

**REDBOURN POST OFFICE
73 HIGH STREET
REDBOURN
HERTFORDSHIRE

BUILDING RECORDING**

Project: RPO1447

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Produced for:
Mrs S. Woodland



Introduction

This project was undertaken during renovation work to the interior of a first floor room within Redbourn Post Office, 73 High Street, Redbourn. The work fulfilled a requirement for building recording which was requested by the District Archaeologist for St. Albans District Council (Simon West). Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the owner of the building, Mrs S. Woodland to undertake the recording work.

The archaeological fieldwork and preparation of this report were undertaken by Mark Phillips (Project Officer). Photographic recording was undertaken by Nigel Macbeth. The project was managed by Wesley Keir (Project Officer). All Albion Archaeology projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

A copy of this report and the project archive will be deposited at Verulamium Museum (Accession No. RPO08).

Site Description and Location

The Post Office is located at 73 High Street, Redbourn in Hertfordshire. It is situated on the eastern side of the High Street within the historic core of Redbourn. The building consists of a two storey main range measuring approximately 15m by 6m that is aligned parallel to the street frontage with a two storey cross-wing at the rear of the building to its northern end. Additional rooms have been added to the rear of the main range along the rest of its length (Figure 1)

Background

The building is a grade II listed building (listing no. 15/187).

List description

House and shop. C17 or earlier timber frame. Circa 1830 red brick facade and shop front. Steep pitched plain tile roof with restored off-centre chimney stack. 2 storeys. 4 regularly spaced sash windows to the 1st floor with flush moulded frames. Ground floor is colour washed. Shop front has two doors and 4 windows. 2nd window from S retains its 4 arch lights. Rear has a deep C17 gabled cross wing on N side: red brick, the gable end 1st floor and attic window with stone surrounds. Weatherboarded gabled stair turret in angle, probably C17.

Description of Work Undertaken

Removal of a modern stud wall in the first floor room of the cross wing at its southern end revealed the remains of timber framing. The planning officer required that these remains be recorded prior to replacement of the stud wall. The record consisted of photographs and an annotated sketch with measurements. The photographic record comprises four large format monochrome photographs of the wall in elevation supplemented with digital photographs of the elevation and details. The photographic record will be deposited with the archive. A figure showing the first floor plan of the building with the location of the observations has been prepared based on CAD drawings supplied by the architects JLM Architecture Ltd (figure 1). An elevation of the timber frame (Figure 2) has been prepared from a digital photograph.

Observations and Interpretation

The remains were those of the outer face of a timber framed wall aligned NNW-SSE (Plate 1, Figure 2). The surviving original elements of the frame are shaded darker



grey in the figure. These consist of two posts at either end, a lower transverse timber, an upper transverse timber, two studs, a diagonal brace and framing for a window.

The lower transverse timber has a maximum cross section of 300mm by 160mm. It is morticed into the vertical posts at either end. The upper transverse timber is approximately 150mm square in section. It is morticed into the top of the southern post, whilst the relationship with the post at the northern end has been lost due to decay at this point with the junction being partially covered by a modern repair that includes a metal strap. The upper edge of the transverse timber has a series of shallow rebates to receive the lower end of rafters that slope down from the western side of the main range.

A curved down-brace joins the southern post and the lower transverse timber. This timber was only 20mm thick. At its junction with a vertical stud it was let into a shallow rebate in the stud and fixed with three nails; peg holes in the brace at this point did not appear functional, falling either side of the stud behind. There were two vertical studs and mortice holes indicate the presence of a third stud, forming a symmetrical arrangement. The central stud was 140mm by 100mm in cross section. A short rail morticed into the studs at either end formed the sill for a window opening. A mullion in the centre of the window was 70mm wide with chamfered edges. Incised carpenters marks survive where the central stud joins the window sill and the lower transverse timber.

The panels in the southern half of the frame retained a combination of lath and plaster and wattle and daub infilling. The wattle and daub survived only in the panel beneath the window. In the northern half of the frame there was evidence for the structure that would have supported the infill. There are holes in the underside of the upper timber and a V-section slot in the lower timber to take the ends of vertical staves that would support wattle and daub infill.

Later modifications consist of inserted timbers for structural support at the northern end of the frame and studding to support a lath and plaster covering on the opposite (western) side of the wall. The studding consists of four quarter-round uprights. The structural supports include a piece of re-used timber (B) with waney edges that was not morticed into the frame. This appears to be a replacement for the missing original stud. Modern sawn timber (C) and metal strapping has been used to support the northernmost end of the frame where the junction between the vertical post and the upper transverse timber has rotted away.

The presence of the blocked window demonstrates that this timber framing formed part of an outer wall. The components of the frame are joined to form a flush face on its eastern side which is therefore the outside face of the wall. It represents the rear wall of the main range along the street frontage. The upper transverse timber of the frame is a wall plate supporting the rafters of the main range. The relationship of this wall to the northern cross wing shows that it predates the construction of the cross wing.

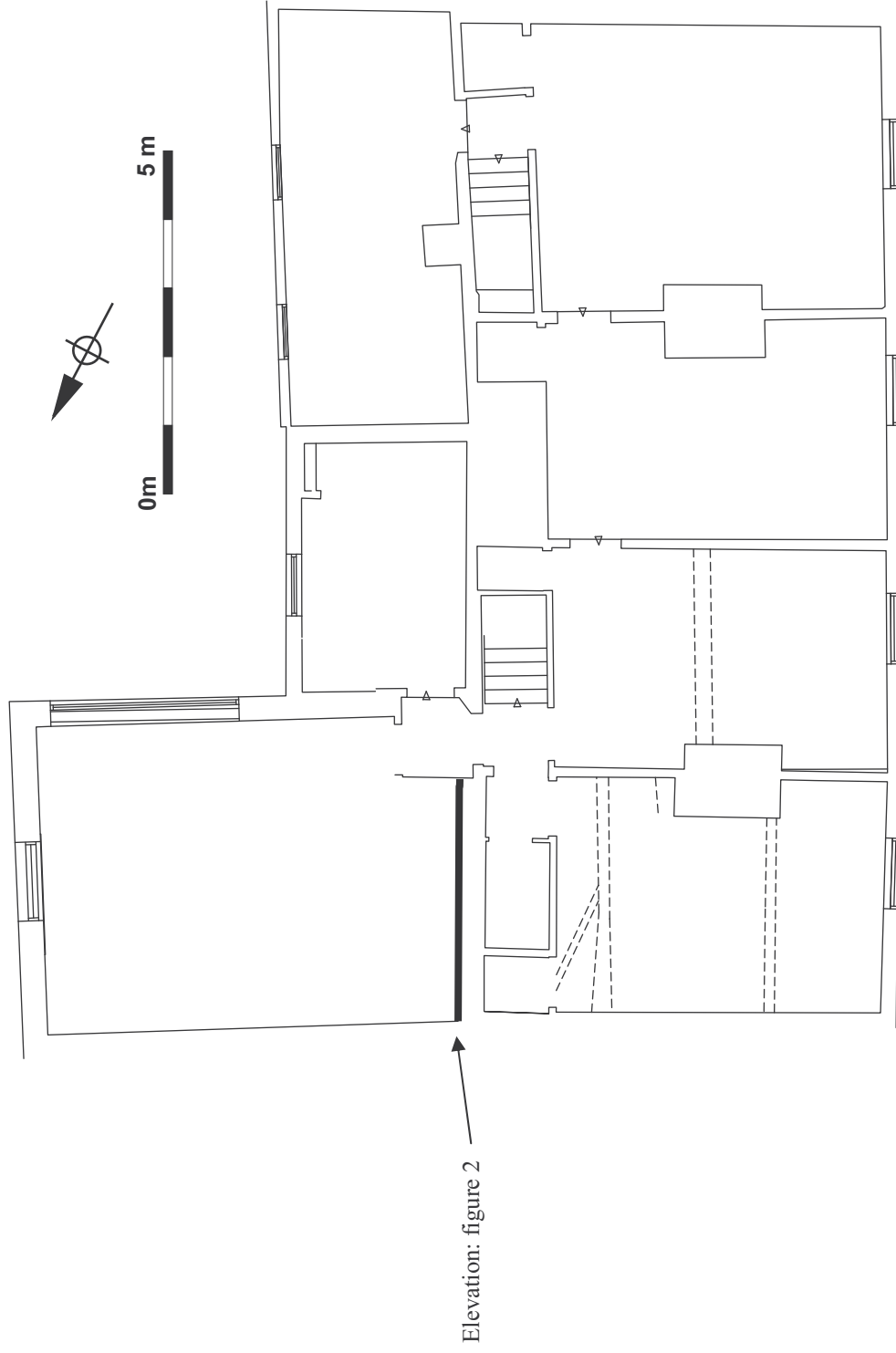


Figure 1: First floor plan

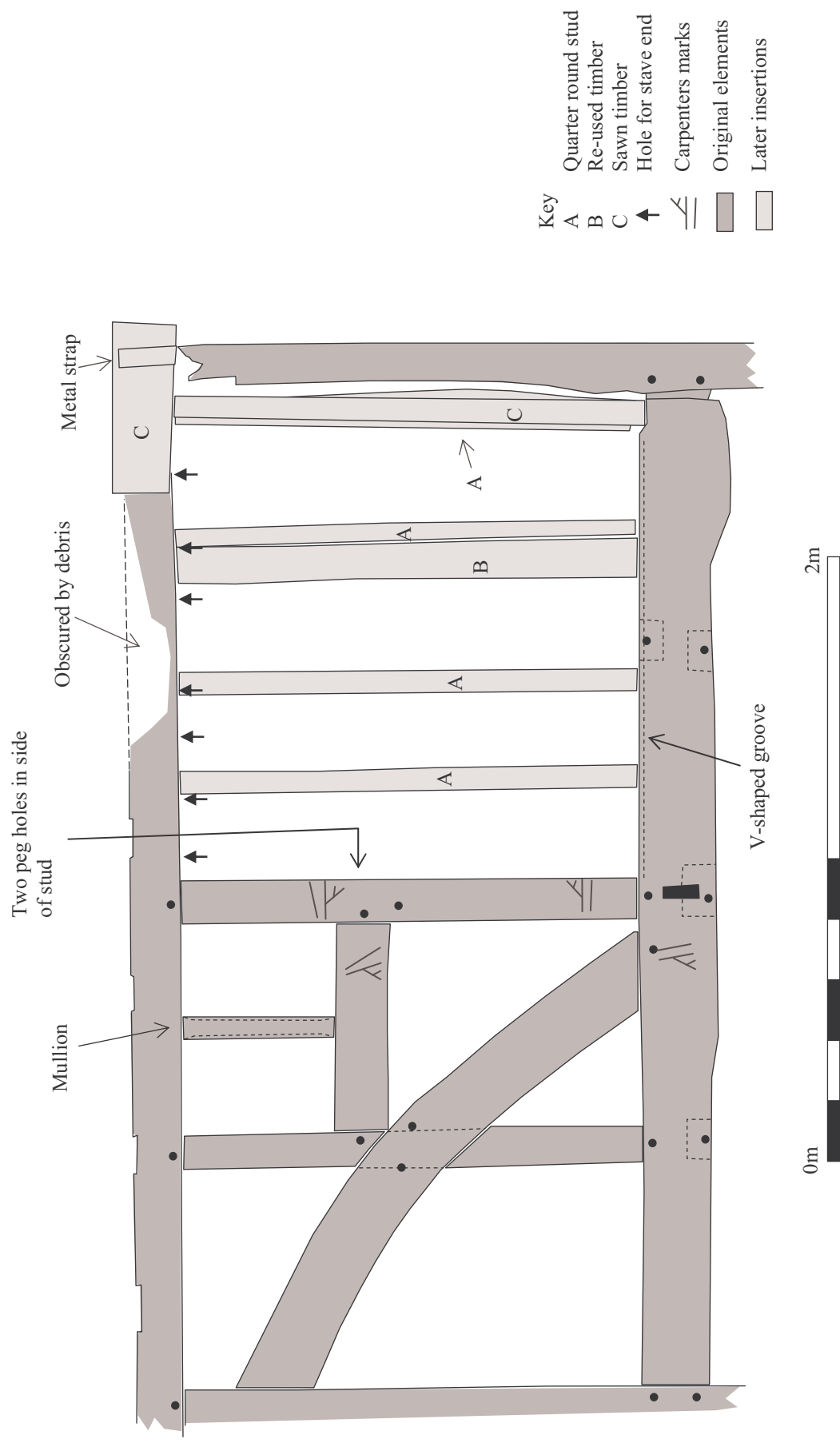


Figure 2: North-east facing elevation of timber frame



Plate 1: Timber frame