



Northamptonshire
County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Watching Brief and Building
Recording at Corner Farm House
Main Street, Ashby St Ledgers
Northamptonshire
November 2008



Leon Field

January 2009

Report 08/214

Northamptonshire Archaeology

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**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
JANUARY 2009**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AND BUILDING
RECORDING AT CORNER FARMHOUSE
MAIN STREET, ASHBY ST LEDGERS
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Iain Soden		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Corner Farm, Main Street, Ashby St Ledgers, Northamptonshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Corner Farm, Main Street, Ashby St Ledgers is an early 18th-century two storey three bay house, which was extended by the addition of a further two bays and second floor in the later 18th century. Few original features survive inside due to recent fire damage and alterations and much of the upper storeys had been completely remodelled following the fire with only the ground floor showing any early features.	
Project type (e.g. desk-based, field evaluation etc)	Historic Building assessment	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	None	
Current Land use	Building being upgraded after fire damage	
Monument type/ Period	18th-century dwelling	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Corner Farm, Main Street, Ashby St Ledgers, Northamptonshire	
Study Area (Sq.m or ha)	111 SQ.M	
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	SP	
Height OD	138.1m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Daventry District Council	
Project Design originator	Iain Soden	
Director/Supervisor	Leon Field	
Project Manager	Iain Soden	
Sponsor or funding body	Dr John Airlie Hunter	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	November 2008	
End date	November 2008	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Post-medieval pottery
Paper	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Record sheets, plans, sections
Digital	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title	Archaeological watching brief and building recording at Corner farmhouse, Main street, Ashby St Ledgers, Northamptonshire	
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Contents

1	INTRODUCTION
2	BACKGROUND
3	OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY
4	BUILDING RECORDING
5	CONCLUSIONS
	CONTEXT INDEX

Figures

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: 1810 Surveyors plan

Fig 3: First edition Ordnance Survey plan 1880

Fig 4: Ground floor plan of Farmhouse

Fig 5: Isometric ground floor plan of Farmhouse

Plates

Cover: The street frontage

Plate 1: Room 1 with services trenches open, looking west

Plate 2: Room 1, new replacement beams, looking north-west

Plate 3: Room 1 services trench, showing plaster-covered wall and ironstone wall below ground level, looking west

Plate 4: Room 2, window, looking east

Plate 5: Room 2, door with fire damage, looking west

Plate 6: Room 2, fireplace, looking north

Plate 7: Room 2, axial beam and central post, looking south

Plate 8: Room 2, axial beam and central post junction, looking west

Plate 9: Room 2, replaced joists, looking north-west

Plate 10: Room 2, remodelled and supported joists, looking north-west

Plate 11: Room 2, early joists still *in situ*, looking east

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AND
BUILDING RECORDING AT CORNER FARMHOUSE
MAIN STREET, ASHBY ST. LEDGERS
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

Abstract

Corner Farm, Main Street, Ashby St Ledgers is an early 18th century two- storey, three-bay house, which was extended by the addition of a further two bays and second floor in the later 18th-century. Few original features survive inside due to recent fire damage and alterations and much of the upper storeys had been completely remodelled following the fire with only the ground floor showing any early features

1 INTRODUCTION

Dr John Airlie Hunter is the owner of Corner Farmhouse, at the corner of Main Street, Ashby St Ledgers, Northamptonshire. Main Street runs through the centre of the village with the corner farmhouse being on the south side at an intersection with a country lane linking to the B5385 (NGR SP 57210 68119; Figs 1).

The property is a listed building, Grade II (17/39, listed 11 March 1987). Daventry District Council requested that an archaeological building recording and watching brief should be undertaken on the house to ensure that any loss of historic fabric is mitigated during renovations (Listed Building Consent Application DA/2008/0602/LB). This was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology during November 2008.

The corner property has a frontage onto Main Street while it also has access to the side country lane. It is physically linked to the adjacent property, a long-standing arrangement. The building had been empty for some time but was in good condition at the time of recording, although little interior décor had survived. Full access was available on the ground, but the first and second floors had been stripped and all new walls and wall coverings inserted before the archaeologists were commissioned and so could not be recorded. There was no visible evidence of the former layout (ie pre-fire) anywhere above the ground floor.

2 BACKGROUND

Topography and geology

The house is situated in the centre of the historic village of Ashby St Ledgers with the village church and manor house found to the east. It is bounded by Main Street to the north, a country lane to the east, an adjoining building to the south and the common driveway to the west.

The underlying geology comprises Lower Lias Clays and the building plot lies at 138.1m aOD.

Historic Context

The earliest written record for Ashby St. Ledgers is found in the Domesday Book which documents the village as being “four hides” with ten caracates of arable land (Williams and Martin 1992).

The earliest cartographic evidence for the Corner Farm house is seen in the provisional Ordnance Survey map of 1810 (Fig 2). This shows the farmhouse in its current location and indicates that the additional two bay room to the south had been constructed prior to the survey. No documents exist to provide an earlier dating for the house or pinpoint the date of its construction.

The farmhouse is again seen in the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1880 (Fig 3) where it and its surrounding buildings are seen in greater detail.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The general objectives of the assessment were:

- To seek to identify and record architectural or archaeological features or remains revealed
- To explain the significance of the evidence and how it relates to the development and phasing of the building

More specifically, the work:

- Provides a detailed document and map-based assessment of the site

- Provides a general appreciation of the farmhouse and its plot
- Records structural remnants still visible at the time of recording, three months into the renovation project in response to the fire.

Methodology

This record of the building primarily took the form of a photographic record and drawn plans to set out the relationship of the building's ground floor and its constituent parts. The buildings were assessed within the general precepts set out in the English Heritage procedural guidance (2006), but to no particular defined level. In particular the records made as part of the work conformed to the following:

Written and Drawn Accounts

This comprised hand drawing of a floor plan and an isometric plan of the lower floor. These later formed the basis of the interpretative plans reproduced in this report.

Photographic Record

Both general and specific photographs were employed to show exteriors, interiors and specific items and fixtures/fittings, if significant.

In addition to the building recording work a series of services trenches were excavated by hand down to a maximum depth of 0.45m below the ground level. Archaeological supervision was present throughout all excavation work with any potential features investigated by qualified staff. Standard Northamptonshire Archaeology recording procedures were employed (NA 2003). All works were undertaken in agreement with the county curator and conducted in accordance with *IFA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1994, revised 2001), the *Code of Conduct* of the Institute for Archaeologists (1985, revised 2006), the standards and guidelines for an archaeological watching brief (IFA 2000) and the requirements set out in the Project Specification (NA 2008).

4 BUILDING ASSESSMENT

Ground floor interiors (Figs 5 and 6)

The ground floor of the corner property comprises two rooms, one large three bay room and a later 18th-century addition of another two bay room at right angles, forming an L-shape in plan.

Room 1

The front room was the original house built in the early 18th century and measured 11.90m by 5.70m. No clear internal structural elements were visible due to fire damage and the stripping out of the building. The floor was a modern concrete, layer (101), which was cut through for new services trenches (Plate 1).

Some of the joists for the ground floor ceiling were exposed during works but are not thought to be of great age (Plate 2).

The walls of the room were of coursed ironstone with an interior plaster covering. Very little of the stone was exposed during assessment but parts seen appeared to be in good condition (Plate 3).

The room had six casement windows set into splays around the room. Two were in the north wall at either side of the front door, one was in the west and east walls and two were in the south wall around the door leading to the back garden. All the windows had modern fastenings casements with no other decoration or fixtures.

Room 2

Room 2 was to the south of room 1 at its eastern end, forming an L-shaped building 9.20m by 4.70m. It had similar ironstone plaster-covered walls and the flooring was of the same modern concrete (101).

The room contained two casement windows set into splays in the eastern wall with modern fastenings casements (Plate 4). These windows were set directly opposite the two doors set in the western wall for entrance to the back garden. One of the doors had evidence of fire damage (Plate 5), and it is likely these doors are a modern development of the house.

A large inglenook fireplace, 2.20m wide, was located on the north-east side of the room. It was made out of similar plastered stone walls to the rest of the room with a decorated timber bressumer across its top (Plate 6). A cast iron chimney liner was still in place during the ongoing building works.

The room's ceiling was carried on a jointed axial beam which was itself supported by a wooden upright post in the centre of the room (Plates 7 and 8). The beam and post were

broken in places and decayed but showed little to no evidence of any fire damage that was evident on the doors to the west.

Attached to the beam were 19 separate joists in varying states of decay supporting the floor above. The majority of the joists seemed to have been completely replaced (Plate 9) with some supported by later renovations (Plate 10) and with some earlier timbers adjacent. Many of these earlier joists were seen warped and decayed (Plate 11).

No recording was undertaken of the upper floors above either Room 1 or Room 2 as these had already been renovated and no early aspects of the building remained to be seen, nor was there any evidence of the pre-fire layout of the building at these levels.

Service trenches

Five service trenches were excavated around the interior of the house. Four were placed around the interior of Room 1 with one placed next to the north-west door to the garden in Room 2. Generally the five trenches revealed a similar stratigraphic sequence with the modern concrete flooring layer overlying a dark brown clay layer with chalk and charcoal inclusions. This layer likely represents a early flooring or foundation layer as the limestone wall in the western services pit was seen continuing down next to it. One variation to this sequence was seen in the central services pit in Room 1 where a further layer of yellow sand had been introduced over the chalky clay. This layer likely represents a modern levelling layer during the construction of the last concrete flooring. No finds were present so none of the layers were datable.

5 CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that little evidence of the original or early development of the building was recordable due to exposure to fire damage and preceding renovations. The outer walls of the house survive relatively intact. However many of the internal aspects of the house at ground floor level, such as the timber joists and beams, have had to be replaced or supported over time.

All other internal aspects to the house had been obscured prior to recording by renovations preventing wider recording or understanding.

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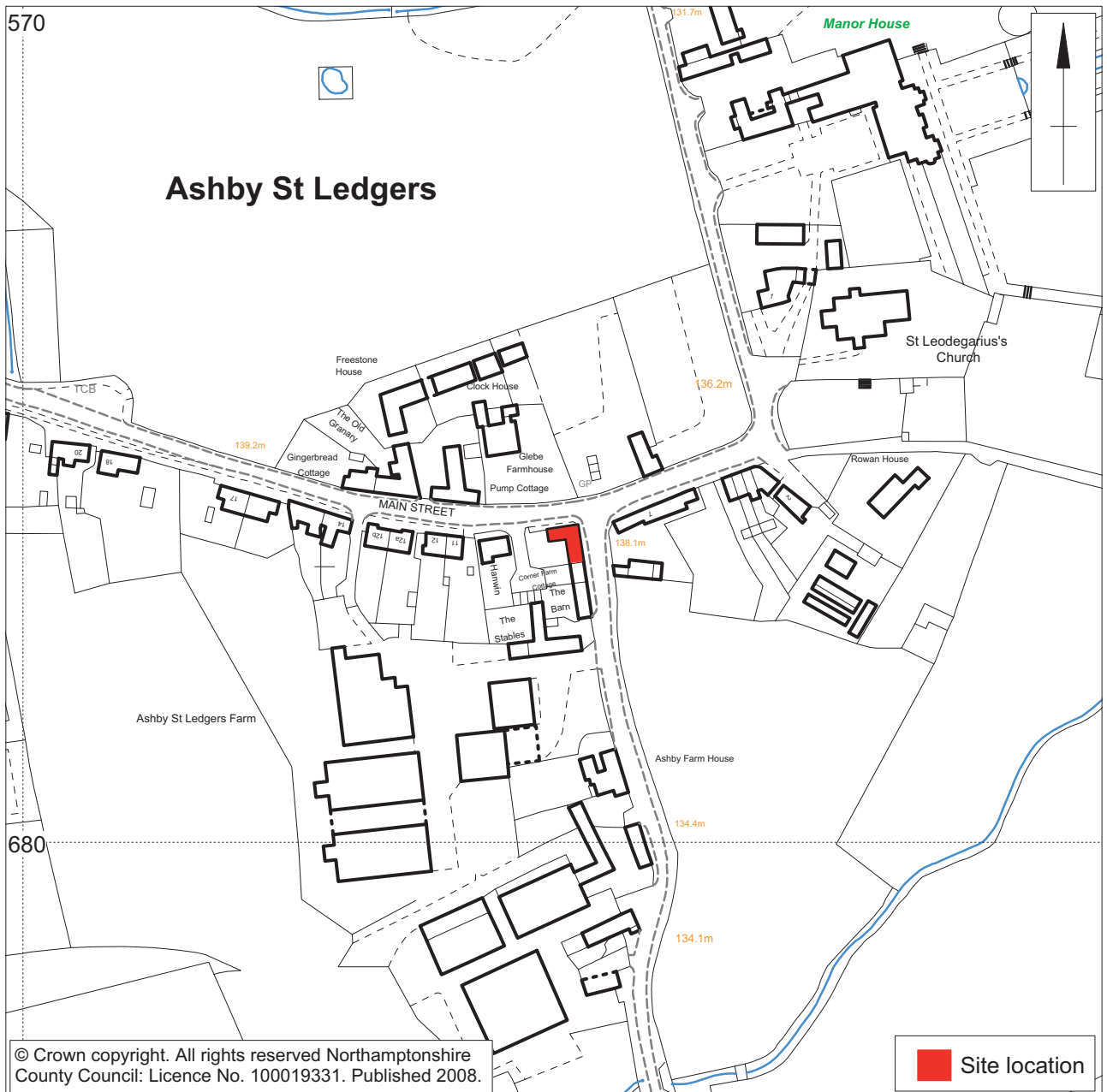
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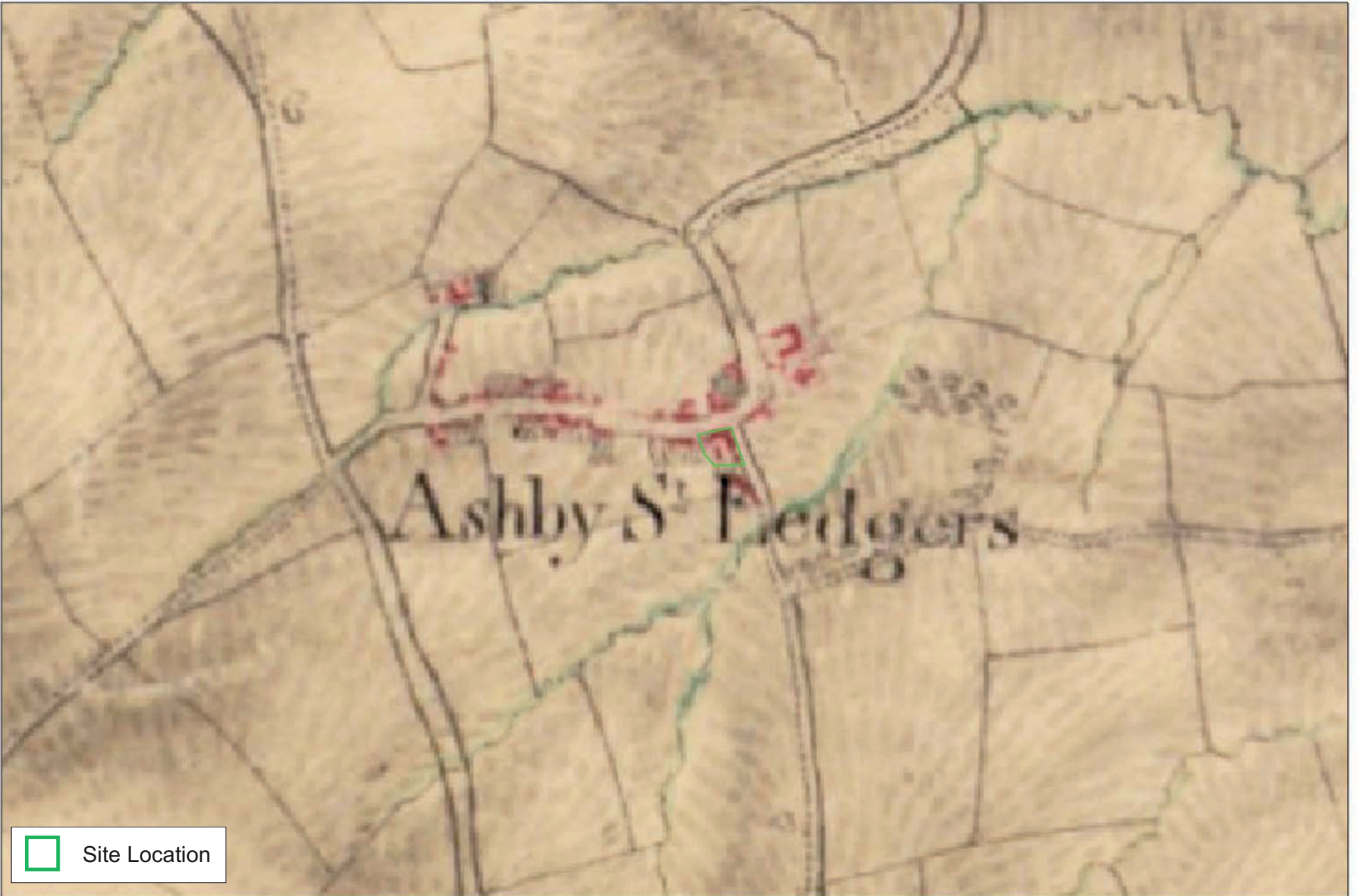
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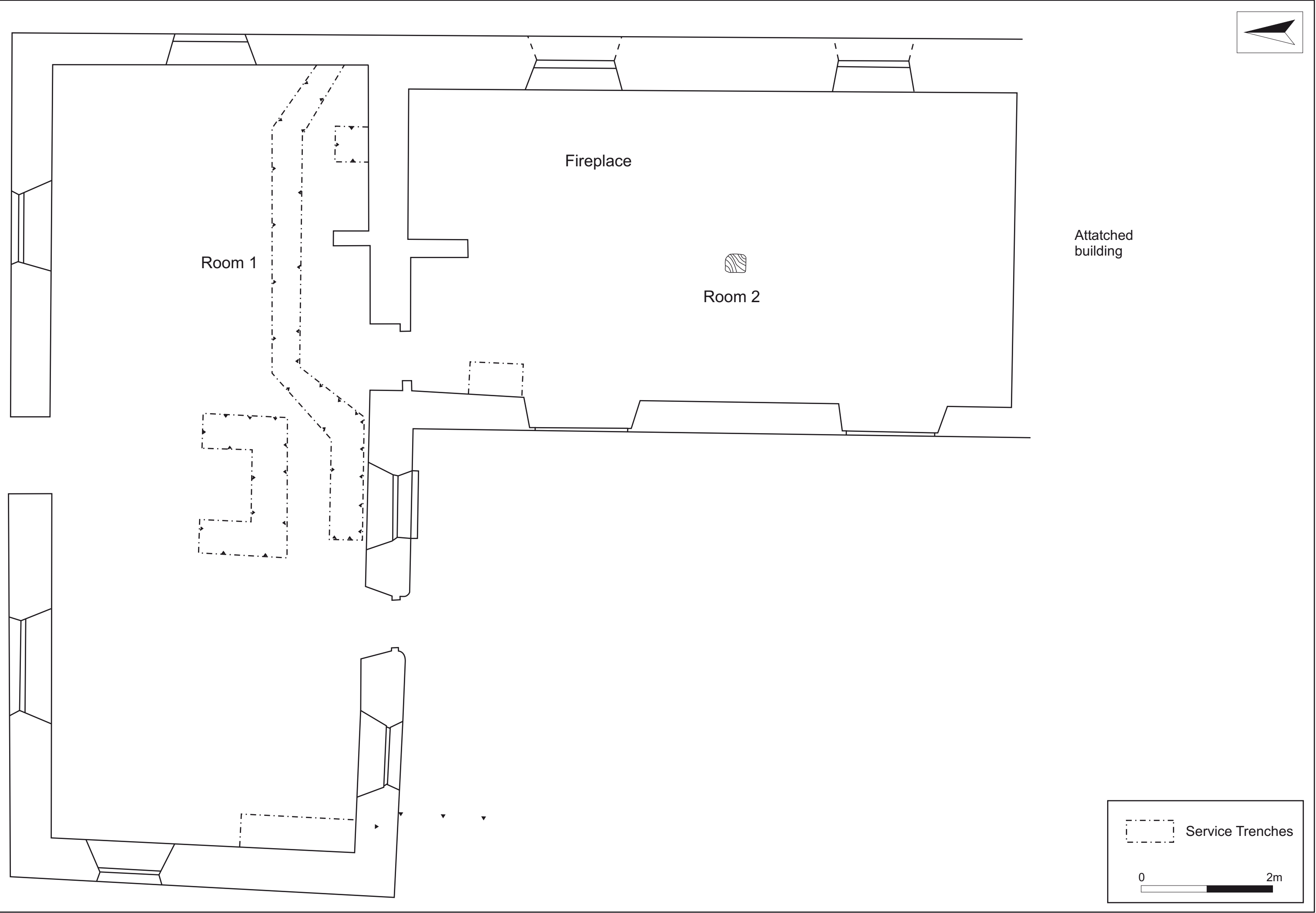
Scale 1:2500

Site location Fig 1

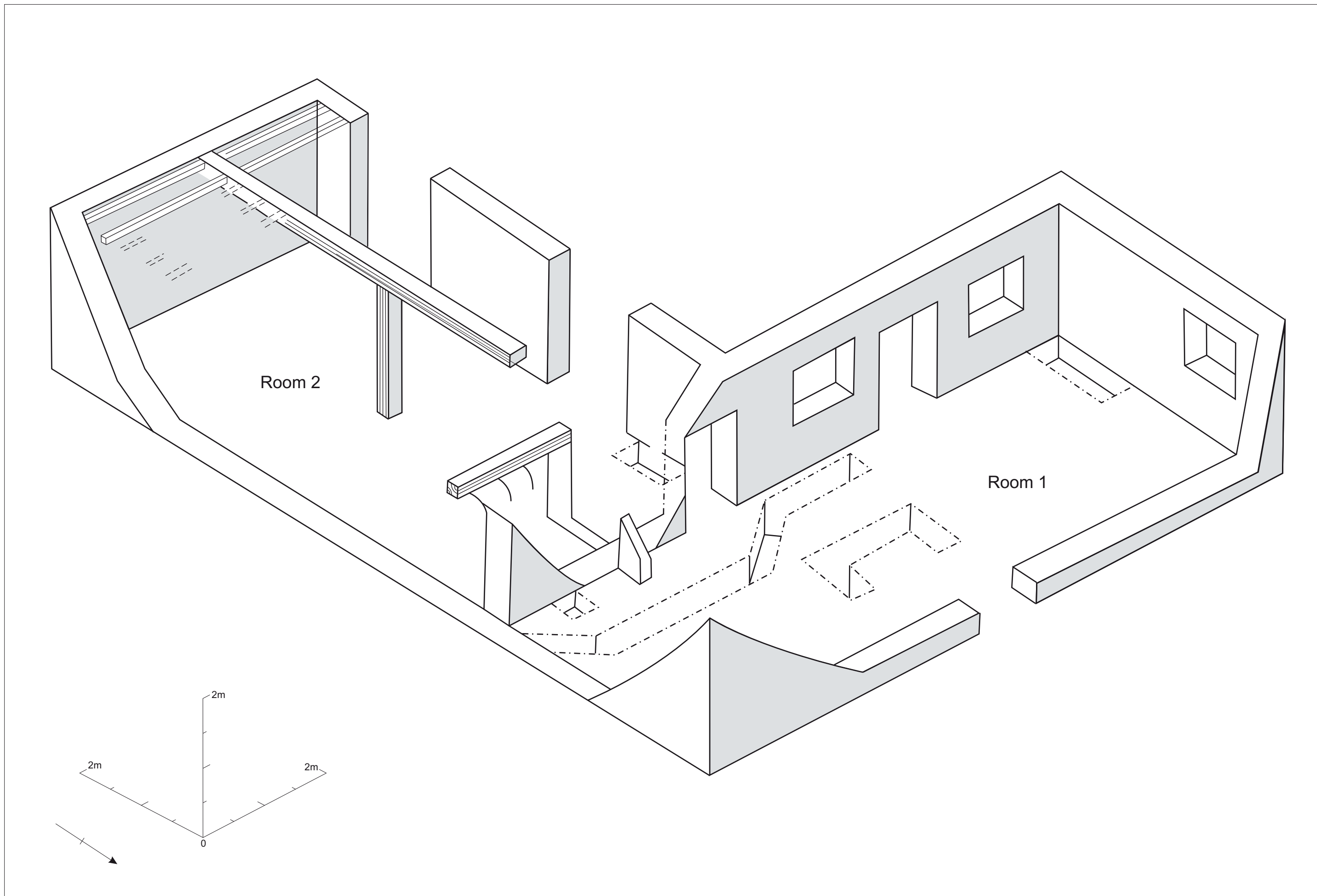




First Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1880 Fig 3



Ground Floor Plan of Farmhouse Fig 4



Isometric Ground Floor Plan of Farmhouse Fig 5



Plate 1: Room 1 with services trenches open looking west



Plate 2: Room 1, new replacement beams, looking north-west



Plate 3: Room 1 services trench, showing plaster-covered wall and ironstone wall below ground level, looking west.



Plate 4: Room 2, window, looking east



Plate 5: Room 2 door with fire damage, looking west



Plate 6: Room 2, fireplace, looking north



Plate 7: Room 2, axial beam and central post, looking south



Plate 8: Room 2, axial beam and central post, looking west



Plate 9: Room 2, replaced joists, looking north-west



Plate 10: Room 2, remodelled and supported joists, looking north-west



Plate 11: Room 2, early joists still *in situ*, looking east