

Witley Court
The East Basements
Worcester

Building Recording.



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**Witley Court,
The East Basements
Worcester**

Building recording.

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Witley Court
The East Basements
Worcester
(NGR SO 77 65)

Building Recording.

1. Summary

In response to a request from English Heritage (Properties in Care, Midland Region.), project proposals were produced, dated 2nd December 1996.

The proposals were part of the ongoing archaeological programme of Witley Court and its associated buildings.

Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned by English Heritage to undertake building recording work on the East range of the basements in advance of as well as along side ongoing repairs to Witley Court.

It was proposed that a hand drawn record would be made of all the elevations as well as certain floor plans affected by the repairs, the building recording was carried out between December 1996 and August 1997.

The recording work predominantly comprised the production of metrically accurate, hand-measured, outline drawings with detail added using rectified photography where possible.

A total of 85 elevations and 9 plans were drawn covering 17 rooms of the East basement.

The analysis of the basements has revealed that the only early 17th century fabric to survive lies in the east external wall where a series of blocked primary openings can be seen, and the main stack/cross wall of what might have been the north wall of the original kitchen. Evidence for 18th century alterations is also minimal but the vaulted ceiling for the later phase of the kitchen and walls of the southern extension to the basements were observed.

The majority of the existing structure appears to date from the 19th century with bay windows being added and later on a large marble lined plunge bath and associated rooms and plumbing.

The floor levels in the basements have also undergone some alteration in the past. This would seem in part to be related to the insertion of plumbing or heating for the bathroom.

2. Introduction

This report relates to the repair and consolidation of the east wing basement at Witley Court, Worcestershire.

In response to a request from English Heritage (Properties in Care, Midland Region), project proposals were produced (dated 2nd December 1996).

Archaeological Investigations Ltd was subsequently commissioned by English Heritage to undertake building recording work on the East range of the basements in advance of as well as along side ongoing repairs to Witley Court.

It was proposed that a hand drawn record would be made of all the elevations as well as certain floor plans affected by the repairs and the building recording was carried out between December 1996 and August 1997.

The site lies at NGR SO 77 65.

3. Background

This can be divided into the history of the site and previous work undertaken there.

3.1 Historical

Witley Court is a ruined multi-period mansion with elements dating back to the 13th century, once one of the largest private houses in the country and fitting its description as '*a palace, regal in size and grandeur...a supremely splendid shell*' (Pevsner, 1968, 171; 173). Its immediate pre-fire appearance owed much to a radical refacing and extension in the 1850's but the building has a very long history.

There is a reference to *Witlege* in the Domesday Survey of 1086, and by the 13th century the manor appears to have been in the hands of the Cooksey family (Walker, 1990, 7). There was a medieval manor house, on the site in the late-13th or early-14th century, as was recently confirmed by the survey and re-assessment of part of the extensive cellars. A substantially intact stone-built two-bay section under the central part of the house, formerly vaulted, was tentatively identified as the undercroft of a long-demolished solar block presumably once attached to a medieval great hall (Morriss, 1990).

In 1498 Robert Russell of Strensham, a member of one of the county's most important families, came into the Cooksey estates (Walker, 1990, 7). Although there is a reference to Great Witley Park in the late-16th century, the first reference to the Court does not occur until the first half of the 17th century when it was the home of Sir William Russell. High Sheriff and Governor of Worcester, he spent much of his wealth in support of the Crown (Gibbons, 1990, 15). Sir William gave his son, Thomas, Witley Court in 1654 but in the following year

Thomas sold the 'imposing residence' to Thomas Foley, the iron master, then High Sheriff of the county (*ibid.*).

According to one authority, Thomas Harral in his book *Picturesque Views of the Severn* (1824), Foley, despite his wealth, was content '*with the situation of the old house, repaired it, and made many additions*' (*ibid.*). Thomas Foley bought several other large estates in the region before he died in 1677. He was succeeded in turn by his son, Thomas, who died in 1701 and is credited with the building of '*the fair new-built house*' mentioned in Camden's *Britannia* of 1695 (Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, V, 535; Gibbons, 1990, 15). His son, another Thomas, was one of the infamous Tory peers created by Queen Anne to retain that party's majority in the Lords after the turbulent sitting of 1711/12 (Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, 535). The new Baron Foley of Kidderminster died in 1733.

Although the Baron had, as part of major improvements to the house and its environs, planned to replace the old medieval parish church that stood a little to the north-west, this had not been carried out at the time of his death. It was his widow, Elizabeth, who obtained permission to demolish the old church that, according to the petition, was '*by reason of its antiquity ruinous and much decayed*'. The new church was built closer to the house, just a short distance from its west wing. It was finished in 1735, and in December of that year Elizabeth died (Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, 535).

Its design has been attributed to James Gibb, and the similarity in its dimensions to the private chapel designed by him in 1719 for Canons, Middlesex, appears to have been deliberate. "Canons", the country retreat in Edgware of James Brydges, the first Lord Chandos, was the subject of much interest in the 1730's. Lord Chandos had lost most of his ill-gotten gains in the South Sea Bubble fiasco of 1720 and the house was about to be sold to pay off his debts.

Chandos and its chapel were finally pulled down in 1747 and the second Baron Foley, yet another Thomas, acquired its fine painted windows, ceilings and other fittings, including the organ case. The hitherto plain interior of the new Witley church was thus transformed into one of the finest Baroque spaces in England. The second-hand pieces did not fit exactly, but the Chandos fittings were, on the whole, easily incorporated into the church.

The second Baron died unmarried and the title became extinct. He was succeeded by yet another Thomas Foley. He was the great-great-grandson of the first Thomas Foley through his son, Paul, who had been given the manor of Stoke Edith, Herefordshire. This Thomas was also an MP and in 1776, the year before he died, was the second Foley to be elevated to the peerage - again as Baron Foley of Kidderminster (Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, 535).

Towards the end of his life he began to suffer financial problems, mainly because of the activities of his two eldest sons. It was said that '*His children, by a system of extravagance wherein no one good was done, no one worthy act performed, no one good consequence derived, tore a noble fortune to pieces*' (Royal Register Vol.iv, quoted in Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, 536).

His eldest son and heir, Thomas Foley, was a Privy Councillor, Joint Post-Master General - and a notorious gambler; it was he that started the family's gradual decline (Walker, 1990, 10). He died in 1793 and his son, another Thomas, in 1833 (Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, 536). Shortly after inheriting the title and lands, the next Baron - another Thomas of course -

saddled with the debts of his grandfather and a huge house, sold the Witley estates in 1837 for £890,000 (Walker, 1990, 10). He died, in Paris, in 1869 (Gibbs & Doubleday, 1926, 536).

The new owners of Witley were the trustees of William Ward, a minor, who became the first Earl of Dudley in 1860. Until he came of age in 1846 the house was let; between 1843-46 the tenant was Queen Adelaide, widow of William IV (*ibid.*).

When Lord Dudley took possession of the estate he began an ambitious programme of works on both house and gardens and entertained on a lavish scale. His son, another William, inherited in 1885 and for the rest of the century and into the Edwardian era Witley Court was one of the most fashionable private houses in the country, patronised by the rich and the royal. After the tragic death of Lady Ward in 1920 and the general downturn in the post-war economy, the family decided to sell Witley. It was bought by Sir Herbert Smith - but was damaged by fire in 1937. The damage was by no means terminal, and the west wing, chapel, and link block escaped completely. However, the house was allowed to deteriorate due to the activities of vandals and demolition contractors. A Building Preservation Order was made in 1964 and in 1972, with no obvious improvements in view, the Department of the Environment took the unusual step of taking the ruins into compulsory guardianship. Since 1984 it has been in the care of the Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission - English Heritage.

3.2 Previous work

The City of Hereford Archaeological Unit/Archaeological Investigations Ltd has been involved in recording of the ongoing English Heritage repair work at Witley Court since 1990 and has produced numerous reports on the structural development of the Building and its landscape. The following reports have been produced in the Hereford Archaeology Series:

<i>The medieval undercroft:</i>	<i>HAS 87:</i>	<i>Oct 1990</i>
<i>Assessment:</i>	<i>HAS 92:</i>	<i>Nov 1990</i>
<i>The west wing:</i>	<i>HAS 172:</i>	<i>April 1993</i>
<i>The south west wing:</i>	<i>HAS 214:</i>	<i>Sept 1994</i>
<i>Landscape survey:</i>	<i>HAS 215:</i>	<i>July 1994</i>
<i>The link block:</i>	<i>HAS 232:</i>	<i>Jan 1995</i>
<i>Assessment of the architectural stone:</i>	<i>HAS 235:</i>	<i>Jan 1995</i>
<i>Recording the loose architectural stone:</i>	<i>HAS 255:</i>	<i>Sept 1995</i>
<i>The stables and western guesthouse:</i>	<i>HAS 269:</i>	<i>Jan 1996</i>
<i>The proposed roofs of 1837:</i>	<i>HAS 271:</i>	<i>Feb 1996</i>
<i>Landscape survey :</i>	<i>HAS 275:</i>	<i>Feb 1996</i>
<i>The boathouse:</i>	<i>HAS 316:</i>	<i>May 1997</i>
<i>The east wing bathroom:</i>	<i>HAS 350:</i>	<i>Feb 1998</i>
<i>The vets room:</i>	<i>HAS 354:</i>	<i>March 1998</i>
<i>The boathouse update:</i>	<i>HAS 413:</i>	<i>May 1999</i>
<i>The coachhouses</i>		<i>(presently being written)</i>

4. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the work were:

- To continue the policy of recording details of the fabric and analysing the results prior to individual parts being repaired and restored.
- Carrying out appropriate excavations and collecting and recording finds that were unearthed during the works.

The issue of digitising the drawings was also reviewed but it was decided to continue with inked drawings for this stage to keep the output consistent with earlier surveys.

5. Method

The datum from previous surveys (link block and stable yard) was retained and used for the basement survey for continuity of method and so that the drawings could be related to each other at a later date.

A grid of 1m squares was marked out on each wall face to be recorded respecting the datum line used on earlier phases of the project.

Each surveyed elevation was then drawn separately on drafting film at 1:20 scale in outline and annotated with details such as constructional features, drainage, water and heating system elements, blocked openings, holes, mortar variations and plaster details.

A black and white photographic survey, consisting of scaled, rectified elevations and general shots of rooms and features was undertaken prior to conservation work.

The information from the on-site hand-drawn record was then combined with the rectified photographs to produce the standard outline with detail record of each elevation within the area of the basements to be recorded. These were annotated and are included at the rear of the report numbered by room rather than as a series of figures as this aids both cross-referencing and the use of the report for future research.

6. Results.

A total of 85 elevations including 9 plans were drawn covering 17 rooms of the East basement. Drawn records are ordered by room number at the end of the report. Three phase plans (Figs 3-4) have also been produced from the analysis.

6.1 General Notes on the Basements

Earlier studies of the house have established that, in the early 17th century, Witley Court was basically of half-H shape, consisting of a single pile central range containing, on the ground

floor, the hall, cross-passage and, probably, a parlour. It was built of brick, rising from a tall stone plinth, and decorated with stone quoins, band courses, window-frames and doorways etc.

Projecting from each end of the hall range were the two long wings, and in the extruded angles rose the stair towers. In addition there were two short wings at either end of the south elevation. It was thus a fairly standard plan form of the early 17th century for a house of this size.

Work on the west wing demonstrated that it seems to have contained long galleries on both ground and first-floor levels - an unusual arrangement that later became less so once the ground floor level was subdivided (Morriss, 1993). It is clear that this was the wing at the 'high' end of the hall, containing the best reception rooms. Traditionally, the east wing would then have been at the 'low' end of the hall range and have contained the various service rooms. This was also a fairly standard layout of the time, with obvious echoes of the medieval house.

The different function of the two wings may have been the reason why they run the whole length of the east wing, whilst there are only basements at each end of the west wing. However, this may be a little simplistic and it is noticeable that the natural bedrock occurs at a higher level on the west side of the house than it does on the east, so much so that part of the western plinth is of scarped bedrock whilst all of the east side is built up from footings level.

The basements of Witley Court are true basements rather than cellars. The earliest surviving section, under the central range, was probably the undercroft of a medieval cross-wing and was stone vaulted; it probably dates to the late 13th or early 14th century and was subsequently incorporated into the post-medieval cellarage (Morriss, 1990).

The slight changes in ground levels of the site mean that the external access to the basements on the west side are at ground level - from the rear courts - whilst those on the east side, including those in the east wing - are partly above and partly below ground level. With the exception of most of the west wing, virtually all of the rest of the house is cellared, and there is a double-depth cellar in the 18th century added pile on the south side of the central range.

The archaeological evidence indicates that the basement under the east wing has been radically altered on several occasions since the early 17th century house was built, and that these alterations continued up until the very recent past when the concrete floor was inserted at ground-floor level by English Heritage.

6.2 General Description

The run of basements included in this report are those under the east wing, the eastern tower, an additional quadrant between the tower and the west wing, and the easternmost end of the central hall range.

Overall, the east wing was radically altered to a much greater extent than the central or west wings, especially on the east side, where huge bay windows were added at either end, and at the northern end, where yet another bay window was added. This wing has been altered in

virtually every major campaign of remodelling suffered by Witley Court since the early 17th century.

The basement under the wing is lined mainly with brick, though there is some evidence of worked sandstone towards the southern end. In both side walls and in the basement of the stair tower, most of this brickwork is of fairly crude handmade red bricks of varying lengths but usually quite thin - just 600-650mm high. The bricks are mainly laid to a rather variable English bond. This is considered to be the primary brickwork of the early 17th century house.

With the possible exception of the stack wall between rooms B32 and B37, none of the cross-walls in the basements are of the same type of brickwork and all seem to have been inserted; most are contemporary with the brick-vaulting that covers (or in some cases, covered) most of the basement rooms.

Because of the many alterations made to the building, it is difficult to identify primary openings in the basement walls. There are possibly primary, and now blocked, window openings in the west wall but most of those in the courtyard, or west, wall appear to have been inserted; there is also some evidence that the brickwork above basement level on this wall which incorporates the upper parts of these windows is later too. The bricks are slightly larger and better made.

Probably, the only primary doorway now surviving in use at basement level is one through the east wall of the basement of the eastern stair tower (B34) to the main axial corridor along the wing (B28). This has a depressed four-centre arched brick head on the tower side, and a timber lintel on the corridor side; on the corridor side its formerly straight jambs have been 'splayed' with added brickwork at a later date.

Along the corridor and evident also in some of the rooms are the inserted brick-lined flues related to the hot-air heating systems used in the house from the early 19th century and refined later on. These would need careful and detailed study throughout the whole house if the development of the heating systems is to be properly understood.

6.3 Room Descriptions

6.3.01 The East Wing Passageway (B29, B33, B36 & B44)

The general layout of the basements under the east wing is of a series of rooms laid out to the east of a corridor along their west side. The southern end of this passageway (B29) is slightly wider than the rest and has little of its original vaulting left. This section of the passageway is later than the rest, as it was created by partitioning off what had been large full-width spaces by a brick wall. At its southern end, the segmental headed doorway was inserted.

The brick vaulting pattern that the new wall interrupted is most obvious in that portion of passageway labelled B33, adjacent to rooms B31 and B32 (*see below*). The situation to the south of this is less easy to assess, and it is not clear if the basement at this point was ever vaulted. There are simple segmental vault arches at either end of section B33, built at the same time as

it was created, and it is possible that the southern one of these also marks the southern limit of the basement vaulting.

The present floor level within the passage is much lower than that of the rooms to the east of it in the wing, and to the other rooms to the west of it in the central range and tower basement. At one time there was a higher level to the passage, marked by the cut-off sprinters of a shallow brick vault about 800mm above ground level. The crown of the vault would have been close to the present levels of the door thresholds to the passage.

It is not clear if the spandrels of the vault were then infilled with brick rubble and a level floor created by the use of flags or quarry tiles, or if a wooden floor was added over the vault. As there are no other areas of wooden flooring in what would have been a fairly damp basement, stone flags or quarry tiles seem the most likely floor covering for the passage. Quite why such an elaborate arrangement was needed is unclear also; the use of a vault could indicate that it was built over a water channel of sorts, perhaps supplying the various service rooms within the basement. It is probable that pipes serving the bathroom ran along the passage and that the vaulted floor is contemporary with the development of the bathroom and its associated plumbing.

As the remains of this sub-floor vaulting run the entire length of the passage, including that section towards the south that was clearly later than the rest, it is evident that the vaulting must also be of the same date, or later than, the creation of the southern section of the passage.

Apart from the extreme southern end (B29) the passage ceiling is brick-vaulted throughout. The vaulting of section B33 is simply the western section of a full-width two-aisle quadripartite brick vault associated with the former large and full width room to the east - now rooms B31 and B32 (*see below*). The rest of the vaulting is intrinsic to the passage and part of the single phase inserted vaulting of the northern part of the wing.

The vaulting over the northern part of the passage (B36) is generally a simple tunnel vault, made up of handmade red bricks springing directly from the west (courtyard) wall and the east spine wall. The vaulting is contemporary with the spine wall and it is possible that the section of the external wall was partially or wholly rebuilt to accommodate it.

At various points along the vaulting there are primary groined cross-vaults associated with windows on the courtyard side and mainly with doorways in the spine walls - an exception being a blocked borrowed light window that served room B40.

There are five courtyard windows in all on the west side, none of which seem to be primary. These all have, internally, splayed brick reveals and a deep splayed sill, with segmental brick arches. The bricks of the reveals look to be larger than those lower down the wall, but the degree of plaster, render and paint makes proper assessment of the walling difficult. The 'skirting' at the wall base (respecting the floor level above the lost vaulting) was of render on tile, almost certainly part of the mid-19th century work.

At its extreme north end, part of the passage has been separated off from the rest and a tunnel-vaulted antechamber created (B44). This is probably of the mid-19th century and has the remains of a tunnel vaulted tiled ceiling and walls. It was undoubtedly associated with the adjacent bath to the east.

6.3.02 The Bath Room (B43).

The Bath Room is lit by the stone-lined windows in each cant of the northern bay window (Plate 1). It once had a higher floor level, marked by the series of redundant joists pockets in the walls about 0.5m above the present floor and door threshold.

This earlier floor level would also account for the way in which the fireplace opening in the west wall has clearly been lowered from an earlier height - leaving the original segmental brick head fossilised in the brickwork. The doorway through to the room to the south (B41) also looks as if its threshold has been lowered. The room is not vaulted but it is not clear, because of the concrete ceiling, whether or not it ever was.

The most obvious feature of this room is the sunken bath itself, taking up most of the room. It still has much of its marble lining in place and reached down a short curved flight of marble steps at the north end. The way in which those steps run into the bay indicate that they post-date it.

To the east of the room is a small annexe (B42) in the northern part of the large added bay window, possibly used as a closet. The brickwork in this bay is of larger handmade red brick, up to 750mm high and 230mm long, and even the wall on the line of the original east wall between the two rooms seems to have been largely rebuilt in similar brickwork.

6.3.03 The Changing Room (B41).

The Changing Room that served the Bath Room to the south also once had a higher floor level, again reflected by redundant joist pockets (Plate 2). However, there is little obvious evidence of changes to the doorways or to the fireplace in the south wall although they were probably lowered. The doorway to the corridor has a segmental relieving arch over it, visible on the west side of the room.

The room extends beyond the width of the original wing into the southern part of the added canted bay. There is some visible ashlar stone facing of the original external wall at the extreme south-eastern corner of the room, but otherwise most of the brickwork seems to be of 18th century date. There are remains of a red quarry tile floor at the existing, lowered, floor level and the doorway to the corridor has a stone threshold.

6.3.04 The Lamp Room (B40).

The Lamp Room has a floor level at the same level as the existing floor levels of the Bath Room and Changing Room to the north, and no indications of any joist pockets or alterations to doorways that it ever had a higher floor level. The existing floor is quarry tiled.

In the east wall there is possibly a blocked primary opening, which seems to be of primary narrow brickwork. There are obvious construction breaks between the cross-walls to north and south and the brickwork of the east wall. The brick vaulting, however, is contemporary with the cross-walls and the wall of the passageway, indicating that the vaulting is inserted as the east wall is primary.

The vault pattern is slightly odd, and made superficially odder by the north wall. Essentially it is of two 'aisles', the eastern aisle of standard quadripartite brick vault springing from a central pilaster in the south wall and a corner pilaster in the south-eastern corner. The western 'aisle' has the standard pattern in its eastern half but the western section has contemporary groined cross-vaults to a doorway and former window to the corridor.

To the north, the groined cross-vault of the window has partially been obscured by the remodelling of the north wall (Plate 3); this is over 1.4m thick, and would also account for the absence of a corner pilaster in the northern corners of the room for the vaulting.

In the western end of the south wall, and primary to it, there is a blocked doorway with a segmental head to the Store to the south (B39).

6.3.05 Stores I (B39).

The Stores, a room to the south of the Lamp Room, is very similar in form. However, it does have a more logical vaulting pattern of two aisles of quadripartite vaults springing from brick piers in the angles and midway along the cross-walls (Plate 4). The eastern corner pilasters are clearly secondary to the outside wall but are bonded into the cross-walls, and the western pilasters are contemporary with the cross walls and the passage wall. In the earlier brickwork of the east wall there is a blocked window that could have been a primary opening; the vaulting cuts across this opening (Plate 5).

As in the Lamp Room there are no indications of a higher floor level, and the present floor is paved with quarry tiles. The blocked doorway in the north wall to the Lamp room is clearly visible in the brickwork. The doorway to the corridor is neatly centred in the vault pattern and has a segmental brick head. In the plastered walls there are remaining iron brackets and some sockets in the brickwork associated with wall fixings. The room is unheated, so its description as a store room is plausible.

6.3.06 Stores II (B37).

Room B37 has no indications within its walls of earlier, higher, floor levels and the present floor is quarry tiled. The vaulting appears, at first, to be slightly unusual; as with the rest of the vaulting, it is secondary, and this is quite evident in the manner it and the contemporary cross-walls butt against the east wall. The northern half is of the same pattern as the original northern halves of the two rooms to the north (B39 and B40), but the two aisled quadripartite pattern is truncated and does not continue in the southern half. Instead, this is a contemporary quadrant or half tunnel vault springing from the southern wall of the room. The reason for this is associated with the spaces to the south (*see below*).

The east wall of the room is at least, in part, of primary 17th century brickwork and the inserted doorway through it (into narrow setlas room, B38) is contemporary with the blocking of a possibly primary window opening. The doorway has a segmental brick head. To the west, the doorway to the corridor has lost its head but seems to be contemporary with the corridor wall.

The south wall has a series of openings. The central section is the back of a stack and contains within it a fairly small blocked fireplace, with a segmental brick head. This, in turn, is incorporated into the blocking of a slightly wider and slightly taller fireplace, also with a segmental brick head. Above this there are more construction breaks. To the east, and set back from the projecting stack, is a blocked low doorway (Plate 6). This has a very broad segmental arched head, one and a half bricks wide, and barely 1.3m high; however, its true height can be seen on the other side of the wall (in room B32).

The fact that this room had a fireplace in at least two phases of its development indicates that it was not designed to be a store room, but the fact that there were no fireplaces in use in its latter phases indicates that it could have become one. The fact that the present floor level within the room makes the doorway in the south wall unusable also suggests that it is higher than the original floor level - and this may, therefore, be the case for the rest of the rooms to the north.

6.3.07 The Original Kitchen (B31 & B32).

Rooms B31 and B32, and the adjacent section of the passageway, B33, were all, at one time, part of the same large space. When this was vaulted, the vault pattern consisted of two bays with two aisles of quadripartite brick vaulting occupying the full width of the wing. There were no angle pilasters in this pattern, the vaults springing directly from the walls, but there was, of necessity, a central pillar. This basic design was thus similar to that under the stair hall at the western end of the central range.

A series of dwarf brick piers and walls within the room shows that the last floor level was some 350mm higher than an earlier one of large stone slabs still in good condition. The higher floor level is more or less the same as that of the rooms to the north.

As with the rest of the vaulting, this work was secondary to the building. In the surviving primary brickwork of the east wall there is a blocked and possibly primary window opening in the northern bay (i.e. in room B32), and modern brickwork in the east wall of the southern bay (in Room B31) may also relate to such an opening.

The north wall of the room (i.e. of B32) contains a blocked and much altered fireplace (Plate 7), but one of very large proportions. It was over 2.5m wide and, from the earlier stone floor, originally 2m high. The original lintel was a large timber, subsequently replaced in modern repairs. Long before this repair a very shallow segmental brick arch had been introduced below the original lintel, and that, in turn, had been 'underpinned' by a single course 'arch' of brick supported on a wrought iron strap between the jambs. Later still the whole of the opening had been infilled with brickwork incorporating two smaller fireplaces, one with a segmental head, one with a flat lintel. These were presumably bread ovens or the like.

To the east is the blocked doorway opening visible in the room to the north - only on this side its head is 1.7m above the stone floor. Its head, however, seems to be inserted into a much taller opening with a second segmental head partially obscured by the vaulting; this upper section is also blocked (Plate 8). The reasons for this are unknown, but if the upper opening ever went through the wall it must have predated the arc of vaulting on the other side that now hides it. Indeed, it is just possible that this stack wall may be earlier than the vaulting and even possibly a primary feature, though it is difficult to demonstrate this categorically.

The sheer size of the former fireplace in the north wall and the large size of the former room suggest that this was probably the main kitchen when the vaulting was introduced, and that may have been continuing its earlier function if the stack wall can be shown to be a primary feature.

As well as having the western slither of the two-bay room partitioned off by an inserted axial wall to form the southern part of the basement passage, at the same time it seems that the brick cross-wall separating the two halves of the remaining section was built. This may also have been the time when the south wall was either replaced or built, as its fireplace looks to be contemporary and would not have been needed prior to the large room being subdivided.

At probably the same time a narrow corridor was created along the east side of the new southern room (B31), represented by the remnants of a single leaf brick footing. As the thresholds of the doorways in the north and west walls respect a higher floor level within the room and the hearth of the southern fireplace does not, the floor was probably raised when it was subdivided in this manner.

6.3.08 The Butler's Room (B30).

The Butler's room occupies a large space at the southern end of the west wing. Although this space lost, in the past, its westernmost section to the passage, it gained more space when the large bay was added on the eastern side. To maximise the available space, most of the original section of the east wall was removed on the east side, but in the exposed sections through the masonry at either end of the bay the original configuration of ashlar stone facing to primary thin brickwork is visible.

The room is not vaulted, and it seems unlikely that it ever was, though evidence is lacking. There are empty joist pockets visible in the east wall to indicate the existence of a raised floor within the bay window.

The north wall contains an open fireplace with a segmental brick head and the doorway through to room B31; to the west of the stack is a store recess with a stone frame, probably of mid-19th century date. None of these features support the existence of a former higher floor level in the room implying that the raised bay window floor was probably stepped up from the rest of the room. In the south wall there are two doorways, one blocked. This has a depressed two-centred brick head and chamfered jambs. The open doorway to its east is more prosaic, with a segmental brick relieving arch over a timber lintel; it leads into room B22.

This seems always to have been a large room, probably originally occupying the full width of the wing, and latterly its present parameters. The ceiling is of modern concrete and much of the upper sections of the walls have been replaced to support this.

6.3.09 The Setlas Store (B38).

Added alongside the central portion of the east wing, between the two bays, is a peculiar and long tiled space with a quadrant vaulted roof presumably designed for storage of cool foodstuffs etc. (Plate 9). It was probably fitted with brick and stone setlasses or shelving and was clearly a later addition - possibly as late as the mid-19th century.

6.3.10 The Dairy (B35).

The Dairy is a curiously shaped space, similar to the spandrel of an arch in plan, the 'arch' linking the sides of the east wing and tower at the side of Nash's north portico. It could thus only have existed after the creation of that portico at the start of the 19th century. Its present form belongs to the later 19th century.

The floor is stone paved and the walls are tiled with glazed white tile, as is the vaulted ceiling. The vaulting is of brick 'Jack' arches springing from cast-iron girders. In the east wall, some of the probably primary masonry facework of the wing is visible (Plate 10) and an inserted doorway leads to the passage. In the south wall is a doorway with a very high threshold leading to the adjacent Bakehouse (B34); this may be the position of a remodelled primary window opening.

6.3.11 The Bakehouse (B34).

The Bakehouse occupies the basement of the eastern stair tower and as a result its walls are mainly of primary thin bricks. In the east wall is the possibly primary doorway opening to the passageway mentioned previously (*see above*). There is a blocked inserted opening to the north of it.

In the north wall the opening to the Dairy is probably a remodelled primary window opening. The south-eastern corner of the tower seems to have been removed, possibly associated with the present south wall and its bake ovens, etc. These are probably of 19th century date. To the east of them is a doorway with a segmental brick head leading into the adjacent room to the south (B28). The ceiling is of modern concrete and much of the upper sections of the walls have been replaced to support this.

6.3.12 Room B28.

Technically, Room B28 is at the eastern end of the central range of the house, rather than within the east wing. There was a wall between it and the adjacent section of the main wing passageway (B29), but this has largely been demolished; there is a big difference in height between the floor levels of the two spaces. It has a flagstone floor but the ceiling is of modern concrete.

In the south wall is a segmental-headed borrowed light window to the adjacent passageway through the central range basement, but this seems to have post-dated an earlier opening, probably a doorway, represented by a vertical construction break beneath its sill. In the west wall there are two tall recesses with segmental heads and, at the southern end, a doorway with a similar head. These recesses seem to be within brickwork built up against an earlier cross-wall to the west, and at the southern end this latter build clearly butts against the south wall.

The northern recess partially obscures a blocked window, also with a segmental head, and the back wall of the other recess also has a full-height vertical break in it that predates the recess and has no obvious relationship with it. It may be the jamb of a blocked and possibly primary doorway.

6.3.13 The Scullery (B22).

The small Scullery was created in an 'L-shaped' section added onto the east side of the short south-eastern wing. Its west and north (Plate 11) internal walls are thus the original external walls of the 17th century house and are mainly faced in ashlar sandstone. The two doorways cut into the west wall are evidently inserted but there is a blocked doorway between them of unknown origin. The doorway in the north wall is also inserted. In the cranked eastern wall there are stone-framed window openings.

At the southern end of the scullery are the remains of stone spiral stairs up to ground floor level that seem to be of the style of the mid-19th century work (Plate 12). The modern concrete spiral stair was added in the early 1990's.

6.3.14 The South Passageway (B20).

The axial passageway through the central block of the house was created within the early 18th century southern pile, so that its northern wall is the original external wall of the hall block; parts of stone masonry can be seen in this wall where plaster has fallen. It ends at the doorway leading into the Scullery (B22).

7. Discussion.

Evidently the east wing, south-eastern wing, and eastern stair tower all had basements when the house was rebuilt in the early 17th century. At that time there is no evidence that the basement was vaulted. With the possible exception of the cross-wall containing the main kitchen stack, there is no evidence of any other primary cross-walls in the early 17th century phase (Fig. 3).

If that stack was primary, then it is almost certain that the main kitchen of the house was then in the large space to the south of it (Fig. 3). The rest of the basement area was almost certainly taken up entirely by service rooms associated with the kitchens, including the pantry and buttery. The basic functions were probably retained after a campaign of brick vaulting took place, probably early in the 18th century.

In the wing, the vaulting pattern incorporated a passage along the west side in the northern half of the basement, but in the southern half the vault pattern crossed the entire width. It is not clear if the northern and southernmost rooms within the wing were vaulted as well, but the central ones certainly were (Fig. 5). The main room was still the kitchen to the south of the stack cross wall. In this phase this was a two-bay two-aisled space with a central pier supporting the vaulting.

It would seem that for some reason the floor levels in the northernmost rooms (B41 and B43) were higher than those to their south and were of boards on timber joists. Subsequently those timber floors were removed and new tiled floors added at the same level as those in the rest of the wing.

In the late 18th or early 19th century, the passageway was extended southwards by building a new spine wall between it, the Kitchen (B31 and B32; Figs 3 and 4), and the room to the south (B30). Probably at the same time the former Kitchen was divided into two by a cross-wall and its floor level was raised.

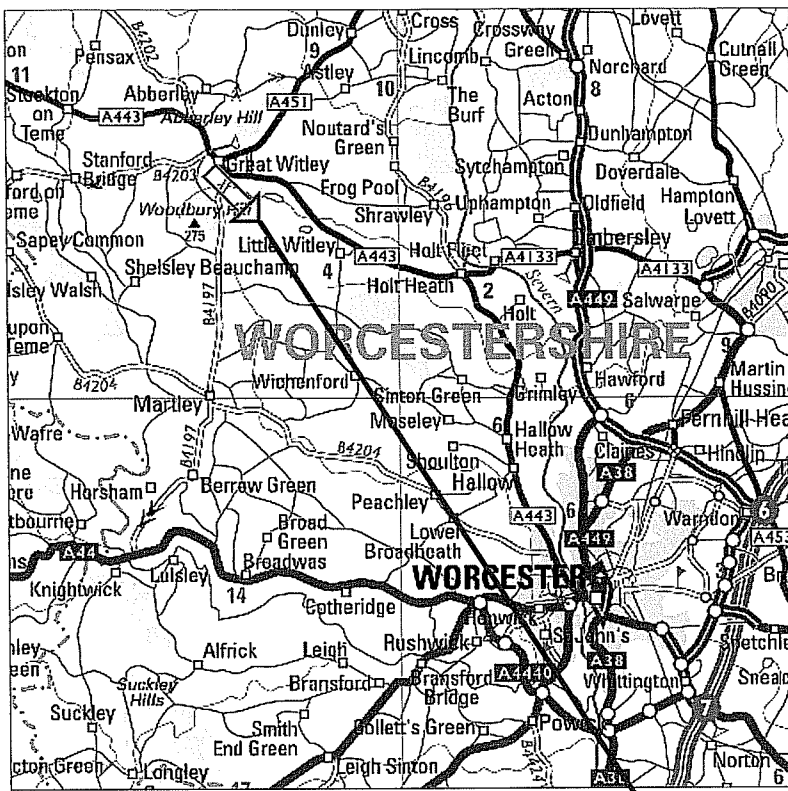
Later alterations took place in the Dawkes' regime of the mid-19th century (Figs 3-5), but the most radical alterations, following a period of decay after the fire, were associated with the insertion of the concrete ground floor in the 1970's.

8. Site archive.

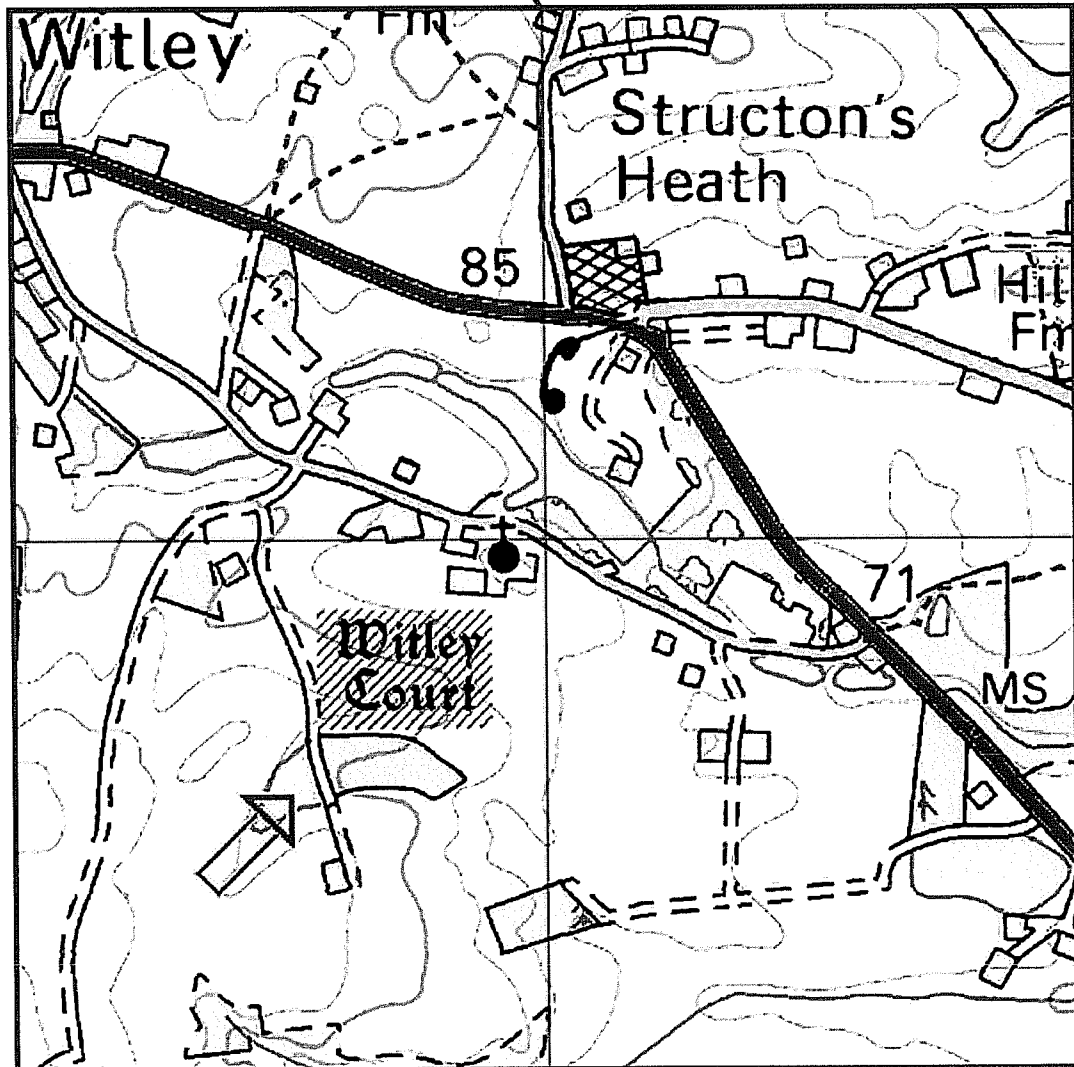
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2. 4 sheets of A3+ site drawings on perma trace.
3. 79 sheets of A3 inked drawings on perma trace.
4. Drawing register.
5. Site note book notes.
6. A copy of this report.

9. Bibliography

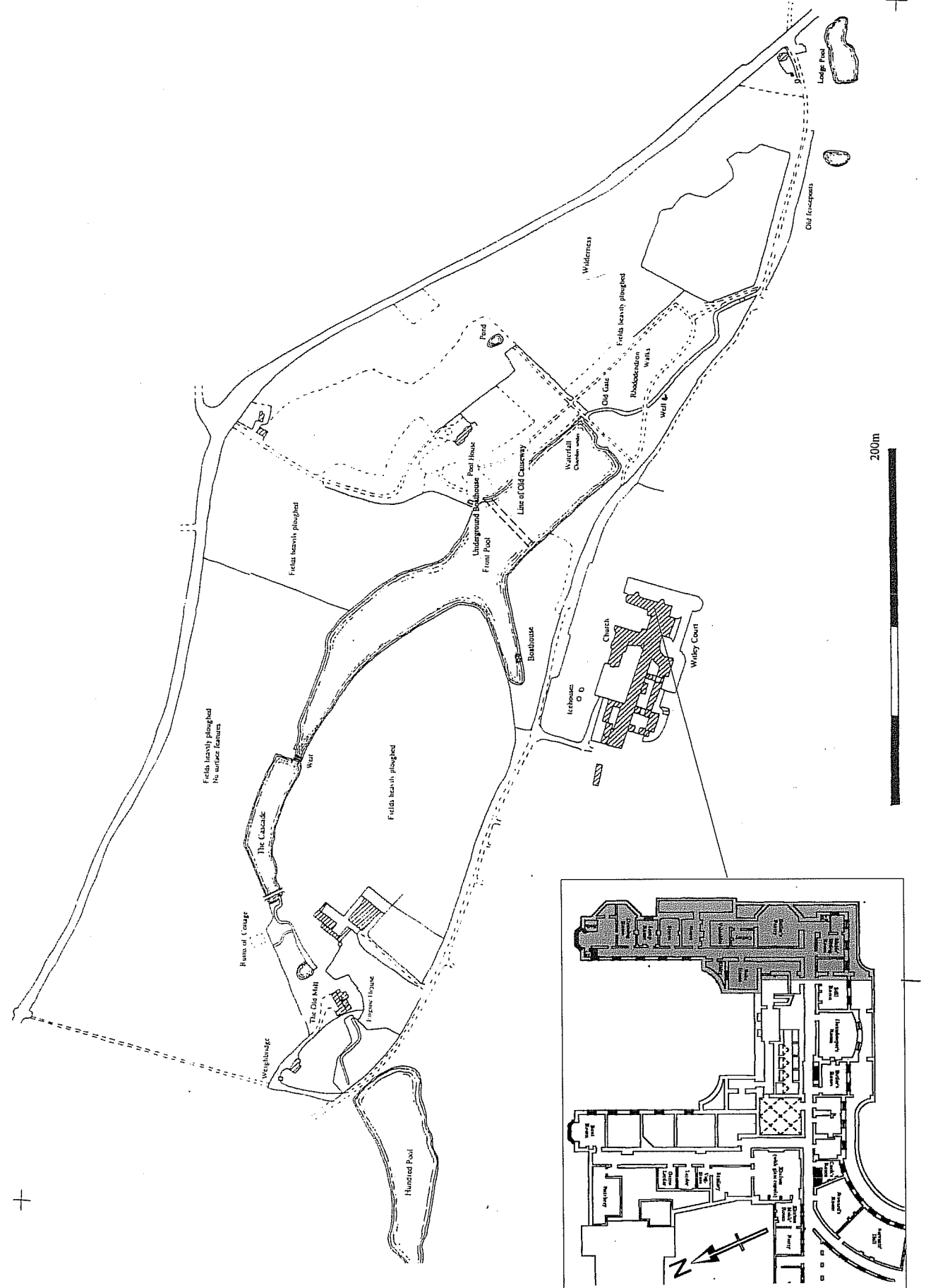
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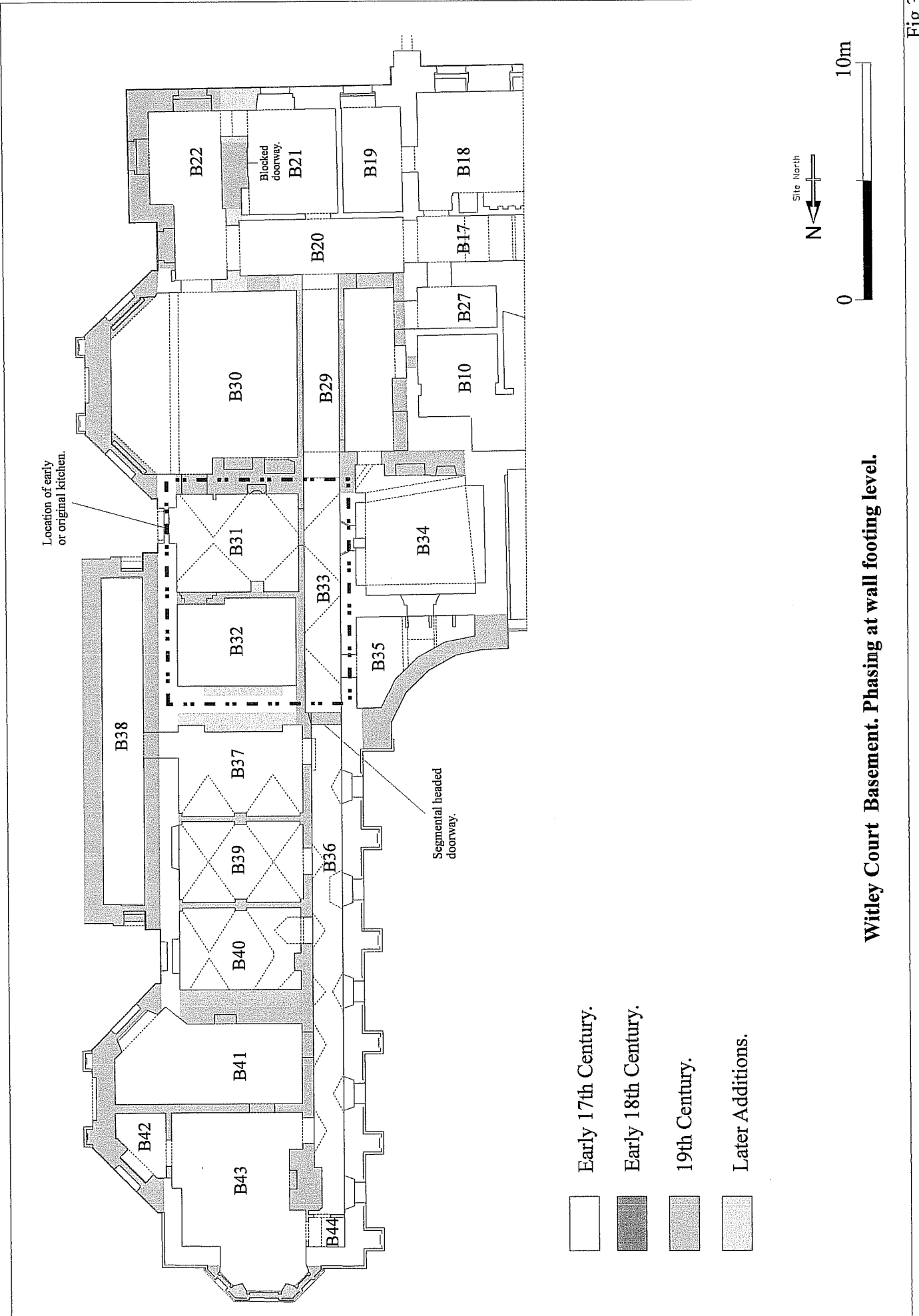
Witley Court Location Maps



200m

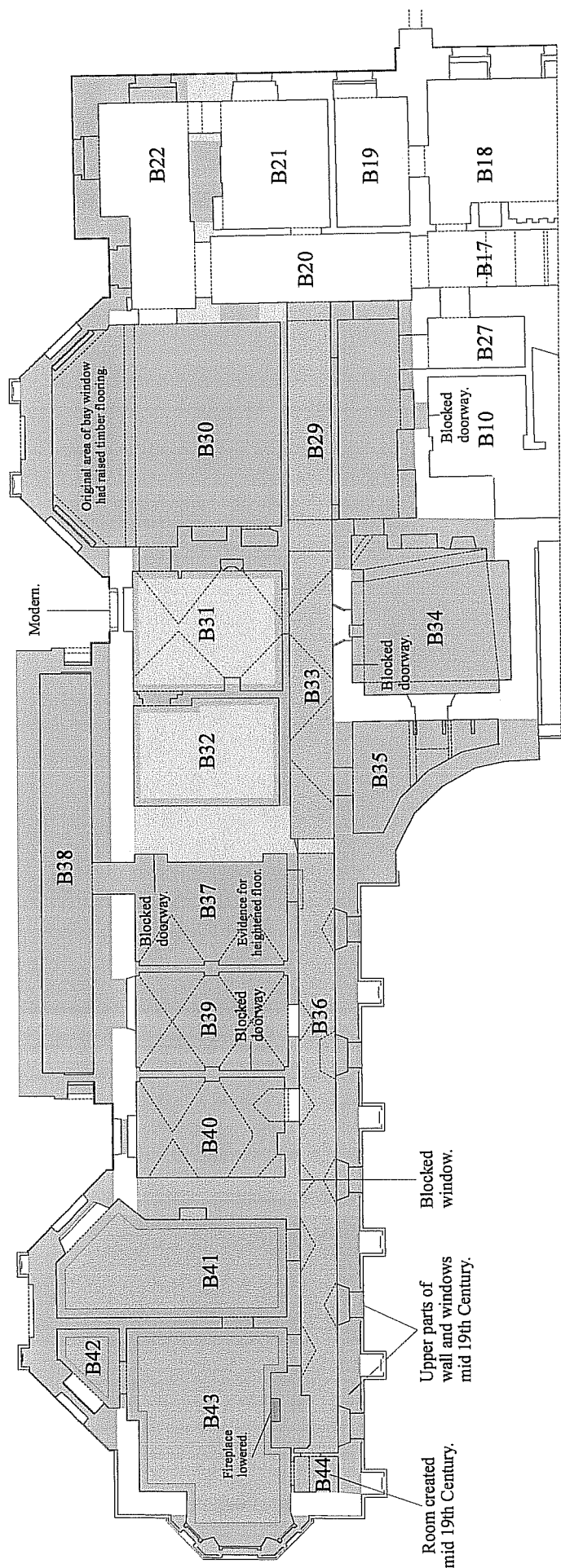
Fig 2

Witley Court Estate map with detailed location plan showing the East basement.



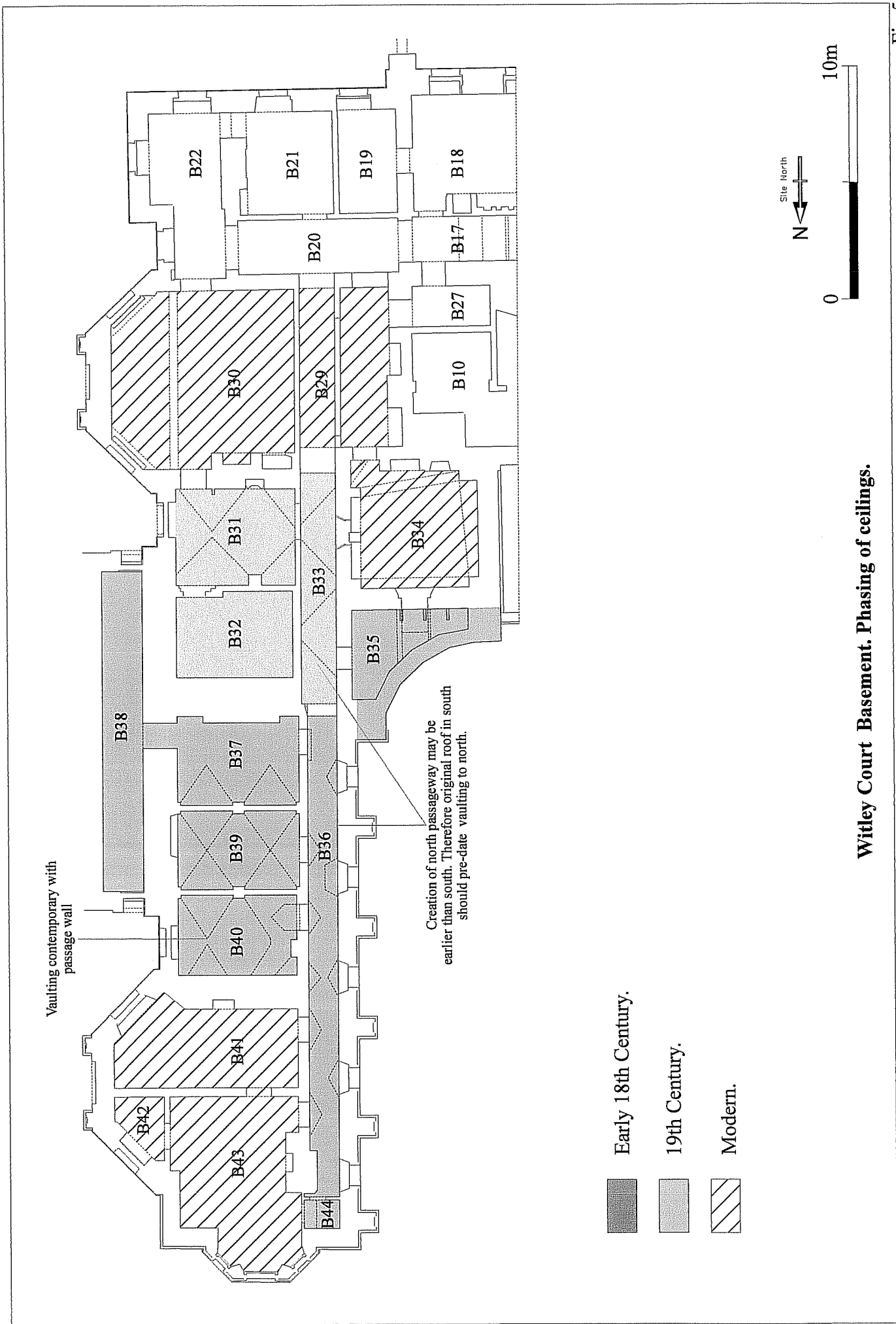
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- Early 18th Century.
- 19th Century.
- Later Additions.

Witley Court Basement. Phasing at wall footing level.

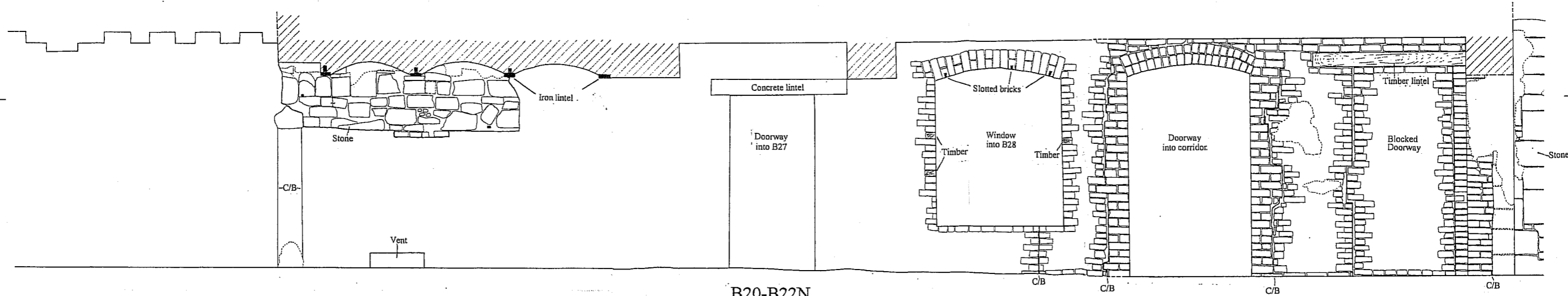


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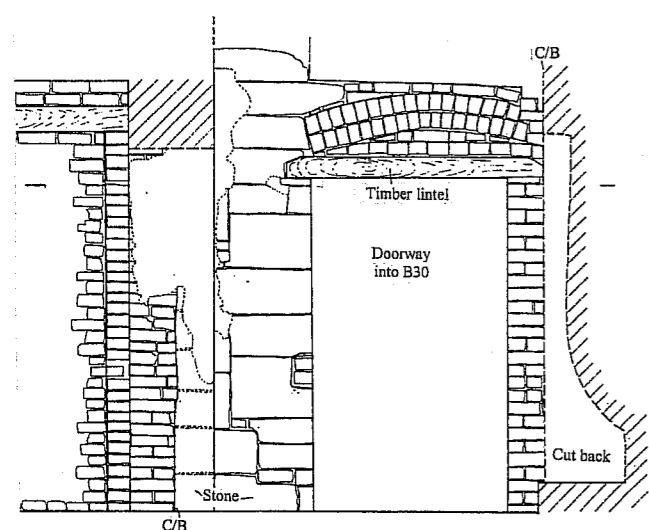
Witley Court Basement. Phasing of floors and upper parts of walls.



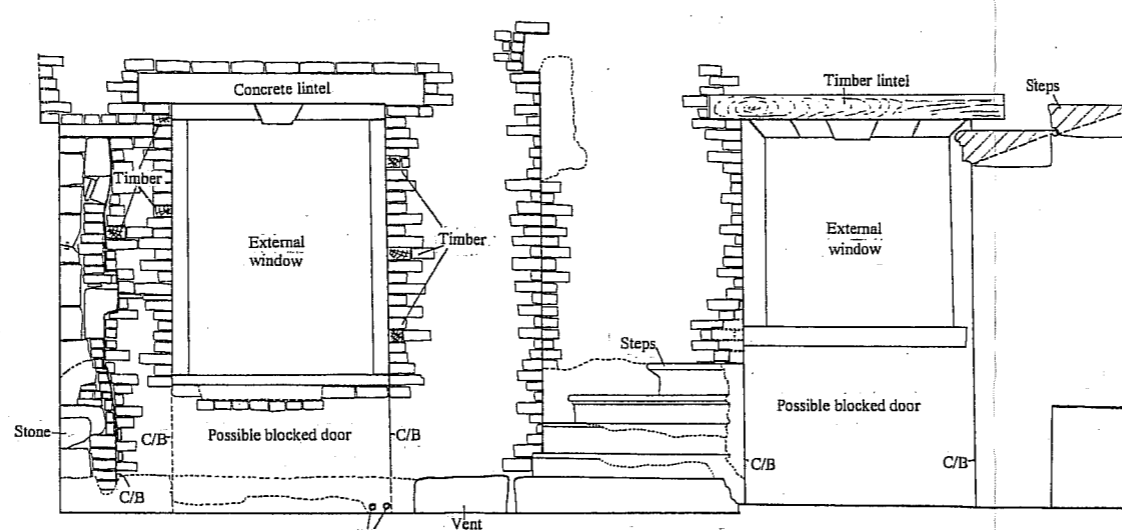
Witley Court Basement. Phasing of ceilings.



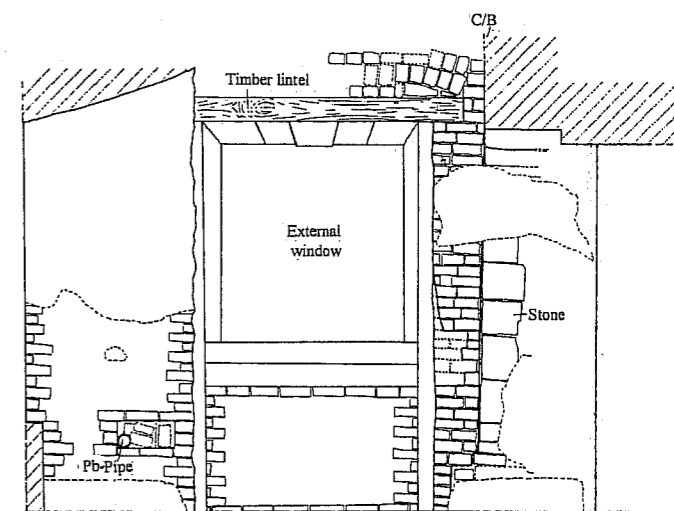
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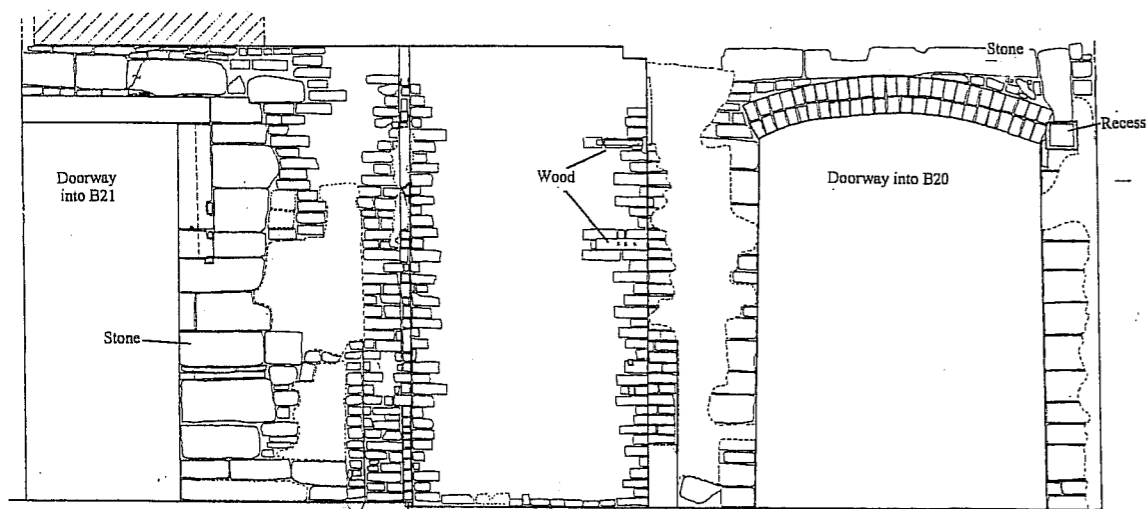
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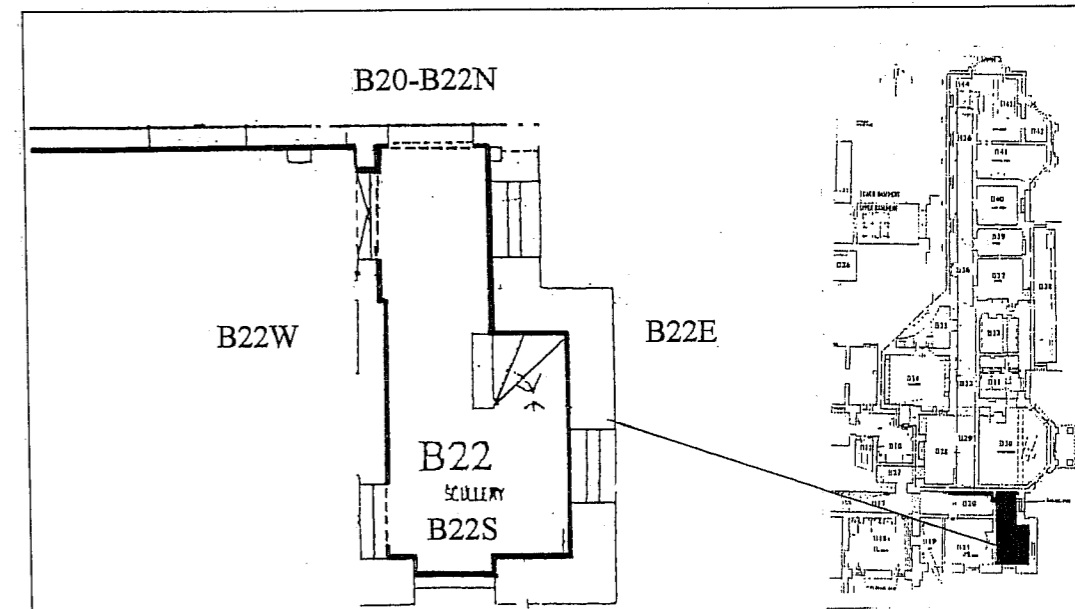
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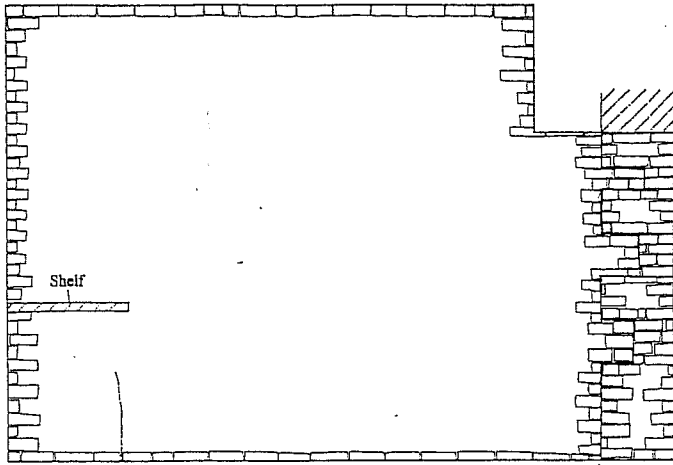


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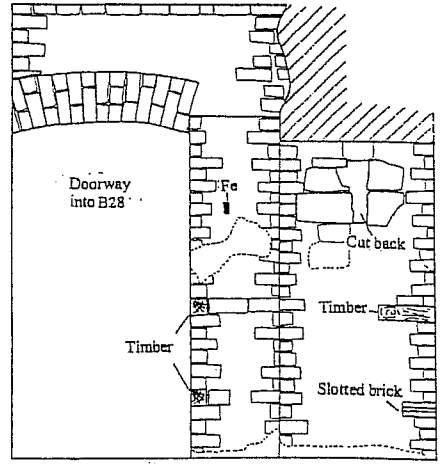


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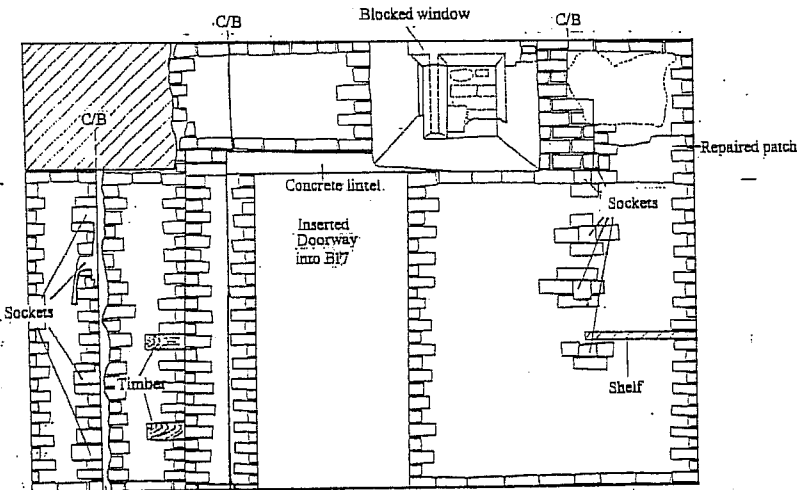




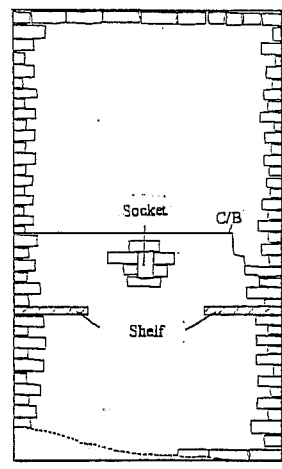
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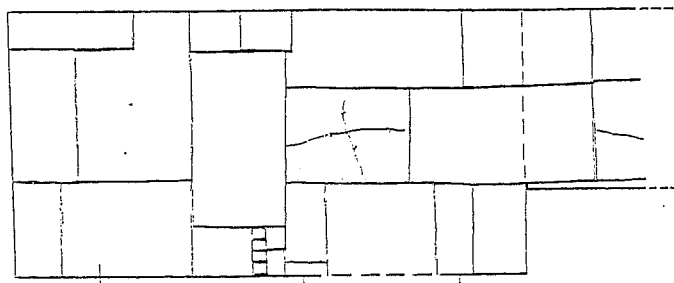
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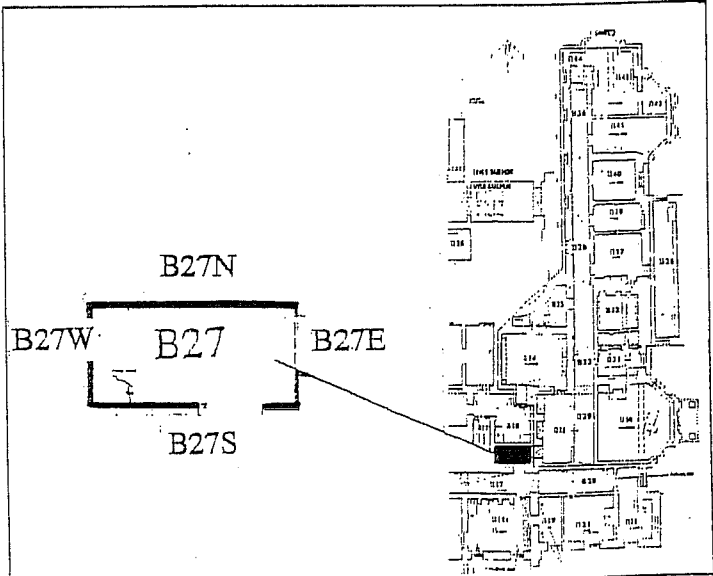
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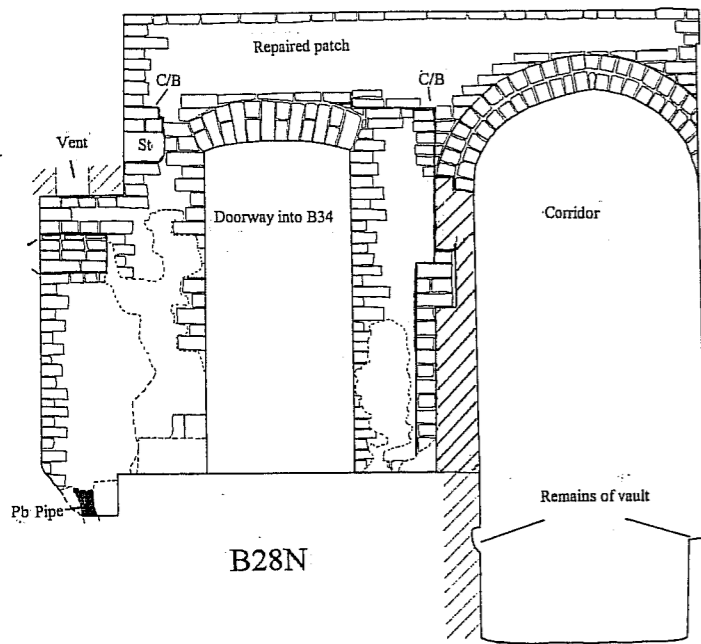


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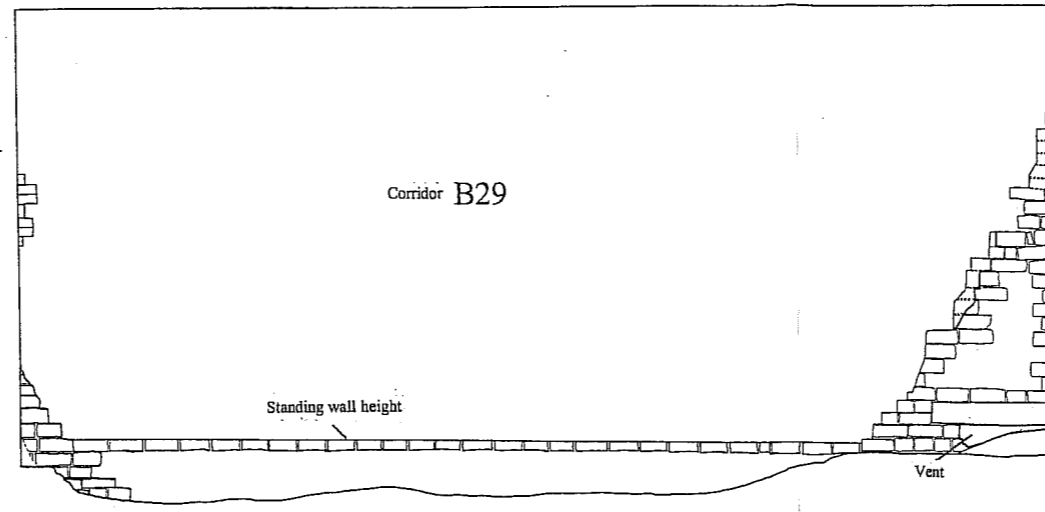


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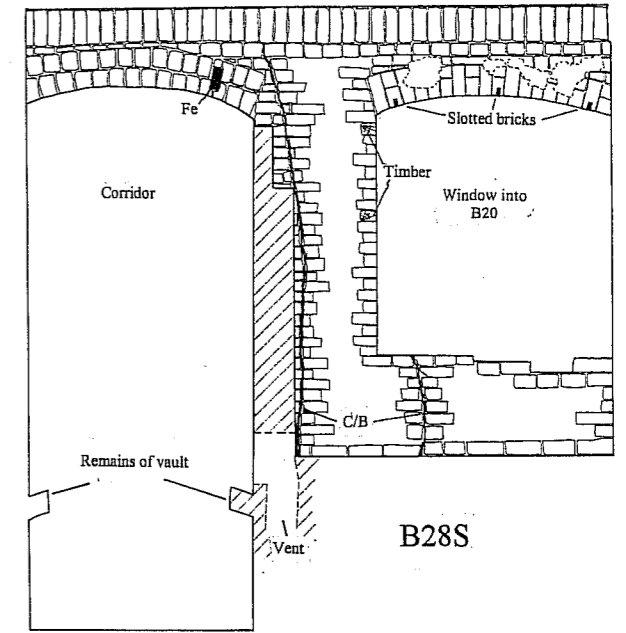




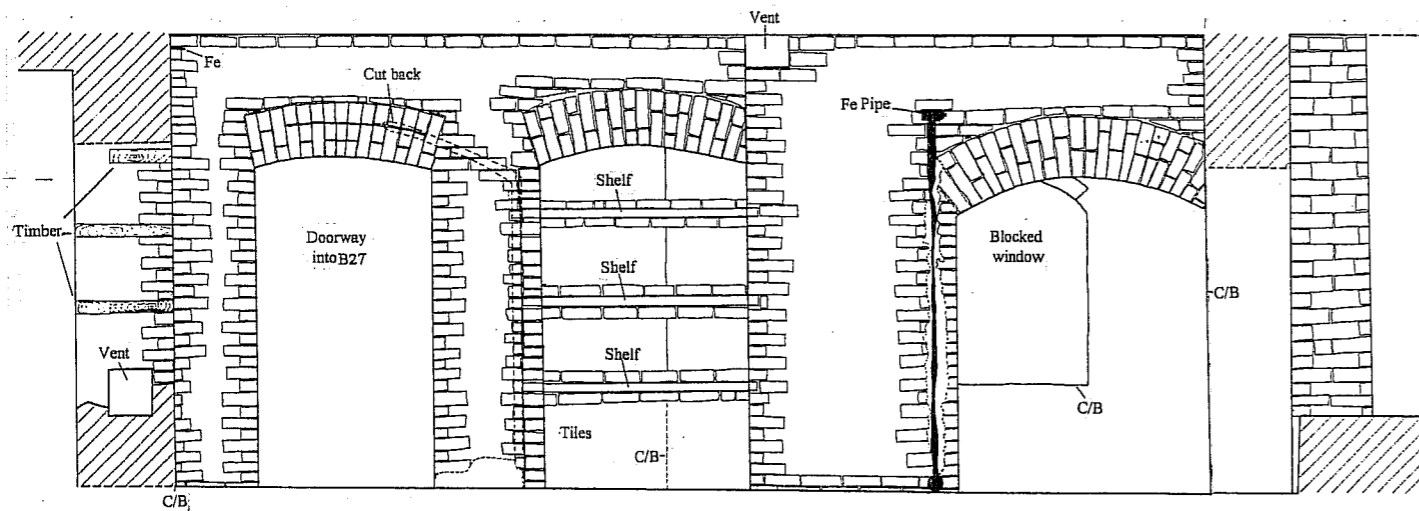
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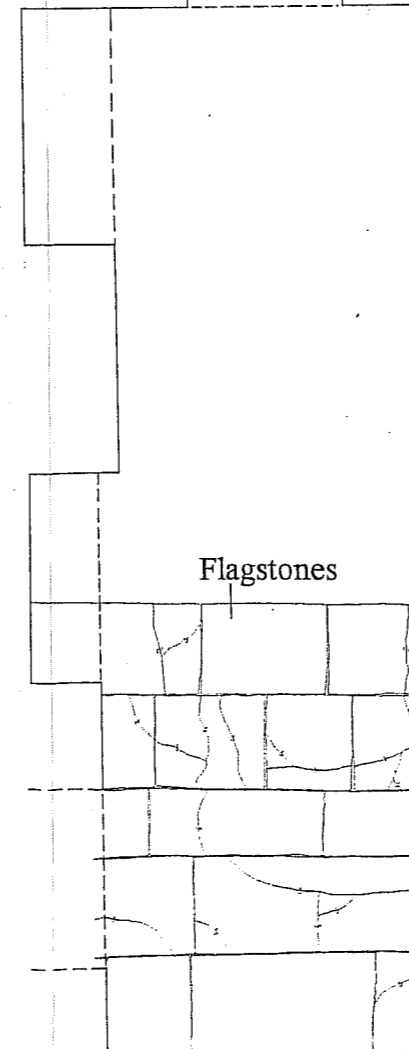
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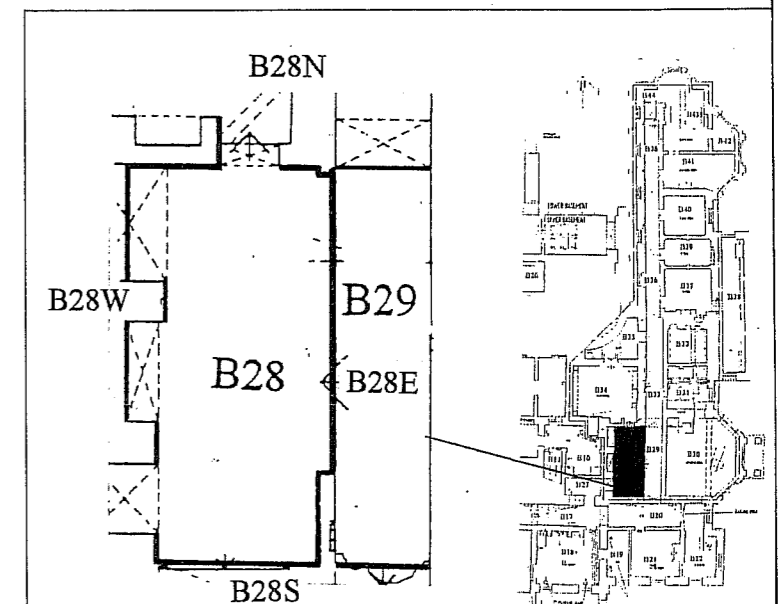
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Flagstones



B28 Floor Plan



B29

Room
B28

Vent

Remains of vault

B29W

Vent

Remains of vault

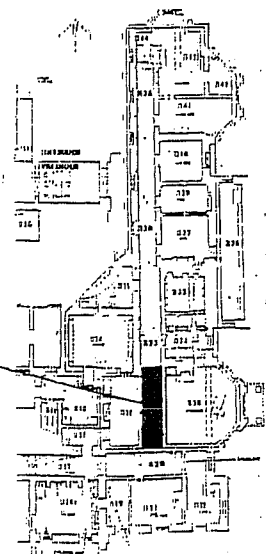
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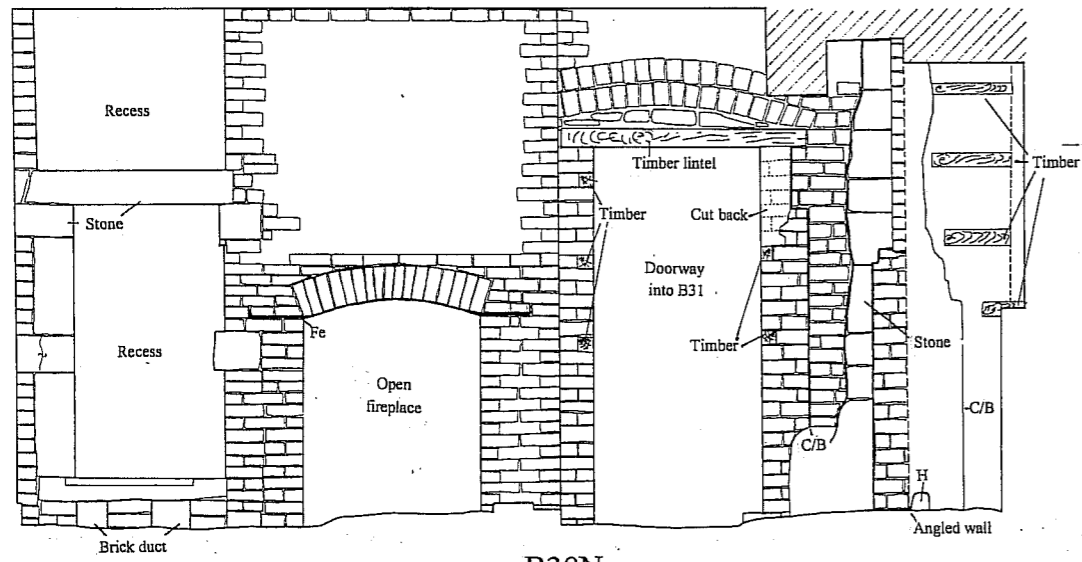
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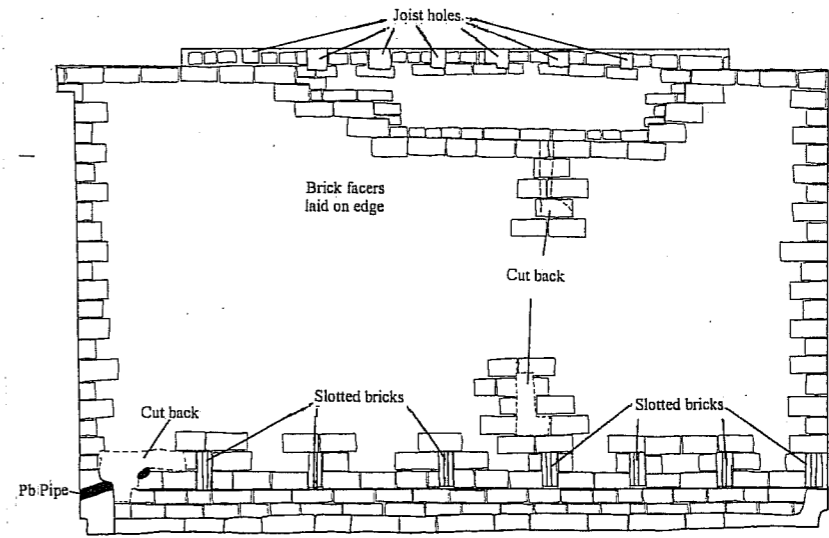
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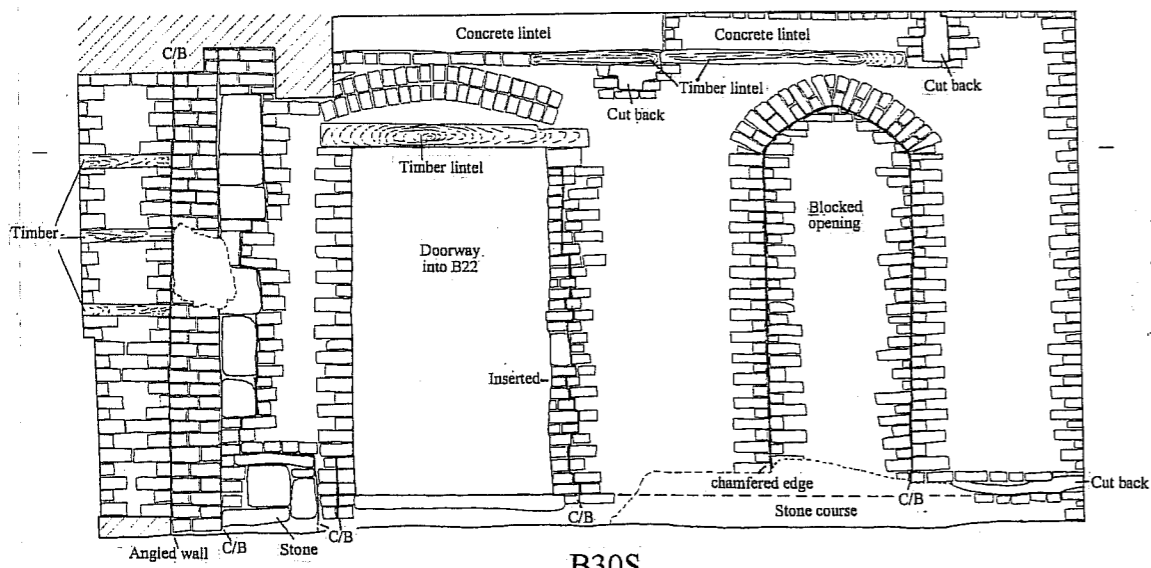




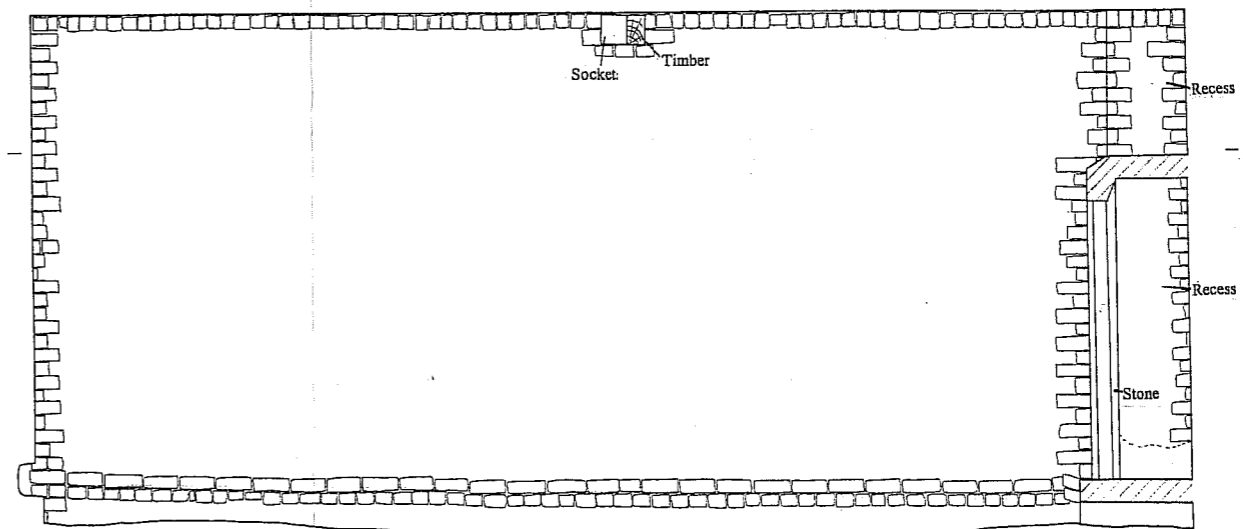
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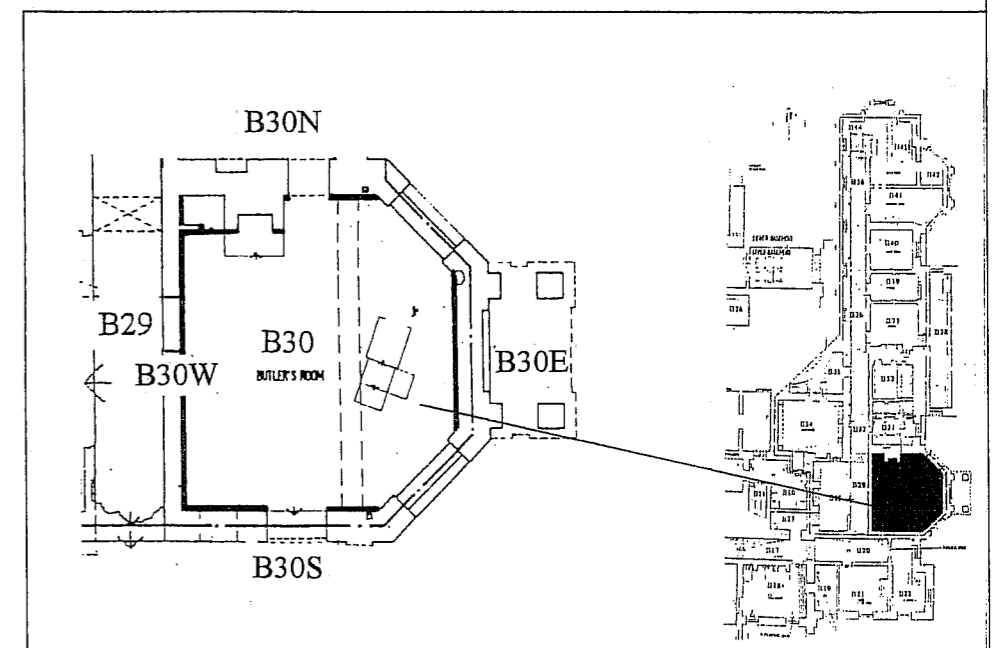
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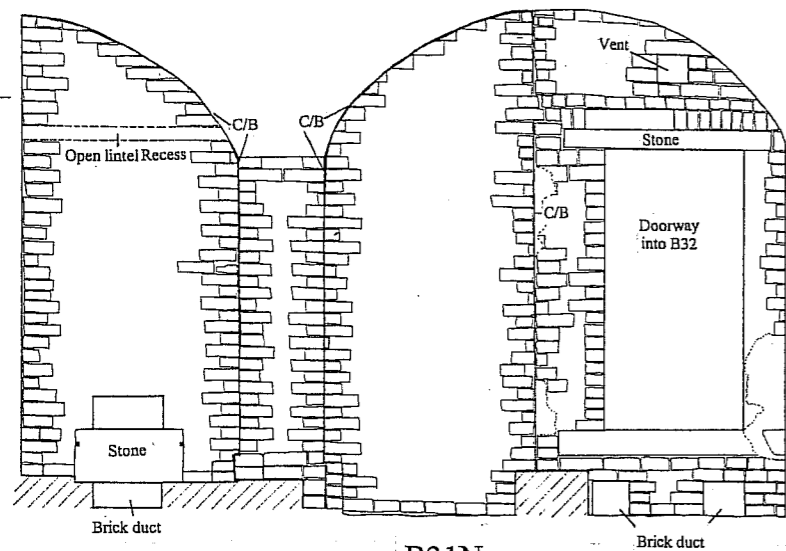


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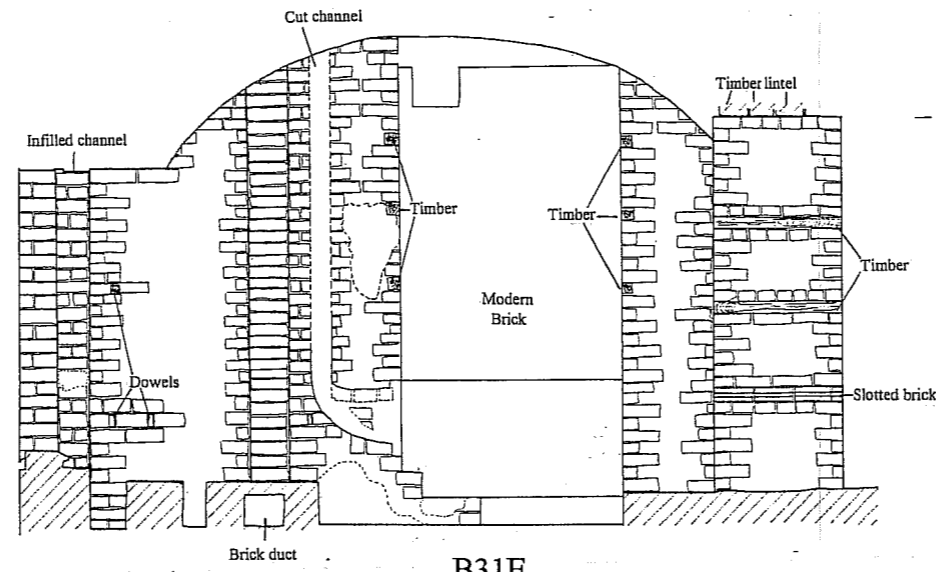


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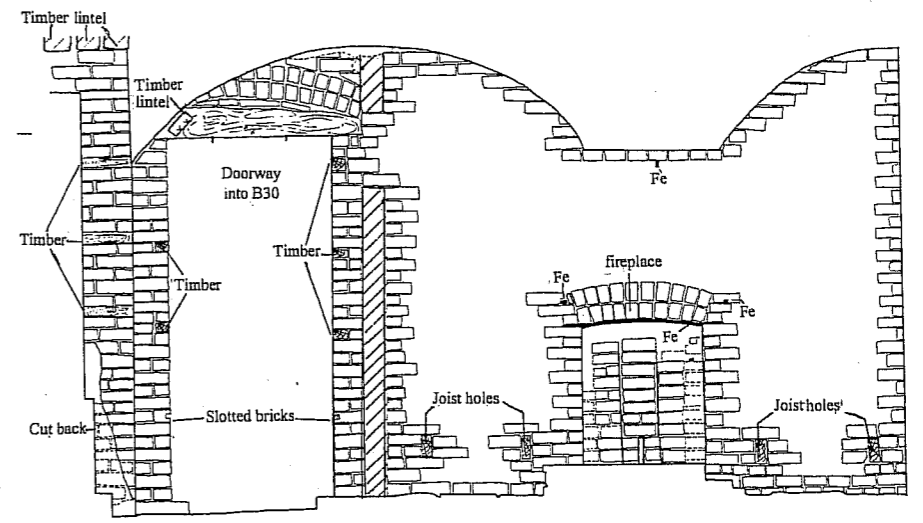




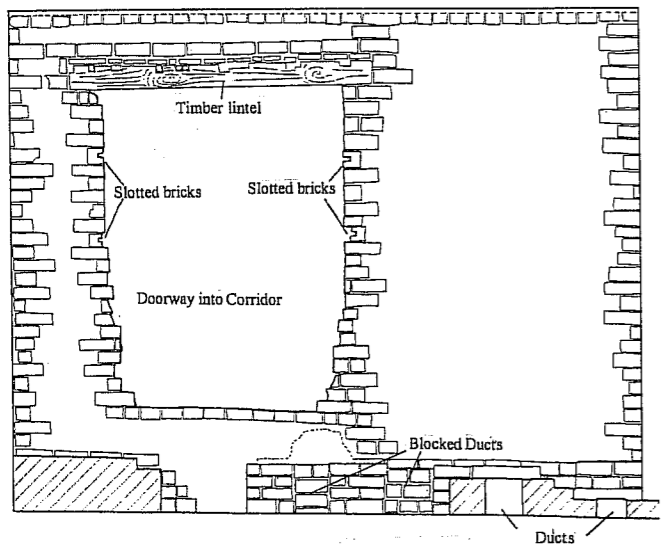
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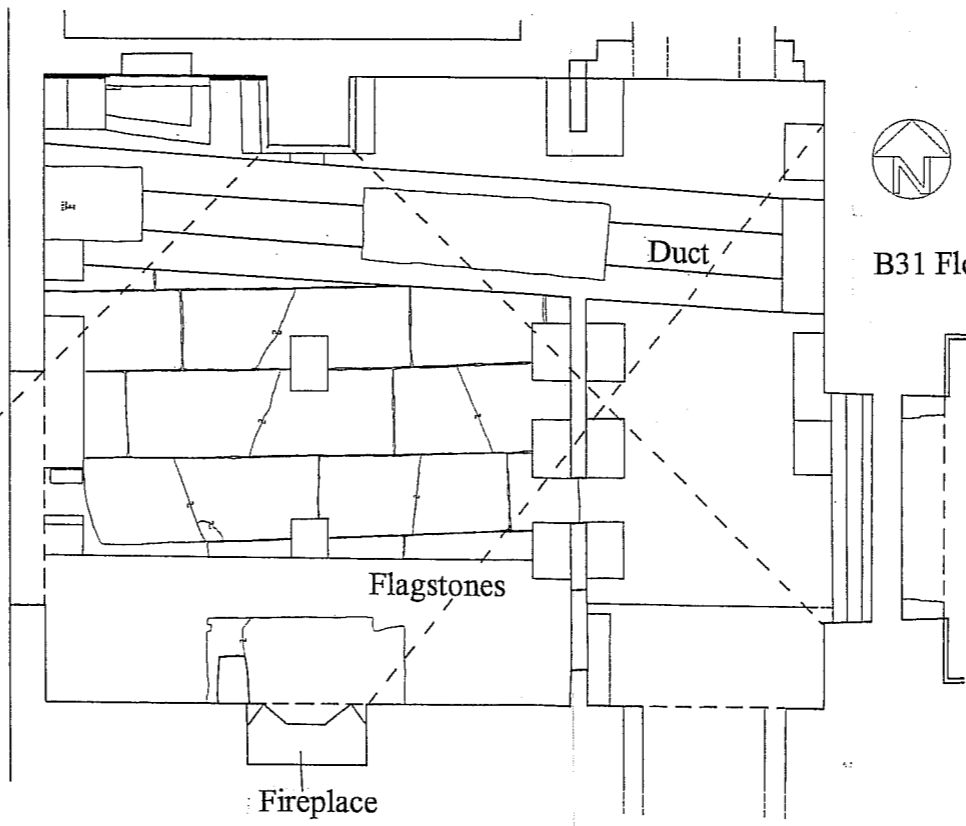
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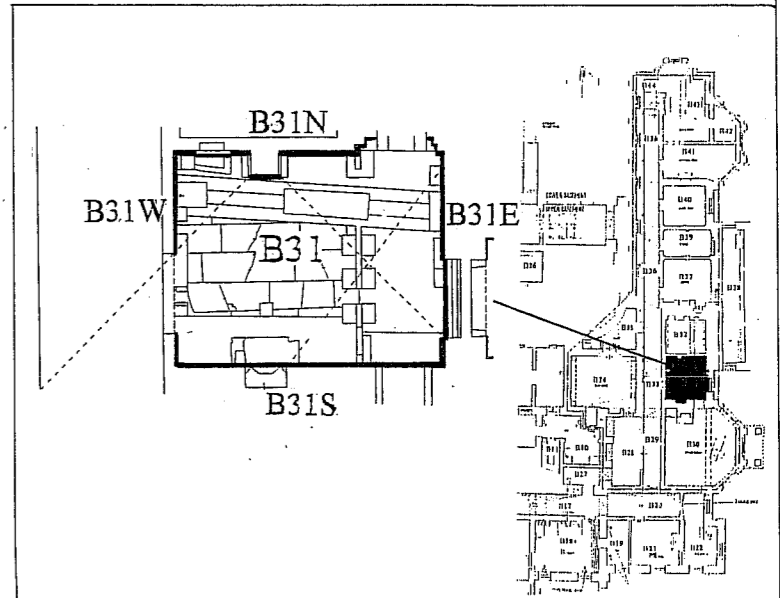
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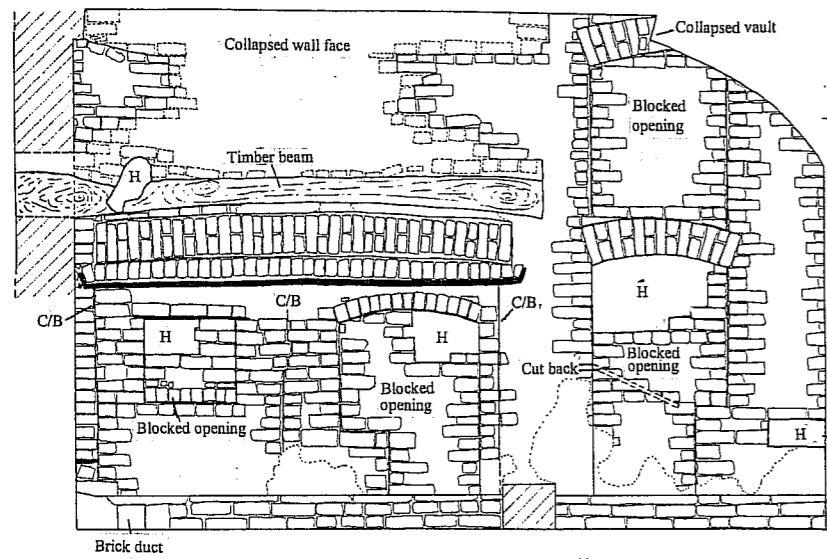


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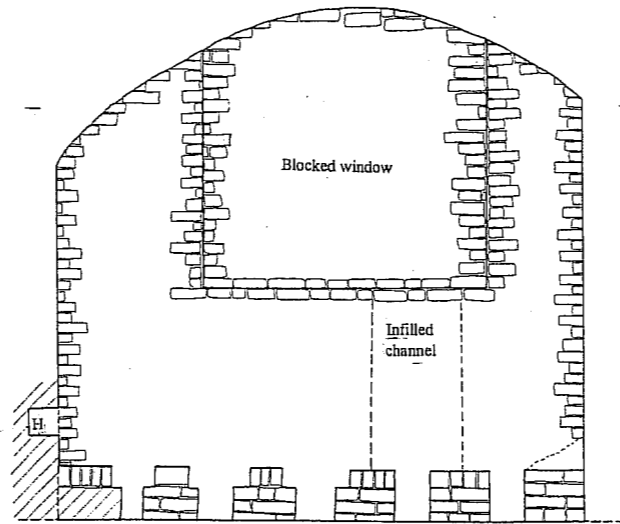


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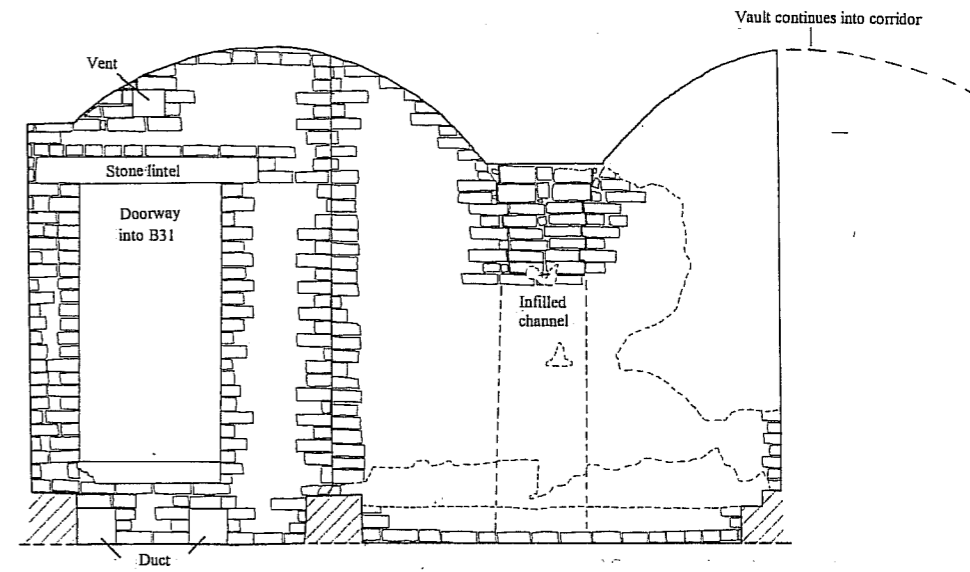




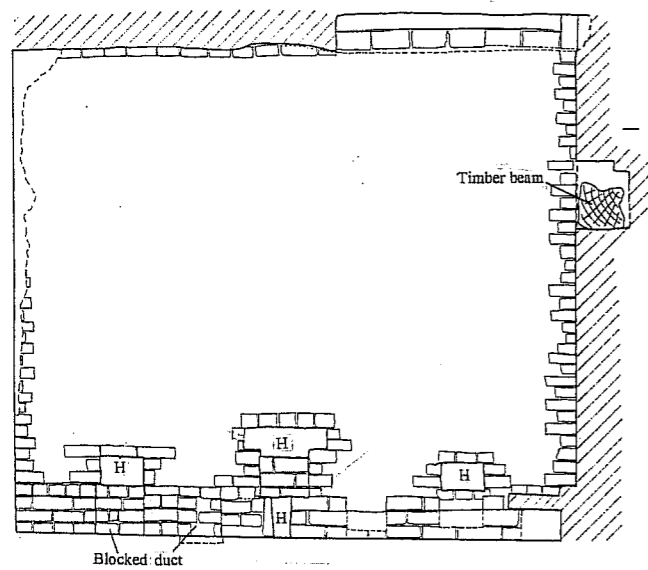
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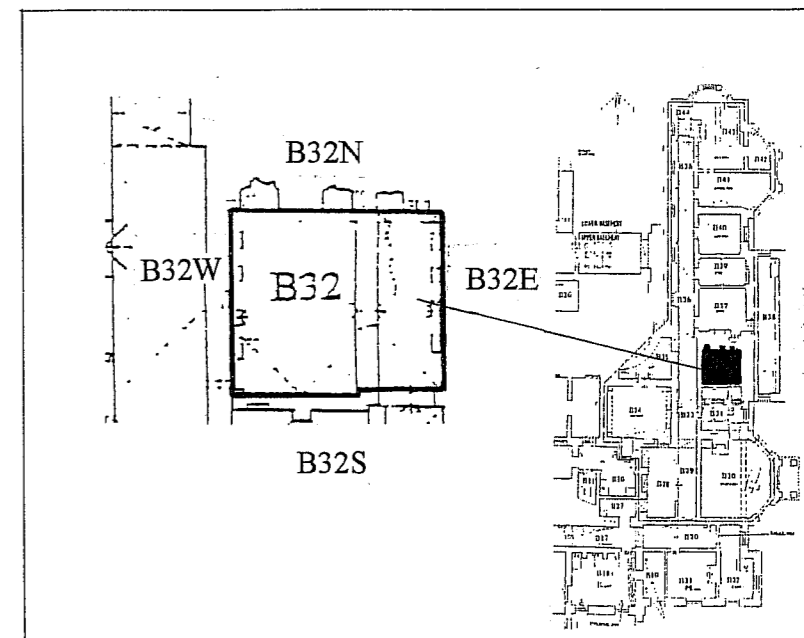
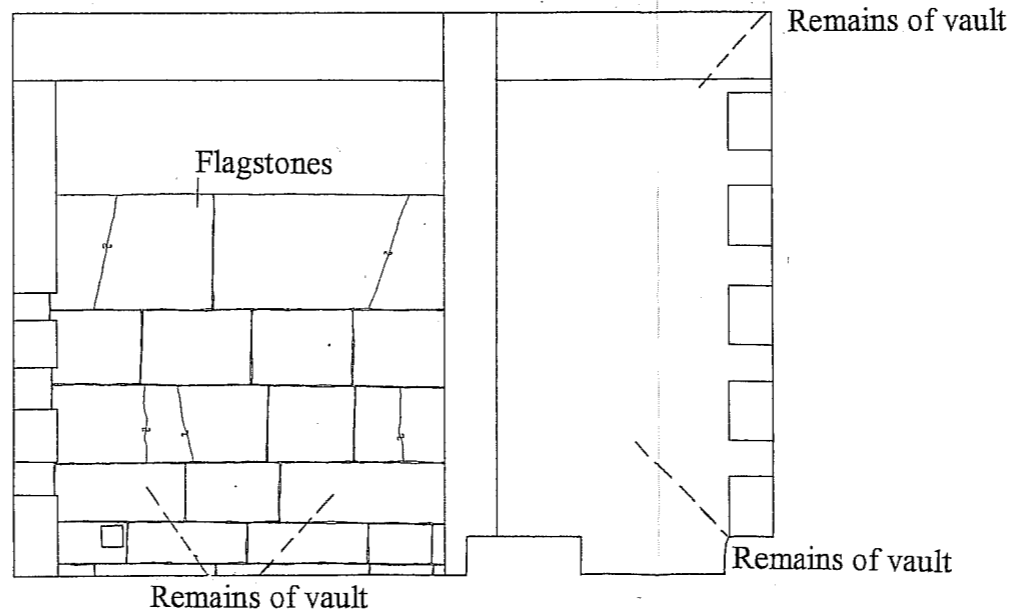
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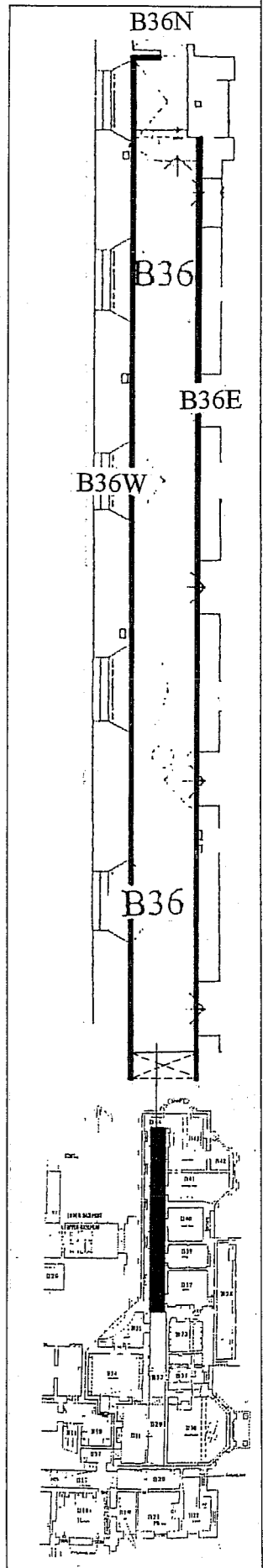
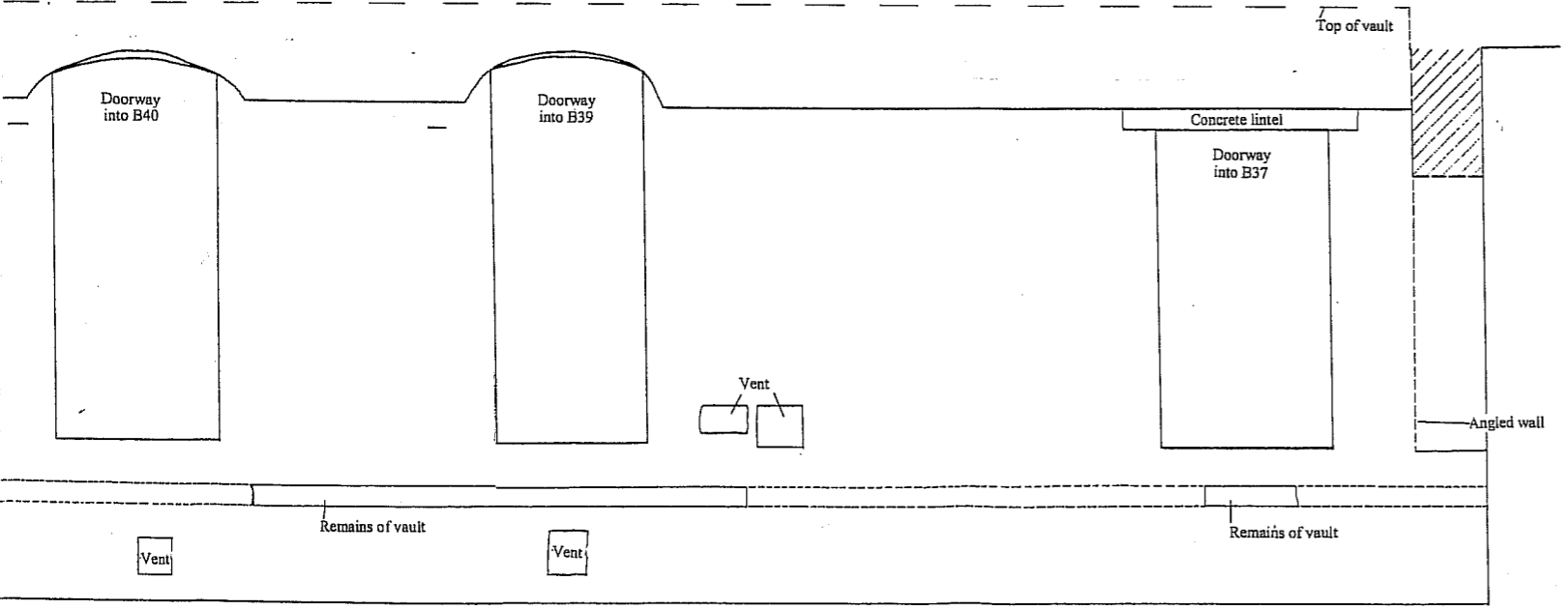
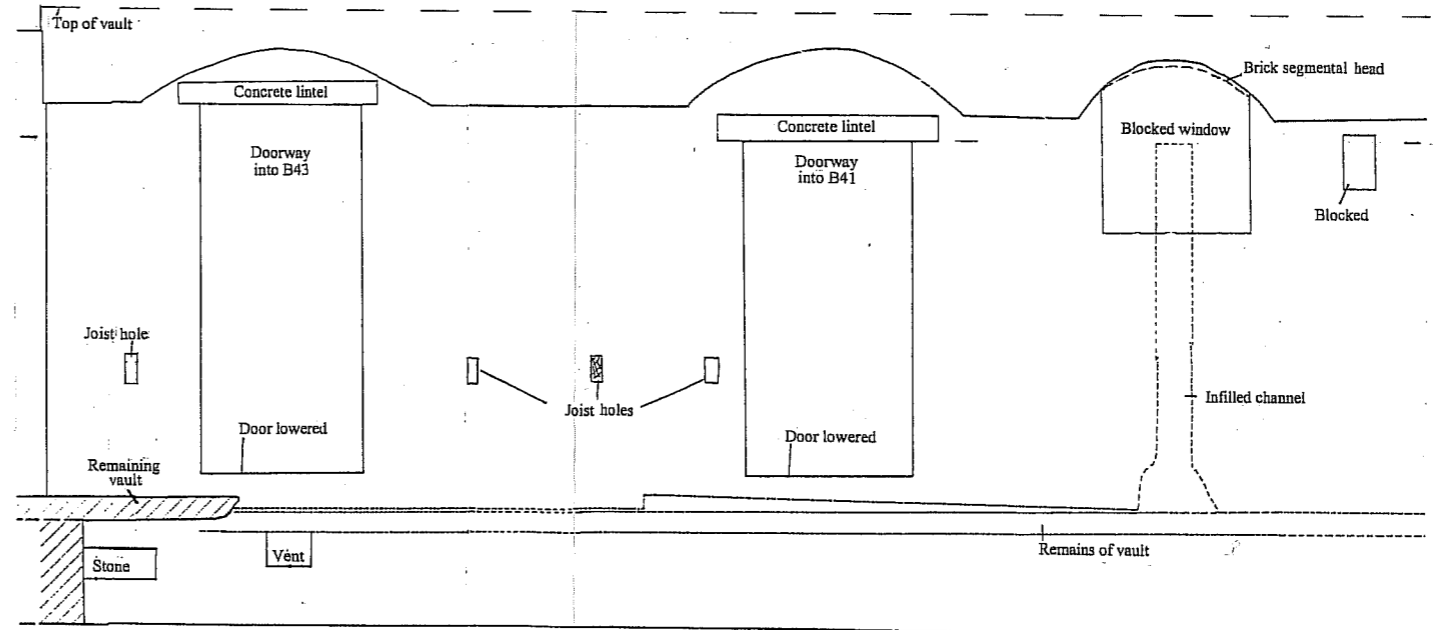
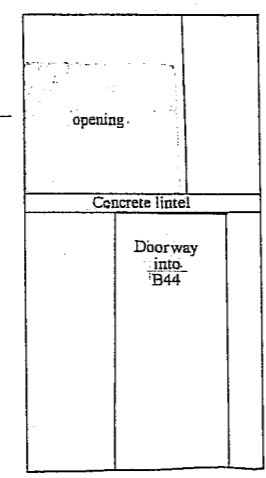
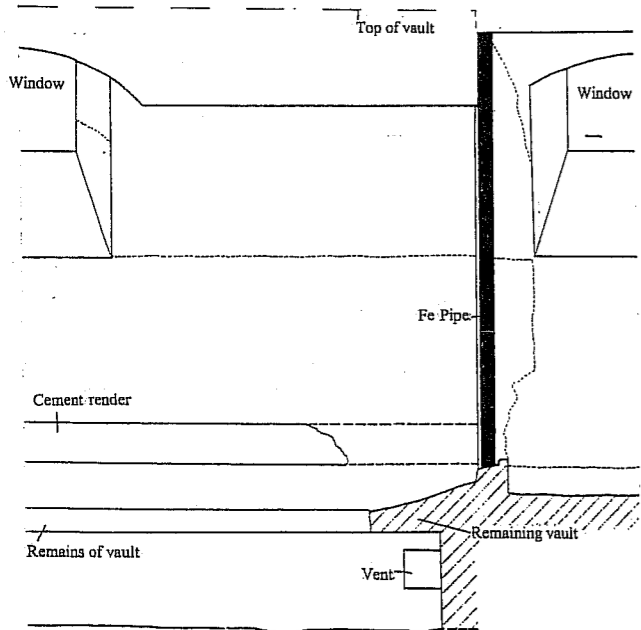
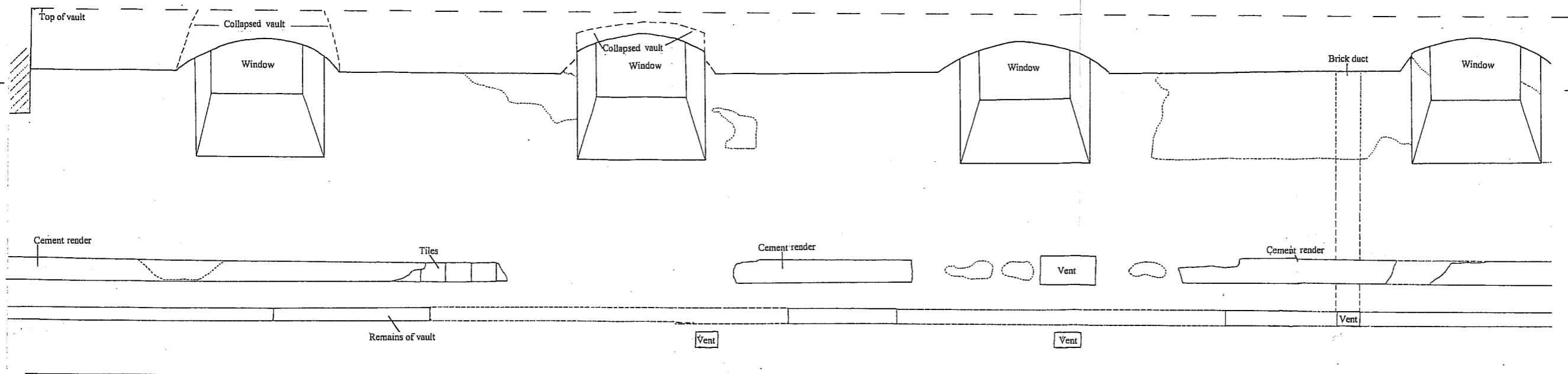


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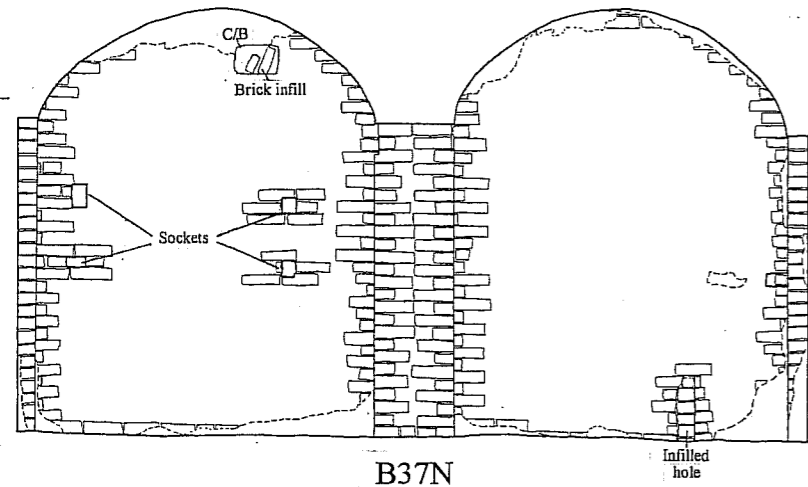
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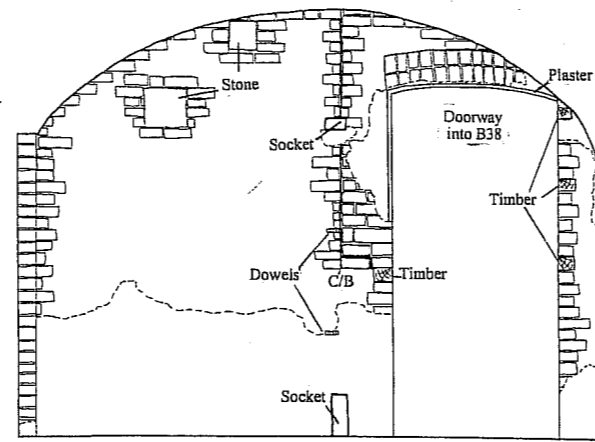
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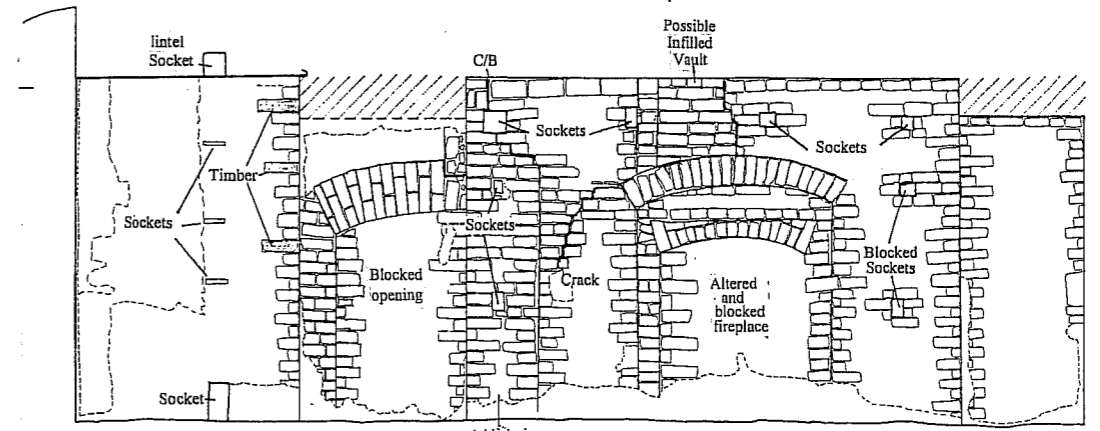
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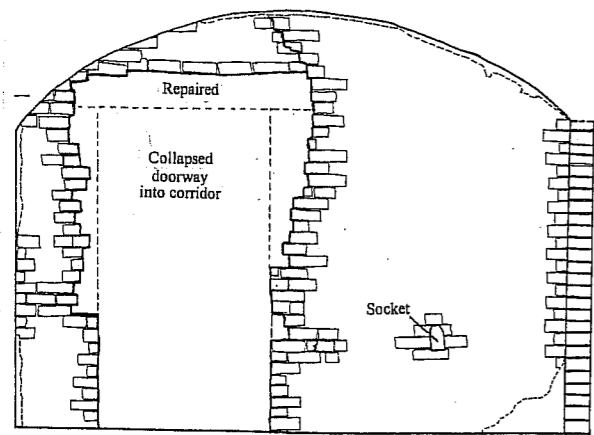
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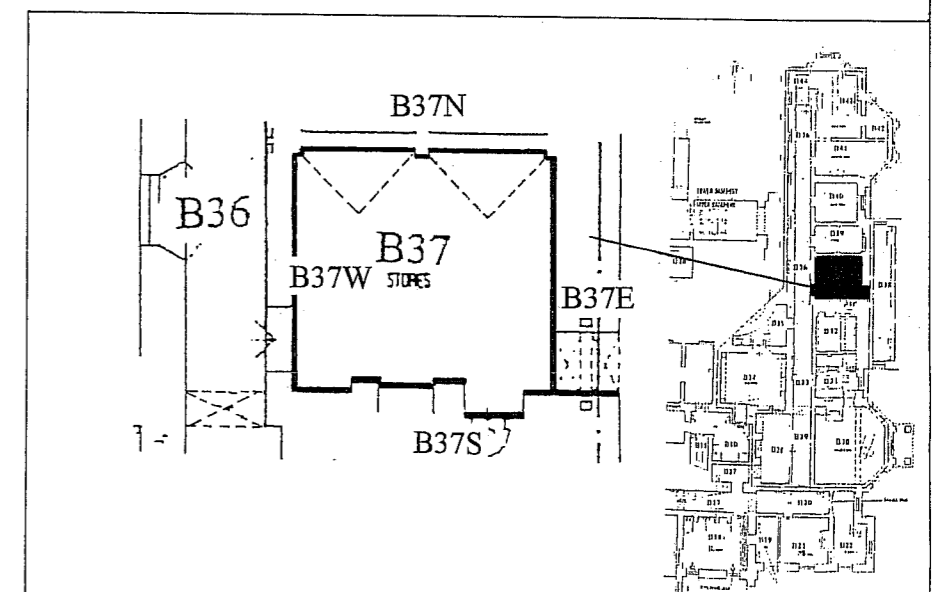
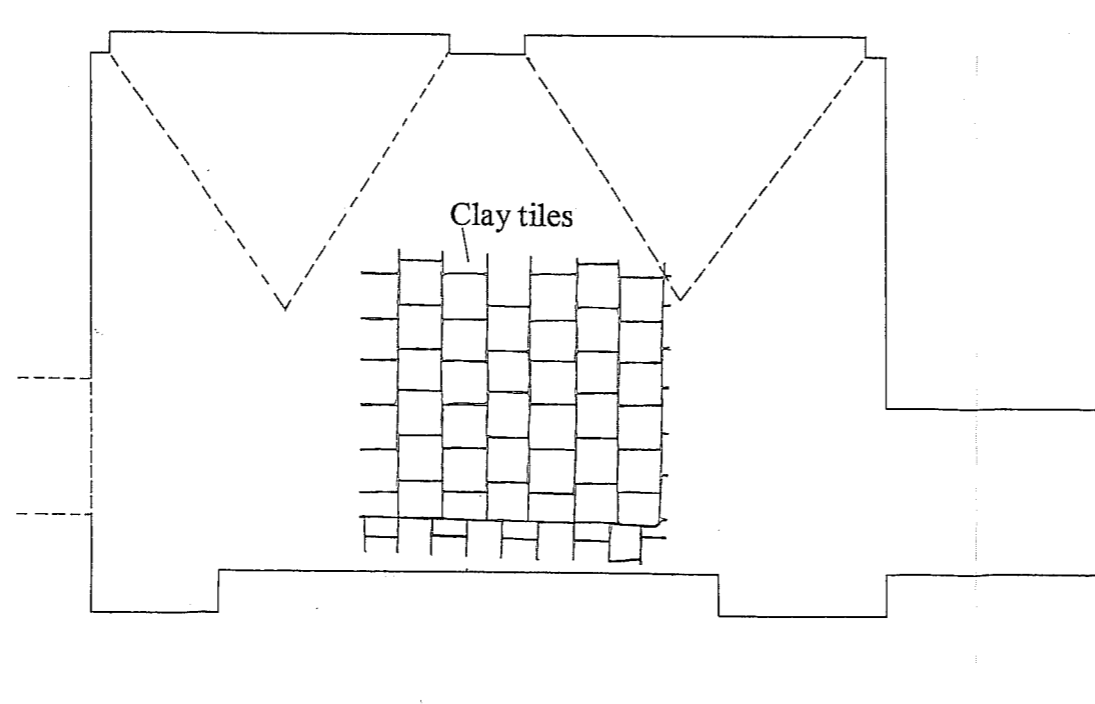
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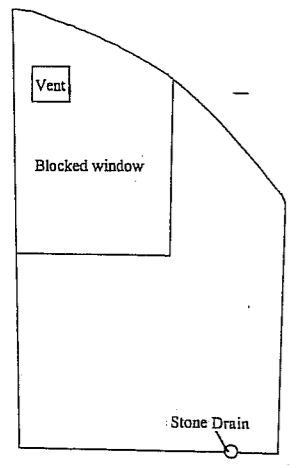


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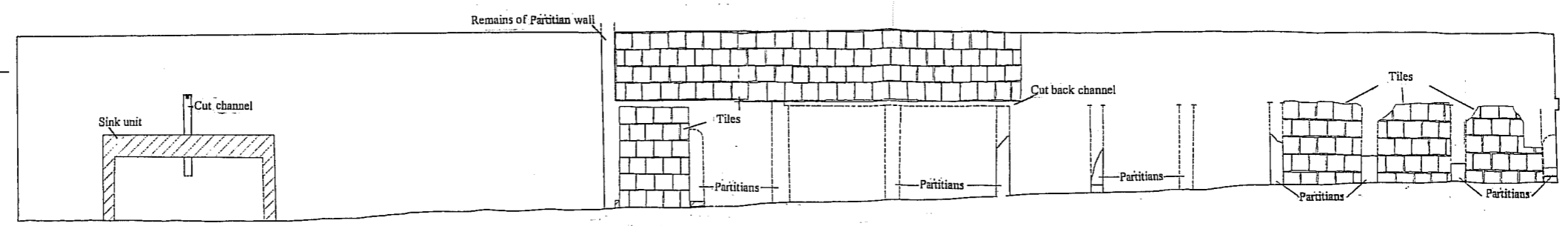


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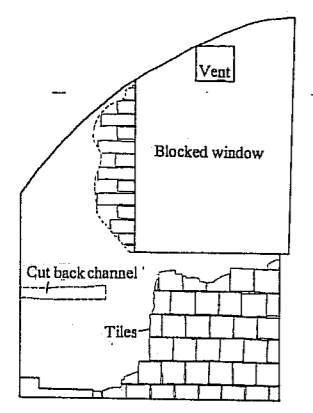




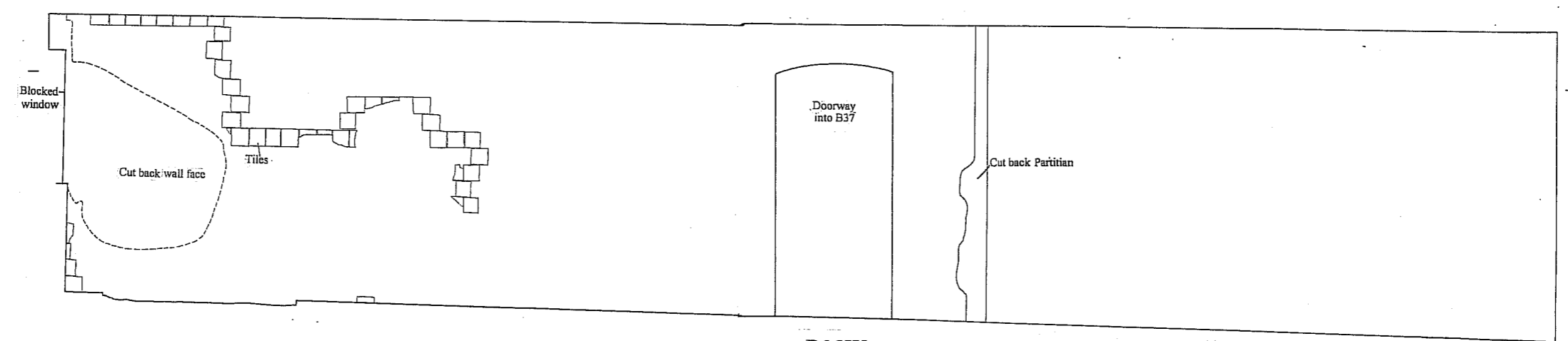
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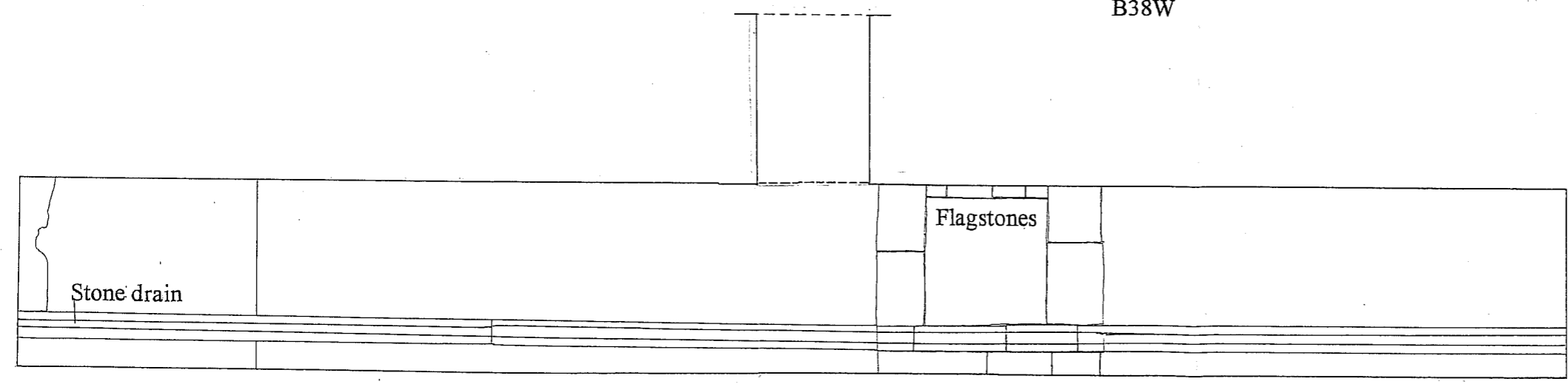
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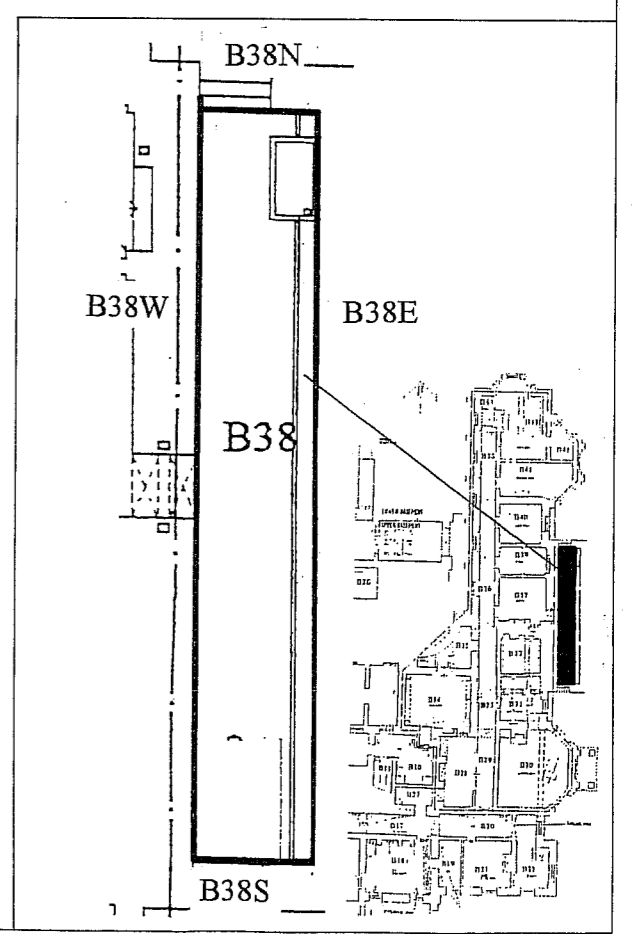
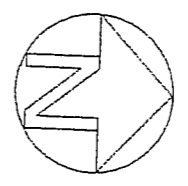
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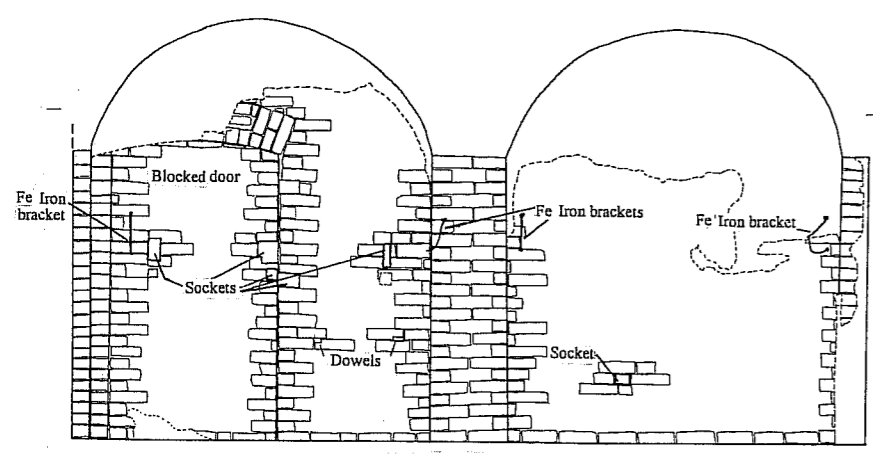


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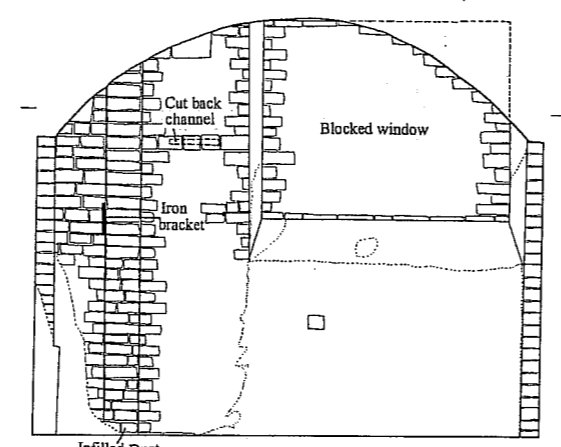


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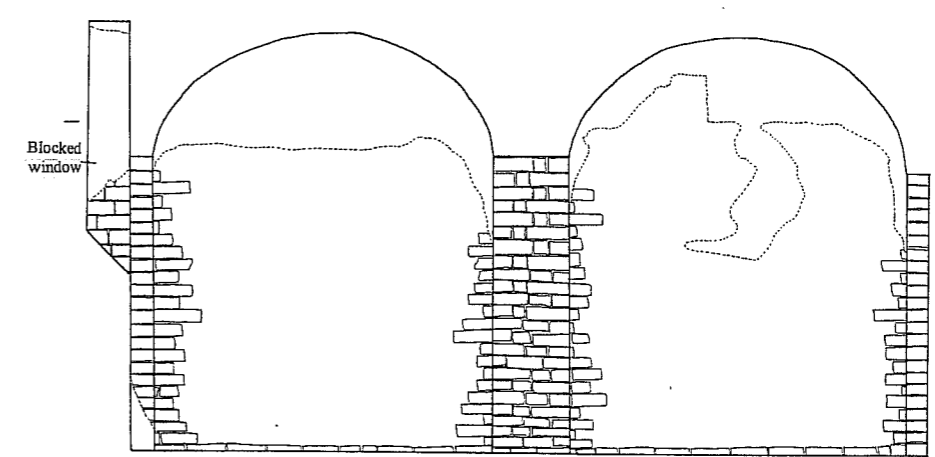




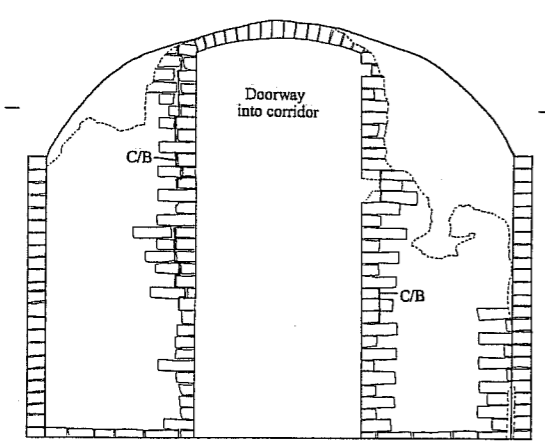
B39N



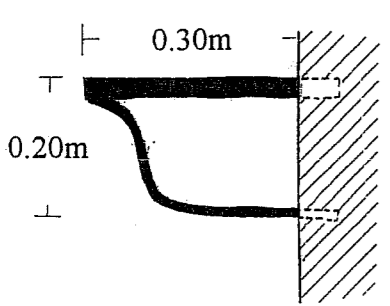
B39E



B39S



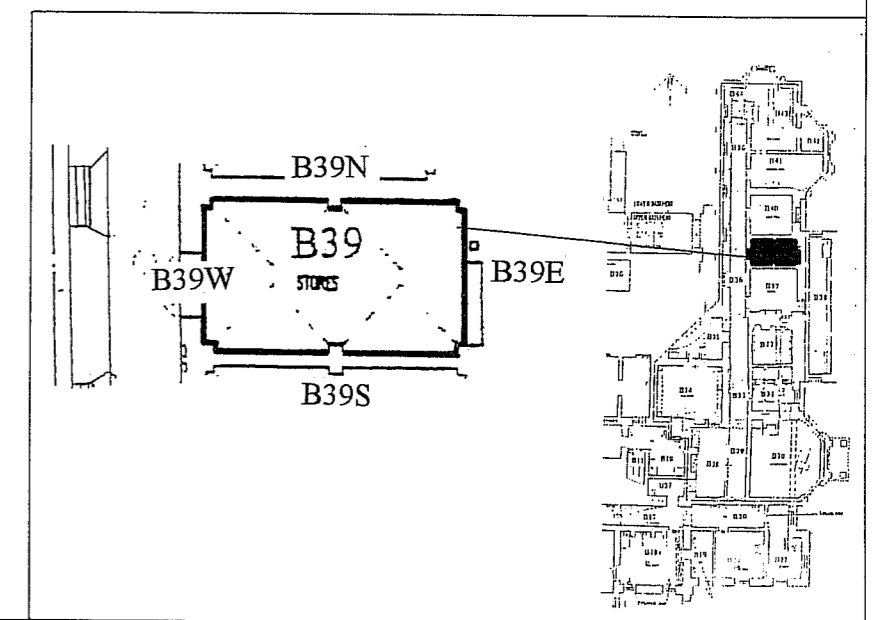
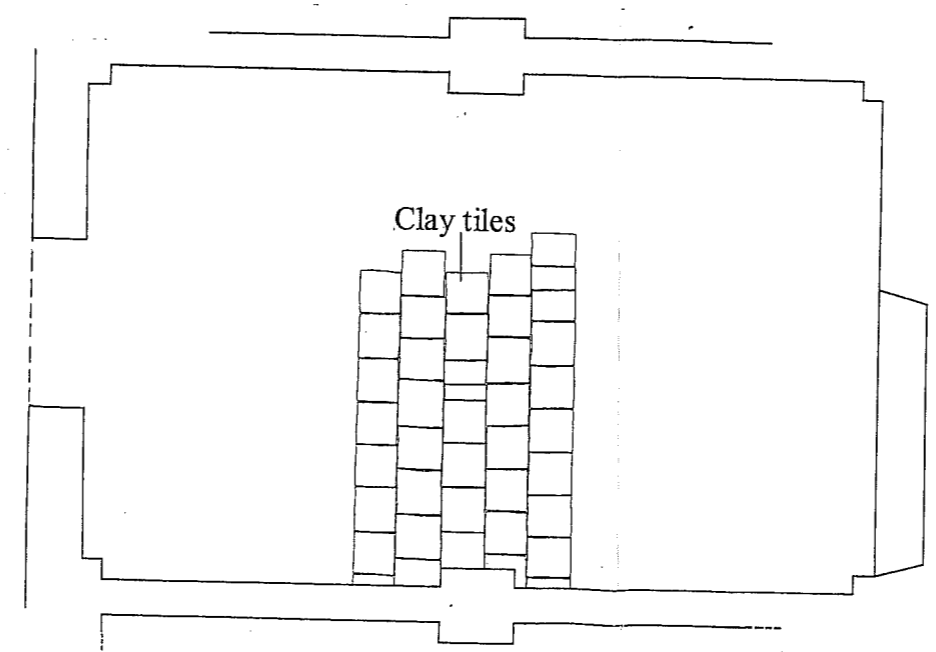
B39W

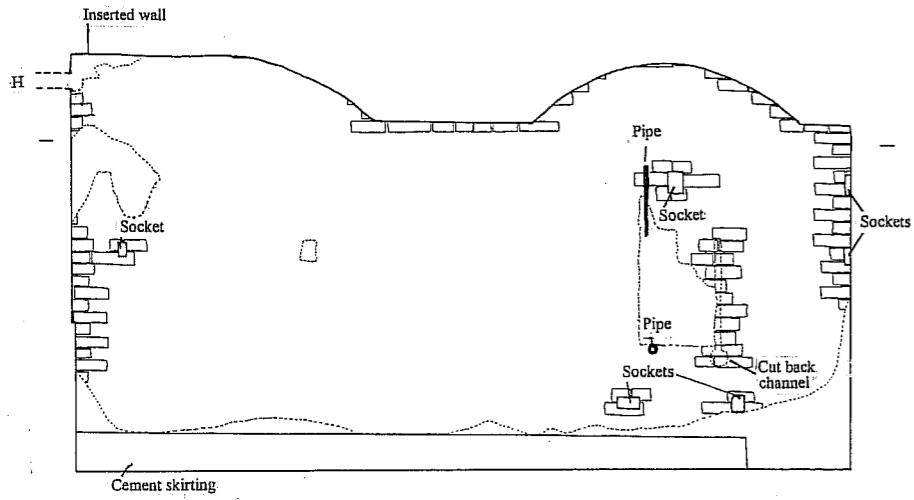


Profile of iron brackets, B39N

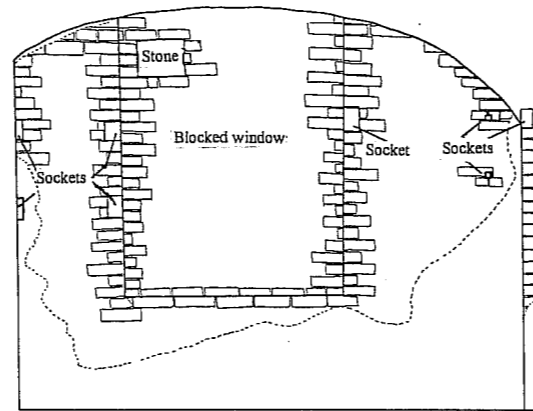


B39 Floor Plan

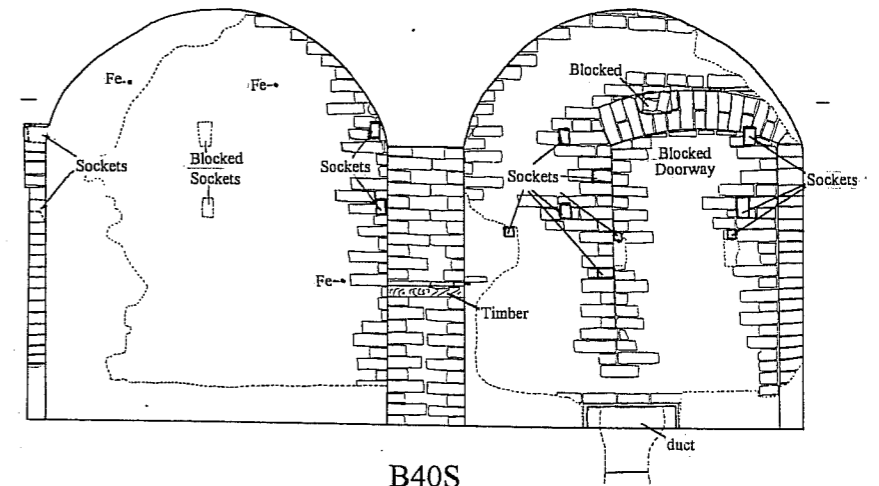




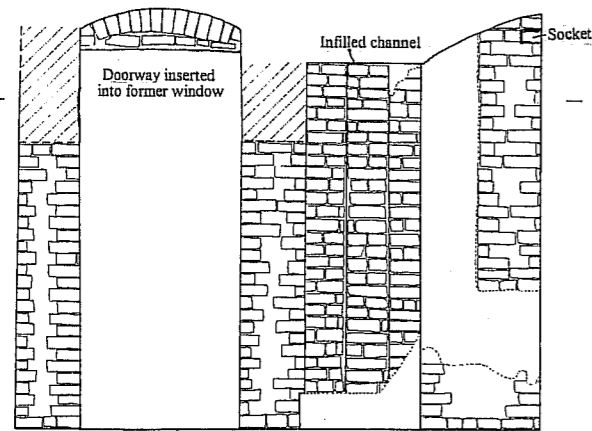
B40N



B40E



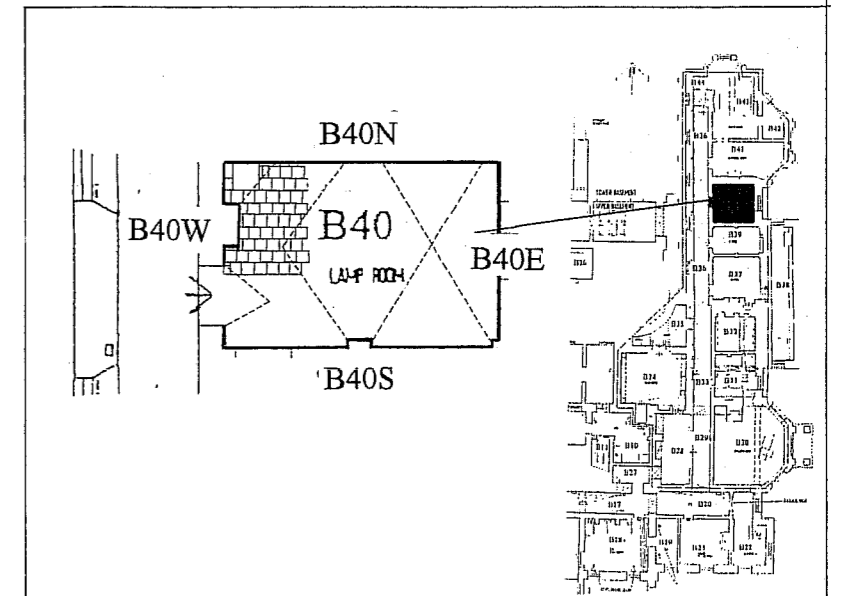
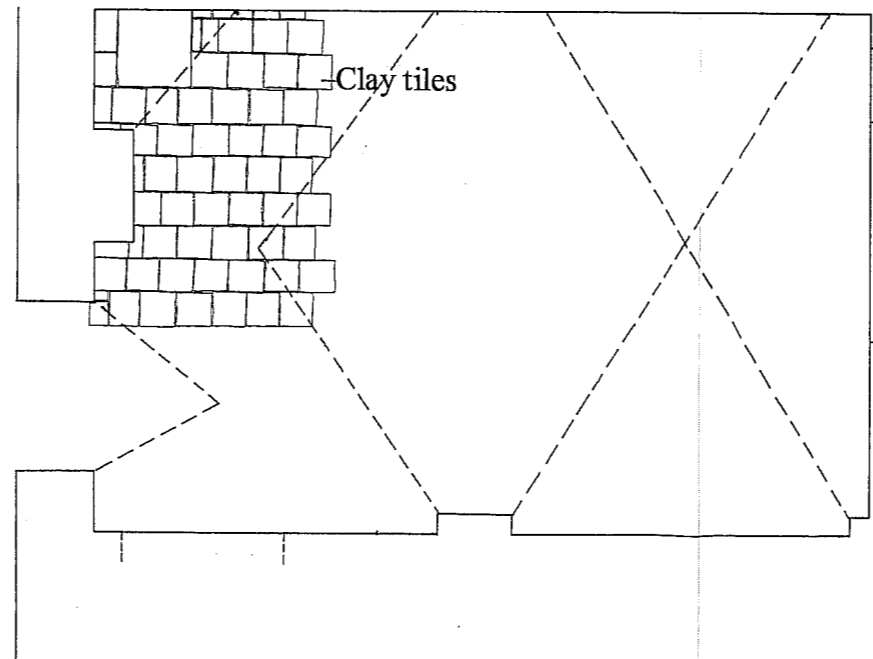
B40S

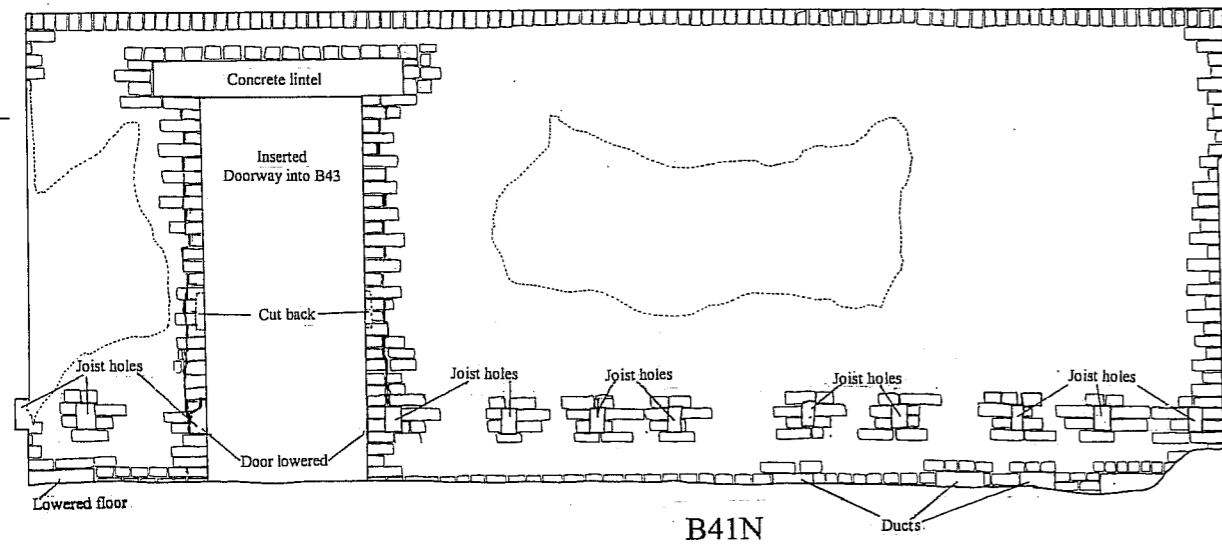


B40W

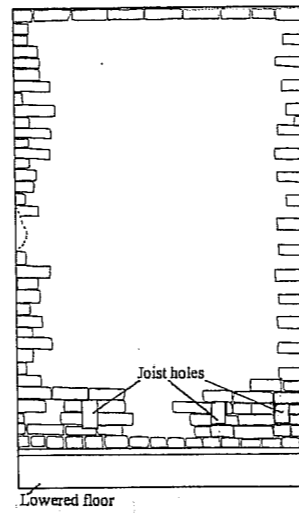


B40 Floor Plan

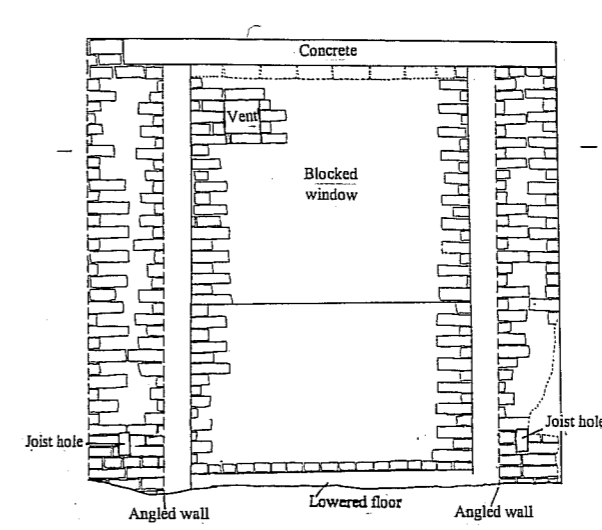




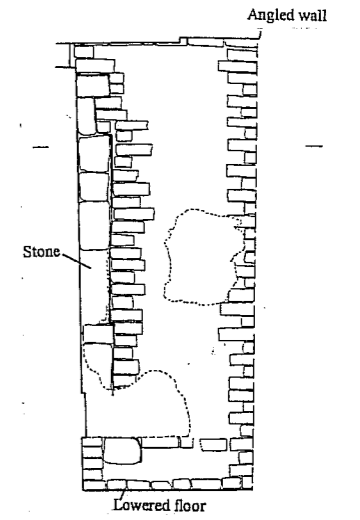
B41N



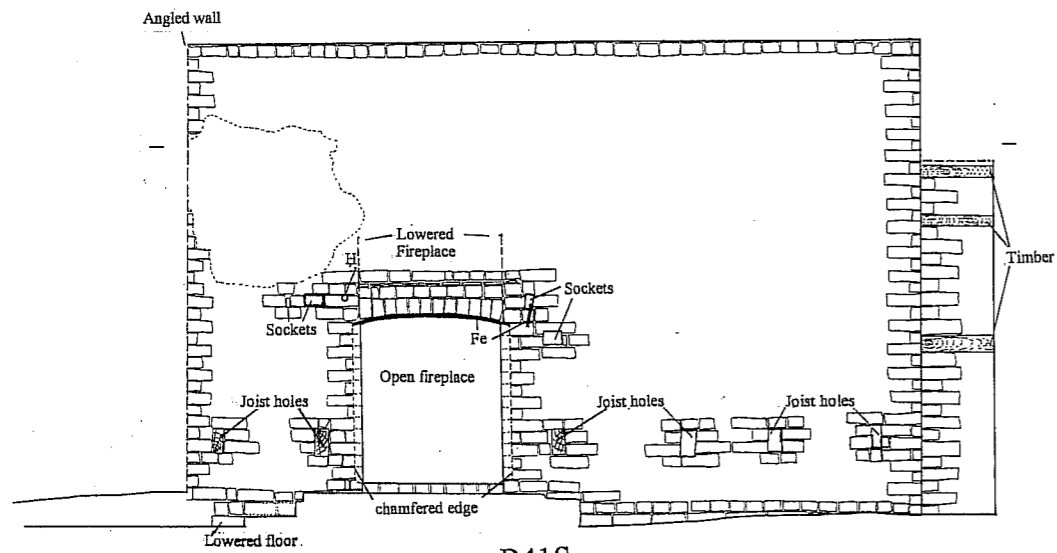
B41E



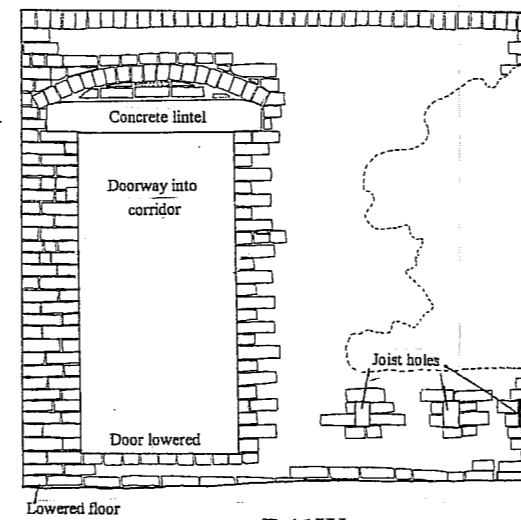
B41S-E



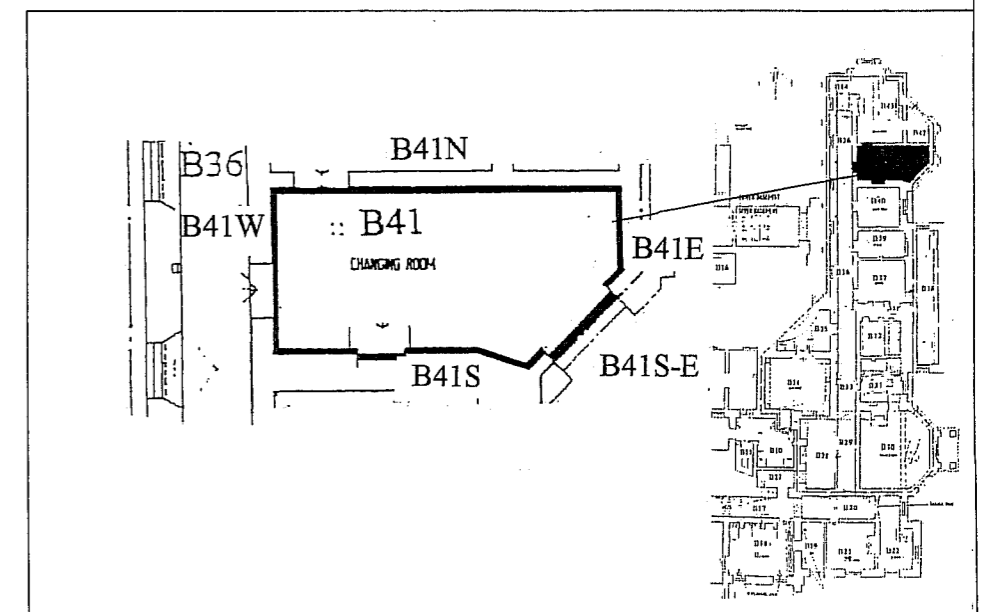
B41S

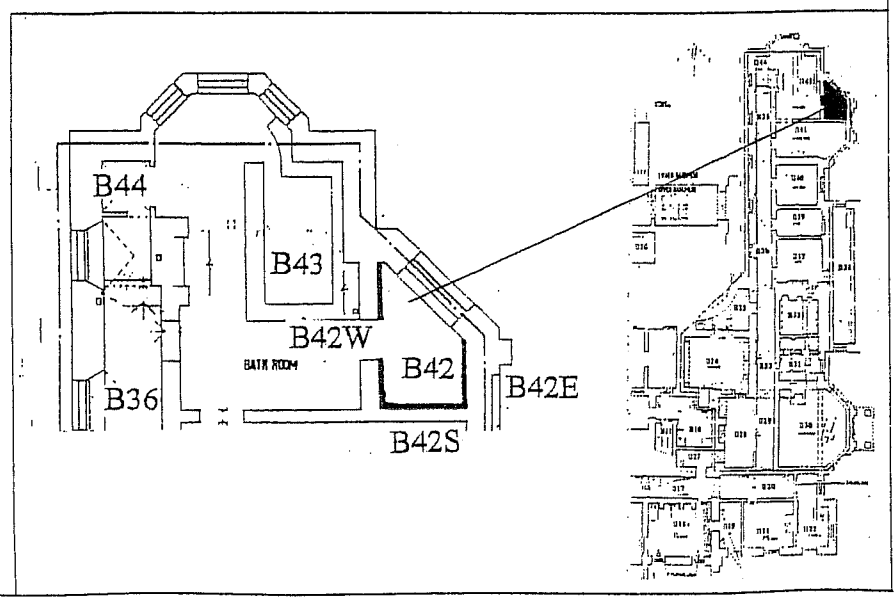
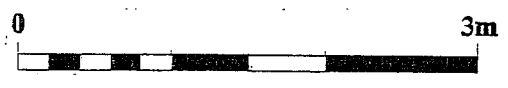
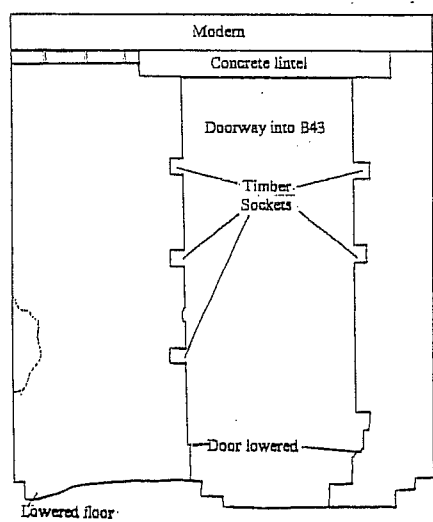
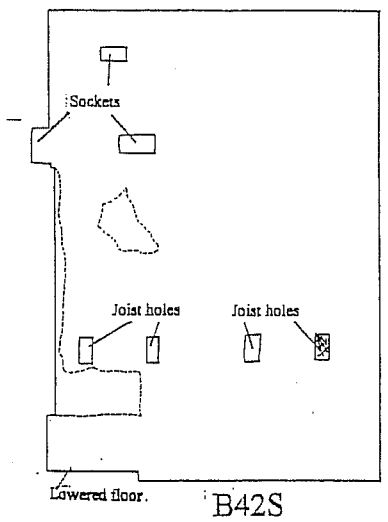
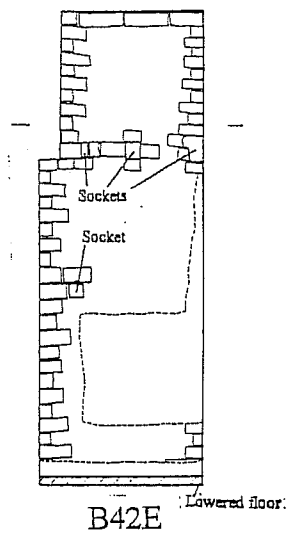


B41S



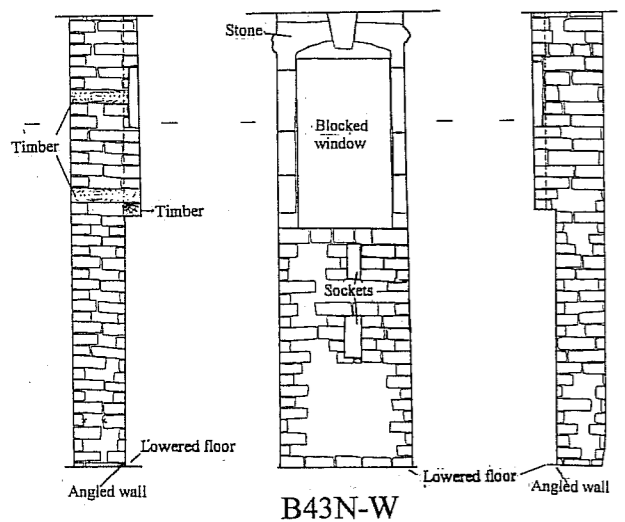
B41W



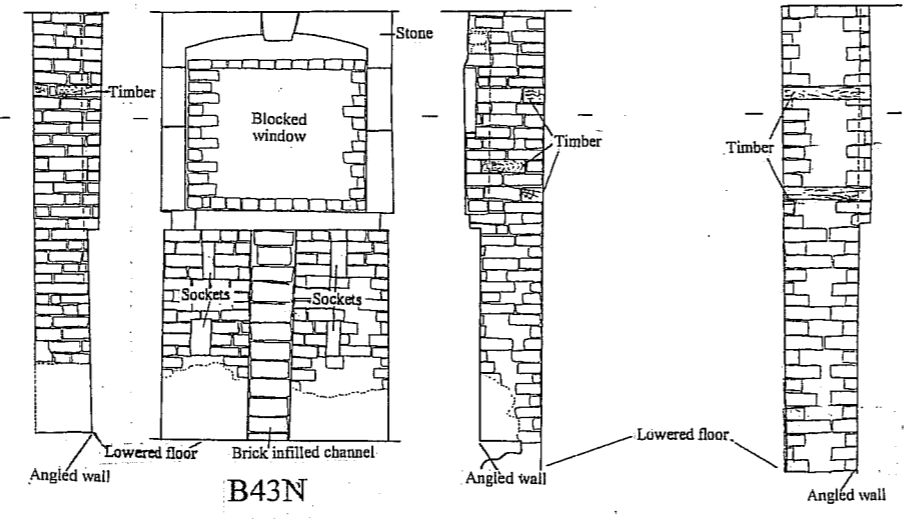


Bath Room

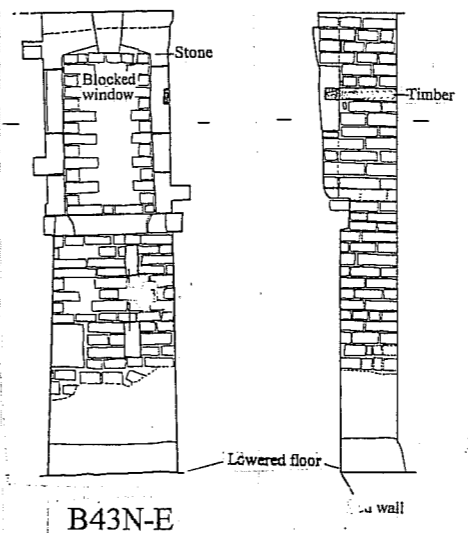
B43



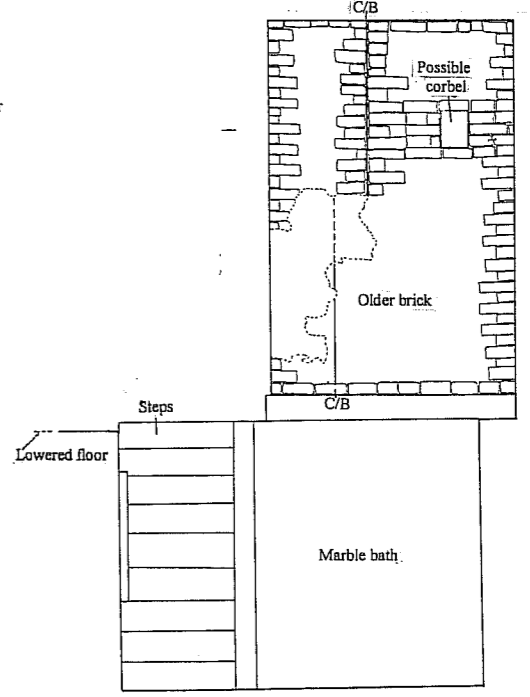
B43N-W



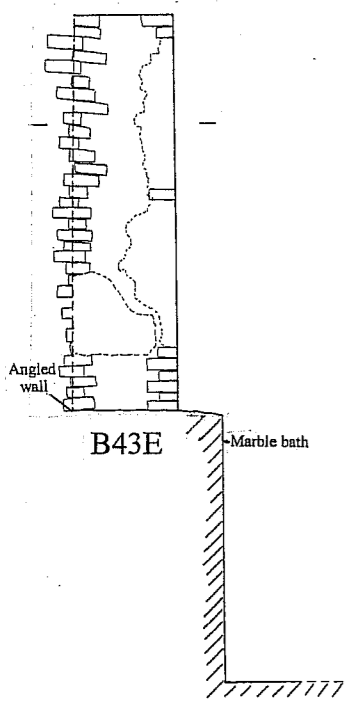
B43N



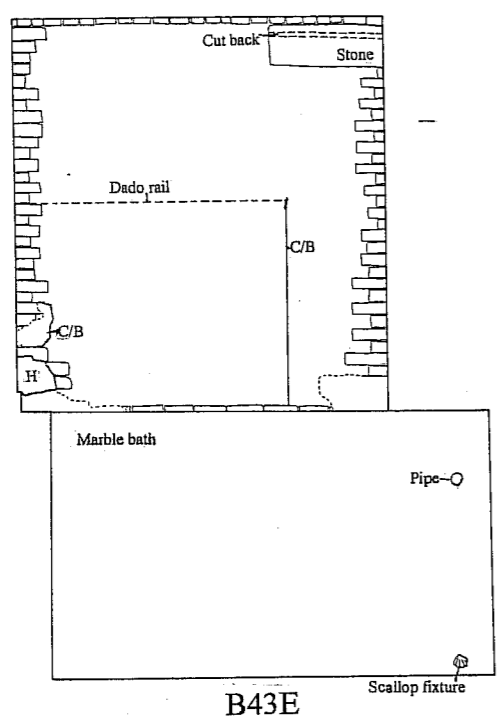
B43N-E



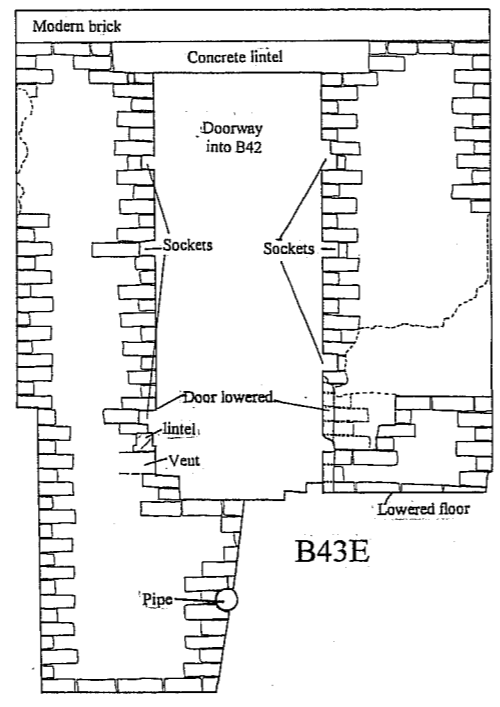
B43N



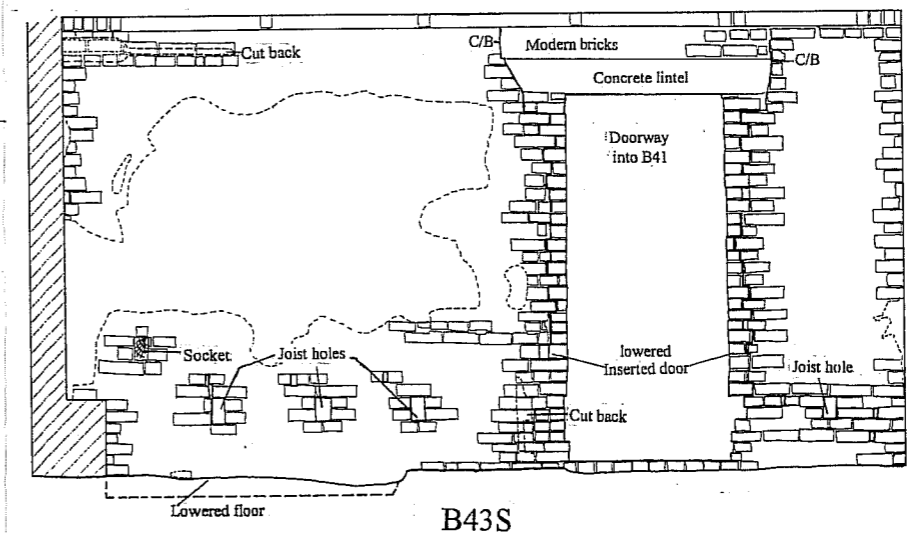
B43E



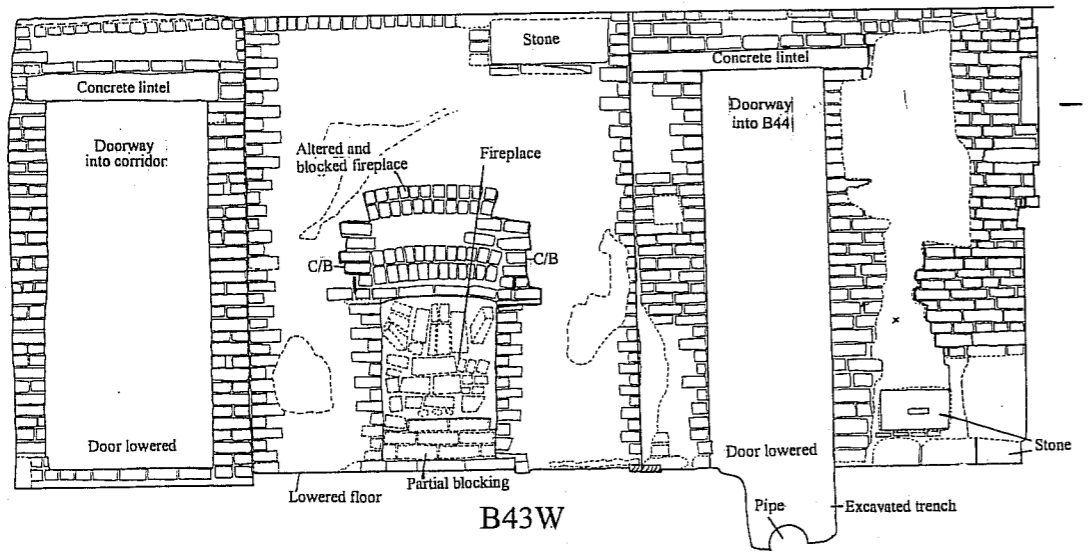
B43E



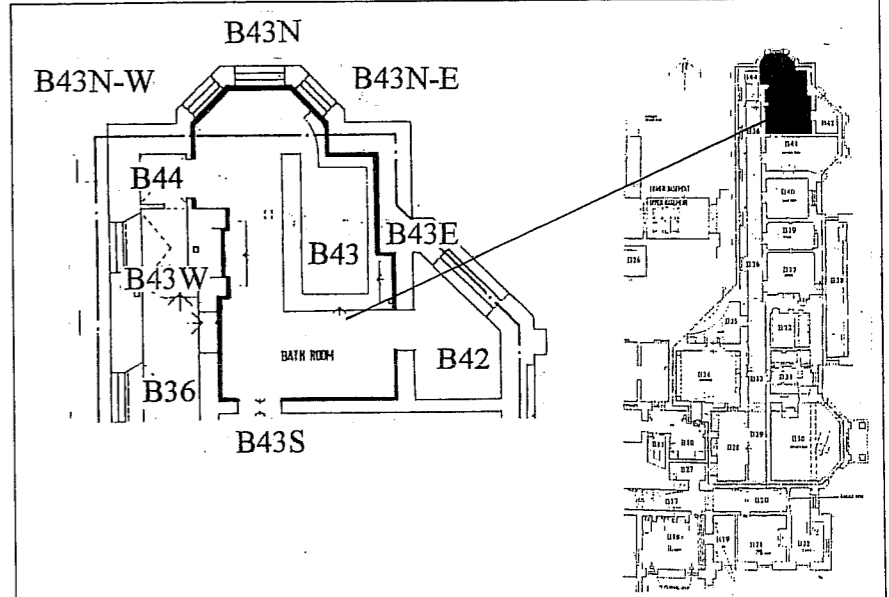
B43E

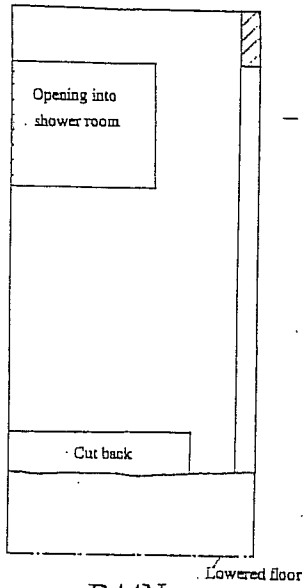


B43S

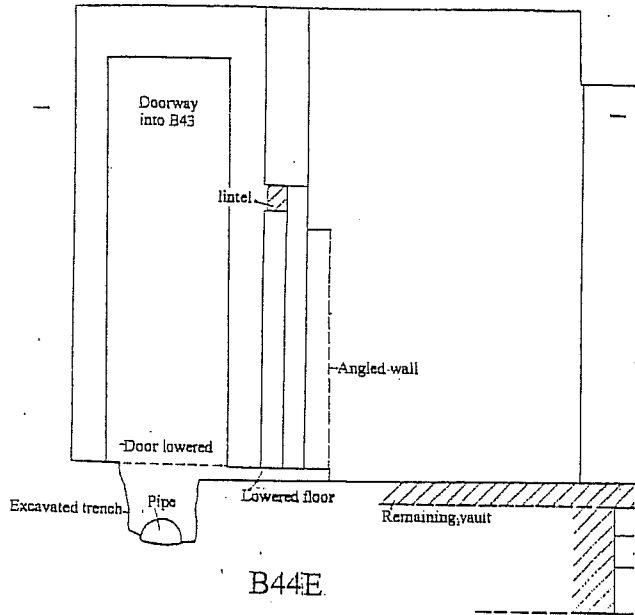


B43W

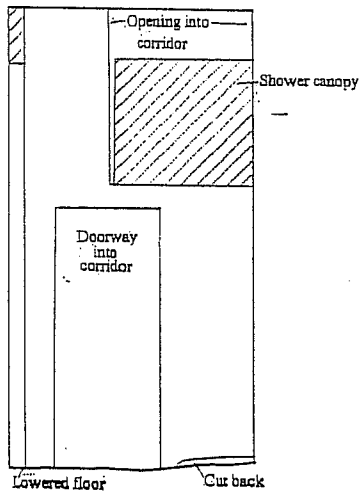




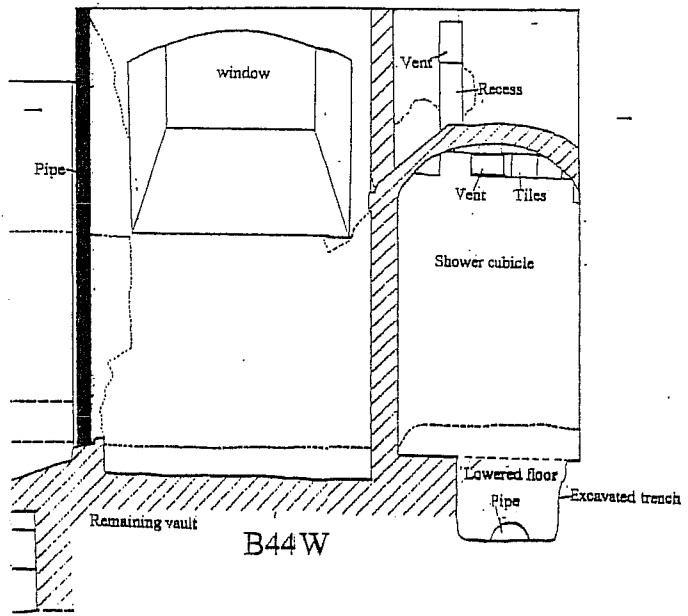
B44N



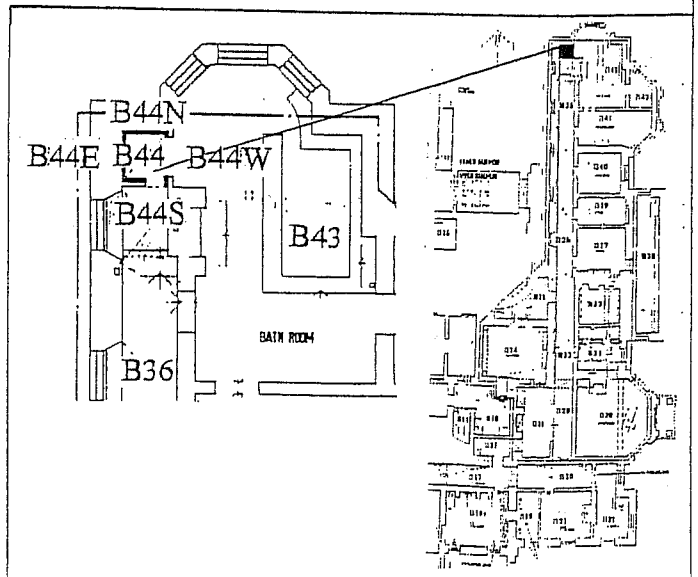
B44E



B44S



B44W



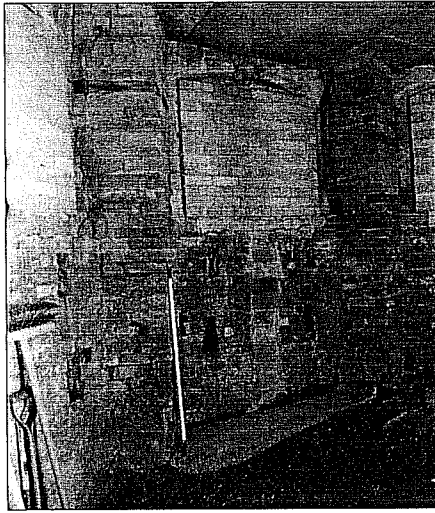


Plate 1 North window in bathroom (B43)
(Archive - Photo 91)

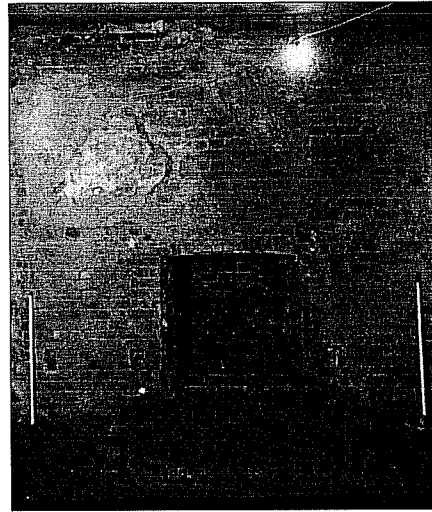


Plate 2 Changing room (B41) showing
raised floor and fireplace in south wall
(Archive - Photo 55)

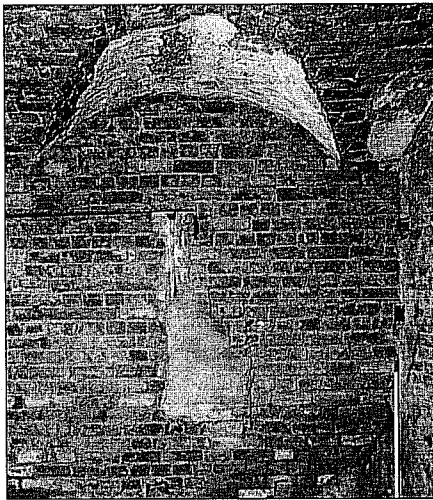


Plate 3 Later thickening obscuring vaulting
in north wall of Lamp Room (B40)
(Archive - Photo 39)

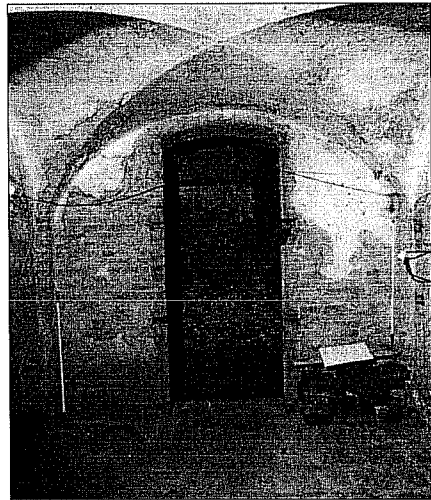


Plate 4 West wall of store B39 showing
vaulting, floor and door into B36.
(Archive - Photo 37)

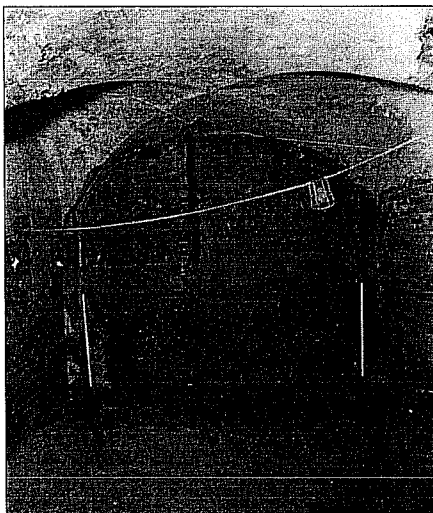


Plate 5 Store B39 showing vaulting
cutting across blocked window in east
wall. (Archive - Photo 34)

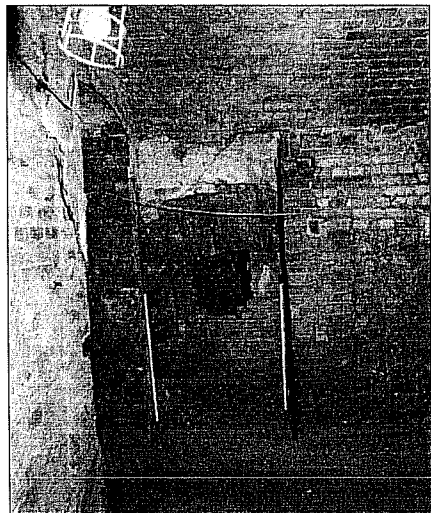


Plate 6 South wall of B37 showing
blocked door, the ceiling obscures an
earlier opening (Archive - Photo 22)

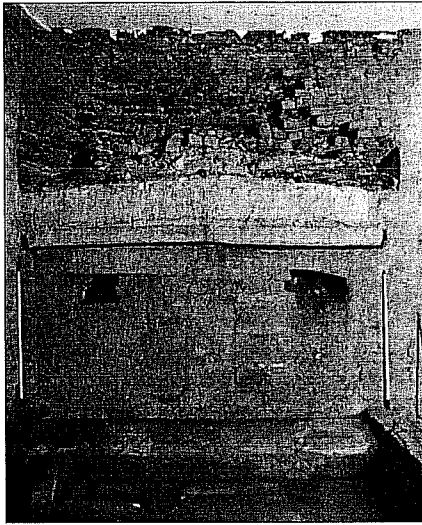


Plate 7 Original kitchen (B32)
north wall (Archive - Photo 13)

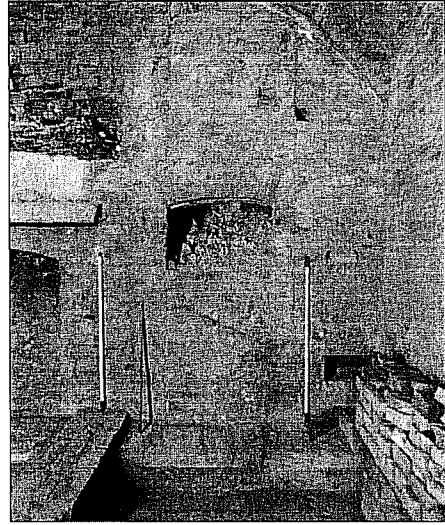


Plate 8 East of plate 7 showing earlier
blocked opening. (Archive - Photo 14)

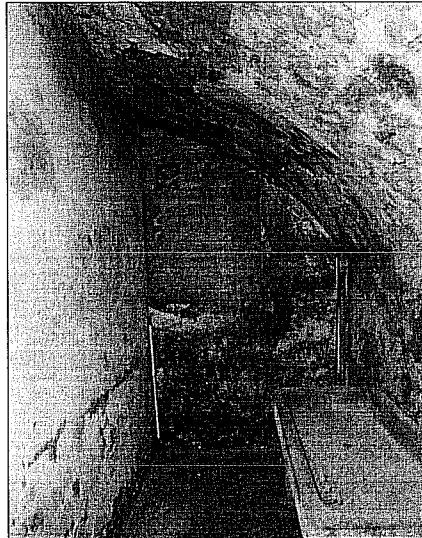


Plate 9 Setlars store (B38)
(Archive - Photo 26)

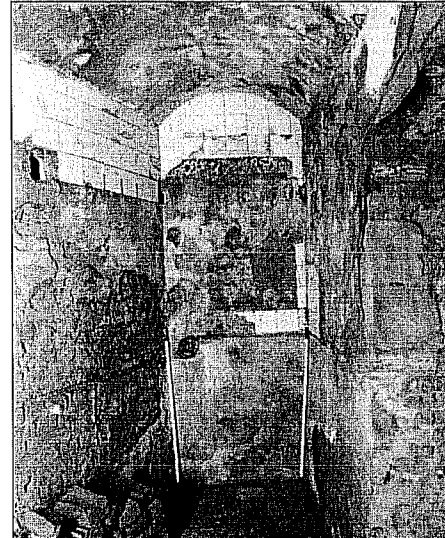


Plate 10 North wall of Dairy (B35)
original masonry near right (Photo 58)



Plate 11 Scullery north wall showing
early masonry (Archive - Photo 112)



Plate 12 Spiral stairs in scullery (B22)
(Archive - Photo 114)