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Ditherington Flax Mill, Shrewsbury,
Shropshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief,
2005

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Ditherington Flax Mill, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief 2005

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Summary

A watching brief was carried out for English Heritage at Ditherington Flax Mill, Shrewsbury, to coincide with the partial removal of the blockings from five early windows within the main mill building, in order to expose the window heads and to recover evidence for the techniques of construction. The exercise revealed 9 in wide timber lintels to all five window openings. Two of these lintels were abutted by chamfered outer timbers, one towards the exterior and one towards the interior. In one opening a splayed jamb was recorded.

1.0 Introduction

On 7 December 2005, an archaeological watching brief was carried out by Birmingham Archaeology for English Heritage at Ditherington Flax Mill, Shrewsbury. The watching brief was held to coincide with the partial removal of the blockings from five early windows within the main mill building, in order to expose the window heads and to recover evidence for the techniques of construction, in particular, to investigate the survival of timber lintels. The project was carried out in accordance with the advice laid down by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 2001a and 2001b).

2.0 Site Location

The mill is located in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, approximately 2 miles north of the town centre on the west side of the main road through Ditherington.

3.0 Objectives

To investigate and record exposed structural details of the blocked window heads.

4.0 Methods

The window blockings were removed under archaeological supervision, and exposed details recorded by means of written notes and digital photography.

5.0 Results

Of the five blocked windows investigated, one was on the first floor (A, Fig. 3), two on the second floor (B and C, Fig. 4) and two on the third floor (D and E, Fig. 4).

Location A

This window, which was on the west side of the building, was blocked with 9¼ in x 5 in x 2 in bricks. Above the opening was a plain 9 in wide timber lintel, and, abutting it towards the interior, a second, narrow, timber with a broad chamfer on its east face (Plate 1).

Location B

Window B, also in the west wall, was blocked with 9¼ in x 5 in x 2 in bricks. It too had a plain 9 in wide timber lintel. On the south side of the window opening a splayed and plastered jamb could be glimpsed (Plate 2).

Location C

The third window was in the east wall. It was blocked with 9¼ in x 4¾ x 2 in bricks and had a plain 9 in wide timber lintel (Plate 3).

Location D

Window D, which was in the west wall, was blocked with 9¾ in x 5 in x 1½ in bricks. A plain timber lintel, approximately 9½ in wide was made up by two timbers, both in poor condition, apparently rotten with fungus adhering to them (Plate 4).

Location E

The fifth window, in the east wall, was blocked with 9 in x 5 in x 1½ in brick, including a perforated malting floor tile of the same dimensions (Plate 5). Above the opening was a timber lintel, 9 ins wide by 3 ins thick, which, unlike any of the other lintels was chamfered towards the exterior (east) (Plate 6).

6.0 Conclusions

The watching brief has shown that each of the blocked windows investigated retains a timber lintel, generally 9 ins thick, and, in the one case (Location E) that it was possible to measure, 3 ins thick. There seems, however, to have been a degree of variation. At location D, for instance, the lintel was composed of two timbers. Uniquely, the lintel at Location E had a chamfered outer face, whereas equally exclusively another lintel (Location A) abutted a timber with a chamfered inner face. It is difficult to draw any conclusions from this diversity without more extensive investigation.

7.0 Acknowledgements

The project was carried out for Birmingham Archaeology by Malcolm Hislop. The illustrations were prepared by Bryony Ryder. Thanks are owed to Troy Smith and his colleagues from Perry Construction Ltd for their assistance during the watching brief. The project was managed for English Heritage by Andrew Patterson.

8.0 References

Bain, K. 2005, *Excavation at Ditherington Flax Mill, Shrewsbury, Shropshire: Archaeological Watching Brief 2005* (Birmingham Archaeology Report No. 1343).

IFA 2001a *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures*.

IFA 2001b *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief.*



Fig.1



Fig.2

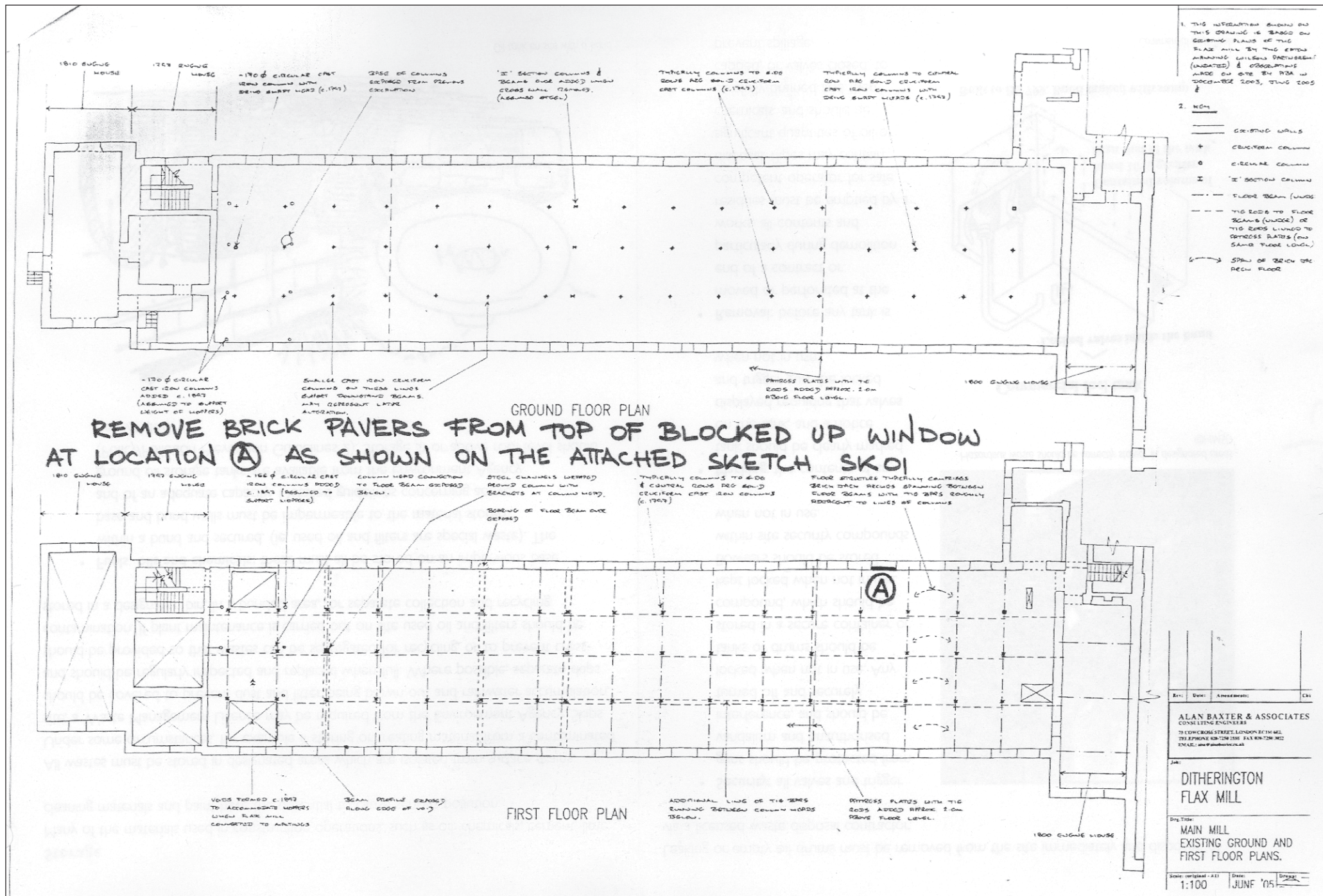


Fig.3

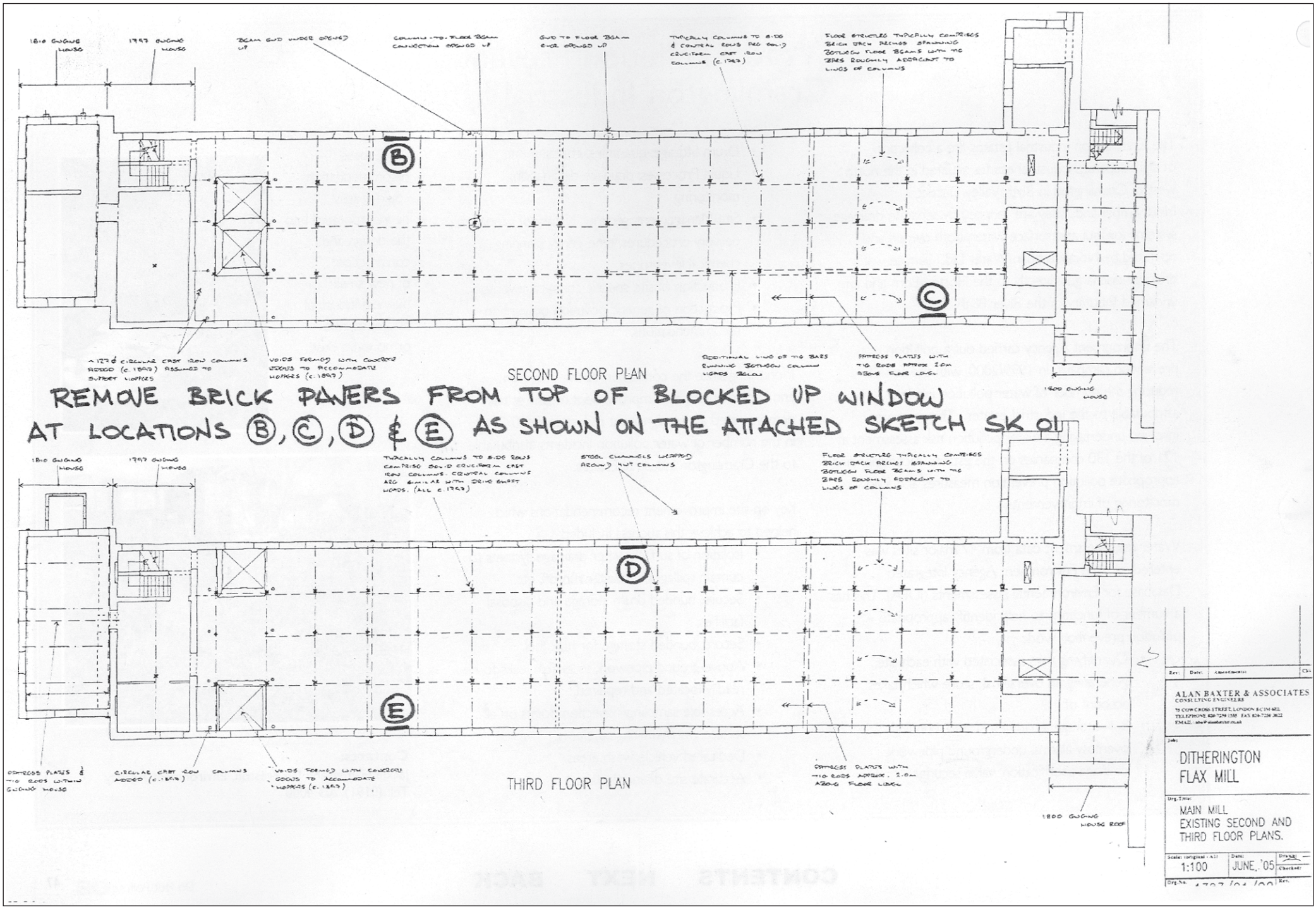


Fig.4

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Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6