

Archaeological Building Recording  
at  
**MICAWBER'S PUBLIC HOUSE,  
NO. 24 ST. MICHAEL'S HILL, BRISTOL.**  
for  
Punch Group (Retail Properties)



Report No. 2253/2010  
BHER No. 24835



**Bristol and Region Archaeological Services**



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at  
**MICAWBER'S PUBLIC HOUSE,  
NO. 24 ST. MICHAEL'S HILL, BRISTOL.**

Centred on  
N.G.R. ST 58518 73361

Client: Punch Group (Retail Properties)  
Agent: Blacknoll Ltd.

<i>Author:</i>	Andrew Townsend
<i>Approved by:</i>	Bruce Williams
<i>Signature:</i>	
<i>Date Issued:</i>	3rd February 2009 

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### Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	c.	Circa
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	Km	Kilometre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	m	Metre
BC	Before Christ	MoB	Museum of Bristol
BCC	Bristol City Council	n	number (count)
BCL	Bristol Central Library	NGR	National Grid Reference
BCMAG	Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery	NMR	National Monuments Record
BHER	Bristol Historic Environment Record	OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations
BRO	Bristol Record Office		Ordnance Survey
BSMR	Bristol Sites & Monuments Record	OS	

### Adopted Chronology

Prehistoric Before AD43	Palaeolithic 1,000,000 – 10,000 BC
	Mesolithic c. 10,000 – 3500 BC
	Neolithic c. 3500 – 2000 BC
	Bronze Age c. 2000 – 600 BC
	Iron Age c. 600 BC – AD43
Roman	AD43-410
Anglo Saxon/Early Medieval	AD410-1066
Medieval	AD1066-1540
Post-medieval	AD1540-present

### NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

February, 2010.

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## **SUMMARY**

An archaeological building-recording at Micawber's Public House, No. 24 St Michael's Hill, Bristol, was commissioned from Bristol and Region Archaeological Services by Blacknoll Limited of East Knighton, Dorchester, agents for the Punch Group (Retail Properties).

It was observed that the extant main-roof structure at No. 24 St Michael's Hill, where this was exposed, incorporates structural timbers of various dates, many of which are of some age, also new timbers resulting from recent remedial work. It was not, however, possible to establish whether or not some of the older timbers comprised a part of the original late-17th-century roof structure of the building.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Site Location

- 1.1 An archaeological building-recording at Micawber's Public House, 24 St Michael's Hill, Bristol (NGR ST 58518 73361), was commissioned from Bristol and Region Archaeological Services by Blacknoll Ltd of East Knighton, Dorchester, agents for the Punch Group (Retail Properties).
- 1.2 The site is situated at the south-east end of St Michael's Hill, approximately 300 m to the north-west of Bristol City Centre (**Fig. 1**).
- 1.3 The recording was undertaken in the attic storey accommodation on the fourth floor of the front building and roof space above (**Fig. 2**).
- 1.4 The site is within the St Michael's Hill and Christmas Steps Conservation Area (BCC 2008, Map 1) and, along with Nos 20 & 22 St Michael's Hill, presently enjoys Grade II listed status (901-1/11/248). Colston's Almshouses presently enjoy Grade I listed status (901-1/11/281 & 282).
- 1.5 Number 24 St Michael's Hill is included in the Bristol Historic Environment Record as a monument: BHER 1508M.

### Existing Use and Layout

- 1.6 The premises presently comprises Micawber's Public House (**Plate 1 & Cover Plate**). The north-west flank of the premises is bounded by Colston's Almshouses, north-east flank by Horfield Road, south-east flank by No. 22 St Michael's Hill, and south-west flank by St Michael's Hill (**Fig. 1**).

### Planning History

- 1.7 A planning application (07/01801/LA) for alterations and repairs to roofs at the premises was submitted to Bristol City Council in April 2007.
- 1.8 Consent for the proposed works was granted, with conditions, on 21st January 2008.
- 1.9 The present programme of building recording relates to condition 3 (SC83) of the consent which states:

The developer shall ensure the recording of those parts of an historic building which are likely to be disturbed or concealed in the course of redevelopment or refurbishment. Such recording shall be carried out by an archaeologist or archaeological organisation approved by the Local Planning Authority. No redevelopment or refurbishment of an historic building shall take place until at least two weeks notice has been given in writing to the Local Planning Authority unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

- 1.10 In response to Condition 3 of the planning consent (see § 1.9), a Written Scheme of Investigation (BaRAS 2009) for the programme of building recording was submitted to the Archaeological Officer for Bristol City Council and approved on 4th January 2010.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **Recording**

- 2.1 A photographic record was made of the areas of roof timbers where finishes or structural elements had been removed.

### **Access & Limitations**

- 2.2 At the time the building recording was undertaken, areas of wall and ceiling finishes were still in place, thus preventing full observations from being made.

### **OASIS & Historic Environment Registration**

- 2.3 The project has been included in the Bristol Historic Environment Record as: BHER 24835.
- 2.4 The project has been registered with the English Heritage OASIS project as: bristola1-70241.

### **Programme**

- 2.5 The building recording was undertaken on 12th January 2010 by Andrew Townsend of Bristol & Region Archaeological Services.

### **3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

- 3.1 A summary history of the St Michael's Hill area is given in the *St Michael's Hill & Christmas Steps Character Appraisal* (BCC 2008, §5) and also covered by Leech (2000), although a detailed history of No. 24 St Michael's Hill (BHER 1508M) itself has not been undertaken to date.
- 3.2 The properties at 22-24 St Michael's Hill (BHER 1507M & 1508M) are thought to date to the late 17th century. Jacobus Millerd's 1673 plan of Bristol depicts the area of where the buildings now stand as undeveloped land. A map of 1710, also by Millerd, depicts the land as developed, including 'Colston's Hospital' immediately to the north-west (Colston's Almshouses, built in 1691).



## 4. BUILDING RECORDING

### General

- 4.1 The building's main-roof structure (fronting St Michael's Hill) essentially comprised a collared roof incorporating an attic storey, with two dormer windows on each side, and a mono-pitched roof above a stairwell at the rear (north-east side) (**Fig. 2, Plate 1 & Cover Plate**).
- 4.2 The recording was undertaken in relation to two elements:
- (i) Attic roof-space (**Fig. 2[B]**);
  - (ii) Attic storey (**Fig. 2[C]**).
- 4.3 At the time the recording was undertaken, it was proposed only to remove a single length of extant timber, that forming the head of a doorway (**Plate 17**) leading to the stairwell at the rear of the building (**Plate 7**).
- 4.4 It appeared that a number of timbers had previously been removed, with strengthening/bracing/repair timbers introduced in some areas. What appeared to be timbers of some considerable age were observed in various locations, although it was not possible to ascertain if these comprised elements of the original late-17th-century roof structure, or those associated with later construction phases. It is possible that, although of some age, some of the timbers may have been removed from buildings elsewhere and reused in the present roof (possibly in the 18th and 19th centuries?), a not uncommon practice. A number of fixings appeared to be hand-made, especially where timber of some age were observed, but a large number of elements incorporated machine-made fixings.
- 4.5 It appears that the attic storey was originally divided by a north-east/south-west stud partition, although this was not extant when the building-recording was undertaken. The stud partition separating the attic storey from the stairwell was extant (**Plate 6**).

### Recording

#### Attic-Storey (Fig. 2 [B])

- 4.6 Three areas of exposed structural timbers were observed in the attic storey:
- (i) Structural timbers, incorporating new elements, associated with the north-west portion of the pitched roof on the north-east side of the building (**Plates 11-13**); the exposed rafters (n=5) appeared to have been sprocketed (**Plate 13**); a timber wall-plate was also visible at eaves level (**Plate 13**);
  - (ii) Structural timbers associated with the valley of the north-west dormer and main pitched-roof of the south-west side of the building (**Plate 14**);
  - (iii) Structural timbers, including new elements, associated with the south-east dormer and main pitched-roof on the south-west side of the building (**Plates 15 & 16**).
- 4.7 A short length of timber comprising a head over the doorway to the stairwell and valley between the north-west and south-east dormers on the north-east side of the building, was designated for replacement (**Plates 7 & 17**).
- 4.8 The stud partition, of unknown date, separating the attic storey from the stairwell appeared to comprise vertical studwork probably infilled with plaster-and-lathe (**Plate 6**).

Attic Roof-Space (Fig. 2[C])

- 4.9 Four areas of structural timbers were observed in the attic roof-space:
- (i) Structural timbers, incorporating new elements, comprising the north-west/south-east pitched roof (**Plates 18, 23 & 24**);
  - (ii) Structural timbers comprising the north-west dormer on the north-east side of the building (**Plate 19**);
  - (iii) Structural timbers comprising the north-west dormer on the south-west side of the building (**Plate 20**);
  - (iv) Structural timbers comprising the south-east dormer on the north-east side of the building (**Plates 21 & 22**).
- 4.10 A vertical timber-strut on the north-east side of the building forming part of the north-west/south-east pitched roof incorporated what appeared to be carpenter's marks (**Plate 25**) (cf. Brunskill 1985, Fig. 47).

## **5. SUMMARY**

- 5.1 The extant main-roof at 24 St Michael's Hill, where this was exposed, incorporates structural timbers of various dates, many of which are of some age, and also new timbers resulting from recent remedial work. It was not, however, possible to establish if some of the older timbers comprised a part of the original late-17th-century roof structure of the building.
- 5.2 The areas of exposed timbers revealed that the roof structure had been considerably altered over time, incorporating structural timbers of various ages, a significant number of which probably date to the 19th and 20th centuries. It is possible that some of the older timbers comprise elements removed from other buildings and reused in the present roof-structure. Carpenter's marks were observed on one of the timbers, although this feature is thought likely to have comprised an off-cut from a larger roof timber.

## 6. REFERENCES & WORKS CONSULTED

### Texts

BaRAS, 2009. *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for a Recording Programme at Micawber's, 24 St Michael's Hill, Bristol (NGR ST 58518 73361) as Archaeological Mitigation for Repairs and Alterations to the Premises*. WSI prepared by Bristol & Region Archaeological Services, January 2010.

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### Architectural/Engineering Drawings

2007 Plans and sections of roof, attic storey and attic space. Malcolm Wright Partnership Drawing 5038/1.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services wish to thank the following for their help and advice: Bob Jones, Archaeological Officer for Bristol City Council; Pete Insole, Historic Environment Record Officer for Bristol City Council; Kate Iles, Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery; Staff of Micawber's Public House; Richard Jones of Blacknoll Limited.

The above report was compiled by Andrew Townsend and produced by Ann Linge of Bristol and Region Archaeological Services.

The project was managed by Bruce Williams, MifA.

## **APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement**

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

### **NATIONAL POLICIES**

Statutory protection for archaeology is enshrined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), amended by the National Heritage Act, 1983. Nationally important sites are listed in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments (SAM). Scheduled Monument consent is required for any work which would affect a SAM.

### **ODPM PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE**

The Planning Policy Guidance of Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16) consolidates advice to planning authorities. The Guidance stresses the non-renewable nature of the archaeological resource, details the role of the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), encourages early consultation with county and district archaeological officers and sets out the requirement for developers to provide sufficient information on the archaeological impact of development to enable a reasonable planning decision to be made.

PPG 16 also indicates the circumstances where further work would be necessary and outlines the use of agreements and conditions to protect the archaeological resource.

### **DISTRICT POLICY**

Bristol City Council Supplementary Planning Document (2006) states (policy SPD No.7, p4):

- (i) There will be a presumption in favour of preserving any archaeological features or sites of national importance, whether scheduled or not.
- (ii) Development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desktop study, and where appropriate a field evaluation. Where there is evidence of archaeological remains, development will not be permitted except where it can be demonstrated that the archaeological features of the site will be satisfactorily preserved in situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals upon important archaeological remains and their settings; or, if this is not possible and the sites are not scheduled or of national importance, provision for adequately recording the site prior to destruction is made, preferably by negotiating a planning agreement to ensure that access, time and financial resources are available to allow essential recording and publication to take place.

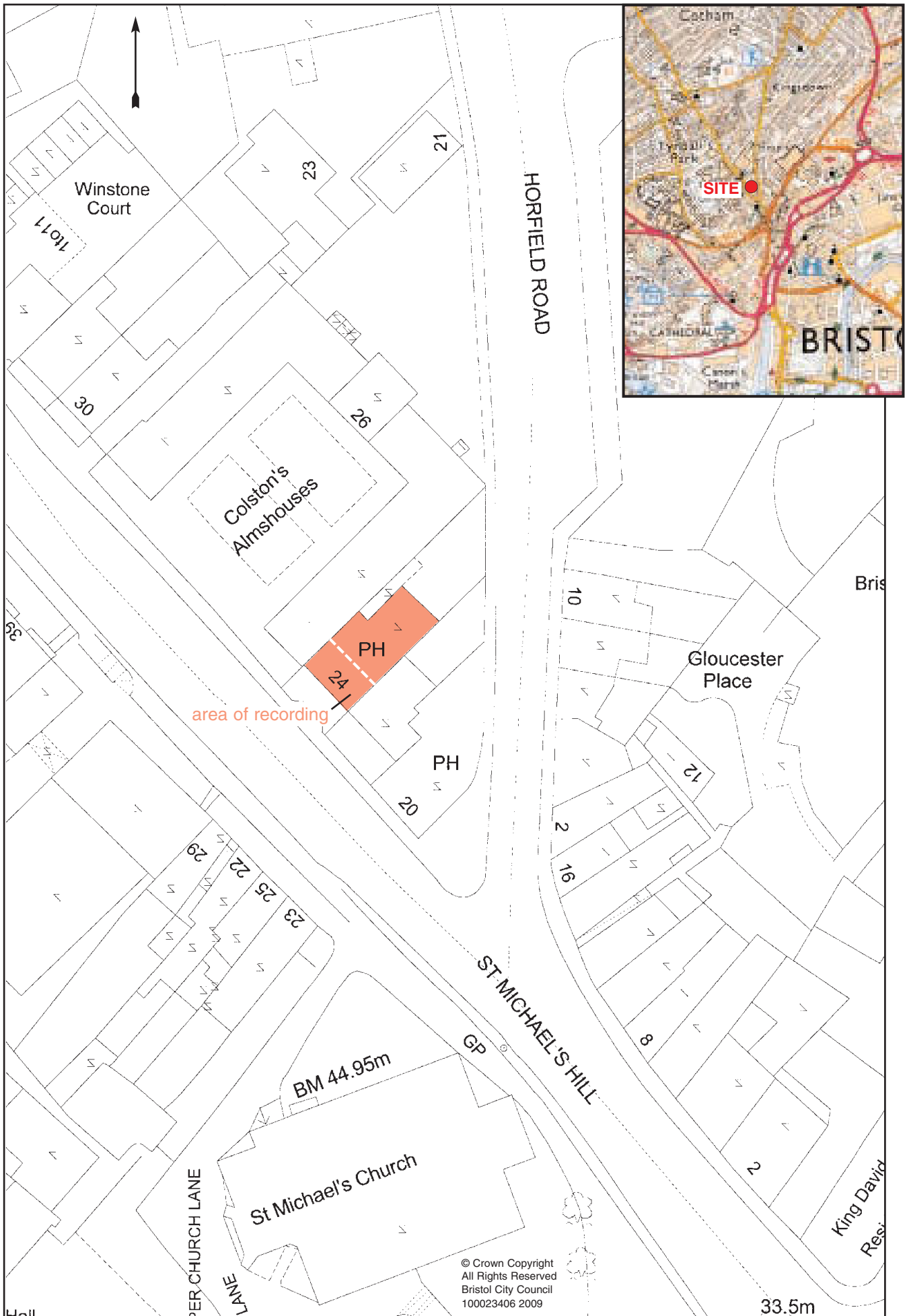


Fig.1 Location of site

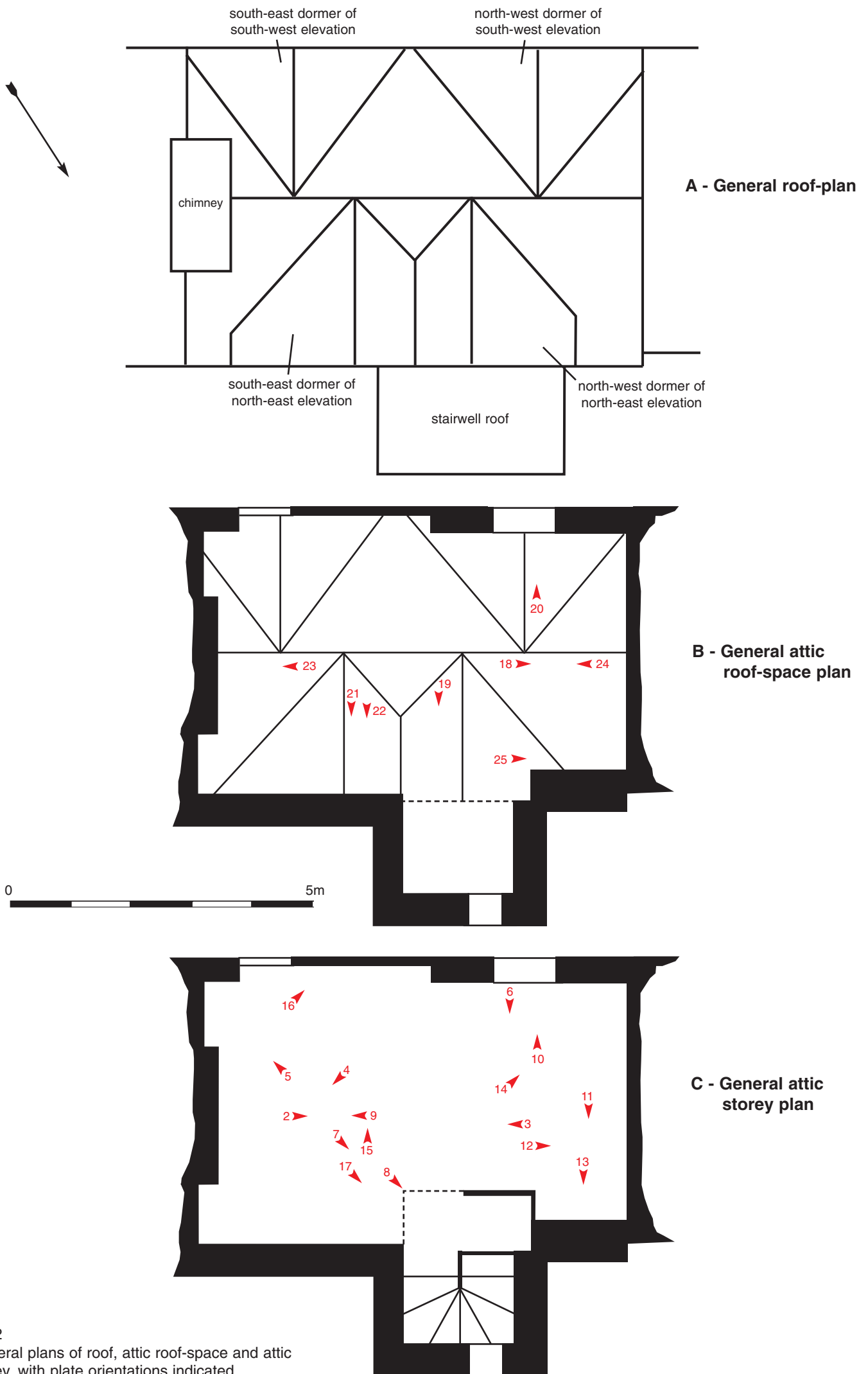


Fig.2  
 General plans of roof, attic roof-space and attic storey, with plate orientations indicated



Plate 1 General view of rear (north-east) elevation of the premises, from the east



Plate 2 General view across attic storey, from the south-east



Plate 3 General view across attic storey, from the north-west



Plate 4 General view across attic storey, from the south-west



Plate 5 General view of intersection of south-east dormer and main pitched-roof on south-west side of premises, from the north



Plate 6 General view of partition separating attic storey from stairwell, from the south-west





Plate 7 General view of door opening leading from attic storey to stairwell, from the south



Plate 8 General view of stairwell, from the south



Plate 9 General view of south-east gable of attic storey/attic space, from the north-west



Plate 10 General view of north-west dormer-gable on the south-west side of building, as seen from the attic storey, from the north-east



Plate 11 General view of lower (eaves) end of exposed structural timbers forming part of the main pitched-roof on the north-east side of the building, from the south-west



Plate 12 General view of upper (ridge) end of exposed structural timbers forming part of the main pitched-roof on the north-east side of the building, from the south-east



Plate 13 Detail view of lower (eaves) end of exposed structural timbers forming part of the main pitched-roof on the north-east side of the building, from the south-west



Plate 14 General view of exposed structural timbers to main pitched roof and north-west dormer on south-west side of building, from the north-east



Plate 15 General view of exposed structural timbers to main pitched roof and south-east dormer on south-west side of building, from the north-east



Plate 16 Detail view of exposed structural timbers to main pitched roof and south-east dormer on south-west side of building, from the north-east



Plate 17 Detail view of timber element to be replaced above door opening leading from attic storey to stairwell, from the south-east



Plate 18 General view across attic space looking towards north-west gable of building, from the south-east



Plate 19 General view across attic space in north-east dormer on north-east side of building, from the south-west



Plate 20 General view across attic space of north-west dormer on south-west side of building, from the north-east



Plate 21 General view across attic space of south-east dormer on north-east side of building, from the south-west



Plate 22 General view across attic space of south-east dormer on north-east side of building, from the south-west



Plate 25 Detail view of structural timber incorporating carpenter's marks on north-east side of building, from the south-east



Plate 24 General view across attic space looking towards south-east gable of building, from the north-west



Plate 23 General view across attic space looking towards south-east gable of building, from the north-west