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Archaeological Services

**Old Star Cottage, 1, Main Street,
Frisby-on-the-Wreake, Leicestershire:
Historic Building Survey**

by Gerwyn Richards & Neil Finn



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Frisby-on-the-Wreake, Leicestershire:
Historic Building Survey**

(NGR SK 694 176)

Gerwyn Richards & Neil Finn

Planning & Listed Building Applications: 09/00305/FUL, 09/00305/LBC

For: Mr J. Mensley, Country House Limited

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Summary

Country House Limited have secured planning and listed building consent for the conversion of Old Star Cottage, 1, Main Street, Frisby-on-the-Wreake, Leicestershire (SK 694 176) into three dwellings. University of Leicester Archaeological Services was commissioned by Mr J. Mensley of Country House to undertake an Historic Building Survey in accordance with the requirements of a condition on the permission. The survey provides a record of Old Star Cottage and its associated outbuildings in their current state prior to conversion.

The property has had a varied history having previously been an inn and a butcher's premises. Ostensibly this is an eighteenth century brick house with various subsequent additions including a slaughterhouse and a detached stable-block. The fragmentary remains of an earlier structure were identified within the building including a stone-built cellar and foundations, a four-centred arched stone fireplace and chimneystack, a moulded ceiling beam, some reset panelling and other reused timbers. The evidence suggests a sixteenth or more likely seventeenth century date for this earlier building.

The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under the accession code X.A239. 2009.

1. Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was commissioned by Mr. J. Mensley of Country House Limited to undertake an Historic Building Survey of Old Star Cottage, 1 Main Street, Frisby-on-the-Wreake, Leicestershire (SK 694 176). Planning and Listed Building approval had been granted by Melton Borough Council for the conversion of the existing dwelling and associated outbuildings into three dwellings (Application nos: 09/00304/FUL and 09/00305/LBC).

The Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council, in his capacity as archaeological advisor to Melton Borough Council, had recommended the completion of an Historic Building Impact Assessment, meeting the requirements of a Level 2 survey as defined in the English Heritage guidance document *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2006), prior to determination of the application. The planning authority made this a condition of planning approval. In discussion with the Senior Planning Archaeologist it was agreed that, rather than preparing an assessment of the building post-determination, it would be more informative to complete an Historic Building Survey, meeting Level 3 requirements as set out in the English Heritage guidelines.

The project was undertaken in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological*

Investigation and Recording of Standing buildings or Structures. In addition, Leicestershire County Council's *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* was followed.

The Survey was undertaken by Neil Finn and Gerwyn Richards on October 7th and 8th 2009.

2. Location and General Description

Frisby-on-the-Wreake is a village in the Melton Borough of north-east Leicestershire, located on the south side of the valley of the River Wreake. The main turnpike road between Leicester and Melton Mowbray originally ran through the village, but in 1810 a bypass road was created and the modern A607 follows this route, on higher ground to the south of the village (Figure 1).

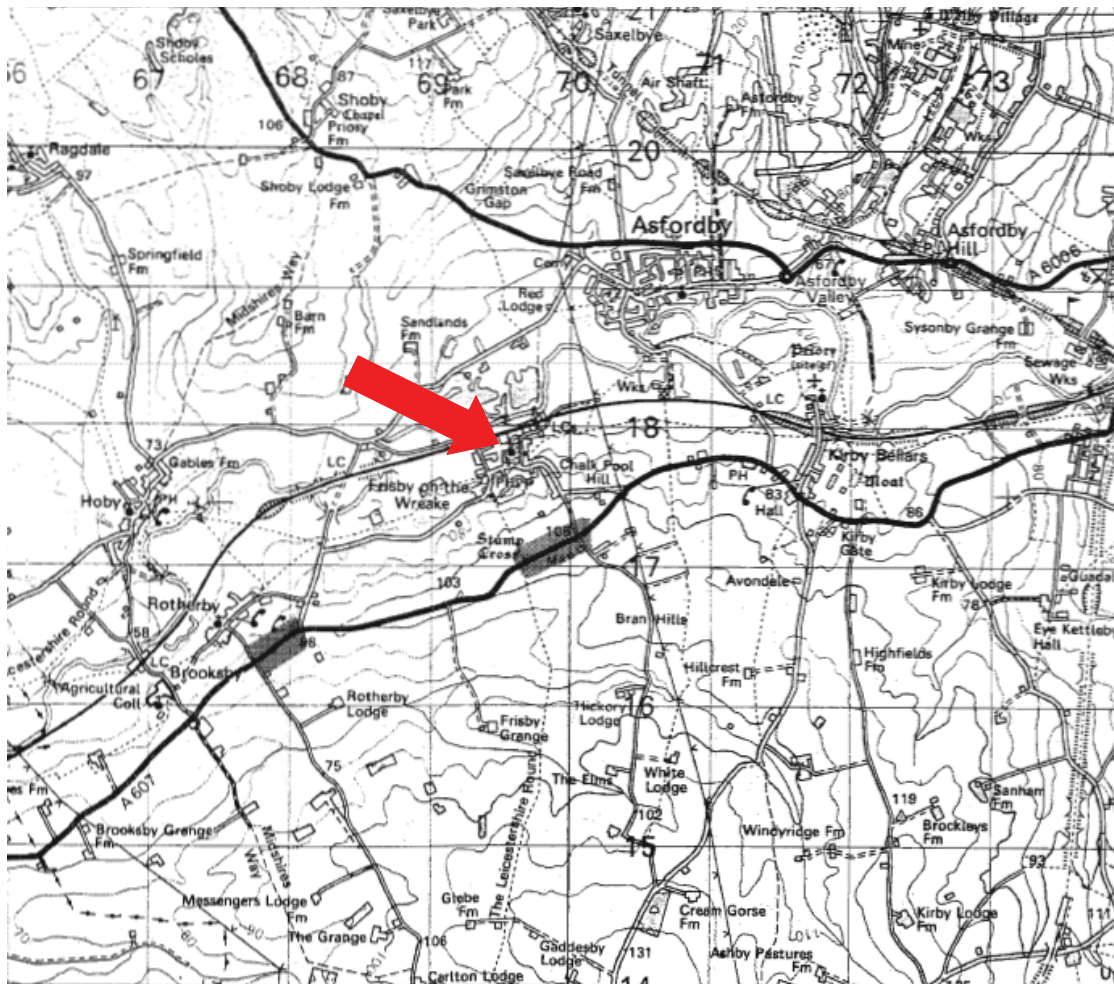


Figure 1. Site location

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The property at 1, Main Street, Frisby-on-the-Wreake occupies a corner plot at the junction of Main Street and Water Lane (Figure 2, Photo 1). A two-storey dwelling known as Old Star Cottage occupies the Main Street frontage with an attached one and a half storey range fronting Water Lane. Beyond Old Star Cottage on the Main Street frontage is a gateway providing access to a rear yard and garden and then a two-storey former stable-block which adjoins the adjacent property, 3 Main Street. Number 3 Main Street is a grade 2 listed timber-framed building and the listing also covers the adjoining stable-block belonging to number 1 Main Street. Old Star Cottage is not listed. The property is located within the Frisby-on-the-Wreake Conservation Area. At the back of the property, a brick-built lean-to range adjoins Old Star Cottage and a brick and timber washhouse adjoins the range fronting Water Lane. In the garden there is a ruined brick-built pigsty and outside toilet. The name of the property commemorates its former function as an inn called the Old Star. There is evidence for part of the property having been used as a slaughterhouse and butchery at one time.



Figure 2 Location Plan: Plot Boundaries in Red, Buildings in Green (Not to scale)



Photo 1. Main Street elevation of Old Star Cottage with former stable-block to right

3. Description of the Buildings

For the purpose of this report a series of letter codes have been assigned to identify the various built elements, as follows:

- A - Principal range of Old Star Cottage, fronting Main Street
- B - Range fronting Water Lane
- C - Lean-to range adjoining rear of range A
- D - Washhouse adjoining east side of range B
- E - Stable-block adjoining number 3 Main Street

Orientation: The long axis of the Main Street range of Old Star Cottage is orientated approximately east-north-east to west-south-west, for ease of description this taken hereafter to be east to west, with the principal front being the south-facing elevation onto Main Street.

Figures 3-6 illustrate all floor plans and a cross-section through ranges A and C.

3.1 *Range A – principal range of Old Star Cottage, fronting Main Street*

The principal element of Old Star Cottage is a three-bay range fronting Main Street. The walls are predominantly of painted brick on a rubble stone plinth. There are projecting chimney stacks on both gable ends, that to the east, within the yard, being stone-built. The brick-built west gable wall and chimneystack have been partially rebuilt from eaves height to the roof line in recent years. The principal south-facing elevation is constructed from handmade red bricks measuring 9 x 4½ x 2¼ inches (229 x 114 x 56 mm), attributable to the 18th century. The upper part of this wall has been raised in height at a later date using brick measuring 9½ x 4¾ x 3 inches (241 x 120 x 76 mm). The rear (north) elevation has not been raised in the same way and the eaves height is lower. The roof is covered in late 20th century concrete tiles.



Photo 2. South elevation of Old Star Cottage

The south elevation has a near-symmetrical arrangement of openings, though the offset position of the front door upsets the balance (Photo 2). This doorway is not an original opening and there is evidence for an earlier arch-headed window, to the east of and partly truncated by the door, the position of which corresponds with the first floor window above. The other ground floor windows have similar arched heads. All window frames and the door are late 20th century in date. There is evidence for a blocked doorway with segmental arched head immediately to the west of the current door.

Interior – ground floor

The front door opens into a central hallway which has a late 20th century timber staircase rising to the first floor. Access to the cellar is from the hallway via a very narrow opening beneath the stairs; this is not the original cellar entrance (see below). Embedded in the west wall of the hallway, at ceiling height, is the truncated remnant of an oak beam with an ogee moulding; it is unclear whether this is an *in situ* timber or is reused in this position (Figure 7).

Doorways at the north end of the hallway open into the two principal rooms to the east and west and a third doorway to the north gives access to the later ranges B and C. The room to the east has in its gable wall a four-centred arched limestone fireplace (Figure 5, Photo 3). This has simple chamfered decoration and a fairly depressed arch and is broadly attributable to the 16th or 17th century; it is in a poor state of repair and had until recently been covered by a large Victorian gothic fire surround. The east gable wall appears originally to have been constructed of ironstone rubble at this level, though subsequently much altered with the insertion of a late 20th century window north of the fireplace and a doorway to its south. This doorway, which is clearly broken through the stonework of the wall, opens onto a small cupboard housed in an awkward external lean-to addition; it is possible that this was at one time an external doorway.

Where plaster has been removed from the internal wall faces the ironstone plinth is exposed on the north and south sides. A break in the plinth in the north wall marks the position of the original cellar access.

The axial ceiling beam is boxed in and the ceiling is underdrawn.



Photo 3. Range A ground floor east room with early fireplace, looking E

Within the room to the west of the entrance hall much of the plaster has been stripped from the walls and the blocked door in the south elevation, previously noted, is clearly visible. It is unclear whether this is an original door position or a later insertion. In the west gable wall is a poorly constructed projecting fireplace (Photo 4). The axial ceiling beam in this room is again boxed in and the ceiling underdrawn; the axial beam is not a continuation of the moulded beam fragment embedded in the wall between this and the hallway.



Photo 4. Range A ground floor west room, looking west

Cellar

Beneath part of the east room and hallway of this range is a cellar constructed from roughly squared ironstone blocks laid to courses (Figure 4). This has a vaulted brick ceiling and the floor is paved in brick. There is a low brick thrall along the east wall. The original access to the cellar was in the north wall and is now blocked (Photo 5). The present access is via a small recess off the main room at the south end which has its own brick vault. There is another room off the main room, under the hallway, again with a brick vault and floor.



Photo 5. Range A cellar showing blocked original entrance, looking north

First floor

The late 20th century staircase rises to a first floor landing at the north end of which is an early fitted cupboard. This is constructed in deal with panelled doors and has a low drawer; it is in a poor state of repair with severe woodworm infestation. Forming the back of the cupboard is a section of earlier small-square oak panelling (Photo 6); this is clearly reused in its present position.

The two principal first floor rooms have 4-panelled doors with L hinges. These rooms have also been partly stripped of plaster and the scar of the original roofline is apparent in both gable walls (Figure 5; Photo 7). In the east room there is a blocked fireplace opening with segmental arch head in the gable wall. At first floor level this east gable wall is of 18th century brick. The west room was unheated. In both rooms the rough finish to the brickwork of the window reveals indicates that these have been altered and enlarged. The upper floors throughout this range are of solid gypsum or lime plaster type.

A stud partition wall has been inserted into the first floor west room and the original door reset, creating a corridor which provides access to range B.



Photo 6. Range A reused panelling in landing cupboard, looking north



Photo 7. Range A first floor east room, looking east

Roof structure

The roof structure of this range consists of oak rafter couples bridled at the apex, without a ridge piece, which are supported on substantial purlins carried on the brick cross walls. Much of the timber is reused. One of the purlins is a reused axial beam measuring 6.2 metres long and another is an early-looking chamfered beam. Many of the rafters have empty joint matrices suggesting that they are rafters from an earlier roof that have been sawn in half lengthways for reuse in this structure. The rafters are numbered near the apex with short, chisel-cut Roman numerals. This numbering system evidently relates to the current roof structure however the order of the rafters is inconsistent. It is apparent that, when the south (front) wall was raised in height to improve the first floor accommodation in the 19th century, the pegs were knocked out

at the apex and the bridle joints disassembled. The rafters on the south side were reset at a shallower pitch with short, nailed spacer pieces propping the rafters off the purlin. The rafter couples were not reassembled in the original order hence the discrepancy in their numbering.

3.2 Range B – range fronting Water Lane

The range occupying the Water Lane frontage is a low, brick-built structure of two bays with a modern concrete tiled roof (Photo 8). The south bay is storeyed with the upper floor room lit by a gabled dormer on the front. The north bay is of a single storey open to the rafters and has a vented window and double doors opening on to Water Lane. Only the south bay was in domestic use, most recently (and probably originally) as a kitchen. Access to the ground floor room from range A is via the door at the north end of the hallway. This room is lit by a horizontal sliding sash window (Yorkshire sash) in the Water Lane elevation. A door in the east wall opens into the rear yard. The floor is nineteenth century quarry tiles. At the north end of the room is a substantial former fireplace. Exposed ceiling beams span the length of the room without intermediate support and are carried on the fireplace bressummer. Adjacent to the fireplace is a small pantry with a brick thrall. The pantry occupies the position of a blocked door which formerly gave access to the northern bay.



Photo 8. Water Lane elevation of Range B, looking north-east

The northern bay of the Water Lane range is a former slaughterhouse. This is open to the rafters with the frame used to hang carcasses *in situ* at eaves level (Photo 9). As noted above, this area was at one time accessible directly from the room to the south, but access is now via a doorway in the east wall from the yard and the double doors in the west wall from the street. There are vented windows with sliding timber shutters in the east and west walls.



Photo 9. Interior of former slaughter house with hoist for hanging carcasses

At first floor level the south bay of range B is accessed via the partitioned corridor in the west room of range A, noted above; this is evidently an inserted opening. Modern stud partition walls define two rooms, the larger of which is lit by the dormer widow and is currently a bathroom. The smaller room, to the east, has no natural light. The chimneystack from the fireplace in the room below is located against the north wall. The ceiling is underdrawn and the roof structure is not visible. The floor is of solid gypsum or lime plaster type.

3.3 *Range C – lean-to range adjoining rear of range A*

Constructed against the north wall of range A in the later 19th century is the brick-built lean-to range C. This appears to have functioned as a scullery. The room is lit by a horizontal sliding sash window in the north wall and there is also a door in this elevation, opening onto the rear yard. A lobby area at the west end of this range provides internal access to ranges A and B. There is a timber roof truss over the centre of the room, its form illustrated in Figure 5. A stepped brick plinth visible on the south side of this room marries the narrower brick-built north wall of range A to the wider stone walls of the cellar beneath. The cellar was formerly accessed from within the area of range C and there was presumably an earlier structure at this point predating the construction of this range.



Photo 10. View from yard looking west with range C to left and range D to right

3.4 Range D – washhouse adjoining east side of range B

Adjoining the east side of the slaughterhouse and abutting the adjacent property to the north, number 2 Water Lane, is a former washhouse range D. The walls are brick built, except for the south wall which is of timber construction suggesting that this range may originally have been open-fronted. The washhouse is later in date than range B and is attributable to the later 19th century. The door and two fixed light windows are in the southern elevation (Photo 11). Internally there is a copper for heating water in the north-east corner. Against the west wall there is a stone sink and drainer and a water-pump (Photo 12). There is also a butcher's chopping block within this room and this area may have double as a meat preparation area, being immediately adjacent to the slaughterhouse. The roof is covered in pantiles and a number of glass pantiles provide additional light to the interior.



Photo 11. Range D washhouse exterior, looking north-west



Photo 12. Range D washhouse interior, looking north-west

3.5 *Range E – stable-block adjoining number 3 Main Street*

On the Main Street frontage, east of the yard entrance, is a former stable-block. This is brick-built on a rubble stone plinth with a pantile roof. It is of one bay and two storeys and abuts the adjacent timber-framed number 3 Main Street (Figure 6; Photo 1). In the white-painted Main Street elevation there are blocked door and window openings to the ground storey and an off-centre two light upper storey window below the eaves. In the west gable wall a stable door provides access to the ground floor interior. The only natural light at this level is provided by a small fixed light window in the north elevation. There is a brick-built, timber-lined trough or manger in the north-east corner. The first floor is supported by a chamfered axial beam with scroll stops at its east end, which may be reused (Photo 13).



Photo 13. Range E stable-block ground floor interior, looking south-east

Access to the upper floor is via an external staircase on the north side, within the yard (Photo 14). The boarded first floor is in a poor state of repair, limiting access. In the north wall, east of the door, is the scar of a removed brick structure of uncertain function. The upper floor room is open to the rafters, which are modern replacement softwood items, supported on earlier roughly trimmed roundwood purlins. The only window, in the south elevation overlooking Main Street is a two-light horizontal sliding sash.



Photo 14. Range E stable-block north elevation and first floor access, looking south

3.6 Other outbuildings

In the garden to the rear of the property are a brick-built and slate roofed pigsty and an adjacent walled yard of late 19th century date (Photo 15). There is also an outside toilet. These structures are in a poor state of repair and largely overgrown.

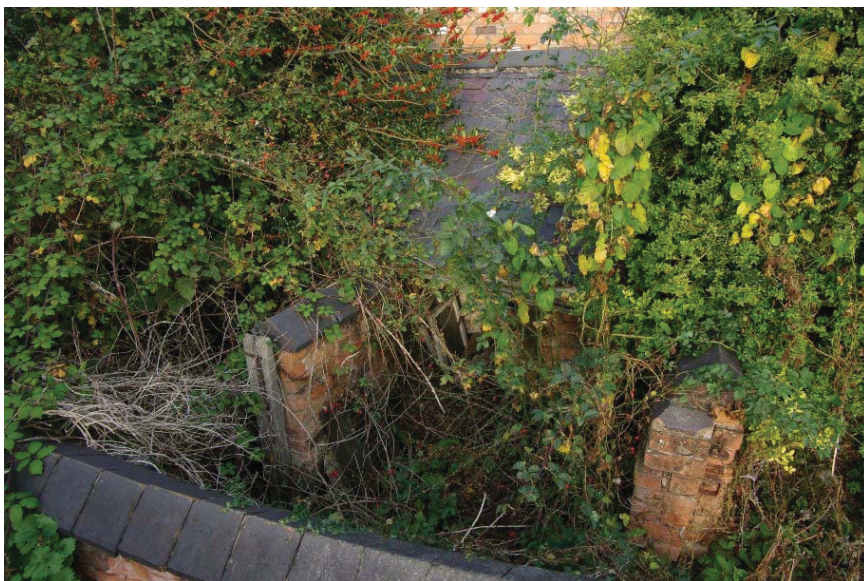


Photo 15. Pigsty in rear yard, looking north-east

4. Discussion

4.1 *Outline chronology*

Excluding the residual evidence for an earlier building on the site, which is discussed below, the general chronology of the various ranges of building is as follows: Range A is likely to have been constructed around the middle decades of the eighteenth century, to judge from the brickwork of its walls and details such as the remaining panelled doors with L-hinges. Range B and the stable-block range E are attributable to the later eighteenth or earlier nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century the south wall of Range A was raised and the roof altered to improve the first floor accommodation. In the late nineteenth century the lean-to range C was added, apparently replacing an earlier structure in this position. The scullery range D and the other outbuildings to the rear of the property were also constructed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. All of the buildings were extant by the time the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map was published in 1884.

4.2 *Earlier fabric*

There is extensive, if fragmentary evidence of an earlier building on the site of Range A. *In situ* elements of this include the stone-built cellar, wall foundations, fireplace and chimneystack, which indicate that the earlier building occupied a similar ground plan to Range A, measuring *c.*11m long and 4.7m wide, its long axis parallel with Main Street. Since access to the cellar appears originally to have been through an opening in its north wall, this suggests the existence of a contemporary rear range of which no other evidence has survived. The four-centred arched fireplace is not closely dateable but can be broadly attributed to the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

The moulded beam fragment embedded in the wall between the hallway and western room of Range A may be more diagnostic. Double ogee mouldings have a wide period of use however single ogee mouldings are rarely used on beams before the seventeenth century, with most belonging to the period 1630-1700 (Hall 2005, 157-8). The truncated state of the beam fragment makes it difficult to reconstruct its original profile with confidence (see Figure 7), however it most closely resembles seventeenth century examples illustrated by Hall (*ibid.*, Figure 6.9).

The reset panelling forming the back of the cupboard on the first floor landing also seems to be of seventeenth century date. Small-square panelling with plain panels was popular from the later sixteenth century until the second half of the seventeenth century, with examples in dated contexts common from 1580 to 1665. In general more elaborate mouldings tend to be earlier and the relatively plain moulding on the panelling at 1 Main Street, Frisby-on-the-Wreake (Figure 7) suggests a seventeenth century date (Hall 2005, 139-140).

Most of the roof timbers are reused although diagnostic details are lacking. The fact that virtually all the rafters are of the same form, deriving from the same earlier roof structure, may be taken to indicate that these were salvaged from a dismantled building either on this site or in the immediate vicinity. Had they been brought in with a job lot of second hand timber from elsewhere, one might not expect the resulting roof to be of such uniform character.

Based on the residual fabric that is certainly *in situ* a broad sixteenth or seventeenth date range can be suggested for the construction of the earlier building on the site of Range A. If all of the early fabric evidence is taken into account, including the reset panelling and the moulded beam fragment, a construction date in the seventeenth century seems most likely.

The evidence indicates that the east gable wall of the earlier building was stone-built, but what of the other walls? It seems unlikely that stone-built walls would have been dismantled in the eighteenth century in order to erect a brick structure of similar plan. It is therefore suggested that the stone plinth walls supported a timber-framed superstructure, except for the east gable wall and its chimneystack.

5. Archive & Publication

The site archive consists of:

- 2 x A2 and 1 x A3 permagraph sheets of survey drawings with site notes
- 3 A1 paper plans supplied by client showing existing and proposed plans & elevations
- CD containing 85 digital photographic images
- 85 Black & White negatives and contact prints
- Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report Number 2009-173)

The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under the Accession Number X.A239. 2009.

A version of the summary (above) will be submitted for publication to the editor of the *Transactions of Leicestershire Historical & Archaeological Society* in due course.

6. Bibliography

English Heritage, 2006. *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice*.

Hall, L., 2005. *Period House Fixtures and Fittings*. Newbury: Countryside Books.

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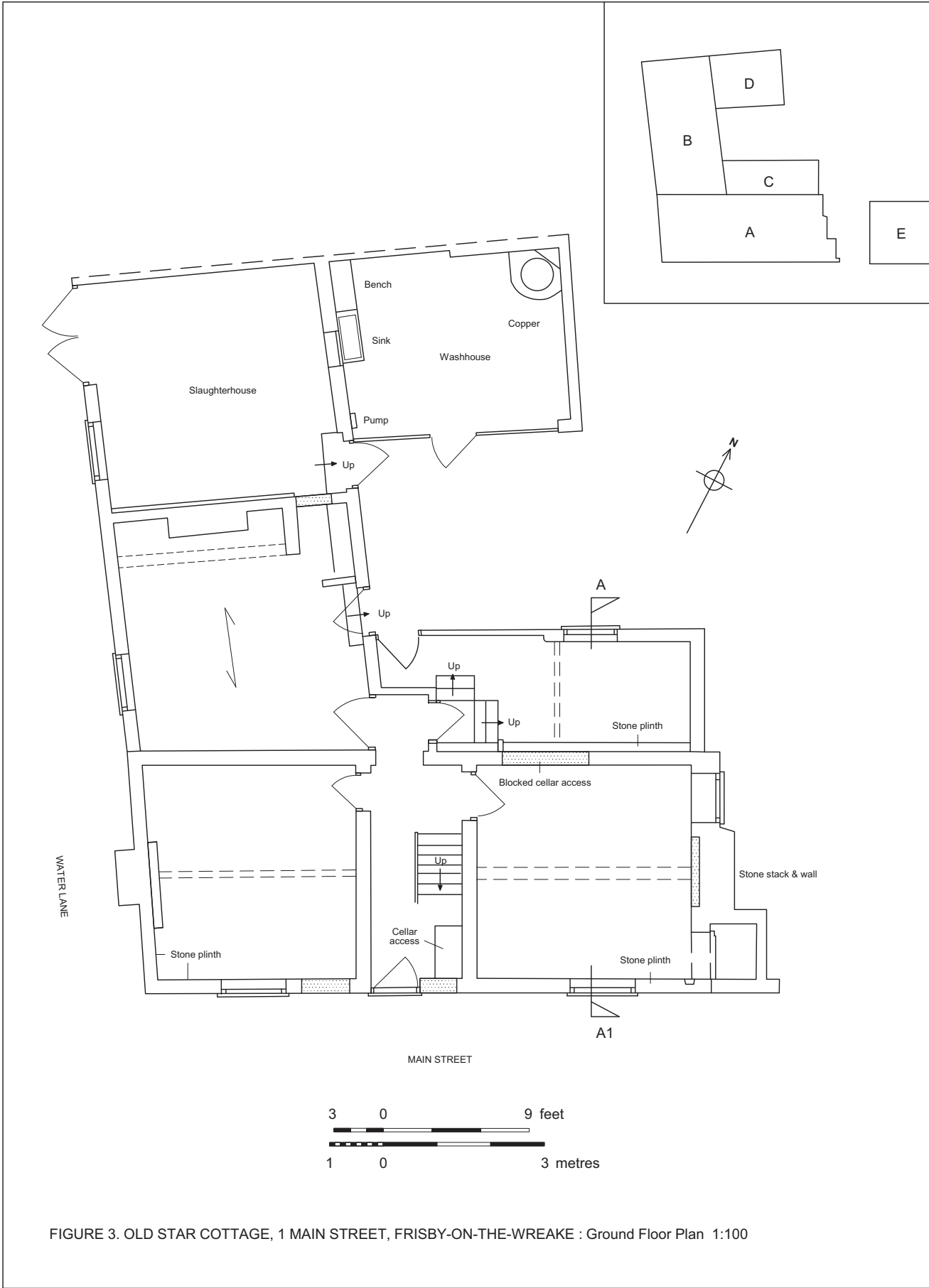
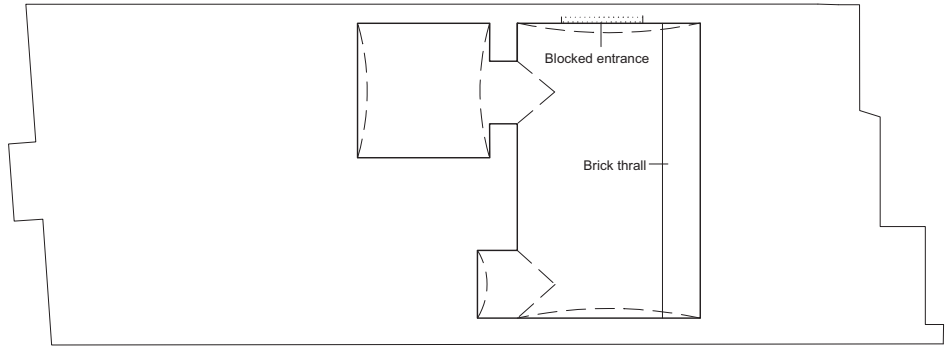
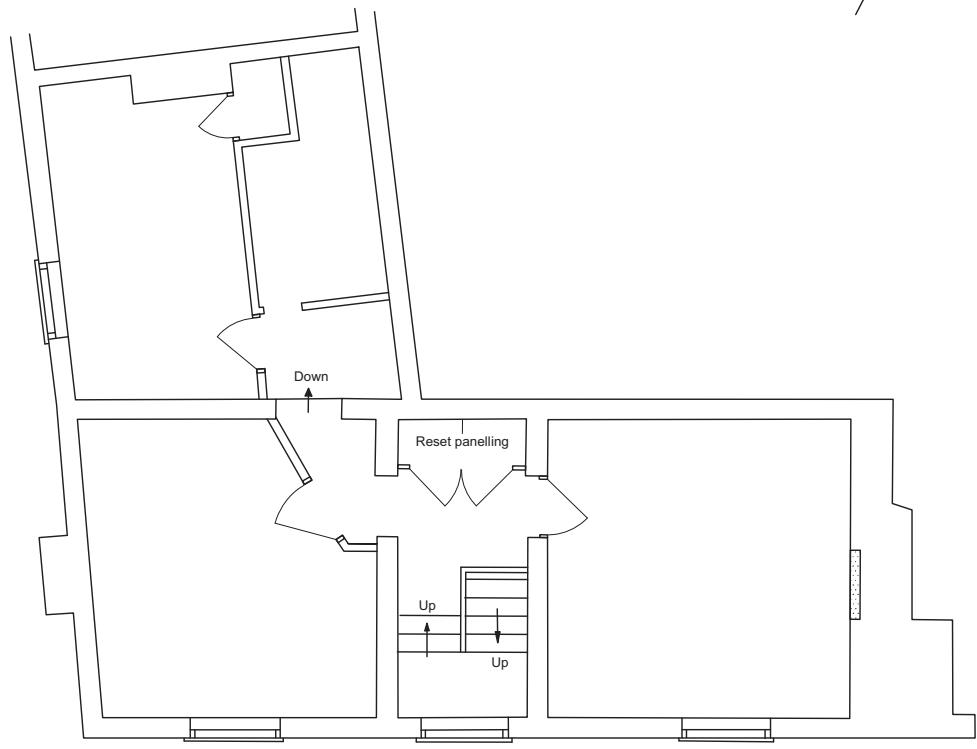


FIGURE 3. OLD STAR COTTAGE, 1 MAIN STREET, FRISBY-ON-THE-WREAKE : Ground Floor Plan 1:100



CELLAR



FIRST FLOOR

FIGURE 4. OLD STAR COTTAGE, 1 MAIN STREET, FRISBY-ON-THE-WREAKE : Cellar (above) and First Floor Plan (below) 1:100

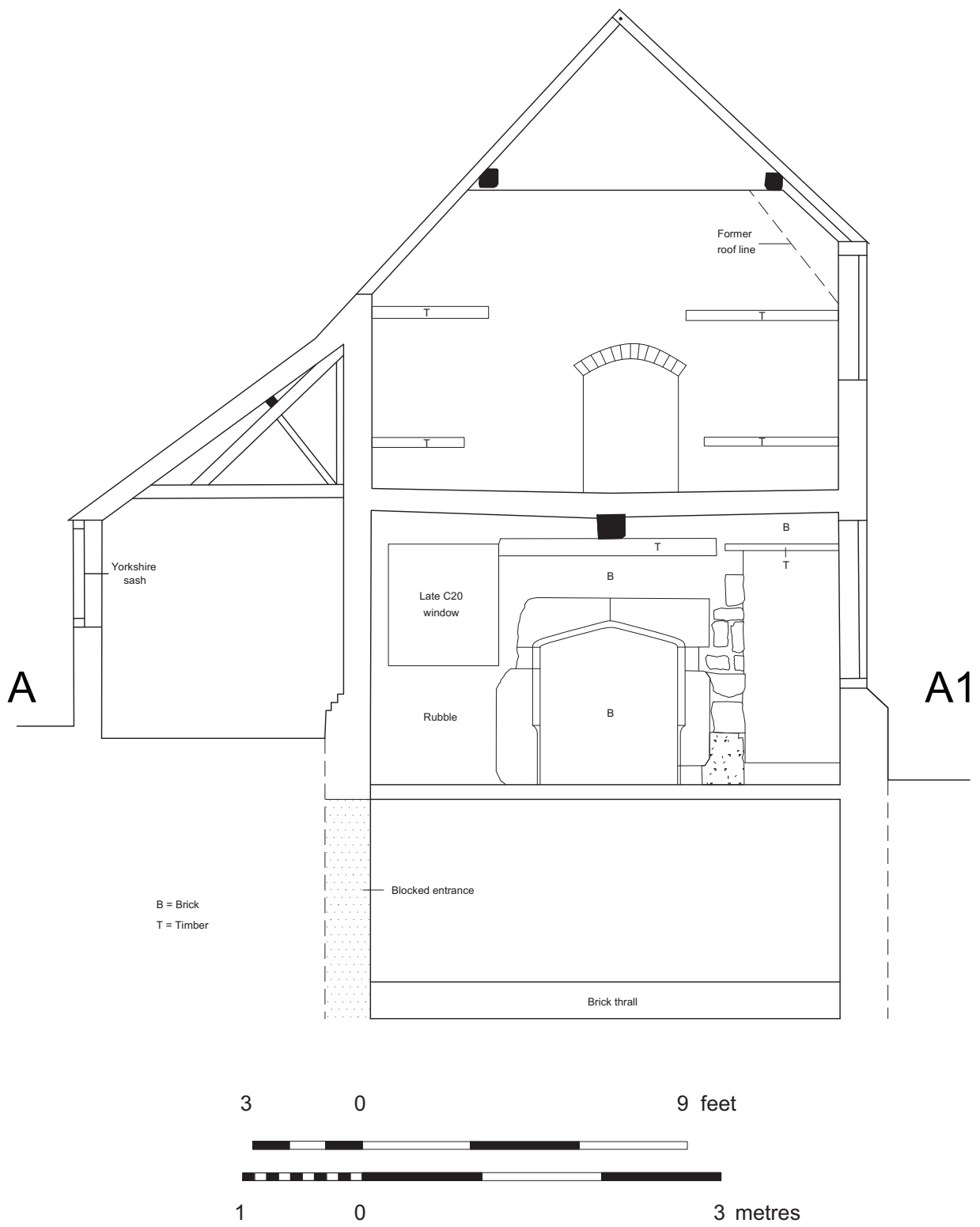
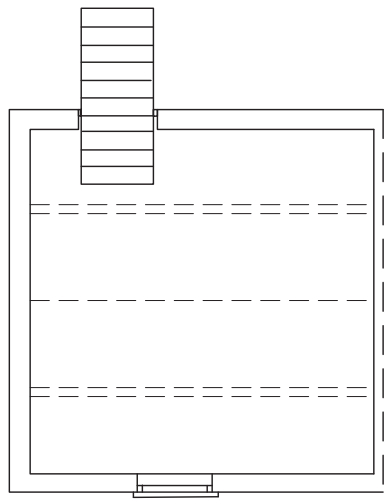
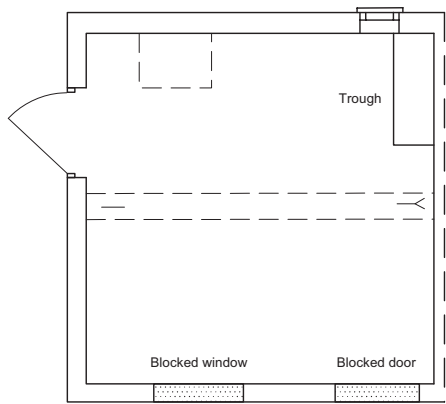


FIGURE 5. OLD STAR COTTAGE, 1 MAIN STREET, FRISBY-ON-THE-WREAKE : Section A - A1 1:50



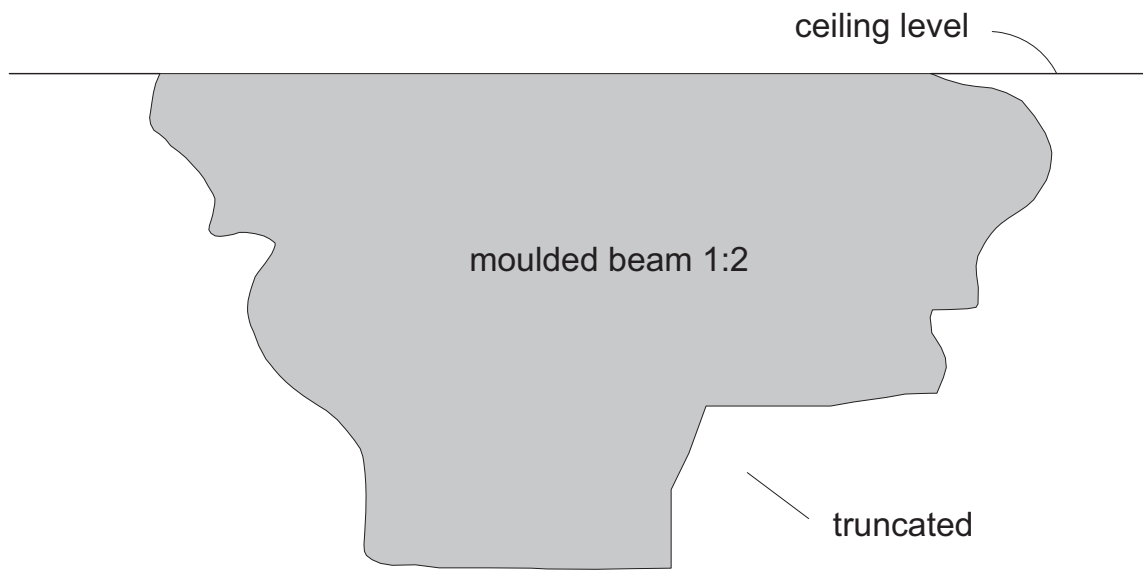
FIRST FLOOR



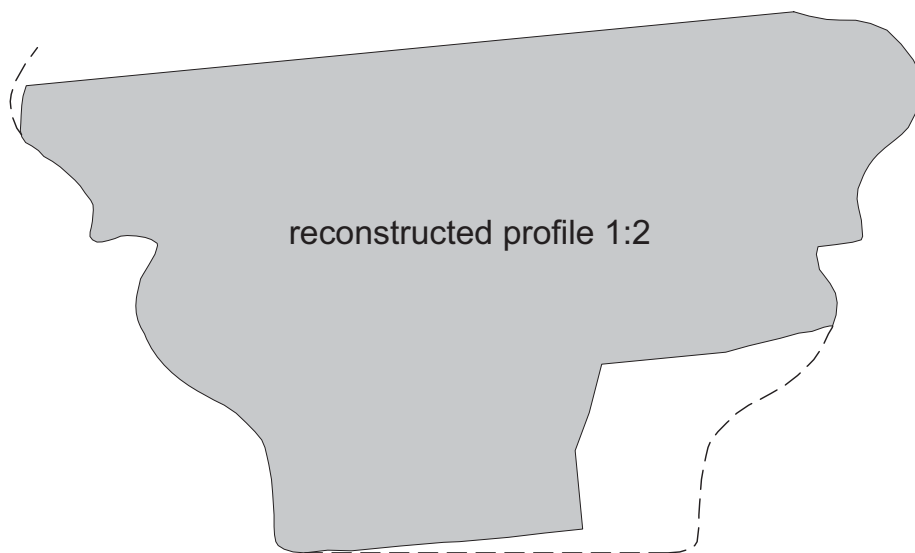
GROUND FLOOR



FIGURE 6. OLD STAR COTTAGE, 1 MAIN STREET, FRISBY-ON-THE-WREAKE : Stable-block Ground and First Floor Plans 1:100



a)



b)

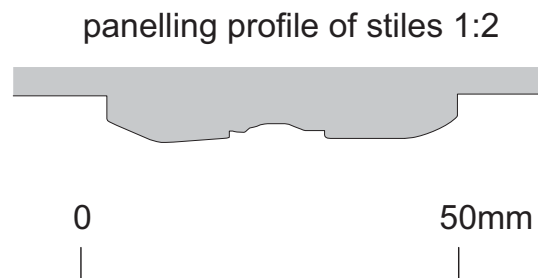


FIGURE 7. OLD STAR COTTAGE, 1 MAIN STREET, FRISBY-ON-THE-WREAKE : Moulded Beam (above) and panelling (below) scale 1:2

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