

# **birmingham archaeology**

**Former Taunton Cider Company  
Premises, Norton Fitzwarren,  
Somerset**

**Historic Building Assessments  
2006**

**UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM**



Project No.1475  
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**Former Taunton Cider Company Premises, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset**  
**Historic Building Assessments 2006**

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## Former Taunton Cider Company Premises, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset

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## Summary

*A programme of archaeological building recording and evaluation was undertaken in July 2006 at the former site of Taunton Cider Company premises, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset (NGR ST 19502585). This was carried out in advance of proposed residential redevelopment of the site and supplemented a programme of historic building assessment undertaken as part of an overall environmental impact assessment. Further work was carried out on Building 2, Morse's House and Building 3, Home Place/Eden Mead specifically assessment of the building fabric and roof structure, and the production of measured plans and cross-sections. Building 2 revealed evidence to suggest that it dated to the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century with good survival of the original fabric on both the interior and exterior. Building 3 appeared to date to the 17<sup>th</sup> century with good survival of the exterior fabric and fenestration pattern but more limited survival of interior fabric.*

## Former Taunton Cider Company Premises, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset

### Historic Building Recording and Assessment, 2006

#### 1.0 Introduction

In July 2006 Birmingham Archaeology carried out historic building recording and assessment of two properties in Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset. The work was commissioned by Entran Ltd and followed on from assessments carried out as part of an environmental impact assessment in advance of redevelopment of the former Taunton Cider Company manufactory (Hislop 2006). The initial assessments of the buildings recognised that both were of local significance and had the potential to be, in the one case (Building 2: Morse's House) of national significance, and in the other (Building 3: Home Place/Eden Mead), of regional significance. It was not possible to make a definitive decision owing to difficulties of access, and to the fact that later cladding had obscured the extent to which the early fabric survived. It was therefore recommended that further investigation and recording be carried out in order to gain a fuller understanding of the structures, and to inform any planning decision on their futures. This report is to be read in conjunction with the initial assessment as part of the overall Environmental Impact Assessment.

#### 2.0 Location

The two buildings are located in the centre of the village of Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset, adjacent to each other on the south side of the main east-west road. Building 2 (Morse's House) lies to the west at, and Building 3 (Home Place/Eden Mead) to the east at (NGR ST 19502585, Figs. 1 and 2).

#### 3.0 Objectives

##### *Building 2 (Morse's House)*

The main aim of the project was to carry out investigative recording work in order to make a more definitive assessment of the significance of the buildings. Specific objectives were as follows:

- To produce measured phased ground and first-floor plans
- To produce measured section drawings through north, east and west ranges
- To remove plaster in order to identify the original cross walls in the north and east ranges
- To create access to the roof of the north range if possible, for recording purposes

##### *Building 3 (Home Place/Eden Mead)*

- To produce measured phased ground and first-floor plans
- To produce a measured section drawing through the north range
- To remove plaster in order to identify original internal walls

#### 4.0 Method

The metric survey was carried out by reflectorless total station (Nikon NPL 332) and by hand measurement using tapes and a laser distance meter (Leica Disto). New structural evidence was also recorded by high-resolution digital photography (5 Megapixel or above).

Soft-stripping of surfaces was carried out using hand-tools. The work was supplemented by written description and hand-drawn plans.

All work was undertaken to the standards specified in the *Recording Historic Buildings: A Descriptive Specification* (RCHME 1996), *Measured Survey and Building Recording for Historic Buildings and Structures* (Dallas 2003) and *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (English Heritage 2006) and in accordance with the standards set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (IFA 1999, revised 2001).. All stages of the project were carried out in accordance with the guidelines established in the *Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2)* (English Heritage 1991).

The project complied with all Health and Safety requirements stipulated by Entran Ltd. and those outlined in the *Health and Safety in Field Archaeology Manual* (SCAUM 2002) and in the project *Risk Assessment* (Birmingham Archaeology 2005).

The project archive was compiled in accordance with the guidelines contained in *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-Term Storage* (UKIC 1990) and *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Galleries Commission 1992).

## 5.0 Building 2 (Morse's House)

### *Ground Floor* (Fig. 3)

*North Range:* The ground floor of the range originally had a two-room plan. The thickness of the exterior walls was indicative that they were original and constructed in stone. A north-south wall sub-divided a large western room from an eastern room. Soft-stripping revealed it was constructed in red-brick, but probably replaced an earlier wall in this location.

A series of north-south transverse beams with chamfered edges (five in total, one of which had been replaced) suggested the western room was open. A doorway to the north and street was blocked and converted to a window and was opposed in the southern wall by a doorway with splayed interior jambs.

The western room was served by a massive chimney-stack and associated fireplace at west end of the room. Removal of plaster from the chimney stack at the east end of the principal range revealed the survival of a sandstone jamb and a chamfered timber bressumer (Fig.11, Plate 1), apparently concealed when the fireplace was converted into a safe in the mid-to-late-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Soft-stripping revealed that the remainder of the walls on the ground floor are part of a later sub-division of the interior of the building in brick (plaster obscures exact composition, however, limited testing suggests machine-cut red-brick). The majority of brick sub-division was probably associated with a 20<sup>th</sup> century renovation.

The east room had remains of a substantial but heavily altered chimney-stack in the southern wall shared with the northern wall of the eastern range. A chimney-stack shared with the adjacent west room was less substantial and constructed in red-brick.

*East Range:* The wing extended south from the northern range in an L-shaped plan. Originally the range had a cross-passage with a room to the south (the eastern room of the north range was adjacent and to the north, *see above*). The northern room had evidence for an original stud wall on the soffit face of the northern of two transverse beams in the form of mortices and a linking groove (Plate 4). The wall to south was of later-brick construction beneath the other transverse beam. A doorway was blocked and converted to a window on

the eastern exterior wall. This suggested an east-west cross-passage leading to a stone-built newell staircase on the west side of the range contained within a turret (detail of newell, Fig. 12).

The room to the south was originally open but was later sub-divided with brick and plaster-board. The central transverse beam supported the floor above, but was at a higher level to the two that flanked the cross-passage suggesting this was a later insertion. There were two splayed window embrasures on the eastern exterior wall. A substantial chimney-stack on southern wall was brick built and probably inserted.

*West Range:* The original plan was a two-room layout separated by a central stairwell. The northern of the two rooms had a former cart-entrance blocked and converted to a window on the western façade. Directly opposing this on the eastern wall was a wide cart-entrance with splayed interior jambs. This appeared to have been a through passage to the rear courtyard of the house.

Two east-west stone-built walls flanked the straight central staircase. The walls had clear evidence for access between the two rooms underneath the stairs. The staircase itself was not original but may have been a replacement in the original location.

The southern room was open plan with a chimney-breast at the southern wall. Evidence from the roof space revealed this to be brick built and was a later inserted feature. Two plain casement windows faced west, the design and size suggested they were not typical of the building. The ceiling level within the room was higher than to the north. The north-south corridor was subsequently separated by a brick wall partition.

The southern part of the building was part of an extension of the stone-built range with cart access at the ground floor level and a heightened ceiling.

The northern extension enclosed the space between the west range and north range. The thickness of the walls suggested a brick construction. Clear variation occurred between the window types and heights within this element and earlier elements of the range. However, exterior render prevented detailed examination of the construction material. The ground floor plan was originally open with access to the north range and remainder of the south range, but was subsequently sub-divided with brick-built walls.

#### *First Floor* (Fig. 4)

*Main Range:* Soft-stripping revealed the east - west wall dividing the west room from the east room was of stud construction with lath and daub infill built against the chimney-stack (Plate 2). The remainder of the internal walls were of plasterboard construction.

Detailed examination of the roof-space revealed a single surviving original truss overlying the east-west wall (Fig. 8). No tie-beam was visible and the principals were truncated and connected by a collar bonded to the principals with a halved-joint. The truss was in-filled with wattle and daub. The remainder of the roof space to the west over the main range had been replaced, probably in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by a series of principal rafter trusses with plank ridge-piece. However to the east the roof space survived. The ceiling was of lath and daub construction throughout.

*East Range:* The partition walls were all revealed to be lath and daub in-fill within a stud wall. The floor level was raised in the southern room. The southern room had two evenly spaced jointed crucks side-pegged with mortice and tenon joints (Fig. 9 and 13). A collar with mortice and tenon joints tied the crucks together and the apex was likewise mortice and tenon jointed. The gable supported the roof structure at the southern end of the room, whilst a further truss with stud wall in-fill below the collar enclosed the room. Above the central room there was no evidence for trusses.

*West Range:* The original layout of the first floor was largely identical to the ground floor. The rooms had subsequently been sub-divided by plasterboard sub-division as part of their conversion to offices. The stairwell was open to the north on the first floor, and had been enclosed by a plasterboard and glass partition. The roof structure was a later replacement with simple principle rafters resting directly on the stone-built walls.

#### *Discussion*

The original plan of the complex of buildings appeared to be an L-shape north and east range with an adjacent and unconnected outbuilding (the west range) forming the other side of a small courtyard (Phase 1). Subsequent construction led to the extension of the west range to the south (Phase 2). The west range was subsequently extended to the north and connected to the north range. The layout was changed to create a linear corridor along the eastern side of the west range on the ground floor that connected to the north range (Phase 3). The area between the ranges was built within the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as later sub-division of the interior spaces (Phase 4).

*North Range:* The two-room plan of the north range seems to have been largely open as indicated by the transverse beams across the room. The soft-stripping of the fireplace gives reason to suspect that the original 17<sup>th</sup>-century fireplace survives largely intact beneath the plasterwork. The application of a thick layer of plaster to the chimney-stack may throw light upon the tablet dated 1608, which is set into the chimneybreast. This seems to be a replica of an original feature, perhaps covered over when the conversion of the fireplace was carried out. The use of smoke-hood fireplaces was common in the Somerset area between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries prior to the development of more complex fireplaces (Penyore 2005, 75). These tended to be stone construction on the ground floor with timber-framed construction sloping to the chimney above and allowed multiple hearths. The entire removal of the chimney-stack on the first floor may be consistent with having been timber-framed.

The small windows visible on the exterior façade and located on the northern and western walls were consistent with a tight newell staircase, adjacent and to the north of the chimney-stack, subsequently blocked during renovation. Examples of a layout such as this can be seen at Ford Cottage, Seven Ash, West Bagborough and Lower Wedcombe Farm, Brompton Ralph (*ibid*, 77-78). The chimney-stack in the centre of the house was brick-built and may have been part of an alteration of the heating arrangements.

The western roof space appeared to have few original features having been largely replaced as part of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century renovation. However, principal rafter trusses resting on the stone walls were built as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Somerset (*ibid*, 51) and it is possible the later roof was a straight replacement of the earlier style. The shorter principals on the single surviving truss appeared to have been cut and were not consistent with a half-hipped roof construction (Williams & Gilson 1985, 25-27).

*East Range:* The east range shared stone-built structural walls with the north range and therefore may have been contemporaneous. The use of side-pegged jointed crucks occurred up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Williams 1977, 827) with the later varieties tending to rest on the ground floor ceiling beams. However, Penyore (2005, 51) suggests that cruck trusses were only rarely used after the 16<sup>th</sup> century and then only in barns with wide spans. This may suggest that the end of the building was formerly an open outbuilding prior to conversion to a formal dwelling with the cross-passage separating the domestic quarters from the outbuilding.

The interior walls on the first floor within the east range were of stud wall construction and part of a probable later period of sub-division.



*West Range:* The original plan appeared to have been a two-room outbuilding divided by a central staircase. The northern room appeared to be a through passage to the court at the rear with the southern room originally open to the west (the windows appeared to be later inserted) and a raised ceiling suggestive of a hayloft. The extension to the south appeared to maintain the buildings use as a barn whilst the extension to the north was contemporary with a general change to domestic use contemporary with the 19<sup>th</sup>-to-20<sup>th</sup> century change in plan to a side corridor.

The roof like the north range was entirely replaced but was probably consistent with a principal rafter roof construction resting on the side walls.

## 6.0 Building 3 (Home Place/Eden Mead)

### *Ground Floor* (Fig. 5)

The ground floor had been heavily renovated as part of 20<sup>th</sup> century conversion to a bar. The bar itself was semi-circular, formed by half a converted fermentation barrel. The wall partitions were generally later brick insertions. A greater number of partitions in the eastern half of the ground floor were recent additions, designed for toilets and storage space as part of ground floor conversion to a bar. An original splayed doorway entrance to street was flanked by a series of splayed window embrasures. An inserted French door to garden area existed to the rear. A large original fireplace and associated stack dominated the western wall (Plate 13 and 15, *See Hislop 2006*). The ground floor of brick-built extensions at the rear had been converted to kitchen and restaurant space.

Access to first floor was via a straight staircase with associated lobby area on the ground floor of the eastern brick-built extension. The entrance to this had a large doorway removed from elsewhere and inserted at a later date. The door stylistically dated to the late-17<sup>th</sup>-to-18<sup>th</sup> century. It was a four-ledged door with exterior studding, hung with two divided scroll strap hinges. The drop-handle operated a pivot connected to the latch and was reminiscent of types seen in Gloucestershire in the late-17<sup>th</sup> century (Alcock & Hall 1994, 27). There was a simple square-section bolt at the base (Plates 5, 6, and 7).

### *First Floor* (Fig. 6)

Three gablets within the eaves corresponded with a series of three splayed window embrasures towards the northern (street) façade of the house. Two similar splayed window embrasures and gablets occurred to the south and rear. One had been converted and incorporated into a doorway towards the brick-built extension to the rear.

The original layout was unclear. The use of lath-and-daub (including horse-hair) partition walls (Plate 8) and ceiling construction (Plate 9) occurred in the majority of first floor. Five rooms were located to the north and front of the house with a long corridor along the rear wall. The north - south partition walls split the window embrasures and provided shared light for the rooms to either side. The chimney-stack against the western gable continued through the western room (Plate 14). However, there was no evidence for a hearth. Beaded skirting boards (Plate 11) and plain four-panel doors with brass door-handles and cyma-recta moulded architraves (Plate 12) existed throughout the rooms. However, the eastern end of house had plasterboard walls as part of later sub-division to create kitchen and bathroom area.

The entire roof space and tile roof had been replaced and no evidence of the earlier roof structure was visible (Plate 10).

### *Discussion*

The overall plan of the building was consistent with the north range of Building 2, with a fireplace and stack at the western end with a central doorway flanked by a series of splayed window embrasures. This suggests the original fabric of the building was roughly contemporaneous. The addition of the brick-built gabled extensions to the rear was part of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century expansion of the building.

Later renovation, predominantly 20<sup>th</sup> century in date had removed the vast majority of original internal features on the ground floor. However, there was strong evidence to suggest the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>-century door had been removed from the central front entrance and placed at the back. The dimensions of the door and associated original frame correlate closely with the front entrance suggesting it was removed and placed at the back during a period of renovation when the doorway was blocked.

The internal sub-division on the first floor probably dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rod-and-daub walling was used between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Penoyre 2005, 52) and the use of lath may be a 19<sup>th</sup> century adaptation maintaining the vernacular use of horse-hair daub in to a much later period in this area, where elsewhere in the country the transition had occurred to lime-based render. Therefore, the walls cannot necessarily be seen as an original feature and may be part of a later sub-division of the rooms. The joists supporting the ceiling were of machine-sawn timbers consistent with a 19<sup>th</sup>-century date. The detailing within the rooms (doors and skirting boards) was likewise consistent with a 19<sup>th</sup>-century date.

## 7.0 Conclusions

*Building 2:* Morse's House represents a good example of a two-range domestic house with associated barn complex. The suggestive date of 1608 for Morse's House (Building 2) prescribed by the plaque above the fireplace was consistent with the structural elements visible within the building. However, the presence of jointed crucks may suggest elements of the building dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As mentioned previously much of the original fenestration pattern survived intact. Despite the internal layout being largely altered, elements of the internal structure survive including internal features such as a newell stair well, mullioned windows, chimney stacks, ceiling beams, and roof trusses.

*Building 3:* Home Place/Eden Mead (Building 2) has no evidence to date it earlier than the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The door located at the rear of the building although not original to the locale was probably original to the building and stylistically dated to the late-17<sup>th</sup> century. The building as a whole, although heavily clad, maintained a high degree of the original fenestration pattern, particularly on the street frontage. However, the internal layout, particularly on the ground floor, had been radically altered and that on the first floor could not conclusively be dated earlier than the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As with the majority of building 2, the roof space had been entirely altered.

Further investigation has provided sufficient evidence to allow an informed judgement about the historic or architectural significance of the two buildings. PPG 15 (DoE 1994) states that 'all buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition are listed'. Revision of the criteria for the listing of buildings (DCMS 2006, 16) states,

- i. Before 1700, all buildings which contain a significant proportion of their original fabric are listed;
- ii. From 1700 to 1840, most buildings are listed.

The two buildings certainly represent earlier survival than is visible from the rendered exterior façade. Although detailed dating cannot be ascertained they both appear to date to the 17<sup>th</sup> century or earlier.

It is arguable that Building 2, Morse's House, meets these criteria, and on those grounds might be considered to be of national significance. The original exterior fabric of the building survives intact and there is good evidence to suggest that the original fenestration pattern survives on both the northern, western and eastern facades of the three ranges. However, survival of the actual fenestration itself is poor and confined to two original windows with wood mullions. The interior plan survives only in the form of beam locations, and it is arguable that few of the original wall locations survive, although there is evidence that some of the stud walls may represent early sub-division. However, several original features do survive most noticeably the fireplace within the north range, the turret staircase with newell post within the east range and four original roof trusses, two of which are a distinctive variety of side-pegged jointed cruck.

Survival within Building 3, Home Place/Eden Mead, is poorer. The original fenestration pattern survives largely intact on the northern street façade. However, there is little or no evidence for survival of the actual windows or doorways themselves. The 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century doorway located at the rear of the building although possibly original to the building is not *in-situ*. The original interior layout has been entirely altered, although a later inserted 19<sup>th</sup> century layout survives on the first floor. The only feature that survives intact from the original building was the fireplace and associated chimney-stack against the western gable.

Neither Morse's House, Building 2, nor Home Place/Eden Mead, Building 3, are statutorily nor locally listed and they are not in a conservation area. However, Building 3 has considerable group value with Building 2 and it is as a group that the two should be considered. This association raises the significance of Building 3 and contributes to the setting of Building 2. They are certainly of regional significance, bordering on national significance if considered to be of listable quality. If the buildings were to be altered or demolished preservation by record would certainly need to take place.

### **Acknowledgements**

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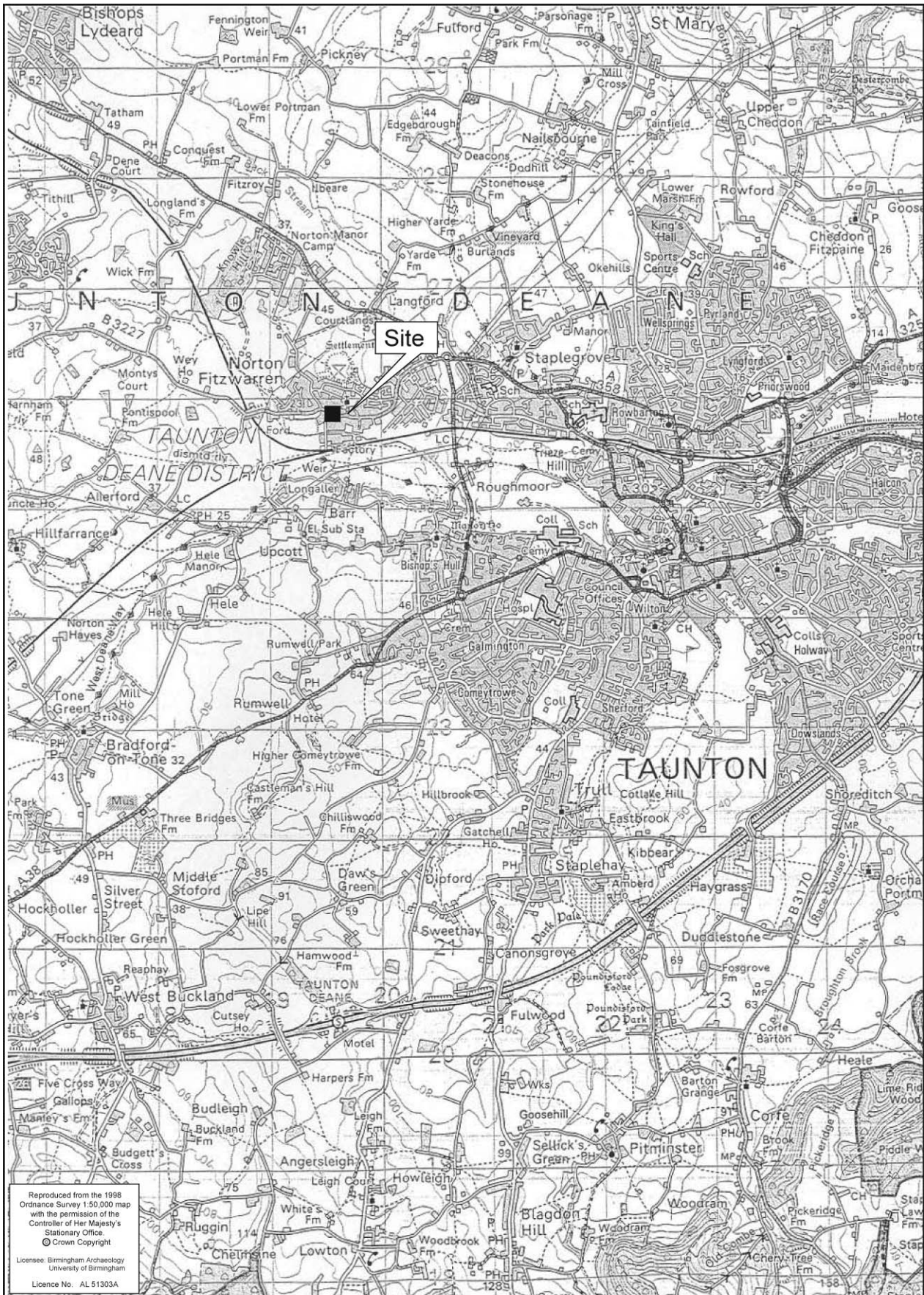


Fig.1

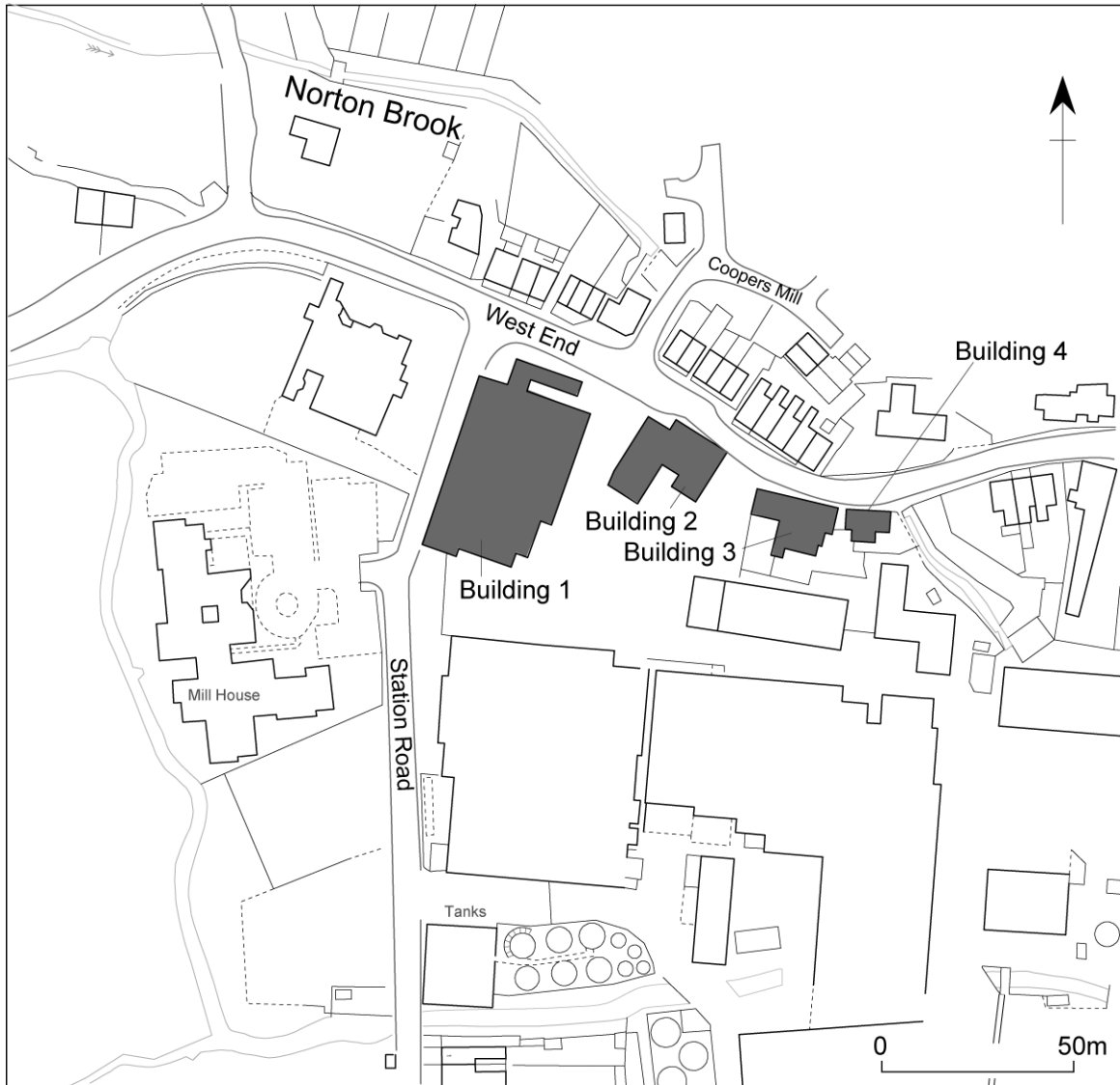


Fig.2

Drawing Location

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Fig. 3

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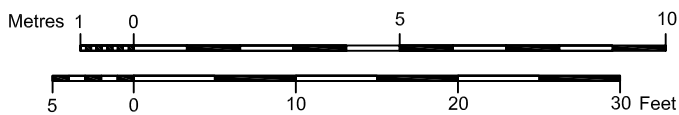
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-  Phase 1 - 17th Century
-  Phase 2 - 18th to Early 19th Century
-  Phase 3 - 19th Century
-  Phase 4 - 20th Century



Building Address

Building 2, Ground Floor, Former Cider Factory, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset

NGR

ST19502585



- Phase 1 - 17th Century
- Phase 2 - 18th to Early 19th Century
- Phase 3 - 19th Century
- Phase 4 - 20th Century

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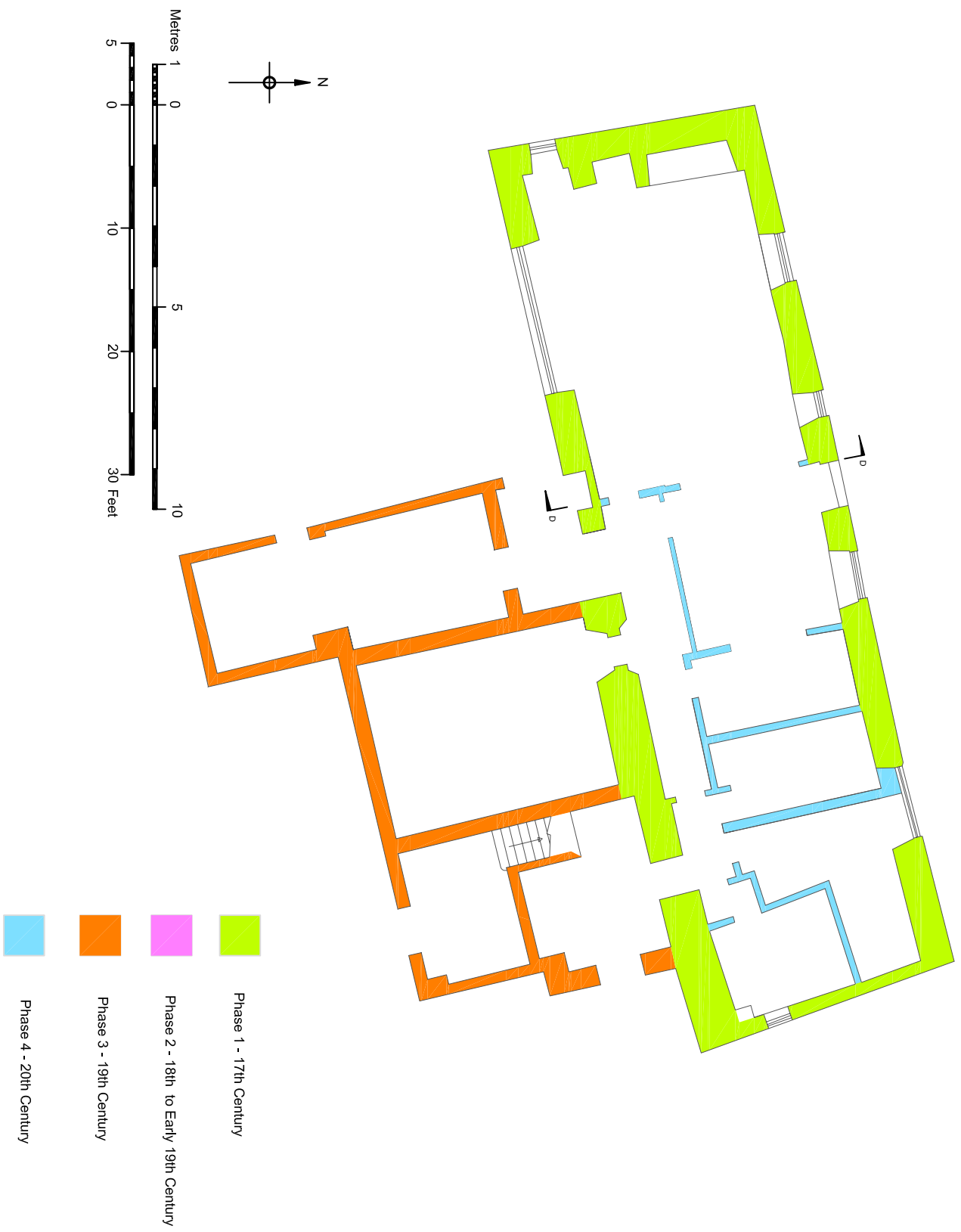
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Fig No.  
Fig. 5

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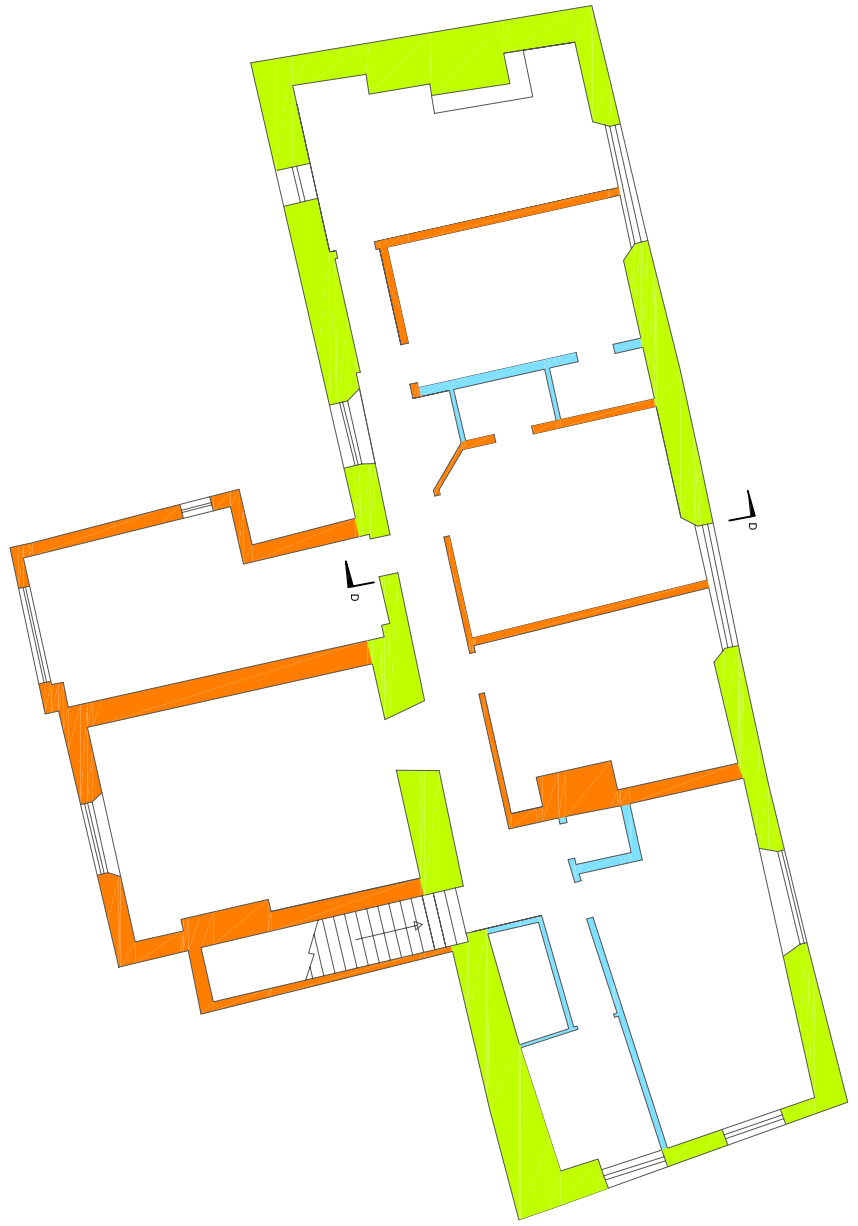
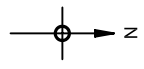
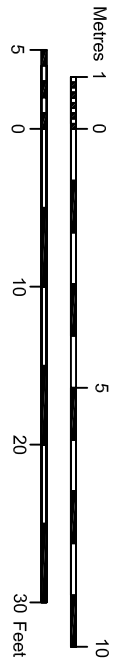
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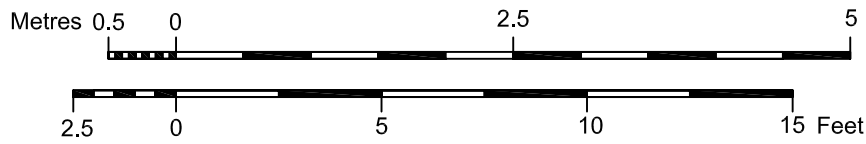
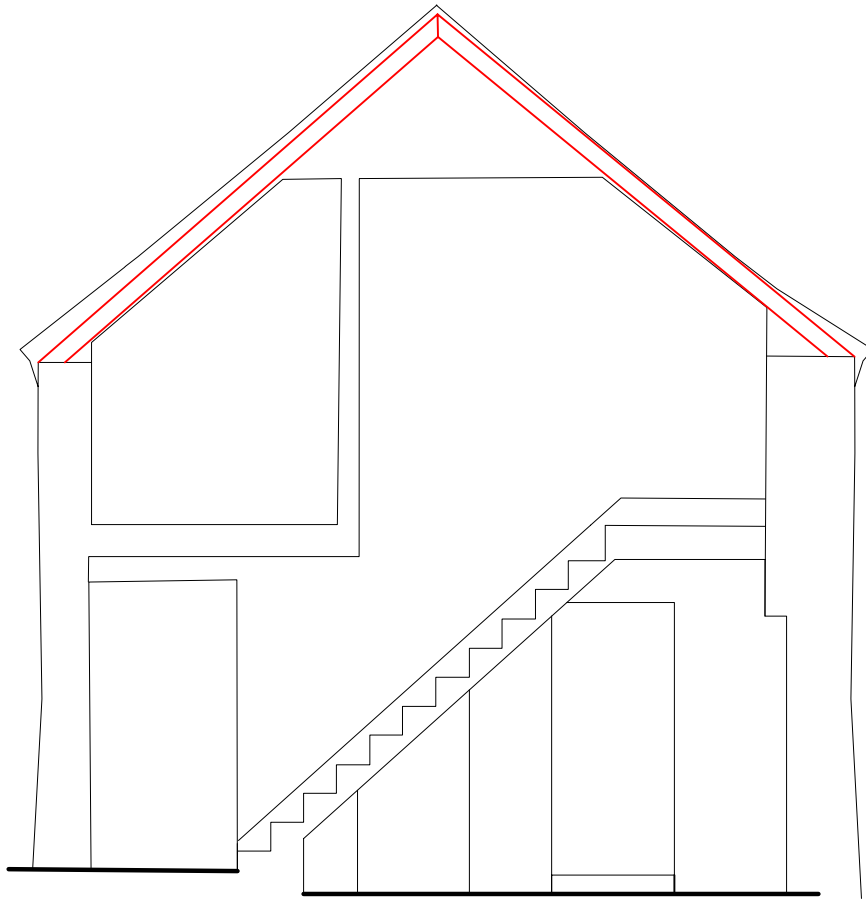
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- Phase 1 - 17th Century
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- Phase 4 - 20th Century



# Section A-A



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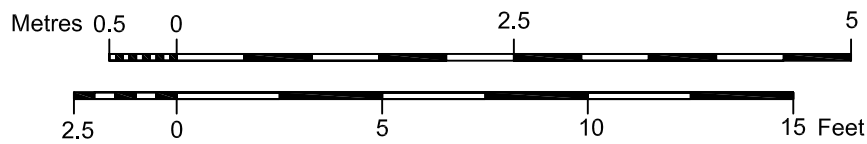
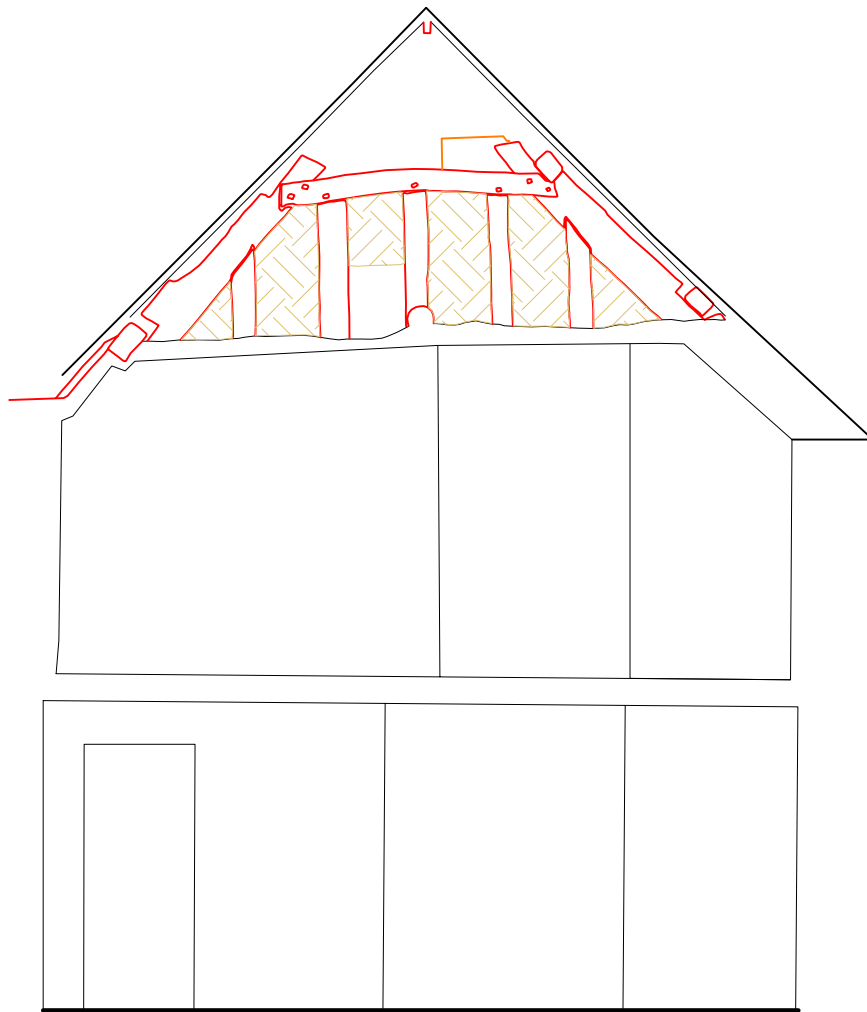
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# Section B-B



- Timber
- Brick
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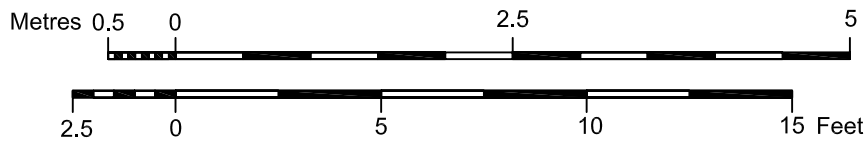
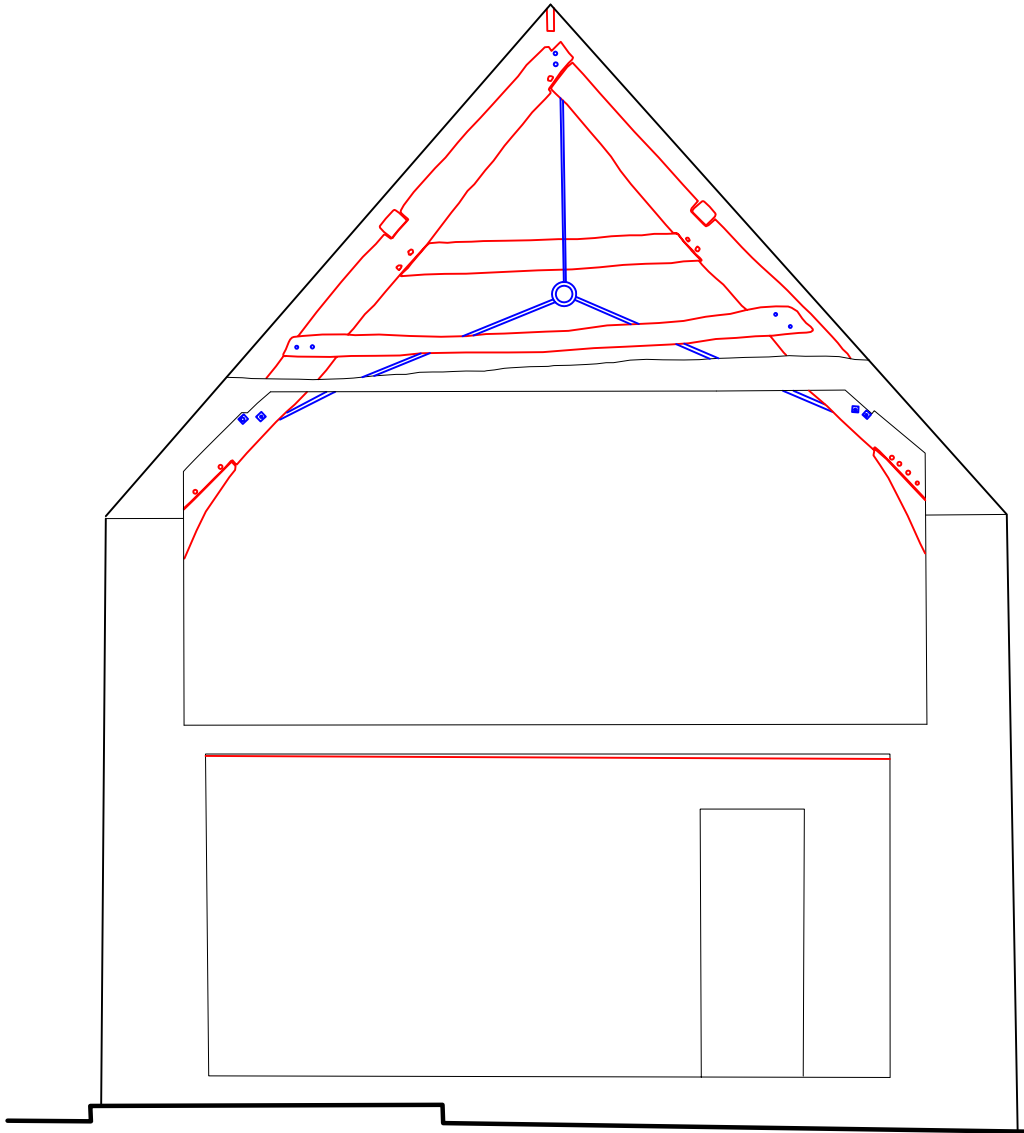
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# Section C-C



- Timber
- Metal

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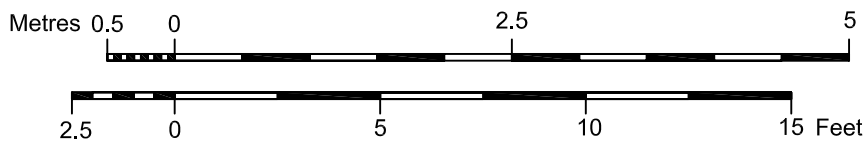
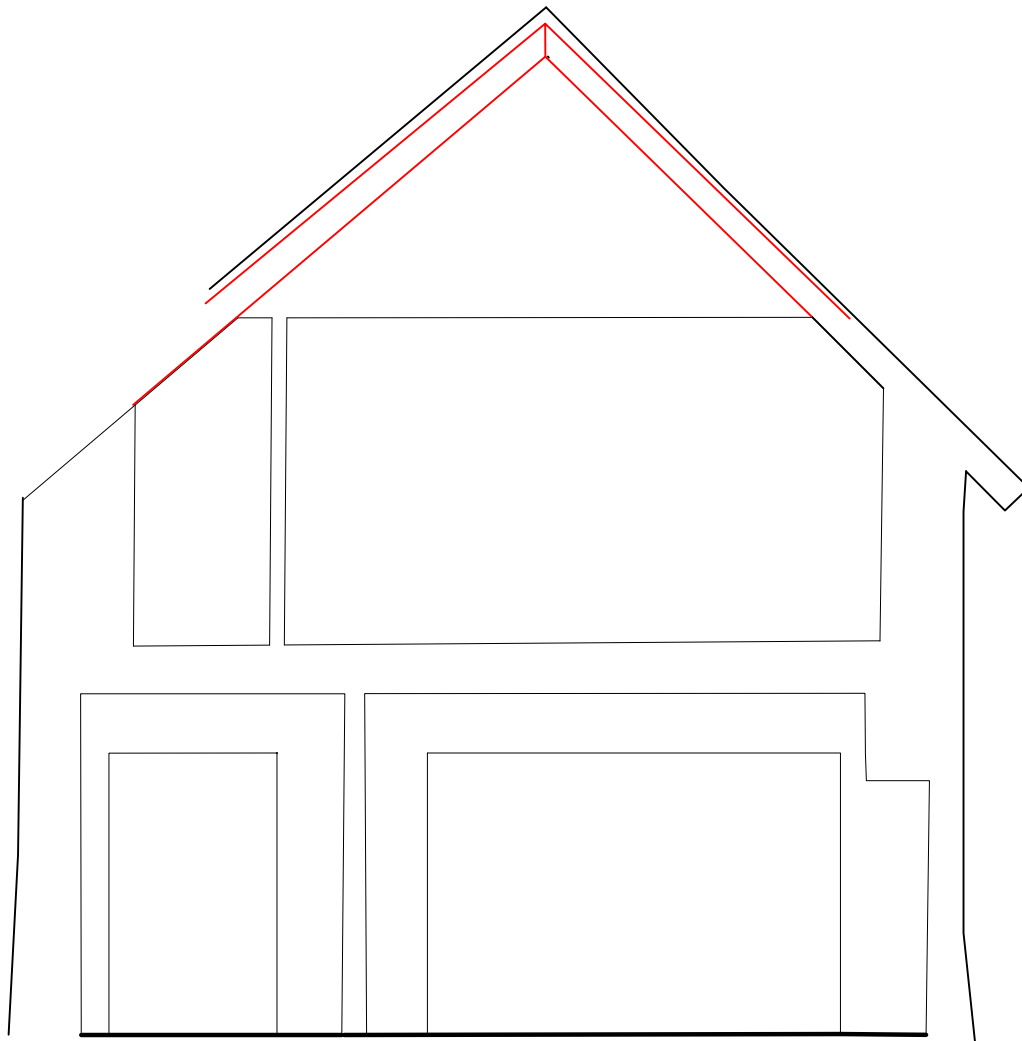
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# Section D-D



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Fig. 10

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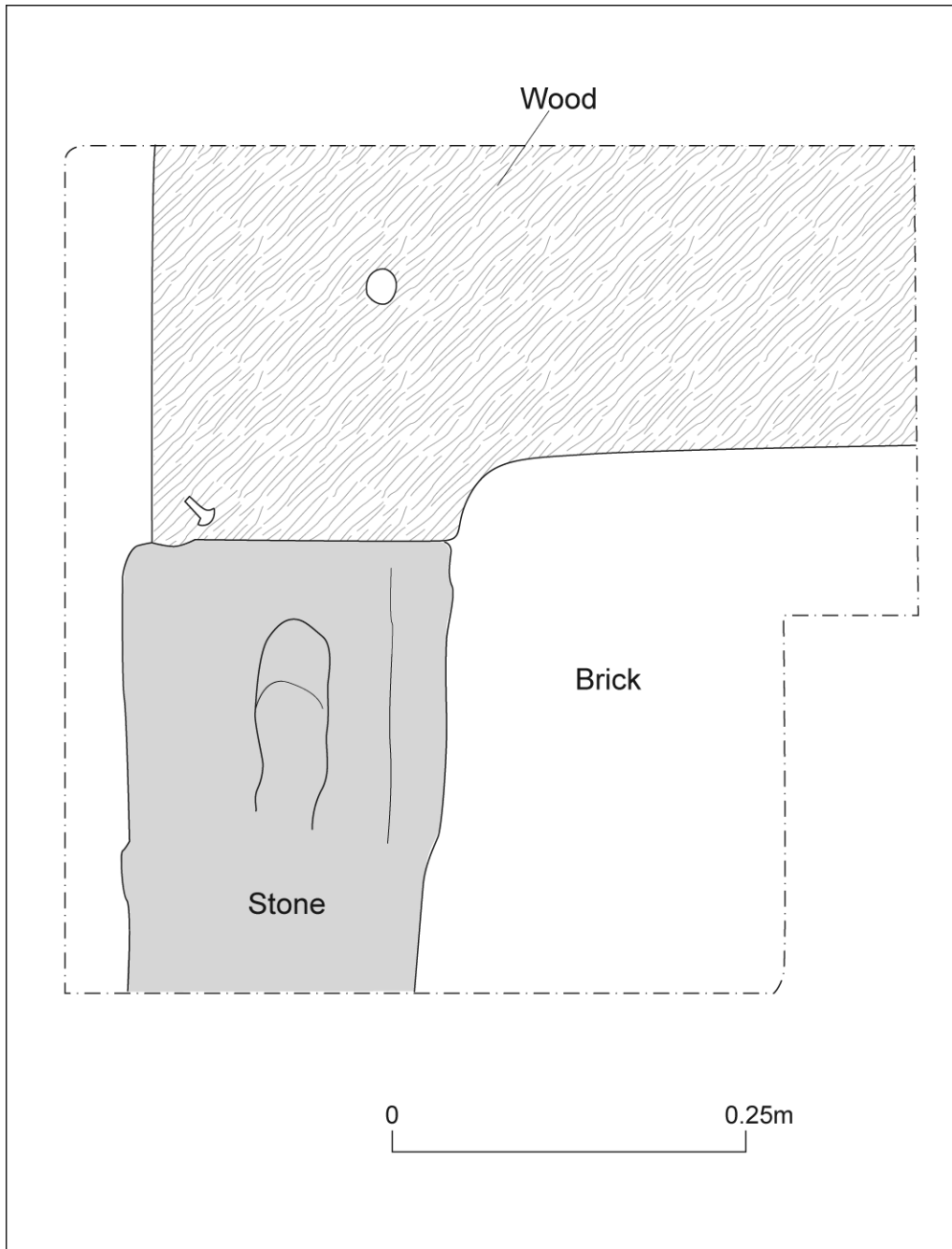


Fig.11

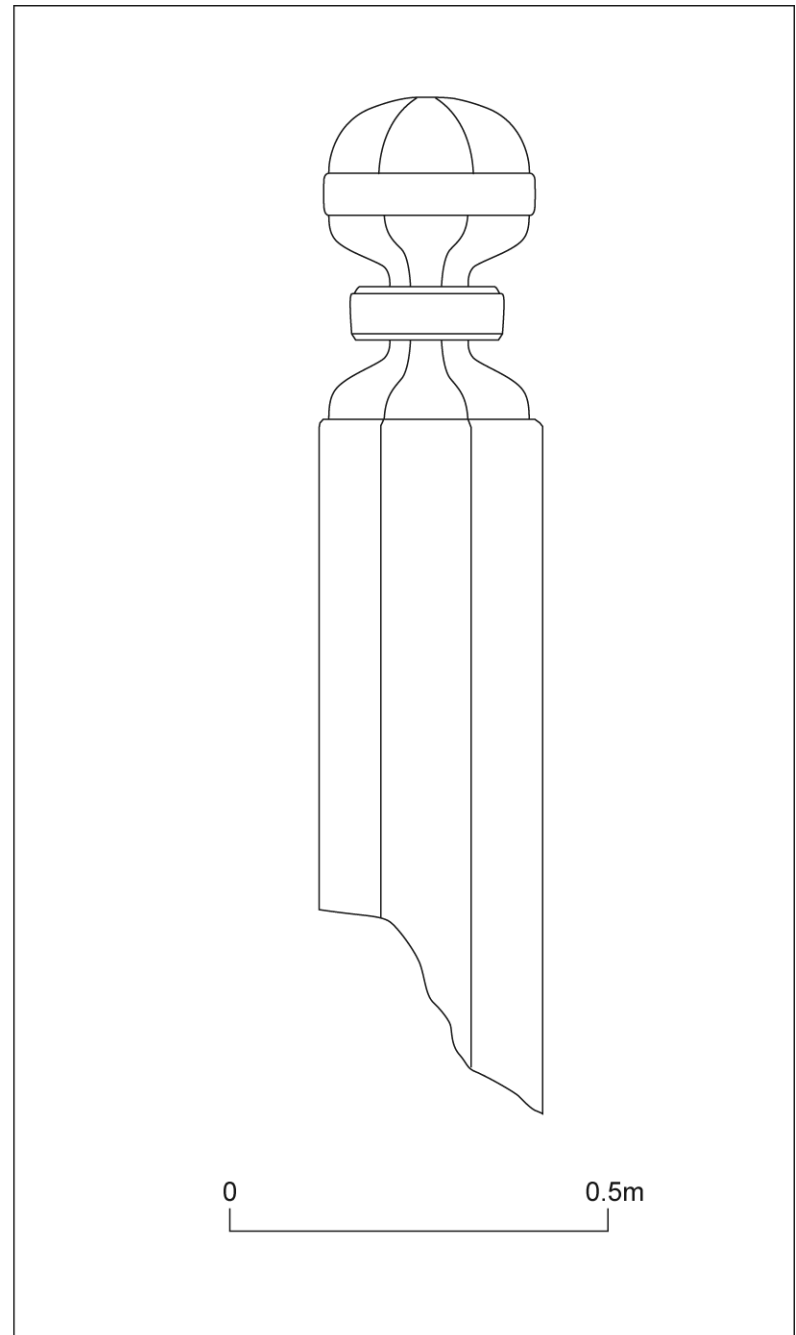


Fig.12

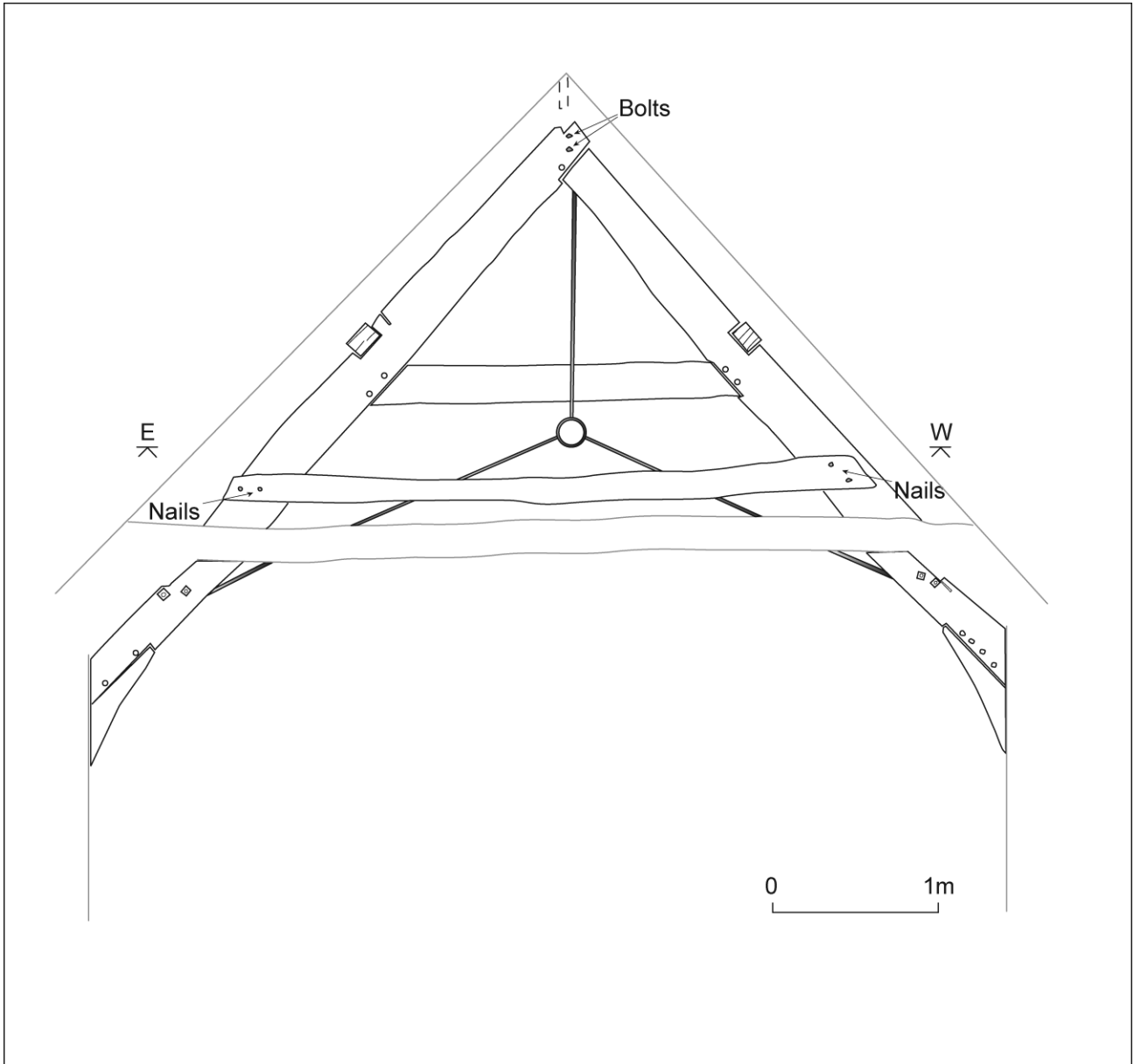


Fig.13





Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8



Plate 9



Plate 10



Plate 11





Plate 12



Plate 13



Plate 14



Plate 15



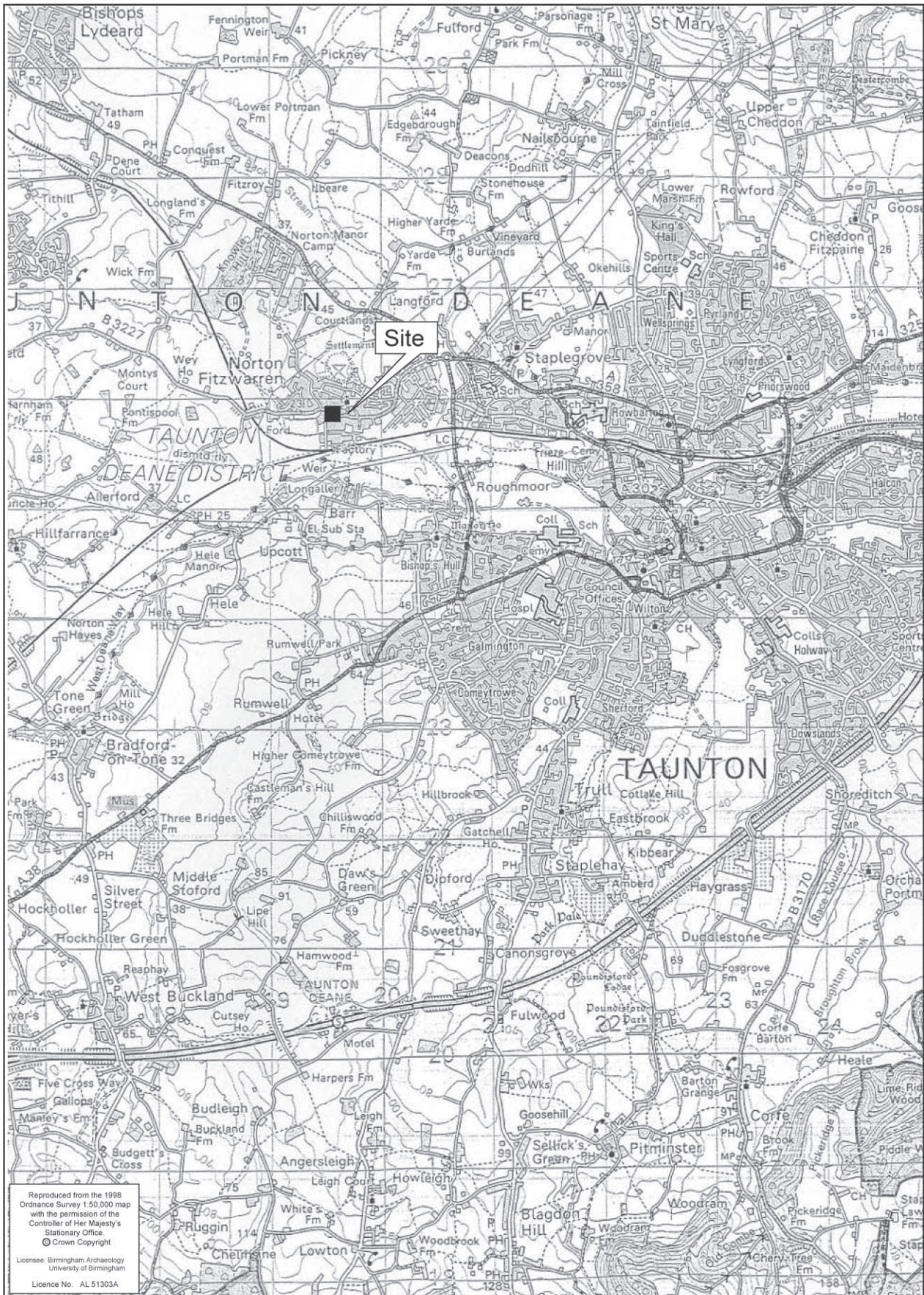


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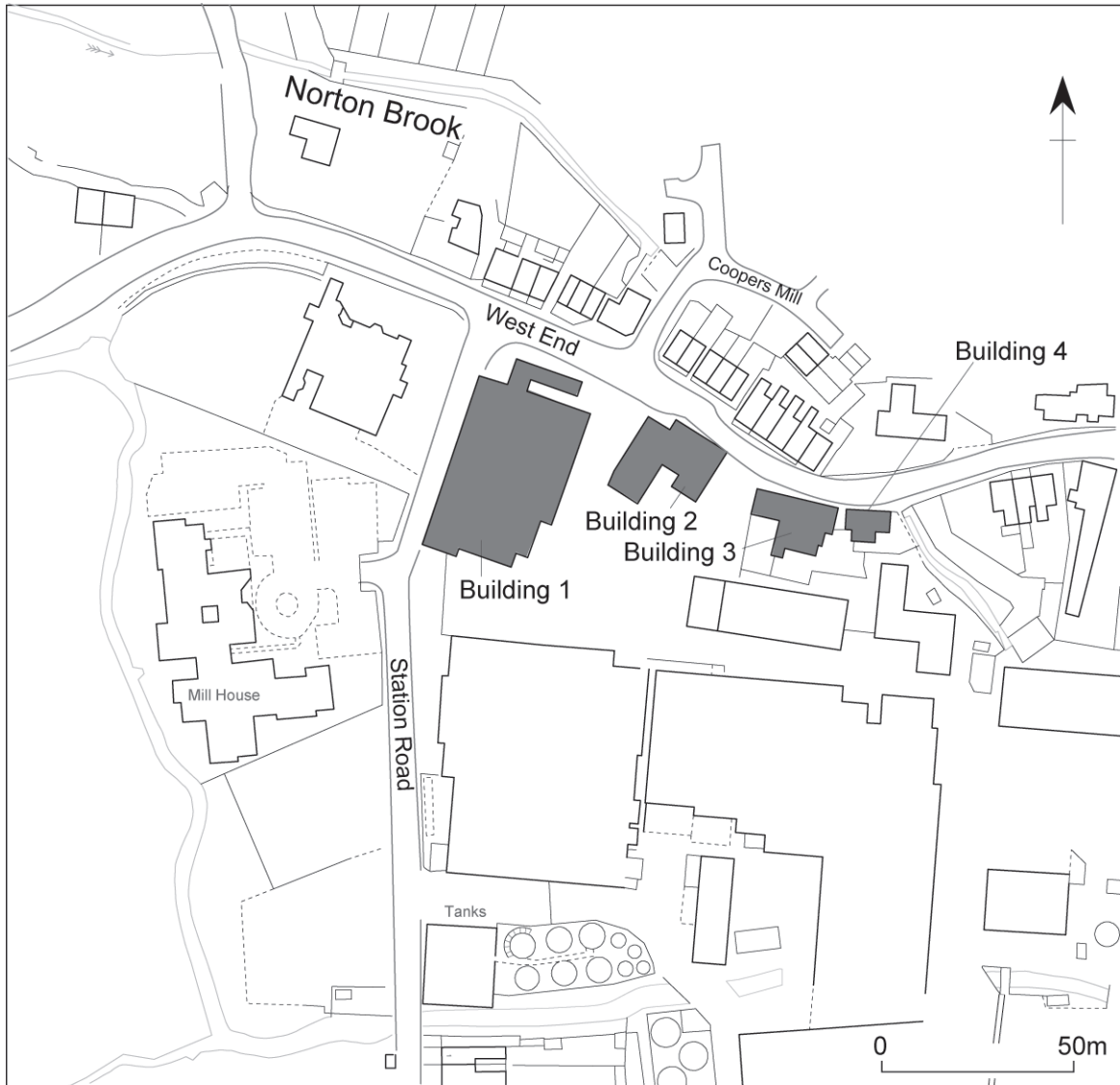


Fig.2



- Phase 1 - 17th Century
- Phase 2 - 18th to Early 19th Century
- Phase 3 - 19th Century
- Phase 4 - 20th Century



- Phase 1 - 17th Century
- Phase 2 - 18th to Early 19th Century
- Phase 3 - 19th Century
- Phase 4 - 20th Century

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**Fig. 4**

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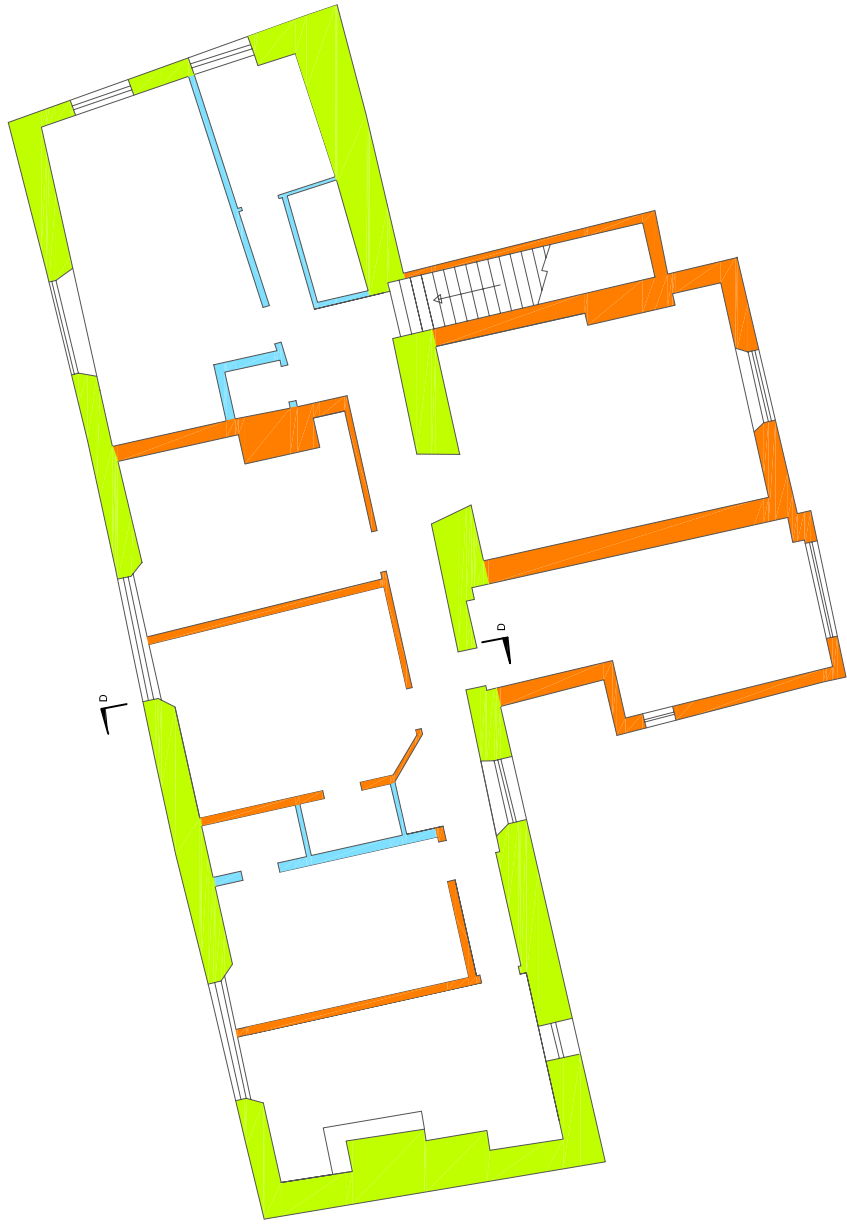
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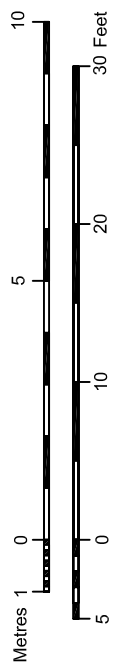
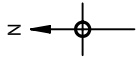
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- Phase 2 - 18th to Early 19th Century
- Phase 3 - 19th Century
- Phase 4 - 20th Century



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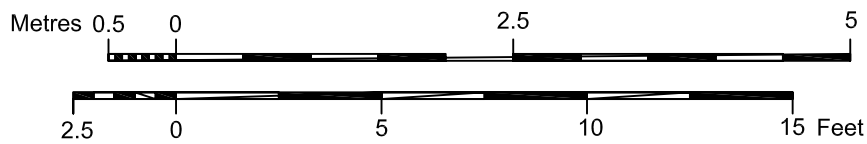
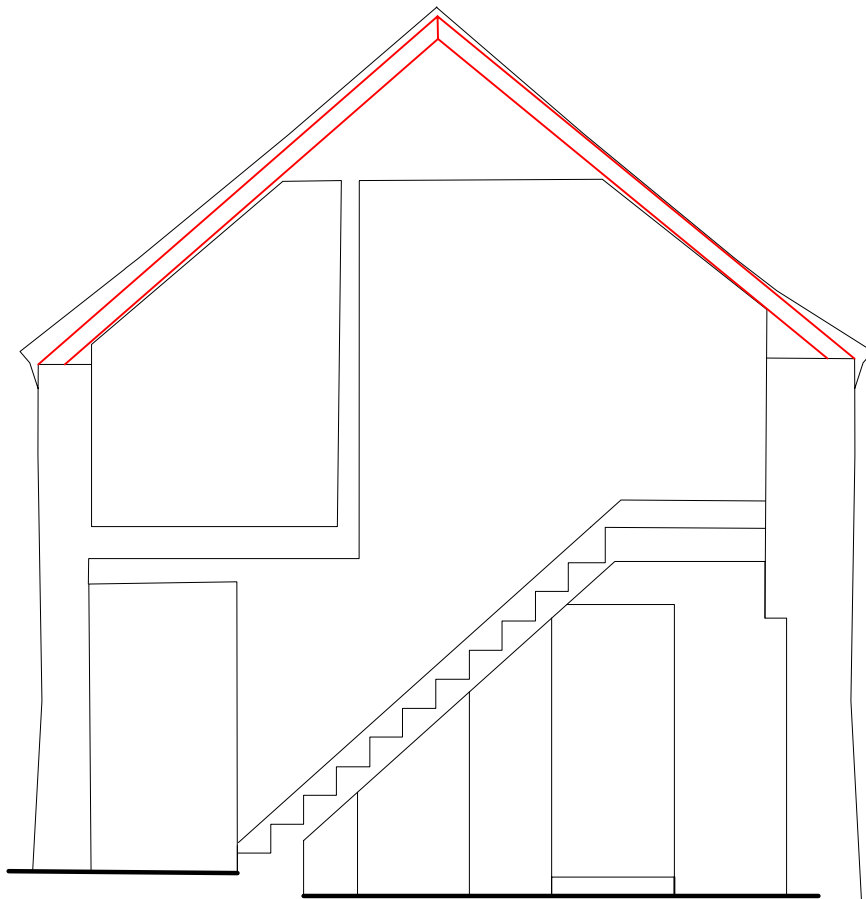
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Fig No.  
**Fig. 6**

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# Section A-A



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Fig. 7

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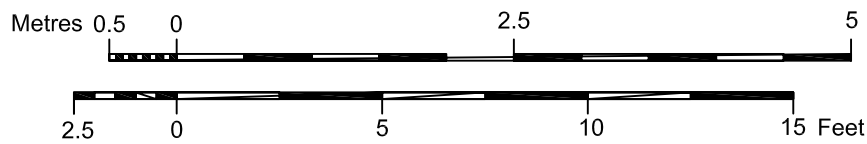
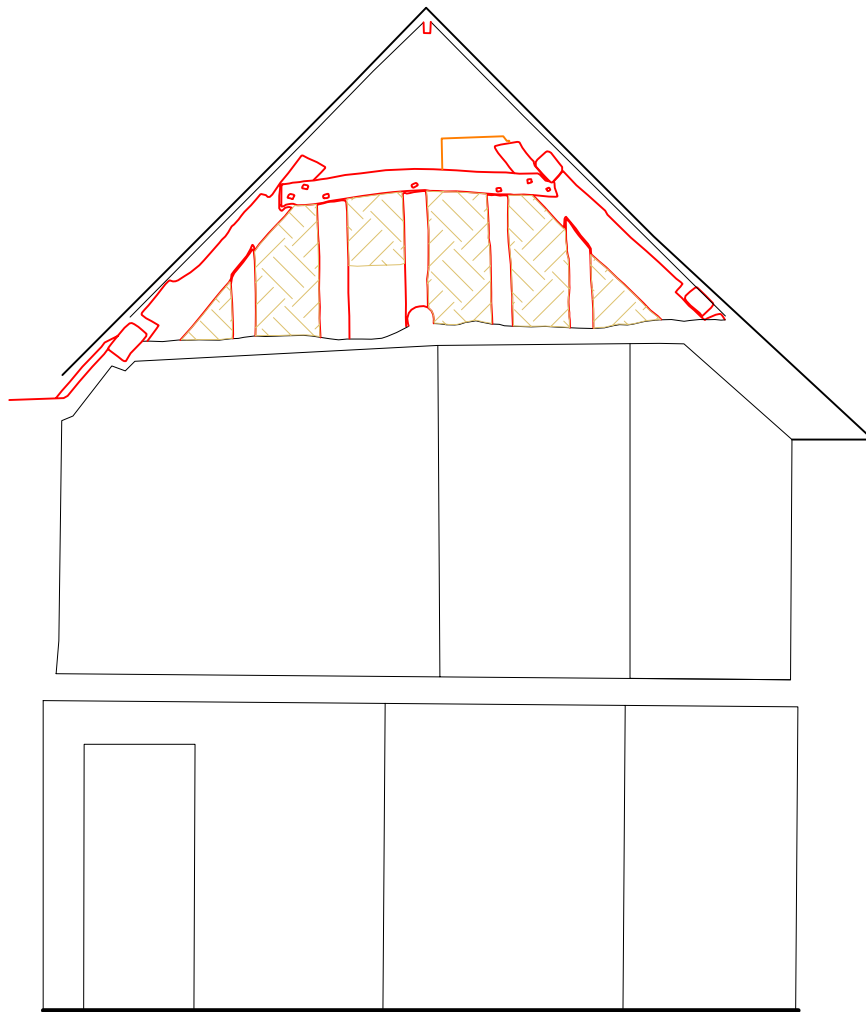
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# Section B-B



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-  Wattle and Daub

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**Fig. 8**

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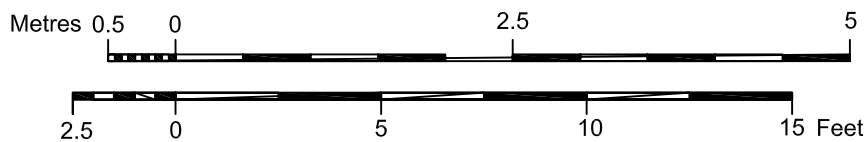
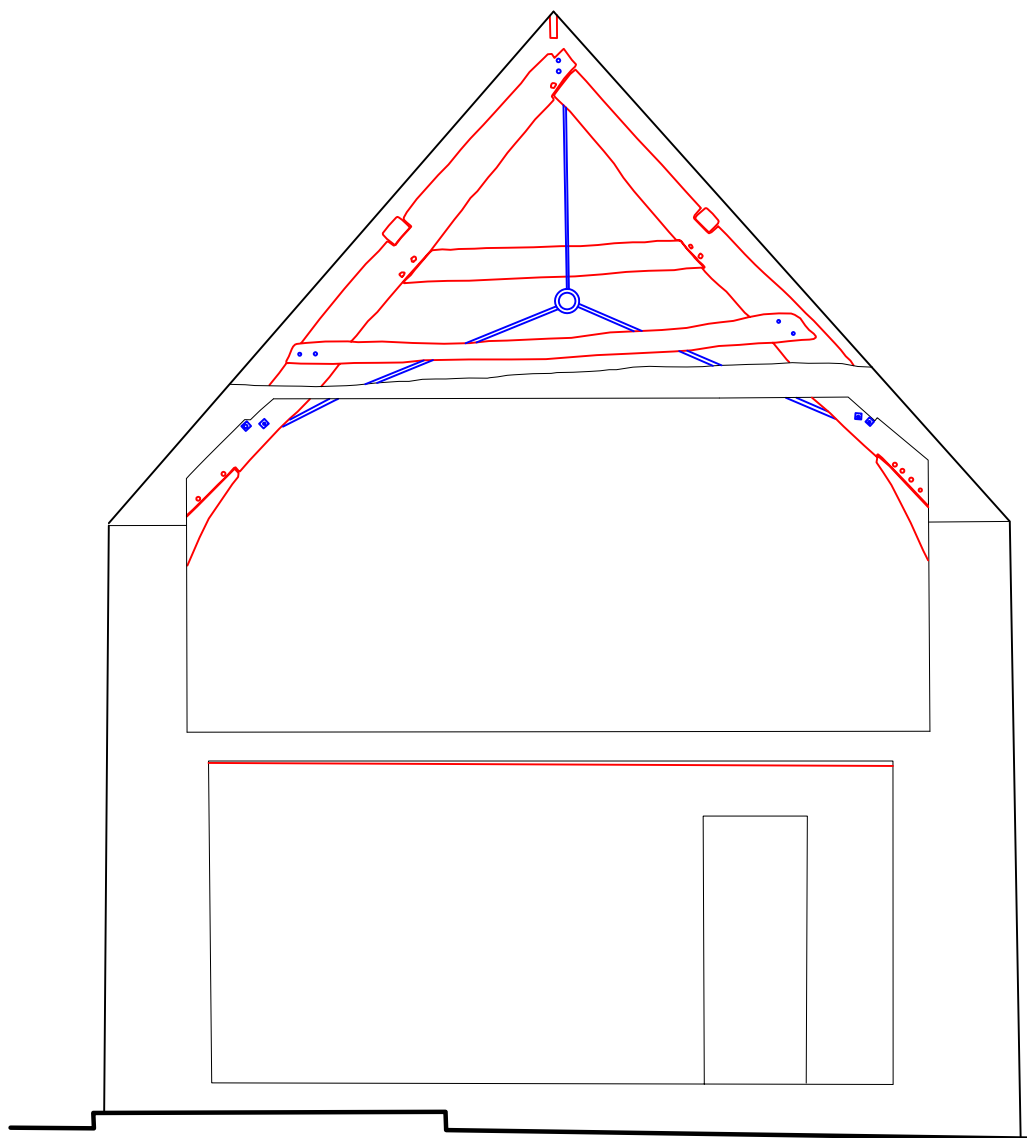
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# Section C-C



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- Metal

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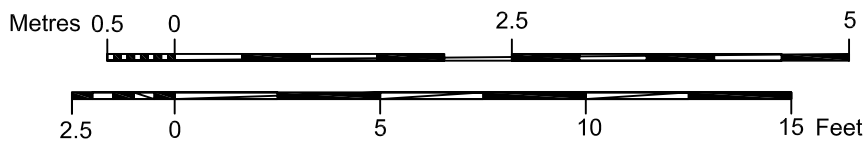
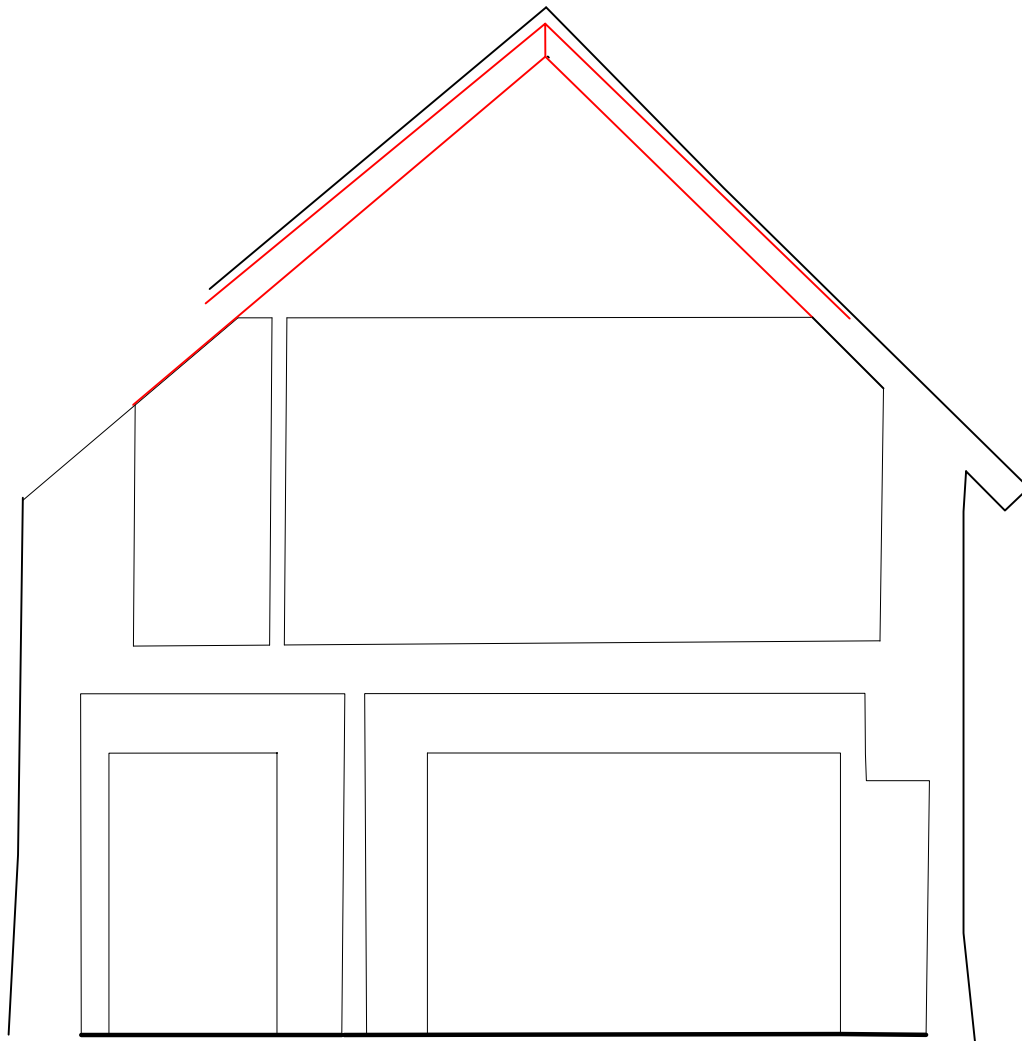
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# Section D-D



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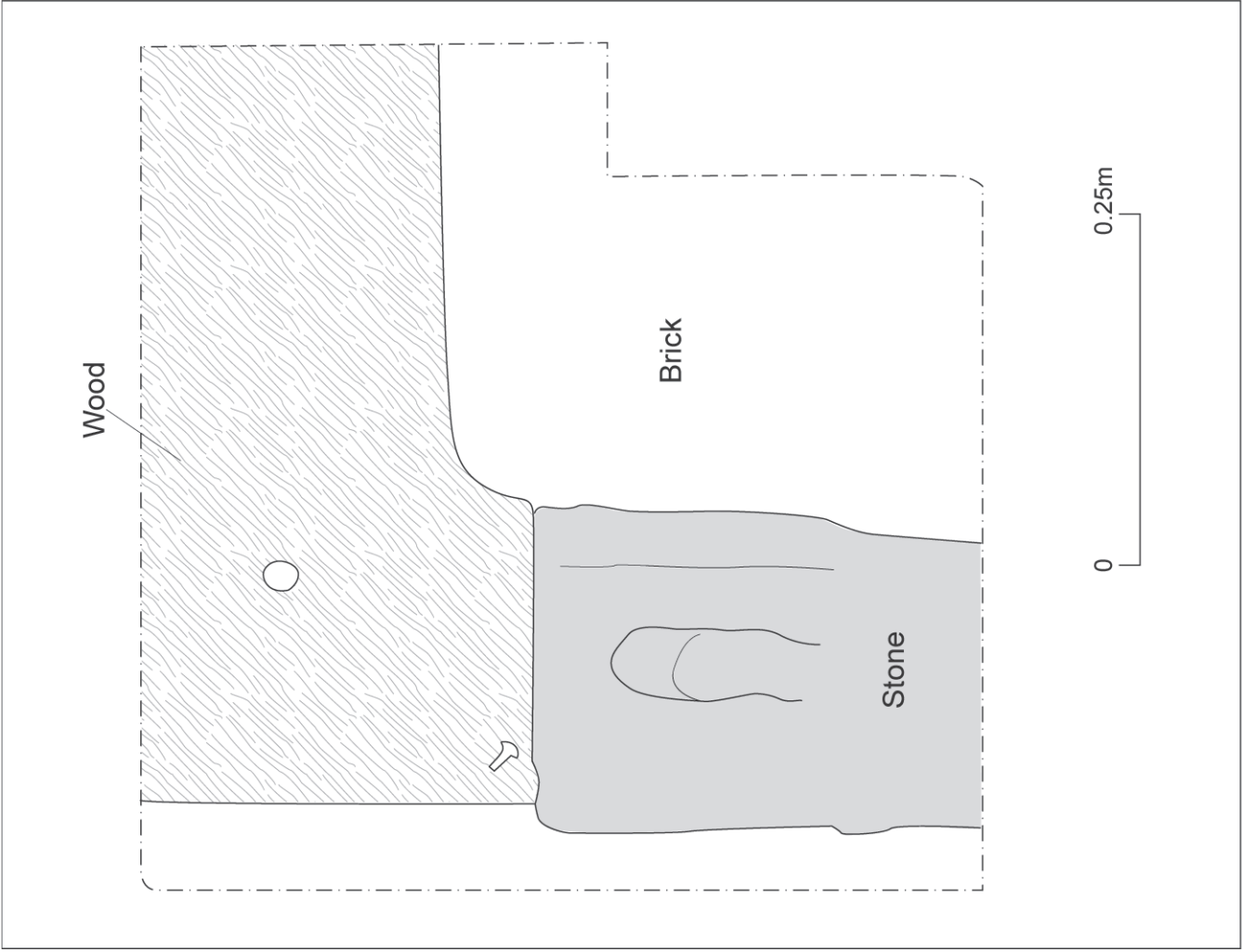


Fig.11

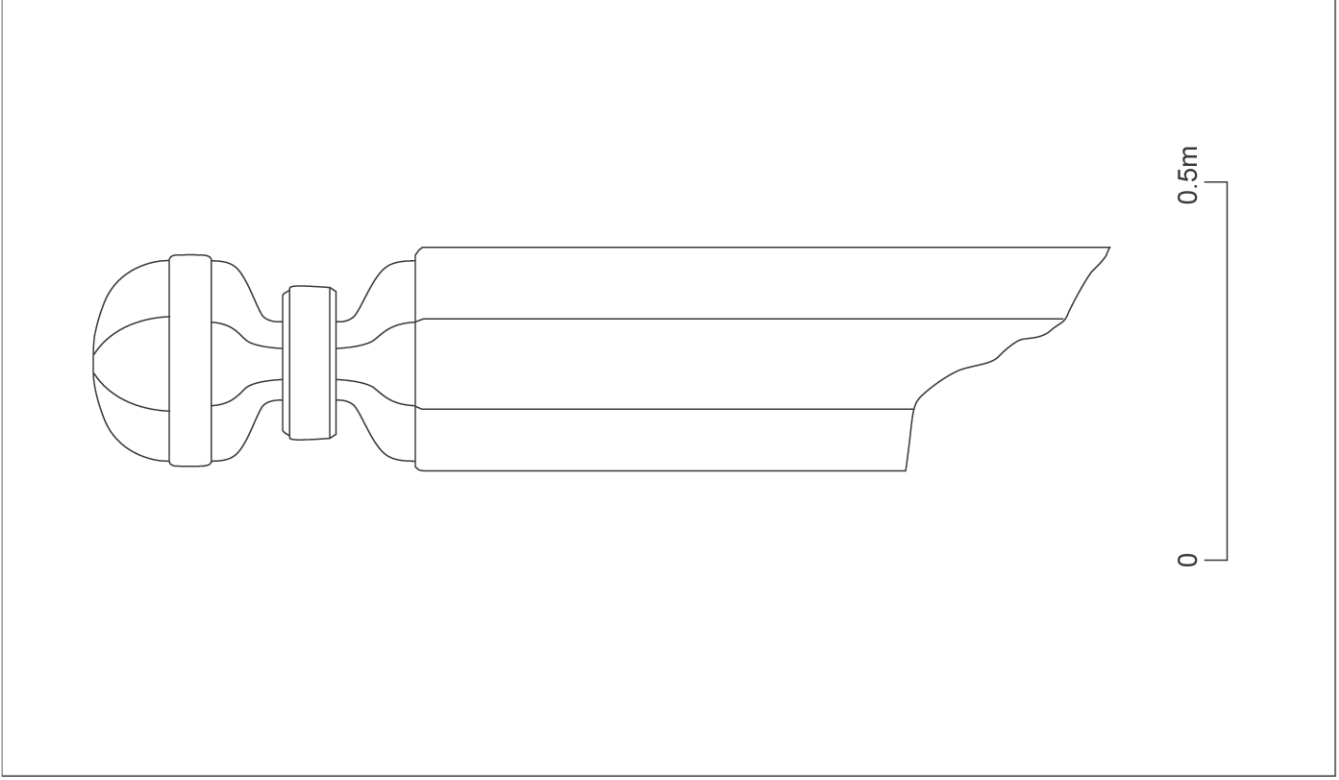


Fig.12

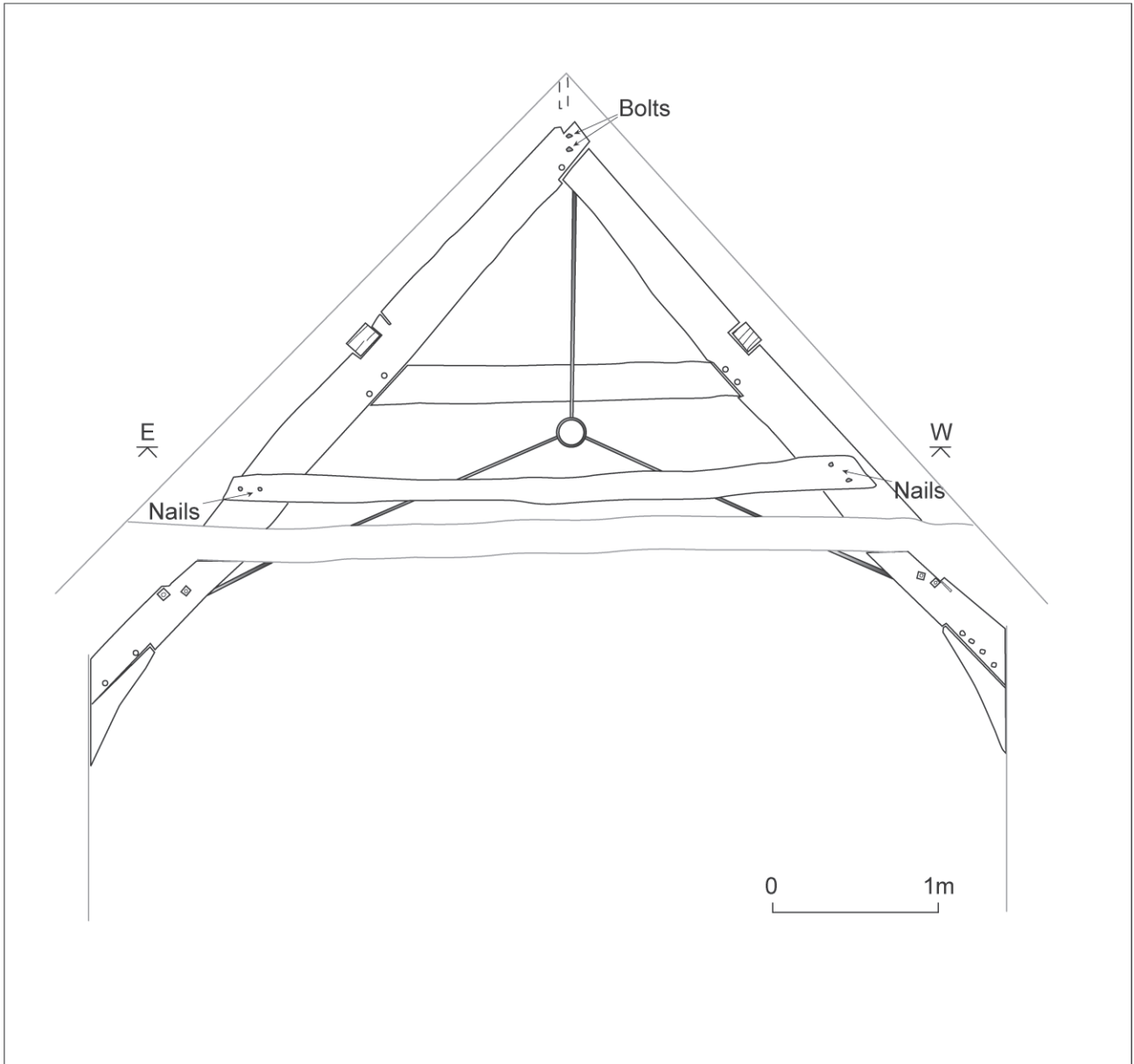


Fig.13





Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8



Plate 9



Plate 10



Plate 11





Plate 12



Plate 13



Plate 14



Plate 15