

# Archaeological Building Recording Services

**An Archaeological Standing Building Survey.  
The Former Methodist Chapel,  
Tower Square,  
Tunstall,  
Stoke on Trent.  
(NGR SJ 85897 51218)**

**On Behalf of Mr A. Machin**



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**October 2013**

**Planning Permission No  
SOT/55078/55079**

**ABRS Project No 2013-MCTS**

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**An Archaeological Standing Building Survey of The New Connexion Methodist Chapel  
(former), 27-28 Tower Square, Tunstall, Stoke on Trent.  
(NGR SJ 85897 51218).**

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(former), 27-28 Tower Square, Tunstall, Stoke on Trent.  
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Gerwyn Richards

**Summary**

*This document is an archaeological standing building survey of The New Connexion Methodist Chapel (former), 27-28 Tower Square, Tunstall, Stoke on Trent (SJ 85897 51218), commissioned from Archaeological Building Recording Services (ABRS) by Mr A. Machin in advance of the proposed conversion of the upper floors of the building to residential use.*

*The building was originally built as a New Connexions Methodist Chapel in 1821. It is brick-built. Historical sources indicate worship ceased following the construction of a larger Chapel nearby, the building was sold in 1852 and converted to retail use. The early conversion has severely affected the original building, as a result there is very little coherent evidence of the building's early life as a Chapel. A ceiling rose exposed on the first floor may be part of the original Chapel, but this cannot be confirmed with any certainty.*

*Documentary sources record that a gallery was added to the Chapel to increase seating capacity and cartographic evidence suggests that the Chapel may have been extended towards the west either during its use as a Chapel or soon afterwards. It is difficult, therefore to confirm what, if any of the current building is part of the original Chapel.*

*The true importance of the Chapel is its historical significance, reflecting the rise of 19th century non-conformity in strong working class areas of the country. It also reflects one of the multitudes of sects and break-away missions seen in non-conformity. An important indication of "democratic" religion.*

*The archive will be deposited with The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery under the Accession Number 2013.LH.46.*

**1. Introduction**

Archaeological Building Recording Services (ABRS) were commissioned by Mr A. Machin to undertake an archaeological standing building survey of The New Connexion Methodist Chapel (former), 27-28 Tower Square, Tunstall, Stoke on Trent (NGR SJ 85897 51218 (Figures 1 & 2)). Planning permission has been granted to convert the upper floors of the building to residential use (Planning Permission No SOT/55078/55079). The building is a brick-built former Chapel, believed to date from the early 19th century, and located within the historic town centre of Tunstall. The Archaeologist, Stoke on Trent City Council has recommended that an archaeological standing building survey to English Heritage Level 2 as defined in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006) be carried out prior to any proposed works being carried out. The building is Grade II listed and located within the Tower Square Conservation Area.

The project was completed in accordance with the *Brief for Historic Building Recording, 27-28 Tower Square, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 5AB* (July 2013) as issued by the Archaeologist (Stoke on Trent City Council) and followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct*, and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (2008).



**Figure 1**  
Site Location

Reproduced from 1:50000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office.  
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The building subject to this historic building recording lies within the historic town centre of Tunstall, on the south west corner of Tower Square (*Figure 2*). Tunstall is the northernmost of the original six towns which became the city of Stoke on Trent and is the fourth largest. It is situated in the very north west of the city borough, its north and west boundaries are the current city limit. There is documentary evidence of a market held in the Manor of Tunstall in 1525. The current market square, now known as Tower Square was laid out in 1816. Writing in 1795, J. Allbut describes Tunstall as ... “*the pleasantest village in the pottery*” (VCH vol. VIII).

The Methodist New Connexion (MNC) came into being on August 9th, 1797 as a result of a schism within the Methodist movement. Following the refusal of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference to discuss a number of issues of administration raised and believed to be vital to the future expansion of Methodism by Alexander Kilham, William Thom, Stephen Eversfield and Alexander Cummin, the four established the New Connexion at Ebenezer Chapel, Leeds. The three key issues were; Times of Sunday services should be determined by those who wished to attend them and not by an anxiety to avoid the usual hours of service in the



Anglican Church, Holy Communion should be administered by Methodist Itinerant Ministers in their own meeting houses, and finally, lay members should share in the government of the Church at Circuit and District Meetings and at the annual Conference of Preachers.

The MNC became well established in the Midlands and in the North of England, at its second conference, held in Sheffield in 1798, a total of 15 ministers and 17 laymen representing 10 organised circuits attended. Sadly, in the same year Alexander Kilham died of exhaustion and was buried in Hockley Chapel, Nottingham.



**Figure 2**  
Proposed Development Area (in Red).  
(1:1250).

In 1847, the MNC Golden Jubilee year, there were 334 Chapels, 141 ministers, 20,000 members and 38,000 Sunday School pupils in Britain. There was a further 30,000 members in Canada following its first mission sent to the county in 1845 under John Addyman. In 1866 the President of the MNC Conference, Rev. Samuel Hulme wrote to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference suggesting the idea of Methodist Unity. The Rev. William Arthur, President of the Wesleyan Methodists responded “*We have seen days of division and breaking down. God grant that we may now see days of building up*”. Re-unification, however, did not occur until October 1932.

The Methodist New Connexion Chapel, Tower Square can trace its origins to the early 1820's. As early as 1821 regular meetings were being held in the house of William Evans (13 Williamson Street). Stoke on Trent City Archives hold Baptismal Registers commencing in 1821 and continuing until 1952. The associated Sunday school was usually held in the open at a timber yard belonging to Thomas Walker (Walker Street, Brownhills); during inclement weather the school was moved into the joiner's shop. Once the congregation grew too large for Evans's house, it too moved to Walkers Yard. In 1823 John Ridgway bought the land on the south west corner of the recently laid out market-square from the lord of Tunstall manor and the Chapel, named Mount Tabor was built in 1824, Mount Tabor is located in Galilee, it is the location of a battle between the Israelite Barak under Deborah, and the army of Jabin under Sisera, in the 12th century. It is believed by Christians to be the site of the Transfiguration of Jesus.



**Figure 3**

Hargreaves's map of the Potteries, 1832 (6 inch to 1 mile): Ref. No.: SM 14 A

The Chapel is clearly recorded on Hargreaves's map of the Potteries drawn in 1832 (*Figure 3* (Ref No. SM14 A)). The Chapel, however does not appear to be as large, east to west as it currently stands, suggesting that it may have been extended at some point in the past. Another notable feature is the lack of an alley between the Chapel and the building to the north. The alley separates the current building from number 29 Tower Square and runs the full length of the block. Hargreaves's map shows the alley turning through ninety degrees to the rear of the Chapel and joining Piccadilly Street to the south. This again suggests the Chapel recorded by Hargreaves has been altered significantly.

The chapel grew in popularity throughout the early 19th century and seating space was extended by the building of galleries. In 1841, following the expulsion of Joseph Barker (1806–1875) from the New Connexion and opposition from the followers of Barker, known as Barkerites in the town the New Connexion was disrupted and lost ground. Barker was expelled on the grounds that he “*had denied the divine appointment of baptism, and refused to administer the ordinance*”. Barker's expulsion lost to the Connexion an estimated 29



societies and 4,348 members. Barker became the pastor of a church in Newcastle-on-Tyne, which had also left the Methodist New Connexion.

Mount Tabor, however, survived; in 1851 the chapel which could seat 420 only had a congregation of 80 in the morning and 90 in the evening. In 1851 a religious revival following a prolonged period of social upheaval on a national level took place which reached Tunstall. Mount Tabor soon became too small and a site was purchased for a new chapel on Victoria Terrace (now Lascelles Street). The old chapel was sold in 1852, worship however, carried on in the upper schoolroom for a further five years until the new chapel was built in 1857. The new Chapel seated 394 and remained active until 1953, the board of Trustees being finally dissolved on July 12th 1954. This later Chapel was demolished in the late 1960s.



**Figure 4**

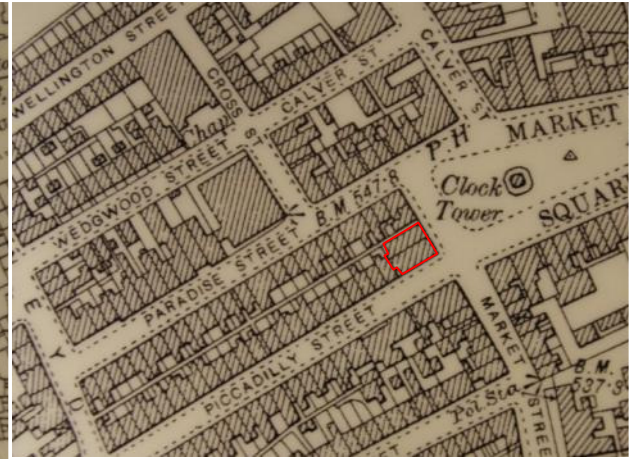
Tower Square c.1900, Chapel Right of Centre.  
(Henshall, D. Images of England, Tunstall (2006))

Following its closure as a Chapel and subsequent sale Mount Tabor was subdivided into two units, becoming numbers 27 and 28 Tower Square (*Figure 6*). The building continued in use as retail units. A shop front was added to the Tower Square elevation (*Figure 4*). An examination of the Trustees Minute Book (1888-1954) held by Staffordshire Records Office (Ref D5481/2/17/8-10) lists the assets held by the Chapel in the mid 1920s, the old building is not included, confirming its sale prior to this date.



**Figure 5**

First Edition Ordnance Survey 1882  
(Sheet XI.8)



**Figure 6**

First Edition Ordnance Survey 1899  
(Sheet XI.8)

The early edition Ordnance Survey maps (*Figures 5 & 6*) record the outline of the now former Chapel building. However, it is not until the second edition, 1899 that the building is recorded as being two buildings. There had also been some alterations to the western (rear) of the building, both since Hargreaves's map and between the two Ordnance Survey editions. Evidence again that the building is likely to have undergone some degree of structural alteration. The building recorded by the 1899 edition is identical to the current building.

## 2. Aims and Methodology

The specific objectives of the standing building survey were as follows:

- To provide a written, drawn and photographic record of the building prior to its permitted conversion.
- To ensure the long term preservation of the information through deposition of the record and a summary written report with an appropriate depository.
- The site based element of the Historic Building Recording programme involved the review and verification of existing measured survey drawings and the completion of photographic and written records.
- Desk-based research included the analysis of readily available documentary and cartographic sources including Stoke on Trent City Archives & Staffordshire Records Office.

*Orientation:* The building is orientated east-north east to west-south west (*Figures 2 & 21*) with the principal elevation facing east-north east, for ease of description this is taken hereafter to be east to west with the principal elevation facing Tower Square to the east. Where the terms 'left', 'right', 'front' and 'back' etc are used in the report, this is in relation to this principal elevation as viewed from the east (Tower Square). A letter prefix has been allocated for significant partitions where required.

As far as is known, no previous historic building recording has been undertaken of the building. The ground floor and cellar are not included in the proposed works and are currently occupied and trading as a retail premises, as a result analyses and recording of these areas was limited.

The site visit was carried out by Gerwyn Richards on October 30th 2013.

### 3. Description of the Building

The former Mount Tabor Chapel is Grade II listed, it was listed in 1972 (Listed Building No 1290371). The listed building description records it thus:

*Former chapel of Methodist New Connection now in use as shops. 1821, with later modification. Painted brick with plain tiled roof. Pedimented facade to Tower Square with inserted early 20th Century shop fronts to ground floor, with a continuous fascia carried on console brackets and windows with leaded upper lights and some decorative glazing. Central Palladian window in stuccoed architrave above, flanked by 2 windows in shouldered architraves. Plaque in pediment. Elevation to Piccadilly Street of 2 storeys, rising to 3 over sloping ground to west. All windows altered, through original flat arched heads survive, and there is one early 19th Century doorcase with moulded architrave.*

Mount Tabor is a brick-built two storey former Chapel building located on the south westernmost corner of Tower Square. It has a pedimented principal elevation fronting Tower Square with stucco render. The Piccadilly Street frontage (south facing) is painted brick while both the north and west facing elevations are exposed brick. The bricks themselves are locally made red bricks (brick dimensions 9 x 2 ¾ x 4inch). On the north facing elevation there is no discernible bond visible. The south facing elevation has a mixture of bonds, with Flemish Bond (one stretcher brick between header bricks, the header brick being centred over the stretcher brick in the course below) predominant towards the western end. There is a full length brick plinth on the Piccadilly Street frontage; the north facing long elevation is plain. The roof is plain tiles.

The principal elevation appears to consist of the original Chapel frontage with its pediment and central Palladian window with stuccoed architrave above; there are two flanking windows with shouldered architraves. The plaque on the pediment is inscribed 1821, apparently contradicting documentary evidence that the Chapel was built in 1824. The date may therefore, relate to the founding of the Chapel rather than the actual construction of the building. The later inserted shop front ground floor consists of a continuous dentilated fascia with windows which have attractive leaded upper lights with geometrical design decorative glazing. A photograph taken in c.1900 (*Figure 3*) shows this same shop front suggesting it dates from the late 19th century and is largely original. The first floor windows are timber framed, the flanking windows are top hinged casements, the Palladian window is non-opening, and none of the frames are original.

Both of the long elevations appear more complicated, there is a straight joint visible in the brickwork on both elevations, suggesting the building consists of two phases, east and west. It is possible that this straight joint is a reflection of the record made by Hargreaves in 1832 (*Figure 3*) where the Chapel appears shallower east to west. The brick corbelling at eaves level continues for the full length of the elevation. There are a number of both original and inserted windows on the Piccadilly Street elevation (*Figure 8*); the original window openings are tall with their original flat arched heads, none of the window frames themselves are original. Towards the west, near the eaves is a shallower window, to the right of which is a blocked window, apparently of the same dimensions (*Figure 9*). These windows correspond

with the second floor of this bay. The flat arched head of both these windows match those seen on the other windows indicating the windows are contemporary. There are three blind windows towards the east, two on the ground floor and a one on the first floor. The brickwork appears to be the same as the building as a whole so it appears these blind windows are a design feature rather than later alteration work, all have flat arched heads. The two remaining windows are clearly later insertions as they neither match the original windows in style, dimensions and level, and indeed both straddle the straight joint (*Figures 10 & 21*).

There is an attractive early 19th century door surround with moulded architrave and dentilated cornice above central to the west bay (*Figure 24*). There is an over-door light opening above a clearly modern door, the glazing in the over-door light has also been replaced by modern glass. To the west of the door is a brick arched opening at ground level, most likely a coal chute to a cellar.

The north facing elevation is similar in lay out to that of the southern elevation. The only significant difference is the lack of blind windows, there is one first floor window towards the east which mirrors the open window on the south elevation, confirming that the blind windows are indeed design features. There is a blocked door towards the east of the bay, immediately adjacent to the straight joint (*Figure 24*).

The northern elevation of the western bay is very similar in appearance to its southern counterpart. Again there are two shallow windows near the eaves and original window openings on the ground floor. This ground floor window may, in part be original as it consists of a horizontal sash with thick glazing bars, probably early to mid 19th century in date, on the lower sash of eight lights, the upper sash is a modern single light (*Figures 11 & 24*), and the remainder of the window frames are modern insertions. There is an original first floor window opening at an unusual level, with only minimal clearance between it and the shallow window above (*Figure 24*). There is a blocked door immediately to the east of the straight joint (*Figure 24*).

Both the blocked doors on this elevation have concrete heads, it is likely, therefore that both are later insertions, which were then blocked as use of the building changed.

Internally, there are two full size storeys as well as a smaller second storey to the east and a cellar to the west. The early conversion of the Chapel to commercial use and subsequent occupation has altered the building significantly.

The cellar is located at the front of the building and is accessed via a modern timber built stair towards the centre of the building (*Figure 20*). There are three principal rooms within the cellar, the two largest are divided by a spine wall, possibly inserted aligned east to west. The ceiling is underdrawn and carried on two bridging beams, both of which have additional column support. The northernmost is carried on two timber posts at the east and west ends, while the southern beam, which is the larger span is supported by one cast iron column in the centre as well as two Rolled Steel Joist (RSJ) beams at each end. There is chute in the north west corner, which is not visible externally.

In the north east corner of the cellar are the original brick-built stairs rising north to south, the stairs are now blocked (*Figures 19 & 20*). To the east of the stairs is a small brick vaulted cellar (*Figure 20*). There is nothing of architectural or historical significance remaining

within the cellar to indicate previous uses. There is no evidence of the chute visible on the Piccadilly Street frontage, it is likely, therefore that there is a second, inaccessible cellar under the western bay.

The continued occupation of the ground floor caused severe limitations to the level of analysis and recording possible. Originally, as a Chapel the ground floor would have been open plan with a pulpit at the western end and possibly a lobby on the eastern end, if, as is likely, the main door was located on the Tower Square frontage. It is possible that there may have originally been separate rooms, such as a vestry or meeting rooms at the western end. No evidence of these remain.

There are a multitude of partitions on the ground floor (*Figure 21*) and all of the exterior walls have been “drylined”. It is likely that these range in date from the original conversion and partition of the Chapel in the 19th century through to very recent work and may conceal earlier features. It is likely that the main east - west spine wall is original to the partition as is the wall between C and D (*Figure 21*). The area immediately to the east of this wall aligns with both the original stair visible in the cellar and the blocked door visible externally, both of which confirm that this wall is likely to be original to the 19th century conversion work (*Figure 21*). There is no internal evidence of the other blocked door.

Towards the rear of the ground floor there are two separate staircases providing access to the remainder of the building. The north – south aligned stairs can only be accessed from the Piccadilly Street door, the stairs themselves are masonry-built. This along with the limited access suggests that these steps may be original to the Chapel and were the original access to the gallery which documentary sources record or to the Sunday School rooms. Both walls are likely, therefore to be original also (*Figure 21*).

The east – west aligned stair is timber built and it is unclear whether this stair dates to the conversion and partition of the building or is more recent, its location, abutting the spine wall suggests this stair may date to the 19th century partitioning. No evidence of this was apparent during the site visit.

On the first floor, there are again a number of partitions (*Figure 22*); stripping out of the modern partitions carried out prior to the site visit has aided the analysis of this floor. The removal of the suspended ceiling has exposed an ornate ceiling rose along with deep plaster cornice (*Figures 17 & 18*). Ceiling roses are a common flourish seen in Chapels, buildings normally regarded as austere. The size of this ceiling rose suggests it was originally to be viewed from the ground floor, and may, therefore be original to the Chapel.

The cornice is continuous through rooms I, J, and K, this part of the building was, therefore originally an open area. It is likely that the partition wall between K and L was inserted as part of the conversion of the Chapel. It is more than likely then that this cornice dates to the conversion and is not original to the Chapel. The quality of this cornice suggests this room was more than a simple storage room over a retail premises, it is possible that as well as subdividing the ground floor, the first floor was a separate unit, with its own access via one of the stair cases.

On the north and south walls in rooms J and K, there are chimney breasts, the plaster cornice follows these breasts. It is possible that the chimneys are original to the Chapel, a fact supported by the external blind windows which overlap the chimney.



Rooms J and K are higher than the remainder of the first floor and there is also what may be a void below the floor of room I, this ambiguity in floor levels may represent remains of the gallery. There was, however, no clear evidence of this visible.

As with the ground floor there is a narrow room (L) towards the centre of the building on its north side (*Figures 16 & 22*). The walls of room L align with the walls between rooms C and D on the ground floor, it is likely therefore that room L was an earlier stairwell. If this and the masonry stairs to the south are contemporary it suggests that the first floor was also sub-divided, but it is likely that the two stairwells are not contemporary and relate to different phases of use of the building.

Towards the rear of the building there are two smaller rooms (N & G), both heated with fireplaces on the west walls. This area was originally the Sunday School rooms, it is likely, therefore that these rooms are original to the Chapel. The fireplace within G, however is rather ornate and has an Art Deco appearance and is likely, therefore to be later in date.

The floors within these two rooms are exposed and are laid with wide (9 inch) floorboards. Similar floorboards are seen throughout the remainder of the building.

Access to the second floor is via a timber built straight flight stair with a bottom winder (*Figure 15*). It has a turned newel post and stick balusters. Such plain designs became popular from 1800 and remained popular until the late Victorian period when greater ornamentation re-appeared (Hall 2007). It is possible, therefore, that this stair is original to the early 19th century.

The second floor is divided into 3 main rooms, all which appear to be original and may, therefore date to the Chapel. There is clear evidence of a blocked fireplace in the southern room (O) and a likely chimney breast in northern room (P). It is likely, therefore, that both of these rooms were heated. Damage to the partition wall between P and Q has revealed early plaster and lathe walling as well as mock panelling of thin plyboard (*Figure 13*), indicating that this may be an original wall.

The window openings on this floor are all shallower than those seen elsewhere and the reveals are all chamfered. There is no internal evidence of the blocked window seen on the Piccadilly Street frontage.

The stair matches the design of that seen on the first floor. The floor boards are again the same as those seen throughout the building.

There is no evidence of the original function of this floor remaining.

At the time of this survey, there was only limited access to the attic over the western part of the building. The roof is carried on a pair of deal king post trusses with raking struts (*Figure 12*).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Mount Tabor Chapel was built in 1821, but only remained in use as a Chapel until 1852. The building was sold and converted to retail use in the late 19th century. This early conversion

and prolonged retail use has severely truncated the original Chapel, leaving little coherent evidence of its original use.

What little physical evidence remains confirms the cartographic sources which suggest that the Chapel, although built in 1821 and recorded by Hargreaves's map of 1832 was extended towards the west sometime before 1882 when the first edition Ordnance Survey records the building largely as it currently stands. It is possible, therefore, that not only was the Chapel extended in this period, but also extensively re-modelled. It is questionable therefore, what, if any of the current building dates to the original 1821 Chapel.

Internally, there are a number of fixtures remaining which may date to the original Chapel, including a plaster ceiling rose and the rear staircase. Unfortunately, neither can be dated accurately. Documentary evidence indicates that galleries were added to the original Chapel sometime during the 1830s (VCH). Possible evidence of these galleries was observed during the building recording, most notably, the ambiguity in floor levels at the eastern end of the first floor. The masonry-built stairs is the only structural element remaining which may date to the original Chapel, but again these are impossible to date and may just as well date to the construction of the later galleries.

The attractive cornice recorded on the first floor may also indicate that as well as being divided on the ground floor, the building may have also been divided between the ground floor and the upper floors. Cornice such as this would not have been used unless the space was being seen and used.

The true importance of the Chapel is its historical significance, reflecting the rise of 19th century non-conformity, especially strong in the industrialised working class areas of the country. It also reflects one of the multitudes of sects and break-away missions seen in non-conformity. All of which reflect the democratising of religion, something which was not seen in the established Anglican Church.

## **5. Archive & Publication**

The site archive consists of

- 2 A3 paper sheets containing plans, elevation & notes
- DVD containing 102 digital images
- 3 A4 contact sheets
- 102 Black & White negatives and contact prints
- 4 A4 photo record sheets
- 1 Unbound copy of this report

The accession number 2013.LH.46 has been issued by Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent. The archive will be deposited in due course.

A version of the summary (above) will be submitted to the editor of the local journal for inclusion in the next edition.

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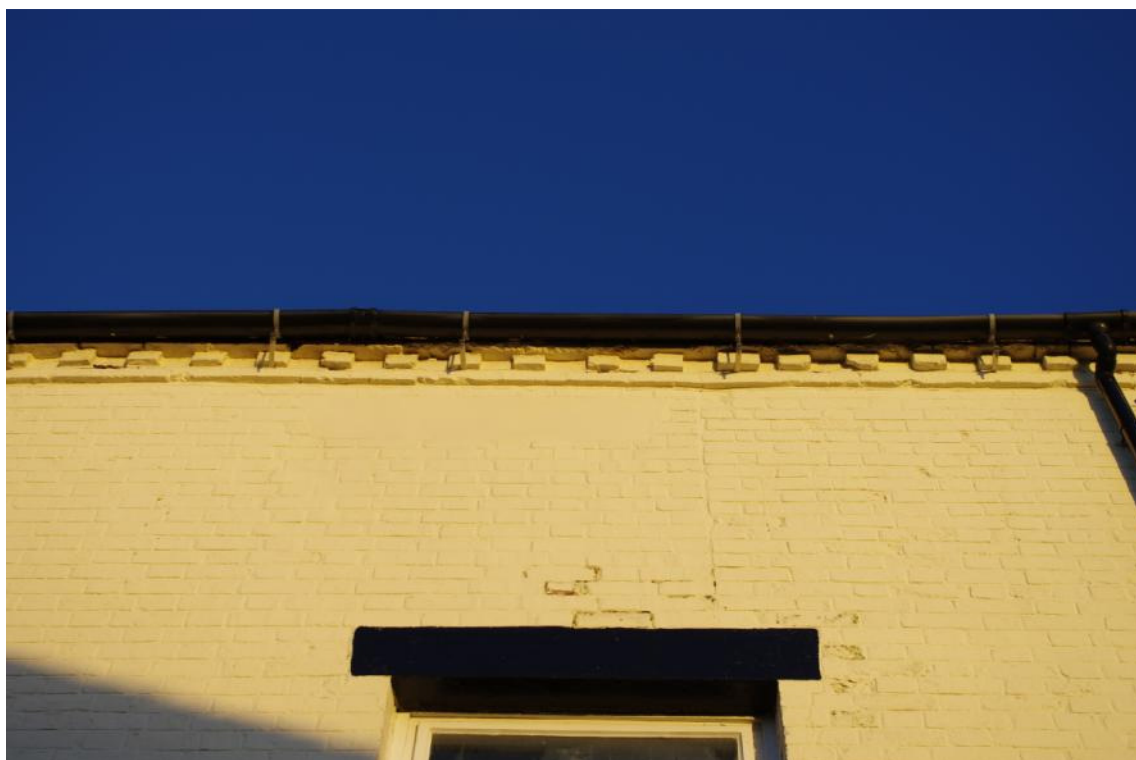
## 7. Colour Plates



**Figure 7**  
Principal Elevation (looking West-North West).



**Figure 8**  
Piccadilly Street Elevation (looking North).



**Figure 9**  
Blocked Window on Piccadilly Street Elevation.



**Figure 10** Straight Joint Visible on  
Piccadilly Street Elevation (left of  
scale).





**Figure 11** Early Window on North Facing Elevation, Ground Floor.



**Figure 12**  
Roof Truss (looking South East).



**Figure 13**  
Room Q (Second Floor) Early Partition Walls.



**Figure 14**  
Room Q, (First Floor) General View & Fireplace (looking North-North West).



**Figure 15** First-Second Floor Staircase.



**Figure 16** Room L (First Floor), Possible Location of Earlier Staircase.





**Figure 17**  
Room J Ceiling Rose.

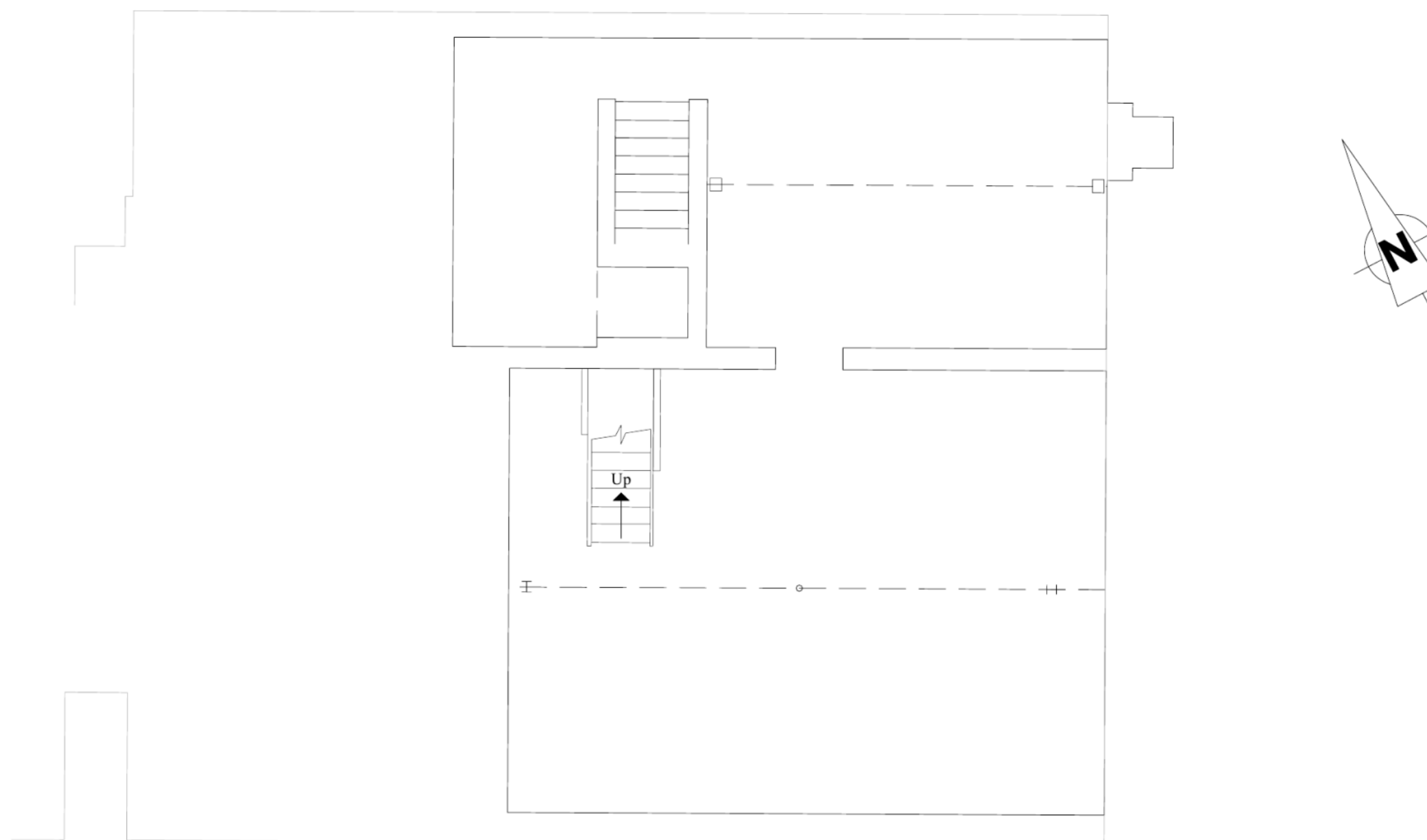


**Figure 18** Room K Plaster Cornice &  
Chimney Breast.



**Figure 19** Original Brick Stairs in Cellar (looking West-South West).



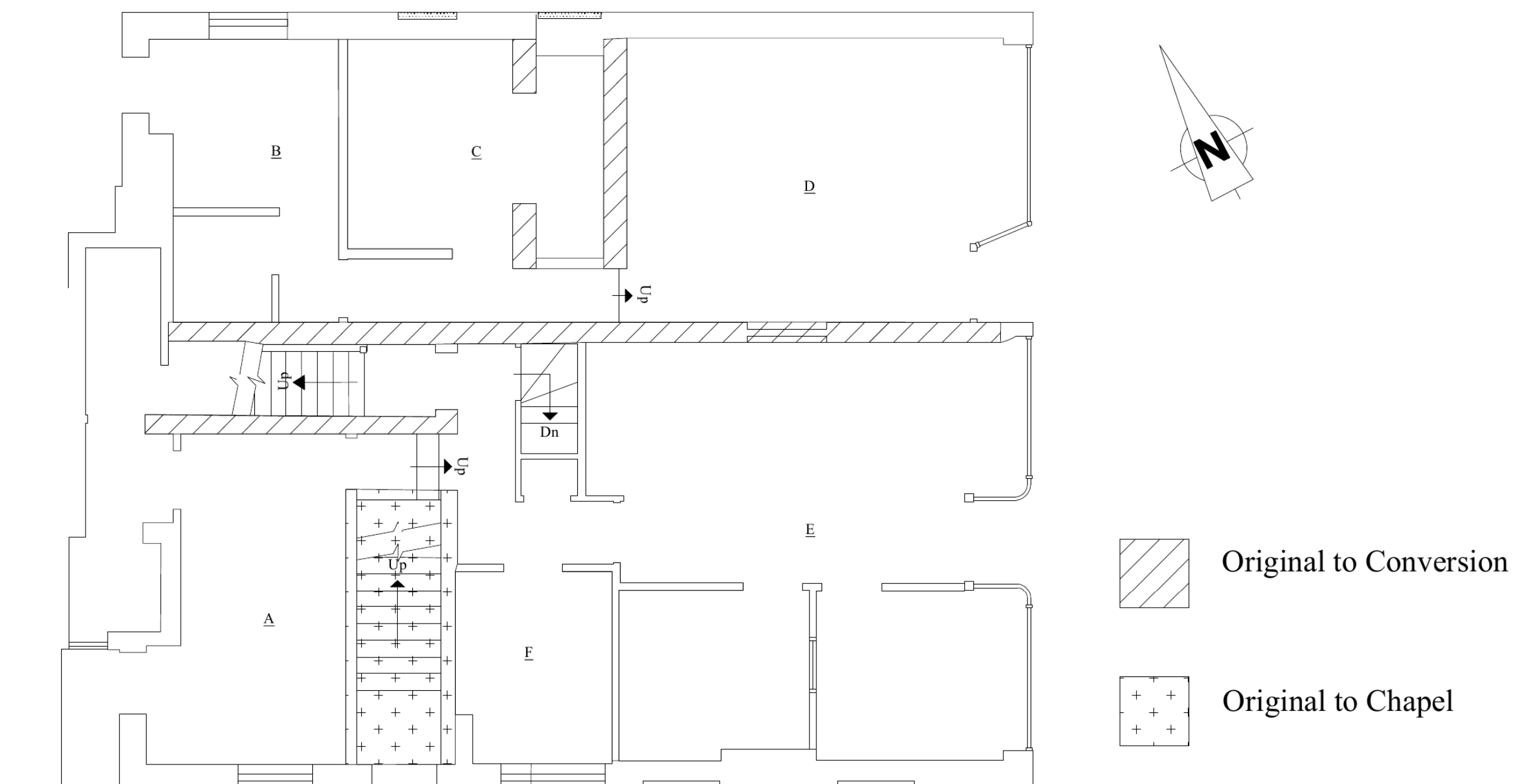


Scale in Metres

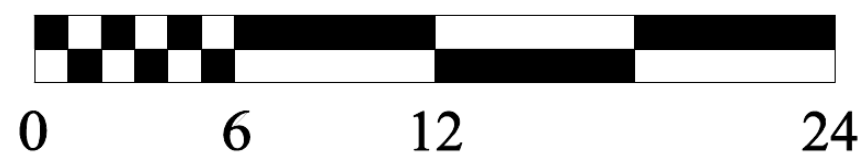


Scale in Feet

**Figure 20** Cellar.

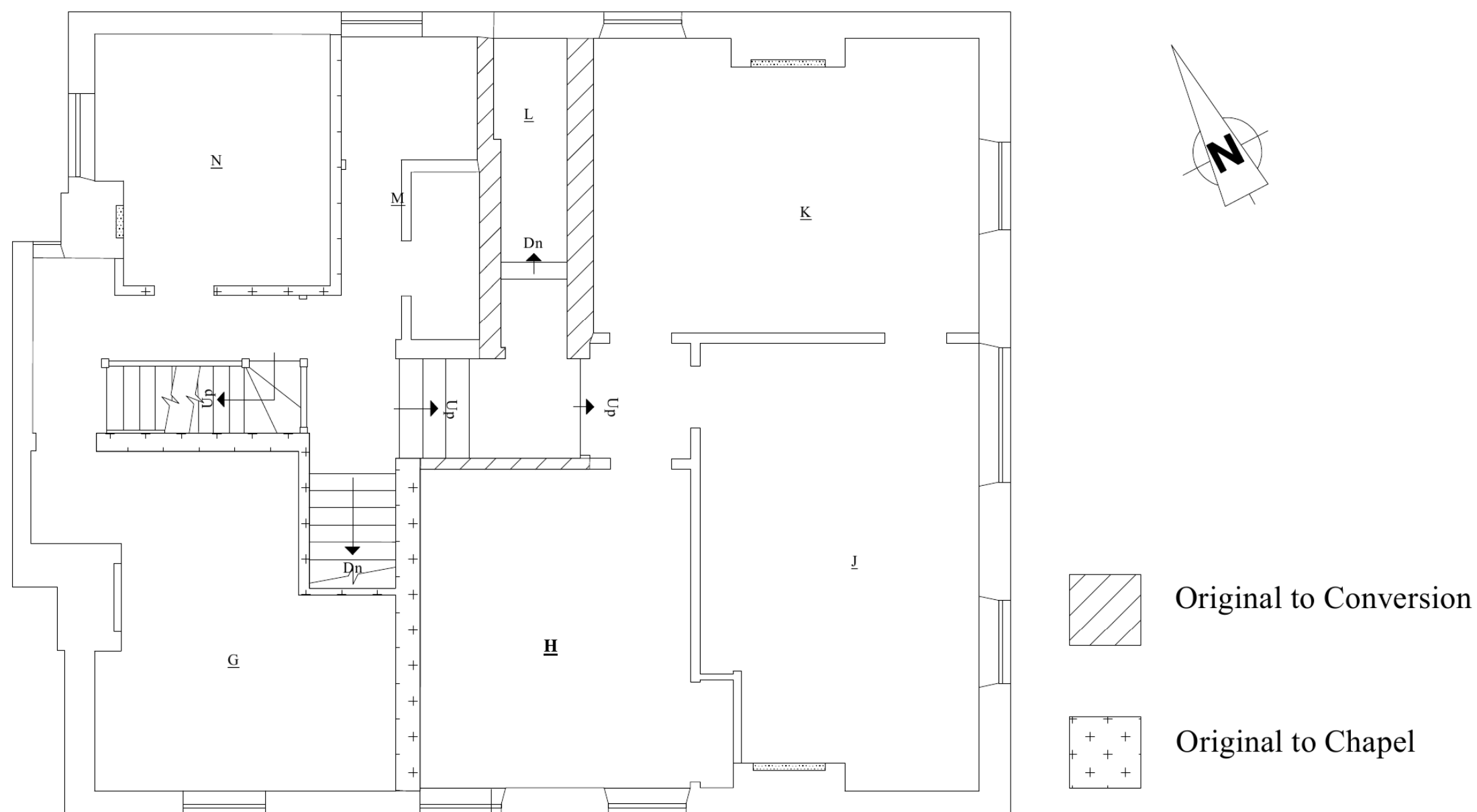


Scale in Metres



Scale in Feet

**Figure 21** Ground Floor.

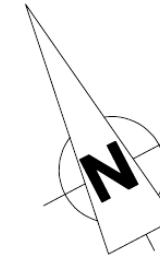
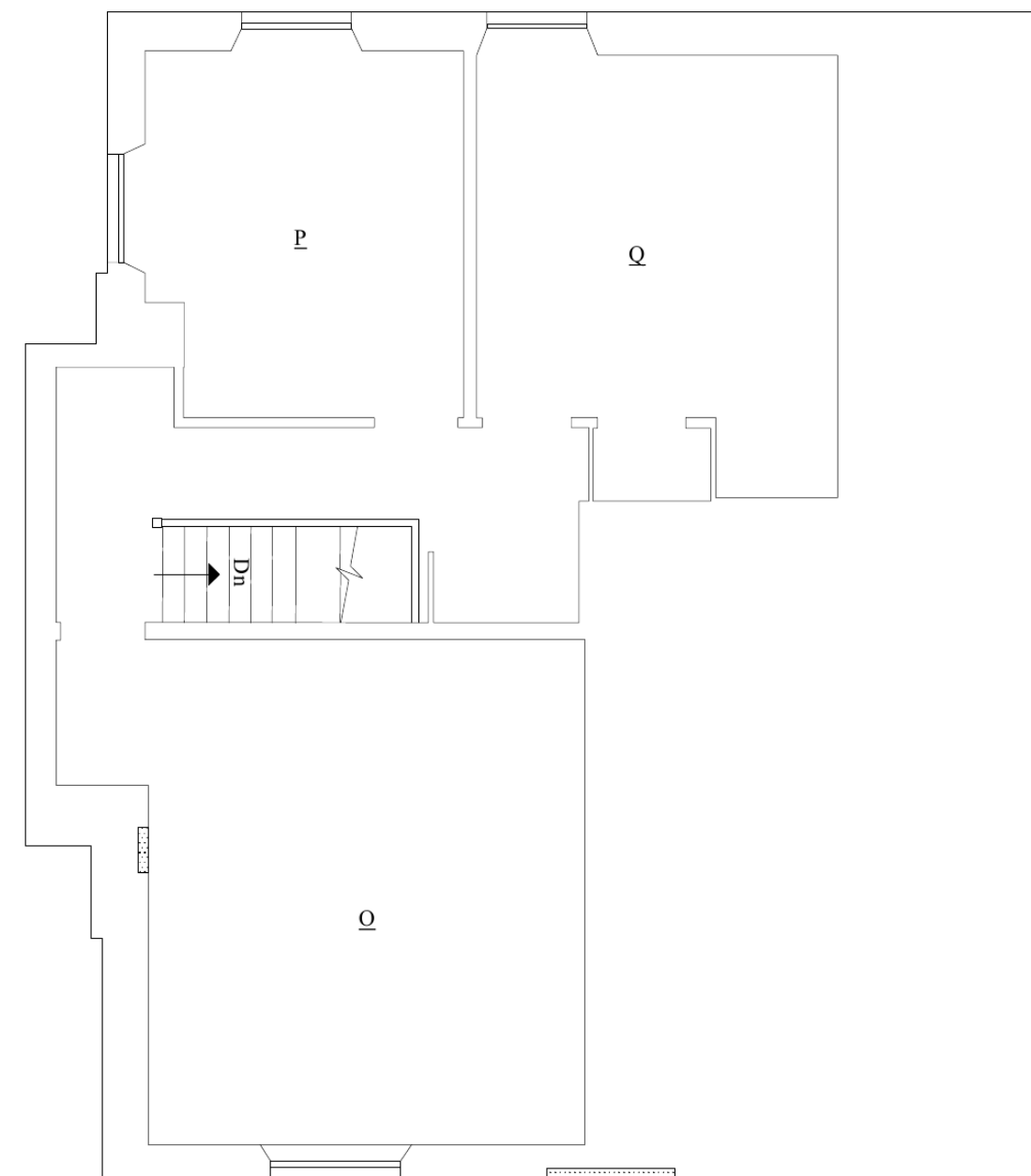


Scale in Metres



Scale in Feet

**Figure 22** First Floor.

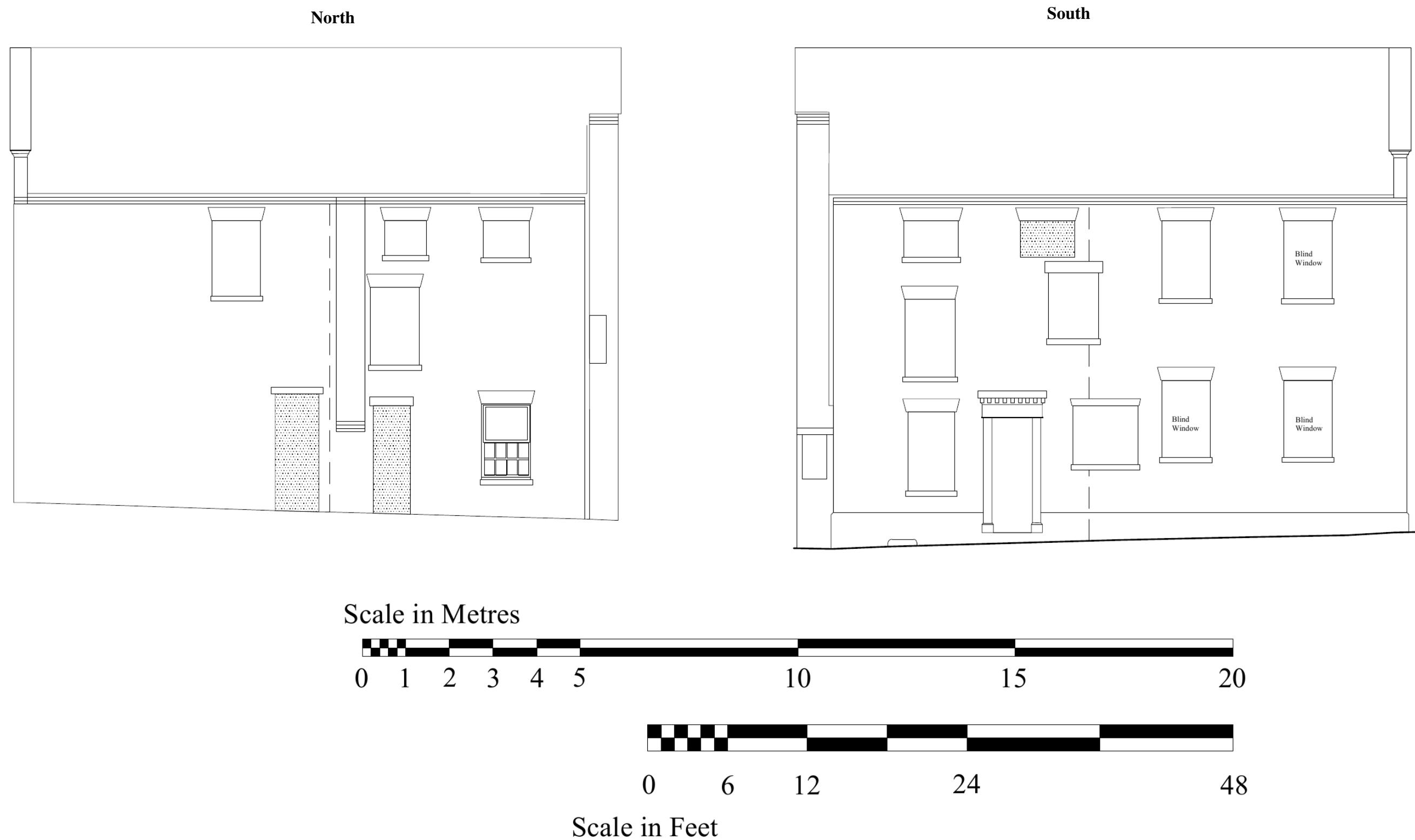


Scale in Metres



Scale in Feet

**Figure 23** Second Floor.

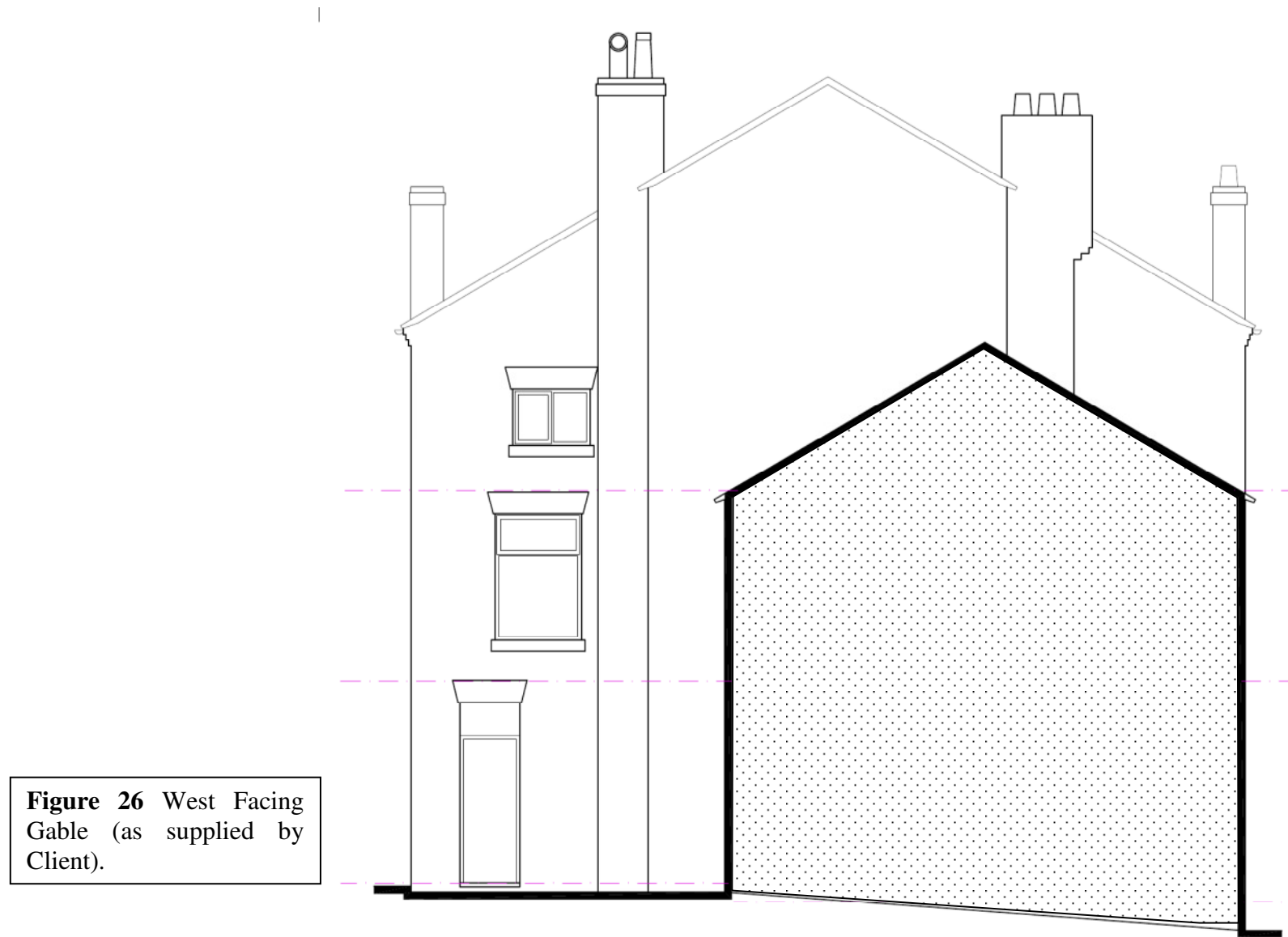


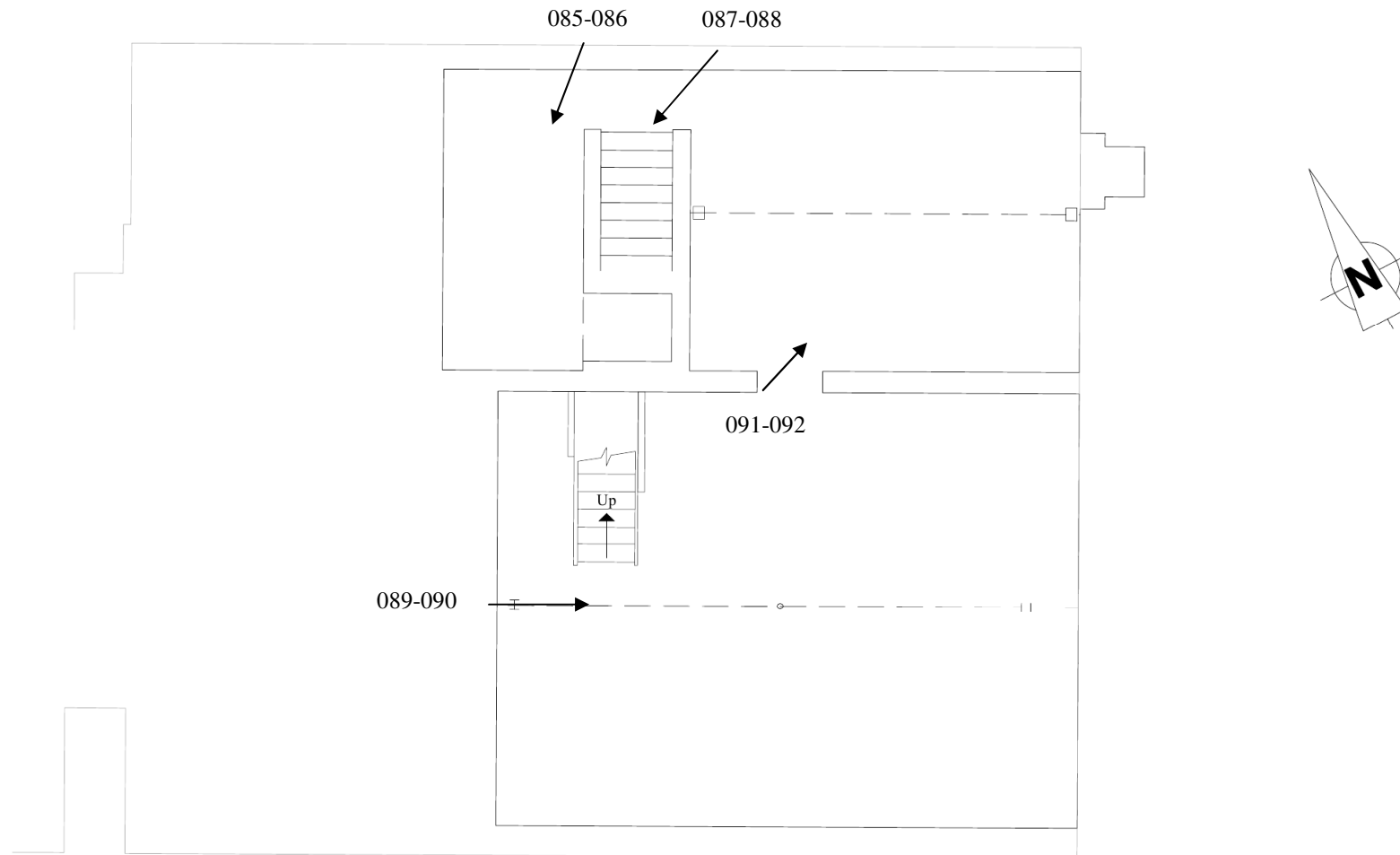
**Figure 24** North and South Facing Elevations.



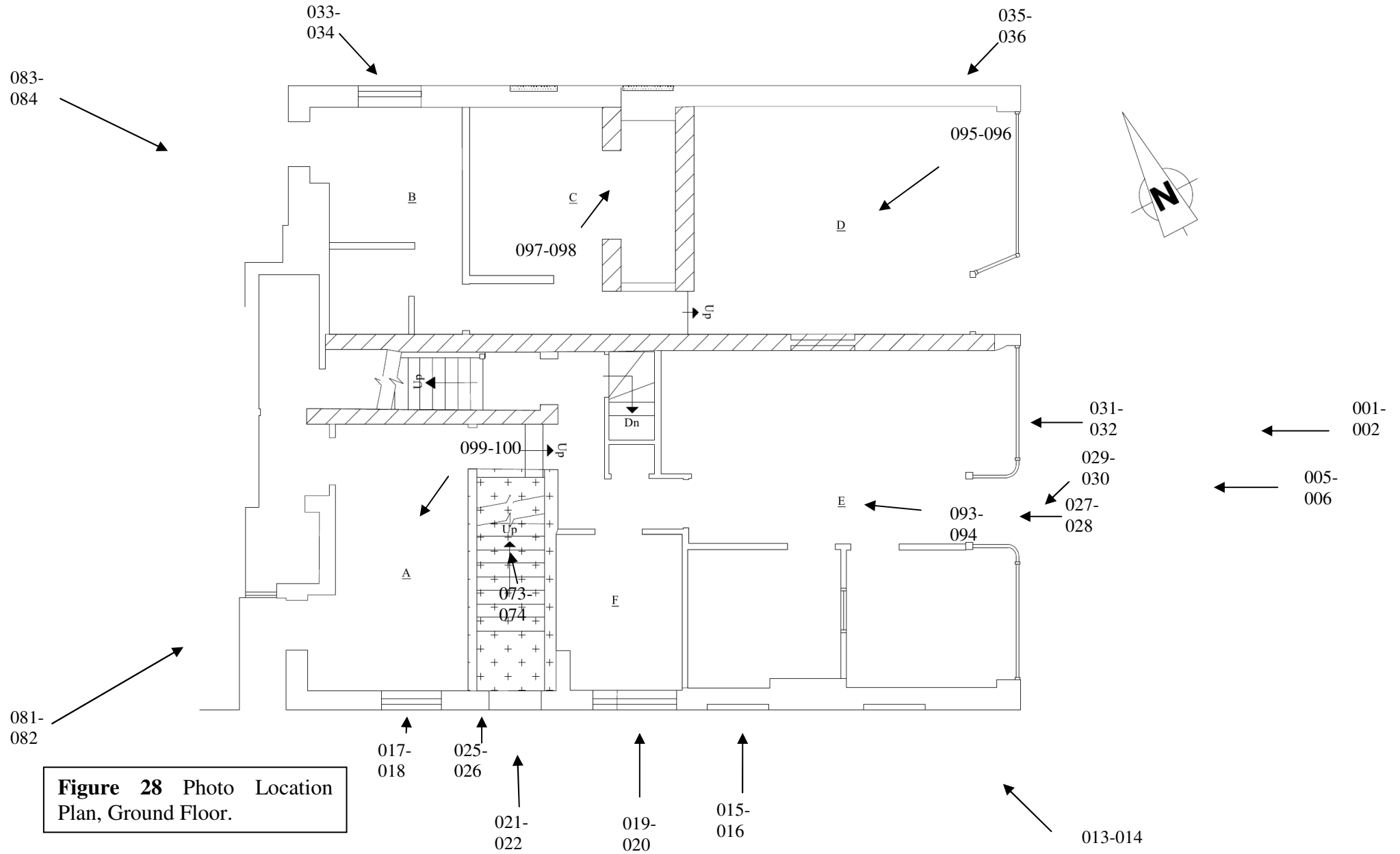


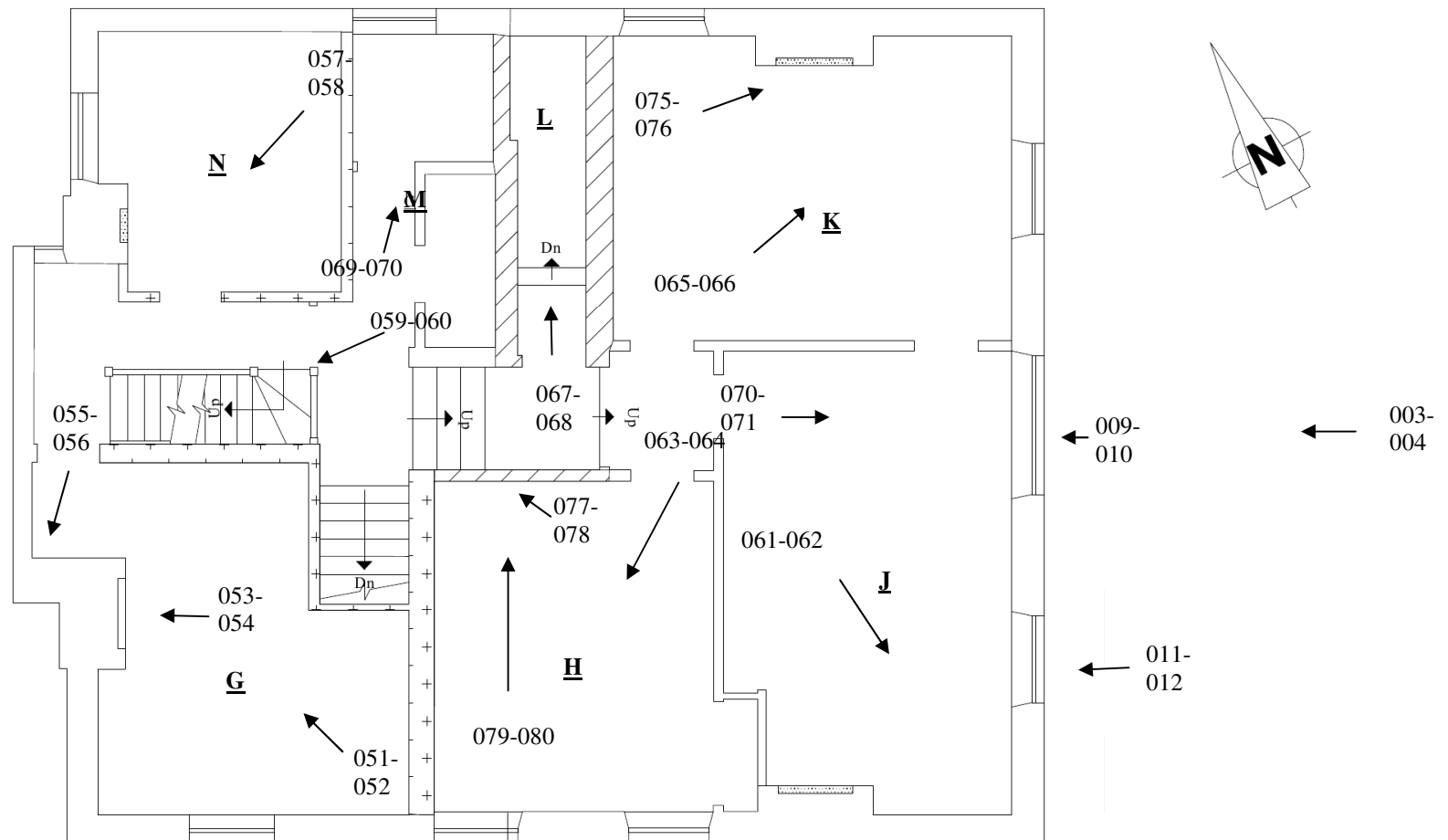
**Figure 25** Principal Elevation (as supplied by Client).





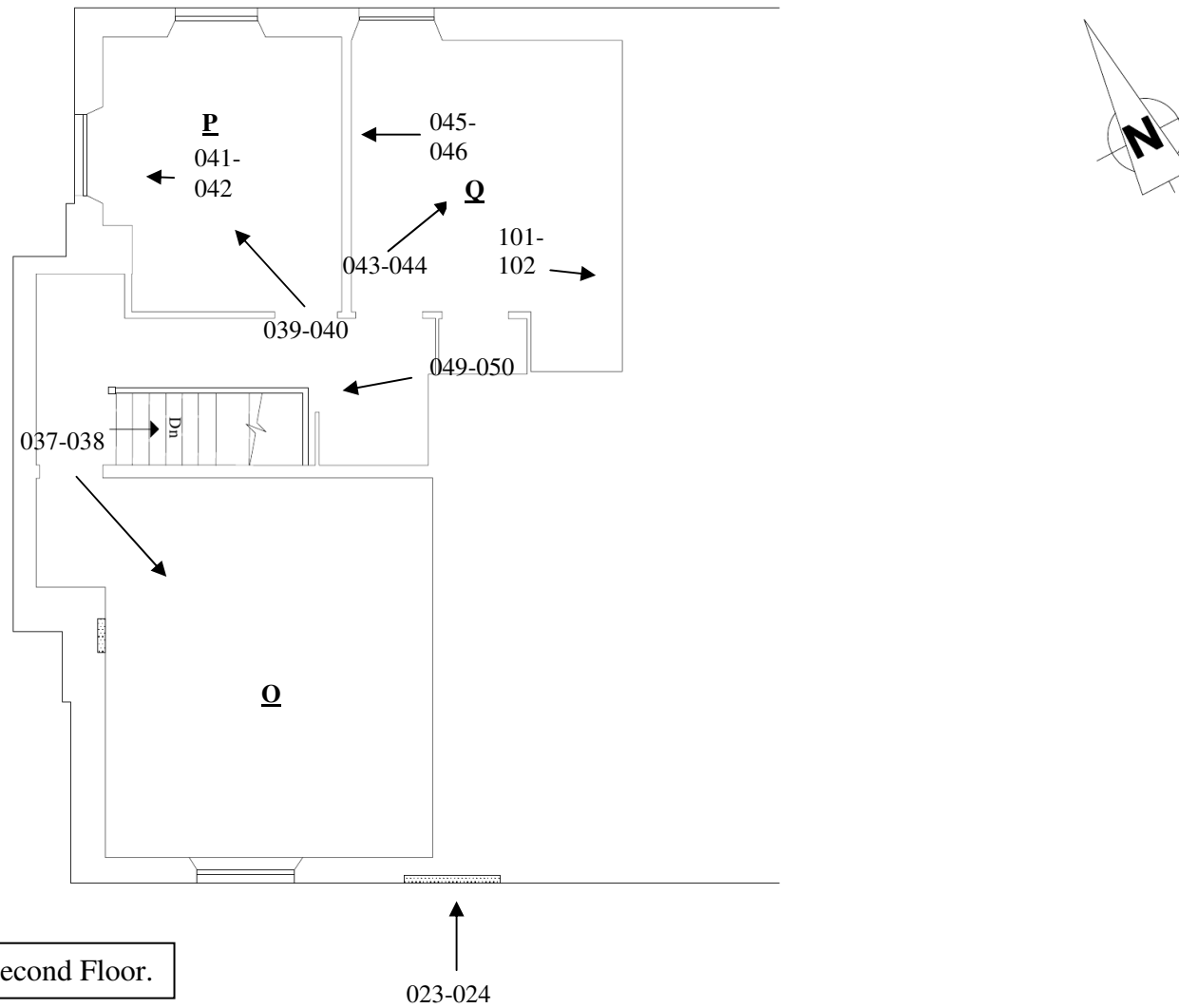
**Figure 27** Photo Location Plan, Cellar.





**Figure 29** Photo Location Plan, First Floor.





**Figure 30** Photo Location Plan, Second Floor.

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