

# 126 HIGH STREET

Oxford, Oxfordshire



## HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING (refurbishment of ground floor shop)

September 2019  
FINAL

Document No: TJC2019.99  
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## SUMMARY OF PROJECT DETAILS

<b>OASIS ID:</b>	thejesso1-334385
<b>Planning Reference:</b>	Oxford City Council – 19/00038/LBC
<b>TJC Project Code:</b>	C24
<b>Project Type(s):</b>	Archaeological Photographic Survey Structural Watching Brief
<b>National Grid Reference:</b>	SJ 5143 0619
<b>County:</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>District/Unitary Authority:</b>	Oxford City Council
<b>Parish:</b>	St Michael & St Martin & All Saints
<b>Elevation (above Ordnance Datum):</b>	c.65m
<b>Designation Status(s):</b>	Grade I listed building (NHLE No.1047260) 12.01.54 Central (University and City) Conservation Area 05.04.71
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Oliver Jessop MCI fA
<b>Reviewed by</b>	James Thomson MCI fA
<b>Date:</b>	September 2019
<b>Version:</b>	FINAL (23.09.19)

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**Appendix 1** – Photographic survey records

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## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

*This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological building recording and a architectural photographic recording of the ground floor shop unit and basement at 126 High Street, Oxford. The building is a Grade I Listed building (NHLE 1047260), located at National Grid Reference SJ 5143 0619.*

*The aim of the project was to provide a permanent, publicly accessible, photographic and archaeological record of aspects of historic fabric that might be exposed during the refurbishment of the property.*

*The building comprises a large medieval townhouse, the present structure originating in the 15<sup>th</sup> century though much altered, particularly within the ground floor and shopfront area. In addition, the site also takes in the cellar of the property, now used for storage, which may retain fabric of earlier phases of development on the site which date back to the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century.*

*The full historical interest of the building was not fully appreciated until a scheme of emergency archaeological recording was undertaken in 1972, identifying the remains of 16<sup>th</sup> century range to the rear that was almost entirely lost to demolition. During the subsequent watching brief, a stone garderobe, was discovered, along with a substantial section of painted wall plaster; and beneath the service basement were earlier rubbish pits including late Saxon pottery.*

*The archaeological photographic record has successfully captured the differing character of each of the internal spaces and the external appearance of building.*

*Only one area within the building produced new evidence for its former structural development, comprising of the survey of a large timber beam that was exposed alongside the east wall of the main ground floor room. This beam was in a secondary location and re-used, however it would have originally acted as a ceiling/floor beam, the evidence for which is derived from a row of large empty mortices with timber pegs along one of the side faces. The size and nature of the beam would be consistent with surviving timberwork still in-situ elsewhere within the building and a 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century date is likely.*

*The archaeological and architectural record that has been produced will be archived with the Oxford History Centre and uploaded to the online OASIS database – ref. thejesso1-334385.*

# I INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological building recording and a architectural photographic recording of the ground floor shop unit and basement at 126 High Street, Oxford (**Figure 1**).

## AIMS

The principal aim of the project is to record archaeological remains within the site, to make a permanent record in advance of its refurbishment, and to contribute to the understanding of the origin and development of the building in accordance with a condition of planning permission (No. 19/00038/LBC, condition 3).

The specific objectives of the programme of archaeological recording were to:

1. Identify and record any significant historic fabric/wall coverings revealed during the buildings works;
2. Identify and record any significant structural features or relationships revealed by the building work; and
3. Investigate the chronology, construction and development of the building.

The scheme of works was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (TJC 2019) approved by David Radford of Oxford City Council (OCC) in April 2018.

## DISSEMINATION

Copies of this report will be distributed to the Client, and the Oxford Historic Environment Record. In addition, a digital copy will be uploaded to OASIS (Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS) with the reference number: **thejesso I-334385**. A summary of the results will be submitted to South Midlands Archaeology.

The project archive, including all record photography, research notes and a copy of the report, will be deposited with the Oxford History Centre in Cowley.



Figure 1: Site location plan

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### STANDARDS

The project will conform to current national guidelines as set out in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation of standing buildings or structures (ClfA 2014a); Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives (ClfA 2014c); and Historic England's *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (2016).

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

The archaeological record comprised of monitoring during the refurbishment programme, including 35mm film photographic record and measured survey (see WSI TJC 2019). Oliver Jessop MCIFA and Marcus Abbott MCIFA attended site on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

### PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

The exterior and interior areas of the building affected by the refurbishment programme was recorded comprising 35mm black and white record photography. Metric ranging poles of an appropriate size, will be used as a scale and details of each image will be recorded on pro-forma recording form. Digital images were also taken to act as a secondary backup (included in archive).

The photographic record comprised:

1. General views of the building within its wider setting (HE 2016, photography item 1).
2. The overall appearance of the principal rooms (HE 2016, photography item 4).
3. Any external or internal detail, structural or decorative, as exposed during the course of the works (HE 2016, photography item 5).
4. Any dates, signage, graffiti, makers plates etc. (HE 2016, photography item 7).

### MEASURED SURVEY

Architectural drawings supplied by the project architect were used as a base for marking observations during the course of the works. The drawn record comprised:

5. Plans identifying the location and direction of accompanying photographs (HE 2016, drawn record item 8).
6. A phased plan of the development of the extant buildings was also prepared, accompanied by written site notes and sketches.
7. A photogrammetric and drawn record of an exposed timber in **G1**.

### 3 SITE LOCATION

#### SITE LOCATION

The site (**Figure 1**) is located on the southern side of the High Street, in the centre of the City of Oxford, c.105m to the east of Carfax and directly opposite the southern entrances to the Covered Market. The property is three storeys in height with a cellar below the front half of the building. There is a small yard to the rear and is built up against the adjacent properties on either side (**Figure 2**).

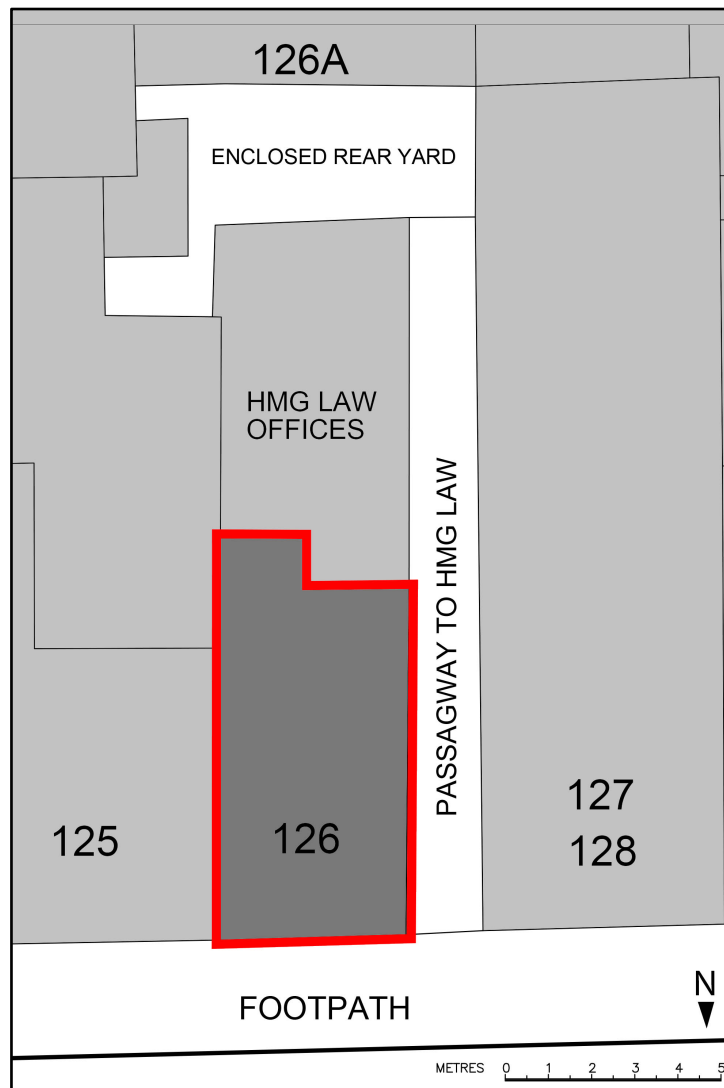


Figure 2: Site layout

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## 4 HISTORY

### 126 HIGH STREET

No.126 High Street is a Grade I Listed Building (NHLE 1047260) and represents the earliest surviving non-University/religious building within Oxford that is located in the heart of the medieval settlement close to Carfax on the High Street.

The building has a well-documented history of ownership including a large number of local worthies, including several mayors (Munby 1975; TJC 2018). Originally occupied by a sequence of mercers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and grocers through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century uses of the shop were more varied and shorter lived. The core historic fabric is dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century which is evident in the exposed timber framing on the upper floors and in the ceiling beam and wall fabric within the cellar.

The shop and shopfront are predominantly 20<sup>th</sup> century and retain almost no legibility of the previous appearance of the building, apart from a plaster cornice in the main frontage room of the ground floor shop.

The rear range has been largely rebuilt c.1972, however does still retain elements of a timber framed window and a section of decorative painted wall plaster.

## 5 BUILDING RECORD

### INTRODUCTION

The following section presents the results of the archaeological recording during the refurbishment of the property in May 2019. The images taken as part of the photographic recording are included as **Appendix 2**, and a summary description of the additional archaeological observations are included below.

A detailed appraisal of the historical development of the building and a summary of previous archaeological recording has already been prepared in a heritage assessment (TJC 2018) to which reference should be made for a greater understanding of the evolution of the property.

### LIMITATIONS AND WEATHER CONDITIONS

There were no significant limitations to access during the archaeological recording and the weather was dry and sunny at the time of survey.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS

Following the careful removal of modern shop fixtures and fittings the shell of the ground floor shop unit and basement rooms were surveyed (**Figure 3**). Black and white and digital photography was undertaken throughout to form the primary archaeological record (see **Appendices 1, 2**).

Each space was examined for evidence of earlier features, surfaces and structural elements however there was only one area of the building room **G1** where new features of archaeological significance were identified.

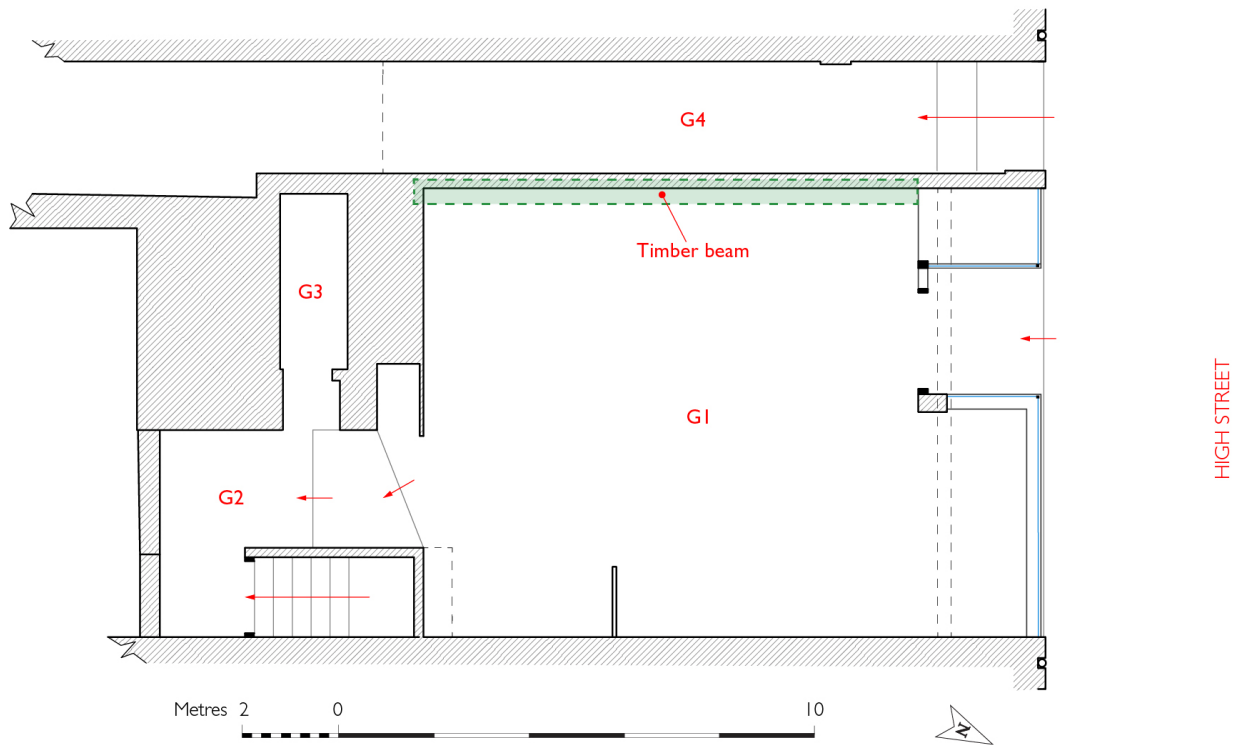
#### *The Basement/Cellar*

The basement, or cellar forms part of the earliest phase of the building being dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. There was originally direct access to the street from this level via an external flight of steps, however this is no longer visible.

The only elements of historic fabric that were exposed and not obscured by modern (mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> Century) cladding and flooring was along the south wall (**Appendix 2.9**) and the ceiling beams in **C1** and **C2-C4** (**Appendices 2.13-15**). However, there were no new features of archaeological significance exposed within this part of the building.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



BASEMENT PLAN

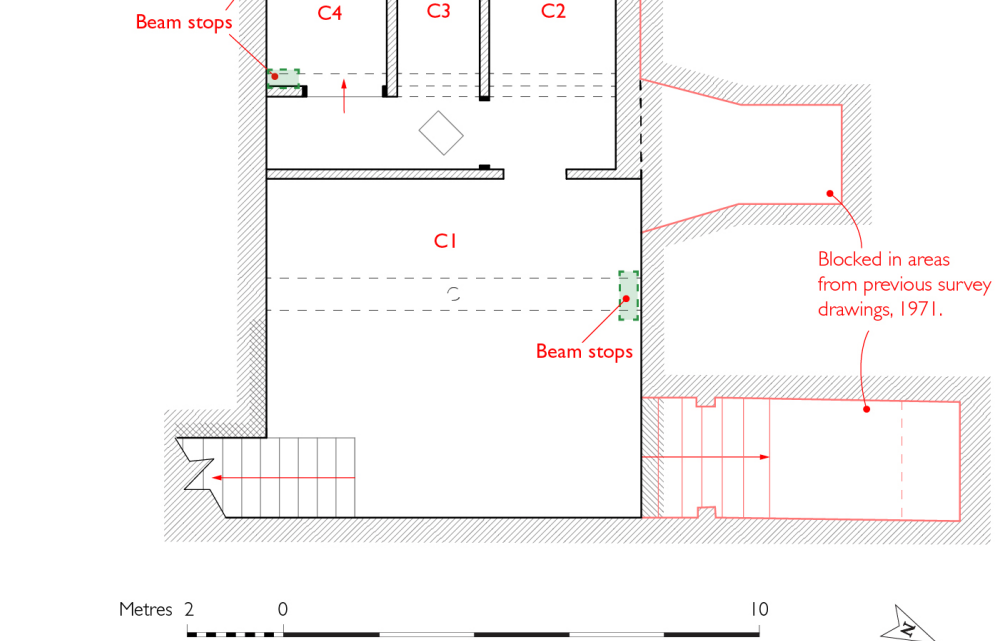


Figure 3: Location of archaeological features



### *Ground Floor*

The watching brief has confirmed that only modern materials and recent alterations within the building have been removed as part of the soft strip (**Appendices 2.4, 2.6**).

Only one significant feature has been noted as part of the archaeological monitoring, which is a substantial timber beam along the west side of the ground floor (**Figure 4**). This feature is consistent with being once part of the medieval structural frame that comprises the building, however it has been reused and is now in a secondary position.

The beam is c.4.5m in length with a scantling measurement of 35cm. Along the exposed side face are a row of ten empty mortices, wall with remnants of peg holes, some of which are still in-situ (**Appendix 2.19-2.22**). There is a chamfer on the lower edge and traces of paint on the lower edge which demonstrate that the room below the beam had a white painted ceiling. There is a substantial metal strap around the beam secured with hand-made nails (**Appendix 2.20**), which relates to its secondary re-use in its current location.

The beam once functioned as a spine beam for a timber floor and is likely to represent part of an earlier floor that was set at a lower level than the existing ceiling in **G1**. Evidence for this is derived from the dimensions of the room and the secondary remodelling of the room in the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries to incorporate the existing high ceiling with a plaster cornice.

Of additional note were metal strips that had been wedged down the side of the beam, apparently to obscure the former chamfered edge against the timber floorboards. These pieces of metal were very damaged and fragmentary, however on one face they were embossed with the words 'McVitie & Prices' (**Appendix 2.26**). The fragments of tin are of a design that is consistent with products from the Edinburgh biscuit company McVitie & Price, which was expanded in 1875 when Charles Edward Price joined the company.

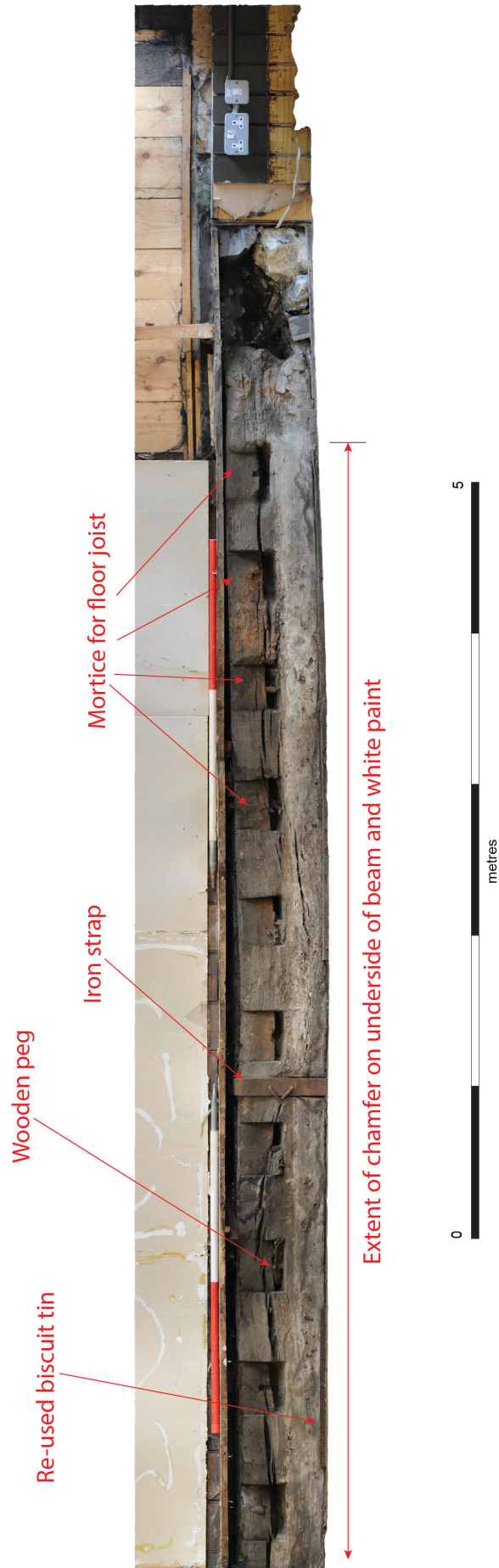


Figure 4: Photogrammetric image of timber beam in G1

## 6 DISCUSSION

This scheme of archaeological building recording during the refurbishment of the ground floor shop unit and basement at 126 High Street in Oxford has enhanced our understanding of aspects of the building, notably in regards to the discovery of a re-used floor beam and carved details on the ceiling beams in the basement. The archaeological photographic record has provided a lasting and permanent record of aspects of the building which have been obscured by modern 20<sup>th</sup> Century shop fittings and surfaces.

The survey of the exposed timber beam in **GI** has confirmed that it does appear to be an element of the former medieval timber frame that survives elsewhere within the building, although is in a secondary location separate from the timber structure. Its dimensions and the locations of the mortices indicate that it is a re-used principal floor joist, potentially originally located within the ceiling of **GI**. It is possible that when the existing retail space which has a high ceiling was formed to include the addition of the plaster cornice in c. the original ceiling was removed and replaced. The beam was then re-used to add additional support to the internal wall against the external passageway to the rear of the property.

It should be noted that the exposed beam has been retained in-situ and although covered up again, the new surface finish have been secured in such a manner that it does not damage the historic fabric.

Within the basement no new features were exposed, however it was noted in this scheme of archaeological survey that there are a variety of carved chamfer stops on the ends of the ceiling beams, which appear to be contemporary with the primary phase of the building previously surveyed by Munby in 1971 (see article in *Oxonensia* 1975).

In accordance with section 3.2 of the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (TJC 2019) a series of research questions were proposed that might be addressed during the archaeological recording which comprised:

1. What was the original plan form, circulation and functional divisions within the structure, and how did that use change through time?
2. Does any evidence survive to shed light on the extent, character and date of activity at the site predating the existing buildings?
3. Does surviving evidence improve our understanding of the form, evolution and function of housing in Oxford?

The archaeological recording has not added to our understanding of questions 2 and 3, although has provided new information relating to the re-use of historic fabric during the post-medieval period, assumed to be as part of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Century remodelling of the interior.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst the results of this scheme of archaeological recording have increased our understanding of the historic fabric that comprises 126 High Street, it is considered that they are not of such significance to warrant formal publication apart from within the CBA journal - South Midlands Archaeology.

## 7 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### AUTHORSHIP

This report was prepared by Oliver Jessop MCIfA, with graphics by Marcus Abbott MCIFA. The fieldwork was undertaken by Oliver Jessop MCIfA and Marcus Abbott MCIFA. The text was reviewed by James Thomson MCIFA

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Stephen Woodcock is thanked for commissioning the survey and for arranging access.

David Radford is acknowledged for monitoring this scheme of work and has provided background information from the Oxford Historic Environment Record.

### PROJECT ARCHIVE

The fieldwork archive has been accepted for deposition by the Oxford History Centre and will be submitted during October 2019.

*Its contents include:*

- Heritage Assessment (TJC 2018.110)
- Written Scheme of Investigation (TJC2019.45)
- Interim report (TJC2019.77)
- 2x b/w photographic negative sheets (35mm Films 1, 2)
- b/w photographic prints (x33 7x5)
- colour photographs (x71 images on gold CD) and (x21 7x5 prints)
- A3 rectified image and drawing of ceiling beam
- Site notes and drawings (4x A4)
- Copy of final report (TJC2019.99)

## 8 SOURCES AND REFERENCES

### *Bibliography*

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). 2014a. *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation of standing buildings or structures*. CIfA: Reading

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). 2014c. *Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*. CIfA: Reading

Historic England. 2016. *Recording Historic Buildings – a guide to good recording practice*. English Heritage.

Munby, J. 1975. '126 High Street: the archaeology and history of an Oxford House', *Oxonensia*, XL, 254-308

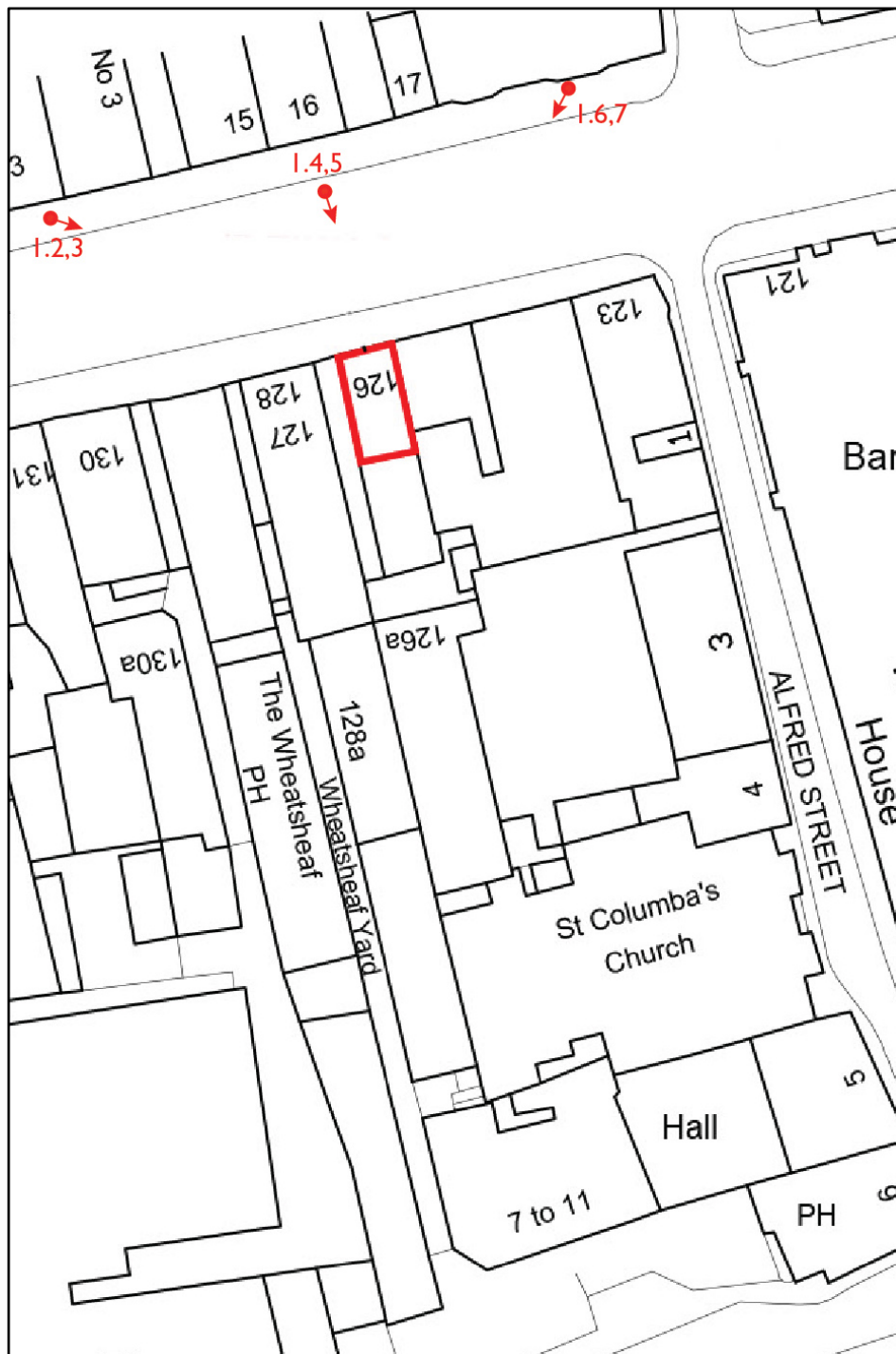
The JESSOP Consultancy (TJC). 2018. *126 High Street Oxford: Heritage Assessment*. (Unpublished) Report No.2018.110.

The JESSOP Consultancy (TJC). 2019. *126 High Street Oxford: Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording*. (Unpublished) Report No.2019.45

The JESSOP Consultancy (TJC). 2019. *126 High Street Oxford: Interim report for structural watching brief*. (Unpublished) Report No.2019.77

APPENDIX I:

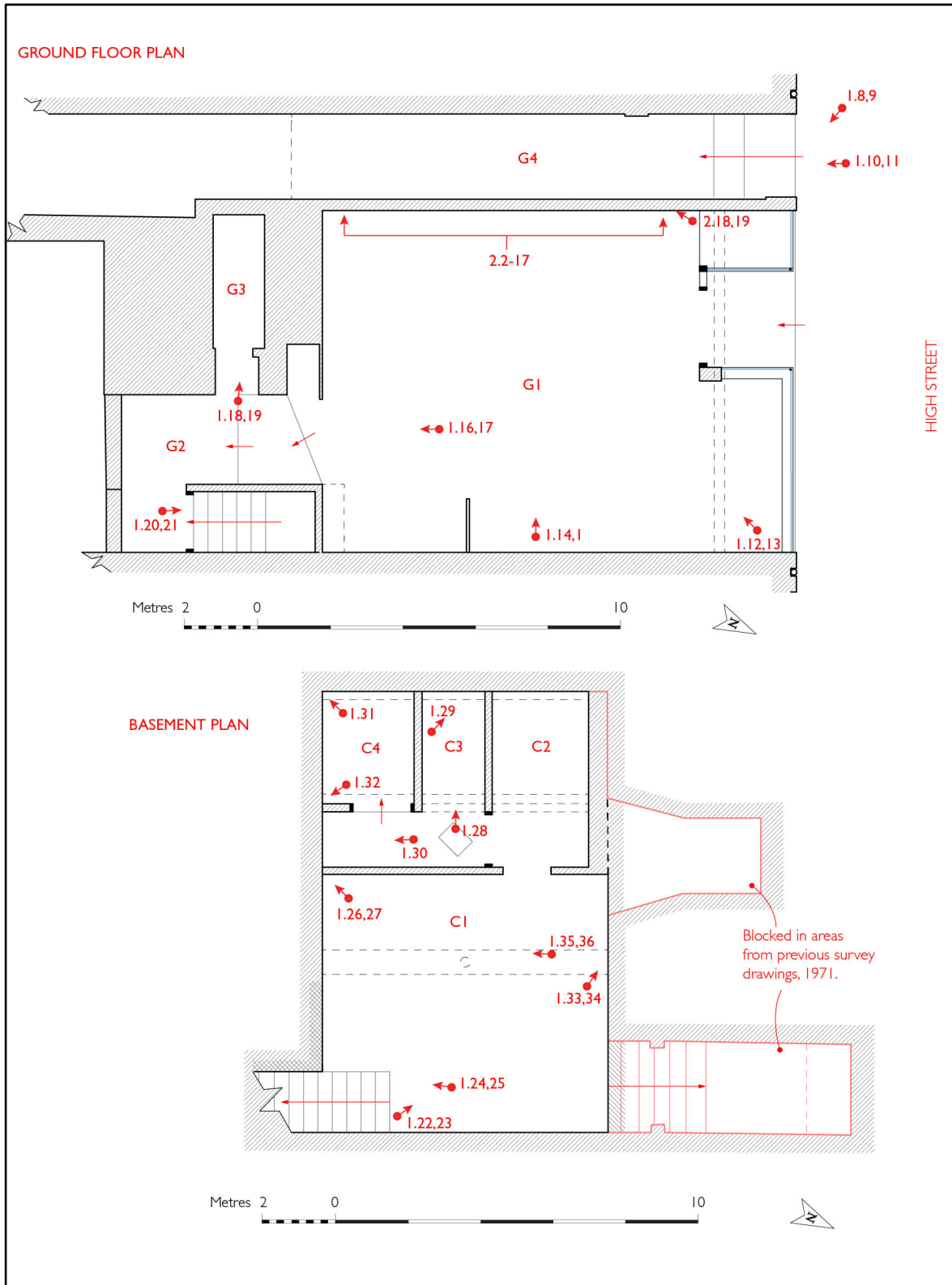
PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY RECORDS



Appendix I.1: External locations of photographic viewpoints (Films 1-2)

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Appendix I.2: Internal locations of photographic viewpoints (Films I-2)

PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTERS

Appendix I.3: Film I (b/w 35mm)

Film & Frame	App. No.	Room	Description	Scale (m)	Direction	Date
1.1			ID Shot			
1.2	2.1	External	GV of facade	2m	SE	30.05.19
1.3		External	GV of facade	2m	SE	30.05.19
1.4	2.2	External	Detail of shop front	2m	S	30.05.19
1.5		External	Detail of shop front	2m	S	30.05.19
1.6		External	GV of facade	2m	SW	30.05.19
1.7		External	GV of facade	2m	SW	30.05.19
1.8	2.3	External	Detail of shop front	2m	Se	30.05.19
1.9		External	Detail of shop front	2m	Se	30.05.19
1.10		External	Detail of passageway	2m	S	30.05.19
1.11		External	Detail of passageway	2m	S	30.05.19
1.12	2.4	G1	GV of room and exposed beam	2m	SW	30.05.19
1.13		G1	GV of room and exposed beam	2m	SW	30.05.19
1.14	2.5	G1	GV of room and exposed beam	2m	W	30.05.19
1.15		G1	GV of room and exposed beam	2m	SW	30.05.19
1.16	2.6	G1/G2	View looking towards G2	2m	S	30.05.19
1.17		G1/G2	View looking towards G2	2m	S	30.05.19
1.18		G3	GV of room/store	1m	W	30.05.19
1.19	2.7	G3	GV of room/store	1m	W	30.05.19
1.20	2.8	G2	View looking down stairs	1m	N	30.05.19
1.21		G2	View looking down stairs	1m	N	30.05.19
1.22		C1	GV of room	1m	NW	30.05.19
1.23	2.9	C1	GV of room	1m	NW	30.05.19
1.24		C1	Detail of base of stairs	2m	S	30.05.19
1.25	2.10	C1	Detail of base of stairs	2m	S	30.05.19
1.26		C1	Detail of exposed stonework	1m	SW	30.05.19
1.27		C1	Detail of exposed stonework	1m	SW	30.05.19
1.28	2.11	C3	Detail of exposed stonework	2m	W	30.05.19
1.29		C3	Detail of ceiling beam	-	NW	30.05.19
1.30	2.12	C4	Detail of stonework in south wall	2m	S	30.05.19
1.31	2.13	C4	Detail of beam stop	-	SW	30.05.19
1.32	2.14	C4	Detail of beam stop	-	SE	30.05.19
1.33	2.15	C1	Detail of beam stop	-	NW	30.05.19
1.34		C1	Detail of beam stop	-	NW	30.05.19
1.35		C1	Detail of iron loop in beam	-	S	30.05.19
1.36	2.16	C1	Detail of iron loop in beam	-	S	30.05.19

Appendix I.4: Film 2 (b/w 35mm)

Film & Frame	App. No.	Room	Description	Scale (m)	Direction	Date
2.1			ID Shot			
2.2	2.17	GI	GV of timber beam	1m	SW	30.05.19
2.3		GI	GV of timber beam	1m	SW	30.05.19
2.4	2.18	GI	Detail of joints on timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.5		GI	Detail of joints on timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.6	2.19	GI	Detail of joints on timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.7		GI	Detail of joints on timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.8		GI	Detail of iron strap on timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.9	2.20	GI	Detail of iron strap on timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.10	2.21	GI	Detail of joints on timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.11		GI	Detail of joints on timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.12	2.22	GI	Detail of joints on timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.13	2.23	GI	Detail of joints on timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.14	2.24	GI	GV of timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.15		GI	GV of timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.16		GI	GV of timber beam	5cm	SW	30.05.19
2.17	2.25	GI	GV of timber beam	1m	S	30.05.19
2.18	2.27	GI	Detail of opening in wall	1m	S	30.05.19
2.19		GI	Detail of opening in Wall	1m	S	30.05.19
2.20		GI	Detail of biscuit tin	5cm	-	30.05.19
2.21		GI	Detail of biscuit tin	5cm	-	30.05.19
2.22	2.26	GI	Detail of biscuit tin	5cm	-	30.05.19
2.23		GI	Detail of biscuit tin	5cm	-	30.05.19
2.24			void			
2.25			void			
2.26			void			
2.27			void			
2.28			void			
2.29			void			
2.30			void			
2.31			void			
2.32			void			
2.33			void			
2.34			void			
2.35			void			
2.36			void			
2.37			void			

APPENDIX 2:

PHOTOGRAPHS



Appendix 2.1: General view of main façade, looking south (2m scale; Film 1.02)



Appendix 2.2: Detail of shopfront, looking south (2m scale; Film 1.04)



Appendix 2.3: Detail of shopfront, looking south-east (2m scale; Film 1.08)



Appendix 2.4: General view of interior of **G1** following soft strip; note beam (2m scale; Film 1.12)

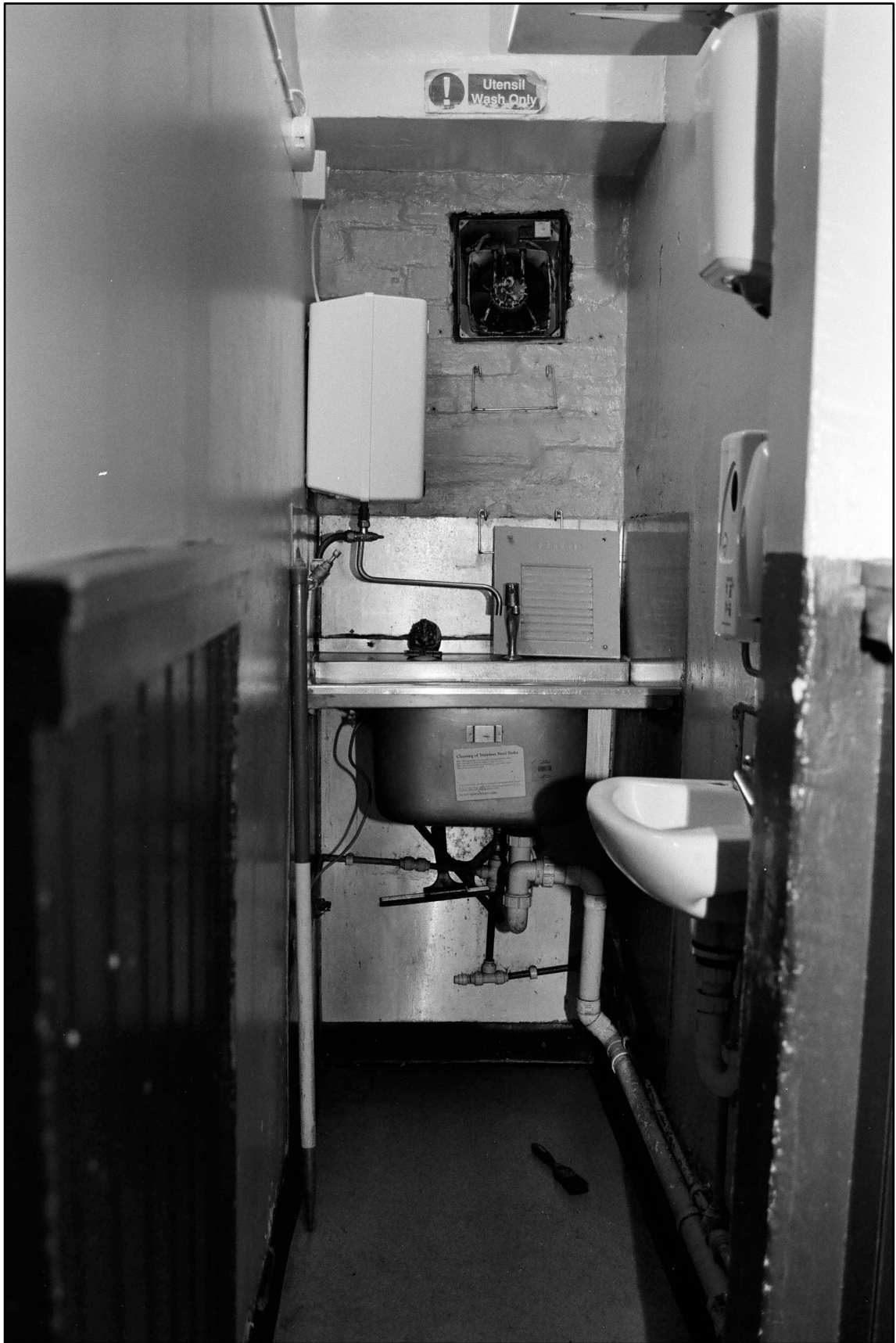


Appendix 2.5: General view of interior of **G1** following soft strip; note beam (2m scale; Film 1.14)





Appendix 2.6: Detail looking into G2, looking south (2m scale; Film 16)



Appendix 2.7: General view G3, looking west (1m scale; Film 1.19)



Appendix 2.8: General view looking down the stairs in G2 (1m scale; Film 1.20)

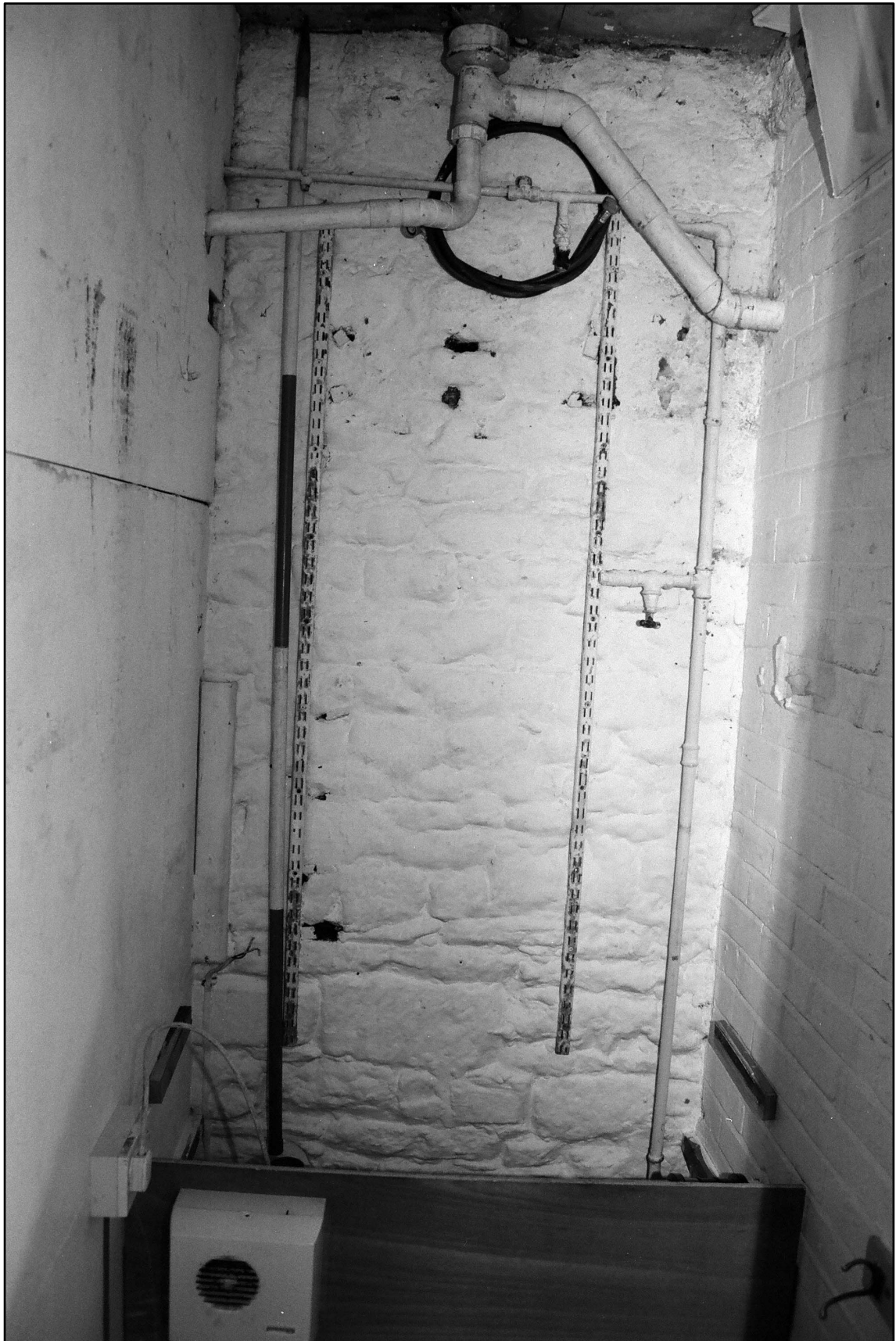


Appendix 2.9: General view of C1, looking north-west (1m scale; Film 1.23)





Appendix 2.10: Detail looking up the stairs in CI (2m scale; Fim 1.25)



**Appendix 2.11:** General view of masonry wall in **C3**, looking west (2m scale; Film 1.28)



**Appendix 2.12:** General view of masonry wall in **C4**, looking south (2m scale; Film 1.30)





Appendix 2.13: Detail of beam stop in **C4**, looking south-west (Film 1.31)



Appendix 2.14: Detail of beam stop in **C4**, looking south-east (Film 1.32)



Appendix 2.15: Detail of beam stop in CI, looking north-west (Film 1.33)



Appendix 2.16: Detail of ceiling loop on beam in CI, looking south (Film 1.36)

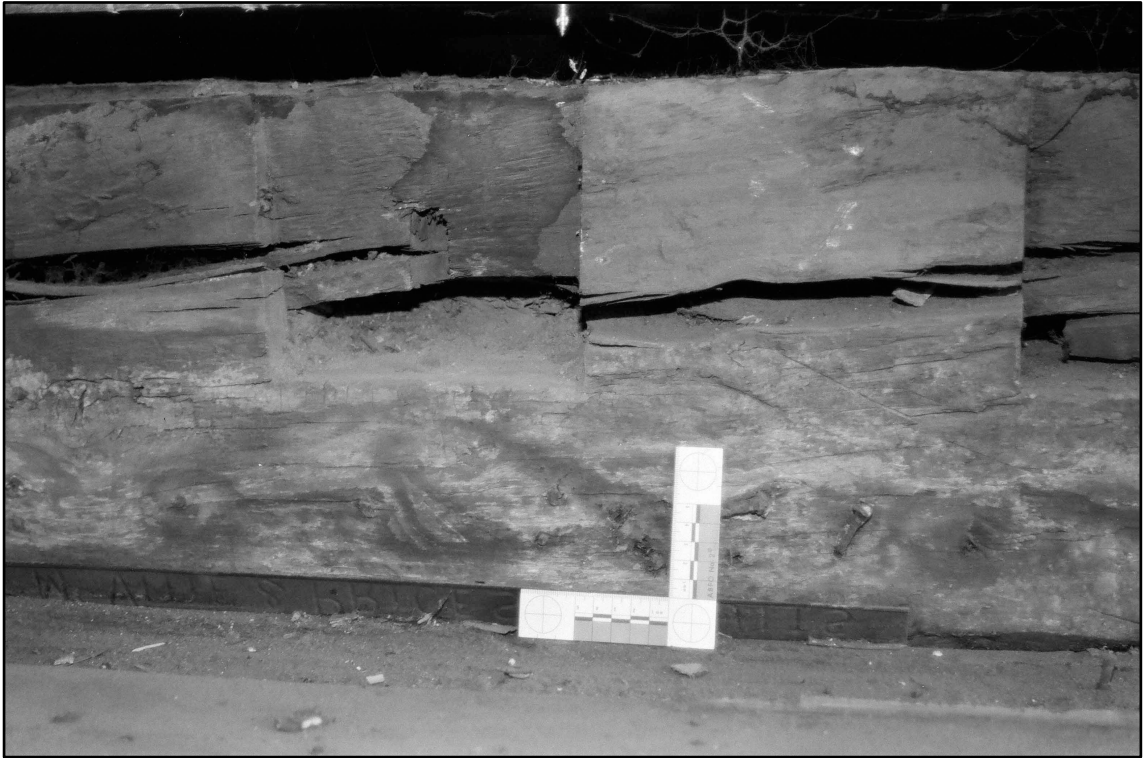




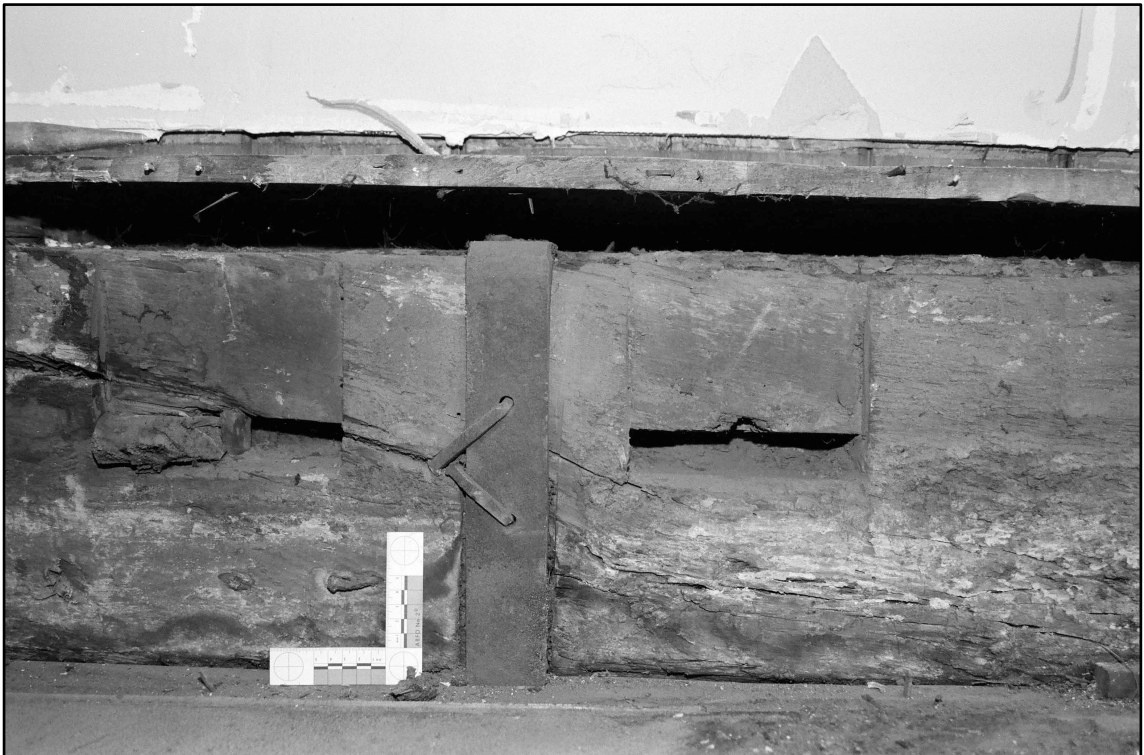
Appendix 2.17: General view of re-used beam in **GI**, looking west (1m scale; Film 2.02)



Appendix 2.18: General view of re-used beam in **GI**, looking west (5cm scale; Film 2.04)



**Appendix 2.19:** Detail of mortice in re-used beam in **G1**, looking west (5cm scale; Film 2.06)



**Appendix 2.20:** Detail of metal strap in re-used beam in **G1**, looking west (5cm scale; Film 2.09)



Appendix 2.21: Detail of mortices in re-used beam in **GI**, looking west (5cm/1m scale; Film 2.10)



Appendix 2.22: Detail of mortice in re-used beam in **GI**, looking west (5cm scale; Film 2.12)



**Appendix 2.23:** Detail of white paint on re-used beam in **G1**, looking west (Film 2.13)



**Appendix 2.24:** General view looking along re-used beam in **G1** (1m scale; Film 2.14)





Appendix 2.25: General view looking along re-used beam in **GI** (1m scale; Film 2.17)



Appendix 2.26: Detail of biscuit tin fragment pushed against beam in **GI** (5cm scale; Film 2.22)



**Appendix 2.27:** Detail of exposed wall in North-west corner of G1 (1m scale; Film 2.18)