

**An Archaeological Standing Building Survey
at 15-17 Gaol Street, Oakham,
Rutland
(SK 859 087)**

Gerwyn Richards

for

M.G. Evans & Co.

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Contents

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Summary | 1 |
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 2. Aims and Methodology | 2 |
| 3. Building Survey | 4 |
| 4. Discussion | 5 |
| 5. References | 6 |
| 6. Archive and Publication | 6 |

Figures

Figure. 1. Site location (From 1970 Ordnance Survey)

Figure 2: Speed's Map of 1610.

Figure 3 Cullingworth Map of 1787 (Including Detail).

Figure 4 1886 Ordnance survey map of Oakham.

Figure 5 1904 Ordnance survey map of Oakham.

Figure 6: Floor Plans

Figure 7 Sketch of Roof Truss, Building B (Not to Scale).

Figure 8 Northern and Western Elevations.

Figure 9 Southern and Eastern Elevations.

Figure 10 Principal Elevation, Looking West.

Figure 11 Rear Elevation, Building A to the right, Building B to the left.

Figure 12 Eastern Gable of Building A Showing Different Building Phases.

Figure 13 Western Wall of Building B, Internal.

Figure 14 Southern Wall of Building A, Internal.

Figure 15 Building A, First Floor.

Figure 16 Building A, Southern Wall (with scale) and Eastern Gable.

Figure 17 Building B, First Floor.

Figure 18 Building B Roof Truss.

Figure 19 61 South Street, Showing Earlier Gable Wall.

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Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was commissioned by M.G Evans & Co to undertake an archaeological standing building survey at 15-17 Gaol Street, Oakham, Rutland (SK 859 087).

Planning permission had been granted for the demolition of two outbuildings to the south of number 15 Gaol Street. The survey indicated that the buildings were essentially late 19th century in date, most likely cart sheds but included elements of earlier buildings.

An examination of cartographic evidence suggests that these earlier elements, most notably the western wall, may be remnants of the County Gaol which originally stood to the north of the proposed development area, and an 18th-century building to the south.

The archive will be held by Rutland County Museum under accession number OAKRM2008.57.

1. Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was commissioned by M.G. Evans & Co to undertake a archaeological standing building survey at 15-17 Gaol Street, Oakham, Rutland (SK 859 087). Planning permission was granted for the demolition of the existing outbuildings to the south west of number 17 and construction of two new retail units with two flats (Planning Application Number FUL/2007/1205). The proposed development area lies within the historic medieval and post medieval core of Oakham.

The Senior Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council, as advisor to Rutland County Council, advised that the proposed works would impact upon the historic fabric of the building and that groundworks might impact upon earthfast archaeological remains. It was therefore recommended that provision be made for a programme of archaeological attendance for inspection and recording. Specifically an archaeological standing building survey should be carried out to record the outbuildings prior to commencement of the works, and an archaeological watching brief should be maintained on all groundworks (work to be carried out at a later date).

Previous archaeological research in connection with the proposed development included an archaeological desk-based assessment and building appraisal (Boutsikas, 2008) and an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching (Baker, 2008). The former concluded that the proposed development site lies within an area of significant

archaeological potential, within the historic core of Oakham and noted that some of the buildings were of possible historical interest. In particular, there was evidence from historic maps that the rear (western) wall might be part of the early post medieval County Gaol, which stood on the corner of High Street and Gaol Lane, parts of which were still standing in 1935 (VCH). In 1811 a new County Gaol was built on Station Road, but it closed in 1878 due to a lack of inmates. The building appraisal also indicated that the southern wall was built of coursed ironstone and may also be part of an earlier structure.

2. Aims and Methodology

The specific aims of the archaeological work were to:-

- To provide a permanent record of the existing outbuildings prior to partial demolition and alteration.
- To produce an archive and report of the results.

An historic building survey of the building, prior to demolition, was carried out following the English Heritage guidance document *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2006). The project was completed 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 historic building survey was undertaken by Gerwyn Richards. The site visit was carried out on January 15th 2009.

Orientation: The range of buildings detailed in this report is 'L' shaped, orientated approximately west-north-west to east-south east (identified as A in this report) and north-north-east to south-south-west (identified as B in this report), for ease of description this taken hereafter to be north to south and east to west, with the principal front being the east-facing elevation onto Gaol Street. Where the terms 'left', 'right', 'front' and 'back' etc. are used in the report, this is in relation to the principal east-facing elevation.

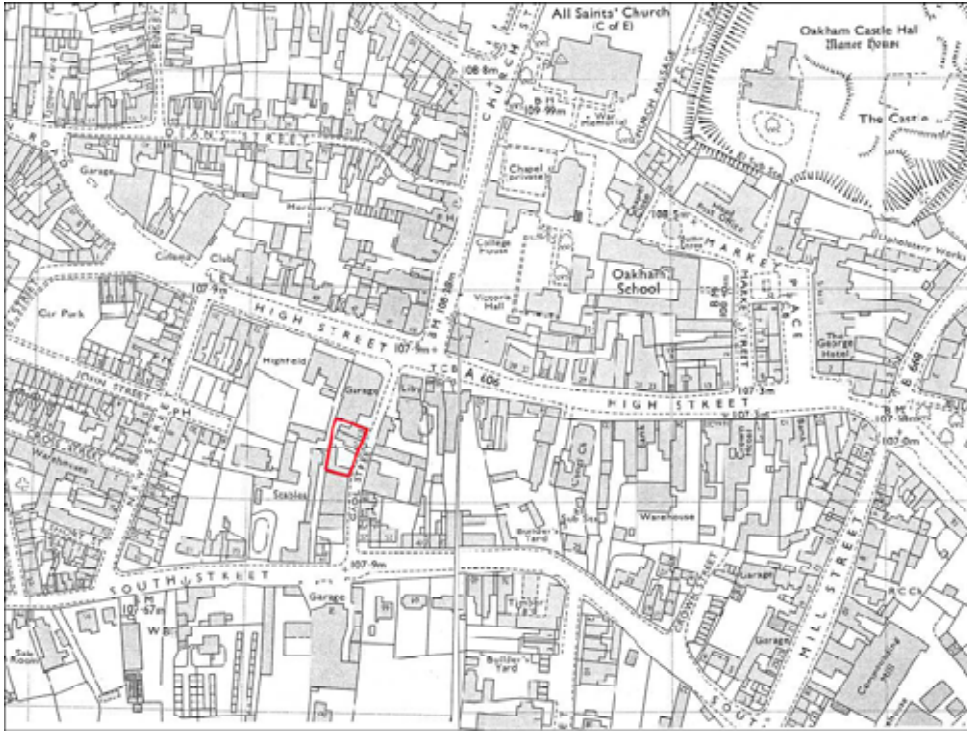


Figure. 1. Site location (From 1970 Ordnance Survey)
Licence number AL 10002186

3. Description of the Building

The building is located to the south of number 15 Gaol Street and consists of an 'L'-shaped range, forming the western and southern boundaries of a small yard fronting Gaol Street. Building A is aligned east to west, along the southernmost boundary, perpendicular to Gaol Street and Building B is aligned north to south parallel with Gaol Street along the westernmost boundary. An initial examination suggests the two buildings are not contemporary and both may contain elements of earlier structures. Until recently the building had been used as garaging and as a woodworking shop; its appearance suggests it was originally built as an open-fronted cart house.

3.1 Building A (Figure 6)

Despite its appearance, A appears to be the earliest of the buildings and has undergone a number of episodes of re-building and re-modelling. The southern wall is of good quality coursed ironstone (*Figure 14*), which has been limewashed internally. It is likely to be the earliest element of this building and may be the remains of an earlier building. The gable fronting Gaol Street has a more complex history (*Figure 12*); externally the gable is Victorian red brick (9 inch by 3 inch, by 4 inch) with a close-boarded loading door at first-floor level and what appears to be a blocked coach entrance at street level, recently re-pointed. Internally, however, there is no evidence of this blocked cart entrance and the brickwork is 2½ inch thick hand made, dating from the 18th century. The gable has apparently been re-skinned during the late 19th century, no doubt to replace the soft 18th-century bricks which had probably begun to disintegrate after a century exposed to the elements. The external brickwork matches that of the north-facing wall at first floor level. It is likely,

therefore, that the building was essentially rebuilt at this time, retaining only the southern ironstone-built wall and the internal gable wall.

As with the gable wall, there is a first floor loading door on the north-facing wall; the ground floor is open fronted and the first floor wall is carried upon a substantial softwood timber lintel which is supported on a central bullnosed-brick pier. There is an open pedestrian door to the west, adjacent to the angle between the two buildings. A partially demolished partition wall near this door may originally have been the full width, creating a room within the angle between the two buildings. Internally, at ground floor level there is nothing of architectural or historical interest; the ceiling is machine-sawn joists and the floor is concealed by demolition build up. There is both a change in brickwork and a straight joint between the western walls of A and B confirming, along with the window opening in the partition wall, between the two wings, that the two wings are not contemporary. The floor in this room is partially laid with blue bricks.

First floor access to both wings is via a stair ladder adjacent to the western wall of A, possibly an original feature. As with the ground floor, there is little of architectural or historical interest remaining. The southern ironstone wall is clearly visible; a brick wall has been built upon the ironstone (*Figure 16*) raising the eaves height to their current level. Further evidence of the re-building of the eastern gable can also be seen with brick plinths (*Figure 16*) abutting the north and south walls and the wall itself only being a single skin.

The roof is interesting in its simplicity. It is essentially a common rafter construction supported by three 'semi-trusses' formed by rafters of heavier scantling with a collar and tie-beam supporting a long purlin (*Figure 15*). Unusually, the middle tie beam does not sit below the rest of the truss; it is offset to the adjacent rafter. The roof is Welsh Slate.

3.2 Building B (Figure 6)

This building forms the western boundary of the proposed development area and is open fronted at ground floor level and timber clad at first floor level; once again there is a central first-floor loading door. Both gables are brick built, again 9 inch by 3 inch, by 4 inch Victorian red bricks and once again bullnosed brick piers, suggesting the Victorian rebuilding seen in Building A also affected this building. The first floor is carried on a timber lintel supported by a central cast iron column. The rear, western wall is 2 ½ inch hand made bricks, dating from the eighteenth century (*Figure 13*) on the internal face of an earlier mixed ironstone and marlstone rubble wall. An examination of the external elevation indicated at least three separate phases of building (*Figure 11*), all utilising the earlier stone wall.

At first floor level, the eaves have been raised by approximately 16 courses; the bricks in the lower courses match those bricks on the ground floor. This new brickwork means the straight joint visible on the ground floor between A and B is not visible on the first floor. The gables are Victorian brick and the eastern wall is timber.

The roof is more complex than that recorded within A (*Figures 7 & 11*); it has two large king post trusses supporting twin purlins on cleats, the post is bolted through the

tie-beam. Unusually the trusses are not square to the walls, it is possible, therefore, that these trusses were not built specifically for this building but recovered from another. Trusses cannot be shortened without affecting the structural integrity, when it is necessary to use a truss which is too long it can be mounted at an angle in order to reach the correct span. This is what has more than likely occurred in this example. Once again the roof is Welsh slate.

The only evidence of the buildings previous use is a trap door adjacent to the northern gable wall.

4. Discussion

Despite their rather modest size and appearance, the outbuildings exhibit a rather complex history, with evidence of at least three builds, re-modelling and evidence of at least one, or possibly two earlier buildings. The earliest element is likely to be one of the two stone walls, which one, however, is unclear. Speed's Map of 1610 (*Figure 2*) shows no buildings within the proposed development area, but does show what appears to be a wall aligned east-west which, using the 'kink' in Gaol Street as a reference point, appears to be in the same location as the southernmost wall of Building A within the proposed development area. It is unclear; however, whether this is the same wall as the current wall.

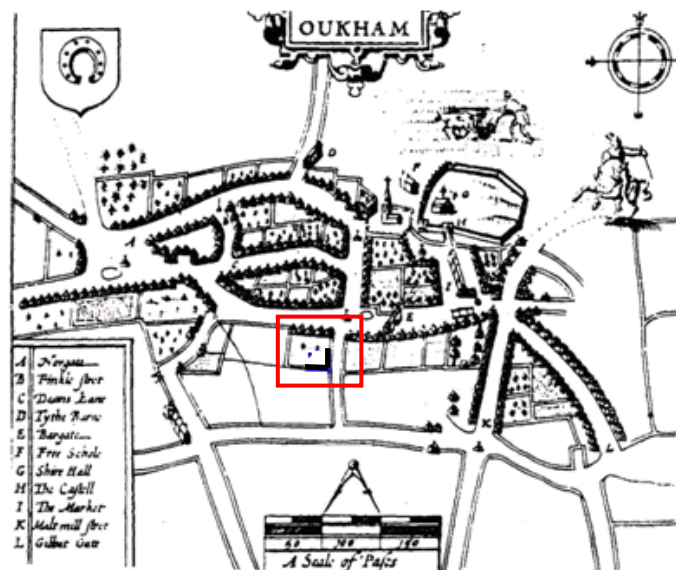


Figure 2: Speed's Map of 1610 showing approximate area of proposed development highlighted.

The next and probably most significant map is the Cullingworth Map of 1787 (*Figure 3*). The proposed development site is clearly identifiable and includes a building in the same location and approximately the same size and alignment as Building A. The easternmost gable, fronting Gaol Street also has the same angle to the street. Given the clear evidence of rebuilding and re-modelling recorded, it is unlikely that any of the building remains, with the possible exception of the southernmost wall. There is no evidence of Building B, there is a wing projecting to the south; of which no evidence remains on the standing wall, however, there was no clear view of the south facing elevation due to the proximity of a neighbouring building. The westernmost

wall, did, however continue to the south and may represent another remnant of this building.

The westernmost wall (the rear wall of building B) may also be recorded on the Cullingworth Map, possibly as part of the County Gaol. The external stonework is virtually un-dateable, but the internal brick skin is clearly 18th century in date, indicating the stone-built wall was already standing in the 18th century. There is a strong possibility, therefore, that this western boundary wall is a remnant of the County Gaol. Both cartographic sources and a visual inspection indicate that the wall continues for the full length of Gaol Street and is clearly visible as the gable wall of number 61 South Street (*Figure 19*). The straight joint indicates that it pre-dates number 61.

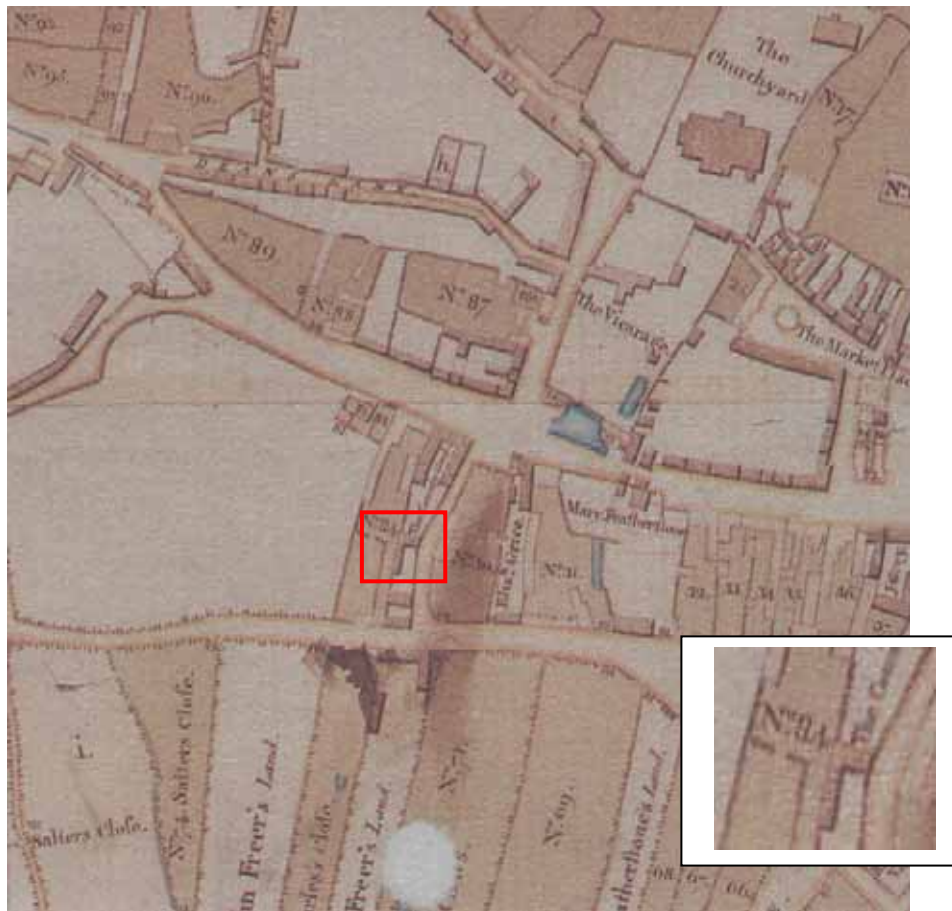


Figure 3 Cullingworth Map of 1787 (Including Detail).

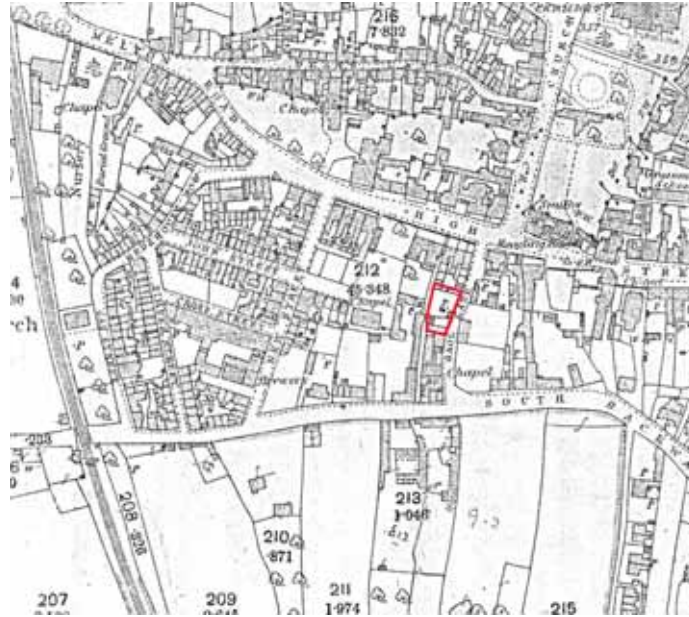


Figure 4 1886 Ordnance survey map of Oakham Sheet Rutland No IX.2 with development area outlined.

By the time the First Edition Ordnance Survey was published in 1886 (*Figure 4*), the building recorded on the Cullingworth Map has altered considerably; the map probably records the building as it stands today. There is evidence of a building occupying the footprint of building B; it is too small, however, to be the standing building.



the buildings are essentially late 19th or early 20th century in date, but including earlier elements, most notably the southern and western walls.

The buildings, in their final unified guise are unusually agricultural in nature, but are in an urban setting. Such cart sheds are a common sight on Victorian farms. There is no evidence to suggest the buildings originally belonged to a lost farm. The most likely explanation for the buildings is that they were built as coach houses for one of the towns coaching inns. Both the building recording and cartographic sources indicate both were built in the late 19th century possibly quite cheaply as the trusses for building B are likely to have been re-used.

Both the southernmost and westernmost walls pre-date the buildings, fortunately both of these walls will be retained within the development. The Cullingworth Map suggests that both walls were likely to have formed parts of the curtain wall of the County Gaol.

5. References

Brunskill, R.W., 1982 *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain*. Victor Gollancz.

Boutsikas, E., 2008 *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for the Proposed Development on land at 15-17, Gaol Street, Oakham, Rutland (SK 8596 0873)*.
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McKay. W.B., 1945. *Building Craft Series, Brickwork*. Longmans, Green & Co.

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6. Archive & Publication

The site archive consists of

- 1 A3 permatrace sheet containing sketch plan of grave slabs & site notes
- 10 Black & White negatives & contact prints
- 10 Colour slide transparencies
- CD containing 2 digital images
- 1 A4 contact sheet
- A4 Photo Index Sheet
- 6 A1 paper plans supplied by client
- 1 A4 watching brief sheet
- Unbound Copy of This Report (ULAS Report Number 2008-199)

The archive will be held at Leicestershire County Council under the Accession Number OAKRM2008.57

A version of the summary (above) will be submitted to the editor of the local journal *Transactions of Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* for inclusion in the next edition.

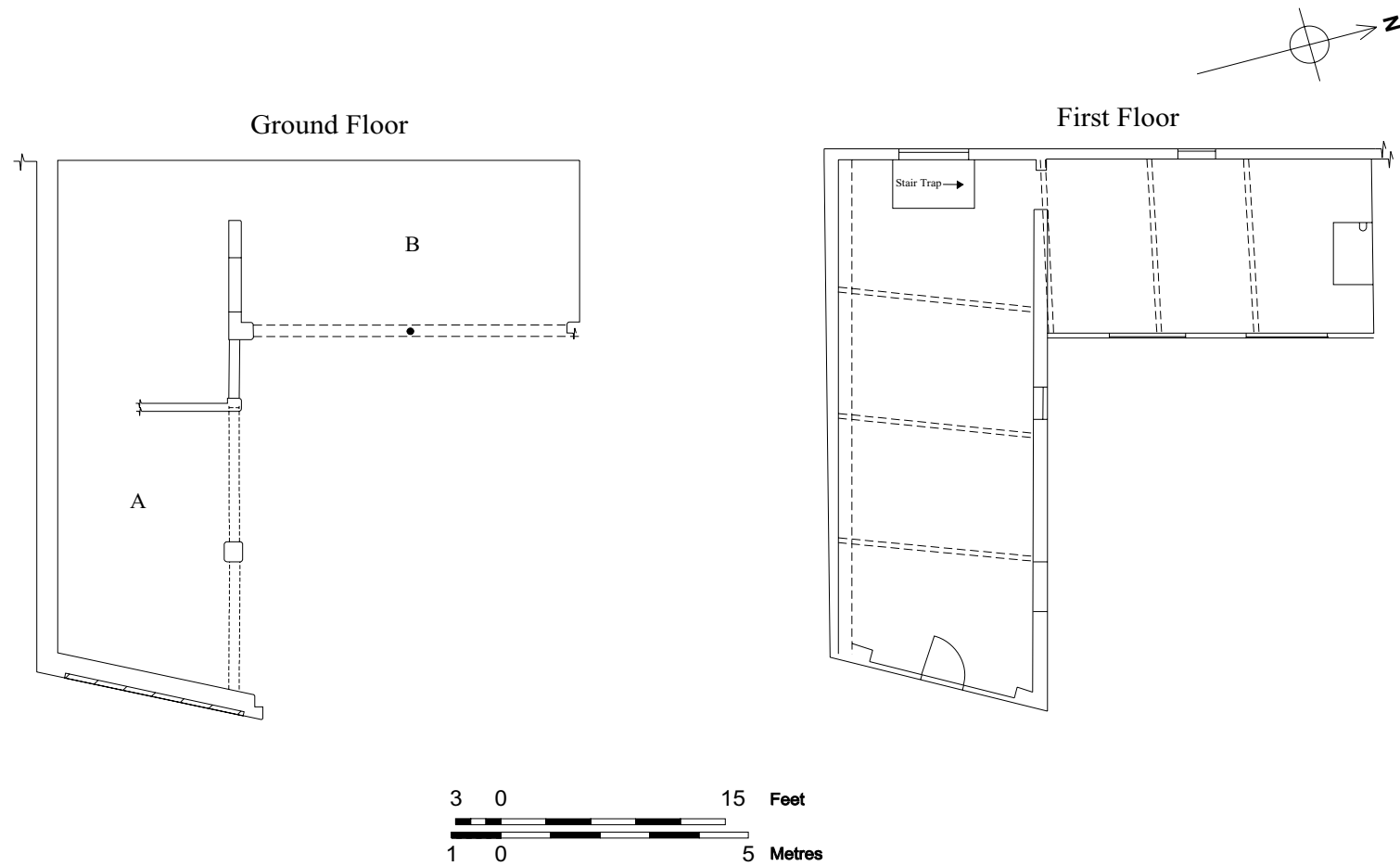


Figure 6: Floor Plans.

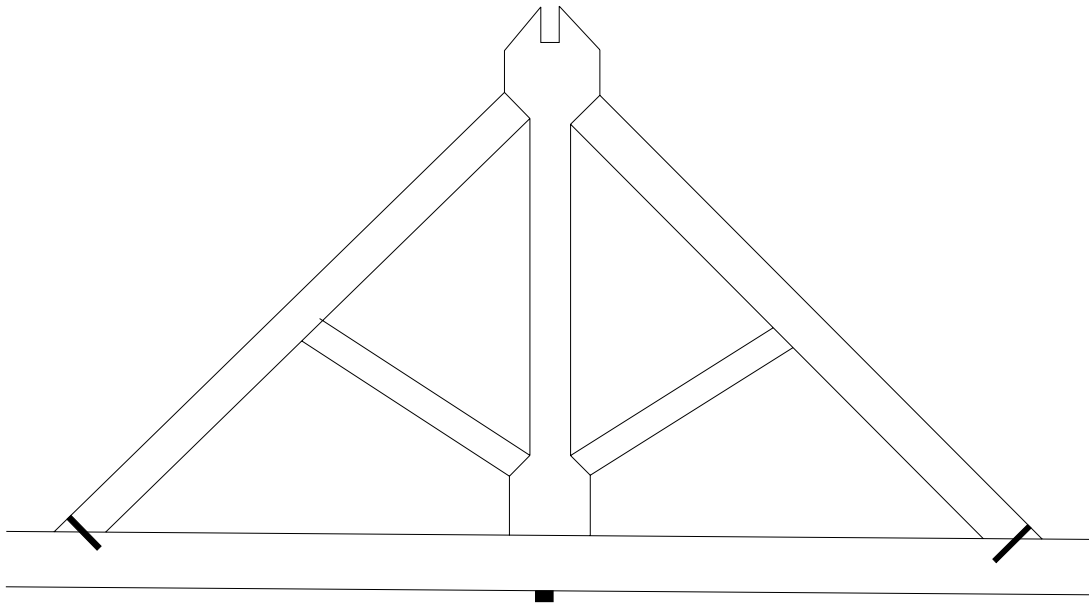


Figure 7 Sketch of Roof Truss, Building B (Not to Scale).

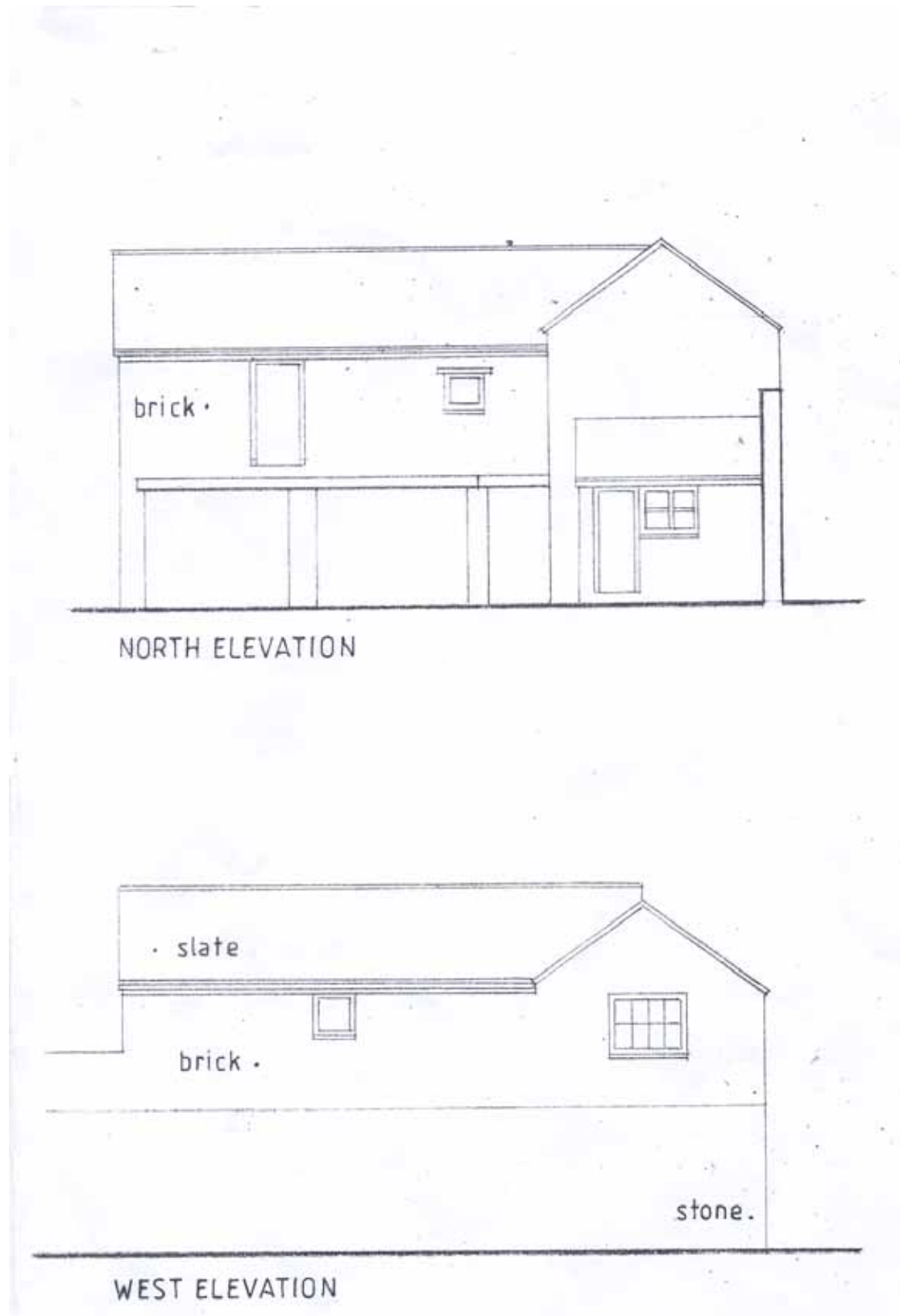


Figure 8 Northern and Western Elevations.
(Not to Scale, Drawing Supplied by Client)

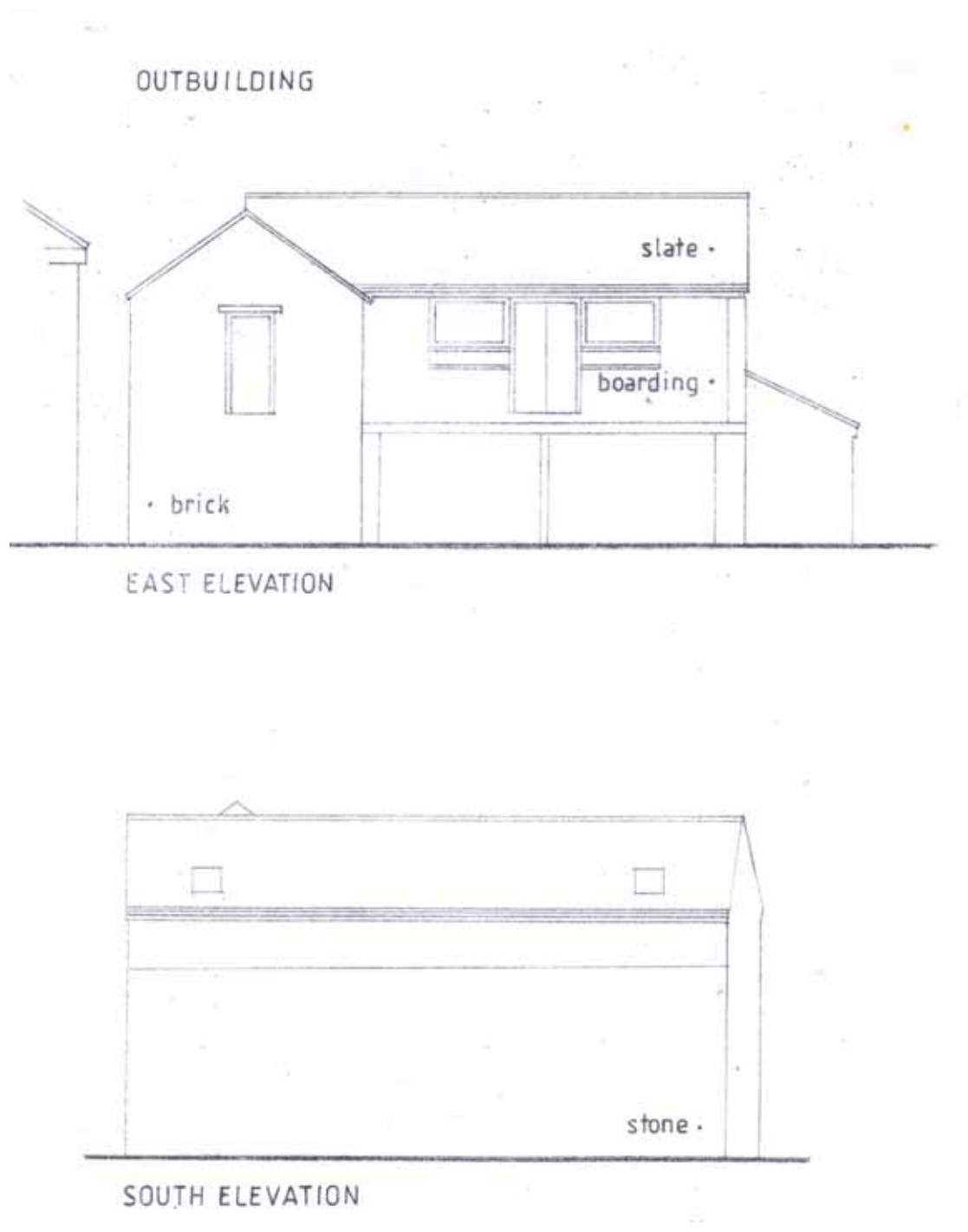


Figure 9 Southern and Eastern Elevations.
(Not to Scale, Drawing Supplied by Client)

Colour Plates



Figure 10 Principal Elevation, Looking West.



Figure 11 Rear Elevation, Building A to the right, Building B to the left.



Figure 12 Eastern Gable of Building A Showing Different Building Phases.



Figure 13 Western Wall of Building B, Internal.



Figure 14 Southern Wall of Building A, Internal.



Figure 15 Building A, First Floor.



Figure 16 Building A, Southern Wall (with scale) and Eastern Gable.



Figure 17 Building B, First Floor.



Figure 18 Building B Roof Truss.



Figure 19 61 South Street, Showing Earlier Gable Wall.