

**A SECONDARY PHASE OF
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AT
8 COLLETON CRESCENT, EXETER**

Prepared for Mr. G Stead

By

G.M. Young

Exeter Archaeology

Report No. 10. 87

Project No. 7282

December 2010

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Results	1
2.1 Basement	1
2.2 Groundworks	4
2.3 Ground Floor	5
2.4 First Floor	5
2.5 Second Floor	6
2.6 Third Floor	6
3. Conclusions	6
4. Room Data Sheets	7
Basement	7
Ground Floor	8
First Floor	8
Second Floor	8
Third Floor	8
Acknowledgements	8
Sources Consulted	8

1. INTRODUCTION

Exeter Archaeology was commissioned to carry out a watching brief on works at No.8 Colleton Crescent by TFQ Architects on behalf of the owner and developer of the property Gordon Stead of Venture Property and Development Company Ltd. The Grade II* listed premises were being converted to 5 apartments for which an historic building survey and report were produced prior to works by Keystone Historic Building Consultants in February 2008 (Keystone report no.K746). Additional survey work was required to cover stripping of interior fabric within the basement and ground floors of the building. Drainage trenching was also monitored in the basement. The recording work was carried out as a condition (No. 3) of listed building consent for the works (ECC No. 08/1094/07), and guidance on the scope was provided by the ECC Archaeological Officer by email to TFQ architects dated 4 June 2010.

As described in the Keystone report, the basement rooms of No. 8 were subject to major conversion works in 1987 when most of the evidence of the former room partitions was removed. Among the considerable interventions made to the basement area at that time were the insertions of concrete pillars and steel beams.

During the present phase of works the basement ceiling was stripped entirely of its ceiling plaster and some walls which had not been affected during the earlier works were stripped back to masonry. A significant intervention was the removal of the original basement stairs on the east side of the building.

Drainage trenches were dug through the concrete floor of the basement rooms of the kitchen and the service area between the former rear wall of the house and the wine cellar. New pipe runs 0.25m wide were dug to connect services to existing drains.

The results of this watching brief are supplementary to the earlier Keystone report and the summary results are presented later in the report in the form of amendments to the Historic Room Data Sheets as used in the Keystone report. Additional photographs of newly exposed historic fabric and annotated plans were produced. Only a small portion of the photographic record is included here, the full record will be included in the archive to be deposited in the RAM Museum, Exeter.

Amendments to the Historic Room Data Sheets for No.8 Colleton Crescent are set out below following a more detailed account of the findings.

2. RESULTS

2.1 Basement

The C20th ceiling plaster was removed exposing original joists measuring 230mm x 40mm with evidence of the former lath and plaster ceiling. The joists exposed in the front room were supported by three steel beams, supported themselves by blockwork pillars. A pair of steel beams lay to either side of an original chamfered timber beam running lengthways through the building (Photo 1). Positioned between the front door and the north-west window, it extended almost the full length of the basement, stopping 1.36m short of the original rear wall (Fig. 1). The beam measured c.250mm x 280mm deep and the southern end exhibited the remnants of a possibly original pale

grey matt paint finish. No evidence of studwork partitioning below the beam was visible.

Between the door and the south-east window was another steel beam supported by concrete blockwork pillars. Just to the east of this the joists were strengthened by a single row of cross-bracing struts.

Also visible above the ceiling were the brick hearth bases of the ground-floor fireplaces. Behind the present boiler room on the north-west wall is the former kitchen fireplace. In the ceiling above was a hearth base for the ground-floor fireplace. A similar brick base lay above the basement fireplace in the northern room. Between the two fireplaces was a vertical shaft running up through the ground-floor front room (Photo 2). Measuring 400mm x 400mm, the base of the shaft was faced on the north-west and south-west sides with fairly smooth plaster with a shallow key. Behind this on the south-west side, original studwork with brick nogging was visible. Above these panels, the same walls were finished in a light brown, keyed plaster base coat to the top of the shaft. The other two walls revealed the rear faces of lath and plaster.

In the front room of the basement, the front wall, the south-east wall and part of the north-west wall were stripped back to masonry. The north-west wall was exposed from the front wall to the main kitchen fireplace. The fabric consisted of Heavitree breccia and grey volcanic rubble stone. The same fabric was present in the chimney-breast and included some large, dressed Heavitree blocks. The stonework was bonded with a pinkish earthy mortar with chalk flecks. Within the side of the chimney-breast was an area of brick patching with pale lime mortar. The same stone fabric continued onto the front wall and beneath the window. The splays of the north-west window were formed largely of brick. Two areas of modern infill were seen midway up each reveal comprising blockwork on the south-east side and modern brick in cement mortar on the north-west side. The modern pier adjacent to the south-east splay was of concrete block.

The stone fabric continued above and in the jambs of the front door. A single, inset timber was seen in the north-west jamb spanning the full width of the reveal. A similar timber on the south-east jamb had been replaced with brick. Above the door was a double row of bricks forming a segmental relieving-arch and below this was a concrete lintel.

Approximately 150mm below the ceiling joists the stonework of the front wall was surmounted by brickwork. This arrangement was also seen in both side walls. From this level up the outside walls were constructed of brick.

The wall above and below the modern casement window in the south-east of the room was modern and included a concrete lintel. Inset in the wall 0.40m above the present window soffit was a limestone slab (possibly reused). Measuring c.40mm thick and 1.15m long it was set 0.40m from the south-east wall. The south-east splay of the window was of very coarse-textured red-brown bricks with two slots containing remnants of timber at 0.71m and 1.40m from the floor. The timbers were approximately 90mm thick.

The south-east wall was largely stone, apart from three coarse-textured bricks set in a row and a floor-to-ceiling column of brickwork towards the south-west end. This latter constituted a former flue, now blocked (Photo 3). The upper section of brickwork, representing the chimney flue, consisted of coarse-textured mid-brown bricks bonded in a pale buff lime mortar that differed from the surrounding stonework. This extended from 1.37m from the floor to the top of the wall and from 0.80m to 1.45m from the front wall. The blocking-brickwork of the former fireplace was also of mid-brown coarse-textured bricks, but bonded in a sandy, friable, light brown lime mortar. The brickwork of the blocking extended from 0.63m to 1.38m from the front wall. These bricks had the remains of a black pitch coating on their faces.

Within the section of exposed stone wall to the north-east of the blocked flue were a number of inset timbers. At the top of the stone masonry was a double row of timbers 90mm wide, set just at the level of the ceiling joists. Two of the timbers were linked by edge-halved scarf joints. Above these timbers, brickwork replaced stonework. Another inset timber was located at the north-east end of the wall at 0.77m from the floor and measuring 2.54m long. Directly above this at the north-east end was another timber, set perpendicular to the wall. This had a circular depression in the centre. Another oak timber was seen 50mm above this with a flat chamfer on its upper edge and which extended behind the rear wall backing onto the stairs. This timber had a depth of 90mm into the wall. A drawing of this wall was made at a scale of 1:20.

At 5.69m from the front wall is a steel beam at high level that supports the remains of an original brick cross-wall (Photo 4). At 2.69m above ground the original brickwork is built into the north-west wall. It is supported at its south-eastern end by the same concrete block pillar that supports the paired steel beams running lengthways through the building. On the south-eastern side of this pillar, more original brickwork was visible indicating a former wall running lengthways in the centre of the basement. This lay adjacent to original studwork that suggested a partition wall on the line of the existing wall at the bottom of the main flight of the stairs. There were mortices within the timbers along with an extra stud that suggested a possible former doorway at the foot of the stairs into the front room(s). Further to the south-east within the same cross-wall, glazing behind plasterboard was visible (Fig.1). This was later opened up for a new doorway exposing a modern stair light window.

Most of the joists over the stairs had been cut off and replaced with new timbers. At the north-eastern end of the basement, floorboards as well as joists had been replaced. Further steel beams were in place supporting the floor above and around the stairwell.

Exposed fabric above the stairs revealed cutaways in the joists to allow sufficient headroom. The original closed string of the stairs was exposed revealing a cavetto moulding (Photo 6). Below the stairs, alterations to the original quarter landing at ground-floor level could be seen, showing a riser had been eliminated. On the ground beneath the stairs an original brick floor surface was exposed with a slot beneath the outer edge of the stairs, presumably for timber framing. The original wine cellar in the north-east corner of the Basement remained unchanged (Photo. 10).

2.2 Groundworks

A series of drainage trenches were dug through the floors of the basement. The first area to be excavated (Trench 1) was in the service area beyond the former rear wall of the house and to the south-west of the wine cellar. New pipe runs were cut through the concrete floor 250mm wide leading to a new manhole site over existing drains (Fig. 3). The manhole pit was 0.55m from the north-east wall and 2.95m from the north-west wall. This was dug to a depth of 0.57m exposing a 100mm diameter plastic pipe set in concrete at the base. To the north-west of this drain was a 120mm ceramic drainpipe on a bearing of $c.36^\circ$.

From the manhole pit a trench was dug to the northern corner of the room (Spur a). At the north end, concrete footings of the modern concrete block walls of the infill were seen extending to a depth of 0.32m. Away from the walls, the trench section showed a hardcore sub-base to a depth of 0.25m under a variable thickness of concrete. At the base of the trench appeared to be a thin skim of lime mortar over reddish stone, possibly Heavitree stone or coarse sandstone, at a depth of $c.0.40$ m. The stone, which appeared to be bedrock rather than masonry, continued towards the south-east before being truncated by the cut for the ceramic drain. The bedrock continued on the other side of the manhole in the spur trenches extending eastwards.

Two trench spurs were dug to the east of the manhole pit, one on a more easterly bearing (Spur b), meeting the north-east wall just to the east of a concrete block pilaster, and the second (Spur c), heading for the south-east corner of the room. In these trenches stone flags of the original floor surface were revealed directly beneath 130mm of concrete. The 60mm-thick, pale greenish buff, crystalline limestone (Purbeck stone) overlaid reddish brown sandy clay containing patches of a white soapy substance. At 0.38m below surface was a layer of finer red-brown silty sand overlying the bedrock at the base of the trench.

The extent of the paving was limited. Beginning at 3.90m from the north-west wall it continued south-eastwards to 4.84m where it was replaced with 40mm-thick brick floor tiles. These surfaces were exposed in section within Spurs b and c of the trench as illustrated (Fig. 3). Cutting the natural subsoil in Spur b of the trench from $c.4.50$ m to $c.4.67$ m from the north-west wall was an area of concrete, infilling the base of the trench at 0.47m below surface. A similar cut was visible in Spur c at $c.4.48$ m to $c.4.70$ m from the north-west wall, with reddish brown gritty clay in place of concrete. The eastern limit of this cut-out was edged with a single row of bricks, present in both trench spurs, on a bearing of $c.220^\circ$. Immediately east of the bricks in both spurs appeared to be firm, purplish brown, natural clay subsoil.

The brick floor tiles were laid on a thin bed of reddish-brown mortar to a depth of 0.22m below surface. Below this to the edge of excavation at 0.41m was reddish brown gritty clay containing occasional brick fragments. There were no further exposures of natural subsoil at this formation level.

At the extreme south end of Spur c were brickwork footings beneath the south-west wall of the room, projecting $c.0.28$ m beyond the wall surface.

A further drainage trench (Trench 2) was dug in the front basement room to connect to an existing manhole $c.2.00$ m north-east of the front door (Fig. 4). The 300mm-wide

trench ran from the blocked door in the north-west wall in a north-south orientation. The excavation cut through 200mm of concrete over a plastic damp-proof membrane. Beneath the membrane over much of the area were flagstones of the same pale greenish-buff Purbeck stone seen in the rear of the basement (Photo 7). South of a point *c.*2.40m from the large concrete block stanchion at the front of the basement, the flagstones had been removed. In their place was a layer of red sand of varying thickness up to a maximum of 50mm. Whole flags appeared to have been removed prior to the concrete floor, as there were no broken slabs visible and the polythene DPM overlay the red sand. Beneath the DPM and the flagstones was a make-up layer of mid-brown gritty sand containing brick fragments and lime mortar lumps. This lay on purplish brown gritty natural clay at a maximum depth of *c.*0.37m. At the extreme north end the edge of excavation was higher than the natural subsoil. The depth of the trench extended from *c.*0.28m at the north to 0.60m at the south on a gentle incline towards the manhole.

The foundation brickwork of the internal cross-wall, formerly dividing the front kitchen from the rear room, was seen towards the north end of Trench 2. This wall has largely been removed with just a high-level remnant remaining above the steel beam now in place. The bricks of the foundation were identical to those above the steel beam and extended to the base of the trench and beyond to reach the natural firm subsoil at 0.36m below surface.

2.3 Ground floor

Interventions on the ground floor were much less intrusive resulting in a limited exposure of original fabric.

Brickwork was exposed around the wide opening in the rear wall of the building. Coarse-textured reddish brown bricks were seen forming a segmental arch and were also present in the jambs of the opening. The aperture is splayed suggesting a former window and these bricks formed a slightly projecting frame to the opening. The brickwork is original as indicated by the cement covering the lower sections of the jambs beneath the brick. The position of this cement on both jambs shows where the original wall has been broken through below the sill of the former window.

The adjacent door in the north-west corner was exposed on the exterior wall. This was shown to be a later insertion with bricks crudely forming the new jambs of the opening (Photo 8). Above the doorway was a modern concrete lintel.

The blocked door in the north-west wall within the former exterior yard of the building was also a later insertion, the aperture being punched through the stone masonry and topped with a concrete lintel.

2.4 First floor

Floorboards were lifted throughout this floor revealing a large central beam running from front to back and stopping just short of the rear wall. A modern bathroom partition was removed from the north-west room and a modern cupboard from the south-east room. The partition dividing the rooms at the front of the building are modern but the remaining room divisions are original stud walls. Two new doorways were doorways inserted through the central cross-wall between front and rear rooms.

2.5 Second floor

Floorboards were lifted throughout this floor revealing a similar large central beam running from front to back, this time meeting the rear wall. The removal of a modern toilet partition in the north-west room exposed the splay for the original window in the rear wall (Photo. 9). The front rooms on this floor appear to be original with the stud wall supported by a large beam extending from the front wall and into the Hall. The removal of a late bathroom in the north-west room leaves only original partitions remaining.

2.6 Third floor

The raising of floorboards throughout this floor revealed another large floor beam running from front to back. All room partitions were original.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Although the direct evidence for the original internal room divisions within the basement is small, there is enough, together with other circumstantial indications, to develop a plan of the original layout. The original chamfered beam displayed no evidence for studwork timbers beneath it and therefore must have been supported on columns or cross-walls. With no evidence for column support this implies that this beam was positioned near midway in the room between supporting walls. Therefore, if there *was* a partition at the front of the basement it is likely to have been between the front door and the south-east window. However, this was where a row of apparently original joist cross-braces were seen (hardly necessary if a partition wall is present). The blocked fireplace in the south-east wall appears to be a later insertion as the bonding mortar of the brick flue differs from the surrounding stonework. A partition may have been inserted at some later date, forming a room at the south-east end of the basement. In the primary phase of the house, however, the front of the basement appears to have been a single large kitchen room (Fig. 2).

The original room layout at the rear of the basement is defined by the remains of brick partition walls and studwork. The high-level remnant of the brick cross-wall, midway within the basement, defines the division of the rear room from the kitchen on the north-west side (Photo 4). The eastern boundary to this room is suggested by the remnant of brick wall near the foot of the stairs. A door is suggested from the kitchen to the rear of the building by way of the exposed studwork in the centre of the basement. This suggests a door in line with the front door of the basement. The blocked window in the rear room would have been centrally placed within the room's back wall (Fig.2).

The stairs would have been separated from the basement rooms, so a partition is implied where there is now a steel beam supporting the joists. Access to the kitchen and the rear room from the foot of the stairs may have been via a small lobby with opposing doors. Access to the exterior service area and cellars would have been through the present doorway on the north-east side.

A similar division of ground-floor rooms from front to rear is supported by the exposed fabric seen within the shaft. A partition wall directly above the basement cross-wall on the north-west side would have divided a front parlour from a rear dining room.

Documentary references to the basements of this range of buildings mention of kitchens, a butler's pantry, housekeeper's room, servants' bedrooms, stores, larder, cellars, wash house and pump (Thorp 2008). The limited evidence within the building makes it difficult to allocate spaces for these functions other than the location of the kitchen at the front of the house and the wine cellar at the rear. The use of expensive Purbeck limestone for the floor at the front of the basement is indicative of the kitchen. The smooth surface of the flagstones suggests a much used and often scrubbed floor surface. The fact that this surface seems to end at the partition wall of the rear room leads to the conclusion that this room was not a work room. It seems likely therefore, that the rear room was the housekeeper's or footman's room. It is quite possible that the wine cellar also served as pantry or store. Laundry and washing activities may have taken place in the yard beneath a lean-to roof where stone flags were also revealed during the trenching.

4. ROOM DATA SHEETS

Amendments to the Historic Room Data Sheets for No.8 Colleton Crescent

BASEMENT

WALLS

Remnants of original brickwork and timber framing were present defining the division between the front kitchen and the rear room on the south-east side. This is represented by the wall at the foot of the main flight of the original basement stairs. Original timber framing in line with this wall and to the north-west of the stairs suggested the site of a former doorway dividing front from rear rooms.

The upper section of an original brick partition wall survives above a steel beam on the north-west side of the basement. Brick footings for this wall were also seen during groundworks.

Evidence was seen to suggest that all solid boundary walls were of local volcanic and Heavitree breccia stone including the front wall. Above a level of c.150mm below the joists all of the exposed boundary walls were of brick.

A segmental brick relieving arch was seen above the front door.

CEILING

An original chamfered beam was exposed running north-east to south-west just north-west of the central door in the front elevation. The beam extended almost the full length of the basement stopping 1.36m short of the original rear wall. The southern end exhibited a possibly original blue-grey paint finish. Its position suggests a single front kitchen room across the width of the building.

FIREPLACES

A brick stack was exposed in the south-east wall of the kitchen, now blocked. The bricks were bonded in a pale buff lime mortar that differed from the surrounding stonework suggesting this was a secondary insertion.

STAIR

The closed string of the stairs was revealed with a cavetto moulding.

FLOORS

The area beneath the stairs had an original brick floor.

Beneath modern concrete floor surfaces original limestone flags and brick tile flooring were seen in the rear area (formerly external) and limestone flags in the front room.

FEATURES

A shaft was seen running through the ground-floor rear room as seen from the basement which perhaps served as a service lift. This was situated on the north-west wall just north-east of the steel beam that supports the remains of an original brick partition.

GROUND FLOOR

WALLS

A segmental brick arch was present above the former window in the rear wall with bricks also forming the window jambs. Evidence was also seen for the conversion of the window into the present doorway by way of cemented-over scars of the broken-through lower section of the wall. The doorway through the rear wall of the building at the north-west corner was seen to be a modern insertion. The door (now blocked) through the north-western party wall of the former rear yard was also seen to be modern.

FIREPLACES

The brick bases of ground-floor hearths were visible above the stripped ceiling of the basement with one above the main front kitchen fireplace and another above the rear room fireplace, again on the north-west wall.

FIRST FLOOR

FLOORS

Large floor beam exposed running from front to back but being truncated just short of the rear wall. Joists were pegged onto this beam.

FIREPLACES

A slate hearth slab was seen beneath chimneybreast of the north-west room.

WALLS

Division of front room is by modern partition. All other room partitions are original.

SECOND FLOOR

FLOORS

Large floor beam exposed running from the front to the rear wall.

WALLS

After removal of modern bathroom, all remaining room partitions are original.

THIRD FLOOR

FLOORS

Large floor beam exposed running from the front to the rear wall.

WALLS

All existing room partitions are original.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The watching brief and report were commissioned by TFQ Architects on behalf of the owner and developer of the property Gordon Stead of Venture Property Development Company Ltd. Site recording was carried out by G.M. Young of Exeter Archaeology in accordance with a brief provided by A.R.Pye (ECC Archaeology and Planning Officer). The report was written and illustrated by G.M.Young and the project was supervised by J. Allan of Exeter Archaeology. Thanks are due to John Thorp of Keystone Historic Building Consultants for providing their in-depth report on the building, produced in February 2008, to which this current work is supplementary.

Sources consulted

February 2008, 7, 8 & 9 *Colleton Crescent Exeter*, Keystone Historic Building Consultants (Keystone report no. K746).

8, Colleton Crescent
Basement Plan
Features

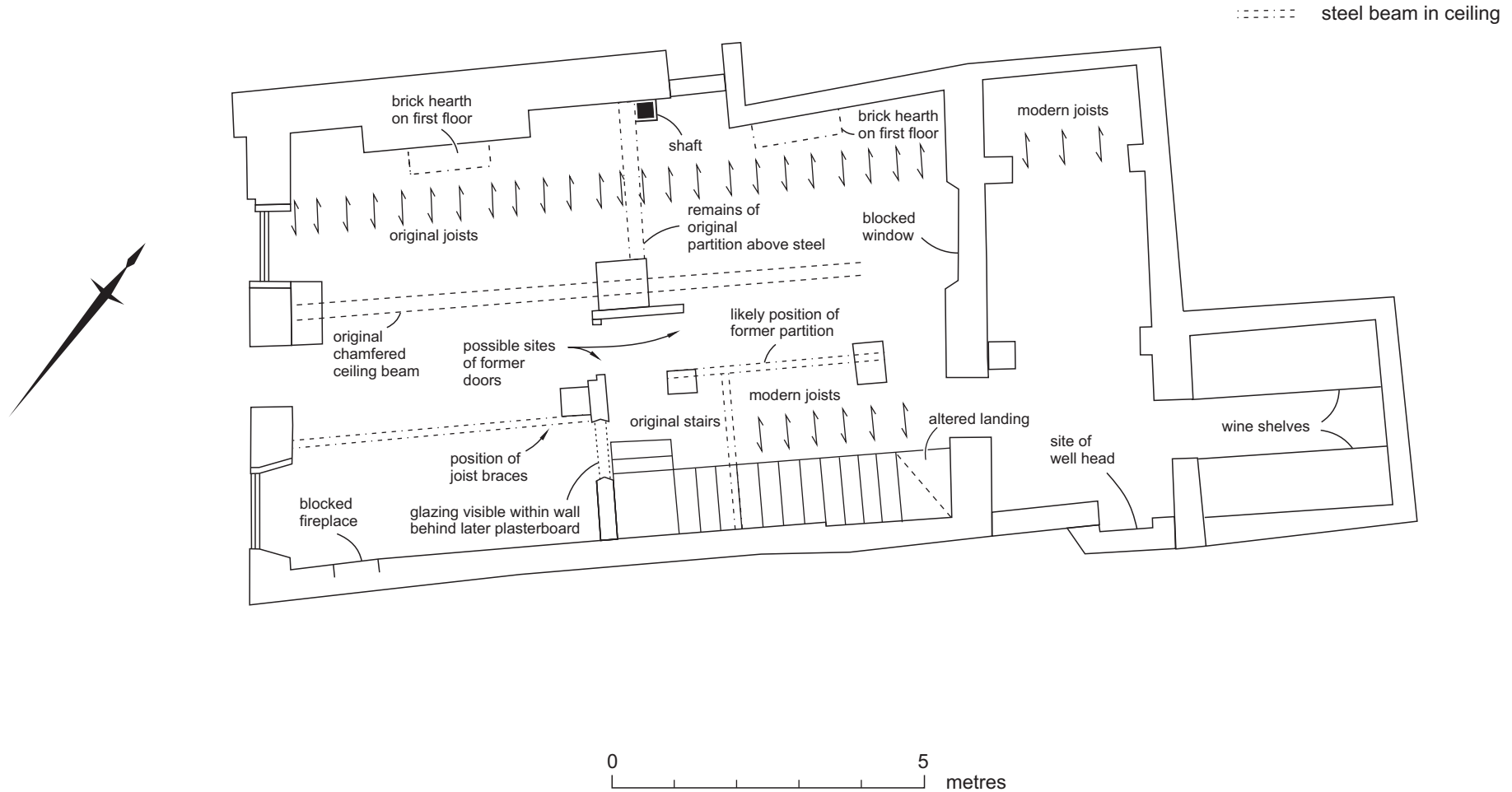


Fig. 1 Plan of the basement showing features observed. Scale 1:100.

8, Colleton Crescent
Basement Plan
Existing Fabric

- Heavitree and volcanic stone
- Original brickwork
- Modern concrete blockwork
- Steel beam in ceiling



Fig. 2 Plan of the basement showing the existing fabric and suggested room layout. Scale 1:100.

8, Colleton Crescent
Basement Plan
Trench 1

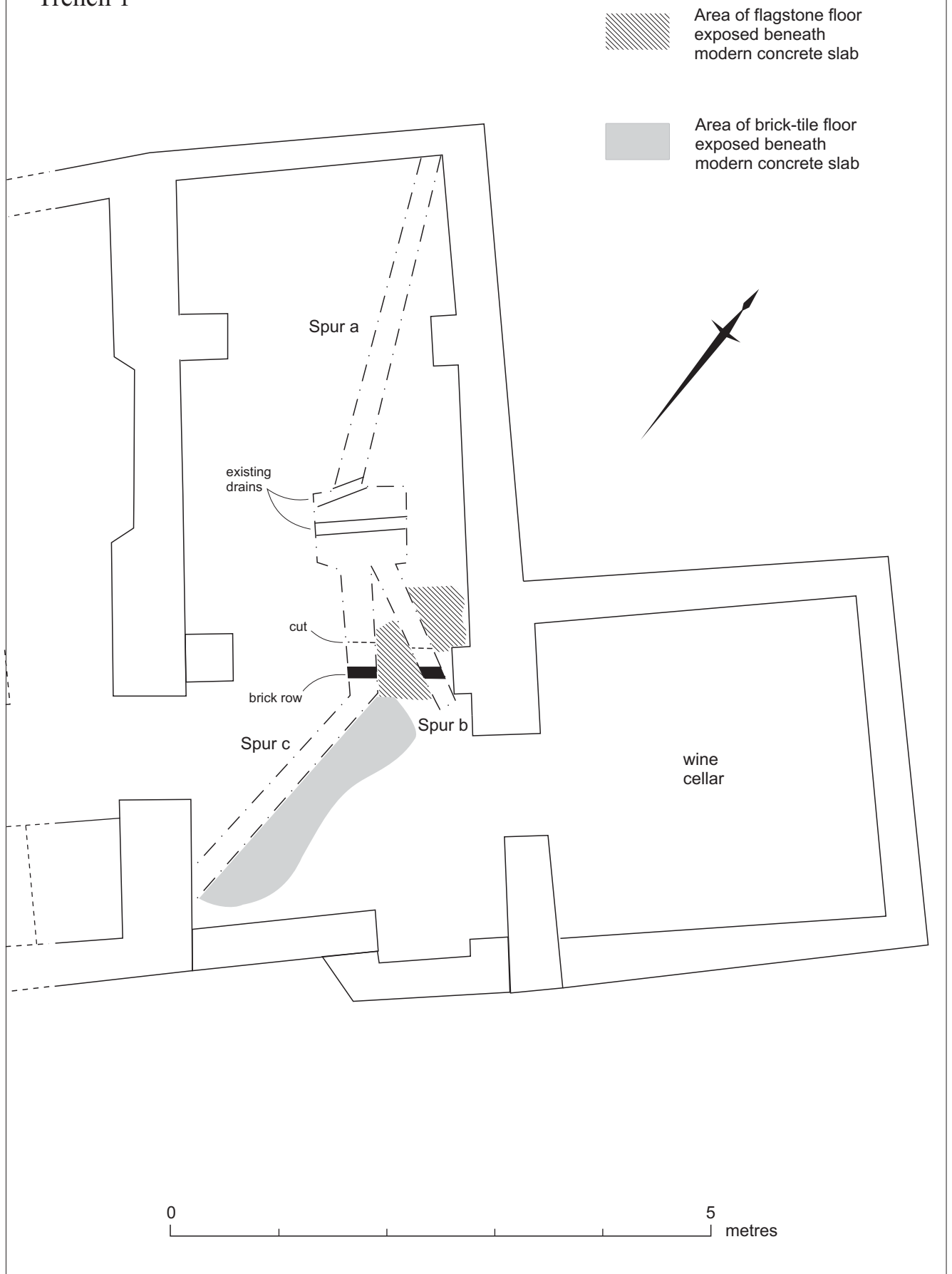


Fig. 3 Plan of the basement showing the location of drainage Trench 1 and the areas where stone and brick-tile flooring were revealed in section. Scale 1:50.

8, Colleton Crescent
Basement Plan
Trench 2



Area of flagstone floor
exposed beneath
modern concrete slab

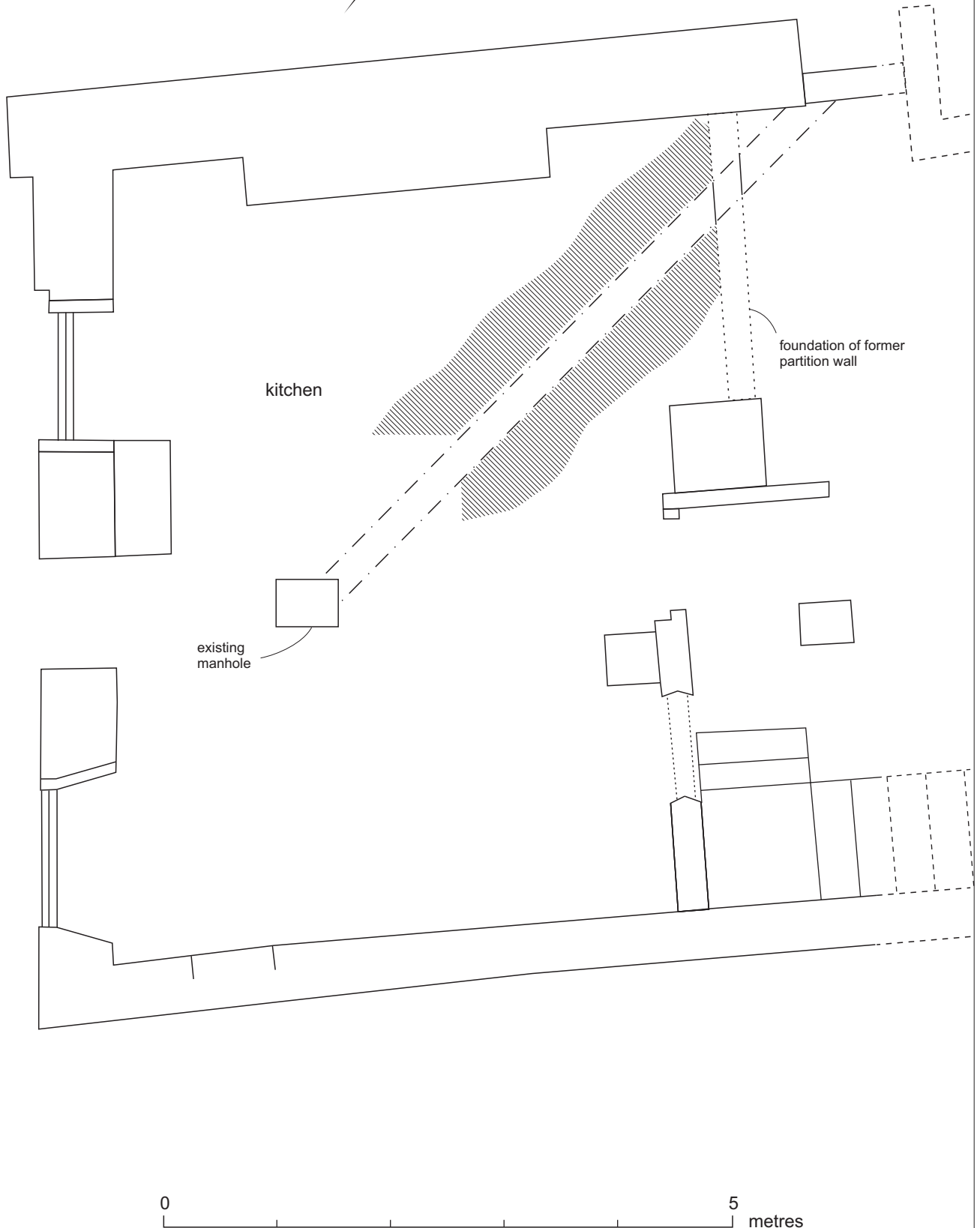


Fig. 4 Plan of the basement showing the location of drainage Trench 2, with the shaded area indicating the approximate position of flagstone flooring exposed in section. Scale 1:50.

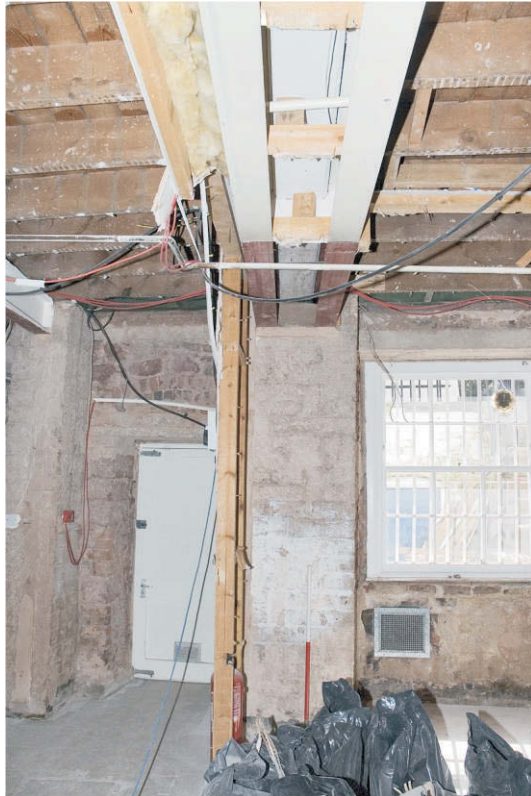


Photo 1. The front basement room showing the original chamfered ceiling beam flanked by a pair of modern steel beams. Scale 1m. View south-west.



Photo 2. View of the possible service lift as seen from the basement rear room on the north-west side. View north-west.

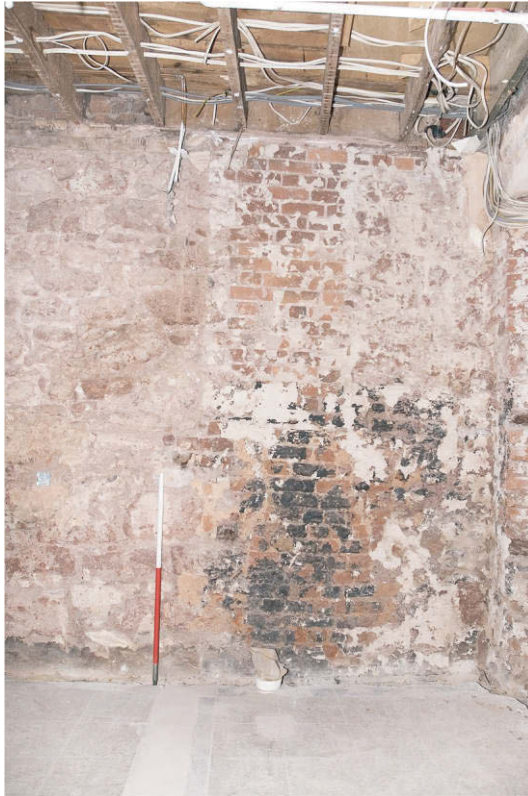


Photo 3. The front basement room showing the brick chimney flue with brick blocking exposed in the south-east wall after stripping. Scale 1m. View south-east.



Photo 4. The front basement room showing the high-level remains of an original brick partition wall, supported by steelwork, that divided front from rear rooms on the north-west side. Scale 1m. View north.



Photo 5. Original studwork between the front and rear rooms of the basement on the south-east side, with mortices for a stud and a possible door-head beam. Scale 1m. View north.



Photo 6. View towards the original basement stairs with an original brick floor below, exposed after the removal of a screen wall. Scale 1m. View east.



Photo 7. View of the drainage trench in the basement front room showing the southern limit of a flagstone floor below the modern concrete. Scale 1m (0.50m in view). View north-west.



Photo 8. View of the original brickwork of the rear wall of the building at ground-floor level, showing the inserted door, with a concrete lintel, in the north-west corner. Scale 1m. View west.



Photo 10. The second-floor rear room following the removal of a modern partition and the raising of boards, exposing a large floor beam and the original window splay in the rear wall. Scale 0.25m. View north-east.



Photo 11. A view of the wine cellar in the north-east corner of the Basement. Scale 1m. View north-east.