



# HERITAGE NETWORK



## 'SHIPWRIGHTS COTTAGE' Cottered, Herts.

HN530

*Historic Building Recording  
& Archaeological Monitoring Report*



# THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

*Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation*

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

## ‘SHIPWRIGHTS COTTAGE’

Cottered, Herts.

HN530

### *Archaeological Monitoring and Building Recording*

*Prepared on behalf of Aaron and Susan Playle*

by

Geoff Saunders, BA AIFA

and

David Hillelson, BA MIFA

Report no.332

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*The cover photograph shows ‘Shipwrights Cottage’ viewed from the north*

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Geoff Saunders, David Kaye and David Hillelson. The report text and illustrations were prepared by Geoff Saunders. The report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Aaron and Susan Playle; Paul Sheriff, Builder; and the staff of the County Archaeology Office, Hertfordshire County Council for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	‘Shipwrights Cottage’, Cottered, Herts.		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	East Hertfordshire
<b>Village/town:</b>	Cottered	<b>Parish:</b>	Cottered
<b>Planning reference:</b>	3/03/2156	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 31985 29294
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Aaron and Susan Playle, ‘Shipwrights Cottage’, Cottered, Herts.		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	Extension	<b>Present land use:</b>	Garden
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	c.80m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c.80m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN530	<b>Other reference:</b>	n/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Type of work:</b>	Bldg record & monitoring	<b>Archive location:</b>	Hertford Museum
<b>Start of work</b>	14/06/2005	<b>Finish of work</b>	29/07/2005
<b>Related SMR Nos:</b>	n/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	n/a		

**Synopsis:** In response to a condition on the planning permission for an extension at ‘Shipwrights Cottage’, Cottered, Herts., the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owners to undertake a programme of building recording and archaeological monitoring.

The present house is considered to be an early 18th century rebuilding of an earlier structure. The monitoring of the building works has demonstrated that substantial renovation of the timber framing and its facings has taken place in the recent past.

The monitoring of the construction groundworks has revealed evidence which indicates domestic activity in the vicinity from the 12th –14th century onwards.

## 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared on behalf of *Aaron and Susan Playle*, as part of a programme of archaeological investigation at ‘Shipwrights Cottage’, Cottered, Herts. The planning permission for the construction of an extension to the rear of the building (ref. 3/03/2156), granted by East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC), has been subject to a standard archaeological condition, in accordance with the provisions of the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 on Archaeology and Planning (PPG16). The scope of the required archaeological work has been defined in a *Design Brief for Archaeological Building Recording, Building Monitoring and Recording, and Monitoring and Recording of Groundworks* prepared by the *County Archaeology Office (CAO)* of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as advisers to EHDC (ref. JS 19/07/04). The CAO has agreed to extend the six-month validity of the *Design Brief* on the understanding that the work will be undertaken with reference to the revised standards incorporated in their current documentation. A full specification for the work is contained in the Heritage Network’s approved Project Design dated May 2005.

**1.2** The property is located on the south side of the A507 Baldock to Buntingford Road, 200m east of the parish church of St John, and forms the west range of a two-storey house of timber-framed construction faced in plaster (Figure 1). It is an early 18<sup>th</sup> century rebuild of a 16<sup>th</sup> century or earlier structure and is listed Grade II for group value (IoE 159837). The site is centred on NGR TL 31985 29296. The development proposes a two-storey extension to the western end of the southern elevation.

**1.3** The planning authority has identified this building as having intrinsic archaeological interest. The aim of the project has been to make a high quality record of the structure before the start of construction works and to monitor those works to ensure that any hidden features of interest, whether above or below ground, were observed and recorded adequately.

**1.4** The present report is intended to set the site in its archaeological and historical context, and complete the requirements of the planning condition.

## **2. Fieldwork**

### ***TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY***

**2.1** The site lies close to the centre of Cottered on land which slopes down gradually from north to south (Figure 1). The existing patio immediately to the rear of the cottage is substantially lower than the lawn indicating that either the ground level of the patio has been reduced or the lawn built up.

**2.2** The underlying geology of the area consists of light olive brown (2.5Y 5/4) clay with frequent inclusions of chalk.

### ***METHODOLOGY***

**2.3** The monitoring and recording programme was divided into two discrete elements. These combined the recording of the works directly associated with the alteration of the existing structure, and the recording of the groundworks for the new extension.

**2.4** The building was photographed before the start of the building works (Appendix 1) and monitoring visits were made in the course of the construction programme to record elements of the building structure which were exposed, and to supervise the ground reduction for a new patio to the rear of the new extension and the excavation of footings trenches (Figure 5).

**2.5** The machining was undertaken using a tracked 360<sup>0</sup> mini-digger, and a toothless ditching bucket was used for ground reduction. Spoil from the various stages of the groundworks was inspected for archaeological artefacts.

**2.6** The project was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Design Brief, and the Heritage Network’s approved Project Design.

### ***ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING***

#### ***General Description***

**2.7** Shipwrights Cottage forms the western range (to the west of the gabled crosswing) of a larger house which has been subsequently divided in two (Figures 2 & 3). It is timber-framed in construction, set on a brick plinth, the exterior elevations being rendered with a modern cement render. It is two storeys in height with a central chimney, and a steep thatched and half-hipped roof.

**2.8** The northern (front) elevation has two three-light flush casement windows in each storey, and an entrance door set in a centrally placed gabled porch (cover photo).

**2.9** The western (side) elevation has two two-light flush casement windows in the ground floor, and a single two-light flush casement in the upper floor.

**2.10** The southern (rear) elevation has French windows at the western end of the ground floor, and a half-glazed door at the eastern end (Plate 1). A low set small one-light casement window is placed between the two doors, serving a cupboard beneath the staircase. A one-light casement is set in the middle of the upper floor, serving the staircase, and a further one-light casement is set at the eastern end.

### ***Building Monitoring and Recording***

**2.11** The alteration works involved the addition of a gabled extension to the western end of the southern elevation (Figure 4). The existing opening in the ground floor was retained and a new opening was made in the upper storey.

**2.12** The render was largely stripped away from the ground floor revealing a modern brick plinth, modern sill and middle rail, and reused studs which are unlikely to pre-date the Victorian period (Plate 2). The principal post was not observed in the section available. The internal plaster was modern and supported on modern laths. Some apparently original floor joists were visible above the middle rail (Plate 3).

**2.13** The render was partially stripped from the upper floor revealing a modern wall plate and roof timbers, and reused studs. The exterior render was modern and supported on metal mesh, and the internal plaster was cement-based and supported on modern laths. An original beam was observed above the level of the middle-rail, extending from the east and finishing approximately half way along the elevation (Plate 4). No indication of its current or original structural purpose could be ascertained.

## ***ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING***

### ***Ground reduction***

**2.14** The new extension crossed an existing paved area to the rear of the house, that had been terraced into the natural ground slope. The terracing was extended southwards, to a maximum depth of approximately 0.92m, to allow for a new patio (Figure 5). The natural geology was encountered in this area at a depth level with the existing patio.

**2.15** A sub-rectangular pit [01] was observed cutting through the natural clay on a west-southwest – east-northeast alignment (Figures 5 & 6). The full dimensions of the pit were not apparent as it extended beyond the limit of excavation, but it had a maximum depth of 0.29m. The pit had steep very slightly concave sides and a flat base. The single firm, olive brown (2.5Y 4/4), slightly silty clay fill (02) yielded 3 undiagnostic bodysherds of probable 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century date. Groundwater was encountered in the base of the feature. The function of the feature is unclear.

**2.16** Unstratified artefacts including pottery, glass, and clay pipe, recovered from within the overburden, varied in date from between the 13<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**2.17** No further archaeological features or deposits were observed.

**Footings trenches**

**2.18** The footings trenches for the new extension measured approximately 0.45m wide by 1.0m deep. The footings were located within the area of the existing patio, and the stratigraphy in the trenches consisted of natural clay only, demonstrating that the ground level within the area of the existing patio has been reduced previously (Figure 5).

**2.19** No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the footings trenches.

**Drainage trenches and soakaway**

**2.20** The drainage trenches and soakaway associated with the new extension were excavated through undisturbed natural clay that had already been inspected when the ground level was reduced for the new patio.

**FINDS CONCORDANCE**

Context	Pottery		An.bone		Glass		Clay pipe	
	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.
(02)	30	3	10	2				
Unstratified	845	30	15	2	30	2	10	2
Total	875	33	25	4	30	2	10	2

**Pottery**

**2.21** A total of 33 sherds of pottery, weighing 875g, was recovered from one stratified and one unstratified context during the present investigation. The pottery ranged in date from the early medieval period through to the late post-medieval period.

**2.22** Three undiagnostic bodysherds of 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century date were recovered from the fill of pit [01]. One of the sherds was coarsely sand-tempered, the remaining two were finer but also sand-tempered.

**2.23** The vast majority of the assemblage, 91% by number and 97% by weight, was recovered unstratified within the overburden. The material ranges in date from the 13<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century, and further sherds of 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century date were observed but not collected. Hertfordshire greyware of 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century date is the most prolific fabric among the medieval sherds, and jugs appear to be the commonest vessel type. This unstratified pottery is heavily abraded and not within its place of primary deposition.

**2.24** The large amount of pottery recovered is an indication of occupation activity in the vicinity of the site from the 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards.



*Recommendations*

**2.25** Given that the majority of the assemblage from the site is heavily abraded, unstratified and not in its primary place of deposition, no further work is proposed on this assemblage.

***Animal bone***

**2.26** A total of 4 fragments of animal bone, weighing 25g, was recovered during the investigation. The fragments are worn, small, and undiagnostic.

*Recommendations*

**2.27** No further work is proposed on this assemblage.

***Glass***

**2.28** A total of 2 pieces of glass, weighing 30g, were recovered unstratified during the investigation. The pieces are late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century in date and appear to be from the base of a small bottle.

*Recommendations*

**2.29** No further work is proposed on this assemblage.

***Clay pipe***

**2.30** Two fragments of clay pipe, weighing 10g, were recovered unstratified during the investigation. The fragments are from the pipe stems and are undiagnostic.

*Recommendations*

**2.31** No further work is proposed on this assemblage.

### **3. Discussion**

**3.1** The building recording on the present site has shown that significant renovation of the timber framing has taken place in the recent past, and that the internal and external facings of the walls have also been renewed. The observed joists carrying the upper floor appear to be original. A beam of unknown function, which may also be original, was observed extending westwards, just above the level of the middle-rail.

**3.2** The monitoring of the groundworks demonstrated that the area immediately to the south of the building, which formed a patio, had been terraced into the natural ground slope in the recent past. A single small pit, context [01], was recorded, cut through the natural clay. Although the function of the pit is unclear, the 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century pottery recovered from it is the earliest indication of activity on the site.

**3.3** The large assemblage of unstratified pottery recovered from the site is an indication of domestic activity on or in the vicinity of the site from the 12<sup>th</sup> –14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The ground reduction for the existing patio may have removed any direct evidence of archaeological activity on the site at this time.

#### ***Conclusion***

**3.4** The present house is considered to be an early 18<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding of an earlier structure. The monitoring of the building works has demonstrated that substantial renovation of the timber framing and its facings has taken place in the recent past.

**3.5** The monitoring of the construction groundworks has revealed evidence which indicates domestic activity in the vicinity from the 12<sup>th</sup> –14<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

## 4. Schedule of site visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
26/05/05	DJH	2	Photography
14/06/05	GIS	1	Monitor ground reduction for patio
14/06/05	GIS	6	Monitor ground reduction for patio
15/06/05	GIS	1	Monitor ground reduction for patio
16/06/05	GIS	8	Monitor ground reduction for patio
27/06/05	DGK	1	Inspect footings trenches
29/07/05	DJH/DGK	2	Inspect exposed structure

## 5. Bibliography

Hillelson, D. 2005, ‘Shipwrights Cottage’, Cottered, Herts: Archaeological Project Design. Heritage Network

Smith, J. 2004, *Design Brief for Archaeological Building Recording, Building Monitoring and Recording, and Monitoring and Recording of Groundworks, Shipwrights Cottage, Baldock Road, Cottered.* Hertfordshire County Council

[www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) English Heritage listed buildings database

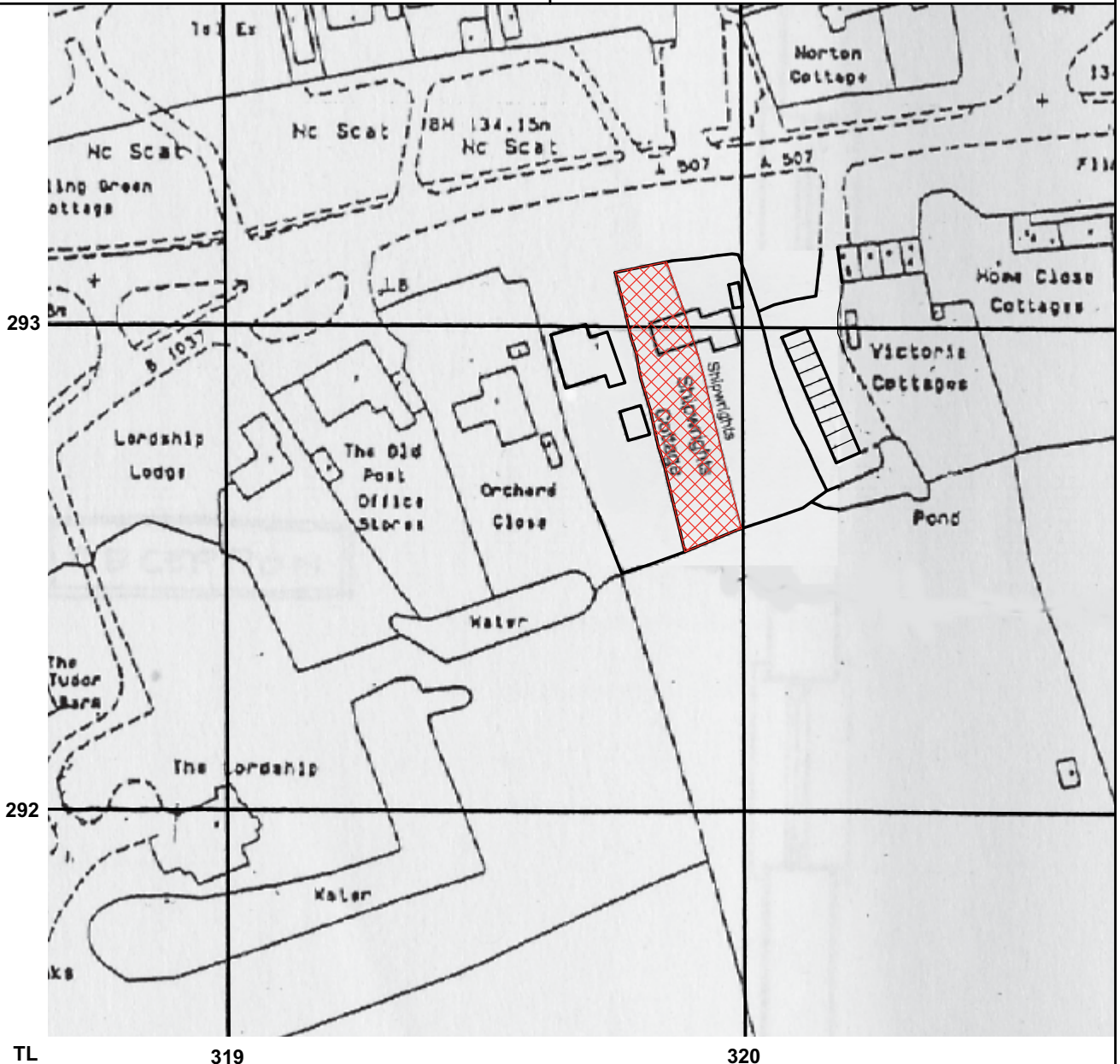
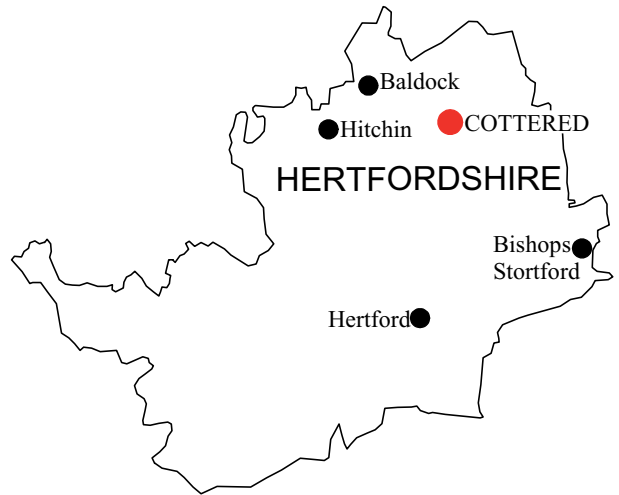
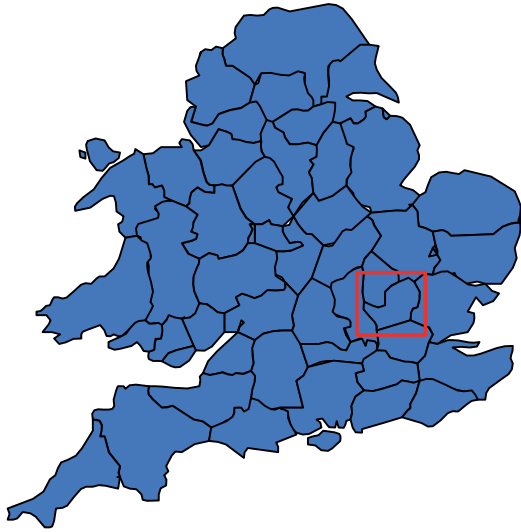
## 6. Illustrations

Figure 1.....	Site location
Figure 2.....	Existing plans
Figure 3.....	Existing elevations
Figure 4.....	Proposed plans
Figure 5.....	Site layout
Figure 6.....	Feature plan and section
Plate 1.....	‘Shipwrights Cottage’ southern elevation
Plate 2.....	External elevation after removal of render
Plate 3.....	Floor joists above the middle-rail
Plate 4.....	Original beam above the level of the middle-rail

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'Shipwrights Cottage', Cottered

HN530

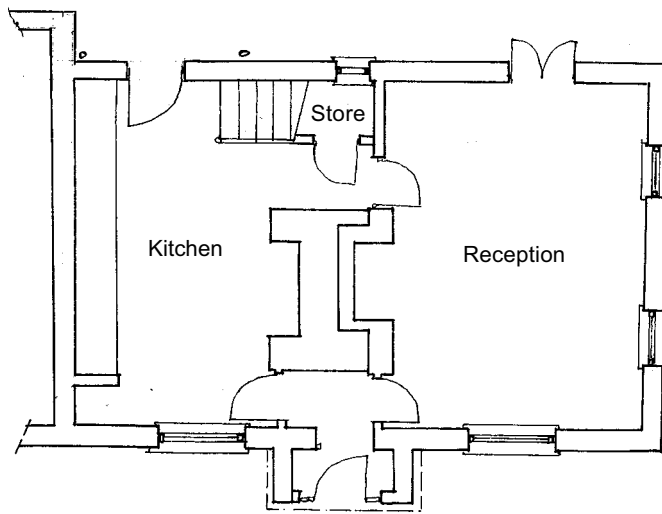


Site Location

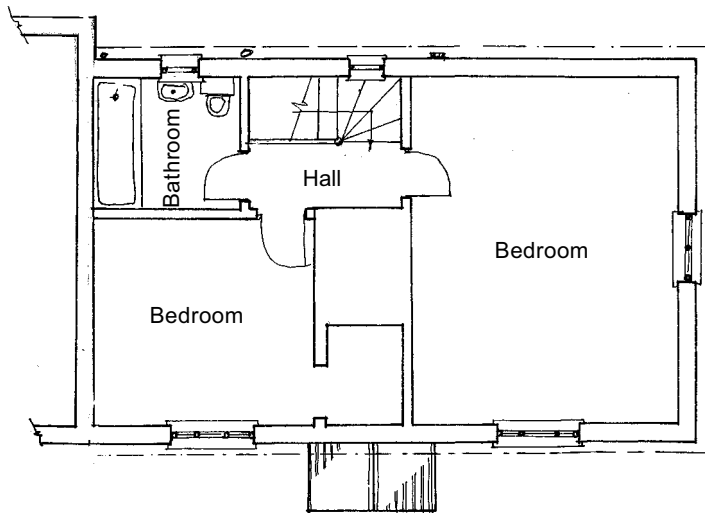
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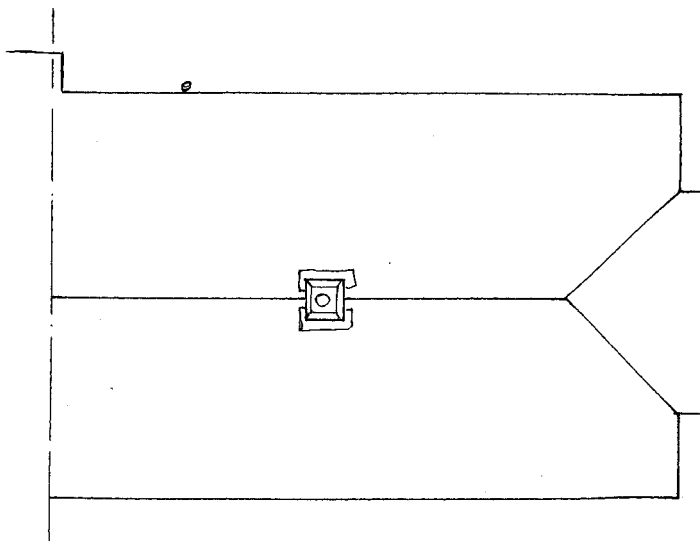
Figure 1



Ground floor

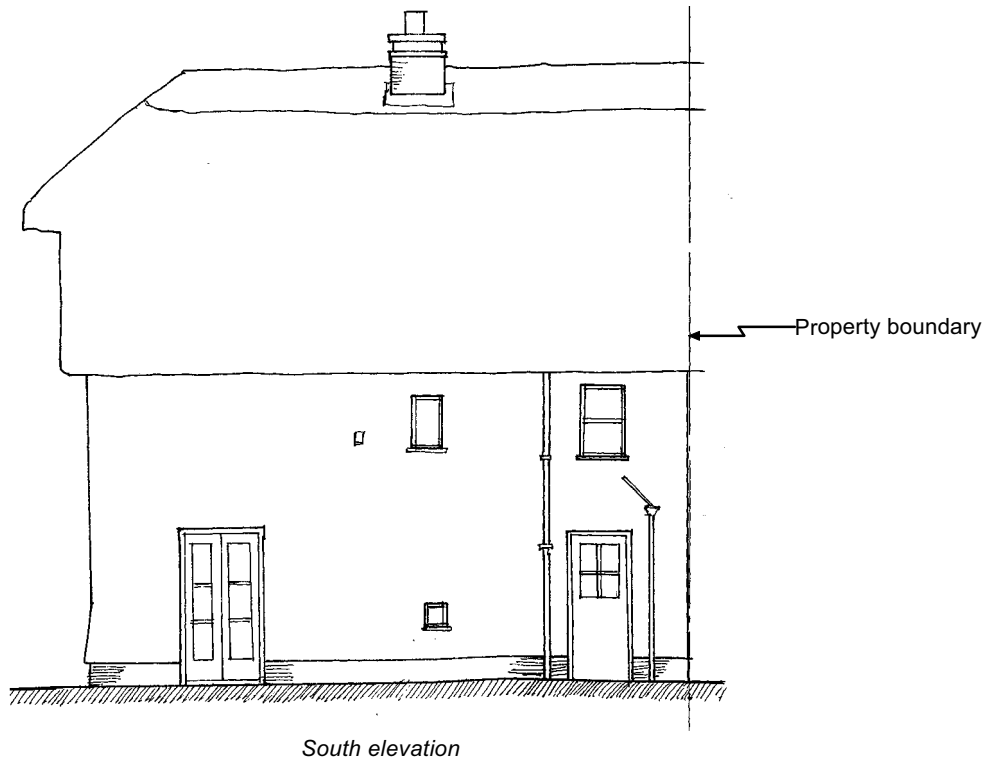
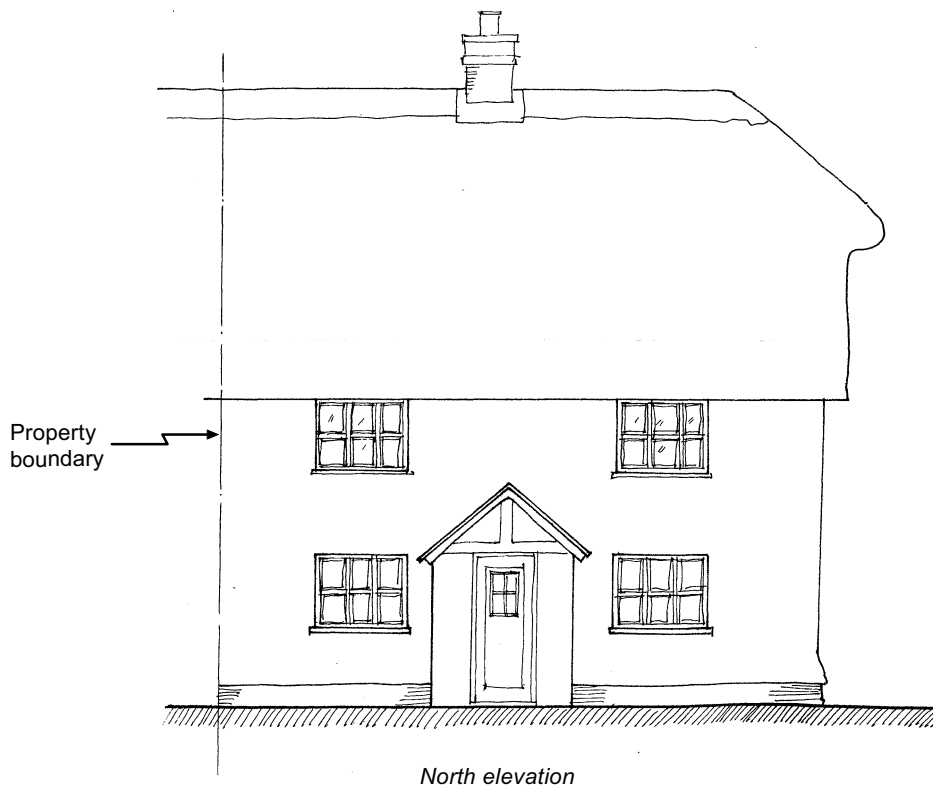


First floor



Roof line

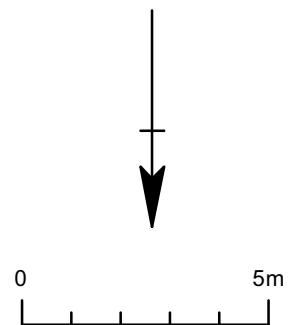
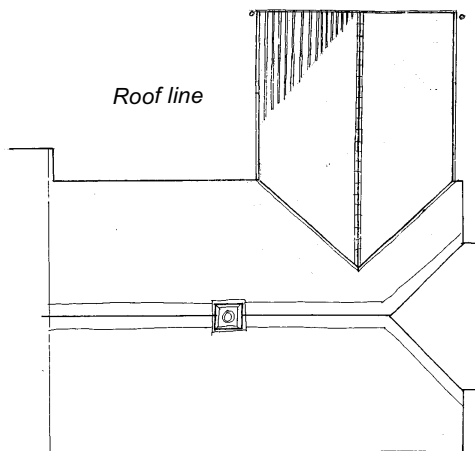
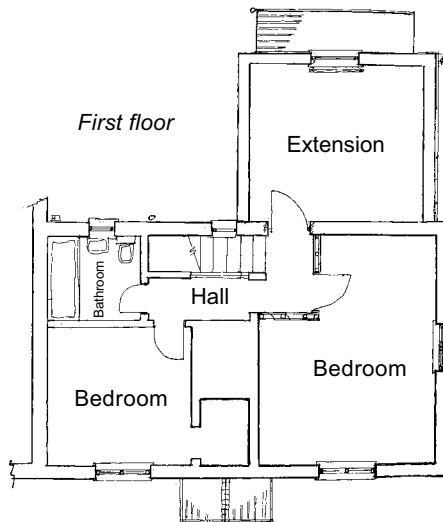
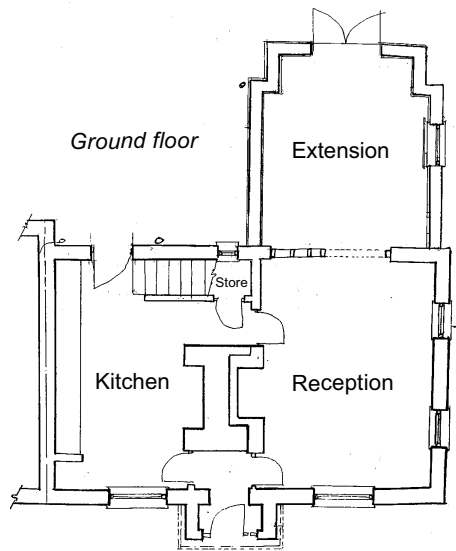




Existing elevations  
(Courtesy of M.A.D.E. Contracts)

Scale 1:100

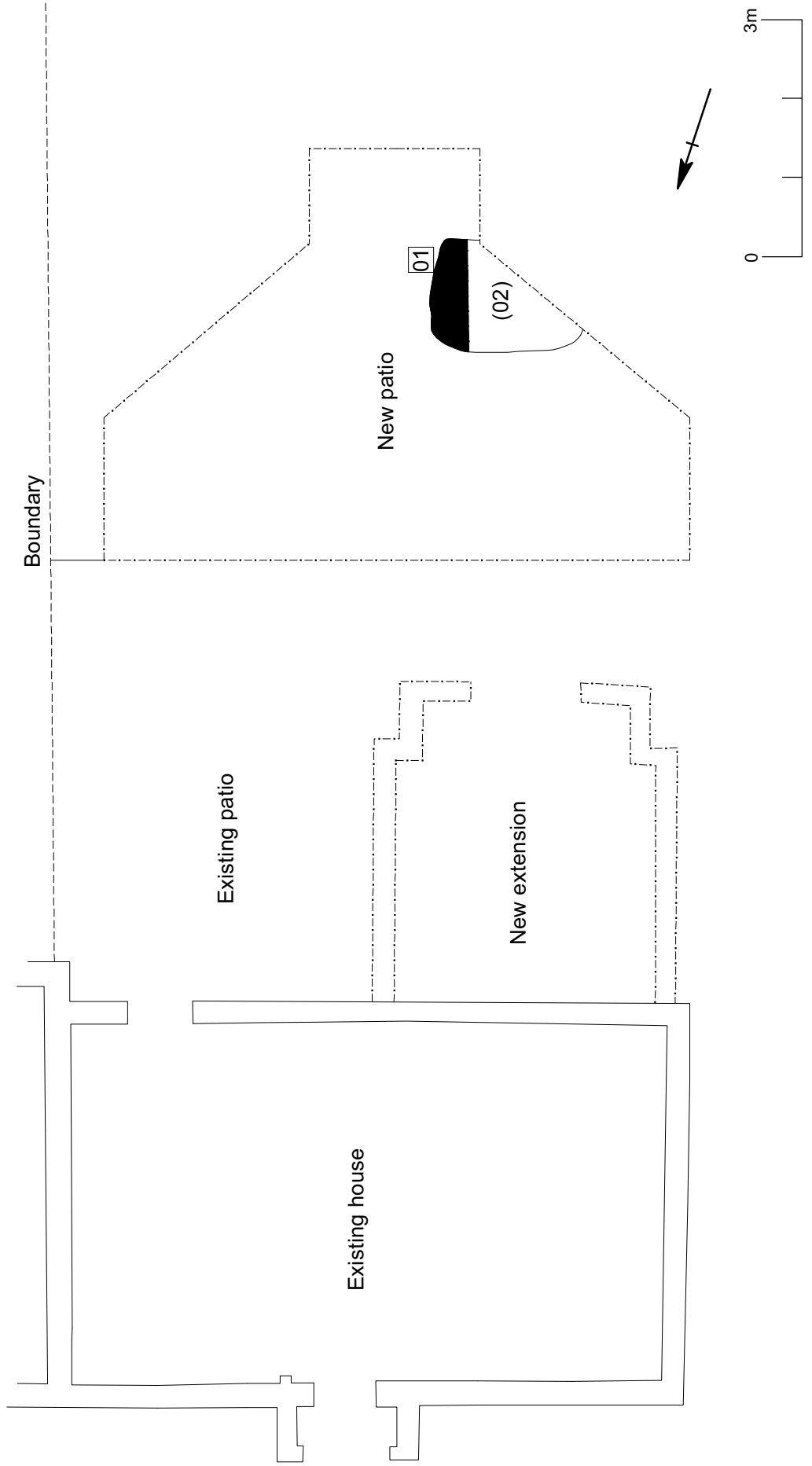
Figure 3



Proposed plans  
(Courtesy of M.A.D.E. Contracts)

Scale 1:150

Figure 4



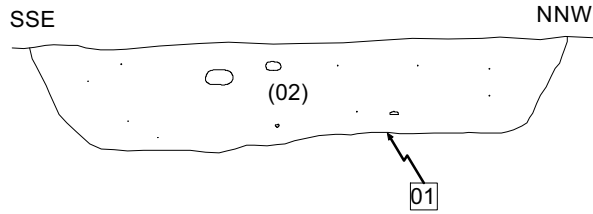
Site layout

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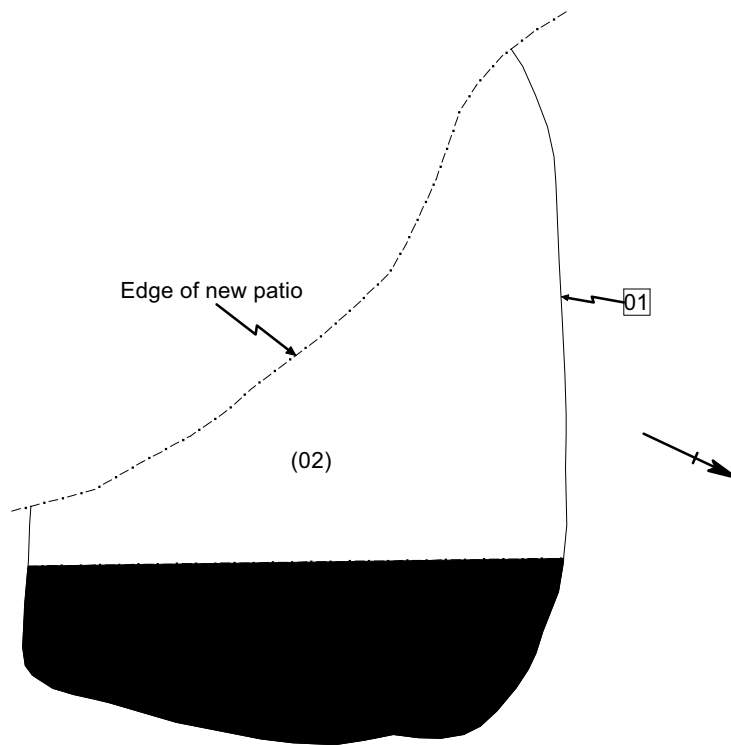
Figure 5



*East-north-east facing section through [01]*



*Plan of [01]*



Feature section and plan

Scale 1:20

Figure 6



Plate 1: 'Shipwrights Cottage' rear elevation looking N



Plate 2: External southern elevation after removal of render

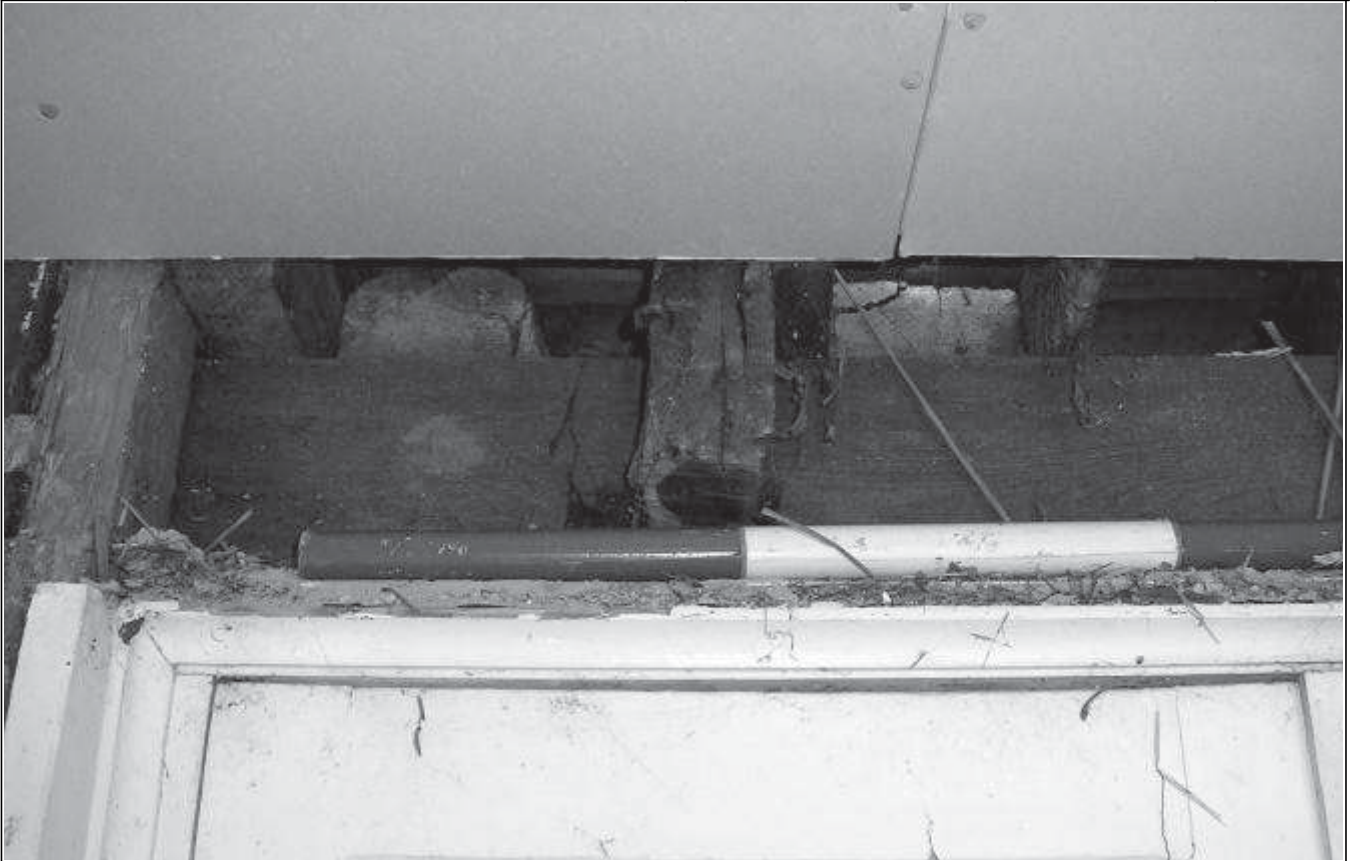


Plate 3: Floor joists visible above the middle-rail

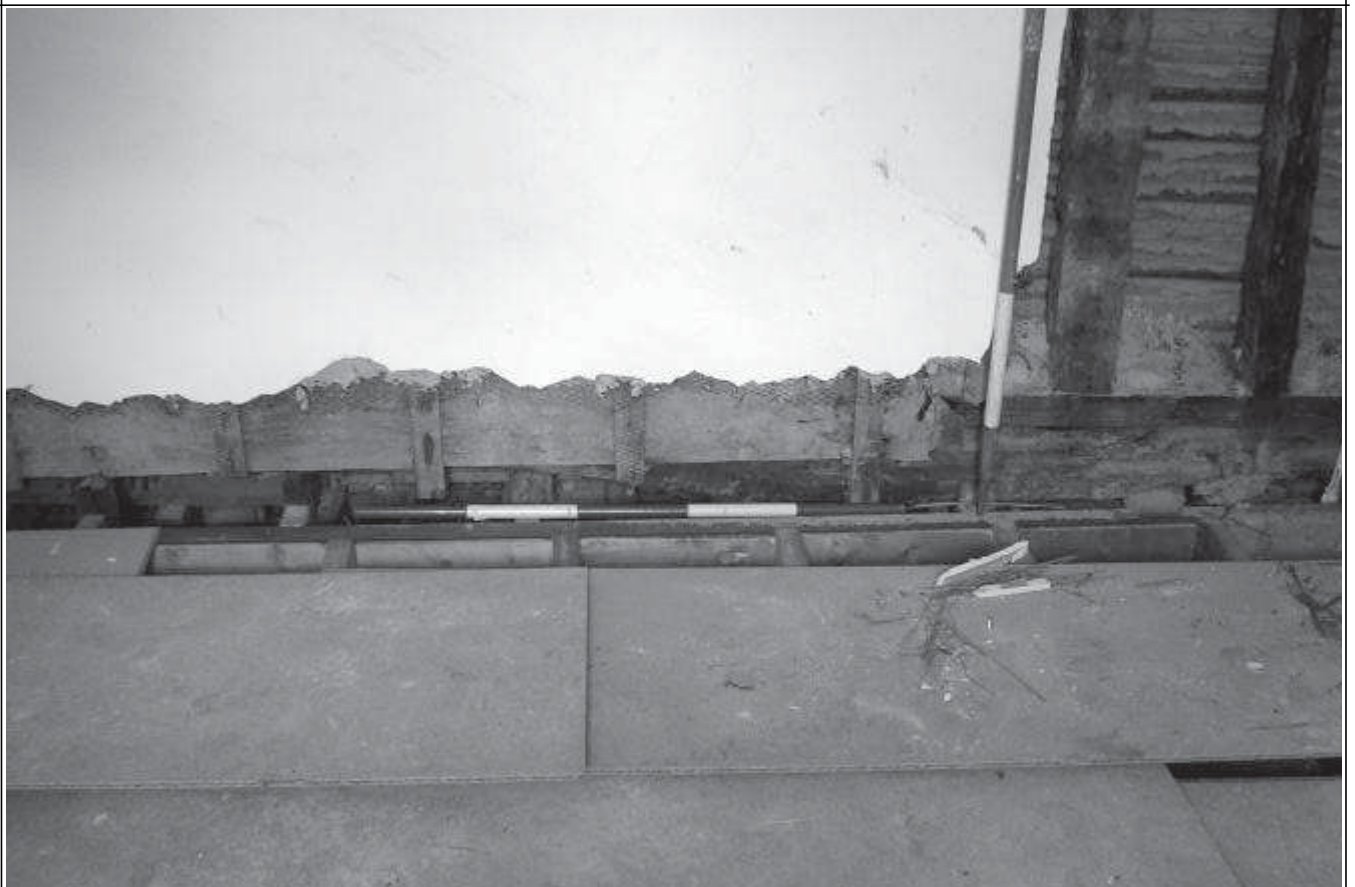


Plate 4: Original beam observed above the level of the middle-rail

# Appendix 1

## PHOTOGRAPHIC LOGS

### Digital Log

Frame No.	Description	Facing
HN530-001	North elevation	S
HN530-002	Ditto	Ditto
HN530-003	South and West elevations	N
HN530-004	Ditto	N
HN530-005	South elevation	N
HN530-006	Ditto	Ditto
HN530-007	Ditto	Ditto
HN530-008	Ditto	Ditto
HN530-009	South elevation first floor detail after removal of render.	N
HN530-010	Ditto	Ditto
HN530-011	Ditto	Ditto
HN530-012	Ditto	Ditto
HN530-013	Original beam above the level of the middle-rail	Ditto
HN530-014	South elevation detail after removal of render	Ditto
HN530-015	Roof after removal of thatch	Ditto
HN530-016	Ditto	Ditto
HN530-017	South elevation ground floor detail after removal of render	Ditto
HN530-018	Ditto	Ditto
HN530-019	Floor joists above the middle-rail	Ditto
HN530-020	Ditto	Ditto
HN530-021	Original beam above the level of the middle-rail (detail)	Ditto



Frame 1: N elevation looking S



Frame 2: N elevation looking S



Frame 3: S elevation looking N



Frame 4: S elevation looking N



Frame 5: S elevation looking N



Frame 6: N elevation looking S



Frame 7: N elevation looking S

