

**PRIORY HOUSE,
DUNSTABLE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

Document: 2004/116(2)
Project Code: PHD1050

November 2005

Produced for:
Dunstable Town Council



Contents

Preface.....6

Structure of this report.....6

Non-Technical Summary.....7

1. INTRODUCTION..... 9

 1.1 Planning Background.....9

 1.2 Stages of Work.....9

 1.3 Aims and Objectives.....9

 1.4 Site Location and Description.....10

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND..... 11

 2.1 Methodology: Documentary and Cartographic Research.....11

 2.2 Historical Context.....11

3. BUILDING RECORDING: DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS..... 14

 3.1 Methodology: Building Recording.....14

 3.2 General Description.....14

 3.3 External Description (Plates 1, 2 and 3).....15

 3.4 Internal Description.....15

 3.5 Evidence for Building Phasing (Figure 5).....23

4. SYNTHESIS..... 27

 4.1 Development of the Building.....27

 4.2 Assessment of Results.....30

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 33

6. APPENDIX 1..... 34

 6.1 List Description.....34

7. APPENDIX 2: ARCHIVE..... 35

8. APPENDIX 3: SOURCES CONSULTED..... 50



9. APPENDIX 4: ADDENDUM TO REPORT 69

1. RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING 74

 1.1 Objectives of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording74

 1.2 Monitoring of Subsurface Deposits74

 1.3 Historic Building Recording74

 1.4 Conclusions.....75

2. BIBLIOGRAPHY 76



List of Figures

Figure 1: Location of Priory House

Figure 2: Ground floor and first floor Plans

Figure 3: Basement and attic plans

Figure 4: Priory House and hat factory in the 19th century. Phases superimposed on copy of 1879, 1st edition Ordnance Survey map

Figure 5: Phase Plan showing suggested chronological development

*The figures are bound towards the end of the report in front of the plates and Appendix 4.



List of Plates

Plate 1: Exterior, south facing elevation

Plate 2: Exterior, north facing elevation

Plate 3: Exterior, east facing elevation

Plate 4: Ground floor, Room G1 looking towards the eastern end

Plate 5: Ground floor, Room G1 looking towards the western end

Plate 6: Ground floor, Room G5 looking towards the north wall

Plate 7: Ground floor, Room G1 window, shutters closed (scale 1m)

Plate 8: Ground floor, Room G1 window, shutters open (scale 1m)

Plate 9: Ground floor, Room G1 reconstructed fireplace in northeast corner of room

Plate 10: Ground floor, Room G7 northeast corner, showing secondary stairs, panelled arch through to Room G1 and fireplace

Plate 11: First floor, secondary stairs, looking up from the first floor landing

Plate 12: First floor, secondary stairs

Plate 13: Ground floor, main staircase

Plate 14: Ground floor, main staircase

Plate 15: Ground floor, room G2, dado panelling in northwest corner

Plate 16: Ground floor, room G2, fireplace at east end of room

Plate 17: First floor, corridor between rooms G6 and G8, showing cupboard above doorway

Plate 18: First floor, H-shaped hinge on cupboard

Plate 19: H-shaped shutter hinges (scale 10cm)

Plate 20: Shutter closure (scale 10cm)

Plate 21: First floor, Room F6, southeast corner

Plate 22: First floor, Room F5, south wall

*The plates are bound towards the end of the report in front of Appendix 4



Plate 23: Attic floor, northwest corner, showing landing to secondary stairs and dormer window

Plate 24: Attic floor, southeast corner, showing framing of 18th century gable incorporated into 19th century mansard roof structure

Plate 25: Attic floor, roof structure, showing framing of former ventilator

Plate 26: Attic floor, showing earlier floorboards preserved beneath later floor level

Abbreviations used in Text

BLARS	Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Records Service
BCC	Bedfordshire County Council
CAO	County Archaeological Officer
LPA	Local Planning Authority
HER	Historic Environment Record
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a report as possible, within the terms of the specification. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

This report has been prepared by Mark Phillips BA (hons) and Hester Cooper-Reade BA (hons) MIFA with contributions from Nigel Macbeth (photographs). Joan Lightning BA(hons), PIFA prepared the plans and illustrations. The project was managed by H. Cooper-Reade.

Albion Archaeology would like to acknowledge the commissioning architects, Robert Noble Associates, and their client, Dunstable Town Council for their assistance throughout the project.

*Albion Archaeology
St Mary's Church
St Mary's Street
Bedford, MK42 0AS
☎: 01234 294001
Fax: 01234 294008
e-mail: office@albion-arch.com
Website: www.albion-arch.com*

November 2005

Structure of this report

This report replaces the draft version issued December 2004

After the introductory Section 1, this report presents the results of the historic building recording. This includes the results of documentary and cartographic research and sufficient historical background to place the building in context. A synthesis of the results and their significance is presented in Section 4. A selection of photographs and copies of the drawn plans are included to illustrate the text, details of the photographic record including copies of the contact prints are included in Section 6, Appendix 2. Section 9, Appendix 4 contains the addendum report describing the results of the archaeological monitoring that took place during building works.



Non-Technical Summary

Background

This report presents the results of the historic building recording at Priory House, High Street South, Dunstable, the interim stage of recording works required because of proposed building works on the site. Further stages of monitoring and archaeological recording were required during site works. The building is being converted by Dunstable Town Council for public use. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Robert Noble Associates Ltd on behalf of Dunstable Town Council to undertake a programme of historic building and archaeological monitoring. The work was carried out in accordance with the terms of a brief issued by the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) and a written scheme of investigation prepared by Albion Archaeology.

Phases of construction (Figure. 5)

The earliest part of the structure consists of a medieval stone building with an open hall above a vaulted ground floor. It is identified as a building type that is known as a first-floor hall, in this case dating from the late 12th or 13th century. During the first half of the 18th century, whilst the building was in the possession of the Crawley family, Priory House was extensively remodelled and extended. At this time, the frontage of the building was resurfaced in brick, with stone details, and the house was extended at the rear in a similar style to form a double-pile building. The interior was arranged in a manner typical of the homes of the minor and aspiring gentry of the time, with reception rooms downstairs, an entrance hall with a main staircase, bedrooms on the first floor and servants' accommodation in the attic accessed via a separate staircase. Sometime during the 18th century it is likely that an annex was added to the east side of the building. During the 19th century, the building was partly remodelled with many of the earlier features remaining. At this time, Priory House was used as both a home and for the manufacture of straw-hats. Straw hat manufacture was extended into a factory on the eastern side of the building, possibly built in the 1830s. The most noticeable change at this time consisted of the conversion of the double roof to a single mansard roof as part of the factory workspace and the addition of a western annex. Following the liquidation of the straw hat business at the beginning of the 20th century, the factory buildings attached to Priory House were demolished and the east end of the building was partially rebuilt. The interpretation of the structural history of the building is broadly in accordance with the sequence already outlined in a previous Conservation Management Plan (Ford 2003).

Surviving features

The building contains elements of the medieval fabric and during building works a medieval doorway, first seen during the 1990s, was revealed and recorded.

The building contains good examples of fixtures and fittings dating from the 18th century, although not all of them are in their original setting. These include fireplaces, staircases, panelling and a cupboard. Fireplaces located in two ground-floor reception rooms (G2 and G7) date from around the 1730s. Both of these have been moved but it can be demonstrated that the example in the rear reception room (G2) was located in the front reception room (G1) in the early 19th century, remaining there until the 1990s. The main staircase is a well-



preserved 18th-century example with associated wood panelling of the same date. The rear staircase contains elements dating from the 18th and at its upper end the small room that forms the landing, dates from the same period. Here, part of the original roof structure of the north wing and internal partitioning survive. Other 18th century features are the wooden window shutters with largely intact ironwork. A cupboard, in the corridor between the main stairs (G6) and eastern annex (G8), appears to be an in-situ feature dating from the 18th century. It is situated adjacent to the chimneypiece and prior to the creation of the corridor would have been situated within the reception room (G2).

A few surviving features in the attic level relate directly the building's industrial use from the early 19th century. The insertion of extra windows for illumination and framing associated with a rooftop vent survive within the attic structure.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Dunstable Town Council, following a successful application for Listed Building Consent (Application Number SB/LB/03/1469), is to convert Priory House for community use with the aid of a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant. The Bedfordshire County Archaeological Office (CAO) recommended a programme of historic building recording as part of the works. A Conservation Management Plan has already been produced by James Ford of Clague Architects as part of the bid for HLF funds (2003).

The conversion is subject to conditions which include the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). The requirements for the recording work are outlined in a brief of works produced by the CAO (Bedfordshire County Council, 2004) on behalf of the local planning authority. A full WSI (Albion Archaeology, 2004) was produced and approved prior to commencement of works.

1.2 *Stages of Work*

The brief required historic building recording prior to conversion work and a programme of monitoring and archaeological recording during building conversion and associated ground-works. This report outlines the results of the historic building recording with amendments made as a result of the subsequent monitoring during building works. The detailed results from further stages of work are included in Section 9, Appendix 4 of this document.

The historic building recording uses and adds to information contained within the existing Conservation Management Plan which should be read in conjunction with this report. Plans provided by the client have been used as the basis for the historic building recording survey.

A full archive comprising the report, drawn plans, field notes, photographic negatives, contact sheets and a set of prints will be deposited at the Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Records Service (BLARS) or Luton Museum.

1.3 *Aims and Objectives*

The purpose of the work as outlined in the brief (Bedfordshire County Council, 2004) and subsequent Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology, 2004) was to:

- Provide a review of the local and regional historical context of the structures recorded by the project
- Produce a high quality, fully integrated archive for long-term deposition in order to preserve by record the building in its current form prior to conversion



1.4 Site Location and Description

Priory House (Historic Environment Record (HER) 4279) is a Grade II* listed building, fronting High Street South, Dunstable (Watling Street) (OS Grid ref TL01988/21773). Priory House contains the remains of the medieval guest house that once formed part of the Augustinian Priory of Dunstable founded c.1130 by Henry I. The guest house lay at the southern edge of the priory site; any below ground remains of the main priory buildings now lie below Priory Gardens, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 3) located to the back of Priory House



2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 *Methodology: Documentary and Cartographic Research*

Cartographic and documentary work was undertaken using information held in the Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Record Service (BLARS) and local studies library. A search was made of the primary records, maps and photographs using the BLARS and National Archives indexes in order to establish whether relevant sources might exist. Relevant sources were taken to be photographs, drawings or maps showing priory house and any documents dating from the mid-17th century to present that might reveal information relating to the development, use and ownership of Priory House. The historic map evidence from the 18th century is ambiguous. A map of Dunstable (BLARS- PU43/1988) drawn in 1762 is difficult to correlate with details on later surveys.

A full list of sources consulted is included as Appendix 6.3.

Secondary sources were also consulted. These included the Victoria County History and other standard county histories (Godber, 1969), as well as local histories by Benson (1986), Curran (2003) and Lamborn (1859).

2.2 *Historical Context*

Medieval Dunstable was founded as a new market town, at the crossroads of Watling St and Icknield Way, by Henry I, c.1100. An Augustinian Priory occupied the south-eastern quarter of Dunstable, situated between High Street South and Church Street. The priory was founded by Augustine canons at invitation of Henry I, c.1130, who endowed the priory with the manor and borough of Dunstable, excluding the manor of Kingsbury, which was his own residence.

Priory House is believed to have been the hospitium (guest hall) of the priory. The hospitium would have accommodated visitors to priory, pilgrims on way to shrines and other passing travellers to whom the priory owed an obligation. The hospitium was probably sited on the perimeter of the priory precinct, possibly adjacent to a gatehouse forming a southern access into the Priory complex.

In 1539 the Priory was surrendered to the Crown during the dissolution of Monasteries by Henry VIII. The Priory church was retained as a parish church and the remainder of the priory including the former hospitium, was leased to private individuals.

By the second half of the 17th century, the house was privately owned, with deeds surviving from this time onwards (BLARS, Acc 5045, BORDV 13/1 to 13/27).

Robert Crawley, a doctor, died in 1694 bequeathing his manor or mansion house:

...situated in the S. end of Dunstable, called 'Dame Sayres' with barns, stables, outhouses, gardens, orchards and premises belonging to the same; and with a piece of ground (c. 5 acs) called the 'Pryory' to his wife Joan. (BORDV 13/1)



The house and land passed to her son John in 1702, then to one of his sons, Thomas, in 1728. Thomas Crawley was a doctor who specialised in nervous disorders, using the house as both his home and a private asylum (Evans nd.).

During the mid-18th century, whilst occupied by the Crawley family, the medieval core was enclosed by a larger brick built house, with a second range of rooms to the north. An annex on the east side of the building, possibly associated with its use as an asylum, was probably constructed around this time. The building was now close to its present form.

When Thomas Crawley died the house passed, in 1753, to his cousin, Rev John Lord, the rector of Dunstable Priory Church who also ran a small mental hospital at Drayton Parslow (Bucks). Shortly afterwards Rev Lord sold Priory House to a Thomas Vaux of Dunstable who leased the property to tenants.

In 1778, Priory House was sold by Thomas Vaux to Thomas Cooke, who in 1796 sold it to George Maddison. He lived there until 1805, leaving it in his will to this son, George, Lieutenant Colonel of the 77th Regiment of Foot.

During the 19th century, the history of the building was associated with the developing straw-hat industry of Dunstable. George Maddison jnr sold Priory House to the executors of Mark Brown who lived next door and had built up a successful business as a hat manufacturer.

In 1839, Priory House was purchased by Robert Munt & Thomas Brown, straw bonnet manufacturers and co-partners, who had leased the property since about 1833 (Curren 2003).

In 1846, Mark Brown's son, William, sold Priory House and his share of the business to the Munt family, who moved into the house. An engraving of 1859 (Lamborn) shows significant changes had been made in order to establish factory. The arrangement of the house and adjacent factory at this time is shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1879 (Fig. 4).

Following the liquidation of Munt and Browns in 1908, the house passed to Arthur Munt who subsequently demolished most of factory. The Munt family left Priory House in 1941. In 1946, the building and gardens were acquired by the local authority, through compulsory purchase, for use as public open space. The building served as the council offices until 1986 when it was sold to a private company (Curren 2003).

Following the sale of the building extensive refurbishment work was carried out inside the building during the 1990s. Work carried out in 1990 included the removal of a number of internal partitions on both floors and extension of the main stairs up to attic level. The work revealed an early fireplace that was subsequently restored. In 1996, the ground floor room at the front of the building was extensively dry lined and replastered.



In 2000, a successful application (No. SB/TP/20000/0264) was made, for its conversion to a bar and restaurant. The work was started but discontinued before completion.



3. BUILDING RECORDING: DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

3.1 *Methodology: Building Recording*

Throughout the project the standards set in the IFA *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings and Structures* and ALGAO *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* have been adhered to. All work has been done in accordance with the IFA Code of Conduct.

The site survey comprised detailed examination of the building, compilation of a plan record of the structure using base plans provided by the architect and a photographic survey to RCHME Level 3 standard. Further detail was added to the plans and further measurements were taken where additional survey detail was required. The level 3 photographic survey was undertaken using medium format print supplemented with other formats as appropriate

A selection of the photographs has been reproduced to illustrate the text. Copies of the photographs have then been colour copied for inclusion in the report. Although colour photographs are used to illustrate the report, the archive also contains black and white photographs showing the same and additional views. Copies of the Contact prints have been included as an appendix.

The pre-existing Conservation Management Plan and architect's plans have been used as the basis for this survey. The room numbering in the following building description is the same as that used in the Conservation Management Plan (Ford 2003), with additional numbers used as necessary (see Figs 2 and 3). In the following, for ease of reference, description north is taken to be directly to the rear of the house; in reality the house is not orientated on the cardinal points (see fig. 4).

It should be noted that at the time of the survey a certain amount of soft stripping had already taken place. A modern suspended ceiling had been removed in the attic, throughout many floorboards were lifted with windows and original panelled features boarded over in readiness for future building works.

3.2 *General Description*

Priory House is a two-storey, partially basemented, building with a large attic space under a mansard, welsh slate roof. Much of the visible structure dates to the 18th century although the frontage was cement rendered in the 19th century. The rear elevation, dating from the middle years of the 18th century (Ford 2003), is largely unaltered although it has recently been repointed using cement render. It is constructed in red brick (English bond) with stone detailing

At ground floor level the rooms include a large vaulted undercroft, originally part of the medieval priory hospitium (or guest house). Entrances off the undercroft lead to the rear hall and stair well, large reception room and a small, low status room within the western annex which also contains the rear stairs. There is a further reception room to the east of the main stair case, now divided to form a corridor leading to three inter-connecting rooms



Priory House underwent major alterations and enlargement around 1743 and many of the internal rooms retain elements of 18th century detail

3.3 External Description (Plates 1, 2 and 3)

The south-facing, front elevation is cement rendered, the rendering probably applied in the 19th century to an earlier brick face. The corners of the main block, the later extension to the western side and the remaining ground floor frontage of the former factory building to the east have similar heavily rusticated quoins on the corners. A simple stringcourse defines the first floor level of the main building and the extension to the west. A prominent cornice is tied in to the key blocks over the first-floor windows, above which a parapet partially obscures the dormer windows in the attic storey.

The openings in the front elevation are round-headed, with heavy pilasters, archivolts and key blocks, in the Palladian style and contain double hung sliding sash windows. The doorway is positioned asymmetrically in a four bay façade; the asymmetry dictated by the vaulted structure of the first floor, which precludes a central position for the entrance. The door case is flanked by pilasters, with triangular pediment supported on consoles.

The rear, north-facing, elevation is in red brick laid in English bond, with stone dressings and rusticated quoins of local Totternhoe clunch, a soft limestone. A projecting, pedimented, central section contains a Doric door case, with a round-headed window at first floor level. The façade is topped by a moulded cornice with parapet and stone coping over. The window openings to either side of the central projection have segmental brick arches with a stone key block.

The east-facing side elevation comprises a single storey, lean-to structure with Edwardian sliding sash windows, above which rises a narrow, two-storey section adjacent to the gable of the earlier house.

3.4 Internal Description

3.4.1 Ground Floor – Entrance and Reception Room G1 A-D (Plates 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9)

The room measures 11.7m by 5m internally and consists of the ground floor of what is believed to be the Priory Guest Hall, although alterations since its construction have introduced a variety of styles and later features.

3.4.1.1 Medieval Features

Original walls, up to 1m thick, survive on the north, west and east sides of the room constructed of rubble walling, using irregular or coursed stone facings with through stones and a rubble core, now covered with plaster. Photographs taken during building work in the 1990s show a blocked pointed arch located in what appears to be the north wall of the eastern of the central bays. The archaeological monitoring that took place during the current building works revealed this doorway and allowed its position to be recorded (see Section 9, Appendix 4).

This doorway, in the north wall, may be the remains of an original ground floor entrance.



The room has a rib-vaulted ceiling consisting of a four bay, quadripartite vault. The chamfered ribs dressed in stone, probably French limestone, rise from pilastered columns arranged on the sides of the long walls. The vaults are infilled with finely cut stone facings, laid with very thin joints. Much of the stonework appears original, although there is some isolated stone replacement below the springing line of the columns. The bosses at the intersections of the vaults are modern additions in cast stone.

3.4.1.2 Later medieval or Tudor features (late 15th and 16th century)

In the north wall of the easternmost bay there is fireplace that consists of an opening occupying almost the full width of the bay with a stone lintel over. The lintel is a low pointed arch, chamfered on its lower edge, made of Totternhoe clunch. The shape was typically employed in the Tudor period, during the late 15th and 16th centuries. The centre section of the lintel appears to be a modern replacement. Inside, the fireplace has been recently rebuilt with modern block work and metric brickwork, used to form a curved recess. Looking up from below, a brick lined flue runs in the thickness of the medieval wall.

3.4.1.3 Post medieval features

The south wall of the room has been altered and is approximately (0.3m – 0.4m) thinner than the fully extant medieval walls. Joint lines in the vaulting show where the wall has been cut back on its inner side. This work is associated with the 18th century refurbishment of the building, which gave the house a fashionable brick exterior in the Palladian style. It is more likely that the southern medieval wall was thinned rather than completely replaced, although this cannot be confirmed without further intrusive work.

A watercolour by Thomas Fisher (1782-1836), painted between 1812 and 1822, shows the interior of the room looking towards the east end. In the painting, the walls are panelled to their full height with the pilasters that support the vault being boxed in by panels, which continued to a point just above the height of the springing of the ribs. The painting probably shows the room much as it would have appeared in the 18th century. Features surviving from this period include late-17th or early-18th century timber panelling within the arched opening at the northern end of the west wall. The window openings to the street frontage contain 18th-century sliding, double-hung sash windows; the original shutters and metal shutter bars are all intact.

Further evidence for the 18th-century state of the room can be traced on the medieval stonework. Depressions cut into the sides of the ribs, above the springing, would have accommodated the framing of panelling around the pilasters. A series of rectangular mortise holes, now filled, can be seen in the underside of the transverse ribs that separate the entrance bay from the bays to the west. A faint shadow line, created by material adhering to the vault, lies a short distance to the east of the rib that separates the entrance bay from the bay to



the west. These mark the positions of internal partitions, either side of the front entrance hall to the house.

The floor covering within the entrance bay comprises black and white chequered tiles likely dating from the 18th century rebuilding. The tiles are laid diagonally and are chipped and holed in places.

To the western side of the former entrance hall, within what would have been one of the 18th century reception rooms, a timber-joisted floor overlies a brick barrel-vaulted cellar cut out of the chalk. Within the eastern, gable wall there is a stone hearth, indicating the presence of a former fireplace, and removed. The bay to the east of the former entrance hall also has a timber-joisted floor and at the far east end there is an area of suspended timber flooring, comprising finely made deal floorboards with secret fixings.

A narrow doorway giving access into what is now the western annex (Room G7) has been cut through the western, end wall of the former medieval hall. The passage through the wall is lined with wood panelling of characteristic 18th century form. This door is clearly not an external door suggesting that some form of extension must have existed on this side of the building in the 18th century.

An open arch, 2-3m wide, in the west end of the north wall forms an opening into the rear reception room (G5). This seems likely to have been inserted during the 19th century.

3.4.2 Ground Floor – Reception Room G5 (Plate 6)

This room measures 7m by 4.7m. A door in the east end, the original 18th-century access, opens into the main staircase area. The openings along the northern frontage comprise two double-hung sash windows and a glazed and paned door, all evenly spaced. The windows are panelled below and all have original 18th century internal shutters and most of the original window furniture. The west wall has two alcoves with arched heads and moulded edges; the southernmost contains a door that opens into a small space below the secondary staircase. There is a deep beaded cornice moulding throughout the room.

3.4.3 Ground Floor – Reception Room G2 (Plates 15 and 16)

This room currently measures 4.7m long by 3.5m wide, although these are not the original dimensions. It is situated in the rear part of the house, to the east of the main staircase. It contains timber dado panelling and an ornate 18th century fireplace, moved from the front reception room within the medieval vaulted hall. It is lit by two windows in the north wall both with the original 18th century shutters and window furniture.

The fireplace has a mantel and supporting trusses with acanthus leaf decoration, a floral garland below and a decorative band with an eared outline around the hearth, a shape current during the 1730s. This fireplace was almost certainly



removed from the east end of Room G1, being indistinguishable from the fireplace in the watercolour of that room by Fisher.

The north and western sides of reception room G2 are lined with painted wooden dado panelling. It occurs in a variety of arrangements and is clearly reused material, probably relocated to this room from elsewhere in the house. Most of the panelling on the west wall has solid moulded stiles (upright members) with traces of scratch mouldings on the continuous rails (horizontal members). Most of the panelling on the north wall has discontinuous solid moulded rails with plain continuous stiles, probably the same material as described above but used on its side. In the southwest corner of the room and under the eastern of the two windows, the moulding is the same all round the frame, whilst the material in the northwest corner of the room appears to be a modern replacement. This simple style of panelling may be earlier than the raised and fielded panelling used around the main staircase. An earlier date to this panelling is in keeping with its reuse.

This room was originally 4.7m square in plan, but was narrowed by the insertion of a brick partition to form a connecting passage between the main stairwell (G6) the 19th-century eastern extension (Room G8). The partition runs across the earlier dado panelling adjacent to the entrance door to the room and probably dates from the 19th remodelling.

A hinge is visible in the extreme northwest corner of the room, just above the level of the skirting board. It appears to be a rising butt hinge, introduced in the late 19th century. A change in the panelling here suggests that there was a hinged door giving access to the space below the stairs.

3.4.4 Ground Floor – Rear Entrance, Hall and Stairway G6 (Plates 13 and 14)

The principle stairway of the house is located centrally to the rear of the house in a rear entrance hall measuring 5.5m by 2.8m. One door forms the main rear entrance to the building. Another door in the south of the hall would have opened into the former entrance hall of the 18th-century building (G1). The staircase dates from the 18th century and consists of a dog-leg staircase with two flights of stairs joined by quarter landings. The hall is lit by a round-headed window in the north wall, above the landings. The staircase is in mahogany or similar hardwood, with oak treads. It has an open string with elaborate carved brackets below projecting treads. The balusters have barley twist mouldings and the swept, slim moulded handrail terminates in a bun capping at the newel. The walls of the stair hall have dado panelling with raised and fielded panels, the dado rail being of similar section to the stair handrail.

The first-floor landing contains the original 18th-century woodwork, including raised and fielded dado panelling and an arched doorway leading from the landing to the first floor bedrooms. The arch is executed in mahogany or similar hardwood and features inset panels, capitals and a key block at the apex. The arch had been boxed in for protection as part of the soft-stripping phase and was only partially visible at the time of the building recording survey.



The continuation of the staircase from the first-floor landing to the attic space is a modern installation in a style approximating the 18th century work of the first floor.

3.4.5 Ground Floor – Corridor Connecting Hall G6 with Room G8 (Plate 17)

This corridor, 4.2m long and 2.1m wide, has been created by partitioning off the southern side of the rear reception room G2. At the east end of the corridor, above what is now the door into the eastern annex (Room G8) is a cupboard. The door to the cupboard is nearly square, with a plain frame and panel. It is hinged on the right-hand side with H-shaped hinges with decorative terminals (Plate 18). These can be stylistically dated to the late 17th or first quarter of the 18th century (Alcock and Hall, 1994). The cupboard contains a single shelf and, within the door, nine small circular ventilation holes arranged in three triangles. Its location, against the side of the chimney, would suggest a function as an airing cupboard.

3.4.6 Ground Floor – Western Annex Room G7, Including Secondary Staircase (Plates 10, 11 and 12)

This room is wider at the street frontage than at the rear, measuring 6m long by 3.35m wide at its south end and 3.1m wide at the north. The current room was created during the 19th century, filling the space between the medieval hall (G1) and buildings on the next plot to the west.

A fireplace situated in the middle of the east wall has a carved wooden strip, framing the marble surround of a brick hearth. The carved wooden surround is very similar to an element in the early Georgian fireplace in room G2 with an ‘eared’ outline. It is likely that the wood and marble elements belonged to a high status Georgian original, probably reused in its present location.

At the north side of the room, a door connects with a small room (3.25m x 1.25m) that is fitted with shelves as a storeroom, the same area accessed via a door from the rear reception room G5. This arrangement would have allowed servant access to the rear of the house. An enclosed wooden staircase, also at the north end of the room, served as the backstairs of the house, leading to the first floor and servants’ quarters in the attic space.

The presence of what appears to be a stone hearth below the stairs and away from any obvious position for a chimney is curious given the fact that there is no reason to doubt an 18th century date for the backstairs

The stairwell at the west end of the building served as the secondary staircase for the building and in the 18th century would have been the only access up to the third storey attic rooms. The first flight of stairs, from Room G7 to the first floor level, is within a wooden enclosure situated in the north end of Room G7, whilst the flight between the first floor and attic is situated within the space between the west end of Priory House and the east end of the adjacent building. The staircase ends on a landing in a small western extension of the attic space; a surviving portion of the 18th century roof space. Turned newels supporting the rail appear to be 18th century in date.



3.4.7 Ground Floor – Eastern Annex Room G8 and G3

Room G8, in the northeastern corner of the building, is 6m long and 4.75m wide. On the west side of the room is the base of a large chimney. A large rectangular stone hearth in front of the chimney indicates the position of a hearth or range. On its south side, the room is divided from the adjacent room (G3) by a single thickness internal brick wall containing a modern sliding door in its west end. There is a single, panelled door in the western end of the northern external wall and two Edwardian windows in the east wall.

Room G3 is situated in the centre of the east end of the building and measures 5.75m long x 2.8m wide. Its west wall is formed by the eastern, end wall of the medieval hall (G1) and a thin, internal brick wall, probably a later insertion separates it from room G8. The opening along the external, eastern wall, contains a window which matches those found in Room G8 to the north. The openings within the southern wall include a window containing modern glass in a fixed, non-opening frame. The modern glazing has been inserted into the opening for what was clearly once an external window looking out onto the space now covered over to form Room G4. The window opening appears to be of 19th or early 20th century construction, with a segmental brick arch over and a stone sill. In the same wall, to the east of the window is a modern fire door connecting this room with G4.

The external window within Room G3 is located within the extant two storey projection on the east end of the building. This two-storey projection encompasses the eastern part of Rooms G3 and G8 on the ground floor and Rooms F7 to F10 on the upper floor. Although the existing window opening is of 19th/early 20th-century date, investigation in the roof space suggests that the two storey projection appears to be integral to the 18th century building. It may therefore, have been part of the 18th century re-modelling, perhaps built to enclose a kitchen area as suggested by the presence of the large fireplace in Room G8.

3.4.8 Ground Floor – Eastern Annex Room G4

This room measures 5.9m long by 2.85m wide. It is of recent construction with a flat roof and modern block work used internally and was created by infilling the space between Room G3 and the wall at the street frontage. The two blocked windows in the frontage, formerly part of the 19th century factory building adjacent to Priory House, are only visible externally.

3.4.9 Basement – Room B1

Access to the basement is via stairs situated beneath the main staircase on the ground floor. Room B1 at the eastern end of the basement measures 3.75m by 2.75m. The room is cut out of the chalk bedrock and roofed over with a brick arch. The floor is lined with bricks. There are nine holes (measuring approx 0.15m square and 0.2m deep) let into the eastern wall, partly lined with brick. This room currently houses a sump and a pump to raise wastewater from the basement level.



3.4.10 Basement – Rooms B2

The area designated B2 measures approximately 8m by 4m. It is situated beneath the main staircase and Room G2 on the ground floor above. During the partial conversion of the building, into a bar and restaurant in 2000, this part of the basement was converted into toilets. The building work has obscured any construction details of the basement in this area.

3.4.11 Basement – Room B3

Basement room B3 is situated beneath the westernmost bay of the medieval vaulted hall. The room measures 6m by 2m and is cut out of the chalk bedrock. The southern two thirds of the space are unlined, with the sides formed by the natural chalk. The northern part is lined by irregular ashlar masonry, which appears to be in the local Totternhoe clunch. A brick pier projects from the western wall and traces of brickwork at the top of the walls, suggest that this room was formerly covered by a brick vault. The roof is now formed by the floor boards of the room above. It is divided from B2 by a wall of modern block work, part of the basement conversion work.

3.4.12 First Floor – Rooms F4-F6 (Plates 21 and 22)

On the first floor of the former medieval hall is divided into three rooms with lathe and plaster partitions.

Room F6, the easternmost of these rooms, measures 5.3m x 3.9m. It contains a single opening with 18th-century double-hung sash window with shutters. The window has an arch over and is panelled with raised and fielded panels. The room also has a deep, moulded cornice with dentils and dado rail around wall.

Room F5, the central room measures 4.2m by 3.85m. There are two window openings, each containing 18th-century double-hung sash windows with shutters. The easternmost of the windows is similar to that in the adjacent room F6 with an arch over and raised and fielded panels. The westernmost window, on the other hand, has no arch, plain panels and a splayed opening. The room has a simple, beaded cornice moulding and dado rail.

Room F4, the westernmost of these rooms, measures 5.2m by 3.7m. It contains a single opening containing an 18th-century double-hung sash window and shutters with plain panelling and splayed opening, matching that found in the west side of Room F5. The cornice is in a simple beaded style; the dado rail is missing.

The presence of two types of window, with both occurring in the central room suggests an earlier division of two rooms instead of three.

3.4.13 First Floor – Room F1

This room originally measured 4.5m by 4.1m, although it is now smaller due to the insertion of a corridor. There are two window openings in the northern wall, each containing a double-hung sash with shutters. The insertion of a modern timber-studding wall along its southern side reduced the room to form an east-west corridor, connecting the main staircase with the rooms of the eastern annex. This



corridor was no doubt inserted at the same time as the one on the floor below when the eastern annex was built. There is a beaded cornice around the ceiling; the dado rail has since been removed.

3.4.14 First Floor – Room F2

This room, currently the largest on the first floor, measures 7.3m long by 4.7m wide. There are three window openings in northern, external wall containing double hung-sashes still fitted with the original shutters. There is a 19th century, cast iron fireplace in middle of the west wall. Beaded cornice around the ceiling. A door in the east wall connects with the main staircase, two doors in the south wall connect with rooms F3 and F4.

3.4.15 First Floor – Western Annex Room F3

This room measures 5.2m long and, mirroring the room below, is between 3.5 and 3.3m wide. The room can be accessed via room F2 to the north, Room F4 to the east or the secondary staircase. Window opening contains a 19th century double hung sash window. There is a 19th century fireplace in centre of the eastern wall. A square, raised-platform accommodates the change in level between this room and the adjoining rooms.

3.4.16 First Floor – Eastern Annex Rooms F7-F10

The current layout comprises four small rooms, which at the time of the survey were fitted out as a kitchen (F7) and washroom/toilet (F9/10). The presence of a beaded cornice around rooms F7 and F9, and the change in floor level between F7 and F8 suggest that the layout of these rooms predates their recent conversion for use as kitchen, washroom and toilets. A modern partition of timber studding and plasterboard has been inserted to divide Room F9 from Room F4, suggesting that the partition is a recent insertion. The construction of rooms F8 and F9 would have necessitated the demolition of the upper part of the NE corner of the medieval hall. As a result of these modern alterations little of the original structure can be seen.

3.4.17 Second Floor – Main Roof Space Room S1 (Plates 23, 24 and 25)

The building has a mansard roof, enclosing an open area 12m long by 6.7m wide. It is lit by four dormer windows and a large irregular window opening in the western gable end. Photographic evidence indicates that a similar-shaped window also existed in the eastern gable until relatively recently. The central portion of the attic space along its northern side is occupied by a modern structure that houses the upper landing of the modern part of the main staircase, inserted during the use of the building as offices.

In the 18th century, the roof structure consisted of a double pile roof with a central valley. Traces of this earlier structure are visible in various locations. In the eastern gable, the end framing of the pitched roof of the front pile survives. This framing appears to retain some original infill with a chimney in the centre of the gable. The purlins situated above the dormers and some of the rafters are roughly finished, out of character with the 19th-century timber work and apparently part of the 18th-century roof. Traces of the early roof structure are also concealed by the ashlar at the front and rear of the roof.



In the front half of the house, an earlier layer of floor planking is visible beneath the 19th-century floor. This earlier planking appears to be the 18th century in date and partly overlies or butts up against three major joists. Mortices in the upper face of the central joist suggest that the front attic space was divided into two halves by a central partition. The rear half of the house contains no evidence of this earlier floor.

Beneath the floorboards, a flue runs vertically through the thickness of the eastern end of the north wall of the medieval hall below. Although the original date of the flue cannot be ascertained, it would have emerged in the central valley of the 18th century roof arrangement. It appears to have still been in use after 19th century conversion of the attic, when it was diverted into a horizontal brick lined flue, exiting the building at the eastern gable.

The roof was converted into a mansard during the mid 19th century for its use as part of the Munt & Brown hat factory. The new roof is visible as the pine structure infilling the central valley of the double pile roof. New rafters in the lower part of the roof and a series of wooden trusses with iron work bracing supporting the roof to form a large open space. The space was lit by large windows in both gable ends, four dormers and a large south-facing central window. The dormers still exist as window openings and the framing for the central window at the front survives in the roof structure. Further evidence for use as factory space survives in the form of framing for a roof ventilator in the centre of the ridge. Both the ventilator and the south facing window are visible as external features in an engraving of 1859.

3.4.18 Second Floor – Western Annex Room S2

The western end of the rear half of the 18th century double-pile roof survives as a small room, or landing, at the top of the back stairs. This contains sections of the original rafters, purlins and wooden panelling. The panelling consists of vertical wooden planks fixed to horizontal rails, with the vertical joints between planks covered by narrow batten strips.

3.5 Evidence for Building Phasing (Figure 5)

3.5.1 Phase I - Medieval (12th/13th century)

The medieval core of the building is indicated at ground and first-floor levels by the thickened rubble walling that remains largely intact on the north, west and east sides of the building. The surviving features from this period consist of the walls, now incorporated in the later building and the vaulted ceiling of the ground floor level. Alterations to the existing openings and wall surfaces has meant no traces of the medieval doors, windows or fireplaces can be identified, although photographic evidence suggests a blocked medieval door in the northern wall of the ground floor hall. The medieval fabric of Priory House is generally accepted as dating from the 12th to 13th centuries. First floor halls similar to this were constructed between the late 11th century and the mid 14th century (Wood 1965), with the type of vaulting in Priory House indicating a probable date in the late 12th or 13th century.



3.5.2 Phase II – Dissolution (1539) to 18th Century

No documentary evidence was uncovered for changes to the building occurring between dissolution and purchase by the Crawley family in 1694 and, of the existing features in the house, only the fireplace in the north wall of the main hall (G1) may belong in this phase. The shape of the lintel suggests it dates from the late 15th or the 16th century. It is not possible to ascertain whether this fireplace might have originally been part of the medieval building.

3.5.3 Phase III – 18th Century

The structure was extensively remodelled and extended during the first half of the 18th century. Much of the internal and external fabric of the building can be stylistically dated to this period. The documentary evidence shows the history of ownership during this period, although there is little to link specific owners with changes to the building. There is little pictorial evidence from this period, although the 19th century paintings by Fisher show the building largely in its 18th century form. The Conservation Management Plan (Ford 2003) suggests a date of 1743 for the main re-modelling of the building.

During this period, the street elevation was refaced in brick. Examination in the ground floor room shows that the front wall has been cut back on the inside by up to 0.4m or, possibly totally replaced, with brick at this time. A north range was also added, converting the building to a double pile, with a double apex roof. The north range consisted of two main rooms on either side of a central staircase. There is a suggestion that the small, two-storey projection to the east may have been added at this time to provide space for the kitchen and additional first floor rooms. The projection appears to be integral to the 18th century, however the current external window opening seen in Room G3 would have been inserted or re-modelled at a much later date.

The ground floor room at the front was divided into two reception rooms and an entrance hall by the insertion of wooden partitions. The tiled floor in G1 indicates the position of the entrance hall, matching mortises in the medieval vault ribs, cut to accept the partition framing. On the first floor, there were two bedrooms at the rear of the house, one or two small rooms at the northeast corner and probably two bedrooms at the front of the house. The two patterns of window panelling found at the front of the house suggest that there were two rooms, each with two windows. Today the central front bedroom contains two different windows.

A secondary stair at the west end of the building provided access to the attic space. The arrangement of this second staircases at ground floor level at this time is uncertain, because the existing ground floor room (G7) is part of a 19th century addition to the building. It is possible that a small out-shot to the building enclosed the stair well. Fisher's picture shows what appears to be a small two-storey out-shot, with chimney, on the western side of the building but set some way back from the road. The position of the fireplace associated with the chimney is unclear. There is a stone hearth within the current floor of the building set beneath the ground-first floor staircase. This is an unlikely position without some complicated arrangement for the flue, yet the staircase enclosure and the stairs themselves are consistent with an 18th century date.



It is likely that the basement part of the building dates from this period.

A number of internal features survive from this period. The windows in the front and rear faces of the building retain their original 18th century wooden shutters with H-shaped hinges. Other original woodwork includes the staircase and panelling in the rear hall and landing, panelling in the west end of room G1, panelling and fireplace in room G2, part of the fire surround in G7 and an airing cupboard in the corridor between G6 and G8.

It is clear that some of these features are not in their original locations. The panelling in room G2 has been relocated. The fireplace in G2 was almost certainly originally located in the east end of G1 whilst the 18th-century elements in the fireplace in G7 may have come from the west end of G1.

Watercolours by Fisher painted between 1812 and 1822 show the interior of room G1, looking towards the east end and the external street frontage. The views show the building mostly as it would have appeared in the 18th century. The east end of room G1 contains the fireplace now located in room G2 and has panelling all around the walls, to ceiling or the springing of the vaults.

3.5.4 Phase IV – Late 18th and 19th Century

During this period Priory House was partially remodelled on at least two occasions; the re-modelling largely associated with the building's connection with straw hat manufacture. In the Regency period the building was purchased by the Brown family, successful, neighbouring straw hat manufacturers. Shortly after this (1839) the building was sold to Munt & Brown's and incorporated into their newly-built factory. Fisher's painting (1812 to 1822) shows the building with a large extension to the east and inserted dormer window's, whilst an engraving of 1859 shows further alterations to the attic space, a small extension to the west and the eastern extension now replaced by a large factory building.

It is probable that the south facing elevation, as reworked in the early 18th century, was finished in brick with stone used for the quoining and around the windows and door. In Fisher's painting, undertaken sometime between 1812 and 1822, the front of the building is rendered with a rusticated finish. It is likely that this was applied in during the 1820s, when it was fashionable to do so (Ford 2003).

The eastern extension may have been built soon after the Brown family bought the building as part of their straw hat factory, or simply as an extension to the house. Typically in this type of manufacture the factory buildings would have been built adjacent to the residence of the owner or factory manager. The style of the extension in comparison with the main house is perhaps suggestive of industrial or low status domestic use. If part of a hat factory, the blocked windows would suggest that the upper rooms would have been used for storage rather than hat manufacture. It is not clear whether this extension was built along the street frontage or slightly set back.



There is evidence that the interior was partly remodelled during this period. It is possible that the arrangement of the bedrooms at the front of the house was changed at this time to divide two rooms into three. Inserted partitions in rooms G2 and F1 to form corridors linking the main staircase with the east end of the house may have been created at this time. Fireplaces in G5, F2 and F3 date from the 19th century and a Georgian fireplace in G7 may have been relocated during this period.

Significant structural changes were made to the building prior to 1859, after it had been bought by Munt & Brown in 1839. The space at the west end of the building was infilled with a two-storey annex, no doubt replacing a smaller out-shot containing the 18th century stairwell.

A three-storey brick-built factory was constructed, adjoining the east end of the building around the same time. The earlier brick building, visible in Fisher's watercolour, was incorporated into the new factory, one of the largest hat factories in Dunstable. Both the extension to the west and the factory were finished with windows in the same style at ground level and with first floor stringcourses and windows, slightly below the level of those in Priory House. The building was further extended by the conversion of the attic space into a mansard roof. The roof space was clearly intended to be part of the factory, being fitted with a vent on the ridge similar to those of the adjacent factory and additional windows for lighting.

3.5.5 Phase V - Twentieth Century

In 1909, following the liquidation of Munt and Brown's hat business, the factory building on the east side of the house was demolished, leaving only a small two-storey out-shot and the front wall of factory standing up to first floor level with the gateway arch retained as an entrance.

Photographs of Priory House, taken during the 1940s, show its parapet and the top of the former factory wall with crenellations, which have since been removed.

Modern work, carried out at the end of the 20th century, included the conversion of the attic with a modern suspension ceiling (which had been removed by the time of the survey) and an extension of the central staircase to provide access to the attic.

The final episode of repairs and alterations was undertaken in 2000. Toilets were built in the basement and extensive repairs were carried out on the rear elevation.



4. SYNTHESIS

4.1 *Development of the Building*

The building was probably built in the late 12th or 13th century. At this time, it comprised a two-storied rectangular structure with a vaulted ground floor level of four bays. It is believed that it served as the hospitium (guest hall) of the Priory, providing shelter for visitors, passing pilgrims and other travellers to whom the priory owed an obligation. No evidence for the arrangement of doors, stairs, windows or fireplaces is currently visible beneath the later alterations. Based on comparison with other examples it is possible to suggest the likely layout of the building at this time. There is likely to have been one entrance at ground level, located in one of the long sides. The main entrance may have been on the north side, rather than facing the street frontage, as it is now. An original, north side entrance would have been particularly likely if the building was part of the boundary of the priory precinct, situated adjacent to one of the main gateways. A truncated, blocked arch, photographed during building works in the 1990s, appears to be located in the north wall of the ground floor hall (G1). This may be the remains of the entrance to the building at ground level during the medieval period. The first floor in this type of building was usually accessed via an external staircase or a spiral stair built into the thickness of the wall in a corner. The windows at ground level were probably small, with larger windows in the upper storey. The fireplace was generally located towards the middle of the building against one wall. The upper floor would have been a hall, open to the roof.

There is no documentary evidence for changes to the building occurring between 1539, when the Priory was surrendered to the crown and its purchase by the Crawley family in 1694. It is likely that it was used for much of this period as a family residence. When it was left by Robert Crawley to his wife Joan, it was referred to as his manor or mansion house...called 'Dame Sayres' with barns, stables, outhouses, gardens, orchards and premises belonging to the same; and with a piece of ground (c.5acres) called the 'Pryory'(Luton and Bedfordshire County Record Office, BORDV 13/1). It is likely that a number of changes would have occurred at this time to modify the accommodation. Large rooms would have been partitioned and new fireplaces installed. The fireplace in the north wall of G1 probably dates from the late 15th or 16th century and so may date from this phase, or the later part of the preceding phase. Small ground floor windows would have probably been enlarged. The large open hall of the first floor may have been divided into two floors by the insertion of floor to create an attic space.

During the 18th century, the building served as a family residence. In the first half of the century, it was owned by members of the Crawley family, who had acquired the property in the late 17th century. In 1728, the house was inherited by Thomas Crawley, a doctor specialising in nervous disorders, who used part of the property as a private asylum for resident patients.

During the first half of the 18th century, the house was greatly enlarged, making it close to its present form. The street frontage of the earlier building was replaced with a brick façade. The interior of the former medieval hall was divided by



internal partitions to form reception rooms and an entrance hall on the ground floor and at least two bedrooms on the first floor. At the rear of the building, a new range of rooms was built in brick. The scope of the remodelling and details of internal fittings show that the building was elevated to a high status residence. Some of the surviving internal details can be dated to the early 18th century. These include two fireplaces with a moulding around the hearth having an eared outline, which were current in the 1720s and 1730s. Neither of the fireplaces is now situated in its original location, but pictorial evidence does show that one was situated in room G1 during the early 18th century. Hinges on one cupboard situated in the rear extension of the house, can be stylistically dated to the late 17th or first quarter of the 18th century.

The building work carried out in the first half of the 18th century produced a plan in line with that seen in the houses of the minor and aspiring gentry of the time. The creation of the entrance passage to the rear stairs provides a substitute for an entrance hall. The division of rooms downstairs would form a suite of rooms, usually dining room, drawing room and a third (library, morning or breakfast), and sometimes a fourth other (Smith 1992).

The second half of the 18th century is likely to have been a less eventful in terms of changes to the fabric of the building. From 1753 to 1778, whilst in the ownership of Thomas Vaux, the building was let to a number of tenants during which time it is unlikely that major work to the building would be undertaken. Towards the end of the century, the ownership of the building changed twice more. There is no clear evidence of changes in the second half of the century, however. It is possible that the annex on the east side of the building could have been built at this time, although it is perhaps more likely that it dates from the first quarter of the 19th century when the building was bought by the Brown family.

A secondary stair at the west end of the building provided access between the ground floor, first floor and at that time the only access to the attic rooms. The newel posts and banister rail of the flight that connects the first floor and attic appear to be an original 18th century feature.

Two paintings by Fisher, executed sometime between 1812 and 1822, show an interior view of the ground floor room at the front of the house (G1) and an exterior view, showing the front elevation of the house. Although painted in the early 19th century, these paintings also provide valuable evidence for the appearance of the building in the late 18th century. The interior shows the reception room lined with Georgian timber panelling to the full height of the room, with an timber fireplace and over mantle. Traces of the panelling may survive in the round-headed passage to the right hand side of the west wall of Room G1. The fireplace in the room is almost certainly the one that is currently situated in the rear reception room G2, and dates from around the 1730s.

The history of Priory House during the 19th century was closely connected with the straw-hat trade in Dunstable. This process began with the sale of the house by George Maddison jnr to the executors of Mark Brown who lived next door and had built up a successful business as a hat manufacturer. In 1839, Priory House



was purchased by Robert Munt & Thomas Brown, straw bonnet manufacturers and co-partners, who had leased the property since about 1833.

Fisher's painting shows the external view of the front elevation with a rusticated stucco surface. It is likely that this would have been applied in the 1820s according to the Regency fashion. In front of the house, iron railings are shown much as they stand today. On the east end of the building, a two-storey, brick-built annex is shown. This has two windows in each floor; those in the first floor are blocked and there is a wide entrance gateway towards its east end. In the 1820s the annex is clearly of less high status than the rest of the house and was likely to have been used at least partially in the manufacture of straw hats.

In the tithe map (BLARS- MAT12/1), surveyed in 1822 and revised in 1840, Priory House can be seen with a large garden, recognizable by its curving boundary on the southeast side. The house appears to be too narrow, as though the northern extension of the 18th century has not been included in the plan. The plot adjacent to Priory House, the hat factory also owned by the Brown family, is shown occupied by a large range of buildings ranged around a roughly square plot with a narrow entrance giving access from the road.

In 1839 Priory House was bought by the straw hat company Munt & Brown and, in 1846, Mark Brown's son, William, sold Priory House and his share of the business to the Munt family, who moved into the house. An engraving of the house and factory dated to 1859 (Lamborn) shows significant changes had been made in by this time. The engraving shows the factory on the east side of the house, the western annex is present and the roof converted to a mansard. The factory frontage was three storied with a central gateway. The arrangement of the windows and the placement of the gateway suggest that part of the new factory frontage could have incorporated at least part of the eastern annex of Priory House that is shown in the painting of the 1820s. The windows appear to be at the same height, relative to those in Priory House and the gateway in the annex appears similar that of the factory, being flanked by pilasters. The presence to additional attic windows and a vent in the engraving provides evidence that the extension of the attic formed part of the working area of the factory at this time.

Following the liquidation of Munt and Browns in 1908, the house passed to Arthur Munt who in 1910 demolished most of factory, leaving only the small two-storey out-shot and the ground floor frontage as a boundary. This event gives the other possible explanation for the presence of the external window in Room G3.

Photographs dating from the 1940s show the factory wall with blocked up windows and that medieval style crenellations had been added to the wall and the parapet of the house. The Munt family left Priory House in 1941. In 1946, the building and gardens were acquired by the local authority, through compulsory purchase, for use as public open space. The building served as the council offices until 1986 when it was sold to a private company.

Following the sale of the building extensive refurbishment work was carried out inside the building during the 1990s. Work carried out in 1990 included the



removal of a number of internal partitions on both floors and extension of the main stairs up to attic level. In 1996, the ground floor room at the front of the building was extensively dry lined and re-plastered. Records in Bedfordshire County Council HER document these works. A fireplace, dating probably from the 15th or 16th centuries was uncovered and reconstructed in room G1. The early Georgian fireplace, now located in room G2, was removed from the east end of G1.

In 2000, a successful application (No. SB/TP/20000/0264) was made, for its conversion to a bar and restaurant. The work was started but discontinued before completion.

4.2 Assessment of Results

4.2.1 General assessment

Priory House contains the remains of a type of medieval building for which surviving parallels are uncommon. Wood (1965) suggests approximately twenty surviving examples from this country. The 18th-century elements of the building include largely unaltered front and rear elevations. Internally the building contains well-preserved fixtures and fittings, some in their original locations and others that have been relocated within the building.

Overall, the building is important for its potential in documenting the history of Dunstable. It is connected with social, political and religious history of the medieval and Tudor period, and subsequently the social and economic history of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The archaeological importance of the building consists of the evidence it may contain for its chronological development and changing form and function through time. In addition below ground work associated with the insertion of services might uncover other evidence relating to the medieval priory or 19th-century factory buildings that once stood on the site.

4.2.2 Significant features and questions

The layout of the earliest part of the building, the undercroft and first floor hall, is obscured by the later development of the building. Whilst some of it can be inferred, though comparison with other examples, the actual detail remains speculative. Photographic evidence from building works undertaken in the 1990s (BCC HER) suggested the presence of a medieval doorway in the north wall of the building (Fig. 5), though no location details for the photograph are recorded. This door was however revealed and recorded during subsequent building works (see Section 9, Appendix 4, this document). Evidence relating to the original layout of the building is significant because the building is an example of a type with relatively few surviving parallels.

It is possible that the roof could contain evidence dating from the medieval use of the building or its use following the Dissolution (late 1530s). The double layer of flooring, found only over the front pile of the building, could point to a date prior to the 18th century for underlying parts of this structure. Although the subsequent



building works offered no further opportunity to observe the structure in more detail, any future works in this area might help to clarify this.

The dating of the various partition walls within the building remains uncertain. These are obviously related to the internal form and function of the building and changes through time. For example, it is suggested in that the corridors may relate to access through the building during the 19th century (Ford 2003) and that the arrangement of first floor rooms at the front of the building differed in the 18th century (see section 3.4, below). Observation of work that affects these structures might provide further dating evidence.

The 18th century arrangement of the western end of the building, in the area now occupied by the 19th century western annex, remains uncertain. A doorway from the front reception room (G1), believed to be 18th century and the western staircase both connect with this space; though in Fisher's painting (1812 to 1822) there appears to be no structure occupying this end of the building, at least at the front of the plot. Any further evidence to resolve the arrangement at this end may contribute to an understanding of the form and use of the building during the 18th century.

Although there is little surviving evidence of the hat factory other than alterations within the roof space and surviving walling along parts of the street frontage, observations during building works may further elucidate the constructional phases of the eastern extension and whether elements of it survive within the fabric of the building.

4.2.3 Surviving Fixtures and fittings

The building contains good examples of fixtures and fittings dating from the 18th century. These include fireplaces, staircases, panelling and a cupboard. Fireplaces located in Rooms G2 and G7 date from around the 1730s. Both of these have been moved but it can be demonstrated that the example in G2 was located in Room G1 in the 1820s, remaining there until the 1990s. The main staircase in the rear hall, G6, is a well-preserved example of from the 18th century and has associated wood panelling of the same date. The rear staircase also contains elements dating from the 18th century and at its upper end the small room that forms the landing, dates from the same period. Here, part of the original roof structure of the north wing and internal partitioning survive. Other 18th-century features are the wooden window shutters with largely intact ironwork. One cupboard, in the corridor between the main stairs (G6) and Room G8, also appears to be an *in situ* feature dating from the 18th century. It is situated adjacent to the chimneypiece between G2 and G8, and prior to the creation of the corridor would have been situated within G2.

A few surviving features in the attic level relate directly to this part of the buildings industrial use from the early 19th century. These comprise evidence for the change in the roof structure itself and specific adaptations for industrial use. The framing of extra windows for illumination and framing associated with a rooftop vent survive within the attic structure.



4.2.4 Potential Evidence for Form, Function and Development

The layout of the earliest part of the building, the undercroft and first floor hall, is obscured by the later development of the building. Whilst some of it can be inferred, though comparison with other examples, the actual detail remains speculative. Photographic evidence from building works undertaken in the 1990s suggests the presence of a medieval doorway in the north wall of the building (Figure 5), though location details for the photograph are recorded. Evidence relating to the original layout of the building is significant because the building is an example of a type of building with relatively few surviving parallels.

It is possible that the roof could contain evidence dating from the medieval use of the building or its use following the Dissolution (1539). The double layer of flooring, found only over the front pile of the building, could point to a date prior to the 18th century for underlying parts of this structure. Opportunity to observe the structure in more detail may help to clarify this.

The dating of the various partition walls within the building remains uncertain. These are obviously related to the internal form and function of the building and changes through time. For example, it is suggested in that the corridors may relate to access through the building during the 19th century (Ford 2003) and that the arrangement of first floor rooms at the front of the building differed in the 18th century (this report). Observation of work that affects these structures may provide further dating evidence.

The 18th century arrangement of the at the western end of the building, in the area now occupied by the 19th century western annex, remains uncertain as does the exact chronology of the small two-storey eastern projection. Any further evidence to resolve the arrangement at this end would contribute to an understanding of the form and use of the building during the 18th century.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albion Archaeology, 2004, *Priory House, Dunstable: Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording and Archaeological Monitoring*.
- Alcock, N W, and Hall, L, 1994, *Fixtures and Fittings in Dated Houses 1567-1763* (CBA)
- Bedfordshire County Council, 2004, *Brief for Historic Building Recording and Monitoring: Priory House, Dunstable*.
- Benson, N C, 1986, *Dunstable in Detail, An Illustrated Guide to the Town of Dunstable* (The Book Castle)
- Brown, N. & Glazebrook, J., eds., 2000, *Research and Archaeology: A framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. Research Agenda and Strategy (East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8)*
- Curran, J, 2003, *Straw Hats and Bonnets* (The Book Castle)
- Evans, V, Unpublished manuscript of Priory House held by Bedford and Luton Archive and Record Service.
- Ford, R, 2003, *Priory House, Dunstable, Bedfordshire: Conservation Management Plan* (Clague architects, unpublished report)
- Godber, J, 1969, *History of Bedfordshire*
- Lamborn, C, 1859, *The Dustapleogia* (reprint The Book Castle)
- Page, W. ed., 1904-1912, *Victoria County History: Bedfordshire*
- Smith, J T, 1992, *English Houses 1200-1800, The Hertfordshire Evidence*, (HMSO)
- Wood, M, 1965, *The English Medieval House*



6. APPENDIX 1

6.1 List Description

C18. cement rendered, C19. Mansard welsh slate roof. 2 storeys and attics. 4 round-headed windows with archivolt and key blocks. Door surround of architrave, consoles and pediment. Parapet. Original garden front of good design. Red brick, stone dressings and in-and-out quoins. Ground floor windows in architraves, 1st floor windows in eared coping. Pedimented Roman Doric doorway. Moulded cornice, parapet with stone coping. Pedimented slight central projection. On site of Priory Guesthouse. Reputed to contain C13 vaulted room



7. APPENDIX 2: ARCHIVE

7.1.1 Summary of Archive Contents

Report (hard and digital copy)

Set of architects plans as provided on paper (A3)

Condition survey (provided by architect)

Field notes

Copy of specialist report

Set of negatives 120mm colour print (film A)

Set of colour prints (film A)

Set of negatives 120mm colour print (film B)

Set of colour prints (film B)

Set of negatives 120mm B&W print (film 1)

Set of contact prints 120mm B&W print (film 1)

Set of negatives 120mm B&W print (film 2)

Set of contact prints 120mm B&W print (film 2)

Set of negatives 120mm B&W print (film 3)

Set of contact prints 120mm B&W print (film 3)



7.1.2 The photographic record

7.1.2.1 Negatives/Prints 120mm (colour)

PROJECT CODE :PHD1050	FILM No. Colour A	FILM 120mm TYPE
--------------------------	----------------------	--------------------

IMAGE No	Neg. No.	SUBJECT	VIEW	BY	DATE
1	1/2	Exterior rear elevation	S	NMcB	
2	3	Exterior front elevation	N	NMcB	
3	4	Exterior front elevation	N	NMcB	
4	5	Exterior west end elevation	W	NMcB	
5	6/7	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	W	NMcB	
6	8	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	W	NMcB	
7	9	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	W	NMcB	
8	10	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	E	NMcB	
9	11	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	E	NMcB	
10	13/13	Room G1, fireplace in Bay D	N	NMcB	
11	14	Room G1, window, shutters open	S	NMcB	
12	15	Room G1, window, shutters closed	S	NMcB	
13	16	Room G5, general view	N	NMcB	
14	17/18	Room G7, showing secondary stairs and door to G1	NE	NMcB	
15	19	Room G1, door to G7	W	NMcB	



PROJECT CODE PHD105-	FILM No. Colour B	FILM 120mm TYPE
-------------------------	----------------------	--------------------

IMAGE No	Neg. No.	SUBJECT	VIEW	BY	DATE
1	41	Room G6, rear hall staircase	NE	NMcB	
2	42	Room G6, rear hall staircase	SE	NMcB	
3	43	Room G7, ground floor, western annex	NE	NMcB	
4	44	Room G2, panelling in NW corner	NW	NMcB	
5	45	Room G2, decorated wooden fireplace	E	NMcB	
6	46	Room F2, general view	NW	NMcB	
7	47	Room F6, general view	SW	NMcB	
8	48	Room F5, general view	S	NMcB	
9	49	Attic, S1, western gable end	W	NMcB	
10	50	Attic, S1, western gable end	NW	NMcB	
11	51	Attic, S1, eastern gable end	E	NMcB	
12	52	Attic, S1, south-western dormer window	SE	NMcB	



7.1.2.2 Negatives/Prints 120mm (black and white)

PROJECT CODE :PHD1050	FILM No. B&W 1	FILM 120mm TYPE
--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------

IMAGE No	Neg. No.	SUBJECT	VIEW	BY	DATE
1	1	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	E	NMcB	Nov 04
2	2/3	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	E	NMcB	Nov 04
3	4	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	E	NMcB	Nov 04
4	5	Room G1, fireplace in Bay D	N	NMcB	Nov 04
5	6	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	W	NMcB	Nov 04
6	7	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	W	NMcB	Nov 04
7	8/9	Room G1, window, shutters open	S	NMcB	Nov 04
8	10	Room G1, window, shutters closed	S	NMcB	Nov 04
9	11	Room G1, door to Room G7	NW	NMcB	Nov 04
10	12	Room G1, door to Room G7	NW	NMcB	Nov 04
11	13/14	Room G2, decorated wooden fireplace and panelling.	NE	NMcB	Nov 04
12	15	Room G2, decorated wooden fireplace and panelling.	NE	NMcB	Nov 04
13	16	Room G2, decorated wooden fireplace and panelling.	NE	NMcB	Nov 04
14	17	Room G2, panelling	NW	NMcB	Nov 04
15	18	Room G8, general view, windows	E	NMcB	Nov 04



PROJECT CODE :PHD1050	FILM No. B&W 2	FILM 120mm TYPE
--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------

IMAGE No	Neg. No.	SUBJECT	VIEW	BY	DATE
1	1	Room G6, rear hall staircase	NE	NMcB	Nov 04
2	2/3	Room G6, rear hall staircase	E	NMcB	Nov 04
3	4	Room G7, ground floor, western annex	SE	NMcB	Nov 04
4	5	Room G7, ground floor, western annex	NE	NMcB	Nov 04
5	6	Room G5, Ground floor, rear.	N	NMcB	Nov 04
6	7	Exterior rear elevation	S	NMcB	Nov 04
7	8/9	Exterior front elevation	N	NMcB	Nov 04
8	10	Exterior front elevation	N	NMcB	Nov 04
9	11	Exterior, elevation at east end	W	NMcB	Nov 04
10	12	Room F2, general view	NW	NMcB	Nov 04
11	13/14	Room F6, general view	SW	NMcB	Nov 04
12	15	Room F5, general view	S	NMcB	Nov 04
13	16	Attic, S1, western gable end	W	NMcB	Nov 04
14	17	Attic, S1, eastern gable end	E	NMcB	Nov 04
15	18	Attic, S1, eastern gable end	E	NMcB	Nov 04



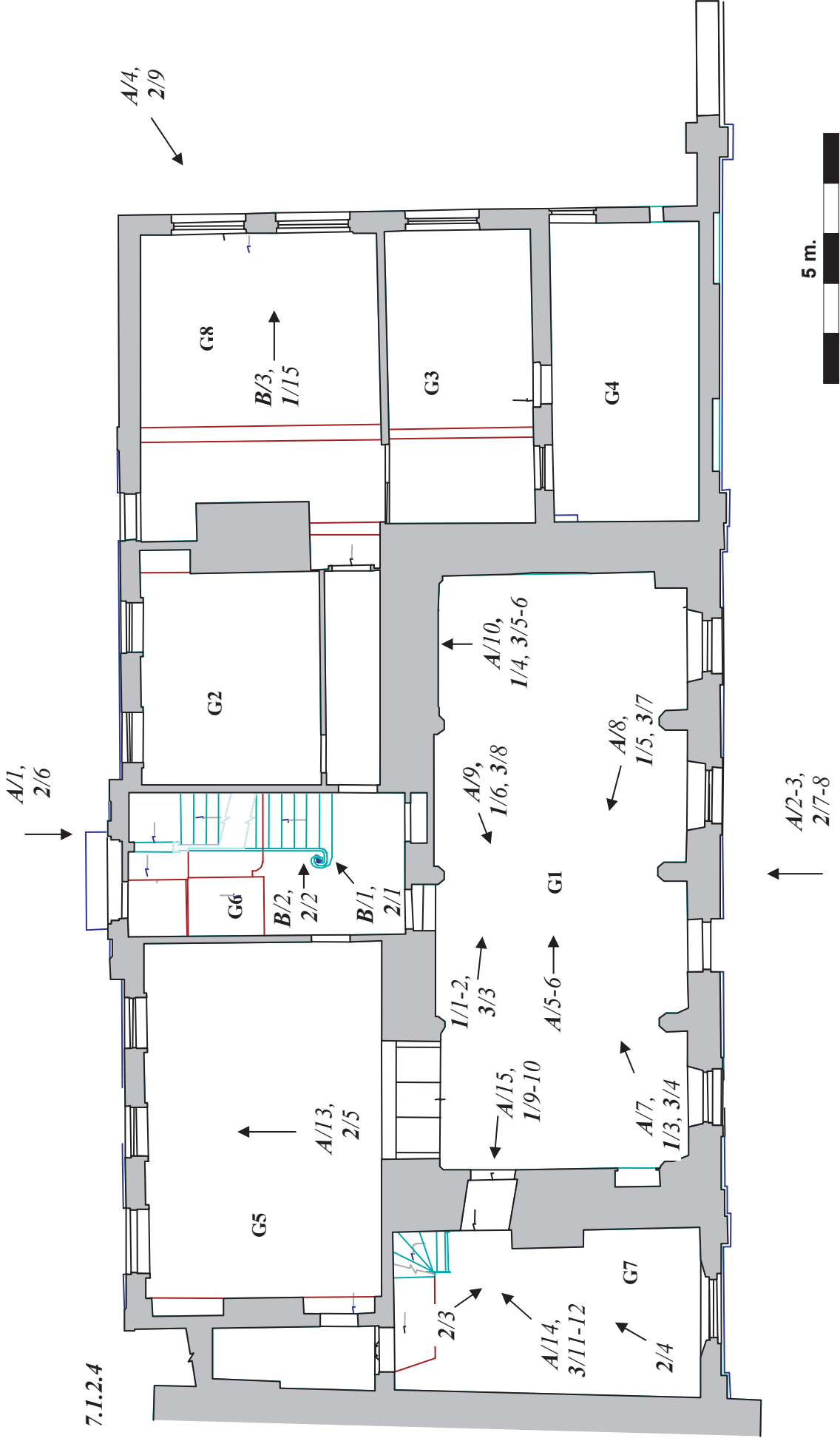
PROJECT CODE PHD1050	FILM No. B&W 3	FILM 120mm TYPE
-------------------------	-------------------	--------------------

IMAGE No	Neg. No.	SUBJECT	VIEW	BY	DATE
1	1	Basement, room B3, western wall	SW	NMcB	Nov 04
2	2	Basement, room B3, eastern wall	NE	NMcB	Nov 04
3	3/4	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	SE	NMcB	Nov 04
4	5	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	NE	NMcB	Nov 04
5	6	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	NW	NMcB	Nov 04
6	7	Room G1, ground floor vaulted room	SW	NMcB	Nov 04
7	8/9	Room G1, fireplace in Bay D	N	NMcB	Nov 04
8	10	Room G1, fireplace in Bay D	N	NMcB	Nov 04
9	11	Room G1, window, shutters open	S	NMcB	Nov 04
10	12	Room G1, window, shutters closed	S	NMcB	Nov 04
11	13/14	Room G7, back stairs and door to G1	NE	NMcB	Nov 04
12	15	Room G7, secondary stairs and door to G1	NE	NMcB	Nov 04
13	16	Secondary stairs, looking up from first floor landing	N	NMcB	Nov 04

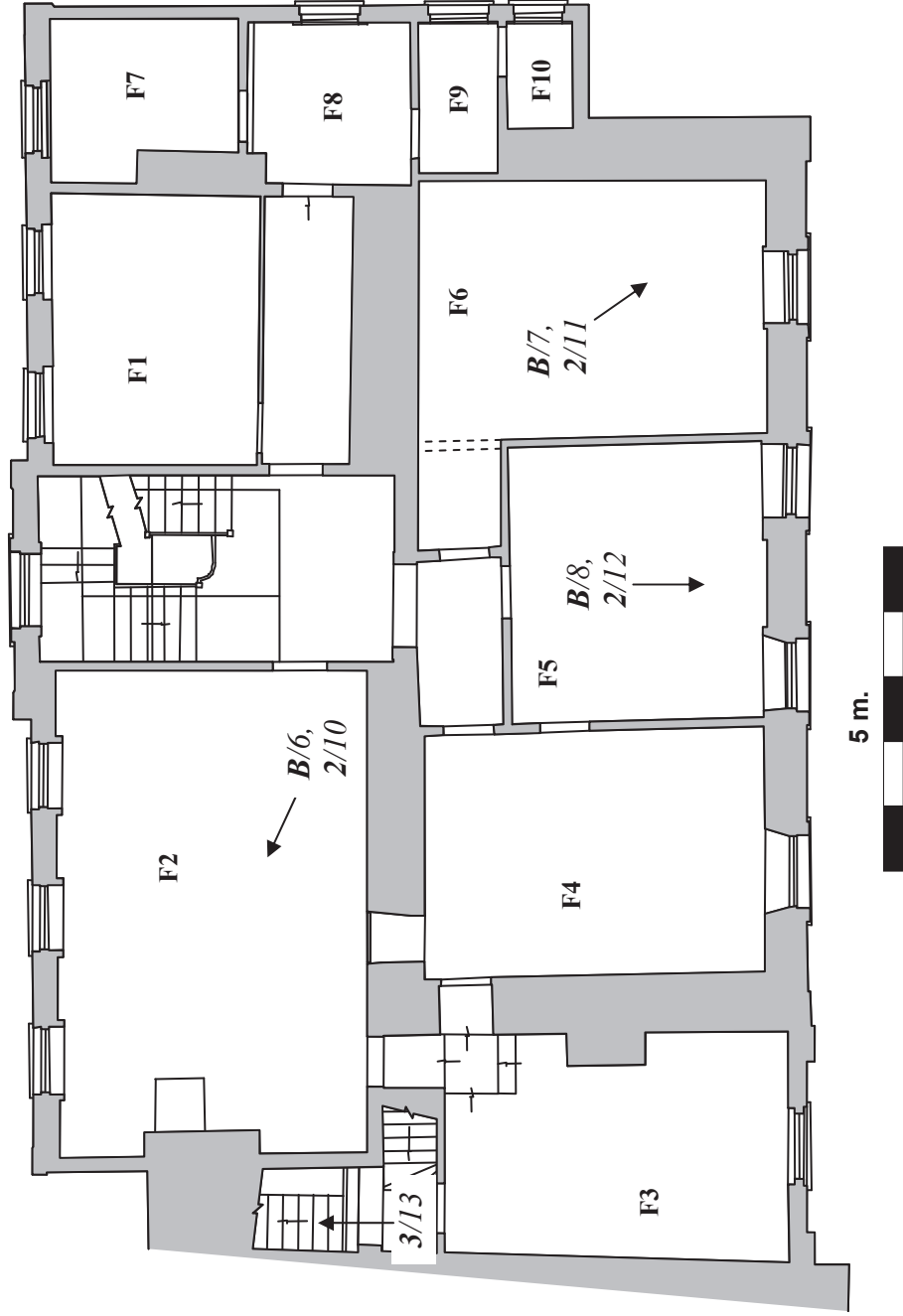


7.1.2.3 LOCATION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

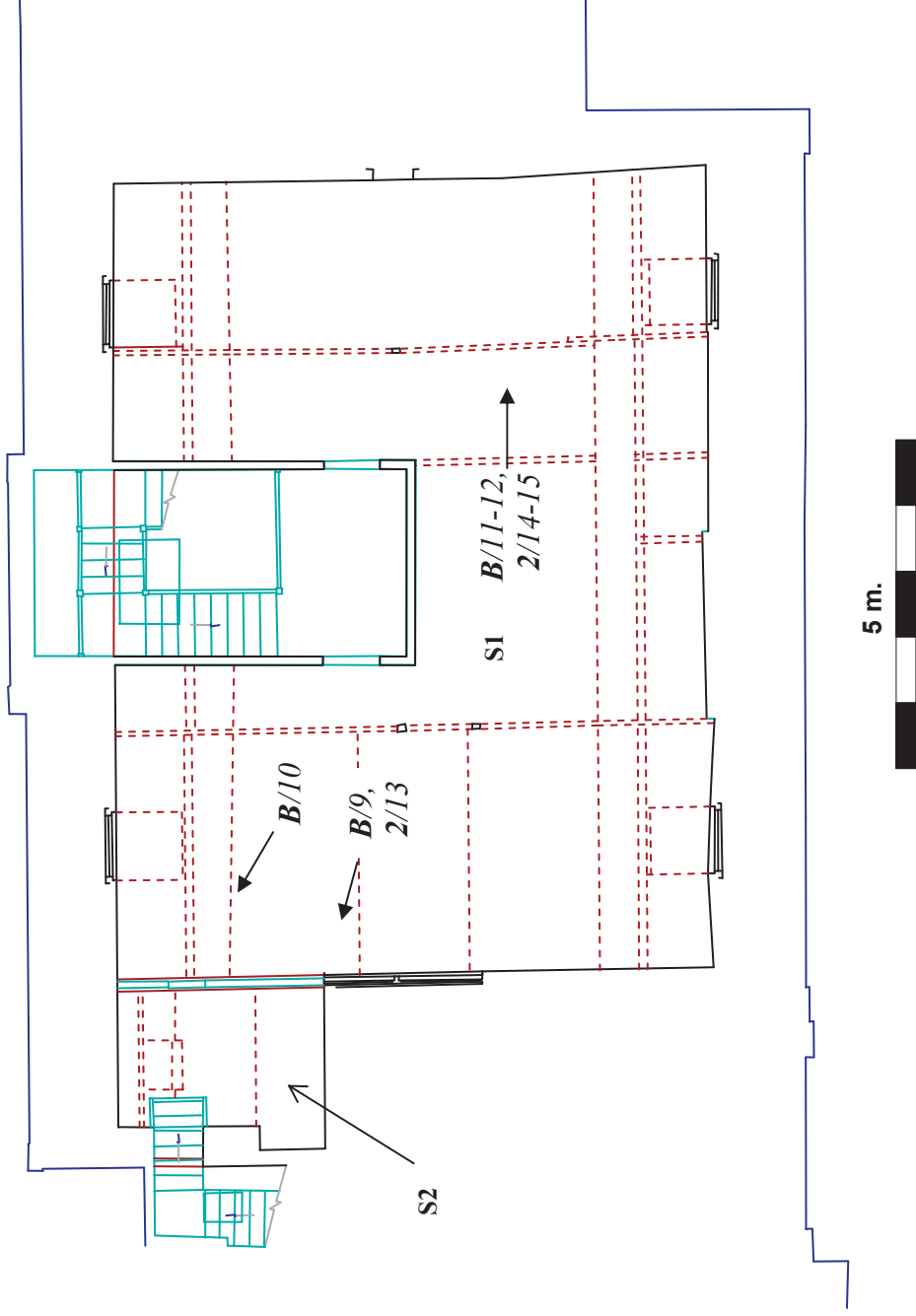
These are indicated on the following four plans that show the different floors of the building. The direction of the photograph is marked with an arrow. The image number is shown next to the arrow and is shown in the format, Film number/ Image number eg *1/5*.



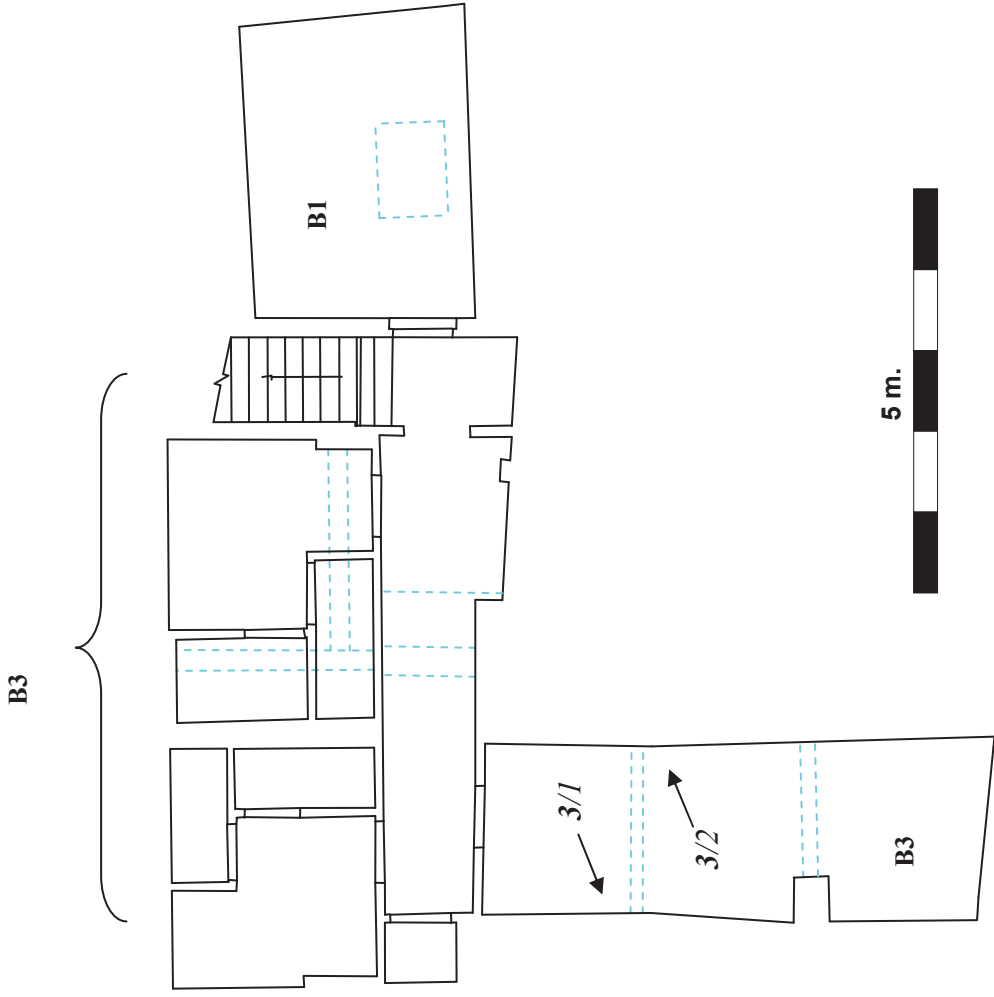
Ground Floor – Photograph Locations



First Floor – Photograph Locations



Attic – Photograph Locations



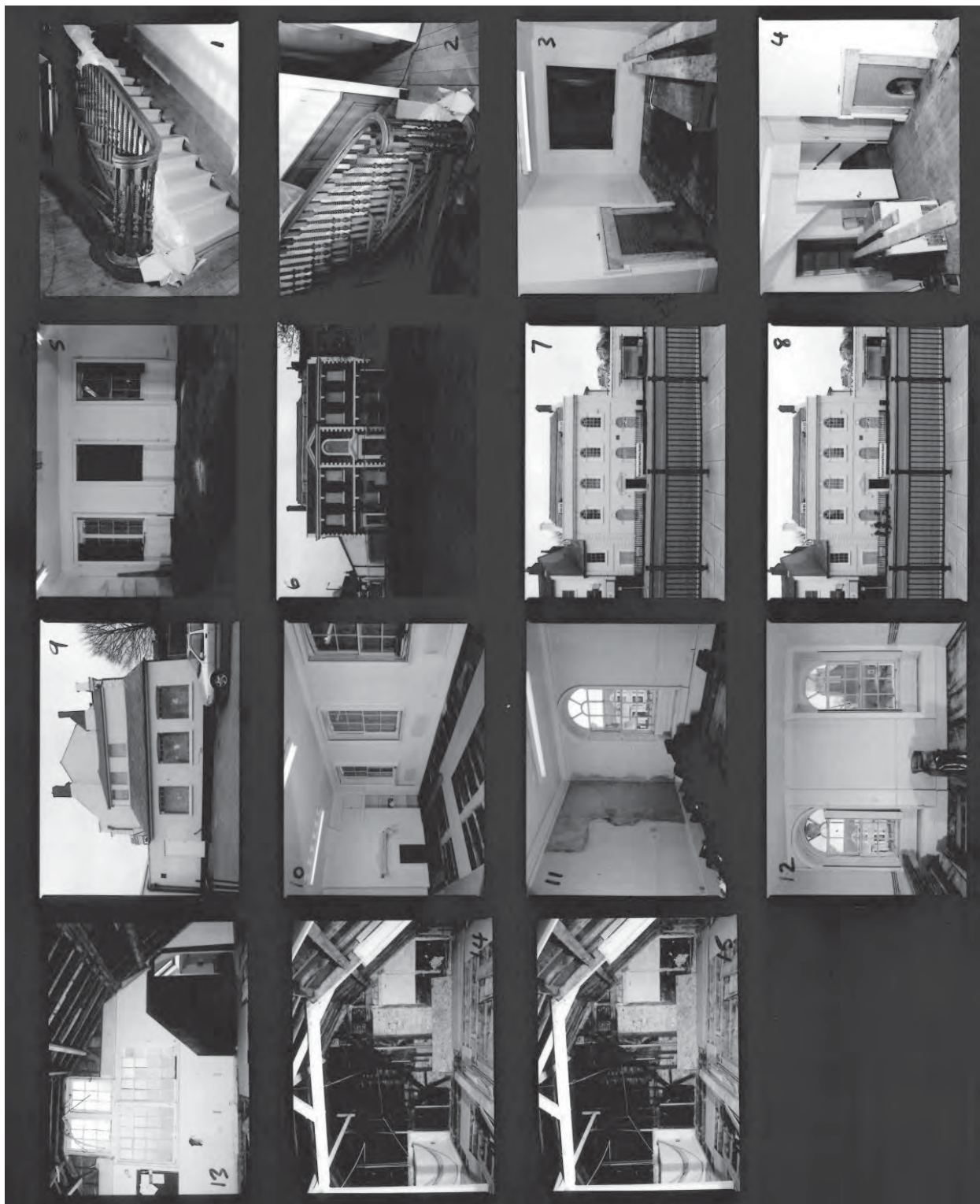
Basement – Photograph Locations



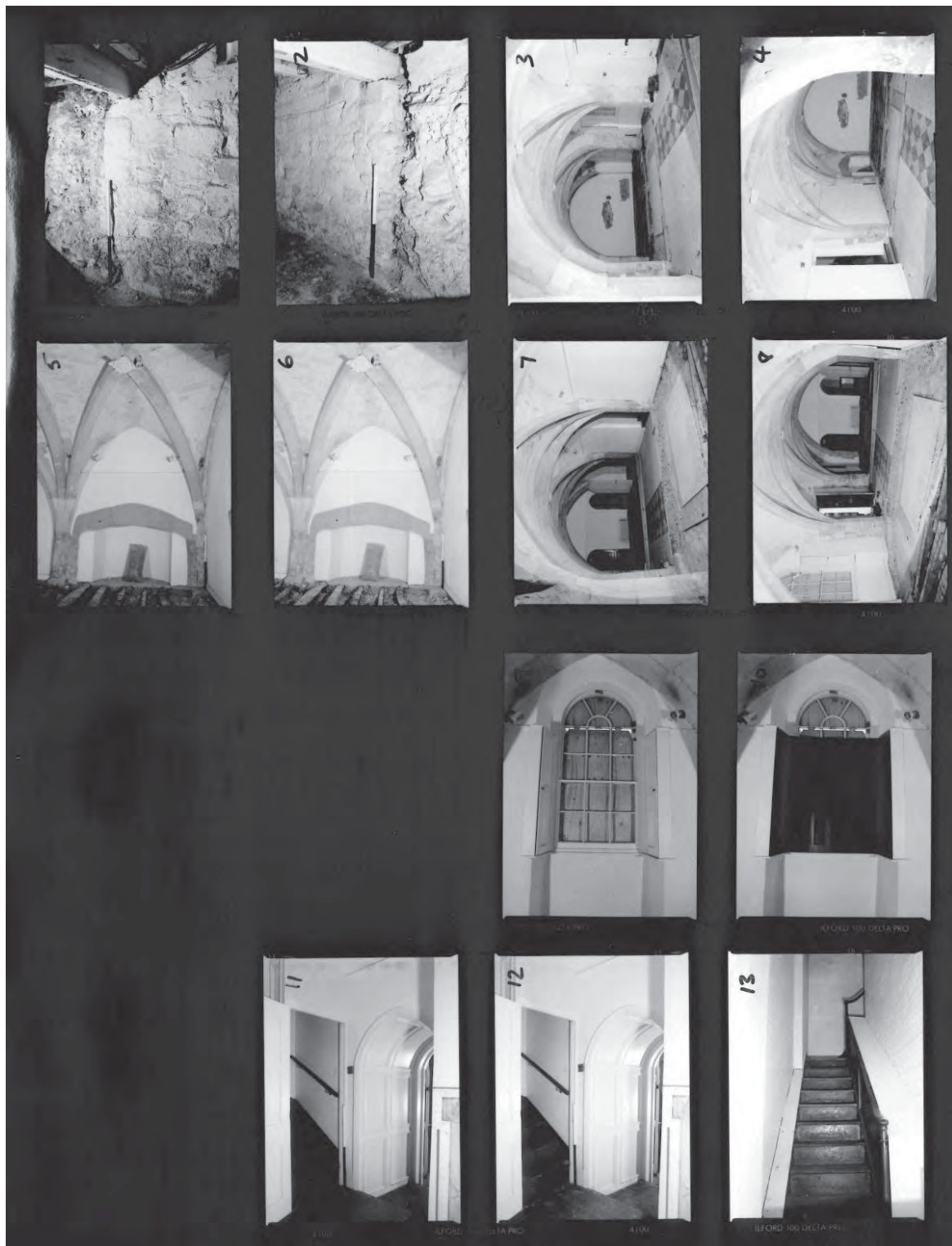
7.1.2.5 Scanned Copies of Monochrome Contact Prints



Contact Print: Film 1



Contact Print: Film 2



Contact Print: Film 3



Arrangements for Long-Term Deposition

The project archive will be deposited at the Bedfordshire and Luton Record Office. Copies of the report will be deposited with the Bedfordshire County Council Historic Environment Record, with the National Monuments Record: Buildings and with Bedfordshire Libraries local study section.



8. APPENDIX 3: SOURCES CONSULTED

8.1.1 Historic Maps

Dunstable as shown on a map of Houghton Regis, dated 1762. (BLARS ref. PU43/1988)

Tithe Map, surveyed in 1822 and revised 1840. (BLARS ref. MAT12/1)

Ordnance Survey first edition, 1:500, surveyed 1879.

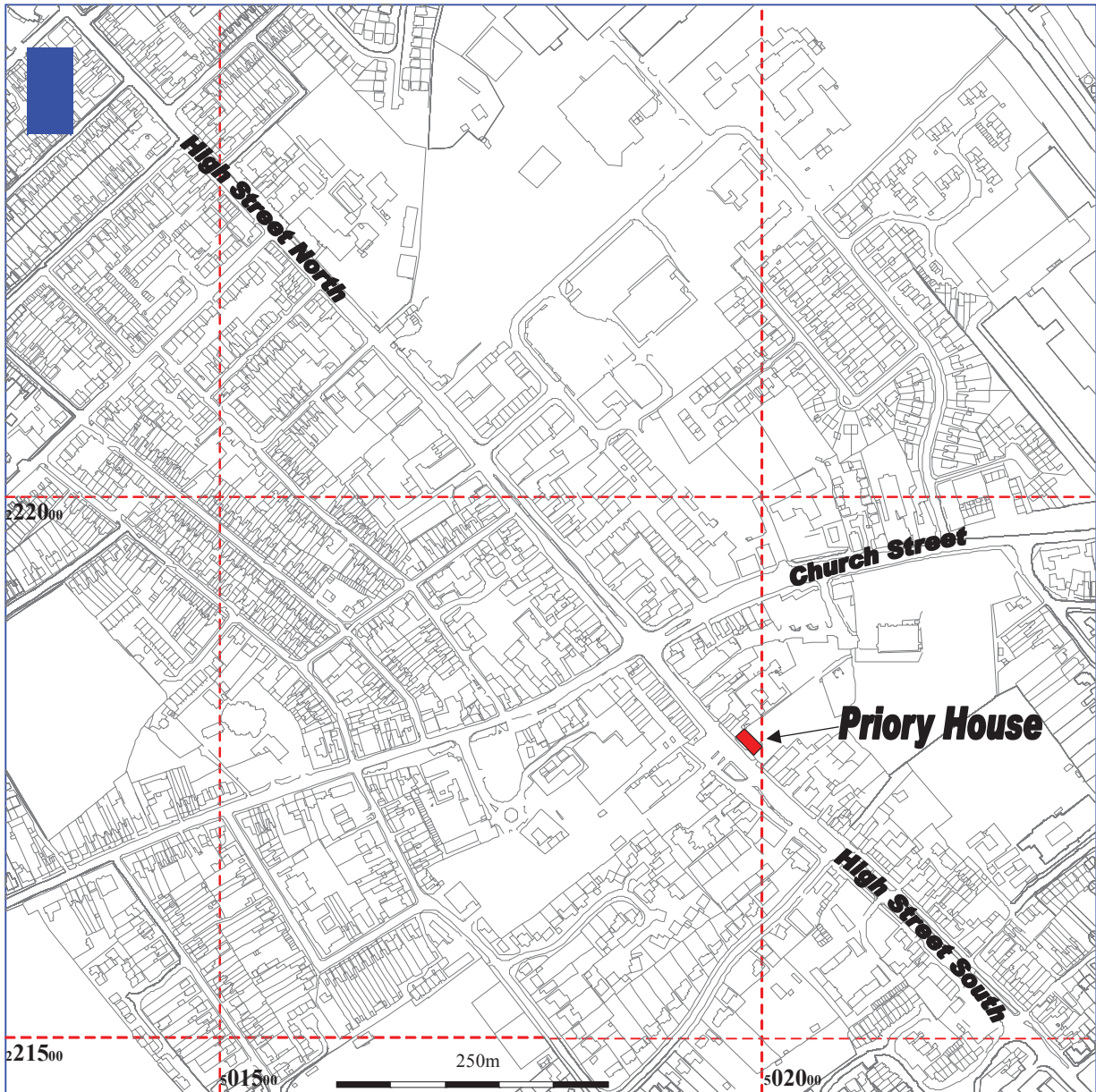
Ordnance Survey first edition, 1:2500, surveyed 1879.

8.1.2 Primary Sources

Deeds of Priory House, BLARS, Acc 5045, BORDV 13/1 to 13/27

8.1.3 Secondary Sources

Secondary sources consulted consist of local histories and the Victoria County History. These are listed above in the bibliography.



Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Bedford. OS Licence No. 076465(LA). © Crown Copyright.

Figure 1: Location of Priory House

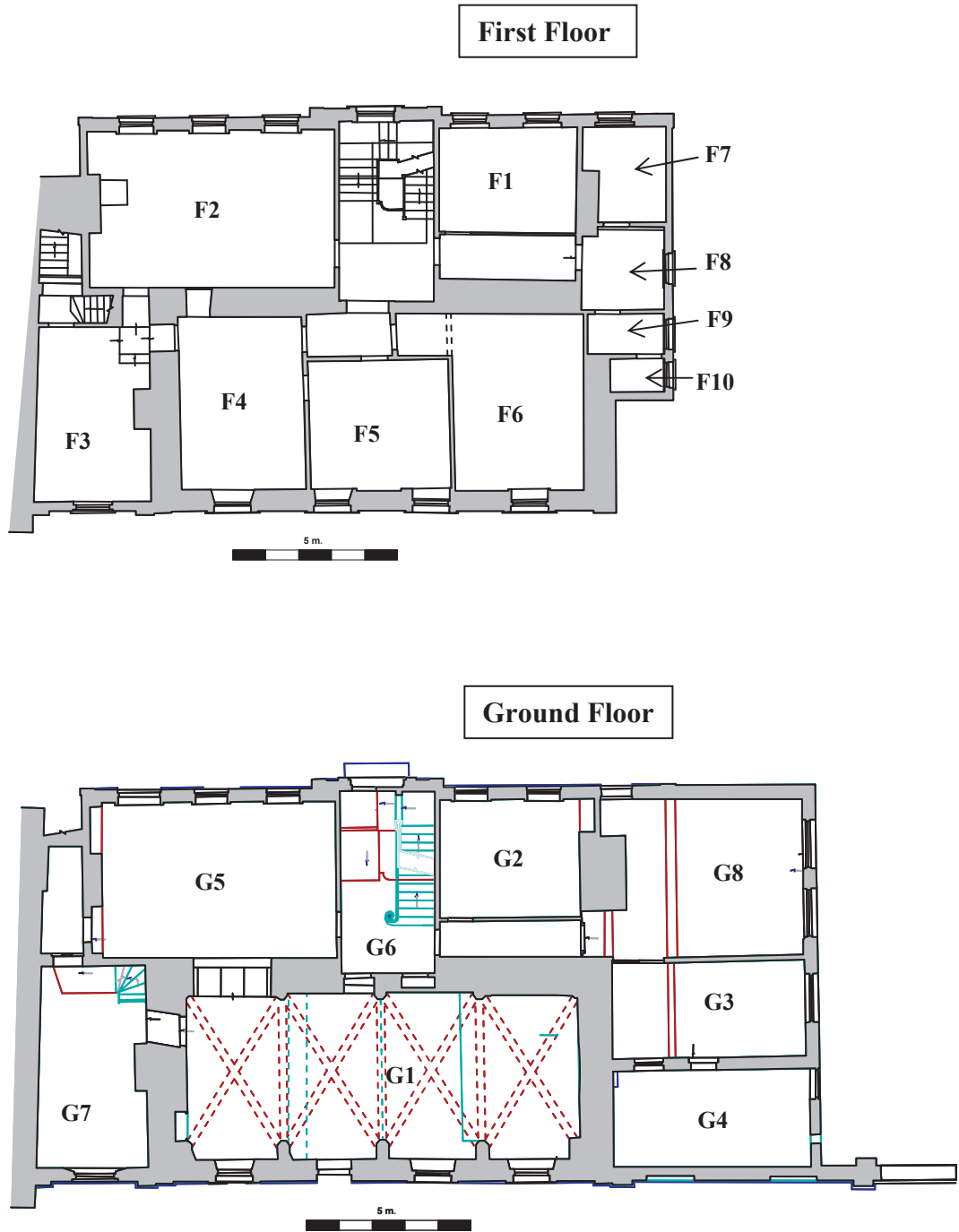


Figure 2: Ground floor and first floor Plans

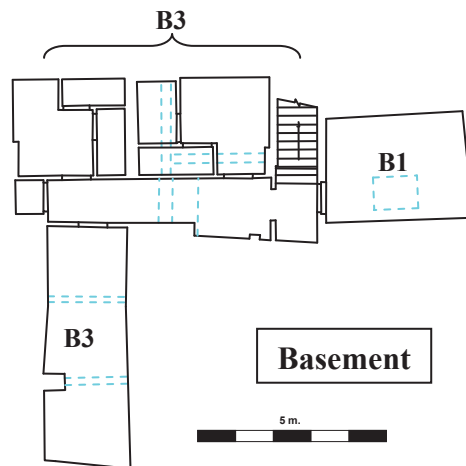
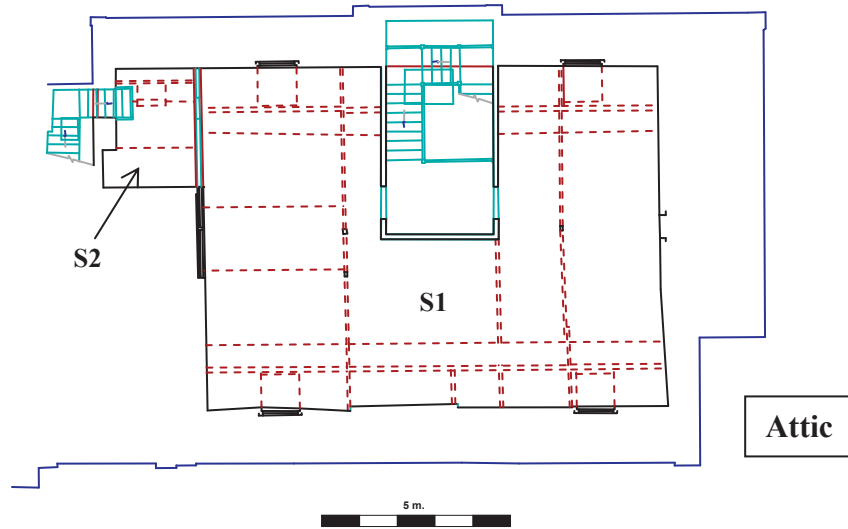


Figure 3: Basement and attic plans



Figure 4: Priory House and hat factory in the 19th century. Phases superimposed on copy of 1879, 1st edition Ordnance Survey map.



Figure 5: Phase plan showing suggested chronological development



Plate 1: Exterior, south facing elevation



Plate 2: Exterior, north facing elevation



Plate 3: Exterior, east facing elevation



Plate 4: Ground floor, Room G1 looking towards the eastern end



Plate 5: Ground floor, Room G1 looking towards the western end



Plate 6: Ground floor, Room G5 looking towards the north wall



Plate 7: Ground floor, Room G1 window, shutters closed (scale 1m)



Plate 8: Ground floor, Room G1 window, shutters open (scale 1m)



Plate 9: Ground floor, Room G1 reconstructed fireplace in northeast corner of room



Plate 10: Ground floor, Room G7. Northeast corner, showing secondary stairs, panelled arch through to Room G1 and fireplace



Plate 11: First floor, secondary stairs, looking up from the first floor landing



Plate 12: First floor, secondary stairs



Plate 13: Ground floor, main staircase



Plate 14: Ground floor, main staircase



Plate 15: Ground floor, room G2, dado panelling in northwest corner



Plate 16: Ground floor, room G2, fireplace at east end of room



Plate 17: First floor, corridor between rooms G6 and G8, showing cupboard above doorway

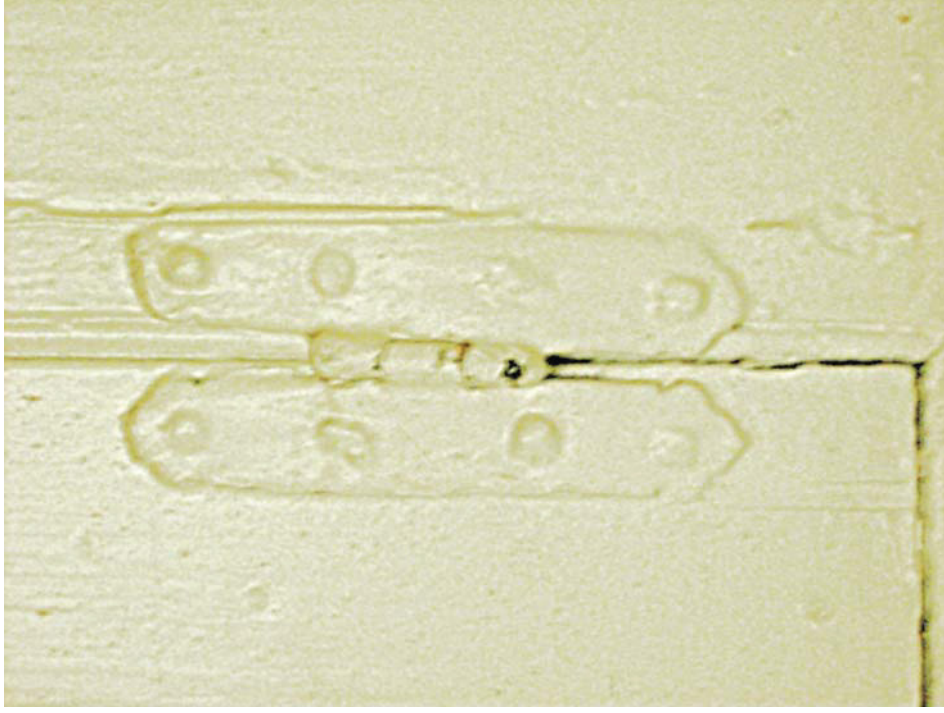


Plate 18: First floor, H-shaped hinge on cupboard



Plate 19: H-shaped shutter hinges (scale 10cm)



Plate 20: Shutter closure (scale 10cm)



Plate 21: First floor, Room F6, southeast corner



Plate 22: First floor, Room F5, south wall



Plate 23: Attic floor, northwest corner, showing landing to secondary stairs and dormer window



Plate 24: Attic floor, southeast corner, showing framing of 18th century gable incorporated into 19th century mansard roof structure



Plate 25: Attic floor, roof structure, showing framing of former ventilator



Plate 26: Attic floor, showing earlier floorboards preserved beneath later floor level



9. APPENDIX 4: ADDENDUM TO REPORT



**PRIORY HOUSE,
DUNSTABLE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ADDENDUM TO DOCUMENT 2004/116

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

Document: 2004/116 (2 addendum)
Project Code: PHD1050

November 2005

Produced for:
Dunstable Town Council

© Copyright Albion Archaeology 2005, *all rights reserved*





List of Figures

Figure 1: Plan showing locations observed during building work

Figure 2: Elevation of doorway in Room G1

List of Plates

Plate 1: Doorway in Room G1



Non-Technical Summary (addendum)

This addendum to the main report presents the results of historic building recording and archaeological monitoring undertaken during building work to convert Priory House, High Street South in Dunstable, for public use.

An interim report (Priory House Dunstable, Interim Report: Historic Building Recording, Report No. 2005-116 (1)) presented the results of a survey undertaken before the start of the building work. This report is an addendum to the earlier report, summarising the results of monitoring and archaeological recording undertaken during the course of the building work. The two reports jointly form the final report to this project.

A limited programme of archaeological observation and recording was undertaken during the building works. This comprised monitoring of trenches excavated by the building contractors and recording of medieval masonry exposed during the building work.

The monitoring of construction/service trenches at the rear and eastern end of the building and ground reduction inside Room G1 produced no significant archaeological observations.

Recording of the medieval masonry confirmed details of the original building. Where observed the building consisted of rubble-cored walls with a facing of well-finished square or rectangular stones laid in regular courses. The stone used for the facing and architectural details was clunch, a local building stone. The internal face of an arched opening was exposed in the second bay from the eastern end of the building. This had a low segmental arch with a plain chamfer. It appeared to be integral with the construction and of the same style as the piers and vaulting within Room G1, suggesting that it is part of the original construction of the building. This would have formed the north doorway into the building.



1. RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

1.1 *Objectives of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*

A targeted programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken during building work to convert the building for public use. This programme was comprised of two elements, monitoring of groundwork and building recording. Groundwork carried out by the building contractors was monitored so that any significant archaeological deposits could be recorded. The building recording, in addition to that already undertaken (Albion Report No. 2005/116(1)), was focused on elements of the medieval core of the building that were exposed during building work.

1.2 *Monitoring of Subsurface Deposits*

Groundwork was carried out by the building contractors at two locations outside the building, whilst inside, the ground level was reduced in room G1.

Externally trenches were excavated on the eastern and northern sides of the building. The trench at the eastern end measured 8.6m by 1.7m and was up to 0.6m deep. The trench on the northern side took the form of a narrow trench that extended along most of this face of the building, up to a depth of 0.5m. Both of these trenches were excavated through layers of recent construction deposits and topsoil layers. Chalk bedrock was noted at a depth of between 0.5m and 0.6m below the ground surface.

Inside the building, the ground level was reduced in Room G1 by approximately 0.2m. The material removed consisted of loose dry, dust and chalk debris. The ground below this consisted of chalk bedrock, although insufficient of it was exposed to make any useful archaeological observations.

1.3 *Historic Building Recording*

Inside the building, a limited programme of observation and recording was undertaken on the medieval fabric of the building that was exposed during construction work.

In room G3, the base of the eastern, external face of the medieval building was exposed in a small cutting made by the building contractors. These consisted of squared blocks of clunch up to 0.2m long that had been laid on a thin bed of mortar, directly on to the chalk bedrock.

In Room G1, the lower half of the eastern end wall was exposed. Here, on either side of later fireplace, the wall was faced with clunch. The clunch had been worked into well-finished square or rectangular blocks measuring up to 0.25m high and 0.3m wide. It was laid in courses of between 0.15m and 0.25m high.

At the northeast corner of the medieval building, a narrow strip of the wall was exposed by the removal of a doorframe in Room G8. The stonework consisted of



squared and faced blocks of clunch up to 0.25m high. There was no indication of a buttress at this location.

Removal of plaster from the north wall of Room G1, in the second bay from the east end, demonstrated that a rectangular doorway had been inserted into an earlier arched opening. The later doorway occupied the western side of the arched opening, with the western jamb of the earlier arch having been cut back to accommodate the new opening. The eastern side of the arch had been infilled with a mixture of brick and stone and above the wooden lintel of the later door, the arch was filled with stone. The stone used for the partial blocking of the earlier arch consisted of squared blocks of clunch, presumably reused medieval stonework. The remains of the earlier arched doorway consisted of an opening approximately 3m high and 1.68m wide. The arched opening was not centred within the vaulted bay, but was situated against the east side of the bay, making a slightly asymmetric arrangement. The head of the opening was formed by a segmental arch, following the line of the wall rib of the vault above. The opening was surrounded by a plain chamfered moulding, though this was mostly obscured by the later masonry infill.

1.4 Conclusions

Monitoring of groundwork carried out during the building conversion did not produce any significant archaeological observations.

Inside, building recording work confirmed the location of an arched doorway in the north wall of the medieval building. Photographs taken during building work carried out in the 1990s (Historic Environment Record of Bedfordshire County Council) show the outer face of this doorway.

It is likely that this arched doorway formed the original north entrance of the medieval building rather than being a later insertion. Although the masonry is badly decayed on the eastern side of the opening, it does appear to be integral with the construction of the pier of the vault. Other evidence does not contradict the idea that this is part of the original construction of the building. The arch is constructed in the same material as used elsewhere in the medieval work. Although, it should be noted that this type of stone remained one of the most commonly used in this area until the post medieval period. In addition, both the arch and the vault are constructed in the same style, with a plain chamfered section as used for the ribs of the vault.

The photographs taken of the outside of the doorway in the 1990s appear to show the left hand side of a pointed arch, whilst the internal opening has a low segmental arch. The change in shape could be accommodated within the thickness of the wall.



2. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion Archaeology, 2004, *Priory House, Dunstable: Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording and Archaeological Monitoring*.

Albion Archaeology, 2005, *Priory House, Dunstable: Historic Building Recording: Interim Report* (Report No. 2005/116)

Bedfordshire County Council, 2004, *Brief for Historic Building Recording and Monitoring: Priory House, Dunstable*.

Ford, R, 2003, *Priory House, Dunstable, Bedfordshire: Conservation Management Plan* (Clague architects, unpublished report)

Wood, M, 1965, *The English Medieval House*

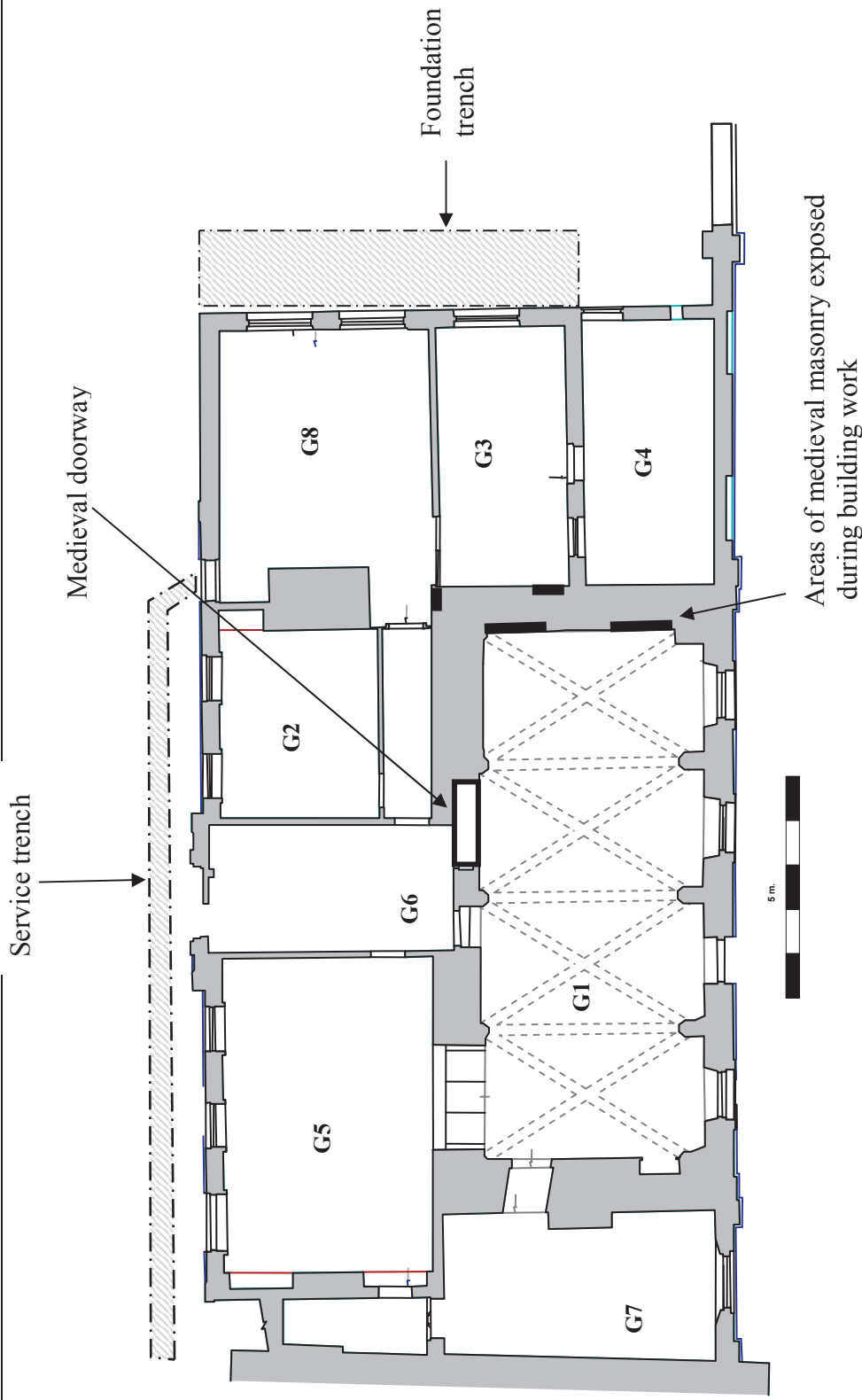


Figure 1: Plan showing locations observed during building work

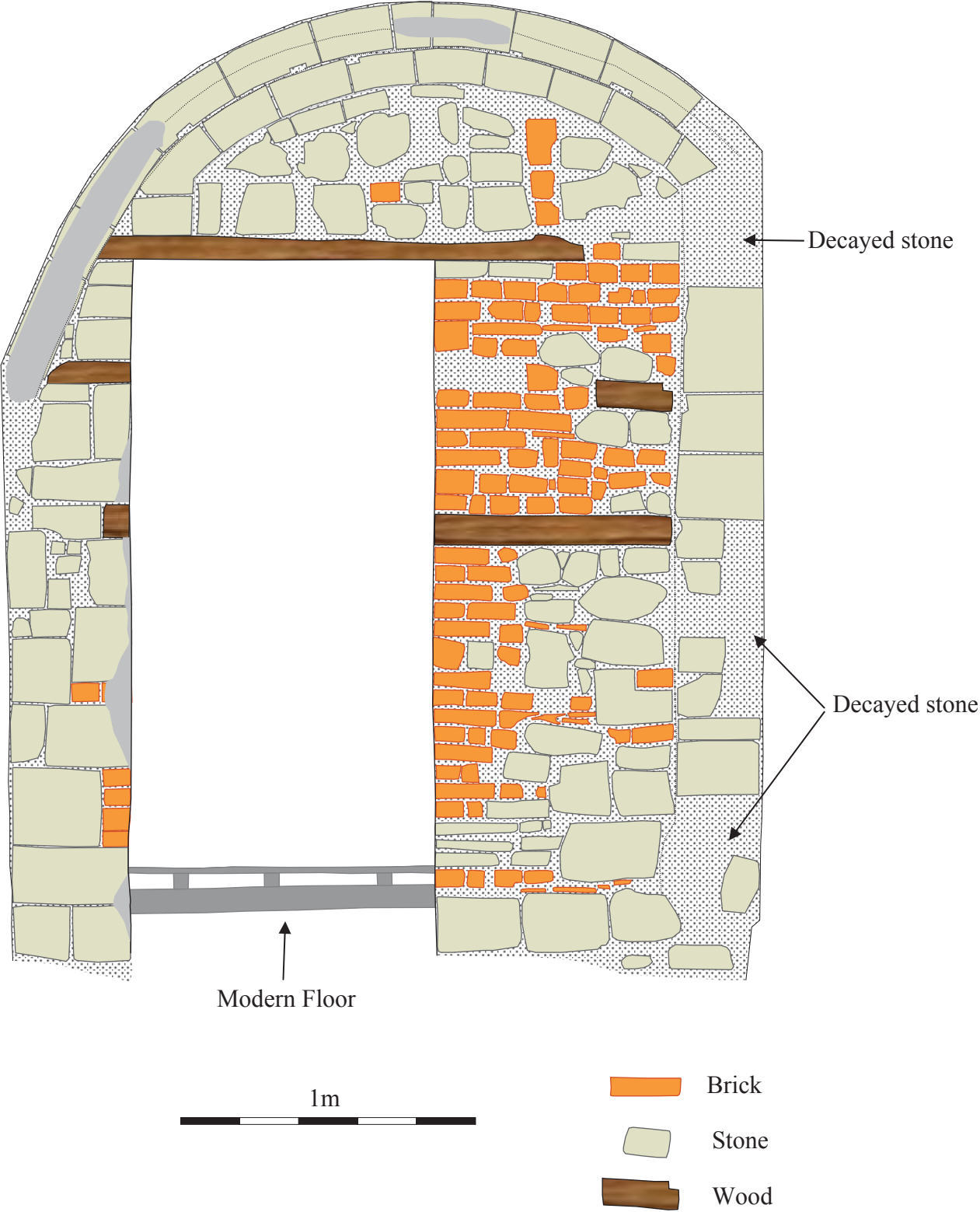


Figure 2: Doorway in Room G1



Plate 1: Doorway in Room G1