

Archaeological
Building
Recording
Services

**An Archaeological Standing Building Survey
Westacott Farm
Crediton
Devon**

(NGR SX 84238 97627)

On Behalf of R J Salter & Son



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August 2019

**Planning Application No
18/01830/FULL**

ABRS Project No 2018-WFCD

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**An Archaeological Standing Building Survey, Westacott Farm (Outbuildings),
Crediton, Devon, (NGR SX 84238 97627).**

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An Archaeological Standing Building Survey, Westacott Farm (Outbuildings), CREDITON, Devon, (NGR SX 84238 97627).

Summary

This document is an archaeological standing building survey of outbuildings at Westacott Farm, CREDITON, Devon (NGR SX 84238 97627), commissioned from Archaeological Building Recording Services (ABRS) by R J Salter & Son in advance of the consented re-development of the buildings to residential use.

Westacott Farm is an interesting farmstead with a range of building traditions. The recorded buildings are likely to be 19th century in date, although it is possible the buildings retain remnants of earlier buildings, particularly building B and the southernmost range of building C.

Two of the buildings are cob built, a widespread building tradition in Devon that has persisted well into the modern era, cartographic sources indicate that building A was built sometime between 1841 and 1889. Building B is potentially earlier, but with a late 19th roof. Building C is, despite its appearance an interesting building, retaining traces of the former farmhouse, the northern part of the building is well finished in brick with iron windows and terracotta details, which are not common in agricultural buildings.

The farm was formerly part of Westacott/Trobridge Estate of the Yarde-Buller Family and for a time the farm was tenanted by the farm bailiff to Sir Redvers Buller. At some point during the early 20th century the farm was sold by the estate and later amalgamated with the adjacent Eastacott Farm.

The archive will be retained by ABRS under the temporary site code 2018-WFCD until deposition with Royal Albert Memorial Museum Exeter can be arranged.

1. Introduction

Archaeological Building Recording Services (ABRS) were commissioned by R J Salter & Son to undertake an archaeological standing building survey of outbuildings at Westacott Farm, CREDITON, Devon (NGR SX 84238 97627 (*Figures 1 & 5*)). Planning Permission has been granted for the conversion of the buildings to residential use (18/01830/FULL). The buildings are a range of traditionally built agricultural buildings, believed to date from the 18th or 19th centuries. The Senior Historic Environment Officer, Devon County Council as adviser to Mid Devon District Council has recommended that an archaeological standing building survey to Historic England Level 2/3 as defined in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (Historic England 2016) be carried out prior to any proposed works being carried out. The buildings are not statutorily listed, nor within a designated Conservation Area, they are recorded as non-designated heritage assets by the Devon & Dartmoor HER (HER Ref MDV119422 & MDV119420).

A Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Building Recording has not been issued, the generic online Devon County Council Specification for Historic Building Recording has been consulted and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) ABRS 2018-WFCDN_WSI_v1)) has

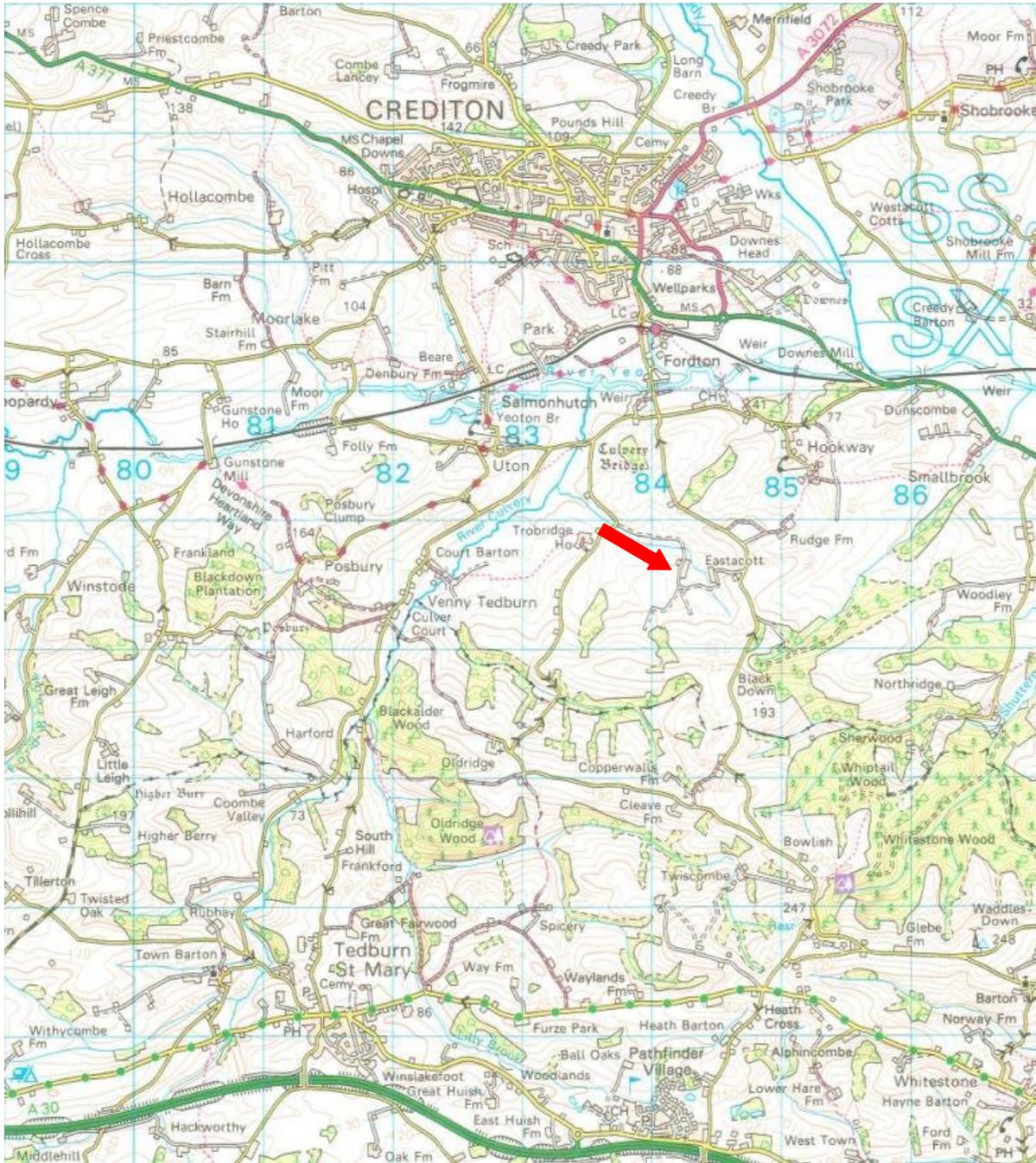


Figure 1
Site Location

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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been submitted to the Senior Historic Environment Officer, Devon County Council and approved. The project was completed following the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa) *Code of Conduct*, and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (2019).

The settlement and parish of Crediton has a well established history, Winfrith also known as Saint Boniface was reputedly born here in the 7th century and the town developed early significance as a religious centre being chosen as the centre of the episcopal see in AD909, a bishops palace was maintained in the town until the Reformation. By the 13th century, like

most of Devon the wool trade was established and remained the dominant economy throughout the medieval and post medieval period, and a market was granted in 1231. The town became renowned for the manufacture of woollen cloth called serge (is a type of twill fabric that has diagonal lines or ridges on both sides made with a two-up, two-down weave) and as a result the town became rich and by the early part of the 16th century was reputed to be among the top 50 wealthiest towns in England. During the 16th and 17th centuries the town suffered as a result of the plague and the Civil War, which along with the general decline in the woollen trade in the mid 18th saw a gradual decline in the town.

During the 18th and 19th centuries the town became the focus of the surrounding agricultural community and in 1836 a new market place was opened, replacing the former High Street market. The agricultural importance and prosperity of the town was further enhanced by the construction of the Exeter and Crediton Railway (later the London & South Western Railway (LSWR)) in 1851. Also based on agriculture the town developed tanneries and boot and shoe factories.

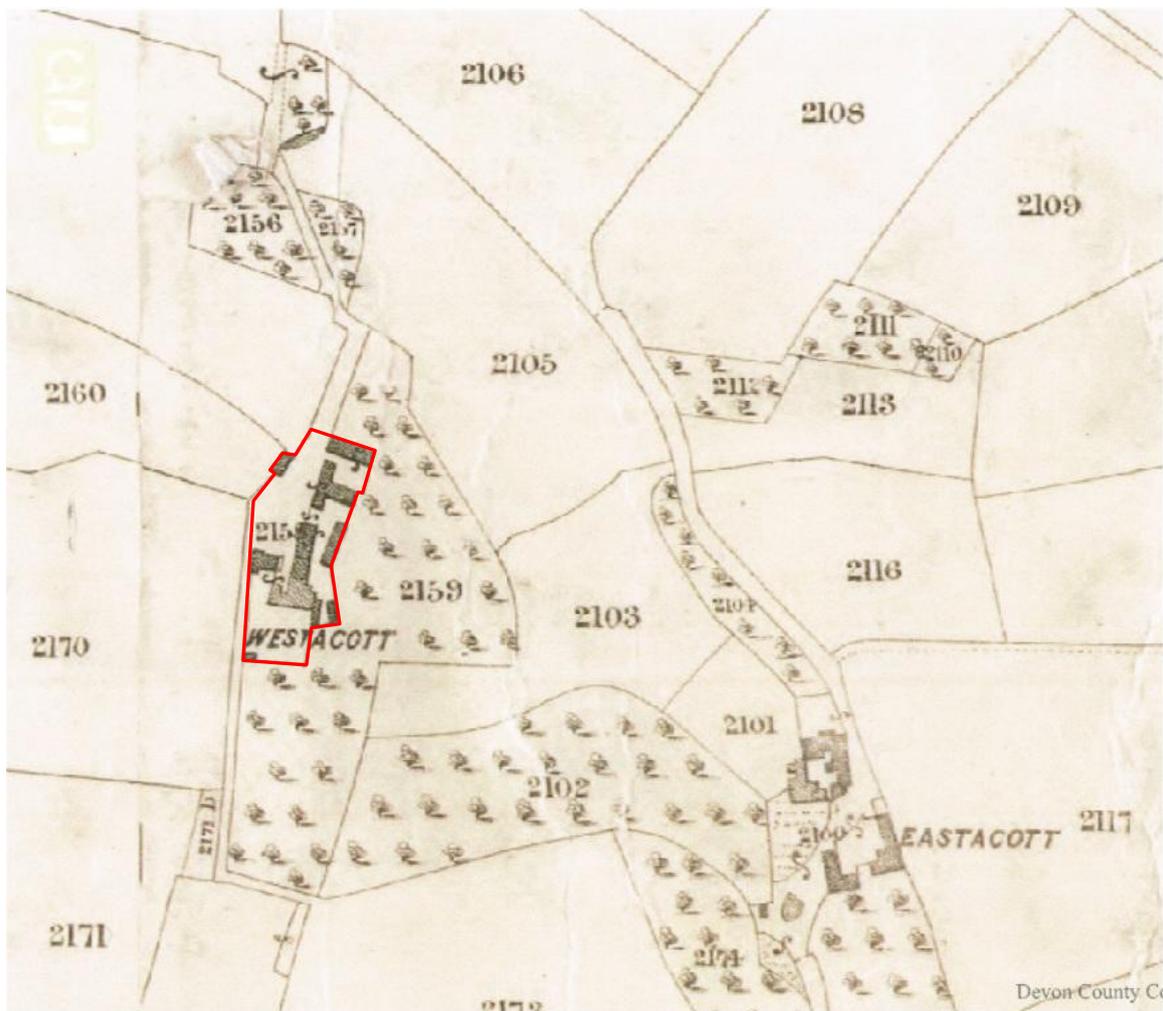


Figure 2
A Plan of the Parish of Crediton in the County of Devon (1841).

The earliest available cartographic reference to the proposed development area is “A *Plan of the Parish of Crediton in the County of Devon (Part II)*” drawn in 1841 for the church tithe (Figure 2). Westacott Farm is clearly recorded and identified by name, the accompanying

apportionment identifies 2158 as Homestead and Lane and 2159 as Court Orchard. The farm is owned by John Yarde of the Westacott Estate and occupied by John Rowe, other sources describe it as the Trobridge Estate. John Yarde (1799-1871) was the Conservative MP for South Devon between 1835 and 1858, upon his retirement in 1858 he was created Baron Churston, of Churston Ferrers and Lupton and in 1860 changed the family name to Yarde-Buller. John Rowe's occupancy of the farm is confirmed by Whites History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon published in 1850 which also records John Rowe.

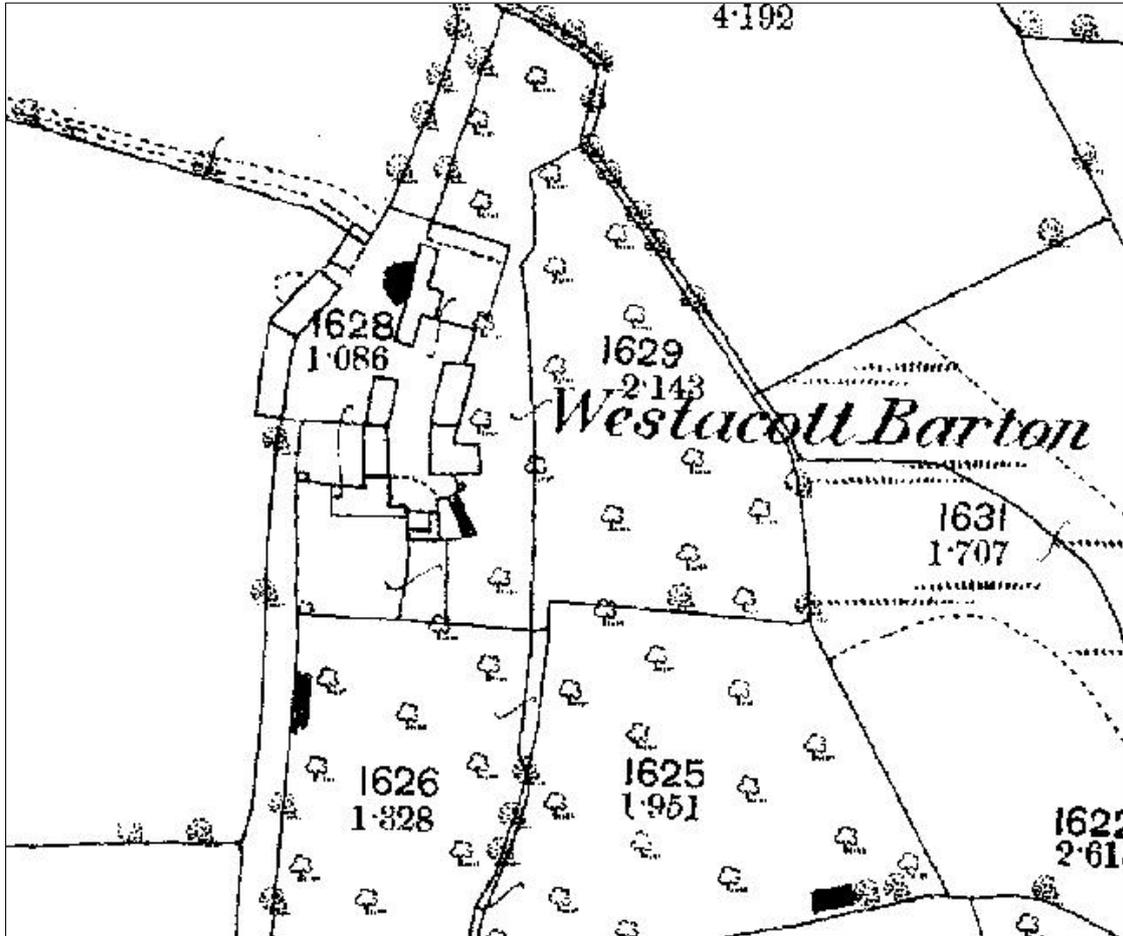


Figure 3
First Edition Ordnance Survey (1889).

The plan records Westacott as a linear farmstead, the differentiation in shading would suggest that a farmhouse was located at the southernmost end of the farmstead. Neither the plan, nor the apportionment give any indication as to the nature and use of the buildings, but the description of Orchard Close would suggest the likely presence of an apple loft, cider mill and most likely other commonly found agricultural buildings.

In 1857 Billings Directory & Gazetteer of the County of Devon lists Henry James of Westacott Barton, Kelly's Post Office Directory published in 1883 lists Edward James, likely a descendent of Henry, who remained at the farm until at least 1893. The first edition Ordnance Survey, the first modern map of the proposed development area and the parish in general was published in 1889; the online version (*Figure 3*) lacks the colour detail of a published version but does record some significant alterations to the farmstead and potentially interesting features. To the west and north west two buildings have been built, the

northernmost having what appears to be a horse engine house on the west facing elevation. The small building immediately to the north appears to be open fronted, as does a larger building to the north east, these are most likely linhays or open fronted shelter sheds, or in the case of the smaller shed a cart shed.

There is a second, semi circular structure abutting the “T” shaped building recorded in 1841, which itself is on a reduced footprint. The semi-circular structure is shaded, which may suggest, following Ordnance Survey conventions that it is of timber or iron construction. The easternmost building appears to have been extended to the south and occupying a larger footprint than it did in 1841, suggesting it may have been extended or re-built, most likely under the direction of the James Family.

It was common for farms to undergo significant re-development during the later years of the 19th century, this was normally brought about by the boom in agriculture and changes to agricultural practices meaning 18th century and earlier farm buildings had become obsolete.

Kelly’s Directory of 1897 lists a John Saunders at Westacott Farm, Saunders was also listed as farm bailiff to Gen. Right Hon. Sir Redvers Henry Buller PC. VC. GCB. Sir Redvers had inherited the estate following the death of his unmarried elder brother James in 1874, at the time the estate included some 2,942 acres of Devon and 2,174 acres of Cornwall, producing an income of £14,137 a year, the Kelly’s listing suggests that Westacott was still part of the estate. Saunders remained at Westacott until at least 1902.

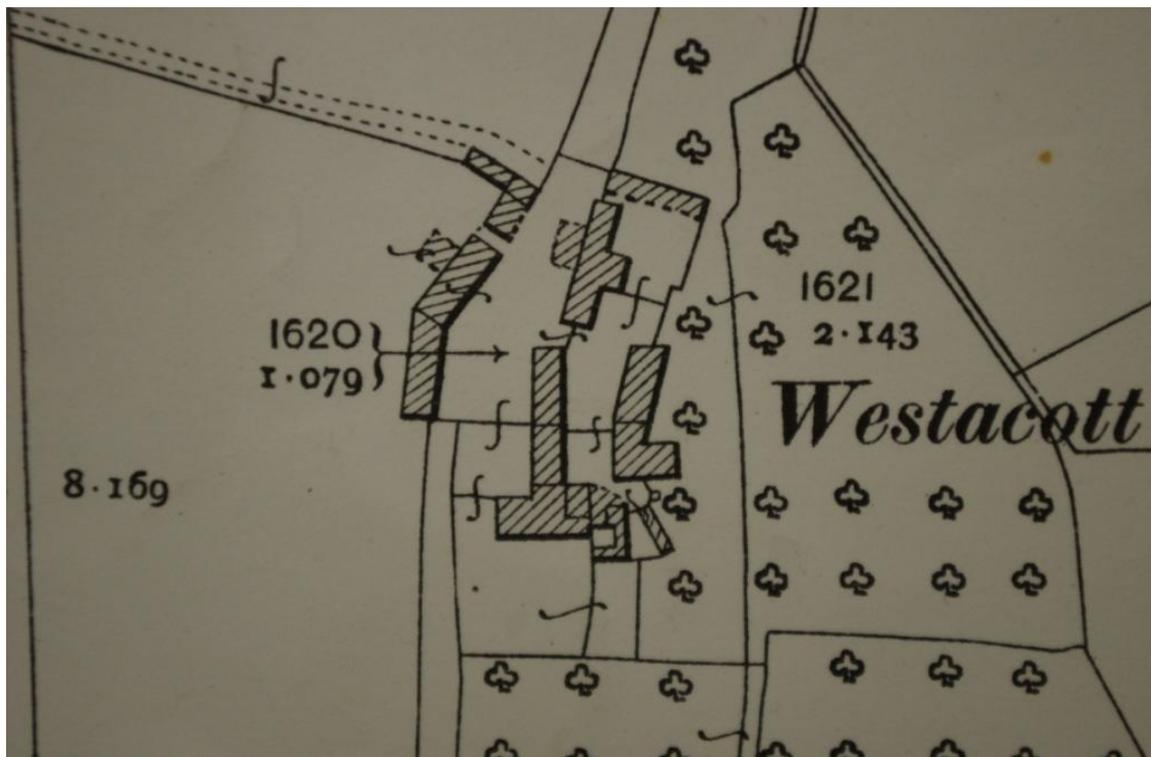


Figure 4
Second Edition Ordnance Survey (1905).

The second edition Ordnance Survey was published in 1905 (DA&LS Ref LXVII.11 (*Figure 4*)), the map is clearer than the online version of the first edition, and shows a number of features and changes to the farmstead. The two semi circular structures have been replaced

by square structures, the westernmost remaining open sided while the other appears to be open to the north. The north easternmost open fronted building is confirmed as an open fronted shelter shed with a fold yard to the south.

To the east of the farmhouse, which is still apparent is an unusual array of buildings, the exact purpose of which are unclear.

In 1908, Sir Redvers died without male issue and his next surviving younger brother Arthur Tremayne Buller inherited the family estates. By 1910 Westacott Farm was occupied by John Cooke, sometime between 1910 and 1919 John died and in 1919 Mrs Jn Cooke is listed at the farm. In 1926 a George Frederick Friend is listed at Westacott House, not farm, which suggests it was no longer a working farm. However, in 1930 George is listed at Eastacott Farm, suggesting the two farms may have been merged, possibly following the sale of both farms. Following the death of Arthur Tremayne Buller in 1917 the estate passed to his son Major Mowbray Louis Buller, and it is likely that the farm was sold under his direction, although some of the Cornish farms were sold as early as 1913. The merger of the two farms is confirmed by Kelly's Directory of 1935 which lists Frederick Friend at Eastacott & Westacott.

Post war mapping shows no significant alterations to the farmstead beyond the construction of two large buildings to the north. The farmhouse remained until the 1970s.

2. Aims and Methodology

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

- To provide a comprehensive written, drawn and photographic record of the building prior to the permitted demolition, as it represents upstanding archaeological/historical remains of local, regional or national importance.
- To provide a comprehensive review of the local and regional historical context of the structures recorded by the project, making reference to the appropriate regional research agendas.
- To produce a high quality, fully integrated archive suitable for long-term deposition in order to 'preserve by record' the buildings in their current form prior to conversion, conservation and/or demolition.

Desk-based research included the analysis of readily available documentary and cartographic sources including the Devon Historic Environment Record (HER) & Devon Archives and Local Studies (DA&LS).

The Historic Building Recording produced measured survey drawings of the building and completed a photographic (raw image files and converted to TIFFs (Tagged Image File Format)) and written record of the building to the equivalent of Historic England Level 2/3. An ordered archive has been compiled and will be deposited with Royal Albert Memorial Museum Exeter, the digital archive will be deposited with Archaeology Data Service (ADS). An Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) record has been completed.

Orientation: There are four buildings subject to this historic building recording, all are linear in plan, with the long axis aligned north-north east – south-south west (*Figure 5*), for ease of description this is taken hereafter to be north to south. The principal elevations are those facing the yard. Where the terms ‘left’, ‘right’, ‘front’ and ‘back’ etc are used in the report, this is in relation to these principal elevations, as viewed from the yard. For the purposes of this historic building recording a letter affix has been allocated to identify each building and a number suffix added for significant partitions where required.



Figure 5
Proposed Development Area, in Red, Recorded Buildings in Green.
Supplied By Client (1:1250).

All historic maps are reproduced with north to the top of the page, following Ordnance Survey standards unless indicated otherwise with appropriate north arrow and key.

As far as is known, no previous historic building recording has been undertaken of the building.

The site visit was carried out by Gerwyn Richards on July 30th 2019.

3. Description of the Buildings

Building A

Building A forms the westernmost range of the former farmstead (*Figure 23*), it is a linear range consisting of three principal elements, the southernmost range being ruinous consists only of the rear brick and stone-built wall and four cross frames and trusses (*Figure 6*). The condition of the range prevented a detailed examination and record, but from the remains it is possible to assume the range may have originally been a linhay, a two-storied open fronted cattle building with hay-loft above. The use of deal for the trusses, which are also bolted suggests a mid to late 19th century construction date, this is supported by cartographic sources which indicates the range post dates 1841.

To the north is a second range, the change of alignment suggests the two may not be contemporary, but there is no cartographic evidence to support this. The range is cob-built under a pitched roof clad in Welsh slate (*Figure 7*); the roofs of cob buildings are usually hipped, the difficulty of providing the necessary restraint for a gable, not gabled as in this example, which shows evidence of leaning in the northernmost gable. The cob is set atop a sleeper wall in local rubble stone some 1550mm above the current ground level. The sleeper wall is capped with a brick course. The cob is cement mortar rendered, during the late 19th century it was common to apply a rough cast render to cob walls, replacing the earlier lime wash. Where this render has fallen away banding can be seen in the cob (*Figure 8*); the exposed cob is primarily dull yellow culm clay, with clear band of local red clay, this would suggest that the cob has been allowed to harden before the next lift was added. From around 1820 shuttering began to be used in the construction of cob walls, the removal of the shuttering allows drying out episodes revealing the changes in cob. The use of shuttering tended to be limited to larger estates as shuttering was expensive, Westacott, being part of a large estate is likely to have had access to shuttering. Shuttering also allowed the construction of thinner walls, this example being only 520mm (20 inches), thinner than common cob walls which measure some 600mm-750mm (30inches).

On the principal elevation there is a large off centre threshing door flanked by cob buttresses, and a second, slightly lower threshing door to the north, this arrangement is mirrored on the rear elevation, which itself is largely concealed by an additional bay and vegetation. There is a small pedestrian door adjacent to the south gable.

There are three openings on the principal elevation, only one, on the ground floor being potentially original. The two first floor openings with their brick reveals and flat timber lintels are undoubtedly later insertions (*Figure 9*), both openings have well finished concrete sills, the larger having the outline of a central mullion. It is unclear as to why these openings were added, but the brick reveals appear to be clearly mid to late 20th century in date giving an indication as to when the openings were inserted.

Internally, the range consists of three bays (*Figure 24*), the two southernmost bays, (3) and (4) are clearly modern insertions, indicating that the range was originally a single bay, confirming it as a threshing or fodder barn. (3) and (4) are open to the roof, while there is a first floor above (2), this floor is not convincingly original and the use of rolled steel joists (RSJ) as bridging beams would appear to support this. There is no indication as to the most recent use of (2) beyond a short concrete manger against the principal elevation (*Figure 10*).

Access to the first floor is via a timber ladder. The roof is carried on five King post trusses with raking struts. The trusses are somewhat naive in their finish with a straight King post bolted at the heel and the raking struts being finished with half lap joint and nailed to the King post (*Figure 11*). King post trusses have a wide date span, but examples such as these, bolted at the heel tend to be exclusively post 1860s in date, a date which is supported by cartographic sources. The forward raking struts on the four northernmost trusses have been removed for some unknown purpose.

The roof is clad in Welsh slate, slate became common in Devon from the mid 19th century onwards so it is entirely conceivable that the roof is original.

Abutting the rear elevation is (1), an open fronted bay (*Figure 24*), the west facing wall is modern concrete blocks while the south facing wall, although ruinous is of 19th century brick, the rubble sleeper wall suggests it may have originally been cob. The roof is again carried on King post trusses, but in this case better finished (*Figure 12*), this would suggest the two are not contemporary, this is supported by cartographic sources which suggest there was originally a horse engine here, likely replaced by the current building.

The roof of (1) is clad in Welsh slate which is identical in appearance to that used on the main range, which conflicts somewhat with the assumption that the roof on the main range is original. It is possible therefore that both ranges have been re-roofed.

Building B

Building B is located to the east of building A and on a similar alignment. The building is again largely cob built under a hipped roof clad in Welsh slate (*Figure 13*). The building occupies the same footprint as a building recorded on the 1841 tithe map, so could potentially be the earliest building remaining within the farmstead. The building has undergone significant repair and alteration, the south facing gable, although rendered has clearly been re-built in modern concrete blocks (*Figure 14*). The north facing gable, as well as part of the east facing long elevation is built of local rubble stone (*Figure 15*), it is unclear whether this a later repair or part of the original structure to strengthen the down slope part of the building as the stone used is identical to that used for the sleeper walls elsewhere within the building.

On the principal elevation is a low timber and corrugated tinned steel sheet lean to, (4). It is possible that this lean to is the structure recorded on the 1905 Ordnance Survey, there is no physical evidence to confirm its age, although the trusses could conceivably be 19th or early 20th century in date, with simple half lapped joints similar to those seen in building A. To the north of the lean to is a buttressed cart door, to the south of the cart door is a blocked window opening and, at height two arrow slit openings. There are further openings on the rear elevation, one of which, although partially blocked could be a second cart door.

On the east facing elevation is a short, largely open sided projecting bay, (2) (*Figure 16*). According to the 1841 map this was originally a larger bay, but it was partially demolished prior to the publication of the 1889 Ordnance Survey. A short section of cob wall survives on the south, the northern wall is brick-built, and the two phases of brick work suggests the westernmost part is later.

The westernmost part of (2) was, at the time of the survey stacked with bales, preventing further recording.

The survival of the external render prevents a thorough examination of the cob structure (further hampered by intermittent torrential downpours & bright sun wetting & drying the exposed elevations during the site visit), but there is potential evidence of banding within the principal elevation within the lean to, (4) where yellow culm clay overlays the local red clay (*Figure 17*), although being located in a sheltered and dry environment there could be other environmental factors to cause this potential colour change. The cob walls vary in thickness from between 520mm (approx' 20inches) to almost 900mm (35inches), the thinner walls suggest shuttering was used during construction, supported by the limited banding observed. The thicker walls may be earlier, suggesting that there may be multiple phases of construction within the cob walls.

Internally, the north – south range is divided into three bays, (1), to the south, (2) central and (3) to the north (*Figure 27*). Both (1) and (3) appear to be largely unaltered, (3) even retaining a pitched stone cart floor. There is however evidence in the form of open joist holes in the northern gable and sawn off bridging beams in the long elevations of a removed loft in the northernmost bay. The wall between (3) and (2) is of late 20th century brick, probably replacing an earlier cross wall, evidence of which can be seen with the retained plank and batten door at the western end. The door, although clearly of some antiquity contains no real diagnostic features to aid dating. There is a cob wall between (1) and (2), suggesting that the wall between (2) and (3) may have also originally been cob. There is a concrete floor and drain in (1) indicating that the bay was recently used for animal housing, the doors between the three bays may, therefore have served a feeding passage.

The roof is carried on eight King post trusses with raking struts, in deal. The trusses (*Figure 18*) are identical in design and appearance to those seen in building A(1) which suggests they may be contemporary, this however confuses the chronology established using cartographic sources which suggest A(1) is later. It is possible; therefore that B was re-roofed in the late 19th or early 20th century.

Building C

Conversion work on building C had commenced prior to the site visit, leaving nothing of historic or architectural significance within the interior. Externally, the “T” shaped building is clearly of two separate phases, the north – south range being brick built, while the east – west range is local rubble stone built. The brick range is constructed in English Bond (alternate courses of header and stretcher bricks), although a strong bond, it is an unusual choice for an agricultural building as it is difficult to lay and more expensive than other bonds due the number of bricks used. The range is well finished with cant brick window reveals and contrasting terracotta sills to the cast iron windows (*Figure 19*). The windows themselves are probably mid 19th century in date, suggesting a tentative date for the building as a whole. The range as a whole is peculiarly well finished for an agricultural building and in comparison to the previous buildings, suggesting that for a time at least the farm had some aspirations of grandeur.

The east – west range is largely stone built, with some brick dressings and quoin work (*Figure 20*). It is likely that this range is the remnants of the original farmhouse seen on earlier maps, the only remaining evidence of which is the potential chimney breast on the west facing gable (*Figure 21*). The small, handmade bricks suggest the building may have pre-19th century origins, although not enough survives to speculate further.

Building D

Building D is located to the north east of building A (*Figure 5*). The building survives only as two cob walls under a lean to roof in corrugated tinned steel sheets (*Figure 22*). The apparently unstable roof structure prevented further recording, but there appeared to be a manger along the northernmost wall, suggesting the building may have originated as a shelter shed. There is a second lean to corner to corner with the north westernmost corner of the cob wall; it too is in a too dilapidated condition to record.

4. Conclusion

Westacott Farm is an extremely interesting farmstead with a range of building traditions. The recorded buildings are likely to be 19th century in date, although it is possible the buildings retain remnants of earlier buildings, particularly building B and the southernmost range of building C.

Two of the buildings are cob built, a widespread building tradition in Devon that has persisted well into the modern era, cartographic sources indicate that building A was built sometime between 1841 and 1889. Physical evidence also supports this construction date. Building B is potentially earlier, but with a late 19th roof. Building in cob was widely seen as a primitive and ancient building technique, however more recent work has confirmed that a large number of cob buildings, including these at Westacott farm date to the 19th century, after all the material is extremely cheap or free and the agricultural boom of the era fuelled the demand cheap buildings.

Building C is, despite its appearance an interesting building and retains traces of the former farmhouse. The northern part of the building is well finished in brick with iron windows and terracotta details, such details are not common in agricultural buildings, which suggests the farm may have been profitable and had some aspirations at the time of its construction. Documentary sources indicate that for a time the farm was tenanted by the farm bailiff to Sir Redvers Buller and may therefore have been one the “better” farms of the estate. At some point during the early 20th century these fortunes changed and the farm became amalgamated with the adjacent Eastacott Farm. The fate of the farmhouse is unclear as the outline is still recorded on maps dating to the 1970s.

This historic building recording provided a permanent visual (photographic & drawn) record, analysis of historic plan and fabric and historical background of the building in its current state.

5. Archive & Publication

The site archive consists of

- 6 A3 permagraph sheets containing plans & notes
- 8 A1 paper plans & elevations
- 4 DVDs containing 166 digital images
- 5 A4 contact sheets
- 54 A4 photo record sheets
- 1 Unbound copy of this report

The archive will be held by ABRS under the temporary site code 2018-WFCD until deposition with Royal Albert Memorial Museum Exeter can be arranged.

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

5.1 OASIS Record Summary

INFORMATION REQUIRED	UPLOADED AS
OASIS No	archaeol30-348382
Project Name	An Archaeological Standing Building Survey, Westacott Farm (Outbuildings), Crediton, Devon.
Site Co-ordinates	NGR SX 84238 97627
Project Type	Standing Building Recording
Project Manager	Gerwyn Richards
Previous/Future Work?	No/Not Known
Current Land Use	Commercial
Development Type	Residential
Prompt	NPPF
Archive Recipient	Royal Albert Memorial Museum Exeter/ADS

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7. Colour Plates



Figure 6
Building A Ruined Southernmost Range (Looking South West).



Figure 7
Building A Principal Elevation (Looking North – North West).



Figure 8
Building A Principal Elevation, Showing Banding in Cob (Looking North West).



Figure 9
Building A Inserted First Floor Openings on Principal Elevation (Looking North West).



Figure 10
A(2) General View, Internal (Looking South West).



Figure 11
A(4) King Post Truss (Looking South West).



Figure 12
A(1) King Post Truss (Looking East – South East).



Figure 13
B Principal Elevation (Looking South – South East).



Figure 14
B South – South West Facing Gable
(Looking North).



Figure 15
B North – North East Facing Gable
(Looking South – South West).



Figure 16
B(2) East – South East Facing Elevation (Looking West).



Figure 17
B(4) Possible Banding Visible in the Principal Elevation (Looking South West).



Figure 18
B(1) King Post Truss (Looking North – North East).



Figure 19
C East Facing Elevation (Looking West).



Figure 20
C Quoins on South West Corner
(Looking East).



Figure 21
C West Facing Gable Showing Potential Chimney Breast (Looking East – South East).



Figure 22
D General View (Looking North – North West).

Figure 23 Site Plan.

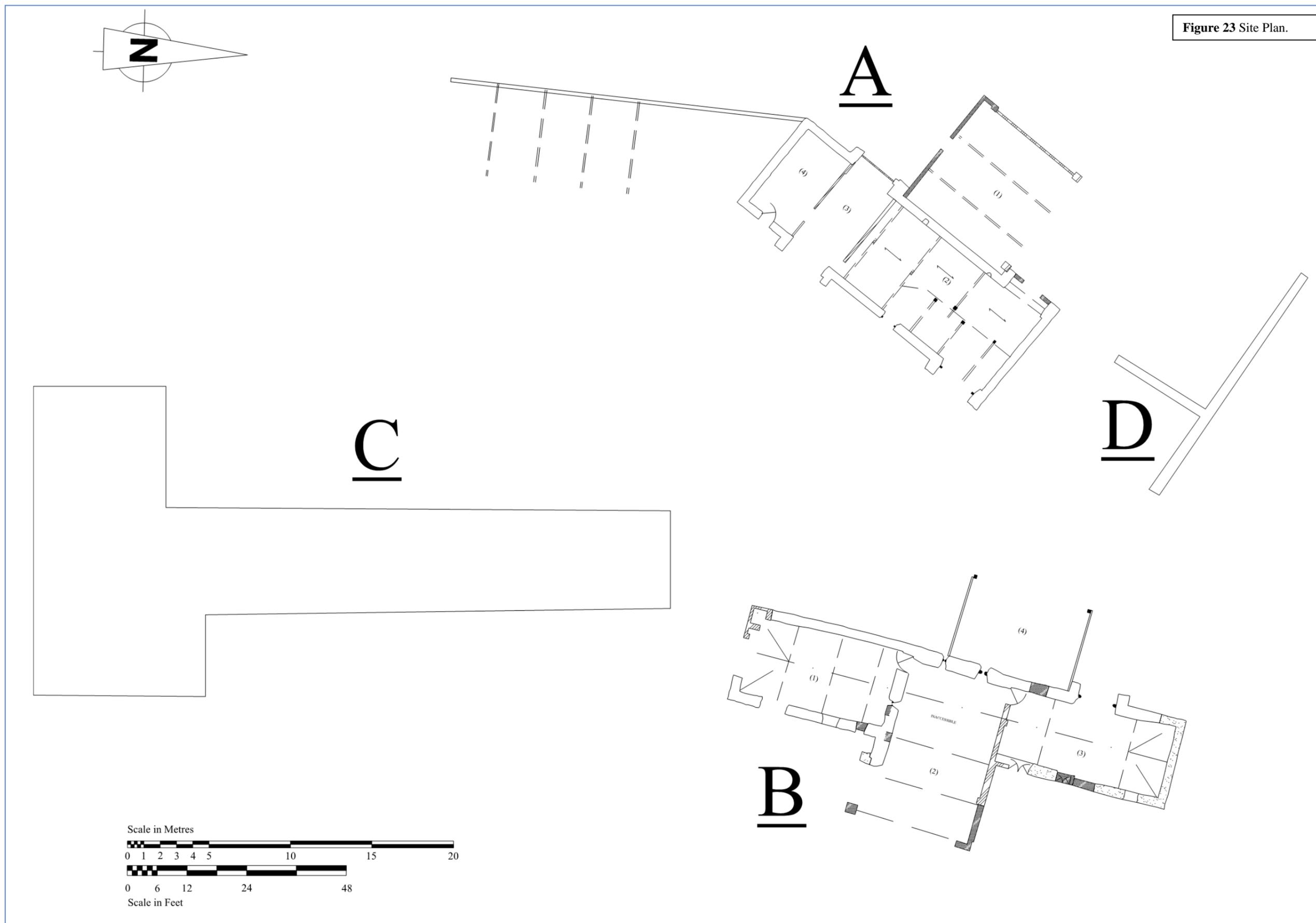


Figure 24 Building A Ground Floor Plan.

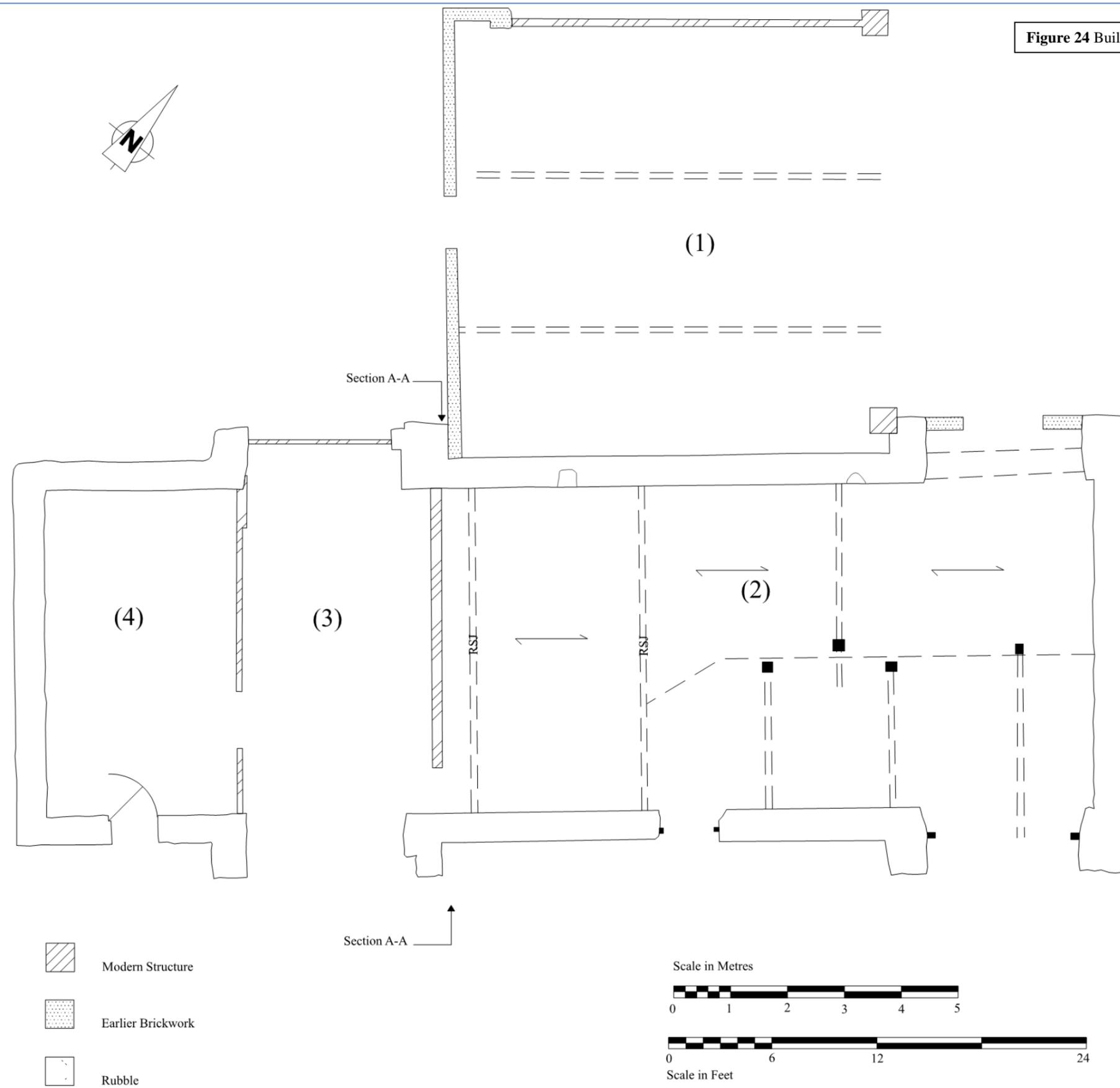
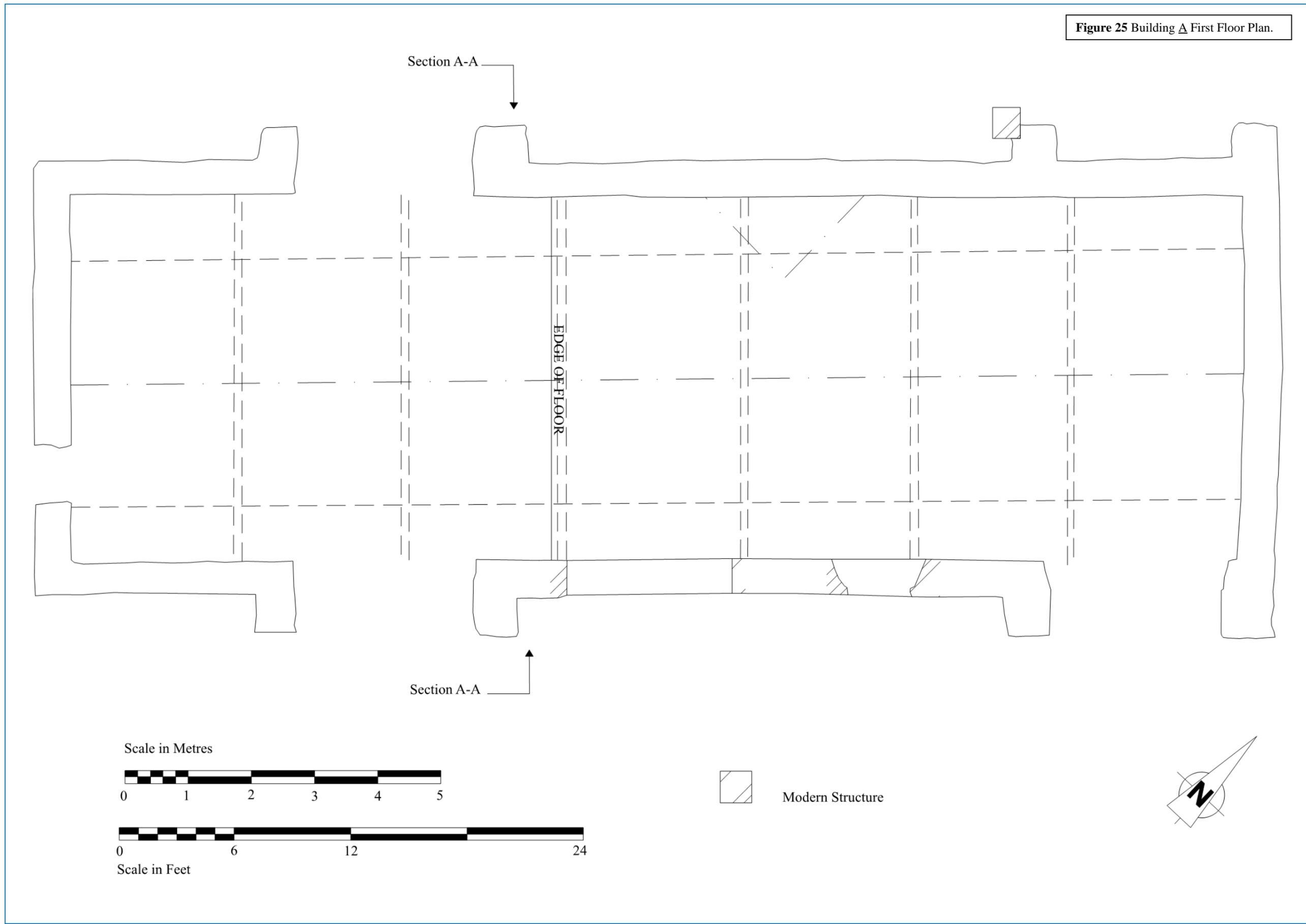
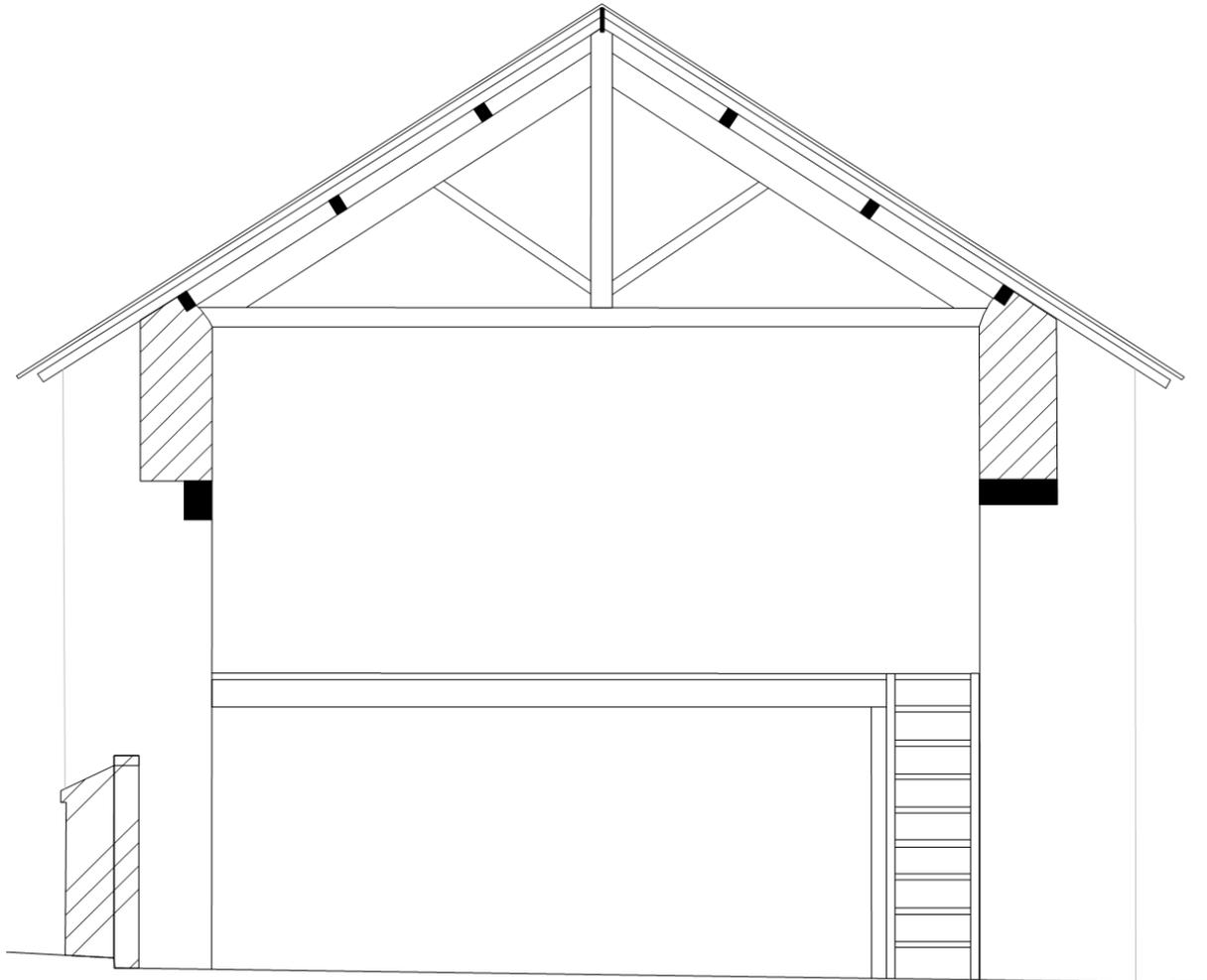


Figure 25 Building A First Floor Plan.





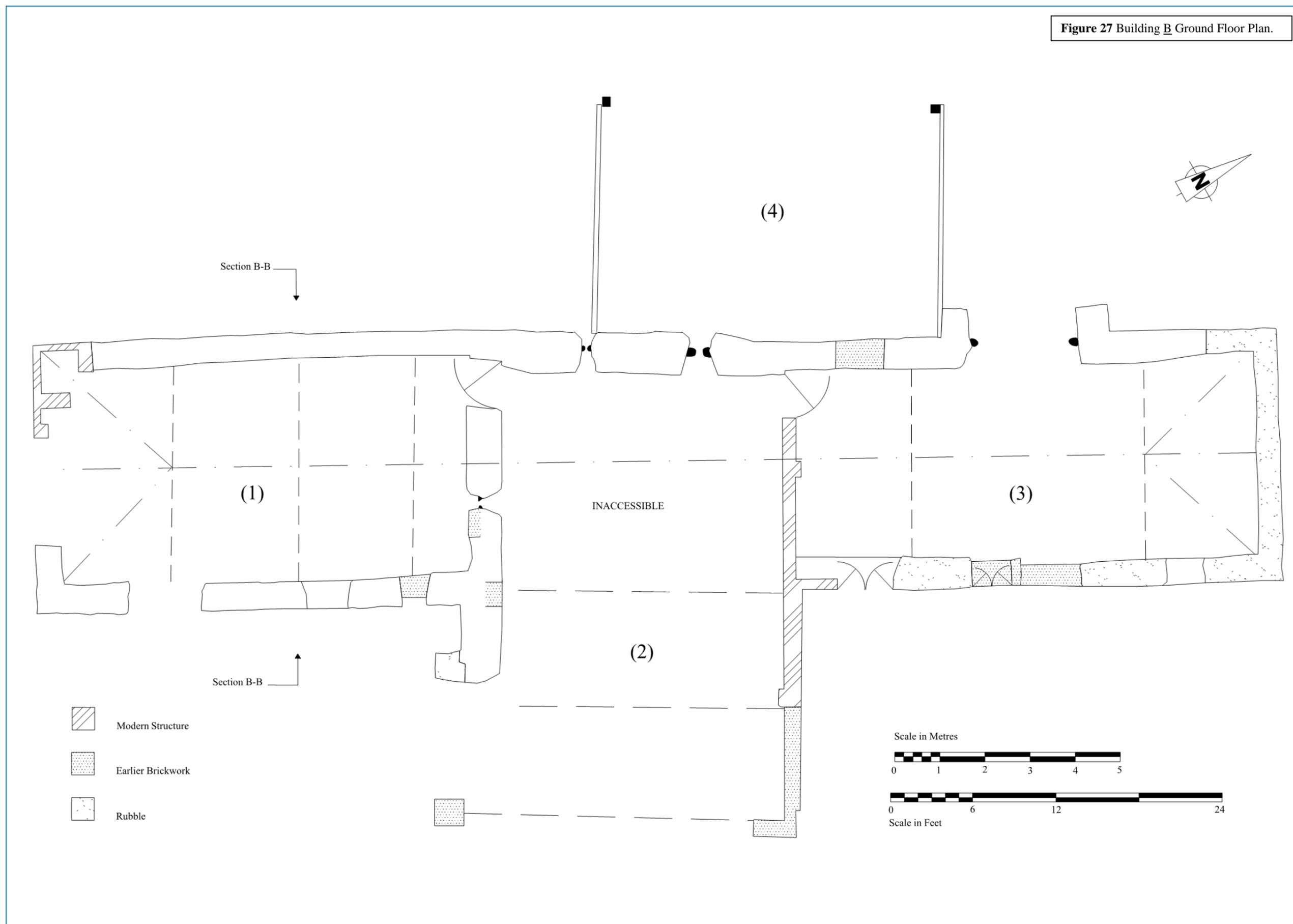
Scale in Metres

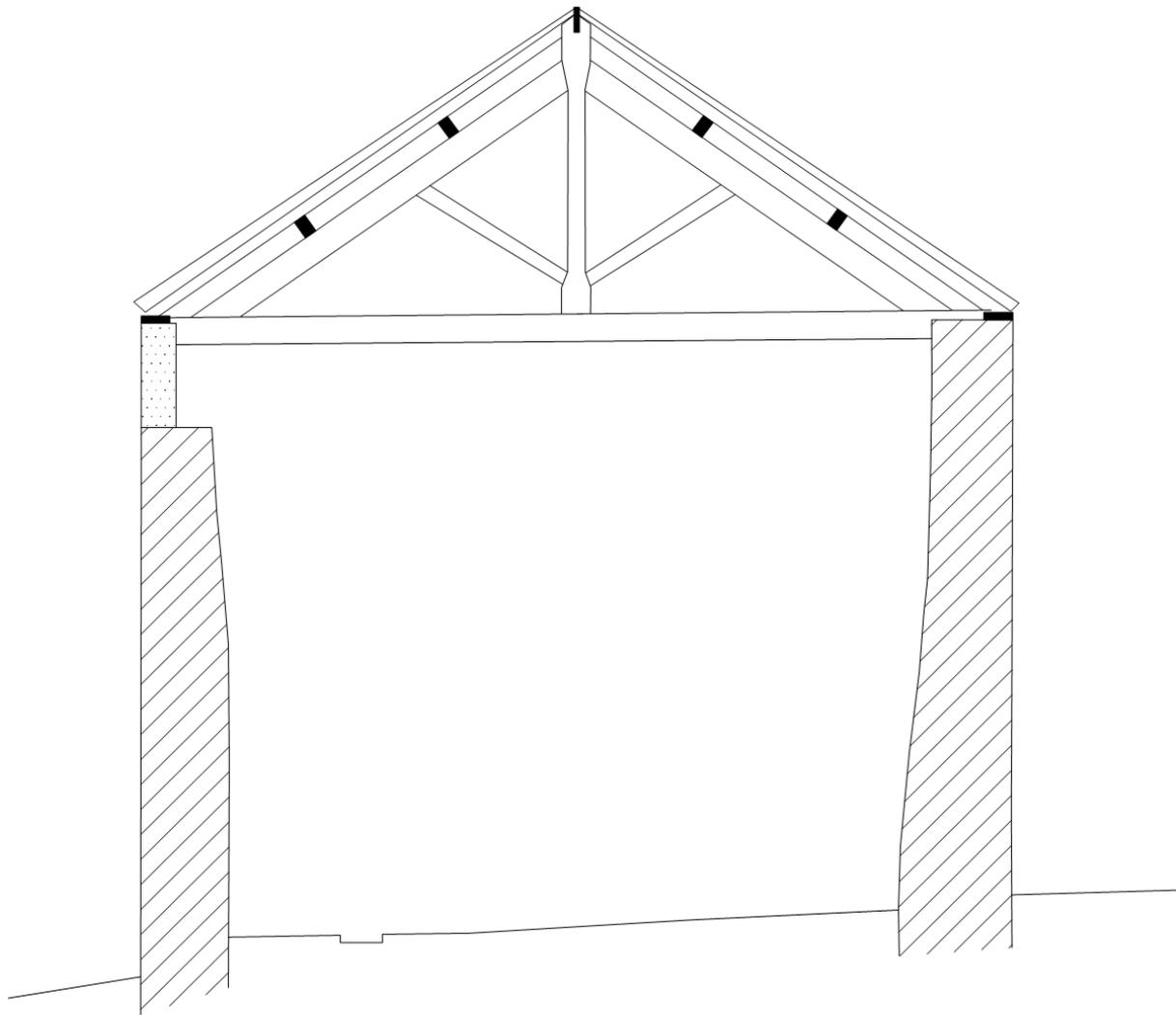


Scale in Feet

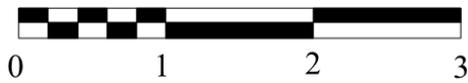
Figure 26 Building A Section A – A.

Figure 27 Building B Ground Floor Plan.





Scale in Metres



Scale in Feet

Figure 28 Building B Section B – B.

Figure 29 Report Photographs Location Plan – Building A Ground Floor.

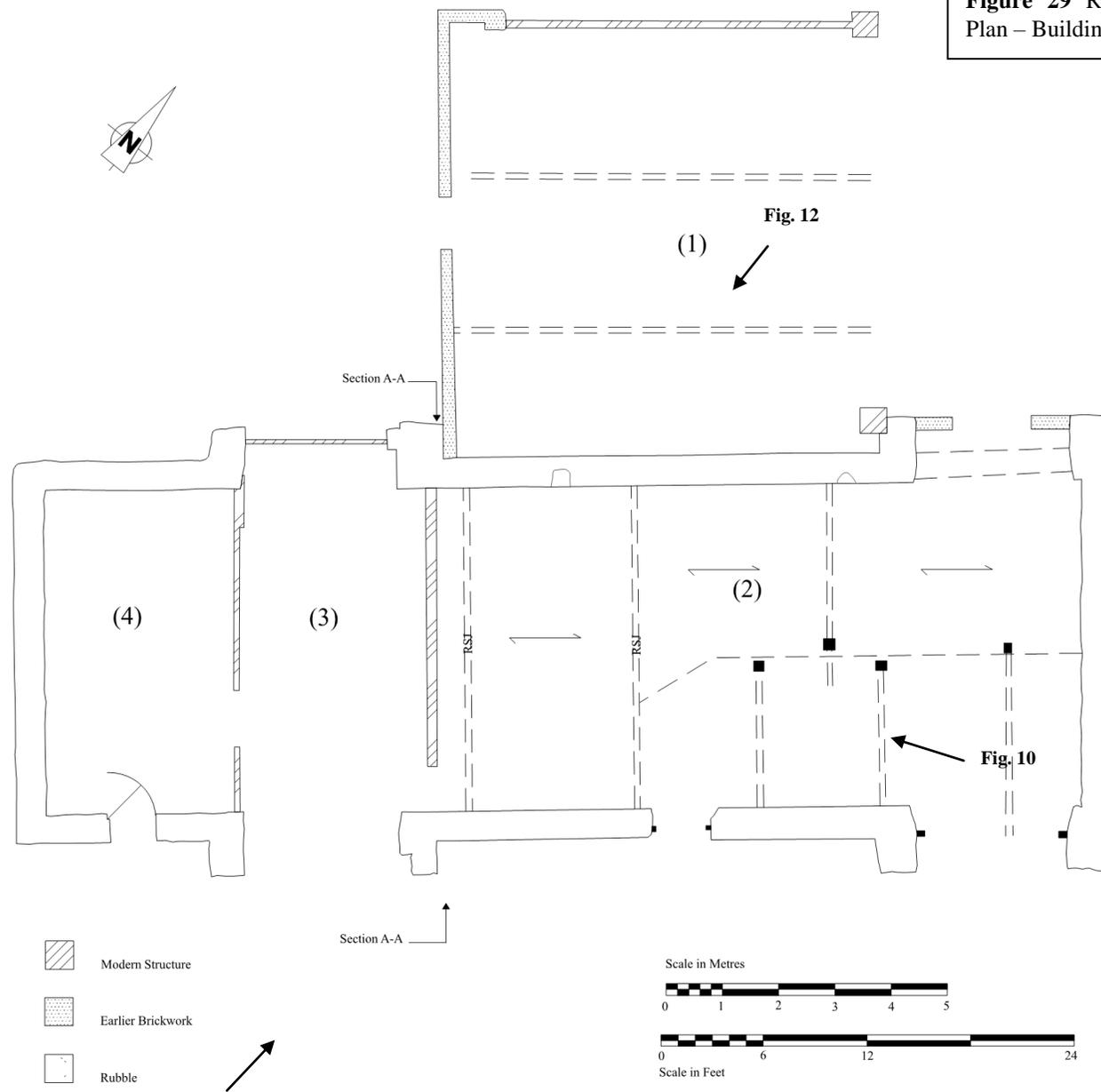


Fig. 7

Figure 30 Report Photographs Location Plan
Building A – First Floor.

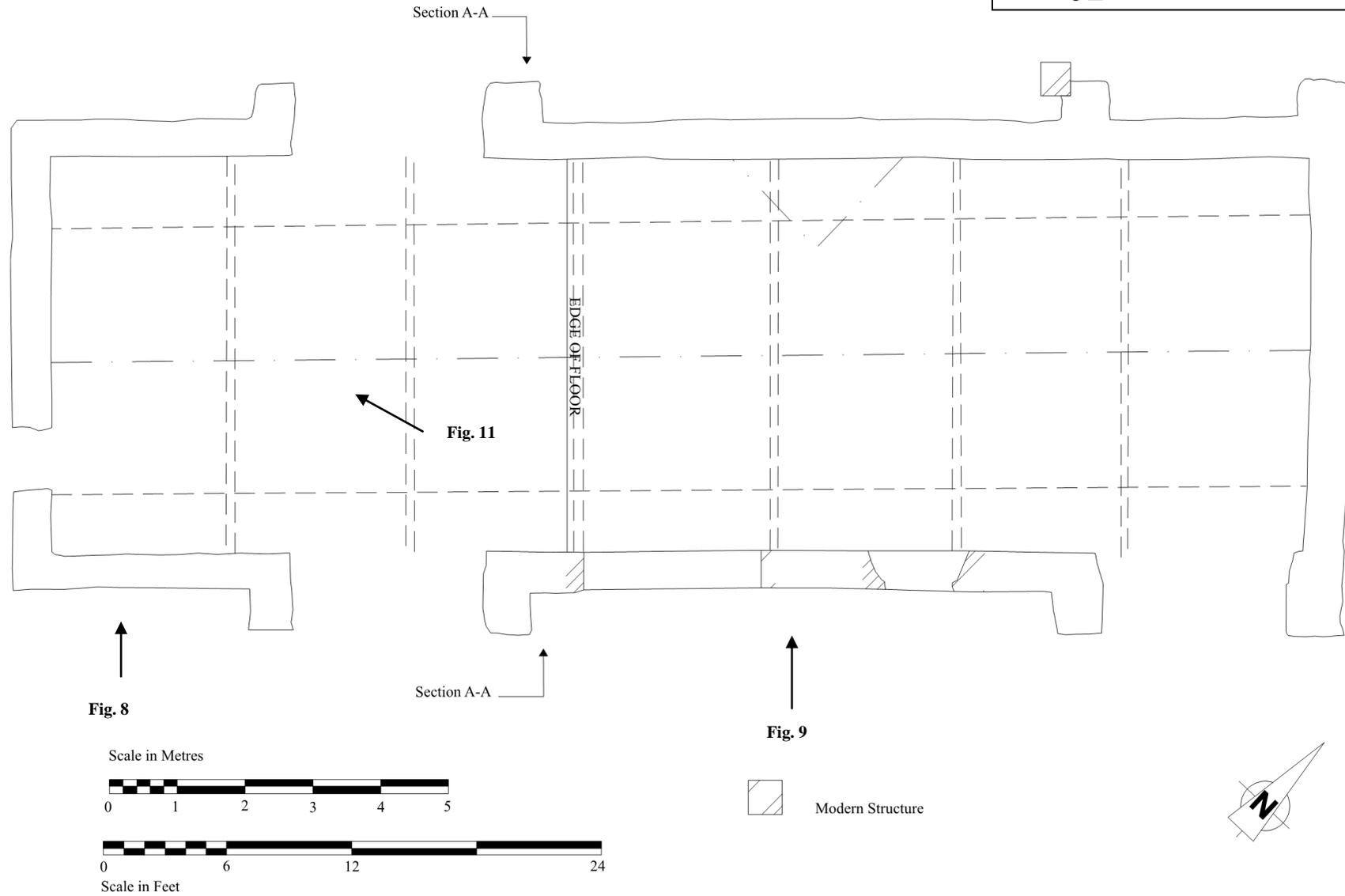


Figure 31 Report Photographs Location Plan
Building B – Ground Floor.

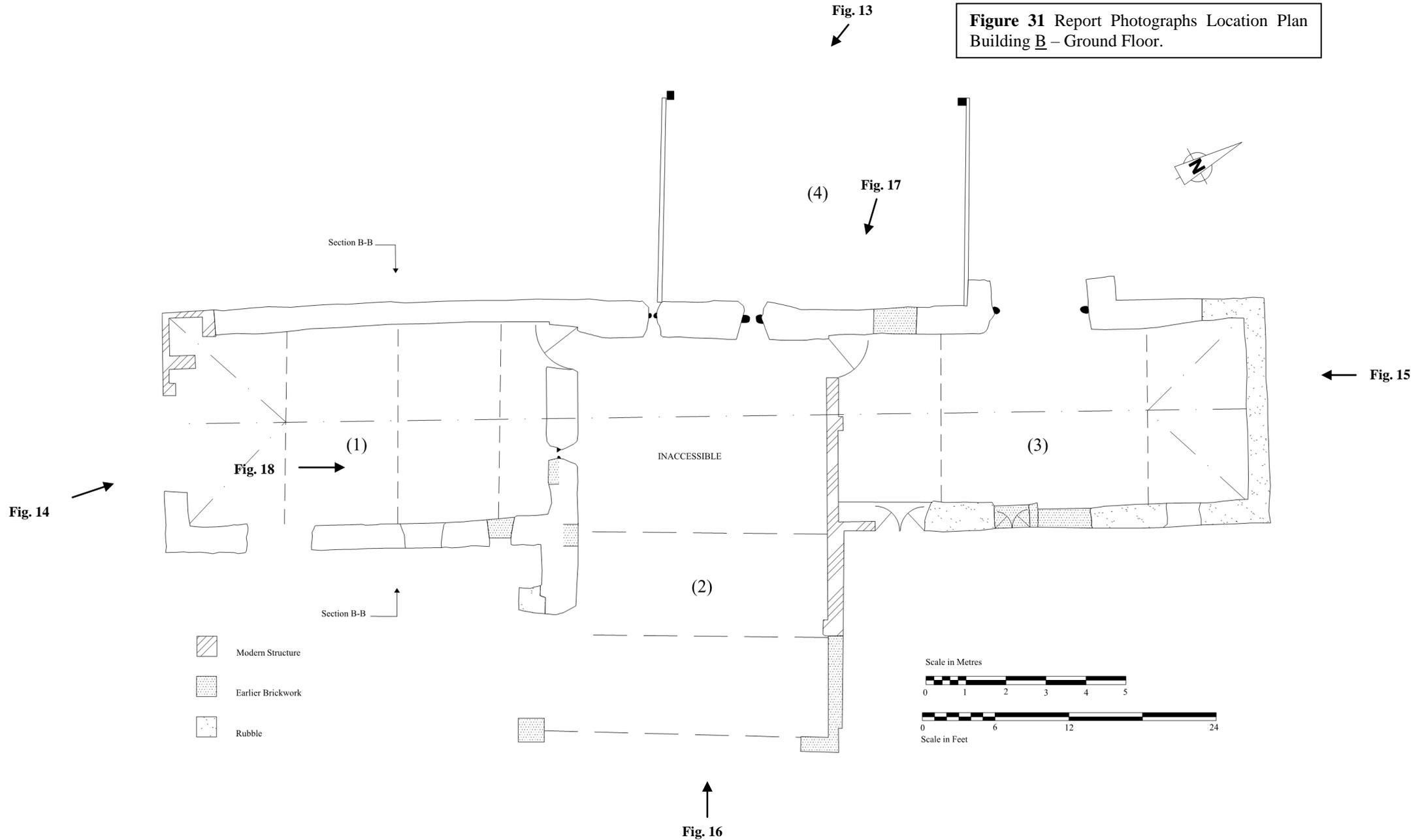
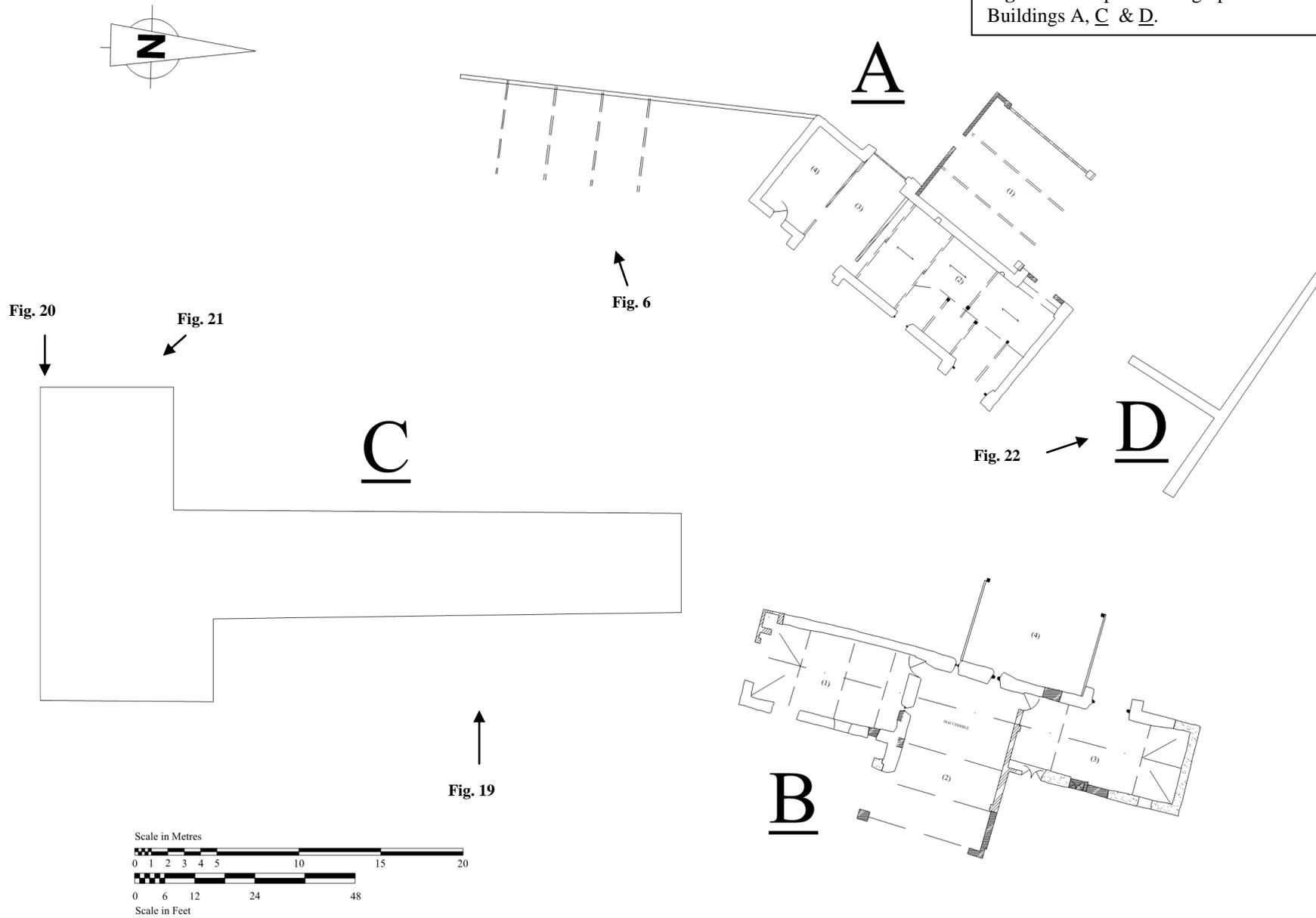


Figure 32 Report Photographs Location Plan
Buildings A, C & D.



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