

**195 HIGH STREET, EXETER:  
A TOWN HOUSE AND SHOP OF C. 1700**

**Prepared for Greggs PLC**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

This report presents the results of historic building recording undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) in November 2010 at No. 195 High Street, Exeter (SX 91938 92615; Fig. 1). The property is a grade II listed building of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (no. 481138). The recording was commissioned by Greggs PLC and was undertaken during conversion of the ground floor and basement of the vacant property into a food outlet. The work was required under condition 3 of the grant of Listed Building Consent (application 10/1493/07). Guidance on the scope of the required works was provided to Greggs by the Exeter City Council Archaeology Officer in an e-mail dated 11 November 2010.

## 2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The building occupies a rectangular plot bounded to the southeast by High Street and to the southwest by Parliament Street. The site may originally have formed part of a larger burgage plot extending back to Waterbeer Street. The rear of the site was formerly occupied by parts of No. 196 High Street and No. 23 Waterbeer Street. These properties were demolished for the construction of the Guildhall Shopping Centre in the 1970s. No. 196 High Street was demolished without record in 1973, although limited observations identified the presence of 16th-century features within the main tenement and the rear range behind No. 195 High Street (Exeter City Historic Environment Record (EC HER) entry 11180). Excavations following the demolition of this property (and others to the northeast) exposed a deep sequence of archaeological deposits. Excavations under No. 196 High Street uncovered evidence for Saxo-Norman timber buildings, and features of this period were shown to predate the cellar walls of the later (presumably 16th-century) houses. The present tenement boundaries were established in the late 14th or 15th century (EC HER entries 11180 and 11181).

A rapid visual survey of the property was prepared by EA in August 1998 prior to internal alterations (Parker 1999). A basic description of the whole building was made, with the exception of the basement, which was not inspected and whose presence may not have been known. This description is included as appendix 1 of this report.

In September 2010 an historic building appraisal of the property was prepared by EA to identify and assess impacts of the proposed conversion on the historic building (Passmore 2010a). The development of the property based on available evidence was put forward, and a revised version of this history of the site incorporating evidence from the recent observations is presented in section 6.

## 3. METHOD

The recording was undertaken in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Work* prepared by EA (Passmore 2010b). All areas of stripping out of modern partitions and cladding on the ground floor and basement were monitored and exposed historic fabric was recorded prior to the insertion of new partitions and cladding. The extent of this stripping was less than had been anticipated when the historical building appraisal was prepared. The main areas stripped were parts of the ceilings of the basement and ground floor and, again on both levels, the main rear wall of the building. Historic fabric on the upper floors of the building was not affected by the works, although the phased floor plans produced in the appraisal have been updated in light of new observations on the development of the building.

The following method was utilised to record exposed historic fabric:

- A photographic record using black-and-white print film supplemented by use of a high-quality digital camera for interpretation and reporting.
- Production of floor plans and the interior elevation of the main rear wall of the building.
- A written record outlining the evidence for historic fabric, an interpretation of this evidence, and an outline of the development of the building based on these observations.

This report presents an updated version of the description and development of the building put forward in the appraisal report. Modern partitions and panelling are not described, but where retained are depicted on the accompanying figures.

#### 4. THE BASEMENT AND GROUND FLOOR: THE 2010 RECORDING (figs 2-4)

##### *The Basement* (Figs 2 and 4; photos 1-3)

The basement occupies the space under the main building (formed by a large room measuring 10.1m by 4.7m), but also extends to the rear where there are two small, brick-vaulted cellars. Where visible, the front, side and rear walls of the basement are constructed of stone, although most remained obscured by render, as well as 19th-century and modern panelling. The front and dividing walls of the cellars are constructed of brick. This difference in material may well be evidence that the whole of the basement has been retained from an earlier building, and that the rear cellars are secondary, inserted features, perhaps wine cellars.

The only exposed feature in the stone masonry is a coal chute, covered over at street level, in the south-east wall.

The northern cellar has an arched opening and a doorway set back from the front face (Photo. 1). It has a concrete floor that supports two concrete block walls, possibly separating a former cubicle from a larger toilet. The southern cellar has a rectangular door opening, as well as a second slightly smaller, now blocked, opening (Photo. 2). Part of the vaulted ceiling has been removed, and this void has been utilised for the new lift between the two floors.

The ceiling and ground floor are supported on three long, massive beams, one of which is chamfered. One beam is supported on a wooden corbel set into the wall. Where exposed, approximately half of the original floor joists survive, the remainder having been removed. Evidence from the sockets indicates that the joists themselves are fixed with tusk tenons. Both the beams and the joists display laths indicating that these timbers were covered by a lath and plaster ceiling. It is clear that the ceiling was not suspended, and that the beams projected below the adjacent ceiled areas, and were painted white. Most of the floorboards have been removed and replaced by a wooden structure supporting the modern ground floor. However, a small area of original, wide floorboards survives below the present floor (Photo. 3).

The original position of the stairs has not been identified. However, it is clear from a scar in the paint of the northern beam that at one time the stairs were located in the middle of the northern bay. Additional sockets in this beam may be associated with the stairs.

Three additional supports had been placed under the beams – a large wooden post, and two cast-iron columns, one of which is inscribed with the maker’s name “Garton & King Exeter”.

**Ground floor** (Figs 2 and 4; Photo. 4)

Following removal of the modern partitions, an earlier layout of the ground floor was exposed, comprising a large front shop, with a small store and lobby to the rear. Whether the shop was divided into smaller rooms (including a domestic kitchen) is not known. The lobby gives access to the rear corridor that leads to a fire exit into Parliament Street and the stairs to the upper floors. Where visible the walls are constructed using red brick (as seen on the exterior Parliament Street elevation), although a limited exposure of stonework was visible within the shop front. On the evidence from the first floors, it is likely there was at least one, possibly two, fireplaces in the south-west elevation.

The ceiling arrangement divides the ground floor into four bays – two equally-spaced middle bays, a front bay containing the shop front, and a larger rear bay. The presence of a larger rear bay may add weight to the arguments that domestic accommodation was situated to the rear of the shop. The three main beams have been boxed over and are largely obscured. Contemporary joists were exposed within the front bay, and both the beams and joists display scars of a lath and plaster ceiling. One joist contains three pegholes. This may represent the position of a partition below or could be an indication of reuse. This ceiling was replaced in *c.* 1800 by a lower ceiling supported on new, thinner joists; the beams were boxed over at this time (Photo. 4). The new ceiling was of lath and plaster and supported a wooden cornice, much of which survives. Curiously there is a break in the cornice in the middle bay that appears to be an original feature. This could simply represent the ends of the wood used, but appears to represent something further, now missing, perhaps a thin decorative feature or the position of a partition. Elsewhere in this bay historic fabric had been disturbed by the insertion of a modern beam. In one location the later lath and plaster was also visible overlying an earlier thick layer of grey-painted plaster. The cornice in the rear part of the building, noted as being of early date in the 1998 and the 2010 appraisal, is actually a modern wooden feature.

The walls of the rear store, where exposed, are of red brick, whilst the upper part of the east wall – below a roof light – is formed from lath and plaster covered with embossed wallpaper mimicking tongue-and-grooved boards. Elsewhere either plaster or later cement render is visible. The fabric incorporates steel posts and a steel lintel over the doorway representing 20th-century alterations. Behind the lath and plaster the brickwork curves inwards to meet a smaller skylight over the store. Within the north elevation is a brick-blocked doorway.

The upper floors are accessed by a very fine late 17th-century staircase. The lower section between the ground and first floors was replaced in the 19th century. At its base three steps lead up to a half-landing, where there is access to a store under the first-floor toilets. The partitions forming the sides of the stairs are timber framed, with that on the east side infilled with brick nogging. The end of the framing on the west side is marked by a wooden post set on a replacement stone pad. The upper sides of the stairs are lined with large boards.

No alterations to the small store behind the stairs were undertaken and its phasing remains unclear. Essentially, it appears to be of one phase, *c.*1700, with a blocked arched opening in the east wall. The fabric to the north also incorporates an inserted recess, and this fabric appears to abut the north (rear) wall of the main building.

## 5. THE UPPER FLOORS (Figs 2-4)

The upper floors have hardly been altered since the 1998 survey, and all the historic architectural features recorded in 1998 survive. No alterations to the historic fabric were undertaken in 2010.

The description prepared at that date presented in appendix 1 and the locations of features are shown on Figs 2-3. On all floors the windows in the rear elevations (overlooking the courtyard/light well) are all modern replacements and no historic windows survive. Masonry around these windows has also been altered. Other minor alterations include the replacement of some floorboards and covering of historic floors with carpet.

On the first floor the fireplace in the front room has been boarded up, but part of the 19th-century grate lies within the room. The condition of this fireplace is not known but the removal of the grate may indicate this is poorer than in 1998. The front of this room has been raised up, an alteration contemporary with changes to the ceiling level of the ground floor.

On the second and third floors the front of the building is divided into two rooms. The arrangement of these partitions is odd, and their antiquity is not known. On the second floor the partition is clearly a secondary feature. On the third floor the partition overlies the skirting board on the front wall indicating it is a later addition. However, at the north end of the room the partition retains early door frames and architraves that connect with other partitions, which indicates that they must be original or a very early addition.

## 6. DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUILDING

The site lies within the core of the Roman military fortress and later civil town, as well as the medieval city. Excavations in the 1970s at the rear of the property have demonstrated that archaeological deposits of Roman military date survive below medieval and later buildings. Excavations under No. 196 High Street also uncovered evidence for Saxo-Norman timber buildings, and features of this period were shown to predate the cellar walls of the later (then upstanding) houses. The present tenement boundaries were established in the late 14th or 15th century.

In the 15th and early 16th centuries the larger tenement of Nos 196-197 High Street was divided into two properties, and from the limited archaeological evidence it appears the houses on these tenements were rebuilt. It is possible that on each new tenement a pair of properties was constructed (i.e. Nos 195-196 and Nos 197-198). This is a phenomenon recorded elsewhere in the city – a particular good sequence of paired buildings survive at Nos 41-2, 43-44, and 46-47 High Street; Parker *forthcoming*). The former 16th-century features at the rear of 195 (described as being situated within the now-demolished No. 196 High Street) is probably evidence that the two buildings formed part of the same larger tenement. Timber-framing in the party wall between Nos 197 and 198 High Street is also evidence for the same arrangement on that tenement (3-D reconstruction drawing to appear in Parker *forthcoming*).

The earliest architectural features in No. 195 High Street date to the late 17th century. A 16th-century wooden overmantel, now in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, removed from No. 195 before 1930, may have come from the first-floor front room, where there is a blank space above the fireplace (Parker 1999, 2). If this identification of its position within the

building is correct then the bas-relief must have been reused, perhaps from an earlier house on the site.

The house represents a rebuilding – around 1700, but perhaps on the basis of some of the carpentry a little earlier – of the front block of an earlier house. Only the basement was retained from the earlier structure. The earlier house would have comprised a front block, courtyard and rear (kitchen) block with a connecting gallery. Contrary to the discussion presented in section 6 of the appraisal report, the historic building recording undertaken during the conversion has demonstrated that the layout of the ground and upper floors does not relate to an earlier building. The size of the cellar indicates that the present shop is on the footprint of the front block of the medieval building. At this date it would be expected that all household functions (such as cooking) would be undertaken within the main house, and although the location of a kitchen within the building has not been positively located, the rebuilding of the house may provide a context for the transfer of the rear block to No. 196 (with the kitchen brought into main house). The cellars within the basement may have been used as wine cellars.

Some 18th- and 19th-century alterations were noted in 1998. The 2010 recording has identified as phase of alterations around *c.* 1800 that includes the rebuilding of part of the front elevation and the installation of a new slightly lower ceiling on the ground floor. Other alterations include the provision of cast-iron grates in the fireplaces, replacement of the lower flight of stairs to the first floor and replacement (and more recent removal) of the stairs to the basement, the installation of tongue and grooved panelling on the ground floor and basement, and alterations to the rear store on the ground floor. Overall, most of these fittings relate to the more recent commercial use of the property.

During the 20th century this commercial use continued, with, not surprisingly, most activity taking place on the ground floor. The upper floors had until recently been used as offices, serviced by the rear (fire) door in Parliament Street, and consequently few significant alterations have been undertaken. It appears that the basement went out of use in the 20th century, and was only reoccupied after 1998.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The recording was commissioned by Greggs PLC and managed for them by Kim Read and for EA by J.P. Allan. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Passmore, with input from J.P. Allan. The report illustrations were prepared by T. Ives.

## SOURCES CONSULTED

Exeter City Historic Environment Record entries 11180 and 11181

Parker, R.W. *forthcoming* ‘The transformation of the building stock in Exeter, 1450-1700’, in Allan, J., Alcock, N., and Dawson, D. (eds) *West Country Households, 1500-1700*, Soc. Post-Med. Archaeol. Monograph.

Parker, R.W. 1999 *195 High Street*, Exeter Archaeology no-number report.

Passmore, A.J. 2010a *Historic Building Appraisal of 195 High Street, Exeter*, Exeter Archaeology Report Number 10.62.

Passmore, A.J. 2010b *Written Scheme of Work for Historic Building recording at 195 High Street, Exeter* (EA project number 7408).



## Appendix 1: The 1998 survey

### 195 HIGH STREET

No. 195 High Street is a large late 17th-century house which stands on the north-west side of High Street at the corner of Parliament Street, in the historic parish of St. Pancras. The building is not listed. The following observations were made on an informal visit during alterations in August 1998. A rapid visual survey of the building was made, but this was by no means comprehensive, and many historic features may remain unidentified.

The building occupies a rectangular plot which may originally have formed part of a larger burgage plot extending to Waterbeer Street at the rear. The plot is shown as continuous on Coldridge's map of the city made in 1819, however it must later have been subdivided, since the rear part of the site was occupied by parts of No. 196 High Street and by No. 23 Waterbeer Street until the demolition of these properties for the construction of the Guildhall Shopping Centre in the 1970s. No. 195 High Street is five storeys tall, including a cockloft within the roof. There may also be a cellar, though this was not visited. The roof is gabled at the rear and hipped at the front, where it is concealed by a low parapet. The front elevation has been altered or rebuilt in the 18th or 19th centuries, and is now severely plain, with two pairs of 18th- or 19th-century sash windows on each storey, and a modern shop-front on the ground floor. The front elevation is rendered, but is almost certainly of brick. The rear elevation and the side elevation to Parliament Street are also of brick, which appears to be laid in Flemish bond. There is a 17th-century, two-light mullioned window on the second floor overlooking Parliament Street. The rear of the building has a projecting 'turret' or rear gallery block with its own, hipped, slate roof. This may have formerly connected with a rear range later annexed by No. 196 High Street (A 17th-century plaster overmantel and large ovolo-moulded window preserved in the new building on the site of No. 196 may well have come from such a rear block).

The ground floor of the building has been gutted, but at the time of the survey it retained evidence of having been divided into two rooms. The rear room had moulded plaster cornices suggesting a high-status room. No other features were revealed in this area by the alterations. The upper floors are approached by a very fine late 17th-century staircase, resembling the staircase (now damaged by fire) at No. 18 North Street nearby. The staircase has turned balusters, square newels and a square handrail. There are now seven flights, the lowest flight having been replaced by a 19th-century staircase in a different position. On the first floor, the front room retains excellent 17th-century bolection-moulded, large field panelling to the rear and side walls, but not the front wall, which has been altered. There is a bold cornice and a bolection-moulded architrave to the main door. The fireplace has also been altered, and has a 19th-century grate. Adjoining the fireplace is a fitted cupboard with a gothic arch. The spandrels of the arch are decorated with painted arabesques in gold.

The rooms on the upper floors retain several fitted cupboards and many also retain fielded-panelled doors with L-hinges. On the third floor in the rear room is a fine 17th-century bolection-moulded fireplace, fitted with a later hob-grate. The original roof of the building also survives and is visible within the cockloft. It has four trusses of massive scantling, at least two levels of squared purlins, and diagonal windbraces. The hipped roof at the front is a later modification.

One outstanding feature of the building, unfortunately no longer *in situ*, is a carved *bas-relief* representing the Judgement of Paris. This is of German or Flemish origin and probably dates from the 16th century. The panel is most likely to have come from the first-floor front room, where there is a blank space above the fireplace of roughly the appropriate dimensions, with three short, fielded panels above. The carving was acquired from the house in 1928 and is now preserved in the RAM Museum (J. Allan, pers. comm.).

The house is an interesting survival. It probably represents a late 17th-century rebuilding of the front block of an earlier house, which survived in part at the rear and was later annexed to No. 196 High Street. The original plan of the house appears to survive intact on the upper floors, and a number of features of great architectural interest remain, especially the staircase and the bolection moulded panelling.

R. W. Parker 22nd February, 1999



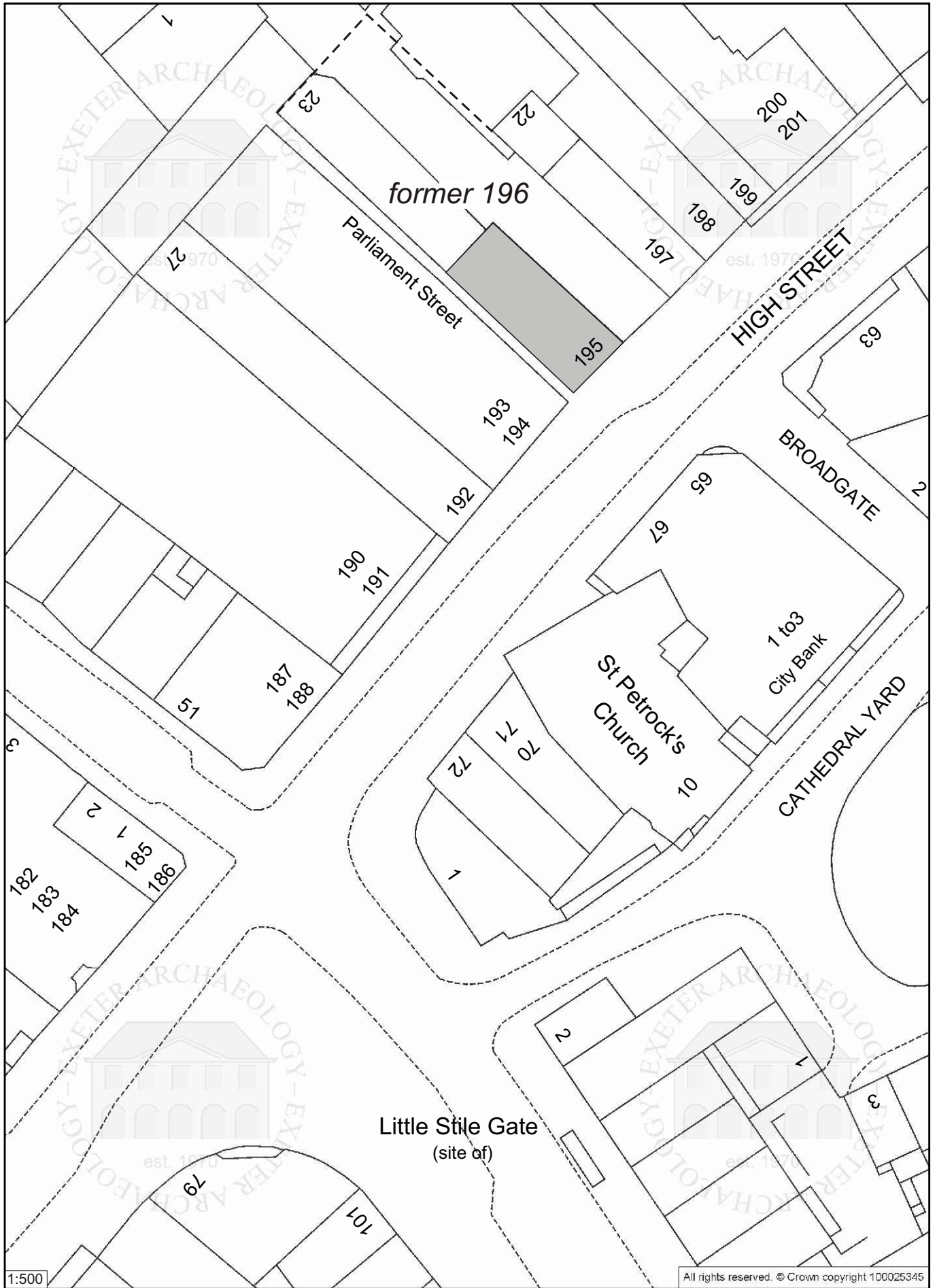
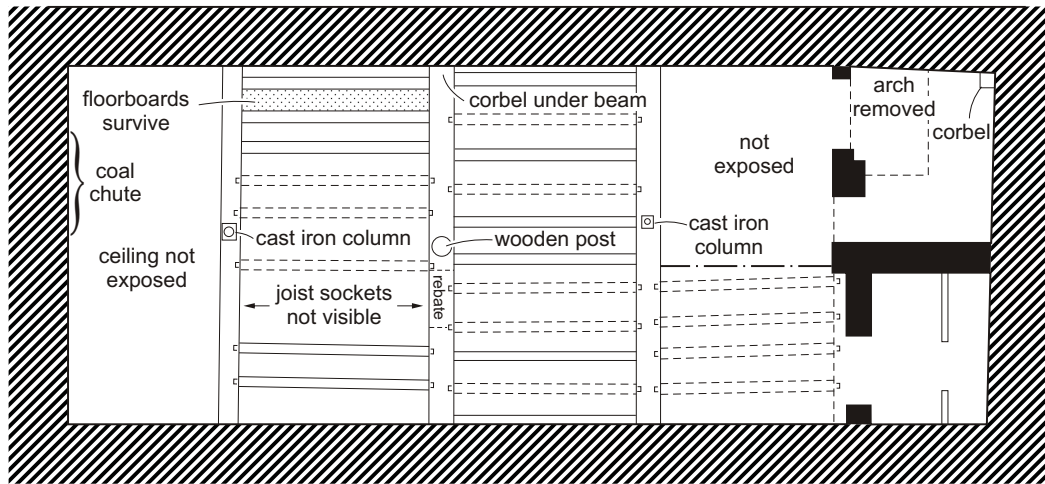
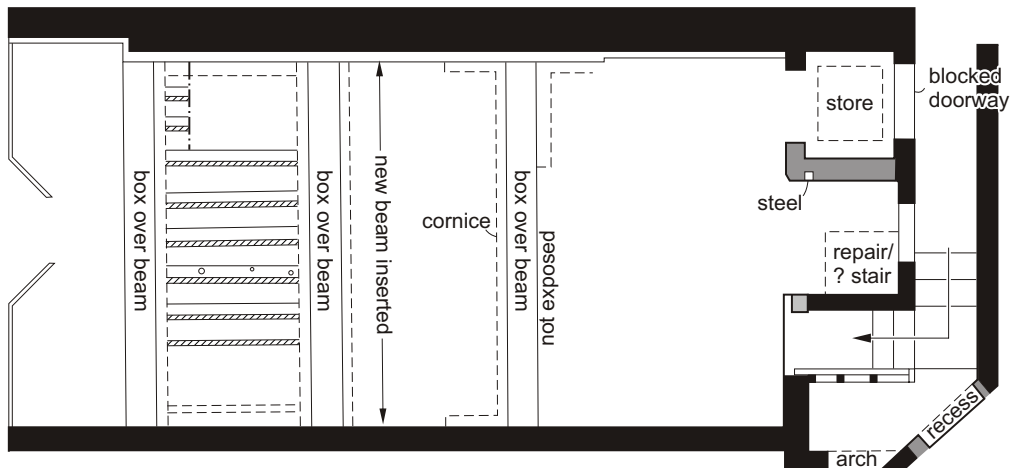


Fig. 1 Location of site.

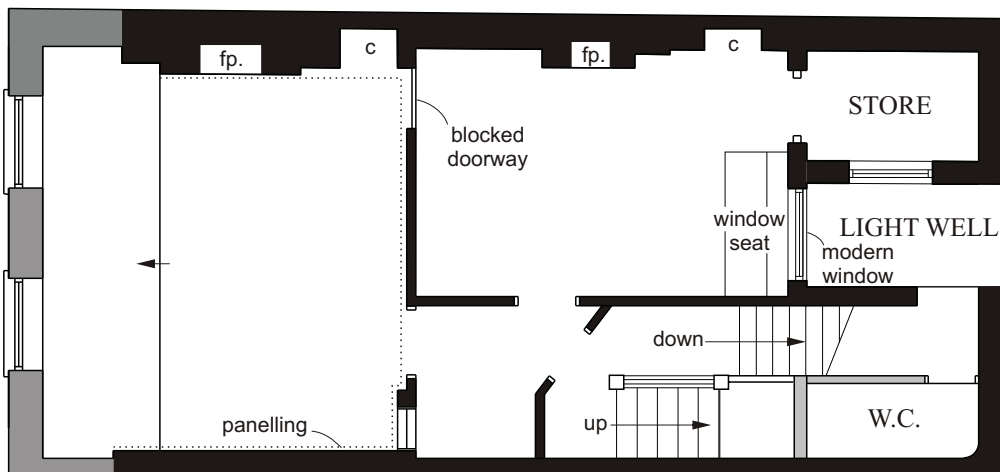
## Basement



## Ground floor



## First floor



15th/ 16th century

18th century

20th century

c = cupboard

c. 1700

19th century

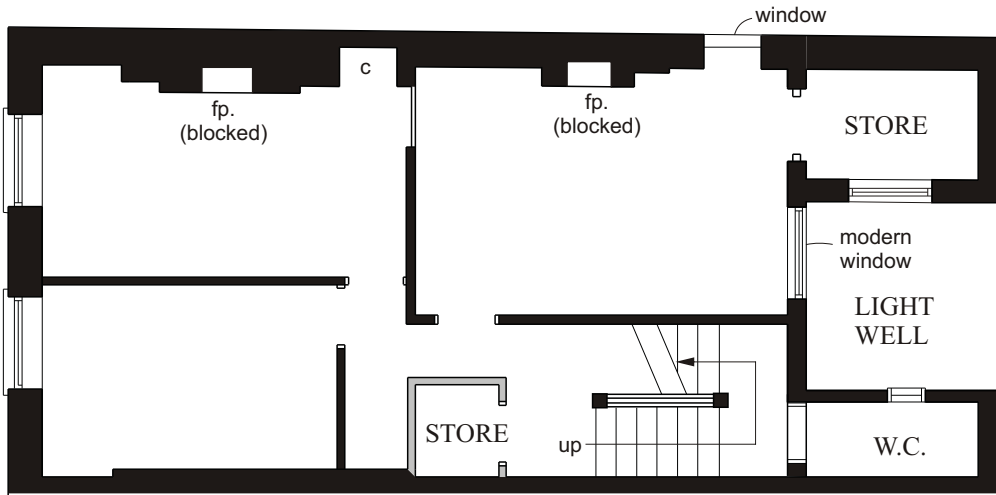
secondary joists

0

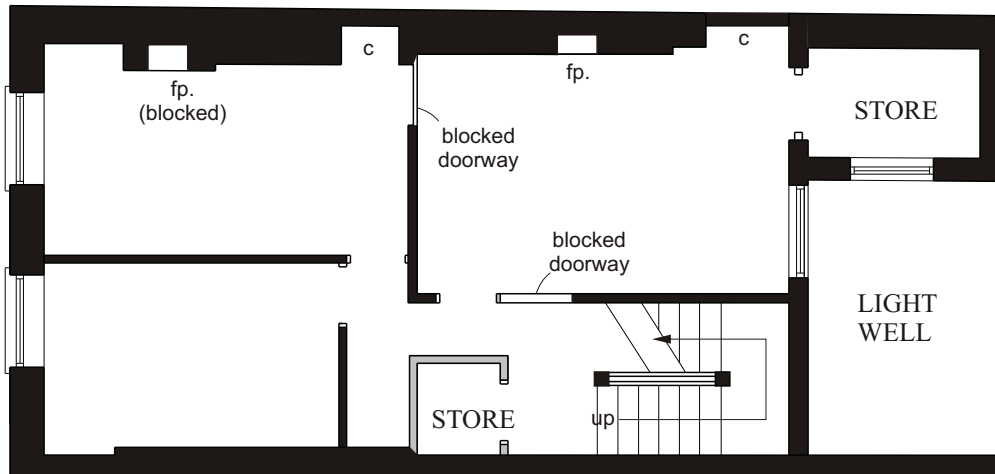
5 metres

Fig. 2 Plans of the basement, ground and first floors.

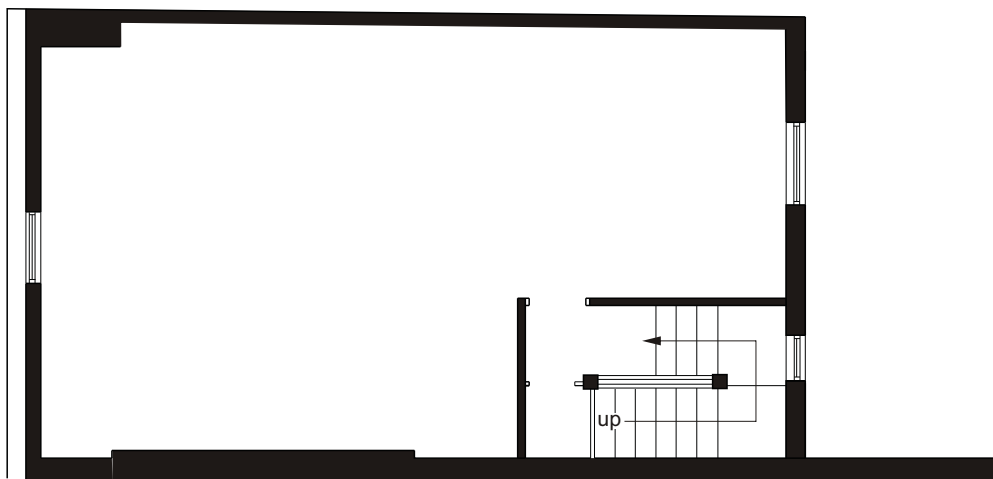
## Second floor



## Third floor



## Attic



c. 1700       20th century  
 19th century      c = cupboard

0  5 metres

Fig. 3 Plans of the second and third floors and the attic.

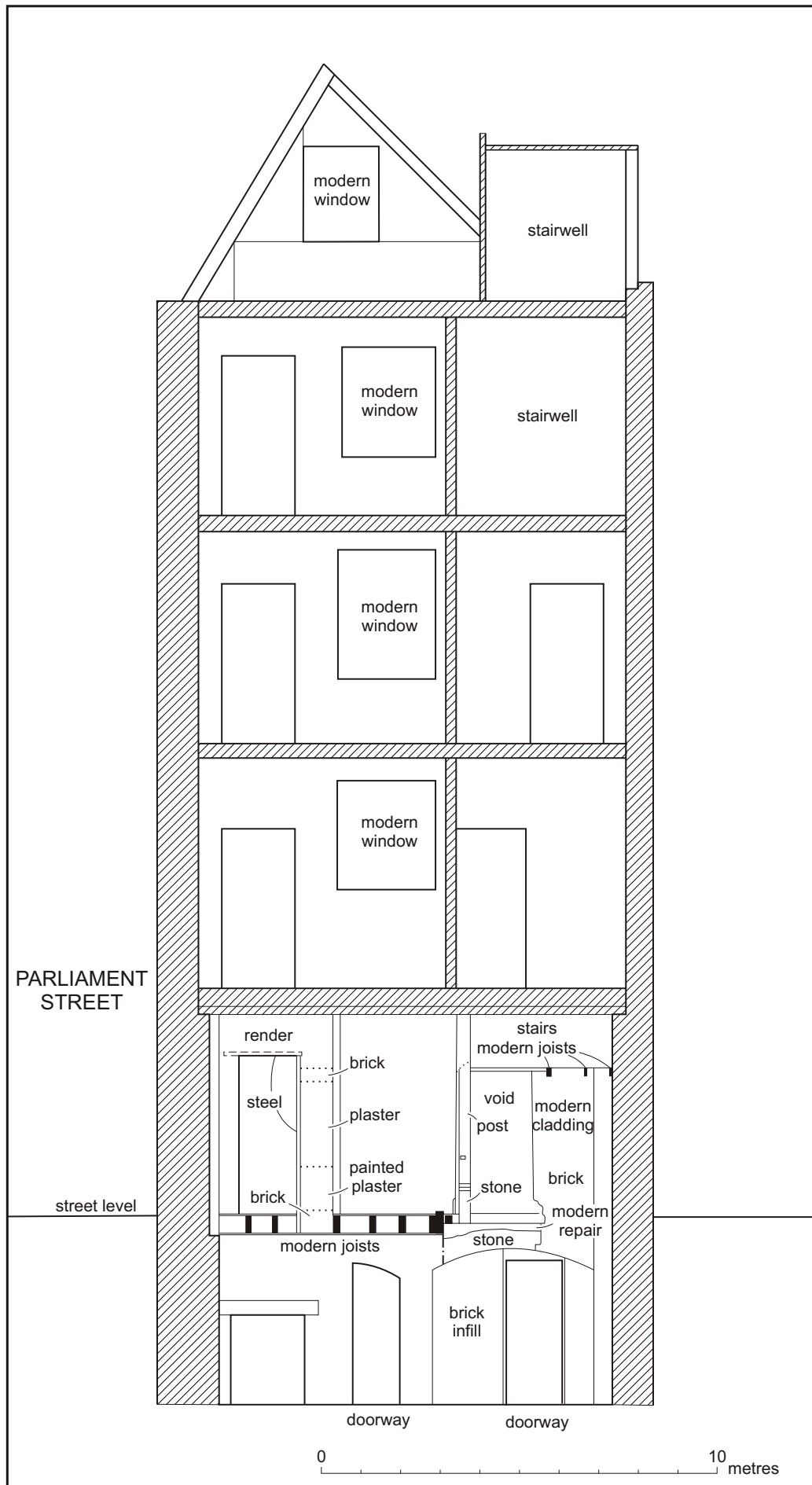


Fig. 4 Internal rear elevation.



Photo. 1 The arched cellar opening in the rear wall of the basement, looking northwest. 1m scale.



Photo. 2 The low door in the cellar in the basement, looking northwest.



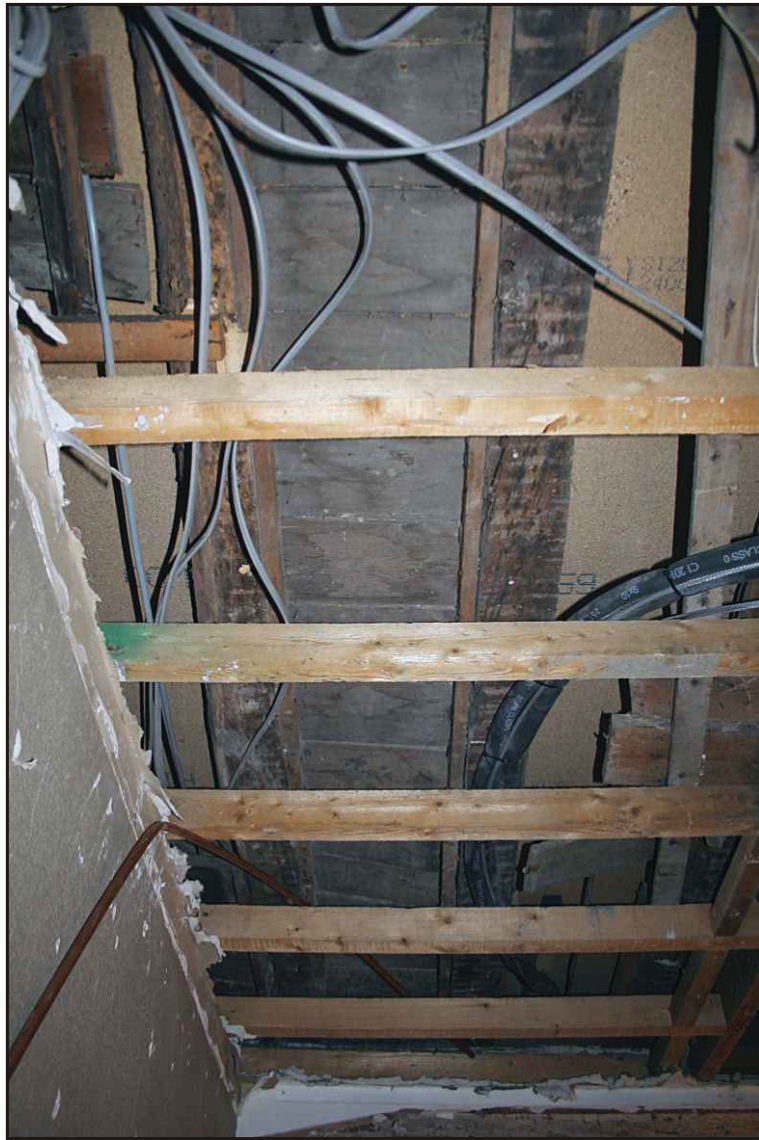


Photo. 3 The ceiling in the basement showing joists and original floorboards above, looking northwest.



Photo. 4 The ground-floor ceiling showing two phases of joists and the wooden cornice, looking northeast.