

King Henry's Parlour
Bracewell, Lancashire:
Supplementary Report on
Archaeological Building Recording



June 2008

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SUMMARY

King Henry's Parlour, at Bracewell, near Barnoldswick (NGR: SD 86254840), appears to be an 18th or early 19th century barn, which incorporates medieval material including masonry and the roof structure, and is thought to have been built on the footprint of a late medieval building. This report supplements an earlier one of November 2007 by the same author, and provides a revised interpretation of the building. It was produced for the owner Mr T Smeeth, to inform an anticipated planning application for the conversion of the building.

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KING HENRY'S PARLOUR, BRACEWELL, LANCASHIRE:

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This supplementary report follows an earlier document of November 2007 by the same author¹, which presented the results of archaeological recording at King Henry's Parlour, a grade 2 listed building at Bracewell near Barnoldswick in Lancashire. Both were undertaken for the owner, Mr T Smeeth, via the architect Mr John Wharton, at the request of the Lancashire Archaeology Service.
- 1.2 Planning and listed building applications were made to Pendle Borough Council in January 2008 for the conversion of the building to a dwelling (references 13/08/0022P & 0023P), but these were withdrawn in April 2008. However it is anticipated that new applications will be made in the near future.
- 1.3 During the consultation period for the original planning applications, concerns were raised about the archaeological building recording by Pendle Borough Council's Conservation Officer and by the Lancashire County Archaeology Service. These concerns related to the interpretation of the building's history and development, and to the presentation of the archaeological information. This supplementary report is intended to address these concerns, in order for the new applications to be properly considered.
- 1.4 In summary, a reconsideration of the available evidence suggests that King Henry's Parlour is essentially an 18th or possibly early 19th century barn, built on the footprint of a late medieval structure and incorporating various late medieval elements, including the roof structure and dressed stone, but in a manner which suggests that most, if not all of these elements, have been re-sited and do not occupy their original positions.

2 Scope of additional work

- 2.1 A site meeting was held on 18 March 2008 to discuss the findings of the original report and the interpretation of the building, in relation to the proposals in the then current planning application. This was attended by the following:
 - Shelley Coffey, Pendle Borough Council planning officer
 - Stephen Haigh, buildings archaeologist
 - Rosemary Lyons, Pendle Borough Council conservation project officer
 - Doug Moir, Lancashire County Archaeological Service planning officer

¹ *King Henry's Parlour, Bracewell, Lancashire: Archaeological Building Recording* Stephen Haigh Buildings Archaeologist, November 2007

- John Wharton, architect
- 2.2 Following the meeting, and in response to specific comments from the Archaeology Service, it was agreed that some additional research and investigation was required to provide the information necessary for the proper consideration of the applications. This additional work was to comprise:
- the investigation of historical records identified at the John Goodchild Collection in Wakefield, and a request to the Diocese of Bradford for any information on the building, as former owner
 - the removal of selected areas of limewash inside the building, to establish whether there might be any firm evidence for the form and position of an earlier upper floor and fireplace
 - the production of phased plans and elevations, identifying which features are likely to be original, and which are later
- 2.3 The Lancashire Archaeological Service also raised the possibility of undertaking a dendrochronological analysis of the roof, but to date this has not been forthcoming and this report has been produced without this specialist input.

3 New historical information

- 3.1 A sale document held by the John Goodchild Collection in Wakefield (a private archive), describes the Bracewell Hall Estate when offered for sale in 1874², and includes a plan of the estate, reproduced as Figure 2. The document does not mention King Henry's Parlour by name, but describes what is thought to be the building, as the stables: "The stabling is only of a temporary character, converted out of a stone-built barn, divided into coach house, three-stall stable, harness loft, pony stable &c...". If in fact this does describe King Henry's Parlour, it suggests that the building was not of particular interest at the time, and that it was then recognised as a former barn.
- 3.2 A short work on Bracewell Church, published c.1908³ also contains some information on King Henry's Parlour, and although consulted as part of the research for the initial report, it was not specifically mentioned. The author refers to the building as "about twenty-one yards [19.2m] wide by thirty to thirty-three yards [27.4–30.2m] long"; this is much larger than the main building now standing (ie. without the later wing), which measures almost exactly 16 yards or 48 feet (14.65m) by 8 yards and 1 foot, or 25 feet (7.61m). The reason for this anomaly cannot be explained, but it is worth noting that the Ordnance Survey

² "The Bracewell Hall Estate in the West Riding of the County of York, 1874". Messrs Chinnock, Galsworthy & Chinnock, Land Agents & Surveyors, London

³ Taylor-Taswell, S T c.1908 *Bracewell Church*

map of the 1890s shows the building with exactly the same outline as at present⁴.

- 3.3 These two sources contribute little new firm evidence to the interpretation of the building, the most significant being the 1874 description of it as a “former barn”. It is also worth noting that the earliest the King Henry’s Parlour name is known to be used is on the first edition Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1849-50.
- 3.4 The Diocese of Bradford, former owners of King Henry’s Parlour, was contacted to establish whether they might hold records relating to the building’s maintenance, but this enquiry proved negative⁵.

4 A re-examination of the building

- 4.1 A visit was made in May 2008, to inspect the building in better light than was available in the autumn of 2007, and specifically to re-examine the possible evidence for an upper floor and fireplace. Phased plans and elevation drawings were produced for this report and are included as Figures 4 to 8.

Exterior

- 4.2 The exterior of the building is almost entirely faced with random rubble, mostly showing little weathering and it is known that the previous owners undertook major repairs on the building, around 1970, including the re-slating of the roof⁶; much of the exterior appears to have been repointed at this time. This random rubble contrasts with many of those dressings which are medieval in appearance (eg. many of the window surrounds), which have worn edges, suggesting that they have been re-used within re-faced or rebuilt fabric. The nature of the rubble facing is such that it is not possible readily to determine phase breaks.
- 4.3 Just as significantly, the pattern of openings within the building implies that they were planned to allow the use of the building as a combination barn (in which a variety of agricultural functions would have been accommodated, including crop threshing, livestock housing, and hay storage), rather than surviving from a domestic context. While not conforming exactly to any particular combination barn type, the building has several characteristic features of such an agricultural building. The large doorway in the front elevation (D3) indicates the position of the threshing bay, and there is a blocked opening in the rear wall more or less opposite, in the usual position of a winnowing doorway (previously suggested as a fireplace – see below). It was also previously posited that to the north-east of the threshing bay was a shippon, indicated by the lower ground level (albeit now

⁴ See Figures 2 and 9 in the report of November 2007

⁵ Personal communication, John Wharton, architect

⁶ Personal communication, Mr T Smeeth, owner

raised by the concrete floor) and opposing windows (W2 and W7), with the entrance in the gable (now W6). It is now thought that rather than the shippon fortuitously exploiting an earlier arrangement, these three openings were incorporated specifically to serve the shippon, and in the case of the traceried window W2 using re-used masonry, possibly derived from the church, where many have been replaced.

- 4.4 Similarly, to the south-west of the threshing bay, the present stable (probably an early 20th century replacement) is served by a tall doorway in the front elevation made up with re-used masonry. The south-west gable has a blocked opening (W5) which has the characteristic form of a mucking-out hole, as well as the taller opening (W4), which may be a later insertion. Internally, the two recesses in this area are typically placed as “keep-holes”. There does not however appear to be an agricultural explanation for the wide blocked opening in the rear elevation, marked as D5 on the plan.
- 4.5 At first floor level, openings are essentially confined to the south-west end of the building. The two opposed, now blocked doorways which clearly used to serve the hay loft, are in the characteristic position for forking holes, to allow hay to be taken into the building directly from a cart; that on the south-east side (D6) has been made up with very weathered stone on the outside, incorporating an arch, almost certainly re-used in this position, but whether or not the dressed stone was used for picturesque effect, or simply for convenience, is uncertain. In contrast, the former doorway to the front elevation (D1) is plain, but incorporates an inscribed mark on the face within the building, probably a post-medieval graffito as it incorporates what may be Roman numerals, but alternatively a medieval mason’s mark. It is illustrated as Figure 3.
- 4.6 The blocked window at upper level in the south-west gable (W3) has similarities with the traceried window in the front elevation (W2), but is of a rather different form, and many aspects indicate that it is not in its original position: the mullion does not match the sill, and part of the lintel has been made up from thin flags. It is therefore likely that this is also derived from the church, particularly as the use of carved heads as stops is generally associated with churches rather than secular buildings.
- 4.7 Another feature of interest is the incomplete, shouldered doorway incorporated within the south-east elevation (D4), which does not relate to any opening visible inside the building: it therefore appears to owe its form and position to the incorporation of earlier dressings within the re-faced or rebuilt fabric.

Interior

- 4.8 Inside the building, attempts were made to remove limewash from parts of the inner elevations, but these proved unpractical in small areas, and the author is confident that enough detail of the rubble is visible through the limewash to assert that no additional evidence would be forthcoming with regard to the blocked opening in the south-east side, and the possibility of there having been an upper floor of significantly different form and extent to that now surviving. That is to say, the present hay loft in the south-west end must occupy the same position of any earlier upper floor here, while to the north-east, only the set-backs incorporated in the walls provide evidence for the former upper floor. These would not have continued across the threshing bay, which would have remained open to the roof.
- 4.9 No further details can be reported regarding the blocked opening clearly visible in the south-east side of the building, originally described as possibly a former fireplace, but the opening is poorly defined and appears to have had any dressed jambs removed or robbed. It was suggested as a fireplace on the basis that a lateral position for one might be expected in a higher status domestic building, and that there was staining visible above it, but the complete lack of evidence for there being a thickening of the wall to the outside to accommodate a stack makes this possibility very unlikely, and this feature is now thought to be a former winnowing doorway, of which the outer face has been lost through repairs.
- 4.10 Despite the persuasive fact that the openings in the building are in positions characteristic for a combination barn of the 18th or early 19th century, at 1.0 or 1.1m the walls are unusually thick for a building of such a date, when 2 feet (600mm) or less was normal, and this fundamental aspect does point to a medieval origin for the building.
- 4.11 It is also worth noting the presence of brick used in the interior at the eaves. This is typically six courses high and runs along the full length of the north-west side of the building, and for the three bays at the north-east end on the south-east side. The fact that there is no corresponding break in the external elevations suggests that the present external rubble wall facing is contemporary with this brickwork, and therefore must be of 19th or even 20th century date.

Roof

- 4.12 Little further information about the roof has come to light since the original report, and although this structure is certainly of late medieval date, there remains the possibility that it was derived from another structure. However, the roof clearly fits the footprint of the building closely, although the use of corbels and iron

plates under some of the trusses indicates that there have been some alterations to it. The south-west truss (truss 1), which has a different form from the other three, is of a type termed a “truncated principal rafter truss”; trusses of this type are concentrated down the east side of England⁷, and in its original setting such a truss is likely to have distinguished a particular part of a room or building, for example one end of a hall. However, in its present context this truss has no clear role, which does suggest that the roof was not intended for the present arrangement of openings.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 In conclusion, there remains significant evidence for King Henry’s Parlour having late medieval origins, but the form of the present building suggests that it is effectively a barn dating from the 18th or early 19th century, but was built using earlier and varied fragments, which may be derived from the original building or others in the vicinity, such as the church and the 15th or 16th century Bracewell Hall. It is likely that its outline follows that of its medieval predecessor, but no external faces of this earlier building remain.
- 5.2 In list form, aspects of the building which suggest a medieval *origin* are:
- the thickness of the walls, of which all four are at least 1m thick at ground floor level
 - the use of numerous medieval dressings (which may not be derived from this building, or may have been re-used)
 - the undoubtedly late medieval roof structure
 - the proximity of the building to the former Bracewell Hall
- 5.3 Against this are several aspects which indicate that the building was substantially rebuilt in the post-medieval period:
- the arrangement of the building in a form very much characteristic for a post-medieval combination barn, rather than as a domestic building
 - the nature of the main wall faces, which are predominantly of relatively little weathered, random rubble
 - the fact that the medieval dressings are of highly varied character, including some which appear to be derived from the church, and are used in positions which do not present a coherent pattern for the building as a domestic structure.

⁷ Personal communication, Adam Menuge, Senior Investigator and Team Leader (North), English Heritage



Figure 1: Drawing of the Bracewell Hall built c.1869, now mostly demolished. The drawing is stylised and does not show King Henry's Parlour. From the sale document of 1874⁸.



Figure 2: Extract from the plan of the Bracewell Hall, from the same document of 1874.

⁸ "The Bracewell Hall Estate in the West Riding of the County of York, 1874". Messrs Chinnock, Galsworthy & Chinnock, Land Agents & Surveyors, London

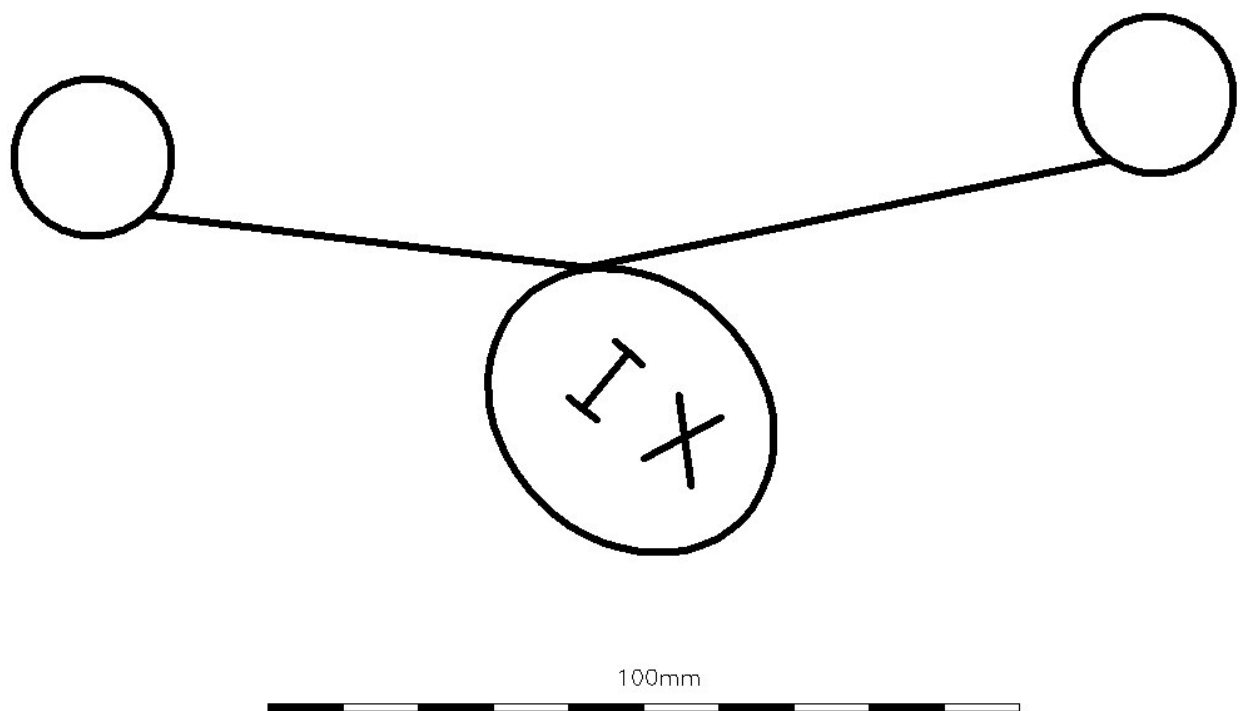
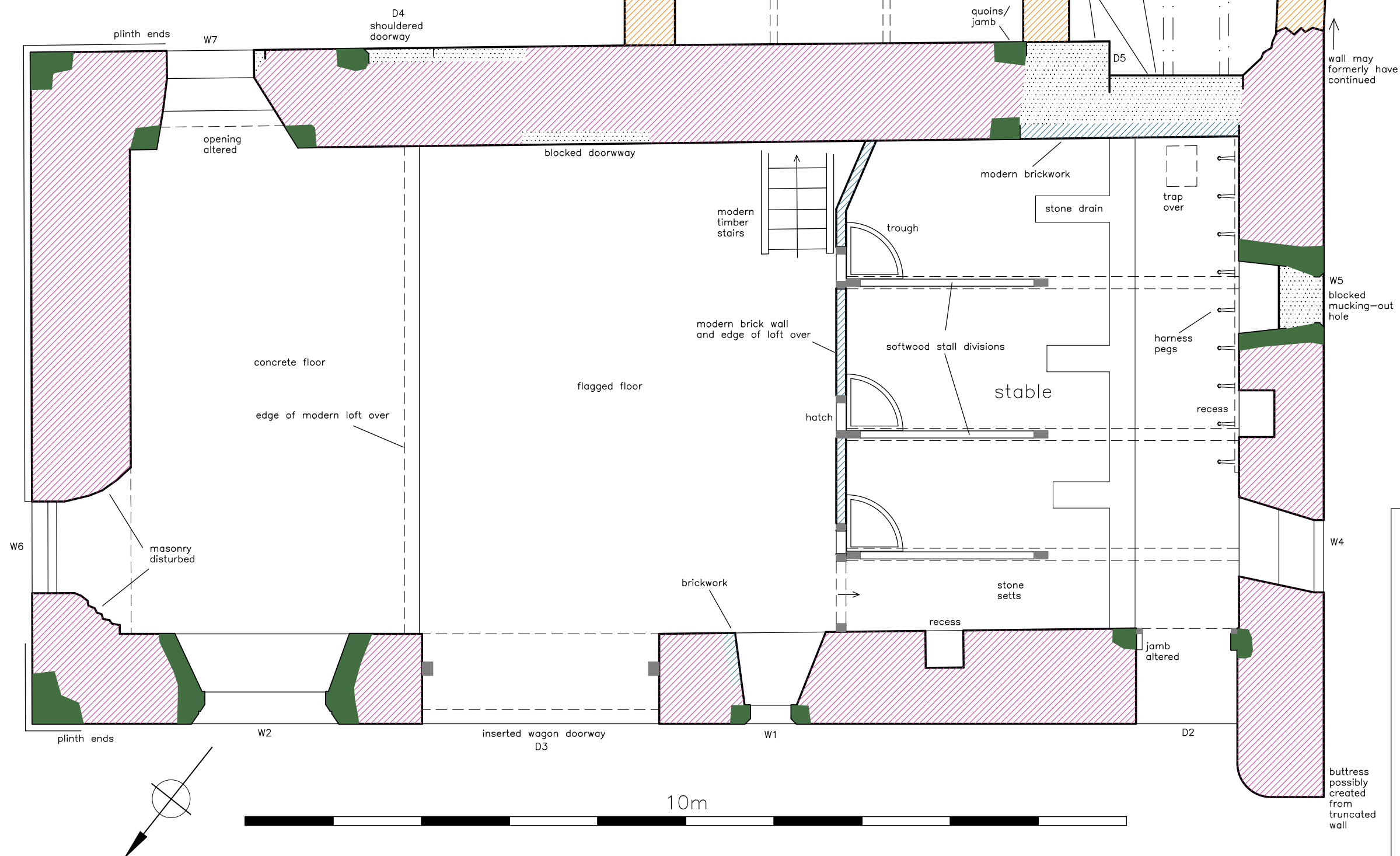


Figure 3: Tracing of mason's mark or graffito, on internal jamb of doorway D1

KEY

- 18th/early 19th century, probably on footprint of late medieval building
- re-used medieval stonework
- 18th or early 19th century
- early – mid 19th century
- modern masonry (19th/20th century)
- blocking or infill of uncertain date



KING HENRY'S PARLOUR
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FIGURE 4:
GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SHOWING PHASES

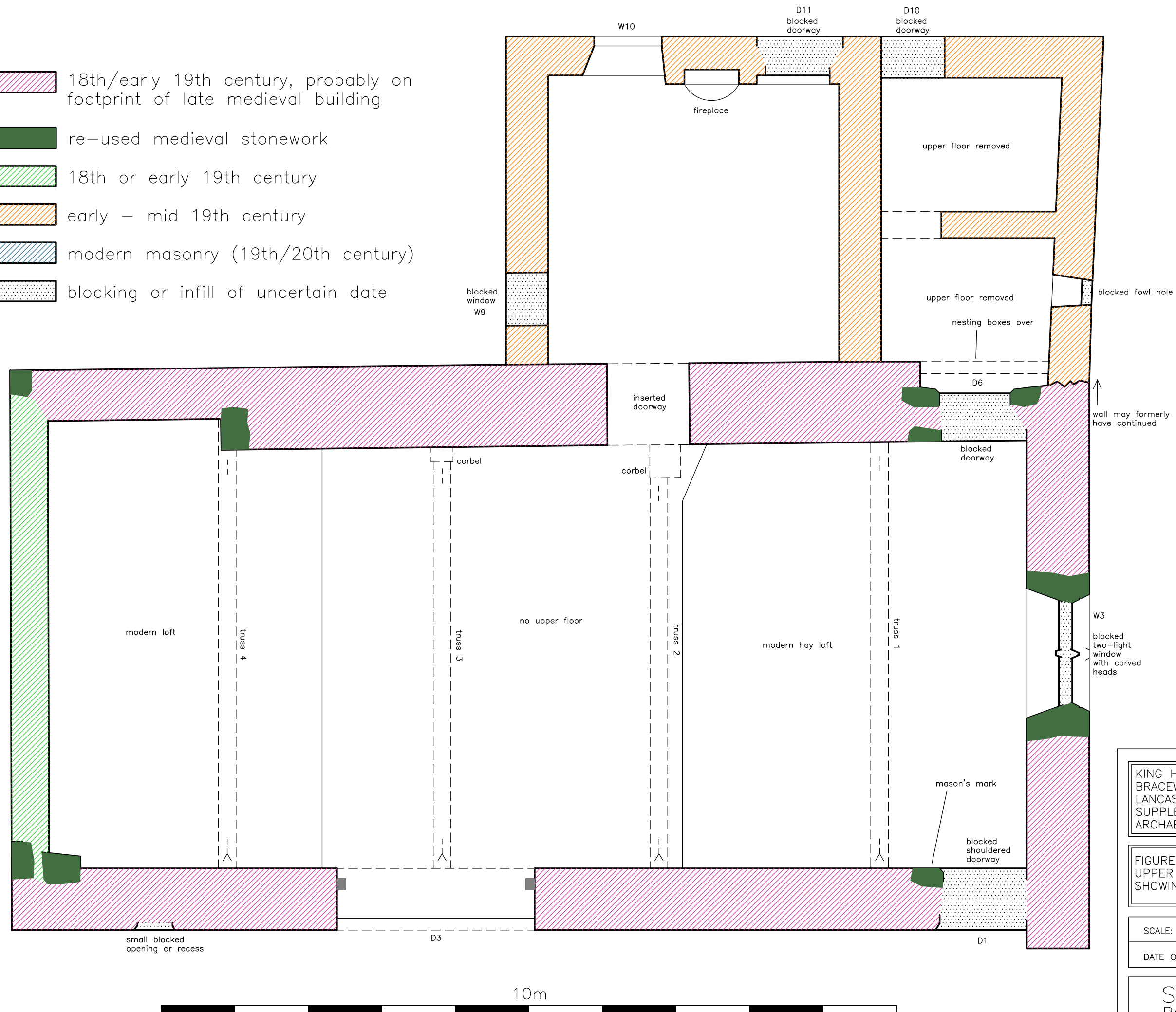
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DATE OF SURVEY: MAY 2008

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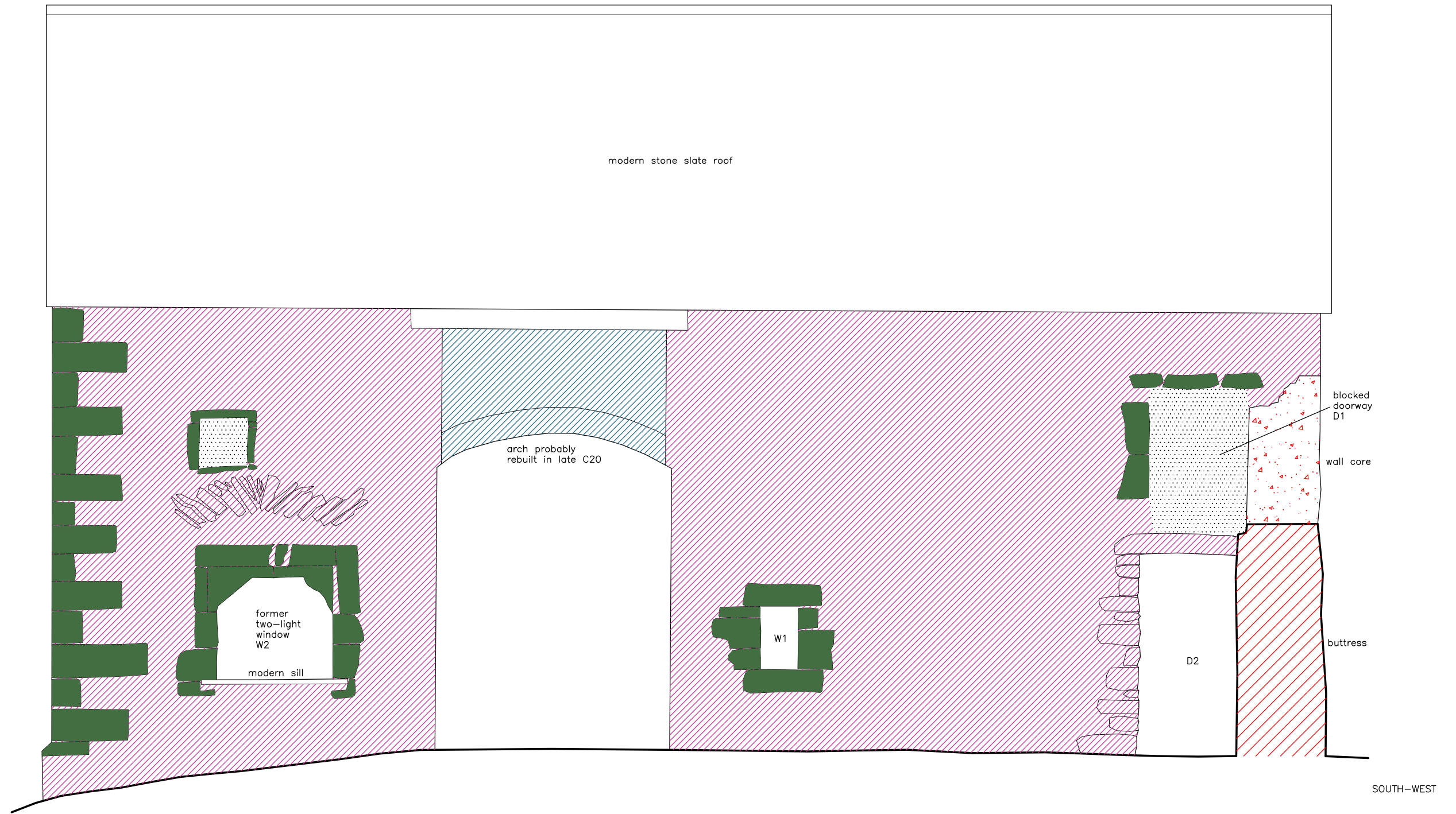
KING HENRY'S PARLOUR
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FIGURE 5:
UPPER FLOOR PLAN
SHOWING PHASES

SCALE: 1:50

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10m

NORTH-WEST ELEVATION

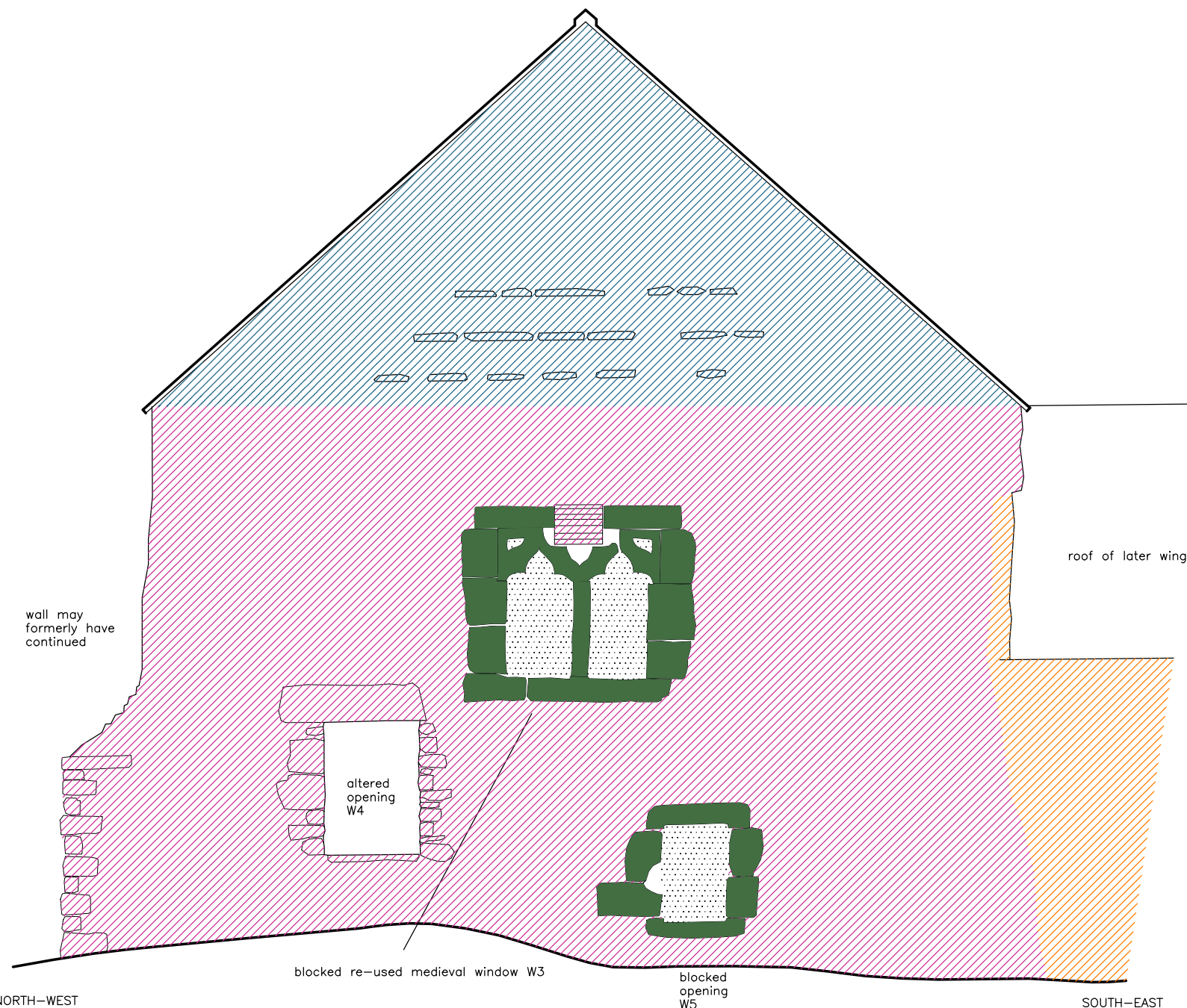
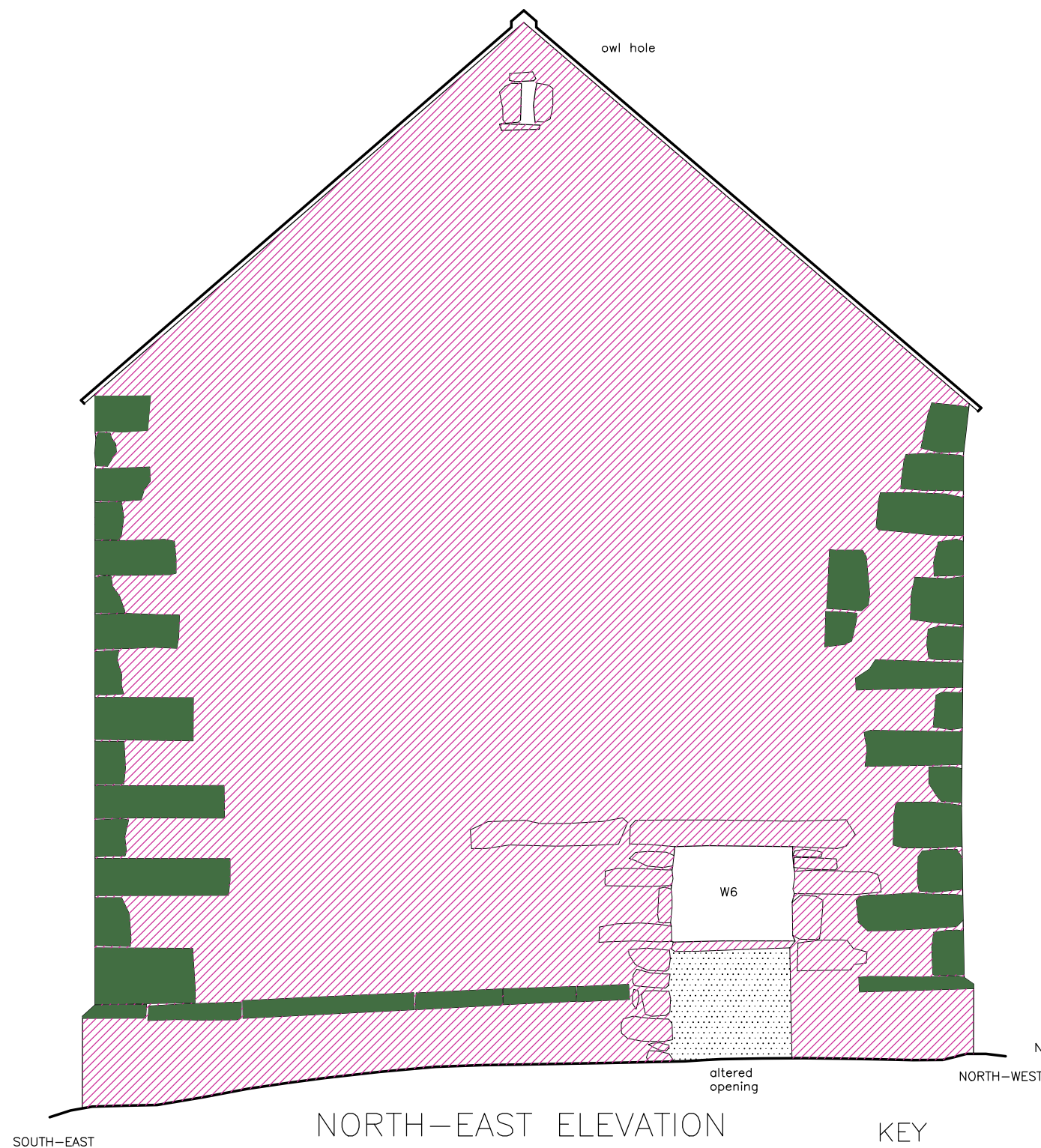
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FIGURE 6:
NORTH-WEST ELEVATION
SHOWING PHASES

SCALE: 1:50

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10m



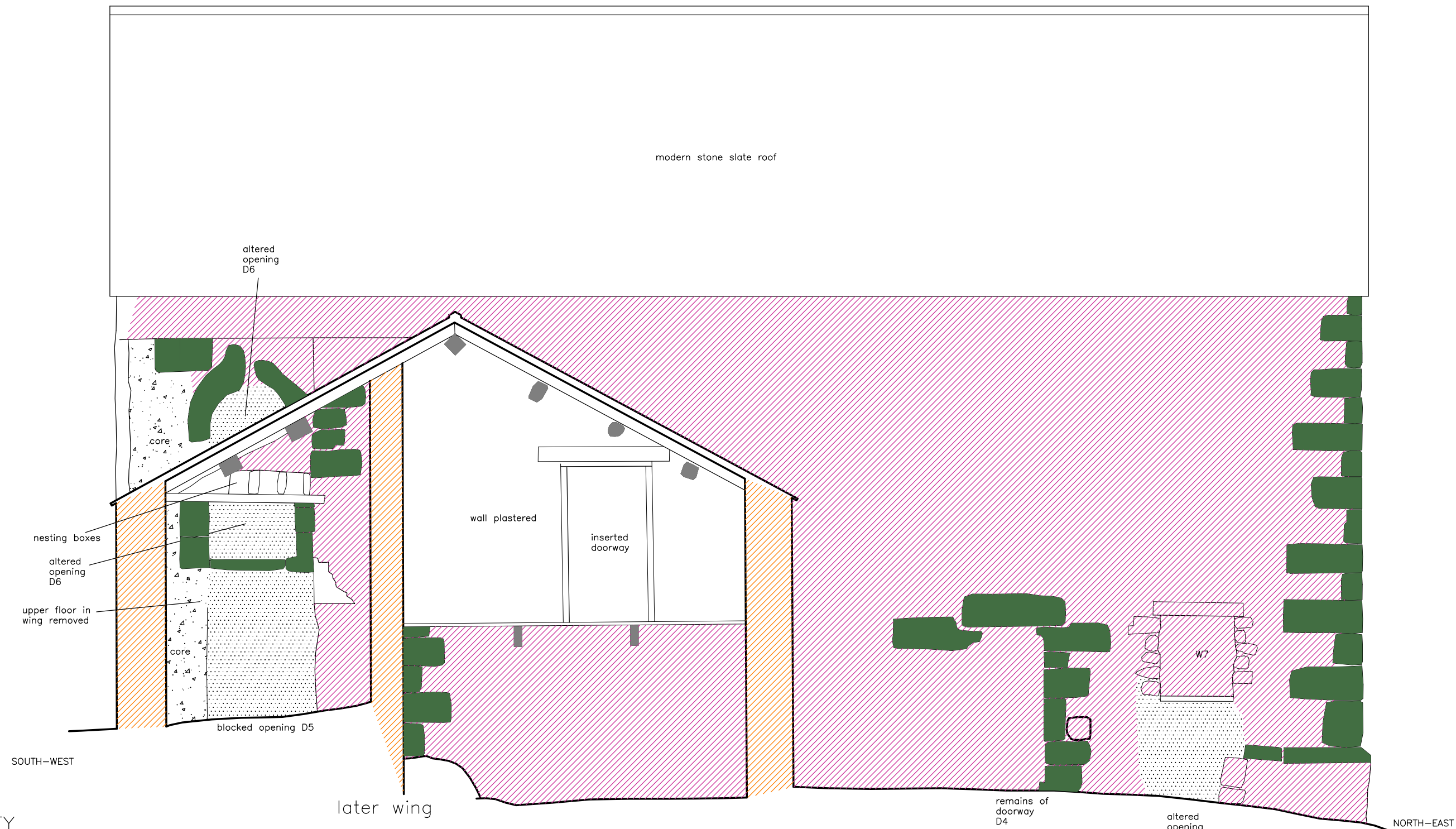
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FIGURE 7:
UPPER FLOOR PLAN
SHOWING PHASES

SCALE: 1:50

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SOUTH-EAST ELEVATION

10m



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FIGURE 8:
SOUTH-EAST ELEVATION
SHOWING PHASES

SCALE: 1:50

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