order, he sat in the street outside the inn for three hours waiting for his supper because he could not bear the ‘*odours and contagious perfume*’ within, the tapestry of spider’s webs or the smoke that was ‘*so palpable and perspicuous*’ he could ‘*scarcely see anything else*’. Supper was not forthcoming and he went to bed hungry only to be bitten all night by fleas the size of new boiled peas before being woken at dawn by bawling children, barking curs and hogs crying out for their breakfast ‘*so I arose and travelled almost sleeping towards Dunster*’.<sup>17</sup>

Renamed the *Rose and Crown* in 1687<sup>18</sup> the building is mentioned in the 1713 rent roll for the Manor of Nether Stowey, when it is occupied by Richard Jenkins.<sup>19</sup> The buildings are shown for the first time on the c.1750 map of Nether Stowey (Fig. 2) drawn by Thomas England for Susanna Balch, the daughter of Robert Everard of Nether Stowey and MP for Bridgwater. Although detailed in many respects the map should not necessarily be taken as an accurate representation of the house and its rear ranges at this time. The building is shown as a two-storey structure with its long asymmetrical façade to the road. Access is provided by a large off-centre doorway, while light is provided by three windows on the ground- and a further four windows on the first floor. It is possible that the drawing shows a large ground-floor window at the western end. The drawing also shows three lateral stacks in the rear elevation as well as a small square projecting range at the western end of the main range, possibly a stair turret. With regards to the number of stacks, it is possible that although the artist didn’t show the eastern rear range, one of the chimneys nevertheless belongs to it. To the north of the possible stair turret a long range, consisting of two buildings, is shown occupying the western boundary of the site. The southern building has a single door and ground-floor window, with a lateral stack in the west elevation, while the northern range has a single doorway with two first-floor windows or loading doors. No ground-floor windows or chimney stacks are shown. Interestingly the substantial eastern extension is not shown on the map. Finally, a small rectangular structure is shown at the northern end of the yard and on the boundary with the garden beyond.

The property was owned by Sarah Butler throughout the late 1760s, passing to her son Jenkins following her death in 1783. The site is shown in some detail on the c.1775 map (Fig. 3). The front range retains the earlier ground floor arrangement with a wide doorway flanked to the east and west by two and one windows respectively. However, only three windows are shown on the first floor, while the number of axial stacks on the north side of the range has been reduced to two. The projecting western range is shown in greater detail with a ground floor doorway and a single window above. Whether this is the same building as shown on the earlier map is unclear. To the north the western range is shown as a single building with a doorway providing access on the ground floor and a single window to the upper floor. It is unclear again whether this is a simplification of the range by the artist or represents alterations to the previously much larger range of buildings. Finally, a small rectangular structure is shown at the northern end of the yard, although unlike the earlier map this building is shown against the western boundary with the garden beyond. Jenkins Butler leased the inn to Mary Thorn until

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<sup>16</sup> Wisnicka 2022.

<sup>17</sup> DD/SAS/c795/PD/64.

<sup>18</sup> Wisnicka 2022.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

1789, when Ann Lee becomes the new tenant. Ann remained in occupation until 1793 when Samuel Sully became the new innkeeper.<sup>20</sup>

By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ‘*the run down old 16<sup>th</sup> century coaching inn underwent extensive renovations [...] when the thatched building was tiled and slated*’.<sup>21</sup> The *Rose and Crown* was owned from 1795 by Thomas Poole, a local tanner and magistrate, who kept Samuel Sully as the tenant. The inn was frequented by travellers and the local gentry, and the meetings of the Nether Stowey Female Friendly Society were held there. Founded in 1806 by Thomas Poole to help women in times of sickness, childbirth, widowhood and old age, every member subscribed according to her means, and thrift and self-help were encouraged. The Society thrived and Elizabeth Sandford, a member of the Poole family, recorded that it was Coleridge, visiting Poole in 1807, who wrote the motto for the banner that was carried to the church on the Society’s first anniversary: *Foresight and Union linked by Christian Love Helped by the Good below and heaven above*.<sup>22</sup> The *Rose and Crown* is listed in Pigot’s 1830 directory when William May is listed as the new proprietor.

The tithe survey of Nether Stowey took place in 1840 (Fig. 4), revealing that the property continued to be owned and occupied by William May.<sup>23</sup> The map clearly shows the large front range and the substantial eastern range. On the western side of the plot a narrow range extends along the boundary with a roughly square building at its northern end projecting into the central passage. A short distance to the north is a small rectangular range, with a further small square building immediately to the north. William and his wife Charlotte are listed in the 1841 census, along with 15-year-old Robert Jesty, 5-year-old Frances Hext and 20-year-old Martha Thomas. In 1851 the *Rose and Crown* was still occupied by William and Charlotte, as well as Frances Hext, now listed as a barmaid, 13-year-old Louisa Longman, listed as a visitor, and the 17-year-old servant Mary Ann Naylor.

By the early 1860s William and Charlotte were living at the inn with the barmaid and niece Frances Hext, now listed as married, and their 11-year-old nephew Robert D. Jesty. Following William’s death in 1865 Charlotte is listed as the sole proprietor in the 1871 census, living at the *Rose and Crown* with 24-year-old William Jesty, a single unemployed clerk, and the domestic servant 21-year-old Eliza Lockyer. By the early 1880s Thomas and Belinda Sweeting, listed respectively as licensed victualler and baker, were in residence at the inn, along with their sons Henry, Tom and William, and their 11-year-old daughter Flora. Henry is also listed as a baker, while the other children are listed as scholars. In addition, the Sweetings had a boarder, 20-year-old Michael Salt, an Inland Revenue Officer, and a single servant, 17-year-old Mary Wheatley.

The area was mapped by the Ordnance Survey in 1886, when the property was shown in the greatest detail thus far (Fig. 5). The information shown on the map is not dissimilar to the existing layout of the buildings, with the main range fronting onto St Mary’s Street and large rear ranges extending along both boundaries, separated by a narrow passage. In addition, a range occupies the full width of the plot on the north side of the small courtyard and separating the buildings from the garden at the rear. The western end of the main range is shown projecting a short distance into the road, while the eastern range consists of three parts, likely of different heights and reflecting the position of the buildings visible today, including a long narrow stable

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<sup>20</sup> Q/REL/41/33.

<sup>21</sup> Wisnicka 2022.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> DD/SAS/C212/8/8, plot no. 26.

and/or carriage port outbuilding. On the western side of the passage the western range is shown as a large monolithic block, the footprint of which reflects the existing floor plan. The extension and the outbuilding housing the oven have been joined under one roof, possibly to increase the number of guest bedrooms on the first floor. It is likely that these were accessed directly through the main range, as neither this nor the later Ordnance Survey maps depict the presence of a bridge passage structure.

By the late 1880s the *Rose and Crown* had been acquired by Sarah Harriet Jones,<sup>24</sup> although the 1891 census lists Henry and Raziah Wilson at the property, along with their 16-year-old daughter Elizabeth, listed as an assistant barmaid, and their sons Henry and Edwin, both scholars. Although the Wilsons are listed in Kelly's Directory in 1895, two years later it was owned by Edward Charles,<sup>25</sup> and by the 1901 census Robert and Rosine Stacey are listed as the occupiers. The property remained remarkably unaltered throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as is evidenced by the 1904 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 6). This and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century photograph (Fig. 7) clearly show the central carriage passage, suggesting that the opening was only a relatively narrow horse and cart passage.

By 1911 the *Rose and Crown* was owned by Frederick and Annie Day, their 26-year-old son Albert Henry, listed as a farm bailiff, and 23-year-old Florence Eugenie, who assisted with the business, as well as a single boarder of private means, 40-year-old Hugh Cyril Arthur Brooking, and 16-year-old William Bartlett, listed as an ostler or stableboy, and servant. The *Rose and Crown* was listed in 1914 in Kelly's Directory as 'Frederick Day, Rose & Crown Hotel - good accommodation for motorists; teas and a motor garage, carriages for hire'.<sup>26</sup> By 1925 Charles A. Groves had bought the *Rose and Crown* Hotel and was still listed as the proprietor immediately before the outbreak of the Second World War.<sup>27</sup>

## 5. THE BUILDING SURVEY

### 5.1 Introduction

The *Rose and Crown* is a large and complex building, parts of which are of medieval date. At the time of the site visit parts of the building had been stripped out, exposing large areas of historic fabric. Other parts remained essentially as they had been when the building was still occupied as a public house. The main ground-floor bar area to the east and part of the carriageway within the south range had been fully stripped, whereas the rooms to the west of the carriageway and much of the first floor of this range were still concealed by modern decorative finishes. Much of the ground floor of the east range remained exactly as it had been when the public house closed, while the first-floor area was still occupied as a dwelling. The ground floor rooms of the west range had been largely stripped, whereas the first floor remained untouched. Much render had been removed from the courtyard elevations of the east and west ranges and the rear of the south range, and access was possible to all of the roof spaces. Nearly all parts of the building could be accessed during the site survey, the only exception being the covered bridge linking the eastern western ranges across the courtyard, which was considered to be unsafe. This structure could, however, be assessed from the doorways at each end.

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<sup>24</sup> Kelly's Directory 1883.

<sup>25</sup> Kelly's Directory 1897.

<sup>26</sup> Kelly's Directory 1919, 1923.

<sup>27</sup> Kelly's Directory 1939.

This level of exposure allowed the inspection of a very large percentage of the historic fabric. Additionally, in places where useful observations might be made, small inspection holes were opened by the client's building contractor under archaeological supervision to clarify points of detail and the potential for the survival of historic fabric. There remain many areas where further stripping during the conversion and restoration of the buildings could reveal significant features and relationships. The following description and interpretation, including the phased plans, are presented here as provisional, with the caveat that they may need to be revised in the light of any future works.

## 5.2 The south range (Figs. 8-9, Pls. 1-23)

The basic plan and appearance of the south range of the *Rose and Crown* suggests that it originated as 'three-room-and-cross-passage' house; a form of planning characteristic of medieval vernacular housing. The layout of these buildings consisted of a central hall, accessed by a cross passage (or 'truanse') at one end, and two end rooms; one below the truanse and the other at the opposite end of the building beyond the hall. In their early form the central hall of such houses was open to the roof and heated by an open hearth, with the result that the roof timbers and some of the internal partitions became blackened by soot. The 'outer room' below the truanse and the inner room at the end of the hall often began their existence as unenclosed spaces separated from the other rooms only by low partitions or screens; however, as living standards improved these rooms were usually floored over at first-floor level to create upper chambers, and ceiled off from the hall by high partitions to increase privacy. The final stage of the development of such buildings was the flooring over of the open hall to provide a fully storeyed house and the replacement of the central hearth by fireplaces served by chimneystacks. This process of development from the medieval 'hall house' to the early modern fully-storeyed house has been observed in countless examples in the west country and elsewhere. The key diagnostic elements in interpreting such buildings are the survival of heavy smoke blackening in parts of the roof and on the internal partitions and variations in the character of the first-floor structures, indicating piecemeal development of the first floor areas. Identifying the position of the truanse is also a key element in understanding and interpreting such early houses. The *Rose and Crown* preserves evidence of all of these features, including smoke blackening of the roof trusses and partitions, and it seems clear from the surviving evidence that the south range was an open hall house of medieval date.

### *Exterior*

#### *Main façade*

The *Rose and Crown* (Pl. 1) has a long low frontage towards the street. Although no features of early date are now visible externally, the basic form of this range, with thick masonry walls and a roof aligned parallel to the street has probably remained unchanged since the late medieval period. As is usual in urban buildings the most likely places for the survival of early fabric are the partition walls with the adjacent properties, where the proximity of other structures will have reduced the potential for alterations. The front and rear elevations of the range are more likely to have suffered modernisation to keep ahead of architectural fashions and to improve the lighting, heating and internal communication.

The façade of the building is divided into two main sections by the carriageway which pierces the range to the west of the centre of the building. Although, in its present form, this carriage way is of post-medieval date, it may well replace the original truanse, running through the range from front to rear and providing direct access from the street to the rear courtyard and gardens. If this is the case, the hall and the inner room are likely to have lain to the east of the

carriageway, and the outer room to its west. The low pitch of the existing slated roof is probably an 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century alteration; the earlier eaves level may well have come down to the heads of the upper windows, or even below this, as is still evident internally, within the first-floor rooms.

The eastern half of the façade has been remodelled in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century and now has a very plain double-fronted elevation with a central doorway featuring glazed doors and a square overlight, presumably opening on the former public bar. Flanking the doorway are a pair of tall rectangular sash windows, while the upper storey is lit by three uncharacteristically low and broad sash windows. Both the glazed doors and the fenestration of this section appear to be of early 20<sup>th</sup> century date; however, the proportions of the lower openings may reflect 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century sashes and the unusual proportions of the upper windows perhaps reflect either tripartite casements or mullioned window frames. This is confirmed internally, where the remains of earlier window embrasures are visible within the former public bar (see below). Although heavily altered, this part of the façade has clear potential to retain significant medieval and post medieval fabric.

The western half of the façade shows similar early 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural detail but is more irregular in appearance and has features more suggestive of an historic inn. The lower part of the elevation is concealed by a projecting lean-to structure with a slated pent roof. At the western end of the lean-to the ground-floor room is lit by a very large tripartite sash window in a very large projecting bay, which was probably the window of the lounge bar. To the east of this the lean-to roof shelters a pair of double doors opening upon the carriageway through the building. This entrance is distinguished by a small pediment or gable surmounted by a magnificent, oversized wrought-iron bracket for a hanging inn sign. It is interesting that the lean-to structure extends further to the east than the present carriageway, as though the passage through the building was formerly wider than at present or, conceivably, lay to the east of its current position.

At first-floor level, roughly at the centre of the façade, above the carriage way, is a small and oddly-proportioned sash window like those to the east. This is probably of the same date as those windows and may also replace an earlier mullioned or casement window. The two sashes in the western part of the façade are larger and of more irregular sizes and shapes, which probably also reflect conversion from earlier openings. At the south-western corner of the building an oddly-positioned chimney shaft rises above the roofline at eaves level. It is uncertain whether this chimney serves this or the adjacent building. The western part of the façade, therefore, also seems likely to contain significant early fabric of medieval and later date.

#### *Rear elevation*

Much of the rear elevation of the south range (Pl. 2) is obscured by the buildings connecting it with the east and west ranges; however, a small area of the rear elevation is exposed at first-floor level, above the wooden lintel of the carriage way through the building and, to the west of this, above a lower roofline. The original pink or red rubble masonry of the rear wall (Pl. 3) appears to have been raised by approximately 0.5m with much cruder masonry, to raise the eaves line and substitute a lower pitched roof for the original steep pitch. This alteration may have been necessary to accommodate a corridor running alongside the north wall of the south range at first-floor level, to provide independent access to rooms that had formerly been interconnecting. It is interesting that this side of the roof is covered with Bridgwater pantiles, whereas the side facing the street is slated.

There is no trace of a relieving arch or an architectural frame to the rear entrance to the carriageway, but only a very substantial, though much decayed, unmoulded timber beam supporting the wall above. This may imply that the present carriageway represents an enlargement of the original medieval cross passage or truncheon, and that its original door frame was removed to enlarge the opening. Part of the wall above the carriageway has been removed and brick walling inserted to provide a window lighting the head of the main staircase. This window opening turns in a right angle into the west wall of the east range, and clearly relates to a later link block between the west range and the south range. This is presumably a late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century alteration contemporary with the existing main staircase, which lies immediately to the east of the present carriageway.

There are two lateral stacks built against the north wall of the range, to the east and west of the carriageway. The eastern chimney stack has been absorbed by the later link building and its lower parts are not visible, but appears to have had significant architectural detail, including a moulded stone string course lying well above the presumed ancient and also the modern roofline of the south range. As this string course conflicts with the roof of the later link building, it must pre-date that structure and is unlikely to represent a weathering for that roof.

Above the string course the chimney divides into two separate square brick shafts, showing that this chimney served at least two fireplaces, presumably at ground and first-floor level of the south range. The display of individual flues in this way was a form of conspicuous consumption at a time when chimneys were still a status symbol. It is therefore likely that this chimney stack was originally more visible within the yard. The west range and the south range may well have been originally detached, separated by a courtyard. The lower part of both chimney shafts is of earlier brick than the upper parts, and may possibly be of mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> century date, though the stone chimney stack beneath is likely to be earlier. The stack lies roughly at the centre of the building and was presumably added to heat the hall and hall chamber following the division of the original open hall into two storeys.

The large eastern chimney stack is also of stone construction and is particularly massive, with high shoulders raised well above the presumed medieval and modern rooflines of the south range. At the western corner of this stack, well below the present eaves line, the remains of a small coping can be seen (Pl. 4), confirming that the original roof came down to an eaves level well below the present eaves. This stack may also have served two separate fireplaces heating rooms on the ground and first floor at the west end of the range. As these areas may have been floored over before the hall, it is possible that this chimney is earlier than the one to the east – though there may have been other arrangements for heating this area previously (see below).

Brick masonry to the east of the chimney stack may represent an inserted flue serving an additional first floor room, while a large rectangular area of rubble masonry overlying a timber plate built into the wall surface further east may represent the raising of the eaves above a medieval eaves plate, or blocking of an opening such as a window. There may also have been a stair turret in this area linking the ground and first-floor rooms (see below). The present brick chimney shaft overlying the earlier stone masonry is probably of late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

The north wall of the south range appears to have been the location of many of the service features for that range, including fireplaces and chimney stacks. Given that the present main staircase appears to be a very late insertion into the building it is highly likely that there were earlier staircases, probably in the form of stair turrets built into or adjacent to this wall.

Although many of these features may well be of secondary date, this wall has great potential for the preservation of early fabric and could provide critical evidence for the phasing and development of the layout of the house.

### *Interior*

#### *The carriageway and stair (Rooms G02, G03, G04)*

The carriageway through the south range of the building (Room G03) is broad, nearly 2m wide, with 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century double doors at its south end (Pl. 5). The east and west walls of the passage are constructed of panels of red brick supported by timber studs and lacing; these walls clearly date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century when this form of construction was common. In the west wall a plain flush-panelled door opens on the western room and in the east wall is a handsome two panelled door, possibly of 18<sup>th</sup> century date, with the remains of substantial 'L' hinges and a flat architrave with an oval fanlight. This door has possibly been reused in this position. It opens upon the main staircase (Room G02; Pl. 6), which rises alongside the passage and is of generous scale, closed by a pair of double doors. At the foot of the stair a door opens upon the former public bar and beneath it is a stair cupboard (Room G04). This door pierces a partition which is also of timber studwork with brick panels and is probably also of late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century date (Pl. 7).

Close examination of the fabric of this latter partition, however (particularly from within the adjacent room), reveals that this partition represents the line of one of the primary screens dividing the medieval house and contains some material from the screen. Hard against the chimney breast of the fireplace in the adjacent room is a substantial vertical post headed with a 'gunstock' shouldered mortice and tenon joint and two pegs-holes (Pl. 8). This represents the remains of the jamb of a doorway, the joint having formerly housed the shaped door head of one of the doorways opening from the truncheon from the hall. The line of this wall must therefore represent the eastern limit of the original cross passage screen. The screen was clearly of the usual 'Plank-and-Muntin' type<sup>28</sup> often found in houses dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the late 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The present arrangement of the carriageway clearly dates from a late period in the history of the house and must represent an enlargement of the original truncheon to allow for increased (and wider) traffic. If the western limit of the medieval truncheon is assumed to be in its present position, this would give a passage of 4m in width, which is exceptionally generous for a house of this size. It seems highly likely that the carriageway and staircase have been enlarged, and that this was achieved at the expense of the western room, by removing the original western screen and rebuilding it a metre to the west of its original position. This may be confirmed by the fact that the present carriageway ignores the bay divisions of the medieval roof and the early partitions still extant at first-floor level (see below). The original western limit of the truncheon, which may have respected these bay divisions, must have been on the centre line of the present carriageway.

The partitions and the ceiling structures of the carriageway, though certainly of late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century date, have the potential to contain either reused or *in situ* remnants of the

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<sup>28</sup> Plank-and-Muntin screens are substantial timber structures, usually consisting of a sill beam resting on a low sleeper wall. Vertical posts or 'muntins' rise to support a head beam or rail roughly at first-floor height (though these were often freestanding and unrelated to internal floor structures). The sides of the muntins were grooved to accept the edges of large planks, forming a substantial panelled wall. The muntins, head rail and sill might be chamfered or moulded and the whole often provided a field for decorative painting and other ornament.

original screens and partitions, such as mortised head beams, remains of moulded or chamfered muntins etc. The footings of the sleeper walls of the screens and possible evidence of the flooring of the truncheon may remain below floor level.

*The western room (Room G05)*

This large room has been much subdivided, probably due to concerns about the structural integrity of the ceiling, which is an elaborate structure with heavily moulded beams, but is sagging in the centre. The room (Pl. 9) has been divided by a central spine wall containing a flat arch and a 'gothick' arch, and by a subsidiary screen forming a glazed porch within the door to the carriageway. These subdivisions are modern and were probably inserted to support the ceiling. The room is at present heated by a modern chimney, unusually sited in its south-western corner, with an ornate late 19<sup>th</sup> century chimneypiece. This also seems to be a relatively modern addition.

The ceiling is currently obscured by later plaster, but is possibly of an elaborate type with intersecting beams dividing it into panels and, possibly, decoratively-moulded joists in each panel. Inspection of some of the joists from above identified no mouldings; however, these joists may be replacements, or they might retain decorative paintings or colour which could not be identified from above. The large central ceiling beam is an exceptionally large one with superb architectural detail featuring deep hollows and a central moulded fillet on each side. The stops at the south end of the beam are convex run-out stops of a type typical of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century (Pl. 10). The stops at the northern end of the beam no longer survive, which suggests that they are now buried in the wall, which may have been modified by the construction of the chimney and fireplace against the rear wall of the range, served by the large chimney stack previously described.

The relationship of the chimney with the ceiling, which may itself be an insertion, indicates that the chimney is later than the first-floor structure. Unfortunately, the fireplace is blocked and its character and date is unknown. As the room was clearly a prestigious one it is likely to have been heated, and there may have been an earlier fireplace predating this one. This may have been either in the western end wall or in a lateral stack built against the front wall of the house, occupying the position of the present southern bay window projecting into the street. No visible evidence of either now remains.

Alongside the chimney breast in the north wall is a narrow recess and to the west of this an opening into rooms within the west range beyond. These tall narrow openings have the character of doorways rather than windows, and their proximity suggests that, though one may well have communicated with the east range, the other is likely to have served another purpose: it may have led into a stair turret lying beyond the north wall giving access to the first-floor chamber.

The south wall has been removed almost in its entirety and is now supported by a row of three cast-iron columns to allow the creation of a wide bay window on the street frontage (Pl. 11). The present bay is of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date, with later fenestration, but may replace a long 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century mullioned window, or an earlier bay window of the type still surviving at Nos. 10-14 High Street, Dunster, also a former inn. This bay may have superseded a lateral chimney stack, as suggested above.

This room was clearly an important one, with an exceptionally richly-moulded ceiling. It is possible that the hidden ceiling joists and beams retain painted or moulded decorations and that



there is a substantial historic fireplace and early doorways to a possible stair turret in the north wall. The fireplace may retain its lintel and possibly also *sgraffito* decorations commensurate with the status of the room. There may also be traces of an earlier lateral stack below the floor in the area of the current window bay.

*The eastern room (room G01)*

This large room occupies the probable site of the hall and inner room of the medieval house and has been stripped out completely, revealing the fabric of all four walls. The south wall (Pl. 12) shows clear evidence of deep, blocked chases, now infilled with later rubble, representing cruck chases for the substantial timber wall posts supporting the roof. The ceiling beams do not exactly align with these chases and it seems certain that the present first-floor is an insertion, perhaps in two different phases. Much of the remaining masonry of the front wall represents later 18<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding to create deep splayed embrasures, probably for the insertion of sash windows in the front wall. The central doorway has been slightly narrowed and converted from a similar splayed embrasure, and must formerly have been a window. The windows appear to have been designed to incorporate window seats and it is probable that the room was either fully panelled, or that it featured a panelled dado incorporating these window seats.

In the north wall of the room (Pl. 13) is a large fireplace. Unfortunately, this has been much rebuilt and the current clavel or lintel is a replacement. Its position immediately within the former doorway in the screen to the trunche shows that it is likely to be a later alteration. Like the corresponding chimneystack to the west, it may have been inserted to replace a lateral stack in the opposite wall, or it may have replaced a central open hearth when the hall was ceiled over. The ceiling beams have broad, plain chamfers which retain mutilated stops of the type characterised by various writers as ‘Geometric’<sup>29</sup> and generally assumed to be typical of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The joists are obscured by modern plaster. It is possible that the chimney and the ceiling beams of this part of the building are contemporary.

Most of the wall to the east of the fireplace has been removed to open up a wide archway into the adjacent, trapezoidal room (Room G06) within the east range. To the east of this opening, however, important evidence of a former stair is revealed in the form of a series of small openings in the north-eastern corner, one of which now lies across the present first-floor level (Pl. 14). These must represent either two small window embrasures rising with the stair, or a high-level window lighting the stair and a second window lighting a cupboard beneath it. The east wall contains a series of three small sockets below the present ceiling level, which probably indicate the position of a half landing. This implies that the stair rose eastwards, turned to meet the landing and then returned to westward to reach the first floor. The first-floor structure in this end bay, though clearly modified after the removal of the stair, may well be of earlier date than the floor structure of the hall, representing an early first-floor chamber at the eastern end of the hall.

The east wall is much disturbed, but contains a small, late fireplace near the southern wall. This would be more-or-less central to the wall if the staircase was still in position. It has a brick flue cut into the end wall of the building and is probably a late 19<sup>th</sup> century addition. There is no trace of an earlier fireplace, and it appears that the room was originally unheated. It may have been intended to function as a service room, rather than a high-status parlour – certainly, the exceptionally grand mouldings of the ceiling in the western ground-floor room indicate that

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<sup>29</sup> Moir & Parker 2022; Alcock & Hall 1994, 37.

the more prestigious areas of this early house lay below the truncheon, rather than beyond the hall.

There is no surviving evidence of a partition between the hall and this room, and it seems likely that the partition was removed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to unite the two rooms into a large public bar area. The presence of the small 19<sup>th</sup> century fireplace implies that the rooms were still separate spaces at the time the fireplace was inserted. Other indications of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations are the wide archway opening onto the rear range and the later reinforcement of the ceiling with steel joists. The room seems to have originated as an open hall, rising into the roof, with a small service room at its eastern end served by a timber stair and landing. Evidence of a former open hearth and sleeper walls for the partitions to the eastern room and stair may remain beneath the current floor surfaces. The present ceilings may cover chamfered joists.

*The main stair (Rooms G02-F01)*

The main staircase in the central part of the building has a ramped handrail and dado rail consistent with a late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The plaster of the east wall of the stair overlies parts of an earlier plank and muntin screen which formerly separated the truncheon and the hall. Evidence of chamfered muntins relating to this screen were uncovered in an inspection hole in this wall.

*The room over the stair (Room F19)*

The stair rises to a small landing (Room F01) from which doors open to east, west and north. The latter gives access to rooms in the east wing and also, via a covered bridge, to rooms in the west wing. To the south, over the stairs and half of the width of the carriageway, is a small room, now a bathroom (Pl. 15). This room is defined to its east and west by full height timber and plaster partitions, which presumably overlay the original truncheon screens, defining a first-floor room corresponding with the original passage below. Although the screens vary in the details of their construction it seems certain that they are contemporary with the roof structure and that they may be part of the primary fabric of the range. They thus provide important evidence for the plan of the ground floor.

One of these partitions (Pl. 15) lies on the east side of the room, towards the former hall; this partition infills an 'A'-frame roof truss with jowled jointed cruck heads to the wall posts on either side and a high-level cranked collar without arch bracing. It is not, therefore, identical with the main hall truss, which is fully arch braced (See below; Pl. 16). The infilling of the partition is supported upon widely-spaced vertical studs rising to sockets in the collar beam and linked by horizontal rails in short lengths, pegged into the sides of the vertical studs and onto the jowled heads of the cruck posts. Above the present ceiling of the bathroom the plaster infilling on the west side of the partition survives intact (Pl. 17); the plaster panels respect the roof timbers which are left exposed and in their natural colour. There is no smoke blackening in this bay, either on the partition or the roof timbers, which include two visible levels of purlins, the lower one with pairs of curved windbraces rising from a third purlin at a lower level, and a massive diagonally-set ridge tree. It is therefore clear that this bay of the roof was always fully enclosed.

Unusually, the timbers in this partition facing the hall are also not smoke blackened, as one might expect, but show clean faces. There are a number of possible explanations for this: the partition might post-date the flooring of the hall and the insertion of the chimney- in which case one would expect smoke blackening to extend into the roof of the bay over the truncheon (and it is perhaps odd that the truss was not fully arch braced, like its neighbour over the centre

of the hall). Alternatively, the partition is a primary part of the structure, but its surface towards the hall was entirely covered with plaster, which protected the timbers from sooting. Since sooting on the hall roof timbers is evident in other places, this seems to be the only reasonable explanation and we may conclude that the partition is primary and that the western end of the house was probably always fully storeyed.

There appears to have been no primary doorway in this partition, which looked onto the open hall; the present doorway in its northern part appears to be a late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century insertion added at the same time as the main staircase, when a corridor was formed against the rear wall of the house.

The partition on the opposite side of the bathroom, to the west, also closes an 'A'-frame truss, but it is of slightly different form (Pls. 18-19). Some of the timbers are exposed within the room, below the ceiling, though painted black. These show that the truss was also an 'A'-frame truss with a high, cranked collar and without arch braces; it was, presumably, always a closed truss or solid partition contemporary with the existing roof and the masonry shell of the present south range. At the centre of the truss a vertical wall post is visible, tenoned and pegged into the collar beam. There is also a lower tie, visible below the bathroom ceiling; this has the remains of a shaped door-head, in the form of a shallow pointed arch, cut into it (just visible behind the bathroom door). This shows that, prior to the creation of the present corridor against the rear wall of the range, the rooms were interconnecting. Further evidence of the doorway and other features may survive beneath the modern plaster.

Above the ceiling this truss is also well preserved (Pl. 19), though the apex is missing. The timbers are not smoke blackened and neither are the plaster panels infilling the apex or the body of the partition below. The first-floor rooms over the truss and to the west of it were clearly open to the roof and the present ceilings are much later additions.

#### *Rooms to the west (Rooms F05, F06, F07)*

To the west of this partition are two first-floor rooms and a short length of corridor. These rooms have clearly been divided from a single large room, presumably the principal chamber of the original house. The room was large, measuring 6.5m x 5.5m, and was heated by a (secondary?) fireplace in the north wall, which still remains, though covered by a 19<sup>th</sup> century mantelpiece with shaped brackets. This fireplace may also retain historic fabric and, perhaps, *sgraffito* decoration. Adjoining the fireplace is a second fireplace, now blocked, but the hearth remains visible in the floor. (Pl. 20). This fireplace was probably an insertion made after the rooms were subdivided. It seems to date from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The partitions dividing the room are very insubstantial, formed of simple boarding. There are few other historic features in this area and the entire roof structure at this end of the building is a modern replacement.

#### *The hall chamber (Room F02)*

The room to the east of the main stair probably represents the hall chamber, which is likely to have been created by flooring in the upper part of the hall in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This room is still divided from the room to the east (Room F04) by a third closed truss and partition, though only the upper part survives, and thus the whole first-floor plan of the medieval house seems to be intact.

The hall chamber is a magnificent space which has been cleared of later inserted ceilings and partitions to expose almost the entire historic roof structure. Only the wind braces in the lower parts of the roof remain ceiled over, though their shape can still be discerned under the modern

plaster. The room is of two bays divided by a single medieval roof truss (Pl. 21) supported by chamfered upper and lower arch braces and with a high, cranked collar. There are three levels of purlins, the lower sets being linked by curved, flat wind braces, and a very large, diagonally-set ridge tree. There are five common rafters in each bay though many appear to have been renewed. All of the timbers are now painted black, which is unfortunate, as it is difficult to discern the extent of the smoke blackening below. Clear evidence of heavy smoke blackening does survive, however, in the remaining parts of the eastern closed truss, discussed below.

The room was heated by a fireplace in its north wall, served by the eastern lateral stack. This fireplace is completely blocked and its date and character are unknown. As this room was a prestigious one, this fireplace may also retain historic fabric and, perhaps, *sgraffito* decoration. The fireplace was blocked when a corridor was created running alongside the north wall of the room, which also led to the truncation of the roof trusses on this side. This alteration was probably made in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century, to allow access between rooms which formerly interconnected directly, and to improve the privacy of the residents.

#### *The eastern chamber (Room F04)*

The eastern chamber is a small room with few surviving historic features, apart from a late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century fireplace with a cast-iron chimneypiece and grate in its south-eastern corner. The modern plaster finishes and ceiling, however, conceal the fact that this is one of the primary volumes of the medieval house.

Above the present 19<sup>th</sup> century ceiling much of the medieval roof is visible (Pl. 22), including an 'A'-frame end truss without arch bracing, with a high, cranked collar. This truss and the purlins and wind braces are irregularly smoke stained; more, perhaps, as a result of leakage from the hall than from direct exposure to the open hearth. The intensity of the smoke staining within the hall may be judged by the velvety blackening of the remains of the partition between the room and the hall (Pl. 23), which has been exposed by the removal of the lower part of the partition. This seems, like the one between the hall and room F19, to have had a pair of verticals rising into the underside of the collar and retains its plaster infilling to the apex (though this may not be primary – some medieval rooms were left open at the apex to allow smoke to percolate, as a precaution against pests and to allow heat to circulate). The underside of the collar and most of the joints are very black indeed. Above the collar level an earlier ceiling remains in place, though damaged. The ceiling plaster appears to have been laid over a base of straw lathing, now burst in places.

The room was formerly served by a stair in its north-eastern corner, though this has been entirely removed. It appears to have been unheated originally, and it may have been less prestigious than the large western chamber. This room probably interconnected only with the hall chamber, since both rooms were reached from the north-eastern stair, whereas the large western chamber seems to have been served by a stair at the north-western corner of the range and interconnected with the room over the truncheon. These independent groups of rooms may have served as 'suites' either for family and servants, or for family and children, or for paying guests and their attendants, in which case the family will have been accommodated elsewhere.

### **5.3 The east range** (Figs. 8-9, Pls. 24-32).

This range is a complex multi-phase structure which was originally detached from the south range and has developed in several stages, the earlier parts lying at the south with later extensions to the north. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century the first floor of this range seems to have served as an assembly room for the inn. This use is suggested by the large 'Venetian' window in the

end gable and by the large tripartite sash window in the west wall of the range (Pl. 24) as well as by the very large scale and height of the first-floor room. On stylistic evidence these features indicate an extensive rebuilding of the east range in the years around 1800-1840.

The building is of two storeys, covered with a double-pitched Bridgwater pan-tiled roof. It currently extends some 18m to the north of the south range, lying at an acute angle to it, beyond which lower structures including an external stair and a long lean-to shed, most recently in use as a skittle alley, extend further north. The extreme south end of the range appears to be an infill block of 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century date, built within a small courtyard which originally separated the south and east ranges. The south end of the earlier range was defined by a very large chimney stack, located only a metre or so from the rear wall of the south range and from the large hall chimneystack there. The close proximity of this chimneystack to the hall chimney must surely indicate that they are of different periods as it is probable that, if they were not, they would have been combined into a single large chimneystack serving both parts of the building. This stack and the gable wall of the building are at an angle both to the rear wall of the south range and the rest of the east range, which may indicate that the range was extended southwards early in its existence, and that it was necessary at that time to maintain a narrow passageway (now serving as a cupboard) between the buildings.

### *Exterior*

#### *East elevation*

The east range does not lie against the eastern boundary of the site, but approximately 1.5 metres to the west of this boundary, creating a very narrow passage between this and the adjacent building (Pl. 25). In places the adjoining house has 'strayed' over the boundary, so that the eastern end of the medieval south range is surrounded on two sides by the adjacent property. Although it might be assumed that this passage existed to supply light or ventilation to the eastern side of the range, this does not appear to be the case. There are very few windows in the east wall of the range, indeed, the only windows are at its southern end. The rest of the east elevation is blind, the only feature visible being an horizontal building break approximately 1.5m below the roofline, which shows that the range has been raised in height at some period, probably when the large assembly room was created at first-floor level in the 19th century. The separation of the building from the boundary may conceivably be a fire precaution designed to prevent fire spreading from adjacent properties - though the street frontage appears always to have been continuous. Alternatively, the isolation of the building from the boundary and its structural independence from the south range may have been because it was itself a fire risk. It may well have originated as a detached kitchen, these buildings being notoriously prone to taking fire.

#### *West elevation*

The west elevation of the east range has been stripped of external plaster, exposing the rubble masonry, which consists of large pink/red unsquared blocks bonded with a pale pink lime and sand mortar. There are numerous building breaks or discontinuities in this extremely complex wall and the phasing remains very uncertain. At the southern end of the elevation (Pl. 26, extreme right) the wall between this building and the south range is constructed of late 19<sup>th</sup>- or early 20<sup>th</sup>-century wire-cut, extruded brick and seems to represent a very late enclosure, at ground-floor level, of the western part of the small courtyard between the chimneystacks. Above this the covered bridge linking the east and west ranges has been cut through earlier brick masonry forming a window at the head of the main stair landing.

To the north the rubble masonry of the west wall is interrupted by a vertical break which seems to represent the jamb of a window, later blocked and infilled with more rubble masonry (Pl. 26, centre right). The opposing jamb of this opening has been destroyed and the blocking cut by a wide window opening, with a concrete lintel, lighting the rear part of the bar area. The truncated blocking of the earlier opening has made good in extruded, wire-cut brick, which dates this opening to the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Below the sill of the window a further break may be observed extending to the ground, which shows that the window superseded a doorway. The northern jamb of the window appears to be identical with that of the doorway; unfortunately, the original lintel of this opening has been destroyed; however, a large area of late brickwork above the modern concrete lintel may show that the doorway formerly had a high relieving arch and that it may have been an early opening before its mutilation in c.1900. A further blocked opening is visible in the wall above this, lighting the first-floor rooms. This lies within an area of masonry of a slightly different character which probably represents later rebuilding of the wall. The opening may have been blocked in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the assembly room was created on the upper floor.

There is more potentially early masonry to the north of the window previously mentioned, but the wall here has been breached by a large doorway, now partially blocked and converted into a window opening (Pl. 26). The northern jamb of the opening is constructed of mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick, suggesting that this, too, may be a modification of an earlier and narrower opening. The doorway has a timber lintel of relatively slight scantling surmounted by a very low and crude relieving arch – the doorway was probably driven through earlier masonry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The wall above this doorway is bulging outwards and is now restrained by an iron girder. Above this is the large tripartite sash window of the former assembly rooms, within an area of masonry utilising a greater proportion of red stone. This may be early 19<sup>th</sup> century masonry relating to the construction of the assembly rooms.

At the northern end of the range, beyond a very substantial masonry internal wall (which may represent the northern limit of the early parts of the structure) is a further section of stone building. This has thinner walls than those to the south and may be an extension. Its west wall is pierced by a pair of doorways under relatively slight timber lintels (Pl. 27). These appear to have been forced through earlier walling and may be of 19<sup>th</sup> century date. One of these openings has been partially blocked in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century to create a narrow door with a window alongside it but was originally a wide doorway like the one immediately to the south. The doorway to the north is a smaller doorway which may have opened on a workshop, store or tack room. The red rubble masonry extends over all these openings above first floor level – a lower level than appears at the southern end of the building.

#### *North wall*

The north wall of the range retains modern render and is partially obscured by a relatively modern external stair, probably a fire escape (Pl. 28). This partially obscures the base of a fine ‘Venetian’ window in the northern gable. Beyond this structure former covered sheds, later utilised as a skittle alley, extend northwards along the property boundary.

#### ***Interior***

##### *The link block (Room G06)*

This small and awkwardly shaped room (Pl. 29) was contrived within a triangular space which remained between the south range and the east range, possibly a former yard or court. The room is currently approached from the former public bar by an oval-headed archway, which

may date from the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and from the east range by a large modern opening under a concrete lintel; however, it was formerly an entirely separate room with its own fireplace and light source. The present openings to north and south may succeed earlier ones, but no evidence now survives and it is impossible to know whether this room served as a part of the public rooms of the inn, such as a private dining room or ‘snug’, or as a private parlour for the proprietors and their family.

The entire interior has been stripped, revealing walls of very rough rubble masonry. In the west wall is a fireplace embrasure of two phases, backing onto the other chimneys and, perhaps, feeding into them, though the chimney stack above has long been demolished and the opening is blocked. The original fireplace may be of late 18<sup>th</sup> century date; it had a wide rectangular embrasure which may have been designed for a hob grate. The opening was narrowed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, presumably to accept a register grate, and then subsequently blocked. The room was lit only by a small window crudely forced through from the curious light-well or passage alongside the eastern boundary of the passage; this has also been altered and its jambs have been refaced. Its original date and character are uncertain.

To the west of this are a small cupboard (Room G09) and passage (Room G08). The latter seems to have opened into the east range from the area under the main stairs of the south range and probably represents an early 20<sup>th</sup> century modification.

#### *The rear bar (Room G07)*

This was one of the areas of the interior which remained as it had been at the closure of the public house, and very few historic features were visible (Pl. 30). All the ceiling beams were boxed in with faux-rustic boarding and supported by carefully gnarled ‘olde worlde’ posts reflecting the popular style of pub *décor* in the 1960s and 1970s. There is probably an early fireplace in the south wall of this room, possibly a very large one, but no other observations are possible at this stage.

#### *Rooms beyond the bar (Room G11)*

These rooms, currently in use as stores, contained no recognisable historic features, but may originate as an 18<sup>th</sup>-century single-storey extension to the range, possibly providing additional stabling. The building may have been remodelled in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was raised to two storeys and the assembly room was constructed.

#### *Rooms above the link block (Rooms F01 and F08)*

Above the link block are a complex series of spaces providing communication between the various parts of the building. Room F01 extends the landing from the head of the main stair in the south range to meet the covered bridge to the west range and also opens between the two chimney stacks, as a trapezoidal passage linking to the first-floor room above the presumed private parlour or ‘snug’. None of these areas have been stripped, though previous owners seem to have been aware that this part of the building was formerly an open court and, for didactic purposes, have created a ‘thatched roof’ over the rear wall of the south range (with an east-*Anglian* block-cut ‘ridge’). The roof over this part of the building appears to retain some ancient and possibly reused material.

#### *Rooms to the north: the assembly rooms (Rooms F09, F10, F11)*

The entire first floor of the range to the north of this link block appears to have contained a single large room which can only have been an assembly room. These were a popular addition to inns in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century and provided space for private and public balls with

music and dancing. Their popularity declined in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, though some still survive as ‘function rooms’ in large former inns or hotels. Such rooms were usually at first-floor level and were large, well lit both by large windows and by chandeliers, heated by one or more fireplaces, and had high ceilings, often domed or decorated with plaster mouldings. In the larger examples a separate room was provided for quieter activities such as card games and there was a recess or gallery for musicians. The approach was often by a dignified staircase.

The *Rose and Crown* assembly room seems to have been converted from an earlier building of which the south wall only is visible (Pl. 31). This survives above a modern gallery and shows evidence of the tall, tapering hood of a very large fireplace – whether this served the ground or first floor, or both, remains unknown. The roof at this end of the building preserves some early timberwork and appears to have been rebuilt in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The roof structure to the north is somewhat later; a common-rafter roof of late 19<sup>th</sup> century or early 20<sup>th</sup> century date presumably replacing an earlier 19<sup>th</sup>-century roof.

The former assembly rooms has a ceiling with coved sides, perhaps formerly decorated with plasterwork, and is lit by a Venetian window at its north end (Pl. 32) and by a large tripartite sash in the west wall. It is possible that the room to the south provided the retirement room or card room. And there is a modern gallery structure or mezzanine at the south end which might conceivably replace an earlier musicians gallery. There is likely to be a blocked fireplace in the east wall, where a tall chimney stack remains visible externally. The approach appears to have been by the main stair within the carriageway, from which a wide doorway opened at the south-western corner of the room.

The room has been substantially altered in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A fire escape in the form of an external stair has been driven through the lower part of the Venetian window, the roof (and presumably also the ceiling) has been renewed, not unsympathetically, retaining the coved sides and the room has been divided into separate spaces by modern partitions. These partitions do not extend its full width, however, and it is still recognisable as a single large volume and as having a degree of architectural pretension.

#### 5.4 *The west range* (Figs. 8-9, Pls. 33-40)

This range is also a very complex building which appears to have developed in stages and may originally have consisted of separate structures of widely differing dates. The buildings seem to have been detached from the south range originally and the space is now filled by a single-storey link building – though this might replace an earlier stair turret. The earliest part of the structure seems to be its northern end, which is probably an early post-medieval structure, though very little of this now remains due to extensive 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding. The middle part of the range replaces a narrower range of buildings shown on the tithe map and appears to be largely of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century date, though its upper storey seems to have been remodelled in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to provide inn accommodation and is linked to the other buildings by a clumsily contrived covered bridge.

### **Exterior**

#### *East elevation*

At the south end of the west range the elevation of the single-storey section to the inn yard is constructed of late 19<sup>th</sup> century brick and contains openings blocked in wire-cut, extruded brick typical of the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pl. 33). There were originally two windows, one narrow, the other wider, and a doorway into this area, but these have been replaced in the early



20<sup>th</sup> century by a very wide opening with a timber lintel. It is likely that this opening formerly also had a timber frame with mullions substantial enough to bear the weight of the superincumbent structures, including the covered bridge, but this was replaced in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century by a modern metal-framed window with no mullions. The lintel is bowing and the bridge has become unsafe.

To the north of this the elevation rises to two storeys (Pls. 34-35), though the upper section is clearly later than the lower section, having extruded brick quoins and dressings to the windows. The lower part is of random rubble without dressings to the openings. It contained a single room entered by a handsome plank door with horizontal trails secured by closely-spaced double rows of domed-headed nails, under a timber lintel which seems to have been reused, since it bears a notched lap joint. The architrave is very plain and of slight scantling, with a simple bead moulding. To the north the room within is lit by a tall window, once much taller than at present, with a segmental-arched brick lintel. This may be a modification of an earlier opening with a lower head. At first-floor level are a pair of tall sash windows with margin lights, dating from c.1900. The whole upper part of the building seems to have been reconstructed at this time.

North of this a change in build is perceptible. This part of the range is shallower than the section to the south and seems to have stood just over 1.5m from the western boundary. This seems to have thicker walls and to have been a taller building. It may originally have been of cob construction and is presumably of earlier date than the masonry structures to the south.

This part of the building is essentially of three bays, defined by substantial internal beams, which still remain *in situ* (there may have been a further bay/s to the south, as discussed below). The southern bay is now occupied by an enormous oven, which necessitated the blocking of a window in the east wall. The two northern bays have also been severely altered; the front wall has been rebuilt in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with openings with concrete lintels and metal, Crittall window frames. Much of the masonry inserted at this time is of extruded, wire-cut red brick. At centre of the building a hatchway to the first-floor space remains, with a 19<sup>th</sup> century flat-arched head. The masonry above this, below the eaves, is of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date, when the roofline appears to have been raised and the upper floor converted into accommodation.

#### *The north elevation*

The north elevation of the building (Pl. 36) preserves its earliest fabric, a large area of cob walling between 0.6- 0.7m thick forming the centre of the gable end. This has unfortunately been cut both to the east and west by the rebuilding of the side elevations and, above first-floor level, by a large modern window, but the stone footings appear continuous and it is likely that the whole building was originally of cob. It is uncertain whether the north wall was originally gabled or hipped. The eastern corner clearly shows, in the character of its quoins, how the eaves line has been raised on that side, whereas the western wall has been wholly rebuilt.

#### *The west elevation*

This elevation, probably at one time a thick cob wall, has been entirely demolished and rebuilt in modern brick when the building was converted into pub toilets. The wall is now of red brick with small metal-framed Crittall windows. A modern metal staircase rises between this wall and the site boundary wall, providing access to the first floor.

## *Interiors*

### *The Kitchens (Rooms G13, G14, G15 and G16)*

At the south end of the range Room G13 was probably constructed on the site of a former stair turret in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but in its present form it is of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The room has been heavily modernised to form part of the pub kitchens and no historic features are currently visible. The room appears to have been unheated and may have served as a food preparation room, a larder, pantry or china store (The small blocked window in the east wall may suggest such a storage use) but little evidence remains.

The adjoining rooms (Rooms G14, G15 and G16) are divided by modern partitions and were probably a single volume until they were converted into the pub kitchen. Only the northern room preserves any visible historic fabric. This room has exposed masonry of several periods in its north wall, the greater part of which is occupied by a very large oven (Pl. 37) with a domed brick vault, probably of mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century date. This has a low stoke-hole to the east, a central opening with an iron door to the main, vaulted space and a flue (possibly of earlier date) in the south-western corner. The oven was clearly constructed to function on an industrial scale; this part of the building may have been rebuilt as a bakehouse in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As there is no provision for a large fireplace capable of housing a kitchen range or other facilities for boiling and grilling it is probable that the bakehouse was supplementary to a second kitchen, probably in the ground floor of the west range, until that area was annexed to form part of the bar.

### *The northern room (Room G17)*

The oven occupies the southern bay of the earliest part of the range which, as previously described, is essentially a three-bay structure. This has since been converted into pub toilets and very few original features survive. The principal beams supporting the first floor are very substantial timbers with chamfered undersides and deep housings for substantial joists (Pl. 38). Three such beams remain, with sockets in both sides. The third beam overlies the southern wall of the oven, and this, too, has sockets in both sides which suggests that, unless the beams have been reused in their present context, the building may have extended further south.

### *First-floor accommodation (Rooms G14, G15, G16)*

These rooms probably date from the very late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the upper storey of the building was remodelled, probably as guest accommodation for the inn. The entire upper storey and the roof appear to have been rebuilt to provide two new guest rooms. Small cast-iron fireplaces were installed and large sash windows with margin lights provided (Pl. 39). The covered bridge linking this range with the main stair was also installed and a corridor provided to access the northern room of the pair (this room was later subdivided to provide an ensuite bathroom). Both rooms retain attractive cast-iron fireplaces with integral chimneypieces and tiled hearths.

### *The northern rooms (Rooms F17 and F18)*

The two northernmost rooms appear not to have been converted at the same time as the southern rooms, though this part of the range was also rebuilt. Room F17 overlies the oven and room F18 the toilet. These spaces appear to have served as a loft until they were converted into accommodation in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. The roof structure of this part of the building is of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date and was left exposed. The roof timbers were cut in a saw mill, using a circular saw, but preserve carpentry techniques familiar from Somerset buildings of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, including staggered butt purlins secured within the principals by pegs (Pl. 40).

## 5.5 Other Structures

### *The skittle alley and other buildings*

Running from the northern end of the east range for a considerable distance along the eastern boundary of the site is a long, low building which was formerly in use as a skittle alley. This structure is of 19<sup>th</sup> century date and appears to have developed in several phases. It preserves a roof with staggered purlins of a type characteristic of post-medieval buildings in Somerset. When first constructed it was originally an open-fronted cart shed or lincay, the front supported on posts. This was later enclosed with concrete blockworks to form the skittle alley and the building somewhat curtailed in length. Before its truncation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century this structure turned at an angle to close the end of what must have been an impressive inn yard. A further structure stood against the western boundary opposite the skittle alley but, of this, very little now remains and its function is uncertain.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

### *The south range*

This range represents a well-preserved medieval three-room-and-cross-passage house, probably of the very late Middle Ages – the late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Although the original divisions of the house at ground-floor level and the western end of the roof have been lost, the first floor retains three substantial primary partitions and thus the evidence for the original plan. The house certainly had an open hall with an arch-braced roof and an open hearth, as the smoke blackening of the eastern screen shows, but this was only of two bays, and the grandest accommodation appears to have lain below the cross passage or truncheon, where the large ground-floor room was provided with an elaborately moulded ceiling. These rooms must have been served by chimneys and were always fully enclosed from the hall, as there is no smoke blackening of the surviving original roof timbers. There were two upstairs rooms, interconnecting via a doorway with a pointed arched head. The large chimney serving this area appears to be secondary and there may have been a large lateral stack on the front elevation, which later gave way to a substantial bay window. At the opposite end of the building a small, unheated room with a chamber over and a timber staircase may have been a lower-status service room, reversing the hierarchy normal in a typical medieval house. This part of the roof is irregularly smoke stained, suggesting that this area was only partially enclosed and relied on the open hearth for warmth.

At a later stage, probably in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the hall was enclosed and a new two-storey chimney added at the rear of the range. The earlier suite of two chambers to the west was now augmented by a second suite of rooms at the eastern end, though whether this was guest or family accommodation remains unknown. The building seems to have remained essentially unchanged until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the truncheon was widened to form a carriageway and staircase, the façade was remodelled and the roofs enclosed with modern ceilings

### *The east range*

The east range is a very complex structure and its interpretation is difficult; however, it is suggested that it originated as a single-storey kitchen block sited at a distance from the rear wall of the main house and away from the neighbouring property boundary as a precaution against fire. The thick, masonry internal wall crossing the northern end of the range and the east and west walls are the most likely parts of the building to retain early masonry, though probably only in the lower parts of the walls.

The early building may originally have been roughly square in plan; however, it was enlarged, perhaps in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, by extending it to the south, and it was then provided with a new chimney stack, at an angle to the original building – a compromise respecting the awkward alignment of the earlier south range. It probably remained in use as a kitchen at this stage, as it was not yet physically connected with the main house. It is possible that the building was enlarged to improve the catering facilities following the conversion of the house to an inn.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries a small trapezoidal room was created linking the south and east ranges, infilling part of the small triangular courtyard between the two buildings. This may have served as a small parlour off the eastern end of the hall. Although the southern part of the range may have remained in use as a kitchen, the rest of the east range appears to have ceased to serve a domestic use. The wide openings in this wall, and their ‘industrial’ character, suggests that this part of the building was remodelled to provide a series of large loose boxes for the accommodation of prestigious horses. The upper part of the building was subsequently remodelled to provide an assembly room accessed from the new main stairway and carriageway in the south range.

#### *The west range*

This range also contains early fabric, though it is not well preserved and the original function of the range is uncertain. The northern part of the building – a thick-walled cob structure of two storeys and of three or four bays – may have served as a brewhouse, malthouse or possibly a stable before it was partially incorporated into the inn kitchens in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At this time a range of 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings with a narrower footprint than the present range (possibly including a stair turret serving the western rooms in the medieval house) were demolished and rebuilt on the same alignment as the older building. A very large oven was inserted within the shell of the earlier structure, which may suggest that the building was now serving as a bakehouse- presumably in addition to the kitchens in the east range. Later in the century, or very early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the range was again remodelled to provide extra accommodation at first-floor level, accessed by a covered bridge.

## 7. SITE ARCHIVE

The site records have been compiled into a fully integrated site archive which is currently held at Oakford Archaeology’s offices under project number 1958, pending deposition with the ADS. Details of the building recording, including a pdf copy of the final report will be submitted to the on-line archaeological database OASIS (oakforda1- 511659).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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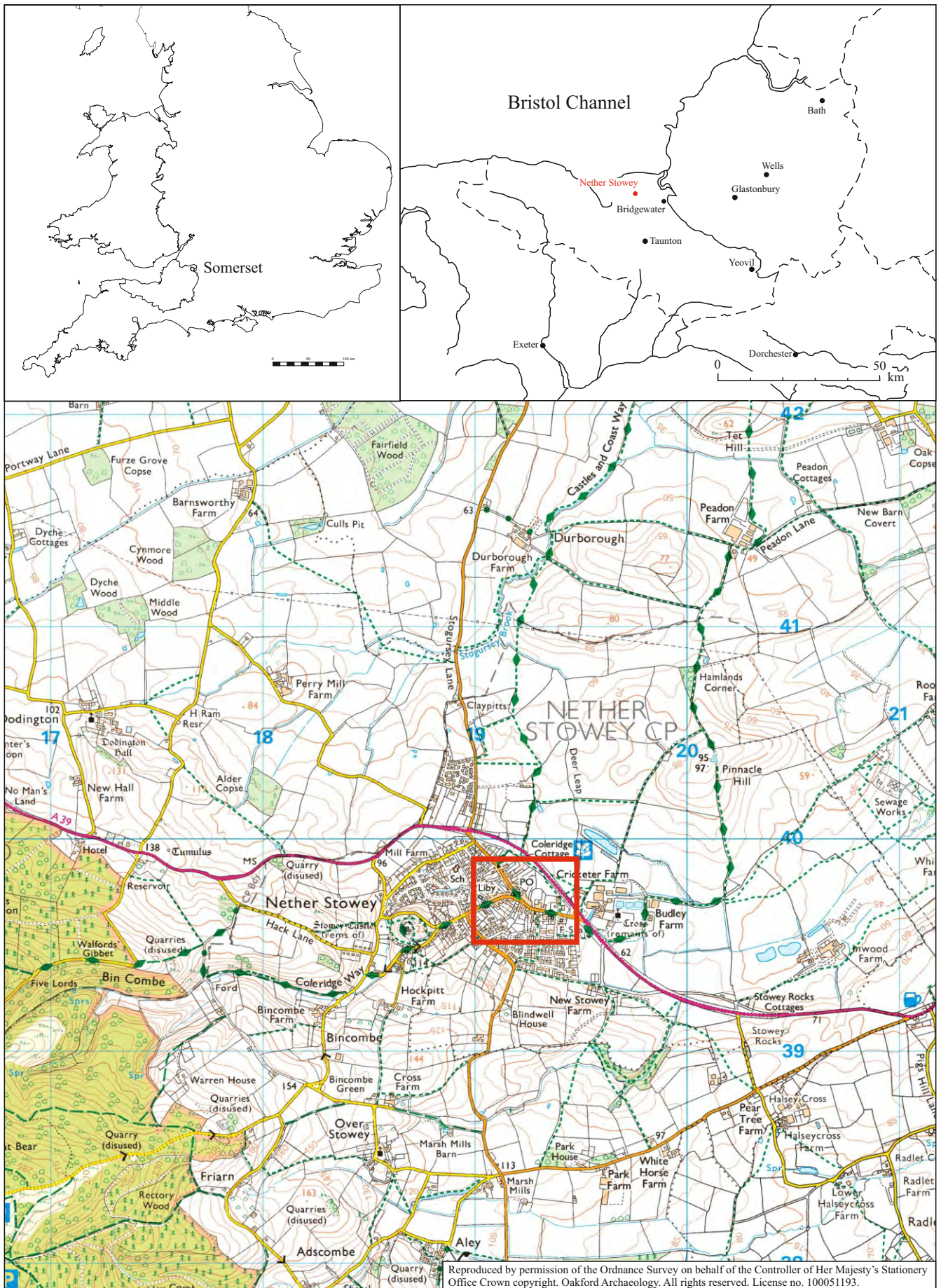


Fig. 1 Location of site.



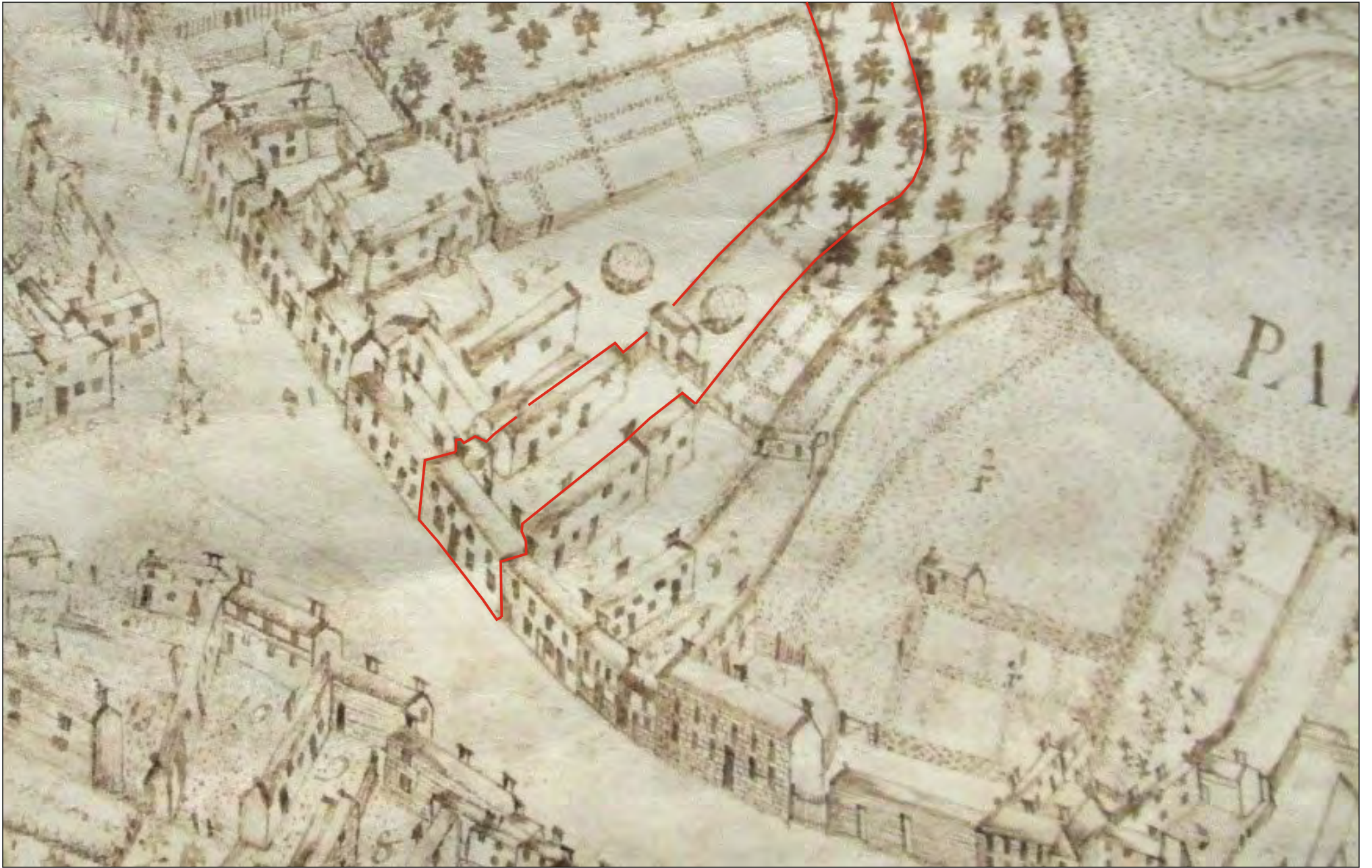


Fig. 2 Detail from the c.1750 Map of Nether Stowey by Thomas England.





Fig. 3 Detail from the *c.*1775 Map of Nether Stowey by Thomas England.





Fig. 4 Detail from the 1840 Nether Stowey Tithe Map.

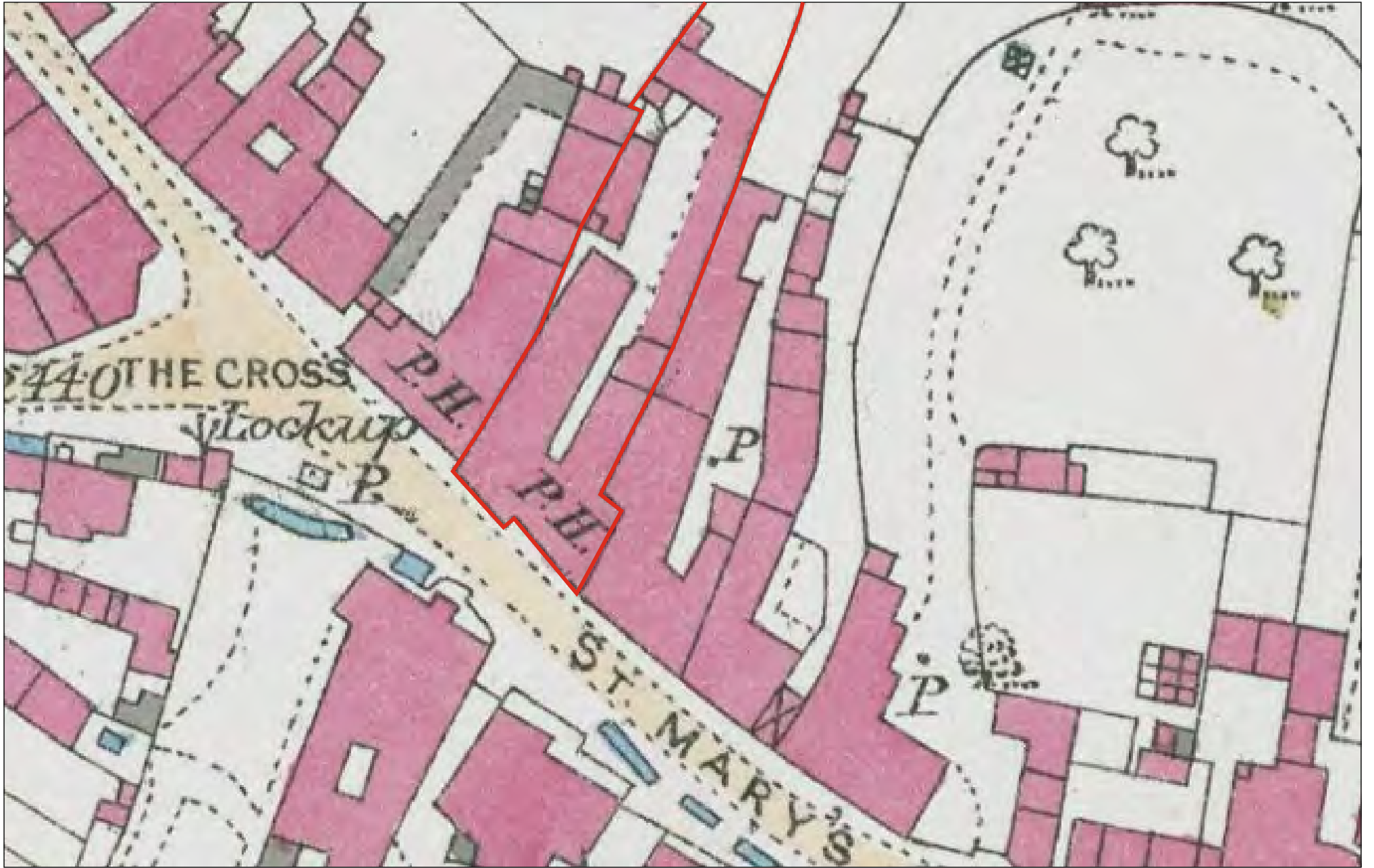


Fig. 5 Detail from the 1886 1st edition Ordnance Survey Map Somerset Sheet XLIX.6.

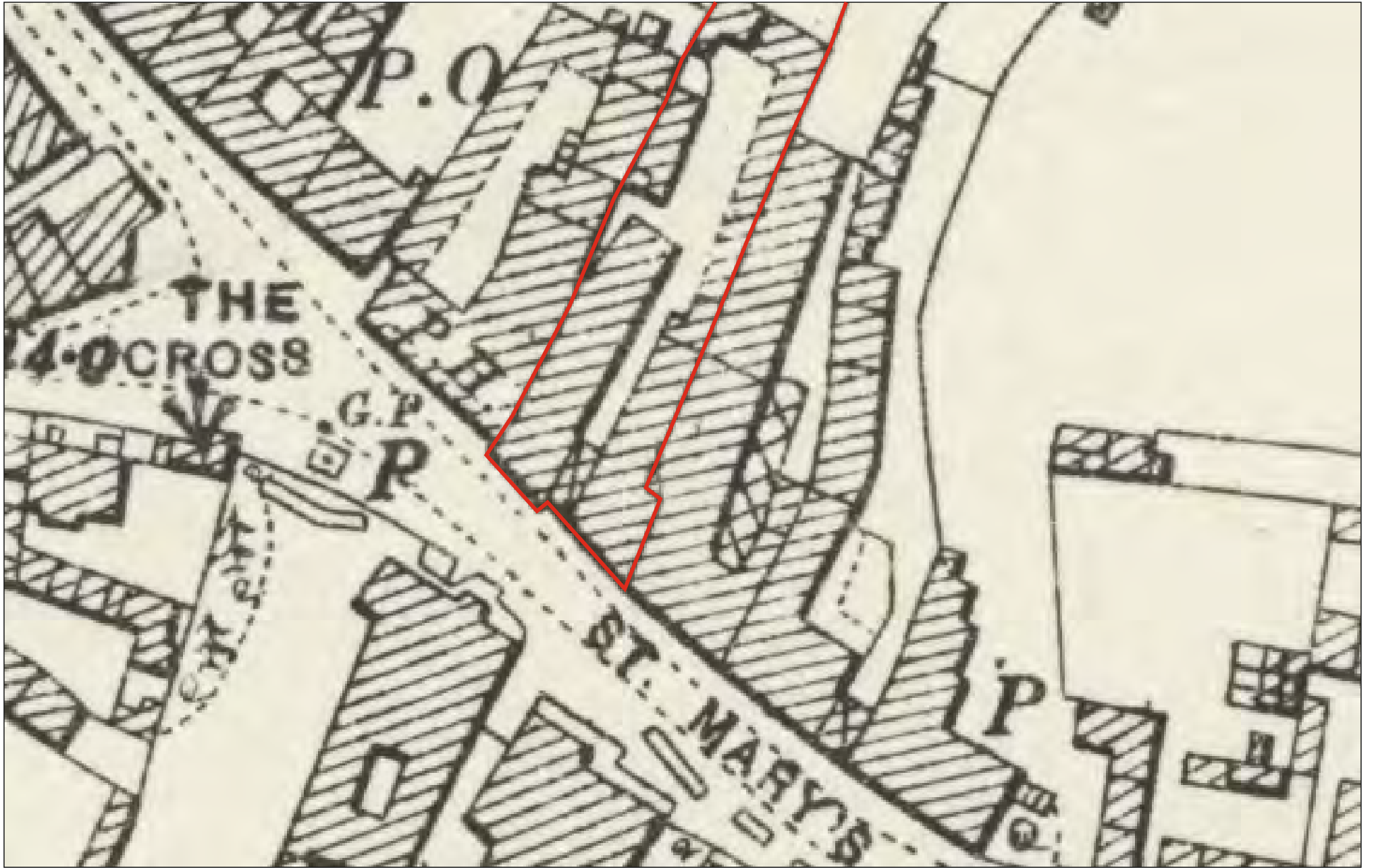


Fig. 6 Detail from the 1904 2nd edition Ordnance Survey Map Somerset Sheet XLIX.6.





Fig. 7 Early 20th century photograph of the Rose and Crown Hotel.



Fig. 8 Plan of ground-floor showing location of observations and suggested phases of development.







Pl. 1 General view of the south range of the Rose and Crown. Looking northeast.



Pl. 2 General view of the rear ranges with the carriageway through the south range of the building in the centre. 2m scale. Looking southwest.



Pl. 3 General view of the rear elevation of the south range showing raised wall level. Looking southeast.



Pl. 4 General view of blocked window (right) and coping stone on west side of chimneystack (centre left). Looking southwest.





Pl. 5 General view of the carriageway through the south range of the building with the 19th- or early 20th-century double doors at its south end. 2m scale. Looking southwest.



Pl. 6 General view of the main staircase. Looking northeast.



Pl. 7 General view of northwestern timber studwork late 18<sup>th</sup>- or early 19<sup>th</sup>-century partition showing position of former medieval partition (centre) and blocked doorway (right). 2m scale. Looking northwest.



Pl. 8 Close-up of vertical post headed with a 'gunstock' shouldered mortice and tenon joint and two peg-holes. Looking northwest.





Pl. 9 General view of the western room (G05) divided by a central spine wall containing a flat arch and a 'gothick' arch, and by a subsidiary screen forming a glazed porch within the door to the carriageway. Looking northeast.



Pl. 10 Close-up of the ceiling beam showing deep hollows and a central moulded fillet on each side. The stops at the south end of the beam are convex run-out stops of a type typical of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Looking south.



Pl. 11 General view of row of three cast-iron columns with wide bay window in the background. Looking southwest.



Pl. 12 General view of the south elevation of room G01 showing the remains of the infilled cruck chases. 2m scale. Looking south.





Pl. 13 General view of heavily rebuilt fireplace in north elevation of room G01, with wide archway into the adjacent trapezoidal room G06 to the right. 2m scale. Looking northeast.



Pl. 14 General view of two small window embrasures rising with a former corner stair. Looking northeast.



Pl. 15 General view of the full height timber and plaster partition on the east side of room F19. Looking south.



Pl. 16 General view of the full height timber and plaster partition on the west side of room F02. Looking northwest.





Pl. 17 Close-up of high-level cranked collar without arch bracing. Looking southeast.



Pl. 18 General view of original partition on west side of room F19. Looking northwest.



Pl. 19 Close-up of cranked collar and without arch braces, with intact plaster infilling. Looking northwest.



Pl. 20 General view of the later fireplace in the north elevation with the original fireplace visible in corridor F05. Looking northeast.





Pl. 21 General view of the single medieval roof truss supported by chamfered upper and lower arch braces and with a high, cranked collar. There are three levels of purlins, the lower sets being linked by curved, flat wind braces, and a very large, diagonally-set ridge tree. Looking southeast.



Pl. 22 General view of A-frame end truss without arch bracing and with a high, cranked collar. Looking southeast.



Pl. 23 Close-up of the eastern elevation of the partition between the former hall and inner room showing smoke staining. Looking west.



Pl. 24 General view of the west elevation of the east range with the large tripartite sash window on the first floor. Looking northeast.





Pl. 25 General view of the very narrow passage between the east range and the adjacent building. Looking northeast.



Pl. 26 General view of the west elevation of the east range with the late 19<sup>th</sup>- or early 20<sup>th</sup>-century enclosure, at ground-floor level, of the western part of the small courtyard between the chimneystacks, visible to the right. Looking northeast.





Pl. 27 General view of extension with a pair of doorways under relatively slight timber lintels. Looking southeast.



Pl. 28 General view of the north wall of the east range, with the 'Venetian' window partly obscured by a relatively modern external stair, probably a fire escape. Looking south.



Pl. 29 General view of the small and awkwardly shaped room which was contrived within a triangular space which remained between the south range and the east range, possibly a former yard or court. 2m scale. Looking north.



Pl. 30 General view of the rear bar with its faux-rustic boarding and supported by carefully gnarled 'olde worlde' posts reflecting the popular style of pub *décor* in the 1960s and 1970s. Looking southwest.





Pl. 31 General view of the south wall of the earlier building showing the remains of a tall, tapering hood of a very large fireplace and chimneystack extending to full height of the gable. Looking southwest.



Pl. 32 Close-up of the 'Venetian' window at the north end of the former assembly rooms. Looking northwest.



Pl. 33 General view of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century single-storey brick infill at the south end of the north range containing openings blocked the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Looking north.



Pl. 34 General view of the east elevation of the west range showing rebuilt upper elevation. Looking north.





Pl. 35 General view of the north end of the west range rebuilt in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with openings with concrete lintels and metal Crittall window frames. Looking southwest.



Pl. 36 General view of the north elevation of the north range showing the large area of cob walling forming the centre of the gable end. 2m scale. Looking southwest.





Pl. 37 General view of the mid- to late 19th century oven in room G15. 1m scale. Looking north.



Pl. 38 General view of the principal beam supporting the first floor with chamfered undersides and deep housings for substantial joists. Looking southwest.



Pl. 39 General view of room F14, part of the late 19<sup>th</sup>- or early 20<sup>th</sup> century, remodelling of the upper storey of the building to provide guest accommodation for the inn. 2m scale. Looking southwest.



Pl. 40 Close-up of the late 19th century roof structure in F18 with staggered butt purlins secured within the principals by pegs. Looking southeast.