

**THE ADMIRAL VERNON INN,  
ALPHINGTON, DEVON:  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING 2007-9**

**By R. W. Parker,**

**With Contributions by A.J. Passmore and A.G. Collings**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been produced by Exeter Archaeology (EA) for the Exeter Housing Society to describe the results of archaeological building recording and a watching brief undertaken at the former Admiral Vernon Inn, Chudleigh Road, Alphington (SX 91748 89895) during the recent conversion of the inn into residential units. The importance of the inn buildings as historic structures was recognised by their designation as a Grade II listed building in January 2007. The archaeological work was required under conditions attached to the grant of Listed Building Consent for the partial demolition, alteration and conversion of the buildings by the Local Planning Authority, Exeter City Council. The recording was carried out by Exeter Archaeology during the building works in 2007-9.

The Admiral Vernon Inn stands on the west side of Chudleigh Road a little to the south of Alphington Church (Fig. 1). The main building lies parallel with the street frontage, with a large inn yard behind it surrounded by high walls. To the south of the inn is a private house, which was formerly part of the original structure, but which has long been alienated from it. Although it was not part of the development area, and was not inspected during the recent phase of recording works, this cottage is an integral part of the building and, in order to understand the original plan form of the building, it is necessary to include it in the following descriptions. To the rear of this house, along the southern boundary of the inn yard, were two historic agricultural buildings, including an early barn or stable, which has been retained and converted in the recent development, and an open-fronted lincage, which has been demolished and replaced with new housing.

## 2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 The setting

Alphington village is an ancient settlement at the junction of five important routes leading south and west from Exeter; these roads still converge today on a triangular site to the north of the church, which may have originated as a market place. The village was large and prosperous; its proximity to Exeter encouraged the development of large private residences in addition to farms and cottages for agricultural workers. Prior to the 20th century, Church Road and Chudleigh Road were the most heavily developed areas of the parish. Many vernacular buildings remain along the main street frontages, although other early buildings have been lost in a series of disastrous fires, one of which destroyed a large block of property to the north of the inn in 1909. Further destruction of historic buildings in this row took place in 1994, when Nos 38-42 Chudleigh Road were demolished to make way for a nursing home (Lucerne Court). This development now borders the inn site on the north and west.

### 2.2 Tenorial history (researched by A.G. Collings)

The historic manor of Alphington, and the bulk of the parish (but seemingly not the site of the property under discussion), was owned by the Courtenay Earls of Devon from the late 14th century up until the present century. According to the listing description (See appendix) there was a Bell Inn at Alphington, on Courtenay-owned land, as early as 1430. However the reference for this has not been established and it may refer to a different site, since the earliest references to the site now occupied by the Admiral Vernon suggest that it was not held by the Courtenays. The earliest surviving land tax assessment, for 1783, refers to it as 'Burgoynes;', being owned by the executors of Gregory Jackson Esq. and occupied by Mr Robert Strong. The assessment of £4 4s suggests it was a substantial property that would have included several fields. By 1798 it was owned and occupied by Mr Richard Chown, and it was to remain in that family for several generations.

In the earliest surviving Poor Rate Book, for 1836-7 the property, still known as Burgoynes, was described simply as an 'House and Lands', owned by Charles Chown and occupied by Thomas Langsford.<sup>1</sup> A Valuation of the parish in 1841 indicates that ownership had changed to Richard Chown, the property being described as 'Bell Inn buildings Garden & Close', occupying three-quarters of an acre.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> DRO 1481A/PO 701, Property No. 104.

<sup>2</sup> DRO 1481A/PO 1a, page 21.

The property is first depicted in plan on the parish tithe map of around 1842, when it was given the plot No. 383 (Fig. 2). Unfortunately the layout of the buildings appears conventionalised and no further information about the structures was recorded in the accompanying apportionment. However, the colour coding showed the building on the frontage to be a residence, with three ranges of agricultural buildings aligned east-west at the rear.

In 1849 the property was conveyed by the Chulmleigh spinster Miss Eliza Copley and others to Mr Richard Loram, an Alphington yeoman. The conveyance cited an 1797 will of Richard Chown in which the property was referred to as 'All that his Messuage or Tenement or Dwellinghouse theretofore called ... The Old Bell and the several Fields, Hereditaments and Premises thereto belonging'.<sup>3</sup> The earliest directory to cover the parish was produced in 1850 by William White, which refers to the property as the Bell Inn, still held by Thomas Langsford.<sup>4</sup> He appears in the census of the following year on a night when there were six staying at the inn, all employed in agricultural or related trades and all from Devon or the adjoining counties.<sup>5</sup>

Until the late 19th century the name 'Admiral Vernon' or 'Vernon's Head' (see Appendix) referred to a different inn located 170m to the north, on the other side of Ide Lane. This was originally the Church House of Alphington, which had been granted to the parish by Lord Courtenay in 1499. It was destroyed by fire in around 1873, the subsequent sale of the site being held at the Bell Inn.<sup>6</sup> The site of the destroyed building was purchased for the new board school, which still stands opposite the church. For almost a decade after this, the inn on the Chudleigh Road continued to be known as The Bell. It remained so in 1881 when William Loram was the occupant. He is described as an innkeeper and farmer of 64 acres, although it appears that there were no clientele staying there on the census night.<sup>7</sup> Soon afterwards the Bell Inn became known as the Admiral Vernon Inn. This adoption of the name of the destroyed pub has since led to much confusion between the two properties.<sup>8</sup>

By 1886 William Loram was still the owner, but the innkeeper was John Routley; the property included the orchard and field behind, extending to nearly 4 acres.<sup>9</sup> The OS 1st edition 1:1250 map, surveyed in 1888 and published in 1890 (Fig. 3) shows the main buildings in more reliable detail than the Tithe Map and also extensive buildings at the rear of the site. The three ranges to the rear are broadly identifiable, with extensive additions to the south west of the central range lying outside the present site boundary. By 1910 the property was owned by the St Anne's Well Brewery and a valuation map showed it to include the orchard of 1.7 acres that extended some 200m south-west of the inn.<sup>10</sup>

### 2.3 Previous archaeological studies

The earliest phase of previous archaeological work was undertaken in 1980, when the adjoining cottage (No.46 Chudleigh Road) was partially surveyed by Exeter Archaeology. The house was identified as integral with the inn building, the whole complex having a classic vernacular plan form based upon three rooms and a cross passage, with visible features of mid to late 17th-century date and alterations of the 19th century.<sup>11</sup>

In 1994, prior to the development of the adjacent nursing home, two evaluation trenches were excavated, one on the nursing home site to the north and one within the inn yard. In neither of these trenches were significant archaeological features observed.<sup>12</sup>

The cottage was examined once more, by the City Archaeology and Planning Officer, during alterations to the building in 2004. At this time the external render of this section of the building was removed, exposing fabric showing a highly complex sequence of successive historic alterations. A

<sup>3</sup> In bundle DRO D1508M/Deeds/Alphington 7.

<sup>4</sup> White 1850, 183.

<sup>5</sup> HO/107/1867/f243/p7.

<sup>6</sup> *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* 23/4/1873 1a.

<sup>7</sup> RG11/2146/f97/p4.

<sup>8</sup> e.g. Devon County Council Historic Environment Record: sites SX98NW/59 & 187.

<sup>9</sup> Alphington Poor Rate Book October 1886, D[evon] R[ecord] O[ffice] 1481A/PO113.

<sup>10</sup> Inland Revenue Valuation Book DRO 3201V/2/1 and Valuation Map 1:2500 scale 2nd edition LXXX.14.

<sup>11</sup> J. Thorp, standing buildings record, EA Archive B/101/1.

<sup>12</sup> Hall, 1994. EA report No. 94.49.

sketch plan and photographic record were made and the survival of many 16th- or 17th-century fixtures and fittings were noted.<sup>13</sup> These observations slightly qualified the conclusions of the previous phase of work in 1980.

The designation of the building as a Grade II Listed Building in January 2007 led to the production of a listing description that identified the Inn building as of early 16th-century date, with alterations of the 17th century (see appendix). Later in 2007, the buildings were inspected by EA prior to commencement of the conversion works. The resulting notes took the form of a rapid building survey which was incorporated into the project design for the archaeological recording which followed. This report augments the 2007 building survey with additional observations and drawings made during the demolition and conversion works.

### 3. BUILDING SURVEY: THE INN

#### 3.1 Exterior

The main body of the public house consists of a long, two-storey range lying parallel to the street with rendered cob and stone walls and a tiled roof (Fig. 4). To the north, beyond the vehicular entry to the inn yard, is a modern property replacing an earlier building demolished in the late 20th century. To the south of the pub is a cottage which was at one time a part of the property, but has long been in separate occupation. This continues the alignment of the main range, and has a short cross wing to the rear which is continuous with the early agricultural buildings on the southern side of the yard.

#### *Southern elevation*

The southern elevation of the building now relates to the cottage and will not be described here in any detail. However there is a central chimney stack in the southern gable end of the cottage which seems likely to be a primary feature. The lower part of the stack is constructed of large blocks of red-brown Heavitree breccia. The top two thirds are of small handmade bricks which look early, perhaps of late 17th- or early 18th-century date, crowned by a later brick chimneystack of relatively stumpy proportions. There are blocked openings on either side of the stack representing doorways or windows, but the date of these openings and of their abandonment can no longer be ascertained.

#### *Eastern elevation; Façade to Chudleigh Road*

The façade of the cottage is double-fronted, with a central doorway. This arrangement was shown in 2004 to be the result of 18th- or 19th-century alterations. The lower part of the façade of this section of the building is of red breccia and its upper part of cob (Fig. 5). At the centre of this bay, at first-floor level, there appears originally to have had a wide, but shallow opening with a lintel chamfered and stopped externally. Below the sill of the opening was an unusual timber-framed area consisting of vertical timber studs embedded in the cob. Although the significance of this feature remains uncertain, it is possible that this opening represents the remains of a projecting oriel window of 17th-century type, supported by shaped brackets secured to the timber studs below the sill. This sort of architectural feature would suggest that the first-floor room in this part of the building was of very high status, perhaps housing the principal bed chamber.

The existing window openings in the main façade of the cottage are tall rectangular openings, cut into earlier walling to replace the central opening, perhaps at the time this part of the building was annexed as a separate dwelling. An undated ?late 19th-century postcard of the exterior (Fig. 6)<sup>14</sup> shows that this subdivision had already been made by that date. The cottage is shown with conventional tall sashes, while the adjoining public house retained windows of earlier type, with lower and wider openings fitted with both horizontally sliding and vertically hung sash windows. These were probably early 19th-century replacements for timber mullioned windows with casements. All the windows in the façades of both properties had been replaced in the late 20th century with modern windows which have themselves been replaced in the recent alterations.

The position of the wall dividing the two buildings is shown by a 20th-century axial chimneystack rising through the roof, offset to the west of the existing ridge. The southern bay of the

<sup>13</sup> A.R. Pye, 2004 notes and photographs held with main EA Archive No. 6245.

<sup>14</sup> In possession of A.G. Collings. Reproduced in Aplin & Gaskell 1998, 47.

public house is lit by a wide rectangular window on the ground floor and a smaller one on the first floor. Immediately adjoining these windows, and running the full height of the façade, is a tall breccia lateral chimney stack without offsets, very well coursed and surmounted by a 20th-century chimney shaft. The 19th-century photograph (Fig. 6) shows that there was originally a short cross roof extending at right angles to the main ridge to meet the western face of the chimney stack and offsets at this level. However, this roof must have been removed when the present roof structure was added and the chimney was rebuilt. This part of the building seems likely to have contained the principal room, or 'hall', of the original house on the ground floor and chambers above. The first-floor rooms being approached by a newel stair lying within the rear wall of the cottage, and by a corridor along the rear or west wall (see below). The southern and northern limits of the hall are not clear. However, it is unlikely that it extended further north than the present main entrance, which seems likely to have opened upon a cross passage.

The position suggested by Thorp for the cross passage, to the south of the wall dividing the two properties, has proved to be incorrect; the removal of the render obscuring the fabric beneath the window in this position in 2004 showed that the masonry continued unbroken and there was no sign of a doorway here.<sup>15</sup> It is thus most likely that the cross passage lay to the north of the hall, within the main entrance to the public house. The early photograph (Fig. 6) shows the doorway to the pub with a simple 18th- or 19th-century porch supported by shaped timber brackets, and a small window alongside, which may have lit either the hall or the passage. The original entrance may well have been a wide door spanning both openings. The bracketed porch had been replaced by a modern porch surmounted by a pent roof, which extended over the adjoining window also. This was a late 20th-century addition, and has recently been removed.

The northern rooms and the room over the main entry are lit by windows which, though altered, appear to retain their original proportions. The ground-floor window may have lit a service room below the passage, though this room was served by a large fireplace and does not seem to have been of low status. The first-floor rooms were presumably chambers. At the north end of the main range is a further gable-end stack constructed in dark-red bricks of relatively small size, possibly of late 17th- or early 18th-century date. The carriage entry to the yard north of this stack retains its double doors with a range of interesting historic strap hinges with expanded ends. The door-frame is massive and well chamfered and may be of early date. Unfortunately the lower parts of the jambs of the doorway have been repaired, removing any evidence of stops or mouldings.

The roofline of the inn lies at a much higher level than that of the cottage, as though the roofs were of different periods. However, this is because later roof structures have been erected above the original rafters, which survive beneath. Both roofs were originally thatched. The cottage is likely to have been slated during a 19th-century refurbishment, while the inn remained thatched into the 20th century (see below). The original roofline was continuous across both buildings with a steeper pitch and a level ridge. The eaves line must have been broken over the windows by 'eyebrow' dormers, since there is evidence to suggest that the eaves line of both properties were considerably lower than at present. The roof of the inn may have been raised in this way because the older roof was considered too weak to bear the weight of the slating, and the new roof was thus erected as an independent structure over it.

#### *Carriage entry and North gable of main range*

The north gable elevation of the main range towards the carriage entry is of stone in the lower part. The wall on the opposite side of the entry is also of stone with an inserted flue for a fireplace serving the adjoining house. No early beams are visible in the ceiling of the entry and it is apparent that the part of the building bridging the entry has been substantially reconstructed in the 20th century. Both elevations of the room over the carriageway, to west and east, are now entirely of modern materials. The original construction of these walls is uncertain, but it is most likely to have employed timber framing, perhaps infilled with cob, like the area previously described in the front elevation of the cottage (see above). This method of construction could account for the extent of the 20th-century rebuilding here, especially if the timberwork had appreciably decayed.

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<sup>15</sup> A.R. Pye, 2006, email to K. Metcalfe; copy in project archive.

To the west of the stack in the north gable of the main range, just beyond the oversailing part of the entry, is a ground-floor window which preserves the lower part of an early 19th-century sash window, featuring many small panes. The first-floor window directly above this preserves a horizontally sliding sash of the same period. These are the only early windows remaining in the building, and are presumably relics of the early 19th-century refenestration of the building described above.

#### *West Elevation*

The west elevation of the main building had been almost entirely rebuilt in the 20th century. An early photograph of the rear elevation, taken in 1932 before an outing to Bigbury Bay<sup>16</sup>, shows the main range of the pub still thatched, and a slated lean-to structure covering the rear elevation. Above this a single first-floor window cuts deeply into the thatch above the level of the eaves. A wide opening in the angle between the main range and the northern cross wing seems likely to represent a porch over a doorway in the rear wall, which may be just discerned behind the shoulders of the assembled day-trippers. The lean-to, and the original rear wall of the range, appear to have been reconstructed later in the 20th century, perhaps after the war. The lean-to was eventually replaced with a large modern extension containing lavatories (Fig. 7) which has recently been demolished and replaced by a modern building.

#### *The north-western cross wing*

The north wall of the cross wing is offset slightly to the north of the north gable of the main range and is aligned at a different angle. This misalignment could suggest that the cross wing is an addition, although no direct relationship between the two buildings could be established and the issue remains uncertain. The north wall of the cross wing has been substantially reconstructed in the 20th century and its windows are modern replacements.

The west elevation of the cross wing contains a large projecting chimney stack constructed of mixed Heavitree breccia and volcanic stone from Pocombe. The stack has a deep projection and two levels of offsets, both high above the ground, but well below the present eaves, suggesting that the present eaves level of the building has been raised. The lower part of the chimney is surmounted by a brick chimney shaft which is plainly of modern construction.

Much of the south elevation is obscured by the modern extensions. A first floor window is visible adjoining a shallow projection suggesting a stair turret, but this projection is not visible in the 1932 photograph and it is likely to be a modern addition. There is evidence that much of the south wall has been rebuilt during the modern alterations.

### **3.2 Ground floor (Fig. 8)**

#### *Entry and Bar Area*

From the main doorway of the inn, it is apparent that the interior has been severely altered. A small lobby had been created within the doorway in the late 20th century, and a modern bar and serving area had been built to the west of this, with wide openings serving the rooms to north and south. The ceilings in the bar area had been entirely replaced with modern joists braced with herringbone strutting, supported on rolled-steel-joists which had been inserted in place of the original beams. The whole centre of the first floor and parts of the adjoining ceilings had been altered in this way. These alterations included the complete removal of the internal partitions defining the original rooms, destroying the historic plan of this area of the house.

The most likely reconstruction of the original plan form has rooms to north and south separated by a cross passage running through the building from front to rear. The line of the putative passage is perpetuated by a corridor in the modern extension to the west of the original building, which seems to reflect the position of an entrance in the rear wall corresponding with the main entrance. The partitions defining the passage may have been either solid walls or timber plank-and-muntin screens. They were certainly substantial load-bearing structures, since the scale of disruption to the first floor in this area could only reflect the removal of such load-bearing walls.

<sup>16</sup> From the 'Exeter Memories' website:[http://www.exetermemories.co.uk/EM/\\_pubs/pubs/vernon2.jpg](http://www.exetermemories.co.uk/EM/_pubs/pubs/vernon2.jpg).



### *Northern room*

Prior to the stripping of the interior, the northern room was panelled in modern laminated oak, which though of unusually high quality, disguised all the period features in this area (Fig. 9). Part of a large fireplace with breccia jambs was visible in the north wall, though a new fireplace had been constructed in front of it with false jambs and a granite lintel. All the windows and doorways were modern, with the exception of part of an early 19th-century sash window in a deep embrasure adjoining the fireplace.

Removal of the panelling revealed that the southern and western walls of the room had been almost entirely removed or rebuilt in the 20th century. The western wall, which must originally have contained a doorway to the cross wing, now appeared to be entirely of concrete blocks and modern brick. However, the remains of a cob wall survived behind this and could still be traced under the modern staircase in the adjoining room. No trace of the original doorway to the cross wing was visible, and this may still be concealed beneath modern plaster and block work. The lobby and much of the fabric surrounding the main entrance had also been rebuilt in concrete blocks, probably as a result of the removal of the original south wall to create the modern bar.

The fireplace survived intact behind the modern jambs and lintel of the false fireplace built in front (Fig. 10). It had jambs of large breccia blocks and a massive timber lintel decorated with a chamfer and ogee stops. These details would be consistent with a 17th-century date. There were no brick inclusions and no signs of sgraffito decorations within the embrasure, though traces of white lime plaster remained on one of the reveals of the opening, suggesting that it had formerly been plastered and decorated.

Two chamfered beams remained visible in the ceiling. The northern beam had a stepped chamfer or a crude scroll stop at its eastern end. The main beam crossing the centre of the room appeared to have no stops, but had a generous chamfer and was clearly an ancient timber. There is likely to have been a third beam to the south, which presumably formed part of the wall or screen defining the southern wall of the room, until its replacement in the late 20th century with a modern steel joist. Much of the ceiling retained early plaster until the recent refurbishment, when this was removed revealing the original joists.

The joists were substantial squared timbers running from north to south, which survived across much of the ceiling, despite the removal of the wall and beam on the south side of the room (Fig. 11). The original joists showed traces of whitewash, which was valuable in demonstrating that the ceilings were originally unplastered, with their timberwork exposed. No traces of decorative painted schemes were apparent on the joists, although these might be detectable by a professional paint conservator. The floor boards were unpainted and must be later replacements added after the room was ceiled with lath and plaster.

In the south-western corner of the room, near the doorway to the rear passage, one area of original joists had not survived. The void had been infilled with a flat ceiling in the 20th century, and it seems likely that, prior to this alteration, this area was open to the first floor. The void must surely represent the position of a staircase, cut through the early ceiling and rising northwards from the western end of the cross passage to give onto a landing serving the first-floor rooms. Although no dating evidence survives it is likely that this staircase was inserted in the 19th century, after the subdivision of the house, which must have isolated the original newel stair in the neighbouring cottage. The staircase must have been removed in the 20th-century alterations which removed the cross passage; it was replaced by a new staircase in the north-western cross wing.

The ceiling plaster showed traces of the scar of a partition, which must have run across the western part of the room to meet the eastern jamb of the northern window, annexing the western part of the room. The partition was clearly inserted after the ceiling plaster had been applied. It presumably represents a 19th-century partition associated with the insertion of the staircase in the adjoining bay. The small room thus created was lit by the window in the north wall, which could have been inserted at this time specifically to light the newly-created room.

### *Southern room*

This room was probably the principal living room or 'hall' of the early house. It was also heated by a 17th-century fireplace, in the base of the lateral stack on the main frontage (Fig. 12). The fireplace has

jambes formed of massive breccia blocks and a timber lintel decorated with a chamfer and stepped run-out, or perhaps crude ogee, stops. It has been slightly narrowed on its northern side, perhaps in order to create the small window adjoining, and the northern jamb had been rebuilt or reset as a result. The window on the southern side of the fireplace is a wide splayed opening and retains its original timber lintel, though the existing window frames are modern.

The southern wall of the room was covered in modern plaster and cladding, and stripping of areas of these surfaces revealed only modern fabric. Although this wall aligns with a primary partition on the floor above, and might represent the original limit of the room, it is also possible that this wall is an insertion. A partition in this position must have existed, or been inserted, at the time the building was subdivided to create the cottage. This division is presumed to have been made in the 19th century and the wall may well date from this period, annexing the southern bay of the 'hall' to the adjoining house. The small chimney and fireplace standing against this wall are a 20th century addition of modern brick.

Most of the north wall of the room had been removed to create the bar area. A large section of the west wall of the room had also been removed to enlarge the room into the modern rear extension. The removal of the north wall involved the destruction of the entire northern bay of the ceiling. However, the southern bay remained intact and retained its original joists (Fig. 13). These joists showed traces of whitewash and the timbers were much discoloured, suggesting that they had been exposed for a long period in a smoky atmosphere prior to the addition of the plaster ceiling. It is highly improbable that this smoke-blackening relates to an open hearth, since the room had an early fireplace. The discolouration may simply suggest prolonged use of the area as a tap room for the inn. As in the adjoining room, the first-floor planking was unstained or painted and must have been renewed after the ceiling had been installed on the underside of the joists. The main beam crossing the ceiling had a generous chamfer and bold ogee stops. All the other fixtures and fittings in the room were modern. These included a tongue and grooved dado and built-in benches in the window seats, which may be modern replicas of earlier fixtures, perhaps dating from the 19th century.

#### *North-Western Cross Wing*

Although the cross wing must have been accessed directly from the main building, no evidence of a doorway has been observed and it is possible that access between the buildings was via the cross passage and the yard. The cross wing seems to have originally contained a single room. However, it had been divided in the late 20th century to include a staircase to the first floor, with a long, narrow and awkwardly shaped kitchen area alongside, and a large beer cellar in the western part. The interiors of these rooms had been heavily altered and were much obscured by cladding and furniture for commercial catering.

Following the stripping of the interior it became apparent that the cross wing had been extensively rebuilt in the late 20th century. The first-floor structure was entirely of 20th-century date, with herringbone strutting between the joists. Most of the existing window openings were modern, though they may have replaced earlier openings for which no evidence survives. In the west wall of the cross wing a large fireplace was revealed (Fig. 14). This had a wide segmental arch of brick and brick jambs. Further stripping of the plaster showed that the face of the wall had been extensively rebuilt in mixed rubble incorporating some large, red/orange bricks. It seems likely that this represents the replacement or repair in the 19th century of an earlier fireplace of a similar large size, perhaps due to the failure of its jambs or lintel. The prominence of the chimney breast externally certainly suggests a large fireplace in this wall. It may be assumed that this room served as a kitchen.

### **3.3 First floor (Fig. 8)**

The first floor was approached by the staircase in the cross wing, inserted in the late 20th-century. The original access to the first floor may have been the newel stair at the south end of the house, now in the adjoining property. The void in the ceiling of the northern room has been described above and may well have accommodated a staircase, but this is likely to date only from the 19th century. Any other evidence of early staircases in the northern parts of the building has been destroyed by later alterations. Within the main body of the range there were three large rooms overlooking the street and a landing and two bathrooms to the rear.

### *The room over the carriage entry*

This room had a higher floor level than the rest of the first floor, to ensure good clearance for vehicles passing through the carriageway beneath. The room was approached by a curious passage, with an angled staircase, which had been broken through the rear wall of the house wall from the head of the stairs in the north-western cross wing. This was a modern arrangement; earlier, 19th- or 20th-century steps survived below the doorway in the south wall of the room and were on a different alignment, suggesting that they had been approached from the south. The room was virtually featureless and, following the removal of modern cladding, the walls and roof were found to have been almost entirely rebuilt in the late 20th century. A diagonal feature in the north wall might be interpreted as the remains of the western principal rafter of the roof, although examination of the roof space revealed that the roof structure was entirely modern.

### *Northern rooms*

The small bathroom in the northern part of the house was defined by modern partitions of flimsy studwork covered with plaster board. This room, and the large room adjoining, appear formerly to have been a single large chamber filling the northern end of the house. The only original features visible at the time of the recording were the curved forms of the jowled-headed jointed cruck posts rising through the bathroom and the bedroom on each side of the range to support the northernmost truss of the roof (Fig. 15). The room extended through 2 bays of the original roof structure. Adjoining the western cruck post a recess in the wall may show the position of the entrance to the first-floor room in the cross wing.

The room was heated by a fireplace in its north wall, adjoining the opening to the room above the carriageway. This had been altered in the 19th century when a brick arch was inserted. However, it does seem to supersede an earlier fireplace whose timber lintel had been removed and the wall patched in brick.

The southern limit of the room was a timber-framed partition aligned on one of the main roof trusses. This proved to be an original partition with vertical studs and tall, vertical panels infilled with red cob. Just over half the partition survived; the western part having been removed to create the present landing. The partitions between the room and the landing were modern, but may replace earlier partitions which had been inserted to create a landing at the head of the putative 19th-century staircase from the western end of the cross passage. Unfortunately, later alterations had removed most of the evidence for the historic development of this area.

### *Central room*

This narrow, unheated room overlay the central part of the range and comprised 1¼ bays of the original roof structure. Although the room had been severely compromised by the 20th-century alterations, which had removed most of the floor structure and the western part of the room, the original partitions survived on both its southern and northern sides. Both were of timber-framed construction with vertical timber studs and panels infilled with red cob (Fig. 16).

Initially the redevelopment scheme involved the removal and realignment of both primary partitions. However, in order to maximise preservation of the original fabric it was agreed to amend the scheme to retain both. A new doorway was made in the southern partition, by removing a stud and two cob panels to provide access between the two rooms. This intervention necessitated the stripping of some of the cob plaster obscuring the timbers and also revealed the position of a blocked primary doorway. It was clear that the room had originally extended further to the west than at present, perhaps with a narrow corridor running to the west. The corridor had been enlarged in the 20th century by erecting a new partition half-way across the original doorway and removing all the primary fabric to the west. The door did not survive, although its probable appearance may be guessed from surviving 17th-century doors in the adjoining property, which have eight small field panels with moulded stiles and scratch-moulded rails, hung on cock's head hinges typical of the 17th century.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> A.R. Pye, 2004 notes and photographs held with main EA Archive No. 6245.

### *Southern Rooms*

The original southern room had been subdivided to form a modern bathroom and lavatory during a phase of 20th-century alteration. The partition between the bathroom and the southern chamber was of flimsy studwork and boarding lathed towards the chamber only. The wall was finished towards the bathroom by simply papering over and around the studs. At the same time the rear wall was rebuilt in brick. Despite the removal of nearly all the original cob structure of this wall, the original roof trusses and cruck posts were retained and incorporated into the new fabric (Fig. 17). The leg of the southernmost cruck retained pintles for an early door, which must presumably have had an arched top curved to fit the curve of the cruck post. This door demonstrates that the original southern chamber cannot have extended the full width of the range, as there must have been a corridor to the west providing access from the newel stair further south along the rear of the property to the northern rooms. The door does not survive.

The southern chamber extended for 1¼ bays of the original roof structure and was heated by a fireplace in its east wall, in the upper part of the lateral stack on the frontage (Fig. 18). The fireplace lies under one of the trusses, which has no cruck post and simply dies into the wall above the fireplace. There is no evidence of the removal of a cruck post, and this detail provides conclusive evidence that the fireplace is an original feature, and thus, that the main range was storeyed from the outset.

The fireplace had stone jambs and a timber lintel with very abrupt ogee or stepped run-out stops of diminutive size. Above the lintel was an area of rough brickwork incorporating unusually long and flat bricks which look very early in date. The opening had been blocked with 20th-century frogged bricks stamped 'Westbrick'. Behind this modern blocking was an earlier phase of blocking of unfrogged hand-made bricks, rather large in size and in very poor repair. The blocking battered steeply outwards and clearly provided a seating for a small cast-iron hob grate. This is likely to have been inserted within the original opening in the early to mid 19th century. Behind this blocking the original jambs of the fireplace were preserved, decorated with many layers of whitewash, without any sign of sgraffito work or decorative painting. The rear of the fireplace was constructed of large breccia blocks and long, flat bricks measuring 220 x 50 x 80mm, the same dimensions as those above the lintel, which are almost certainly primary.

The southern wall of the room now forms the party wall with the adjoining property. This wall is another primary partition, but is only visible in the area above the present ceilings in the roof space. The modern chimney erected against this partition was inscribed with graffiti giving the date '8/7/64' and the initials 'E.A.M.'. This provides a probable date for the creation of the bathroom and the erection of the modern roof structure, among other 20th-century alterations. Above ceiling level it was possible to see that the rooms were not originally ceiled. The roof timbers and thatch appear to have been exposed to the chambers, but the plaster on the internal partitions formerly extended right into the apex of the roof. The partitions have been truncated, but the marks of laths and some plaster survive on the principal rafters. Ceilings were later inserted just below the levels of the collar beams, but at a higher level than the ceilings in existence at the time of recording. There was no surviving evidence of moulded or decorative plasterwork.

### *North-western cross wing*

The upper storey of the north-western cross wing had been severely altered during the 20th century alterations to fit it out for commercial catering. Much of the north and south walls at first-floor level had been rebuilt and the first-floor, ceiling and roof structures proved to have been entirely renewed. There was no evidence of a first-floor fireplace in the west wall, despite the great height and prominence of the external chimney breast. Above the ceiling level, the gable had been rebuilt and raised above its original height in concrete blocks. The present triangular gable of the cross wing replaces an earlier half-hipped gable facing west.

Under the sill of the southern window was an unusual feature, a timber laid flat, as though on a wall top, with a bird's-mouth joint in its eastern end intended to scarf it to an adjacent timber (which does not survive). This seems to represent a wall plate for an earlier roof with eaves at a lower level. This timber, the absence of a first-floor fireplace and the modern first-floor structure, may all point to the cross wing having been single-storeyed and open to the roof. This supports the conjecture that this wing contained a kitchen, since early kitchens were often of a single storey only. It is likely that the

wing was first storeyed in the 18th or 19th century, at which time the walls may have been slightly raised to increase the headroom on the upper floor. This may not have been done very effectively. The extent of modern rebuilding may reflect a need to increase the headroom further and also, perhaps, the inadequacy of the earlier structure, which might necessitate its replacement with modern work.

### *Roofs*

Both properties now have modern roofs at a higher level than the original, but preserve their earlier roofs beneath (Fig. 19). There are five wide bays over the inn, and still more over the adjoining cottage, though these could not be inspected. The roof of the cottage is in a much better state of preservation than the roof of the inn. The room over the carriage entry and those over the cross wing have separate roof structures, which proved to be entirely modern.

There are four main trusses over the inn. These are formed by couples of principal rafters supported by jointed crucks, with curved, jowled heads tenoned and pegged into the feet of the principal rafters and embedded in the cob walls (Figs 15, 16, 17). The principal rafters are notched and tenoned together at the apex and linked by collar beams, notch-lap jointed to the principals and secured with square pegs and iron spikes with domed heads. There are two levels of trenched purlins on each side of the roof and a diagonally set ridge tree notched into the apex of the trusses. The trusses and purlins and the lower parts of the common rafters are well preserved, but the upper sections of the common rafters have all been removed when the modern roof was built. None of the timbers is smoke-blackened and it is evident that the first-floor rooms extended into the roof space, as described above. The carpentry joints are all of high quality and are consistent with those of 17th-century buildings in the locality.

## 4. BUILDING SURVEY: THE OUTBUILDINGS

At the rear of the pub is a large rectangular yard surrounded by high walls, apparently of modern construction. The yard is metalled across its entire surface, covering to a shallow depth the footings of the demolished agricultural ranges intruding into the yard. Along the southern side of the yard, extending to the west of the cross wing at the rear of the cottage, two ancient agricultural buildings a stable and a linhay, survived at the time of the survey (Fig. 20). The stable has been repaired and converted into new housing. The linhay has been demolished and a new structure has been erected on the site.

### 4.1 **The stable**

The easternmost of the outbuildings is a large, two storeyed building, interpreted as a stable. This is of mixed construction, with cob walls over low, stone footings (Fig. 21). The building projects from the rear elevation of the neighbouring house, and it seems likely that its eastern bay has been annexed by the house and converted into part of the dwelling. There is also clear evidence that it has been truncated to the west and that it originally continued further in this direction.

#### *North wall*

The stable has a plain frontage to the yard, covered in poorly-preserved lime render. At the eastern end are a pair of superimposed doorways, separated only by an ancient, chamfered lintel. The central part of the elevation formerly had a wide and relatively low window, but this has been blocked in cob and stone and was only visible internally. The window was probably blocked when a rectangular building was erected against the frontage of the stable, obscuring the window. This structure appears on late 19th- and early 20th-century maps, but is absent from the 1840s tithe map; it may have been constructed in the mid 19th century. Its function is unknown but it seems likely to have been an agricultural building or a store rather than a part of the domestic accommodation.

The western part of the elevation shows signs of much alteration, perhaps in the context of the addition of the projecting building. Much of the cob walling has been replaced by stone and there is some evidence of a further doorway, blocked in stone. Above this, on the first floor, is a further doorway which may have been served by an external stair associated with the projecting structure, as the loft does not seem to have had any other means of external access. The north-western corner of the building has been truncated and chamfered away and a new doorway cut through the corner, fitted with modern doors.

### *West wall*

This substantial cob wall was in very poor condition at the time of recording. It had become severely fractured and was falling outwards, supported only by crude timber shoring (Fig. 22). It has since been demolished and rebuilt in cob blocks.

The wall had a low stone plinth, interrupted by a wide opening with a replacement timber lintel. This clearly represented a doorway opening into the adjoining linhay, but it had been partially blocked at some stage and converted into a window. The window remained *in situ* behind modern panelling, and consisted of a stout rectangular wooden frame, pegged at the corners and with four large, diagonally-set mullions, each with a pentagonal section (Fig. 23). The window had never been glazed and had no rebates. The only evidence for shutters was a pair of pintles driven into one of the mullions near the centre of the window, and a staple associated with these in another mullion. Any shutter associated with this ferramenta would have closed only two of the lights, leaving three lights open. This suggests that the shutter was not primary, but was perhaps added after the side lights of the window had been blocked or boarded up, reducing a five-light window to two lights only.

The window is of great interest as an example of a particular type of unglazed window found in medieval and post-medieval buildings in western England and south Wales, usually in agricultural buildings or service rooms, but occasionally in domestic contexts, particularly in low-status houses. Examples of this type of window in east Devon, recorded in surveys by Exeter Archaeology, have included a window from a service room in an early 16th-century gentry mansion at Bowhill, Exeter<sup>18</sup> and a similar window from a domestic context in a large medieval house at Great Gornhay, Tiverton.<sup>19</sup> The position of the window in the building, within a blocked doorway and looking out into the interior of the linhay, strongly suggests that the window was not *in situ*, but had been removed from its original position and reset here. Its original position is unknown, although it is possible that it was removed from the north wall in the 19th century when the rectangular building was erected against it, blocking the window in this wall, and then reset within the former doorway in the west wall. It may thus originate from within the present building. As it could not be reused in the present development it was removed from the site and is now in temporary storage.<sup>20</sup>

Although the west wall was constructed of very similar materials to the rest of the building it was certainly a later alteration. The cobbled flooring and drains visible within the building continued under the footings of this wall into the area of the linhay, and the wall was merely butted against the primary rear wall of the original building. The wall must have been constructed after the truncation of the original structure, probably in the context of the construction of the adjoining linhay.

### *South Wall*

The south wall of the stable appears to have had no openings, perhaps because it overlooked an adjoining property. It was constructed of breccia rubble to a height of approximately 1m above floor level and of cob above this. The wall extended further to the west than its present limit, and was perhaps retained after the truncation of the building to form the rear wall of part of the later linhay. However, at some time in the 20th century it was demolished and replaced with a modern brick wall; only the footings now remain.

### *Interior: Ground floor*

The ground-floor interior (Fig. 24) was a single large room, divided into three bays by four massive, well-chamfered beams. The presence of chamfers on both faces of the beams at both the eastern and western limits of the present building proves that it at one time extended further in both directions. The beams retain sockets which provide good evidence for the pattern of the original joists, now reused at a higher level. The pattern of the sockets is unusual, with groups of closely-spaced joists at the northern and southern ends and regular, more widely-spaced sockets at the centre. The significance of this pattern is uncertain. It might relate to the provision of animal feeders at a high

<sup>18</sup> Blaylock, S. R. 2004, 197. (Includes a discussion of the distribution and date range of these windows).

<sup>19</sup> Parker, R.W., forthcoming

<sup>20</sup> At the Exeter Archaeology offices, Custom House, Exeter.

level, such as mangers for the horse stalls, or perhaps additional support for a heavy fixture on the floor above, such as grain bins or hoppers.

The modern floor levels incorporated concrete platforms raised above the original levels, and the joists supporting the first floor had also been raised to increase the headroom. The early floor survived beneath, paved with a well-preserved cobbled floor and with traces of a cobbled drain under a concrete plinth against the north wall. The drain and the cobbles clearly predated the present western wall and ran beneath it, as described above. In the north wall, the timber wall posts or crucks supporting the roof could be seen extending almost to ground level and, in the south wall, sockets were visible which seem likely to relate to timber horse stalls, now removed. At the eastern end of the building, the remains of a boarded partition separating the room from the adjoining house might well retain evidence of an early partition. The wall behind this, dividing the room from the house, was of 19th-century brick.

#### *Interior first floor*

The first-floor was also a single volume (Fig. 25). The eastern part of the interior had plastered walls to north, south and east, whereas the western part was entirely unplastered. This suggests that partitions may have existed which have since been removed. The eastern wall appeared to be a closed truss, with vertical studs halved onto the collar beam of the eastern truss and covered with widely-spaced laths and plaster. This partition may well be a primary feature. Domestic elements from the neighbouring house may well have intruded into parts of the building, perhaps including the plastered part of the present first floor. Accommodation for inn servants, for example, might easily have been provided in this way. No trace of a door is visible in this partition, although it is possible that a doorway lies concealed within the later plaster. It is uncertain whether the upper floor was served by an internal or external staircase, as seems likely, or merely by a loft ladder.

The roof (Fig. 26) is supported on three trusses resting on jointed cruck posts with jowled heads built into the walls. The principal rafters are tenoned and pegged together at the top, with no socket or notch for a ridge tree; an unusual omission in a building of this date, reflecting earlier, medieval, traditions of roof carpentry. The principal rafters are linked by straight collar beams at a very high level, maximising headroom in the loft. The collars have notched lap-joints secured by wooden pegs and iron spikes (Fig. 27). There were two levels of trenched purlins on either side of the roof, secured with pegs driven through their upper faces into the principal rafters. These purlins have been removed and newer timbers substituted. All the common rafters have also been removed.

The function of the building cannot be known for certain. As the property has been in occupation as an inn for a long period it is possible that brewing or malting took place in the outbuildings. No mention of this activity has been noted during the documentary work and none of the characteristic features of maltings are present in the existing structure. The presence of orchards on the property may suggest cider making on the premises. It is certainly possible that the building served as a poundhouse with a work area on the ground floor and a loft for storage of the apples above. The surviving features of the building, however, particularly the provision of multiple doorways in the frontage, good lighting and ventilation, the drainage channels in the floor and the position of the structure within the inn yard, all suggest that the building functioned as a stable. Although now truncated the building was originally several bays longer and would have been capable of housing a large number of horses in addition to fodder and possibly a dormitory for servants in the lofts on the first floor. The construction of the roof of the building is so similar to that of the roof of the main house that it is likely to date from the same period. The building is thus an important and early survival of a 17th-century agricultural building.

#### **4.2 The linhay**

The linhay (Figs 26, 28) truncated the earlier stable and was clearly of later construction. It has now been demolished and replaced with modern housing. It was a very simple structure of five bays, consisting of a roof supported on wooden posts, forming an open-sided shelter with a solid rear wall. This south wall was originally of cob and stone, and was perhaps retained from the earlier building to the east, but it was demolished in the 20th-century and replaced with a modern brick wall, laid in stretcher bond. The west wall of the building survives. It is also of cob, showing the scar of the demolished rear wall. The ground floor area of the linhay at this end had formerly been enclosed with a partition clad with broad, elm

boards to form a small store, but this enclosure had been partially demolished in the 20th century and only the front section remained.

The northern front was open, supported on a row of tall wooden posts tied back to the rear wall by horizontal beams notched and tenoned into the rear of the posts. The posts rested on modern concrete blocks, which must have replaced earlier masonry pads, perhaps when the rear wall was rebuilt. The beams rested in housings in the rear face of the posts with their tenons protruding through the posts to project in front, secured in position by pegs through the sides of the posts. There were no joist sockets in the beams, and it is uncertain whether or not there was ever a first floor. Joists may have been simply laid over the tops of the beams, overlapping at the ends, though the only evidence of such a first floor was at the west end. There was some evidence of enclosure of the central bays, in the form of the shadows of laths on the principal rafters, and it may be that the lofts extended this far into the structure. Alternatively, many of the bays may simply have been open, allowing the parking of high-sided carts and wagons within the structure.

The roof was supported by 'A'-frame trusses of unsquared, roughly-hewn timbers retaining bark and softwood, with their feet bird's-mouthed over the heads of the vertical posts and secured with iron spikes. The collars were applied to the sides of the principal rafters and secured with pegs. However, most of the original collars had been replaced by later timbers. Lateral bracing was achieved by slightly-trenched purlins, which had all been removed and replaced by modern purlins. The common rafters and the original roof covering had also been removed and, at the time of recording, the building was covered with very dilapidated corrugated iron sheeting. Parts of the cobbled floor remained *in situ*, though much damaged and patched.

The date of the building is difficult to determine. Such structures were common in Devon farmyards. The earliest surviving examples seem to date from the 17th century<sup>21</sup> and usually served as cow houses with fodder stored in the first-floor lofts, though they were also convenient for parking vehicles under cover. This seems a likely function for this building, particularly given its location in an inn yard. The construction of these buildings did not change significantly until well into the late 19th century when machine-cut timbers became available and roof structures were generally supported by lower-pitched, tie-beam or king-post trusses with more accomplished carpentry details. This building must be earlier; its steeply pitched roof, unsquared timbers, and pegged joints suggest that it may date from the 18th century. The building was probably erected when the adjoining stable was truncated. A linhay of this kind is an unusual survival in such an urban context.

#### *Other buildings in the complex*

The Tithe map and 19th-century OS maps (Figs 2, 3) show that there were formerly other agricultural buildings within the complex, all of which have unfortunately been demolished. The centre of the yard and part of the adjoining site to the west was occupied by a substantial structure which survived until after the Second World War, but has since been completely demolished, probably when the inn yard became a car park. This building is shown on the tithe map as an agricultural building and seems to have been a large and important structure. Nothing is known of its function, although it may well have served as a barn, or for malting, brewing, cider making or stabling. All that remains of this building is the footings, which were briefly encountered during the removal of the asphalt surface of the yard to install temporary services for the works cabins. The footings survived immediately below the surface of the yard and consisted of substantial blocks of Heavitree breccia. The footings were not excavated; only a corner of the building was encountered and their extent and preservation remains unknown. A further structure stood against the north wall of the yard, however nothing is known of this building and no traces of it were uncovered during the excavations for the new buildings and service trenches, which are described below.

## 5. GROUNDWORKS (by A. J. Passmore)

### *Method*

Four elements of the groundwork excavations were monitored: the foundation trench for the rebuilding of the north wall of the former stable; foundation trenches for the new residential units on

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<sup>21</sup> Child, 1990, 72 in Beacham (ed.)



the site of the demolished linhay; service trenches within the linhay; and service trenches within the inn yard at the rear of the site.

### *Results*

At the south end of the site, under the stables and linhay, natural river gravels and stiff yellow clay were exposed at a depth of 0.46m from the surface. Several features were exposed cutting into these deposits. Two ditches (505 and 517), aligned NW-SE, were partially exposed under the north walls of the stable and linhay, separated by a gap of 1.25m. The full width and depth of these ditches was not excavated. Ditch 505 (Fig. 8, sections 6 and 7) had a gentle rounded profile and contained two fills 504 and 503. A single sherd of 17th- or 18th-century South Somerset coarseware was recovered from the lower fill 504.

Ditch 517 (Fig. 26, section 1) was steep sided, and contained three gravelly clay fills (514-516). The uppermost fill (514) – a firm black gravelly silty clay – contained three sherds from a 17th-century Frechen stoneware medallion jug. This fill also contained an abundant quantity of waterlogged burnt charcoal and wood (which has not been assessed). The fills appeared to represent a deliberate infilling of the ditch, and the quantity of the burnt material in 514 must represent the remains of a deliberate burning activity, perhaps of a fence associated with the ditch.

The context of the ditches is unknown. They may represent early boundary ditches that were infilled when the house was constructed in the 17th century. This would imply that small plots were consolidated to form the present larger landholding at this time. It is also possible that the ditches were associated with a Civil War encampment in the village. There is extensive documentary evidence<sup>22</sup> that both Parliamentary and Royalist troops were camped at Alphington during the later years of the English Civil War, and it is possible that the ditch represents part of the defences around one of these encampments.

Within the footprint of the linhay, a posthole (513; Fig. 8, section 4) was exposed cutting into the natural gravel. This was sealed by a cultivation soil (508) that was only present along the southern part of the site. This soil was itself sealed by a make-up layer (507) for the cobbled surface (506) within the former linhay. Along the north edge of the linhay, and outside this building, these deposits had been truncated by more modern excavations.

With the exception of ditch 507, no features were exposed within the stables. The cobbled floor within this building, which had been extensively repaired and patched, was laid on a patchy deposit of reddish-brown sandy clay (500). Finds from this layer, recovered from different parts of the building, dated to the 17th/18th century and the 19th/20th century, probably reflecting the repairs to the cobbles above. This levelling deposit was laid either onto the fill of ditch 507 or onto natural gravel.

In the former car park at the rear of the site, natural deposits were exposed at depths of between 0.45m and 0.55m below the surface. These were overlain by up to 0.35m of a compact mid red-brown very stony silty clay, possibly representing a make-up layer for a removed historic surface. This was sealed by modern deposits associated with the 20th-century public house car park.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The Admiral Vernon Inn, with the adjacent property, represents a substantial 17th-century house which, despite unsympathetic 20th-century alterations, appears to retain most of its historic fabric and elements of its original plan. The adjoining cottage preserves many important fixtures which reveal the quality of those which have been lost in the inn. The house was storeyed from its first construction and was well supplied with heated rooms. The very large size of the building, and the ranges of agricultural buildings associated with it, suggest that this was constructed either as a very prosperous farm or a well-appointed inn. It is one of a small group of very large 17th-century houses of this type in Alphington, which are of importance in showing how the traditional Devon house type was being developed and improved prior to the introduction of new types of house plan and architectural styles in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The 17th-century stable at the rear is a particularly important survival of an agricultural building of the period.

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<sup>22</sup> Stoye 1996, 69, 122, 125, 128

## 6.1 Summary of development

The listing description identifies the building as a coaching inn dating from the early 16th-century.<sup>23</sup> However, most of the visible features of the present building seem to date from the 17th century. The evidence of substantial ditches underlying the outbuildings at the rear of the property could represent earlier agricultural activity pre-dating the buildings on the site. Alternately, the amount of burnt material within the ditches, which is suggestive of deliberate destruction by fire of a timber structure, coupled with references to Civil War encampments at Alphington, raise the interesting possibility that the ditches might relate to a temporary fortification. In this context, any earlier structures on the tenement are likely to have been damaged or destroyed during the occupation; the present buildings could well represent the reinstatement of ruined properties in the aftermath of the war.

### *Phase I: 17th century*

The recent survey has confirmed that the former public house represents part of a much larger building, probably of 17th-century date, which incorporated both the adjacent house to the south and the earlier of the two agricultural buildings at the rear.

The main range of the building appears to have been of three-room-and-cross-passage plan, but it was constructed on a very generous scale, perhaps with two cross wings, one at its northern end and another linking it with outbuildings on the south side of the yard. The northern room in the main range lay below the presumed cross passage and may have been a service room or kitchen, though its impressive fireplace and chamfered ceiling beams may suggest that it was a more important room than this, such as a dining room or parlour. The hall appears to have lain above the passage, at the centre of the building, with access to the southern room, the newel stair and the south-western cross wing in its south western corner. The first floor contained at least four large rooms, approached by a corridor from the newel stair opening off the southern room. One of these rooms, at the southern end may have had a handsome timber oriel window overlooking the street and may have been the principal chamber.

To the rear of this building was a two-storey outbuilding, which may have been a stable. Although not identical with those of the house, the constructional details of the roof suggest that this building is of similar date, if not contemporary with the main house. The north-western cross wing may also be contemporary, however it is so poorly preserved that it is impossible to be certain, and the misalignment of its north wall may suggest that it is a later addition. It could have been added early in the life of the building to provide an improved kitchen, perhaps replacing an earlier kitchen in another part of the building.

Many of the rooms were heated, suggesting that the building was of high status and its owners prosperous. In fact, the house is of such unusually generous size and so well provided with chambers, fireplaces and outbuildings that it may well have been deliberately constructed to serve as an inn.

### *Phase II: Late 17th- or 18th-century alterations*

If the north-western cross wing is not a primary part of the building, it is likely to have been added soon afterwards, perhaps in the late 17th- or 18th century. Very few fixtures of this period survive in the inn due to the extent of modern alterations, but the adjoining house preserves a number of two-panelled doors with fielded panels, which may show that the building was upgraded and improved at this period, or perhaps in the mid 18th century. The ceilings of the first-floor chambers and those covering the joists in the ground-floor rooms may have been inserted at this time as the accommodation was improved.

### *Phase III: 18th-century alterations*

The principal alteration to the buildings at this period may have been the demolition of the western bays of the stables and their replacement with an open linnhay. A new cob wall was constructed at the end of the stable containing a doorway opening into the linnhay, and part of the building may have been retained as the rear wall of the new structure. The linnhay is here presumed to have been a cart linnhay, since there is no primary provision for a first floor, which would usually have served as a hayloft if the building was

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<sup>23</sup> English Heritage listing description 871/0/10207.

in use as a shippon or animal house. Buildings of this type are extremely difficult to date, however it certainly appears earlier than the 19th century. A possible context for the construction of this building might be an increase in wheeled traffic visiting the inn following the improvement of the roads as a consequence of the establishment of turnpike trusts in the 18th century.

The original fenestration in the main house would almost certainly have been timber mullioned windows with iron casements, but the 19th-century photographs show that these had been replaced with horizontally-sliding sashes. These are likely to have been of 18th, or perhaps early 19th-century date and the bracketed porch over the main door may also have been introduced at this time.

#### *Phase IV: 19th-century alterations*

In the 19th century the southern part of the original building may have been subdivided to form a separate dwelling. This appears to have colonised the southern room, the end bay of the original hall and the south-western cross wing, with the eastern bay of the stable and the first-floor rooms at this end of the building. The southern part of the house was now refenestrated with tall sash windows and a central doorway to resemble a double-fronted villa of the period. The eaves were almost certainly raised at this time and it is likely that the roof of the cottage, but not the inn, was replaced with slate.

As a consequence of these alterations the interiors of both properties would have had to be re-configured. The cottage had now annexed the original newel staircase, and a new stair would have been provided in the inn. This appears to have been added at the west end of the cross passage, cutting through the primary ceiling of the northern room. The western part of the room was also divided off with a partition, without removing the earlier plaster ceiling. On the first floor a new landing must have been made at the head of the stairs, affecting the western parts of the original partitions between the chambers.

If the north-western cross wing had not already been storeyed, the need to increase the accommodation in the reduced building would have been a powerful incentive to achieve this now. Evidence of rebuilding in this phase is provided by the kitchen fireplace, which incorporates 19th-century brick. A lean-to with a slated roof may have been extended along the back of the original house. In the rear yard a rectangular building was erected against the front wall of the stable. An original, unglazed window from this wall seems to have been reset within an earlier doorway in the western end of the stable, looking into the lincay. The 19th-century maps show that improvements were also made to the agricultural buildings at the rear of the site.

#### *Phases V and VI: 20th-century alterations*

In the 20th century the building suffered drastic alterations, fundamentally and adversely affecting its character. These alterations appear to have been made in two phases.

In the first phase a new bathroom was created at the southern end of the first floor and parts of the rear wall were rebuilt. At the same time a new roof was erected over the main roof, the thatch having been removed. The chimney serving the former hall and a new chimney in the same room were rebuilt and the 18th- and 19th-century fenestration was replaced with metal casement windows. The rear wall of the lincay was demolished and rebuilt and its post-pads replaced with concrete. The corner of the former stable appears to have been demolished and the 19th-century building in front removed.

Soon afterwards the rear wall of the building was partially removed and a new extension was constructed on the site of the former lean-to to provide new lavatories and an extension to the bar area. The cross passage through the centre of the building was destroyed to accommodate a new bar and servery, and the stairs were relocated to the north-western cross wing, which was largely rebuilt. The bracketed porch over the main entrance was now replaced with a pent roof in a vain attempt to respect the historic character of the building. The first floor was replanned to accommodate a second bathroom and any original or later historic fixtures, such as fireplaces were either removed or covered up.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## APPENDIX

## LISTING DESCRIPTION

871/0/10207 44 CHUDLEIGH ROAD

02-JAN-07

Coaching Inn (Admiral Vernon Public House)

Grade II

Inn. Early C16 with C17 and later alterations.

**MATERIALS:** The building is constructed of local Heavitree sandstone, some dressed, some rubble and plastered cob with modern timber windows under a plain concrete tile roof.

**PLAN:** The building comprises the hall bay and inner room of a former three-room and cross passage house, the passage and lower service room now being incorporated into the adjacent cottage. The Wing to the rear is of three elements, a former cellar, a kitchen and a modern stair.

**EXTERIOR:** The front elevation is of two storeys and three bays. The first bay has two modern windows, one on each floor, the central bay comprises a doorway with a plain timber door and an informal arrangement of four modern casements, two above and two below, one each side of the door, all beneath a lean to porch. Dividing the first and central bays there is a massive lateral stack with a chamfered plinth constructed of coursed and dressed Heavitree sandstone, above there is a tall chimney shaft of modern brick. The end bay comprises a modern three light casement above a carriage entrance formed of two tall timber doors with wrought iron hinges set in a substantial timber frame and stone wheel deflectors at the base. The returning north elevation is of three bays and two storeys with an informal arrangement of metal and timber modern windows. At first floor in the gable of the main range there is a two light, eight pane Yorkshire type horizontal sliding sash window of early C19 date. The base of the stack slightly protrudes from the centre of the gable. The rear gabled elevation has a massive end stack of Heavitree sandstone with set offs at first floor and a chamfered head below a tall shaft of modern brick. In the rear elevation at first floor there is a two light six pane timber casement window; the remainder of this elevation is obscured by a modern flat roofed building.

**INTERIOR:** The southern bar area occupying the former hall bay has a substantial fire place with a timber bressumer and canted Heavitree sandstone jambs, one partly rebuilt, and a transverse ceiling beam with chamfers and scroll stops. There is a modern fireplace in the southern wall dividing the inn from the cottage. The northern bar area has a substantial transverse ceiling beam with deep chamfers but no stops. There is a fireplace in the north gable wall which has been rebuilt.

**HISTORY:** There are references to there being a Bell Inn on the Chudleigh Road, erected on land owned by the Courtenays, in 1430. It is known from census returns confirm this title in 1871. Ten years after the destruction by fire of the former church house, subsequently named The Vernon's Head after the renowned Admiral and West country M.P. and victor over the Spanish at Porto Bello in 1739, the Bell Inn was renamed The Admiral Vernon; this is recorded on the Census returns of 1881 and the first edition O.S. map of 1890.

**SOURCES:** ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE ADJOINING THE ADMIRAL VERNON PUBLIC HOUSE, CHUDLEIGH ROAD, ALPHINGTON; report number 94.49 M.E.P. Hall. Exeter Museums Archaeological Unit. 1994.

46 Chudleigh Road, Standing Buildings Record B/101/1, J. Thorp Exeter Museums Archaeological Unit, 1980.

**SUMMARY OF IMPORTANCE:** The Admiral Inn, dating probably from the early C16, with later alterations of the C17, is of special architectural and historic interest on account of the survival of early historic fabric, including the standing structure and most specifically the external lateral stack and that of the rear wing, the residual plan form established by the retaining walls and that of the adjacent cottage, and the structural carpentry of the floor beams. All establish this as a building of the late medieval period. The building has been subject to phases of later alteration, some of which, like the addition of the wing and the associated buildings to the rear, have added to the special interest of the building. There are subsequent alterations, most specifically those of the latter C20, that have lessened that interest, though not to the degree that they detract from the overall special interest of the building, which is comparable with other examples in the region.

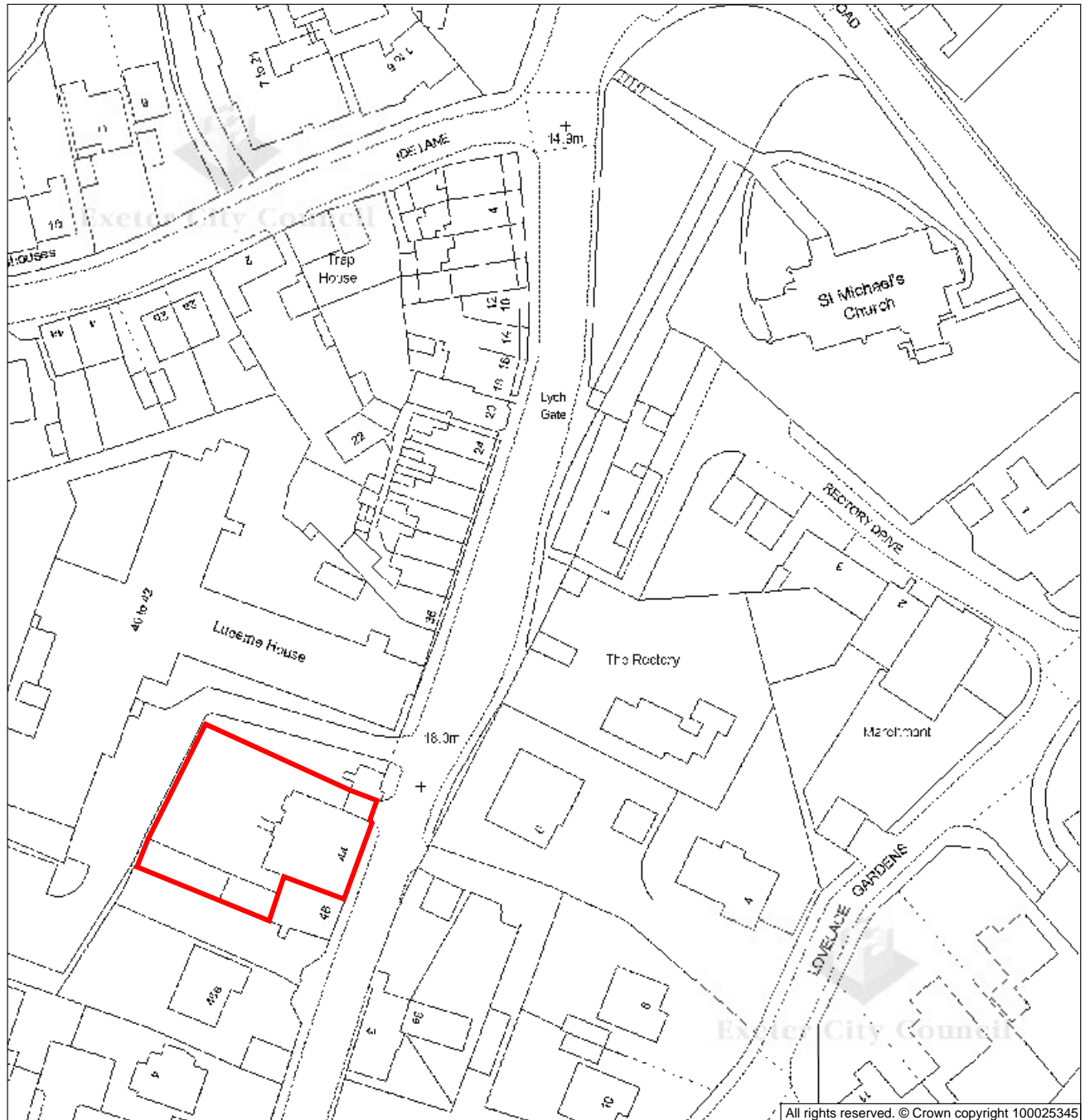
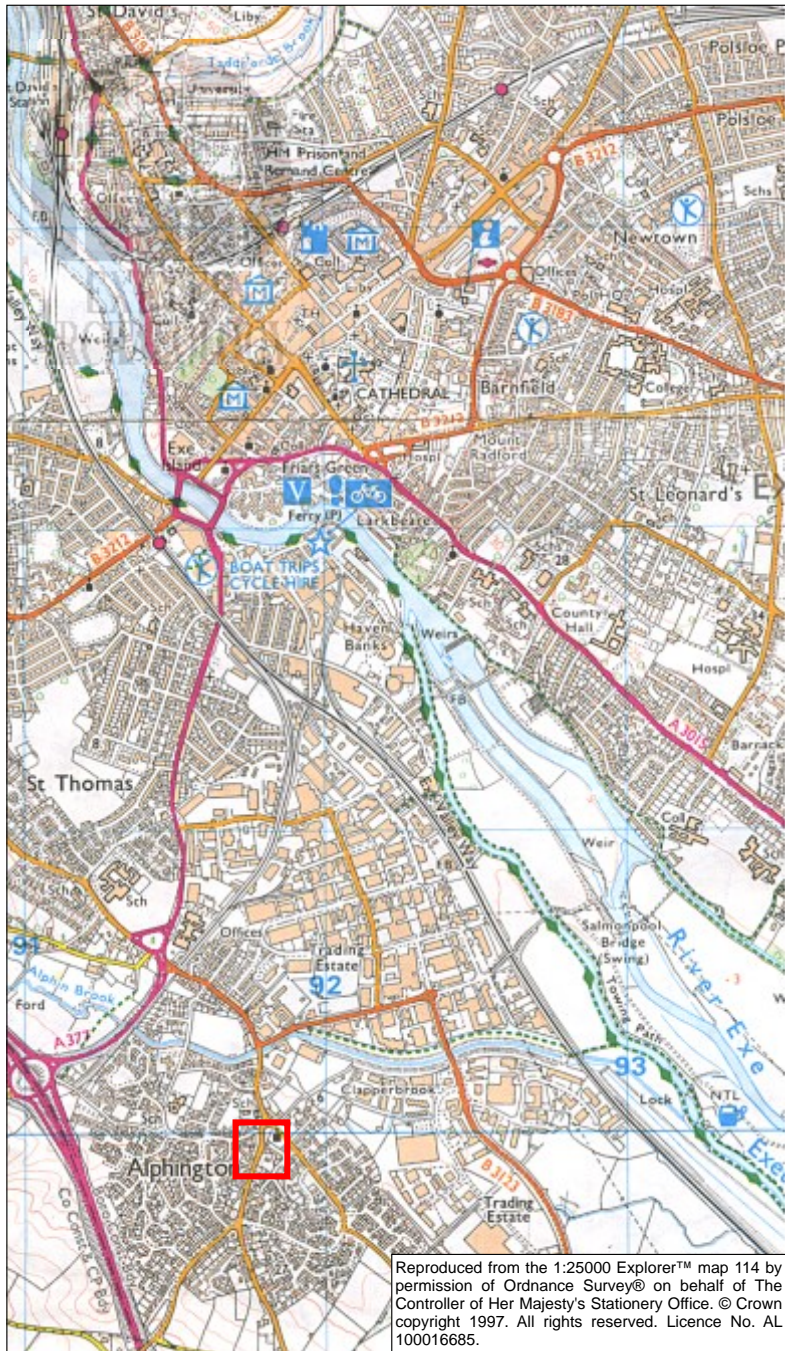


Fig. 1 Location of site. Scale 1:1000.

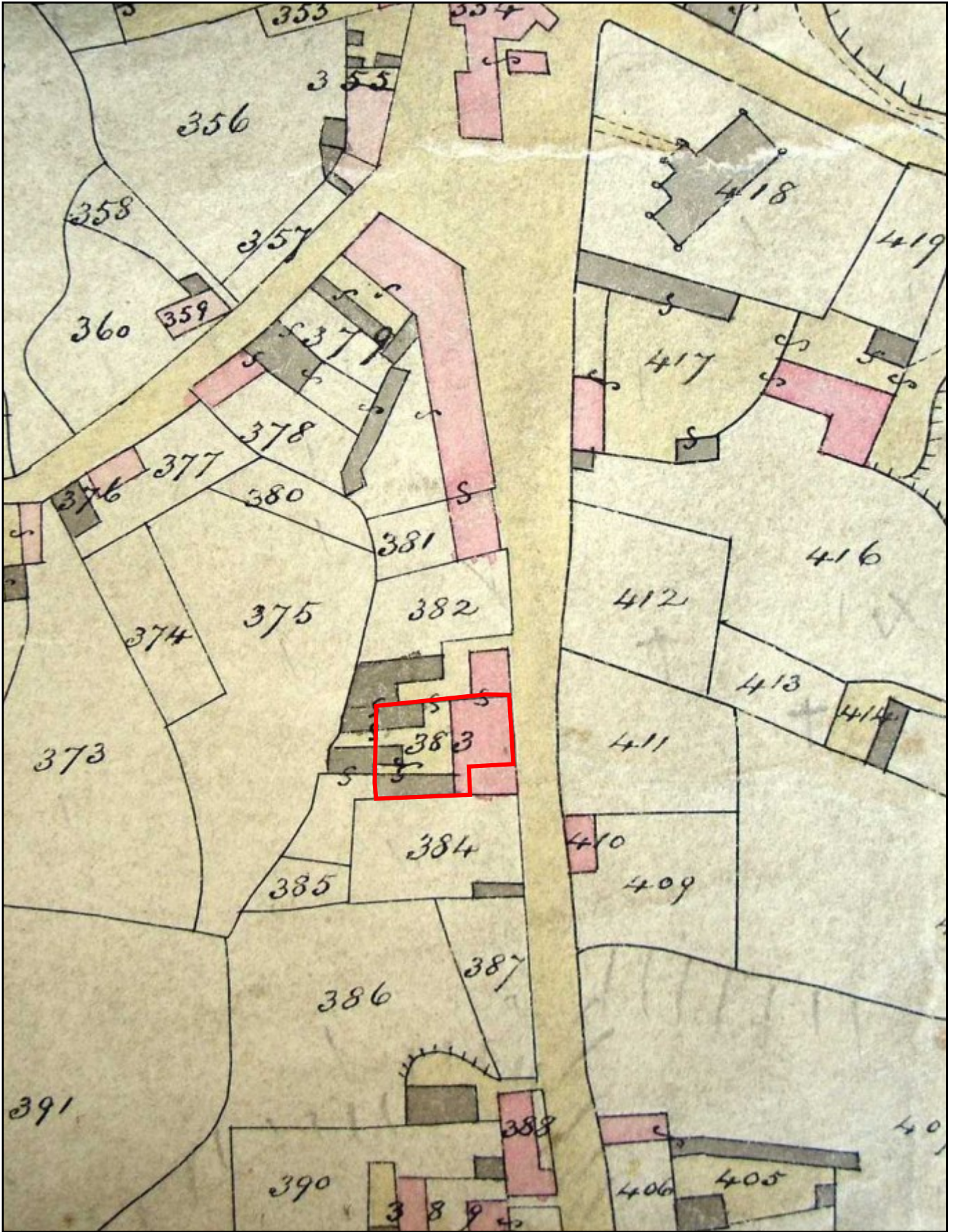


Fig. 2 Extract from the 1842 Aliphington Tithe Map showing the site and buildings.

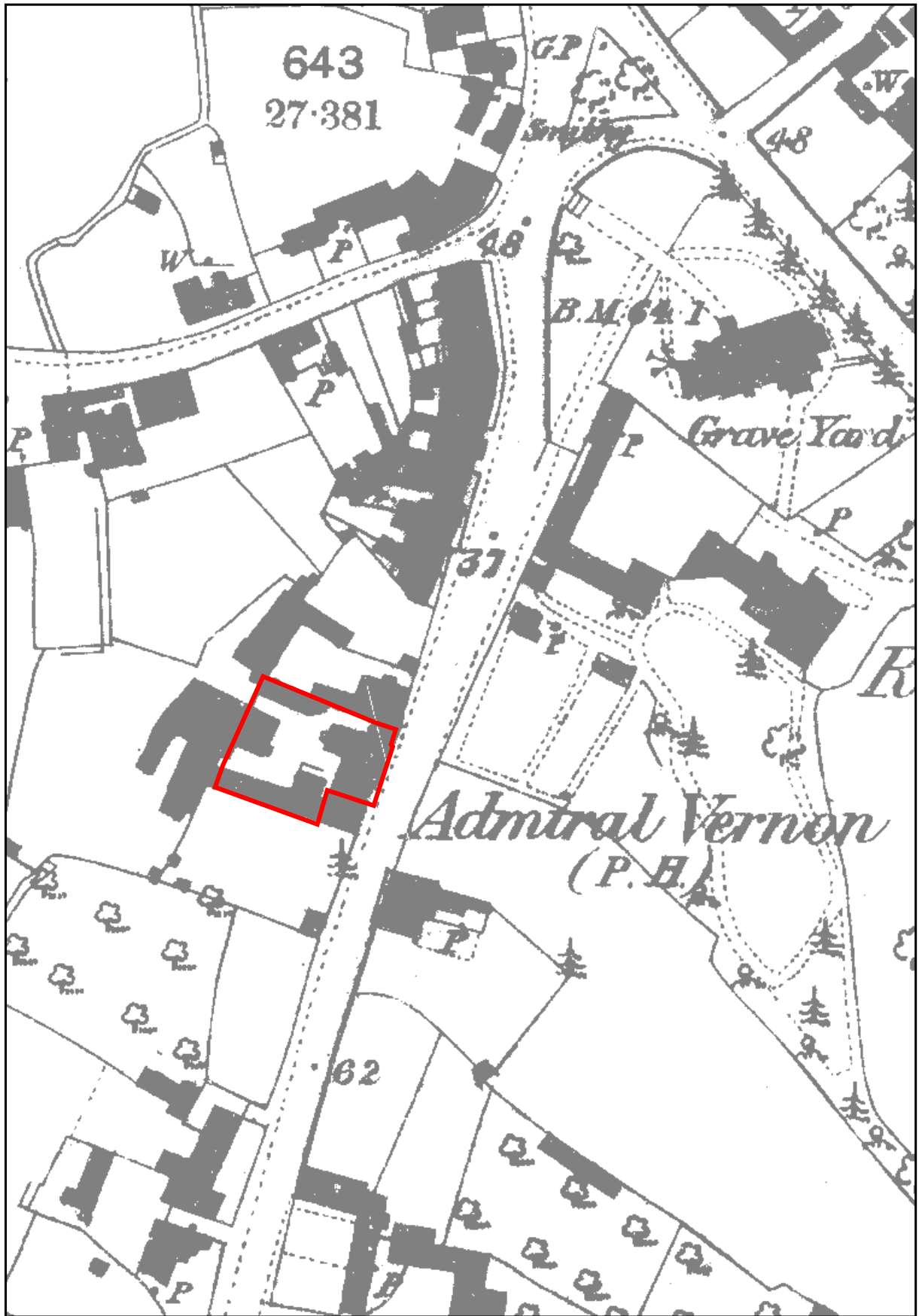


Fig. 3 Extract from the OS. 1st edition 1:1250 map of 1890, showing the development of the site by the end of the 19th century.





Fig. 4 General view of the façade to Chudleigh Road



Fig. 5 Detail of the front of the cottage following the removal of the render in 2004, showing features in the southern part of the front wall (A. R. Pye, 2004).

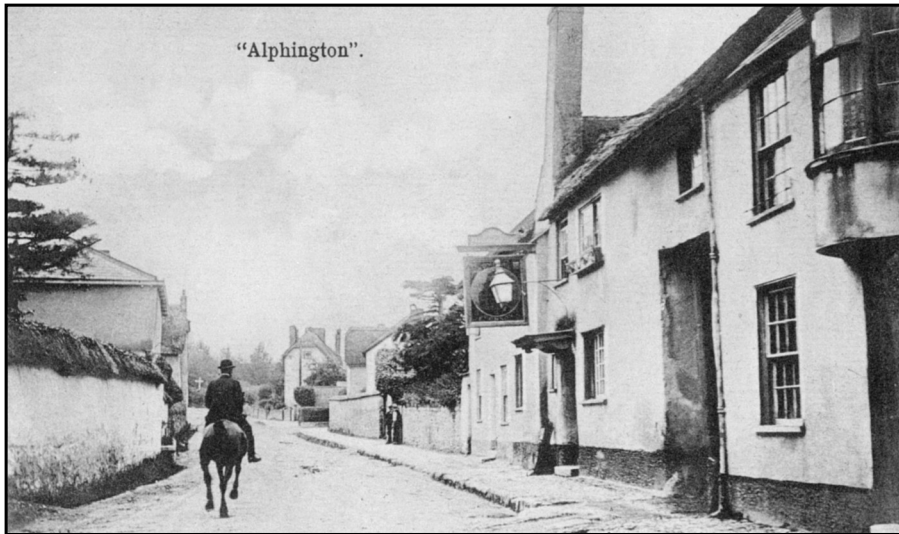


Fig. 6 Postcard showing the front of the inn in the late 19th century with sash windows and a bracketed porch (from a copy in the possession of A.G.Collings).



Fig. 7 View of the rear elevation of the premises before conversion works began in 2007.

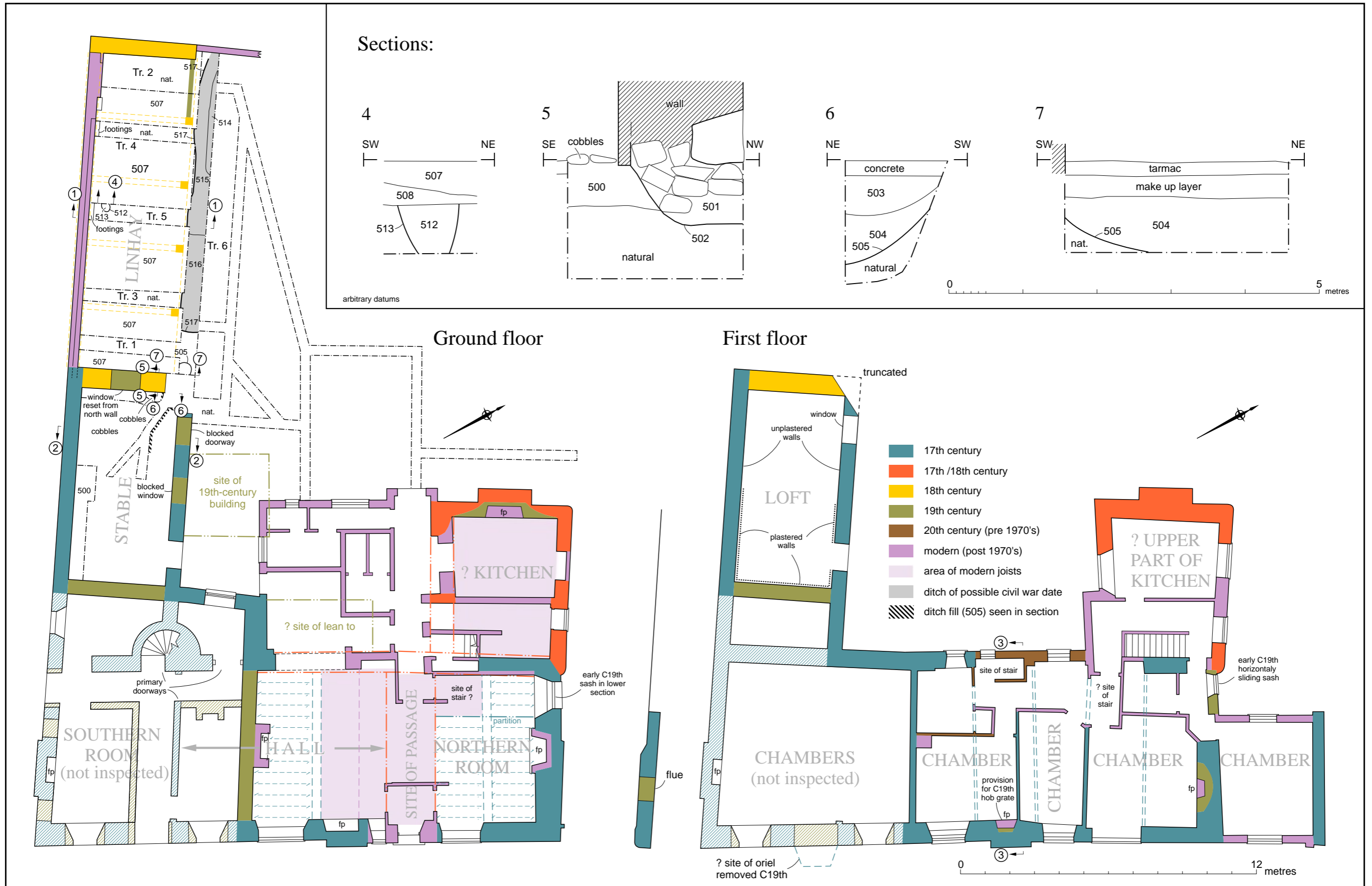


Fig. 8 Suggested phase plans of the ground and first floors, showing the location of features observed during the building survey and watching brief. The position of profiles and sections are also shown, with details in inset.



Fig. 9 The interior of the northern room, prior to stripping, showing the extent of internal alterations.



Fig. 10 View of the northern fireplace following the removal of modern fabric.



Fig. 11 View of the ceiling following stripping showing primary joists and the probable position of an inserted staircase infilled with modern joists (bottom left).



Fig. 12 View of the fireplace in the hall prior to stripping.



Fig. 13 View of the ceiling of the hall after removal of the plaster showing the extent of modern interventions (left).



Fig. 14 View of the west wall in the north-western cross wing during stripping, showing the blocked kitchen fireplace and the modern first-floor structures.



Fig. 15 Detail of a jointed cruck in the northern room on the first floor.

### 3: Main Building Truss II

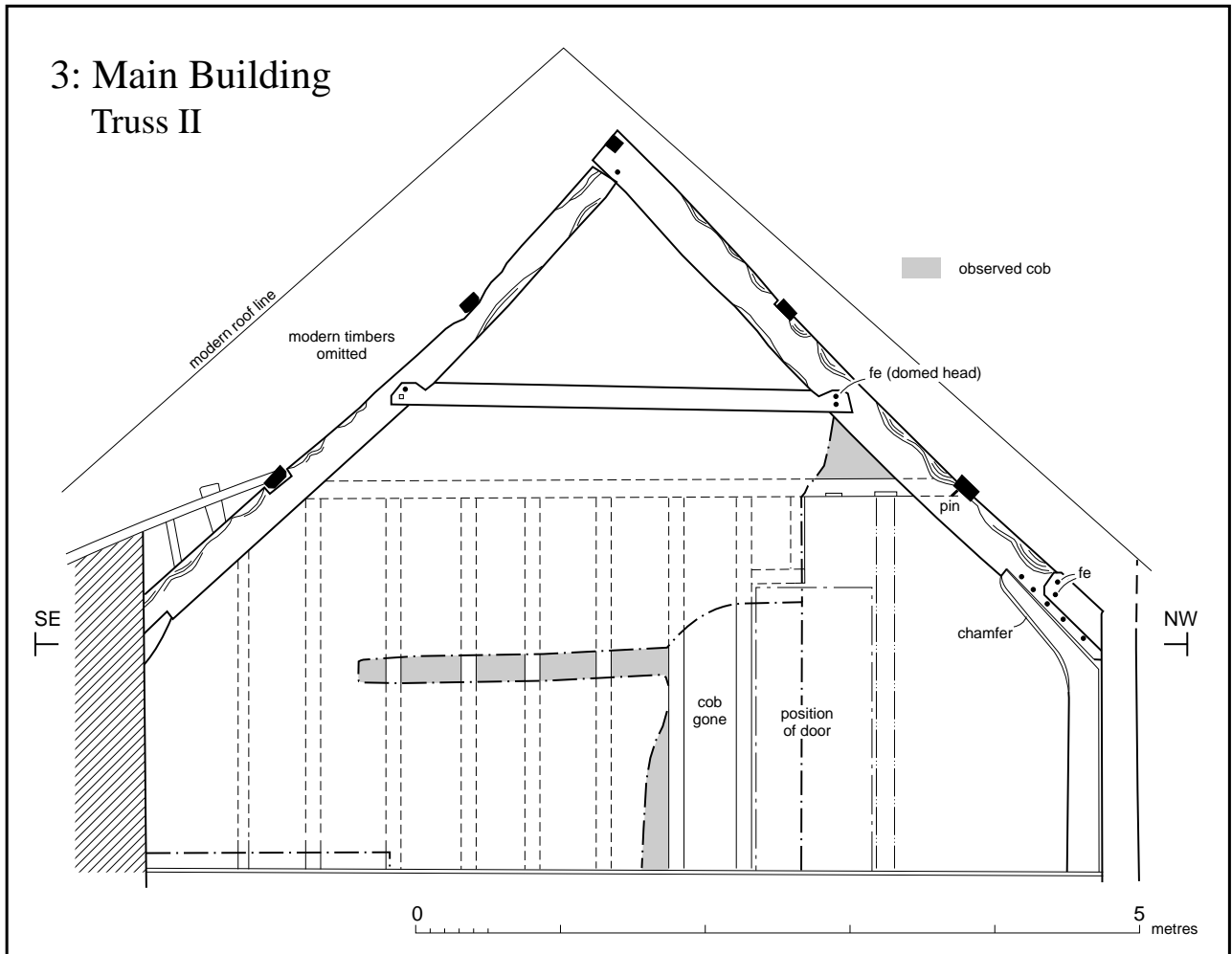


Fig. 16 Measured drawing of a typical roof truss over the main range and of a primary partition dividing the first-floor chambers.



Fig. 17 Detail of the roof construction at the rear of the building showing two of the primary trusses and the rebuilt rear wall.



Fig. 18 View of the first-floor fireplace, window and roof truss in the front wall at the southern end of the inn.



Fig. 19 View within the roof showing the apex of the early roof beneath the modern roof structure.



Fig. 20 A general view of the outbuildings on the south side of the yard, looking south-east.



Fig. 21 The main elevation of the stable before refurbishment, showing the truncated corner.



Fig. 22 Detail of the west gable wall of the stable prior to rebuilding, showing its parlous condition.



Fig. 23 Detail of the early window salvaged during demolition of the gable.



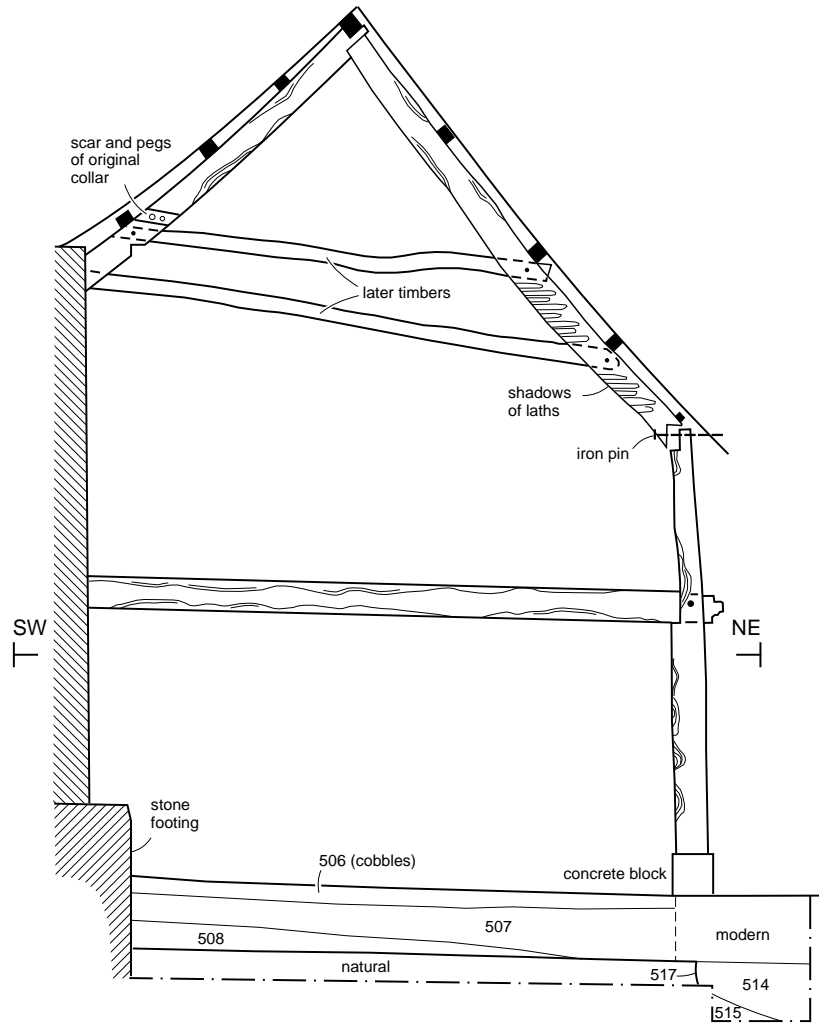
Fig. 24 View of the ground-floor interior of the stable looking to south east.



Fig. 25 View of the first-floor interior, looking to south east.



1: Linhay  
Truss II



2: Stable  
Truss III

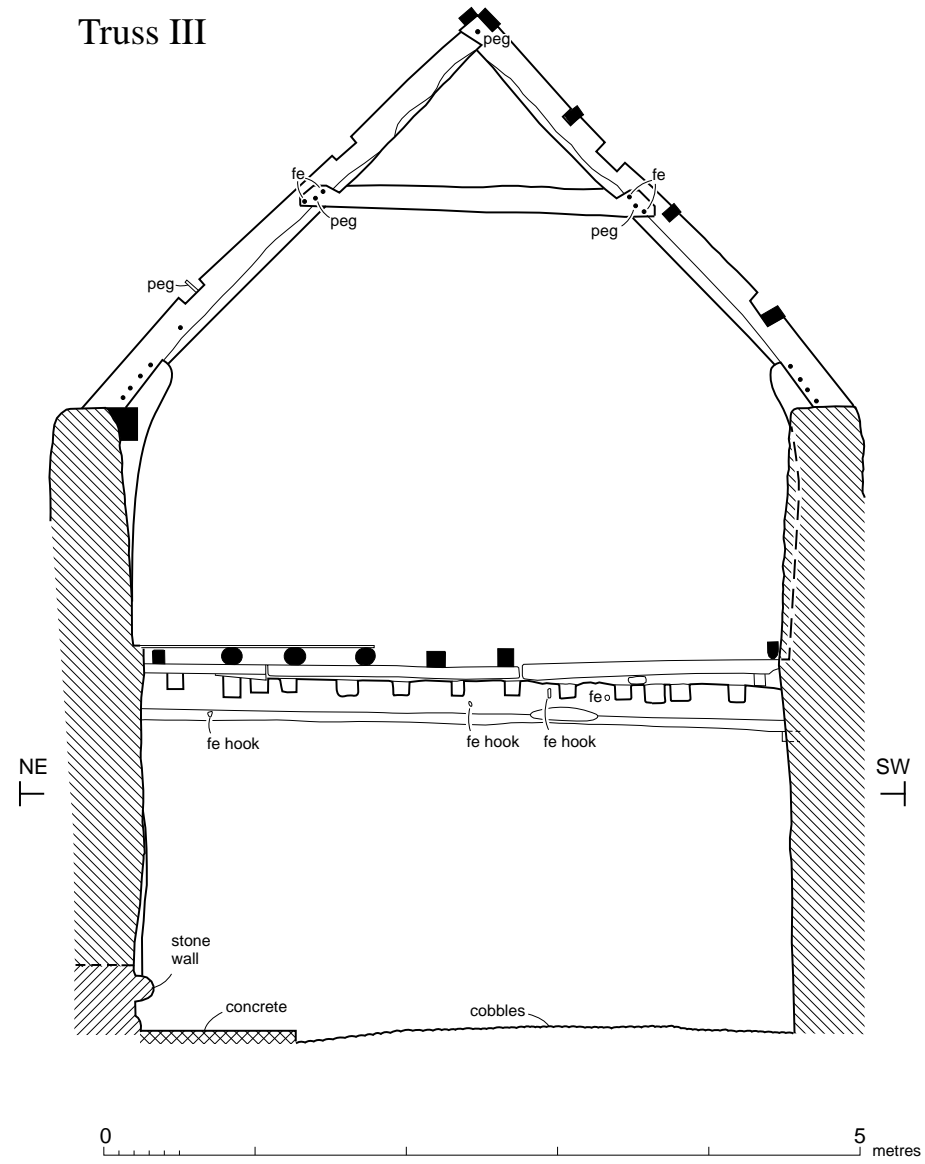


Fig. 26 Measured drawings of the sections of the linhay and stables showing the details of their construction, and a section through the deposits below the linhay.



Fig. 27 Detail of a notched lap joint from the stable roof.



Fig. 28 View of the linhay prior to demolition, looking south west.