

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING:
THE VILLA, FORMER RECKITT & COLEMAN SITE
WATLING STREET, FENNY STRATFORD
MILTON KEYNES**

on behalf of Bellway Homes Ltd



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SEPTEMBER 2007

ASC: 977/WFS/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	WFS	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	977
<i>SMR Event No:</i>		<i>Accession No:</i>	
<i>County:</i>	Buckinghamshire (historic county)		
<i>Town:</i>	Milton Keynes		
<i>District:</i>	Fenny Stratford		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Bletchley		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 8836 3406		
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<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Demolition		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	07/00907/FUL		
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Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In August 2007 a programme of historic building recording was carried out of The Villa, Watling Street, Fenny Stratford, prior to demolition. The Villa, a three storey three-bay house, was one of a group of buildings constructed alongside the pre-canal alignment of Watling Street sometime in the 18th century. The survey revealed little evidence for the earlier form of the building, though tuck-pointed brickwork was revealed beneath later rendering on the south and east elevations.

By 1819 the group of buildings on Watling Street, along with the land to the rear, passed into the ownership of Gregory Odell Clarke, a local entrepreneur. It is likely that Clarke lived at The Villa, which may also have housed his office. By 1864 he had handed much of the business over to his son William, who continued to retain control until c.1890. Contrary to previous accounts, it seems likely that the present form of The Villa, which stylistically dates to the latter half of the 19th century, is the work of William rather than his father, and dates from his taking over the family business.

During the early 20th century The Villa was turned over to commercial use, as offices. Internal alterations made for this seem to have had little impact on the late 19th-century interior: significant damage only occurred after the building fell into disuse in the 1990s.

1 Introduction

1.1 In August 2007 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC)* carried out historic building recording at the former Reckitt & Coleman site in Fenny Stratford, Milton Keynes (Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by *Bellway Homes Ltd*, and was carried out according to the requirements of the *Archaeological Officer (AO)* for the local planning authority (LPA), *Milton Keynes Council*, and a project design prepared by ASC (Zeepvat 2007), and approved by the AO. The relevant planning application reference is 07/00907/FUL.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This building recording project has been required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15)*, in response to proposals for the demolition of a building on the site.

1.3 *Setting*

1.3.1 The former Reckitt & Coleman site is located on the east side of Fenny Stratford, towards the southern end of the new city of Milton Keynes (Fig. 1). It covers a roughly L-shaped area of some 2.5 hectares, bounded to the north by the embankment of the Bletchley – Bedford railway line, to the east by the river Ouzel, to the south by Watling Street, and to the west by the Grand Union Canal.

1.3.2 The site is located for the most part on level ground, at an elevation of c.69m OD, though the access road at the south end rises towards Watling Street. The

underlying geology is Oxford clay, overlain by alluvial deposits comprising the flood plain of the Ouzel. Soils in the area belong to the Oxpasture association (Soil Survey 1983, 572h), described as 'Fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey soils'. Given the proximity of the river, the water table is likely to be not much more than two metres below ground level.

- 1.3.3 The Reckitt & Coleman site is currently under redevelopment, so a detailed description seems superfluous. The site frontage on Watling Street is some 80m in length. At its west end (NGR SP 8836 3406), adjacent to the bridge over the Grand Union Canal, is the structure that forms the subject of this survey, a three-storey house, presently disused and boarded up (Fig. 2). For ease of reference, this building is hereafter referred to as '*The Villa*'. The canal and towpath pass to the west of the building, while Watling Street lies to the south. On the east side of the building, the access road to the site passes in a more or less northerly direction, sloping down from Watling Street. There is a roughly rectangular 'garden' area to the rear of the building, at the same level as the towpath but below the access road. This area has recently been cleared of vegetation and fenced off.

1.4 ***Proposed Development***

In the development scheme for the site originally put forward by Bellway Homes and accepted by the LPA, The Villa was to be refurbished and converted to house three apartments. The building has been disused for many years, and has suffered from vandalism, including attempts to set it on fire. A structural survey carried out for Bellway Homes by RPS Design in 2006 indicated a significant degree of movement in the foundations, with consequent structural damage to the walls above. The survey also suggested that the building would have to be significantly strengthened to permit the changes necessary for its division into separate apartments. This view was broadly confirmed by one of the LPA's own structural engineers. Following discussions between Bellway Homes and the LPA, planning permission was granted for demolition of The Villa, and its replacement by a modern structure incorporating design features of the original building.

1.5 ***Archaeological Background***

A desk-based assessment of the Reckitt & Coleman site was prepared by ASC in 1998, and subsequently revised and updated for Bellway Homes in 2004 (Zeepvat 2004). The assessment concluded:

Following the construction of the Grand Junction Canal at the end of the 18th century limekilns were established on the site, with their own canal dock and wharf. Subsequently a brickworks was constructed on the site, and clay extraction pits were excavated. In the mid 19th century a gasworks was established at the south end of the site, with two large gasholders to the north. More recent industrial uses have included a printing works and chemical works. The latter has since been demolished: a significant depth of contaminated soil was removed from the south part of the site as part of this process.

Based on the results of this assessment, The LPA requested a strip-and-record excavation prior to development of an area of the site alongside the Grand Union canal to the north of The Villa, adjacent to *Wharf House* (Fig. 2). This work was carried out by ASC (Hancock 2006), revealing a well-preserved 19th-century brick-walled canal dock on a north-east to south-west alignment, and traces of related structures in brick and stone.

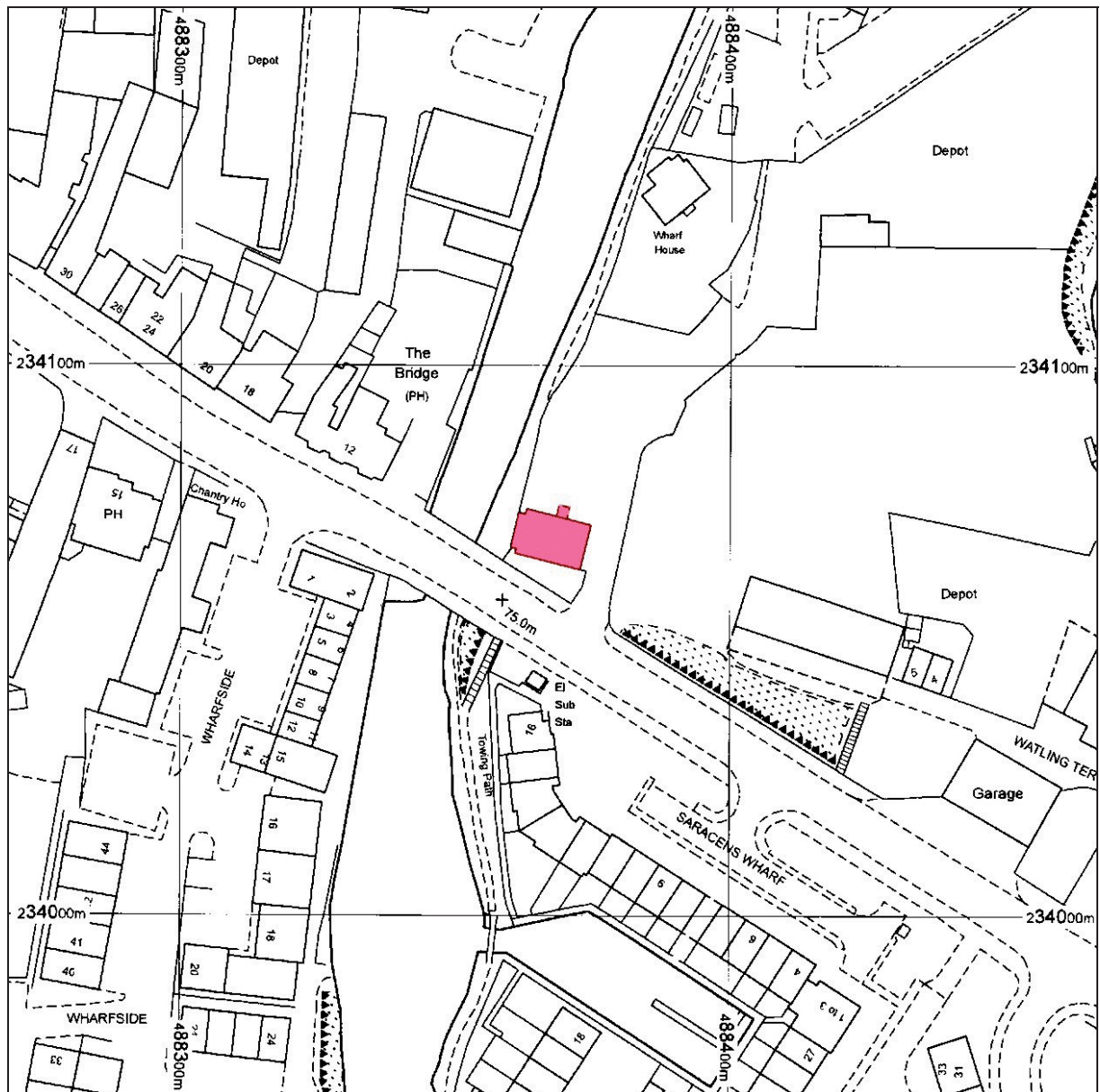


Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:1,250)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the project design (Section 2.1), the aim of the building recording was:

- Preparation of a detailed drawn, written and photographic record of The Villa, prior to demolition.

2.2 *Standards*

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), to current English Heritage guidelines for building recording (EH 2006), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 *Methods*

As described in the project design (Section 2.2) the work involved:

- A programme of building recording, to English Heritage Level 3 (EH 2006)
- A watching brief on the demolition of the building, with appropriate recording of any significant structural details revealed.

2.4 *Constraints*

The weather during the survey and watching brief was mostly dry and overcast, full access was gained to the interior of the building, and full cooperation was received from the clients and their contractors. Initial concerns regarding the structural safety of the building proved to be exaggerated, and the only hazards to recording were quantities of rubbish, and pigeons.

With regard to the watching brief, opportunities for meaningful observation during demolition were limited as the building was demolished rapidly by machine, without preliminary stripping out. Two visits were made to the site during demolition: results from the observations made have been incorporated into the descriptive section of this report (Section 4).

3 Historical Background

3.1 Much of the following historical information is taken from ASC's desk-based assessment of the Reckitt & Coleman site (Zeepvat 2004). Some additional site-specific information was sourced from the historic reference collection at Milton Keynes Library.

3.2 *Medieval* (1066-1500)

The medieval settlement at Fenny Stratford developed at the top of the hill overlooking the Watling Street crossing of the Ouzel, at the junction of the latter with the road to Buckingham. The main function of the settlement was as a market place serving the villages of Bletchley, Water Eaton and Simpson. The earliest documentary reference to the market dates from 1204, when Roger de Cauz was granted the right to hold a market by the king (VCH 1927, 276). The name 'Fenny Stratford' first appears in a document of 1252 (*ibid.*). A market was regularly held in Fenny Stratford until the First World War. Initially the town grew up along Watling Street: this is where most of the older surviving buildings in Fenny are located.

Throughout the medieval period Fenny Stratford prospered as a market town and an important stopping-point on Watling Street. During this period the Roman crossing of the Ouzel was replaced by a bridge: Richard Candeler and Geoffrey Hall of Fenny Stratford were awarded a grant of pontage in 1383, which was renewed in 1398 and 1401, in the latter instance to 'good men of the town' (VCH 1927, 276). There are also frequent references to inns in Fenny Stratford: *The Swan* in 1474 and 1624, *The Bull* in 1609 and *The George* in 1459 and 1681. The general impression is that the town remained prosperous throughout the medieval period.

3.3 *Post-Medieval* (1500-1900)

During the 17th century Fenny Stratford suffered a series of reverses to its prosperity, from which it never fully recovered. The first, during the Civil War, was the billeting in the town of Parliamentary troops under Sir William Waller. The second, in 1665, was an outbreak of the plague, doubtless carried up Watling Street from London, which decimated the town's population. The local inns and Watling Street were temporarily closed, and traffic was diverted around the town. One hundred years later, the earliest cartographic representation of Fenny Stratford on the Jeffries map of 1770 shows only a small settlement extending from the Ouzel to the junction with the Buckingham and Simpson roads, and southwards along Aylesbury Street to Vicarage Road.

Watling Street remained a major cross-country route until the late 18th – early 19th century, though its condition in the Fenny Stratford area left much to be desired. Markham (1973, 301) records that ruts in the road were two to three feet deep, and there was mud everywhere. In 1706 Parliament authorised the creation of the Hockliffe – Stony Stratford Turnpike Trust to manage this section of the road. The situation was not made any easier by the steep climb from the river bridge up to the town, along what is now Watling Terrace, then known as 'The Hollow'.

In 1797 the Grand Junction (later the Grand Union) Canal was opened northwards as far as Fenny Stratford. Three years later, the section northwards to Cosgrove was opened. Development was soon to follow: Hassall (1819) notes the presence of lime

kilns in Fenny Stratford (SMR 4758): these may be the kilns shown to the north of The Villa on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey of 1881 (Fig. 4). The canal cut Watling Street at the top of The Hollow: to bridge the canal on the existing road alignment would have created an even steeper road than already existed, so the river bridge was rebuilt and an embankment was constructed, rising from the new bridge to carry Watling Street across the canal and rejoin the end of the High Street. Markham (1973, 319) notes that the cost of this diversion was £600, of which the turnpike commissioners paid £99.

The coming of the canal prompted the expansion of several local industries, such as brickmaking. To the south of Watling Street a wharf, *Tan Yard Wharf*, was opened shortly after the opening of the canal, and the 1881 Ordnance Survey shows a brick field and kiln to the south of it. A boat-building business on this site was offered for sale as early as 1807 (SMR 4482). Other small brickworks were opened in the area, but all were relatively short-lived. Expansion of Fenny Stratford was further encouraged by the construction of the London & Birmingham Railway in 1838, and the development of railway housing at Bletchley and Wolverton. The Bletchley – Bedford railway line, at the north end of the Reckitt & Coleman site, was constructed in 1846.

The earliest recorded industrial use of the area to the north of The Villa appears to date from the late 19th century, by which time limekilns had been established on the site adjacent to the canal (Fig. 4). Shortly afterwards, a brickworks was established on the northern part of the site. Fenny Stratford gasworks, opened in 1877, was originally located to the east, near the river.

3.4 *Modern (1900-present)*

During the 20th century development in the Bletchley area continued, prompted by the establishment of the Bletchley Brick Company in 1919 and its large modern brickworks at Newton Longville. Other local industries, such as printing and engineering, also encouraged development. The designation of Bletchley as a London overspill area in the mid 20th century led to the construction of the Lakes Estate, 1.5km south-west of the assessment site. Milton Keynes new town was itself designated in the late 1960s.

3.5 *Cartographic Evidence*

The earliest detailed map of the area, an estate map of the manor of Simpson dated 1781 (Fig. 3), shows the former Reckitt & Coleman site as then comprising parts of four fields, in the ownership of Thomas Goodman and Mr Drayton. The original alignment of Watling Street, The Hollow, crosses the south end of the site. The site of The Villa is occupied by a similar-sized building, with extensions to the rear forming three sides of a square yard, open to the east. An access road appears to run between this complex and the adjoining buildings to the east, to the farmland to the north.

On the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1881 (Fig. 4), The Villa appears in greater detail. The rear extensions are still present, with a new building on the east side of the yard, which is now entered from the north-east corner. The access road now leads to a larger yard to the north, containing a canal dock and limekilns. This dock was excavated by ASC in 2006, prior to development of the Reckitt & Coleman site (Hancock 2006). The map shows that The Villa had not as yet acquired its timber-

built extension to the north (Room G7, below). However, as the house is shown as extending westwards to the edge of the towpath, it seems reasonable to infer that the west extension to the house had been built by this time. The canal bridge, adjacent to the house, is a narrow structure, probably brick-built and hump-backed, typical of all early bridges on the Grand Junction and other canals of the period. A gated access links the embanked line of Watling Street with the existing lane to the east of The Villa.

By 1925 (Fig. 5) the north-west extension adjoining The Villa had been demolished, leaving the building as a detached structure, though the enclosed yard behind remained. The timber-built north extension to the house is now shown, along with what appears to be a large central porch on the south side. To the north, the canal dock appears to have been filled in, though its edges are still indicated, and the limekilns have gone from the site. The former brickworks adjoining the dock area had by now become the site of Fenny Stratford gasworks. To the south, the canal bridge remains unchanged. Buckinghamshire County Council rebuilt it two years later, in its present wider, more level form, as shown by a bronze plaque on the bridge (Plate 65). One effect of this was to truncate the open area fronting The Villa, and probably to necessitate alterations to its topography.

By 1972 (Fig. 6), the gasworks site had become Reckitt & Coleman's chemical works, and a large modern building to the north-east housed the BPCC printing works. A modern detached house (Wharf Cottage) had been constructed by the site of the infilled canal dock. In contrast, the south-west corner of the site remained largely unchanged, though the south porch of The Villa had been removed by this date. By this time the building was being used by Reckitt & Coleman as offices.

By 1995 the chemical works had been largely demolished, with the exception of a large structure at the south end of the site and The Villa. The BPCC print works had been converted to a paper recycling plant, which had closed before c.2004. Following the closure of the chemical works The Villa remained unused and, although boarded up, became a target for vandalism, including theft of lead and internal fittings, and at least one attempt at arson.

3.6 *Site-Specific*

The one individual specifically associated with The Villa by most authorities is Gregory Odell Clarke. Markham (1973, 290) describes him as follows:

'...the most prominent brickmaker [in Fenny Stratford] around 1820-70 ... a man of many activities ... who set up business as a coal, timber, slate and iron merchant, and brick and tile maker, at Tan Yard Wharf, London Road. He was of course a wharfinger too.'

Clarke's brickworks, opened in 1819, were located on the Reckitt & Coleman site, and the limekilns and canal dock were probably part of his business empire. Markham (*ibid.*) credits Clarke with the construction of 'the large house' on the site, evidently The Villa. Woodfield (1986, 39, E39) states that The Villa was built by Gregory Odell Clarke c.1860, and describes it as follows:

"Three bays, rendered with vermiculated quoins and keystones to the moulded window architraves. Those on the upper floor break through the eaves line, and have hipped slate roofs. A bay window on the ground floor is a later addition. Heavy eaves brackets. The windows have margin glazing with red and blue flashed glass to the

arched stair window to the rear. The offices for the brickworks were probably also here”.

According to his gravestone in St Martin’s churchyard, Gregory Odell Clarke died on 23rd June 1873, aged 85, so he was therefore born in 1788 (Bradbrook 1911). He was evidently a local man, as the 1841 census records his birthplace as Simpson. An examination of the available 19th-century trade directories for Buckinghamshire reveals that Gregory Odell Clarke is first mentioned in Fenny Stratford in 1831-32, as a ‘merchant’. By 1847 he is described as ‘corn, coal, slate, timber merchant, brick maker and maltster’. Slater’s Directory (1850) additionally describes him as ‘wharfinger’. By 1864 (he was then 76) he had evidently handed over much of the business to his son, William Edward Clarke. At that date Gregory is described solely as ‘wharfinger’, whereas William is described as ‘corn merchant and brick maker’. The last directory entry for Gregory is dated 1869.

Following Gregory Odell Clarke’s death, the business passed to William Clarke. Subsequent directory entries indicate that he further expanded the business started by his father. In 1883 he is described as ‘coal, timber, slate, salt and iron merchant, colliery agent, corn and cake factor, brick and tile merchant, lime burner, wharfinger and carrier, agent in Bucks for the Phospho-Guano Co Ltd, agent for Staffordshire pipes, paving bricks, ridge tiles and chimney tops etc. At that time he had premises at the Fenny Stratford site and also at Water Eaton and Simpson. The final directory entry for William, dated 1891, is similar to that of 1883, though the agency for the Phospho-Guano Company is not mentioned. Presumably that part of the business had proved unsuccessful. The next available directory, for 1895, makes no mention of the Clarke family, and there is no reference to a similar business under a new name, so we do not know if William sold out or died.

3.7 *Other Information*

Examination of the available histories of Fenny Stratford and Bletchley has revealed relatively little information regarding The Villa. Although several collections of old photographs and reminiscences have been published, that part of Fenny Stratford south of the canal bridge seems to have been largely ignored by their contributors. Only one book (Cook 1995) touches on the building. A photo of the unreconstructed canal bridge, dated to the 1920s, shows the front of the house largely obscured by a large shrub or tree in the front garden (*ibid*, 18). At that time the roof ridge was crowned by an intricate metal finial, and the front garden was separated from the road by a garden wall and railings. The accompanying caption describes the house as then being the offices of the London County Insurance Company.

A second photo (*ibid*, 19) shows The Villa from the west, viewed from across the canal bridge. The latter has by now been rebuilt, so the photograph must be post-1926 in date. The west elevation of the house is clear of ivy, and is apparently rendered, while a sign on the extension roof proclaims the building to be an antique shop.

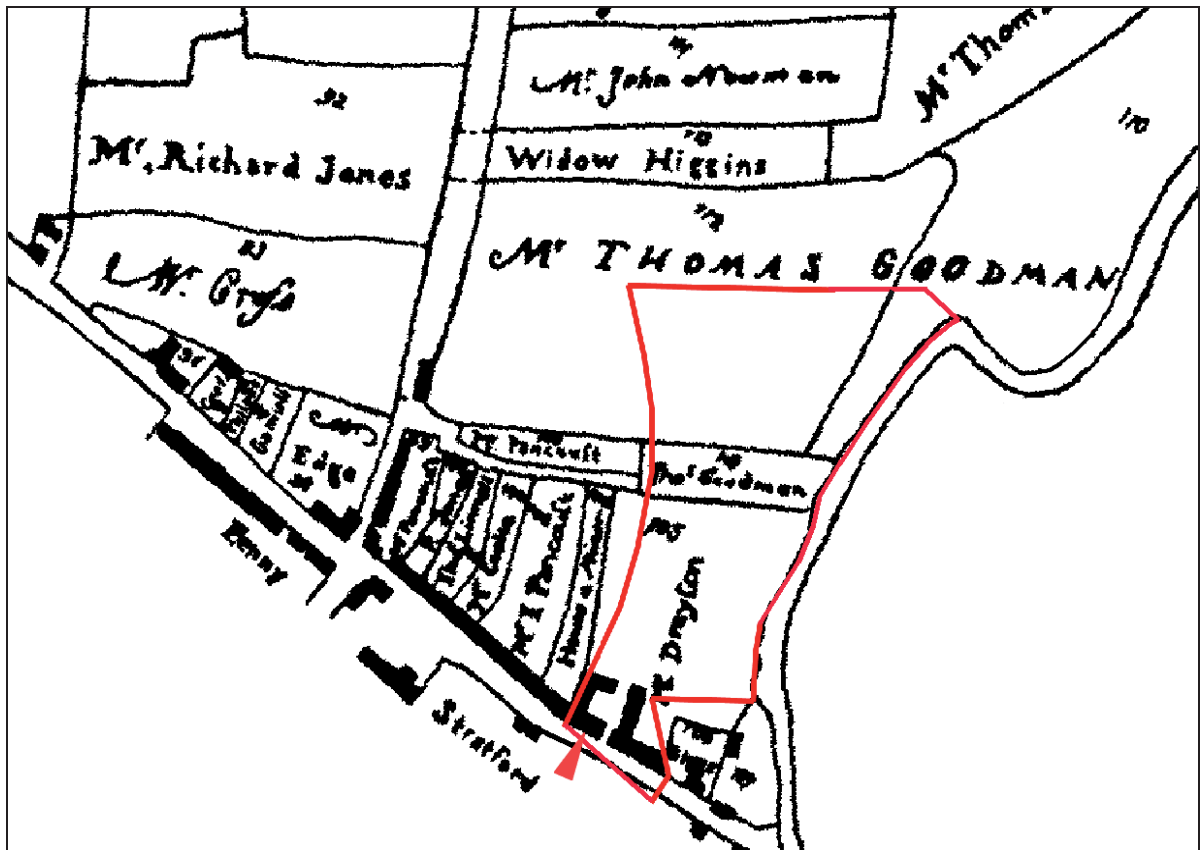


Figure 3: Extract from the 1781 Simpson Estate Map (BuCRO Ma 261/LT)
(boundary of Reckitt & Coleman site in red: position of The Villa is arrowed)

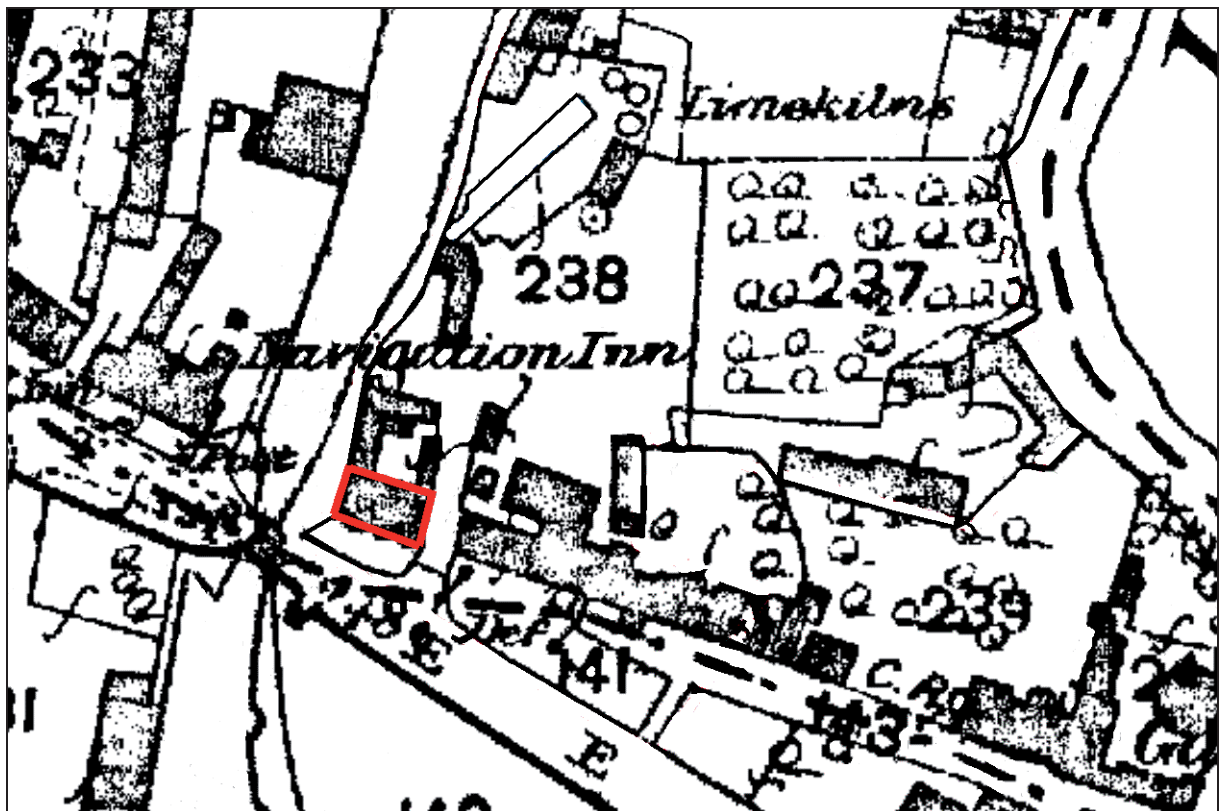


Figure 4: Extract from the 1st Edition 25" Ordnance Survey map, 1881.

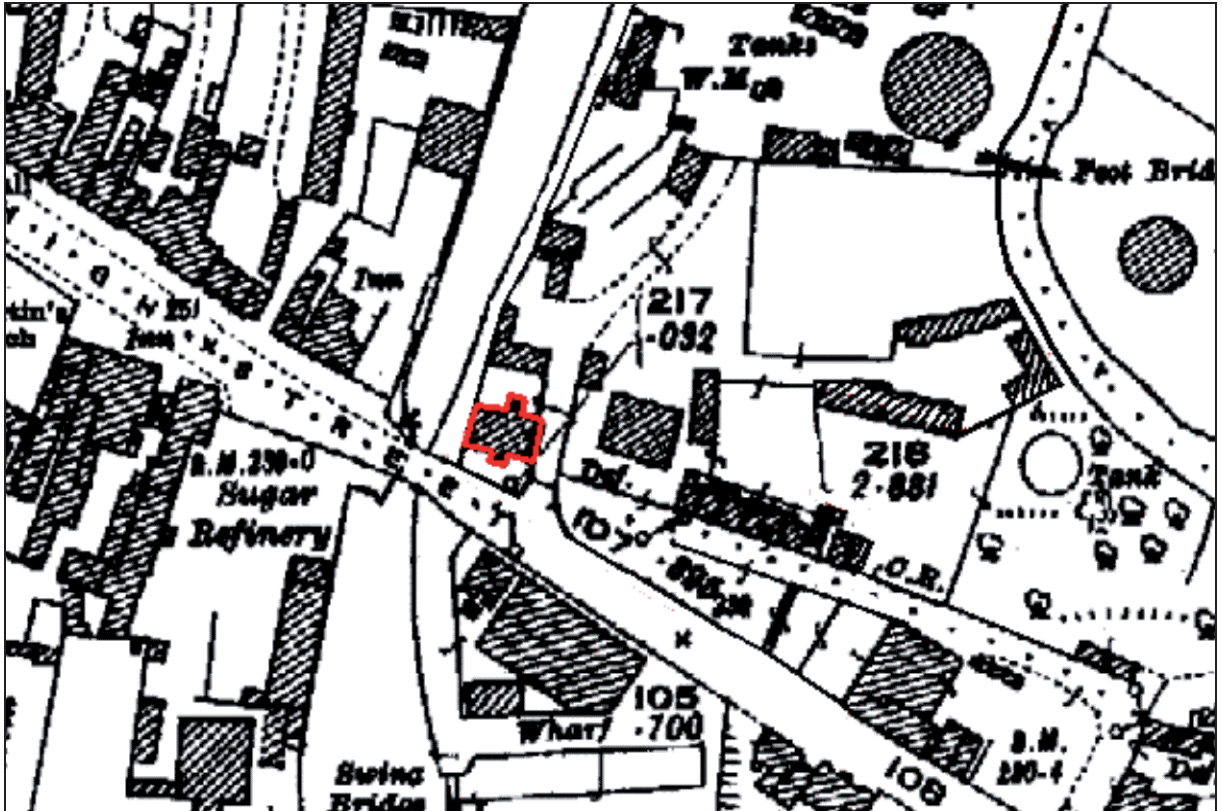


Figure 5: Extract from the 25" Ordnance Survey map, 1925.

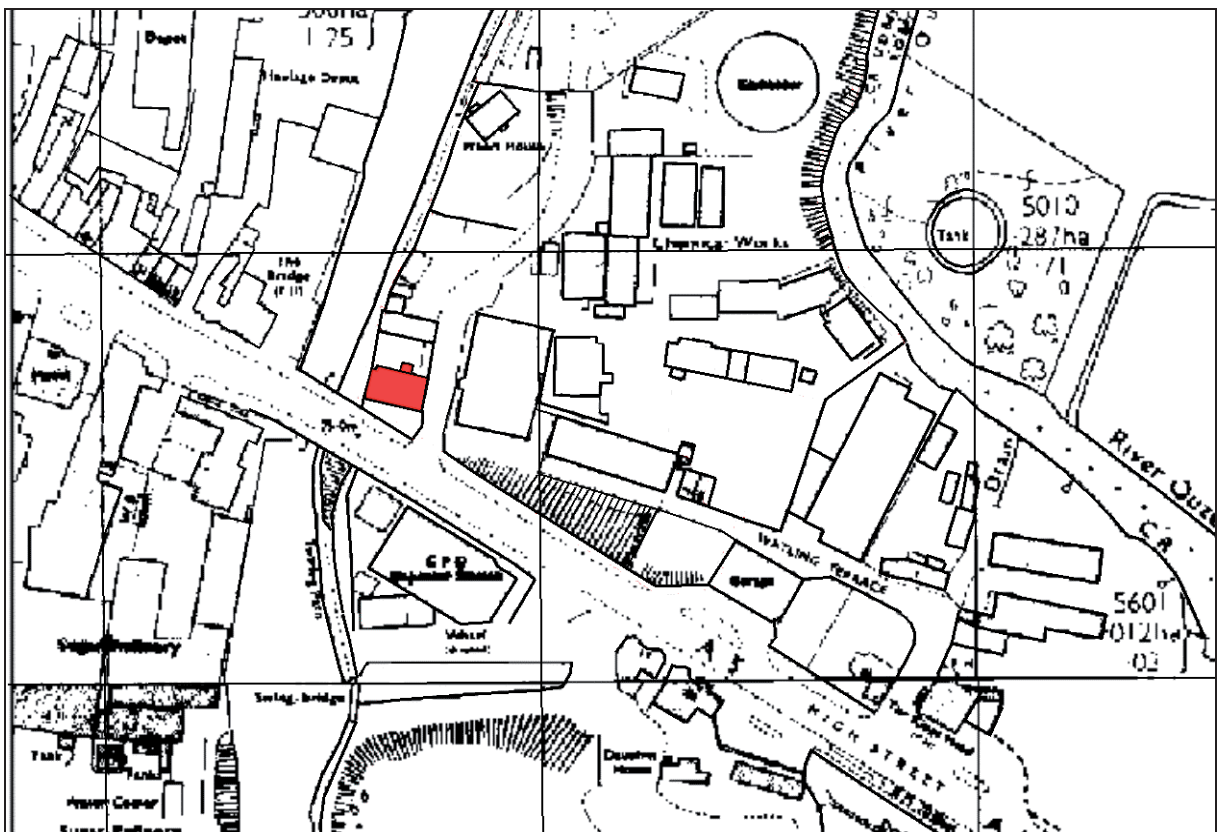


Figure 6: Extract from the 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey map, 1972.

4 Description

4.1 General

The Villa is a brick building of three storeys, under a hipped slate roof. The main part of the house is $c.11.5 \times 7.6$ m in plan, with a brick-built extension $c.1.5$ m wide running almost the full length of its west side. Internal measurements at all floor levels confirm that this extension is wider to the south, narrowing by $c.100$ mm at its north end. A second extension, comprising a flat roofed, timber framed and weatherboarded structure $c.2.4 \times 1.9$ m in plan, extends from the north side of the building at upper ground floor height, supported at its north end on two iron columns. Eaves height on the front (south) elevation of the main part of the structure is $c.6$ m, and $c.8.2$ m to the rear: the roof ridge rises a further 2.3 m above that. The building is aligned on the pre-canal course of Watling Street, rather than the present road.

As much of the building's exterior has been either rendered or heavily painted, it was not possible to determine full details of the brickwork employed in its construction. Examination of the painted north elevation and unplastered walls on the lower ground floor suggests that Flemish bond was used throughout. Bricks used in the construction of the main part of the building were hand-made, and measured in the region of $223 \times 62 \times 113$ mm. The extensive use of seconds for constructing internal walls, where most of the exposed bricks were located, prevented an accurate survey of brick sizes and types throughout the building. Observations made following demolition show that the footings of the building at the rear were shallow, only $c.0.3$ - 0.4 m deep.

4.2 South Elevation (Fig. 7, Plate 1)

The south elevation comprises the building's street frontage. The wall is covered with stucco with scribed ashlar blocks, applied vermiculated quoins (Plate 2), a plinth and string course. The projecting eaves are carried on heavy brackets with moulded leaf decoration (Plate 3). Window sills are also supported by brackets (Plate 4). Those on the central window have been truncated, presumably to accommodate a porch or signboard over the front door. The main part of the building consists of three bays, each with a sash window at first-floor level, breaking through the eaves line. The hipped slate roofs to each bay are also carried on brackets, and the windows have moulded architraves with applied vermiculated keystones (Plate 5). At ground-floor level there is a central doorway with a moulded architrave (Plate 6), flanked by a large sash window beneath an elaborate cornice to the west, and a bay window to the east (Plate 7). The bay window has a pitched slated roof, with a narrow dentillated band at eaves level. The window sills are supported by brackets, as are the other windows on this elevation. The south end of the west extension, which is set back from the main elevation, has a string course at a slightly lower level than that on the main part of the building, a skylight above a blocked door (G3) at ground-floor level, and a sash window with a moulded architrave a first-floor level (Plate 2). Applied quoins are present only above the string course.

The lower ground floor is below ground level on this elevation. The only details visible of it comprise a blocked window in a light well in the west bay, and blocked windows in the lower part of the bay window, also enclosed in a narrow light well (Plate 8) which also serves a small extant window (C6). In both cases concrete blocks

and modern airbricks have been used, showing that the blocking is of relatively recent date.

At the east end of this elevation, a vehicle entering the adjoining development had impacted on the corner of the building, removing a section of one of the applied quoins to expose the underlying brickwork. This comprised good quality hand-made dark red facing bricks of the size range described above, with tuck pointing comprising an initial fill of dark brown mortar, into which had been set a strip of white lime putty, 5mm wide (Plate 9). From this limited exposure it was possible to determine that this pointing was present on the south and east elevations of the building. Considering the skill level and time required for this form of pointing, and its consequent cost, it seems likely that these elevations at least were not originally rendered.

4.3 *North Elevation* (Fig. 8, Plate 10)

The rear elevation of The Villa, this is the only side on which external details of all three floors are fully exposed. As already noted, this elevation is painted, not rendered. It has applied quoins, though these are plain. The projecting eaves and heavy brackets are present, the pattern broken by one first-floor window (F5).

Though falling broadly within a three-bay layout, it is evident that the openings on this side of the building were located with a view more to practicality than to appearance. It is also apparent that they have undergone addition and alteration through time. At ground-floor level there is a central entrance (C1), flanked to the east by a modern two-leaf, vertically planked batten door beneath an inserted wooden lintel (Plate 11). Traces of an arched brick lintel above this door suggests it may have replaced an earlier window. To the west of the central entrance is a broad modern three-light window, with a small upper hinged opening light. This may also have been inserted into a modified earlier opening, though details are difficult to make out on the heavily painted wall.

At upper ground floor level, this elevation is dominated by a central projecting timber-built extension (G7), carried on 'I' beams and plain cast iron columns (Plate 12). This has one small boarded-up window in each elevation. To the east of this is a bricked-up window opening, under an arched brick lintel (G6). From its location and construction, this appears to be an original feature. To the immediate west is a small fixed and barred 2-light window (C1 stairs), and to the west of that a large opening which formerly held a sash window (G2).

The principal feature at first-floor level is the tall Italianate arched sash window (Plate 13) lighting the main stairwell and landing (G1/F1). This had been almost totally destroyed prior to the survey, though parts of its frame remained, and Woodfield (1986, E39) records that it had margin glazing with red and blue flashed glass. To the east of this are two 2-light casements, one large (F7) and one small (F6), and to the west is a single large sash (F5).

The north end of the west extension was covered with a heavy growth of ivy at the time of the survey, and few details were visible. As with the south elevation, this end of the extension is set back from the main north elevation. Two openings are present,

a low arched doorway at ground-floor level (C2), and an opening for a sash window above (G4).

4.4 *East Elevation* (Fig. 9, Plate 14)

Like the south elevation, the wall of this side of the building is rendered, with scribed ashlar blocks and a string course. The applied quoins to the south are vermiculated, while those to the north are plain. There is a plinth, about one metre lower than that on the south elevation, which reaches ground level towards the south-east corner of the building. The projecting eaves and heavy brackets are also present on this elevation. There is a single sash window at upper ground floor level (G6). This was boarded at the time of the survey, so external details could not be recorded.

4.5 *West Elevation* (Fig. 10, Plate 15)

At the time of the survey, this elevation was almost totally covered by a dense growth of ivy, so it was not possible to record any details. With the exception of short sections of the main part of the building, visible at its north and south ends, this elevation largely comprises the narrow north extension to the building, and the substantial chimney stack rising above. Like the south and east elevations, this side of the building is rendered, so no brickwork detail is visible. The string course already noted on the south elevation continues around this end of the building, which is pierced by a single window at first-floor height (Room F2). The eaves are devoid of the elaborate decoration present elsewhere on the house, though brackets still present on the original west end of the building suggest that they were present prior to the construction of the west extension.

4.6 *Cellar/Lower Ground Floor* (Fig. 11)

Room C1 (Plates 16 & 17)

Size: 3.89 × 1.29m, height 2.16m (passage)

Location: Centre, north side

Description: Entrance passage and stairs to upper ground floor. Floor of quarry tiles (red & black), laid in diamond pattern. Walls to west (C2) and east (C7/C8) both of brick, plastered. Areas of modern machine-made brick in east wall may represent blocked doors to C7 & C8. Wood partition between stairs and passage. 4-panel external door to north, similar internal door to south (C5), 5-plank door to stairs and C2. Ceiling is lath and plaster. Straight staircase (Plate 17), rising up nine treads, with clockwise winder of four treads to F1. Modern handrails to both sides, barred 2-light window to north, cupboard under stairs (Plate 16).

Room C2 (Plate 18)

Size: 3.56 × 3.37m, height 2.09m

Location: North-west corner

Description: Office: former kitchen. Floor of lino tiles. Walls clad with modern wood-effect hardboard: plain skirting. Large fireplace to west, with alcove to south, converted to a cupboard. Modern 3-light window to north. Doorways to east (C1) and west (C3). Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room C3 (Plate 19)

Size: 6.38 × 1.47m, height c.2.21m

Location: West extension

Description: Store? Long narrow room running the full length of the west extension. Sloping quarry tiled floor, walls of limewashed brick. West wall constructed in thin (brick width?) panels, with buttresses supporting a beam that carries the wall and the floor joists above. Blocked openings, possibly small windows, in two of the panels. Semicircular arched doorway to north (present fixtures are all modern), doorway to east (C1), also east to C4, fitted with 4-plank door with window slot. Ceiling comprised of north-south boarding to floors above, supported on east-west joists, all sawn timber, painted white.

Room C4 (Plates 20-22)

Size: 4.20 × 2.89m, height 2.08m

Location: South-west corner

Description: Unknown function. Floor of quarry tiles (red & black), laid in diamond pattern, as in C1. External wall to south has change in thickness c.1.4m above floor level. Vertical join in east wall, south of doorway to C5. Wall to north (C2) retains coat of limewashed plaster. West wall comprises central base to chimney stack, with alcove inset c.1m above floor level, and full-height alcove to south (Plate 22). Window in south wall (Plate 20), with rounded brickwork to reveal, and modern blocking. Doorways to west (C3) and east (C5: Plate 21). Former has one step leading down into room. Ceiling of modern hardboard sheets.

Room C5 (Plate 23)

Size: 1.98 × 1.37m, height 2.15m

Location: Centre, south of C1

Description: Lobby. Quarry tiled floor, as C1 and C4. Plastered walls, some plaster missing. Doorways to C1 to north, C4 to west, and C6 to south (with architrave). Doorway to C7 to east has concrete lintel and cement rendering, and is modern. Some modern ceramic tiling on south wall, near south-east corner. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room C6 (Plate 24)

Size: 1.90 × 1.42m, height 2.10m

Location: South of C5

Description: Storeroom. Concrete floor. Plastered brick walls to all elevations. Doorway to north (C5), small 2-light fixed window in south-east corner, opening into light well around bay window. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room C7 (Plates 25-28)

Size: 4.49 × 4.25m, height 2.14m

Location: South-east corner

Description: Former parlour? This is the largest room on this floor. Quarry tiled floor, plastered brick walls to all elevations. East wall has change in thickness, 1.29m above floor level. Doorways to west (C5 – modern) and north (C8): also possible blocked doorway to west (C1). Principal feature in room is the bay window in the south wall (Plate 26). This is fronted by a ‘window seat’ occupying the full depth of the bay. As previously noted, the three windows in the bay are blocked with modern materials. At the centre of the east wall is a chimney breast, its fire surround removed

(Plate 27), with a built-in cupboard to the south, and a blocked window to the north (Plate 28). Blocking material in this instance is modern machine-made bricks. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room C8 (Plate 29)

Size: 4.27 × 2.23m, height 2.15m

Location: North-east corner.

Description: Workshop. Modern concrete floor, plastered brick walls to all elevations, partly covered by perforated metal sheet. Step in east wall, as in C7. External 2-leaf door to north: brickwork around door suggests some repair/modification has taken place, possibly change from window. Doorway to south (C7), possible blocked doorway to west (C1). Ceiling is lath and plaster.

4.7 Upper Ground Floor (Fig. 12)

Room G1 (Plates 30-38)

Size: 7.04 × 1.32m, height 2.83m

Location: Central, north-south axis

Description: Entrance hall and stairs to first floor. Floor carpeted, over boards (prob. north-south). Walls all brick, plastered. A projecting wall corner at the foot of the stairs has an inset metal bar edge, forming a rounded surface to reduce damage to and from passing traffic. Skirtings are tall, stepped, with moulded top edges. A dado rail follows the stairs to the first floor. Moulded 'rose and bracket' cornice (Plate 32). Architraves over major internal doors (G2 & G5) comprise uprights and lintels with moulded edges, lap jointed at the upper corners of the frame, with decorative horizontal and vertical projections from their upper corners (Plate 33). External door to south: only lower part survives reasonably intact. Modern part-glazed partition with door to north of entrance. Between this and the entrance is a hatch in the east wall to G5 (Plate 34). North of the partition are the doors to principal rooms G2 & G5. Door to the latter is four-panelled, with diagonal grooves in panels forming a chevron pattern. The heavily burnt door-case leading into G2 has a similar pattern (Plate 35). Ceiling is lath and plaster.

The open string, dogleg stairs to the first floor rise northwards in the north-west corner (Plate 31). At the bottom is a large step with a curving edge, then seven steps, then a winder leading to a half-landing. Above this, a further five steps climb southwards to the first-floor landing (F1). Each step has two turned baluster spindles (Plate 37), each projecting below the step (Plate 36) and ending in 'bun' terminals. These support an elaborate handrail of inverted 'T' section (Plate 38) that ran continuously from the newel post at the bottom of the stairs to the top. The newel post at the bottom appears to have comprised a series of turned sections dowelled together: that at the top had been completely removed.

Passing to the east of the stairs, a passage leads to the stairs to the lower ground floor, and to north extension G7.

Room G2 (Plates 39-46)

Size: 7.05 × 3.92m, height 2.86m

Location: West part, between G1 and west extension

Description: Principal living room? At the time of the survey this was the largest room in the house, though there is evidence to suggest that it was originally split into two rooms. This room had been the seat of the fire mentioned in Section 3, and was consequently the most damaged part of the house. The seat of the fire had been at the north end of the room, and caution was required when recording in that area.

The floor is boarded, consisting of planks *c.*220mm in width, laid east-west across joists set at *c.*300mm intervals. Much of the floor is either covered with debris or is fire-damaged, so details such as repairs or modifications cannot be ascertained. All walls of the room are of brick, originally plastered, though most of this has fallen off. Skirtings are as described for G1. Timber insets in the wall mark the location of a dado rail, and there is a moulded cornice throughout. The doorway east to G1 is described above. Openings for large sash windows are located at the north (Plate 40) and south (Plate 41) ends of the room, both slightly off-centre. While the northern opening is stepped, the southern is of particular interest as it is splayed. None of the timber components for either window survive, though possible arrangements may be suggested by the surviving windows in G6, F4, F9 and F10 (below).

The most striking aspect of the room is to the west, where the chimney stacks noted on the floor below (C2, C4) rise up the west wall. The south stack (Plate 42) is slightly narrower, and the fireplace has at some time been reduced in width to take a smaller fire. To the south of the fireplace is a tall arched alcove. The fireplace in the wider north stack (Plate 43) has also been reduced in size once, if not twice, and has an unusually deep arched brick lintel. Both stacks still have fittings for gas wall lights in place, two per stack.

Between the two stacks a wide, elaborate arched opening leading to G3 (Plates 44, 45) has been inserted in the original west wall of the building. While the edge of the north stack forms the north side of this opening, it was evidently necessary to reduce the width of the opening to retain symmetry, so the south side is supported by timber framing, *c.*300mm from the north side of the south stack. The arch itself has been heavily damaged by fire, but sufficient remains to show that it was panelled in similar fashion to the door-case between G1 and G2, with added embellishment in the form of ornamental moulded plaster brackets 'supporting' the upper part of the arch (Plate 46).

Above the crown of the arch is supported a timber beam running east-west across the ceiling of G2 (Plate 39). This beam appears to mark the line of the wall that originally divided the two rooms, being inserted following its removal, to support the floor above. This beam is encased within a lath and plaster shell, incorporating parts of the cornice on both sides. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room G3 (Plates 47, 48)

Size: 3.86 × 1.36m, height 2.86m

Location: West extension, south

Description: Former lobby. This room occupies about two-thirds of the west extension. Boarded floor, planks north-south, with lino above. Plastered brick walls to all sides, with skirtings as G1 & G2. Arch to east (G2), which had on this side prior

to the fire a modern timber-framed glazed screen, with a door. External door to south, 4-panel, with rectangular fanlight above. Though complete internally, this doorway has been bricked up and rendered externally so that no trace of it is visible, other than the fanlight. Doorway to north to G4, with 4-panel door. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room G4 (Plate 48)

Size: 2.40 × 1.45m, height 2.86m

Location: West extension, north

Description: WC. Floor, walls and skirtings as G3. Door to south (G3) described above: opening for sash window to north. Ceiling is lath and plaster. Fittings comprise a mid to late 20th-century toilet and hand basin.

Room G5 (Plates 49-51)

Size: 4.35 × 3.61m, height 2.88m

Location: South-east corner

Description: Office: former living room. This room, along with G6, was originally a single room, the largest in the house, measuring 4.35 × 7.05m. Floor boarded, east-west planks, under carpet. Walls to east, west and south of brick, plastered: north wall is a modern partition, probably of plastered blockwork. Skirtings and architrave (west door) as described for G1. Ceiling is lath and plaster. There is a deep moulded cornice (Plate 49) with picture rail below, and traces of a dado rail. As well as the aforementioned door and hatch west to G1, a doorway leads north through the modern partition to G6. The south wall is largely taken up by the bay window (Plate 50), with its three tall two-light sash windows. On the east wall the chimney stack rises through the room from C7, with a mid to late 20th-century brick surround and hearth, which has more recently been fitted with a gas fire (Plate 51).

Room G6 (Plate 52)

Size: 4.35 × 3.36m, height 2.88m

Location: North-east corner

Description: Office: former living room. This room, along with G5, was originally a single room, the largest in the house, measuring 4.35 × 7.05m. Floor boarded, east-west planks, under carpet. Walls to east, west and north of brick, plastered: south wall is a modern partition, probably of plastered blockwork. Skirtings and architrave (west door) as described for G1. There is a deep moulded cornice with picture rail below, and traces of a dado rail, essentially a continuation of that in G5. A doorway leads south through the modern partition to G5. To the east is a 2-light sash window (boarded externally), set in a panelled splayed surround. There is no trace internally of the bricked-up window visible on the north elevation in this area. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room G7 (Plate 53)

Size: 2.29 × 1.67m, height 2.08m

Location: North extension

Description: Kitchen. This is located in the north extension. Modern composition board floor, plain skirting, walls and ceiling matchboarded and painted white. One small window in each elevation (all boarded up). Modern fitted kitchen units on east wall, fitted cupboards to west. Plain four-panel door to G1.

4.8 **First Floor** (Fig. 13)

Room F1 (Plates 54, 55)

Size: 4.37 × 2.75m, height 2.66m (landing)

Location: Central/centre north

Description: Landing and stairwell. Stairs described above (G1). Floor boarded, planks east-west, under carpet. Walls all single-skin brick, plastered, with 19th-century 'torus' moulded skirtings, plain dado rail, moulded architraves, and 'rose and bracket' cornice, as in G1. Doorways with moulded architraves (clockwise from stairs) to F6, F8, F9, F10, F4 & F5. Lit by Italianate window to north (see *North Elevation*). Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room F2

Size: 2.54 × 1.45m, height 2.07m

Location: West extension, north

Description: Unknown function. Floor boarded north-south, under lino tiles. Plain skirting. East, west and north walls are plaster over brick: south wall is modern studding and board partition. Doorways to F5 (east) and F3 (south). Sash window to west, boarded internally, so no details visible. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room F3 (Plate 56)

Size: 3.90 × 1.31m, height 2.07m

Location: West extension, south

Description: Unknown function. Floor boarded north-south, under lino tiles. Plain skirting. East, west and south walls are plaster over brick: north wall is modern studding and board partition. Doorways to F4 (east) and F2 (north). Sash window to south. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room F4 (Plates 57-59)

Size: 3.62 × 3.87m, height 2.66m

Location: South-west corner

Description: Bedroom: latterly office. Floor boarded east-west, under carpet. Walls all plaster over brick. Torus skirting, modern plaster coving. Modern flush panelled door east to F1. Arch with panelled casing to F3 to west (Plate 59), alongside chimney breast, which has a modern brick surround and hearth (Plate 58), similar to that in G5. Arched alcove to south of chimney breast. Shallow arched alcove in east wall near south-east corner (Plate 57) appears to mark a blocked doorway to F10. 1/1 sash window in splayed panelled surround to south. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room F5 (Plates 60, 61)

Size: 3.54 × 3.24m, height 2.66m

Location: North-west corner

Description: Bedroom: latterly office. Floor boarded east-west, under carpet. Walls all plaster over brick. Torus skirting and picture rail. 4-panel door east to F1. 2-light sash window in splayed panelled surround to north (Plate 61). Chimney breast to west (Plate 60), with half-height alcove to south and doorway to F2 to north (originally cupboard?). Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room F6

Size: 2.64 × 1.57m, height 2.73m

Location: North side, east of F1

Description: Cloakroom & WC. Floor boarded east-west, under lino. Walls all plaster over brick, no skirtings. Room divided by east-west two-thirds height screen into cloakroom area with hand basin (south) and WC (north). Small 2-light window to north, 4-panel door south to F1. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room F7 (Plate 62)

Size: 2.70 × 1.39m, height 2.73m

Location: North-east corner

Description: WC. Originally formed a single room with F8. Floor boarded east-west, under lino. Walls all plaster over brick, except south wall, which is a modern studding partition. Door through partition to F8. Modern casement window to north. West wall with F6 slightly overlaps this window, suggesting it is of later date. Ceiling is lath and plaster. Fittings include mid to late 20th-century WC and hand basin.

Room F8 (Plate 63)

Size: 2.76 × 1.77m, height 2.73m

Location: South of F7

Description: Cloakroom. Originally formed a single room with F8. Floor boarded east-west, under lino. Walls all plaster over brick, except north wall, which is a modern studding partition. Door through partition to F7, 6-panel door west to F1. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

Room F9 (Plate 64)

Size: 3.69 × 3.34m, height 2.68m

Location: South-east corner

Description: Bedroom: latterly office. Floor boarded east-west, under carpet. Walls all plaster over brick. Torus skirting, modern plain plaster coving. Modern flush-panelled door west to F1. 2-light sash window in splayed panelled surround to south, as F4. Chimney breast to east, with half-height alcove to north and full-height cupboard to south. Ceiling is lath and plaster. 1/1 sash window in splayed panelled surround to south, as F4.

Room F10

Size: 2.77 × 2.50m, height 2.67m

Location: South side, between F4 & F9

Description: Bedroom: latterly office. Floor boarded east-west, under carpet. Walls all plaster over brick. Torus skirting. 4-panel door north to F1. 1/1 sash window in splayed panelled surround to south, as F4. Traces of blocked doorway to F4 to west. Ceiling is lath and plaster.

4.9 Roof

As noted above, the roof is of hipped gable construction, slate clad. While close examination and measurement of the roof structure was not possible for health and safety reasons, observations were possible through collapsed sections of the ceiling, notably in F4. These revealed the roof structure to consist of kingpost trusses with diagonal braces supporting the ends of the main ridge, possibly one or two

intermediate trusses. Purlins were set at mid height on all four elevations. An indication of this appears in the north-south cross-section through the building (Fig. 14). The two separate chimney stacks at the west end of the building come together to form a single stack within the roof space, which survives above roof level. From the presence of a single stack at the east end of the building there must also have been a narrower chimney stack above. This is now truncated within the roof space.



Plate 1: The Villa from the south-east, c.1998



Plate 2: South elevation, west extension from south-east



Plate 3: Detail of eaves brackets



Plate 4: South elevation, detailing above and below windows (G2 & F4)



Plate 5: South elevation, detail of first-floor window (F4)



Plate 6: South elevation, detail of front door (G1)



Plate 7: Bay window, from west



Plate 8: South elevation, detail of lower section of bay window (C7)



Plate 9: North elevation, tuck pointing under applied quoin on SE corner



Plate 10: North elevation, from north



Plate 11: North elevation, detail of east part

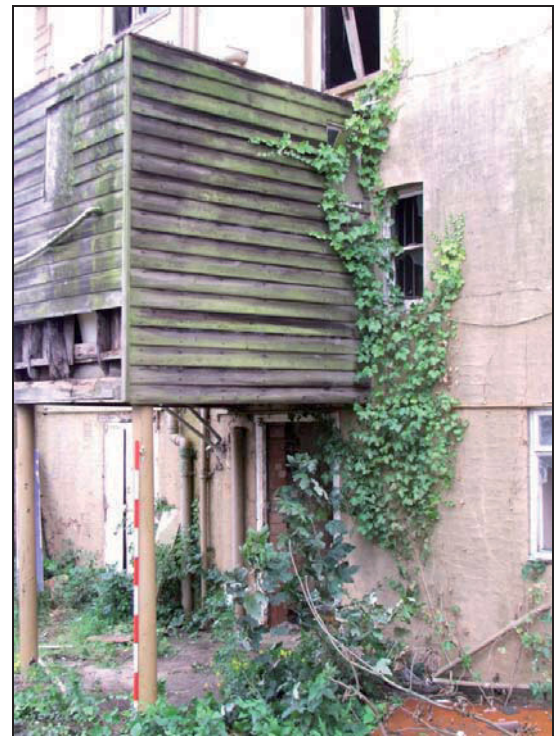


Plate 12: North elevation, rear entrance (C1) and extension (G7) from north-west



Plate 13: North elevation arched window (F1)



Plate 14: East elevation, from east



Plate 15: West elevation, from west



Plate 16: C1, understairs cupboard



Plate 17: C1 stairs, looking north (up)



Plate 18: C2, looking north-west



Plate 19: C3, looking north



Plate 20: C4, looking south (blocked window)



Plate 21: C4, looking east



Plate 22: C4, looking west (base of chimney stack)



Plate 23: C5, looking east



Plate 24: C6, looking south-east



Plate 25: C7, looking north-west



Plate 26: C7, looking south-west (bay window)



Plate 27: C7, looking north-east (chimney breast)



Plate 28: C7, looking north-east (doorway & blocked window)



Plate 29: C8, looking west



Plate 30: G1, looking south



Plate 31: G1, looking north (stairs)

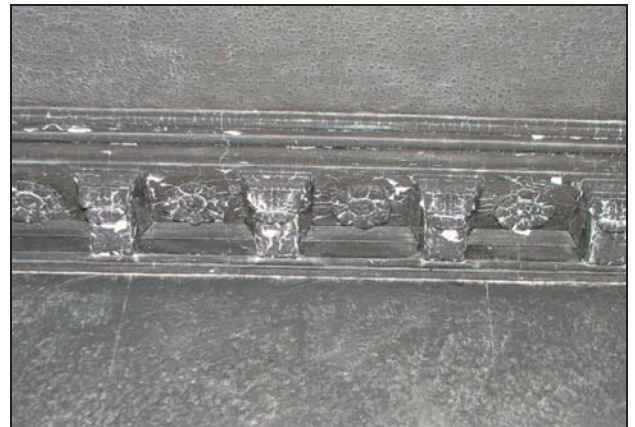


Plate 32: G1, cornice detail



Plate 33: G1, detail of door to G5



Plate 34: G1, hatch to G5



Plate 35: G1, door case to G2



Plate 36: F1, stairs above half landing



Plate 37: G1, baluster cut from stairs



Plate 38: G1, section through stair handrail



Plate 39: G2, detail of ceiling and central beam



Plate 40: G2, north window, looking north-west



Plate 41: G2, south window, looking south



Plate 42: G2, south fireplace looking west



Plate 43: G2, detail of north fireplace



Plate 44: G2, arch looking west



Plate 45: G2, detail of arch, looking north-west



Plate 46: G2, fragment of plaster decoration from arch



Plate 47: G3 & G4, looking north



Plate 48: G3, looking south (blocked door)



Plate 49: G5, detail of cornice



Plate 50: G5, bay window looking south-east



Plate 51: G5, fireplace looking east



Plate 52: G6, window looking south-east



Plate 53: G7, looking north



Plate 54: F1, looking south



Plate 55: F1, looking east



Plate 56: F3, looking south



Plate 57: F4, looking east



Plate 58: F4, looking west



Plate 59: F4, detail of arch and door casing to F3



Plate 60: F5, looking west



Plate 61: F5, looking north-east



Plate 62: F7, looking north-west



Plate 63: F8, looking east



Plate 64: F9, looking east

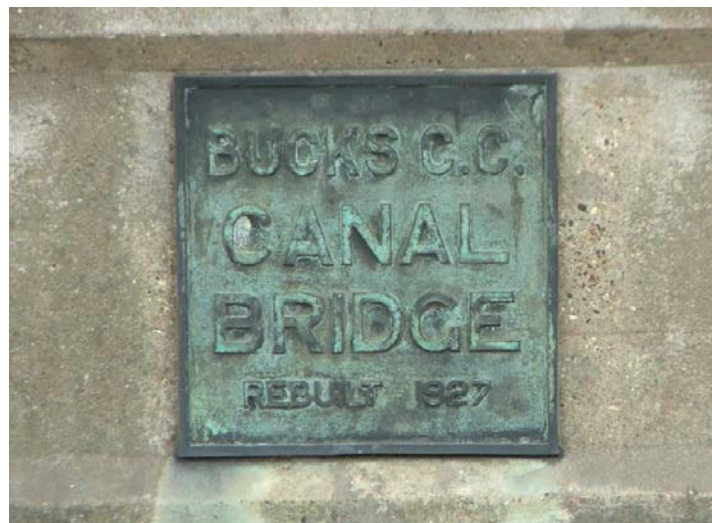


Plate 65: Date plaque on canal bridge

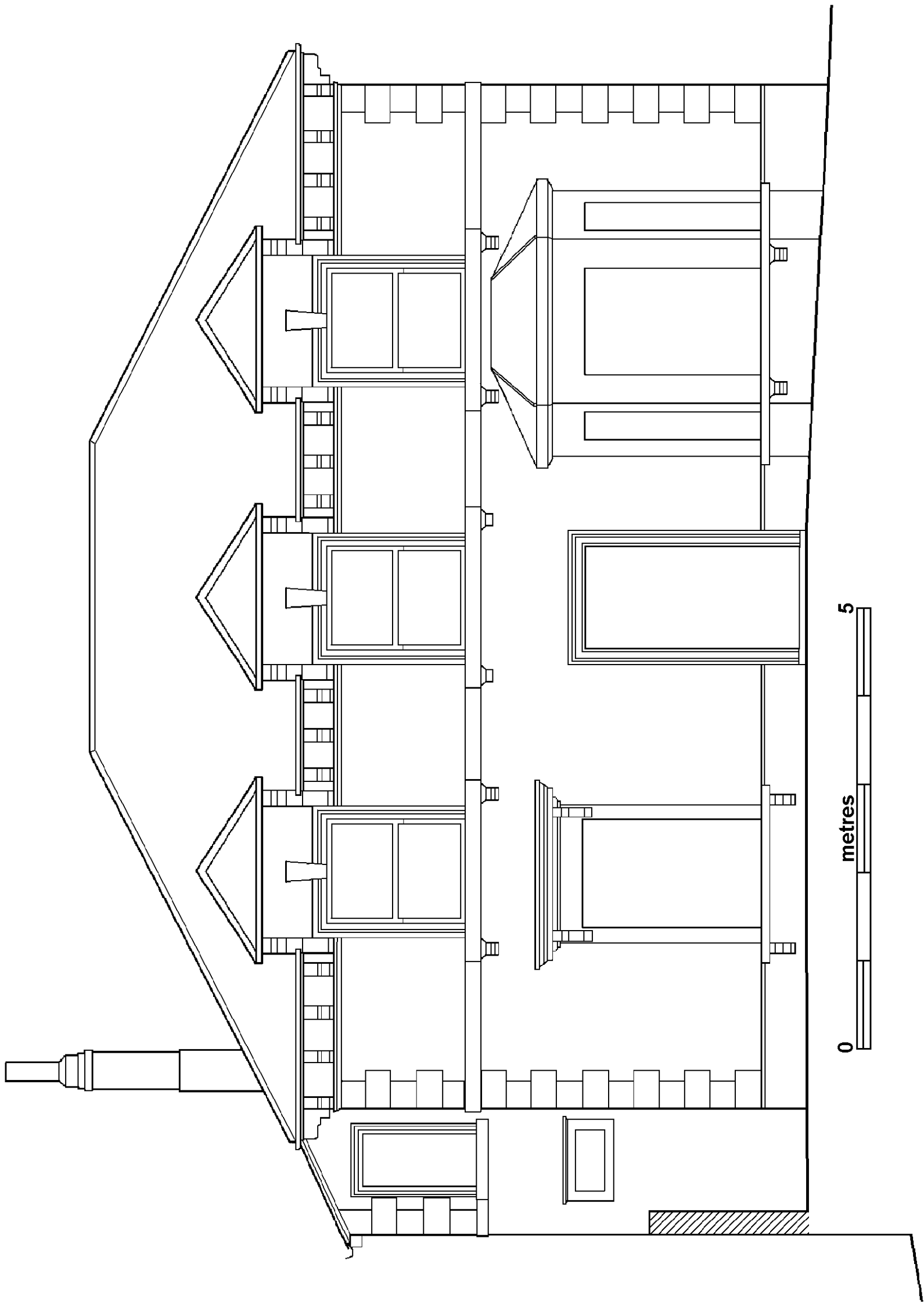


Figure 7: South elevation (scale 1:50)

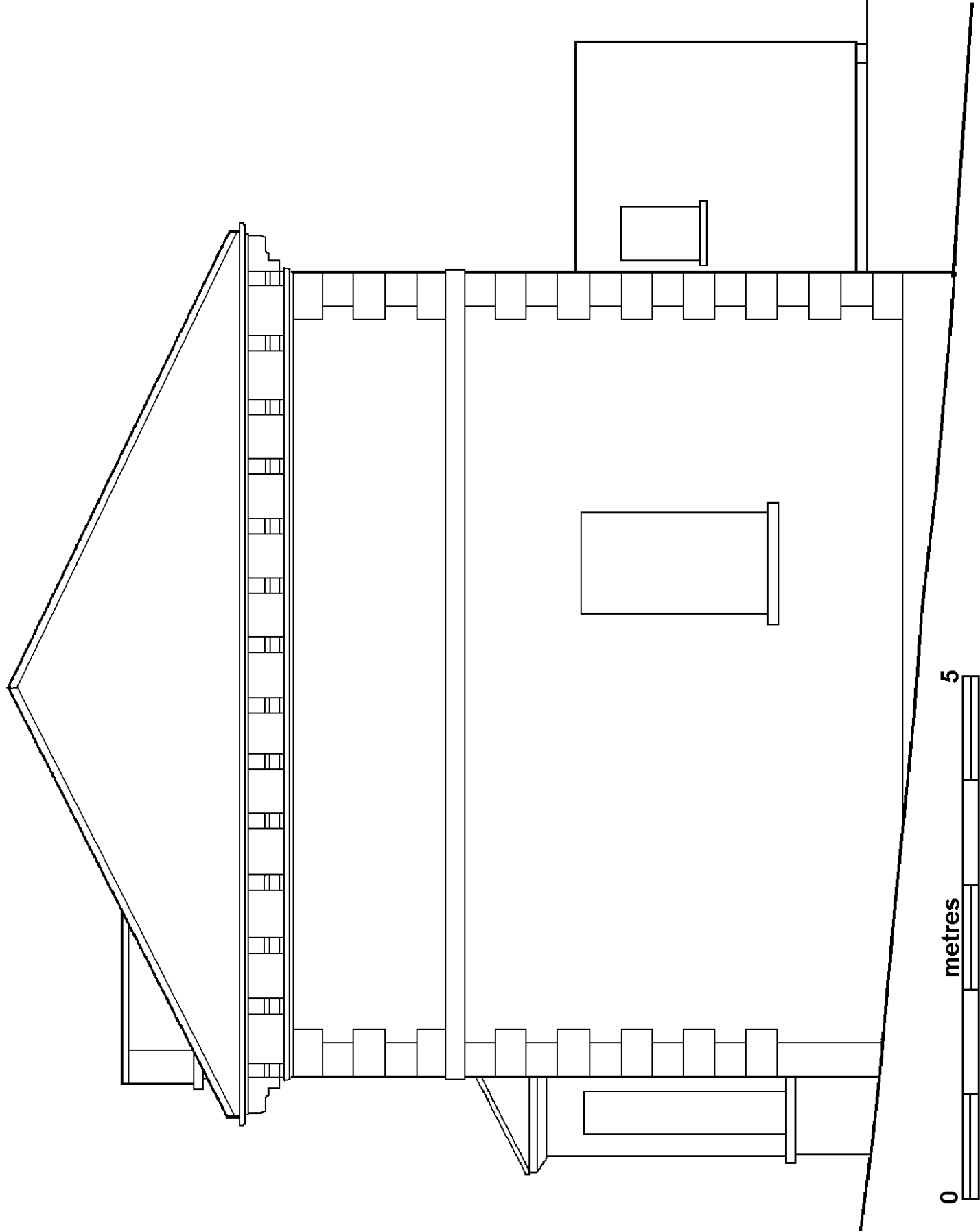


Figure 9: East elevation (scale 1:50)

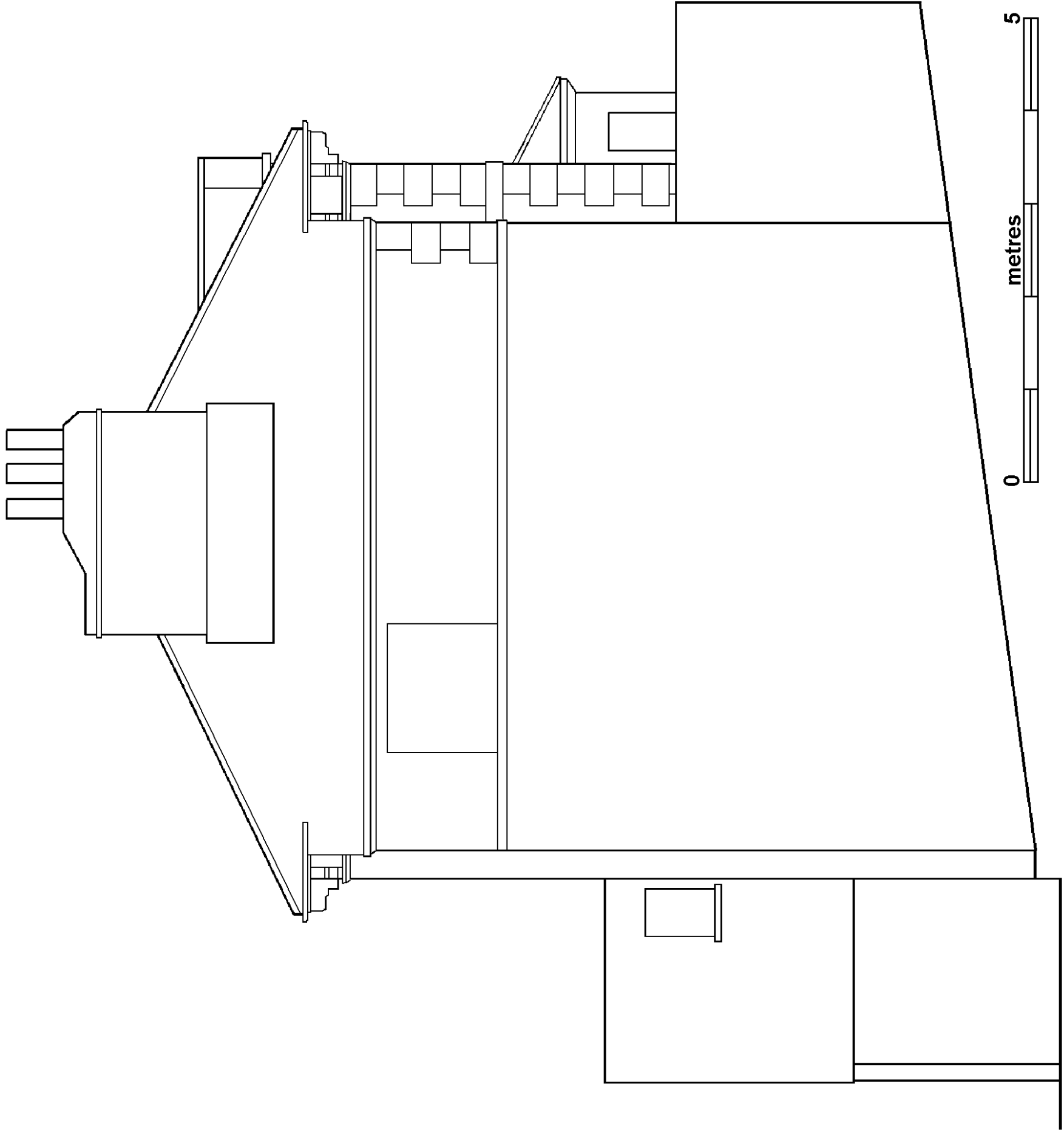


Figure 10: West elevation (scale 1:50)

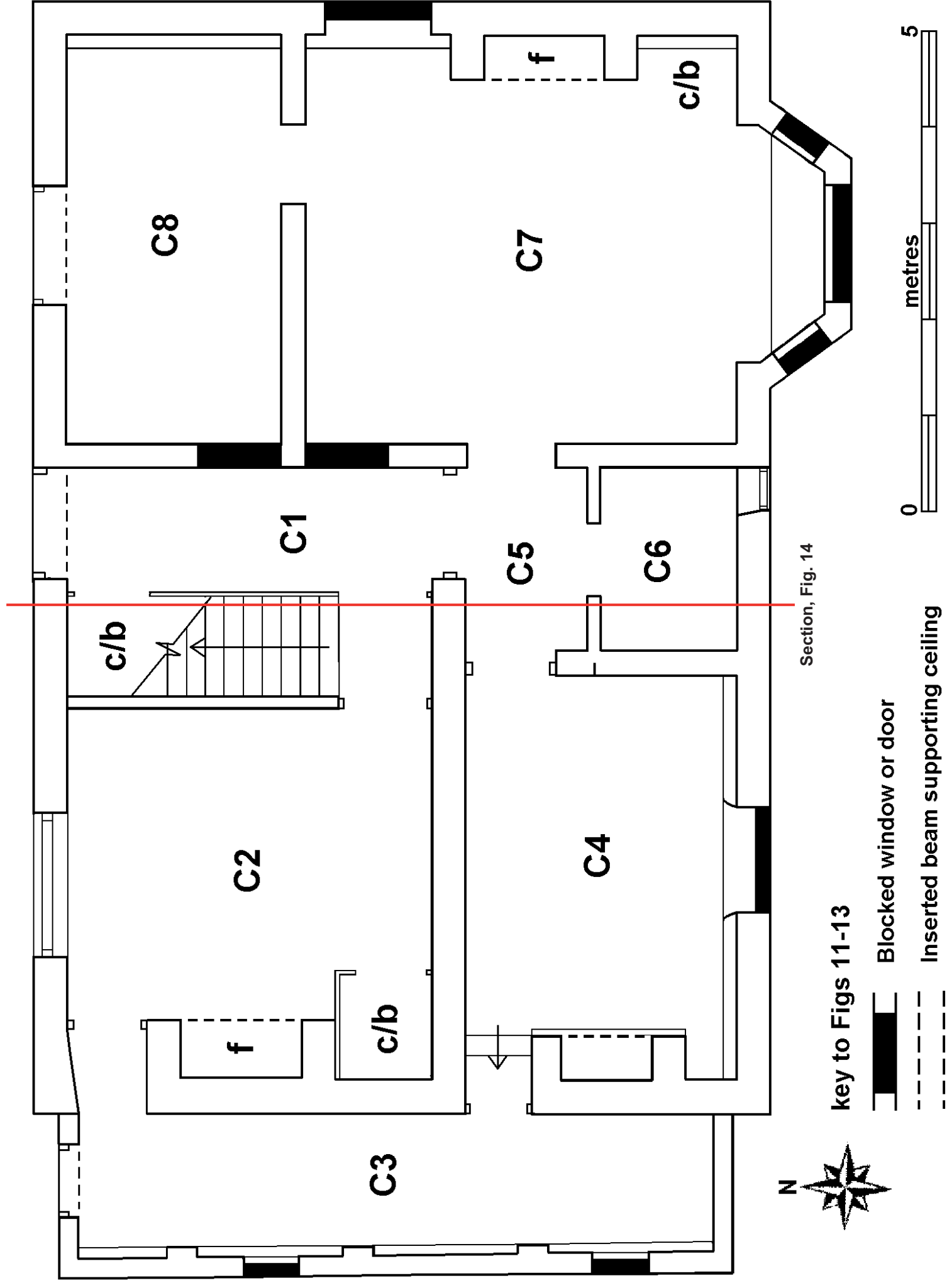


Figure 11: Lower ground floor (scale 1:50)

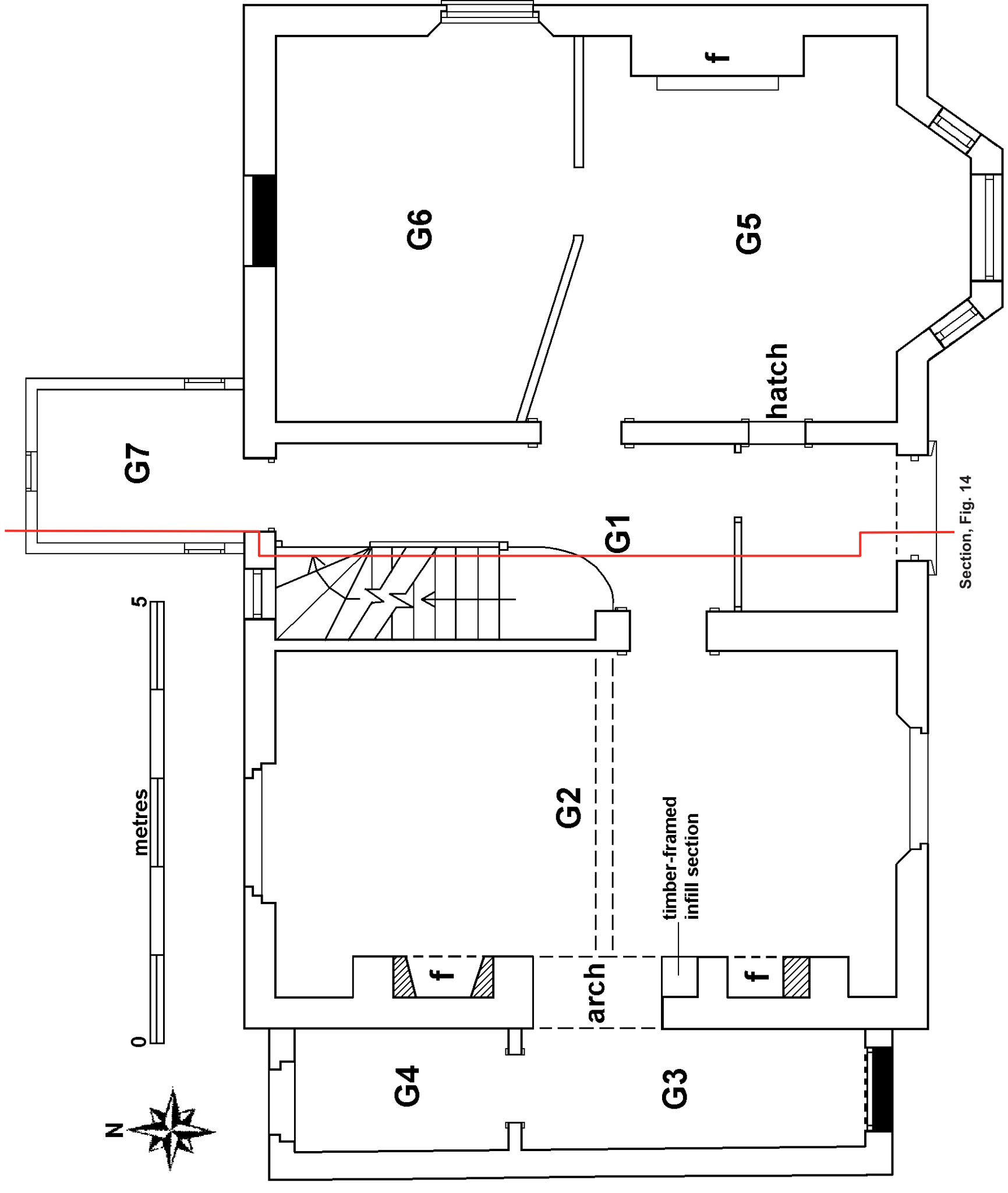


Figure 12: Ground floor (scale 1:50)

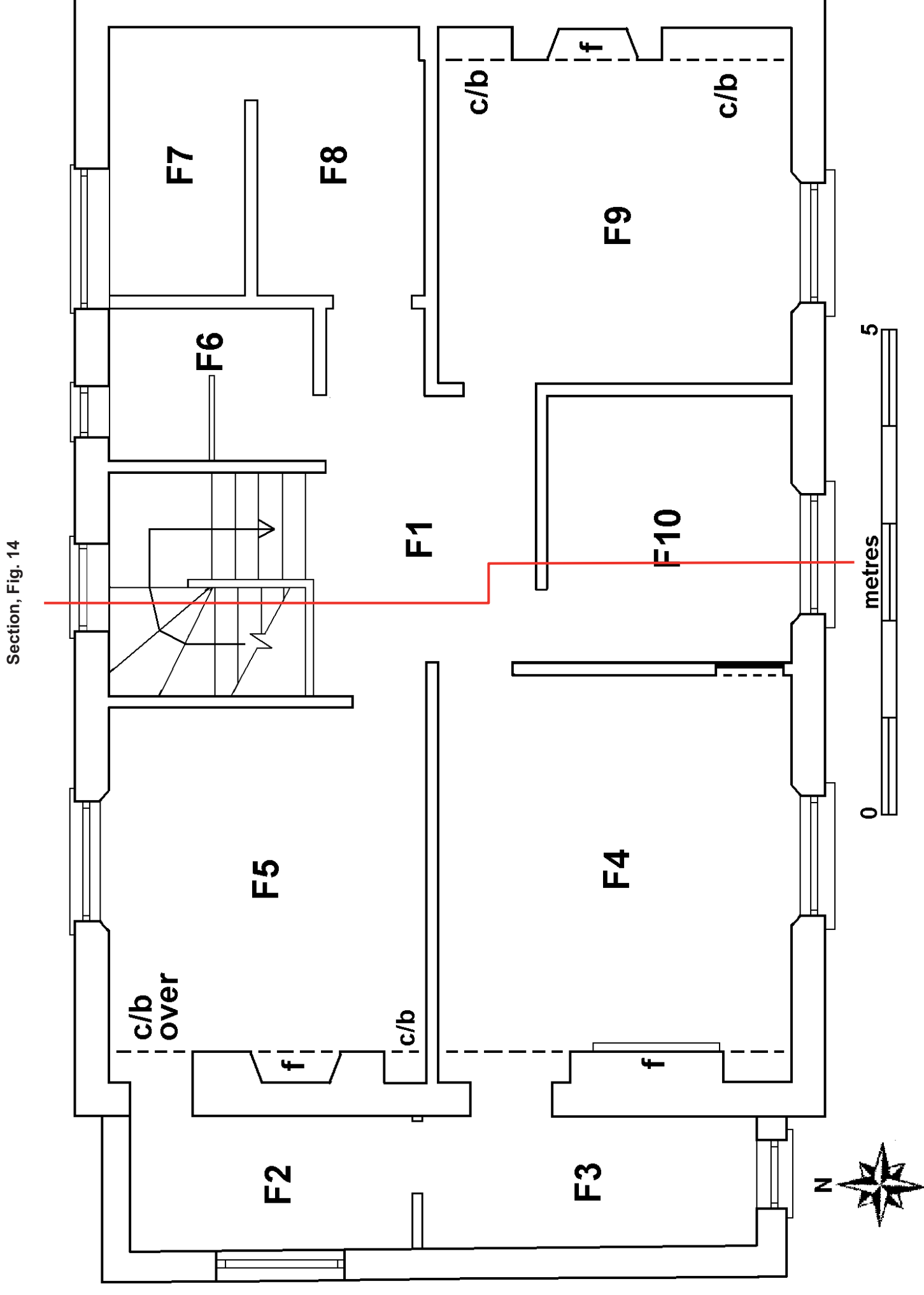


Figure 13: First floor (scale 1:50)

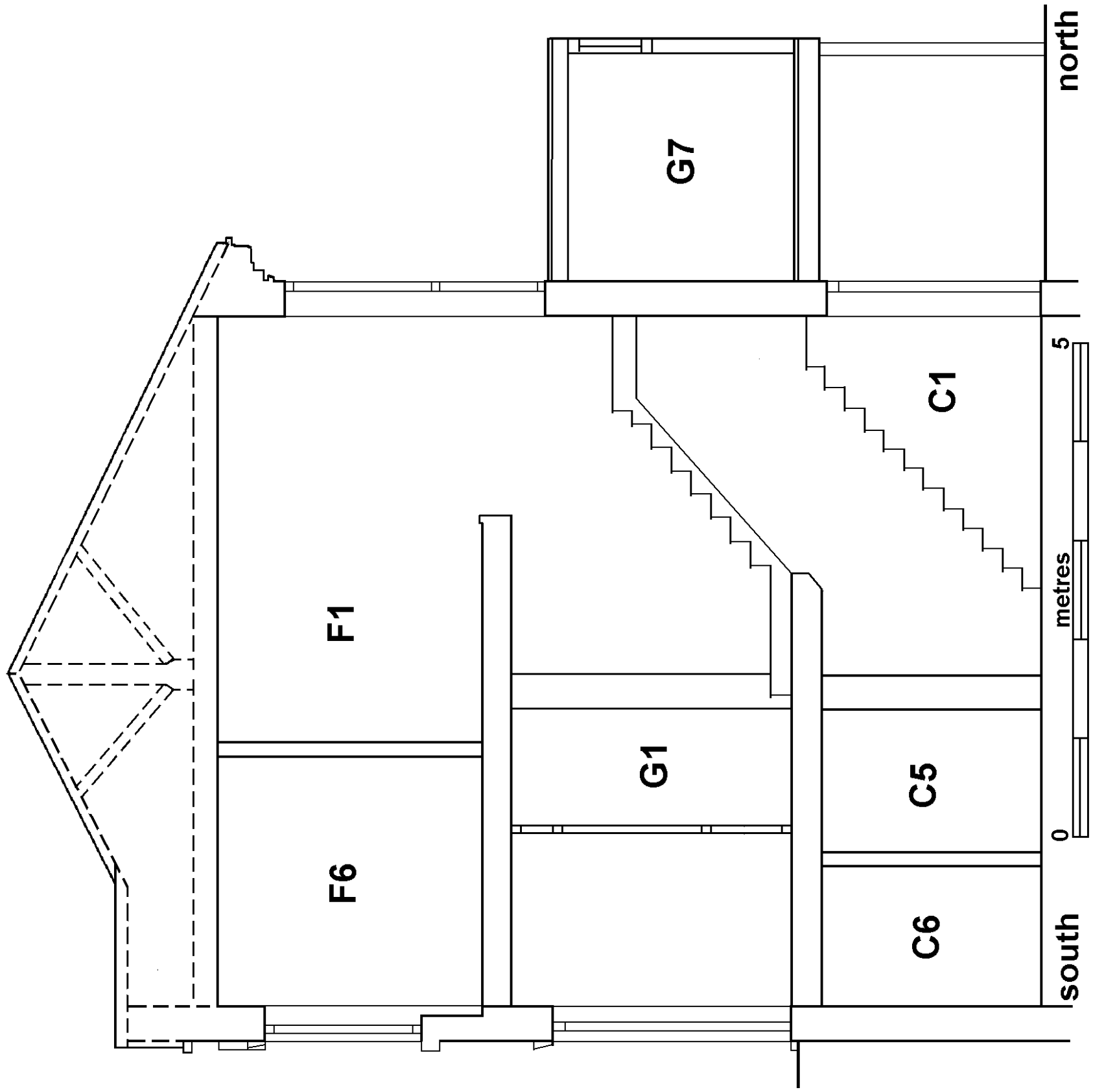


Figure 14: Typical south-north section (scale 1:50)

5 Discussion

5.1 *Dating*

From the available cartographic evidence, The Villa probably has its origins in the 18th century, as one element of a complex of buildings on the pre-canal alignment of Watling Street, arranged around three sides of a yard. This basic group of buildings is unaffected by the construction of the canal on its west side, and appears to survive until the late 19th – early 20th century, when those ranges first to the west and later the north disappear, leaving The Villa, on the street frontage to the south, as a detached entity.

The above evidence is at odds with published descriptions of the building. Markham identifies the house as having been built by Gregory Odell Clarke between *c.*1820-70. Woodfield states that the house was built by Clarke *c.*1860. In the light of the above evidence these statements must be re-examined. Markham not unreasonably dates the house based on the date range of Clarke's business activities around the wharf to the north of the house. Woodfield provides a stylistic date for the building, which suggests that Clarke did not build the house until he was in his 70s, also an unlikely scenario.

Taking the cartographic evidence into account, the house can be shown to be over half a century earlier than Markham and Woodfield suggest. As its present frontage dates to the latter part of the 19th century it is likely that the original 18th-century building was refronted at that date. Because of the use of stucco and heavy moulded cement quoins the original external appearance of the building could not be determined by the survey. However, on the south-east corner, where impact damage had knocked off one of the quoins, good-quality facing bricks with tuck pointing were revealed beneath the later applied finishes on the south and east walls. Tuck pointing is a complex and therefore expensive process, so the brickwork on these elevations was evidently meant to be seen when first built.

5.2 *Phasing*

From the results of the survey it is evident that the 18th-century building comprising the core of The Villa underwent a series of external additions and alterations. These comprise the following:

- The narrow western extension. From cartographic evidence this appears to have been added between *c.*1800-81. The purpose of such a long narrow extension is uncertain.
- The two-storey bay window. On stylistic grounds this is likely to be of mid to late 19th-century date. As this feature does not appear on any OS maps, there is no firm dating for it.
- The refronting of the building, with stucco and applied cement quoins. Stylistically this can be dated to the latter half of the 19th century.
- The construction of the timber extension to the rear. On cartographic grounds this can be dated to between 1881 and 1925.
- The blocking of lower ground floor windows (C4, C7). From the materials used, this was carried out in the last fifty years.

In addition to the above, there have also been significant alterations to the fenestration at the rear of the building. As all the windows and doors involved are modern softwood fixtures, it seems reasonable to suppose that all are of 20th-century date. The date of the blocking of the north window to G6 remains uncertain.

5.3 *Interior*

To an extent The Villa conforms to the bilaterally symmetric plan of a three-bay Victorian house. The lower ground floor, entered from the rear, was evidently where the servants were located. From its large fireplace, C2 was evidently the kitchen, and the larger C7, with its fireplace and bay window (albeit in a light well) was probably the servants' parlour. From its size C6 must have been a storeroom or larder. In the absence of any definitive evidence, the functions of C4 and C8 remain uncertain. Other than some relatively recent relocation of doorways, this pattern of rooms remained unaltered throughout the life of the house.

In its original form, the upper ground floor comprised a central entrance and hall (G1) with two similar-sized rooms to the west (latterly G2), and a single large room to the east (latterly G5 & G6). As only one door leads westwards from G1, the northern room (G2b) must have been entered through the southern room (G2a). All three rooms had a fireplace, and were evidently the main living rooms of the house. At some point G2a and G2b were combined to form a single room. A beam was inserted to support the floor above, and an arch was inserted between the chimney breasts, leading to the western extension (G3), which formed a second entrance hall, with a door at the front of the house. The function of this second entrance is uncertain, though as Woodfield suggests that Clarke also had his office in the house, this may have been its entrance. If so, the office was very large and well appointed. On the east side of the house, the original large room was subdivided in the latter half of the 20th century, as the dividing wall is constructed with modern brick or concrete blocks.

The first floor layout originally appears to have comprised five bedrooms arranged around the central stairwell and landing, and remains largely unaltered. Only the north-east room, now comprising F6, F7 & F8, has been subdivided to form toilets and a cloakroom. Following the construction of the western extension, Rooms F4 and F5 were latterly joined to it (F2, F3) by doors knocked through the original end wall. The arch and panelled door casing in F4 may indicate that this was the master bedroom. The function of the narrow room (latterly two rooms, F2 and F3) in the western extension remains uncertain.

Considering that The Villa has served as commercial premises for most if not all of the last century, it appears that many of the more decorative internal features survived intact until the building ceased to be used and was vandalised. Room G2 in particular must have been quite striking, with the corniced ceiling, the decorated panelled arch to G3, and the large sash windows to north and south. Other surviving decorative features of note in the house are the 'rose and bracket' cornices in G1 and F1, and the unusual doors and architraves in G1. In terms of style, all these features can be assigned with some confidence to the 'Arts & Crafts' movement, and likely to date to the late 19th century.

Leaving aside the more obvious modern installations, the windows of The Villa also deserve comment. All the surviving windows, including those in the upper ground floor bay, are 1/1 sashes. These have original catches and handles. The three south-facing first floor windows, and the windows in G6 and F5, all have splayed panelled surrounds. It is possible that the windows in G2 were of a similar design: the north window has a stepped opening, while the brickwork around the south window is splayed. The use of large panes of glass suggests that all these windows date to the latter half of the 19th century, following the abolition of duty on glass in 1857 (Osband 2001, 53). The surrounds are probably contemporary. The tall north-facing Italianate window lighting the main stairwell follows the best principles of late Victorian design: in his book *The Gentleman's House*, published in 1864, Robert Kerr states that landing windows should preferably face north, so that there would be no glare from the sun, and blinds would not be necessary (Osband 2001, 71). The use of coloured glass in this window suggests an Arts & Crafts influence.

The removal of the stair handrails and balusters, apparently just before the survey was carried out, prevented detailed recording and an appreciation of the structure of the stairs as a whole. However, examination of the surviving elements suggests that the stairs are a late 19th-century installation. In particular the tall, thin turned balusters extending below the treads are typical of this period (Hall 2005, 107).

5.4 *Roof*

The roof structure, comprising slate-clad hipped gables supported by king posts with diagonal braces to the purlins, is typically 19th-century in date.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 Cartographic evidence shows that The Villa was one of a group of buildings constructed alongside the pre-canal alignment of Watling Street sometime in the 18th century. While it is possible that The Villa was constructed on the footprint of this 18th-century structure, the fact that the building follows the alignment of the pre-canal road, and does not (in its original form) extend to the canal boundary makes this seem unlikely. The watching brief did not reveal any evidence for an earlier structure on the site.
- 6.2 The survey revealed little evidence for the earlier form of the building. It is likely that its frontage had the same general arrangement, with a central entrance flanked symmetrically by sash windows, though the latter may have been of different sizes. It appears that the frontage and east elevations at least were not rendered, and the brickwork was tuck-pointed. It has been suggested (Giggins, pers. comm.) that the layout of the 18th-century buildings on the site resembles that of an inn, though no evidence supporting this interpretation has come to light as yet.
- 6.3 The group of buildings on Watling Street, along with the land to the rear previously owned by Messrs Goodman and Drayton, had come into the ownership of Gregory Odell Clarke by 1819. Clarke was at this time 31, and presumably already an aspiring businessman, one of the class of local entrepreneurs so typical of the period. The available historical evidence shows that Clarke's business diversified and prospered into the mid 19th century. By 1864 he had handed much of the business over to his son William, who continued to retain control until *c.*1890, after which time the family and the business seem to disappear from view.
- 6.4 The present external form of The Villa, and much of its internal detailing, appears to date to the latter half of the 19th century. By 1850 Gregory Odell Clarke was 62, and it seems unlikely that he would have embarked on a major remodelling of his house at that age. On balance, it seems more likely that the present form of The Villa is the work of his son William, and was carried out *c.*1860, when he took over much of the running of the business from his father.
- 6.5 During the early 20th century, following the disappearance of the Clarke family from the available historical record, The Villa was turned over to commercial use. Prior to this, it has been suggested that at least part of the building housed the offices of the Clarke family business. In the 1920s the building housed the London County Insurance Company, and later (possibly in the 1930s) it was an antiques shop. More recently it was the offices for Metalin and for Reckitt & Coleman's chemical works. Although internal alterations were made for this, notably the installation of additional toilet facilities, much of the late 19th-century interior appears to have escaped alteration or destruction until the building fell into disuse in the 1990s.

7 Acknowledgements

On behalf of ASC, the writer would like to thank Bellway Homes Ltd for commissioning this survey. In particular, thanks are due to Barry Cook of Bellway and the site manager, Dave Bayford, for their assistance and understanding. The project was monitored for Milton Keynes Council by their archaeological officers, Brian Giggins and Nick Crank, whose comments regarding the history and interpretation of the structure were much appreciated. Thanks are also due to the staff of Milton Keynes Library for their assistance with background research.

The survey was led for ASC by the writer, assisted by Ralph Brown, who also prepared the digitised plans and photo lists. The report was edited by David Fell BA MA MIFA.

8 Archive

8.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Project Design
2. Report
3. Historical & Survey notes
4. Architect's and ASC survey drawings
5. List of photographs
6. B/W prints
7. B/W negatives
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

8.2 The archive will be deposited with the Buckinghamshire County Museum.

9 References

Standards & Specifications

- EH 2006 *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice*. English Heritage (London).
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Watching Briefs)*.

Books and Historical Sources:

- Bradbrook, W. 1911 *History of Fenny Stratford*.
- BCM 1982 *Gazetteer of Buckinghamshire Brickyards, 1800-1980*.
- Cook R 1995 *Britain in Old Photos Series: Bletchley*. Alan Sutton.
- Croft, R.A. and Mynard, D.C., 1993 *The changing landscape of Milton Keynes*. Buckinghamshire Archaeol. Soc. Monog. Ser. 5 (Aylesbury).
- Hall, L. 2005 *Period House Fixtures & Fittings 1300-1900*. Countryside Books (Newbury).
- Hancock, A. 2005 *Archaeological Strip and Record: Former Reckitt and Coleman Site, Watling Street, Fenny Stratford, Milton Keynes*. ASC report, ref. 863/WFS/02.
- Hassall 1819 *A Tour of the Grand Junction Canal*.
- Markham, Sir F. 1973 *History of Milton Keynes and District, vol. 1*. White Crescent Press (Luton).
- Markham, Sir F. 1975 *History of Milton Keynes and District, vol. 2*. White Crescent Press (Luton).
- Osband, L. 2001 *Victorian House Style*. David & Charles (Newton Abbot).
- VCH 1927 *The Victoria History of the County of Buckinghamshire*, vol. 3, 274-283.
- Woodfield, P. 1986 *A guide to the historic buildings of Milton Keynes*. Milton Keynes Development Corporation (Milton Keynes).
- Zeepvat, B. 2004 *Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment: Land at Watling Street, Fenny Stratford, Milton Keynes*. ASC report, ref. 623/WFS/02

Maps

Date	Reference	Description
1781	BuCRO Ma 261/I.T	Simpson Estate Map
1881	-	First Edition Ordnance Survey 25" sheet
1925	-	Ordnance Survey 25" sheet
1972	-	Ordnance Survey 1:2500 sheet

Trade Directories:

Date	Directory
1823-24	Pigot's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1831-32	Pigot's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1842	Pigot's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1847	Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1850	Slaters Directory of Buckinghamshire
1854	Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1864	Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1869	Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1877	Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1883	Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1887	Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1891	Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1895	Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire
1899	Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire

Appendix 1: List of Photographs

SITE NO/CODE: 977/WFS			Site Name: The Villa, Watling Street, Fenny Stratford	
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject	Plate
1	✓	1634	East elevation, from east	14
2	✓	1635	East elevation, detail of eaves brackets	3
3	✓	1636	South elevation, from south (with hoarding)	-
4	✓	1637	South elevation, from south (with hoarding)	-
5	✓	1638	South elevation, detail of first-floor window (F4)	5
6	✓	1639	South elevation, window in west extension (F3)	-
7	✓	1640	West elevation, from west	15
8	✓	1641	North elevation, from north-west (towpath)	-
9	✓	1642	North elevation, from north	-
10	✓	1643	North elevation, detail of wooden extension (G7) from north-east	-
11	✓	1644	North elevation, from north	10
12	✓	1645	North elevation, detail of wooden extension (G7) from north	-
13	✓	1646	North elevation, detail of arched window (F1)	13
14	✓	1647	North elevation, detail of doors (C8 & C1)	-
15	✓	1648	East elevation, from north-east	-
16	✓	1649	South elevation, bay window (G5) from south-west	7
17	✓	1650	South elevation, detail of lower section of bay window (C7)	8
18	✓	1651	South elevation, detailing above and below windows (G2 & F4)	4
19	✓	1652	South elevation, detail of front door (G1)	6
20	✓	1653	South elevation, west extension from south-east	2
21	✓	1654	North elevation, detail of wooden extension (G7) from north	-
22	✓	1655	North elevation, west extension from north	-
23	✓	1656	North elevation, detail of east part	11
24	✓	1657	North elevation, close-up of rear entrance (C1)	-
25	✓	1658	North elevation, detail of rear entrance (C1) and extension (G7)	-
26	✓	1659	North elevation, rear entrance (C1) & extension (G7) from north-west	12
27	✓	1660	North elevation, tuck pointing under applied quoin on SE corner	9
28	✓	1661	C1 looking north	-
29	✓	1662	C1: understairs cupboard	16
30	✓	1663	C2 looking north-west	18
31	✓	1664	C2 looking south-east	-
32	✓	1665	C3 looking south	-
33	✓	1666	C3 looking north	19
34	✓	1667	C4 looking east	21
35	✓	1668	C4 looking south (blocked window)	20
36	✓	1669	C4 looking west (base of chimney stack)	22
37	✓	1670	C5 looking east	23
38	✓	1671	C5 looking west (misaligned shot)	-
39	✓	1672	C5 looking west	-
40	✓	1673	C6 looking south-east	24
41	✓	1674	C7 looking north-west	25
42	✓	1675	C7 looking south-west (bay window)	26
43	✓	1676	C7 looking north-east (chimney breast)	27
44	✓	1677	C7 looking north-east (doorway & blocked window)	28
45	✓	1678	C8 looking west	29
46	✓	1679	C8 looking east	-

47	✓	1681	C1 stairs, looking north (up) [1680 is a failed version of this]	17
48	✓	1682	C1 stairs, looking south (down)	-
49	✓	1683	G1, looking south	30
50	✓	1684	G1 looking north (stairs)	31
51	✓	1685	G1 looking north (passage to G7)	-
52	✓	1686	G1, detail of door to G5	33
53	✓	1687	G1 cornice detail	32
54	✓	1688	G1 hatch to G5	34
55	✓	1689	G1 door case to G2	35
56	✓	1690	G2, south fireplace looking west	44
57	✓	1691	G2, arch looking west	44
58	✓	1692	G2, north fireplace looking north-west	-
59	✓	1693	G2 detail of north fireplace	43
60	✓	1694	G2 north window, looking north-west	40
61	✓	1695	G2 south window, looking south	41
62	✓	1696	G2 detail of ceiling and central beam	39
63	✓	1697	G2 detail of cornice	-
64	✓	1698	G2 detail of central beam	-
65	✓	1699	G2 detail of arch, looking south-west	-
66	✓	1700	G2 detail of arch, looking north-west	45
67	✓	1701	G3 & G4, looking north	47
68	✓	1702	G3, looking south (blocked door)	48
69	✓	1703	G2, fragment of plaster decoration from arch	46
70	✓	1704	G5, bay window looking south-east	50
71	✓	1705	G5, fireplace looking east	51
72	✓	1706	G5 looking north-west (door & hatch)	-
73	✓	1707	G5, detail of cornice	49
74	✓	1708	G6, window looking south-east	52
75	✓	1709	G6 detail of cornice	-
76	✓	1710	G7 looking north	53
77	✓	1711	G1, baluster cut from stairs	37
78	✓	1712	G1, section through handrail from stairs	38
79	✓	1713	G1/F1, view south (downstairs) from half-landing	-
80	✓	1714	F1, stairs above half landing	36
81	✓	1715	F1, looking north	-
82	✓	1716	F1, looking south	54
83	✓	1717	F1, looking west	-
84	✓	1718	F1, looking east	55
85	✓	1719	F1, detail of cornice	-
86	✓	1720	F3 looking south	56
87	✓	1721	F3 & F2, looking north	-
88	✓	1722	F4, looking east	57
89	✓	1723	F4, looking west	58
90	✓	1724	F4 detail of arch and door casing to F3	59
91	✓	1725	F5 looking west	60
92	✓	1726	F5 looking north-east	61
93	✓	1727	F7 looking north-west	62
94	✓	1728	F8 looking east	63
95	✓	1729	F9 looking east	64
96	✓	1730	F9 looking south	
97	✓	1731	F10 looking south	
98	-	1732	Site during demolition	

99	-	1733	Site during demolition	
100	-	1734	Site during demolition	
101	-	1735	Site during demolition	
102	-	1736	Site during demolition	
103	-	1737	Site during demolition	
104	-	1738	Site during demolition	
105	-	1739	Date plaque on canal bridge	65

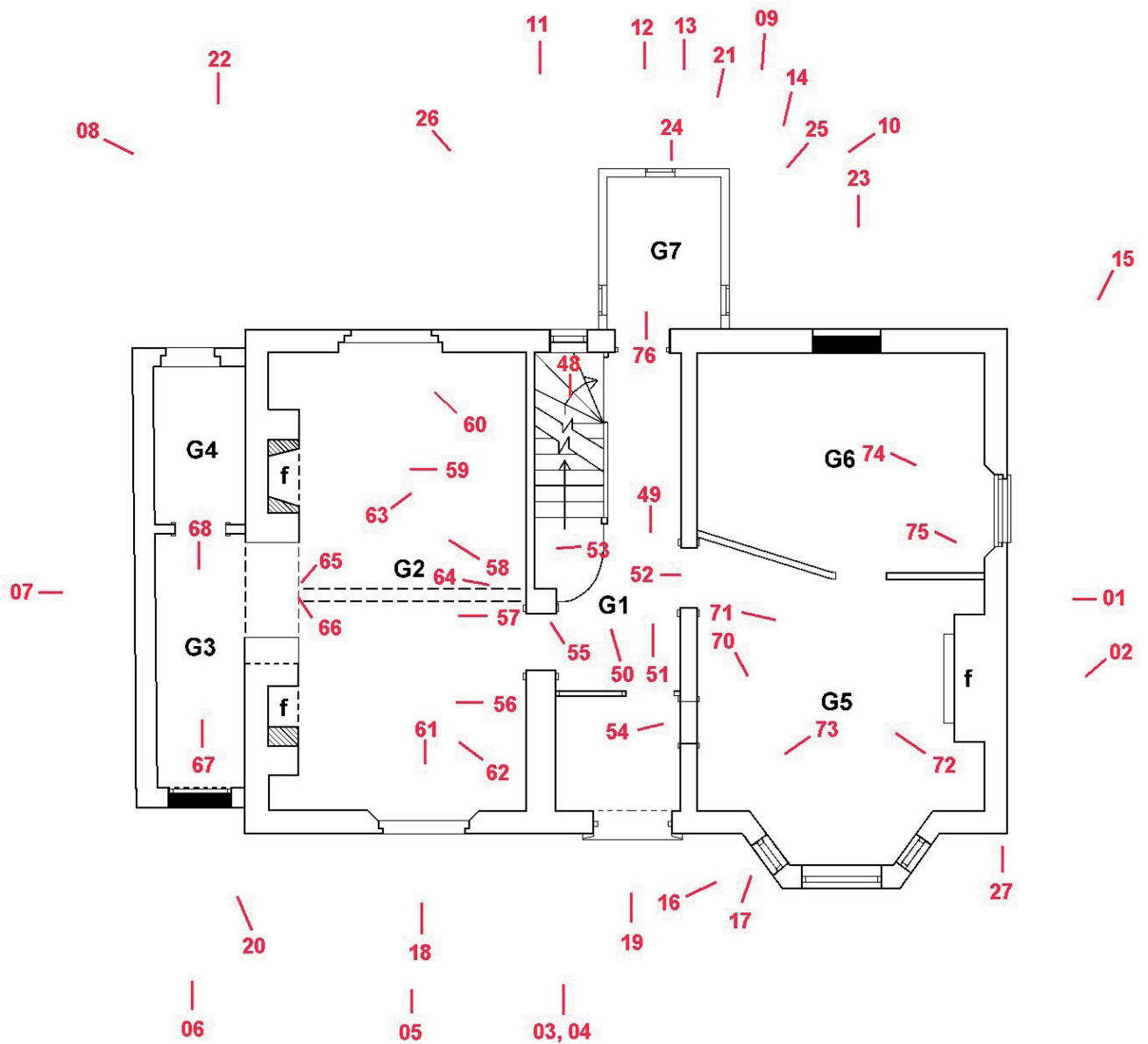


Figure 15: Photo locations: exterior and upper ground floor

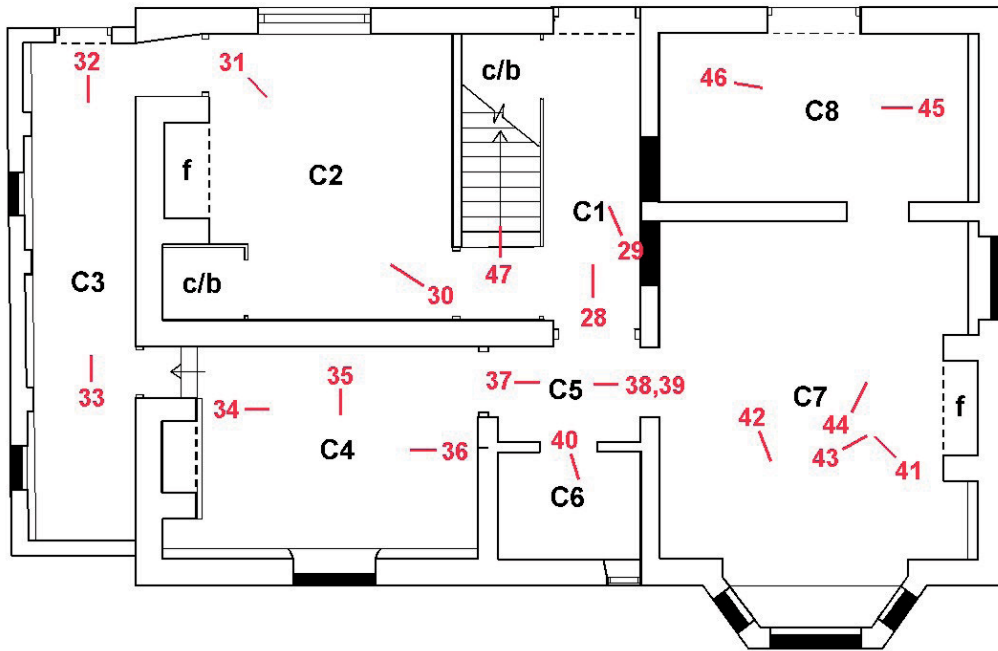


Figure 16: Photo locations: lower ground floor

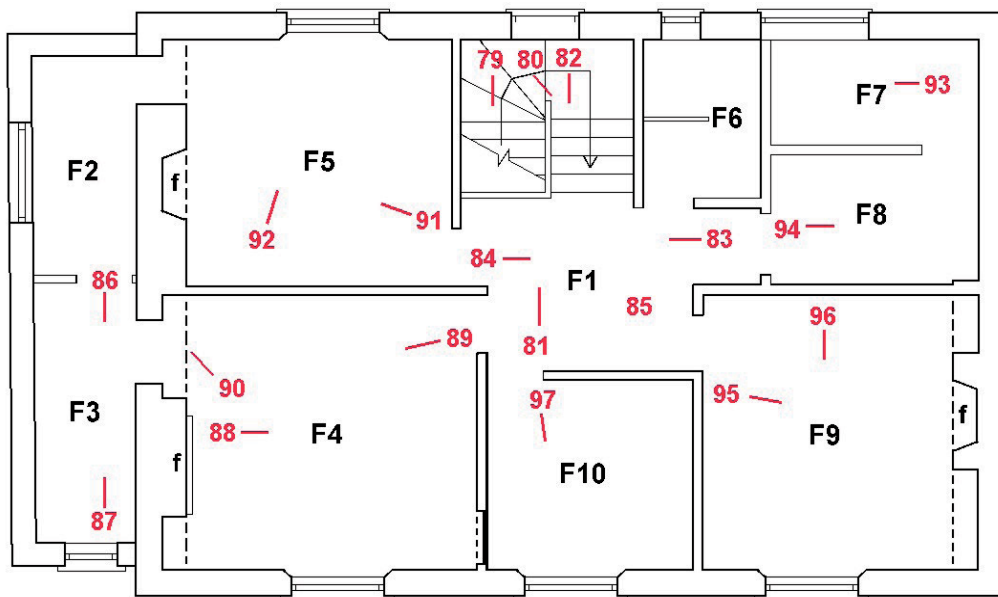


Figure 17: Photo locations: first floor

Appendix 2: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	The Villa, Watling Street, Fenny Stratford, Milton Keynes		
Short Description:	<p><i>In August 2007 an historic building survey was carried out of The Villa, Watling Street, Fenny Stratford, prior to demolition. The Villa, a three storey three-bay house, was one of a group of buildings constructed alongside the pre-canal alignment of Watling Street sometime in the 18th century. The survey revealed little evidence for the earlier form of the building, though tuck-pointed brickwork was revealed beneath later rendering on the south and east elevations.</i></p> <p><i>By 1819 the group of buildings on Watling Street, along with the land to the rear, passed into the ownership of Gregory Odell Clarke, a local entrepreneur. It is likely that Clarke lived at The Villa, which may also have housed his office. By 1864 he had handed much of the business over to his son William, who continued to retain control until c.1890. Contrary to previous accounts, it seems likely that the present form of The Villa, which stylistically dates to the latter half of the 19th century, is the work of William rather than his father, and dates from his taking over the family business.</i></p> <p><i>During the early 20th century The Villa was turned over to commercial use, as offices. Internal alterations made for this seem to have had little impact on the late 19th-century interior: significant damage only occurred after the building fell into disuse in the 1990s.</i></p>		
Project Type:	Building recording		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	none	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	Zeepvat 2004 (dba) Hancock 2006 (exc)
Current land use:	Under redevelopment	Future work:	no
Monument type:	house	Monument period:	18 th & 19 th century
Significant finds:	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Buckinghamshire (historic)	OS reference: (8 figs min)	SP 8836 3406
District:	Milton Keynes	Parish:	Bletchley CP
Site address:	The Villa, Watling Street, Fenny Stratford, Milton Keynes		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	N/a	Height OD: (metres)	69m AOD
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	-	Project design originator:	B Zeepvat BA MIFA
Project Manager:	B Zeepvat BA MIFA	Director/Supervisor:	B Zeepvat BA MIFA
Sponsor / funding body:	Bellway Homes Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	20/08/2007	End date:	31/08/2007
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	Bucks County Museum (acc. No ##)	None	
Paper:		Recording sheets & notes, historical notes, plans, photos	
Digital:		CD with all digital files	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Historic Building Recording: The Villa, Former Reckitt & Coleman Site, Watling Street, Fenny Stratford, Milton Keynes		
Serial title & volume:	ASC report, 977/WFS/2		
Author(s):	B Zeepvat BA MIFA		
Page nos	55	Date:	20 th September 2007