

OLD FREEZER CENTRE, STOCKBRIDGE LANE, ULVERSTON, CUMBRIA

Archaeological Building Recording



Client: Les Salisbury

NGR: 328440 478371

Planning Application Ref.:
SL/2012/0366

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June 2013



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Non-Technical Summary

Following the submission of a planning application for the demolition of the old freezer centre, Stockbridge Lane, Ulverston, Cumbria, a condition was placed on the consent that an English Heritage Level 2 archaeological building recording be carried out. Greenlane Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the building recording, which was undertaken in May 2013.

The origins of the building are uncertain although cartographic sources demonstrate that it was standing by 1832 and appeared to have its present footprint by this time, although there were evidently further additions to the south-west. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it was used as one of the town's first theatres, and documentary sources certainly prove that there was a theatre on Stockbridge Lane, known as the 'New Theatre', in 1808. It is not clear how long this theatre remained in use, but it may have only been until the 1820s. It was subsequently used as part of an aerated mineral water manufactory from the end of the 19th century until at least 1910, at which time it was also being used as a warehouse for the local operatic society. Later sources detailing its use are less readily available, but it has most recently been used as a fish, poultry, and game suppliers.

The recording of the building confirmed that the surviving structure retains some of its original fabric but that it has been substantially altered as a result of its most recent use, with new wall coverings, internal walls, and apertures added. The original plan comprised a building on two levels, the upper level accessed via a doorway from the higher ground to the north-east, the lower level accessed via three large doorways in the south-east elevation. Structural and other evidence indicate a late 18th or early 19th construction century date.

The building has an unusual arrangement and this, as well as evidence for its likely construction date, suggests that the notion that it was originally used as a theatre is plausible. It is even possible that it was purpose-built as a theatre some time prior to 1808 and hence its description as 'new'. Visible later alterations are now confined to those carried out to convert it into a series of refrigerated rooms used as part of the fish, poultry, and game suppliers and the addition of a large extension to the south-east, replacing any earlier structures, all of which was carried out in the late 20th century.

Acknowledgements

Greenlane Archaeology would like to thank Les Salisbury for commissioning the project and providing the 'as existing' drawings of the building. Additional thanks are due to the staff of the Cumbria Archive Centre in Barrow-in-Furness (CAC(B)) for their help in accessing the records and to Jeremy Parsons, Historic Environment Officer at Cumbria County Council, for approving the project design and commenting on the report. Special thanks are due to Peter Lowe for providing additional information about the history of the site.

The desk-based assessment and building recording were carried out by Dan Elsworth, who also wrote the report. The illustrations were produced by Tom Mace. The report was edited by Jo Dawson, and the project managed by Dan Elsworth.

1. Introduction

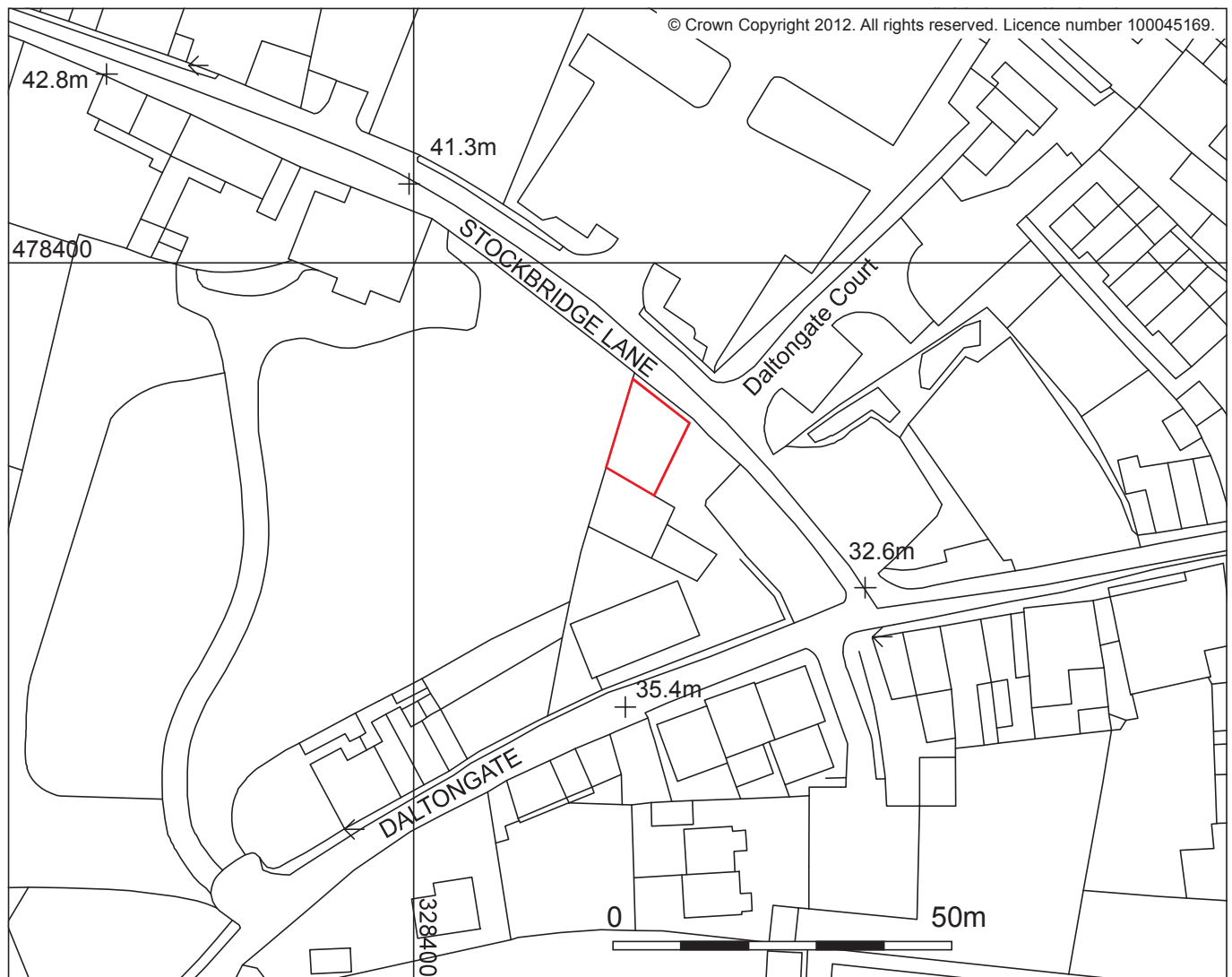
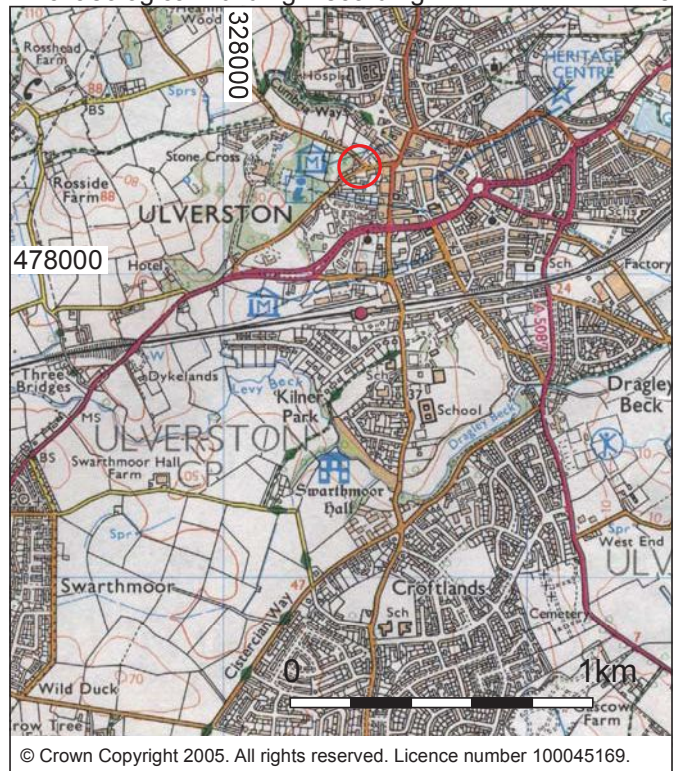
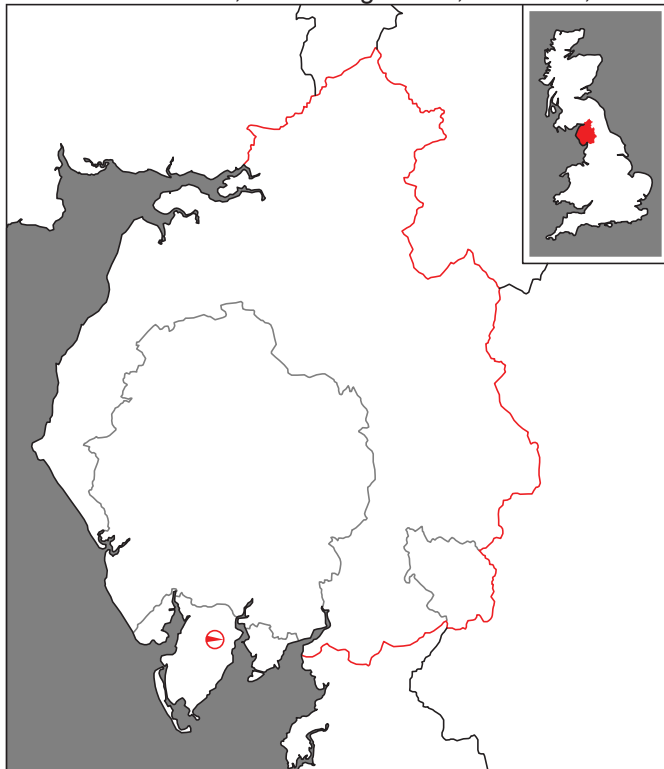
1.1 Circumstances of the Project

1.1.1 Following the submission of a planning application (ref. SL/2012/0366) to demolish the old freezer centre, Stockbridge Lane, Cumbria (NGR 328440 478371) prior to the construction of domestic dwellings, a condition (No. 4) was placed by South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) requiring an English Heritage Level 2-type recording of the building (English Heritage 2006). This is intended to provide a record of the building prior to its demolition as well as providing outline information about its development, form and function. Greenlane Archaeology was approached by Les Salisbury (hereafter 'the client') to carry out the building recording in order to fulfil the condition of the planning consent. A project design was produced in response, and following its approval by the Historic Environment Officer for Cumbria County Council the recording was carried out in May 2013.

1.2 Location, Geology, and Topography

1.2.1 The site is situated on the west side of the centre of Ulverston, close to the junction of Stockbridge Lane and Daltongate (Figure 1). Stockbridge Lane connects Ulverston to Rosside and the villages to the west of the town, while Daltongate was the old road connecting Ulverston with Dalton-in-Furness. The site is situated at approximately 40m above sea level (Ordnance Survey 2005).

1.2.2 Ulverston is on the boundary between the West Cumbria coastal plain and the higher ground of the Furness Fells to the north; the solid geology is typically made up of Bannisdale slates (Taylor *et al* 1971, plate XIII; Moseley 1978, plate 1), and this is overlain by a drift geology made up of glacially-derived tills comprising gravels and clays (Countryside Commission 1998, 66). The local landscape is dominated by fields used for grazing and bounded by drystone boundaries (*op cit*, 73), although it is on the edge of the urban area of Ulverston.



Client: Les Salisbury

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Figure 1: Site location

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The building investigation comprised three separate elements intended to provide a suitable record of the structure, in line with English Heritage standards (English Heritage 2006) and the guidelines of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008a). In addition a desk-based assessment was carried out in accordance with the project design and IfA guidelines (IfA 2008b) prior to the building recording, and a suitable archive was compiled to provide a permanent record of the project and its results in accordance with English Heritage and IfA guidelines (English Heritage 1991; Brown 2007).

2.2 Desk-Based Assessment

2.2.1 Information was gathered from the following locations:

- **Cumbria Archive Centre, Barrow-in-Furness (CAC(B))**: this was visited in order to examine early maps of the site and other primary sources as well as secondary sources such as trade directories in order to identify information about the development and use of the building;
- **Greenlane Archaeology library**: additional secondary sources were used to provide information for the site background.

2.3 Building Recording

2.3.1 The building recording was carried out to English Heritage Level-2 type standards (English Heritage 2006), which is a relatively low level of investigation intended to record the form, function and phasing of the building, without incorporating in detail the results of the desk-based assessment. The recording comprised the following elements:

- **Written record**: descriptive records of all parts of the building were made using Greenlane Archaeology *pro forma* record sheets;
- **Photographs**: photographs in both 35mm colour and colour digital format were taken of the main features of the building, its general surroundings, and any features of architectural or archaeological interest. A selection of the colour digital photographs is included in this report, and the remaining photographs are in the project archive;
- **Drawings**: drawings were produced by hand-annotation of printed plots of 'as existing' architect's drawings produced by Richard Oates Design or by the production from scratch on site. The drawings produced ultimately comprised:
 - i. external elevations at a scale of 1:100;
 - ii. a floor plan at a scale of 1:100;
 - iii. a cross-section at a scale of 1:50.

2.4 Archive

2.4.1 A comprehensive archive of the project has been produced in accordance with the project design and current IfA and English Heritage guidelines (Brown 2007; English Heritage 1991). The paper and digital archive and a copy of this report will be deposited in the Cumbria Archive Centre in Barrow-in-Furness on completion of the project. Three paper copies of this report will be supplied to the Historic Environment Officer, who will distribute copies to SLDC so that the condition can be discharged; one will be provided to the client, and one will be retained by Greenlane Archaeology. In addition a copy of the report will also be supplied to the Cumbria Historic Environment Record (HER) in Kendal, via the Historic Environment Officer, and a digital record of the project will be made on the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) scheme.

3. Desk-Based Assessment

3.1 Map and Image Regression

3.1.1 **Wood, 1832:** this is the first map of Ulverston detailed enough to show individual buildings in any real detail. It clearly shows the structure with essentially the same footprint as at present, although with a large extension to the south from the south-west end, linking to the buildings to the south (Plate 1). The building is not specifically labelled or named so no information about its function can be ascertained from this map.

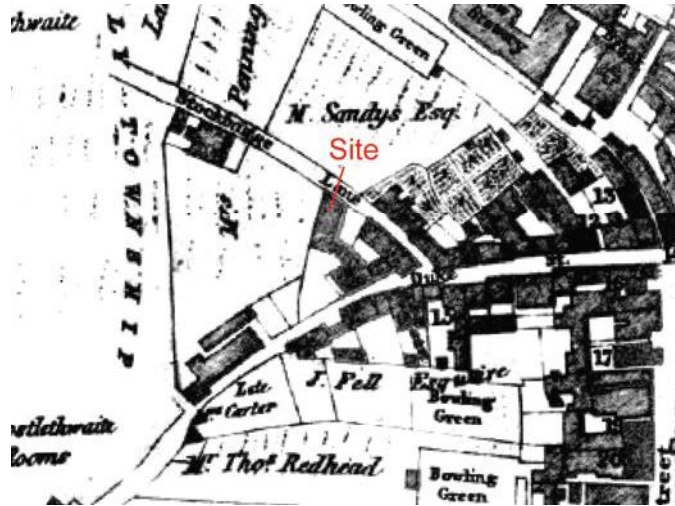


Plate 1 (left): Extract from Wood's plan of 1832 showing the building



Plate 2 (right): Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1850

3.1.2 **Ordnance Survey (1850):** this is the earliest Ordnance Survey map available, although its scale means that it shows a similar level of detail to the previous plan (Plate 2). It shows the footprint as essentially unchanged at this time.

3.1.3 **Ordnance Survey, 1852:** this is an especially detailed map of the town showing the divisions between individual buildings (Plate 3). The divisions between the main block of the building and the extension to the south is clearly shown, although once again there is no information given about its use.



Plate 3 (left): Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1852

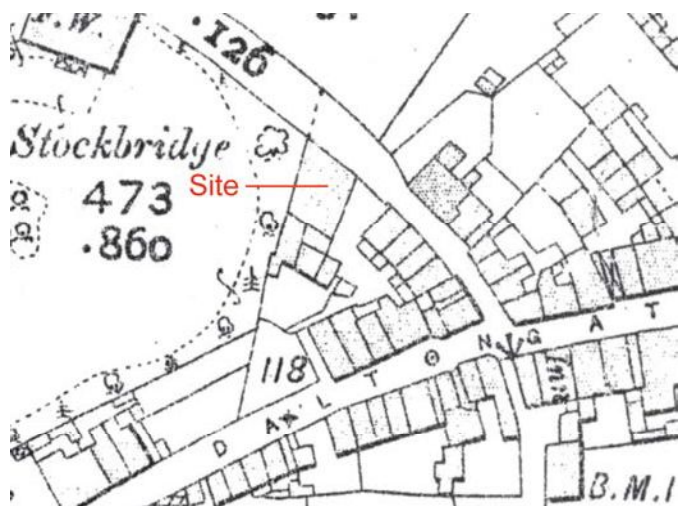


Plate 4 (right): Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1913

3.1.4 **Ordnance Survey, 1891:** this is a later but still detailed map, although the conventions used mean it is difficult to determine which sections are roofed structures and which are just enclosed areas. It

is apparent, however, that an additional structure has been added between the south-west end of the main structure and the extension to the south. Again, no indication is made of the site's purpose.

3.1.5 Ordnance Survey, 1912 and 1938: the outline of the building does not change throughout the run of Ordnance Survey maps between 1912, which include a more detailed map split into two parts for the purposes of the rating valuation in 1910 (Ordnance Survey 1912a; 1912b), and is the same as shown in 1891 although it is apparent that the small addition made by that time was roofed (Plate 4). The accompanying rating valuation states that the building (which is divided as plots number 2404 and 2405) as owned by William Johnson and occupied by himself, in use as a stable, and by the operatic society, as a warehouse (CAC(B) BT/IR 1/28 1910).

3.2 Site History

3.2.1 The origins of the building are uncertain. The map evidence demonstrates that it was present by at least 1832, by which time it had apparently taken on its present form (see *Section 3.1* above). There is some suggestion that it had previously served as a theatre (Peter Lowe pers comm.); certainly the 'New Theatre, Stock-Bridge Lane' was so named in a poster of 1808 (Twyman 1966, 30; CAC(B) ZS/506 1808) but it is difficult to be certain which building this is a reference to. By the beginning of the 19th century there were at least three theatres in Ulverston, the earliest was little more than a barn belonging to the White Hart Inn on Daltongate and referred to in 1775 (Birkett 1949, 50-51). In 1796 (Fell 1982, 181; CAC(B) BDX/59 1802-1829) a purpose-built theatre was constructed on what became known as Theatre Street, which was known as the Theatre Royal after 1806 (Birkett 1949, 62). It is not therefore clear when the 'New Theatre' was constructed or created but presumably not long before 1808. The issue is further confused by Alfred Fell's account, which lists four sites where barns were used as theatres, although even then he suggests that two of these were actually the same site approached from different directions (Fell 1982, 178-179). He also stated that the Congregationalists used a room on Stockbridge Lane as early as 1775 that had been '*used by players*' and they presumably used it until their own building was constructed on Soutergate in 1777 (*op cit*, 181). If the building was indeed used as a theatre the evidence is therefore contradictory, with some sources suggesting it was perhaps used as early as 1775 and others that it was not constructed until the early 19th century, although this could have replaced an earlier building. It is not certain how long the theatre in Stockbridge Lane continued in operation. Contemporary posters are unhelpful as many describe the venue as the 'Theatre, Ulverston' and it is not clear which theatre this is referring to (CAC(B) ZS/994-1106). Nevertheless, these seem to continue into the late 1820s, which is approximately the date to which the Theatre Royal lasted (Fell 1982, 181). It is notable that early directories for the area only refer to a single theatre in Ulverston (eg Baines 1825, 573).

3.2.2 Sources relating to the site in the mid to late 19th century are more difficult to identify, with the exception of maps, and it is difficult to be certain what the building was used for during this period. The 1910 valuation (BT/IR 1/28 1910) shows that by that date it was owned by a William Johnson. This ties it to a mineral water manufacturer of that name listed as being at Stockbridge Lane from 1898 (Mackereth 1898, 441). A document from 1903 shows that this company was merged with another established business at 25 Fountain Street that also manufactured aerated mineral water, bottled beer and stout and operated a tallow chandlers (making candles) to form Hodgson, Johnson and Co Ltd (CAC(B) BDHJ 420/2/4 1903). How long the company continued to use the building at Stockbridge Lane is unclear because the rating valuation shows that by 1910 William Johnson was only using part of it as a stable while the rest was being used by the operatic society (BT/IR 1/28 1910). This is presumably the Ulverston Operatic Society, whose records show them to have been established in 1907 (CAC(B) BDX/342/2/58 1907). This also perhaps provides a link to the suggestion that the building was one of the original theatres in the town, although there is no certain connection between the operatic society and the original theatre.

3.2.3 Sources revealing the use of the building after 1910 are less evident as it does not appear to be listed in directories and none of the maps available state its function.

4. Building Recording

4.1 Arrangement and Fabric

4.1.1 The building now comprises a main parallelogram-shaped block orientated approximately north-east/south-west (Figure 1), with a modern extension from the south-west end, running to the south-east. The 'front' elevation faces south-east onto an open concrete yard, while the north-east gable faces onto Stockbridge Lane. The south-west elevation is obscured by the later addition and the north-west, which forms the boundary with the adjoining property, was not fully accessible. The building is two storey in height but built into the bank on north-west side, and to a lesser extent the north-east, so is essentially a bank barn.

4.1.2 The entire building is finished externally with render, mostly roughcast and painted on at least the south-east side. It has a local grey slate roof finished with v-shaped ridge tiles. Internally it has been extensively altered, with the majority of the walls finished with a concrete skim and/or tiled. Additional stud walls have also been added in places and insulated wall coverings added in many areas to create large industrial freezers.

4.2 External Detail

4.2.1 **North-west elevation:** this was largely obscured and inaccessible but was apparently finished with smooth concrete render and essentially plain.

4.2.2 **North-east elevation:** this comprises the gable end, and is finished with roughcast concrete render, with a slight bulge mid way up on the south-east side. It is extended to the north-west by the boundary wall for the adjoining property and south-east by a shorter boundary wall ending at a large stone gatepost and with a low opening with metal framing for a window or grill or two lights. The elevation proper has a large doorway on the north-west side. This has a large sawn timber lintel with a projecting drip course over. The doorway has been partially blocked, leaving an extant doorway at low level on the north-west side, with a modern timber multi-panel door. Above it are two ceramic grill vents. To the south-east is a larger doorway at a higher level, with a double plank and batten door and an iron plate over the step. The elevation is otherwise plain, although there is a modern grilled vent near the top in the centre.



Plate 5: The north-east external elevation

4.2.3 South-east elevation: this elevation is also finished with rough cast render, mostly painted a cream colour, but the lower strip is a dark red. At ground floor level there is a wide doorway on the south-west side with a slate drip course over and a modern timber double door with a single glazed panel in each. To the south-west of this is a further glazed timber section. There is a plastic slatted vent to the north-east then a further wide doorway with a flattened arch over, which has been partially infilled leaving a pedestrian doorway on the south-west side (now board up) and a vent on the north-east side. At the north-east end there is a further doorway with a double plank and batten door with a slate drip course over with an engine attached on iron brackets attached to the wall between this and the top of the doorway on the south-west side. Immediately to the north-east of this is an aperture filled with timber slats, which is almost entirely covered by a monopitch lean-to attached to the short boundary wall. This also has a slate roof and a wide double doorway covered by mesh and houses an engine, apparently for an extractor fan. At first floor level the elevation has a row of windows; the two on the south-west side are slightly smaller and have two-light hinged timber casements and thin concrete sills, while a larger window to the north-east has a similar style casement and sill, but the sill extends to the north-east. This and an evident line in the render shows that this window was originally much larger; the blocked section also incorporates a slatted plastic vent. At the north-east end on the first floor there is a large sign attached reading 'FURNESS Fish Poultry & Game TEL: 0229 585037 24 hours'.



Plate 6 (left): South-east external elevation



Plate 7 (right): South-east external elevation

4.2.4 South-west elevation: there is no external elevation as such on the south-west side, it being contained within the later extension. However, some features of interest relating to what would have been the external elevation are evident. At ground floor level the wall is entirely finished with a concrete skim and there is a single doorway in the centre. This is a possibly early timber lintel but a modern frame and panel door below. The first floor is finished with plaster and has a number of stud walls butting against it. There is a doorway on the north-west side, the opening for which was originally wider but has been partially filled on the south-west side to incorporate the modern door. A through stone projecting through the wall is exposed above. There is also a small window with a modern hinged timber casement looking into the building from a store room.



Plate 8 (left): Ground floor doorway in the south-west elevation






Plate 9 (right): First floor doorway in the south-west elevation

South-east External Elevation



North-east External Elevation



Key:  cross-sectional timber  cross-sectional wall  blocked feature



Cross-Section A-A1

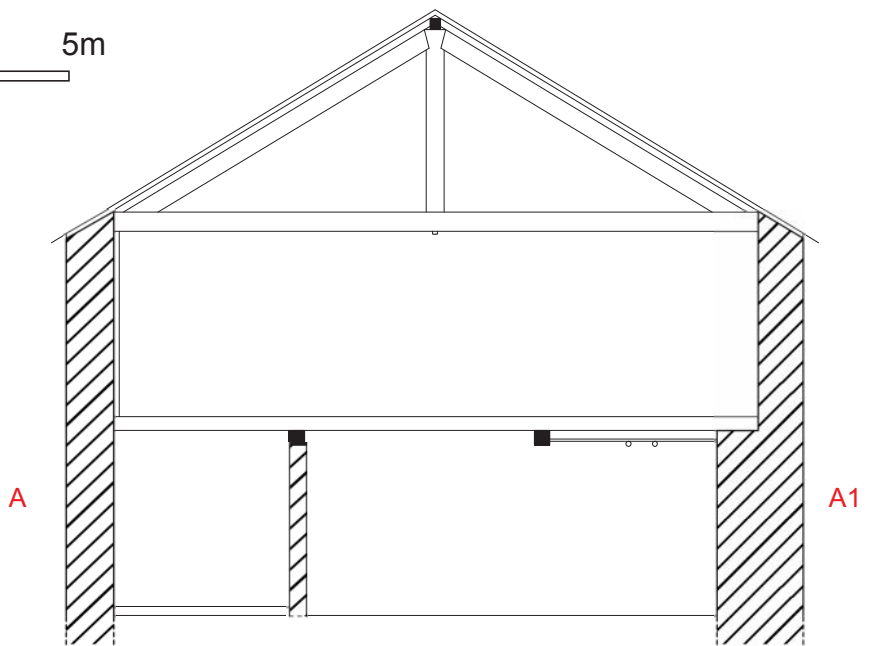


Figure 2: External elevations and cross-section A-A1

Client: Les Salisbury

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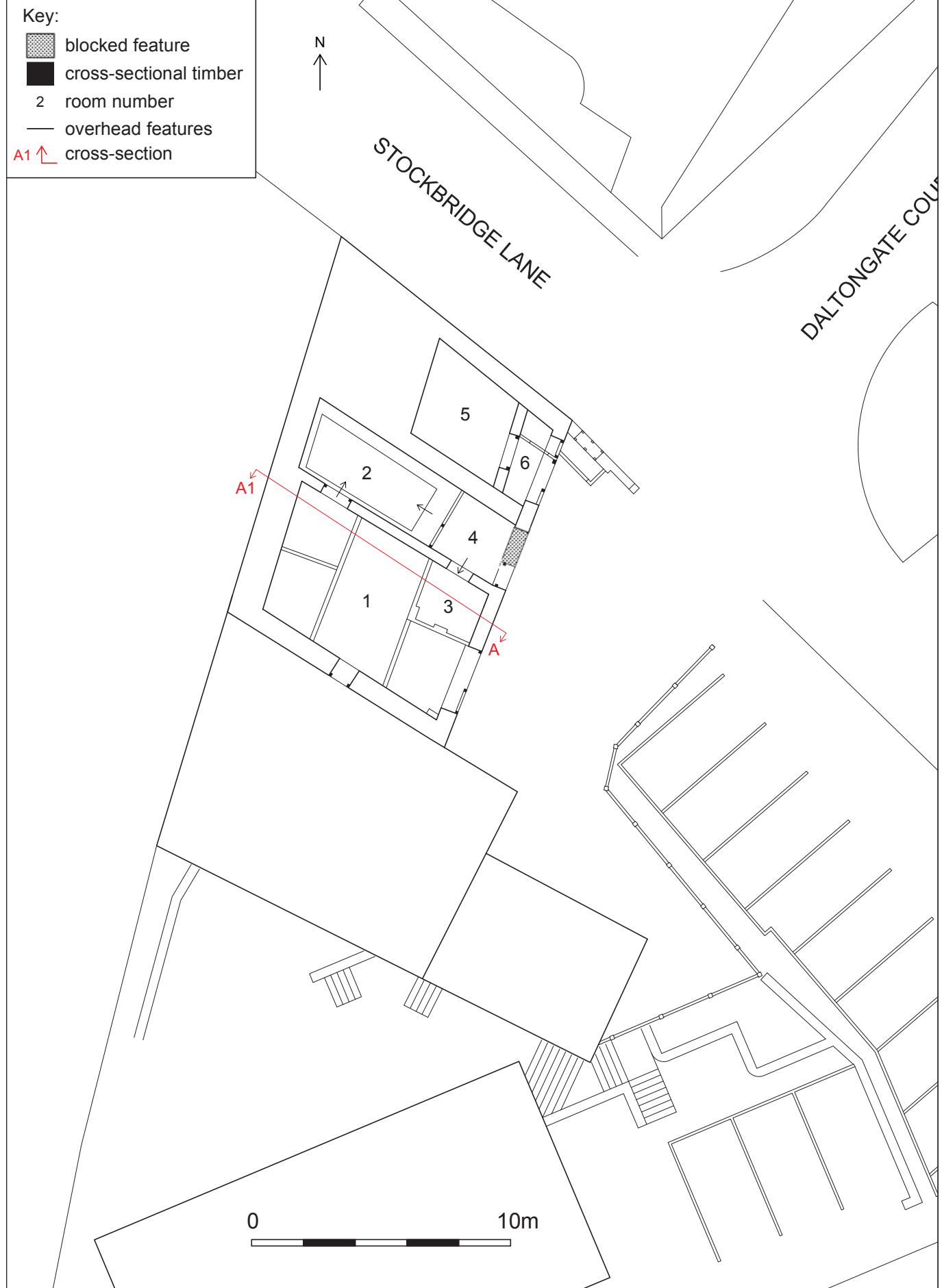


Figure 3: Ground floor plan

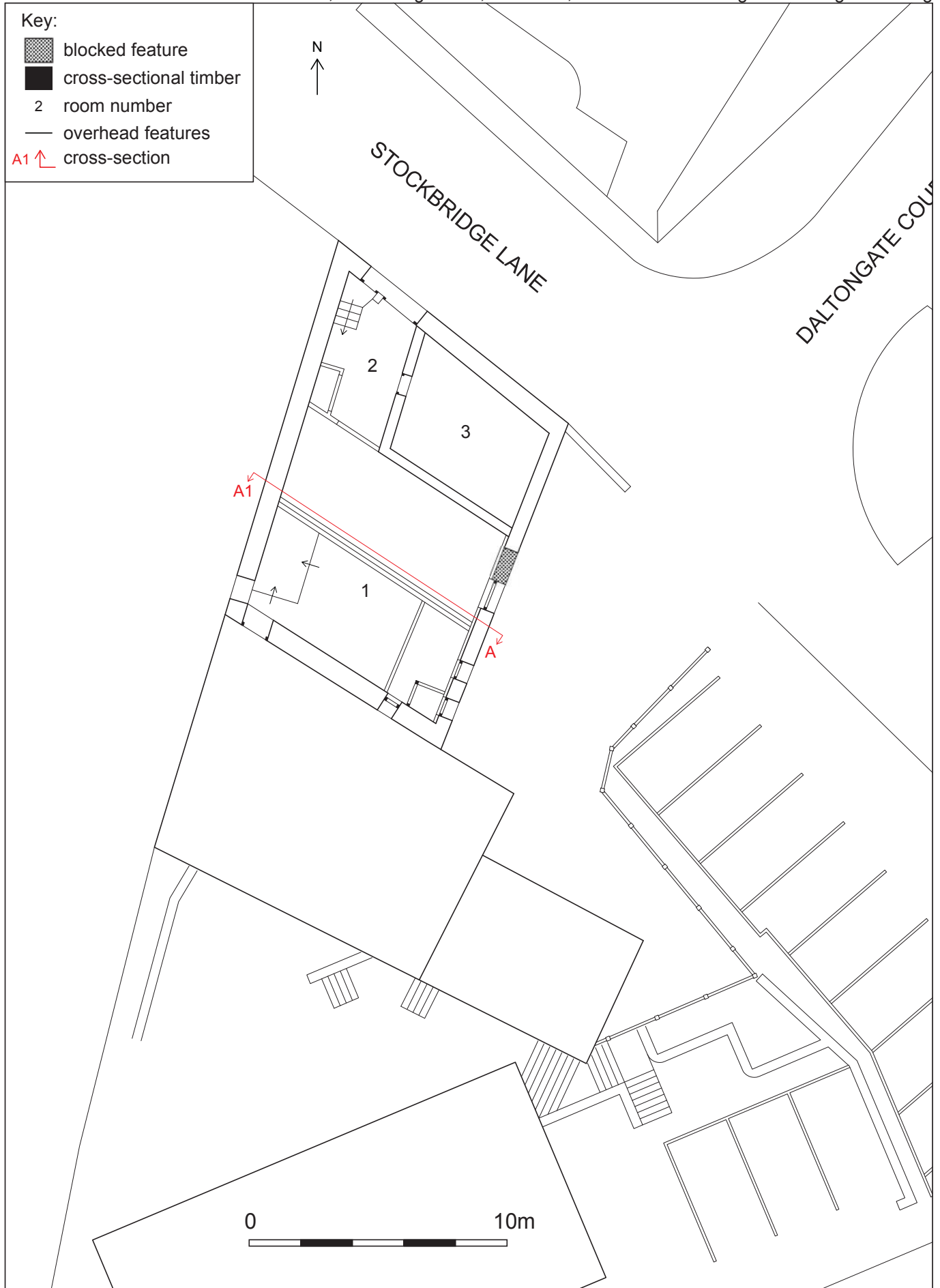


Figure 4: First floor plan

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Plate 12 (left): North-west end of Room G2

Plate 13 (right): South-east end of Room G2

4.3.3 Ground floor Room 3: this is essentially situated in the east corner of Room G1 formed by inserted walls. It has a concrete floor, raised relative to Room G4, and a flat plaster ceiling. The walls are finished with plaster and painted and are mostly plain. The north-east wall has a doorway with a step down and the south-east has a circular vent pipe through it. The south-west and north-west elevations are constructed from concrete blocks and butt the south-east and north-east elevation respectively.

4.3.4 Ground floor Room 4: this is situated to the north-east of Room G3. It has a concrete floor and a flat plaster ceiling. There is boxing on the north-west and south-east sides of the ceiling, perhaps hiding beams. The walls are finished with concrete skim and paint. There are plain doors to the south-west and north-west and a doorway to the south-east with a modern two-light door (Plate 13) and an electric fan inserted through the wall to the north-east of this.



Plate 14: Doorway in the south-east elevation of Room G4

4.3.5 **Ground floor Room 5:** this is essentially a single room, although accessed separately via the doorway at the north-east end of the south-east elevation, with a small lobby to the south-east (Room 6). It has a concrete floor and insulated sheet metal covering the ceiling with attached iron bars supporting meat hooks (Plate 14). All of the walls are finished with concrete skim and paint and all are plain although there is a doorway to the south-east with a plastic curtain over and thick insulated door and graffiti on the south-west wall (Plate 15).



Plate 15 (left): General view of Room G5



Plate 16 (right): Graffiti on the south-west elevation of Room G5

4.3.6 **Ground floor Room 6:** this comprises a small lobby to the south-east of Room G5. It has a concrete floor and a stud wall on the north-east side with a doorway forming a cupboard for the meters and fuse box. There is further stud walling to the south-west forming another cupboard. The ceiling is flat and plastered. The north-east elevation proper has concrete blocks in the east corner, representing the actual thickness of the wall, while the south-east has a timber slatted aperture on the north-west side and a wide doorway with a double plank and batten door to the south-west (Plate 16). The south-west elevation also has concrete blocks forming the thickness of the wall, possibly indicating that the doorway

to the south-east is inserted. The north-west elevation is plain, apart from the doorway to Room G5, which has a heavy fridge door.



Plate 17: Double door in the south-east elevation of Room G6

4.3.7 First floor Room 1: this comprises the majority of the floor, filling two thirds of the south-western end and spanning the full width. It has a concrete floor, which is mostly finished with tiles, although there are scars of timber stud partitions and a raised timber area on the north-west side, presumably a former fridge base. Extant stud walling in the south corner forms a small toilet cubicle. The whole room is open to the roof, their having previously been a suspended ceiling. There is a single king post truss supporting this section of the roof, the king post bolted to the tie beam and notched to meet the principal rafters (Plate 17). All of the timber is sawn and there are Baltic marks on the south-west face of the north-west principal rafter (Plate 18). The roof is in turn supported by three purlins in each pitch and what are probably the original slates backed with lime plaster remain on the south-east side while the north-west side has been re-roofed with new rafters and felt backing. The walls are generally finished with a concrete skim and painted. The majority of the north-east elevation comprises a solid wall with another king post truss sat on top of it in the same style as that to the south-west (Plate 19). This wall returns to the north-east north-west of the centre of the room, and the resulting gap is filled with fairly modern stud walling incorporating a large doorway. The south-east elevation has two windows with hinged timber two-light casements, the north-east larger than the other and there is a fan vent between the two (Plate 20). The elevation continues into the toilet formed by the stud walling in the south corner, where there is another window in the same style as the others. The lower part of the south-west elevation is finished with plaster and paint, with the scars of stud walling evident. The upper part is exposed stone with thick lime mortar (Plate 21). There is a small window with a hinged timber casement on the south-east side and a doorway on the north-west with a wide opening and modern plank door and concrete step. The north-west elevation is essentially plain, with a hole knocked in on the south-west side housing an electric fan (Plate 22).



Plate 18 (left): Truss, Room F1



Plate 19 (right): Baltic marks on south-west face of north-west principal rafter, Room F1



Plate 20 (left): North-east elevation and second truss, Room F1



Plate 21 (right): South-east elevation, Room F1



Plate 22 (left): Upper part of south-west elevation, Room F1



Plate 23 (right): North-west elevation, Room F1

4.3.8 **First floor Room 2:** this is situated in the north corner of the first floor. It too has a concrete floor finished with tiles as per room F1, and there is a short flight of concrete steps running down to the smaller doorway in the north corner. The ceiling is suspended plaster construction at the level of the underside of the trusses. The walls are finished with insulated sheeting held on with clips or bolts. The north-east elevation has a doorway with a double plank and batten door at floor level on the south-east side (Plate 23), and a smaller doorway with a modern multi-panel door on the north-west side at the bottom of the stairs. The south-east elevation is essentially plain, apart from a single doorway with a heavy fridge door (Plate 24). The south-west elevation is a stud wall with a large doorway but with no door, which projects on the north-west side to form a large cupboard. This continues onto the north-west elevation, which is otherwise plain.



Plate 24 (left): Double door in the north-east elevation, Room F2

Plate 25 (right): Fridge door in the south-east elevation, Room F2

4.3.9 **First floor Room 3:** this comprises a large walk-in fridge in the east corner of the first floor. It has a raised concrete floor and sheet concrete suspended ceiling. The walls are all finished with a smooth concrete skim and are plain apart from the doorway to the north-west.

5. Discussion

5.1 Phasing

5.1.1 **Introduction:** the building clearly retains a considerable amount of original fabric although this has been substantially modified and is much obscured due to later uses. In general only two phases of development were identified.

5.1.2 **Phase 1 (late 18th – early 19th century):** the style of the present structure and certain elements of its fabric, essentially just the truss form and presence of Baltic marks, suggests that it was constructed in the late 18th or more likely early 19th century (Greene 1995; 1996; Brunskill 2002, 152-153), and the cartographic sources indicate that it was standing by 1832. The purpose of the building is uncertain; it has the arrangement of a bank barn, with high-level access at a raised ground level (Brunskill 2002, 105-111), but it has none of the other features that might be associated with this and the arrangement of three large doorways at lower floor level would be unusual for this type of building. It is also wider than barns of this type tend to be. The documentary sources do suggest that it may have been used as a theatre and if it was the 'New Theatre' referred to it 1808 this could be taken to indicate that it was built at around that time (which would fit with the likely date of the building). Its form is not unlike other early theatres, which were often little more than a single open space, and examples from the local area are not dissimilar (Eddershaw 1989, 4-12). In some cases at least these also had space below the main floor level that '*could have provided space for stage-machinery, traps, dressing-rooms and even a sunken pit*' (*op cit*, 10). In addition, the dimensions are arguably closer to those of contemporary theatres, the purpose-built theatre in the Woolpack Yard, Kendal being 23m long, 10.75m wide, and 9 high (*ibid*). The major divisions present within the lower floor do appear to be to be original, each accessed by a separate doorway, so such a use is not inconceivable. In the absence of additional evidence it is difficult to be certain of this, however.

5.1.3 **Phase 2 (20th century):** the documentary sources provide little information for what the building was used for throughout most of the 20th century, although it was evidently utilised as part of an aerated mineral water and beer bottling business until at least 1910. Evidence for any changes within the building dating to this period are not evident and the most substantial alterations belong to the late 20th century, in conjunction with its most recent use as a fish, poultry and game supplier. During this period any remaining early extensions to the south-west end were removed and the present large addition was made. Internally many of the walls (and some ceilings) were re-plastered or clad, in many cases to form insulated rooms acting as refrigerators. A number of internal stud walls were added and windows and other openings may also have been introduced, although one was seemingly also blocked up. A concrete floor was added between the two levels, so it is now difficult to ascertain where the original floor level was or what form it took (if the building had originally been constructed as a theatre it is possible that the original floor had various apertures in it and so was unsuitable). The arrangement of the doors at the north-east end was probably also reconfigured to its present situation and this may indicate that the floor level was originally lower.

5.2 Conclusion

5.2.1 The building is an enigmatic structure of uncertain original purpose and the suggestion that it served as a theatre, although difficult to substantiate in the documentary sources, does fit with its form. Further documentary research may elucidate the matter. Its later use has obscured much of the original fabric and it has clearly lost any original internal wall finishes or other details that would have confirmed its use.

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