

**EAST PITTEN FARM, YEALMPTON:
A DEVON FARMHOUSE
UNDER DEMOLITION**

Prepared for Le Page Architects

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SUMMARY

Despite unsympathetic recent changes, East Pitten is a well-preserved example of a substantial farmhouse of the late 17th or early 18th century. It shows a development from the classic three-room and cross-passage layout to a double-pile house integrating rooms for agricultural use; a separate range at the back of the house housed a kitchen, services, and probable accommodation for farm labourers. This kind of farmhouse is much more unusual than those which show a gradual evolution from a medieval core. The building retains both its old roofs, one an impressive eleven-bay structure; investigation of the fabric prior to demolition revealed much evidence for historic building practices.

INTRODUCTION

East Pitten Farm is a stone farmhouse in Yealmpton parish; it lies towards the top of a hillslope overlooking the valley of the River Yealm, near the road from Smithleigh to Yealmpton village (Fig. 1; SX 5882 5411). The underlying geology consists of Middle Devonian slates.¹ A surrounding group of large farm buildings attests the former importance of the farm.

Although the form of the building and the main stack at the centre of the house indicate from the exterior that this is a traditional farmhouse, it escaped Listing when most comparable farms were protected by this means in the 1980s. (This may have arisen because no obvious external features were observed; by no means all farmhouses were inspected internally.) In 2010 the owner of the farm sought planning permission for reconstruction of the house. An initial proposal (62/1341/10/F) was granted approval by South Hams District Council in 2010 without a condition for recording historic fabric. Planning approval for a second proposal which entailed the complete demolition of the farmhouse and its replacement with a new building (62/2034/10/F) was granted on condition that a full archaeological record of the farmhouse should be undertaken. Exeter Archaeology was commissioned by Le Page of Plymouth, architects for the scheme, to carry out this task. The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared in response to advice provided by Mr Graham Tait of Devon County Council's Historic Environment Service (Appendix 1).

This report presents the results of five field visits made over a period of ten days in November 2010, when progressively larger areas of the building were stripped. It represents as full a record as can reasonably be achieved prior to demolition, short of an exhaustive examination entailing the stripping of far larger areas of wall surface. When demolition proceeds, our record should be supplemented by some further selective investigation and recording (Appendix 2).

¹ British Geology Survey 1974.

HISTORICAL AND CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

By Anthony G. Collings

East Pitten is one of two adjacent farms named Pitten; to its west stands West Pitten, which appears to have been the older and higher-status settlement, and is certainly better documented. Indeed no reference specifically to East Pitten has been located until the late 18th century, when it was separately owned from West Pitten. The name Pitten is regarded as meaning ‘The Hollows’.²

In the Domesday Survey of 1086 Yealmpton was recorded as the royal manor of *Elintone*. In the following century, when ecclesiastical parishes were probably formed, Yealmpton included the two manors of Dunstone.³ Unusually, while Yealmpton manor lay in the Saxon Hundred of Plympton, Dunstone lay in Ermington Hundred, with the River Yealm presumably forming the boundary at that date. Later manors, or reputed manors, to emerge within the parish included Bowden (on the north-west edge of the village), Lyneham (1km south-west of West Pitten) and Lotherton. Later maps suggest that the last site lay only 450m east-south-east of East Pitten, on the site of the house now called Sharnica.⁴ It therefore seems to have been the closest manorial centre, and might appear to be the obvious manor within which East Pitten lay, but in fact it was owned during the Tudor period by the Crocker family along with Lyneham manor,⁵ which passed by marriage to the Bulteel family, while East Pitten was to be owned by the Bastard family, who acquired Yealmpton by marriage with a Pollexfen.⁶

The earliest reference located to a settlement at Pitten is in the Lay Subsidy of 1332, in which Thomas atte Pitte was taxed at 13 pence, one of the highest figures in the parish;⁷ the high figure suggests that this refers to West Pitten. The form appears as *Pyttyn* in a 1472 Calendar of Patent Rolls.⁸ The earliest reference so far located using the name West Pitten (from which we may infer that there was another Pytten – presumably East Pytten) – is in an Inquisition Post Mortem held at Exeter in 1499, following the death of John Pyttys the previous year.⁹ This refers to ‘*Westpytten* held of the Priory of Plympton in free socage by 13s 4d rent worth &c £6’. These references hint at a date for the origin of East Pitten between 1472 and 1498, but its ownership for the next 300 years remains very unclear.

It was presumably that John who died in 1517 leaving as his son and heir the 23-year old Andrew.¹⁰ The Lay Subsidy of 1525 contains two names of significance: ‘Jn Treby of Pytton’ was assessed on goods valued at £5 while Andrew Pytts was assessed on goods valued at £3.¹¹ The former is of interest because Treby is the settlement immediately south of East Pitten and that family was to own much land in the South Hams.

² Gover *et al.* 1931, 263.

³ Thorn & Thorn 1985, 1, 18; 29, 4; 52, 42.

⁴ Listing of Devon Manors by Ian Mortimer n.d., at website: <www.genuki.cs.ncl.ac.uk/DEV/DevonManors/parishes.html>; Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map sheet CXXIV.12 Yealmpton parish 1864.

⁵ Westcountry Studies Library transcripts of Inquisitions Post Mortem.

⁶ Lysons & Lysons 1822, 577.

⁷ Erskine 1969, 13.

⁸ Gover *et al.* 1931, 263.

⁹ Westcountry Studies Library transcripts of Inquisitions Post Mortem.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Stoate 1979, 163.

The next decade saw the Dissolution of the Monasteries, with Plympton Priory being surrendered to the Crown in 1539 but the lands of the Priory were not disposed of immediately. A rental of the manor of Plympton Grange was drawn up, seemingly during the Elizabethan period, in which the last of the free tenants to be named were the heirs of 'Andrae Pytte', paying 20s for *Pytten*.¹² Certain aspects of the manor remain unclear, notably the absence of any reference to it from before the Dissolution, although it is said to have comprised the home farm of Plympton Priory, while an attempt in the early 19th century to establish its limits, known to have extended into adjoining parishes, was unsuccessful.¹³

The Inquisition Post Mortem of Andrew Pittes, Gentleman, was held at Modbury in 1547. This provides more detail of his estate: he was 'seised in his demesne as of fee of one messuage, two gardens, 30 acres of land, ten of meadow, 40 of pasture, six of wood, eight of heath in Pytton or West Pytton, held of the King's manor of Barne Court, part of the possessions of the late priory of Plympton ... worth by the year, clear, £6 13s 4d'.¹⁴ Again how much, if any, of this relates to East Pitten is uncertain. Andrew's son and heir was another John, but he was to survive only another ten years, leaving as his heir the five-year-old Joan.¹⁵ It was presumably her marriage in 1571 that led to the property passing to William Woollcombe,¹⁶ whose family were to retain it for several centuries.

The Grange is said to have remained in the Crown estate until the 17th century, when it came into the possession of the Treby family.¹⁷ Its history then seems unclear until a series of surviving Land Tax Assessments begins in 1781. These show the owner of 'East Pitten &c' to have been William Bastard Esq., the occupier to have been John Lavers and the assessment to have been £4 12s 8³/₄d. The Bastard family lived at Kitley, 4km to the south-west, having acquired it by marriage with an heiress of the Pollexfens, and also owned the manors of Yealmpton, Bowden and Dunstone.¹⁸ In contrast, West Pitten was owned by John Morth Woollcombe, who lived in Ashbury parish to the north-west of Dartmoor, and occupied by John Shepherd, being assessed at £5 4s 4d. In 1811 was to be referred to as an old mansion, the greater part of which had been demolished by then, while the barton was said to have extended into Plympton St Mary parish.¹⁹

In 1793 the assessment of East Pitten was reduced to £3 4s 8¹/₂d, suggesting that some of the land had been split off. A more detailed picture of the two farms becomes available in the tithe survey of Yealmpton parish, carried out in 1841–3. This shows East Pitten to have comprised 114.4 acres owned by Edmund Pollexfen Bastard Esq. and said to have been occupied by Mary Jenkins, while the area of West Pitten actually within the parish was slightly smaller at 112.7 acres, although a further 61.25 acres extended into Plympton St Mary parish, the whole being owned by John Morth Woolcombe and occupied by Charles Shepherd; an indication of its former higher status was that it was surrounded by a five-acre green.²⁰

¹² Bracken 1938, 244, 231.

¹³ *ibid.*, 234.

¹⁴ Westcountry Studies Library transcripts of Inquisitions Post Mortem.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Risdon 1811, 390.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Lysons & Lysons 1822, 577.

¹⁹ Risdon 1810, 390.

²⁰ Friends of Devon Archives Tithe Apportionments Project.

The censuses from 1841 to 1871 reveal the household at East Pitten, when it was headed over the 30 years by the widowed Maria Jenkins.²¹ That for 1851 is the first to provide full details and shows the farm being run by the 59-year-old with the help of her two sons and another four living-in male farm servants, the household being completed by her daughter and a female general servant. Later that century the presence of living-in farm servants was to become unfashionable. By 1891 the Harris family were the occupiers of East Pitten, but on that census night it seems only a daughter and two sons were present.²² The 1901 census shows John Harris farming it with the aid of his three sons, the household also including his wife and their four younger daughters.²³ The series of county-wide directories ended in 1939 when John Symons was farming it.²⁴

EARLY MAP EVIDENCE

The early map evidence for the farm is shown in Figs 2–7. It is first shown on Donn’s map of Devon of 1765 – the earliest secure record of its existence, although misnamed East Pitman (Fig. 2) – and on the Board of Ordnance map of 1784–5 (Fig. 3). The present house plan, including the S porch, is readily recognisable on the 1843 Tithe Map (Fig. 4). The growth of its agricultural buildings in the mid-19th century may be traced (Fig. 5); little changed between 1864 and 1950 (Figs 5–7).

BUILDING SURVEY

In this section the building is described as it appears in November 2010. Room names are those shown in Fig. 8.

The farm consists of one long narrow main range facing S, with a parallel but shorter N range abutting its north wall; the pair present a double-pile plan of with a valley between their two gables (Figs 8–11). The external wall faces are rendered entirely.

Recent changes

The farmhouse has undergone a series of major and unsympathetic changes in very recent years. In order to avoid repetition throughout the description, they will be described first. Every window has been replaced with modern double-glazing, and every door and door-frame renewed. Both roofs have been recovered with modern asbestos slates. In the south range the ceilings have been replaced in the eastern room and entry, and the entire floor above them removed and rebuilt with large softwood joists. The old lath-and-plaster ceilings of the hall and parlour have been removed (although the joists and boards of the floors above both rooms remain), and inner concrete block linings have been added to the south and east walls (the latter after stripping of old plaster surfaces). On the first floor the loft and eastern chamber have been knocked into one, creating a single new chamber.

²¹ N[ational] A[chives]: HO/107/239/book 10/f8/p11; HO/107/1877/f281/p7; RG9/1429/f33/p2; RG10/2107/f47/p6.

²² NA RG12/1721/f59/p7.

²³ NA RG13/2085/f71/p8.

²⁴ Kelly’s Directory of Devonshire 1939, 852.

The entire north range has been gutted; all its partitions, stairs and floors are very modern. The kitchen fireplace is the only internal feature to survive these changes (described below).

These interventions illustrate just how much damage can be inflicted on an old farmhouse which has remained unprotected in the last 30 years. In the interests of clarity we have not indicated the new features on our plans, but they appear on the architect's drawings (copy in site archive).

MATERIALS

Walls

The outer walls of the farmhouse are built of clay-bonded rubble *c.* 0.60m thick (probably intended as 2ft), pointed in lime mortar – the normal traditional practice for all but the grandest buildings in the South Hams. The outer walls of the S range were built first; its thinner (0.30–0.32m or 1ft) internal walls were added within the outer shell (they butt-join) and are built of the same stone, but bonded in lime mortar – no doubt because such thin walls would not stand if built simply with clay bonding. Mortar was also used selectively around doorways and other openings. Much thinner stone-nogged studwork partitions (*c.* 0.17m thick), also butt-joining the outer walls, form the supports to the stairs. The stone is a mix – mainly metamorphosed slate rubble (mostly angular, some rounded), with some water-rolled granite and a buff pyroclastic South Hams volcanic ash with prominent vesicles. The different types of building stone probably represent both the acquisition of material from stream nearby beds (the granite, and perhaps the volcanics) and the quarrying of fresh stone from the local Devonian slates.

Woodwork

A notable feature of the farmhouse is the use of large amount of straight sawn softwood – almost certainly continental pine, no doubt imported at Plymouth, whose customs accounts of the 17th and 18th centuries regularly record the importation of such material. It was used for floor joists (almost perfectly straight timbers, now only very slightly sagging, 0.12m deep and 0.10m wide), and for the thin and narrow (151mm, i.e. 6ins, wide) floorboards, which are certainly primary features (see below). The partitions examined in other Devon farmhouse have often proved to be constructed from reused members or from irregular curving timbers; by contrast those examined at East Pitten were entirely of new straight wood. As usual, however, the riven laths which covered the first-floor partition frames appear to have been of oak (identification of species to be confirmed by a botanist).

The choice of timber for the principals of the roof trusses was different, however. They are certainly of hardwood; Tony Davies (a carpenter by trade) has suggested chestnut rather than the oak of our initial identification, which was however based on the identification of strong medullary rays in a sample taken by JA. A second sample will be submitted for identification under the microscope by a botanist.

Ceilings

A small edge fragment of hall ceiling and most of the ceilings of the first-floor rooms survive. All are very plain; none has so much as a cornice moulding. Although the ceilings of the hall and parlour have been removed, the simple rows of nails for the laths in the joists above both rooms show that neither of them had any more elaborate decoration.

Plasters and papers

Although the old wall plaster has been stripped from most of the ground floor, it survives throughout the stair well and in most of the upper rooms. Two layers were used in these parts of the house. The lower coat, which was squeezed between the laths of the partitions, consists of a layer of hard lime mortar *c.* 10mm thick, mixed with sand and a little brown animal hair (the last sometimes in bunches). The sand particles are water-rolled and include a scatter of white mica plates and weathered slate fragments; this material probably came from a local stream. The outer surface of the lower layer is rough but not scored; a second layer of similar thickness and consistency but lacking the hair was applied over it; this has a smoothed and whitewashed surface. A vertical length of wood set with a rounded outer edge was nailed at 45 degrees to the external corners of the partitions and is now embedded in the plaster, its outer face being flush with the outer edge of the plaster. It evidently served as a guide board for plastering.

An effort was made to search for early wallpapers. Since the hall and parlour had been stripped or concealed behind concrete blockwork, no evidence was found there. Samples of plaster were examined in each of the three chambers. All had an accumulation of limewash (not many layers), covered in some cases by pale yellow, cream and pale blue emulsions or coloured washes. None had wallpapers earlier than recent woodchip papers.

Roof covering

The roof now has a covering of 20C asbestos slate. The primary roof is probably represented by a few traditional South Hams pegged slates, found in the valley between the two ranges. It was evidently of greater thickness, as the weathering around the central chimney stack indicates.

ROOM DESCRIPTIONS

S Range*Ground floor**West room*

Stripping of a band of walling at a height of 0.9m around the entire room interior (Fig. 11) showed that only window – that in the S wall – is part of the primary fabric. A blocked primary doorway in the N wall led into the farmyard to the N; a second led into the yard to the S. A doorway giving access to the rest of the farmhouse was perhaps also a primary feature, although its N jamb consisted of 20C brick. The remaining walling consisted of featureless rubble.

Although the primary surfaces of most walls in this room were destroyed by stripping prior to recent cement rendering, areas of old internal surface survive on the E and S walls. Both consist of patchy limewash, applied directly onto a rough rubble surface; initially, therefore, the room was unplastered. The ceiling is entirely modern.

Entry

Wall stripping exposed the clay-bonded N wall, with its contemporary doorway leading to the N range, partially with lime-bonded jambs (Fig. 12). Both internal walls butted this wall; that forming the back of the hall fireplace was in a mix of clay- and lime-bonding. The doorway in the S wall, now leading into a modern porch, had

entirely modern brick jambs; it is therefore uncertain whether a doorway existed here in the historic house, and thus whether this was a traditional entry or a room accessed from the hall.

Hall

Stripping exposed a massive fireplace stack with an arched lintel and jambs of lime-bonded dark red brick, the remainder of the stack being of clay-bonded rubble (Fig. 13). A curving iron bar was incorporated into the brickwork during construction to support the lintel; it was upturned at each end to wrap around the brick courses. This was evidently effective; the brickwork had not settled. Blocks of wood incorporated at intervals in the jambs show that a wooden fireplace surround was used; a shadow of sooting in the brickwork shows that a bare band of unplastered brick surrounded the opening.

The arrangement of joists in the floor above the fireplace shows that an upper floor fireplace was intended from the first (Fig. 14). Trimmers pick up the floor joists in front of the stack. A joist box was built within the trimmers, with thick boards laid to take the hearth stone. Since this has a closed assembly which could not be installed once the entire floor was in place, this must be an original feature. An interesting constructional detail was the use of pairs of wedges to hold the mortice-and-tenon joints.

Stripping of the opposing (E) wall, which backs onto the stairs, exposed its stone-nogged frame incorporating a cupboard under the stairs (Fig. 15). The doorway between the hall and stairs had been demolished before our recording began, but was evidently an original opening, since there is no space for another in this partition. The decayed post marking the junction of partition and S wall survived in the entry.

Parlour

In the E gable wall, demolition of part of the internal breeze-block lining in the expected position of a fireplace showed that a traditional but quite small fireplace with a lintel of local slate does indeed survive here (Fig. 16). Its yellow clay bonding is very similar to that in the adjacent walling, and seen elsewhere in the primary walls, showing that it is a primary feature. Since the lintel and surrounding masonry have rough unhewn surfaces, they were clearly intended to be concealed from the first; embedded wooden plugs, designed to fix a fireplace surround (probably of wood), were also primary features.

Removal of plaster showed that about half the old stone-nogged partition survives between the stairs and the parlour (Fig. 17).

First Floor

Stairs

The construction of the staircase to the first floor is certainly integral with the stone-nogged partitions on each side: the timbers supporting the winder stairs at its top are embedded in the partitions, and were set in the same mortar as was used for the nogging. This shows that the existing first-floor arrangement of winder stairs leading both to the E chamber and to a passage running the length of the N wall is also a primary feature.

There is a splendid piece of carpentry at the top of the stairs, where six components of the structure meet in one place (Fig. 18a, with accompanying axonometric projection 18b). First, one of the studs of the ground-floor partition separating the hall from the stairs rises to form the corner post of the chamber above.

It is therefore larger than the other studs and square-sectioned. At ceiling level it incorporates a second timber – the horizontal head beam of the ground-floor partition, which is held in place by a tongue of timber rising from one side of the ground-floor stud. (Once this timber was in place the process of stone-nogging the ground-floor partitions could have proceeded.) Above these two timbers rises a third – the first-floor stud forming the corner post of the central chamber. Fourth, the trimmer from the floor assembly was laid over the partition rail; it is covered by the floor boards. Finally, a diagonal brace ties this assembly to the first-floor partition.

Former loft (bays I–III)

The W end of the house was separate from the rest of the upper floor, with access from an external flight of steps built against the W gable wall, leading to a blocked first-floor doorway. Stripping demonstrated that the doorway jambs were of rubble continuous with the build of the gable wall. The room remained unheated until the recent past. The primary reveals of a single splayed S window opening were found behind modern plaster. The partition on the line of truss III, visible in the roof space above, had been demolished entirely, but evidence of it was clearly visible on the underside of truss III, about half of which was whitewashed, leaving a clean band where the partition formerly stood.

E chamber

A small and unheated chamber occupied the next two bays. (Although the hall stack backed onto it, removal of old plaster showed that plain rubble without a fireplace extended across its entire width). Framing infilled the spaces on each side of the stack, but that on the S side had been demolished.

Like bays I–III, the room did not have a primary ceiling but instead was open to the roof (described below). It was nevertheless part of the domestic use of the house, being accessible from the passage leading to the main stair. At the end of the passage, where there must have been a door frame, a tenon projected from the adjacent room partition; this would have engaged in a mortice in the door frame.

Stripping exposed the widely splayed reveals of the original S window, infilled with recent brick.

Central chamber

The hall fireplace stack rose through the central chamber, forming the most prominent feature of the room (Fig. 19). Here the flue for the first-floor fireplace appeared at first sight to be an inserted feature: whereas the stack was built of clay-bonded rubble, the fireplace and flue had been added to it in lime-bonded brick, the bricks being set on edge to achieve as thin an outer wall to the flue as possible. However, examination of the closed assembly of the joists below (described above: Hall) shows that this is in fact a primary feature.

The partition between the chamber and the passage to the N was stripped entirely, exposing the central doorway with straight diagonal braces on each side, that to the E rising from the stair (Fig. 20). Examination of the relationship of the studs with the floorboards below showed that all the studs sit on the boards and are unrelated to the joists below. This is clear evidence of the use of platform framing, an early modern building technique in which the floors are installed as building proceeds to the first floor. This allowed the floors to serve instead of scaffolding; the practice is first attested in Devon in the mid-17th century.

E chamber

Stripping exposed the simple upright studs and laths of the partition separating the E chamber from the stairs; this sat on the heavier stone-nogged partition between the stairs and the parlour (Fig. 17). The lath-and-plastered partition formerly returned across the stair well, creating a room extension over the stairs (the scar of a diagonally-set plastering guide demonstrated this), and this feature was extended further over the stairs to create a small plaster-lined cupboard (recently cut back to give greater head height on the stairs). At the N end, blocks of wood had been nailed to the inner face of the studs and head of the primary doorway.

The former presence of a small fireplace against the E wall is indicated by a board filling the position of the removed hearth. This could not be opened up, owing to asbestos contamination in the room below; it was therefore unclear whether it was a primary feature.

Roof and first-floor ceilings (Figs 21–4)

The range preserves its primary roof in unusually complete condition: ten intact trusses forming an impressive run covering the entire length of the structure. They are certainly all of one period, being all of a single style and having a continuous run of carpenter's marks, deeply cut in Roman numerals, on each truss (I–X).

Each truss is an 'A' frame with a notched apex, the two principals fixed with a mortice and tenon joint, two large pegs and a diagonally set ridge purlin. Below are collars, variously cambered and straight, lapped onto the principals and fixed with nails and pegs. The purlins butt the principals but have projecting tenons housed in narrow mortices. The feet descend into the inner wall surface and sit on sole pieces set into the wall top.

There are two variations on the basic design: one in trusses V–X with an additional horizontal plank below the collar, the other in trusses I–V with an extra collar above it.

Trusses VI–X, which rose above the central and eastern chambers, had been designed from the first with additional lower collars from which the ceilings hung. (This was apparent from the manner in which the primary laths and wall plaster were laid continuously with the chamber ceilings; Fig. 17, 'ceiling hanger'; Fig. 22). A horizontal board with one straight lower edge (the upper edge axe-dressed) was nailed to the principals of these trusses; at its centre a short vertical post was fixed with one large nail to the collar above, where it was held in the same way. Thus the construction of the ceilings in these bays followed the building of the roof and, in contrast to most modern building practice, the ceilings were suspended rather than resting on the first-floor partitions. Indeed, the ceiling plastering evidently proceeded before some partitions were in place; the plaster ran over the top of the frame separating the E chamber from the stairs. This would be an economical way to work, allowing scaffold boards to be laid across the stair well and avoiding the labour of working the edges of the room's ceiling.

Trusses I–V were raised over the part of the farmhouse which had no ceilings, and there was therefore no need for the extra boards below the collars. Instead, an additional upper plank collar was nailed between the upper purlins in these bays (Figs 21, 23). This may show that a single collar alone was regarded as insufficient to support a slate roof.

Trusses III and V were closed. Above the collar, truss III retains half its lath-and-plaster panel, with smooth clean lime-plastered finish on its E face, suitable for a chamber. By contrast, the W face consists simply of the exposed laths with the plaster

oozing between them, finished only with limewash. Although this partition no longer survives in the chamber below, clear evidence of its former presence can be seen in the underside of the room's ceiling beam, half of which remains lime-washed whilst the other half (protected by the former partition) is not. By contrast, part of the partition below Truss V survived, forming the division between the W and central chambers, abutting the N side of the chimney breast. In the roofspace above the panel of lath-and-plaster had been removed, but remnants of lime mortar survived in the angles between collar and principal.

The central chimney stack had been rebuilt within the roof space, as had the W gable. The E gable was ancient; its inner face consisted of unplastered rubble. Throughout the roof many of the rafters and some trusses showed patches of lime. Since the first-floor ceilings in much of the range were primary features, this did not represent lime-washing of the roof-space; it seems most probable that it represented lime-staining derived from the torching of a traditional slate roof above.

An observation which is crucial to the overall interpretation of the farmhouse was made in the wall top on the N side of the range (Fig. 24, upper, N side). Selective removal of plaster exposed a vertical timber rises above the sole piece on which the principal sits. Rather than being cut to the slope of the roof (normal practice), this rises above the line of the principal and supports a horizontal member bridging the valley between the roofs of the N and S ranges (Fig. 24, 'valley board'). Since the ashlar piece is sealed behind the primary plaster of *c.* 1700, it must have been installed in the primary building works. The provision of a valley appears to show that the two roofs are contemporary; this needs checking from the outside.

THE NORTH RANGE

This two-storey range has been gutted in the recent past, removing all its internal divisions, ceilings, stairs and floors. The E wall has been rebuilt entirely in concrete blocks, large modern windows have been installed throughout, and all historic surfaces have been removed and replaced in thick hard dark grey Portland cement. Thus far less historic evidence remains than in the S range.

Ground floor

The only original feature visible before stripping was the large fireplace of mortar-bonded rubble, whose old lintel (no doubt of wood) has been removed to make it easier for a cook to operate an Aga within (Fig. 25). The scar of the old lintel is filled with cement; a reused railway sleeper forms a new lintel at a higher level. The fireplace masonry has been so daubed with grey cement that it might at first be taken as a modern replica, but selective removal of this layer showed that early lime-bonded masonry survives on the jambs and within the flue. Plain early rubble walling was also exposed in adjacent walling to the N.

Stripping of a band of the S wall exposed blocked doorways piercing the spinal wall between the two ranges, and leading to the entry, hall and parlour (Fig. 8). Selective stripping of the N wall showed that the window in the E room is a remodelling of a primary window with wider splays (Fig. 26). Given the position of the window towards one end of the range, it is likely that the ground floor was initially divided into two – probably a kitchen and a service room or rooms. It was not considered worthwhile to strip the entire W and N walls.

First floor and roof (Fig. 24)

Few historic features were seen on the first floor. Stripping of the front of the chimney breast exposed plain rubble; there was no early fireplace here. A blocked doorway to the S range was probably of recent date.

The range retains a complete roof of five trusses, each marked with shallow gouged circular marks, numbered from the W end. It is of lower pitch than the S range. The principals are crossed at the apex, where they are halved together. A simple straight plank, nailed to the principals, forms the collar. Light vertical timbers arising above the apex were added subsequently to support a plank ridge which replaced the original diagonally set ridge. The purlins are not housed in trenches but simply notched over the top edge of the principals.

DISCUSSION

The great majority of Devon farmhouses show a process of gradual growth from the late Middle Ages into the recent past; they are usually multi-phase structures, very commonly with a medieval core. We believe that East Pitten, by contrast, was a newly erected farmhouse of *c.* 1700, with remarkably few changes before the recent past. Our reasons for this conclusion start in the roofs, which as usual are the least disguised part of the house. The one over the S range is undoubtedly a single structure, as the carpentry marks and consistent style of construction show; its minor variations in form simply reflect different functions in the rooms below. It has been shown that the internal structure of the first floor, including its partitions, ceilings and floor joists, is contemporary with the roof (indeed much of it is suspended from the roof timbers), and these components can in turn be shown to have been built with the stairs and ground-floor partitions. The external walls of the range form an envelope of consistent thickness corresponding in plan to the roof above, and show no structural breaks; the inner walls are thinner and butt-join or are integral with the external ones. The chimney stack displays the same clay bonding as the walls. Evidence that the stone walls and timberwork are indeed contemporary is visible in the hall, whose ceiling beams are embedded in the clay of the N and S walls. The south range, then, is all of one build.

In dating this structure, its use of much straight sawn softwood, including thin and narrow floorboards, points to the period after *c.* 1680; the brick in the hall fireplace and stair partitions is points to the same date, but could well be as early as *c.* 1700 (cf. the town houses of that date in Ashburton, for example). The roof trusses, with their stepped purlins and combination of pegs and nails, are of late 17th- or early 18th-century type; their use of hardwood trusses contrasts with the progressively greater use of softwood as the 18th century progressed. In sum, a date *c.* 1700 is likely for the house, although it could be a little later.

The unusual length of the S range arises from the integration of the farmhouse and a farm building under one roof. At the W end is a long, unheated and poorly lit ground-floor room whose only small external doorway led into the farmyard to the N; its walls were unplastered but had at some time been rendered with limewash. This is not a barn, cart shed or any other farm building which needs large doorways, nor would it have been suitable for stock. It seems too large for a store such as a cheese house or wood store; perhaps it was an example of the buildings used for by-employment to which Alcock and Carson have drawn attention, such as workshops, tanhouses, dyehouses, and fish cellars (Alcock and Carson 2007, 43–61).

Above this was a first-floor room of three bays, likewise separate from the domestic rooms of the farmhouse. It was entered though an upper doorway in the west

gable, served by a flight of steps from the yard. A rough-faced partition rising to the apex of the roof separated this from the other first-floor rooms; it had been whitewashed. We suggest that this may have been a granary (corn chamber); the partition might then have discouraged vermin, and the whitewash might indicate efforts at cleanliness. It may alternatively have stored other food requiring clean conditions, such as cheese.

Within the domestic part of the house, the functions of two ground-floor rooms are obvious: the hall in its usual position at the centre of the house and the heated parlour at the E end of the range; whether the present entry was a third room or simply a lobby is less clear. There were three chambers upstairs, the central one being the largest and a heated room, unlike its neighbour to the W. The entry

The fact that the N range was butt-jointed against the S range, and had a lower-pitched and cruder roof, initially suggested a slightly later date for this range. However, firm evidence was found that both roofs and the valley between them were built before the S range was plastered shows that the secondary relationship of the N range represents no more than a pause in construction. Indeed, it is difficult to see how the S range could ever have operated without a kitchen and service rooms. The upper room or rooms in the N block may also be noted. Separated from the family living in the farm, and forming part of a service range whose doorway led into the farmyard to the N, it seems likely that they would have accommodated the farm labourers such as the four men recorded in the census of 1851, described above.

Although the farm buildings were developed greatly in the 19th century, as the standing buildings and map evidence show, the farmhouse itself underwent little change; no new rooms were added, nor were the existing ones altered. The only modernisation evident in the surviving fabric was the closure of the large fireplace in the hall and the insertion of a hob grate within it. As late as the 1970s East Pitten, with its traditional plan incorporating rooms designed for agricultural uses alongside the hall, parlour and chambers, its back kitchen with accommodation for farm labourers above, and its plain, solid woodwork and earth-bonded rubble walls, must have appeared a remarkable survival of a modest south Devon farmhouse of the time of Queen Anne.

APPENDIX 1: WRITTEN STATEMENT OF INVESTIGATION FOR HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AT EAST PITTEN FARM, YEALMPTON, DEVON

Prepared by Exeter Archaeology for Le Page Architects

1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

- 1.1 This document has been produced by Exeter Archaeology (EA) to outline a programme of historic building recording at East Pitten Farm, Yealmpton, Devon (SX 58844 54122). The document represents the 'Written Scheme of Investigation' (WSI) for archaeological work required under a condition attached to the grant of planning permission (No. 62/2034/10/F, South Hams District Council) for the demolition and rebuilding of the farmhouse. The document outlines a scheme of archaeological fieldwork and reporting work for approval by the Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES).
- 1.2 The Devon Historic Environment Record shows that the farm was depicted on 19th-century maps of the area, and that the placename Pitten was mentioned as

‘Pyttyn’ in 1472, and that both East and West Pitten formed part of the medieval estate of Plympton Priory.

- 1.3 Little is known about the origins and history of the present farmhouse. Its plan indicates some antiquity, perhaps as a 17th- or 18th-century 3-room and cross passage house or a lobby-entry house. Alternatively the building may have been constructed as two dwellings, although it seems likely that the western end was actually a later addition. The north range is also expected to be a more recent addition.

2. AIM OF THE PROJECT

- 2.1 The principal aim of the project (as set out in a brief prepared by the DCHES; Tait 2010) is to make a record of the historic building prior to its demolition.

3. METHOD

3.1 *Desk-based research*

Prior to fieldwork commencing a programme of desk-based research will be carried out to fully understand the history of the site. Relevant documentary, cartographic and aerial photographic material at the following repositories will be consulted:

- The Devon County Historic Environment Record;
- Westcountry Studies Library, Exeter;
- Devon Record Office, Exeter;
- Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Plymouth.

In addition, documents submitted as part of the planning process will also be inspected.

The results of this desk-based research will be made available to those carrying out the fieldwork.

3.2 *Historic building recording*

The historic building recording will be undertaken in two phases. An initial photographic, drawn and written record of the building in its current condition will be prepared. It is understood the building is unoccupied, and modern fittings such as bathroom and kitchen units have been removed. During this phase of works areas where further stripping is required will be identified and passed onto the contractor. The second phase of recording will take place after the soft strip and opening up for features has occurred.

The work will conform to the level 3 record set out in English Heritage’s *Understanding Historic Building’s: a guide to good recording practice*. The following method for historic building recording will be utilised, tailored to the level of recording required once historic features have been identified.

- A photographic record using black-and-white print film supplemented by use of a high-quality digital camera for interpretative and reporting needs.

- Production of floor plans (based on architect's plans), with sections, elevations and more detailed drawings of architectural features and details as appropriate. These will be prepared at scales of 1:100, 1:50 and 1:20 with smaller details drawn at larger scales as appropriate.
- A written record outlining the evidence for historic fabric and an interpretation of this evidence.

Should the investigations encounter historic fabric that contains environmental or datable material appropriate sampling and post-excavation analysis strategies will be initiated. Such material may include thatch and cob for plant macro-fossil analysis and wood for dendrochronological dating.

3.3 *General project methods*

The project will be organised so that specialist consultants who might be required to report on other aspects of the investigations can be called upon (see below).

- 3.4 Health and Safety requirements will be observed at all times by EA employees working on site, particularly during the second phase of the recording.

4. REPORTING AND ARCHIVING

- 4.1 Following completion of the site work a report will be produced within 3 months of the completion of fieldwork, and will contain the following elements:

- A summary of the project's background;
- A description and illustration of the building's location;
- The methodology;
- Plans and results of the documentary research;
- A description of the project's results;
- An interpretation of the results;
- An evaluation of the methodology employed;
- A site location plan at an appropriate scale, and a plan of the site showing the location of the recorded building;
- Phased and annotated floor plans of the building, along with copies of other drawn records (elevations, cross sections, etc) as appropriate to illustrate features of historic or architectural interest;
- Photographs of the site layout and features of significant historic or architectural interest;
- A summary of the contents of the project archive and its location (as an appendix);
- Specialist reports as appropriate.

The report will be distributed to the client, the DCHES, the local planning authority conservation officer. A further copy will be attached to the OASIS entry (see below) and a copy will be kept with the site archive.

- 4.2 An online OASIS entry will be completed, and the OASIS ID number will be quoted in the summary report.
- 4.3 An ordered and integrated site archive will be prepared upon completion of the project. This will be deposited with Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery under an accession number supplied by the museum (pending). Guidelines in the relevant *Procedures for the Deposit of Archaeological Archives from Developer Funded Fieldwork* will be followed.

5. PROJECT ORGANISATION AND MONITORING.

- 5.1 The project will be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced EA archaeologists, and completed under the general management of John Allan. The documentary research will be carried out by Tony Collings, and the fieldwork by John Allan and Andrew Passmore AIFA. EA is directed by a full Member of the IFA.
- 5.2 The project will be monitored by the DCHES, who will be informed of the progress of the work, including the start and finish dates of fieldwork. The documentary research will commence as soon as this document is approved by the DCHES, with fieldwork following shortly afterwards.
- 5.3 The following specialists, contributors and advisors can be called upon if required:
Dating techniques: Alex Bayliss (EH);
Charcoal identification: Dana Challinor (Oxford); Geoflo (and subconsultants);
Environmental data: Vanessa Straker (English Heritage);
Finds conservation: Alison Hopper-Bishop (Exeter Museums); Salisbury Conservation Centre;
Medieval and post-medieval finds: John Allan (Exeter Archaeology) and sub-consultants;
Petrology/geology: Roger Taylor (RAM Museum); Dr R. Scrivener (British Geological Survey);
Plant remains: Julie Jones (Bristol); Wendy Carruthers (Llantrisant)
Radiocarbon dating: University of Waikato, New Zealand: Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre, East Kilbride.

6. SOURCE CONSULTED

Tait, G. 2010 *Brief for Historic Building Recording: The Farmhouse, East Pitten Farm, Plympton, PL7 5BB* (DCHES ref. ARCH/DM/SH/17279).

A.J. Passmore,
 Exeter Archaeology, project number 7400
 10 November 2010

APPENDIX 2: TASKS WHICH SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT UPON DEMOLITION OF THE HOUSE

1. After removal of slates, record details of both roofs which were inaccessible or concealed from below. Examine junction of the roofs to establish their relationship (v. important!) Record the positions of the breaks in the ridge purlins and the assembly of the feet and wall-plates at the level of the wall top, with pegging & any other features. Add to record of N roof (truss numbering, rafters, etc). Add relationship of roof and central stack to isometric drawing of S range. Keep any old slates and trenails (small roofing pegs).
2. Carry out a watching brief recording any openings in the walls missed so far. If feasible, pull off large pieces of external render prior to the demolition of the walls, using a toothed machine bucket. Search for evidence of early external renders/early washes/evidence of slate hanging, etc.
3. Complete recording in parlour and hall, which are closed at present owing to asbestos. Dismantle and produce small isometric drawing of closed assembly of the structure of the first-floor fireplace.
4. As they are dismantled, examine the tops of the first-floor partitions, and the junctions of the ground- and first-floor frames, to understand their assembly (small job; some have joints, others are just nailed or wedged). Work out how the frame feet are anchored into the floor below.
5. Cut out the corner assembly at the top of the stairs (this might be of sufficient interest to be salvaged as a museum object; it need only be a c. 0.5m length). Dismantle it to understand jointing; produce exploded isometric drawing. (Minor task).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank Simon Crosbie of Le Page Architects, who commissioned us to undertake the work, Graham Tait of Devon County Council's Historic Environment Service, who monitored the project throughout, and Nils White, Conservation Officer for South Hams District Council, for helpful advice. We were grateful for the very helpful cooperation of the site contractors, JDC Ltd. The graphics are the work of Tony Ives of Exeter Archaeology.

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Board of Ordnance 6-inch Drawing No. 19, Part III, surveyed 1784–6.

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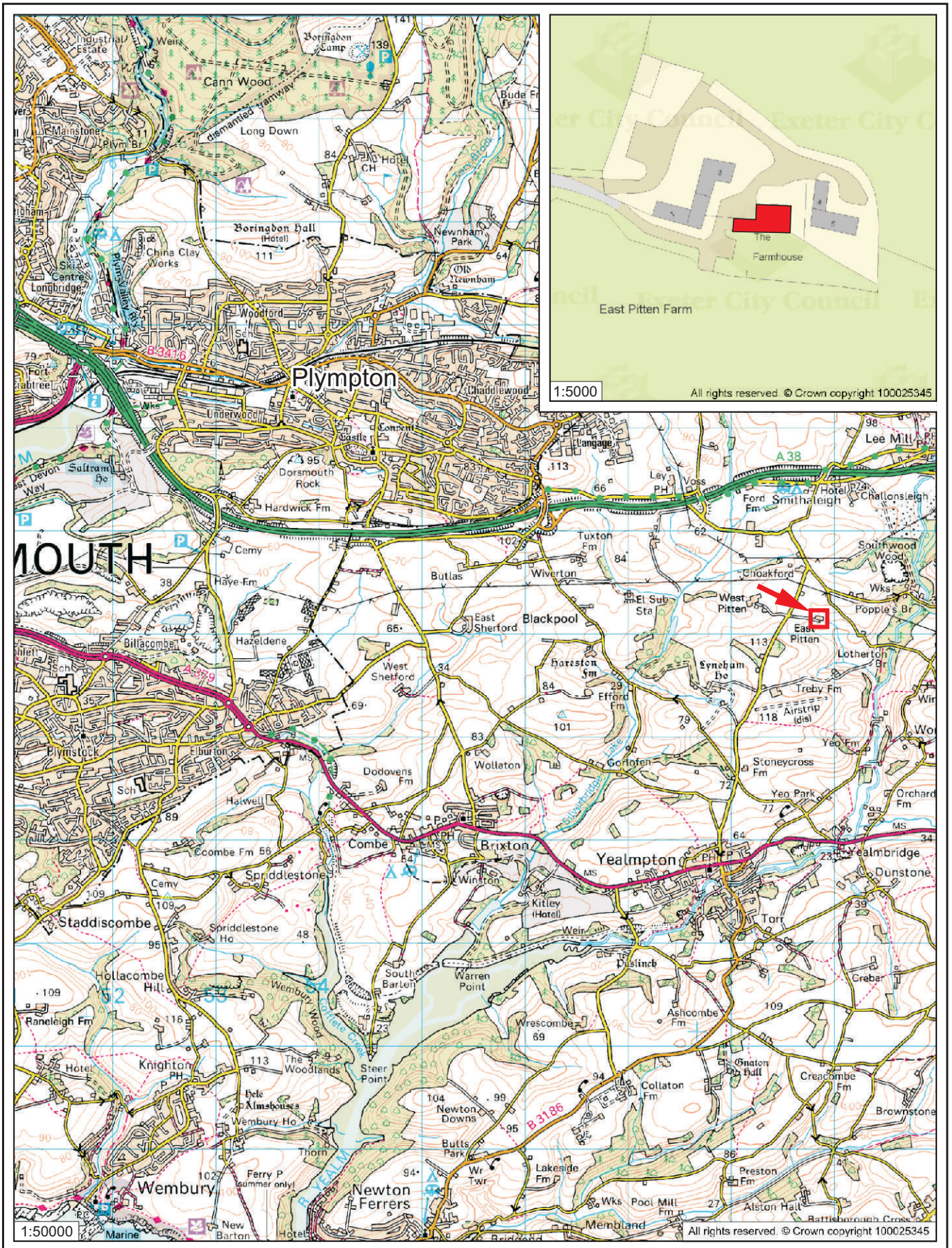


Fig. 1 Location of site.

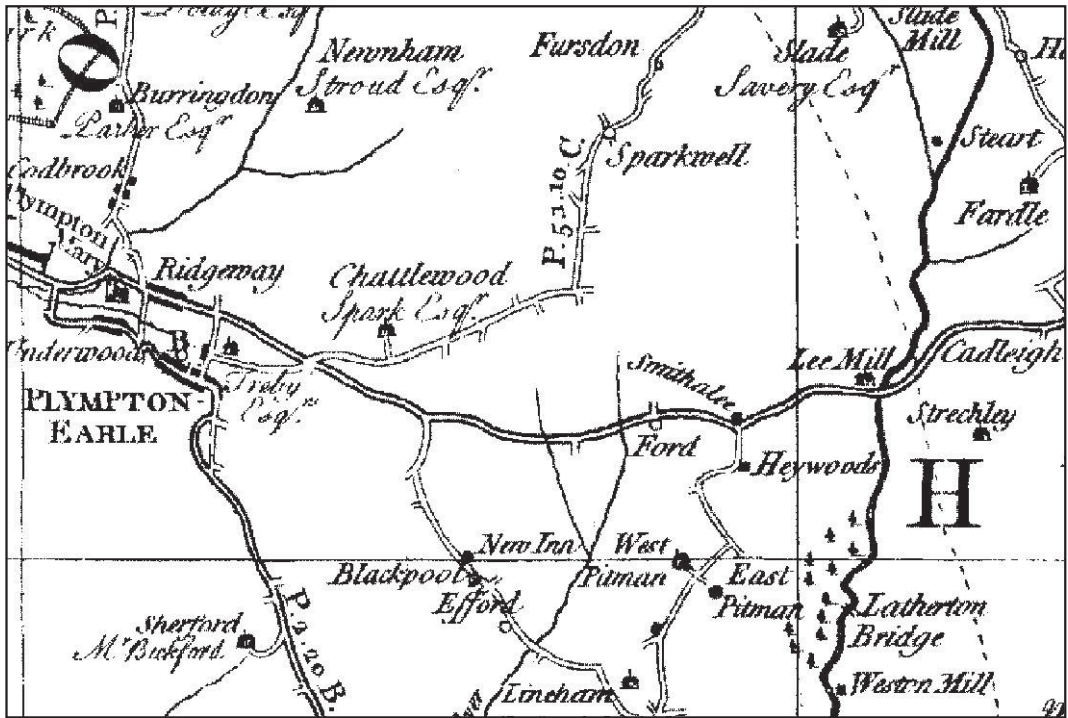


Fig. 2 Detail from Benjamin Donn's 1765 One Inch to the Mile map of Devonshire, Sheet 10a, showing the incorrectly named Pitten Farms.



Fig. 3 Detail from the Board of Ordnance's Six Inch to the Mile drawing of the Yealmpton area, 19 Part III, surveyed in 1784-6.

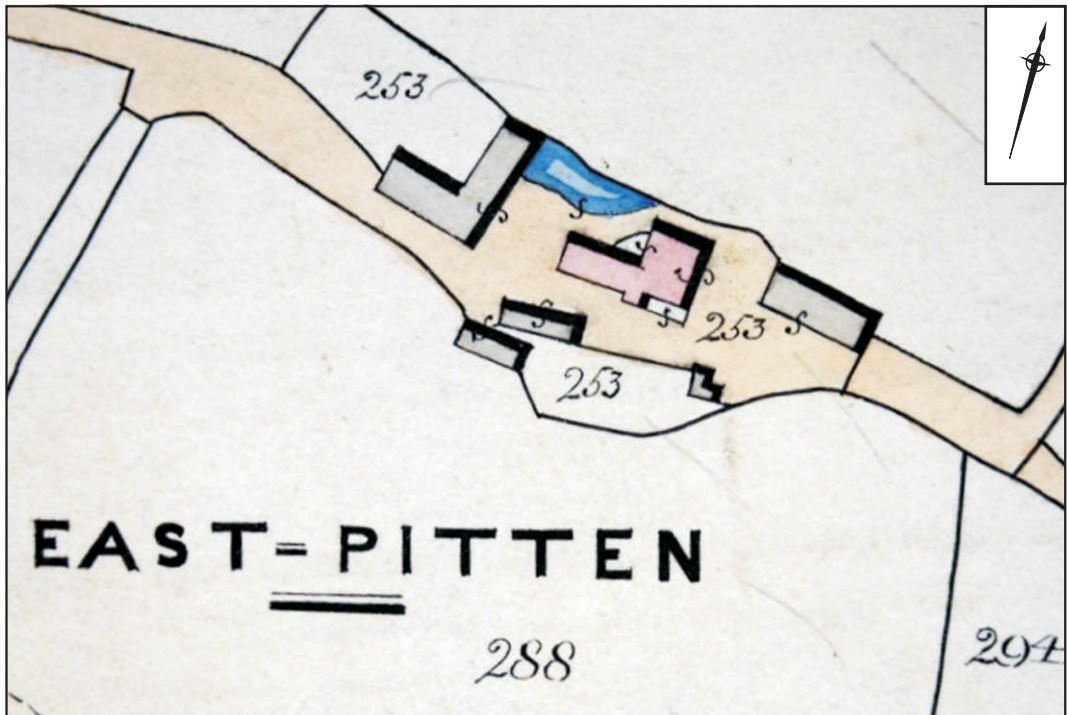


Fig. 4 Detail from the 1843 Tithe Map of Yealmpton.



Fig. 5 Detail from the 1864 Ordnance Survey map sheet 124.12.

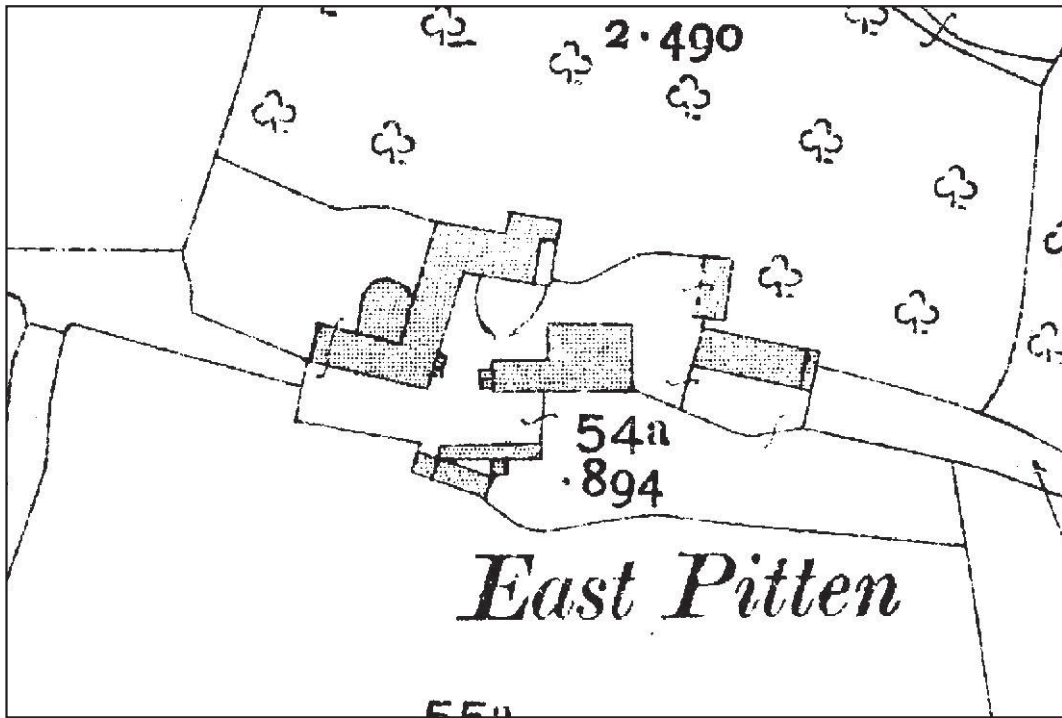


Fig. 6 Detail from the 1913 Ordnance Survey map sheet 124.12.

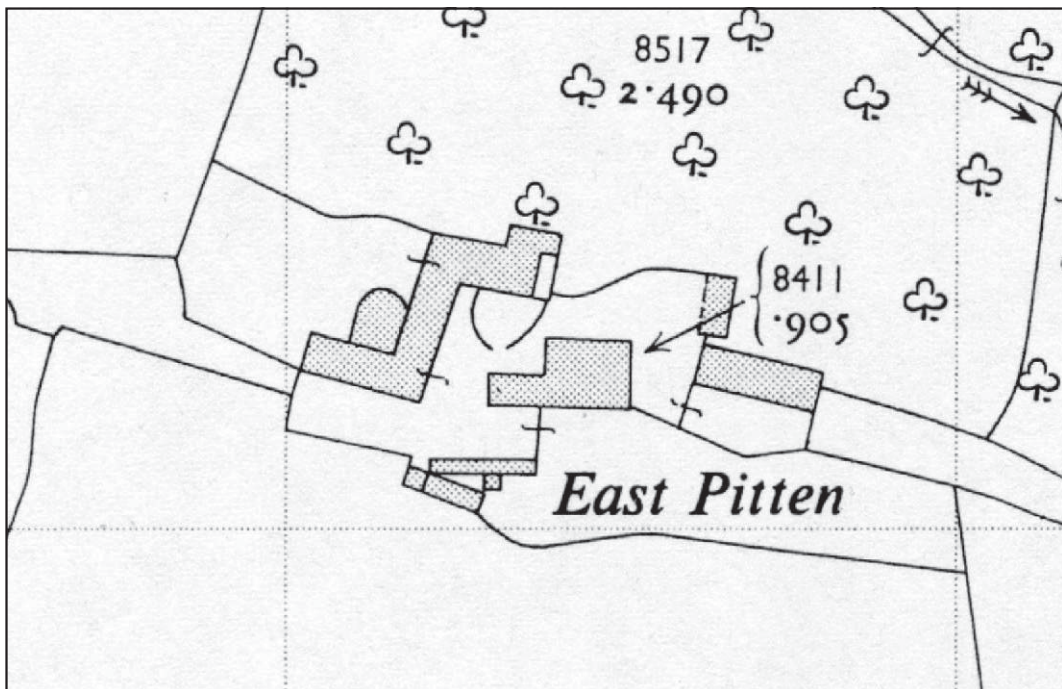


Fig. 7 Detail from the 1950 Ordnance Survey map sheet 20/5854.

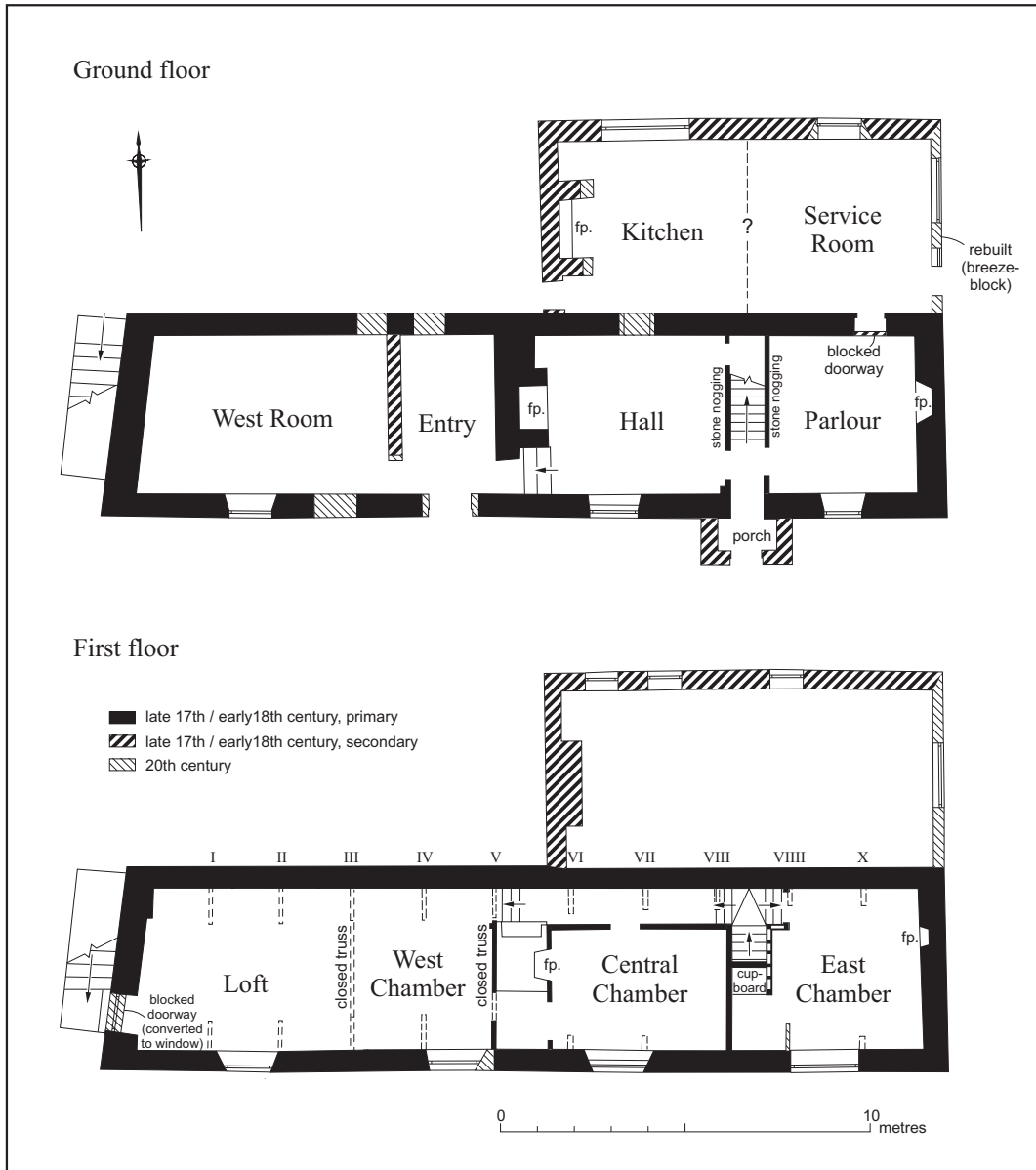


Fig. 8 Phased ground- and first-floor plans.



Fig. 9 Exterior from SE with S range in foreground.



Fig. 10 Exterior from NE with N range in foreground.



Fig. 11 Interior of the W room after stripping.



Fig. 12 The entry after stripping, showing blocked doorway in N wall.



Fig. 13 The hall fireplace. Note iron bar supporting the lintel, wooden blocks for original fireplace surround, area of sooted brickwork exposed within the former surround, and blocking for 19th-century hob grate.



Fig. 14 Assembly of first-floor joists showing trimmers, joist box, and thick boards to support first-floor fireplace.



Fig. 15 Hall, stairs and primary stair cupboard, viewed from the SE.



Fig. 16 Fireplace in the parlour.

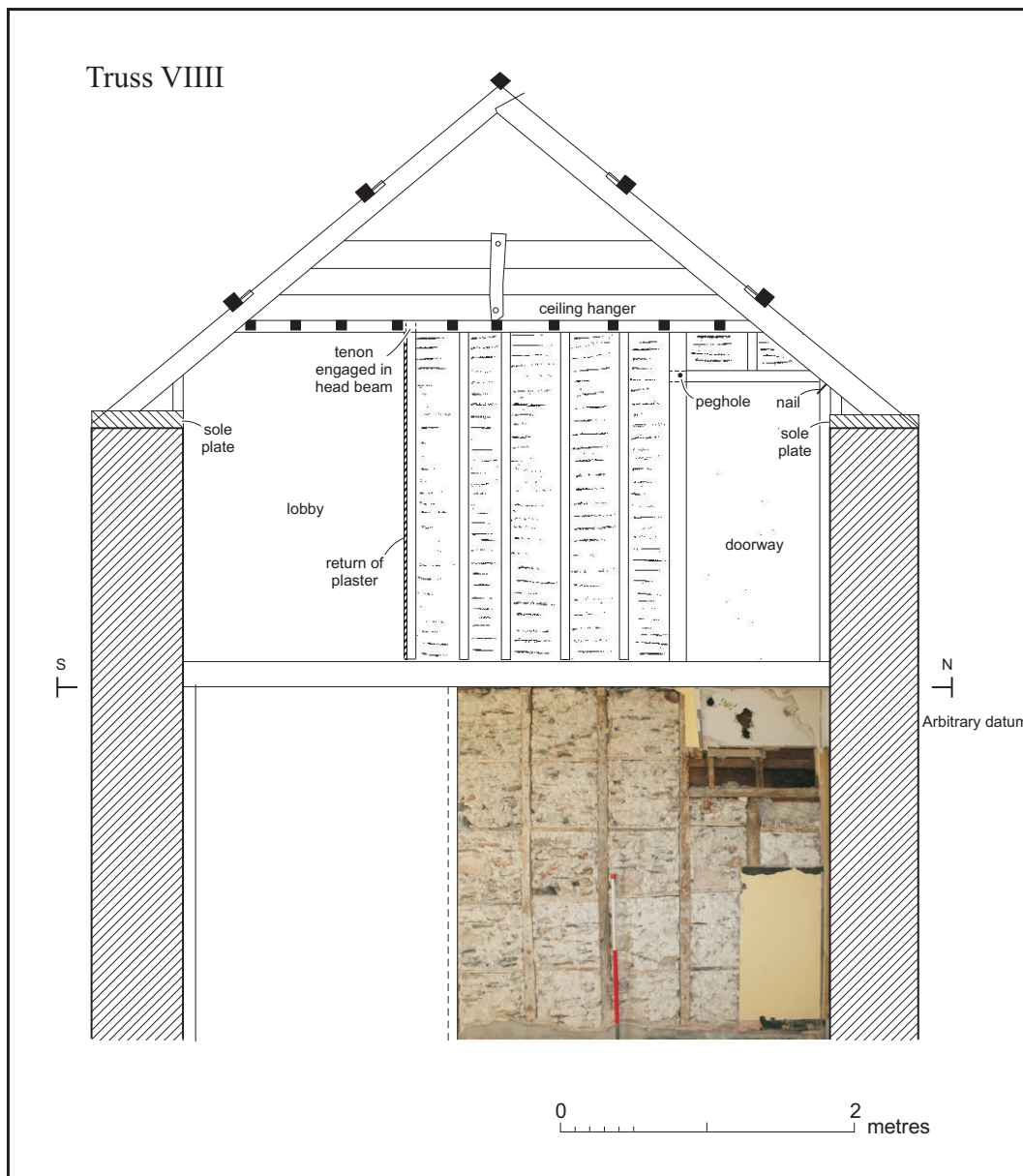


Fig. 17 Section through S range at junction of parlour and stairs, with Truss VIII above.

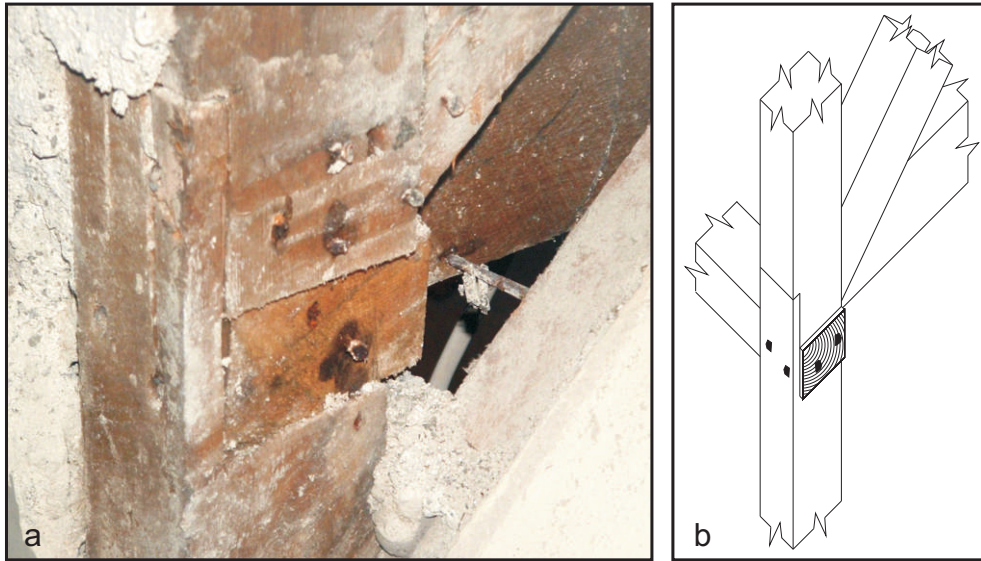


Fig. 18(a) The junction of timbers in the frame beside the stairs. (b). Isometric view of same.



Fig. 19 Central chamber: fireplace stack from SE.

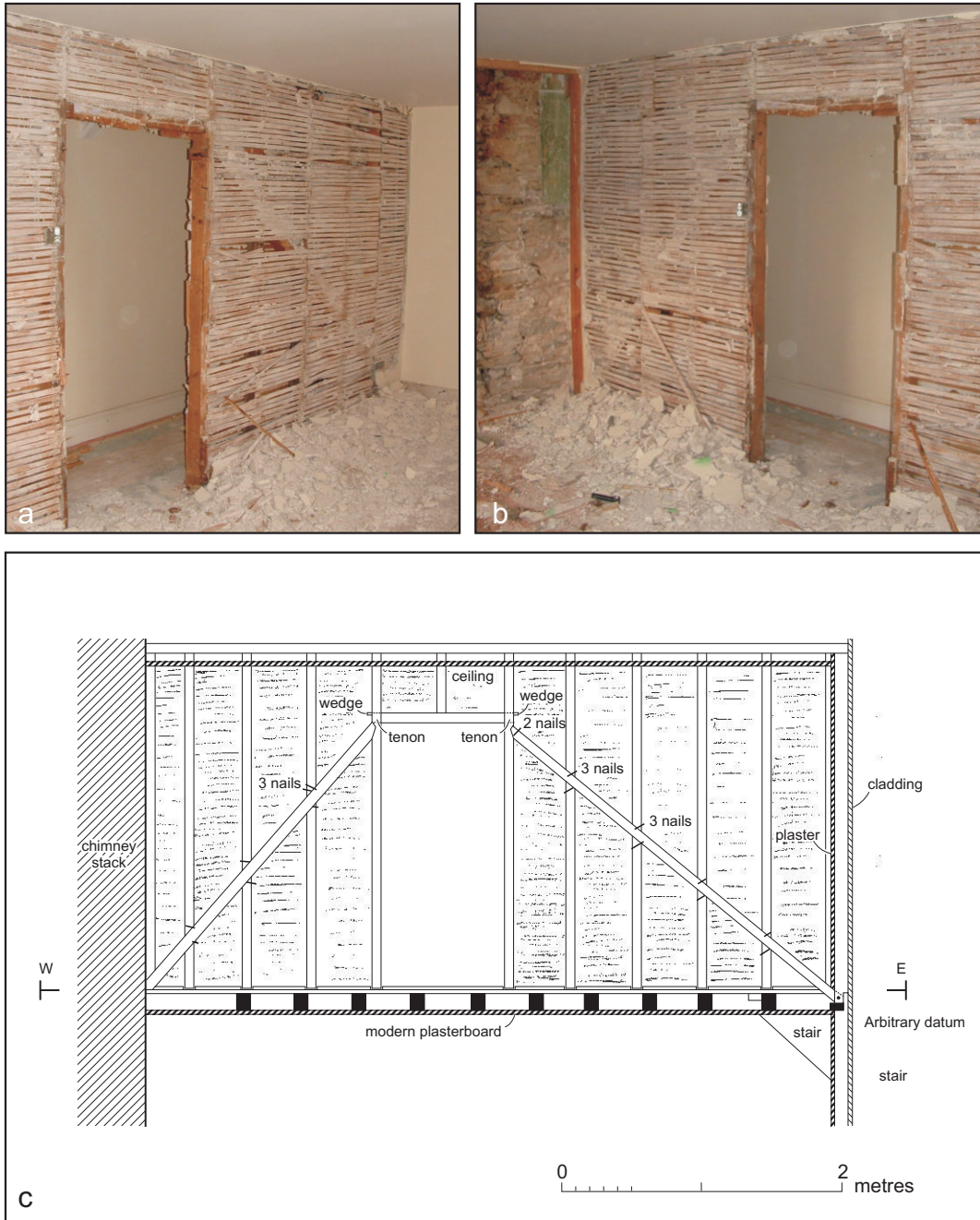


Fig. 20 Partition between central bedroom and passage, (a) Viewed from SW, (b) from SE. (c). Drawing showing platform framing over joists below.

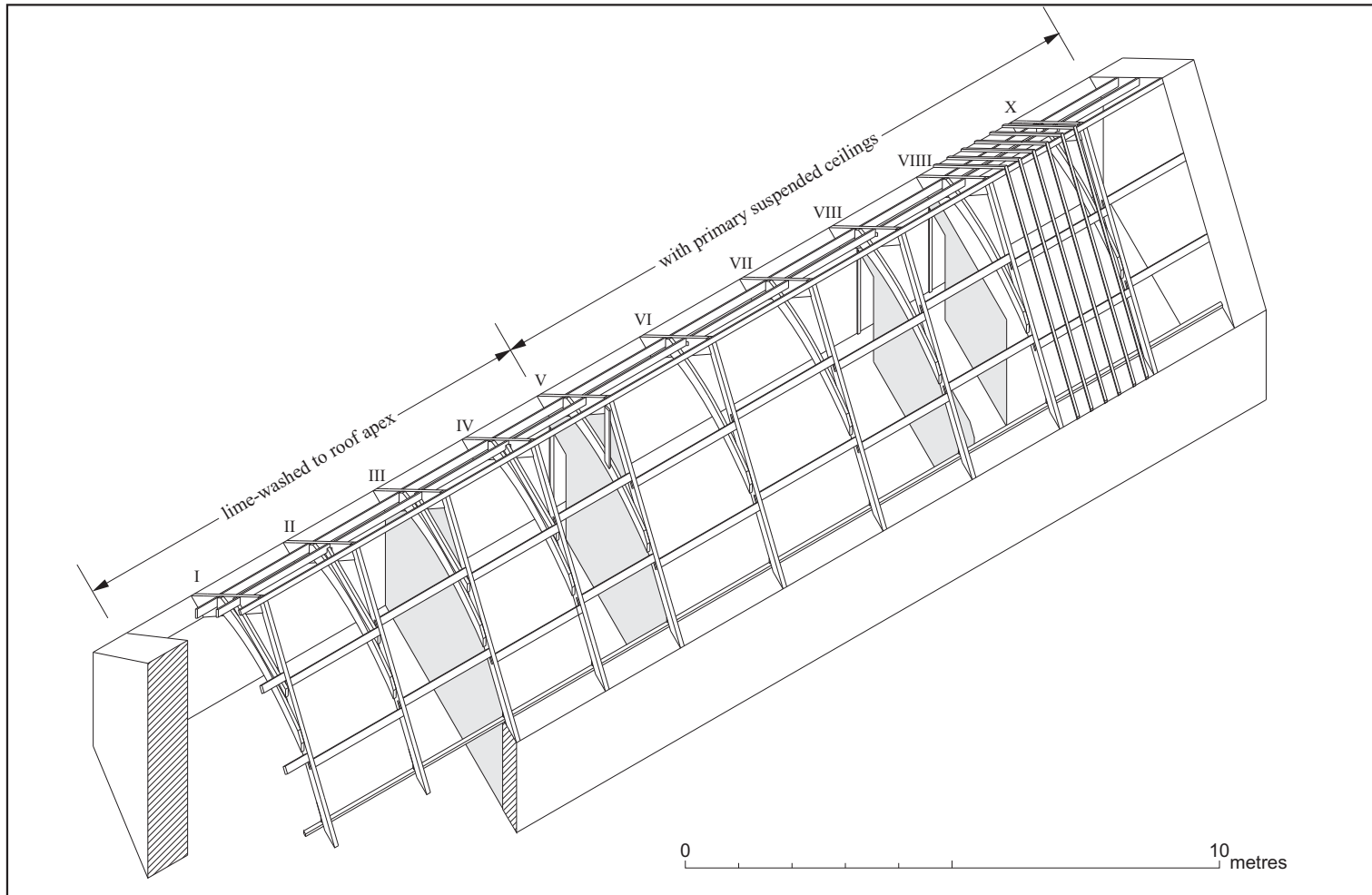


Fig. 21 Isometric projection of roof, with restored positions of closed trusses III and V.



Fig. 22 The roof above the central chamber.



Fig. 23 Roof truss III with partition rising to the apex.

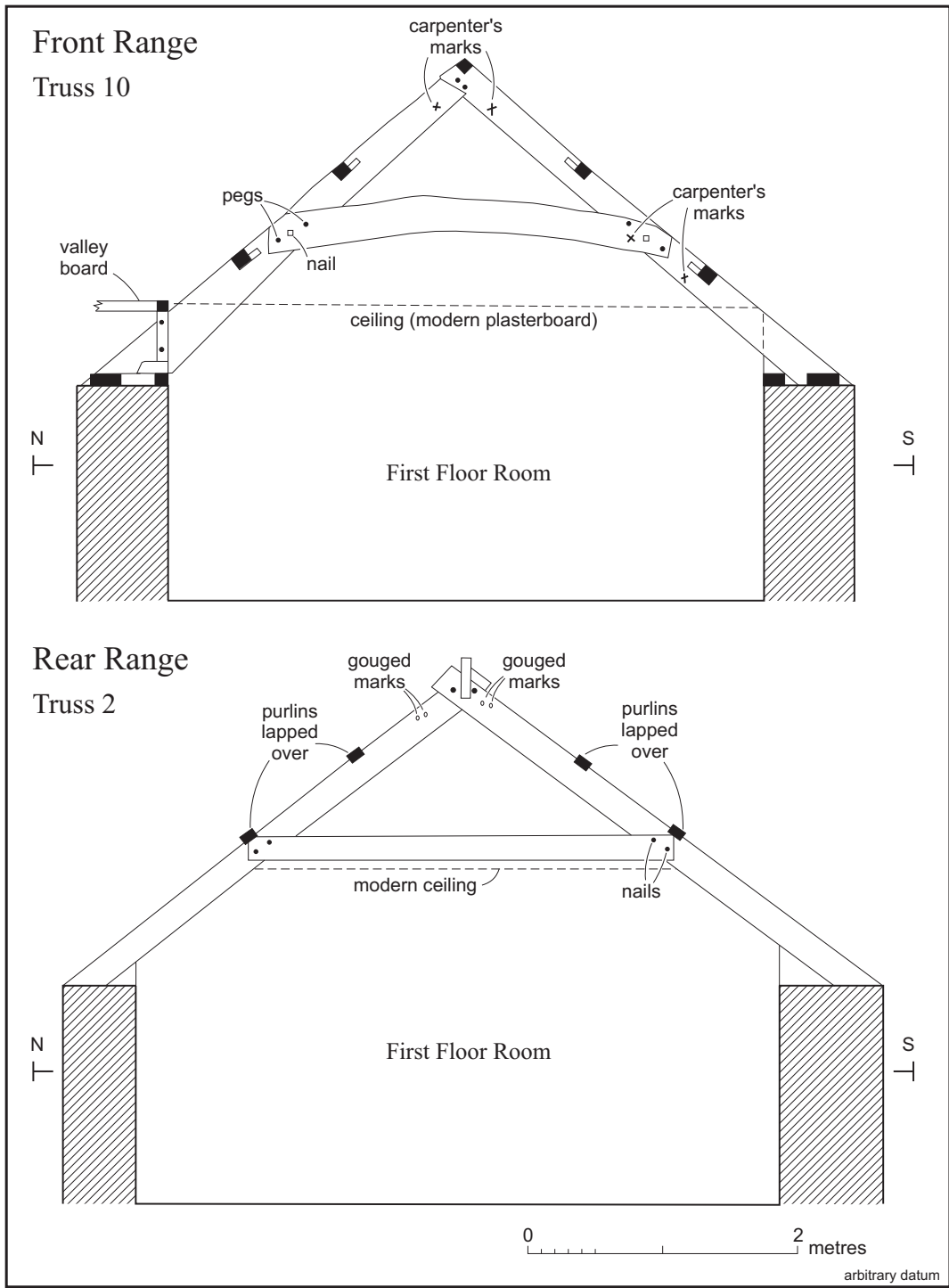


Fig. 24 Measured drawings of trusses in S and N ranges.



Fig. 25 North range: kitchen fireplace.



Fig. 26 North range: ground floor, E room showing blocking of splays of early window, with scar of demolished E gable wall to right.