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**An Archaeological
Evaluation and Building
Record of Rock House
Farm and Rock Holme,
Great Haywood,
Staffordshire**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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**An Archaeological Evaluation and Building Record of Rock House Farm
and Rock Holme, Great Haywood, Staffordshire**

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1.0 Summary

Between 25 February and 5 March 2002, Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit carried out archaeological building recording of Rock House Farm and Rock Holme, Great Haywood, Staffordshire for Miller Homes, prior to demolition. In addition, six trial pits were excavated within the properties in order to evaluate the potential importance of any surviving archaeological deposits.

The building recording identified six principal structural phases ranging in date between the later Middle Ages and the last decade of the 19th century. The earliest structure was an open hall house of cruck construction, probably two bays in length. The northern bay was replaced in the 17th century with a new timber-framed structure, and the southern bay was rebuilt in brick, probably in the 18th century. The house was further extended and remodelled in three distinct stages in the 19th century, the latest phase being dated 1893.

The trial pits revealed that in the south bay, the early archaeological deposits had been removed, probably in 1893, but in the north bay there was a stratigraphic sequence dating back to the 17th century, and several sherds of late medieval coarse ware were recovered.

2.0 Introduction

Between 25 February and 5 March 2002, Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit carried out archaeological building recording at Rock House Farm and Rock Holme, Great Haywood, Staffordshire, for Miller Homes. The work was necessary owing to the poor structural condition of the properties, a circumstance that had prompted a proposal by the owners, Miller Homes, to substantially demolish the cottages. It was agreed that no work would be carried out until a programme of archaeology and recording had been completed. In addition to the building recording, six trial pits were excavated in order to evaluate the potential importance of the surviving archaeological deposits. It was originally intended to carry out dendrochronology sampling prior to demolition of the cruck truss but this has been deferred until after dismantling, and the results will be presented separately.

The archaeological work adhered to a written scheme of investigation prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU 2002), based on a brief issued by Stafford Borough Council (Stafford Borough Council 2002). In addition, the building recording was carried out according to the specification laid down by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (RCHME 1996) and the standards and guidance issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 1999). The project also conformed with government advice contained in PPG 16 (DoE 1990) and PPG15 (DoE

1994). Terminology is based on that of the CBA (Alcock *et al* 1996) for timber framing, and that of Brunskill (Brunskill 1990) for the brickwork

3.0 Site Location

The two properties are located on a sandstone outcrop on the east side of the main road that runs from north to south through the village of Great Haywood, Staffordshire, approximately 4 miles east of Stafford at NGR SJ997225 (Figure 1).

4.0 Objectives

- To record any significant structural features within the buildings and to produce a written description, analysis, and visual record of the structure.
- To evaluate the potential importance of archaeological deposits below the existing floor levels through the excavation of a series of test pits.

5.0 Method

The existing architect's plans, sections, and external elevations were checked and used as a base upon which archaeological information was overlaid. Different types of brickwork were identified and located on the elevations at a scale of 1:50. In addition, the internal elevations containing exposed timber framing and stone, were recorded by measured drawings, at a scale of 1:20, off a horizontal datum related to Ordnance Survey levels. Areas where access was not practical for health and safety or simple logistical reasons will be recorded during the subsequent demolition phase. In addition to the drawn record, a fully referenced photographic record was made using colour slide and print film.

The c.1m square trial-pits were excavated by hand down to the natural red sandstone bedrock, and recorded by section drawings at a scale of 1:10, supplemented by colour slide and print photography. Recovered finds were recorded by context, cleaned and marked. All archaeological deposits and features were assessed for their potential for environmental remains.

6.0 Historical Background

The cottages stand towards the southern edge of the village of Great Haywood directly opposite St Stephen's church of c. 1842-5, which was designed by the local master builder Thomas Trubshaw (Colvin 1995, p.995). They appear on the Colwich parish tithe map of 1839, at which date they formed a single property, being described in the apportionment as a house and yard occupied by one J. Leadbeater. The map depicts a square looking building with a short wing projecting from the southern end of the west front that bears little resemblance to the existing structure; much the same arrangement is shown on estate map of 1855. By 1890, when the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey map was

published, a rear wing had been added (Figure 2), and by the time the 2nd edition appeared, in 1902, the building had taken on the appearance of the present building, and had been divided into two properties (Figure 3)

7.0 Results

7.1 The Building Recording

Rock Holme (Building A) and Rock House Farm (Building B) constitute a pair of houses (Figure 4), that has evolved from a single property which has occupied the site since the late Middle Ages. Rock Holme is dated 1893, but the houses contain a late medieval core, and there are several structural phases between these two dates. The principal building material is red brick, of several periods, replacing earlier timber framing, some of which survives. Both properties were roofed with plain tiles and have brick chimney stacks. The cottages are aligned north south with the main road through the village, and face west towards the church on the other side of the road. Rock Holme is to the south, and Rock House Farm to the north. At the time of the survey the properties were in a ruinous condition.

Building A (Rock Holme) is of two stories and two main bays. Although the front elevation (Figure 8) has a superficial impression of symmetry it is, in fact, slightly irregular. The ground floor is dominated by two large canted bay windows; the left hand one is of six lights, but the right hand one has only four, and is canted on the left hand side only. These windows flank a right of centre doorway and carry a plain tile, lean-to roof of very low pitch, which is continued over the doorway. The first floor towards the road is composed of 19th century timber framing, including a tier of quatrefoils immediately above the roof of the bay windows. Infill panels are of basket weave brick or plaster. There are three windows, the frames projecting on brackets. The central one is narrower in order to reflect the proportions of the front at ground level. A raised panel above the door reads 'Rock / Holme / 1893'.

The front door gave direct access to a living room (Room A4), heated by a fireplace in the south wall. A doorway in the north wall led to a sitting room (Room A3), which was heated by a fireplace to the east, whereas a doorway in the east wall communicated with a rear hall way (Room 2) containing the stairs to the upper floors and to a small cellar (Figure 7). This area was also accessible from an external doorway to the east, and a door in the north wall gave access to a room, possibly the kitchen (Room A1) that had a fireplace with sandstone lintel in the west wall. This room now has a wide garage size opening in the east wall, and it is evident that the house formerly extended further to the east. At first floor level (Figure 5) were three bedrooms, above Rooms A1, A3 and A4. The attic (Figure 6) was used for storage.

The west front of Building B (Rock House Farm) (Figure 8) has a much lower roof line than Rock Holme, having only a ground storey and an attic. It is built almost entirely of brick (Flemish bond), but retains one of the wall posts of an earlier timber framed building to the left (north) of centre. There is a segmental-headed doorway to the right,

and two segmental-headed window openings to the left (north) and centre. The latter retains a tri-partite plate glass sash window. The house was roofless at the time of the survey, but flat roofed dormer windows formerly lit the upper storey. No attempt has been made to create a symmetrical fenestration pattern, and differences in size between the left and right hand windows reflect the different sizes of the two main rooms.

Like Rock Holme, the front door of Rock House Farm gave access to the main living room (Figure 4). This was heated by a fireplace on the north side, and doorways to the north and east led respectively to the sitting room, and staircase, on the one hand, and to a pantry, storeroom and kitchen on the other. The kitchen was housed within a rear extension wing aligned east-west. Another rear extension was aligned with the main house. At ground level, at the north-east corner of the house, it contained an outside lavatory, and between this and the back door that opened into the kitchen, an open fronted loggia. The loggia had a series of slender cast iron columns that carried a timber plate and supported the upper storey (Figure 9).

Stone steps gave access to a lobby in the south-east corner of the cellar (Figure 7). A semi-circular archway opens to the cellar proper. In the centre of the north wall the brickwork breaks forward to contain a semi-circular arched alcove, and to support the first floor beams. On the east side of the cellar is another semi-circular arched recess, the lower part of which has a square-headed opening to a cupboard beneath the stairs. Immediately to the west of this cupboard, in the north wall is a barred window. Around most of the cellar is a low stone topped bench.

The first floor (Figure 5) contained three bedrooms, all with windows towards the west. The northern most was entered directly from the landing, but the other two, which were probably one room originally, were reached from a passageway, within the rear extension along the east side of the property, that also led to the bathroom situated in the rear wing.

Phase 1 (First timber-framed phase)

The earliest phase dates from the pre-Reformation or early post-Reformation period, and is represented by the timber-framed cross frame that forms the party wall between the two properties (Figure 12, section A-A). It was composed of a pair of crucks with a tie beam, a cambered collar and an Alcock H-type apex (Alcock 1981 pp.95-6) in which the blades are linked by a yoke, and then rise to clasp a ridge piece (in this case removed). The upper face of the truss faces north. This means that it was probably assembled on the ground to the south of its present position, and then raised into place (Charles 1981, p.25).

All three horizontal members are attached to the crucks with halved lap joints, and secured with wooden pegs. The collar and tie beam extend beyond the crucks, and each end of the collar is pegged to a packing piece that extends along the back of the cruck blade. Of these two members only the easternmost appears to have survived intact; it is approximately 2.8m in length, 0.9m of which extends below the collar. Roughly midway

between the collar and the yoke another horizontal timber has, at a later date, been bolted to the cruck blades.

The foot of the western cruck is .20m above floor level, whereas that of the eastern cruck is 0.28m higher, a disparity which suggests that the latter has been shortened. The foot of the eastern cruck blade now rests on the uppermost of two timber pads, that in turn sit on top of the sill beam (Plate 1). Two pegs have been driven through the cruck from the west in order to fix it to the wall post that stands immediately behind it, but which was not jointed into it.

Evidence for vertical timber members within the cruck truss consists of an empty mortise in the soffit of the tie beam approximately 0.18m from the eastern cruck blade, and a surviving stud placed centrally between the tie beam and collar. The soffit of the tie beam is largely obscured, so there may be further, hidden, evidence for vertical timbers, that could not be examined at the time of the survey.

Wattle and daub fills the space between the collar and the apex (Plate 2), and a series of stave holes along the soffit of the collar suggests that the frame was also closed between tie beam and collar. Stave holes at the north end of the tie beam soffit show that there was some wattle and daub at ground level too, but here again, only a small portion of the soffit was exposed, so the evidence is only partial. On the other hand there is nothing to suggest that there was any infill between the back of the eastern cruck and the east wall.

On the north side, the upper timbers of the cruck, as well as the wattle and daub, are smoke blackened, an indication that the house to which this truss was related, was a single storey building, heated by an open hearth, and that this hearth was situated on the north side of the truss. The fact that the wattle and daub is also discoloured suggests that the frame is *in situ* rather than having been reused.

The original purlins are no longer *in situ*, owing to the alteration in the pitch of the roof, but there is no doubt that they were formerly trenched into the backs of the packing pieces. The position of the western purlin was clearly marked by a cut in the packing piece, but that of the eastern one was obscured by later plasterwork.

There is reason for thinking that this cruck truss is earlier than rest of the timber framing in the building. Firstly, the character of the wall framing, described below, is more typical of the seventeenth century than an earlier period. Secondly, judging by the angle of the packing pieces, the pitch of the roof (*c.* 55°) appears to have been steeper than the wall plate of the east wall would have allowed (*c.* 50°). Consequently, it is probable that the original east and west wall would have been much lower and would have been carried on the ends of the tie beam as in many other buildings of this kind (Charles 1981, p.25).

Phase 2 (Second timber-framed phase)

The second phase of construction was also timber-framed, and seems to have involved the rebuilding of the northern bay, probably in the 17th century. The physical remains of

this phase are evident in the east (Figure 13, section B-B), west (Figure 8) and north (Figure 14, section C-C) walls of the south bay of Rock House Farm. The frame was of three tiers of rectangular panels, and was 3.16m in height from the bottom of the sill beam to the top of the wall plate. The studs were secured by one, and the rails by two pegs. On the east side (Figure 13) the panels were approximately 0.80m (2ft 7½") square. The frame has been much altered on this side, and it is evident that the doorway from the kitchen (Room B7) has been inserted by cutting through one of the original rails. The existing window to the pantry (Room B4), though it has been placed between two wall posts, has also cut through one of the rails. Towards the north end of the bay, the insertion of a doorway (now blocked) to the pantry has necessitated the cutting away of one of the wall posts.

Evidence to suggest that the wall frame extended beyond the cruck truss is lacking. There are no peg holes or mortises along the southern side of the post at this position, which may suggest that there was a doorway in the east wall immediately south of the cross frame, but which may also be accounted for by the continued existence of Phase 1 walls around the south bay.

Unusually, the wall posts at either end of the northern frame (Figure 14) are splayed at the foot as well as at the head, suggesting, perhaps, that the sill beams of the east and west walls were set into the backs of the posts, above the sill beam of the cross frame in a reflection of normal wall head assembly. This frame is characterized by a slightly irregular pattern, being divided into three main sections below the tie beam by two posts situated roughly equidistant between the centre of the truss and an outer wall. To the east of the eastern post were three tiers of rectangular panels. The post and one of the rails have been cut away when a door was inserted, but peg holes and an empty mortise allow the original arrangement to be reconstructed. At approximately 1.72m above floor level, the central and western sections are divided horizontally by a middle rail, above which is a tier of rectangular panels. Below the rail, however, the arrangement is unusual. There is no evidence for an original division into small rectangular panels like the rest of the frame, though two studs have been inserted at a later date.

One large area within the central section is infilled with large dressed stone blocks (Plate 3). This masonry is of more than one date; the lower courses are larger, are dressed with rather coarse herringbone pattern tooling marks, and are probably 19th century. Some of the stones in the upper courses are more finely dressed with faint diagonal tooling marks, and one bears a mason's mark (Figure 14 inset), probably 14th or 15th century in date. Otherwise the infill is of brick. This area of stonework corresponds with a brick chimney stack on the other side of the cross frame, and undoubtedly bears some relation to it.

The roof truss has a pair of rafters with the feet set forward of the wall posts, and a single collar, below which are three vertical studs and above which are a pair of struts arranged in a V-pattern, extending to the rafters. The truss carried a single pair of trenched purlins and a ridge purlin.

A set of inscribed carpenter's marks, representing Roman numerals, has been recorded from some of the timbers. The numbering does not include the principal rafters or the main wall posts, all of which were, presumably, readily identifiable. The numbering is from right (west) to left (east) and adheres to a somewhat idiosyncratic logic. The roof timbers are numbered separately from the wall timbers. Thus the V-struts above the collar are inscribed I and II, and the studs below the collar II to III. The three main posts are labelled I to III, as are the three studs above the middle rail, and the latter are reflected in corresponding marks on the rail itself. In addition, the two sections of rail are numbered I and II. Four short rails to the far left (east) probably carried a separate numerical sequence, though only one mark (III) could be discerned on the three surviving members. This, however, was mirrored on the adjacent post, which also carried III where it joins one of the other rails.

Also belonging to this period is the spine beam over the north bay. This has cyma-moulded chamfer stops.

Phase 3 (First brick phase)

Phase three is represented by hand made brick walls (9½"x 4½"x 2¼") in Flemish bond on a sandstone plinth. It is confined to the south wall of Building A (Rock Holme) the adjoining section of the east wall, and a small area of the east wall of Room B5. There is no stratigraphic relationship between this and the other brick phases, and it has been designated the earliest brick structure on typological grounds. This phase is dated tentatively to the 18th century.

Phase 4

The next structural phase involved the rebuilding of the west wall of Building B in brick, and a single bay extension to the north. The walls are constructed of hand made red bricks in Flemish bond with slightly recessed mortar courses. The work seems to have taken place in two stages, because the line of the surviving timber wall post, which falls slightly short of eaves level, is continued above as a vertical break in the brickwork (Figure). This subdivision of Phase 4 is emphasized by the existence of a coursed stone plinth beneath the right hand unit, and by a change in brick size from 8¾"x 4¼"x 2¼" in the southern bay (Phase 4a) to 8¾"x 4½"x 2¾" in the northern bay (Phase 4b).

This northern extension bay was built over a cellar, formed by cutting back the bedrock outcrop flush with the north wall of the timber-framed house, and enclosing the space cleared with brick walls to the north, east and west. Above bedrock, and immediately below the sill beam of the timber-framed end truss are two courses of dressed stone faced with coarse roughly herringbone patterned tooling marks, probably of mid-19th century date (Plate 4).

Phase 5

Phase 5 comprises the extensions to Building B to the rear (east) which, judging by the map evidence, came into existence between 1855 and 1890. This phase is characterised

by cut red bricks (8¾"x 4¾"x 2¾") in Flemish stretcher bond with flush faced mortar joints. Vertical building breaks show it to be distinct from Phases 3 and 4b, which it adjoins.

Phase 6

Phase 6 is represented by the reconstruction, in 1893, of Building A (Rock Holme). There are clear vertical building breaks in the north and south walls at the point at which the front breaks forward from Building B (Rock House Farm), and a change to machine cut bricks 8¾"x 5½"x 2¾" in Flemish stretcher bond. There is no doubt then, that the rebuilding of Building A (Rock Holme) in 1893 involved the extension of the building to the west.

It is to this period too that the internal walls and chimney stacks of Building A belong. Almost certainly contemporary with these is the excavation of the sandstone bedrock to a depth of 0.6m below the level of the cruck house. The difference in levels is graphically illustrated in the north and south walls (Plate 5).

7.2 The Trial Pits

The trial pits (Figures 4 and 15) were situated in rooms A1 (TP 3), A3 (TP 5), A4 (TP 4), B2 (TP 6), B4 (TP 1) and B5 (TP 2). Four of the six pits (2,3,4 & 5) revealed minimal stratigraphy before the natural sandstone bedrock was exposed. In Trial Pit 2 this represented the natural level of the rock outcrop on the south east side of the site. In the other three, however, all situated in Building A (Rock Holme), the level of the rock represented the lowering of the ground surface contemporary with the reconstruction of 1893. The only find recovered was a piece of clay pipe from Trial Pit 2.

The other two trial pits, situated in Room B4 and Room B2 respectively, were rather more productive. Trial Pit 6 revealed a stratigraphic build up of between 0.59m and 0.75m below the tiled floor. Immediately above bedrock was a compact red/brown sand-clay layer (1007) mixed with charcoal and sandstone and pieces of slag, which contained two sherds of 17th century pottery. Above this was a mid-brown silt/sand layer (1006) from which was recovered ten sherds of 17th/18th century pottery as well as one medieval sherd of coarse ware of 13th / 14th century date. Overlying context 1006 was a compact red clay layer (1005) flecked with charcoal throughout, and containing some decomposed straw c. 0.02-0.04m thick; it contained five sherds of 17th/18th century pottery.

The lowest layer of Trial Pit 1 was a loose mid-brown sand/silt layer (1011), heavily flecked with charcoal and slag, and with some sandstone rubble lying across the trial pit and directly above natural. Seven sherds of a generally coarse appearance were recovered from this context. One rim fragment and a green glazed body sherd from another vessel are suggestive of a late medieval date, probably 13th to 14th century.

8.0 Discussion

The earliest house we have evidence for is one of cruck construction, open to the roof and heated by an open hearth. Unfortunately, however, there are few dates underpinning the chronology of cruck construction in Staffordshire. We know that crucks were being built by 1325 when a lease concerning a property in Knutton (Alcock and Hall 1981, p.29) stipulated that William Gamul was to build two '*furcas videlicet crockus*' (forks known as crucks) onto a cottage that stood on the site. It is also true, however, that they were still a favoured method of construction in 1605 when a cruck truss was used in the Old School House at Ford in the Staffordshire Moorlands (VA 28 (1997), 128-9). The evidence for an open hall narrows the date range only slightly, if at all, and until dendrochronology, begins to make its mark in the county, we can only repeat the rule of thumb that most Staffordshire cruck buildings date from between 1300 and 1600. Certainly, the Great Haywood crucks display no early framing techniques like the thirteenth century examples recorded at Cottingham, Northants (Hill and Miles 2001), and Upton Magna, Shropshire (VA 26 (1995), 70, 72) and probably belong to a later period.

The possibility that there was a doorway on the north side of the building throws some light on the internal plan of the house during the 2nd timber framed phase, but it might also have a bearing on the plan of the cruck house. At least two Staffordshire cruck houses had cross passages defined by spere trusses¹, and although such structural definition of the point of entry is rare, there is some evidence to suggest that the principal of opposed entrances prevailed. At the late medieval cruck house at Woodhouse Farm, Haughton, for example, the present lobby-entry plan appears to be the result of a remodelling of the house in which a chimney stack was inserted within a non-structural cross-passage (Shryane, n.d., p.37).

Regarding the plan of the Phase 2 house, this seems to have been a two-cell timber framed structure, resulting from the reconstruction of the northern bay. The northern bay had two stories, though we cannot be certain about the southern bay. The most likely position for a stack is at the north end where the lower frame appears to have been designed to accommodate a fireplace. This arrangement of the frame does not correspond with the existing brick stack within Building B and may suggest that there was an earlier, possibly timber framed, stack initially. The date at which this occurred would be some time between *circa* 1550 when floors started being inserted into former open halls, and *circa* 1700 by which time timber framed houses had largely died out in Staffordshire.

9.0 Recommendations

The significant parts of the standing buildings are the two timber framed phases, especially the cruck truss of Phase 1. The timber work was to some extent obscured by later accretions, so that there is still information to be gleaned, about construction techniques and internal planning. It is recommended, therefore, that during demolition the opportunity is taken to carry out further recording work. This should include removal

¹ Hood Lane Farm, Armitage (Meeson, 1975-6) and 23-27 High Street, Aldridge (Jones and Penn 1976-7)

of plaster from the wall post on west side of building, and the removal of brickwork and plaster from around the eastern wall post. Extraction of the brick panels from the timber frame should make it possible to establish the original infill material. Further recording of cruck truss is also necessary to determine the extent to which it was closed at ground level.

Regarding the below ground archaeology, the indications are that the early deposits were probably removed from Building A during the last decade of the nineteenth century when Rock Holme was rebuilt. The test pits in Building B (Rock House Farm), however, demonstrate that archaeological deposits of late medieval date may survive. It is recommended, then, that the entire area of the northern bay of the timber-framed house be totally excavated after demolition in order to recover further evidence about the chronology of the site, and about the internal arrangement of the medieval house. In particular, there is an opportunity to locate the position of the open hearth that must have existed in the first building phase, as well as structural evidence contemporary with or earlier than the cruck truss.

10.0 Acknowledgements

This project was managed for BUFAU by Steve Litherland. The main recording and excavation work was carried out by Chris Hewitson and Andy Rudge. Malcolm Hislop carried out additional structural analysis and compiled this report, the drawings for which were prepared by Nigel Dodds. David Wilkinson monitored the work for Stafford Borough Council.

11. 0 Sources

11.1 Cartographic Sources

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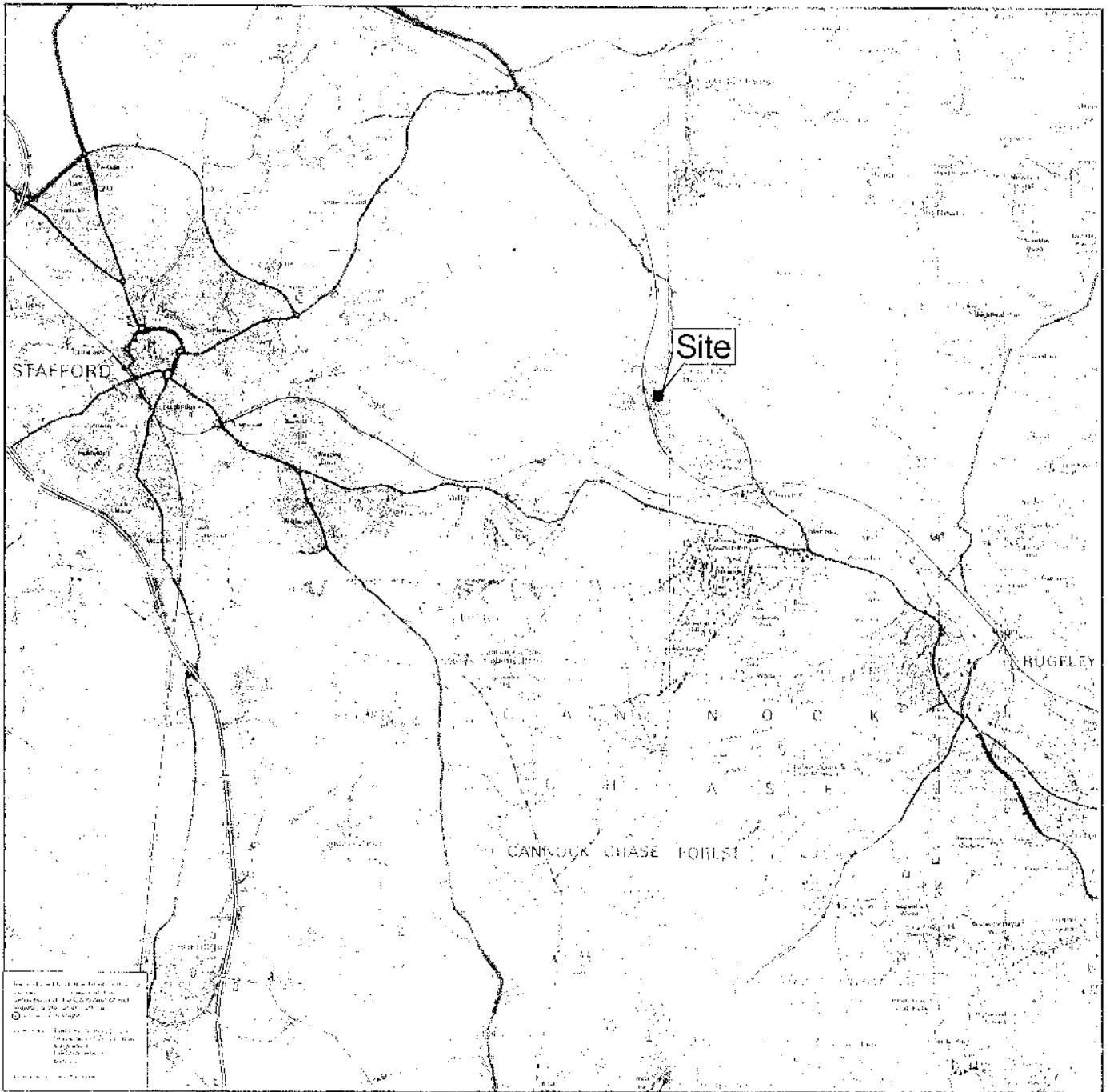


Fig 1

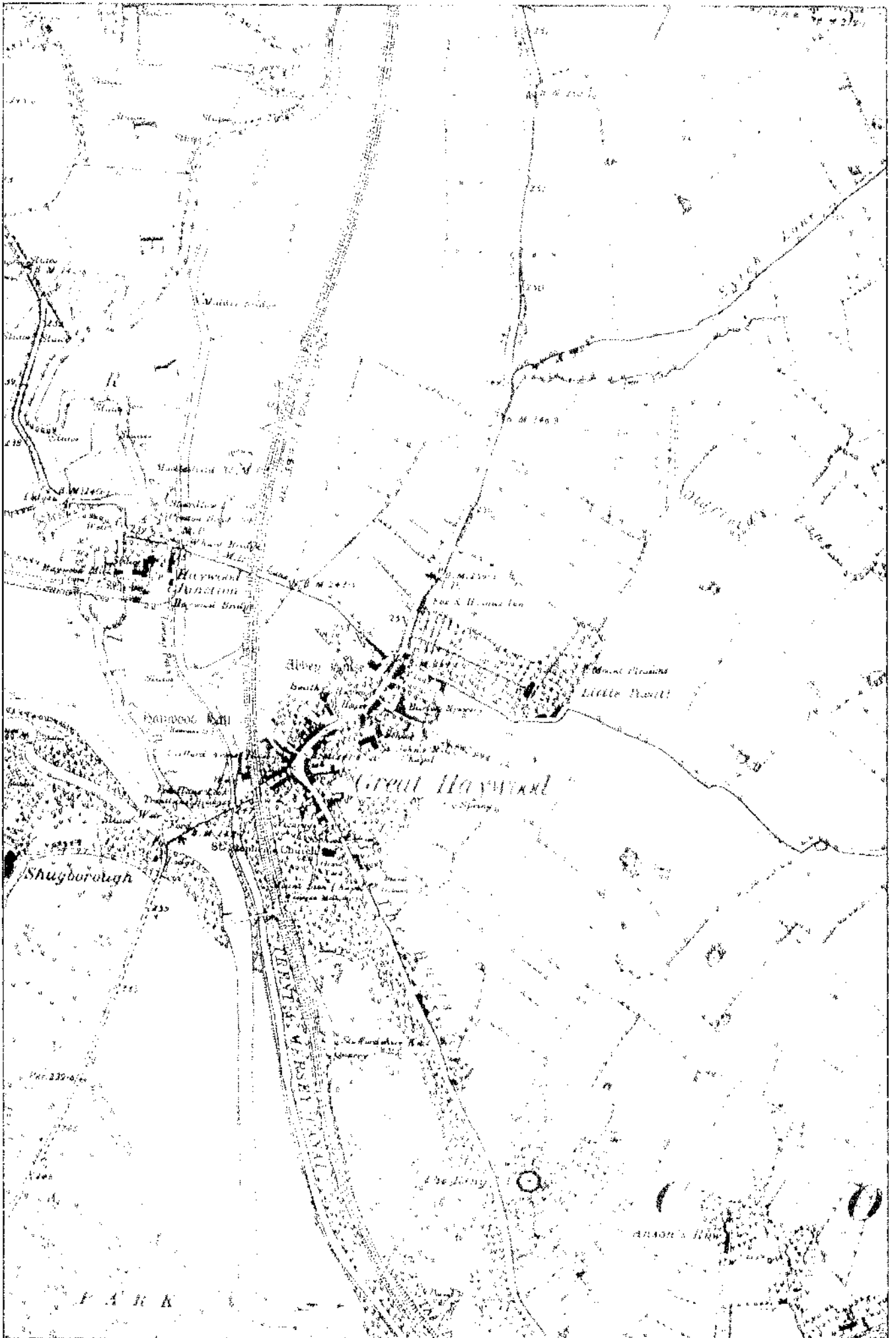


Fig. 2

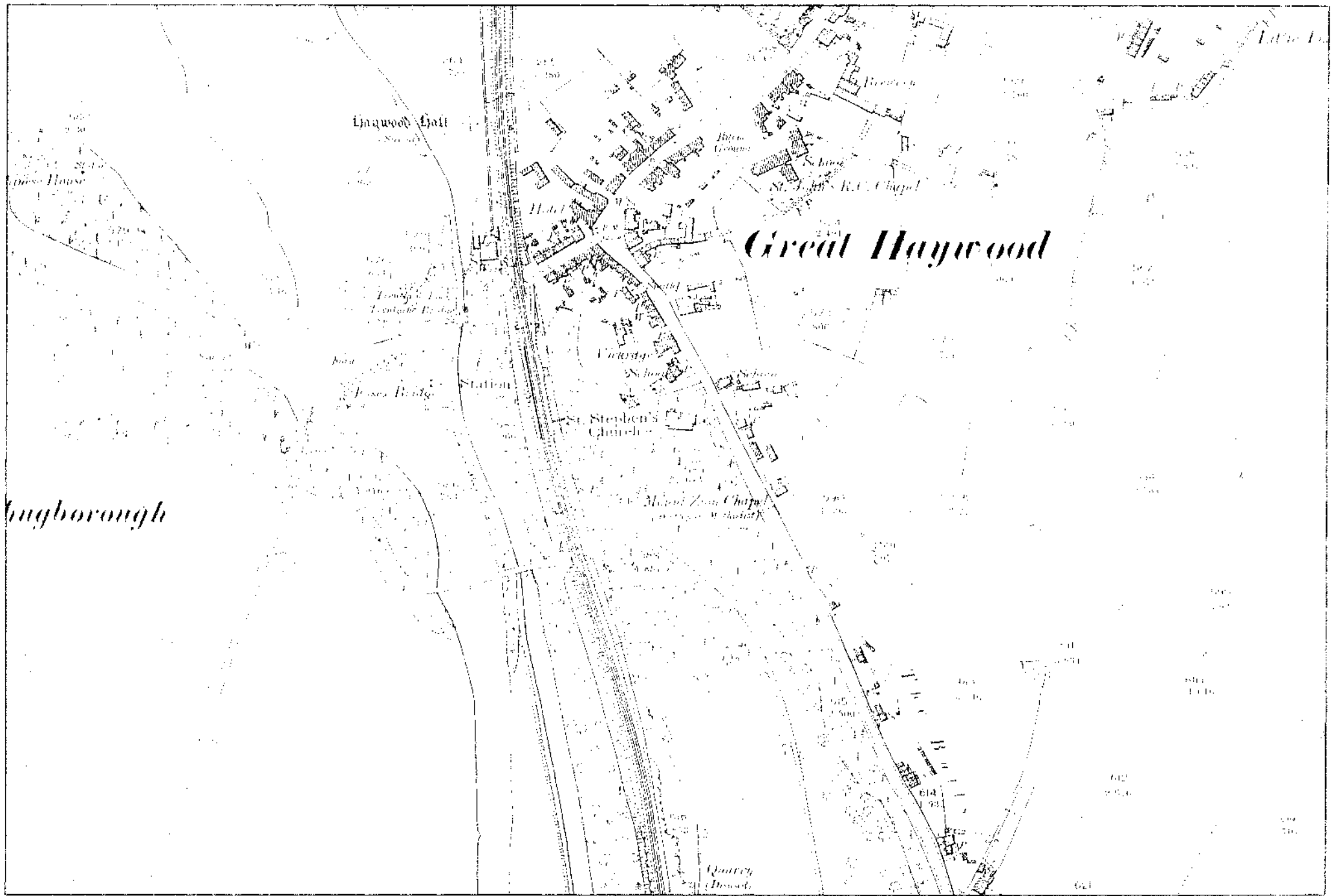


Fig.3

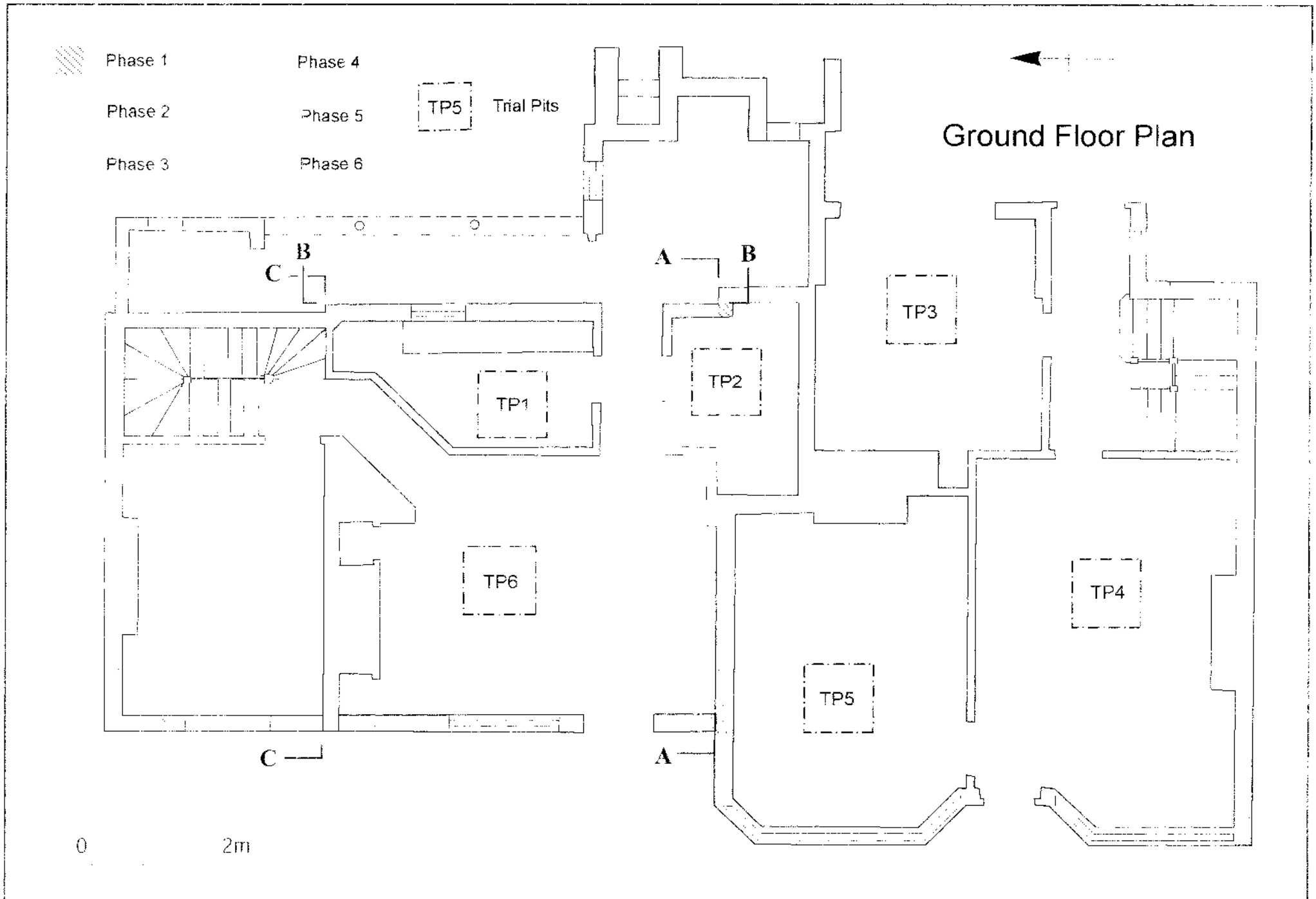


Fig.4

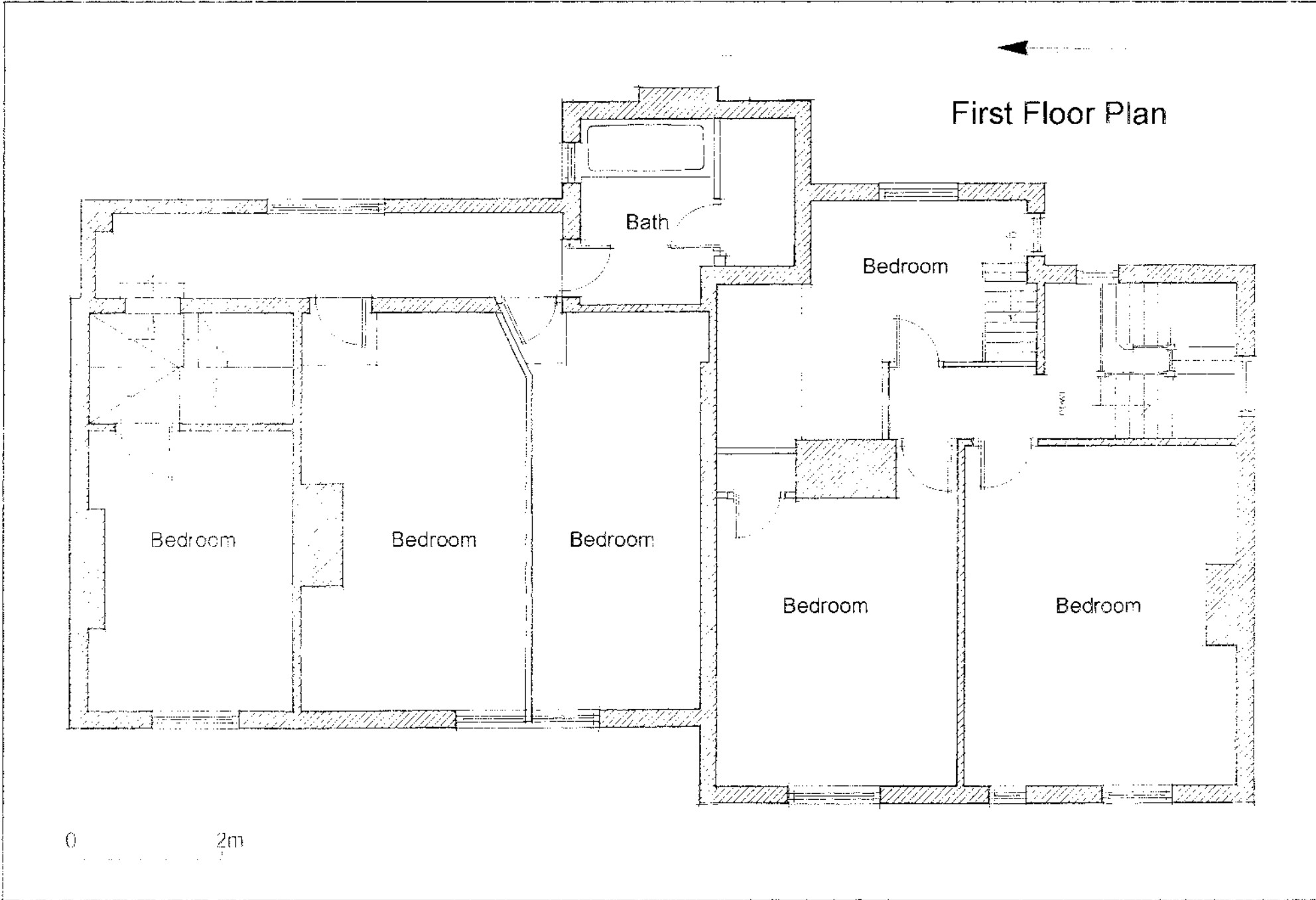


Fig.5

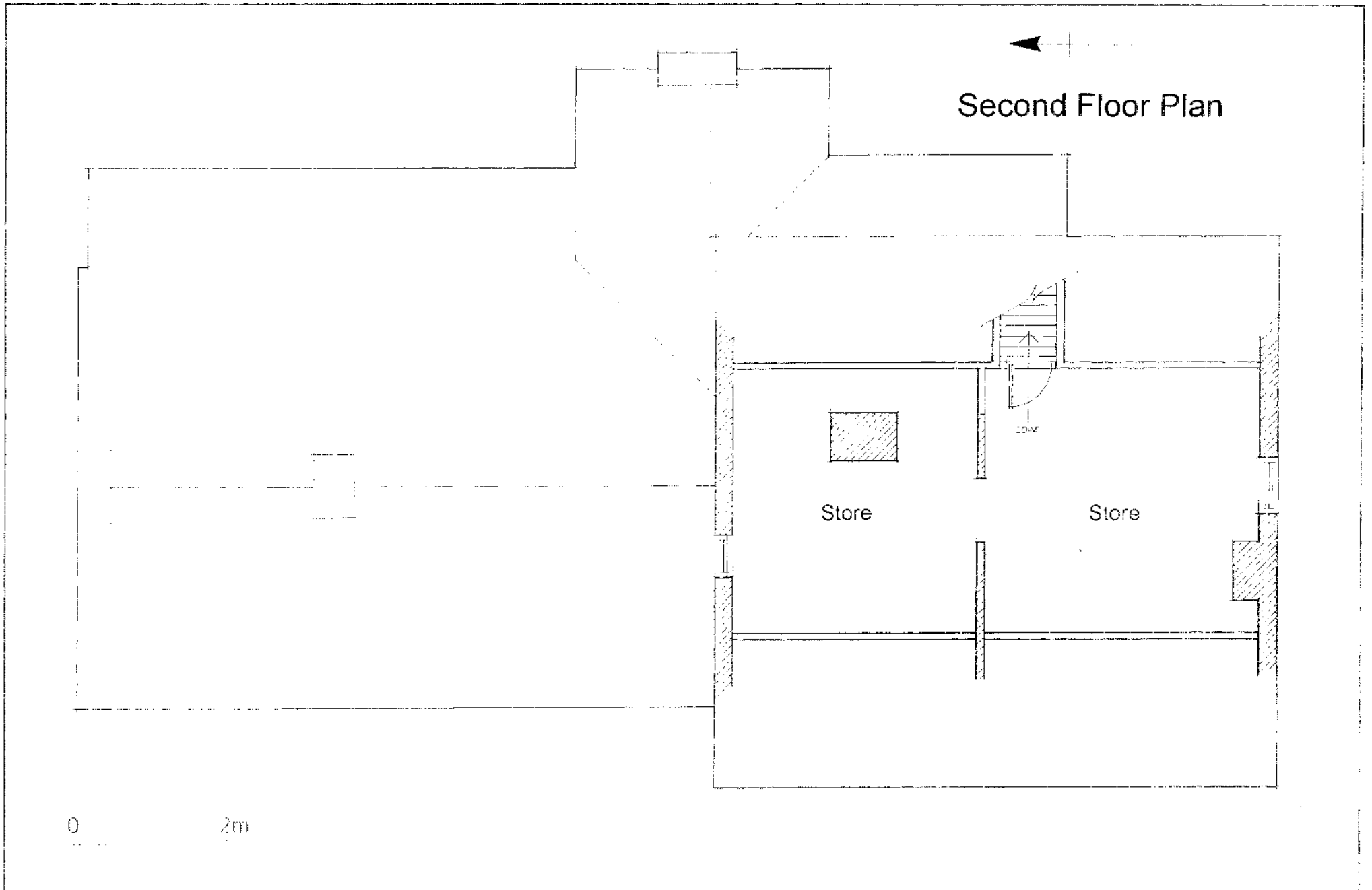


Fig.6

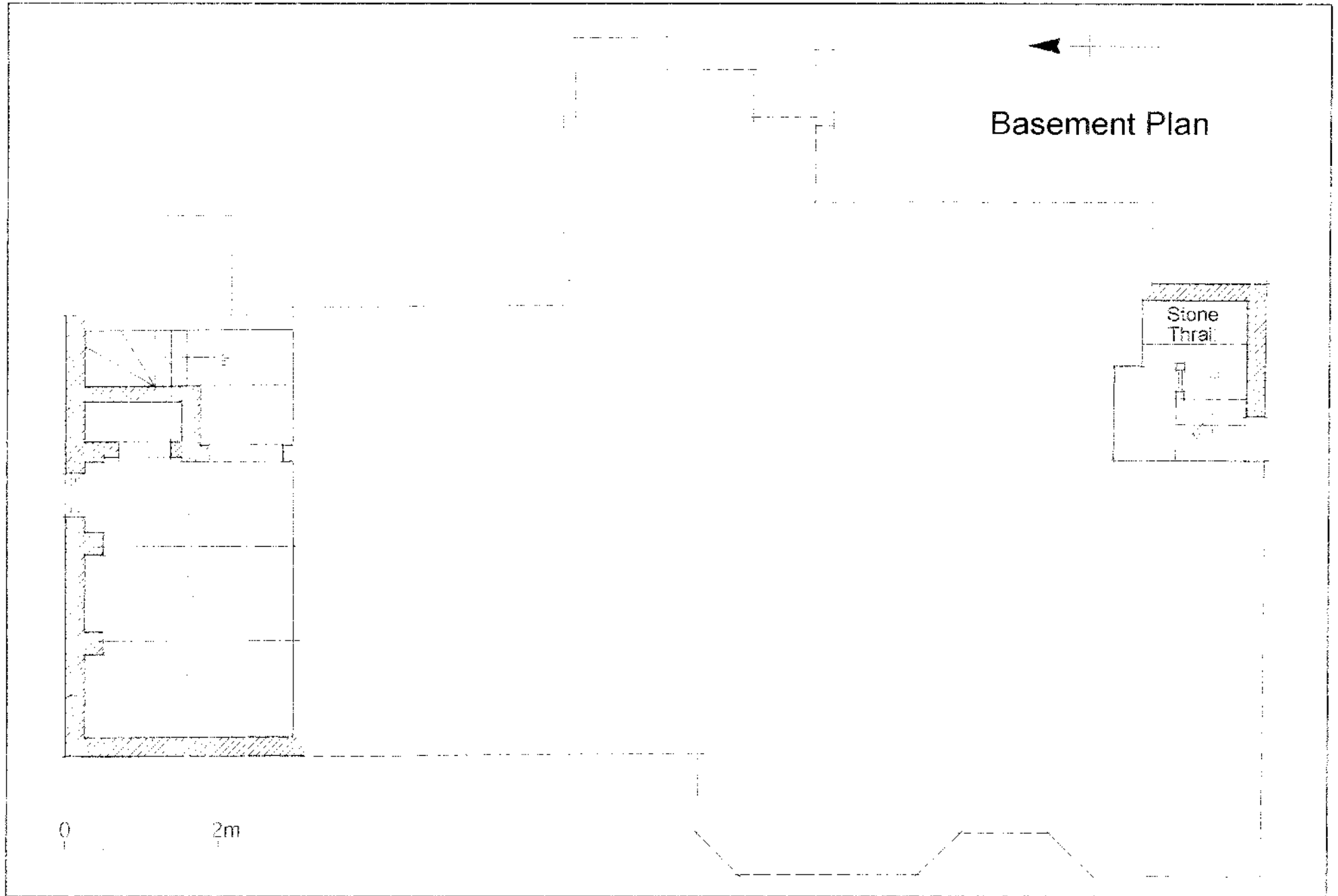
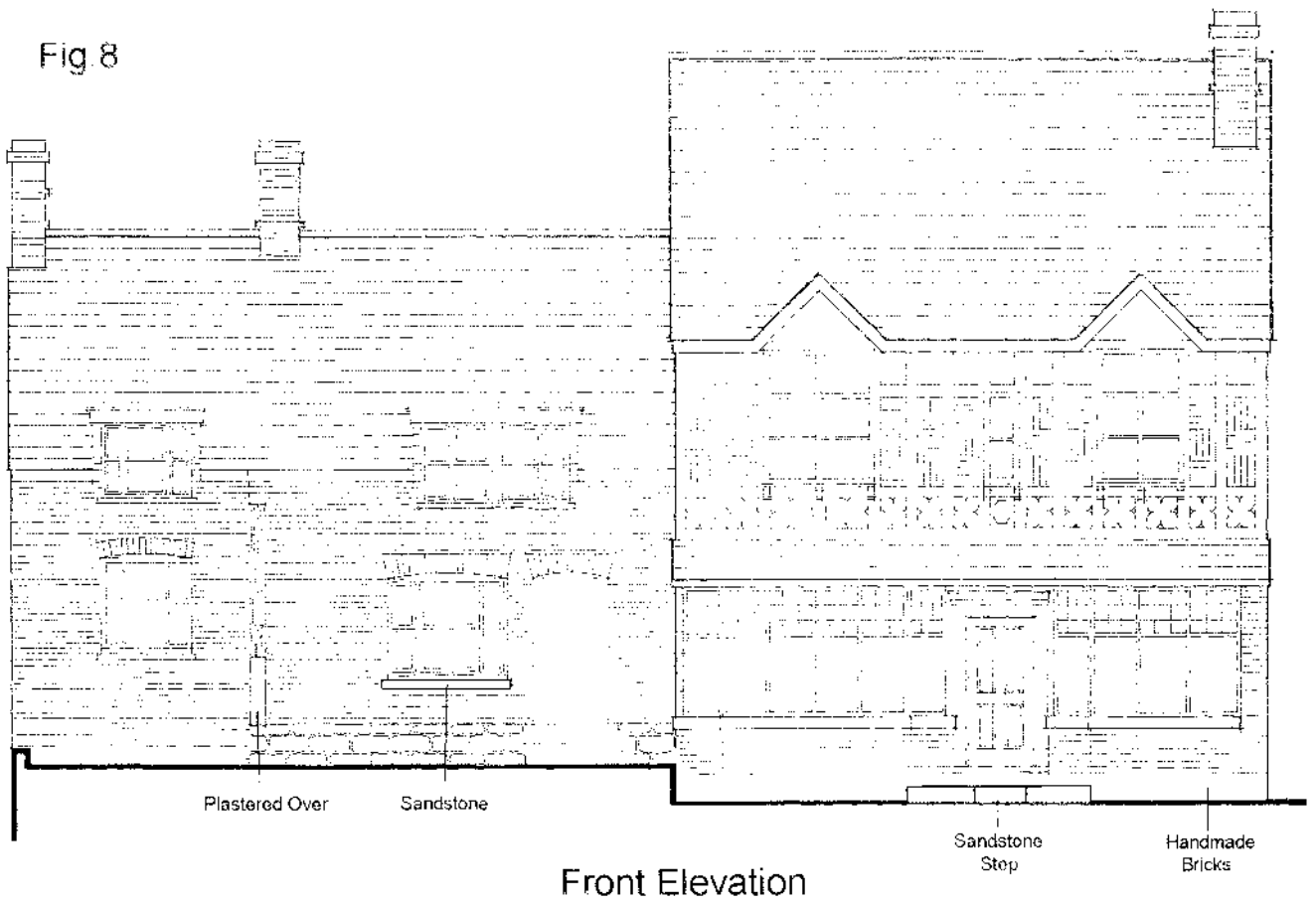


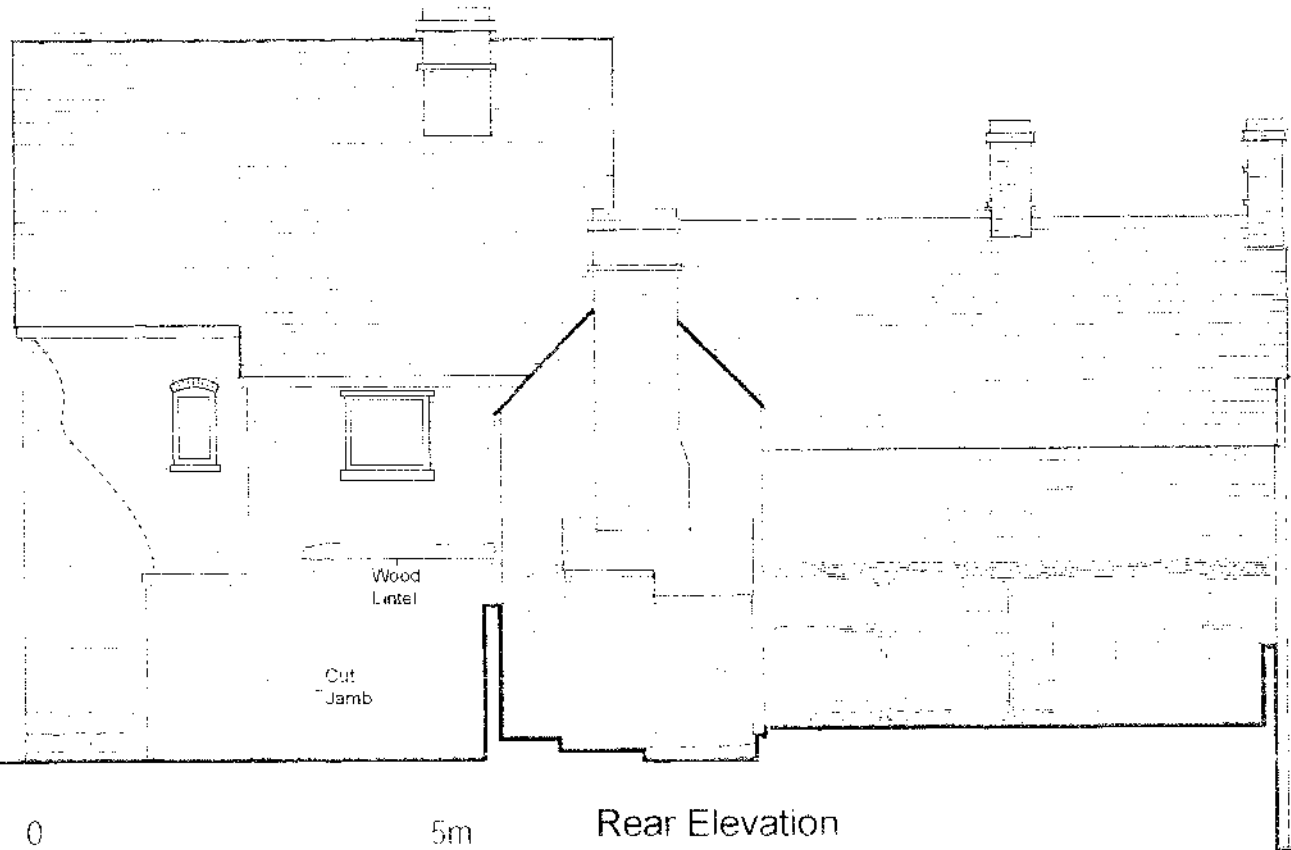
Fig.7

Fig 8



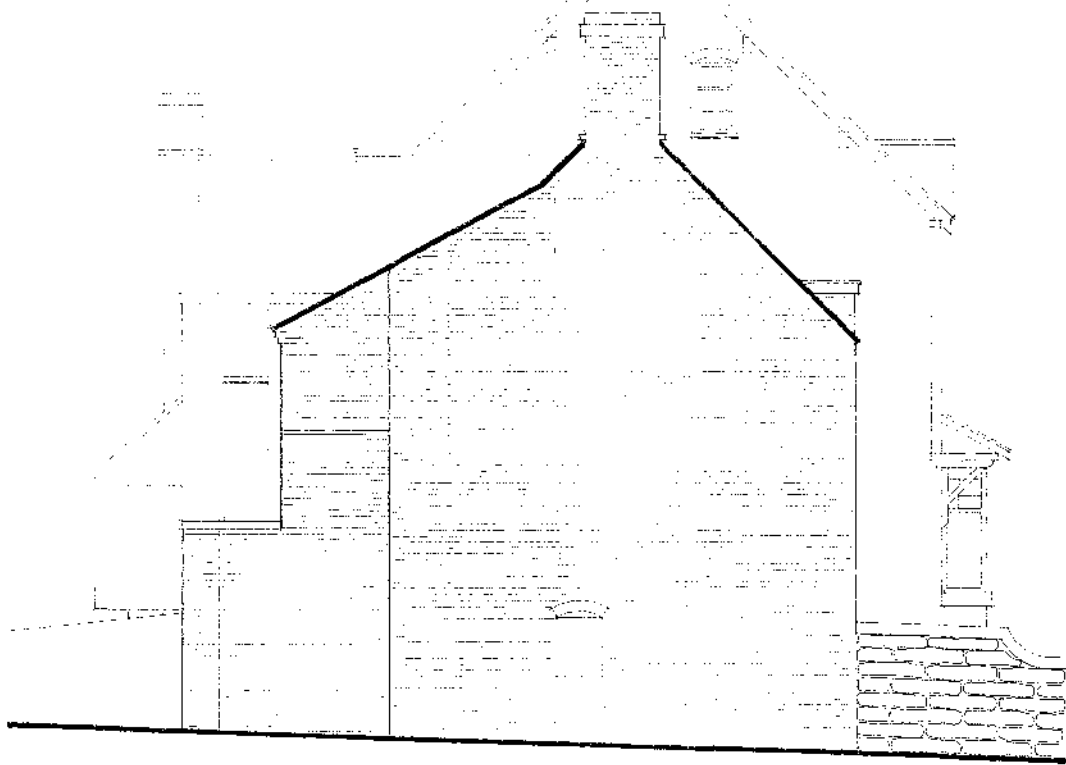
Front Elevation

Fig.9



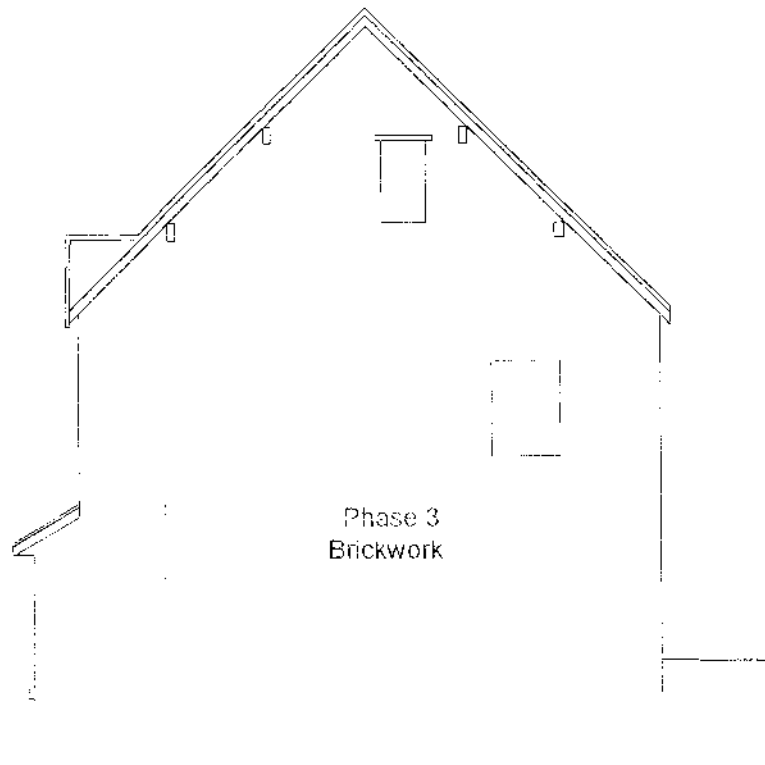
Rear Elevation

Fig.10



North Facing Elevation

Fig.11



Phase 3
Brickwork

South Facing Elevation

0

5m

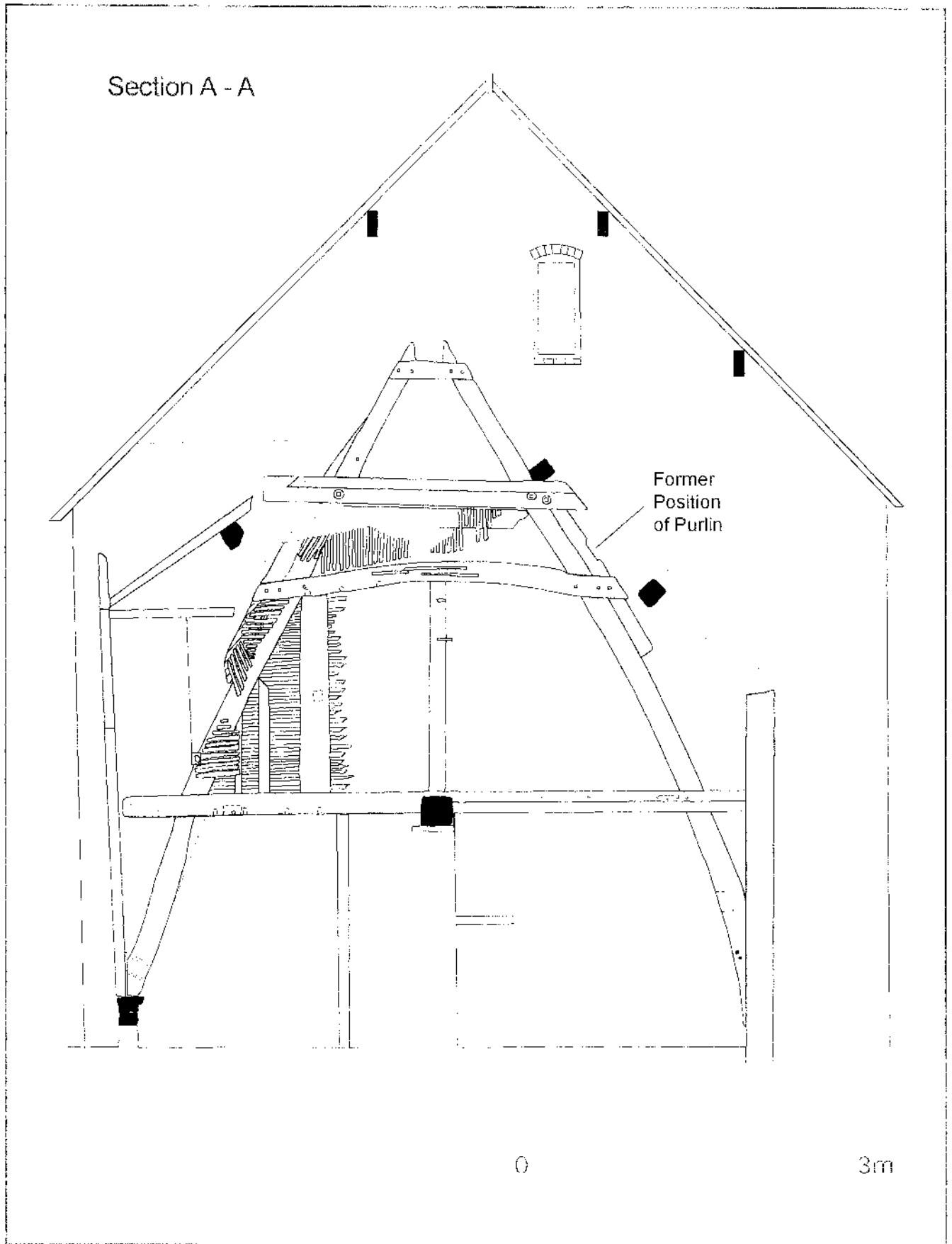


Fig. 12

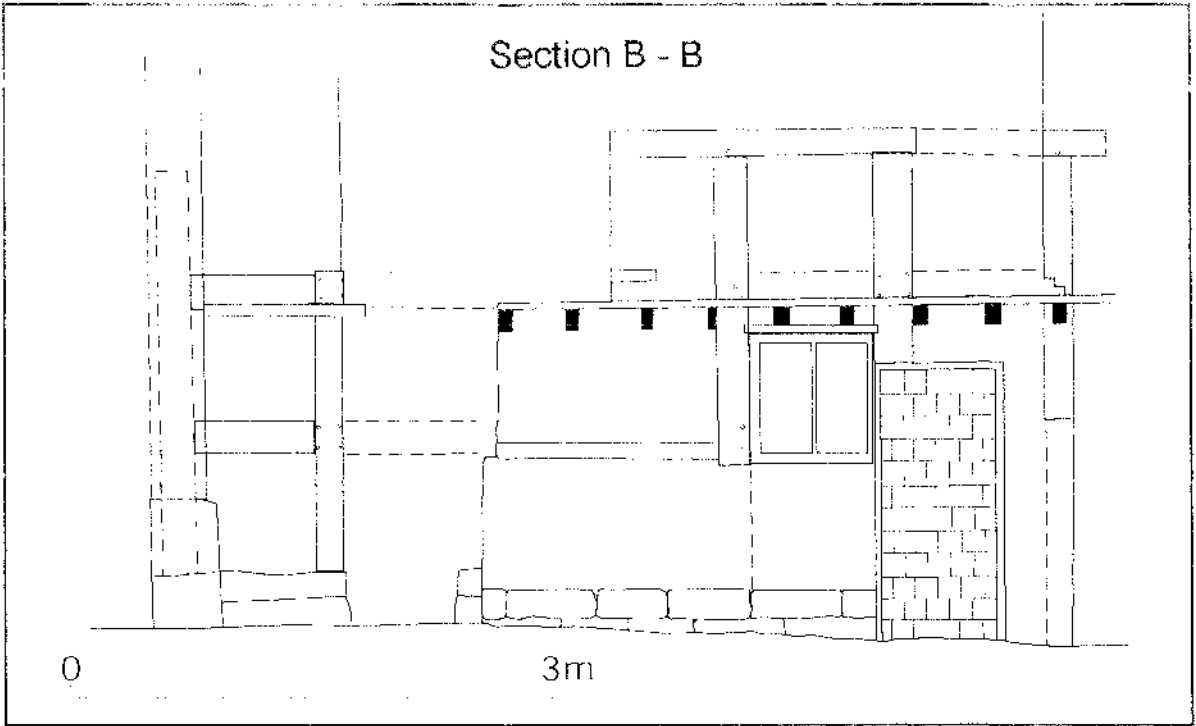


Fig.13

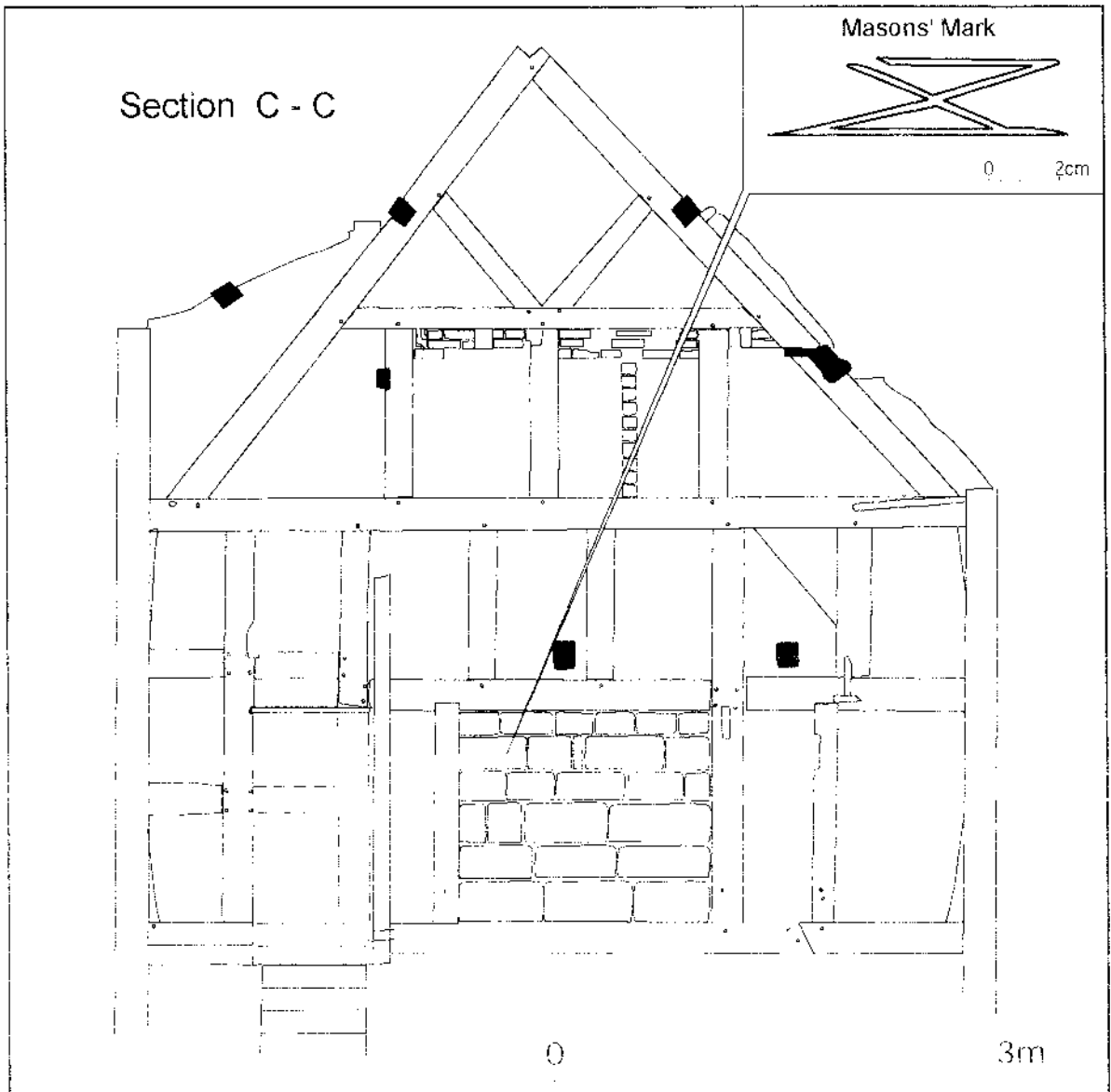


Fig.14

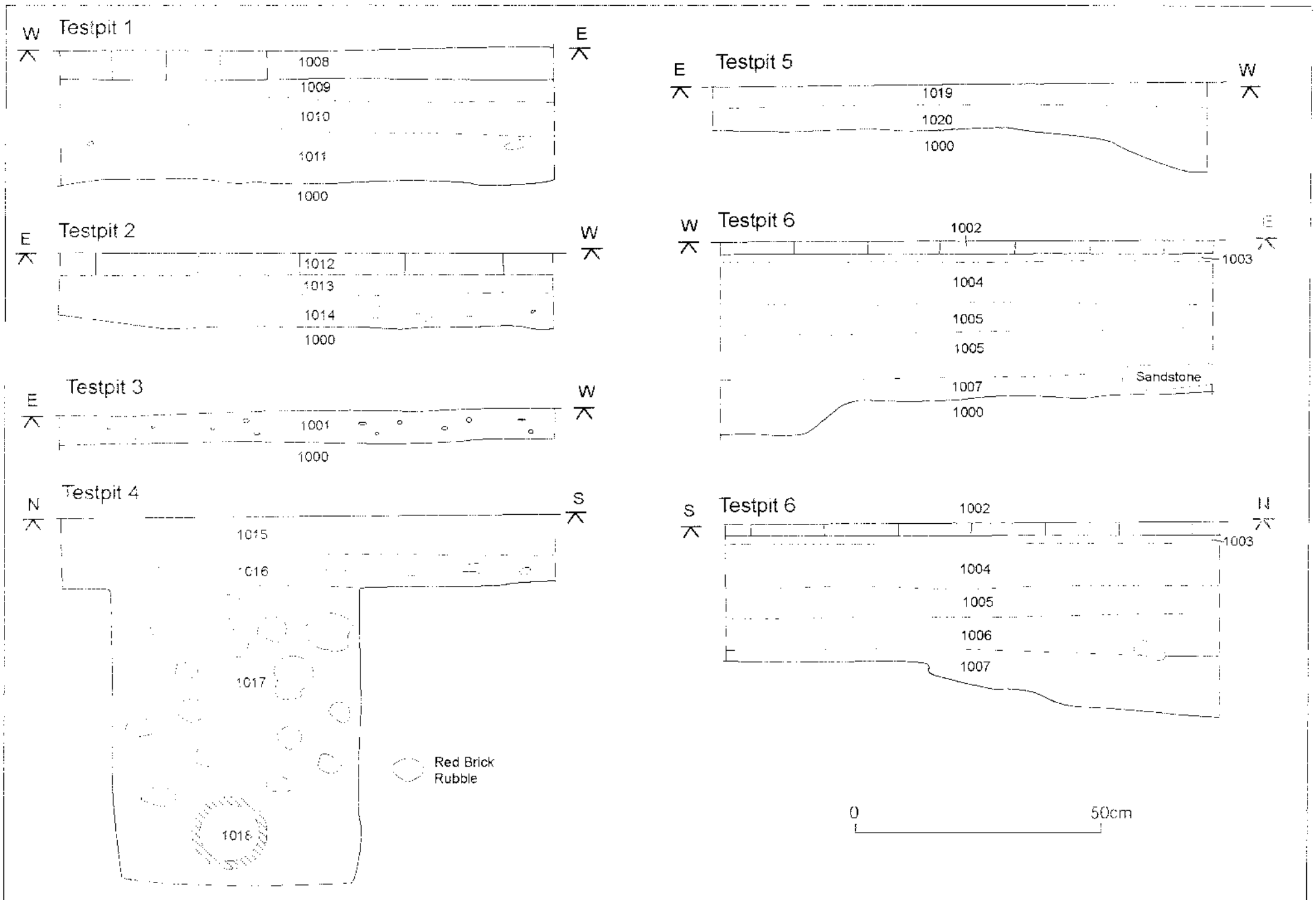


Fig.15



Plate 1

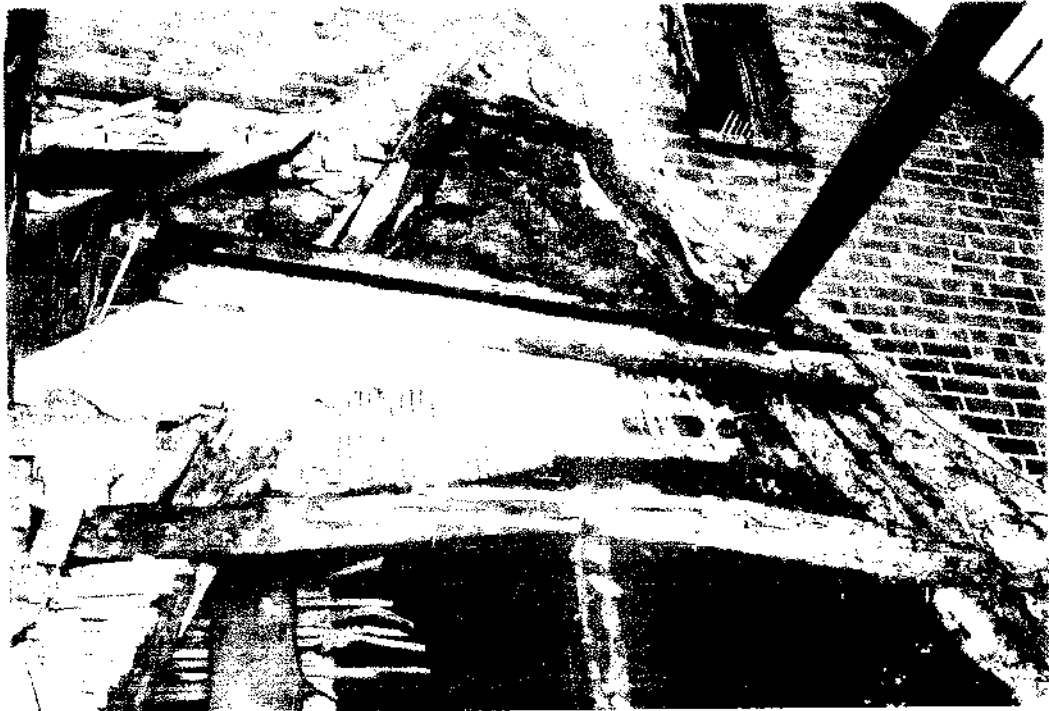


Plate 2

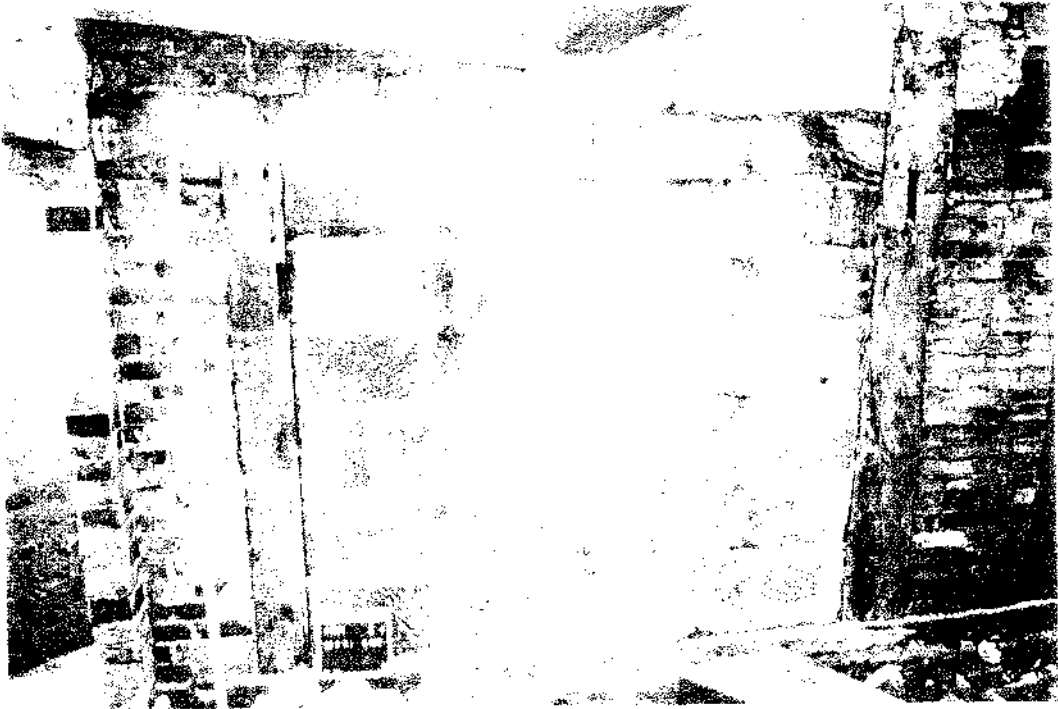


Plate 3

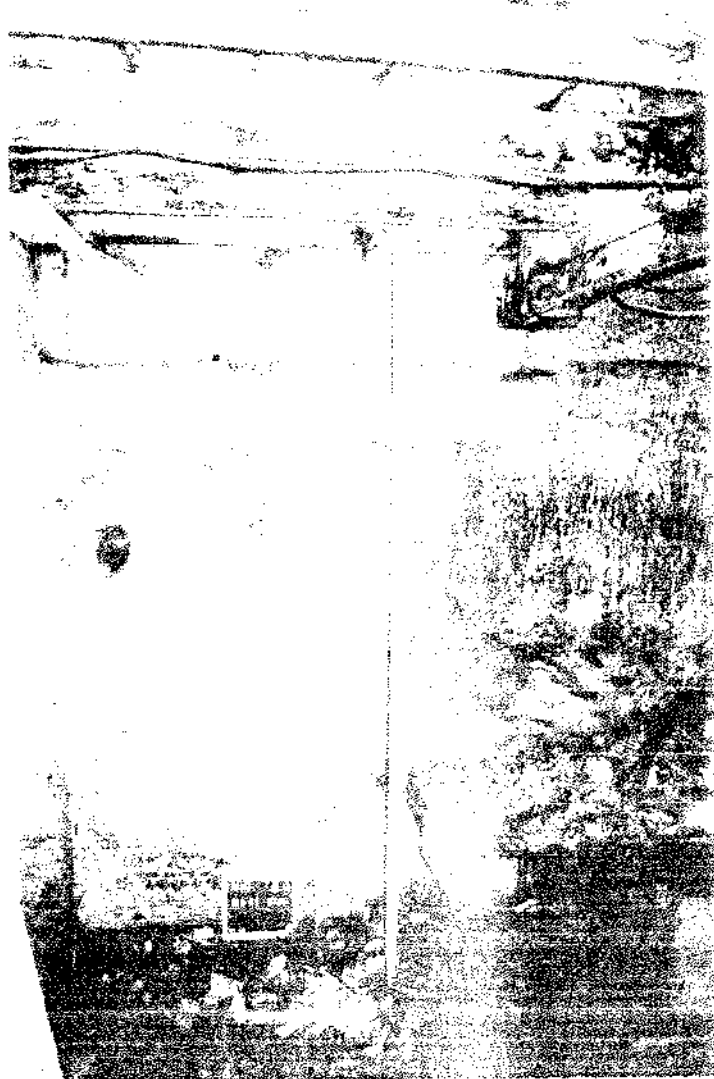


Plate 4

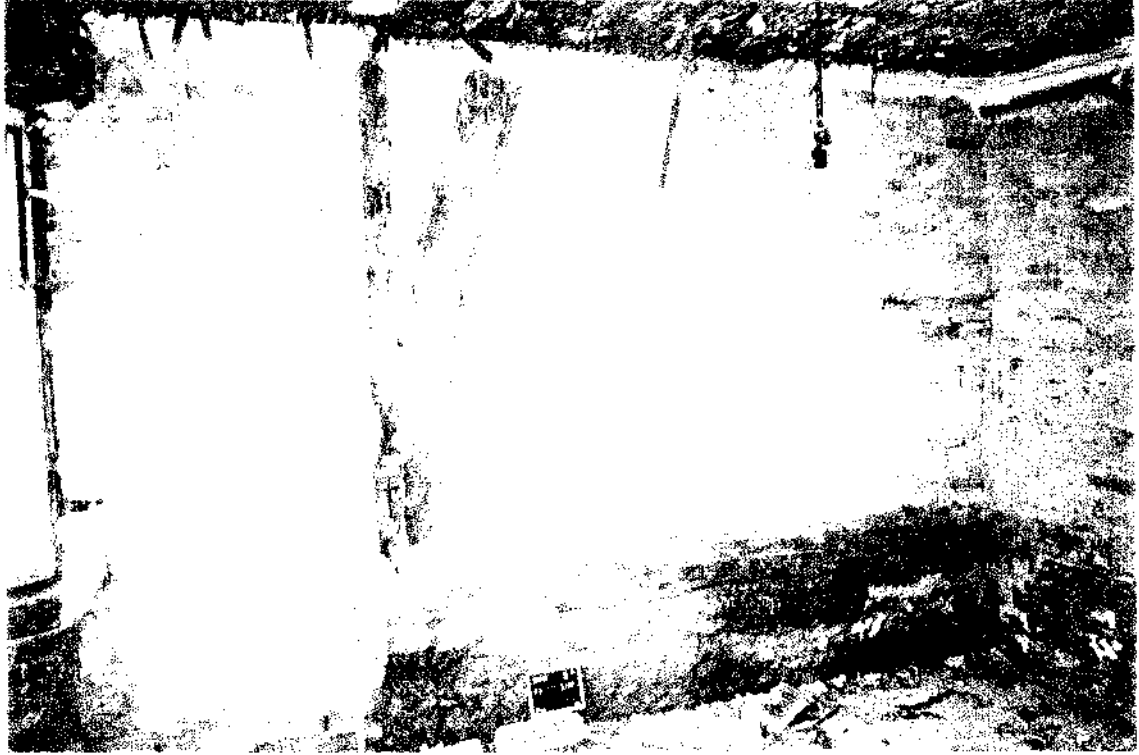


Plate 5