

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING OF A
WAREHOUSE AT KING STREET,
BIDEFORD, DEVON**

**Prepared for
Mr D. Johnson**

by
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Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Method	1
3. Results	1
4. Discussion	4
5. Project archive and ‘OASIS’ report	5
Acknowledgements	5

Illustrations

Fig. 1 Location of site.

Fig. 2 Floor plans.

Plates

Pl. 1 The warehouse viewed from King Street.

Pl. 2 The warehouse viewed from its courtyard.

Pl. 3 Reused beam supporting the first floor.

Pl. 4 Close-up view of a first-floor window.

Pl. 5 View of the first floor showing a ship’s mast reused as a beam.

Pl. 6 Roof trusses showing boards.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

This report has been prepared by Mr D Johnson and presents the results of historic building recording of a former warehouse at King Street, Bideford (SS 45433 26637). The recording, which was undertaken on 25 March 2009, was required by Torrridge District Council as a condition of the grant of planning permission for the conversion of the building (ref: 1/1428/2007/FUL).

The site is located on the west side of King Street, which runs behind The Quay. Wood's map of Bideford of 1842 depicts a largely built-up quayside. The warehouse had not been constructed by that date, although two other buildings were present on the footprint of the later building. To the south, an outbuilding on the site formed part of a property fronting the High Street, and is depicted on the 1932 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map as a bank. The warehouse itself had been constructed by the 1880s. The history of the building has not been researched, but there is evidence on site for use as a public house or club, and also for the extensive preparation of food, possibly as a small bakery.

2. METHOD

A record was made to level 2/3 as described in the English heritage 2006 publication *Understanding Historic buildings: a guide to good recording practice*, and consisted of the following:

- A photographic record of the warehouse in black-and-white print and colour digital format, including internal and external elevations, floors, roof structures and surviving fittings and fixtures,
- A written description of the warehouse, including architectural detail and fixtures and fittings,
- Annotations of architects plans showing phasing and features of architectural interest.

3. RESULTS (Fig. 2)

General description (pls 1-3)

The warehouse is a rectangular, three-storey building, with an angled north-east corner, respecting the alignment of King Street (the earlier building also had an angled corner, and this seems to imply that King Street was laid out after the construction of some of the early warehouses along the quay.) The warehouse includes an integral single-storey range attached to the south elevation, which has been extended to the east. The original part of this range has a pitched roof supported on a single purlin. The slate roof covering and associated batons are modern. At the west end the warehouse incorporates a small cottage. This part of the building was not entered due to dangerous stairs and floors.

The building is constructed of roughly-laid local slates and sandstone bonded with a hard gritty white cement with gravel, brick and coal inclusions. The windows in the north, south and east elevation are aligned both horizontally and vertically in a regular grid pattern. Above the windows on the ground and first floors are shallow red brick arches. All of the windows have wooden frames, but they are of varying designs with

different architectural features including plain central mullions, moulded central mullions, evidence for glazing, and internal pintles for shutters. The only common element is the presence of four iron security bars on the outside of each window. The dividing wall between the warehouse and the cottage is angled at its north end and 'abuts' a row of windows. This appears to have been a deliberate feature to allow, on the upper floors, a single window to provide light into both the warehouse and the cottage.

The warehouse sits within a large courtyard, which at various times had been completely infilled. Some of the more recent outbuildings have been demolished.

The ground floor (pl. 4)

The ground floor appears to have originally been designed as a large open space with a separate room forming part of the cottage and an additional room in the southern range. There are no surviving original doors, and no clear evidence for original openings. Doors have been inserted into the north and east elevations as well as into the south range. It is possible that a blocked doorway in the east elevation of the south range may be original, as could the openings in the south elevation of the warehouse, one of which communicates with the south range and is positioned below (now-blocked) loading doors on the upper floors.

In the south-east corner of the warehouse is a small brick flue, constructed against the corner of the building. There is however no evidence of a fireplace. The flue rises to the loft, and has been capped. The two western bays of the warehouse have been subdivided with the insertion of a brick wall. There are two flights of steps leading up to a raised wooden floor in this western part of the building. The floor has been raised over the cellar, and this flooring at its present height appears to be a secondary feature. There is evidence of further, modern, subdivision, using plasterboard supported on wooden frames, although most of this has been removed.

The first floor is supported on a large reused oak beam displaying joist sockets. The joists in the present building rest on the beam rather than in sockets, and are randomly painted black and white, probably indicating they have been reused, possibly from a domestic context. The beam is supported on a brick pier, and a modern concrete block pier. In the western part of the warehouse this beam is joined to a second beam and they are supported on a plain circular cast-iron column. The present stairs to the first floor are located against the south elevation. However, there is evidence in the floorboards, and from sawn-off joists at the present stair locations, to indicate they have been relocated from a position adjacent to the west elevation. They might have been moved when the ground floor above the cellar was raised.

The ground floor of the cottage incorporated two staircases to the first floor. The ceiling was covered with lath and plaster. At this level there are doors in the north and south elevation, the former having been inserted into its current position, but possibly occupying a near-original opening.

The first floor (pl. 5)

At first floor level the warehouse again comprises a small room forming part of the cottage, and a large open space, punctuated by three small, plain cast-iron columns supporting the loft floor. The loft floor joists are supported on, and set into, two

timbers. At the eastern end of the building is a large dressed wooden beam, and at the western end a mast destined for a sailing ship had been used. The mast had been fully turned but displayed no evidence for actual fitting into a ship, the only other distinguishing features being sockets for the floor joists. As with the floor below, the stairs to the first floor had been moved from a position on the east elevation to their present position against the south elevation.

Adjacent to the stairs to the second floor is a hatch to the ground floor. At the south-east corner of the building is a blocked loading door, whose position had been formerly obscured by toilet facilities. These have mostly been removed. The window in the north-west corner has been altered and the dividing wall partially rebuilt in brick. The adjacent part of the window in the cottage has been widened.

The loft (pl. 6)

The second floor is located in the loft and is of the same layout as the first floor. Again, in the south-east corner is a blocked loading door, close to which is a large hatch providing access to the first floor. The window in the north-west corner has been altered and the dividing wall partially rebuilt in brick, with the window further narrowed by the insertion of a partial brick blocking. The adjacent part of the window in the cottage has been widened and subsequently blocked in brick.

The roof is a 20th-century recovering in slate tiles and is supported on six tie-beam trusses with king posts and diagonal struts. The lower ends of the king posts are attached to the tie beams with iron straps. The east end of the roof is hipped with further timbers at the north-east corner where the roof is carried over the angled masonry below. The rafters support two rows of staggered back purlins, as well as a ridge purlin. The roof space had been partially boarded over using tongue-and-grooved boards fixed both horizontally to the base of the tie beams, and vertically to the sides of the trusses, meaning that some bays were fully open. This may indicate that the loft was used for the storage of delicate goods, such as textiles.

The chimney associated with the flue at the eastern end of the building has been removed, although two chimney stacks serving the cottage survive, one located above the dividing wall with the warehouse, the other in the south-west corner of the building.

The cellar

The cellar is located under the western two bays of the warehouse and is approached by a flight of stairs with ceramic steps adjacent to the south elevation. This opening incorporates a sloped ramp facilitating the storage of beer barrels. There is also a brick-blocked opening in the south elevation. The blocking probably took place when the south range was extended. The ground floor of the warehouse above is supported on a rolled steel joist.

The outbuildings

To the east and south of the warehouse is a former yard. Parts of the boundary wall on the east and south sides of this yard survive, and are constructed using the same materials and technique as the warehouse. Alterations to the wall of the east side of the yard include the insertion of a gateway for vehicle access and a door leading to a former passage along the south side of the property.

The earliest identifiable outbuilding is the extension of the south range of the warehouse, and is constructed of red brick. In the south elevation there are several blocked openings and 20th-century metal-framed windows. The west end of this building has been rebuilt in yellow brick from Peters Marland. This extension has a slate tiled roof supported on two purlins laid on a half truss, with an asbestos inner lining. The floor of this range is laid in decorative brick, above which is a modern cold store.

The central area of outbuildings has been demolished and the relationship between this building and those to the south is unknown. These buildings flanked an L-shaped corridor. To the west of the corridor are two rooms, the southernmost of which may have been the earliest. This was constructed of red brick and internally has a cornice and skirting board. The northern room is constructed of yellow brick from Peters Marland, and its northern elevation incorporates a large 4-pane window with top-opening section of 1930s coloured glazing. This window has external security bars, and the room is entered through a doorway with a security barred door. Internally the room has a parquet floor and wooden skirting boards. To the east is a more recent extension giving access to two rooms, one of which is a boiler room.

4. DISCUSSION

The Warehouse at King Street was probably constructed in the mid 19th century, and is of lesser architectural quality than the earlier warehouses on the east side of King Street. Much of the timberwork, such as the windows and some of the beams supporting the floor joists have been reused, and it is possible that much of the stone masonry was recycled from earlier buildings on the site. The lack of fittings within the building probably indicates that it was used purely for storage, possibly for fragile or perishable goods, such as textiles, although some light manufacturing cannot be ruled out.

The warehouse itself has been relatively unaltered through its history, the main alteration being the raising of the ground floor in the western part of the building. This seems to be associated with the creation or alteration of a cellar below this part of the warehouse. The walls of the cellar appear contemporary with the masonry at ground floor level, and it is possible that a cellar was intended from the outset. The alterations to the ground floor level could have been required due to a raising of the cellar floor itself, perhaps necessitated due to damp penetration.

In the 20th century the building seems to have gone out of use as a warehouse, and there is some evidence within various parts of the building for use as either a public house, club or less probably a café. New buildings were constructed within the yard, and signage and fittings clearly indicate the preparation of food, at least for a short period on a small industrial scale.

5. PROJECT ARCHIVE AND 'OASIS' REPORT

A fully integrated project archive has been compiled and will be deposited at the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon, under museum accession number NDDMS 2009.20.

A report of the evaluation (including a pdf version of this document) will be submitted to the on-line database OASIS (On-line AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS), under OASIS ID: exeterar1 58041

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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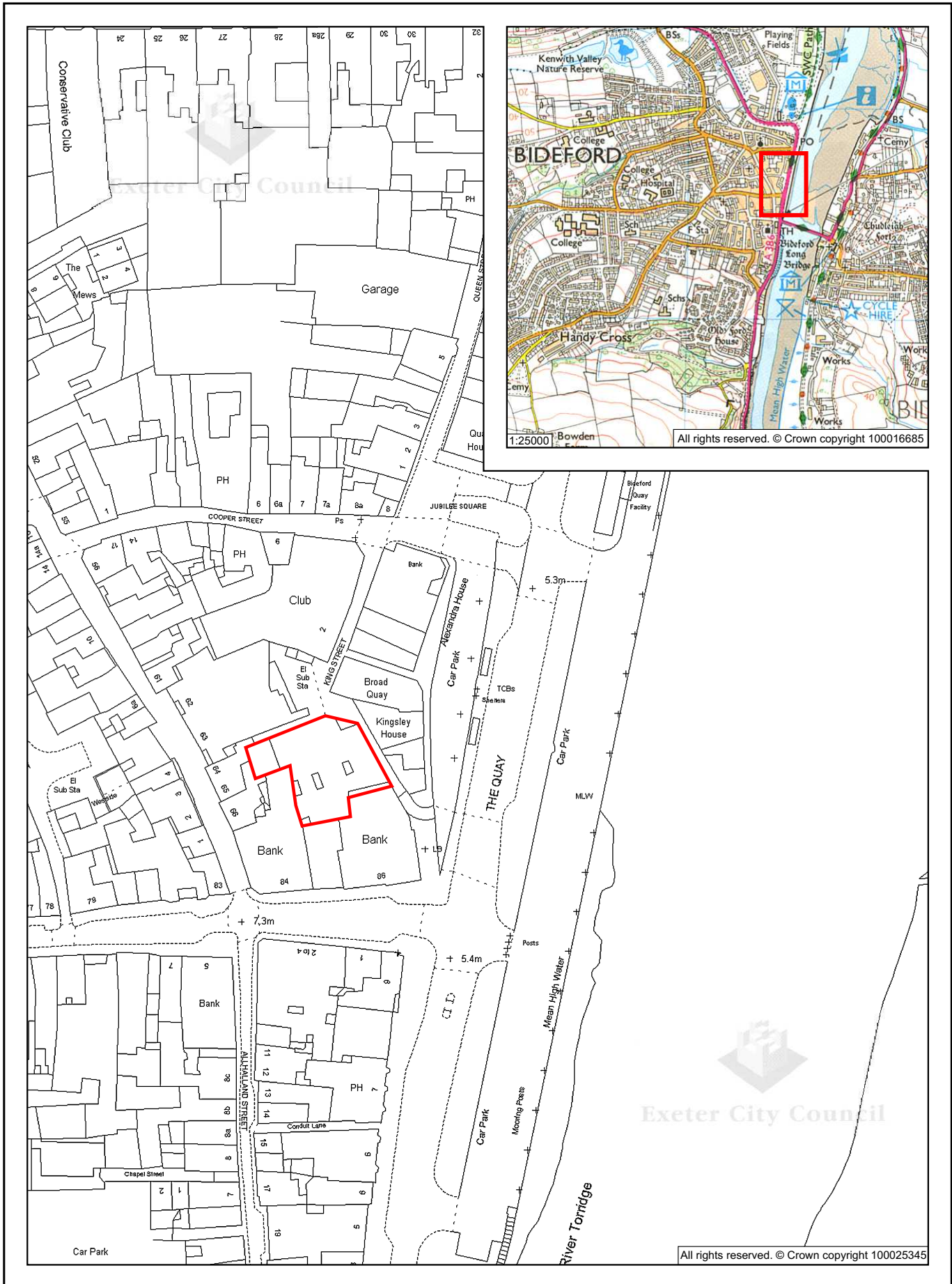


Fig. 1 Location of site. Scale 1:1250.

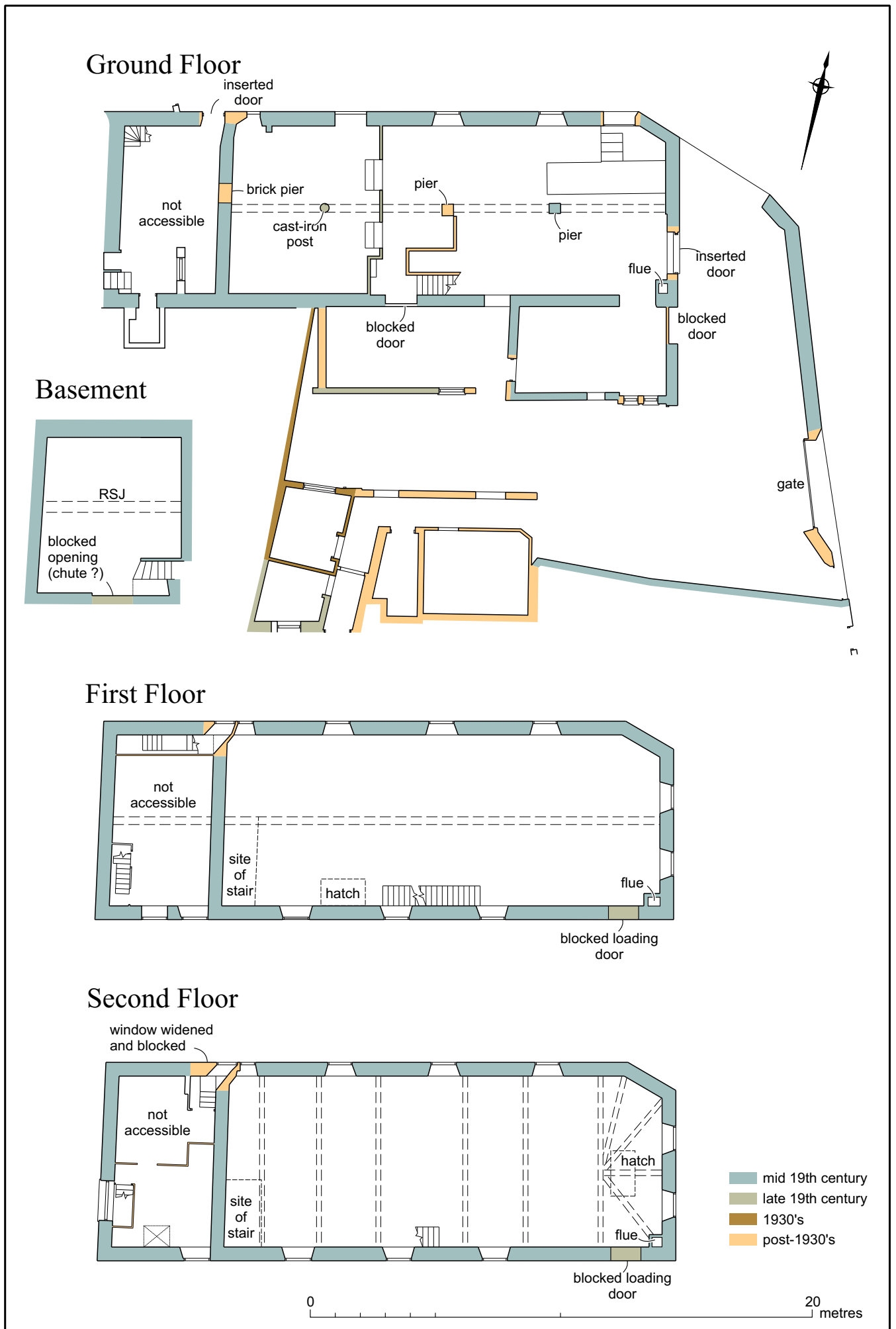


Fig. 2 Floor plans, based on Studiojob Architectural Services Ltd drawing P316-01.



Plate 1 The warehouse viewed from King Street, looking south-west. 1m scale.



Plate 2 The warehouse viewed from its courtyard, looking north-west. 1m scale.



Plate 3 Close-up view of a first-floor window, looking south. 1m scale.



Plate 4 Reused beam supporting the first floor, looking west.



Plate 5 View of the first floor showing a ship's mast reused as a beam, looking south-west. 1m scale.



Plate 6 Roof trusses showing boards, looking south-west.