

Historic Building Record
Outbuildings to the Rear of the George Hotel
North Street
Bishop's Stortford
Hertfordshire

Commissioned by Grovebury Homes Ltd



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NGR TL 48700 21403
Planning Refs: 3/10/2067/FP and 3/10/2133/FP

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SUMMARY

In November 2013 Archaeology South-East (a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, UCL) carried out historic building recording and archaeological monitoring during the conversion of two outbuilding ranges at the rear of The George Hotel, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire. The work was commissioned by Grovebury Homes Ltd, to address a condition placed on planning consent (Ref. 3/10/2067/FP and 3/10/2133/FP) by the archaeological advisors at the Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council, prior to residential conversion into four flats. The hotel is Grade II-listed and dates to the 16th century, but is mentioned in records from 1417.

The outbuildings are half-timbered and curtilage-listed with the hotel, which was one of the town's main coaching inns in the 18th century. They occupy two sides of the hotel courtyard and were probably built in the 18th century as stabling for horses and lodgings for travellers. In the 19th century the north range was extended and the first floor rebuilt to create a meeting hall. Part of the north range also included a coach house, which is now a shop and is outside of the development area.

The survey was conducted in two phases, the first recording the buildings in their 'current' state and the second after stripping-out to record the built fabric as part of monitoring works. Groundworks associated with the scheme were designed to have little or no impact on below-ground deposits.

Conversion to hotel apartments in the mid-20th century had resulted in the retention of few historic fixtures and fittings, but the recording of the timber framing in the west range and the Victorian hall in the north range are of interest. Evidence for historic room layouts, stable fixtures and a Tudor boundary wall were also recorded.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In November 2013 Archaeology South-East (a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, UCL) carried out a historic building record of two outbuilding ranges at the rear of the George Hotel, Bishop's Stortford (NGR TL 48700 21403; Fig. 1). The work was carried out to satisfy a condition placed on planning application references 3/10/2133/FP and 3/10/2067/FP, prior to residential conversion. It was based on recommendation made by the Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC HEU) and outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation by Archaeology South-East (Essex). The outbuilding range is curtilage listed with the hotel, which dates to the 16th century and is mentioned in records from 1417.
- 1.2 Planning applications were submitted to East Herts Council in February 2013 for the change of use of two conjoined courtyard buildings to create two one-bed and two two-bed flats. The buildings stand to the north and west of the courtyard at the George Hotel, which is a Grade 2-Listed building (LB 160929). Traditionally, when the George was a coaching inn, they were part of the stables and outbuilding range but in recent years have been adapted and reused as hotel accommodation and service areas for the hotel. Since the buildings are curtilage listed with the hotel and stand within an Area of Archaeological Significance (No. 114) as identified in the Local Plan, the HCC HEU in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority recommended that a programme of archaeological works be undertaken in order to mitigate the impact of the development on the historic environment. This decision was based on guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012).

2.0 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The recording involved the survey of the building to English Heritage Level 2/3 standards (2006). A Level 2 record is primarily a descriptive record which includes an internal and external record supported by plans and photographs to provide an outline of the building's form, function, date and sequence of development. A Level 3 record is an analytical record and includes an account of the buildings origins, development and use and an analysis of the evidence upon which this has been based. In addition, readily accessible cartographic and documentary resources are drawn upon to better understand the structure and its development within the historic context of its surroundings.
- 2.2 The buildings were recorded during conversion works on two occasions by the author in November 2013. The main recording work was undertaken after the modern room partitions on the first floor had been stripped-out. The second visit was undertaken as part of monitoring works after the ground floor room partitions had been removed, exposing timber-framing on the upper floors. Further monitoring visits on groundworks associated with the scheme that were proposed in the HCC brief and are discussed in section 7.0.
- 2.3 As part of the recording works, external and internal descriptions were made of the buildings noting form, function, built fabric and survival of any historic fixtures and fittings. The drawn record comprised measured plans provided by the architect, annotated on site by the author and included in this report as Figures 4, 5 and 6. Photographs were taken using a digital camera fitted with a wide-angled lens where appropriate. The photographic survey included general external and internal elevations, room views and any surviving architectural detail and fixtures and

fittings. The rear elevations could not be photographed due to their proximity to other buildings. Plans showing the locations of the digital photographic record are included as Appendix 3.

2.4 Cartographic and documentary research was undertaken at the Hertfordshire Local Archives Centre at County Hall, Hertford to understand the history and development of the outbuildings in relation to the former coaching inn.

2.5 The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at Bishop's Stortford Museum in due course. The archive will comprise a hard copy of the report, hard copies of the drawn record and a CD containing a pdf version of the report and full digital photographic record.

3.0 SITE LOCATION AND SETTING

3.1 The George Hotel site is located in the historic core of Bishops Stortford, at NGR: TL 48700 21403, on the corner of North Street and the High Street (Fig. 1). It is bounded by other properties to the north and west in a heavily built-up area of the town. Traditionally the building was a coaching inn and more recently one of the main hotels in the town. The ground floor is now occupied by the Prezzo restaurant chain.

3.2 The outbuildings stand at the west end of a small, narrow courtyard accessed from North Street and comprise the former north and west stable ranges for the hotel, forming an L-shaped outline. The survey suggests they were built in the 18th century and given the age of the hotel it is likely they replaced earlier buildings used for these purposes. They are two-storeyed half-timbered structures latterly used as hotel accommodation and service areas. Part of the ground floor service area of the west range is not included in the proposals and the proposals do not include the former coach house on the east end of the northern range, which is occupied by the neighbouring Oxfam shop. The courtyard has modern paved surfaces providing a patio in the southern half and vehicle access to the north.

4.0 STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

Listed Buildings

4.1 The George Hotel is a Grade II Listed building (LB 160929), the earliest part of which is the mid-16th century east range that faces onto North Street. The outbuildings are not listed in their own right but are curtilage-listed because they share the same site. The list description provides the following information:

Originally C16 or earlier timber framed, remodelled late C19. Three storeys. Front to High Street pargetted, old red tile roof, 4 gables. Tudor style drip moulds to 1 stand second floor casements. Ground floor canted sash bay. Block to North Street stuccoed, steep slate roof. Banded ground floor. Five windows to street, sash with architrave and cornice surrounds. Reeded architrave door surround with modern columned porch. Paired bracketed eaves. Double-hung sash windows on High Street gable end. Courtyard elevation shows C16/17 gables and moulded C19 brick chimneys. Interior has exposed C16 and C17 ceiling beams (RCHM (1911) 65).

Areas of Archaeological Significance

- 4.2 The site is located within Area of Archaeological Significance No. 114, which encompasses the historic core of Bishops Stortford, including the medieval settlement, which is postulated to have grown from an earlier Anglo-Saxon settlement centred on North Street.

5.0 HISTORIC BACKGROUND (including cartographic evidence)

- 5.1 The George is believed to be Bishop's Stortford's oldest recorded inn and is located in a prominent position on the crossroads and opposite the market place. Deeds from 1417 record its sale by Thomas Petworth to Nicholas Coleman (Smith 1976). In 1499 it is listed as 'a messuage with four shops annexed to it' (Cooper 2005). The oldest part is the east wing facing onto North Street, which is described in the List description as 16th century or earlier (LB 160929). A Town Guide from 1925 records the 'remnants of a 16th century timber-framed house inside carrying the same sign'.
- 5.2 Charles I dined at the George in 1629 and the church bells were rung to greet him. In 1675 the rent included a large barn (Smith 1976) or malthouse that was later replaced by five cottages, which had been incorporated into the main building by 1840 (Jolliffe and Jones 1995).
- 5.3 By 1700 it had been held by the Hawkins family for 300 years (Stratton 2004). Bishop's Stortford was an important coaching town in the 18th century, en route from London to Cambridge, and The George was one of its main coaching inns. Such places provided travellers with food and lodgings and a change of horse. In the late 18th and early 19th century the inn housed the Excise Office (Stratton 2004).
- 5.4 Between 1824 and 1841 Henry Gilby (of the famous gin family) ran a coach from The George to The Bull at Aldgate; daily during the summer months and every other day in the winter. He and other coach owners were forced out of business when the railway arrived (Bishop's Stortford Town Guide 1925). The stables were housed on the first floor of No.3 North Street, the current Oxfam shop. Horses climbed a long ramp at the back of the building to get to the stables from the inn yard. On the upper floor of the Oxfam shop, worn black timbers indicate the positions of former stalls and there is an iron manger hanging on the wall. Apparently, older Stortford residents remember horses looking out of the first floor windows (Stratton 2004).
- 5.5 The George is apparent on late 19th century mapping. The 1879 first edition Ordnance Survey map (fig. 2) shows the hotel as a public house, with an outline very similar to that as it appears today, with the hotel on the south and east sides of the site, and the north and west ranges around the small courtyard facing onto North Street. The main difference is an additional building on the south side of the courtyard where the Hotel patio is located, which has an external stairway leading up to it. In addition to this is a small outshot attached to the north-west corner of the outbuilding ranges, likely to belong to the neighbouring property. On the map, the east end of the north range is divided by a line from the rest, though this does not represent the current roof line or extent of the present Oxfam shop.
- 5.6 By the second edition of 1898, the yard building has been replaced with an open-sided structure and the previous stairway has disappeared (Fig. 3). By now The George is a hotel, perhaps following its late 19th century remodelling mentioned in the list description. No other changes to the buildings are visible from the map.

- 5.7 The open-sided structure is also shown on the 1920s New Series OS map, which is not included in the report.
- 5.8 Graffiti evidence seen on the first floor of the north range indicates the room partitions and ceilings of the later apartments were inserted in December 1951, by George Shelley and Peter Bull. It is likely that apartments were created on the ground floor at the same time, along with the first floor of the west range. The buildings continued to be used by the hotel for this purpose until recently.
- 5.9 The Prezzo chain opened a restaurant on the ground floor of The George in 2010, after a period of refurbishment. Presumably by this time the hotel apartments in the former stable buildings had become ready for redevelopment.

6.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

6.1 General description

- 6.1.1 The outbuildings form an L-shaped block along the boundary in the north-west corner of the courtyard, facing the rear of the George to the south. Each is half-timbered, with 9-inch brickwork (c.223mm) on the ground floor and timber-framing on the first, apart from the rear wall of the north range, which is also of brick. The ranges are likely to have been built as one in the 18th century as stabling, overnight accommodation and general service buildings for the coaching inn.
- 6.1.2 The west range (Building 1) retains more of its original character, providing an impression of the original appearance and built fabric of the north range (Building 2). Its dimensions are 5.4m by 18.7m and 7.3m high. Three phases of development were identified: the original 18th century building, the subsequent partitioning of the first floor and the refurbishment into hotel apartments in 1951.
- 6.1.3 The surveyed part was clearly used for stabling on the ground floor and perhaps overnight accommodation for retainues on the first floor. The ground floor has been modernised as bin rooms and stores for the hotel but retains some interesting historic fabric and fittings. Similarly, the upper floor has until recently been divided by modern stud wall room partitions. Behind these, some of the original timbers appear to be reused, perhaps from former buildings here.
- 6.1.4 The north range probably dates to the same time and shares three phases of slightly different development: the original 18th century building, the enlargement in the late 19th century that provided a first floor function room believed to have been a Masonic Hall (G. Dickerson pers. comm.) and the refurbishment of both floors into hotel apartments in 1951.
- 6.1.5 Internal brick walls have been added and existing walls lined-out with boarding to create four bedrooms. Large doorways on the ground floor suggest the eastern half, now part of an Oxfam charity shop, was used as the coach house. It is slightly wider than Building 1, with dimensions of 7.3m by 10.8m and is 3m taller at 10.2m.
- 7.1.2 To understand the buildings as a working group, the two buildings, or ranges, are described in the following sections as one structure, externally and internally.

6.2 West range (1): External description

The west range is half-timbered and constructed over six bays beneath an old peg-tile roof. Its south end is attached to the three-storey hotel gable and the north end is half-hipped, although it was gabled prior to the rebuilding of the north range.

East elevation

6.2.1 The only elevation viewed during the survey was the east elevation. The form of the other elevations is only known from internal study and drawings supplied by the architect.

6.2.2 The east elevation is half-boarded, with the ground floor constructed from brick and the first floor over a timber frame clad in modern shiplap timbers. The southern half (Plate 1) is fully occupied by the hotel and built using bricks with dimensions roughly of 225mm x 110mm x 70mm, suggesting an 18th or early 19th century date. Because the wall is crudely built with no discernable bond and covered in layers of thick paint, its character is difficult to determine, but the flat brick head to a blocked window or doorway partly seen behind the patio terracing, suggests a Georgian or Regency date. A modern service doorway has been inserted at the extreme southern end.

6.2.3 The northern end of the ground floor (Plate 2) contains three modern doorways, two of which are in the ownership of the hotel and were not subject to the survey. The third open doorway, located at the north end, provides access to Room 1. The lack of any historic building fabric around the doorways suggests this end was built open-sided, though the degree of modernisation to the interiors makes this hard to verify.

6.2.4 On the upper floor, the east elevation contains four modern casement windows probably inserted in the 1970s or 80s. The wall is clad in shiplap boards rather than the more traditional feather-edge boards that may be observed on two of the other elevations. At the south end of the elevation is a plain square brick chimney, probably added in the 19th century.

West and north elevations

6.2.5 Judging from external inspection, both the west and north elevations are half-timbered and clad in feather-edged boarding. No windows are present along the west elevation, and there are no internal signs of their former presence. A modern casement window has been inserted in the north elevation.

6.3 North range (2): External description

The north range is half-timbered and constructed over three large bays beneath a slate roof. Its west end is attached to the west range where the roof finishes on a half-hip along the ridge line of the earlier building (Plate 1). The east end joins the postulated coach block (Oxfam shop) which outwardly, at least, retains more of its historic character, suggesting it has been under separate ownership for some time.

South elevation

6.3.1 The south elevation (Plate 3) was the only Building 2 elevation viewed during the survey. The ground floor has been heavily modernised and the first floor and roof were rebuilt when the hall was created. Cement render covers the walls. On the ground floor and to the west are two semi-glazed modern doorways, one to Stairs G2 in the corner, which provides entry into the first floor apartments of both sides and a second close to it, which leads into Apartments A4-7, according to a sign on the door. The fabric of at least part of the front wall is built in modern Fletton bricks but the extent of this and nature of any remaining earlier wall fabric is unknown. The

four ground floor apartments are fitted with modern aluminium windows, with contemporary wooden heads and sills.

- 6.3.2 A range of three multi-pane Victorian sash windows occupy the centre of the upper floor (the hall), flanked by inserted modern casement windows (Plate 3), contemporary with those on the west range. A plain chimney stands on the west end. The west and east sides are attached to existing structures.

Other elevations

The north elevation was not viewed in the survey, but it is clear from internal inspection to be brick-built in a rather haphazard form from red bricks of varying sizes bonded in a thick lime mortar. A tripartite range of Victorian multi-pane top-opening vent windows occupies the central bay on this side.

- 6.3.3 The presumed coach house to the east, beyond the scope of the survey, completes the outbuilding range and a brief description based on the courtyard elevation is included here to complete the record. It also provides an impression of how the recorded part of the north range may have appeared before it was rebuilt in the 19th century and/or was refurbished in the 20th century. Like the other outbuilding elements, the coach house is half-timbered. Two blocked coach doors stand on the ground floor and there are several leaded windows on the upper floor, which appears to retain fan-pargetting and therefore lime, rather than cement, render. The roof is set lower than the main part of the north range and is clad in peg-tiles like the west range.

6.4 **West range (1): Internal description**

The ground floor survey was limited to the storage area at the north end, which was least impacted on in the modern period and contained some stable fixtures and fittings. The first floor was recorded after the partitions were removed during the first part of the soft strip and again when the wall and roof timbers were properly exposed.

Ground floor (Fig. 4)

- 6.4.1 The ground floor is separated into two rooms G1 and G2, both of which have been less affected by modern developments than other parts of the outbuildings, and retain some of the earliest wall fabric. Traditionally they functioned as stables but were divided up at a later stage when a coals store and boiler room was created. Both parts were being used by the builders for storing their materials during the survey.
- 6.4.2 In general terms this part of the building is characterised by modern concrete floors, old white-washed walls and low plaster-boarded ceilings covering older beams and joists. The floor in Room G1 has a wide cable trench running through, which was used during the building works to carry additional services. The back wall, which is also the western boundary wall of the hotel, is constructed from thinner bricks to the other sides arranged in English bond and laid in a lime mortar. Their size is generally around 230mm x 100mm x 50mm (9 x 4 x 2 inches), though there is some variation. Broadly speaking, their form, size and irregular nature suggest they are Tudor 'place' bricks, datable to the 15th to early 17th century (Ryan 1996), suggesting this is a boundary wall to the 16th century phase hotel.
- 6.4.3 Room G1 (Plate 4) is divided from the part that is still owned by The George to the south by a concrete block wall and from G2 by an inserted brick wall that contains two later doorways: a wide loading door and a smaller single doorway (Fig. 4),

providing access to the later boiler inside Room G2, and a coal store. The stairs that protrude on the east side were probably inserted when the north range was rebuilt and are therefore later Victorian in date.

- 6.4.4 The only historic feature to survive in Room G1 is an iron tethering ring along the west wall (Fig. 4), of which there would have been several for the horses stabled there. Any other historic features such as stall partitions (if there were any), troughs and hay feeders have been removed.
- 6.4.5 Room G2 (Plate 5) has the same character as Room G1 to which it would have formed one large stabling area. Some interesting features recorded on the west wall were a second tethering ring and a door pintel to a former external doorway on this side) and a large rebuilt area or blocked doorway on the north wall. An old cast iron boiler stands in the south-east corner that used the late Victorian chimney in the north range as a flue (Plate 5, right). No evidence of earlier stairs or ladder entry points were observed in the survey.
- 6.4.6 The stairs between the west and north ranges (G3) are a later insertion and probably date to the rebuilding of the north range to facilitate entry to the hall. They have a dog-leg form and functional rounded wooden rails (Plate 6). The walls either side are lined with embossed 20th century wallpaper.

First floor (Fig. 5)-

- 6.4.7 Prior to the soft strip, the first floor contained a corridor, four rooms and a bathroom, connected from Stairs 3 by a second, short flight of stairs. The floor on all but the northern end is raised by 0.75m, which is 0.25m above the level of the brickwork. This means that only the bottoms of the studs and sill plates at the northern end could be viewed during the survey. Plates 7 and 8 show the first floor shortly after the room partitions were removed and again after the timber-framing on the walls was exposed.
- 6.4.8 The interior of the room measures 5m by 18.5m and the floor is laid with 5.5-inch pine floorboards. There are six bays that represent the original internal layout of the first floor (labelled T1-5 in Fig. 5, T1 is missing) each 2.4m-wide and represented by trusses and tie beams. There is evidence in the roof space for two partition walls that partly formed three upstairs chambers, each occupying two bays in the original layout.
- 6.4.9 The surviving tie beams are fairly large and straight at approximately 210 x 195mm and double-pegged to the heads of the bay posts. All apart from T4 were braced. The bracing was probably removed when the modern layout was created. Wall plates are of similar size and connected in two places along the long elevations by edge-halved and bridled scarf joints beneath Truss 3 (labelled SJ in Fig. 5), indicating the structure was built from south to north. The bridle scarf is a medieval carpentry form that continued into the early part of the 17th century, but the crude nature of these particular joints suggests this is a later, more vernacular, usage. The bay divisions are disturbed by two later trusses at the north end, inserted when the north range was remodelled, resulting in the loss of an original truss (T1 in Fig. 5). Both of these are machine-sawn like those in the remodelled top floor of the north range.
- 6.4.10 The walls comprise six studs per bay of varying sizes, around c.130mm x 90mm-wide, some of which are reused. Gaps between studs are narrow at only c.250mm.

Both studs and braces are well-pegged to top and bottom and the corners are primary-braced (Plate 9). There are signs of lime-wash on the timbers.

6.4.11 The best-preserved studwork survives along the west wall (Plate 10) and the north end, where the end of the roof was changed from a gabled to a hipped end when Building 2 was changed (Plate 9). The east wall was rebuilt in the late 19th century, or perhaps later when the modern windows were inserted, and therefore contains a majority of machine-sawn timbers.

6.4.12 Some of the main timbers are reused from earlier buildings, but a lot of the studwork is original. The wall plates have Baltic timber marks. Baltic oak was imported to eastern ports on the coast of Britain during the late 17th century to make up for the dwindling domestic supply and has conspicuous markings distinct from carpenter's marks (Plate 11). Along the western wall plate in bay 6 are a row of 1-inch peg-holes arranged singularly and in pairs which are difficult to identify but may be former coat pegs (suggesting a communal use for the end room) rather than harness racks for the horses (Plate 12).

Roof framing

6.4.13 The roof frame has a nailed collar purlin form (Fig. 6) with additional collars added to some of the intermediate bays. In addition, Truss 3 has queen struts (Plate 10). It is cruder in form than the wall-framing, using narrower, more waney, timbers, more indicative of an 18th century date. Widely-spaced (90mm) nail holes on the rafter soffits suggests the roof was once internally boarded but at another time was clearly lath and plastered.

6.4.14 Some evidence of early room partitions was found in the roof space, defining three first floor chambers, which may be later additions since the quality of the studwork is quite crude compared with the wall studding. Both trusses 2 and 4 retain studs that are crudely lapped and nailed to the timbers rather than being tenoned and pegged. Only Truss 4 (T4) is still clad in feather-boarding (Plate 13). Any partitioning below has been removed and left no evidence.

6.5 North range (2): Internal description

The north range was recorded in two stages. Firstly after the modern hotel rooms had been removed from the first floor of Building 1 and both floors of Building 2, and the second after the walls and ceilings had been stripped back to the bare built fabric, ready for the building work to begin.

Ground floor (Fig. 4)

6.5.1 Like the top floor of the west range, the ground floor of the north range was converted for hotel accommodation in the early 1950s. This was accomplished by dividing the area into four rooms (called A4-A7) and a toilet and shower room, linked by an L-shaped corridor (Fig. 4). The rooms were divided by existing historic brick walls, similar in form to those on the south side of Building 1, and later Fletton brick walls. The original plastered brick walls were lined-out for plaster-boarding, which was removed before the second visit took place (Plate 14). All rooms had tiled floors, carpets and sinks.

6.5.2 Historic brick walls were recorded on the three outer walls of the building and along the east side of the modern corridor. Others, perhaps timber partition walls, may have been removed when the building was refurbished. The north wall is an old lime-washed wall built with bricks of a larger size than the Tudor bricks on the western boundary wall. Because of consecutive layers of lime-wash, it was difficult

to provide exact brick size, but the build was clearly English bond and was probably Georgian brickwork rather than Tudor. The east wall, adjoining the former coach house, was built the same but was finished in both lime-wash and plaster (Plate 14). The west wall is similarly finished, but is underbuilt by a much later Fletton brick wall, showing former structural problems with this wall, perhaps from damp. The character of the only remaining partition wall (Fig. 4) could not be properly assessed but would appear to be of English bond and a similar thickness to the main west wall.

- 6.5.3 The only historic features to remain on the ground floor were evidence for a former stair on the east wall and large main floor joists to the upper floor. The stair was represented by a steep diagonal scar in the plaster, which ascended from the front of the building (Plate 14, right), which was interpreted as a former wooden handrail connecting to a since-blocked doorway. The steepness of the scar suggests this was not associated with the reputed horse ramp. Two thick floor joists span the full extent of the largest of the two rooms that in the early phase of the building would either have been propped up with posts or dividing walls. The 190mm by 200mm-wide beams were only visible on the eastern side of the building where the modern ceiling had been removed to expose an earlier plastered ceiling (Plate 15). Unfortunately the nature of the floor joist joinery could not be determined because the sides were obscured by later ceiling joists, but the socket angle suggests it is either more likely to be a soffit tenon joint with diminished haunch, which was common in Hertfordshire either side of 1600 (Gibson 1994) or the more common variation that dates from the 16th century onwards. At the eastern end, it is interesting to note that the beams finish to allow for the stair and the space is now bridged with narrow later joists (Fig. 4).

First floor (Fig. 5)

- 6.5.4 Prior to the soft strip, the first floor (Room 4) contained three modern hotel rooms and a bathroom, connected by a west-east corridor. The first site visit occurred shortly after their removal, which provided an understanding of the character and proportions of the old Victorian hall, believed to be a former masonic hall. The second visit was undertaken after the interiors were stripped back to expose the fabric of the building.
- 6.5.5 The first floor hall is built into the eaves and correspondingly has a very high ceiling. It is divided into three 3.5m bays by bolted machine-sawn trusses fitted with diagonal bracing, the upper parts of which were not seen at the early stage (Fig. 6 and Plate 16). The floor comprises 6-inch pine floorboards and the walls have match-boarding of the same width as the floor and in line with the boards (Plate 17), showing good attention to detail. Some of the walls have been boarded-over. The long walls are well-fenestrated with multi-pane tripartite windows, those on the main elevation being of vertical sliding sashes and therefore of higher quality to those on the back, which are fixed in the main part with tilting panes at the top (Plate 17). The only entrance is in the west side, which was reached by the stairs below.
- 6.5.6 The lath and plaster ceiling survives and within the roof line in the central bay on the north side is an in-filled north-facing window (Plate 17). In the main part of the ceiling are decorated iron roof vents and on the two end bays (Plate 18) and a ceiling rose in the centre perhaps for a gas-lit candelabra (Plate 19). A gas light mantle indicates that there were lights along the front wall as well (Fig. 5).
- 6.5.7 Having stripped-back the interior on the second visit, several discoveries were made regarding the built fabric of the north range. The head of a blocked-in former window

was found on the back (north) wall (Fig. 5), suggesting the building was once single-storey, or perhaps there were stairs along the wall here at some stage. The south wall at the front is built from machine-sawn primary-braced timbers, clearly later in date to those of the west range. The west wall (Plate 20), adjoining the older part of the outbuilding range, is mainly brick-built either side of an inserted chimney breast, which is contemporary, but also incorporates areas of existing timber-framing from Building 1. In particular, there is an area of external cladding at the southern end in the form of feather-boarding, suggesting the earlier north range was c.1m shorter than it is today (Fig. 5), making it originally similar in width to the west range. The brick element is mainly built in stretcher bond, but is partly built on eight courses of earlier, broadly English-bonded, brickwork that presumably represents the plinth of a former dividing wall to the south of the chimney and at the north end of doorway. Later Fletton brickwork has been used to block the former fireplace at the base of the chimney and around the doorway, which was originally much larger (by 0.5m either side) and presumably more formal in its appearance.

Roof framing

- 6.5.8 The roof of Building 2 is built onto the ridge of Building 1 and is correspondingly higher. It displays a collar purlin form entirely built from machine-sawn timbers suiting its late 19th century construction date.

7.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

- 7.1 Monitoring works were carried out after the striping-out of the outbuildings, primarily to study their fabric and to understand their development more fully. The results of this visit are included in the main body of this report.
- 7.2 Groundworks associated with the development were limited since the buildings were already supplied with services run in existing modern ducting, into which new services were added. Two narrow additional trenches were dug through the concrete floor slab but no opportunity arose to view these. The re-paving of the courtyard was not monitored because of the shallow nature of the works and known modern made ground beneath the existing paving. Consequently, no below-ground remains of archaeological significance were recorded.

8.0 DISCUSSION

- 8.1 Judging by the results of the survey, the outbuildings were constructed sometime in the 18th century when the George Hotel was one of Bishop's Stortford's main coaching inns. Traditionally they occupied two sides of the inn courtyard, providing stabling for the horses and accommodation for the drivers and retainues and service buildings, on a small restricted plot in a busy, built-up area of the town.
- 8.2 Of the two, the west range (Building 1) retains the most built historic fabric in terms of original form and constructional detail, presenting brickwork on the ground floor and a mixture of good quality studwork and more vernacular style of roofing on the first. On the exterior the brickwork is crude and roughly-bonded, formed from irregular bricks in no discernable pattern, unlike the Tudor brickwork that forms the rear/boundary wall, which is better-bonded. Internal walls are lime-washed, which is traditional in buildings for animals, and stable fixtures in the form of tethering rings survive. The main first floor elevation of Building 1 has been re-clad and the original arrangement of windows on this level is difficult to determine. Unfortunately the rear

elevation could not be viewed, but it is believed to traditional feather boarding. Internally, there is evidence for a three-room layout, perhaps used to accommodate the coachmen who were more likely to sleep with the horses. Studwork on the first floor is of a good size and well-pegged for the date and therefore may originate from an earlier building on the site. The use of the medieval bridle scarf joint - albeit in crude form - at such a late date illustrates how old joinery can continue in use, particularly in service buildings such as these that have limited architectural pretensions. The roof is of lesser quality and the studwork associated with possible room divisions is narrow and lapped and nailed rather than pegged; again a crude form, suggesting the partitions were added later.

- 8.3 Building 2, the north range, has been similarly-altered at the front with rebuilt first floors and the addition of modern windows. Modernisation of the ground floor means the extent of surviving historic fabric is unknown but there is evidence for at least two rooms and a stair at the east end. The first floor was rebuilt in the 19th century and retains its central sash windows. Again, the rear elevation has been less affected. Inside, the Victorian hall was recorded, which is believed by some to have been a former Masonic hall. Whether it was built as such or acquired this use later on is unknown and there are no known written sources to confirm this. Nevertheless, prior to disturbance by modern activities, it was a good quality interior with its high vented ceiling, matchboard panelling and Gothic trusses.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The George Hotel is an important part of the history of Bishop's Stortford from the medieval period onwards but perhaps most significant in its manifestation as a coaching inn in the 18th century before the coming of the railways. The accompanying outbuildings were part of this heyday and probably replaced earlier such service structures on the site. Like utility buildings generally, they are practical buildings constructed in the vernacular form from basic and reused materials with little attention to detail or architectural embellishment, more so in the 18th century, a time when good timber was becoming scarce and correspondingly more expensive. It is not uncommon for such buildings to be built with stabling below, rooms above and ancillary buildings such as blacksmith's workshops around the cobbled courtyard, but it is unusual to have horses stabled on the first floor as well.
- 9.2 Overall, the outbuildings are important in their association and group value with the George, forming a complete historic unit. It is unfortunate that later developments have impacted so badly on the historic character of the buildings but this is perhaps not surprising considering the limitations of the site and the currently redundant nature of the buildings. It is understood that the neighbouring Oxfam shop, which was traditionally part of the outbuilding range, retains some interesting fixtures and fittings that are likely to be more representative of the traditional aspects of the buildings studied in this survey. Also it would be interesting to understand more fully the late 18th and early 19th century Excise Office, whose location is unclear, and also the origins and function of the 19th century gothic-style hall and its association with local groups.
- 9.3 Groundworks associated with the conversion were limited and shallow and have had minimal impact on below-ground archaeological remains that might be present.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

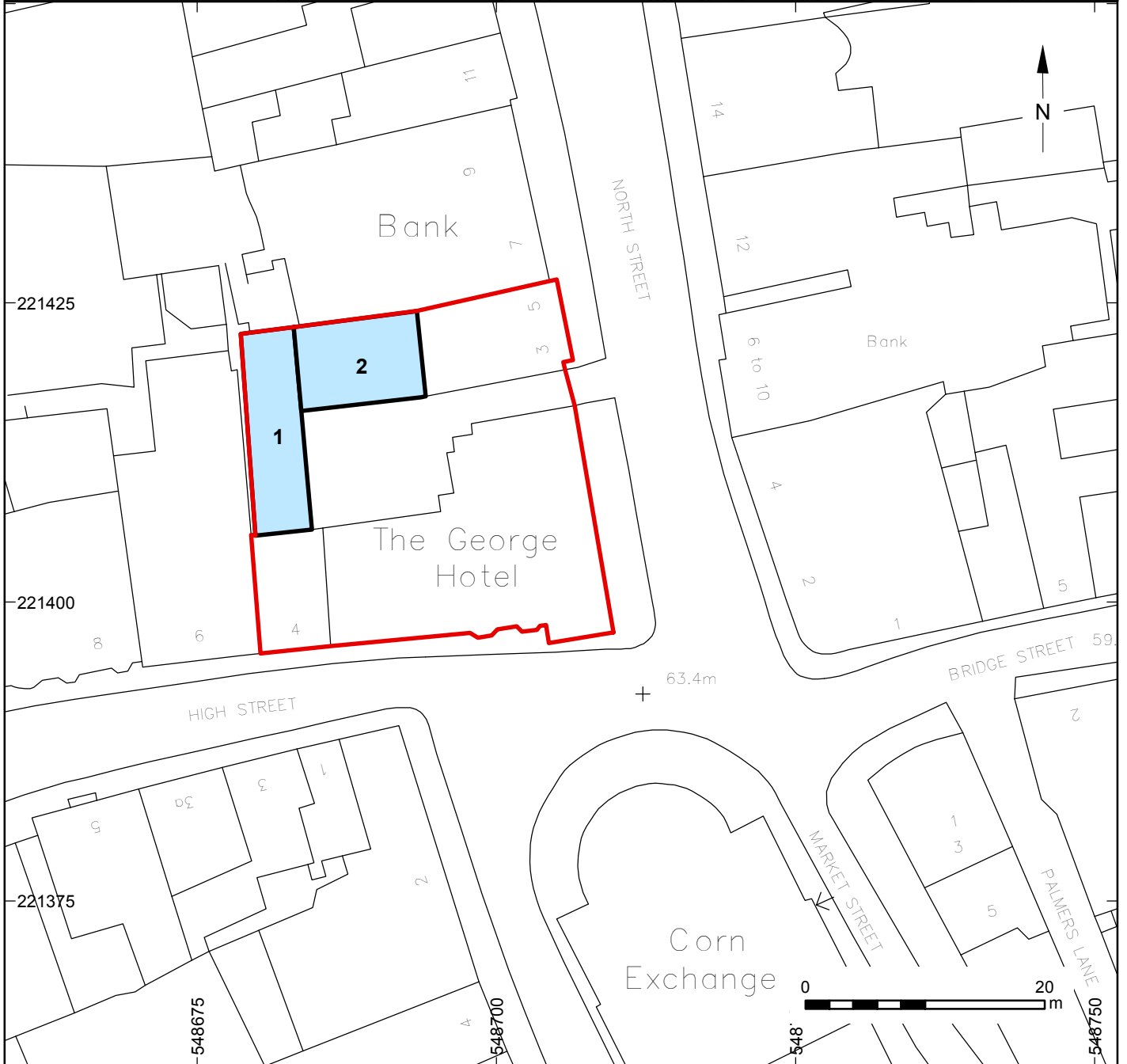
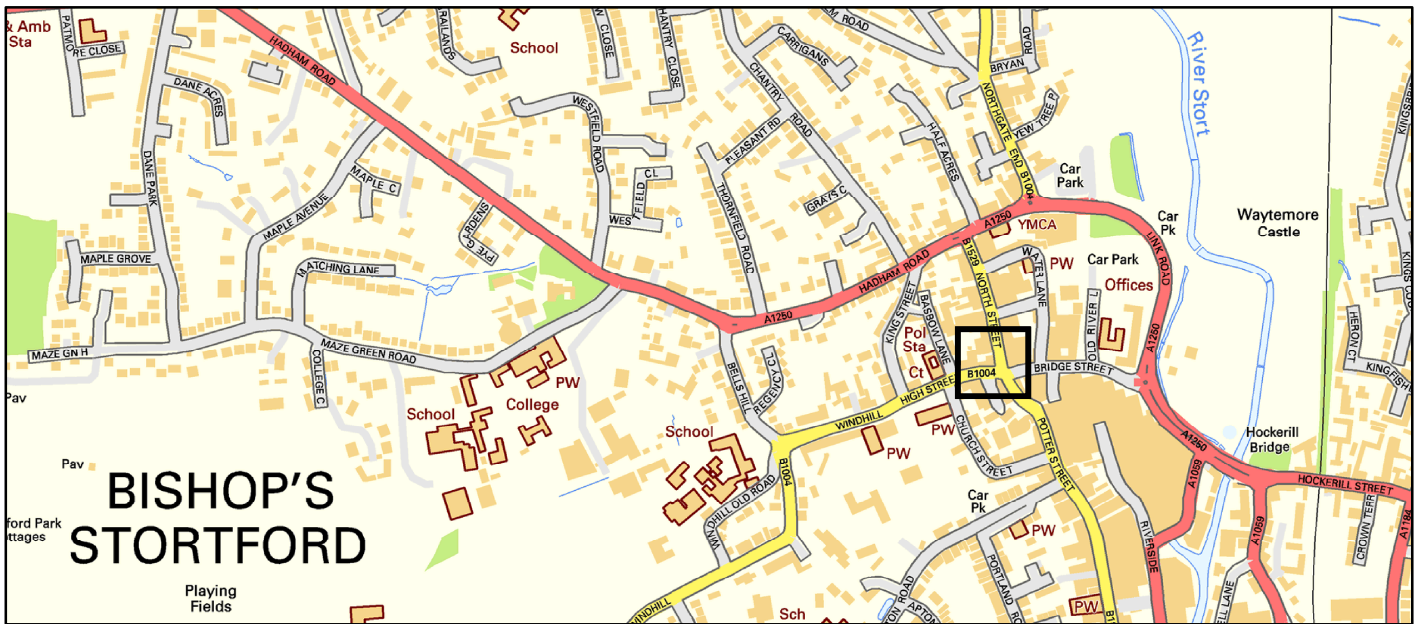
Archaeology South-East would like to thank Mr Graham Dickerson of Grovebury Homes Ltd for commissioning the works and to Terence Burton the architect for supplying drawings. Fieldwork, recording and photography were undertaken by the author. Illustrations were prepared by the author and produced by Andrew Lewsey. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby of ECC FAU and monitored by Alison Tinniswood of HCC HEU on behalf of East Herts Local Planning Authority.

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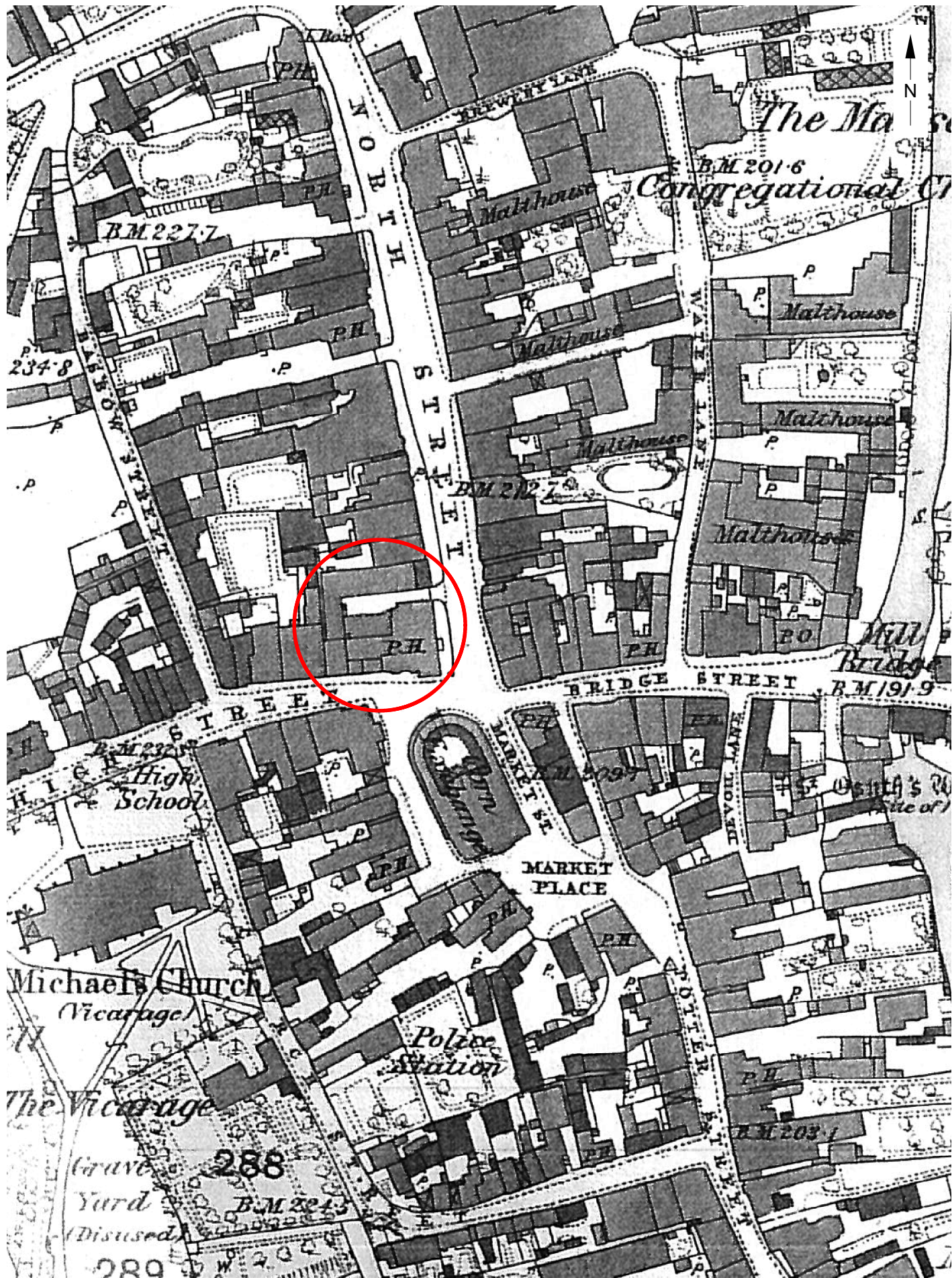
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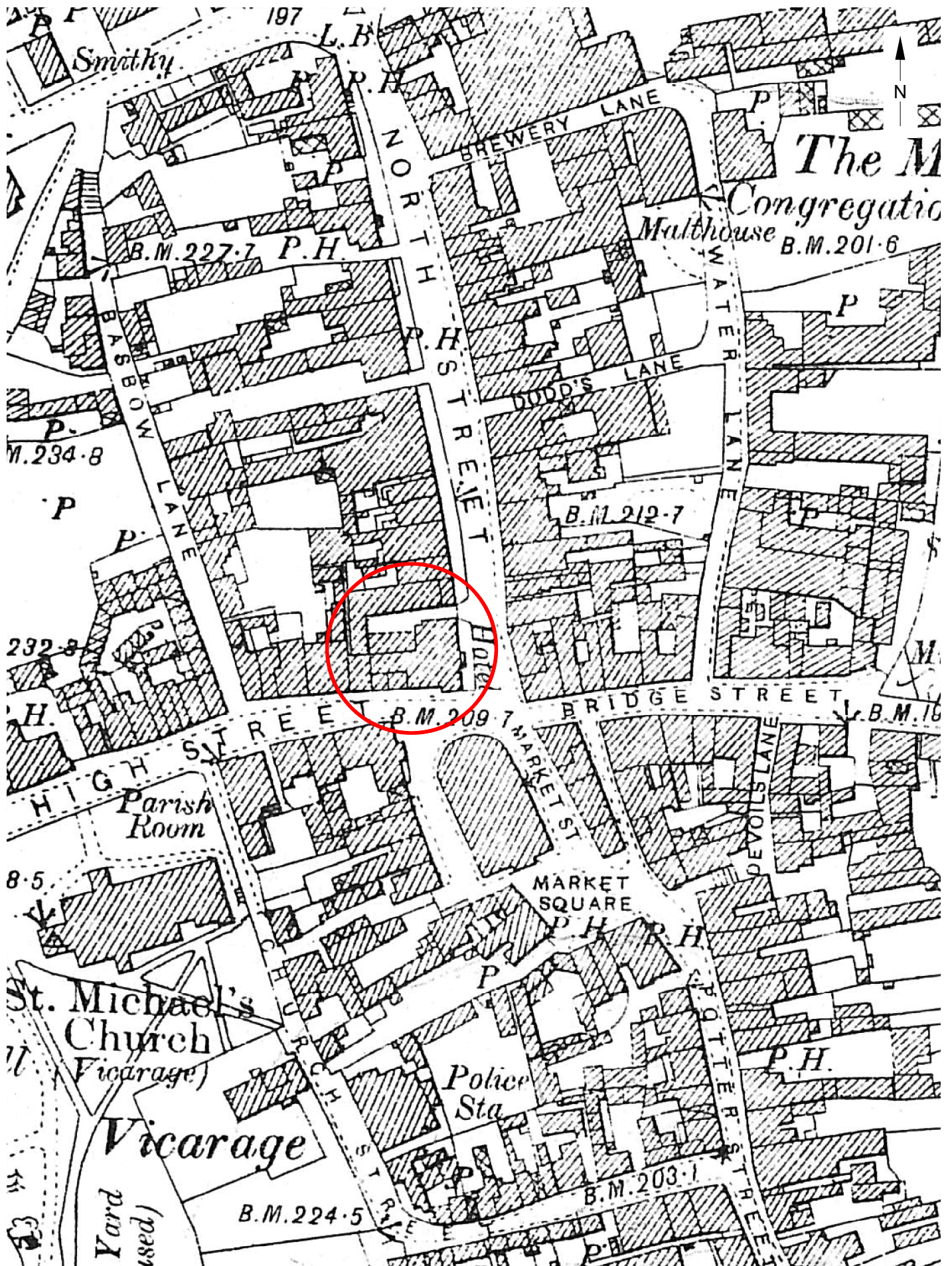
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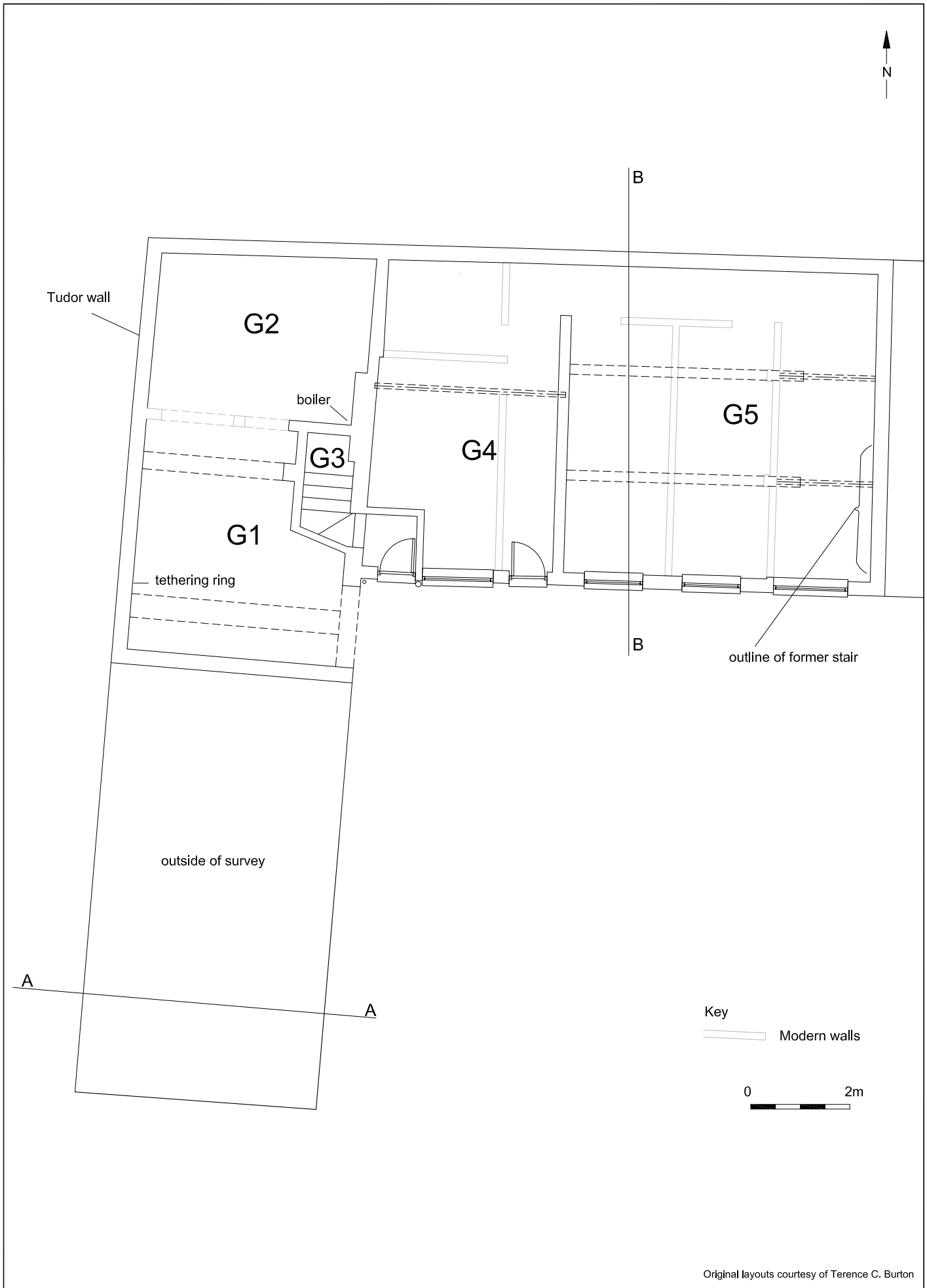
© Archaeology South-East		George Hotel, North Street, Bishop's Stortford	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 8078	May 2014		
Report Ref: 2014141	Drawn by: APL	Site location and location plan	



© Archaeology South-East		GeorgeHotel, North Street, Bishop's Stortford	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 8078	May 2014	First edition 25" OS map, 1879 (sheet 23/6)	
Report Ref: 2014141	Drawn by: APL		



© Archaeology South-East		GeorgeHotel, North Street, Bishop's Stortford	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 8078	May 2014	Second edition 25" OS map, 1898 (sheet 23/6)	
Report Ref: 2014141	Drawn by: APL		

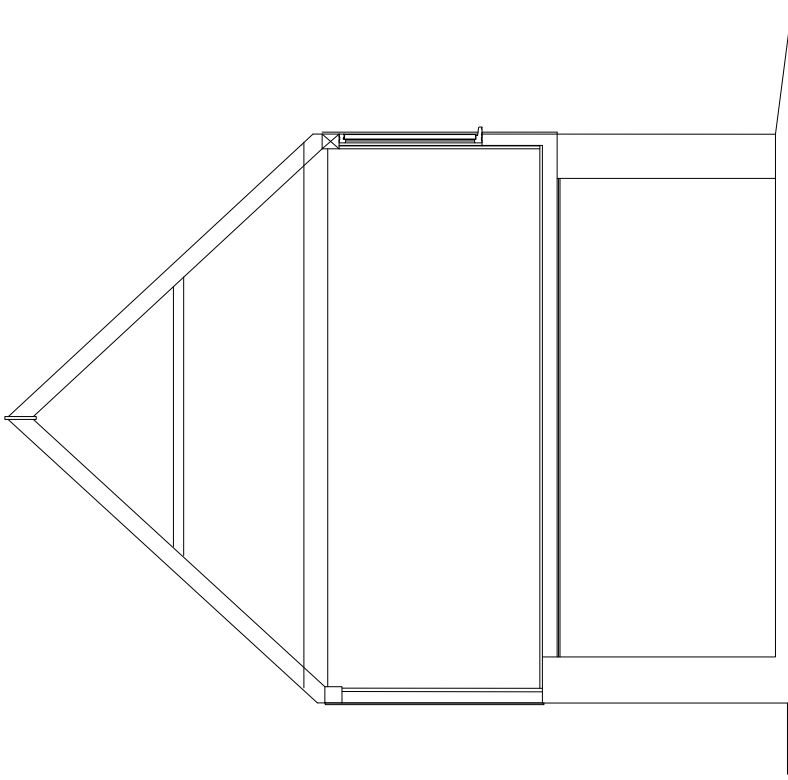


© Archaeology South-East		George Hotel, North Street, Bishop's Stortford	Fig. 4
Project Ref: 8078	May 2014	Existing ground floor plan	
Report Ref: 2014141	Drawn by: APL		

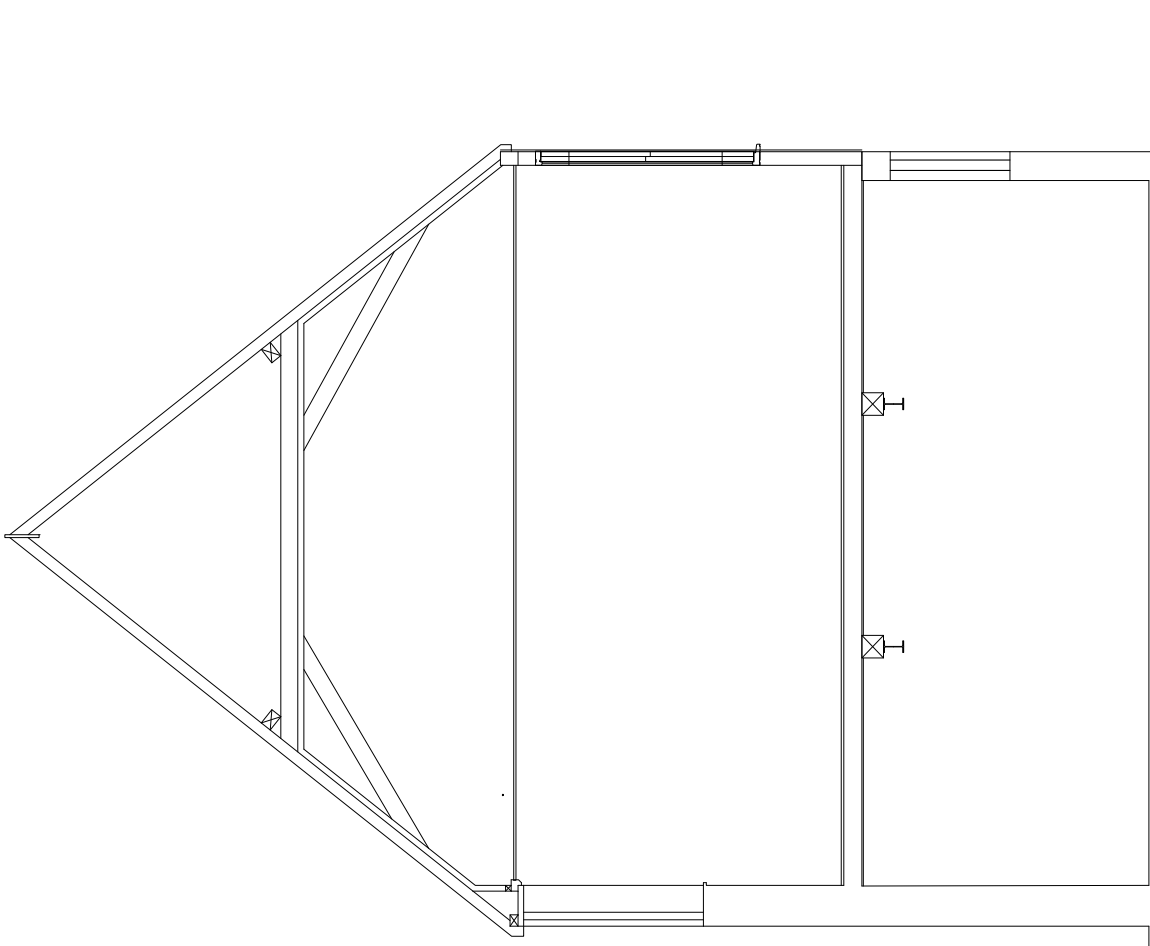


Original layouts courtesy of Terence C. Burton

© Archaeology South-East		George Hotel, North Street, Bishop's Stortford	Fig. 5
Project Ref: 8078	May 2014	Existing first floor plan	
Report Ref: 2014141	Drawn by: APL		



Section A : A Building 1



Section B : B Building 2

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Project Ref: 8078

May 2014

Report Ref: 2014/141

Drawn by: APL

George Hotel, North Street, Bishop's Stortford

Sections A-A and B-B

Fig. 6



Plate 1 East elevation of Building 1 (west side)



Plate 2 East elevation of Building 1 (east side)



Plate 3 South elevation of Building 2



Plate 4 Room G1 and entrance to G2



Plate 5 Room G2 viewed to north-west

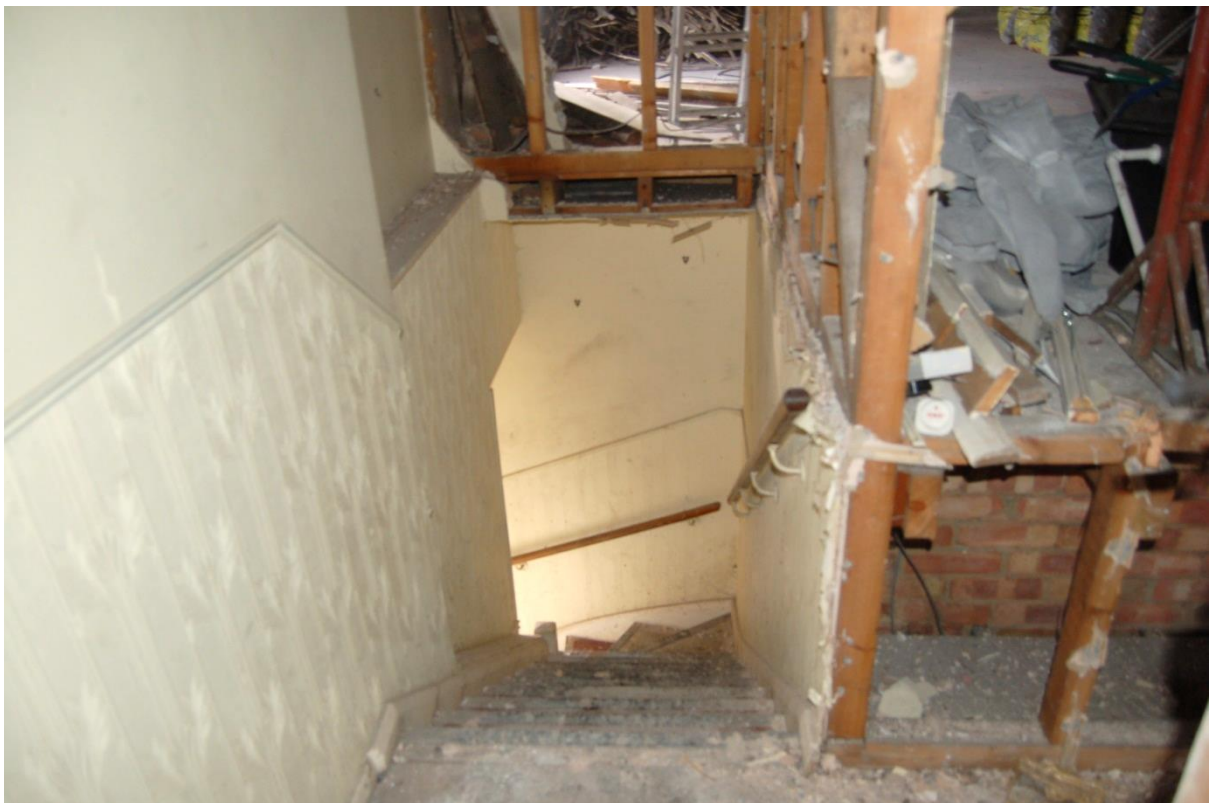


Plate 6 Stair G3



Plate 7 Room F1 viewed to south before stripping-out



Plate 8 Room F1 viewed to south after stripping-out



Plate 9 North-west corner of Room F1



Plate 10 West wall of Room F1



Plate 11 Baltic timber marks



Plate 12 Peg-holes along wall plate in Room F1



Plate 13 Remains of partition walling in Room F1 (T4), viewed to north



Plate 14 Remains of former stair in Room G5



Plate 15 Main joist in Room G5



Plate 16 Room F2 viewed to east



Plate 17 Room F2 viewed to north-west



Plate 18 Cast iron ceiling vent



Plate 19 Ceiling rose



Plate 20 West wall of Room F2 after stripping-out

Appendix 1: Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record sheet

Site name and address: The George Hotel, No. 1 North Street, Bishop's Stortford		
County: Hertfordshire	District: East Herts	
Village/Town: Bishop's Stortford	Parish: Bishop's Stortford	
Planning application reference: 3/10/2133/FP and 3/10/2067/FP		
Client name, address, and tel. no.: Graham Dickerson, Grovebury Homes Ltd, St Aubuns, Cricketfield Lane, Bishops Stortford, Herts, CM23 2SR. Tel. 07885 492769		
Nature of application: Refurbishment and residential conversion		
Present land use: Hotel apartments		
Size of application area: n/a	Size of area investigated: n/a	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 48700 21403		
Site code: n/a		
Site director/Organization: Andy Letch, Archaeology South-East		
Type of work: Building recording & archaeological monitoring		
Date of work:	Start: 1/11/2013	Finish: 8/11/2013
Location of archive (no finds): HALS		
Related HER Nos.: none	Periods represented: Post-medieval	
Relevant previous summaries/reports None		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>A programme of historic building recording and archaeological monitoring was undertaken on an 18th century outbuilding range at the rear of The George Hotel, prior to their conversion into flats. The buildings are half-timbered and curtilage-Listed with the hotel, which was one of the town's main coaching inns in the 18th century. They occupy two sides of the hotel courtyard and were probably built in the 18th century as stabling for horses and lodgings.</p> <p>The west range retains more of its original character, providing an impression of the original appearance and built fabric of the north range. Three phases of development were identified: the original 18th century building, the subsequent partitioning of the first floor and the refurbishment into hotel apartments in 1951. At least part of the ground floor was used for stabling, perhaps overnight accommodation on the first floor. The ground floor has been modernised but retains some interesting historic fabric and fittings. Some of the timbers on the first floor appear to be reused, perhaps from former buildings here.</p> <p>The north range probably dates to the same time and shares three phases of slightly different development: the original 18th century building, an enlargement in the late 19th century that provided a first floor function room, and the refurbishment of both floors into hotel apartments in the modern period.</p> <p>The survey was conducted in two phases, the first recording the buildings in their 'current' state and the second, as part of monitoring works, after stripping-out to record the built fabric. Groundworks associated with the conversion were limited and have had minimal impact on below-ground archaeological remains that might be present</p> <p>Conversion to hotel apartments in the mid-20th century has resulted in the retention of few historic fixtures and fittings, but the recording of the timber framing in the west range and the Victorian hall in the north range were of interest. Evidence for historic room layouts, stable fixtures and a Tudor boundary wall were also recorded.</p>		
Author of summary: Andy Letch (ASE)	Date of summary: 30th May 2014	

Appendix 2: Oasis form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-178160

Project details

Project name	The George Hotel, Bishop's Stortford
Short description of the project	In November 2013 Archaeology South-East carried out historic building recording and archaeological monitoring during the conversion of two outbuilding ranges at the rear of The George Hotel into flats. The hotel is Grade II-listed and dates to the 16th century, but is mentioned in records from 1417. The outbuildings are half-timbered and curtilage-Listed with the hotel, which was one of the town's main coaching inns in the 18th century. They occupy two sides of the hotel courtyard and were probably built in the 18th century as stabling for horses and lodgings for travellers. In the 19th century the north range was extended at the front and the first floor rebuilt to create a meeting hall. Part of the north range also included a coach house, which is now a shop and is outside of the development area. The survey was conducted in two phases, the first recording the buildings in their 'current' state and the second after stripping-out to record the built fabric as part of monitoring works. Conversion to hotel apartments in the mid-20th century had resulted in the retention of few historic fixtures and fittings, but the recording of the timber framing in the west range and the Victorian hall in the north range were of interest. Evidence for historic room layouts, stable fixtures and a Tudor boundary wall were also recorded. Groundworks associated with the conversion were limited and have had minimal impact on below-ground archaeological remains that might be present.
Project dates	Start: 01-11-2013 End: 08-11-2013
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	8078 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	160929 - LBS No.
Type of project	Building Recording
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	INN STABLE RANGES Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	HERTFORDSHIRE EAST HERTFORDSHIRE BISHOPS STORTFORD The George Hotel, North Street
Postcode	CM23 2LD

Study area	255.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 4870 2140 51.8708581886 0.160163749364 51 52 15 N 000 09 36 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Hertfordshire County Council
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Adrian Scruby
Project supervisor	Andy Letch
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Grovebury Homes Ltd

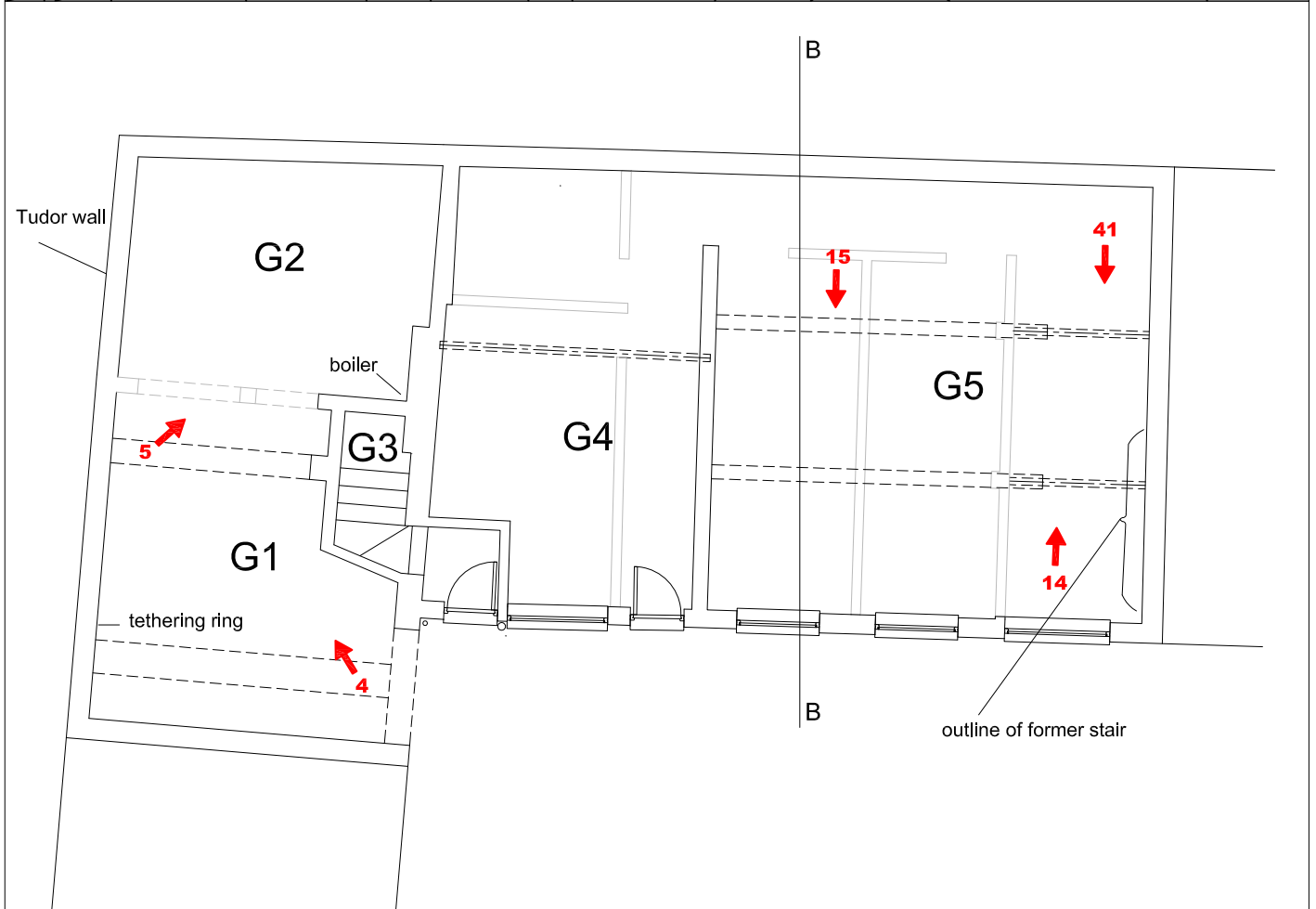
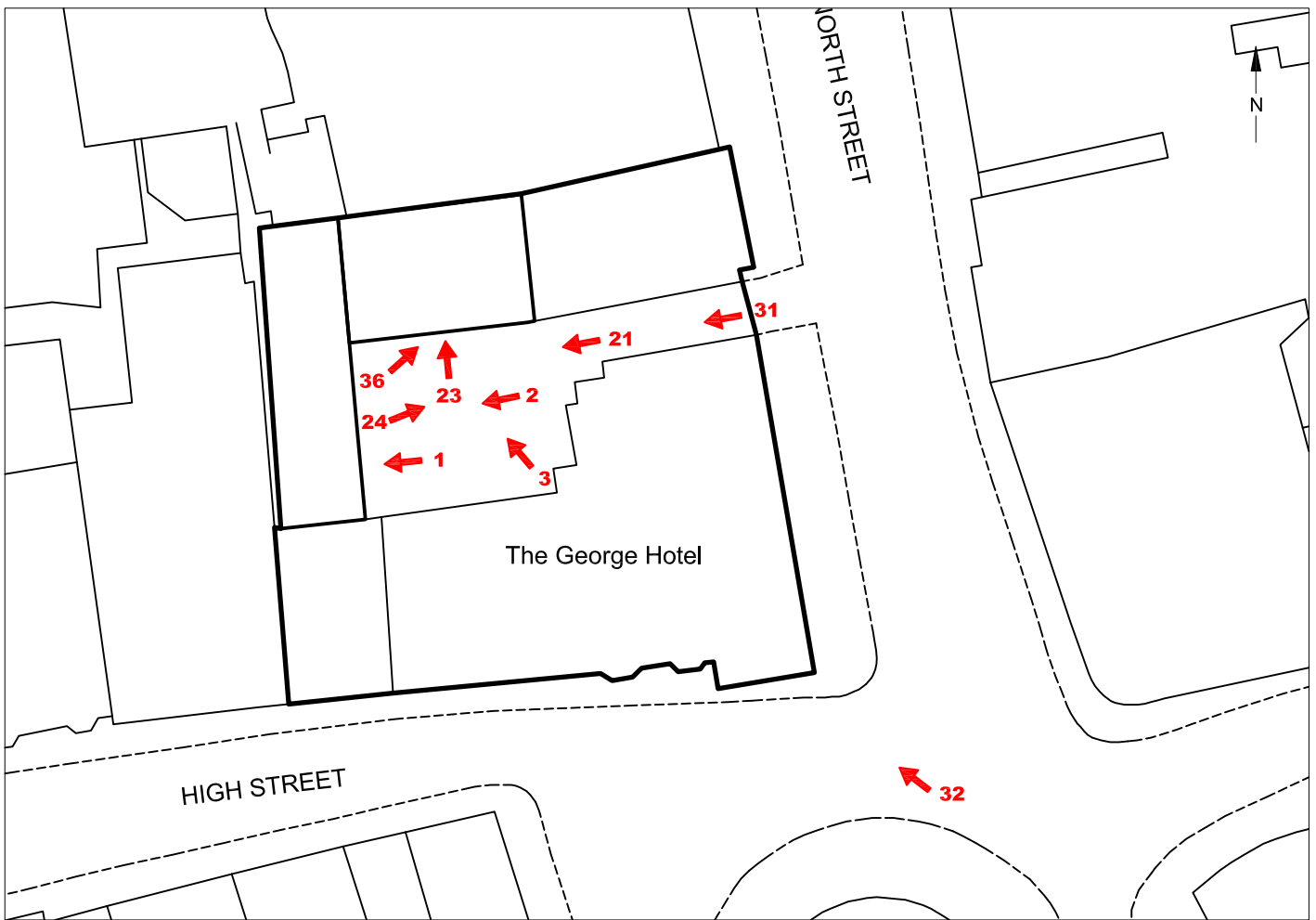
Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Bishops Stortford
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey"
Paper Archive recipient	Bishops Stortford
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Photograph","Plan","Report","Survey "

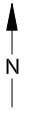
Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Historic Building Record: Outbuildings to the rear of The George Hotel, Bishop's Stortford
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Letch, A.
Other bibliographic details	rep no. 2014141
Date	2014
Issuer or publisher	ASE (Essex)
Place of issue or publication	Braintree, Essex
Description	EH level 2-3 bound report with text, plans, sections and photos

Entered by	Andy Letch (a.letch@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	3 June 2014



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Project Ref: 8078	May 2014	External shots and internal shots (ground floor)	
Report Ref: 2014141	Drawn by: APL		



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Project Ref: 8078	May 2014	Internal shots (first floor)	
Report Ref: 2014141	Drawn by: APL		



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