

# STARKIE HALL, MOOR HOSPITAL, LANCASTER



## Photographic Survey

Matrix Archaeology

March 2016

STARKIE HALL,  
MOOR HOSPITAL,  
LANCASTER

Photographic Survey

Report No. 2016-04  
(Project Code: MA637)

Client: ArcHeritage

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## **1. Introduction**

In February 2016, Matrix Archaeology was commissioned by ArcHeritage, on behalf of P. J. Livesey Ltd, to undertake a photographic survey of the roof structure of the Starkie Hall at Moor Hospital, Lancaster (NGR SD 4952261751). At the time, this grade II Listed Building had been disused for some years, and was undergoing conversion to residential use. The central Gothic tower of the hospital is a conspicuous local landmark, when viewed from the M6 motorway, which runs just to the east of the site. The photography was undertaken on 15 February 2016, using a Canon EOS 1100D, fitted with a Tamron SP 10-24mm lens. Illumination was provided by a Canon Speedlite 430EXII flashgun.

## **2. Site History**

The Lancaster County Lunatic Asylum, as the hospital was originally known, was designed by Thomas Standen and was first opened in 1816. By the late 19th century, increased demand resulted in a substantial additional annexe, to the north of Quernmore Road, which was designed by Arnold W Kershaw in a neo-Gothic style, and was opened in 1883. At the core of the 'Annexe', to the west of the Administration Block, was a substantial hall which originally functioned as the main dining room of the hospital, with the kitchens located to the north.

## **3. Building Description**

The Starkie Hall comprised a large rectangular building, which measured 36.55m (120ft) north-south; by 18.30m (60ft) east-west. The height to the ridge-piece was 15.69m (51ft 6in). The internal space comprised a large hall open to the roof, with arcaded passages at two levels on the east side, connecting to the remainder of the hospital. The west elevation was originally external, but other buildings had been appended to this elevation, which have now been removed. At the time of the photography, construction of internal apartments had already commenced within the hall, although this allowed a much closer access to the roof structure than would have been otherwise possible.

The building interior was subdivided into eight bays (Figure 1), although the end bays had a lesser width than the remainder. The timber roof structure was very impressive, and comprised significant complexity. There were seven principal roof trusses, each perhaps best described as 'a laminated semi-circular arch-braced false hammer-beam truss, supported on attached columns with stiff leaf capitals' (M. Barter, pers. comm.).

The semi-circular arches were each formed of No.19 timbers, each 21mm (0.75in) thick, arranged and bolted to form a composite and continuous arch of 29ft radius. The arch ends sprang off the attached columns, which on the east side formed an internal arcade and provided support for the first floor gallery.

Above the laminated arch, a combination of horizontal beams ('hammer beams') and vertical posts acted to support the principal rafters of the roof. The joints were

reinforced by wrought-iron brackets with *fleur-de-lys* decoration. Within the lower elements of the structure, spaces were infilled with decorative pointed arches. The uppermost part of the roof structure was in the form of a king-post roof, but with additional queen-post components. All of the principal timbers had chamfers with run-out stops, and the whole was executed to the highest standards of carpentry, even within those locations which would be hardly visible from floor level.

Within bays 2 to 7, additional roof trusses were present, at the half-bay points. These trusses were identical to the upper parts of the main trusses, comprising a combination of king-post and queen-post trusses. The principal rafters of these trusses extended on the east, to support the roof of the arcaded gallery. On the west side of the roof, the lower members of the seven principal trusses had been reinforced, probably in the late C20, by the addition of steel fitches. Against the north elevation was a pair of substantial (but infilled) fireplaces.

The original decorative scheme, apparently by the well-known furniture manufacturers Waring & Gillow (1897-1938), was still visible towards the eaves, where it had not been overpainted (Plates 17 and 23). Above the large archway in the north elevation, a knight's helmet can still be discerned, this appears to have surmounted the coat-of-arms visible in Plate 30. The great archway beneath here, now infilled with breeze-blocks, originally contained a *trompe l'oeil* representation of a fairytale castle or chateau. Although this early paint scheme also survives on the soffits of the laminated arches, it has been obscured or destroyed elsewhere.

#### **4. Significance**

The Starkie Hall has a scale and quality normally only seen within high status public buildings. Although the remainder of the hospital was not viewed, it seems unlikely that any other rooms were treated with such an impressive quality and decoration.

It is known that the hospital was a popular venue for visitors. In 1857, Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins had been to Moor Hospital, where they were shown through the principal departments. Although the Starkie Hall did not then exist, it seems highly probable that this building may have been intended to impress visitors, and the arcaded gallery on the east may have been used as a viewing gallery, where visitors could look down into the assembled ranks of the inmates, without having to mix with them.

The Starkie family were major landowners in north and central Lancashire by the late 19th century, with seats at Ashton Hall and at Huntroyd. Le Gendre Nicholas Starkie (1828-99) had been High Sherrif of Lancashire in 1863, and his ancestors had been leaders of Lancashire society for centuries. It is not known how the Starkie Hall was linked to this family, but it seems there must have been a fairly close connection, given the position of the Starkie crest above the archway at the northern end.

The appearance of the room, replicating a magnificent medieval baronial hall, may also in some way reflect the close proximity of Lancaster Castle, with its magnificent gatehouse which broods over the town centre.



Plate 1. Bay 4/5 truss, viewed from south-west.



Plate 2. Roof, viewed from north.





Plate 3. Truss 4/5, west section, lower part, viewed from south-east.



Plate 4. Truss 4/5, west section, upper part, viewed from south.



Plate 5. Truss 4/5, central section, viewed from south.





Plate 6. Truss 4/5, viewed from south-east.



Plate 7. Truss 4/5, east section, lower part, viewed from south.





Plate 8. Truss 4/5, east section, lower hammer-beam joint, viewed from south.



Plate 9. Truss 4/5, east section, upper hammer-beam joint, viewed from south.



Plate 10. Truss 4/5, east section, detail on upper truss, viewed from south.





Plate 11. Truss 4/5, west section, detail on uppermost truss, viewed from south-east.



Plate 12. Truss 4/5, central section, viewed from south.



Plate 13. Timber roof lining above truss 4/5, detail on ventilation aperture, viewed from north-west.



Plate 14. Roof structure within bays 1, 2 and 3, viewed from west.





Plate 15. Truss 7/8, east section, viewed from south-west.



Plate 16. Bay 4, east elevation, upper section of pointed arch, viewed from south-west.



Plate 17. Bay 4, east elevation, remnant of decoration under eaves.



Plate 18. Bay 4, west elevation, window detail, viewed from south-east.





Plate 19. South elevation, window detail, viewed from north-west.



Plate 20. South elevation, upper lunette detail, viewed from north-west.



Plate 21. North elevation, infilled arch, viewed from south-west.





Plate 22. North elevation, infilled arch and roof over, viewed from south.



Plate 23. North elevation, remnant of decoration above infilled arch, viewed from south.



Plate 24. Bays 7/8, west elevation, viewed from east.





Plate 25. Bays 7/8, east elevation, viewed from west.



Plate 26. Bay 7/8, eastern elevation, attached column supporting truss base, viewed from south.



Plate 27. Bay 8, east section of north elevation, showing blocked fireplace location, viewed from south-west.





Plate 28. Bay 8, east section of north elevation, blocked fireplace, viewed from southwest.



Plate 29. Starkie Hall, prior to stripping of C20 ceiling, viewed from south (photo supplied by P. J. Livesey Ltd).

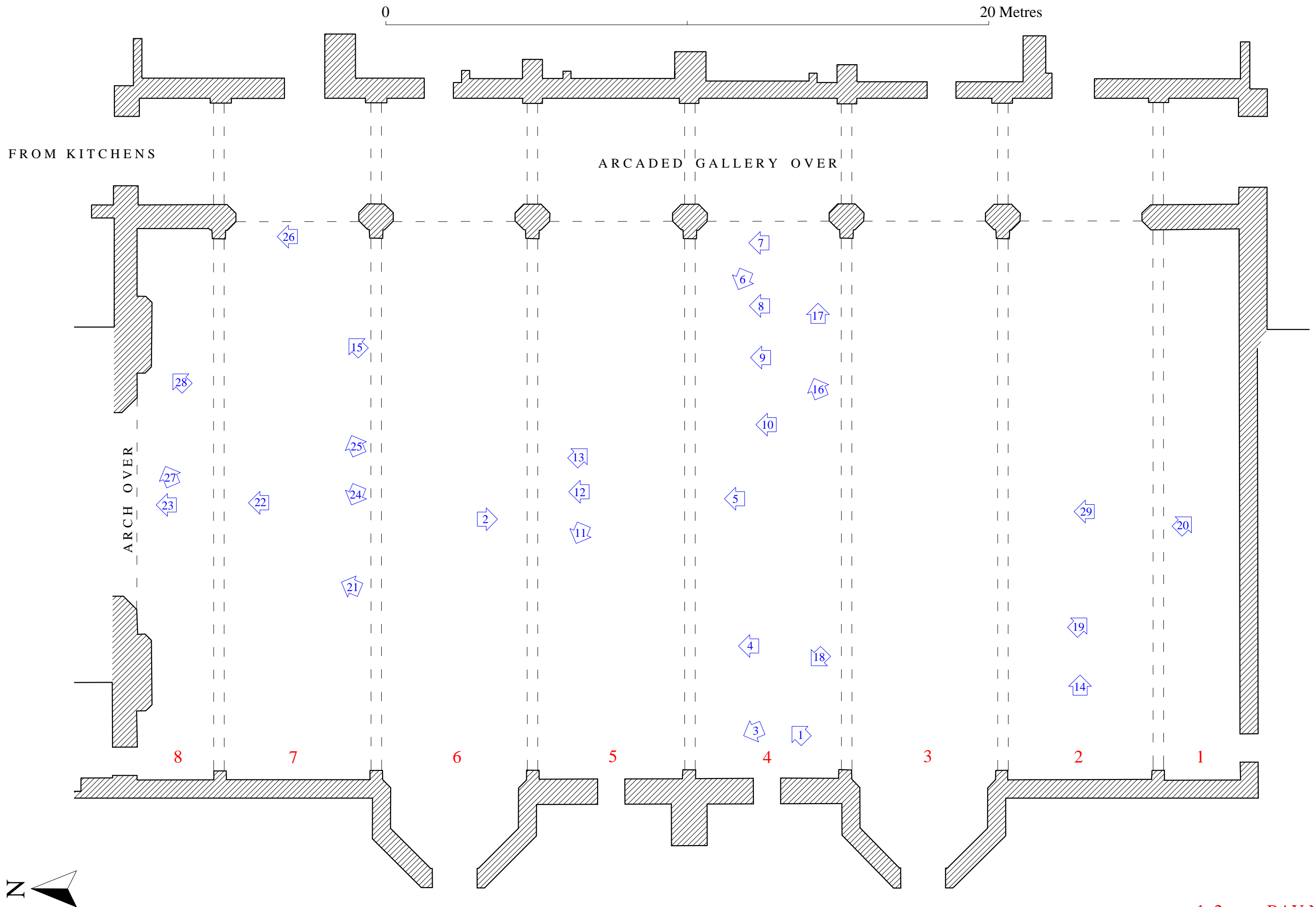




Figure 6. Artist's impression of Starkie Hall dining room, designed by Waring and Gillow. *Author's collection*

recommendations for improvements, and taking photographs to back up their findings. The report was quite damning. They found modern building techniques overlooked, leading to decay and unsanitary arrangements for many patients. Needless to say, it was not only the patients who suffered. The steam heating had many leaks, and 'nurses living in the Nurses' Home suffer discomfort, as

Plate 30. Artist's impression of Starkie Hall following completion, from *Aspects of Lancaster* (Discovering Local History), 2002, edited by Sue Wilson, Wharnccliffe Books



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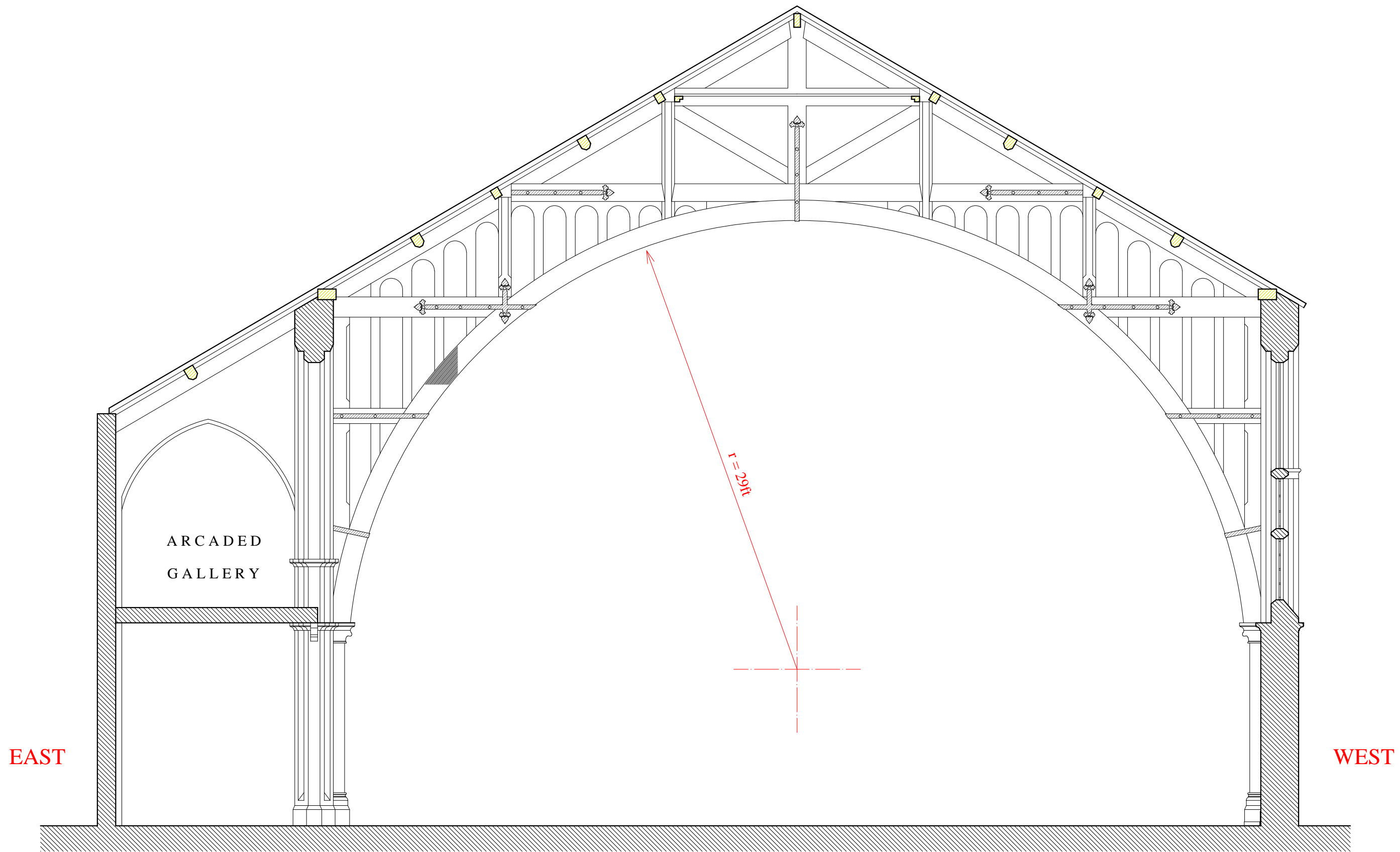
Site: **STARKIE HALL, MOOR HOSPITAL,  
 LANCASTER**

Title: **GROUND FLOOR PLAN, SHOWING PHOTO  
 LOCATIONS, BASE DRAWING SUPPLIED BY P. J.  
 LIVESEY LTD**

Date: Feb. 2016  
 Scale: As for scale bar

Field Recorder: ----  
 CAD Illustrator: M. F.

Sheet 1 of 2 Sheets  
 Figure 1



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| Matrix Archaeology Ltd<br>36 Highfield Road<br>Stretford<br>Manchester<br>M32 8NQ<br>matrixarch@btconnect.com | Site: STARKIE HALL, MOOR HOSPITAL,<br>LANCASTER | Title: CROSS SECTION ON PRINCIPAL TRUSS, BASE<br>DRAWING SUPPLIED BY P. J. LIVESEY LTD (C20<br>IRON FLITCHES ON WEST SIDE OMITTED) | Date: Feb. 2016         | Field Recorder: ----   | Sheet 2 of 2 Sheets |
|   |   |  | Scale: As for scale bar | CAD Illustrator: M. F. | Figure 2            |