

Lower Beanhall Farm,
Bradley Green,
Feckenham,
Worcestershire

Historic Building Recording
and Interpretation
2005
(WSM 33752)

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**Lower Beanhall Farm, Bradley Green, Feckenham, Worcestershire:
Historic Building Recording and Interpretation, 2005 (WSM 33752)**

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Summary

Historic building recording and interpretation was undertaken at grade II listed Lower Beanhall Farm (NGR SO 98906040) for Mr and Mrs D. Hands as a condition of planning permission for redevelopment of the building. The objective of obtaining an interpretative archaeological record of the buildings prior to redevelopment was met by a monochrome photographic survey, the compilation of a written description, a measured survey of the timber framing, structural analysis, the creation of a phased plan, historical research and dendrochronological sampling. Five phases of construction were identified, ranging in date from the 17th century to the mid- to late 20th century, the most architecturally significant of which was the principal timber-framed range. Analysis of the tree ring samples obtained from this range identified two chronologically distinct groups which gave respective felling dates of AD 1565 and AD 1655. Given that none of the sampled timbers showed signs of being reused, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the structure represents the dismantling and re-erection (in 1655) of a building of 1565, during the process of which some timbers were replaced.

1.0 Planning Background

In April 2005 Birmingham Archaeology carried out historic building recording and interpretation at Lower Beanhall Farm, Bradley Green, Feckenham, Worcestershire, for Mr and Mrs D. Hands. The recording programme was prompted by a planning application (R/05/0024) approved by Redditch Borough Council for alterations and refurbishment. Because these proposals were likely to affect a grade II listed building which is also registered on the County Sites and Monuments Record (WSM 10181), in line with guidance given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, Section 2.11 (Department of Environment 1994), the Planning Authority was advised that a programme of historic building recording was required.

2.0 Site Location

Lower Beanhall Farm is situated to the east of the main road through the village of Bradley Green, Worcestershire, some 5 miles southwest of Redditch, at NGR SO 98906040 (Fig. 1).

3.0 Objectives

The overall objective was to obtain an interpretative record of the buildings prior redevelopment.

Specific aims were as follows:

- A detailed photographic survey of the following:

- All external elevations
 - All internal room spaces and roof structures (where accessible)
 - Details of any architectural or functional fixtures and fittings and features relating to either the function or development of the building.
 - Photographs illustrating the building's relationship to surrounding buildings and setting.
- A 1:20 measured and annotated drawing of the existing visible timber frame.
 - The collation and annotation of existing survey drawings
 - A phased plan of the building
 - A location plan related to the national grid.
 - An interpretative written record

4.0 Methods

Desk-Based Research

Historical research of readily available published and non-published documentary sources, including local histories, census returns, trade directories, historic maps and photographs, and other appropriate was carried out at Worcestershire Records Office, Worcestershire Library and History Centre and the library of the University of Birmingham.

Fieldwork

The main photographic survey was carried out with a 35mm camera using black and white film. All photographs included suitable scales and were catalogued on *pro forma* index sheets. In addition, a rapid survey using colour print film was undertaken for presentation purposes including illustration of the report.

The measured survey of the timber frame was undertaken with a reflectorless total station, and the data used to produce AutoCAD drawings.

A written description comprising building type, date(s), architectural character, construction materials and techniques, spatial character and phasing was compiled on *pro forma* building and room record sheets.

Structural analysis of the existing building was carried out on site, and an existing survey drawing used as a basis for compiling a phased plan at a scale of 1: 50. Drawings were catalogued on *pro forma* index sheets

Dendrochronological samples were taken and analysed by Robert Howard of the University of Nottingham Dendrochronology Laboratory following English Heritage guidance given in *Dendrochronology, guidelines on producing and interpreting dendrochronological dates*.

5.0 Historical Background (by Leonie Driver)

Little documentary evidence survives for Lower Beanhall Farm from before the 19th century. Parish registers dating from 1538 frequently list Bean Hall, the frequency of listings and the variety of family names given, suggest that Bean Hall may have referred to the whole estate, not simply the hall itself. Many of the people listed are described as agricultural labourers. The register of baptisms has one entry for Bean Hall Farm specifically, this lists the birth of Joseph Millward to Joseph and Jane Millward on 30.11.1828. Following this the couple had two further children Jane and Anne born in 1830 and 1832.

Lower Beanhall Farm appears on the tithe map, but is not named specifically, either on the map or in the apportionment. At the time the farm comprised a house, buildings, yards, garden and orchard. The landowner at this time was Thomas Farley Esq. who owned a large area of land which included Bean Hall (now Middle Beanhall Farm) situated to the north of Lower Bean Hall Farm. The occupier of much of the land owned by Thomas Farley Esq., and Lower Beanhall Farm itself, was William Fortnam. From census returns William Fortnam, born in nearby Inkberrow in 1787, is known to have been a farmer, and may have succeeded the Millward family as occupier of the Lower Bean Hall Farm, sometime during the late 1830s.

The tithe map (Fig. 2) shows that in 1840 the farmhouse comprised an east-west aligned block with a short wing to the south and a long east-west aligned wing to the east. A further wing extended from the eastern end of the rear wing. Between 1840 and the second edition OS map of 1885 (Fig. 2), the plan of the main farmhouse buildings remained unchanged, however, small, probably single-storey buildings had been constructed, and adjoined the east end of the east wing. Further outbuildings had also been constructed within the farmyard complex to the south of the main farmhouse.

The substantial east wing, and the small buildings extending from this were still present at the time of the publication of the second edition OS map in 1904 (Fig. 2). It was at some point later in the 20th century that the wing was removed. This may have taken place during the 1960s when the house underwent a period of renovation, part of which comprised the construction of a single-storey utility room on the eastern end of the house, the former site of the demolished east wing.

6.0 Survey Results (Figs. 4-9)

At the time of the survey the building consisted of three main parts. The main range (G.04-5, F.03 and S.02) was a single-bay, timber-framed structure with internal end stack to the east. The two-bay rear wing (G.01-03, F.01-02, S.01) was brick-built with an external lateral stack to the north side of the west bay. Attached to the south of the main range was the brick-built south wing (G.06). All three wings were two-and-a-half stories in height.

Four principal phases of development were identified within the fabric of the building. In addition, renovation had occurred throughout the structure since the 1960s, much of which can be accounted for by the present owner (D. Hands *per. comm.*).

The Main Range (Plate 1, Figs 6-9)

This was a two-and-a-half-storey building constructed principally of oak timber-frame with a wattle and daub in-fill. At the time of the survey the principal façade was located to the west. A later addition porch entrance was centrally located at ground level, and the present owner had sought to alter this and revert the opening to its original form as a window. Above this was an original five-light, three-pane window with a further three-light, three-pane window above. The windows had wood mullions but contained replacement panes.

The original principal façade was located to the south and had subsequently been obscured by the construction of the South Wing in front of it. A wide entrance was located centrally on the façade (Plate 2), with a blocked original window above (Plate 3). The entrance was bricked-up with on-end bricks presumably contemporary with the construction of the South Wing (Phase 4). The window above had been breeze-blocked but this may have been a modern replacement of previous in-fill. Original windows were located at ground and first-floor levels on the north elevation. The first-floor window had early or original leaded panes, with iron cross-members (Plate 4).

The original build consisted of two stories of box-frame construction on a sandstone plinth, the main corner posts with gunstock heads. The ground floor construction consisted of uninterrupted closely-spaced studs, whereas the first-floor was composed of small square panels with straight braces. Mortice and tenon joints were secured mostly with twin pegs, although some displayed a single peg.

The eastern elevation (Fig. 9) was heavily altered with the removal of any original timber-frame at ground level, and up to a height of *c.* 1.0m from first floor level. The framing pattern at first-floor level was dominated by a large mid-rail, the soffit of which betrayed no evidence of former studs, so it is presumed that it was open originally, and perhaps formed a mantle-beam for a former fireplace. Above this was a line of original studs that were jointed into both it and the tie-beam above.

The roof was supported by three trusses of varying construction. That at the western gable elevation (Fig. 6, Plate 5) had a series of three collars with studs in-between, and

V-struts above the upper collar. The principals were halved at the apex. The eastern truss (Fig. 9, Plate 6) was constructed in elm with two collar beams, and the principals were halved-lap jointed at the apex. The central truss was not dissimilar to the eastern but had an interrupted tie beam, with the posts connecting to the transverse beam below. Twin purlins were trenched either side of the principals with a ridge purlin at the apex. Interestingly the purlins had been morticed and tenoned to the western truss (Plate 7).

The plan was open with the north-eastern corner of the range was dominated by a large end chimney-stack within the house avoiding the ridge. This was rubble-core and mortar built with an outer skin of 2" thick hand-made bricks (Plate 8). Two hearths opened onto the principal rooms (G.05, F.03, Plate 9). These were plain with a segmental-arch of on-end bricks. The decoration on the upper chimney-stack was a modern replacement based on the original form. The stack originally extended further to the east into room F.03 but removal of much of the original fabric by the previous owner had obscured any conclusions that could be attained from this.

Later stud-wall sub-division had occurred adjacent to the chimney-stack on the first-floor, and this was contemporary with the addition of the spiral stairwell to the second-floor. The first floor was supported by a single transverse beam the north end of which lay on top of the ground floor window lintel. Similarly, the second floor was supported by two transverse beams also supported on the window lintels.

The East Wing (Plate 10)

This was a two-and-a-half storey, two-bay wing built in hand-made brick laid in Flemish bond. On the principal, southern, façade modern wooden casement windows were located on ground and first floor in each bay, with the entrance through a low lean-to porch. The northern and rear façade had a central doorway and ground and first floor windows within the eastern bay. The western bay was dominated by a lateral chimney-stack. A stone plinth ran around the entirety of the wall. The roof was pitched and the eaves had dentil decoration.

Two timber box-framed cross walls located in the east wing of the house on the ground and first floors (G.01-03, F.01-02, Plate 11) represented an earlier phase of construction. These walls had six and seven studs respectively, and had been truncated *c.* 2.0m from ground level on the ground floor. The upper rails of both walls had been replaced. The original wattle and daub infill had been replaced by hand-made brick. The ends of the cross walls were abutted by, and the eastern cross wall encased by the brick outer walls.

The plan was a two-cell building with later sub-division on the ground floor. A lateral chimneystack on the northern wall served the ground floor room (G.02). The ground-floor hearth had been reconstructed by the previous tenant, however, it appeared that at least some of the stonework constituted the original build.

The roof space was open. The eastern roof truss (Plate 12) was similar to that located between the main range and the east wing (Plate 6). The principals were halved-lap jointed at the apex with two collars. A further central truss had been altered but appeared

to be of similar construction (Plate 12). The lower collar had been removed and braces had subsequently been placed between the principals and tie-beam. The tie-beam itself had a series of nine tenons on its upper face and appeared to be re-used or rotated from its soffit face. Twin purlins were trenched on either side of the principals and had been scarf-jointed just short of the central truss. A ridge purlin ran along the apex. At least two of the purlins were modern replacements.

The 1960s redevelopment of the building (D. Hands *per. comm.*) resulted in the demolition of further parts of the wing and a number of farm buildings that lay directly to the east. The eastern gable of the East Wing was totally reconstructed and a single storey utility block was added. The new gable wall was built against the previous gable in hand-made bricks

The South Wing (Plate 10)

The south wing was located and extending to the south of the main range. It was a two-storey wing constructed in hand-made bricks laid in stretcher bond. The principal southern façade was an extensive modern re-modelling using breezeblocks and re-used bricks and all the openings appeared to have been altered. The western façade had a two-pot chimneystack that had been rebuilt from eaves level, with replacement pots. The roof was hipped at the southern end and had been re-slatted. Dentil decoration occurred at the eaves.

The transverse beam that ran north-south had been removed leaving the interior open to the ceiling. Evidence of a stairwell in the present location was provided by mortices and peg-holes in the timber framing. A first-floor doorway had been cut into the fabric of the timber-frame.

7.0 Tree-Ring Dates

Six samples from the main range were analysed, five of which were datable, and three of which contained a full complement of sapwood. The samples fell into two groups giving two quite distinct dates. A group of three samples, all of which came from the north wall, gave a felling date of 1565. Of the two samples that made up the second group, one was taken from the north wall and the other from the south wall. These samples gave a felling date of 1655. The full details of the dendrochronological sampling will be presented in a separate report.

8.0 Interpretation

Phase 1 (16th/17th century)

Phase 1 of construction was associated with the building related to a timber-frame, east-west range. Remnant box-construction timber-frame constructed in oak was located within the fabric of the walls of the eastern range. The demolition of buildings in the 1960s suggests the East Wing may have continued further to the east and formed a range of one-and-a-half storey timber-framed buildings.

Phase 2 (AD 1655)

This phase comprised the majority of the original build of the main range. The main frame produced little evidence of containing reused timbers but produced tree-ring samples, which formed two distinct groups giving felling dates of 1565 and 1655. This suggests that a timber-framed building of 1565 was dismantled and then re-erected, at which time some of the timbers were replaced. We cannot be certain as to when this occurred, and although it is conceivable that it happened around 1655 when the replacement timbers were felled, there is no reason to suppose that it did not occur much later. The practice of dismantling and re-erecting houses has been documented from 17th and 19th century Shropshire (Moran 1989), and it probable that this practice was also carried on in Worcestershire.

The original build appeared to have its principal façade facing south with a central entrance. The elevations to the west and north appeared to be relatively unaltered. However, considerable alteration had occurred to the eastern elevation. Lack of any original framing at ground level would suggest that the building was originally built against an existing structure that was subsequently replaced with the current brick building. However, no direct stratigraphic relationship exists between the Phase 1 elements and the Phase 2 structure and it is possible that they are contemporaneous but independent structures.

Phase 3 (Early 18th century)

This phase consisted of re-modelling of the east wing. Both north and south walls abutted the previous Phase 1, timber-framed cross walls and were built against the Phase 2 timber-framed main range. The brick in-fill of the earlier timber-framed cross walls was of similar character to the outer walls, and the whole alteration represented the conversion of the wing from a one-and-a-half storey building to a two-and-a-half storey building.

The eastern gable truss (Truss 3) and central truss (Truss 4) of the main range were identical in style to those located in the East Wing (Trusses 1 and 2) and may represent an entire rebuild of the roof space contemporary with Phase 3. It was possible that at least two of these trusses had been re-used from the previous timber-frame construction and heightened as part of the conversion of the building from one-and-a-half stories to two-and-a-half stories.

Phase 4 (Early 19th century)

Phase 4, the South Wing was a single build addition to the main range. Originally it appeared to have two floors. The first floor beam has been removed in order to convert the area to a stairwell and landing. Original access was via a doorway on the first floor. The use of hand-made bricks would suggest its construction occurred in the 18th to early-19th century but conclusive dating has been prevented by the lack of original features and the use of dentil brickwork at the eaves mimicking that of the East Wing.

Phase 5 (Mid to late 20th century)

The eastern gable of the east wing was entirely re-built in the 1960s due to the demolition of the adjacent building and probably involved the re-use of original building material from these buildings.

9.0 Acknowledgements

The project was managed for Birmingham Archaeology by Malcolm Hislop, and supervised by Christopher Hewitson assisted by Leonie Driver. Leonie Driver also undertook the historical research. Robert Howard of the University of Nottingham Dendrochronology Laboratory carried out the tree-ring dating, and the illustrations were prepared by Christopher Hewitson and Nigel Dodds.

10.0 Sources

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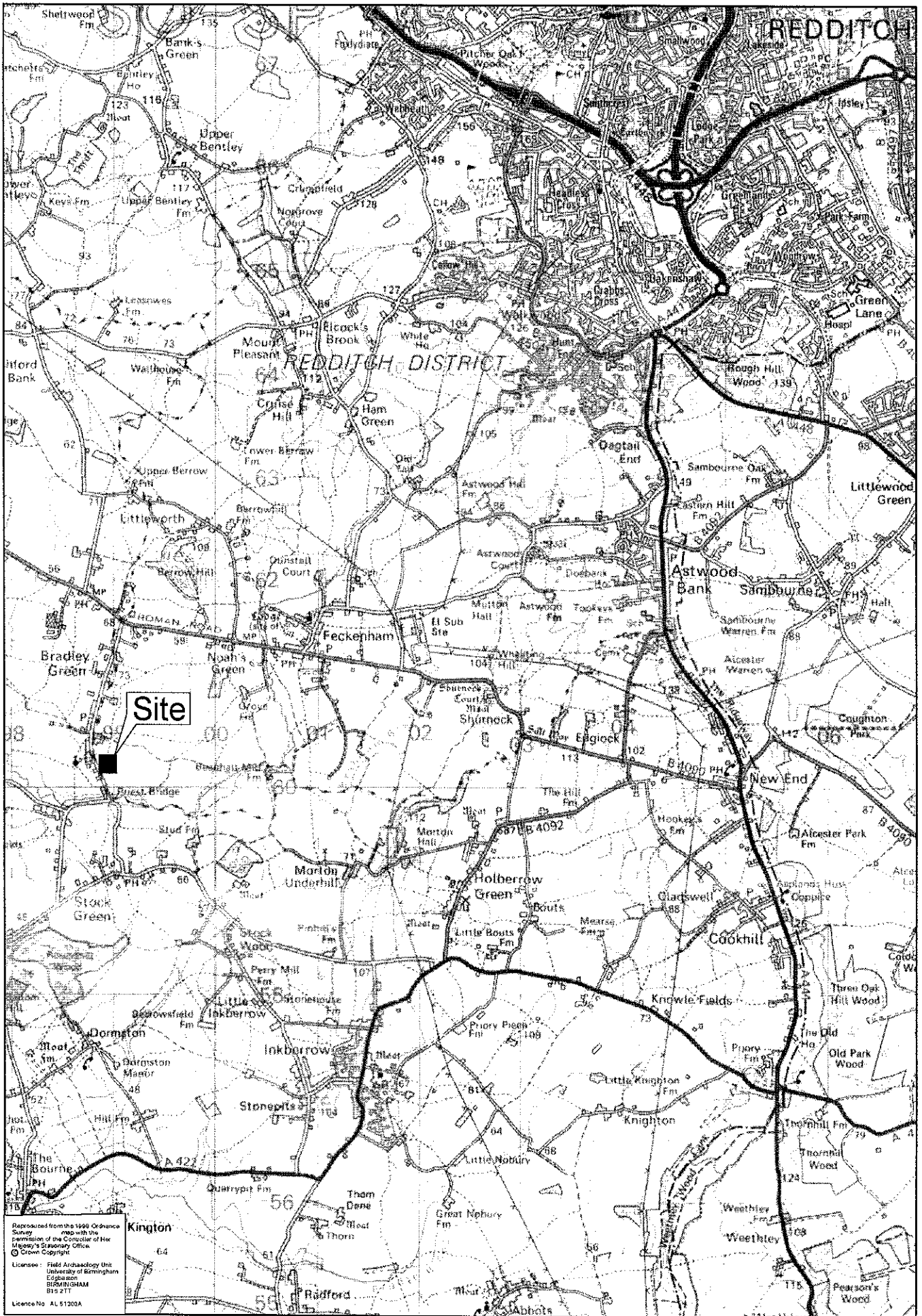


Fig.1

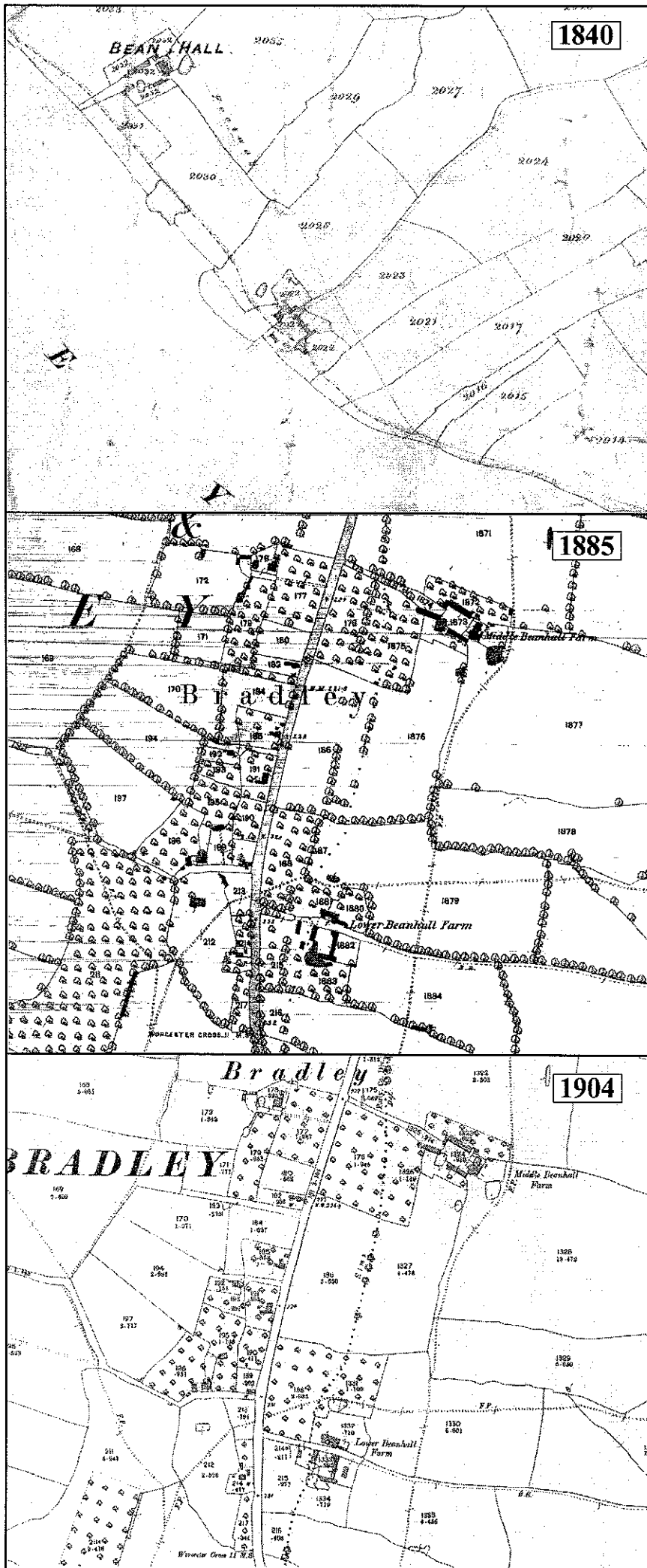


Fig.2

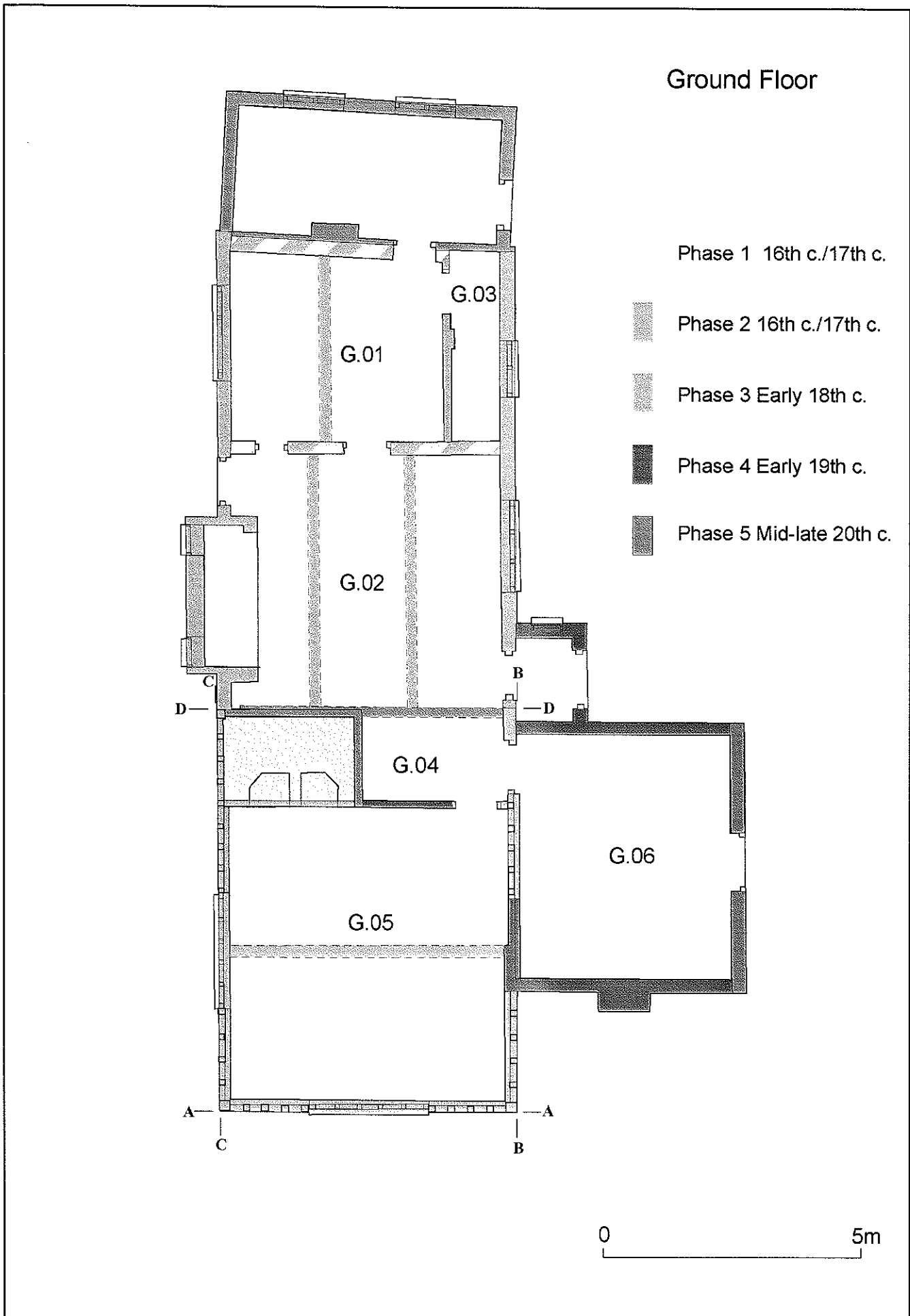


Fig.3

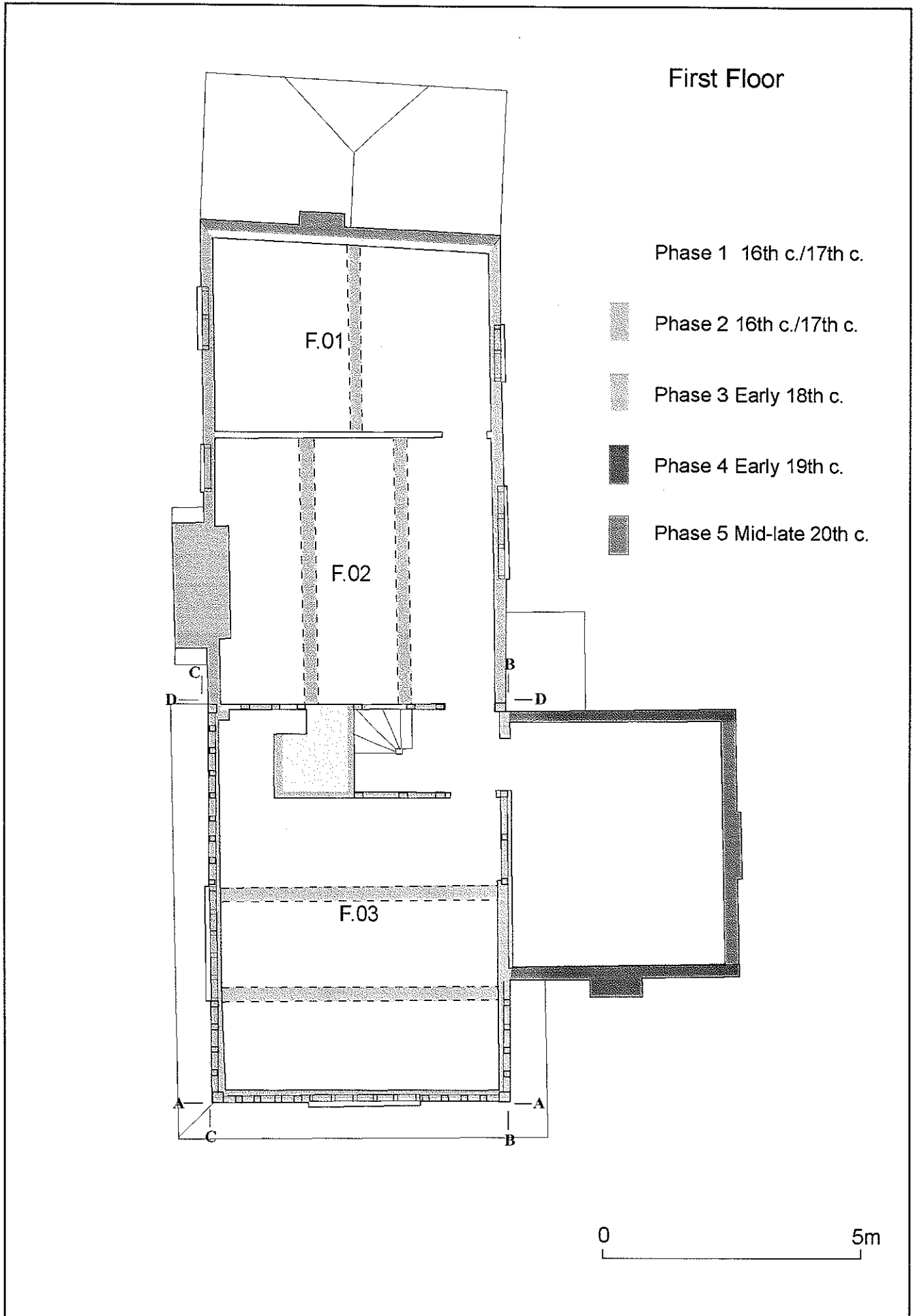


Fig.4

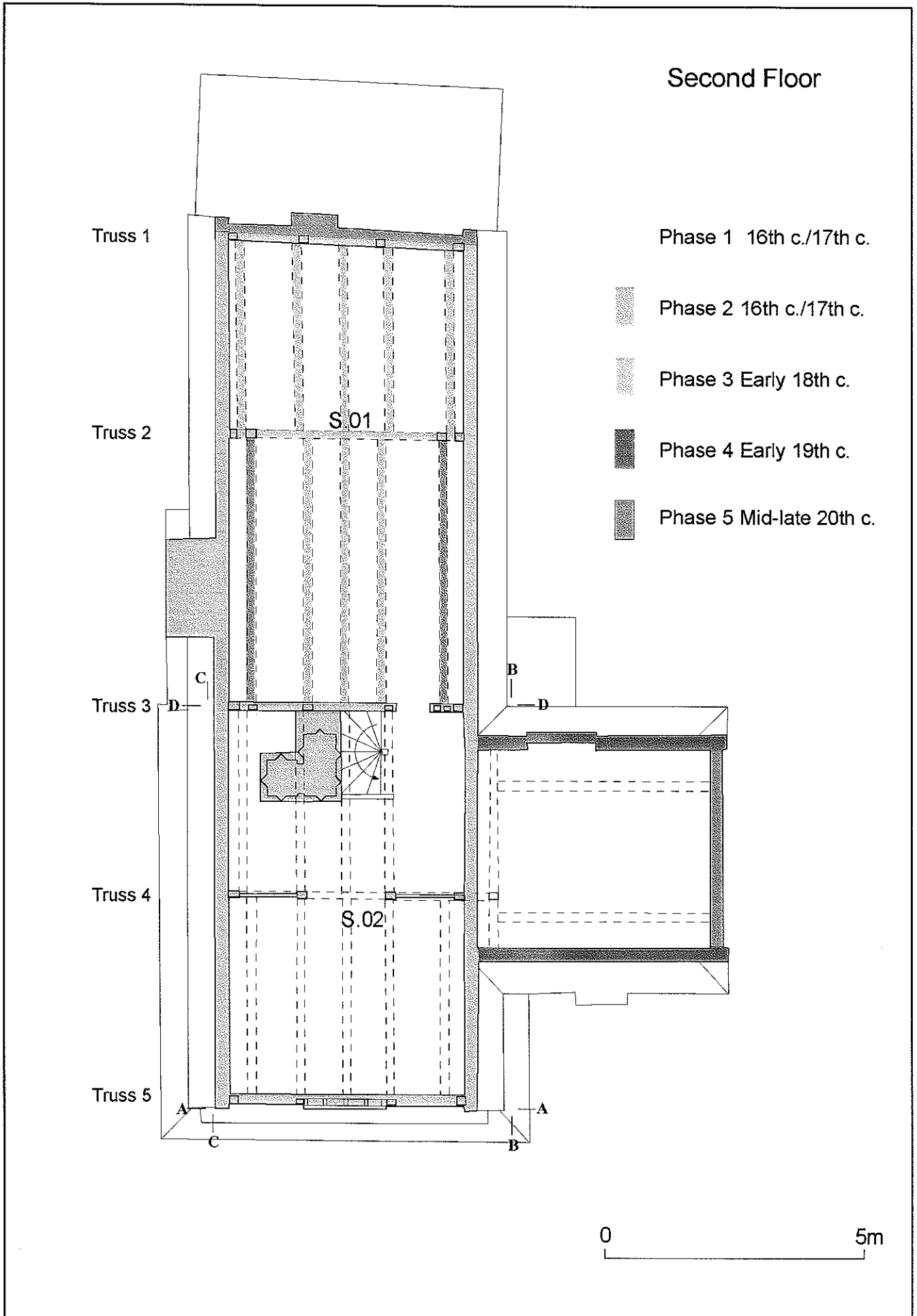
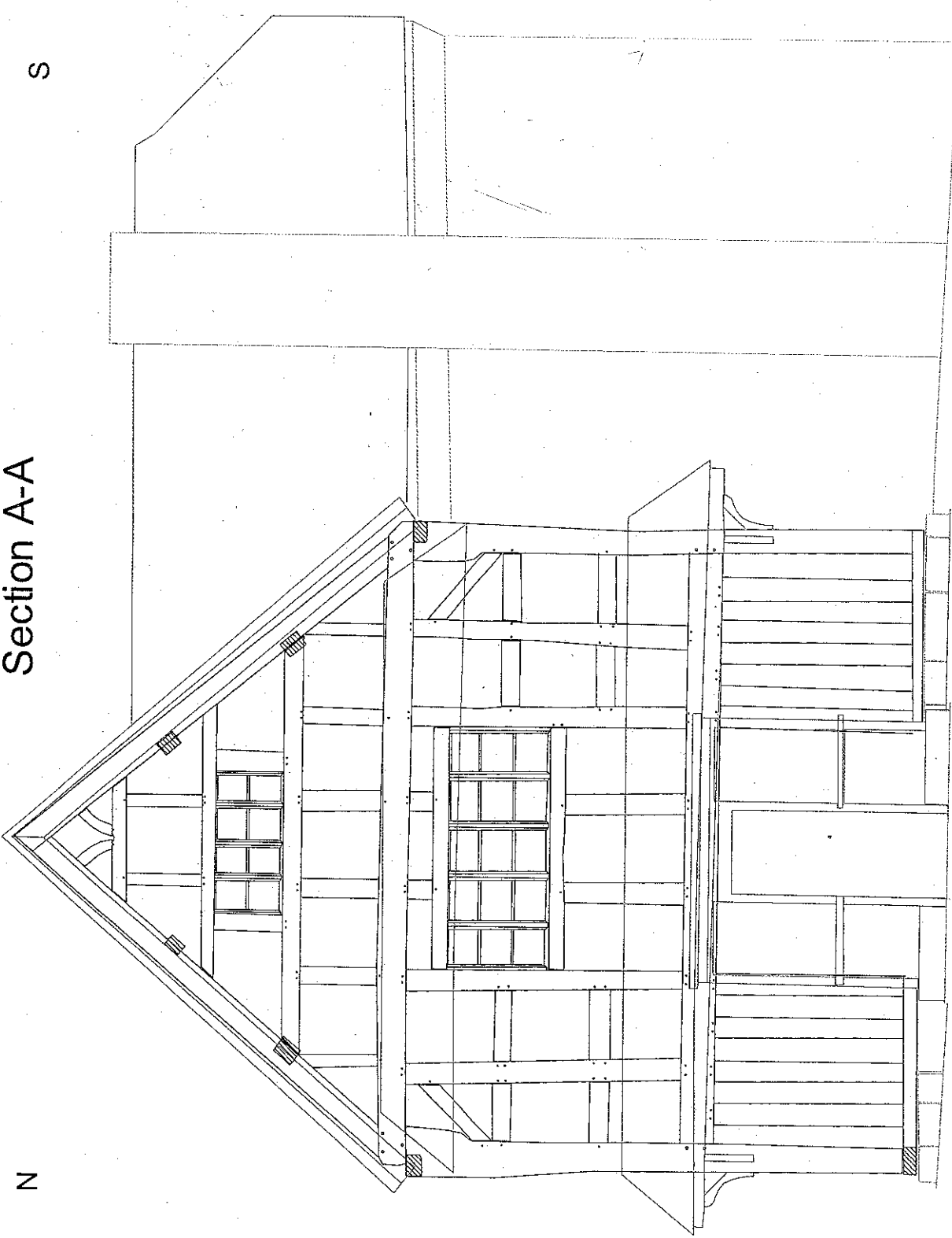


Fig.5

Section A-A



S

N

Timber-Frame
Stone
Brick
Later Features

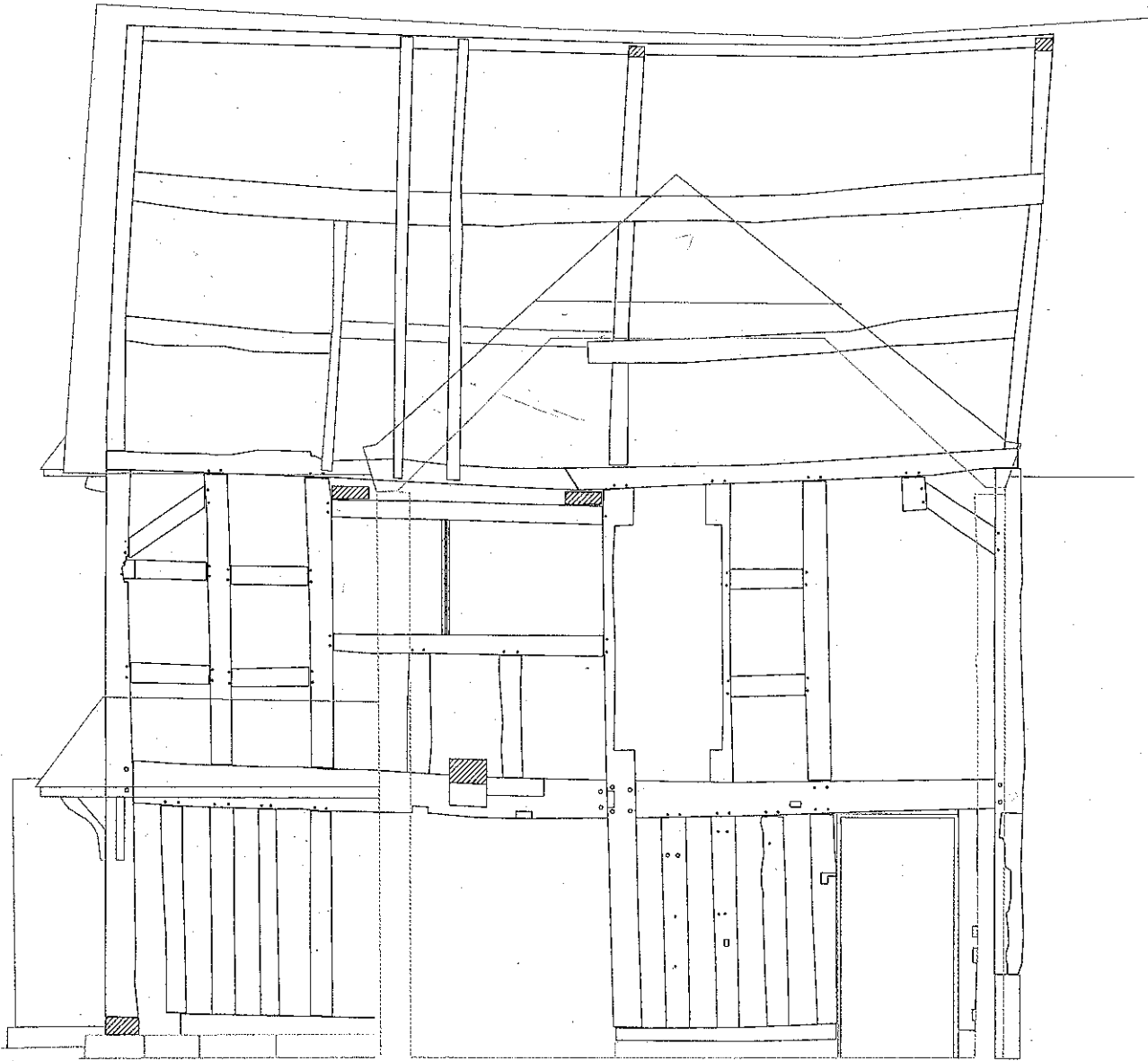
5m

Fig. 6

Section B-B

W

E



5m

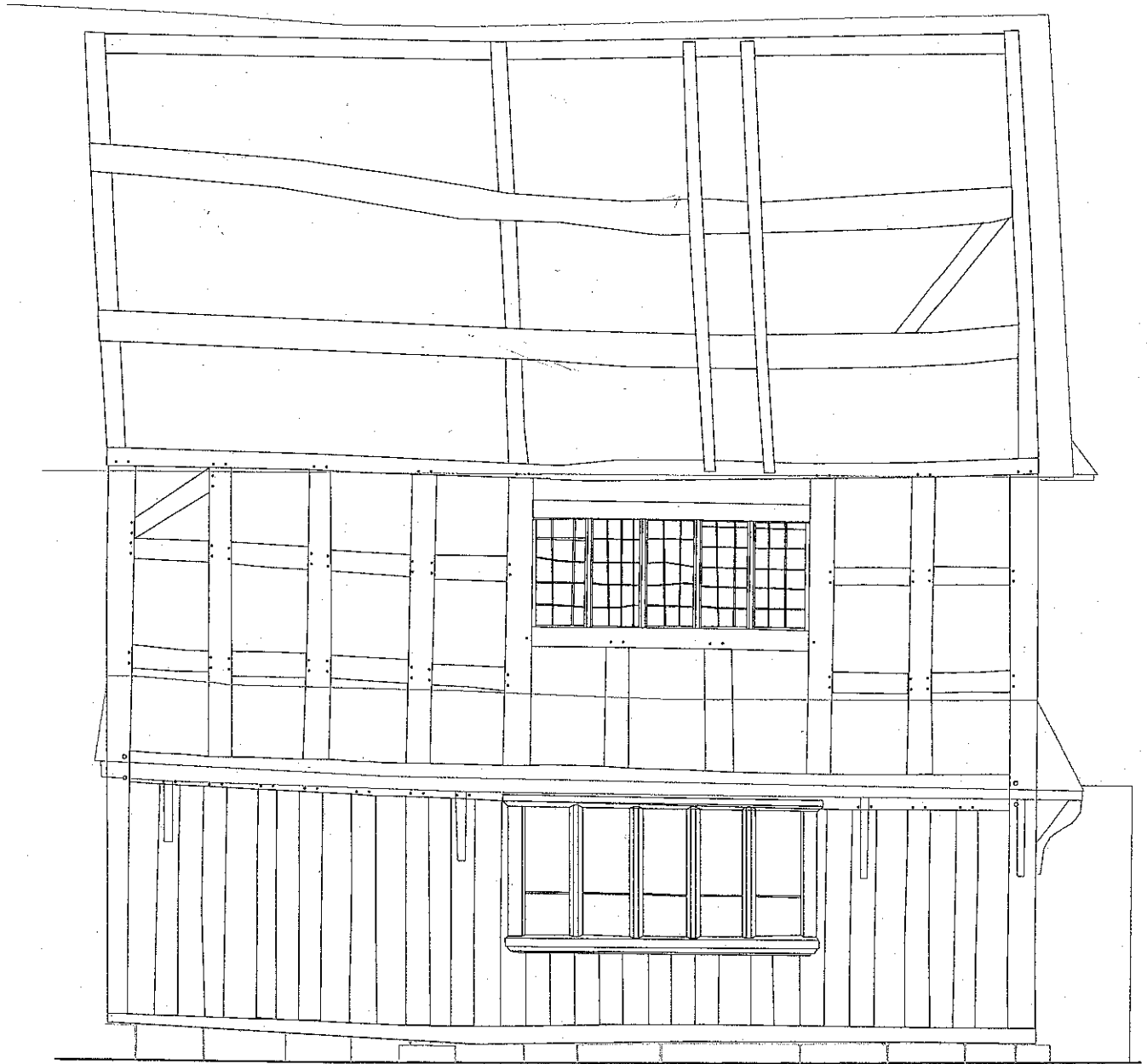
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- Stone
- Brick
- Later Features

Fig. 7

Section C-C

E

W



5m

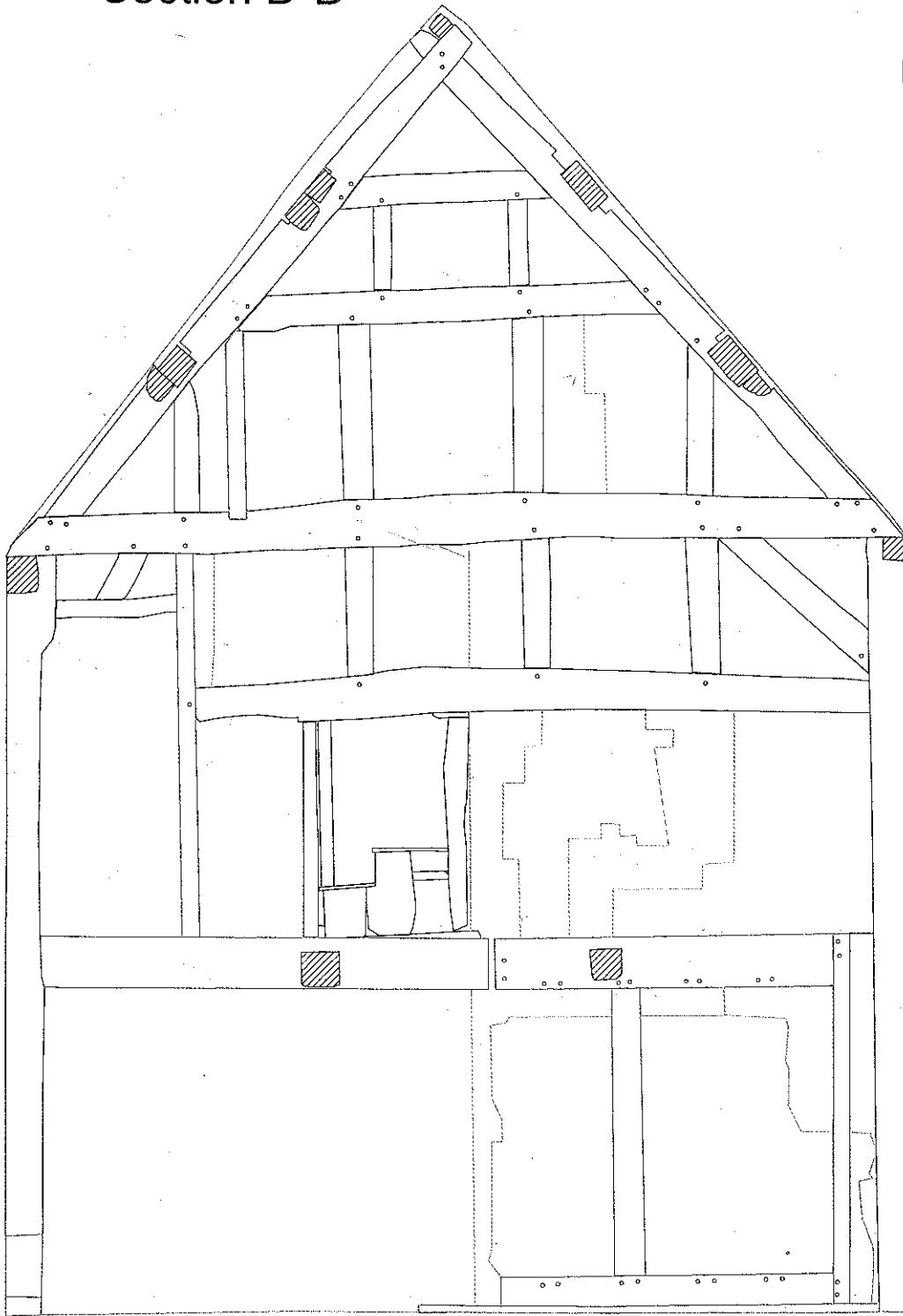
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- Stone
- . - . - . Brick
- Later Features

Fig. 8

Section D-D

S

N



5m

- Timber-Frame
- Stone
- Brick
- Later Features

Fig. 9



Plate 1

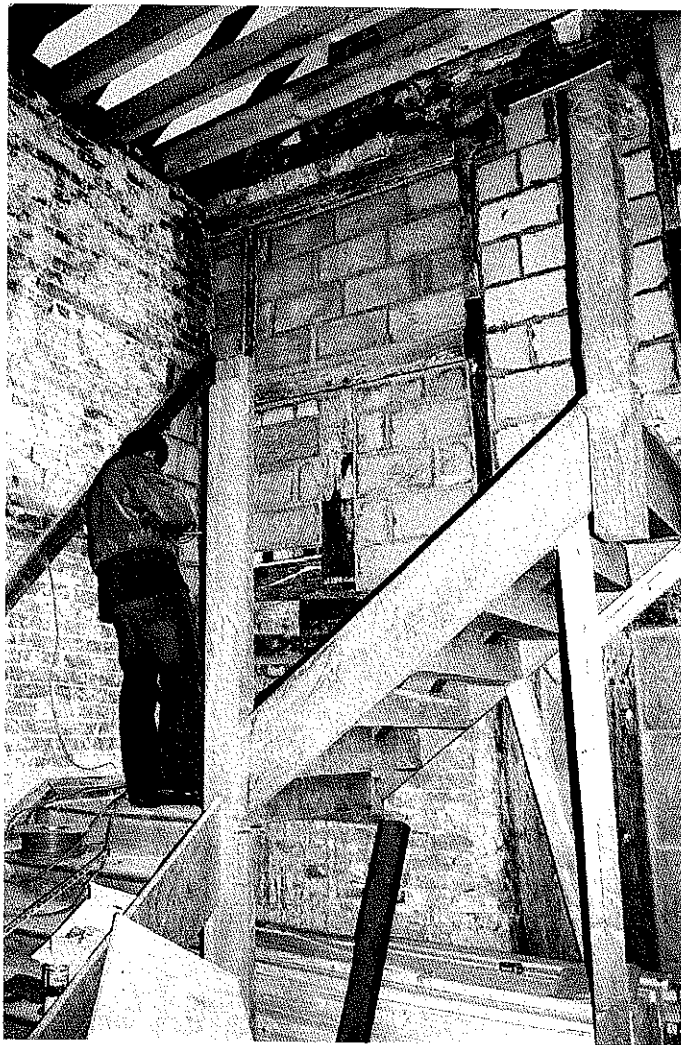


Plate 2

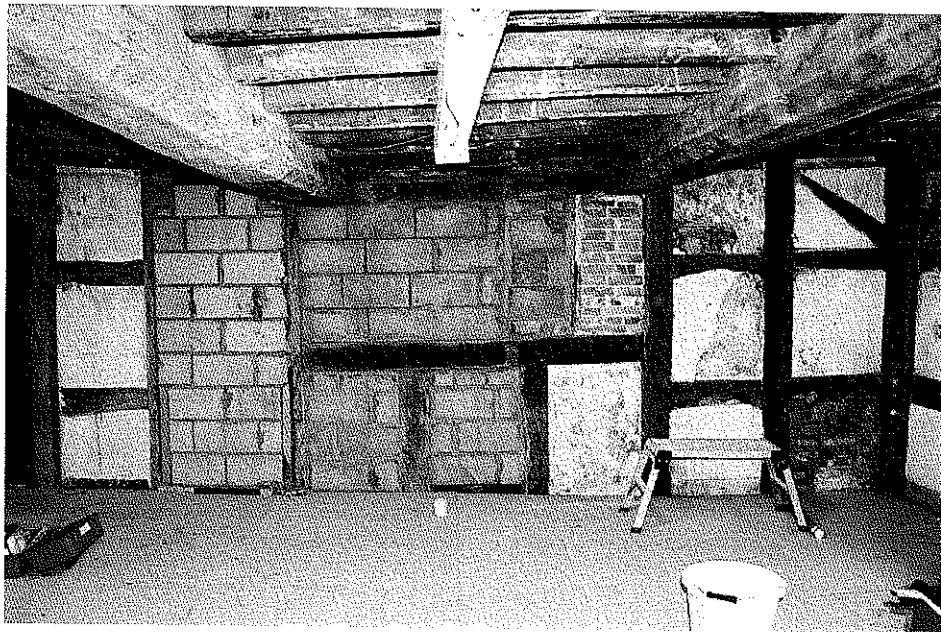


Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7

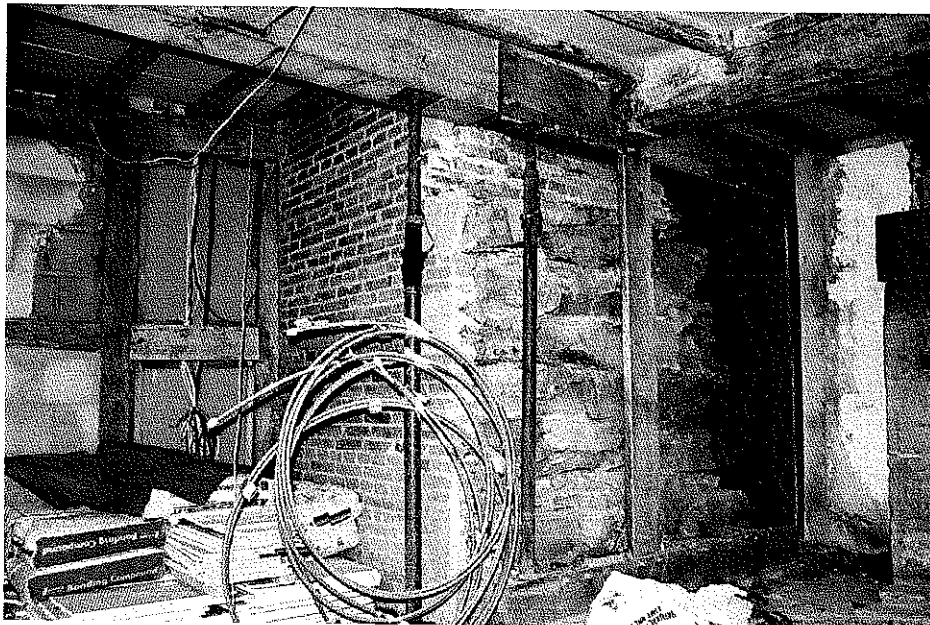


Plate 8

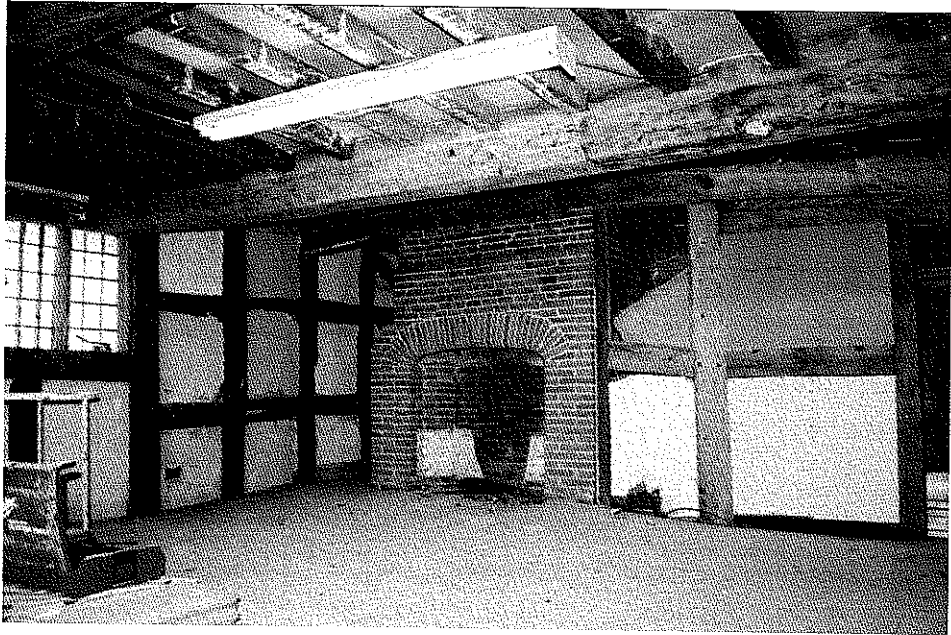


Plate 9

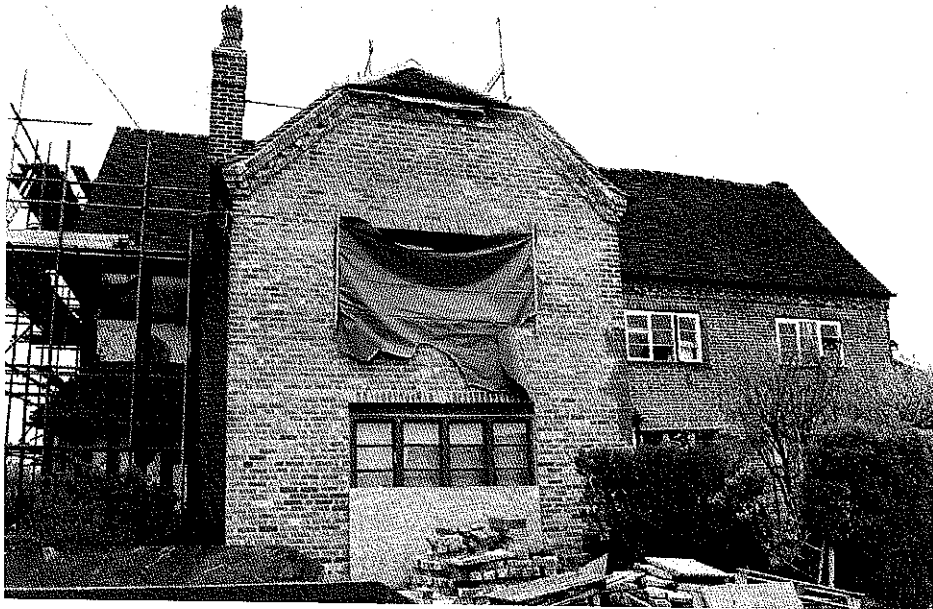


Plate 10

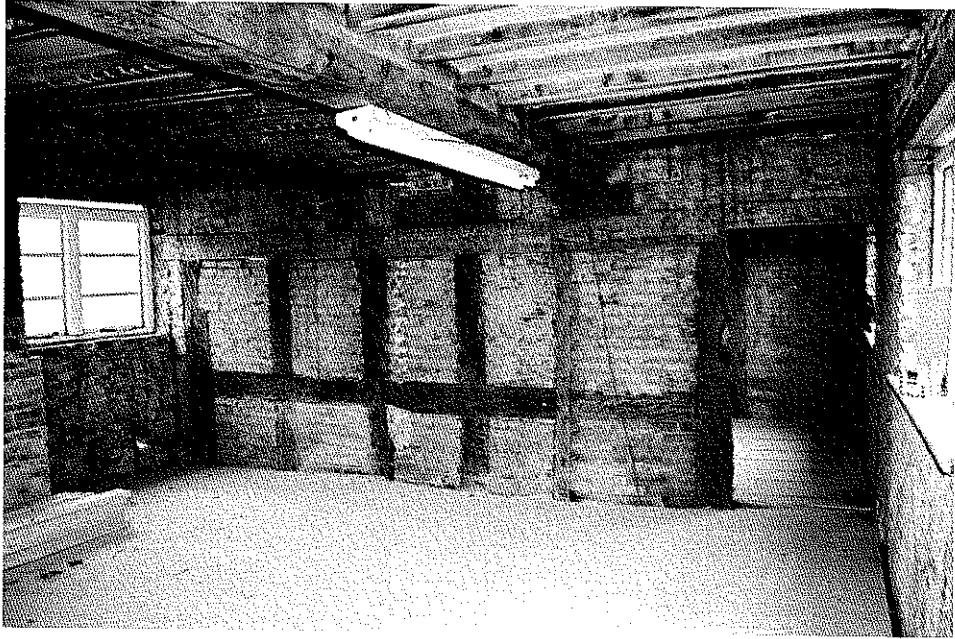


Plate 11

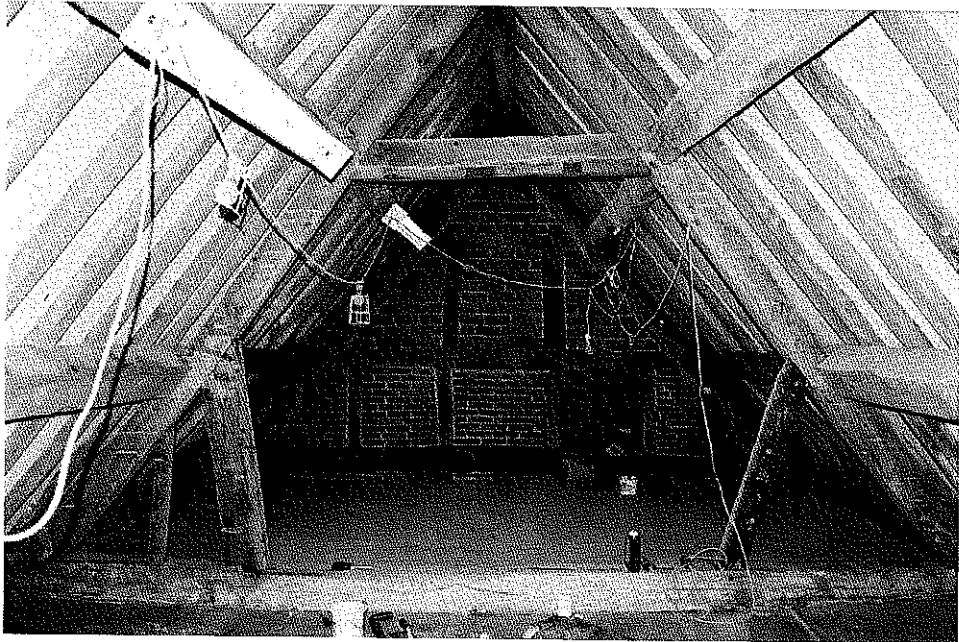


Plate 12