Project Code: WCWW10
HAS 855
Date of Report: January 2011
Client: English Heritage

WITLEY COURT WEST WING

Building Recording

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ARCHAEOLOGY Ltd

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

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Hereford Archaeology Series	855
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Schedule	
Fieldwork	SEPTEMBER 2010
Report	JANUARY 2011

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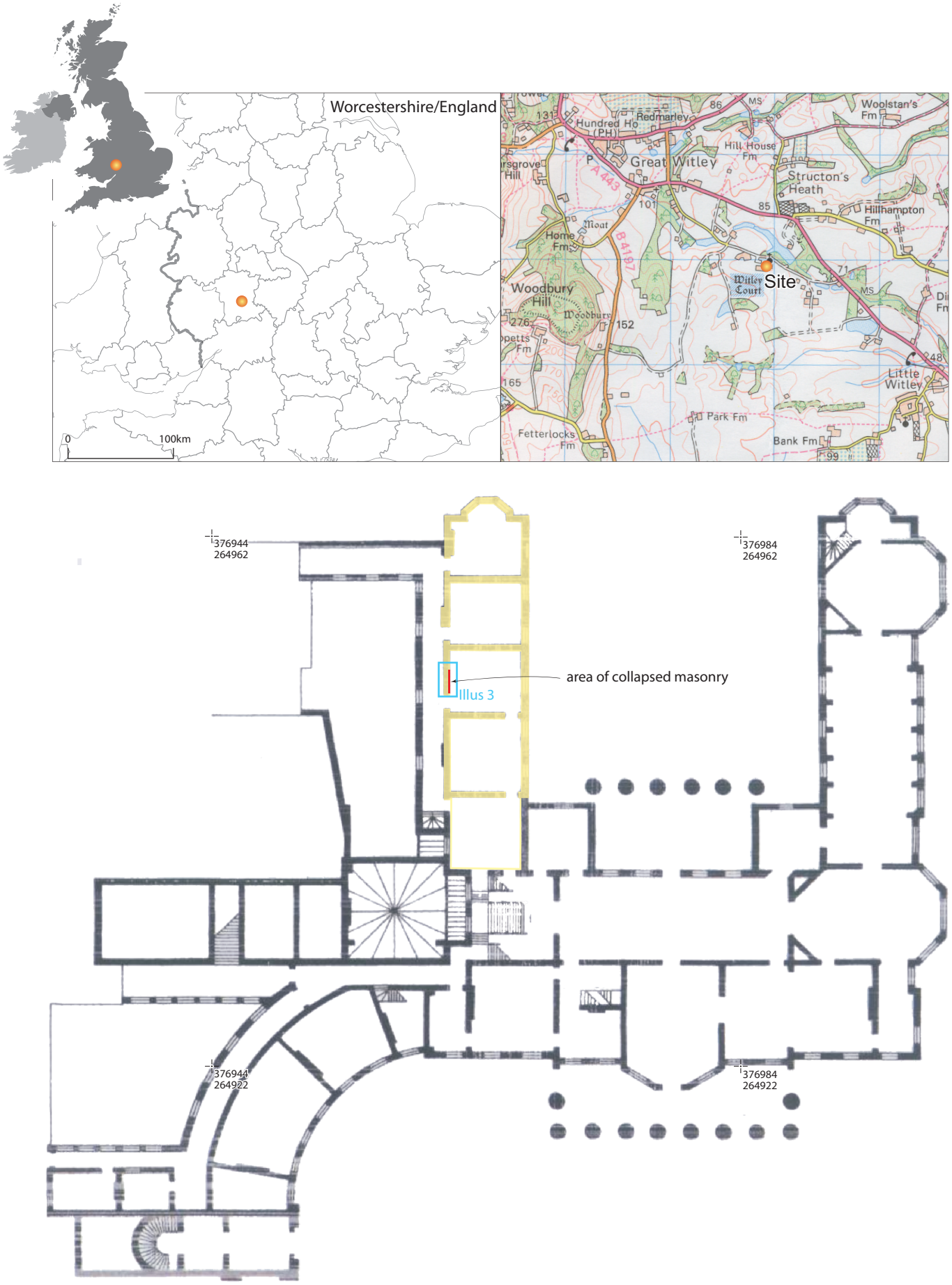


Illus 1
Location plan

WITLEY COURT WEST WING

Building Recording

by Simon Mayes

In 2010, the decay of timber lintels in the Witley Court's west wing caused a massive collapse of brickwork in the west wall.

This has allowed valuable information to be gathered that has enhanced the site record and identified that the original use of the blocked opening was for the formation of a large window. It also answered simple questions relating to problems such as why the opening was only visible on the internal elevation, by confirming that a later skin of brickwork was constructed on the west face of the wall, and identified that the timbers were reused and would have proved unsuitable for dating.

1. INTRODUCTION

In August 2010, an area of brickwork collapsed above a blocked embrasure at first floor level in the centre of the east face of the west wall of the west wing at Witley Court. This was due to the timber lintels within a former opening having perished and gave a rare opportunity to investigate a previously concealed element of this important building. As the site is a Scheduled Monument and listed building, English Heritage requested Headland Archaeology to implement and conduct a rapid recording programme on the newly exposed fabric, prior to emergency repairs.

2. METHOD

A new drawing at a scale of 1:20 was produce of the area around the damaged fabric within the west wing; a plan was produced (also at 1:20) to illustrate the angled brickwork, exposed by the collapse. Sections were recorded through the wall in order to illustrate the depth and internal make up of the wall fabric.

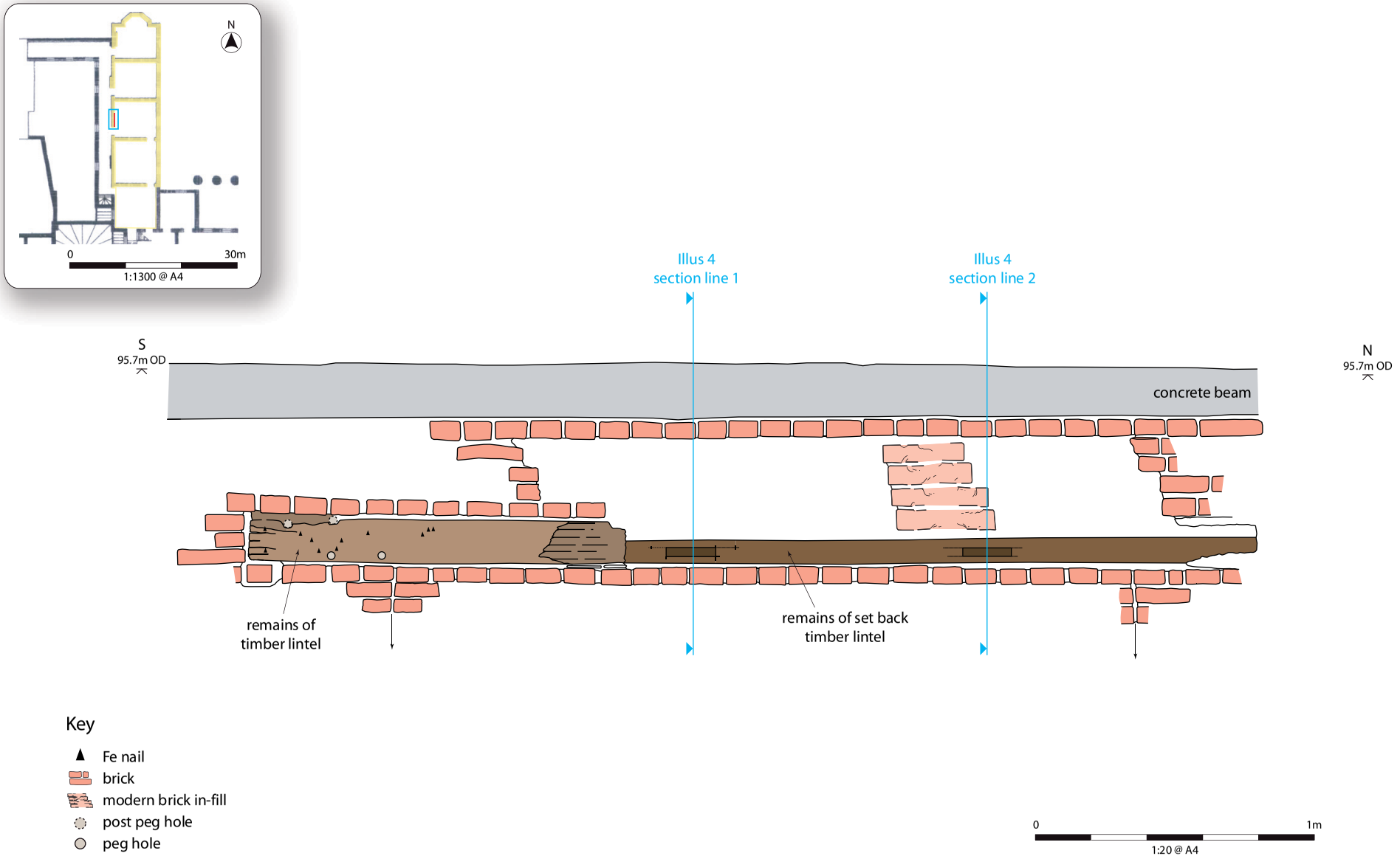
A series of overlapping 35mm black and white, colour slide and digital images were taken with scales to show the extent of damaged fabric in more detail.

Originally, it was envisaged that the timber lintels might have been in a condition to be salvaged intact, to allow the use of dendrology to obtain a felling date. This unfortunately was not possible due to the condition of the timbers as they had both suffered from rot and worm action, and consequently were in a very friable condition.

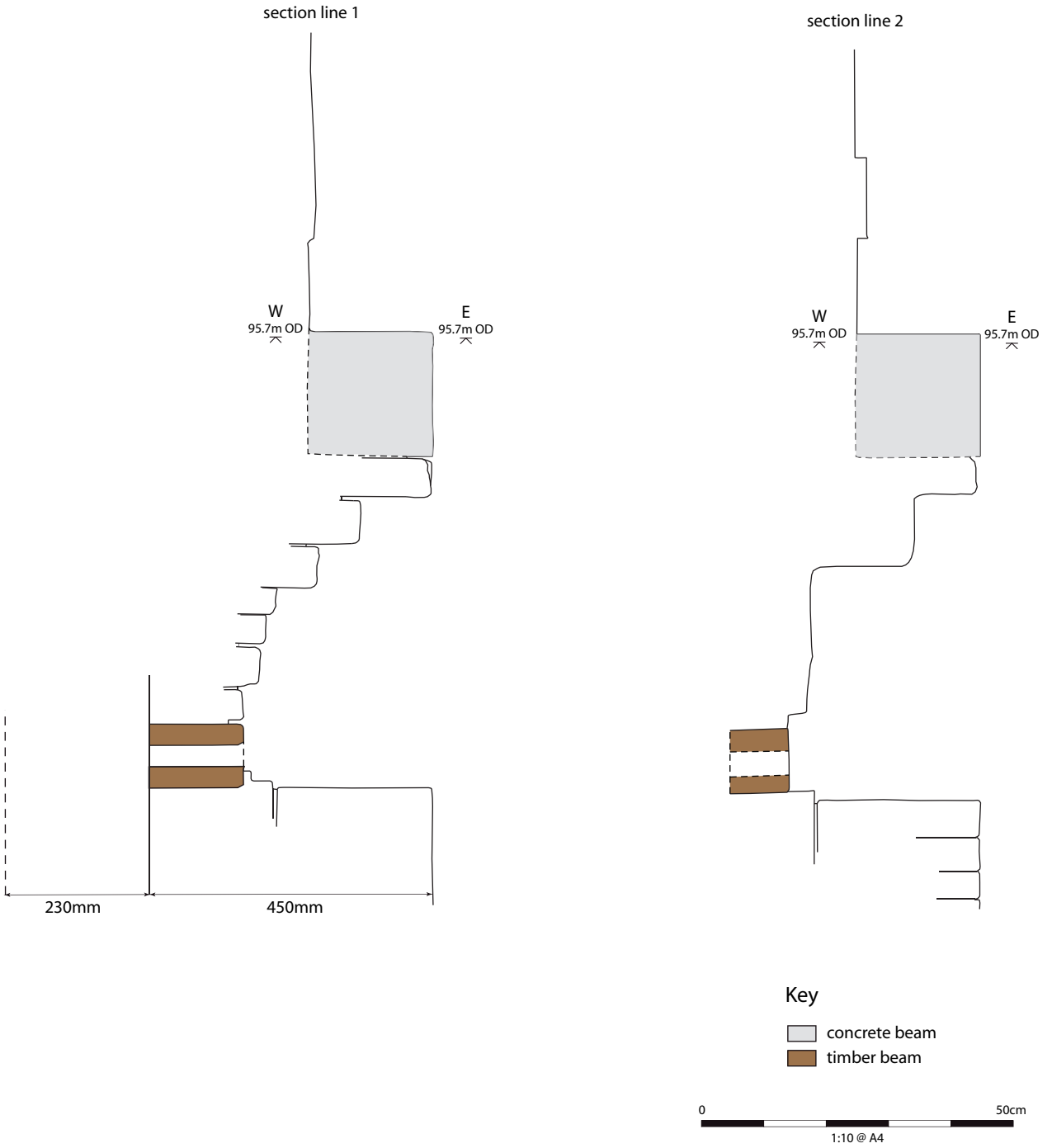
3. RESULTS

Examination of the remains of the surviving timber lintel showed a number of square headed iron nails remaining in the portion of timber that had survived the collapse, these possibly relate to the time when the embrasure was open and surrounded with plaster moulded decoration. The remaining timber also showed evidence for four remaining peg holes, which apparently did not corresponded to any related timberwork and would therefore indicate that this lintel was re-used from a previous wooden structure. Examination of the

Illus 2
Photograph show original wall face prior to collapse



Illus 3
Elevation showing area of masonry collapse

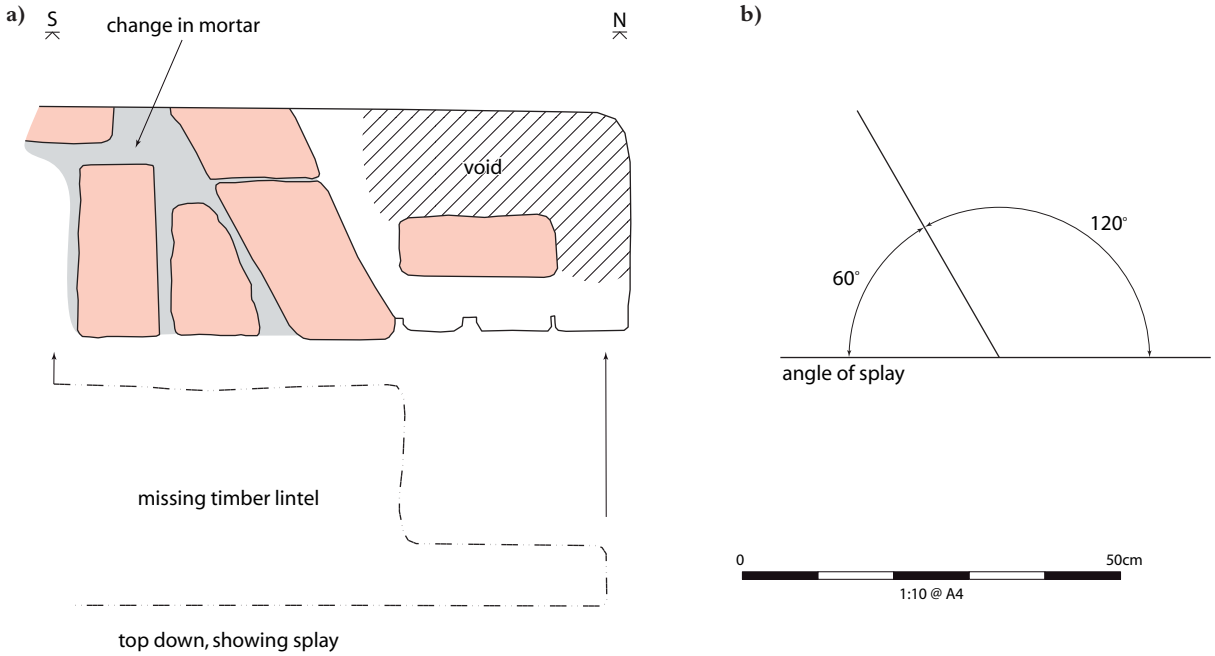


Illus 4
Area of masonry collapse in section (location shown on Illus 3)

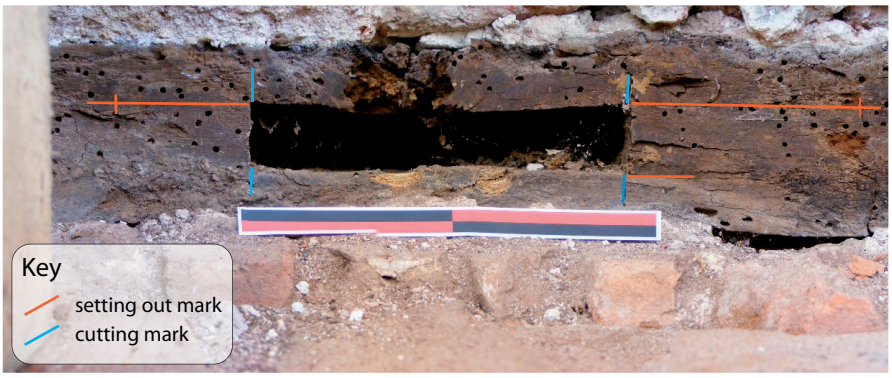
negative impression left by the collapsed timber (Illus 6) showed that the facing lintel at the northern end was cut to form a lap joint; this could further indicate the re-used nature of the timber. It could also signify that the lintel was fabricated to allow the loading of the wall either side of the lintel spread to be transferred down through the brickwork rather than extend across the lintel. Examination of the internal construction revealed that the makeup of the wall was in-fact a little below standard in this place, as behind the timber lintel is a large void in the fabric (Illus 6) which and would then compliment the theory that the timber was cut before and was reused. Viewed with hindsight, this redundant lap joint could be seen as hiding a construction nightmare and hence storing up problems for the future.

The internal examination of the fabric that was exposed after the collapsed of the masonry, revealed another re-used timber lintel set back approximately 300mm from the inner wall face yet shorter in length than that of the front facing timber.

Close examination of the exposed face of the rear lintel revealed surviving setting out marks relating to the methods involved in the production of the two mortice joints visible on the rear timber lintel.



Illus 5
a) Top down plan, showing splay and missing timber lintel
b) Detail showing angle of internal splay



Illus 6
Photograph showing setting out and cutting marks on rear lintel

Illus 7
Area of modern brickwork (highlighted in red)

Illus 8
Photograph showing angle of internal splay

The marks around the mortice joint may also indicate the original width of the frame timbers associated with the joints. A series of scribed lines running parallel to the timber indicate the division for the mortice was approximately a third of the width of the timber while small vertical lines may show the width of the shouldered tenon timber. in this case the dimensions for the mortise are 30mm by 185mm, width of timber 95mm, with marks indicating that the shoulders of the tenon were offset by 65mm and 110mm giving an overall width of 365mm for the adjoining timber.

Examination of the mortice joint indicated that the second lintel had a depth of approximately 150mm giving an overall wall depth of 450mm from the east face. A measurement through the existing opening indicates the total thickness of the wall to be 680mm. the recorded width of the wall and the difference exposed within the area of collapse demonstrated a discrepancy of 230mm

The brickwork exposed behind the collapse appeared modern and inconsistent with that around the collapse. Closer examination of the reverse face of the wall, revealed a large timber slot with modern brick infill. From this, it is possible to imply that the west face of the west wing is clad with a later skin of bricks and this is confirmed by the fact that the opening visible on the east face is not reflected on the west face. From the examination of the second lintel, the later phase brickwork forming the applied skin to the west face of the wall would be approximately 230mm in width.

The key element to the understanding of the blocked area was revealed as a direct result of the collapse and was the splayed brickwork in the sides of the blocked embrasure.

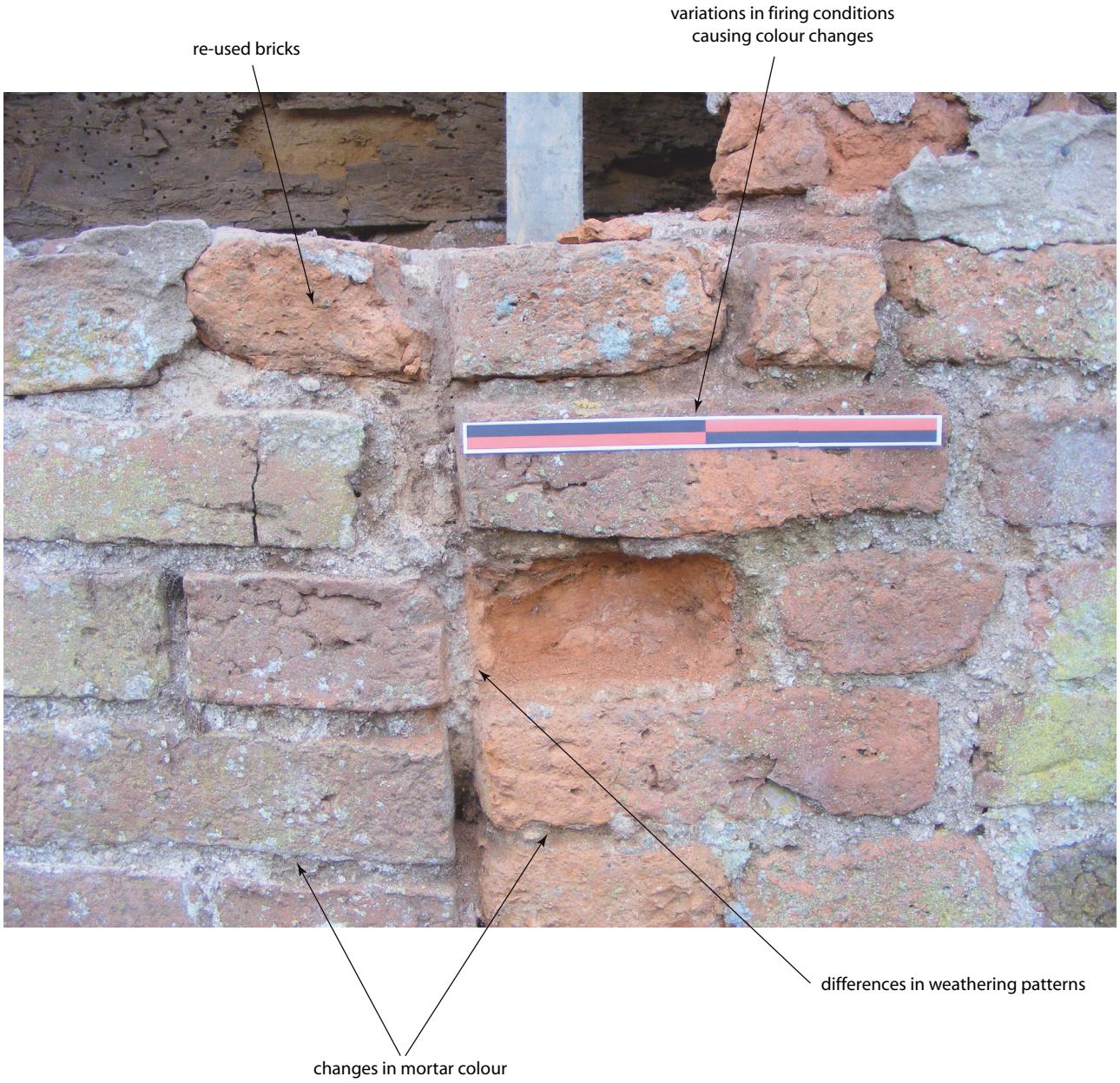
This indicated that the primary use of the blocked opening was as a window and not a doorway (contemporary doorways at Witley Court having straight jambs not splayed). The angle of the splay was at approximately 120 degrees, in relation to the wall face.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the unfortunate events that saw the collapse of the building fabric have proved positive in the sense that they offered an exciting glimpse into the earlier construction of Witley Court.

This valuable insight has allowed information to be gathered that has enabled us to illustrate that the original use of the opening was for the formation of a large window. It also answered questions relating to problems such as why the opening was only visible within one face of the wall and not the reverse, by confirming that a later skin of bricks was applied to the west face of the west wall of the west wing.

The project also identified that the timber lintels were reused timbers, yet unfortunately due to the heavily decayed condition confirmed that they would have proved unsuitable samples for dating.



Illus 9
Photograph showing difference between blocking and original wall face

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site Registers

Drawing Register

Drawing no.	Scale	Type	Description
1	1:20	Elevation	Elevation of collapsed wall
2	1:20	Section	Sample section 1
3	1:20	Section	Sample section 1
4	1:20	Plan	Plan showing splayed opening

Photographic Register

Photo no.	Digital	Direction Facing	Description
–	Y	W	Composite image showing joint detail
DSCF2518	Y	–	Detail of splay
DSCF2519	Y	–	Detail of splay
DSCF2519	Y	–	Detail of splay
DSCF2521	Y	–	Detail of splay
DSCF2522	Y	W	Area of blocking
DSCF2523	Y	W	Area of blocking
DSCF2524	Y	W	Area of blocking
DSCF2525	Y	W	Joint detail
DSCF2526	Y	W	Joint detail
DSCF2527	Y	W	Joint detail
DSCF2528	Y	W	Joint detail
DSCF2529	Y	W	Joint detail
DSCF2530	Y	W	Joint detail
DSCF2531	Y	W	Joint detail
DSCF2532	Y	W	Joint detail
DSCF2533	Y	W	Joint detail
DSCF2534	Y	W	Joint detail
DSCF2535	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2536	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2537	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2538	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2539	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2540	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2541	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2542	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2543	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2544	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2545	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2546	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2547	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2548	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2549	Y	W	Splay detail
DSCF2550	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2551	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2552	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2553	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2554	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2555	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2556	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2557	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2558	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2559	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2560	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2561	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2562	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2563	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2564	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
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DSCF2566	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2567	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2568	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
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DSCF2570	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2571	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
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DSCF2573	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2574	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2575	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2576	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2577	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2578	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2579	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2580	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2581	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2582	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2583	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2584	Y	W	Overlapping elevation

Photo no.	Digital	Direction Facing	Description
DSCF2585	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2586	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2587	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2588	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2589	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2590	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2591	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2592	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2593	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
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DSCF2597	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
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DSCF2599	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2600	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2601	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2602	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2603	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2604	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2605	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
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DSCF2608	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
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DSCF2635	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2636	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2637	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2638	Y	W	Overlapping elevation
DSCF2639	Y	W	Brick details
DSCF2640	Y	W	Brick details
DSCF2641	Y	W	Timber details
DSCF2642	Y	W	Timber details
DSCF2643	Y	W	Timber details
DSCF2644	Y	W	Timber details
DSCF2645	Y	W	Modern brick seen from the rear
68940009	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
68940010	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
68940011	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
68940012	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
68940013	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
68940014	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
68940015	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
68940016	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
68940017	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
68940018	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
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69340012	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
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69340014	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
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69340016	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
69340017	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall

Photo no.	Digital	Direction Facing	Description
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69340022	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall
69340023	Y	W	Elevation of collapsed wall