**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY**

**MARCH 2006**

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDINGS RECORDING AT 7 HIGH STREET BLAKESLEY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

**MARCH 2006**

## STAFF

| | |
|---|---|
| Project Manager | Joe Prentice |
| Fieldwork and Text | Iain Soden |
| Illustrations | Jacqueline Harding |

## QUALITY CONTROL

| | Print name | Signed | Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Checked by | Pat Chapman | | |
| Verified by | Joe Prentice | | |
| Approved by | Steve Parry | | |

## *OASIS* REPORT FORM

| **PROJECT DETAILS** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Project name | 7 High Street, Blakesley | |
| Short description (250 words maximum) | Archaeological buildings recording targeted upon the dining-room floor of the property, prior to renewal. The floor structure was recorded and its context of the dining room above and the cellar below. | |
| Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc) | Buildings recording and analysis | |
| Site status (none, NT, SAM etc) | Listed Building | |
| Previous work (SMR numbers etc) | None | |
| Current Land use | Domestic dwelling | |
| Future work (yes, no, unknown) | No | |
| Monument type/ period | Post-medieval house | |
| Significant finds (artefact type and period) | None | |
| **PROJECT LOCATION** | | |
| County | Northamptonshire | |
| Site address (including postcode) | Kendall House, 7 High Street, Blakesley, NN12 8RE | |
| Study area (sq.m or ha) | 15 sq m | |
| OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. numbers) | | |
| Height OD | | |
| **PROJECT CREATORS** | | |
| Organisation | Northamptonshire Archaeology | |
| Project brief originator | Paul Kessler-Lyne | |
| Project Design originator | Joe Prentice | |
| Director/Supervisor | | |
| Project Manager | Joe Prentice | |
| Sponsor or funding body | Applicant | |
| **PROJECT DATE** | | |
| Start date | 9 March 2006 | |
| End date | 9 March 2006 | |
| **ARCHIVES** | **Location (Accession no.)** | **Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)** |
| Physical | | |
| Paper | Drawings<br>Photos | 2<br>Colour slide and Black/white |
| Digital | | |
| **BIBLIOGRAPHY** | Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report) | |
| Title | N/A | |
| Serial title & volume | | |
| Author(s) | | |
| Page numbers | | |
| Date | | |

# Contents

**Figures**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDINGS RECORDING AT 7 HIGH STREET BLAKESLEY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE MARCH 2006**

## 1 INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING BACKGROUND

In pursuance of upgrading works to their property, 7 High Street, Blakesley, Mr and Mrs Noy applied for Listed Building Consent to South Northamptonshire Council (Application no S/2005/1497/LB).

A condition was applied to the works that recording should take place of specific elements of the structure for which like-for-like replacement was required, namely the floor of the property's dining room/ceiling of the cellar below.

A brief was sent out by the South Northamptonshire Conservation Officer, Mr P. Kessler-Lyne, answered by a project design/statement of intent by Mr J.Prentice, Project Officer of Northamptonshire Archaeology, who were commissioned to carry out the works by Mr and Mrs Noy.

## 2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of the work was to provide a record of the floor to be replaced, the record to stand as a paper substitute for the original floor which for structural reasons could not remain *in situ*.

The record comprised scale drawings made on site, annotated with observations made at the time. In addition general colour slide and black and white photographs were taken for archive purposes.

The structural detail of the floor was put into its context, serving the room above and the cellar below.

## 3 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

### 3.1 The floor structure

The earliest floor present was carried on an axial oak beam traversing the length of the room, (Fig 3) Although originally probably 7m long, one end had been chopped out and wasted by wood-boring beetle infestation and its had failed structurally. In section it measured 260mm wide x 275mm deep, its lower arrises chamfered off.

Into either side of the axial beam were socketed rows of joists measuring 70mm wide x 90mm deep. They comprised dovetailed joints with fully-housed shoulders (Fig 3). An array of simple carpenter's marks showed that the joists and axial beam were a set, (no's I, II, III and IIII were observed). These original joists covered the front half of the floor (14 joists at roughly even spacings) and approximately half of the rear half of the floor.

The remaining portion of the rear half was served by an assortment of re-used oak beams and joists less adeptly jointed in secondary positions, a state probably occasioned by the structural failure of the axial beam. They included a short trimmer-joist at a secondary hearth-location for a fireplace in the rear wall of the dining room above. This trimmer had a groove and sockets suggestive of use with former wattle-and-daub at an unknown location. Between the joists the floor was strengthened to carry a hearthstone, by the addition of roofing slates and iron strapping. One of the other beams had an angled lap-joint cut into it, redolent of a roof-purlin cut to accept an angled wind-brace.

At the front and rear of the building the joists did not socket into the walls but rested without joint upon roughly-finished oak sleeper beams (three at the front and one at the back) supported on secondary brick piers and socketed into the walls at the corners of the cellar (see 3.3 below). These were not of an even finish but measured c180mm x c150mm roughly-squared section.

The floor covering comprised two parts. The northern 60% of the room was floored in pit-sawn oak floorboards of c20mm thickness and varying in width between 200 and 300mm, the lengths too varied up to 5m. The underside of the floorboards bear the nails and marks of former lath and plaster, applied to insulate the room above from the cold of the cellar. The remaining 40% of the room (entirely commensurate with the mixed-joist structure area) was covered in machine-sawn pine tongue and groove boards 20mm thick and a uniform 150mm wide. In this area insulation lath and plaster had been applied to the

soffits of the joists, not the floorboards. The entire underside was once limewashed, both to maximise light levels and to inhibit bacteria.

The upper face of the floor had been dark-stained.

### 3.2 The dining room

The room served by this floor has latterly been known as a dining room. It measures 8m x 5m, but at one end has a staircase towards the centre of the building, around which the room wraps (Fig 2). A fireplace stands opposite, at the foot of the end gable wall (party wall with the adjacent property) although no historic fireplace elements survive. A former ash-box hatch in the stone hearth base and visible only in the cellar below, would have enabled the chimney to be swept from the cellar without disrupting the dining room. Former chair-rail-height panelling is probably of 20th-century date. Beneath this is a possible plaster line denoting a former deep wooden skirting board. Patches of plaster retain small vestiges of former wall papers beneath the panelling. A comparison of the main chamfers of the axial beams above show that this half of the front building was originally considered of lesser status that the opposite side.

A secondary fireplace position has been chopped into the rear wall, served by a distinct brick flue and stack visible from the outside. This stood over the trimmer-joist mentioned above (Fig 3). The most recent floor covering took no account of this and any previous hearthstone appears to have been lost.

The rear access to and from the room rises to a kitchen standing over a second, barrel-vaulted, cellar (see below).

### 3.3 The cellars

Beneath the recorded floor lay a cellar measuring 8m x 5m, with ironstone walls and a waist-level stone-mullioned window looking out onto the High Street (Fig 3). This has security bars and is unglazed; however an inner window of leaded panes in horizontal sashes keeps out draughts. This sits upon an inner brick skin and is clearly an afterthought. Vestiges of a fine fly-mesh over the window opening suggest a former use for the cellar for meat storage (confirmed by rows of meat-hooks from the ceiling). A former access at one end once linked via seven steps with the current staircase above, all

the way up though the house; this has since been blocked in brick at ground level. Access today is through the back wall, via a second cellar to the rear, up into a kitchen.

All of the supporting beams which constitute the cellar ceiling frame (or dining room floor) rest on brick piers which are secondary to the cellar. These support the joists without any carpentry or jointing. While some do have one end socketed into a wall, this is not a principal design feature of the ceiling which could not function without the brick piers. The bricks piers in every case primarily contain bricks of 19th-century dimensions. The room is almost bisected by a wall composed of two phases of brick partition and a length of stud wall with tongue and groove boards (V-beaded). One of the brick partitions contains integral bull-nosed bricks, characteristic of the last quarter of the 19th century. In one corner of the cellar floor lies a small well or sump, almost full of clear water. The existing floor comprises a concrete screed but there is very little head-room (min 1.53m below the axial beam), suggesting that the floor may have been built up considerably.

The rear cellar measures 5.2m long x 3.4m wide and was originally longer, being end-on to the street (Fig 3). Its access lies furthest from the street and it provides a link to the front cellar, which can now not otherwise be entered. It was formerly vaulted entirely in ironstone ashlars, although the apex of the vault has been broken when the current modern timber floor was inserted above. The floor of the room above would originally have been considerably higher –probably by about 0.5m- to accommodate the height of the vault underneath. A secondary window lights the cellar to one side, while some small access can be seen into the front cellar through a small window at chest-height. The entrance through into the front cellar is almost central to the vault axis (but not quite).

A mortar scar can be seen on the butt-joint between the two cellars. The vaulted cellar is the earlier of the two since the mortar of the butt-joint matches the main construction mortar of the front cellar. Where the spandrel of the former vault can be accessed it is seen to be filled with a soil and mortar grout mix, a characteristic late-medieval construction method. The floor comprises a modern concrete screed. The stairs at the rear end are stone, although the sides of the access passage down are lined in brick. A well and pump stand in one end-corner, both of which have been rounded off in brick and ironstone to give added support to the vault.

## 4 DISCUSSION

The two cellars and the dining room provide the context to the recorded floor.

The vaulted cellar may be as early as late-medieval and is severely denuded; however, it is no less startling for that. On the basis of the short inspection possible, nothing apparently remains of the structure which originally surmounted it.

Examination of the structure of the floor from within the front cellar shows that it was secondary to the building. If the frontage building is felt to be 18th century, then the floor cannot be very much later in date. It is perhaps early 19th-century, based upon the bricks upon which the frame rests and without which the floor could not function. Nothing survives of the original floor, nor is it clear how it might have related to the surrounding walls. One third of the floor had been replaced once more, the frame of this section employing a variety of re-used timbers of unknown dates and sources.

Northamptonshire Archaeology
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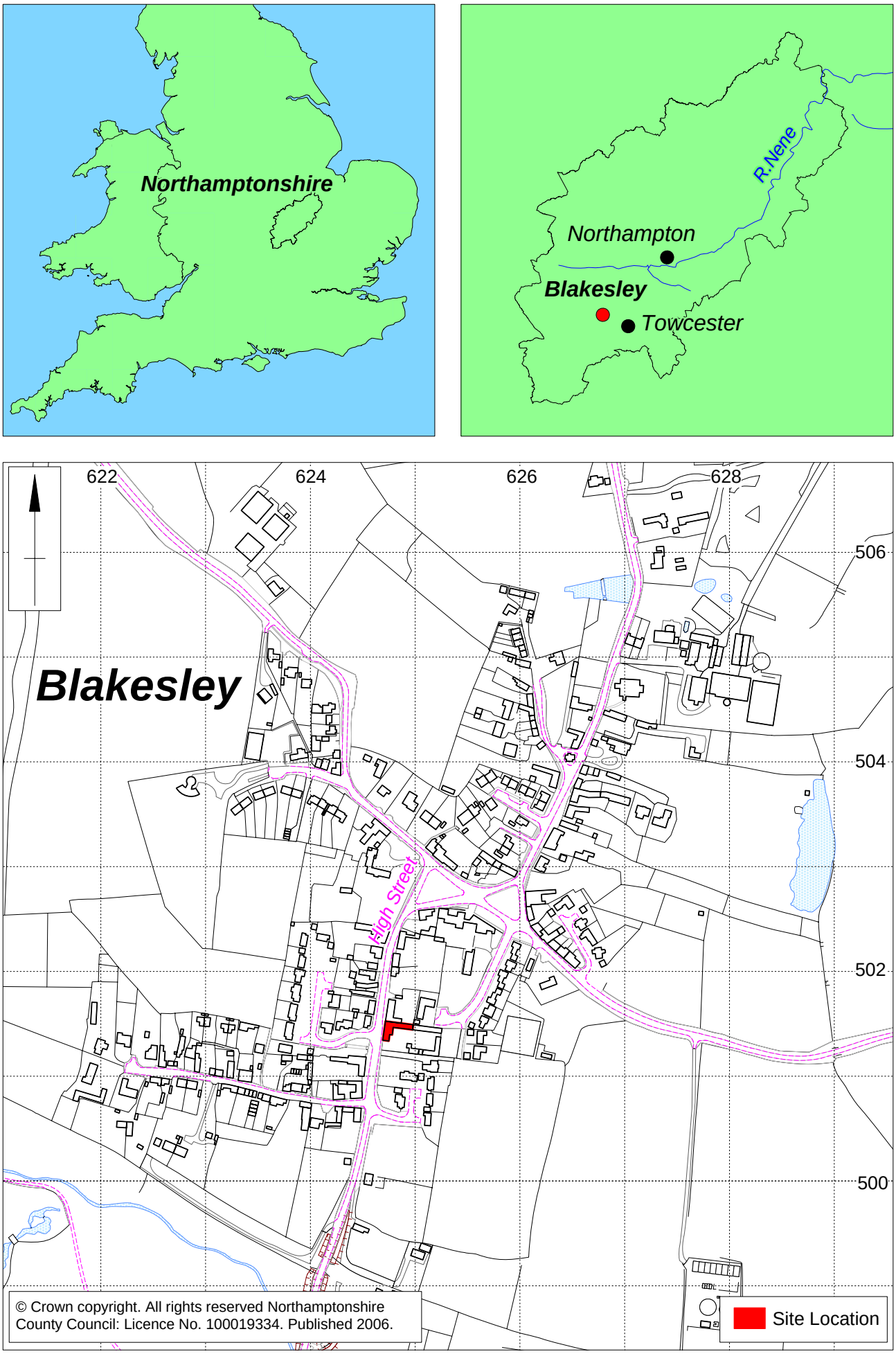
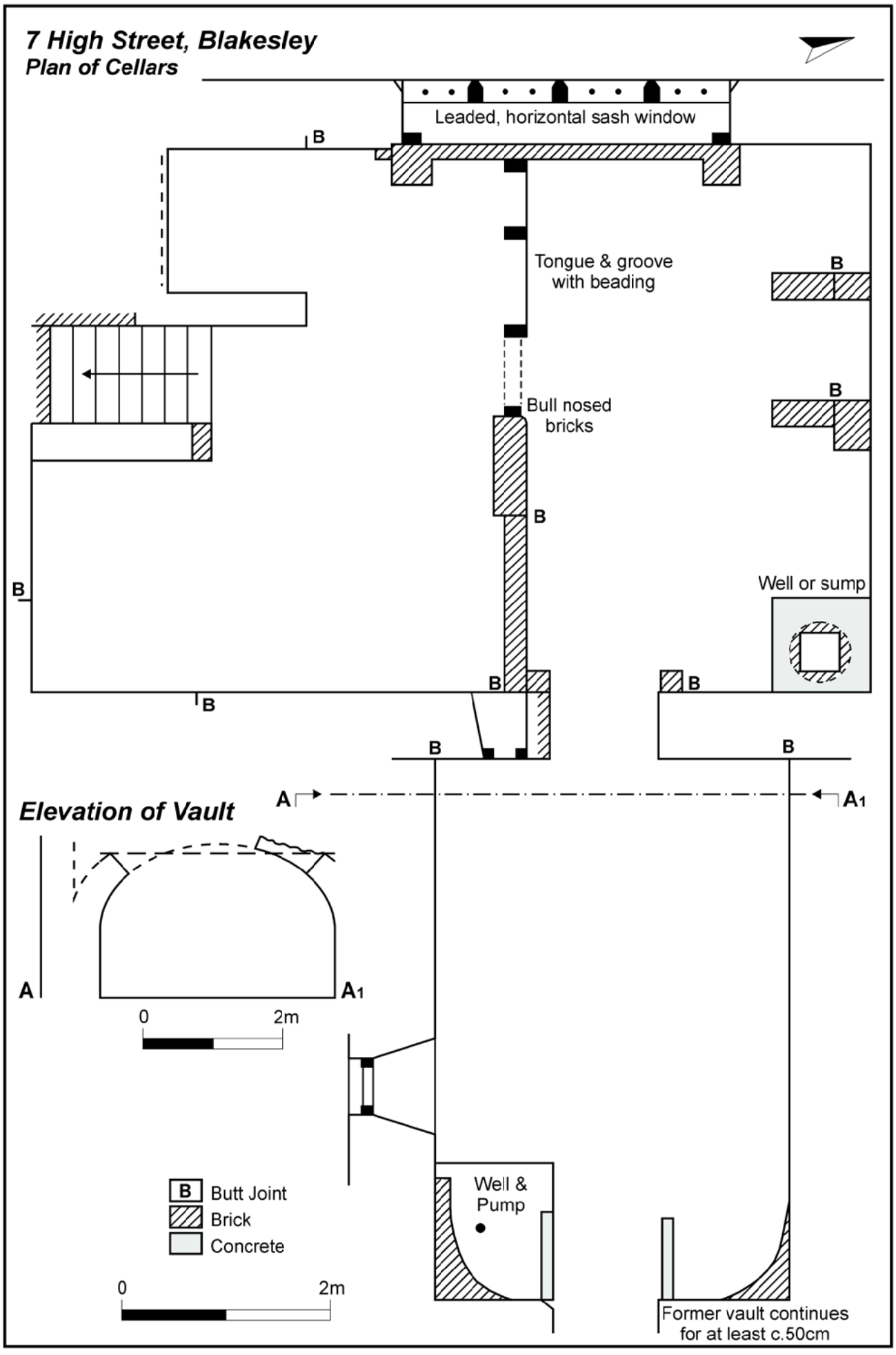



Scale 1:5000

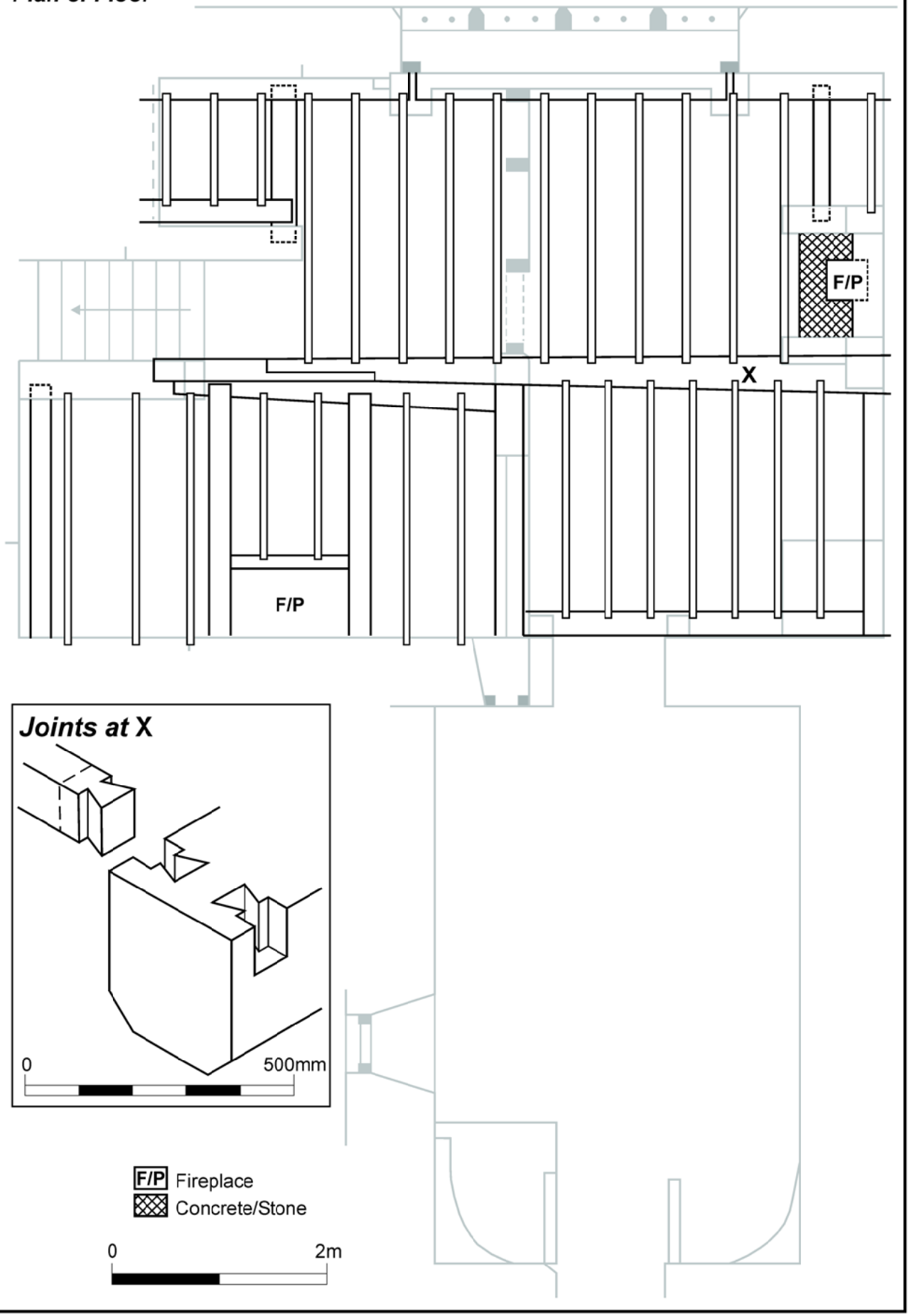
Site Location Fig 1




Plan of Cellar Fig 2

## *7 High Street, Blakesley*

***Plan of Floor***




Plan of Floor Fig 3