FORMER BAKEHOUSE
REAR OF 63-65 HIGH STREET
HALSTEAD
ESSEX

HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY

Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit

April 2010

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Document Ref.	2172rep
Report Issue Date	19th April 2010
Circulation	Januarys Consultant Surveyors on behalf of Premier Travel
	ECC Historic Environment Management
	Essex Historic Environment Record

As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY

Client: Januarys Consultant Surveyors on behalf of Premier Travel
FAU Project No.: 2172
NGR: TL 8132 3055
OASIS No.: essexcou1-75794
Date of Fieldwork: 9th February 2010

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A programme of historic building recording was undertaken by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on a late 19th century bakery prior to residential conversion. The work was commissioned by Januarys Consultant Surveyors, on behalf of the owners, Premier Travel, and carried out in accordance with a brief issued by the Historic Environment Management team of Essex County Council (ECC HEM), who also monitored the work.

Copies of the report will be supplied to ECC HEM and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) at County Hall, Chelmsford. The archive will be stored with Braintree Museum. An OASIS online record has been created at *http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/oasis/index.cfm*.

The bakehouse was by established by Richardson's the bakers who occupied the High Street frontage up until the 1950s and its interior contains the original Victorian baking ovens, largely intact, and associated fixtures and fittings. Industrial sites and monuments such as historic bakeries face a high rate of loss through redundancy, conversion and demolition and their importance has been highlighted in the regional research framework (Brown & Glazebrook 2000).

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Site location and description

Premier Travel occupies the Grade II-listed 17th century former bakery (LBS 113929) that stands on the south-east side of the High Street, towards the bottom of the hill. The bakehouse (TL 8132 3055) stands at the back of the plot between the boundary wall next door and a modern flat-roofed building (no. 67B, plate 1), but was originally detached. It is accessed by a narrow private track between 'Boots' and number 67, currently a vacant shop, but most recently 'Options'.

The bakehouse is brick-built with a later lean-to extension onto the north-east boundary wall (fig. 1). It has two floors, a preparation area and store room, with a loading hoist and taking-in door at the front (north-west), and the oven to the rear, now covered with a corrugated iron roof. It is not listed in its own right, but is curtilage listed with the shop. The building has been boarded up for security reasons and the land behind the bakehouse has been redeveloped in recent years as an engineering business.

2.2 Planning background

An application for change of use of the old bakery to single residential usage was submitted to Braintree District Council in May 2009 (09/00588/FUL). An extension is to be added as part of the conversion, and landscaping of the courtyard at the front. In view of the impact of the proposed works upon the historic integrity of the existing building, its curtilage listing and the importance of such structures as a dwindling resource, ECC HEM advised Braintree District Council that a historic building record should be made before the conversion takes place (ECC HEM 2009).

2.3 Historical background & development

Baking has a long history dating from ancient times when flat bread was cooked in the ashes of a fire. From medieval times up to the early nineteenth century, the industry was controlled by guilds that tried to ensure only those who had served apprenticeships and masterships could bake bread in their towns (Muller 1986). Several bakers would operate from a town centre, having shops at the front and bakeries at the back, usually within a separate building to limit the risk of fire. Traditionally bread was baked in beehive kilns where the fire was under the oven. By 1830 these were being replaced by the side-flue oven which had the fire on one side of the oven and flue/draught control on the other.

Technological changes in the Victorian period led to improvements in bread-making and baking. The baking process became increasingly mechanised, in particular the mixing the dough, which was the heaviest job. Around 1879, A. M. Perkins introduced iron steam pipes into ovens, iron being a good conductor of heat. This meant the ovens could be fuelled outside of the baking area and thereafter fire chambers (or 'boxes') could be placed at the opposite end to the oven, like the Halstead example, which dates from this era and incorporates a heated pipe system into its design. This oven was manufactured by Alfred Hunt, baking engineers of Leicester, and had a loading area at the front and two fire doors at the back, connected to a flue and chimney.

The drawplate oven was the next major development, where the oven floor could be pulled out on wheels, making loading and unloading easier. This introduced the modern era of mass production (Muller 1986).

2.4 Cartographic and documentary background

Cartographic and documentary research was undertaken at the Essex Record Office, Chelmsford (ERO), and references are supplied with the figures. An historic map extract from the Ordnance Survey (OS) is included as figure 2, which has been enlarged in the report for greater clarity. Interested local people provided background details to the bakery and its subsequent use.

According to the maps, the bakehouse was built in the late 19th century, between 1876, the date of the first edition OS map, and 1896, when the second edition was produced (fig. 2). The map shows the building within a densely-packed area of backyard plots to the shops on the street frontage, that included slaughterhouses (for butchers shops) and kipper smoking sheds (local person pers. comm.). Deliveries to the bakery were brought up the lane and through gates on the corner (fig. 3), where they were hoisted up onto the floor above. Water was provided by a pump out the back (marked 'P' on fig. 2).

Herbert Richardson, whose family are associated with the bakery, and formerly had a shop in Head Street, purchased the High Street shop from J and J Symonds, grocers in 1918, some time after the bakehouse was built. From it, he made cakes, bread and chocolate, but died young, after which his wife ran the business (Potts 2003). Some of its larger-than-life bakers were well-known locally, such as 'Bristi' Burst and 'Mad Herman' (local person pers. comm.).

The shop was sold in the mid 1950s and in the 1960s the bakehouse was reportedly used by *Which?* magazine for testing car engines (local person pers. comm.). It was probably at this

time that the lean-to was constructed (fig. 1). Since *Which?* left, perhaps 20 or more years ago, the building has been redundant. The shop at the front traded as Tooks Bakery (presumably using a modern baking oven inside the shop) before being bought by Premier Travel (Potts 2003).

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the historic building survey was, as stipulated in the brief (ECC HEM 2009), to record the structure prior to conversion to RCHME Level 3 standard (RCHME 1996). This entailed an internal and external descriptive record, addressing materials, architectural elements, historic fixtures and fittings and original internal layout, plus full photographic record. Equally important was to record the oven inside, its associated fixtures and fittings, and to understand its operation.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF WORKS

Full access was provided inside the building and to the land owned by Premier Travel. External and internal architectural descriptions were made and plans and elevations supplied by the consultants were annotated to show historic features and structural changes.

A series of photographs (digital and 35mm black & white print were taken internally and externally to provide a record of the original layout and any subsequent changes to it. Specific shots were taken of any areas of important architectural detail, fixtures and fittings, though the area at the back of the oven was difficult to survey and photograph through lack of natural light and space. A representative selection of photographs is reproduced at the back of the report as plates 1-24. The remainder can be found in the archive.

A location/block plan was produced to show the context of the bakehouse within its surrounding area (fig.1) and documentary and cartographic research undertaken to investigate its origins and development (section 2.3).

5.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 General description

The bakehouse is a small rectangular structure on a north-west to south-east orientation facing the High Street. It is built from utilitarian 9 inch yellow stock bricks that are arranged in Flemish bond beneath a pitched slated roof with gables either side. Inside there is a preparation area and oven, with a store room above, and the remains of a 1960s lean-to extension (fig. 4). The oven structure is covered over with a modern corrugated tin roof, and the chimney, at the far end, has been reduced to allow this.

The oven is well-preserved and unaffected by modern developments, apart from some modern additions such as the steel alloy flue and copper pipes by the top doors, which are likely to be contemporary with the later use by *Which?* magazine, who were apparently testing car engines (local person pers. comm.).

In the following descriptions the main building is described externally, followed by internal descriptions that include the oven, which is treated separately as an internal feature.

5.2 External description

The **north-west elevation** at the front of the building is set on two levels. Sole entry into the preparation area at ground level is through an old ledged and battened door in the centre that is flanked by two-over-two horizontally-sliding sash windows, now boarded-up (fig. 3a, plate 2). They have flat wooden lintels and ?codestone sills. A second doorway existed into the later lean-to on the north-east side, but this has been blocked-in (fig. 3) in similar bricks to the lean-to wall; a mixture of reds and yellow stocks. The upper part is now boarded, since there is no longer a roof.

Above the main door is a loading door with a segmental arch head, and above that the beam for the former flour hoist (plate 3). The loading door opens into the storage room above the preparation area. There is a pair of partially-surviving wooden safety rails in front of the door (fig. 3a) and the cast iron rainwater pipe to the left is likely to be original (plate 2).

The original **north-east elevation** was knocked through at ground level when the lean-to was built, and is now open-sided, supported on a central iron column (fig. 3b, plate 4). The upper level was unaffected and retains a four-by-four horizontal sash window.

Access was restricted to the other two elevations because they face onto private land within the grounds of the neighbouring engineering works. Hence there are no drawings of these elevations. Inspection from the fire escape steps at the back of 'Boots' revealed no apparent features to the **south-west elevation**, though any windows or doors may have been blocked when the new red brick building was built (plate 1). The oven can partly be seen in this photograph too, extending from the back. The **south-east elevation,** at the far end is known from internal observation to have a horizontal sash window the same as that on the north-east side above the oven.

5.3 Internal description

On the ground floor, the interior contains the preparation area, oven and later lean-to. There is also a passage that leads to the back of the oven where the fire boxes are located (fig. 4). Originally there was an opening to the side where coal could be brought in from a coal house nearby, which may be the small structure on the south-east side of the oven depicted on the second edition OS map (fig. 2). There is an upper floor over the bakehouse where ingredients such as flour were kept, fed up through the taking-in door on the front elevation and dropped through a flour hopper at the far end of the building, when required.

Damp has been able to enter the building since the roof of the extension was lost, and the ground floor has suffered as a result, though the first floor is unaffected.

Ground floor

The **bakery** is the preparation area where the dough was mixed, and cakes and chocolates made (plates 5 & 6). The working floor is in concrete, but may have been tiled previously. Walls are plastered onto brick and painted white, which may obscure earlier detail. The ceiling is formed from modern plasterboard over white-painted floor joists.

On the left side upon entering is a 'Hunt's Duratix' electric dough mixer, manufactured by John Hunt of Bolton and capable of mixing 30 quarts at three different speeds. At the top is the mixing arm and at the base are brackets for the removable bowl (plates 5 & 7). This dates to the last phase of baking at the shop. On the other side of the door, beneath the window, are two quite ornate iron sink brackets (plate 8), with typical flowing late 19th century design. Around the sink are white ceramic tiles and, on the wall next to it, is the ladder up to the first floor storage area (plate 8).

At the opposite end is the **oven**, the main feature of the building (plate 6). Its dimensions are 4m long by 2.5m wide and 2.7m high. The oven face is built of cast iron inserted into thick

brick walls (fig. 4). The bricks are standard length 9 inch bricks laid in English bond, which provides a particularly strong build (Brunskill 1997) often used in industrial structures.

The front wall of the oven is tiled, with heavy cast iron brackets either side for bolted tie rods that pass through to the back (plate 9). These are around 2m high and designed to stabilise the structure rigid during periods of heating and cooling. The oven itself comprises two main chambers for bread, with a third smaller one below (fig. 6). Above the top chamber is a curved name plate that reads 'Alfred Hunt Ltd' (plates 9 & 10) and above the bottom oven is another that reads 'Baking Engineers Leicester' (plate 9). Each of the bread ovens have a heavy iron door recessed into the cast with a sliding damper above (plate 10; missing on the central chamber). The surround is moulded and the doors have ornate sprung catches in a distinctly 'gothic' style (plate 10). Traces of a dark blue lead paint survive on the door surrounds (plates 9 and 10). Beside the oven, on the south wall, are two sets of wooden racks, presumably for oven gloves and/or towels (fig. 4, plate 6).

Inside the oven, the chambers are lined with tile (for easy cleaning) and the top and bottom chambers have sheet iron floors while the central chamber has an 8 inch tile floor (plate 11).

The bread ovens were heated by c.30mm-diameter iron bars running along their ceilings (plate 11), heated in the flue at the back and regulated by thermometers built into the oven front, also manufactured by Alfred Hunt (fig. 4). They show a range between 50 and 600º Fahrenheit (plates 9 & 10). Heat in the bottom chamber was not regulated and relied on the temperature of the chambers above. The bottom chamber has a plain cast iron door and is fitted with iron shelves for smaller items on baking trays (plate 9)

A poorly-lit **passage** leads from the bakery section, under the lean-to addition, to the fuelling area at the back. It is partly covered with a semi-glazed modern roof but mostly by a flat timber ceiling laid between the oven and the adjoining garden's wall (plate 13). This seems an earlier feature, perhaps doubling as access to the chimney. At the end of the passage, close to the eastern corner of the oven, are various (five in number) inspection and cleaning holes on the line of the flue/chimney (plate 13), the bottom one of which still retains its cast iron door (plate 14) that is of similar design to the top oven doors at the front. Through two of the inspection holes, the iron heating bars were viewed, passing across the flue from the fire (plate 15).

At the eastern corner of the oven the passage turns at 90º into the **fuelling area**. Originally there was access from the yard outside, where the coal was stored, but the doorway is now

blocked (fig. 4). Any remnants of original roofing over the fuelling area have been replaced by the modern corrugated tin roof.

The end wall of the oven (plate 16) contains two fire boxes, one per chamber, thermostat regulated. The fire box plates are bolted onto the back wall of the oven and contain a fuelling box at the top and raking out box at the bottom (plates 17 & 18). Over the top of the fire boxes is again cast the name of the manufacturer (Alfred Hunt). The fire doors open outwards through a simple round catch to reveal an arched brick surround. Inside each box, an iron grill at the bottom let the ash fall into the ash pan below which was accessed by lifting the bottom door upwards (plate 18). Either side of the fireboxes are the large iron tie plates and above is the remains of a chain-operated cogged wheel and ratchet that probably controlled air flow into the flue (plate 19).

The chimney is located in the eastern corner of the oven (fig. 4) and would originally have been quite high, but was cut back when the new roof was added (plate 20). Only eight courses of brickwork remain.

First floor

On the first floor above the bakery is the **store room** (fig. 5), where sacks of flour and other ingredients were kept safe and dry. The walls are bare and painted white like the ground floor and the floorboards exposed. At the front end (north-west) are the loading door and access hatch whose ladder reaches to the eaves (plate 21). The heavy hoist beam that is clearly seen externally is braced onto the roof frame (plate 21). At the opposite end of the store room are two modern steel flues, probably for ventilation in the modern stage of the bakery or under occupancy by *Which?* magazine (plate 22). However, in the southern corner is a wooden chute down which flour was dropped through the floor into the mixing area below. The feature is now blocked at the top with an old flour sack (fig. 5, plates 23 & 24) and the bottom part hidden by the ground floor ceiling.

The roof is a solid nailed collar trenched purlin type constructed from machine-sawn pine, which is typical of the late Victorian period.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The bakehouse was part of a commercial bakery operating from the High Street in the late 19th century, established sometime between 1876 and 1896. It was built to a standard design separate to the shop, with a mixing room, storage area above, and oven. The oven was built of brick with cast iron fixtures and other fittings manufactured by Alfred Hunt of Leicester, who probably also fitted the oven. By the late 19th century the national railway network had been in place for some and it was not unusual for heavy freight to travel relatively long distances. It is interesting to speculate whether John Hunt of Bolton, who supplied dough-mixing machinery to the bakery in the 20th century, was related to Alfred Hunt.

In terms of design, this was a modern efficient oven that worked on clear principles within a purpose-built structure. Additional detail on its form and internal workings would only be gained by careful disassembly, or from contemporary sale catalogues, should they survive. At the start of the process, iron pipes were heated in the flue above the fire boxes at the back of the oven and passed over the bread ovens, whose temperature was regulated by thermometers built into the front wall. The temperature of the bottom oven was unregulated and simply took heat off the other two. The back flue design meant that the hot, dirty work of fuelling the fires could be done away from the preparation area; an example of Victorian ingenuity and innovation in applying commonsense industrial principals to promote efficiency. It presumably also made working in the bakery more comfortable by cutting down on the heat and bustle.

This bakehouse is an important survivor of Halstead's historic townscape. As well as being a particularly well-preserved and interesting example, it serves as a reminder that the late Victorian High Street of any town was an extremely diverse and dynamic place, with shops and other commercial premises of all types along its frontage and a wide range of ancillary services behind. Indeed, historic mapping and trade directories readily illustrate the presence of such premises as forges, malthouses and tanneries located behind the High Street frontage, alongside the bakehouse.

Very little has been published on Victorian bakehouses, so examples of this quality are particularly worthy of record. Although once a common feature of our historic towns, once redundant, the majority have been demolished as town centres have been changed and remodelled. This is also true of other similar structures, such as local smokeries and curing sheds which formerly occupied the same backyard positions. As high streets continue to

change it is therefore important to continue to record these rare survivals and, where practicable, to preserve their remains in sympathetic conversion schemes such as is the case with the bakehouse.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Premier Travel for funding and commissioning this survey and to Sally Fletcher of Januarys Consultant Surveyors for facilitating the works and providing the drawings. Thanks also to the staff at the Essex Records Office. Fieldwork, recording and photography were undertaken by the author. Illustrations were prepared by the author and produced by Andrew Lewsey of ECC FAU. The project was managed by Mark Atkinson and monitored by Teresa O'Connor of ECC HEM, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority.

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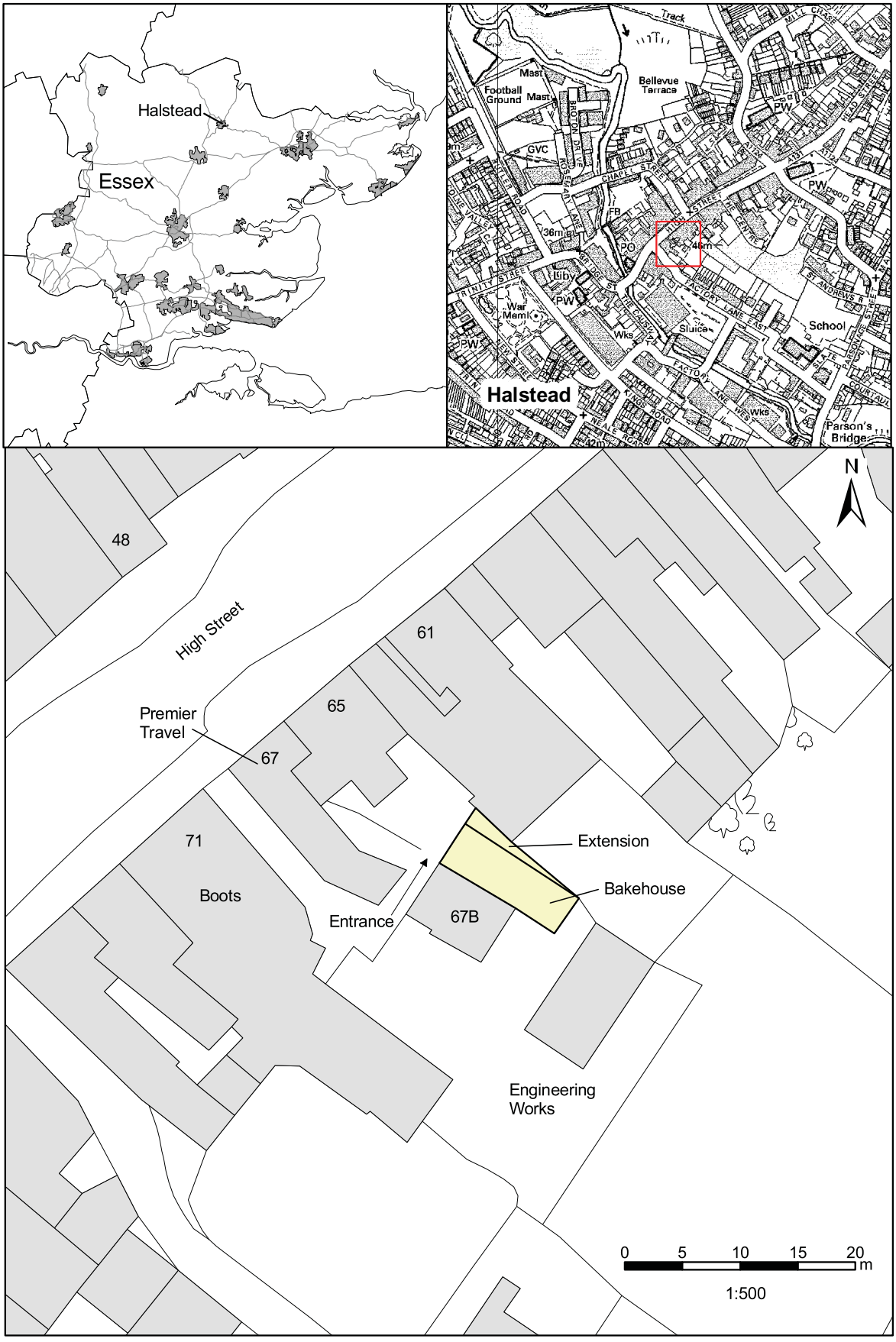

Fig.1. Site location and block plan

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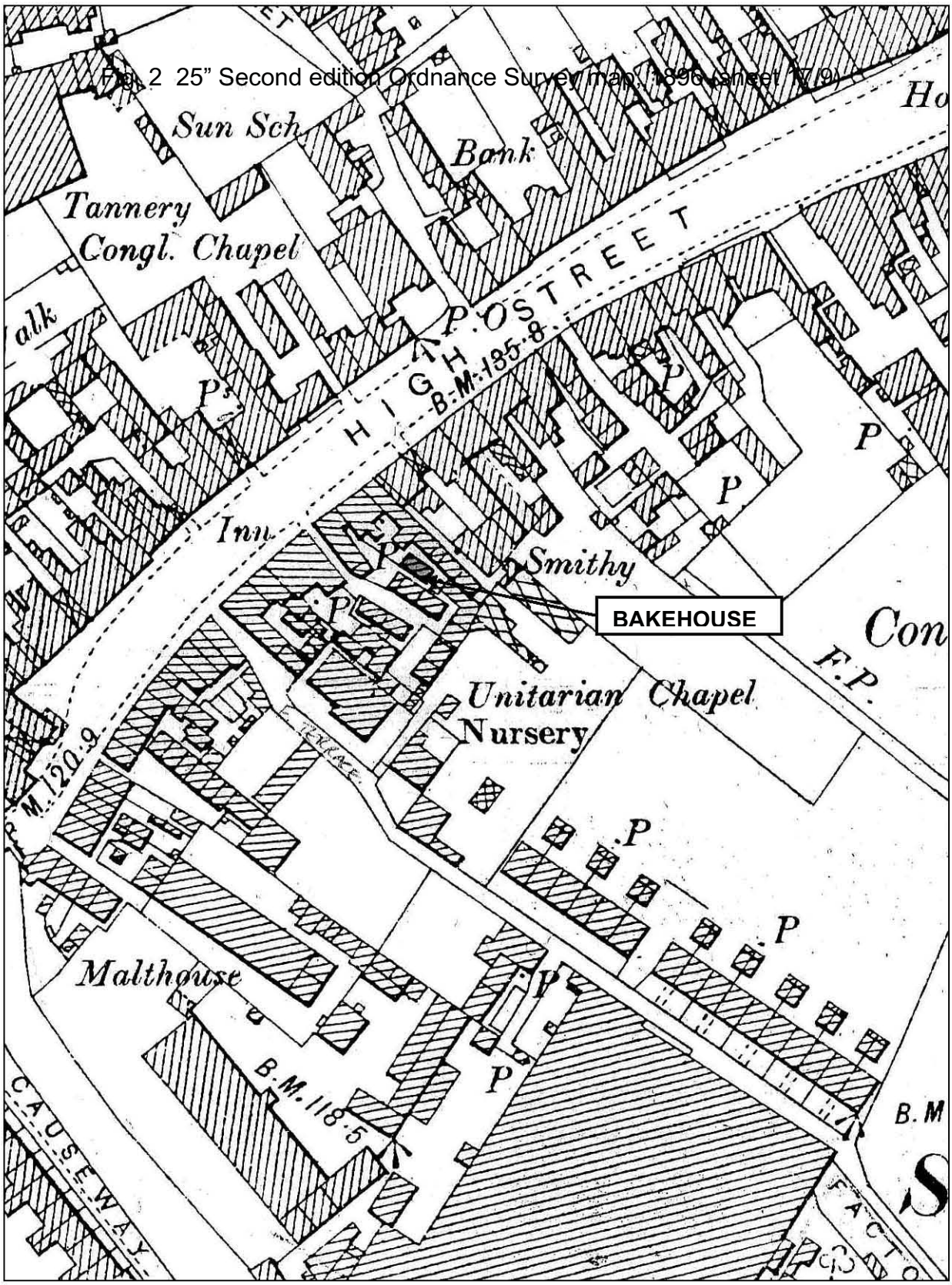
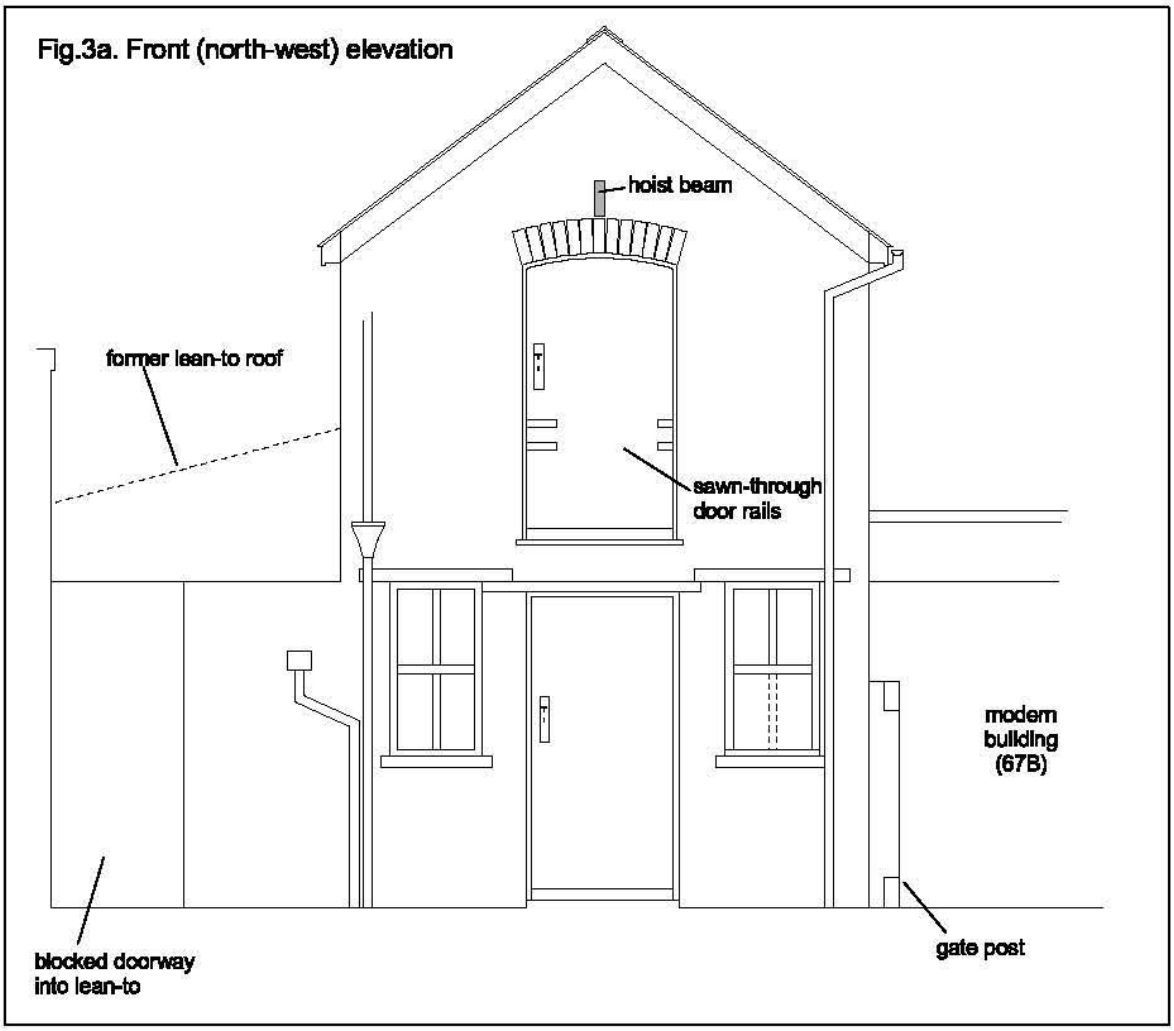


Fig. 2 Second Edition 1896 OS map (sheet 17/9)



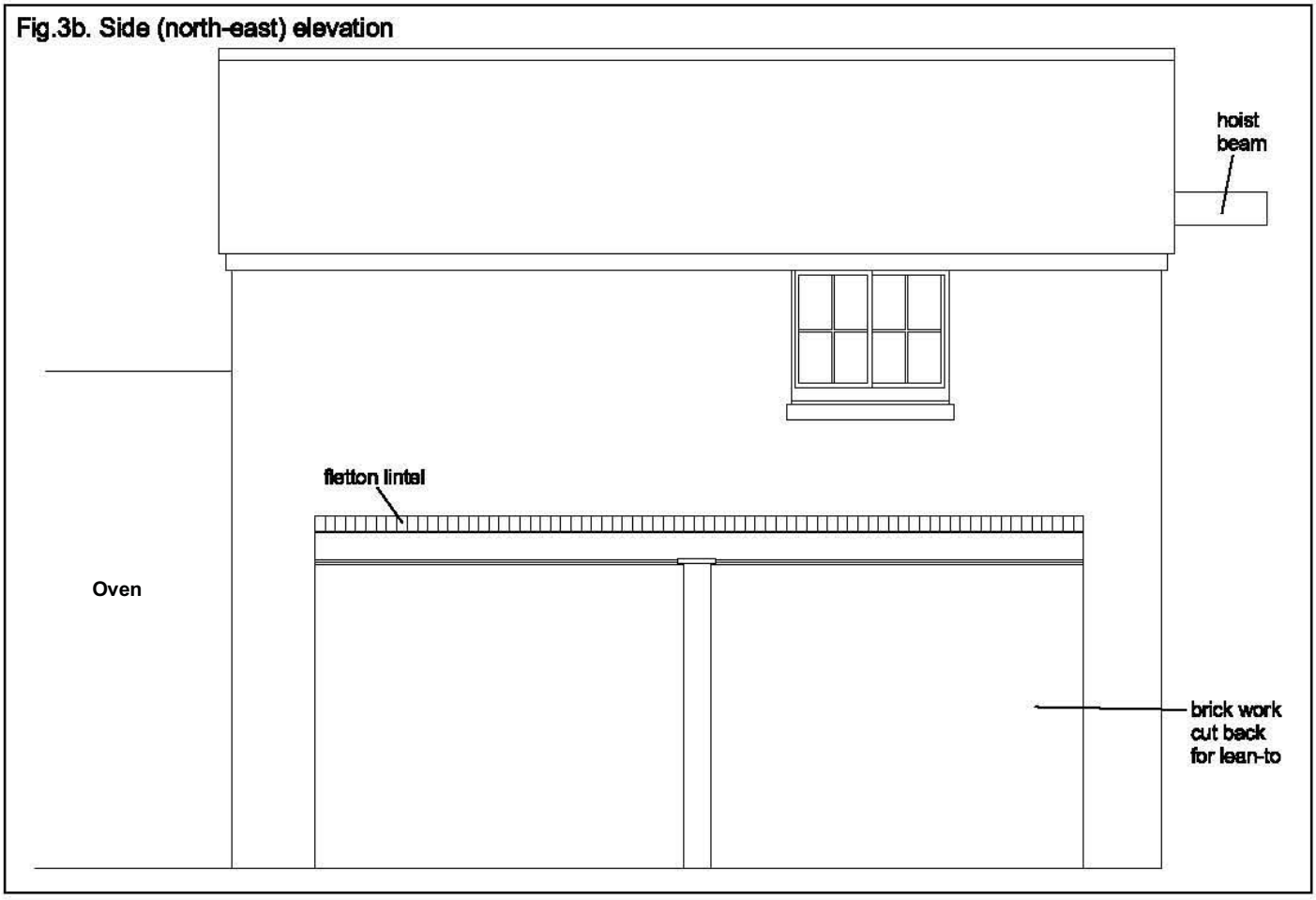


Fig.3. Existing elevations

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 m
0 1 2 3 4 5 ft
1:50

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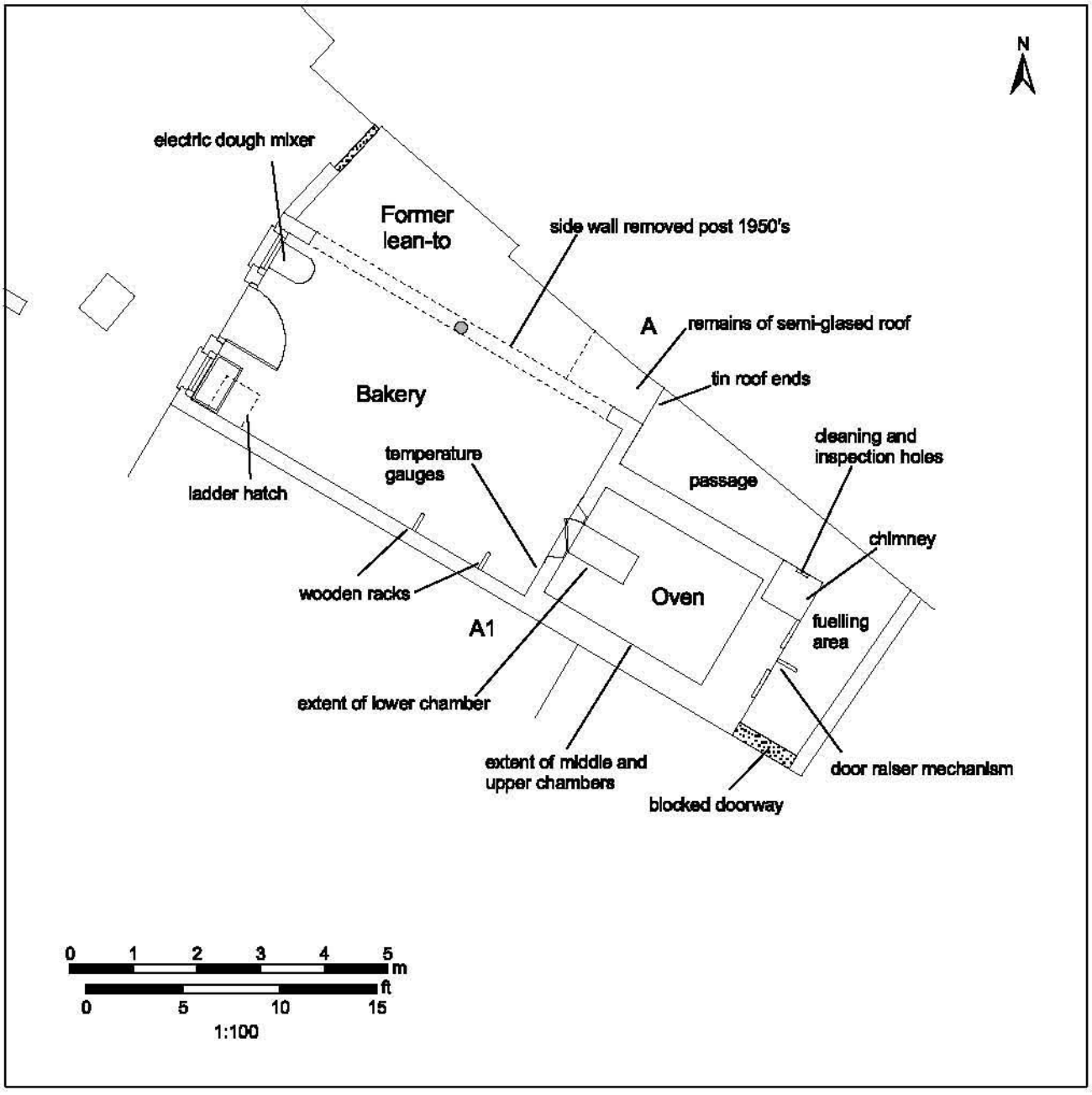

Fig.4.Ground floor plan

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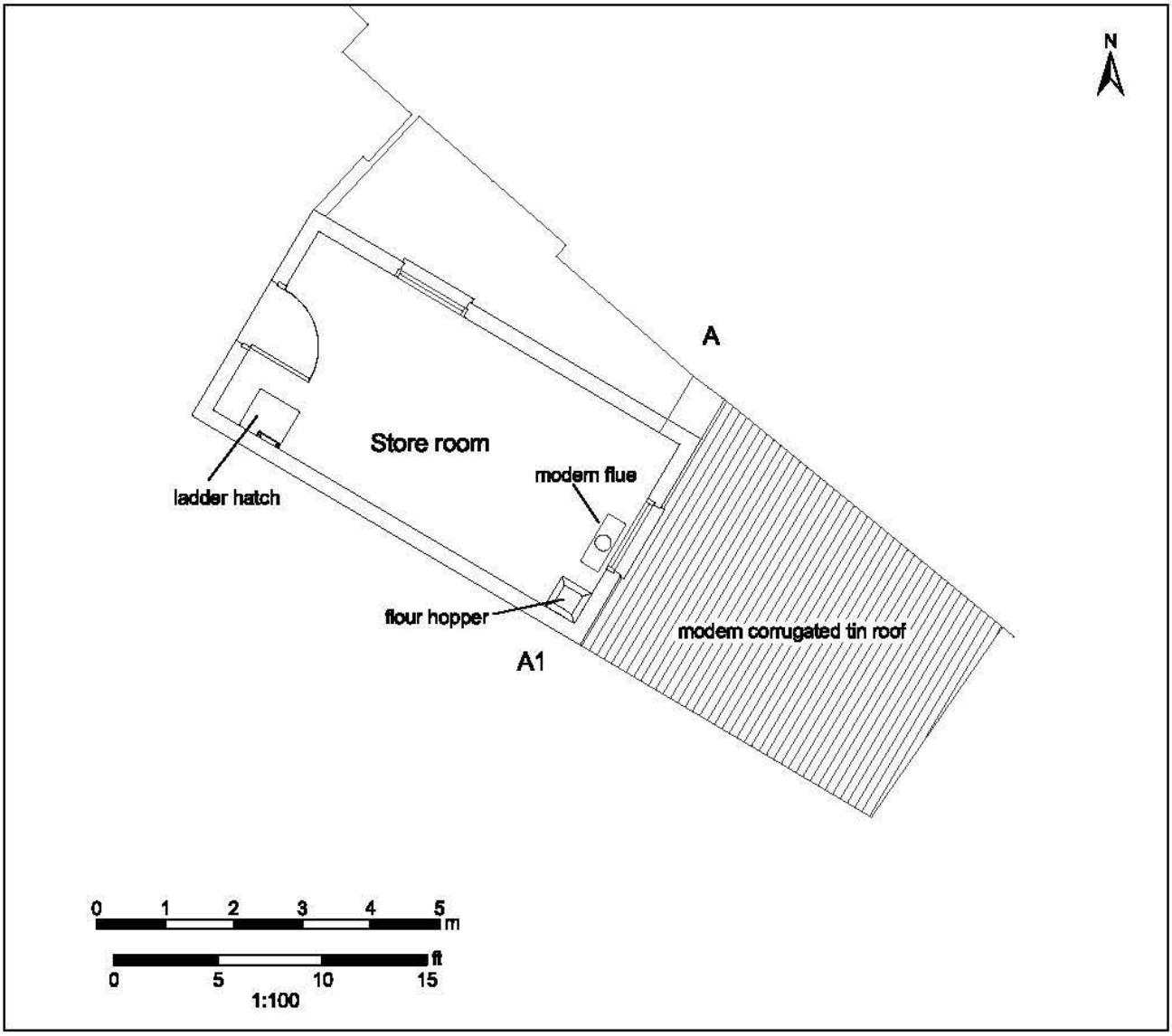

Fig.5. First floor plan

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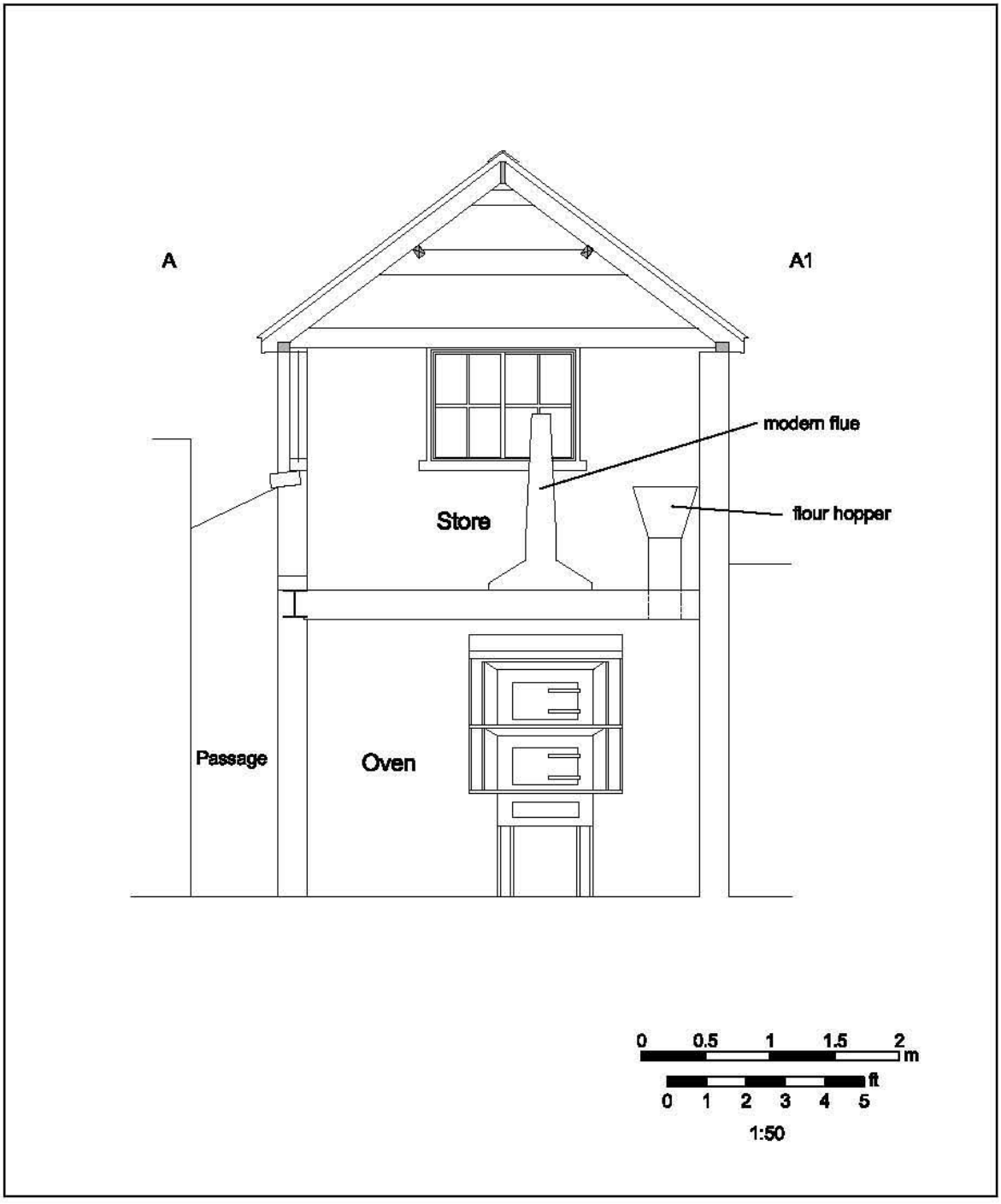

Fig.6. Section A - A1

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Plate 1 Bakehouse viewed to north-east

Plate 2 South-east elevation

Plate 3 Bakehouse viewed to north-east

Plate 4 North-east elevation

Plate 5 Ground floor interior viewed to north-west

Plate 6 Ground floor interior viewed to oven at south-east end

Plate 7 ‘Duratix’ dough mixer

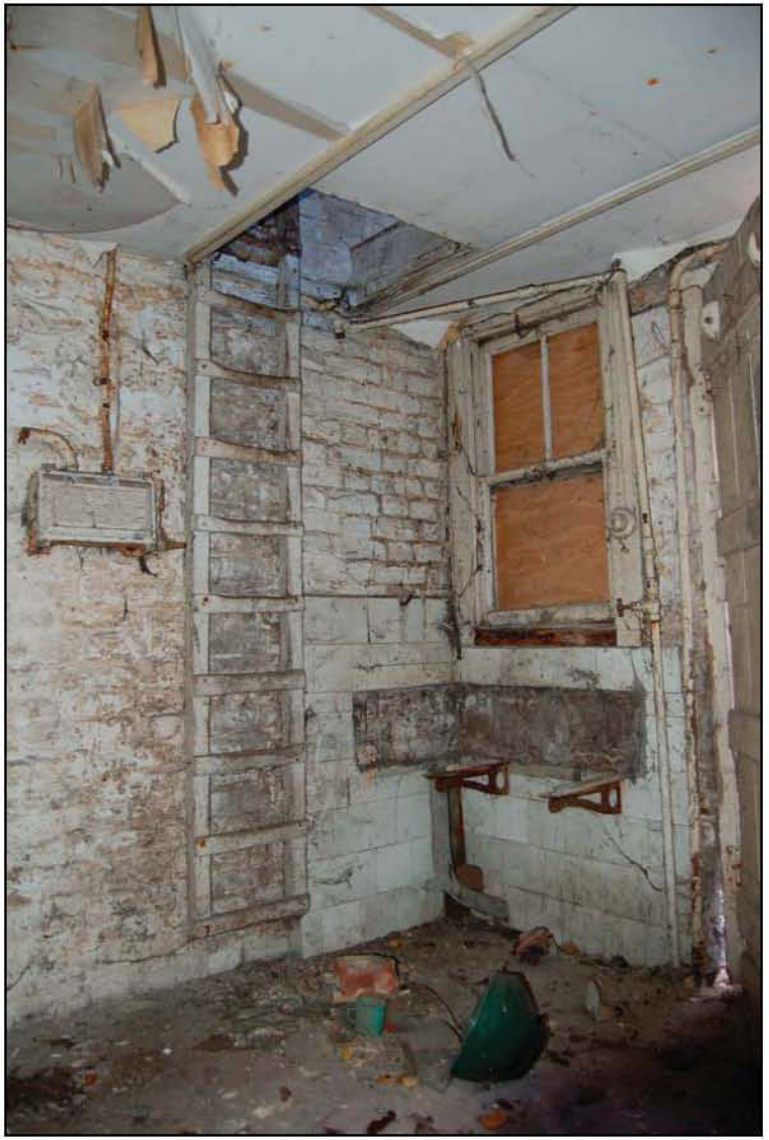

Plate 8 Sink fittings and hatch ladder in western corner

Plate 9 Baking oven

Plate 10 Door detail on oven

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Plate 13 Passage viewed to north-west

Plate 14 Inspection door at base of flue wall

Plate 15 Heating bars in flue viewed through inspection hole

Plate 16 Fire boxes at back of oven (1m scale)

Plate 17 Detail of fire box (1m scale)

Plate 18 View inside fire box (1m scale)

Plate 19 Ventilation control

Plate 20 Remains of chimney

Plate 21 First floor viewed to north-west (loading door)

Plate 22 First floor viewed to south-east

Plate 23 Flour hopper at south-east end

Plate 24 Detail of flour hopper

Appendix 1: Contents of Archive

Site name: Former Bakehouse rear of 63-65 High Street, Halstead, Essex
Project no.: 2172

Index to the Archive:

Document wallet containing:

1. Introduction

1.1 HEM design brief
1.2 FAU written scheme of investigation
1.3 Client/archive report
1.4 Unbound version of report
1.5 CD containing digital photographs, architect's drawings & copy of report, pdf-formatted

2. Site Archive

2.1 Photographic record (digital prints & monochrome 35mm prints & negatives)
2.2 Photographic registers
2.3 Site notes, annotated architect's drawings & sketched oven elevations & section

Appendix 2: EHER Summary Sheet

Site Name/Address: Former Bakehouse rear of 63-65 High Street, Halstead	
Parish: Halstead	***District:*** Braintree
NGR: TL 8132 3055	***OASIS record No.:*** essexcou-1-75794
Type of Work: Building recording (level 2) & measured survey	***Site Director/Team:*** Andrew Letch ECC FAU
Date of Work: 13th & 14th August 2009	***Size of Area Investigated:*** N/A
Curating Museum: Braintree	***Funding Source:*** Januarys Consultant Surveyors on behalf of Premier Travel
Further Work Anticipated? No	***Related LBS Nos.*** 113929
Final Report: Summary in EAH	
Periods Represented: late 19th-century	

SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:

The bakehouse was part of a commercial bakery operating from the High Street in the late 19th century, established sometime between 1876 and 1896. It was built to a standard design separate to the shop, with a mixing room, storage area above, and oven. The oven was built of brick with cast iron fixtures and other fittings manufactured by Alfred Hunt of Leicester.

In terms of design, this was a modern efficient oven that worked on clear principles within a purpose-built structure. At the start of the process, iron pipes were heated in the flue above the fire boxes at the back of the oven and passed over the bread ovens, whose temperature was regulated by thermometers built into the front wall. The temperature of the bottom oven was unregulated and simply took heat off the other two. The back flue design meant that the hot, dirty work of fuelling the fires could be done away from the preparation area, making working in the bakery more comfortable by cutting down on the heat and bustle.

This bakehouse is an important survivor of Halstead's historic townscape. As well as being a particularly well-preserved and interesting example, it serves as a reminder that the late Victorian High Street of any town was an extremely diverse and dynamic place, with shops and other commercial premises of all types along its frontage and a wide range of ancillary services behind.

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Previous Summaries/Reports: none	
Author of Summary: Andrew Letch	***Date of Summary:*** 19th April 2010