



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM

**A Building Record of
Keys Farm, Lower
Bentley, Worcestershire
(WSM 3402)**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 1060
May 2003

**A Building Record of Keys Farm,
Lower Bentley, Worcestershire (WSM 32402)**

by
Malcolm Hislop

For further information please contact:
Alex Jones (Director)
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>

Contents

	Summary
1.0	Introduction
2.0	Site Location
3.0	Objectives
4.0	Methods
5.0	The Historical Background
6.0	The Building Record
7.0	Discussion
8.0	Acknowledgements
9.0	Sources

Figures

1. Location map
2. Site plan
3. Keys Farm in 1874
4. Keys Farm in 1886
5. South elevation of farmhouse
6. North elevation of farmhouse
7. Reused timbers in north wall of farmhouse
8. East elevation of farmhouse
9. West elevation of farmhouse
10. Ground plan of farmhouse
11. Inscription on fireplace lintel
12. First-floor plan of farmhouse
13. Attic plan of farmhouse
14. Ground plan of agricultural buildings

Plates

1. Farmhouse from the south
2. Vertical joint in brickwork of the farmhouse outbuilding
3. Reused timbers in the north wall of the farmhouse
4. Room G2, east wall.
5. Room G2, reused timber in north wall
6. Room G2, fireplace
7. Room G2, original doorway
8. Room G3, fireplace
9. Room F1a, north wall, tie beam reused as a wall post
10. Room F1a, west wall from the east, timber reused as a tension brace
11. Room F1a, west wall from the west, tie beam inverted and reused as a tie beam
12. Room F3, fireplace and cupboards
13. Former window pane in attic
14. Central range of agricultural block from the east

15. Steps on east side of central range from the east
16. Line shaft in central range, from the west
17. Former shelter shed in east yard from the south
18. Former cowhouse in west yard from the south
19. Former shelter shed in west yard from the east

A Building Record of Keys Farm, Lower Bentley, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (WSM 32402)

Summary

In April 2003 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit undertook archaeological building recording for WeatherArk Ltd at Keys Farm, Lower Bentley near Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (NGR SO98296557). The work was carried out in advance of the alteration and extension of an early 17th-century farmhouse, and the conversion of mid-19th-century farm buildings to residential units. It comprised a 35mm photographic survey augmented by structural analysis, written notes, and the collation of existing surveys to produce phased plans of the buildings. The farmhouse was timber-framed, and the product of one main construction phase. It was built to a T-shaped plan with lobby entries at the junction of the main range and cross-wing. One of the interesting aspects of the timber-framed house was the extensive re-use of timber which included at least four largely unmodified cambered tie-beams, probably dating from the medieval period. Another was the presence of a number of faint inscriptions on one of the stone fireplace lintels, including the date 1604.

1.0 Introduction

In April 2003 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) undertook archaeological building recording for WeatherArk Ltd at Keys Farm, Lower Bentley near Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. Planning applications have been made for alterations and an extension to Keys Farmhouse (B/03/0138), and for the conversion of associated agricultural buildings to residential units (B/03/0137). Both the farmhouse and the farm buildings are registered on the County Sites and Monuments Record (WSM01600 and WSM 32172 respectively) and the farmhouse is a Grade II listed building. In line with the guidance given in PPG 15, Section 3.23 (DoE 1994), the Planning Authority advised that a programme of historic building was required (WCC 2003). The project was carried out according to a written scheme of investigation prepared by BUFAU (BUFAU 2003) which was itself informed by a brief issued by Worcestershire County (Glyde 2003). Timber-framing terminology adheres to the CBA glossary (Alcock *et al* 1996), and brick terminology to Brunskill (Brunskill 1990).

2.0 Site Location (Figs. 1 and 2)

Keys Farm is situated on the east side of High Elms Lane, Lower Bentley, in the civil parish of Bentley Paucefoot, near Bromsgrove, Worcestershire at NGR SO98296557. Keys Farmhouse, which lies on the south side of the track leading from High Elms Lane, is a timber-framed house, whereas the agricultural buildings are later brick-built structures and are sited to the north of the track.

3.0 Objectives

- To obtain a detailed photographic and descriptive survey.
- To record construction techniques.

- To determine and date development phases.
- To ascertain the functional and historical use of the buildings and their association with the surrounding buildings and landscape.

4.0 Methods

A 35mm monochrome and colour print photographic survey was made which included:-

- All external elevations.
- All internal room spaces and roof structures (where accessible).
- Details of architectural or functional features relating to either the function or development of the building.
- Photographs illustrating the buildings' relationships to the surrounding buildings and setting.

The photographic survey was supplemented by structural analysis and written notes taking into account the functions of the buildings and the interrelationships of associated structures.

Existing survey drawings were collated and annotated, and phased plans of the buildings produced together with a location plan related to the national grid. In addition, samples of re-used timbers and historic inscriptions were made, the former by measured survey and the latter by pencil rubbings.

Primary and secondary documentary sources were consulted, primarily at Worcestershire County Records Office and in the libraries of the University of Birmingham, in order to aid interpretation of the property.

This is a summary report illustrated with a selection of photographs taken as part of the survey. These photographs and the rest of the archive are currently held by BUFAU, but will be transferred to a more permanent repository upon completion of the project.

5.0 The Historic Background

Before the Conquest, the manor of Bentley Pauncefoot was held by Leofric of Earl Edwin of Mercia, and afterwards passed to William who held it of Ursc D'Abitot. William was succeeded by the Pauncefoot family from whom the parish derives part of its name, and who remained lords of the manor until they sold it in the 16th century (Page 1971, 226). It is probable that the name 'Kcys Farm' also derives from a personal name. The Lay Subsidy Roll of c. 1280 records a number of Worcestershire residents with this surname, though none living in Bentley at that time (Bond and Amphlett 1893, 44, 87, 92, 95).

There is no enclosure map for Bentley Pauncefoot, nor a tithe map, and the earliest cartographic evidence for Kcys Farm is a plan of the holding dating from 1874 and entitled 'Keys Farm / Mr Milward' (Fig. 3). The buildings of the farm are depicted schematically, though two structures are shown which coincide roughly with the

positions of the farmhouse and agricultural buildings. The farmhouse and the agricultural buildings both appear on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey map of 1886, which also depicts a series of pools on the east side of the farm, perhaps fish ponds (Fig. 4), though evidently not the remnants of a moat. Traces of two of these pools are still visible, notably, the one adjacent to the farmhouse, but that next to the agricultural buildings has disappeared.

The farm does not appear in the particulars of the 1842 sale of Bentley Pouncefoot Manor, from which it is concluded that Kcys Farm was not at this time part of the estate. The Post Office Directory for Worcestershire shows that 'William Milward, farmer' was resident at Kcys Farm in 1876, no doubt the 'Mr Milward' of the 1874 plan. Earlier directories, however, do not mention the farm by name, and the only Milward in the parish in 1850 (Kelly, 394) was George Milward the occupier of Hatchetts Farm, a different establishment, to the north of Keys Farm, and one which featured in the sale of 1842 when George Milward was also the occupier. By 1912 Keys Farm was occupied by one William Walker (Kelly, 30).

6.0 The Building Record

6.1 The Farmhouse

The farmhouse was found to date from the early 17th century though it had been subjected to later alterations and additions. It was a timber-framed building with brick infill panels replacing wattle and daub, plain tile roofs and brick ridge stacks. T-shaped in plan, it comprised a main range aligned roughly east-west facing south with lobby entries at the junction with the cross-wing to the west. Attached to the east was a later L-shaped arrangement of outbuildings.

South Elevation (Fig. 5, Plate 1)

The main house had two stories and gable-lit attics, and the principal range had four framed bays, the left-hand (west) bay longer than the other three. The roof line of the main range was at a slightly higher level than the apex of the gabled wing to the left (west), and a cluster of tall lozenge-sectioned chimney stacks towered over it. Four tiers of closely spaced studs (some of the studs had been removed but the peg holes survived to indicate their former existence) occupied the main range, whereas the cross-wing had a single tier of closely spaced studs to the ground storey and two tiers of small square panels to the first floor with straight braces. Moulded console brackets flanking the first-floor window of the wing, together with plain end brackets, sat beneath the jetty bresummer that supported the oversailing gable, which had been rebuilt in brick. The fenestration pattern of the wing remained much as it was originally, though the windows had been replaced. That of the main range had been altered, though an original blocked first-floor window survived to the left. Most of the south elevation windows were 19th-century small-pane casements. A later lean-to porch occupied the angle between main range and cross-wing.

To the right (east) was a single-storey range of outbuildings with gabled wing breaking forward at the right-hand (east) end. These were largely of brick and stone but there is some evidence to suggest that they were at least partially timber-framed originally. The wall plate of the left-hand range was supported at the east end by a

brick pier with bullnose bricks at the corners. There was a vertical joint between this pier and the brickwork to the west (Plate 2), suggesting that the range was formerly open fronted.

North Elevation (Fig. 6)

In contrast to the well ordered main (south) front the north elevation had an irregular framing pattern. In part, this was because the east bay of the main range was close-studded whereas the rest of the wall consisted of square-panelled framing. An additional factor, however, was that the north wall of the main range incorporated a number of re-used timbers with pronounced curves (Fig. 7, Plate 3). A close examination of these timbers suggested that they could be identified as cambered tie-beams and collars, probably of medieval date. There are three former tie-beams in this elevation, two of them were used as wall posts, while the third formed the first-floor level rail within the west bay. A former collar was used as the lowest rail within the west bay. None of these members appeared to have any redundant joints, all being utilised for studs or rails. At the east end of the range was the original (blocked) entrance, partially occupied by a later window (Plate 3). That the current doorway into the second bay from the west was an insertion was indicated by peg holes in the posts to either side of it, which suggested that there was formerly a rail in this position. In front of the ground storey was a full-length glazed porch or conservatory with lean-to plain tile roof. Above was one window (right of centre) and a gabled dormer to the right.

The cross-wing on this side replicated the framing pattern of the south front, except that the gable was not jettied. It had 19th-century iron-framed casements to the ground and first floors, probably in the original central positions, but enlarged so that some of the timber framing had been cut away. At attic level is a two-light casement, the right-hand side having lead cames.

East Elevation (Fig. 8)

The east end elevation of the main house had two tiers of closely spaced studs and long straight tension braces. The gable had been rebuilt with a king strut roof with raking braces at the same angles as the tension braces below; it was inscribed 'LP / AD 1975'. There were late 20th-century windows to the ground and first floor. Under this elevation was a trap door entrance to a small cellar under the east bay of the main range.

West Elevation (Fig. 9)

The framing pattern of the west wall of the wing was inconsistent, being made up of two elements divided by the main wall post at the bay division. Both bays were composed mainly of square panels with straight braces, but the two elements did not match.

Interior

Cellar

The cellar lay under the eastern end of the house only. It was brick-built and vaulted and had apparently been inserted. The bricks were laid in English garden wall bond and there were at least two sizes: 9¼" x 4¾" x 3" and 8¾" x 4" x 2½-2¾", suggesting a construction date in the mid to late 19th-century making use of recycled bricks. The (blocked) staircase to the ground storey of the house was in the southwest corner of the cellar.

Ground Floor (Fig. 10)

At the time of the survey the main range contained two rooms at ground level, a kitchen (G1) and a living room (G2), divided by a timber-framed partition on the line of one of the exterior bay divisions. However, G1 was formerly divided into two single-bay rooms. The evidence for the division could be seen in the soffit of the cross-beam in the kitchen which contained a line of redundant mortices indicating that there was formerly a timber-framed partition wall in this position. Both the rooms in G1 probably functioned as service rooms of one kind or another, including pantry and perhaps scullery. The southwest corner of G1 had been partitioned off in the 20th-century to form an entrance lobby between G1 and G2. Immediately south of the present doorway towards the south end of the wall between the two rooms was an exposed timber stud. It was pegged for a former rail suggesting that the doorway was a later insertion.

G2 was the hall or house, the main living room where cooking may have been carried out. Timber framing was exposed on all walls except the south, and the main cross-beam and joists were all chamfered and stopped. In the centre of the east wall an alcove had been formed which contained a rail just below ceiling level, perhaps a former door lintel (Plate 4). In the north wall both the main wall post and the rail to the east of it, just below ceiling level were obvious reused pieces. Both had obliquely placed halvings cut out of them within which were peg holes (Plate 5).

At the west end of the room was a large open fireplace with sandstone ashlar stack and plain timber mantel beam, possibly a replacement (Plate 6). The stone had been cleaned mechanically in recent years, a process that had left score marks. Inside the fireplace the side walls were of 9-9½" x 2" bricks, probably 16th or 17th century in date.

To the north of the fireplace was a former entrance lobby, originally entered from the blocked doorway in the north wall. At the west end of the lobby was the original doorway to the cross-wing with cambered head and chamfered surround (Plate 7). To the south of the stack was another entrance lobby, though all traces of the original external doorway were destroyed when the porch was added.

On the west side of the south lobby was a 19th-century four-panelled door with butterfly hinges. The door opens to the parlour (G3) within the south bay of the cross-wing. G3 had a stone fireplace in the east wall (Plate 8), the lintel of which bore a

number of faint inscriptions, including at least one date (1604, Fig. 11). A cross-beam and its associated joists were all chamfered and stopped.

The north bay of the cross-wing was divided into two areas by a timber-framed partition, the redundant mortices for which survive in the soffit of the cross-beam. To the south of the partition was the newel staircase, which survives. The function of the area to the north of the partition, now divided into a number of small rooms, is unknown but it may have served as a second parlour.

First Floor (Fig. 12)

At first floor level both the main range and the cross-wing were divided into two rooms. The eastern room of the main range (F1) was apparently entered from the western room rather than having independent access. F1 is currently subdivided by later partitions, and only in the northern room (F1a) is there exposed wall farming. In the north wall the main wall post, which has been identified as a reused tie-beam, has two pegged halvings cut out of it for former joints (Plate 9). In the west wall is a timber re-used as a tension brace, also with a pegged halving (Plate 10). Also in this wall is a former tie-beam turned upside down and re-used as a tie-beam (Plate 11). This too has obliquely set pegged halvings. Other than the exposed framing there are no other features in the western room of the main range (F2), other than the stone chimney at the west end, though the room does not appear to have had a fireplace.

The southern room of the wing (F3) has a 19th-century cast iron fireplace in the east wall with an ovolo-moulded wooden mantelpiece (Plate 12). On the left (north) side of the fireplace is series of four small 17th-century guilloche-decorated cupboards, one on top of the other. In the north wall is a 17th-century six-panelled door, the panels with moulded surrounds towards the room, and plain fielded panels towards the staircase landing.

There is a smaller room at the north end of the cross-wing (F4). An original doorway with cambered head allows access from the landing. It has a boarded door with spearhead strap hinges.

Attic (Fig. 13)

The two rooms above F3 and F4 were lit by windows and were probably sleeping chambers, but the attic over the main range was not lit and was probably only for storage. Standing against the chimney stack at this level, at the time of the survey, was the pane of a casement window. It had lead cames and was probably a fragment of one of the original windows (Plate 13).

6.2 The Farm Buildings

The mid-19th-century farm buildings are almost entirely of one build, though they have been subjected to modification connected with changes of use. All the buildings are constructed of 9" x 4½" x 3" red brick laid in a variant Flemish stretcher bond, the stretcher courses being interspersed by rows with two headers to every two stretchers.

Plain tile-covered, bolted king-post roofs carrying two pairs of purlins and a plank ridge are general.

The buildings comprise an integrated farm complex of E-shaped plan, the two parts of the north range being aligned east-west facing south, and situated between three north-south orientated wings that extend south to enclose two yards. These yards were formerly contained by brick walls, traces of which survive on the buildings, and were the foci of the complex, all ranges facing onto them (Fig. 14).

The Central Wing (Plate 14)

The central wing separating the two yards contains a single-storey threshing barn with opposed entrances to east and west, and, at the north end, a two-storey section, possibly a feed preparation room (ground) and granary (first floor). The barn is unusual in being built in English garden wall bond; it has full height cart entrances with elliptical arches and air vents arranged in lozenge patterns. On the east side is a brick-built flight of steps leading to a first-floor doorway. It incorporates a dog kennel and former privy, both with arched openings (Plate 15).

On the exterior of the north wall at first-floor level is the drive wheel for a line shaft, probably powered by a portable engine. Inside the building the shaft supports three more drive wheels and may have powered a winnowing machine situated at first floor level (Plate 16).

The East Yard

North Range (Plate 17)

The eastern half of the North Range was originally divided internally into three components. To the right (east) is a loose box with segmental-headed door and window containing its original frame. To the left (west) is a room with segmental-headed door and small cambered-arch window. Inside is a chimney breast that formerly served a small fireplace, now gone. Against the north wall are the remains of a two-bay brick structure, bonded with the side walls and probably original. Above it is a series of sawn off timbers, suggesting that there was a low loft above it. In the east wall, mostly south of the brick structure is a tall blocked window opening with bullnose brick jambs and a timber lintel, and on the south side of the chimney a small window with chamfered jambs.

The central section of the range was originally open fronted with a wall plate roll-moulded on the outer edge, and was probably a shelter shed for cattle. At a later date the front of the shed was built up in 9" x 4½" x 3" bricks laid in Flemish stretcher bond, and provided with a pair of doors and windows, suggesting that it was converted into a pair of loose boxes. Inside, brick foundations of two former walls are visible showing that the space was divided both longitudinally and laterally. This probably dates from the conversion of the building. At the time of the survey the building was divided into two by a breeze block wall, above which was a roof truss with pegged members.

East Range

The east range was formerly a stable and tack room. The west wall is lined with wooden harness hooks but the stalls, which stood against the east wall, have been removed. In the east wall is an original doorway giving access to the loose box at the east end of the north range.

The West Yard

North Range (Plate 18)

The north range was occupied by a cowhouse with original segmental-arched doorway (now blocked) to the left of centre. At each end of the range is an inserted doorway, and there are three inserted metal framed windows of mid-20th-century date. The interior has been gutted but it appears that the feed passage was on the south side, and entered from the central range through an original segmental-arched doorway. A doorway at the opposite (west) end is a later insertion.

West Range (Plate 19)

The left hand (south) end of the west range was occupied by a four-bay open-fronted shed with roll-moulded wall plate like the shelter shed in the east yard. The bay divisions are formed by a series of cast-iron columns with moulded capitals. On the grounds that this unit faces the yard, it is probably a shelter shed for cattle rather than a cartshed.

The rest of the range facing the yard was a stable. The original segmental-arched door survives to the right, and a segmental-arched window to the left. It provided accommodation for two horses.

A partially rebuilt doorway in the north wall of this stable communicated with the northernmost room of the range. This room was also entered from the west where there is an enlarged opening and a blocked window. Other than the doorway communicating with the stable there is no obvious clue to its former function.

7.0 Discussion

The most interesting aspect of the project was, perhaps, the reused timber. These pieces were unusually obvious and identifiable, and their unwieldy size lends support to the theory that they may have come from a previous house on the site rather than having been transported from elsewhere. The consistency with which those members identified as reused tie beams had halvings cut into one side only suggests that these joints were integral to the structural character of the building from whence they came. If the reused members were tie beams then the halved joints might denote that passing braces were used in the construction. However, the angles of approximately 70-80° to the horizontal are unusually steep, and this explanation can only be tentative. A more detailed survey of all the reused timbers within the house might throw further light on the character of the building that they came from.

Regarding the plan of the house, the general layout of hall range with service room at the lower end, and cross-wing containing parlour at the upper end is derived from late medieval planning. However, the position of the opposed entrances adjacent to the cross-wing represents a post-medieval break with the traditional location of the main doorways at the lower end of the hall range. This change from the circulation pattern prevalent in the late medieval house, perhaps reflects social changes that resulted in the cross-wing becoming more isolated from the hall or house and its associated service room.

8.0 Acknowledgements

This project was managed for BUFAU by Steve Litherland. Malcolm Hislop wrote this report, most of the photography was done by Edward Newton, and the illustrations were prepared by John Halstead. The project was monitored by Mike Glyde for Worcestershire County Council.

9.0 Sources

9.1 Primary Sources

Willis Bond, J.W. and Amphlett, J. 1893. *The Lay Subsidy Roll for the County of Worcestershire*.

Plans, particulars and conditions of the sale of the Manor of Bentley Pauncefoot. 1842.

Kelly's Directory of Worcestershire. 1850.

Post Office Directory of Worcestershire. 1876.

Kelly's Directory of Worcestershire. 1912.

9.2 Secondary Sources

Alcock, N. Barley, M.W. Dixon, P.W. Meeson 1996. *Recording Timber-Framed Buildings: An Illustrated Glossary*.

Brunskill, R. 1990. *Brick Building in Britain*.

BUFAU 2003. *Historic Building Recording at Keys Farm, High Elms Lane, Lower Bentley, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (planning applications B/03/0138 and B/03/0173): Methods Statement*.

Glyde, M. 2003. *Brief for Recording an Historic Building at Keys Farm, High Elms Lane, Lower Bentley, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire*.

Page, W. 1971. *The Victoria History of the County of Worcestershire Volume III*.

9.3 Cartographic Sources

1874 Key's Farm Plan (*Worcestershire County Records Office 7932/1*)

1886 Ordnance Survey 1:2500

1904 Ordnance Survey 1:2500



SITE

Reproduced from the 1998 Ordnance Survey map of the Redditch District, copyright © Crown Copyright. Licensee: University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, BIRMINGHAM, B15 2TT. Licence No. A. F. 403A

Fig.1

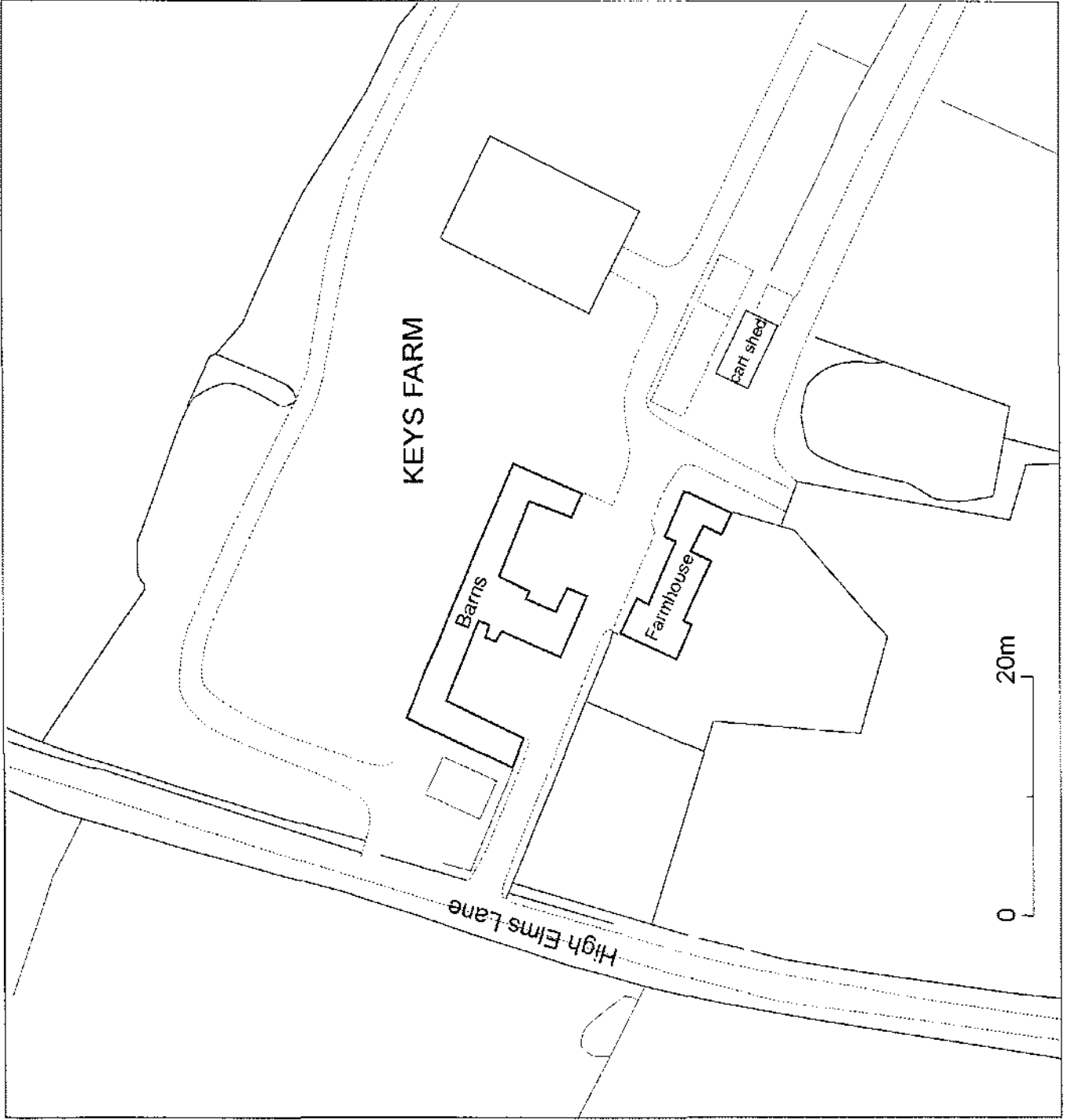


Fig.2: Site Plan

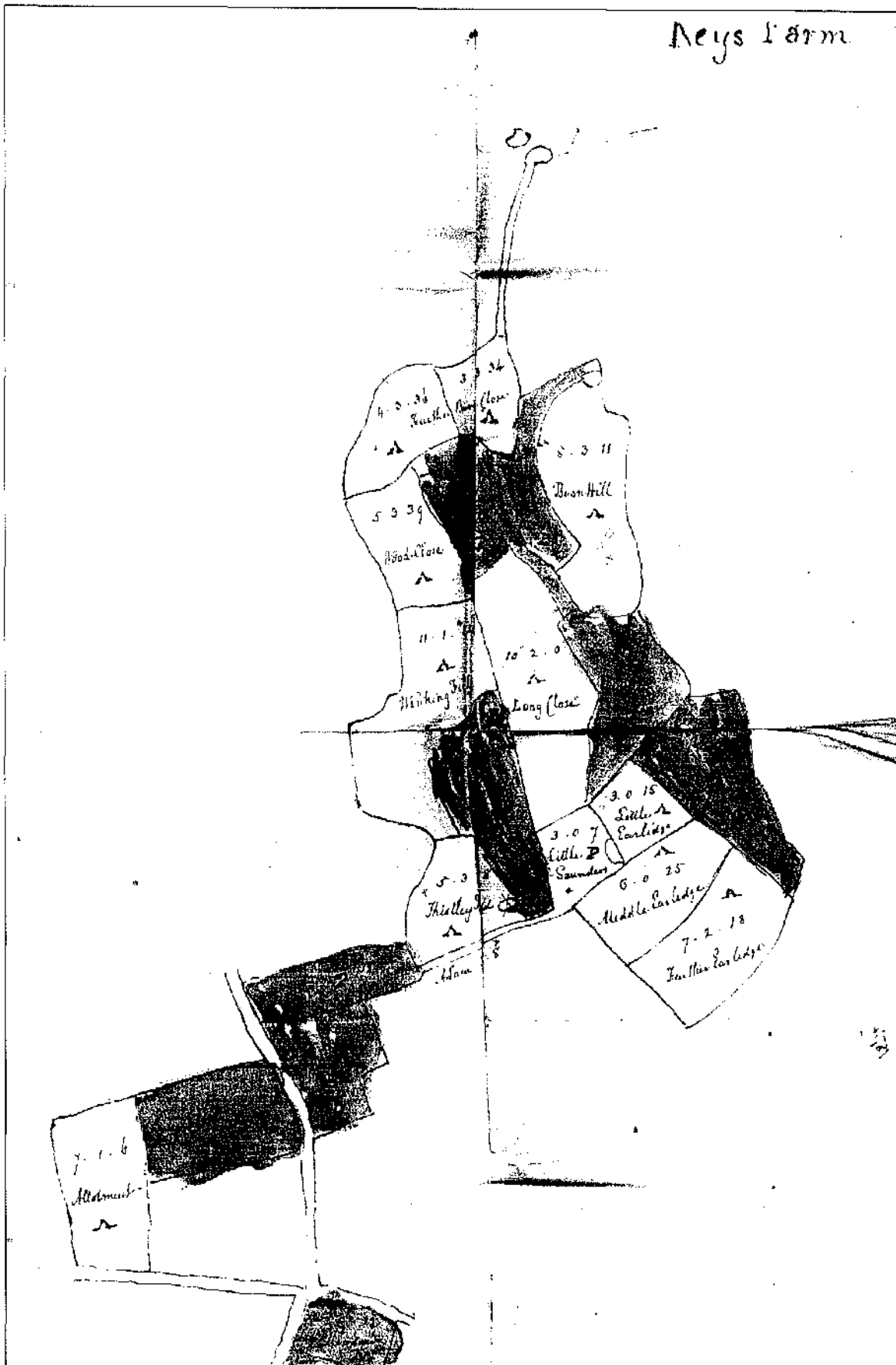


Fig.3: Keys Farm in 1874

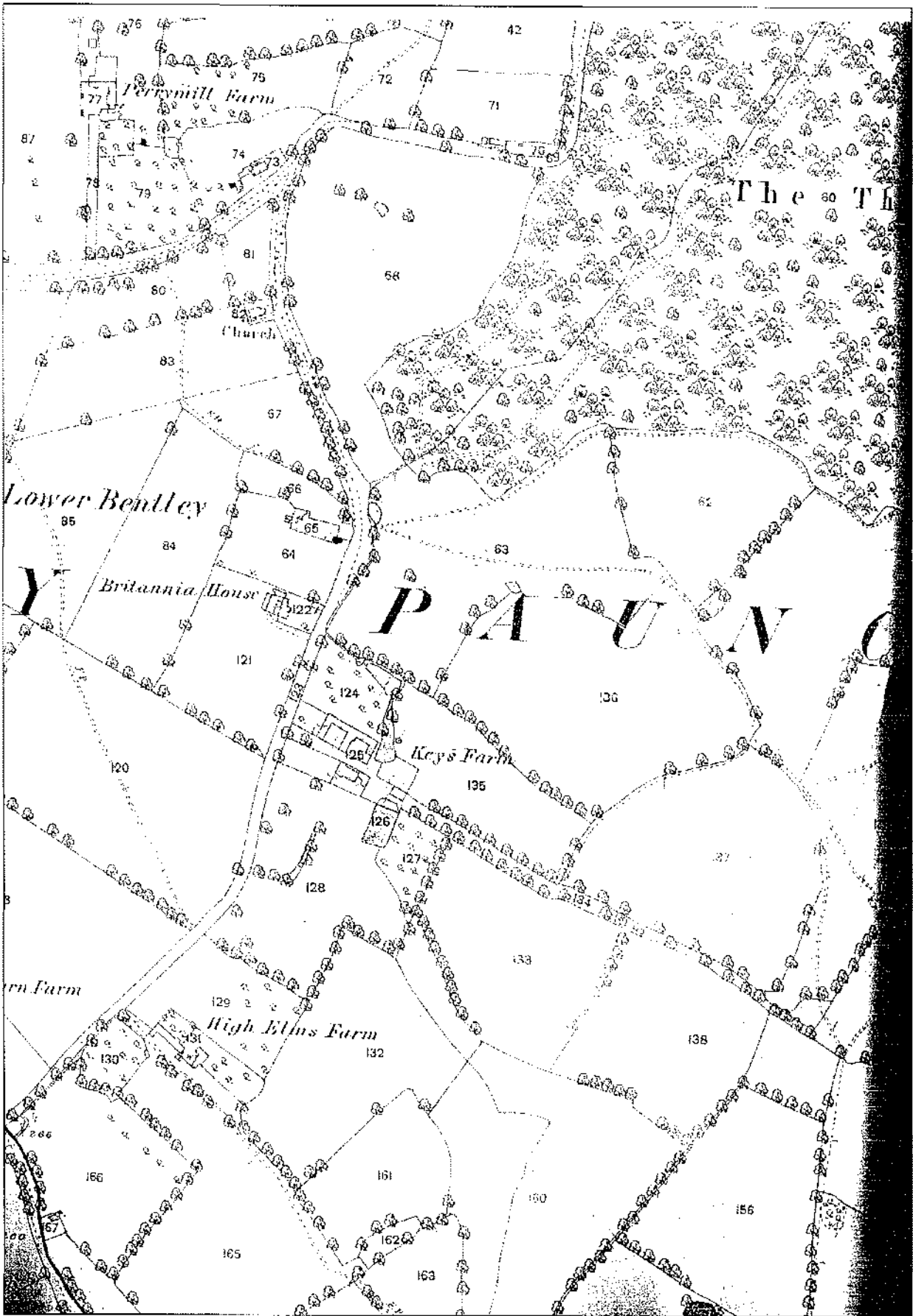


Fig. 4: Keys Farm in 1886

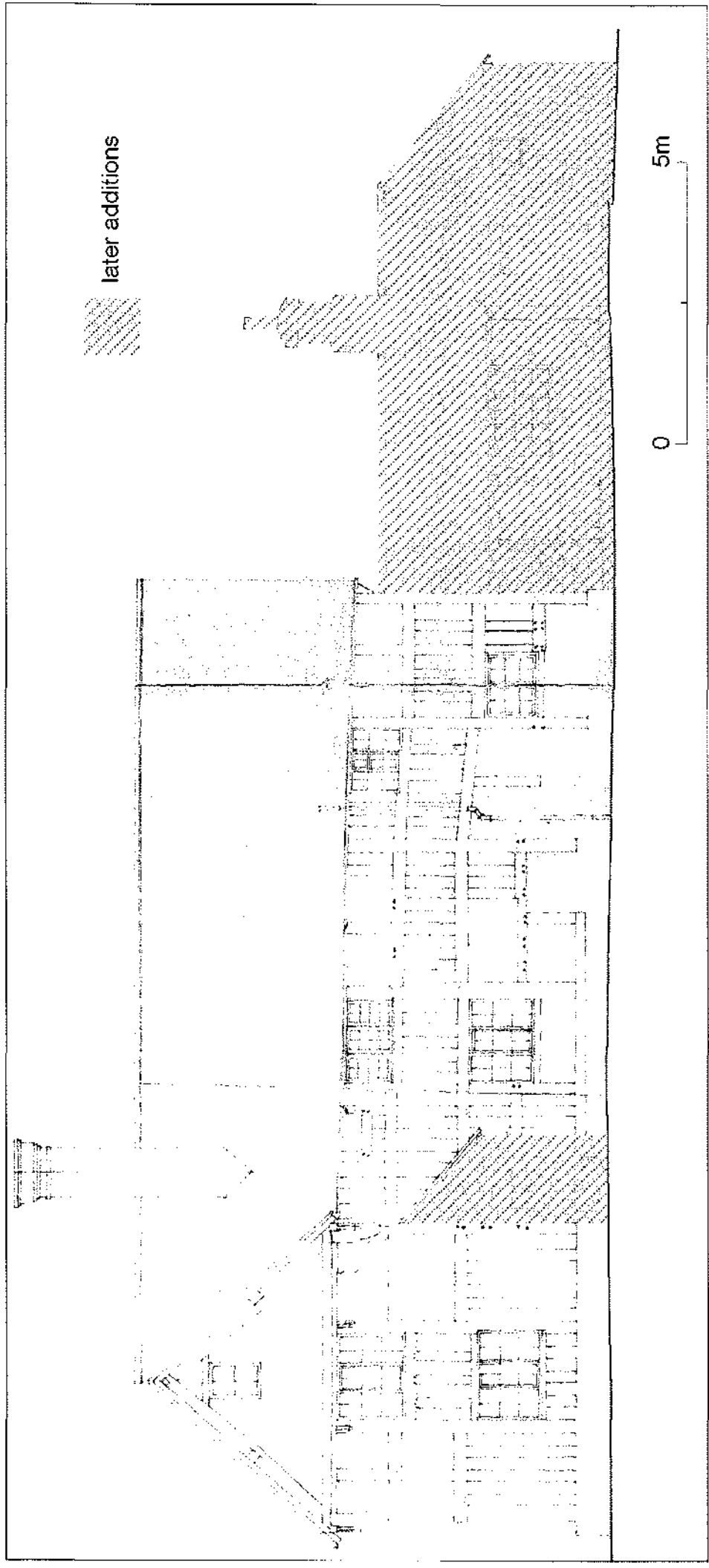


Fig.5: South Elevation

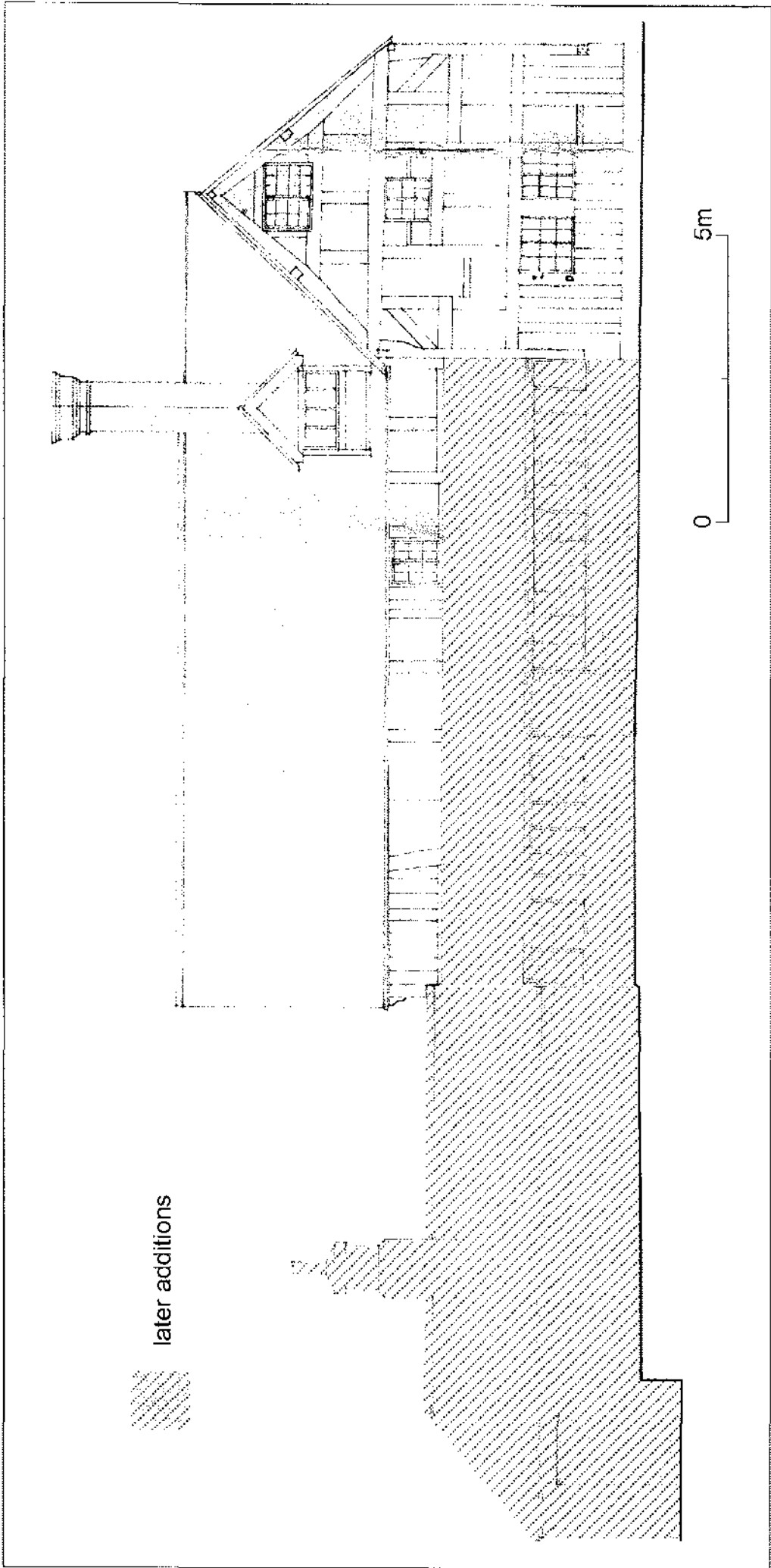


Fig.6: North Elevation

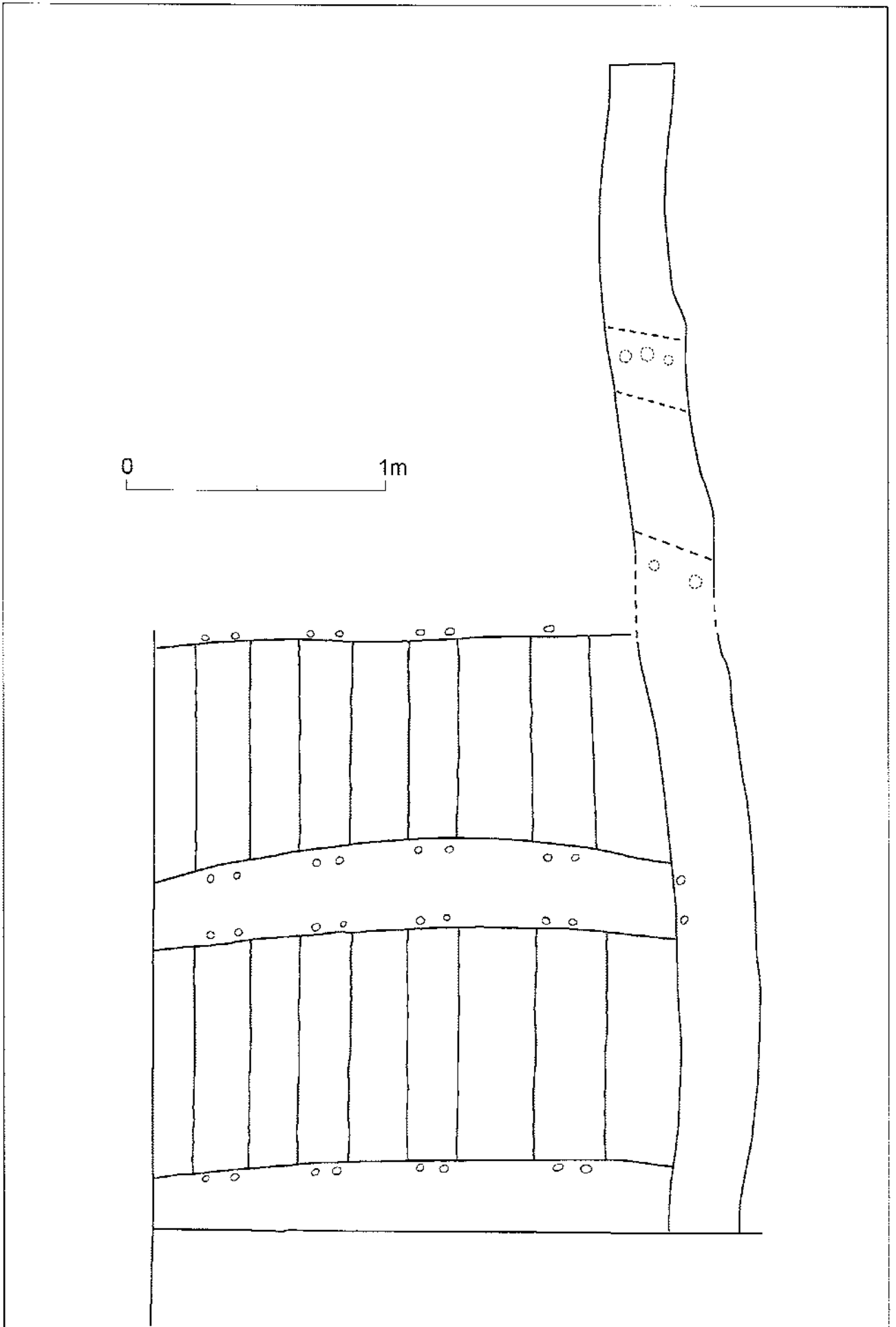


Fig.7: Reused Timbers in North Wall of Farmhouse from the North

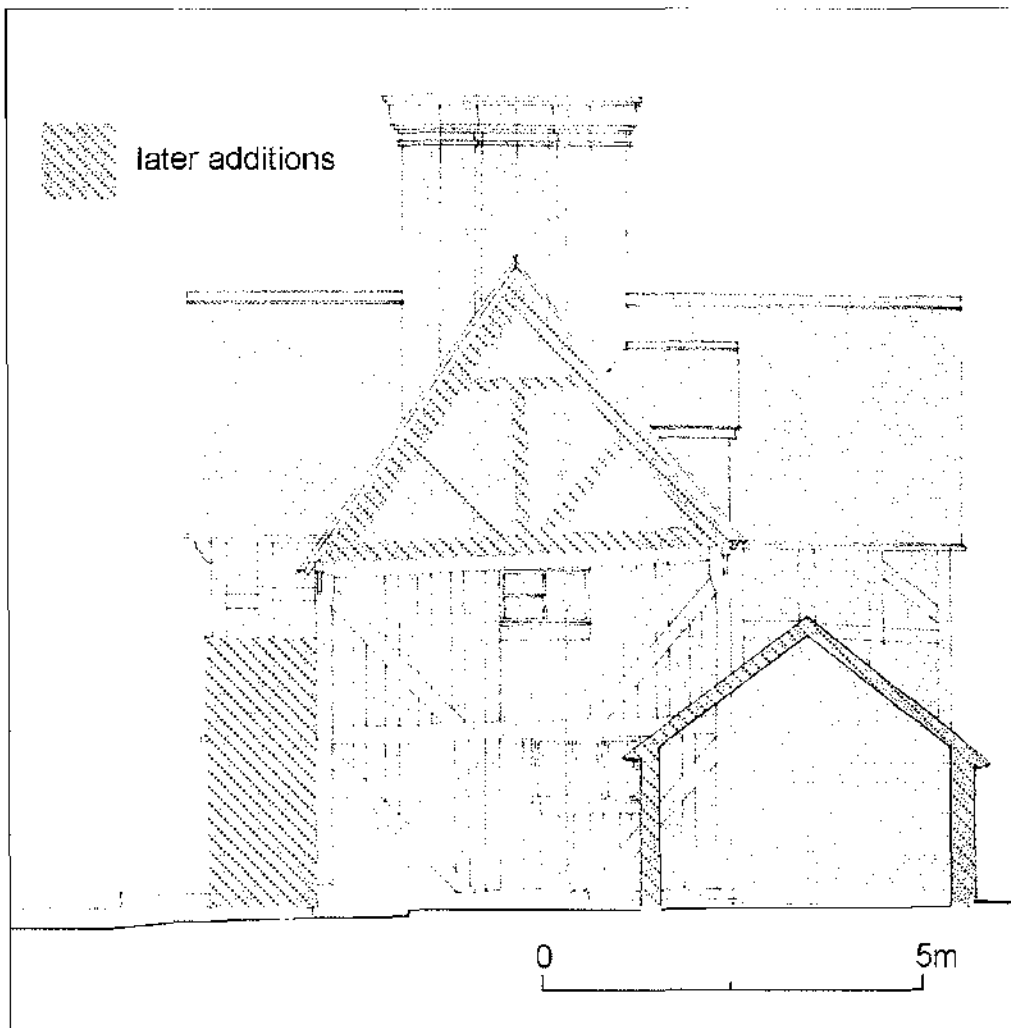


Fig.8: East Elevation

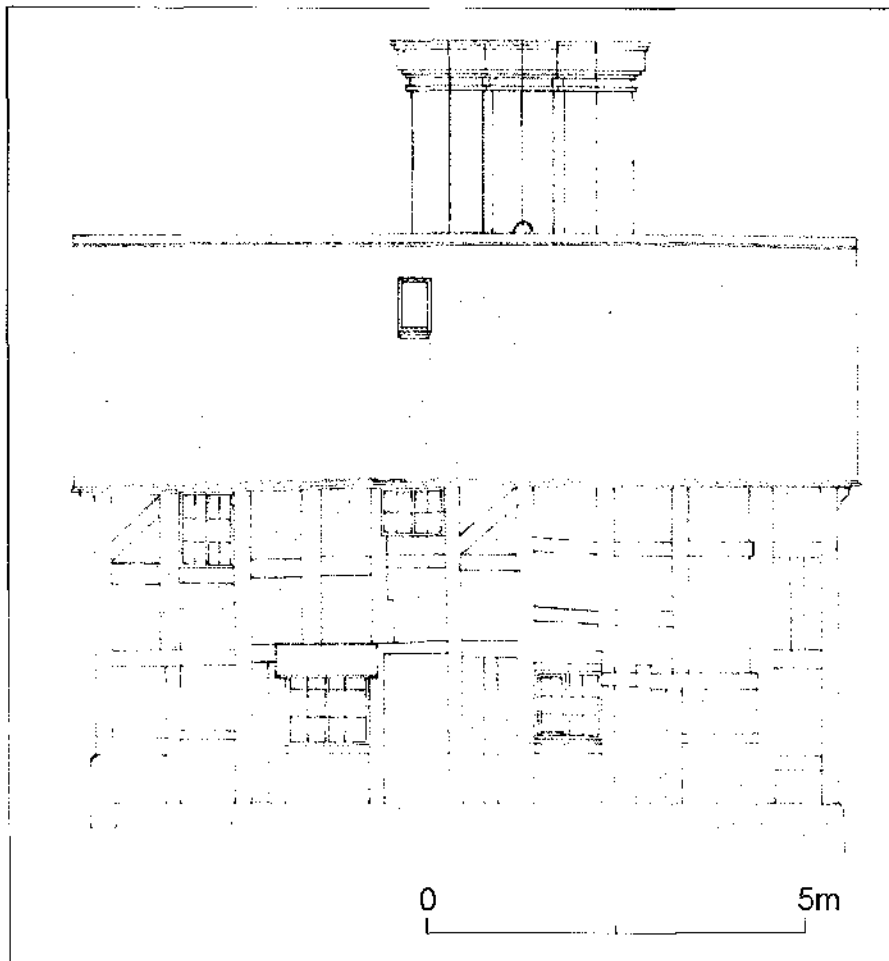


Fig.9: West Elevation

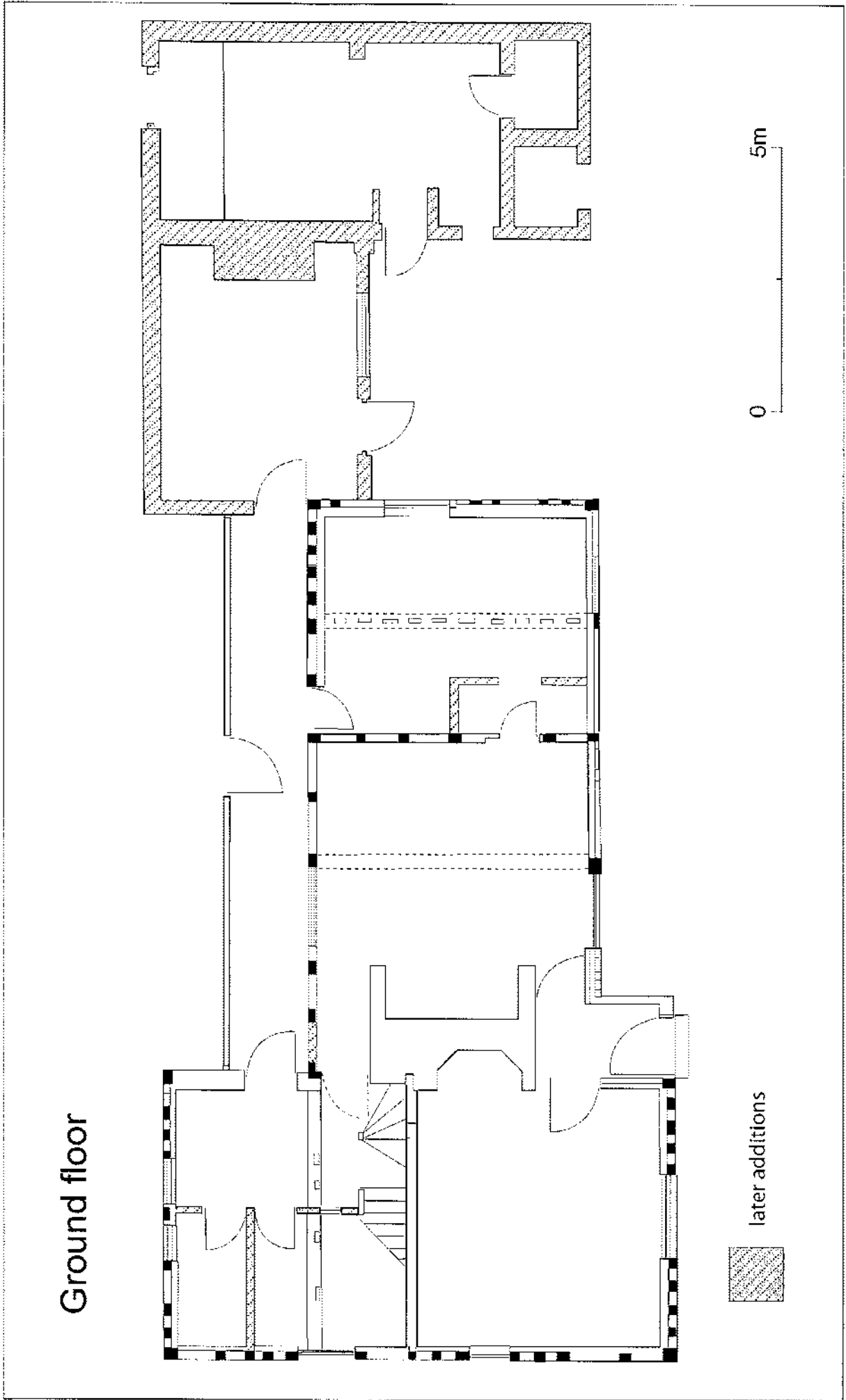


Fig.10

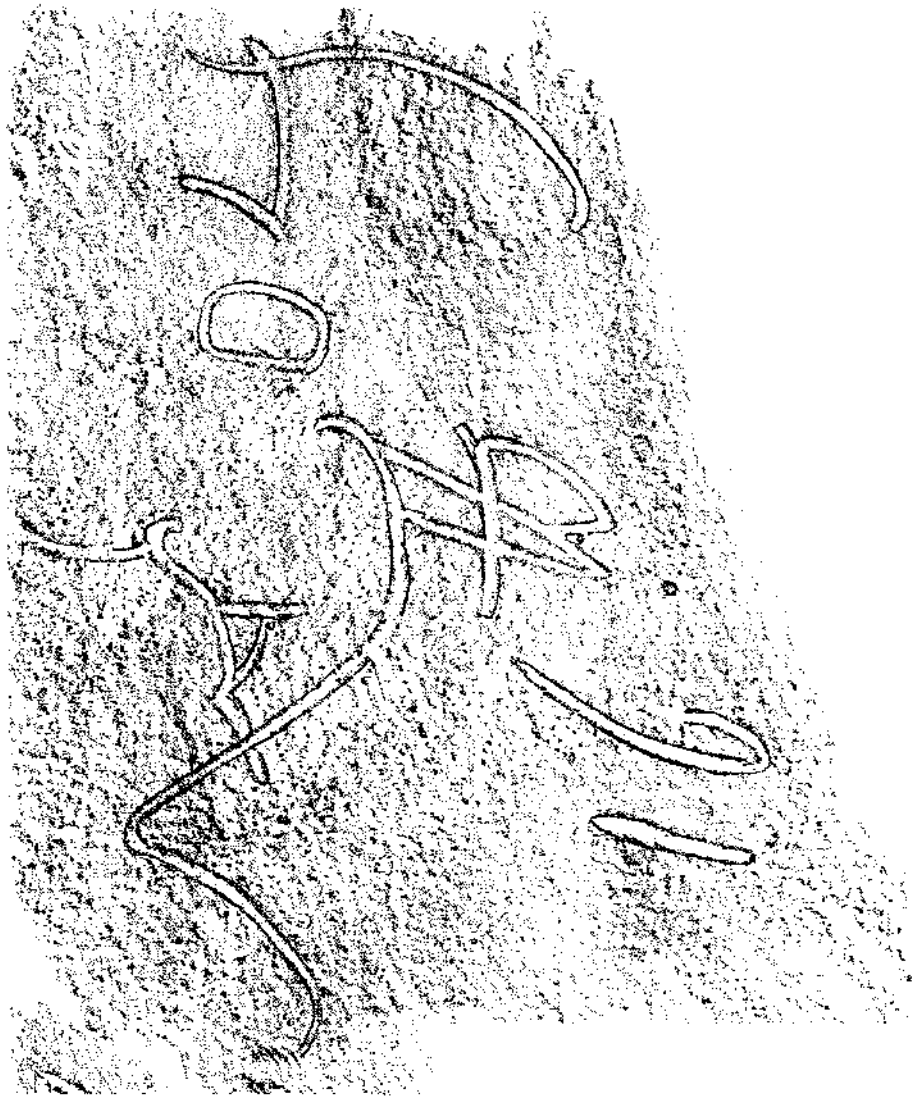


Fig. 11: Inscription on fire place lintel

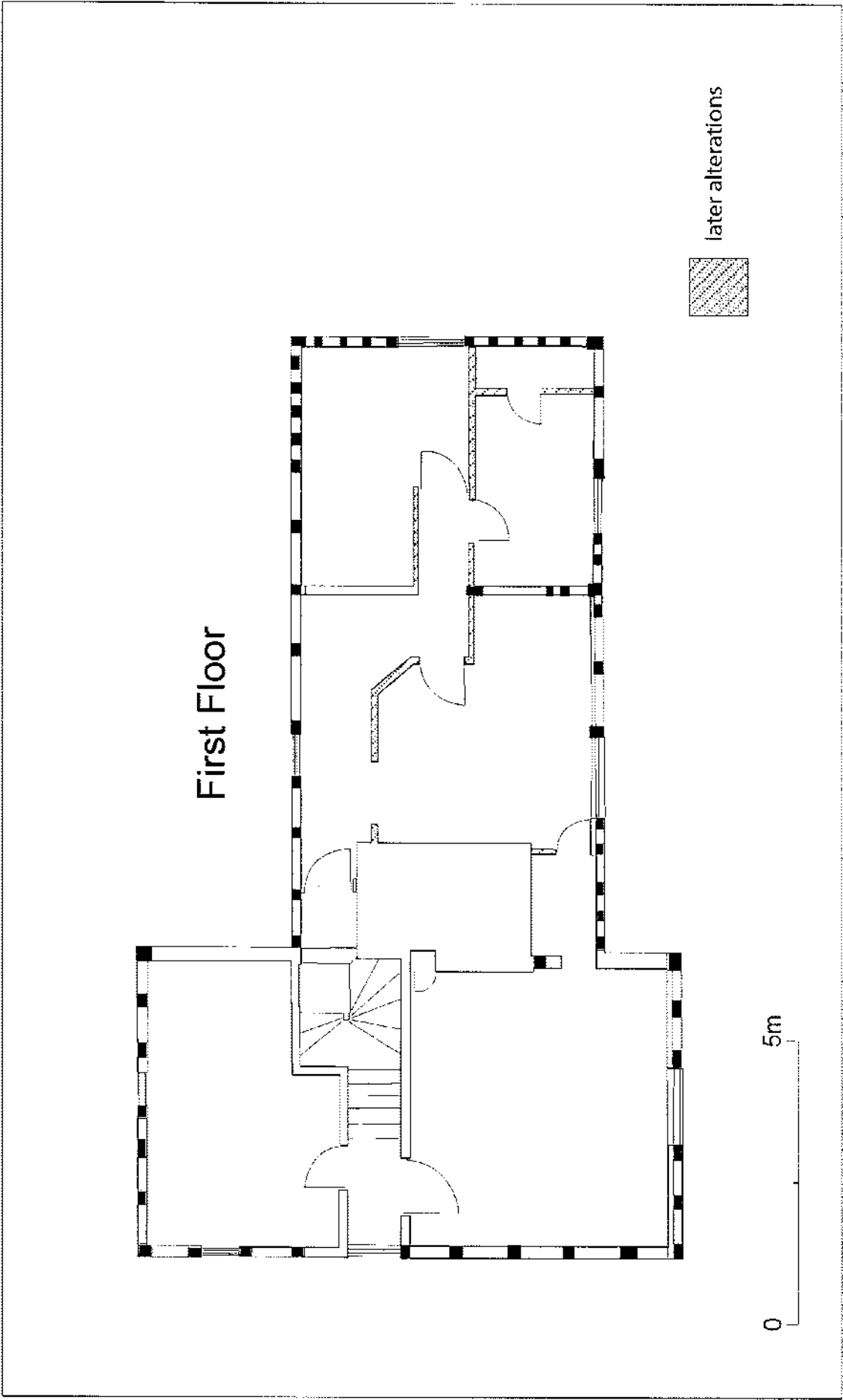
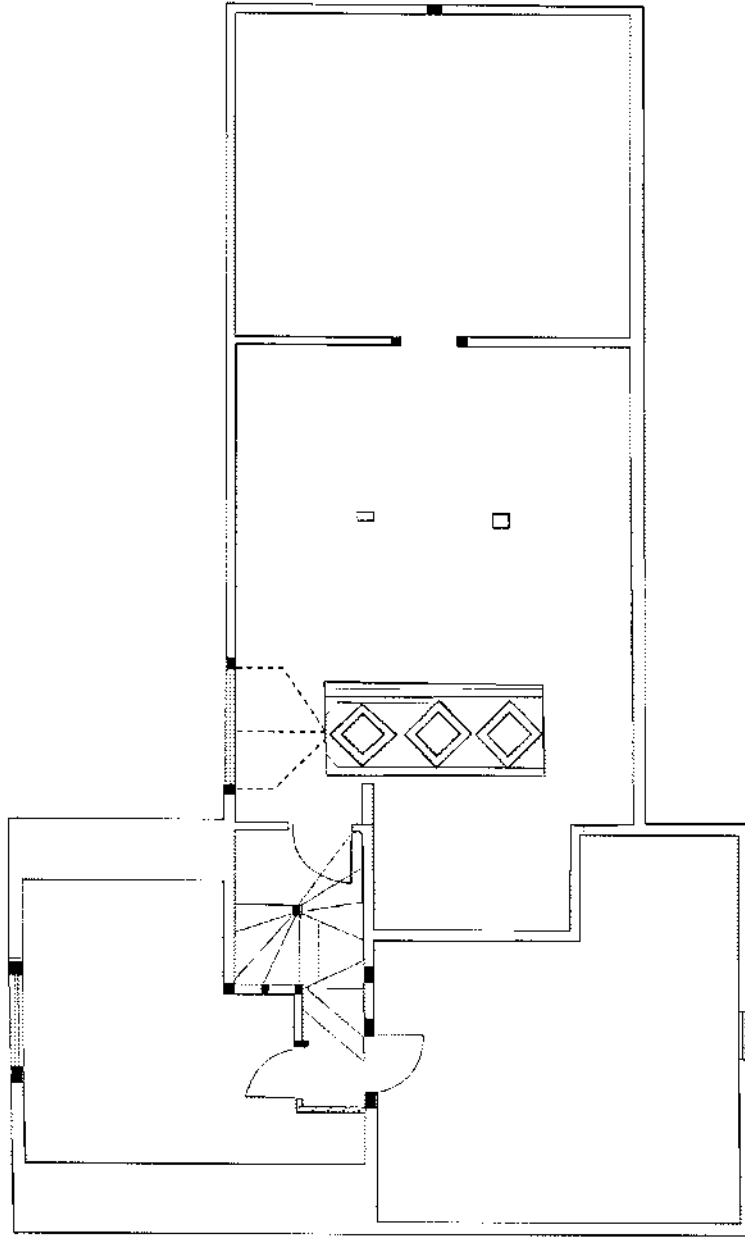


Fig.12

Attic



0 5m

Fig.13

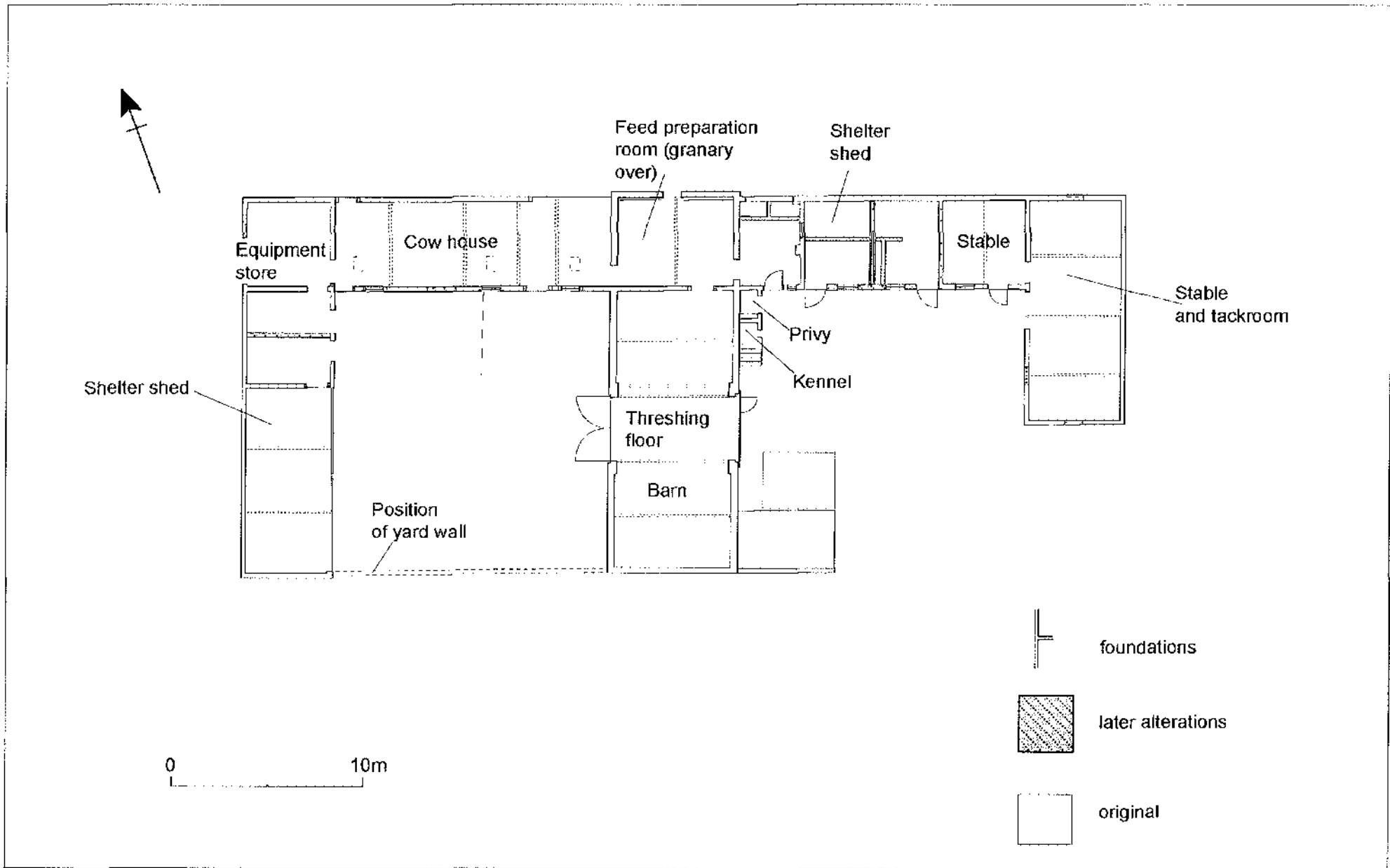


Fig.14



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3

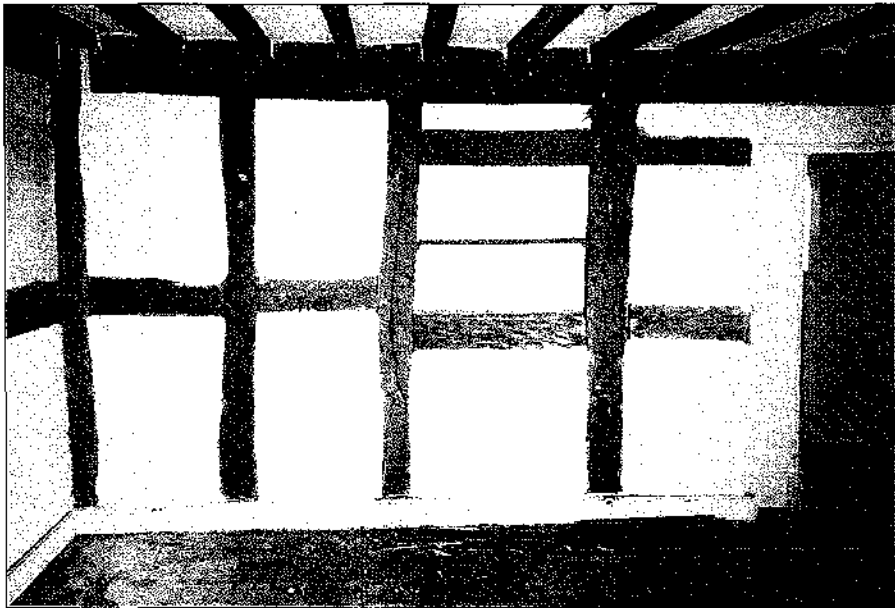


Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8

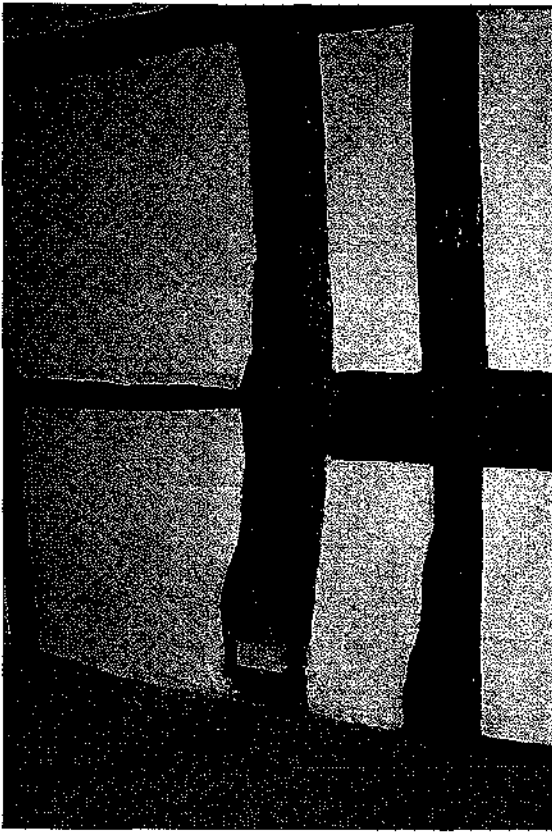


Plate 9



Plate 10

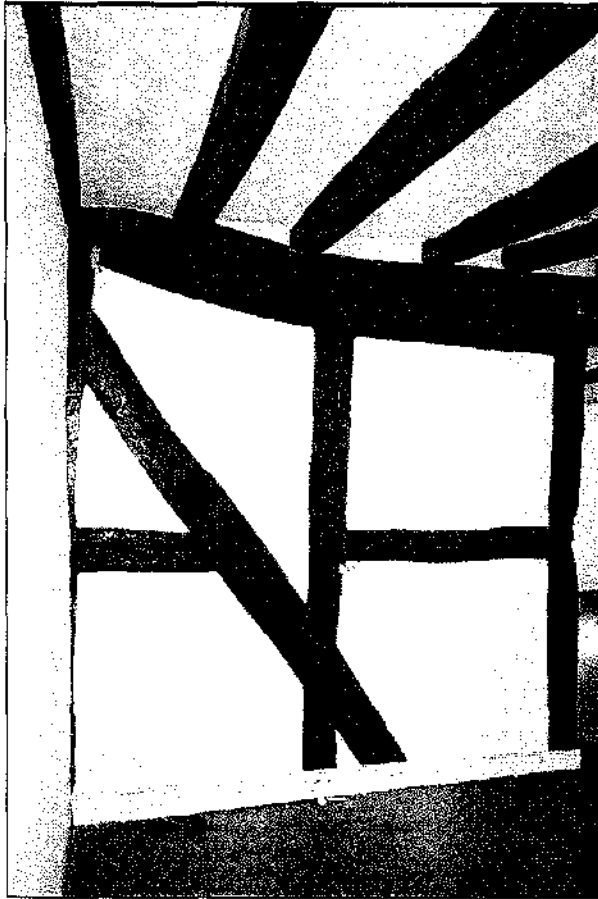


Plate 11



Plate 12

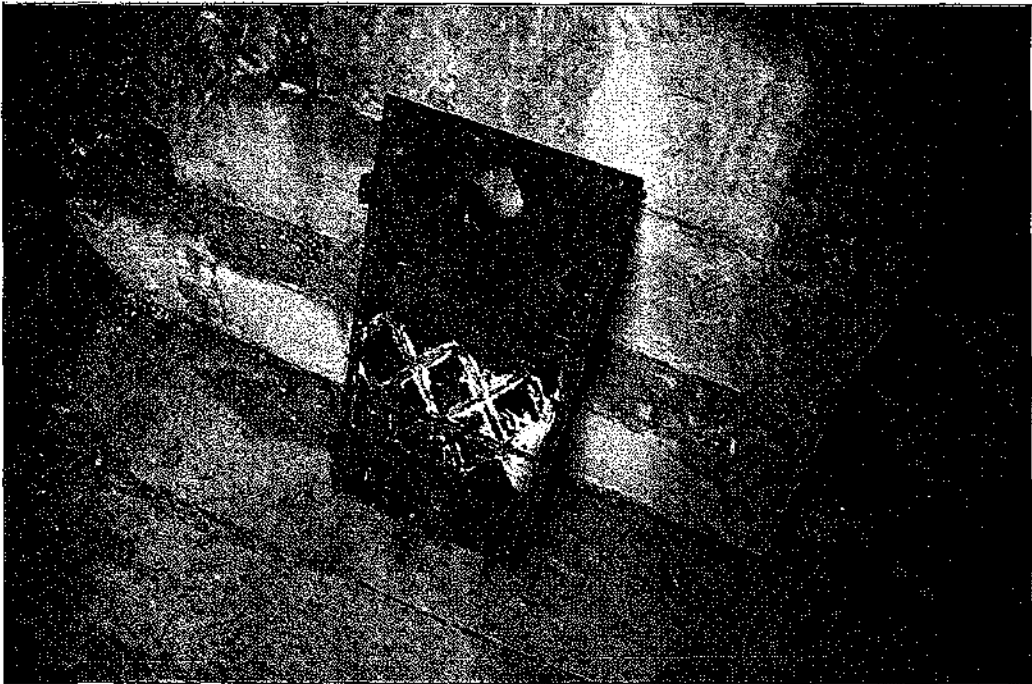


Plate 13



Plate 14



Plate 15

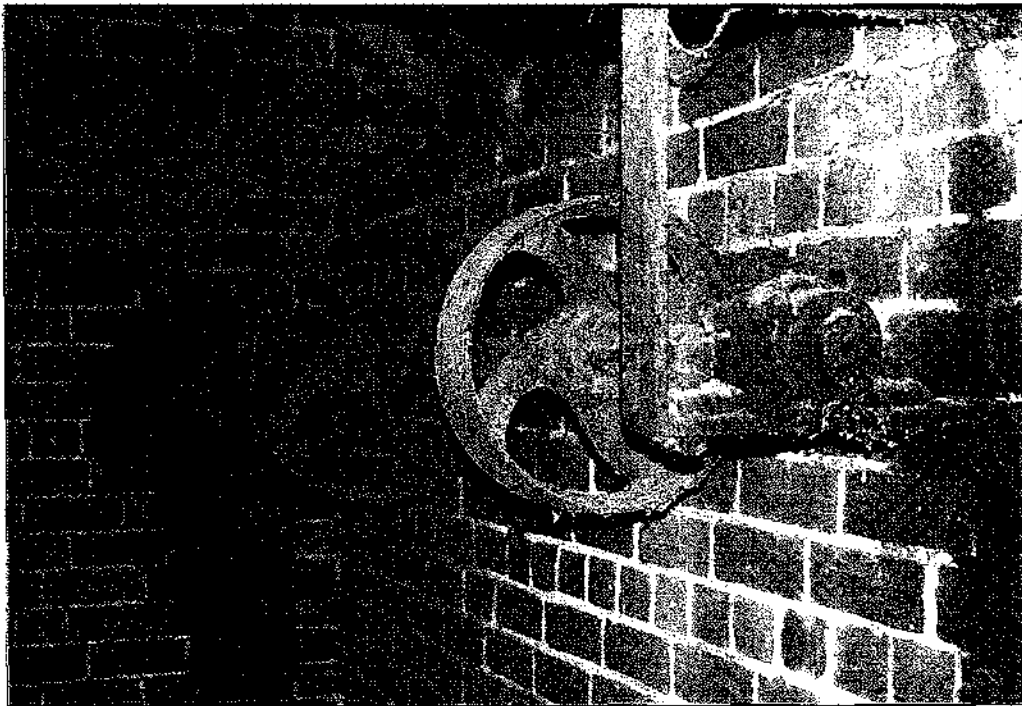


Plate 16



Plate 17



Plate 18



Plate 19