

**CROSSMEAD HALL, ST THOMAS,
EXETER**

Prepared for Taylor Wimpey

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Report No. 11.29

Project Number 7264

March 2011

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Exeter Archaeology (EA) and presents the results of an archaeological investigation undertaken in February and March 2011 of the demolished 19th-century Crossmead Hall, Exeter (SX 8992 9153; Fig. 1). The report was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey to discharge condition 12 attached to the grant of planning permission (no. 08/1476/03) for the demolition of buildings at Crossmead and the construction of a new residential development. Crossmead Hall was demolished prior to the required archaeological record being produced. As a consequence the ECC Archaeology Officer required that material relating to the building should be collated and presented in a report. The results of this exercise are presented on this document.

2. AIMS

The aims of the investigation were set out in an e-mail from the ECC Archaeology Officer to EA on 25 May 2010. The aims were to collect photographs and plans/drawings of the building and present them in a report accompanied by a short description. A secondary aim was to deposit the collated record and report in a museum. The archive from this investigation and EA's 2005 assessment of the site has been prepared and it is expected that this would be deposited at the RAMM, Exeter, within three months of their renewing acceptance of archaeological archives.

3. METHOD

The following sources of information have been consulted during the preparation of this report:

- Exeter Archaeology's 2005 assessment of the site¹;
- The archive from the 2005 assessment, particularly the photographs taken during the site visit (held by EA, proj. no. 5286); and
- David Lewis' 2007 report on the building².

The main bulk of the text is drawn from analysis of the original architect's drawings (reproduced in EA 2005) and the photographs presented in David Lewis' report. The sources listed below were also investigated (as set out in the brief from the ECC Archaeology Officer), but these do not hold any historical information on the site:

- Taylor Wimpey;
- Taylor Wimpey's surveyors, architect and demolition contractor; and
- Exeter City Council planning department.

No replies to correspondence have been received from the University of Exeter or David Lewis. The fate of historic fixtures and fittings is not known.

¹ EA 2005.

² Lewis 2007.

4. CROSSMEAD HALL (Figs 2-3; Photos 1-8)

4.1 **The original 1890s house**

The property was constructed around 1894-5 for John Langdon Thomas, to the design of the local architect James Crocker. The building was originally named Langdon after its owner,³ and was a two-storey property with third floor accommodation in the roof space. A basement was also provided. The building was constructed in the Gothic Revival styles of the mid-late 19th-century, with a number of influences and styles represented in the differing treatment of the elevations (Photos 1-2).⁴ The building was constructed of red brick with Ham stone used around the windows on the east elevation and for the voussoirs on the south elevation. Detailed descriptions of the elevations have been presented by Lewis and are not repeated.

4.1.1 *The ground floor*

On the ground floor the focus of the building was around a central hall with public rooms set around three sides. To the north these were divided from the service rooms by a corridor; these service rooms extended through a range to the west of the main house. The main entrance was on the south side of the building, through the tower, and there was a second, servants', entrance in the north elevation. The principal elevation faced east towards the city, presumably with views down Dunsford Hill towards the Cathedral.

The principal rooms comprised the entrance hall, a dining room, a drawing room, a breakfast room, a conservatory and "Mr Langdon Thomas' room" with en-suite bathroom and lavatory. The provision of this room on the ground floor may imply Mr Langdon Thomas was infirm or disabled and was unable to access the first floor. The 1901 census records that Mr Langdon Thomas was 46 and lived with his wife, son and two daughters, along with a governess, cook, housemaid and nurse. The nurse seems to have had the lowest status of the household implying she was not trained. She may therefore have been a 'nanny' looking after the children, rather than nursing Mr Langdon Thomas. However, if he was disabled rather than infirm, he may simply have required care rather than medical help. With the exception of the conservatory all the principal ground-floor rooms were heated.

The service rooms were situated along the north side of the corridor and comprised stores, a china cupboard, housemaid's pantry, kitchen, scullery, larder, a coal store and a dairy. To the south of the corridor was a wash house and stairs to the first floor, below which was a lavatory (Photo. 5). The stairs had chamfered newel posts with slender, plain balustrades. Only the kitchen and wash house in this range were heated.

The internal decoration was lavish with fine fireplaces, particularly that in the hall, as well as mouldings around the internal doors and windows. Selective use of stained glass – lighting the stairs and the dining room – also provided a contrast in colour and light. The principal rooms were provided with cornices, the finest being in the hall in a modillion style (Photo. 3). The others behind the east elevation are described as being swagged, and these rooms also had reeded skirting boards. The first floor was approached via a staircase with a central landing, above which it divided into two flights (Photo. 4). The underside of these upper flights of stairs was panelled. The balustrades of the stairs and the railings of the first-floor gallery appear to be cast- or wrought-iron, with alternative spiral and curving patterns. Photographs of the building taken in 2007 show the rooms had modern carpets. James

³ Crocker's architect's plans are dated 1893 and the property first appears in a directory of 1896-7; Exeter Archaeology 2005, 4 and associated footnotes.

⁴ A more detailed description of these architectural styles and influences is presented in Lewis 2007.

Crocker's plans indicate that these obscured wooden floors, and a parquet floor was visible in the hall in 2007.

4.1.2 *The first floor*

James Crocker's plan for the first floor does not survive and the descriptions of the first and second floors are based on the photographs reproduced in Lewis 2007 and on Crocker's original section drawings.

The first-floor layout appears to have largely mirrored that on the ground floor, although the bedrooms provided over the service wing were probably larger than the rooms below; these were heated by fireplaces with chimney stacks provided only through the upper floors. A gallery overlooked the entrance hall and led to the first-floor bedrooms and the corridor serving the rooms in the west wing. The decoration in the bedrooms was plainer than that on the ground floor but is recorded as having cast-iron fireplaces with moulded surrounds, run cornices and deep, simple skirting boards.

4.1.3 *The second floor and the roof structure*

Servant's accommodation was provided in the lower part of the roof space; the top of the roof structure was ceiled. These rooms were lit by dormer windows and by round windows in the north elevation; there are further windows in the third floor of the tower. These rooms may have been heated using fireplaces set into chimney stacks recorded on the lower floors. The layout of the rooms is unknown, but accommodation was provided along the length of the west side of the building (comprising at least four rooms), as well as along the south side of the building. The central area (over the gallery) was probably not used as a bedroom and was open to the roof. This area may however have been utilised as a walkway to the rooms on the southern part of the building. The floor was accessed via a flight of stairs in the 'stair turret' attached to the servants' wing (Photo. 6). The stairs were identical to those on the floor below having chamfered newel posts with slender, plain balustrades.

The roof of the main range had a ridge orientated north-south and was supported on queen posts with a high level collar and diagonal struts. The east-west orientated servants' wing had an unusual arrangement. On each truss the principal rafters sat on the wall tops and were secured and braced with a high-level collar and a queen post above. Below the collar two very steep, almost vertical, struts' rising from the edges of the room supported the trusses. This arrangement maximised accommodation space within the range without the need for a central post. A similar arrangement has been recorded at the early 19th-century Westford Mill in Somerset where the wide roof was supported by a King Post (extending down to the floor) with shorter struts also used close to the walls.⁵ The roofs at Crossmead were supplemented by further short sections of pitched roofs over projecting walls and windows. All sections of the roofs were covered in ceramic tiles.

4.1.4 *The basement*

The basement was shown on Crocker's plan and could be entered via stairs from the servant's corridor that led down into a lobby off the main cellar. The cellar could also be accessed using an exterior flight of steps.

⁵ Passmore 2009, 6; pl. 2.

4.2 The 1922 extension

This comprises an extension added to the south of the west end of the service range, and was added when the building was under the ownership of Sir Edgar Plummer.⁶ Its function is unknown, although its near symmetrical layout with internal fireplaces may indicate it provided two servants' quarters. On both floors there were probably two rooms separated by a wall containing fireplaces. There were separate doorways into the ground floor rooms. The first floor rooms were lit by large windows, completely out-of-scale with the other openings in this extension and the earlier building. On the first floor level a corridor was added linking the eastern room with the first floor of the servant's wing. The east elevation was glazed. The design of the roof structure is unknown, but it was covered with ceramic tiles.

To the east of this extension, a wall was constructed across the courtyard and this appears to be contemporary with this extension. A wide carriage opening within this wall had been blocked, presumably in the second half of the 20th-century (Photo. 7). Above the opening was a plaque dated 1922.

4.3 Later alterations

After ownership transferred to the University College of the South West in 1944 few changes were initially made to the interior of the house. The main identified alteration was the removal of the servants' entrance and adjacent windows and their replacement with four windows copying the style of those on the first floor above (Photo. 8). The treatment of the brick voussoirs and window heads was however slightly different. More recently the courtyard had been covered over to form a lounge and bar, and elsewhere kitchen equipment had been fitted with extraction vents and ducts added over the lounge and bar.

By 1955-6 an extension had been added to the north elevation. This was a two-storey brick building with plain elevations incorporating sash windows and vent bricks. It is assumed that openings were made in the north elevation of the house to enter this extension, although no evidence for these has come to light. During the 1980s a covered walkway was added to the west end of the building to connect with a previously-constructed detached dining hall.

5. DISCUSSION

Crossmead was constructed around 1894-5 as a private dwelling called Langdon. The house stood in its own grounds overlooking the city of Exeter. Although rather modest in size the house included a generous array of service rooms and accommodation. The decoration of the ground-floor rooms was particularly fine, although the provision of such details on the first floor was less generous.

During the ownership of Sir Edgar Plummer in the first half of the 20th-century a two storey extension was added to the service wing, probably providing further accommodation. The 1936 Ordnance Survey map shows that Plummer also remodelled the grounds, including adding a flat terrace to the east of the house, along with further enclosed areas (probably terraces), and a building to the west of the house, possibly a garage.⁷

During occupation by the National Fire Service (1942-1944) and then the University the interior of the house appears to have remained relatively unaltered, although it is possible that

⁶ Exeter Archaeology 2005, 4.

⁷ Exeter Archaeology 2005, fig. 7.

the west end of the servants' range was remodelled. Extensions were added to the north and west elevations, and the courtyard infilled.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey and managed for them by I. MacMartin and for EA by T.H. Gent. The report and illustrations were prepared by A.J. Passmore.

SOURCES CONSULTED

Exeter Archaeology. 2005. *Archaeological Assessment of the Crossmead Conference Centre, Barley Lane, Exeter*, Exeter Archaeology No-Number Report.

Lewis, D.W. 2007. *Crossmead, Barley Lane, Exeter: Statement Evaluating Whether Crossmead, Barley Lane, Exeter is Worthy of Statutory Listing*.

Passmore, A.J. 2009. *Westford Mill, Wellington, Somerset: An Archaeological Survey*, Exeter Archaeology Report Number **09.114**.

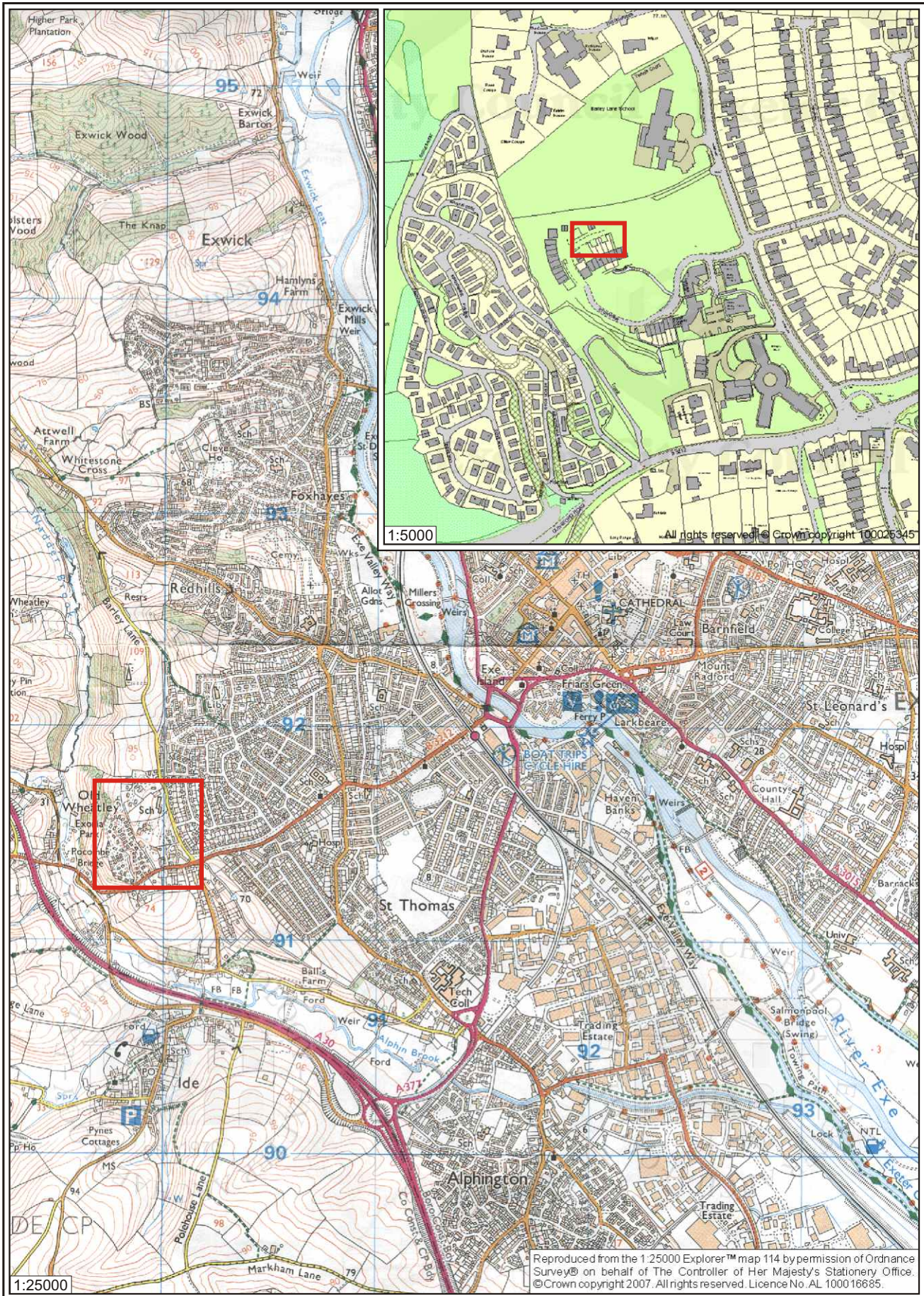


Fig. 1 Location of site. Inset shows location of former house within partially-constructed residential development.

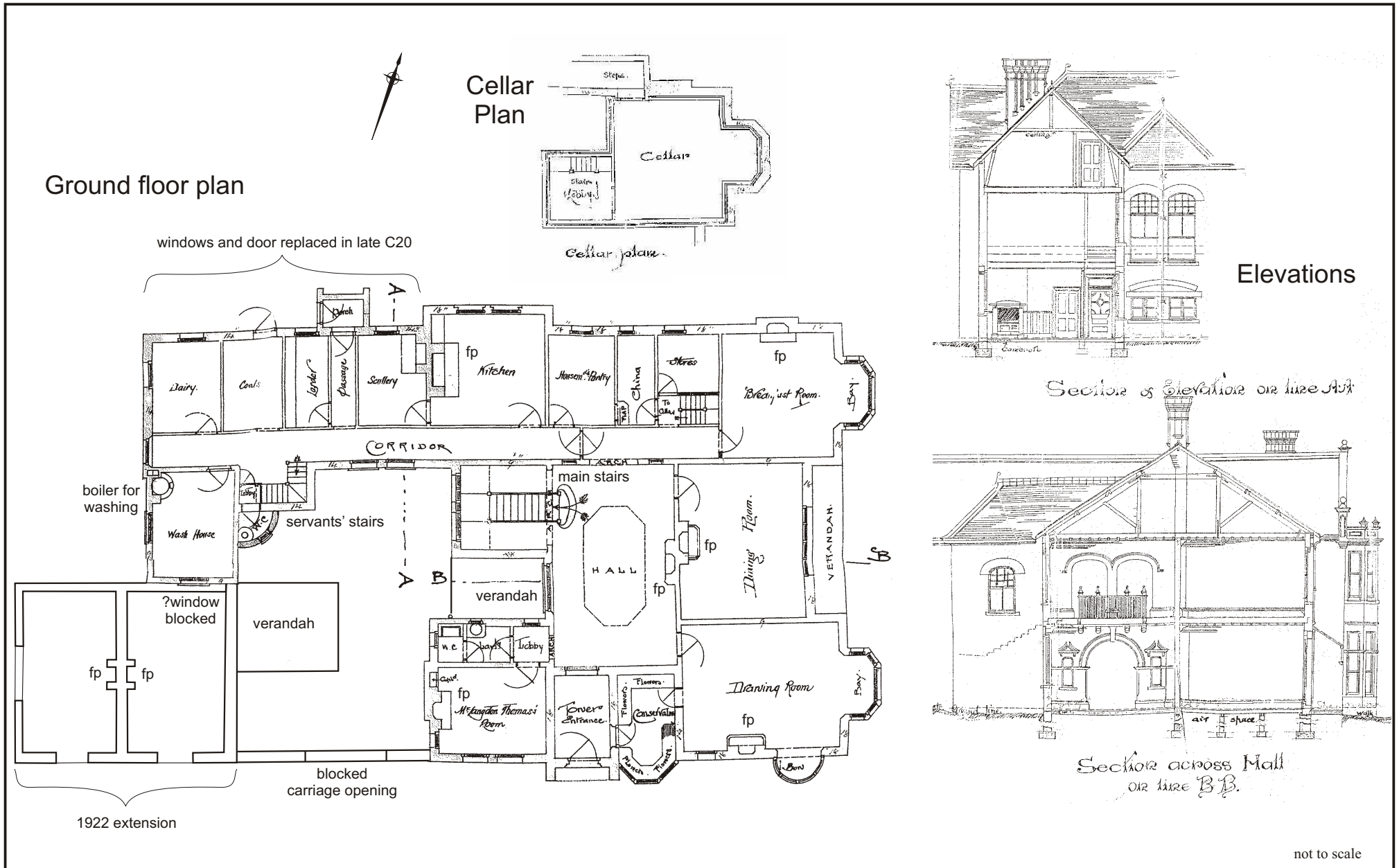


Fig. 2 Plans and sections of Crossmead Hall, drawn in 1893 by James Crocker, FRIBA. Reproduced by courtesy of Exeter City Council Building Control Department (Reference ST 1/1893). Further details have been added based on photographs by D. Lewis.

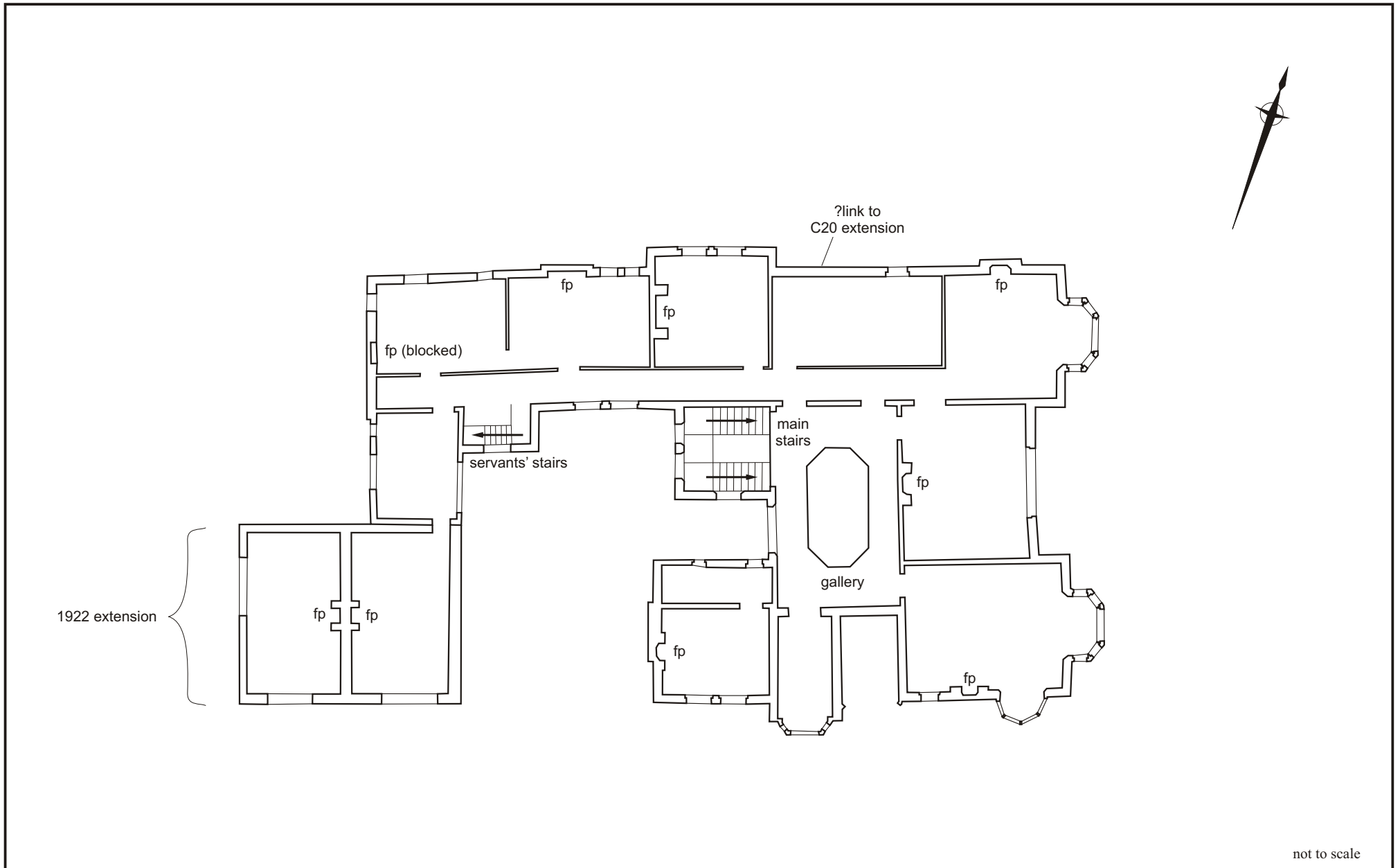


Fig. 3 First-floor plan of Crossmead Hall, based on James Crocker's 1893 ground-floor plan of the building. The internal arrangement is based on photographs by D. Lewis, and is partially conjectural.



Photo. 1 The south elevation photographed in 2005, looking north (Exeter Archaeology).



Photo. 2 The north elevation photographed in 2005 showing late C20 extension, looking south (Exeter Archaeology).



Photo. 3 The hall showing cornice with the gallery above photographed in 2007, looking east (Kathy Metcalfe, Exeter City Council).

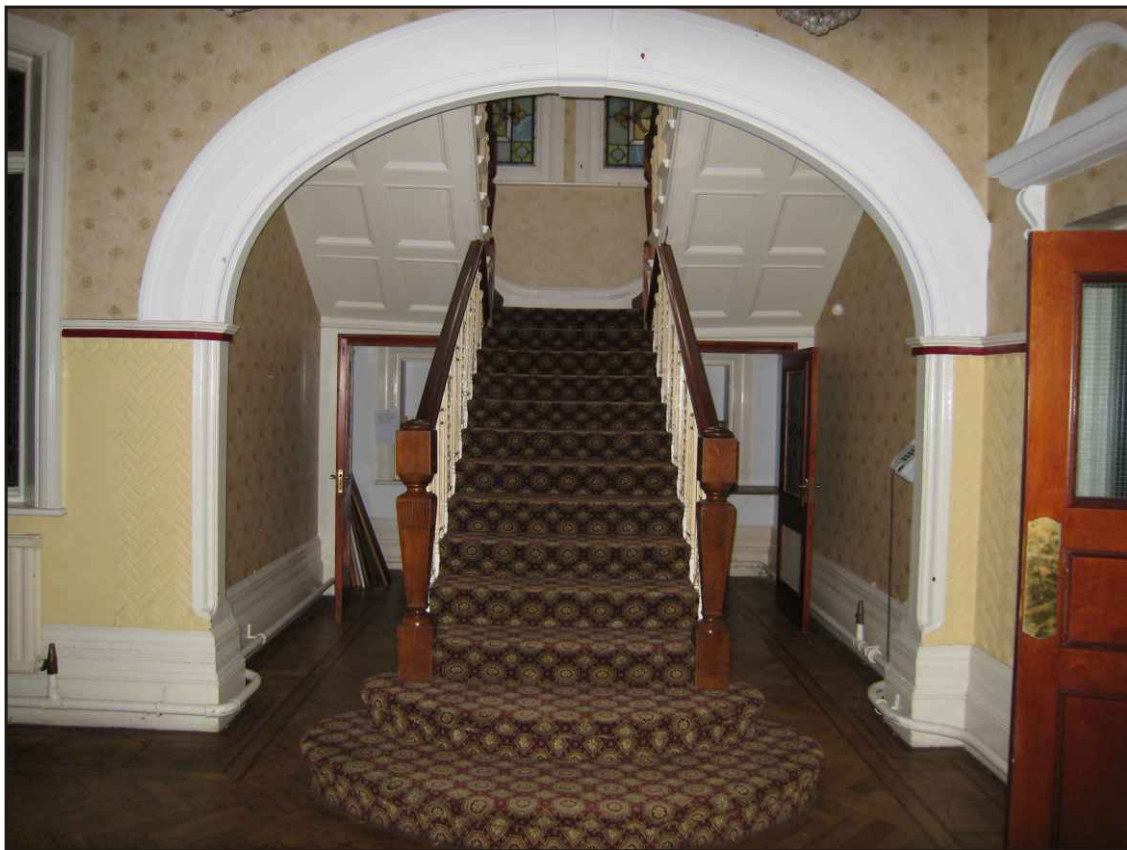


Photo. 4 The main stairs photographed in 2007, looking west (Kathy Metcalfe, Exeter City Council).



Photo. 5 The servants' stairs to the first floor photographed in 2007, looking southwest (Kathy Metcalfe, Exeter City Council).



Photo. 6 Servants' stairs to the second floor photographed in 2007, looking west (Kathy Metcalfe, Exeter City Council).



Photo. 7 The blocked carriage entrance in the 1922 wall enclosing the courtyard photographed in 2005, looking northwest (Exeter Archaeology).



Photo. 8 The north elevation photographed in 2005 showing C20 replacement window openings and link to the dining hall, looking west (Exeter Archaeology).