

36 HIGHER SHAPTER STREET, TOPSHAM, EXETER

NGR SX 96822 87751

Results of historic building recording and archaeological monitoring

Exeter City Council planning reference: 16/1543/03
(Condition 5)

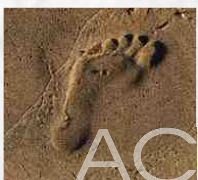
Prepared by:
Naomi Kysh, Andrew Passmore and
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With a contribution from:
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On behalf of:
Mr Mike Perks

Document No: ACD1578/2/2

Date: January 2018



AC archaeology

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Client	Mr Mike Perks
Report Number	ACD1578/2/2
Date	23 January 2018
Status	Version 3
Report Author(s)	Naomi Kysh, Andrew Passmore and Paul Rainbird
Contributions	Charlotte Coles
Checked by	Andrew Passmore
Approved by	Andrew Passmore

Acknowledgements

The archaeological works were commissioned by Mr Mike Perks and managed for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The site works were carried out by Andrew Passmore, Naomi Kysh and Abigail Brown. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Leon Cauchois. The collaborative role of Andrew Pye, Exeter City Council Principal Project Manager (Heritage) is duly acknowledged.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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Summary

Historic building recording and archaeological monitoring of groundworks were undertaken by AC archaeology between March and May 2017 at 36 Higher Shapter Street, Topsham (SX 96822 87751) ahead of and during demolition of the building and construction of its replacement.

The historic core of the building was in place by 1801 and was built of cob; limited dating evidence indicates it was probably constructed in the late 18th century. Later historic maps record a rear outbuilding, which was probably contemporary with the house and partially survived as a boundary wall.

The building has been extensively altered, most notably with the rebuilding of much of the first floor, probably in the early 19th century, the construction of rear extensions in the second half of the 20th century.

The watching brief identified few features; these included a well that was probably contemporary with the house, and a ditch that pre-dated the house and probably formed part of a field system prior to the construction of Higher Shapter Street.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken by AC archaeology between March and May 2017 at 36 Higher Shapter Street, Topsham (SX 96822 87751; Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Mike Perks, and was required under condition 5 of the grant of Planning Permission (ECC planning reference 16/1543/03) for "demolition of existing dwelling and construction of new two storey dwelling". Guidance on the scope of the investigations was provided by the Exeter City Council Principal Project Manager (Heritage).
- 1.2 The property is located on the south side of Higher Shapter Street, situated at a height of approximately 8m aOD. The underlying geology is Permian sandstone of the Dawlish Sandstone Formation overlaid by Quaternary fourth river terrace deposits of sand and gravel (British Geological Survey on-line viewer 2017).

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The property is situated on a general southwest-facing slope set back from, and above the River Exe. This is a location for early settlement; whilst no evidence has been recovered from this part of Topsham, later prehistory and Roman activity has been found on similar topography to the northwest of Topsham.
- 2.2 The property is not recorded on the Devon Historic Environment Record, and it is not referred to in any of the late 20th-century books on Topsham's buildings. Other buildings further west along Higher Shapter Street have been described as, or have datestones, of mid to late 18th- or 19th-century date, although the street itself may have earlier origins. The site is shown as developed on the Ordnance Survey 3-inch to 1-mile map of 1801, with a small building recorded along the street frontage. It is next shown on the 1842 copy of Troake's 1836 map as plot 883 with the building on the street frontage and an attached rear outbuilding on its eastern side. It is located within the built-up area as depicted on the 1843 Topsham tithe map, but this map does not show individual properties within the town. It is recorded on all historic Ordnance Survey 25-inch maps as two properties, with a narrow rear outbuilding attached to the eastern building. It formed part

of a larger terrace with an additional property, flush with Higher Shapter Street, to the east and a pair of houses to the west projecting into the highway.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the work were twofold. Firstly, to prepare a record of the building prior to and during demolition. Secondly, to monitor and record any groundworks that had the potential to expose and/or remove buried archaeological remains, and to excavate and record any such remains where they occur above the planned formation or invert levels.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The recording was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Archaeological Work prepared by AC archaeology (Passmore 2017) and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* and *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (both revised 2014).
- 4.2 All features and deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* (revised August 2012). Detailed sections and plans were produced at a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate.

5. RESULTS – HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING (Plates 1-9)

Exterior

5.1 North elevation

The principle facade of the slate roofed, two-storey property faces north onto Higher Shapter Street and is set straight onto the highway (Plate 1). It has a broadly symmetrical elevation composed of a central doorway and pairs of windows either side; the windows on the first floor are slightly offset to the gables. There is additional central first-floor window which is slightly offset to the north. The front door is a 20th-century planked door with six top-frosted light fixtures. The four external windows are early 20th-century 12-pane fixed windows with four-pane top-opening lights. The first-floor central window is of the same design but is shallower with eight lower panes. A cast-iron down pipe survives at the northeast corner, but has been replaced with a plastic downpipe; the gutters are also plastic.

5.2 East elevation

The east elevation of the front range is plain with a step back at first floor level. The wall is of a pitched gable construction which is topped with a central short brick chimney stack with a single pot. This wall is abutted by the gate pier of no. 38 Higher Shapter Street.

5.3 West elevation (Plate 1)

The west elevation of the front range displays several structural features including a mostly cob buttress in the southwest corner. At the front is the projecting masonry of a formerly attached property (no. 30) with a lower roof pitch than can be seen at no. 36. Below eaves level there is a further slight projection of the masonry with lead flashing. To the rear of the property at ground floor level, the wall projects out to the same line and is finished with slate tiles.

Beyond, in the vicinity of the kitchen extension the party wall curves back slightly and is slightly thicker at the lower levels. This has been rebuilt higher up and has been rendered. The south

extreme south end of the party wall is a concrete block rebuild that forms part of the longer boundary wall to the south. In the garden beyond the kitchen extension a limestone footing of the boundary wall was exposed.

5.4 South elevation (Plate 2)

The south elevation is entirely rendered with a central splayed opening containing an early 20th-century panelled door, the upper panel of which contains two panes. To the east of the doorway is a largely rendered burnt stone buttress. Above the doorway there is a single first-floor double-glazed window.

The rear eastern extension and conservatory are entirely modern, but have been constructed into an earlier boundary wall. Within the conservatory a red brick Flemish brick wall constructed on a pebble footing remains exposed. This abuts the earlier boundary wall behind the main rear extension.

Interior

5.5 Ground floor (Plan Fig. 2)

The front door leads to a central passage with a 20th-century tiled floor; this is divided by a modern partition into an entrance lobby and a rear corridor (Plate 3). The walls between the lobby/corridor and adjacent rooms are formed from timber frames with a series of closely-set slender studs and diagonal braces, with some repairs and replacements visible (Plate 4). At the time of the initial survey the north end of the eastern wall was not visible.

The original doorway in the eastern partition has been blocked off with the timber frame left *in situ*. The style of the old doorway was maintained for the construction of the new, wider doorway to the south. The upper rails of both partitions slightly project below the ceiling. Both doors are early 20th-century replacements.

The east room occupies the front old range of the building although the rear wall contains a window and a 20th-century large, door less opening into the rear extension. Cob external walls are partially visible throughout covered in a thin lime rendering. A central fireplace in the eastern wall has been narrowed in the 20th century and has been lined with brick and a gas fire inserted. It has a contemporary brick and slate hearth. The wall surrounding the fireplace has been plastered. The room has a low plastered ceiling.

The west room has with an off-centre protruding chimney stack in the west wall with a reclaimed Dutch brick hearth laid onto concrete (Plate 5). It has a parquet floor, and contains a 20th-century staircase to the first floor; it also features a metal framed double door to the rear kitchen. The ceiling is composed of thin stained battens with scars of removed lath and plaster. The modern ceiling is set between these timbers.

The rear kitchen is mid-20th-century extension with contemporary tiled skirting and a metal-framed window; the floor and other fittings date to the later 20th century.

Behind the kitchen is an attached rear lobby and bathroom. The former has an external wooden 2-panel door, the larger upper panel being glazed, and a light above. The bathroom is lit by a two-pane, top-opening metal-framed window to the w/c in the east elevation and a reset horned sash in the southern elevation. Both extensions are under the same single-pitched roof sloping down towards the central yard which is partially covered with a sloping corrugated plastic roof.

5.6 First floor (Plan Fig. 3)

The stairs lead to a landing giving access to four rooms; at the front of the landing opposite the stairs is a cupboard that can also be accessed from the west bedroom. In the full-depth west

bedroom is a low beaded skirting board that is also present inside a second cupboard at the front of the building. The main bedroom door is planked with very thin strap hinges (Plate 6). In the southeast corner there is a fitted cupboard over the stairs with the same planked door and strap hinges as seen on the main doorway. There is a projecting chimney stack in the west wall; the fireplace has been blocked. To the west, the wall has collapsed, and has been replaced with plasterboard attached to a wooden frame, and finished with replacement beaded skirting. The remainder of this wall is light brown cob with inclusions of gravel and brick fragments. The exterior has been refaced in brick delineating the position of the demolished adjacent property, and may have been added when this building was attached to the side of no. 36. Two phases of brick masonry of the chimney stack are visible.

The front central room is small, with a full width reveal to the window defined by 20th-century brick lining and reset wooden posts (Plate 7); the post to the right-hand side displays scars of lathe and plaster. There is a built-in cupboard within the southern wall. On the opposite side of the landing is a central bathroom, which contains entirely modern fixtures and fittings.

The east bedroom extends to the depth of the house and contains a built in cupboard along the southern wall. The room has low beaded skirting boards that have been reset in between the cupboards and over a blocked fireplace in the east wall. To the north of the former fireplace is a high level recessed ledge (Plate 8). All of the walls appear to be boarded over an earlier finish.

5.7 Loft and roof

The loft is accessed through a modern hatch and has been boarded out, but an old beam is visible below. The loft is continuous over the whole width of the building. The east and west gables incorporate projecting brick chimney stacks with timber framing either side filled with noggin of variously-sized bricks (Plate 9); the southwest section has been rebuilt in the late 20th century following the collapse of the wall (see also Section 5.6 above). The roof is also supported on three trusses of principal rafters with lapped apexes and nailed joints. The rows of back purlins support secondary rafters and a modern slate covering laid on battens. The secondary rafters have plaster adhering to the sides and it appears that a ceiling has been removed. The trusses are braced by short struts down to the tie beams at first-floor ceiling level.

6. RESULTS – ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING (Plates 10-19)

6.1 Monitoring during demolition

The following observations were made during the demolition of the standing building.

The east end of the south wall is a rebuild constructed of old red brick laid in random bonding in a soft gravel concrete blocks used around the openings to the rear extension, which itself is also constructed of concrete blocks. The western ground floor and central and western sections of the first floor of this wall are 20th-century rebuilds, carried out using red bricks laid using cement mainly in stretcher bond.

The ground-floor fireplace in the east wall has a brick arched head, repointed in the 20th-century, set into a brick chimney stack (Plate 10)

Both ground-floor timber-framed partitions were fully exposed, including the north end of the east partition that had not previously been fully recorded. The exposure of this wall also confirmed that the doorway had been moved to the south (Fig. 4; Plate 11).

The first-floor joists are all of 19th-century date except around the stairs and by door into the southeast extension which are 20th century replacements.

The first-floor front-elevation is partially constructed of red brick mainly laid in header bond that sits on the earlier cob wall which rises from the ground floor to a ledge at the base of the first-floor windows. Above the ledge the full width of the wall is created by a secondary lath and plaster wall attached to vertical studs.

The chimney stack in the west elevation is secondary, and has been cut into the cob wall.

The kitchen (in the southwest extension) is a two-part extension, firstly constructed of brick, which abuts the rear (south) rebuilt brick wall of the primary house and then further extended in concrete block to house the lobby and bathroom.

The southeast extension was built against a tall east boundary wall built of cob contemporary with the east wall of the main house. A scar in this wall indicates the position of a chimney flue that must have served the former rear outbuilding recorded on historic Ordnance Survey maps (Fig. 5; Plate 12).

6.2 Monitoring during groundworks (Plan Fig. 6 and sections Figs 7a-d)

The groundworks were monitored following the demolition of the house (Plates 13 and 14). The following observations were made.

A general deposit sequence was present across the site comprising of a modern levelling layer incorporating material from the recent demolition (context 100), which measured up to 0.40m deep. Below this was a site-wide deposit (101) consisting of mid reddish-brown sandy clay which measured up to 0.75m deep and contained finds of varying post-medieval date; within the garden there had been some disturbance to this layer, which accounts for the varying dates of the recovered finds (Section 7 below). Beneath this layer was the natural subsoil (102) consisting of dark pinkish-red sandy silt.

A well was located adjacent to the west boundary of the site, roughly central to the new house plot, and historically located in the garden to the rear of the main house below the later kitchen extension. It was brick-lined and was sub-circular with dimensions of 0.90m by 0.80m and was assessed as being 6.50m deep; for safety reasons it was not fully investigated (Plate 15).

An ill-defined feature (F103) was recorded in section only and was beneath the modern garage to the east (Plate 16). It measured 0.46m wide at the top reducing to 0.20m at the base and was 0.7m deep with straight steep sides. It contained a single fill (104) comprising almost completely of loose fragmented slate. There were no finds. It may be a sump or drain associated with the construction of the garage.

A wall foundation was also exposed in the west side of the east foundation trench Tr 1 (Plate 17). Foundation 107 comprised a concrete post on a concrete pad within a construction trench F108 measuring 0.67m wide by 0.40m deep, which was cut into post-medieval deposit 101. The backfills of the construction trench (105) and (106) contained modern finds, including brick and mortar, which were not collected.

The foundations for a boundary wall was exposed at the southwest corner of the new building (Plate 18). Natural subsoil (102) was exposed at a depth of 1.6m below ground surface and above this were a series of deposits which were only exposed in section. The lowest deposit (113) comprised mid reddish-brown clayey sand it contained one sherd of post-medieval pottery and a piece of worked flint which is residual in this context. Above this was a foundation comprising of two courses of rounded and angular cobbles with remnants of lime mortar bonding surviving. Above this was a deposit (111) of dark brownish-red sandy clay, which provided a level surface for wall 110 formed of clay, cobbles and lime mortar measuring 0.30m thick. Above this was wall 109 comprised of sub-square and rectangular stone blocks bonded in mortar.

A northeast-southwest aligned ditch F117 was exposed in the base of Trench 4 (Plate 19), located approximately 4m back from the Higher Shapter Street. It was not fully exposed, and measured minimum of 1.20m wide by 0.65m deep. It contained two fills – a lower fill (116) of mid pinkish red clayey sand containing no finds or inclusions, and an upper fill (114) of mid to dark grey sandy loam containing animal bones, shell and charcoal, none of which were collected.

7. THE FINDS *by Charlotte Coles*

7.1 All finds recovered during the watching brief have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. They have been quantified according to material type within each context and the assemblage examined to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. The small collection of finds are summarised in Table 1 below.

Context	Context description	Worked flint		Post-medieval pottery		Clay tobacco pipe	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
101	Layer			1	7	1	15
113	Layer	1	15	1	59		
Total		1	15	2	66	1	15

Table 1: Summary of finds by context

7.2 Clay tobacco pipe

A single incomplete clay tobacco pipe bowl was recovered from context 101. This is plain with a milled band around the top and dates from the late 17th to the early 18th century.

7.3 Post-medieval pottery

A total of two sherds of post medieval pottery were recovered. These are a piece of 20th-century industrial white ware from context 101, and the base of a 17th or 18th century North Devon ware vessel of unknown form from context 113.

7.4 Worked flint

A single black grey mottled flint flake was retrieved from context 113; there is retouch along one side.

8. DISCUSSION

8.1 Ditch F117, whilst directly undated, due to its position clearly predates the current no. 36 Higher Shapter Street, which based on cartographic evidence (see Section 2 above) was present by 1801. The northeast-southwest alignment of the ditch is consistent with other field boundaries northeast of The Strand, and the feature is therefore interpreted as part of a boundary pre-dating the construction of Higher Shapter Street. The single recovered flint was residual, but may provide very limited evidence for general use of the area in prehistory.

8.2 The historic building recording prior to and during the demolition of the property revealed that the historic building had maintained a consistent footprint throughout of life, with no differences

to its overall shape as recorded on Ordnance Survey maps. Limited evidence was recovered for the demolished rear eastern outbuilding, which may have been contemporary with the main house. This was almost certainly single storied, with its single ground-floor room heated by a fireplace in the boundary wall with no. 38. The date of the original cob building was not ascertained, but the slight nature of the ground-floor timber-framed partitions probably indicates an 18th-century (rather than earlier) date, which is consistent with the other dated properties in this street. The well is probably contemporary with the house.

- 8.3** There is evidence of significant repairs during its history of use, in particular the rebuilding of much of the first floor in brick, as well as the addition of a brick stack in the west elevation. This could be evidence that the first-floor was added to a lower building, although the surviving cob in the first floor of the west wall is higher indicating that this was not the case. Rather it seems as though the original house was extensively altered. In view of the timber framing used in the gables, and the later post-medieval style of the roof trusses, this is likely to have occurred early on in the history of the building, perhaps in the early 19th century.
- 8.4** The building is recorded as two principal structures on historic Ordnance Survey maps, which are assumed to represent two properties; other than the presence of a central passage, and probably single rooms to their side (and on each floor) there is no other evidence for its early layout.
- 8.5** On the 1955 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map the primary building is shown as single dwelling for the first time with the addition of an extension to the rear representing the current kitchen extension. By this date the west end of the south wall had already been rebuilt. Later, post 1968, alterations include the replacement of the eastern outbuilding with the recorded extension and conservatory, the addition of the bathroom to the kitchen extension, and more recently rebuilding of the collapsed part of the west wall.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 9.1** The finds, paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service.
- 9.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **284770**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. REFERENCES

Ordnance Survey 3-inch to 1-mile surveyor's draft sheet 40 part 3, 1801

Ordnance Survey 25-inch Devonshire map sheet XCII.4
First edition surveyed 1888, published 1889
Second edition surveyed 1903-4, published 1905
1936 edition, revised 1936, published 1938

Passmore, A., 2017, *36 Higher Shapter Street, Topsham, Devon, (NGR SX 96822 87721), Written Scheme of Archaeological Work for historic building recording and an archaeological watching brief*. AC archaeology Document No. **ACD1578/1/1**.

Henry Troake's map of Topsham, surveyed 1836, copied and published 1842

British Geological Survey, Geology of Britain On-line Viewer
www.bgs.ac.uk



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 Scale 1:2500@A4

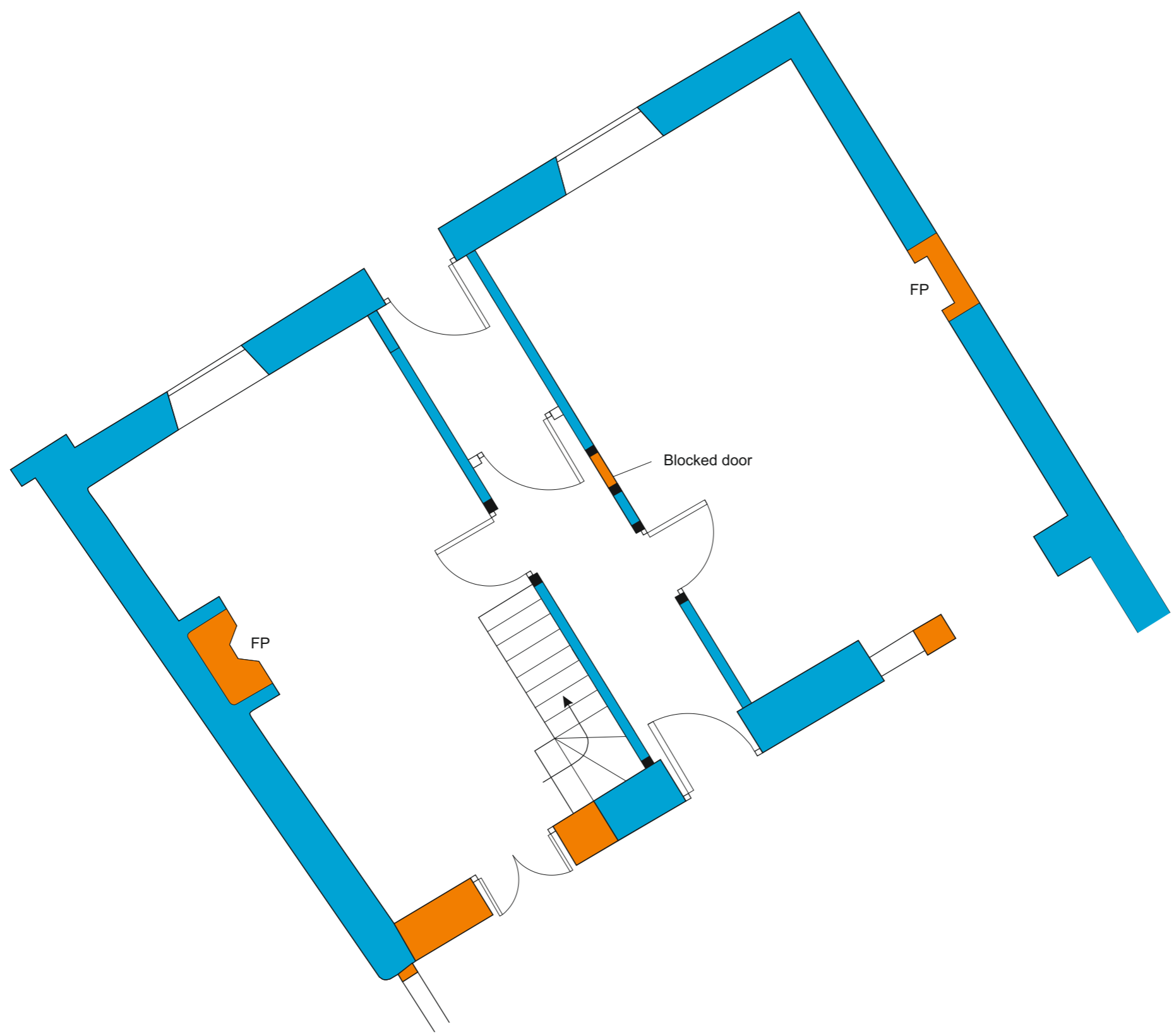
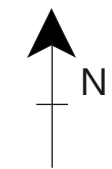
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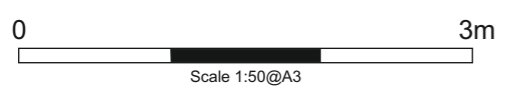
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Fig. 1: Location of site





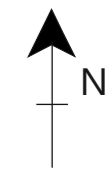
Key	
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	19th century
	20th century
FP	Fireplace
C	Cupboard






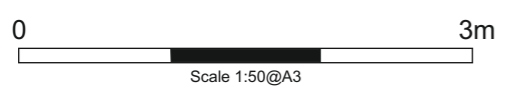
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Fig. 2: Ground-floor phase plan
of the main house





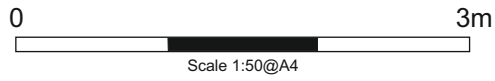
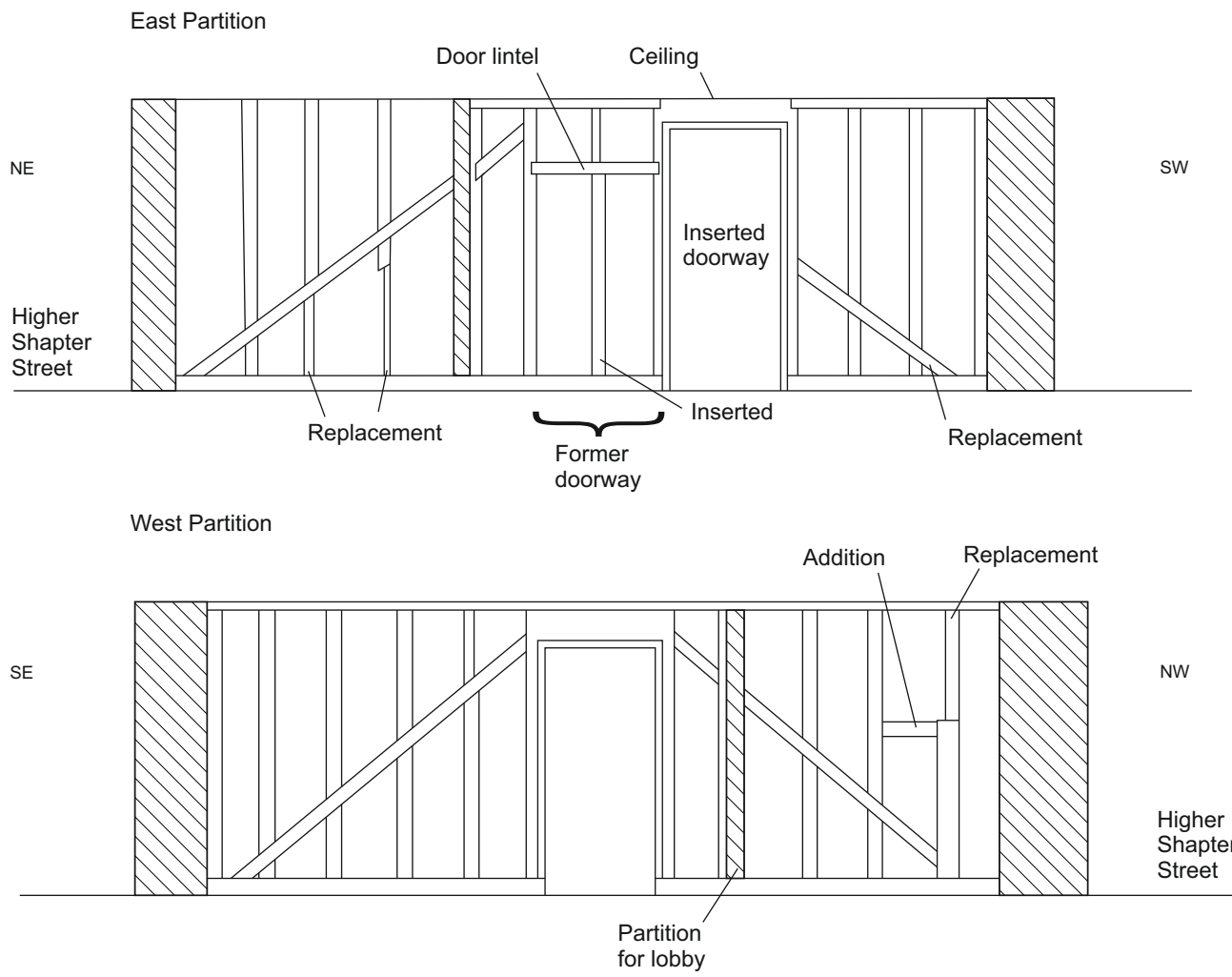
Key	
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	19th century
	20th century
FP	Fireplace
C	Cupboard



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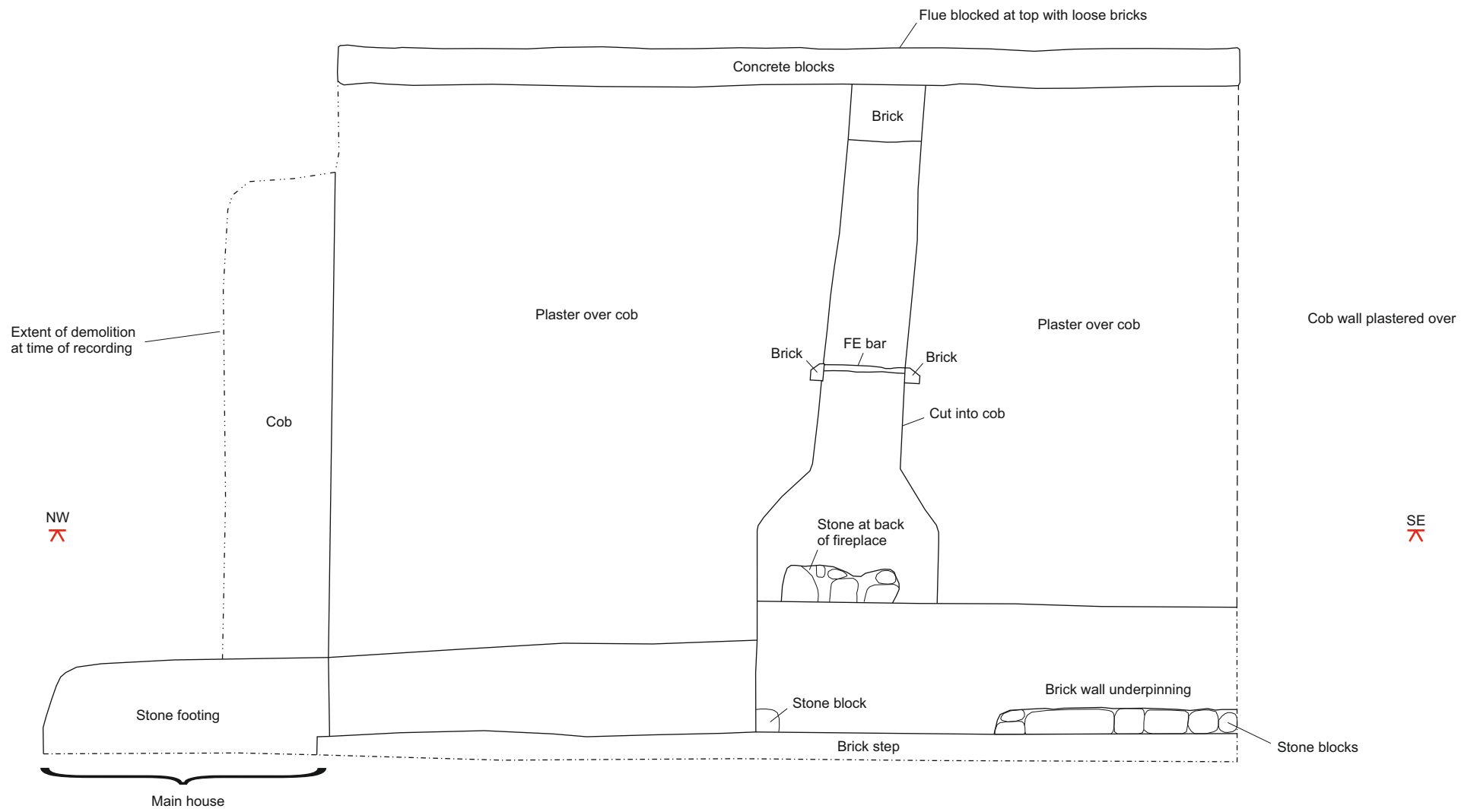
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Fig. 3: First-floor phase plan



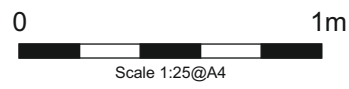


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Fig. 4: Central partition elevations

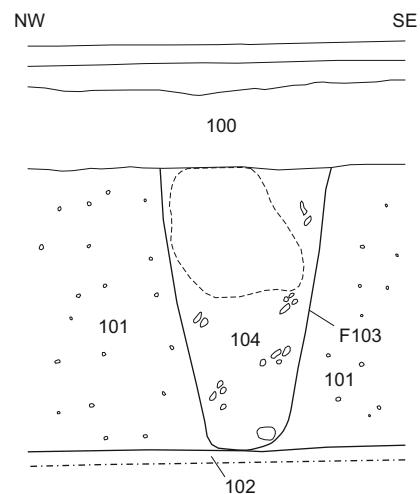




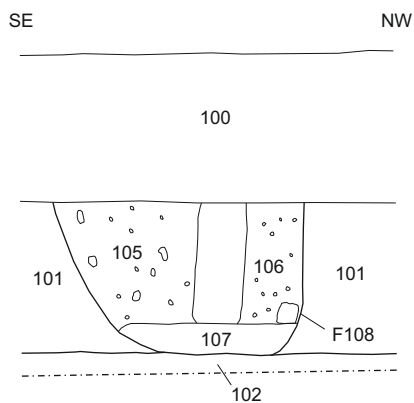
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 Fig. 5: East boundary wall elevation



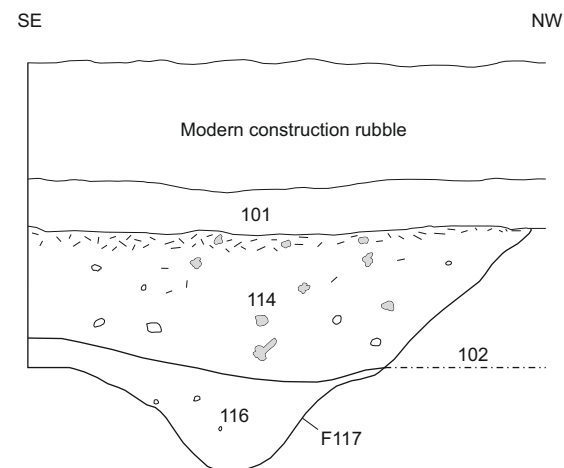
a) Section of F103



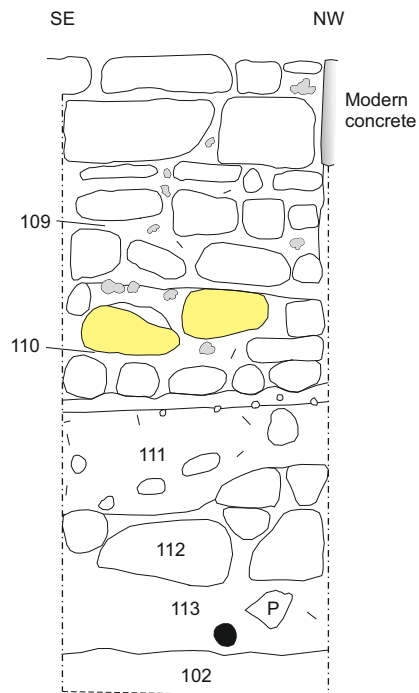
b) Section of F108








c) Section of F115 and F117




d) Section of wall



Key to all sections

-  Stones
-  Mortar
-  Cob
-  Flint
-  Pottery

0  1m
Scale 1:20@A4

PROJECT

36 Higher Shapter Street,
Topsham, Exeter

TITLE

Fig. 7: Watching brief sections





Plate 1: North and west elevations, view from the northwest. 1m scale



Plate 2: South elevation, view from the south. 1m scale



Plate 3: Lobby and rear corridor, view from the north. 1m scale



Plate 4: Rear corridor timber framing, view from the southeast. 1m scale



Plate 5: Ground floor west room, view from the south. 1m scale



Plate 6: First floor main bedroom door, view from the west. 1m scale



Plate 7: First floor central room window reveal, view from the south. 1m scale



Plate 8: First floor east bedroom, view from the south. 1m scale



Plate 9: Loft, east gable, view from the west



Plate 10: Ground floor, east room fireplace revealed during demolition, view from the west. 1m scale



Plate 11: Ground floor, east hall partition revealed during demolition, view from the northeast. 1m scale



Plate 12: Southeast extension, rear wall showing chimney scar, view from the west. 1m scale



Plate 13: General view of the site following demolition of the standing building, view from the north



Plate 14: General view of the site, groundworks in progress, view from the west



Plate 15: The well, view from the southeast. 1m scale



Plate 16: Feature F103, view from the southwest. 1m scale



Plate 17: Wall foundation 107, view from the east. 1m scale



Plate 18: Wall foundations 110 and 109, view from the northeast. 1m scale



Plate 19: Ditch F117, view from the northeast. 1m scale

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