

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 1006

**Building Survey and Photographic Record of
Elm Farm, Wymondham,
Norfolk**

40319WYM

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November 2004

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Location: Elm Farm, Norwich Common, Wymondham
District: South Norfolk
Grid Ref: TG 1354 0335
HER No.: 40319 WYM
Date of fieldwork: August to September 2004

Summary

A photographic and drawn record was made of Elm Farm in advance of, and during demolition. The building (and associated barn) appears to date from 1806, although some of its features seem anachronistic.

1.0 Introduction

(Fig. 1)

A building survey and photographic record of Elm Farm, Wymondham, was undertaken by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) prior to, and during demolition. The farmhouse is located in a central Norfolk landscape of scattered farms and houses, within the area of the former Norwich Common at Wymondham. It was uninhabited at the time of the survey.

This building survey was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: ER 7.05.2004) and NAU Project Design (Ref: 1789/JB May 2004).

The work was designed to create a written, drawn and photographic record to RCHME level 2 (RCHME 1996) in advance of demolition, but with the addition that evidence for an earlier structure within would be sought and recorded, if found, during the course of demolition.

Mr E. Warnes of Apple Interiors, Hellesdon, Norwich commissioned and funded this project.

The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Historical Background

(Fig. 1)

Elm Farm was a late Georgian house of brick, thought possibly to incorporate the remains of an earlier house. There is no easily available source to illuminate the history of the building beyond the building itself. Its position on the former common (enclosed after an Act of 1806) and the associated barn, with iron clamps forming the date '1806' indicate an early 19th-century date for construction. Both the barn and the farmhouse are of similar brick, in Flemish bond.

Although these indications are for a building erected as a new farm in 1806, it has features reminiscent of an earlier date, including its end stack plan. Elm Farm lies close to and parallel with the A11 road, the line of which probably dates from the enclosure of the common c. 1806 and its parcelling out. The house is not shown on Faden's map of 1797, which shows a windmill on the common and other buildings around its edge.

A building description in some detail was made in April 2004, when the structure of the interior was not visible (Rose 2.04.2004; Norfolk Historic Environment Record 40319). Some immediate observations may be added to that report.

- The date of 1806 seen on the barn (see above).
- The original doorway was round-headed (Plate 1). The curve of this brick arch was cut to accommodate the rectangular frame of the present doorframe.
- The beam in the left-hand room (Room 1) is the same as in Room 2, but with the additions of modern softwood mouldings for decoration.
- On the upper floor, in the catslide roof (between Rooms 6 and 9) the blocked cupboard is in fact a door, blocked only in Room 6 but with the door still in place. (Some step must have been provided for access from Room 6 to 9).
- The brickwork is dentilated to front and rear (only).
- It may also be noted that there were no blocked openings on the external brickwork.

3.0 Methodology

The objective of this survey was to create a record of the building to RCHM level 2 (RCHM 1996) but with the addition of further recording during demolition.

Level 2 recording required:

- Written record (this report)
- Drawings:
 - Sketch plan
 - Plans of floors to show form and location of structural features of historical significance.
- Photographs:
 - General views of the exterior
 - Overall appearance of the interior
 - Detailed coverage of the exterior

Plans were drawn of the ground and first floors before any demolition took place. A schematic plan was made of the roof timbers. The archive contains copies of all the digital photographs (Appendix 1).

Further notes were made during demolition of the farmhouse, beginning with the removal of the roof covering and then the roof timbers. Parts of the front wall were removed to allow observation of the cross beams, their fixing into the wall, the nature of the wall and whether there was any evidence for an earlier building. Notes were made on the structure and materials of the walls (which indicated later modification internally to the original house of c. 1806).

4.0 Building Survey

(Figs 2, 3 and 4; Plates 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8; Appendix 1)

Plans were made of the ground floor and the first floor and several observations made. For reference, rooms were numbered 1 to 11 (Figs 2 and 3). Several general points may be noted:

- The brickwork was uniformly Flemish bond and clearly of one build.
- The rectangular entrance door surround is a later addition, with the original roundheaded doorway visible on the inside (and just evident on the outside).
- Building timber was all of softwood.
- The façade wall was about 0.36m thick (i.e. a stretcher and header) whilst the other three main walls (and main internal walls) were about 0.26m thick (i.e. a stretcher).
- The two cross beams in Rooms 1 and 2 rested upon lintels over the windows (Plate 7). Each beam was 7" (180mm) x 9" (230mm) and of softwood.

Ground Floor: The Plan

(Fig. 2; Plates 3, 4 and 7)

The ground floor had stairs rising from the entrance, between Walls A and B, with a door to each side giving access to Rooms 1 and 2. A door in Room 2 gave access to the rear rooms (3, 4 and 5). A door in Room 5 gave access to the outside. There was no evidence of blocked windows in the rear of Rooms 1 and 2.

Both Room 1 and Room 2 had large cross beams supporting the first-floor joists; each was 7" (180mm) wide and 9" (230mm) deep with stop chamfers. The beam in Room 1 had been enhanced by the addition of softwood mouldings to produce a more decorative effect.

The main internal walls on the ground floor were about 0.26m thick; the exception was Wall B which was only about 0.10m thick and found to be a modern insertion of breeze-block. This was presumably done to enable the central stairway to be built which indicates that they were not original and that access to the upper floor was *via* the stack stair(s) in the first instance.

Room 1

(Fig. 2; Plate 3)

Room 1 was reached from the small hallway, *via* a door in the Wall A. Wall A was 0.26m thick and of brick, with some breeze-block inclusions. The cross beam ran from front to back, supported on the window lintel. The stack contained a fireplace of probable 19th-century date. On one side of the stack was an alcove, on the other behind a board door, was a flight of stairs to Room 6 (Plate 3). These stairs were blocked on the first floor by inserted floorboards.

Room 2

(Fig. 2)

Room 2 was nearly a reverse plan of Room 1, except that the cross beam was in a different relative position, there was a door to the rear, and the room size had possibly been reduced by the building of internal Wall B (of breeze-block). Although there was no obvious evidence of stairs by the stack, in the room above, the boards in this corner were narrower suggesting an insertion and possibly an original entrance through the floor.

Removal of brickwork from the front revealed that the two cross beams rested on the timber lintels above the two front windows. Each cross beam was 7" (180mm) x 9" (230mm), of softwood, with joists set in mortices.

Demolition revealed that Wall B was entirely of breeze-block.

Rooms 3, 4 and 5

(Fig. 2; Plate 4)

The rear of the ground floor was divided into three rooms (3, 4 and 5) set at a lower level than those at the front. Curiously, the internal wall between Rooms 3 and 4 contained a window (Plate 4). Room 5 contained the rear stack. The rear windows are original.

First Floor

(Fig. 3; Plate 5)

The upper floor was divided into six rooms (6 to 11) with three rooms to front and three to the rear. The original arrangement of the rooms is uncertain due to the insertion of the central stairway, which may have altered the layout. Except for the wall between front and back, the internal walls consisted only of slight partitions. The rear rooms are lower than the front.

Originally, stairs came into Room 6 by the stack (evidenced by blocking of the floor here) and probably into Room 8 in a like manner. A door in Room 6 (1.62m high) also led into the rear, Room 9 (Plate 5).

The Roof

(Fig. 4; Plates 6 and 8)

Wall plates (of softwood) rest on the front, middle and rear walls; these were inspected after removal and found to have no evidence for tenons or any other jointing. The rear wall plate carried a possible carpenter's mark, perhaps AC 1 1 8 (Fig. 4).

The main roof consisted of common rafters (2" (50mm) x 3" (80mm)), four pairs of which were (nail) fixed at the foot to the four tie beams. There is a purlin in each pitch, fixed in the gable brickwork and supported by raking struts rising from the four tie beams, nailed in place. A ridge board runs between the two stacks.

The catslide roof is at a lower pitch, and consists of common rafters (2" (50mm) x 3" (80mm)) resting on the lower wall plate and the brickwork of the central wall. The rafters are supported by a purlin (in three overlapping sections).

5.0 Conclusions

The form of the house, with two end stacks and with one stair next to the stack, is reminiscent of building plans of 17th- or 18th-century date, such as the RCHM T-plan. In these houses the main façade may have a central door, giving on to a cross-passage or hall, and with an equally-divided plan, with a parlour behind a cross-wall on one side. At Elm Farm, this apparent arrangement is of relatively recent date, with breeze-block found in one cross-wall (Wall A) and entirely comprising the other (B).

It seems likely that originally each stack had a stairway to the room above and possible that the under-stairs cupboard marks an original door to the rear (opposite the front door). There had probably been some major internal change, however, with Wall B and the (central) stairs being of recent date.

There was no evidence for an earlier structure being encapsulated within the present building.

Acknowledgements

The building survey and report was carried out by Kenneth Penn, who is grateful to Edwin Rose (NLA) and Mr Clive Brown (builder) for their assistance and advice. The report was illustrated and produced by Maggie Foottit and edited by Alice Lyons.

Bibliography

RCHME., 1996 Recording Historic Buildings: A Descriptive Specification, Third Edition.
Swindon: RCHME

Appendix 1: Index to photographic archive

Norfolk Archaeological Unit –Photographic Archive			
Site: Elm Farm, Wymondham, Norfolk			
HER Number: 40319			
Frame No.	Description	Photographer	Date
1	House from south-west	K Penn	August to September 2004
2	House from south-west	K Penn	August to September 2004
3	House from south	K Penn	August to September 2004
4	House from south	K Penn	August to September 2004
5	House, west end	K Penn	August to September 2004
6	House, east end	K Penn	August to September 2004
7	House, east end	K Penn	August to September 2004
8	North side of house	K Penn	August to September 2004
9	North side of house	K Penn	August to September 2004
10	Barn, north side	K Penn	August to September 2004
11	Barn, west end	K Penn	August to September 2004
12	Room 1, beam	K Penn	August to September 2004
13	Room 1, beam	K Penn	August to September 2004
14	Room 1, fireplace	K Penn	August to September 2004
15	Room 1, stairs	K Penn	August to September 2004
16	Room 2, beam	K Penn	August to September 2004
17	Room 2, cupboard	K Penn	August to September 2004
18	Upper floor, stairs	K Penn	August to September 2004
19	Below stairs cupboard	K Penn	August to September 2004
20	Room 3, window between Rooms 3 and 4	K Penn	August to September 2004
21	Carpenter's mark on underside of rear wallplate	K Penn	August to September 2004

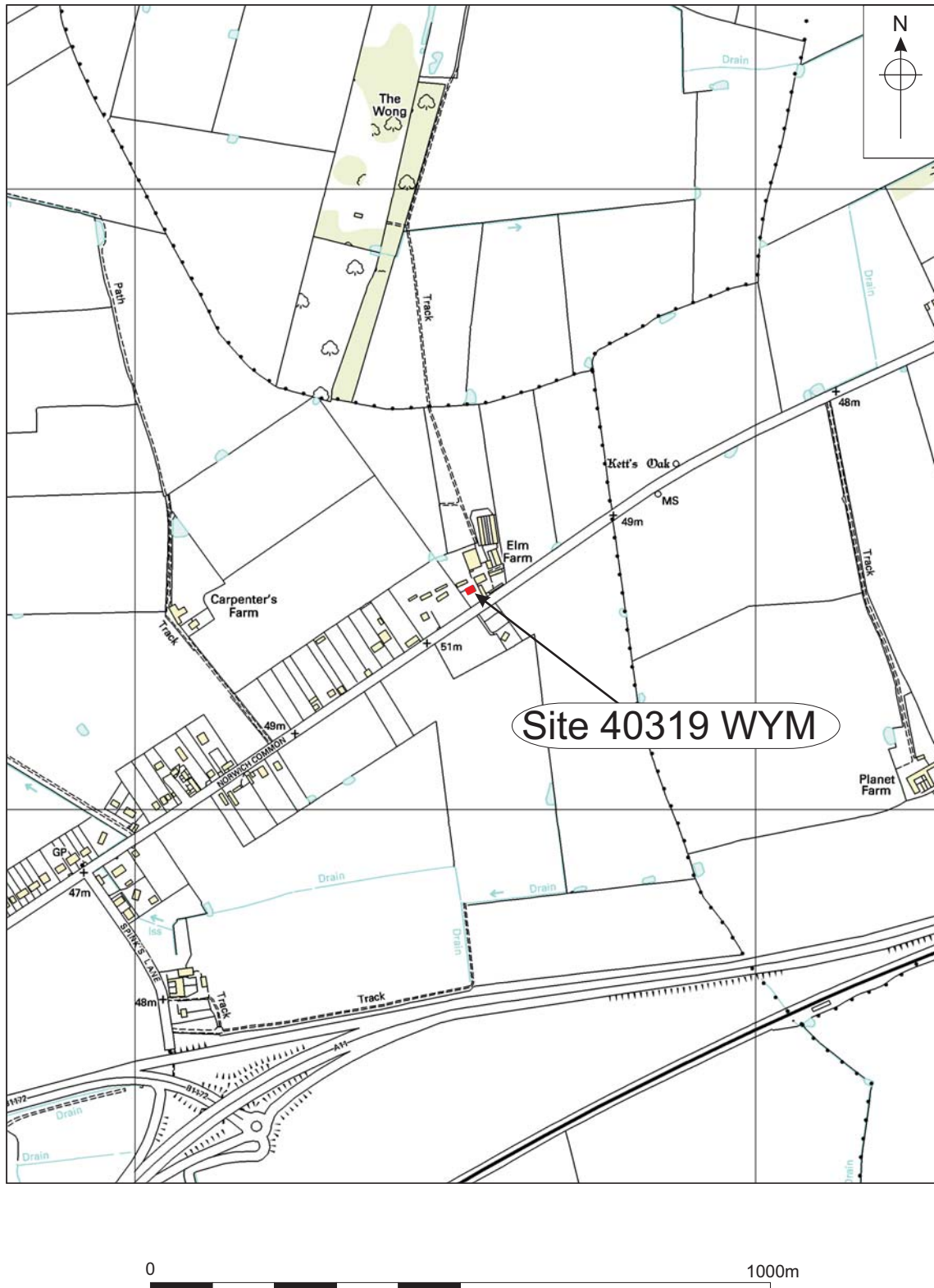


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:10,000

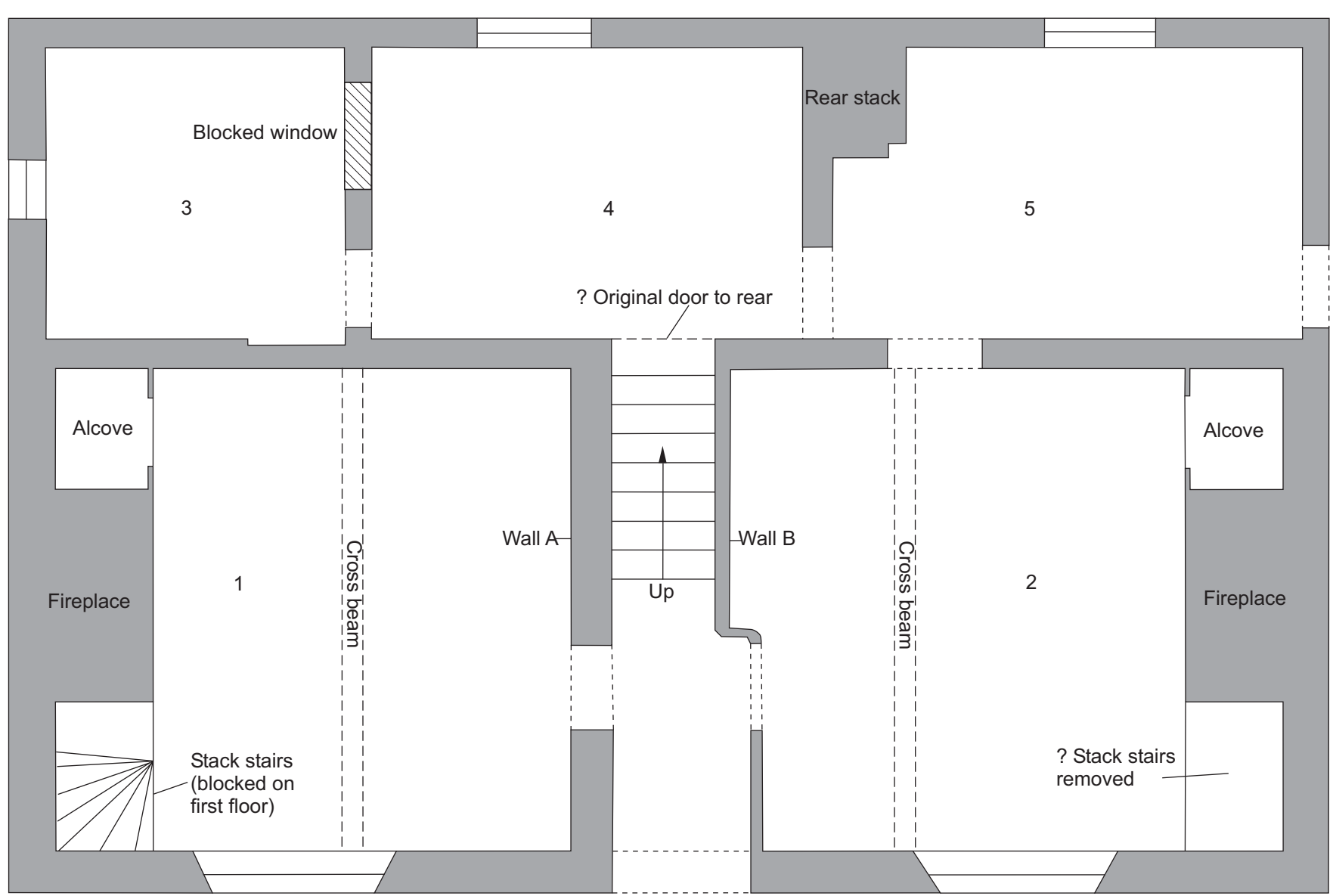


Figure 2. Plan of ground floor. Scale 1:50

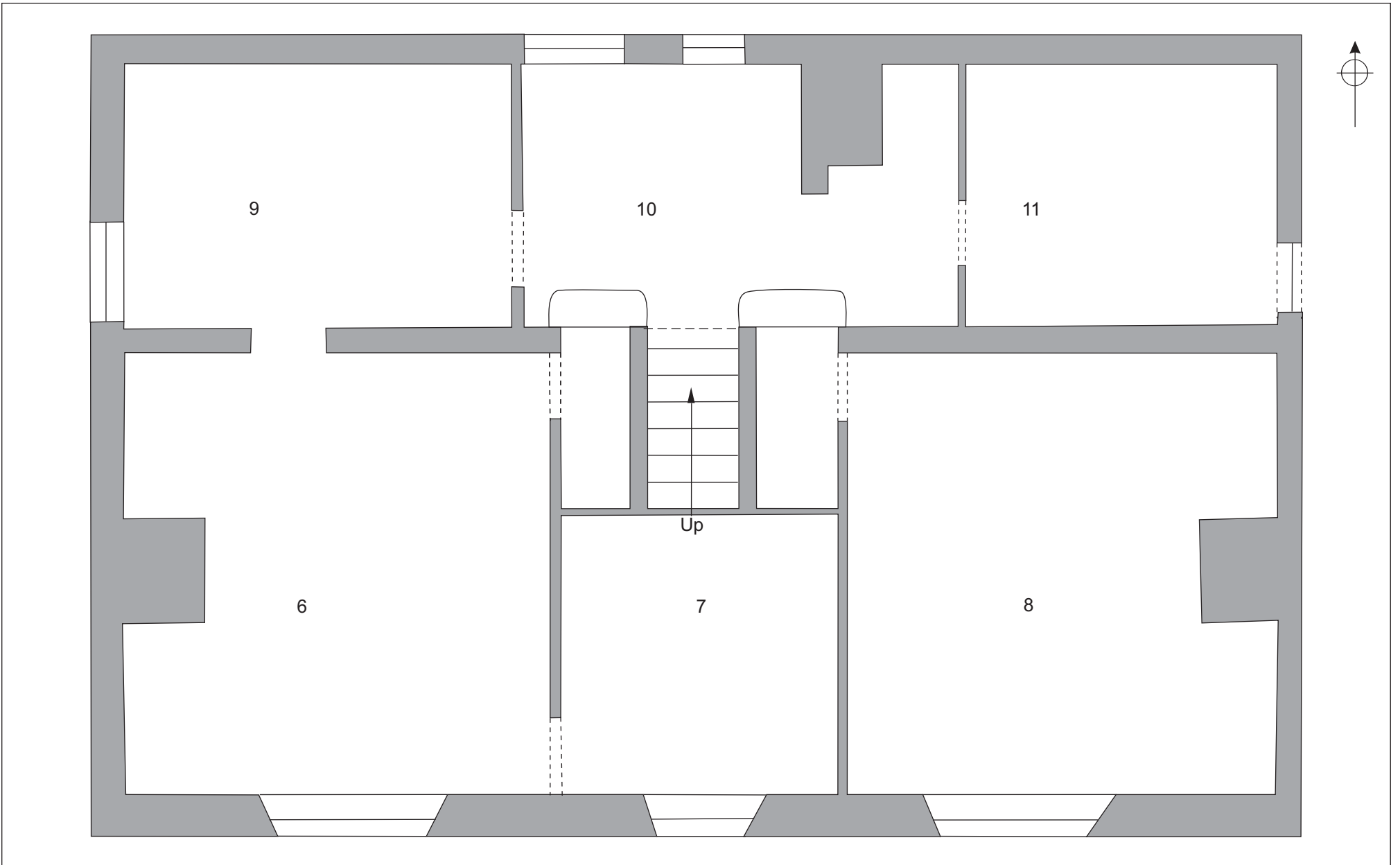


Figure 3. Plan of first floor. Scale 1:50

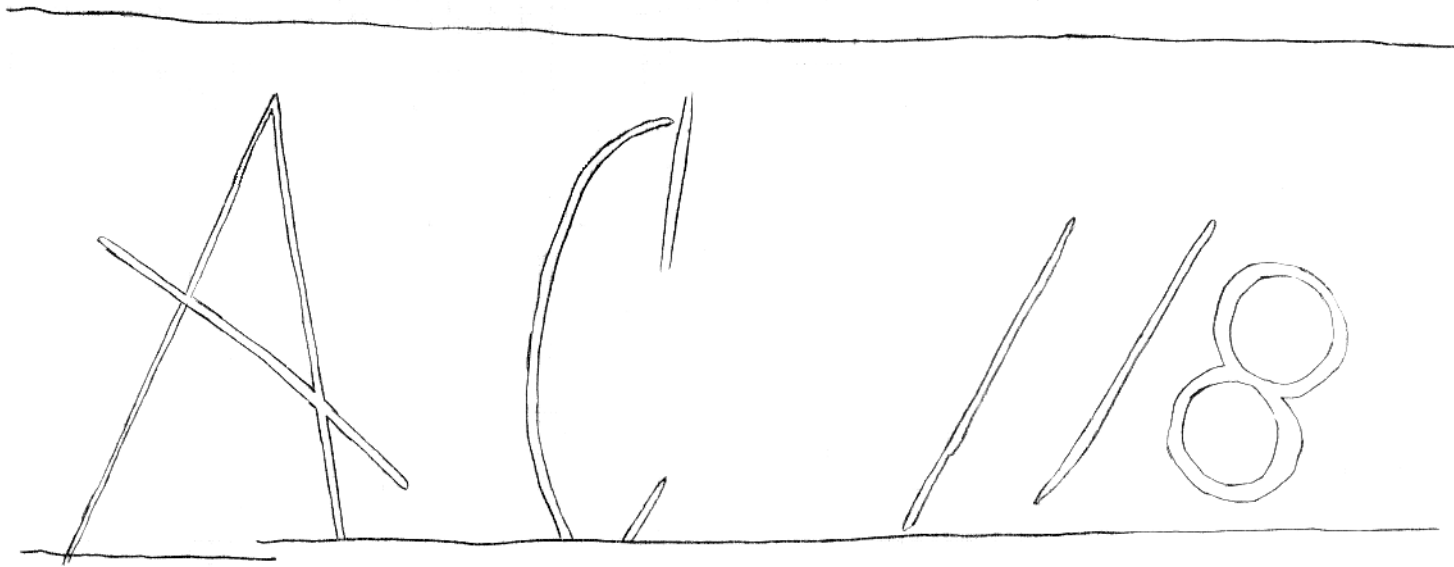


Figure 4. Carpenter's mark. Scale 1:2



Plate 1. Elm Farm, south (front)



Plate 2. Elm Farm, rear view



Plate 3. Room 1, stairs by stack



Plate 4. Room 3, former window



Plate 5. Room 9, door to Room 6



Plate 6. Roof timbers