

HISTORIC BUILDING  
RECORDING  
AT  
MOAT HOUSE, LEIGH SINTON,  
WOCESTERSHIRE

Shona Robson-Glyde

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Interim (pre watching brief)  
7<sup>th</sup> December 2006

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project 2894  
Report 1486  
WSM 35960

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## Historic building recording at Moat House, Leigh Sinton, Worcestershire

**Shona Robson-Glyde**

### **Part 1 Project summary**

Historic building recording was undertaken at Moat House, Leigh Sinton, Worcestershire (NGR SO 7819 5091). It was undertaken on behalf of Minster Care Ltd, who intend to demolish the existing building and construct a new 44-bedroom nursing for which a planning application has been approved. The building recording aimed to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of the building.

The first phase of building at Moat House occurred in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when a small timber framed building, possibly L-shaped, was built. The construction of the building appears to coincide with the documentary evidence of Leigh Sinton becoming a manor in its own right separate to Leigh. The construction of the building probably occurred at the same time as the moat was excavated. Surviving timber framing within the building showed that it was of high status possibly an open hall or a solar wing. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the development of the site to a farm with the construction of a stable within the moat and farm buildings outside it. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the house was converted into a nursing home and saw removal of the timber-frame on the ground floor and some of the first floor. The addition of all the extensions and the late 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations of the building caused it to have a very unassuming appearance, which was hiding a severely wounded timber-frame house.

## Part 2 Detailed report

### 1. Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

Historic building recording were undertaken at Moat House, (NGR SO 7819 5091), Leigh Sinton, Worcestershire (Fig 1), on behalf of Minster Care Ltd through their agent Robert Brain Design and Consultancy. The client intended to demolish the existing building and construct a new 44-bedroom nursing home and submitted a planning application to Malvern Hills District Council (reference MH/05/001801), who considered that a site of archaeological interest may be affected (WSM 07289 and 34929).

#### 1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (IFA 2001).

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council Planning Advisory Section (HEAS 2006a) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2006b).

#### 1.3 Aims

The aims of the building recording were to ‘establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of [the] building’ (IFA 2001).

More specifically the following aims have been identified:

- Provide a descriptive interpretation of the timber-framed building, drawing upon all available evidence.
- Produce a 3D representation of all the surviving timber-framed structure and a conjectural reconstruction, based on available evidence, of what the building may have looked like.

### 2. Methods

#### 2.1 Documentary search

Prior to this stage of fieldwork commencing an archaeological evaluation was carried out. This incorporated a documentary search of the Historic Environment Record (HER) and of other sources. For this stage of fieldwork, in addition to the sources listed in the bibliography, the following sources were consulted:

##### *Cartographic sources*

- 1838 Leigh with Bransford Tithe map (WRO BA 1572/413 ref x760/413)
- 1885 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map, Worcestershire sheet 33.13 1:2500

##### *Documentary sources*

- Place-names (Mawer and Stenton 1927).
- County histories (VCH Vol IV, 101-111).



- 
- Tithe award (WRO BA1572 ref f760/412)
  - Vaughan 2006.

## 2.2 **Fieldwork methodology**

### 2.2.1 **Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2006b).

Building recording fieldwork was undertaken between 13<sup>th</sup> June and 14<sup>th</sup> July 2006. The site reference number and site code is WSM 35960.

Building recording consisted of a photographic survey of the interior and exterior of the building, drawn survey and building analysis. All photographs were taken with photographic scales visible in each shot. The photographic survey was carried out with a Nikon D70 camera. All photographs were recorded on a pro-forma Photographic Record Sheet. Drawing ground plans, drawing revealed timberwork during demolition and completion of pro-forma Building Record and Building Phase sheets, complemented this record.

### 2.2.2 **Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

## 2.3 **Building recording methodology**

The building recording project conformed to the specification for a level 3 survey as defined by English Heritage (EH 2006). This required the following elements of survey.

Survey and drawings

- Plans of all main floors as existing.
- Sectional elevations of timber-frame parts of the building.

Photography

- Overall appearance of rooms and circulation areas.
- Detailed coverage of the building's external appearance.
- Any detail, structural or decorative, relevant to the building's design, development and use, which does not show on general photographs.

### 2.3.1 **Building analysis**

Analysis of the building was based on the study of the photographic record, building recording forms and original drawings. It was also informed by the documentary sources listed above. This allowed plans to be drawn up showing the structural development of the building.

## 2.4 **The methods in retrospect**

Having undertaken the building recording work the following comments may be made with regard to the methods adopted. A number of elements detailed within the brief were not carried out due to the constraints of the work on site. A record of the building was to be made prior to the commencement of the demolition. It was not possible to do this prior to demolition due to the start time of the project. A ground plan was produced but it was too dangerous to draw a first floor plan. Therefore the first floor plan produced in the report used the external measurements of the building from the ground floor and a sketch of the internal layout produced onsite.

It was not possible to draw and photograph the roof structure following removal of the roof tiles due to the nature of the removal and demolition of the roof. Records were produced of all further elements of timber frame as they were revealed during the demolition of internal partition walls. Due to the small amount of timberwork revealed, it was not possible to build an accurate 3D model of the surviving structure. Therefore, on discussion with the curator, it was agreed that a basic 3D reconstruction of how the timber-frame structure may have looked, based upon the evidence recorded during the project, could be produced instead.

A dendrochronology survey of primary phase timbers was carried out on primary phase timbers. These timbers were assessed by the dendrochronologist although only one was deemed suitable for dating with the rest showing too few rings. On analysis, this one core was found not to date, also because it presented too few a number of rings.

This recording project has revealed the constraints of a project that has to work within the parameters of a demolition crew and shown that above all, the safety of the fieldwork staff are the priority. The quality of the work generated in these conditions was of a high standard and has produced a record that has fulfilled the aims of the project.

### 3. **Topographical and archaeological context**

A search was made of the Worcestershire Record Office, for material relevant to the building. Historical evidence for the area was also looked at for the production of the evaluation report (Vaughan 2006). The following information has been largely drawn from this report.

Moat House is located in the eastern end of Leigh Sinton village, north of the A4103 main Hereford to Worcester road, and opposite the t-junction with the B4503 Malvern road. It is set back from the road and bounded by the remains of a moat on the north and west sides.

Leigh Sinton is first documented as *Sothyntone in Lega* in c 1275, as *Suthinton* and *Suthington* in 1275 and 1316, *Sodyngton* and *Lye Sinton al Syddington* in 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is located toward the southern end of the large parish of Leigh, within the Saxon Hundred of Pershore (Mawer and Stenton 1927, 207). 'Leigh Sinton appears to have been held of the abbey of Pershore by the Andrews family from a very early date.' (Spilman 1924, 105) The earliest record was a Richard Andrews, as a landholder in Leigh in 1276. The Andrews held the property throughout the medieval period. Leigh Sinton was first referred to as a manor in its own right in 1542, when it was in the possession of another Richard Andrews of Freefolk, Hampshire, who died that year, leaving it to his three daughters. Edmund Colles then purchased it before 1606, whose family had long held Leigh and therefore it subsequently followed the descent of Leigh (Spilman 1924, 102-3, 105-6). The moat is recorded on the Historic Environment Record as WSM 7289. This records that Leigh Sinton manor house may have been sited at Moat Farm (Vaughan 2006).

A further possible moated site has been identified west of Pipe Elm Farm beyond the west extent of the present village. It is similar to Moat Farm, comprising an L-shaped pond (WSM 7913). Two known timber buildings are located within the village. Ahimsa, on the opposite side of the main road, has a cruck frame of c1600, with possible 15<sup>th</sup> century elements (WSM 35128). The Moorings, off Sherridge lane to the north of the village, is also a cruck frame building, but primarily dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century date, with surviving late medieval elements (WSM 35129). Surviving aspects of the agricultural basis of the village include a post-medieval forge and timber-framed barn and three 19<sup>th</sup> century hop kilns (WSM 25940, 25942, 27978 and 32802) (Vaughan 2006).

The tithe award for 1838 notes that the landowner of the site area was the Right Honourable John Earl Somers and that Moat House was occupied by Joseph Essex (WRO BA1572 ref f 760/412). The tithe map of 1838 (Fig 2) indicates the layout of the moat and farm buildings. Three buildings exist within the moat itself. A small rectangular one toward the north side, a smaller rectangular structure against the east arm, and the largest, an east-west aligned building situated to the north-east of the entrance. An irregular structure is also noted against the terminus of the moat on the west side of the entrance. In addition a series of buildings line either side of the main access from the road to the south. Of these structures only two were surviving by the time of the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition map in 1885 (Fig 3) and the moat had been partially backfilled leaving just the north and east arms intact. The map shows

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the main east-west aligned building, with extensions added, and the small rectangular building against the north edge of the moat. All of the others have been demolished. Both of these structures are now incorporated as part of Moat House.

## 4. Building recording results

### 4.1 Description

Moat House was most recently used as a nursing home. Prior to this it was a farm, known as Moat Farm and had associated farm buildings to the south that were still in existence on 1960s Ordnance Survey maps. Moat House from its front (south, Plate 1) elevation appeared to be a 19<sup>th</sup> century domestic structure. It was constructed of red brick coursed in variations of English Bond and had bay windows. The post and rail timbers visible on the west elevation (Plate 2) showed that the building might be earlier than the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The interior of the building had been substantially altered by its change of use to a nursing home. Many of the original partition walls had been removed throughout and later partitions had been added to create bedrooms, cupboards and toilets. The first floor had some surviving timber framing including decorated tie beams. Much more timberwork was revealed during the demolition of the building, including panels of wattle and daub and timbers with carpenter's marks.

There are also later extensions to the rear (north) of the building (Plate 3). These were constructed of breezeblock and were bedrooms. The small brick structure shown on the tithe and 1<sup>st</sup> edition maps against the north edge of the moat was joined to the main building by this extension.

### 4.2 Structural analysis

The building and elements recorded are shown in Figures 4-10. Analyses of the records have allowed a phasing of the buildings to be produced. This has been produced as Figures 4 and 5 and is presented below. Photographs of the building have been reproduced as Plates 1-28 with their locations shown on Figures 4 and 5.

#### 4.2.1 Phase 1 16<sup>th</sup> century (Figs 4 and 5)

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century a small structure was constructed within the moat at Leigh Sinton and was probably only one arm of a larger building, L or T shaped in design. The architectural style of the timber-frame (Figs 6-8), in particular the carved tie beams (Plate 4 and 5), suggests that the building dates to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

English Heritage Monuments Protection Plan (MPP) states that the main period of moat building occurred between the dates 1250-1350, but that moats continued to be constructed into the 16<sup>th</sup> century. For Moat House there is documentary evidence for Leigh Sinton becoming a manor in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (VCH 1924, 105-6). This suggests that the construction of the moat and the building are contemporary.

#### 4.2.2 Phase 2 c1800 (Figs 4 and 5)

There is no surviving evidence of the appearance or development of the buildings within the moat between the 16<sup>th</sup> century and about 1800 when the small rectangular building against the north edge of the moat was constructed. The building is shown on the 1838 tithe map (Fig 2). This brick structure may have been a stable, as it appeared to have three openings in its front (south) elevation. One of these is still visible, now blocked, in this wall (Plate 6). The west wall of the building has a chimney contemporary with the building (Plate 7) and the position of the hearth can be seen on the inside elevation (Plate 8). It is possible that this was used as a forge for the stable.

#### 4.2.3 **Phase 3 c1825** (Figs 4 and 5)

Around this time an extension to the south of the original (Phase 1) building was constructed (Plate 9). The building was built with an internal timber-frame that had tie beams projecting beyond the ends of the principal rafters (Fig 9, Plate 10). The stud partitions were also constructed with reused timber-frame (Fig 10, Plate 11), possibly from the original phase of building on the site. A hop or grain hole was in the floor of room 21 (Plate 12) suggesting that the structure had an agricultural function. Its construction adjoining the main house, suggests that it may have been partly used as granary.

It is probable that at this time the north wall of the original building was also altered. An inglenook fireplace had been created on the ground floor, in room 16 (Plate 13). This had bread ovens on each side of the inglenook opening (Plates 14 and 15).

#### 4.2.4 **Phase 4 c1850** (Figs 4 and 5)

Around 1850 a large extension was constructed behind (north) and to the east of the original phase building (Plate 16). This is a typical extension of a domestic building and was possibly a replacement for a wing against the east face of the 16<sup>th</sup> century structure. Due to the later alterations, it was not possible to ascertain its original layout or function. However, it was probably used for living accommodation on both ground and first floors with some kitchen or servant accommodation also on the ground floor.

Also at this time a staircase was added into the 16<sup>th</sup> century part of the house. The only evidence for this survived in room 16a, the toilet for room 16 (Plate 17). Where the top stair was still in place. The fixing points were visible in the wall and the line of the staircase could be seen in paintwork.

#### 4.2.5 **Phase 5 c1875** (Figs 4 and 5)

Around 1875 an extension was added (Plate 18) to the east of the phase 3 addition to the front of the building. Both of these extensions are shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 (Fig 3) with dormer windows. Although both of the dormers have been replaced since this time. The function of this phase extension appears to have been domestic, due to its dormer window and the chimney on its north elevation (Plate 19).

#### 4.2.6 **Phase 6 1920s/30s** (Figs 4 and 5)

The 1920s/30s saw extensions added to the rear of the building (Plate 20). These joined the small phase 2, possible stable, structure and the c1850 extension to the house. It is probable that the extensions were used as outbuildings of the house such as a washhouse. With the construction of these extensions, the frontage of the possible stable was also extended to the south and had a bow window built on its frontage (Plate 21). This suggests that at this time the building was being used as a dwelling, possibly for a farm foreman or servants. The south elevation of the house also had its bay windows rebuilt at this time.

#### 4.2.7 **Phase 7 1960s** (Figs 4 and 5)

At this time Moat House was first converted into a nursing home. A large ground floor extension was built against the east elevation of the house (Plate 22). This appears to have been used for residents accommodation. Many internal alterations were made to the building in order to make it habitable as a nursing home. The lift was installed (Plate 23) and the 1920s/30s extensions were made into a kitchen and laundry. New staircases were also added into the building (Plate 24) possibly dividing the building between the bedrooms and general living areas. It is probably at this time that the ground and first floor layout of the c1850s addition to the house was considerably altered. The ground floor became an open plan dining room (Plate 25) and the first floor was subdivided into bedrooms, toilet and corridor.

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#### 4.2.8 **Phase 8 1980s/1990s** (Figs 4 and 5)

During the 1980s and 1990s the nursing home was extended and a new wing was built against the rear (north) of the 1960s extension (Plate 26). This consisted of seven bedrooms (Plate 27) and a bathroom. The phase 2, c1800, building was also divided into two bedrooms at this time (Fig 4). It is probable that the alterations of this phase and those that occurred in the 1960s caused the structure to become unsound. For example, the alterations resulted in floor joists not attached to the first floor walls.

### 5. **Synthesis**

The earliest of the surviving structure dated from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is unlikely that the building only consisted of the two bays still surviving at the time of recording. This range may have been the hall or a solar wing and had an extension to the east. The surviving fabric from the building suggests that it was a high status building. Carved tie beams, as on the first floor of Moat House (Plates 5 and 28), were typically found at the high end of an open hall or in first floor chambers such as the solar. A high status building is not unexpected for construction within a moat, as moated sites are usually associated with the manor house of a settlement.

The later development of the site shows that it had developed into a farm by around 1800. The construction of a stable within the moat and close to the house, suggests that this was used for the carriage horses or for the owners riding horses. The tithe map (Fig 2) shows farm buildings constructed to the immediate south of the moat it is likely that these housed the stables for the farm horses or oxen. By the 1880s these farm buildings have been replaced by a U-shaped set of buildings (Fig 3), the plan of which is typical for mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century farm buildings arranged around a central courtyard.

The conversion of the house into a nursing home in the 20<sup>th</sup> century caused major remodelling of the site and removal of much of the original timber-framing of the building, particularly on the ground floor. Because of this, it has not been possible to produce a reconstruction of the timber-frame building showing the surviving timber-framing. However this surviving timber can give an idea of the appearance of the structure when it was first built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This has allowed a 3D interpretation to be produced (Fig 11).

#### 5.1 **Research frameworks**

There are no research frameworks on which to base the study of historic buildings in Worcestershire. However, timber-framed buildings have been studied for years resulting in a number of national synthesis including *Timber-framed buildings of England* (Brown 1997) and *Timber building in Britain* (Brunskill 1999).

Moated sites have come under study by English Heritage and have been classed under the Monuments Protection Plan (MPP). A number of books have also been produced on the subject including *Moated sites* (Wilson 1985). For Worcestershire in particular, Bond produced a paper 'Moated sites in Worcestershire' (1978). This details the number, size, type and distribution of moats within the County. The moat of Moat House is included as one of the 146 definite moats within Worcestershire.

### 6. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*Building recording was undertaken on behalf of Minster Care Ltd at Moat House, Leigh Sinton, Worcestershire (NGR ref SO 7819 5091; SMR ref WSM 35960). The first phase of building at Moat House occurred in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when a small timber framed building, possibly L-shaped, was built. The construction of the building appears to coincide with the documentary evidence of Leigh*

*Sinton becoming a manor in its own right separate to Leigh. The construction of the building probably occurred at the same time as the moat was constructed. Surviving timber framing within the building showed that it was of high status possibly an open hall or a solar wing. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the development of the site to a farm with the construction of a stable within the moat and farm buildings outside it. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the house was converted into a nursing home and saw removal of the timber-frame on the ground floor and some of the first floor. The addition of the all the extensions and the late 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations of the building caused it to have a very unassuming appearance which was hiding a severely wounded timber-frame house.*

## 7. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 4 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 8 Photographic records AS3
- 292 Digital photographs
- 10 Scale drawings
- 1 Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum  
Hartlebury Castle  
Hartlebury  
Near Kidderminster  
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ  
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

## 8. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Minster Care Ltd and Robert Brain, Mike Glyde, Humphries Demolition Ltd and Pete Wilkes.

## 9. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Shona Robson-Glyde. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Simon Woodiwiss. Fieldwork was undertaken by Shona Robson-Glyde and illustration by Carolyn Hunt and Shona Robson-Glyde.

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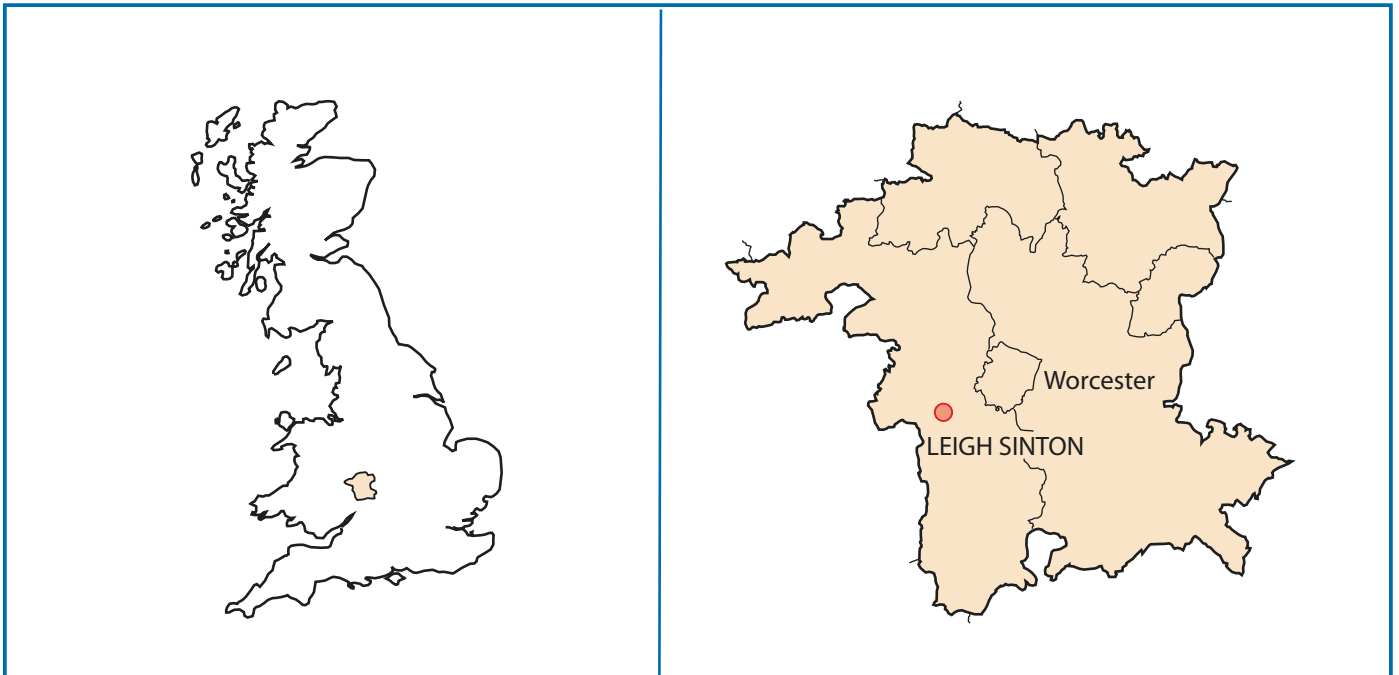
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11. **Figures**





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Location of the site.

Figure 1

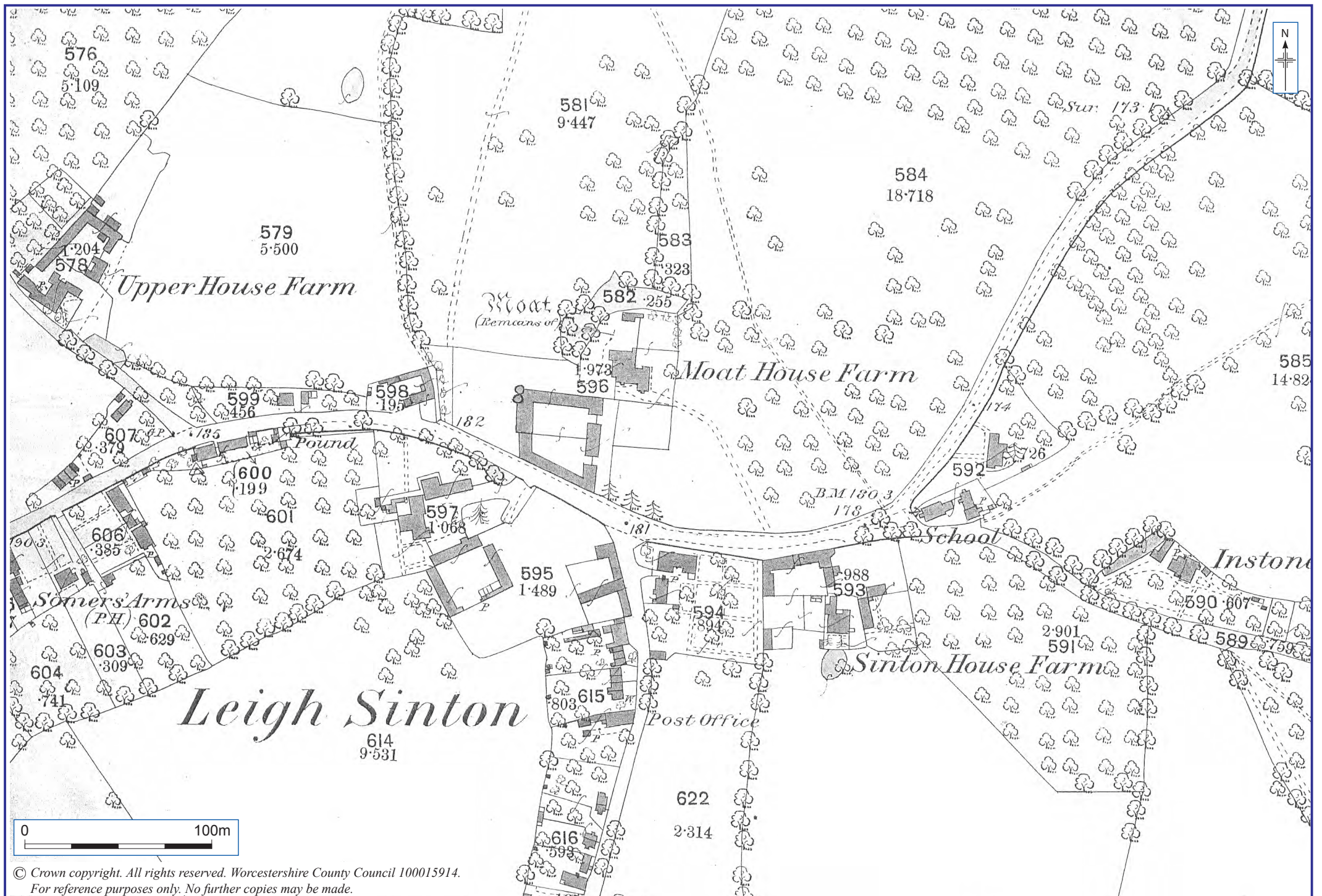




Tithe of Leigh Sinton (WRO BA 1572/413 ref x 760/413)

Figure 2





Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1885 1:2500, Worcestershire sheet 33.13

Figure 3

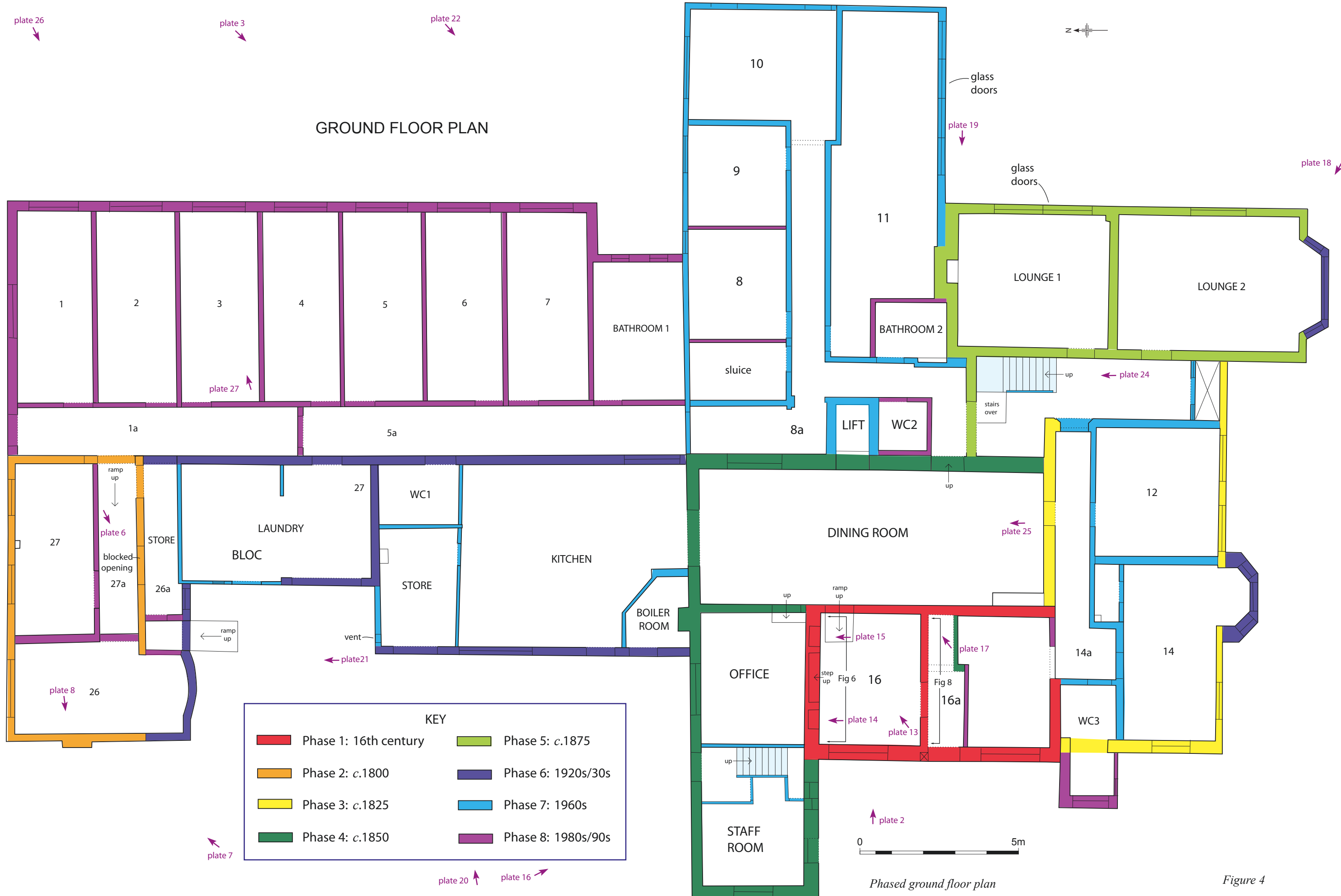


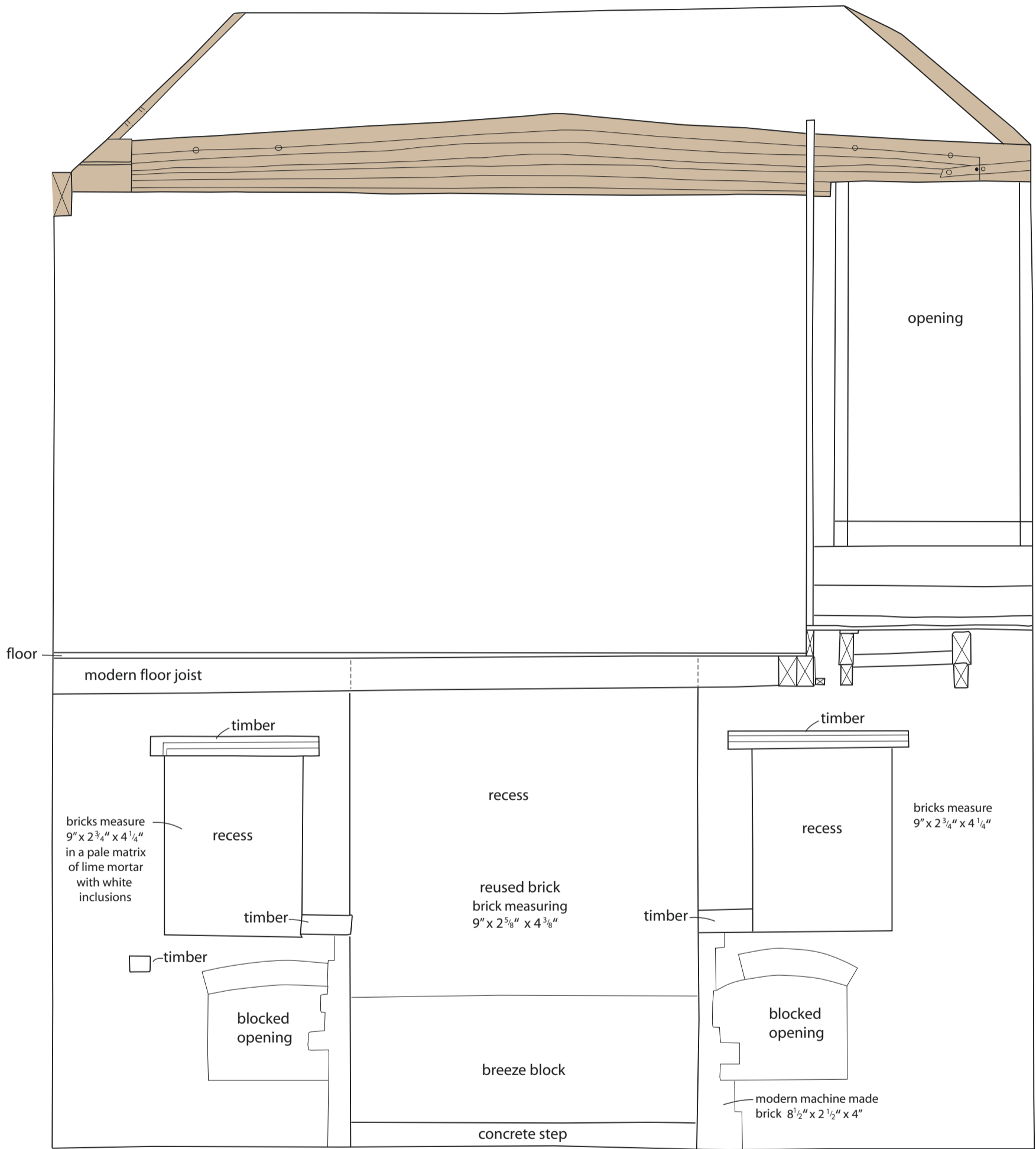
Figure 4

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



Phased 1st floor plan of Moat House

Figure 5

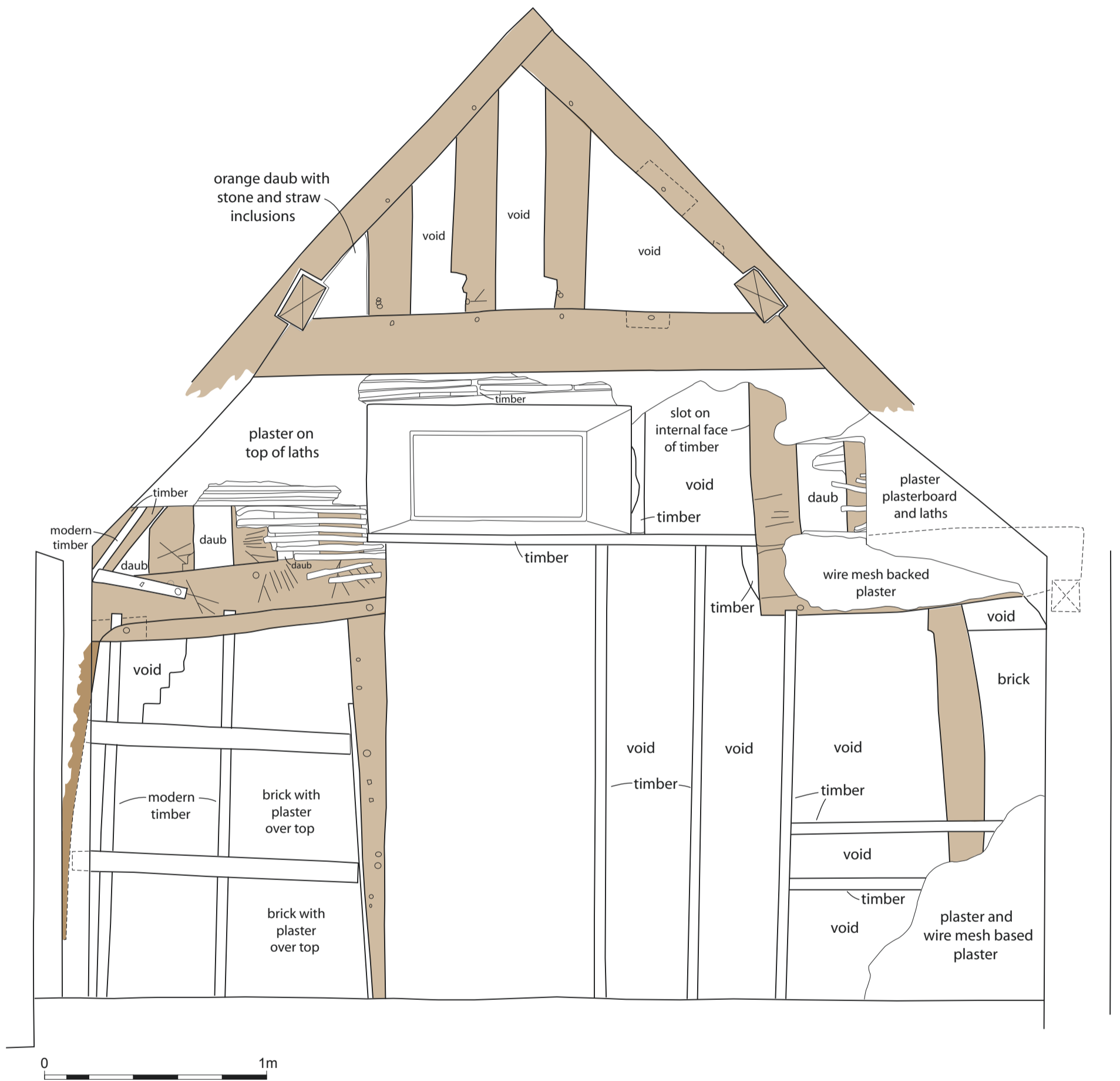


0 1m

First floor, Room 23 and ground floor room 16

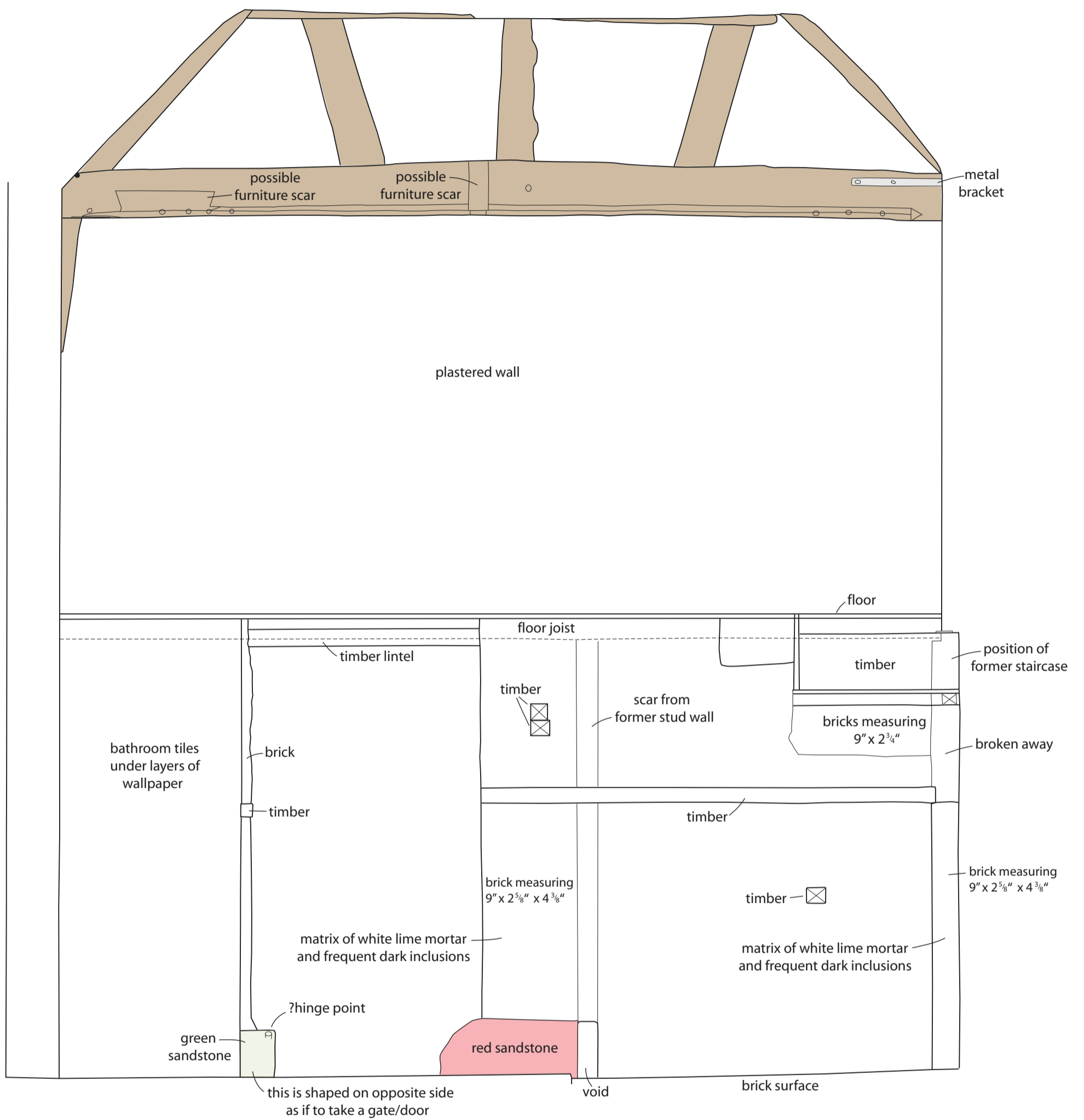
Figure 6





First floor, Room 22 north-facing

Figure 7

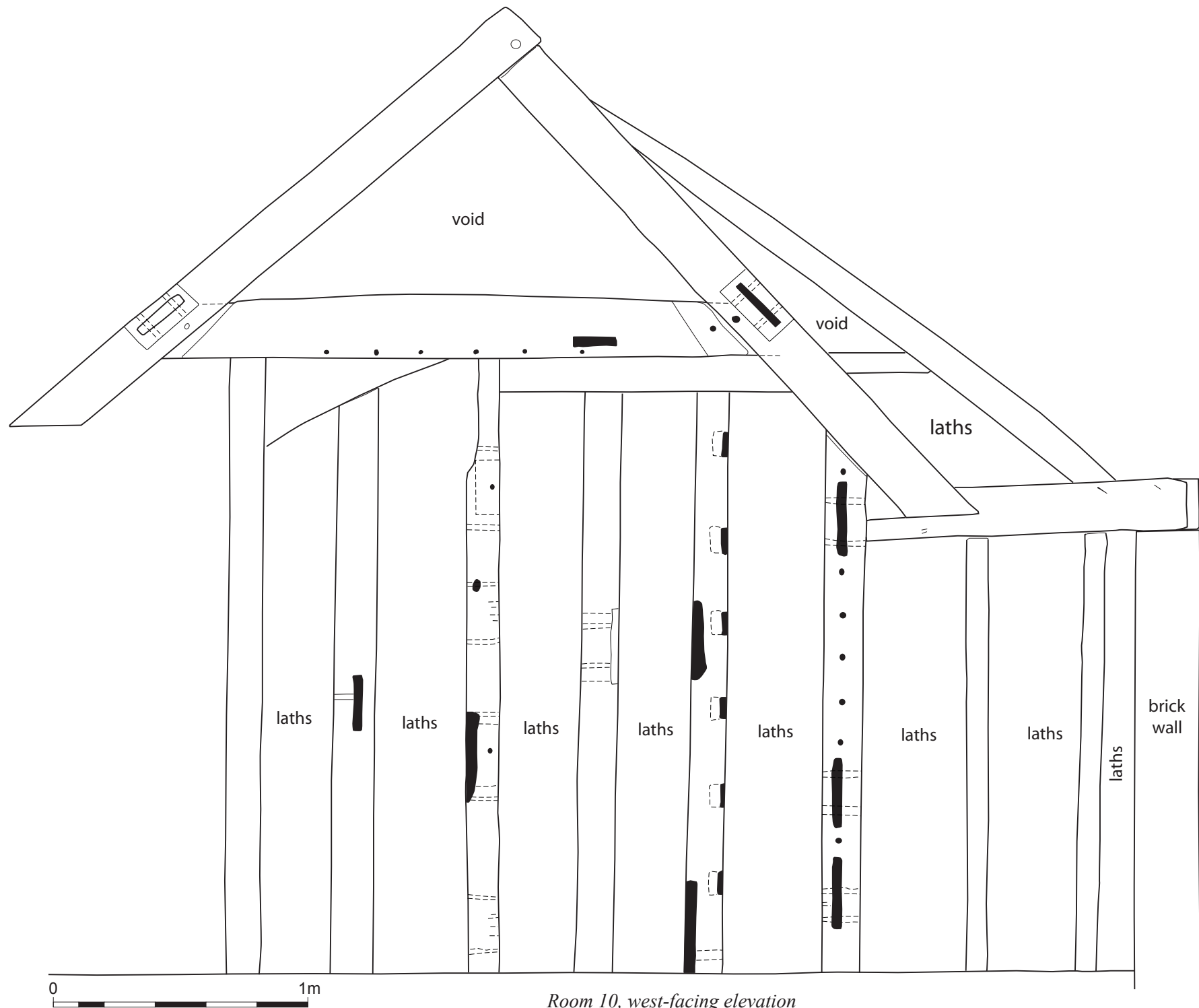


0 1m

First floor, Room 22 and ground floor room 16WC: South facing

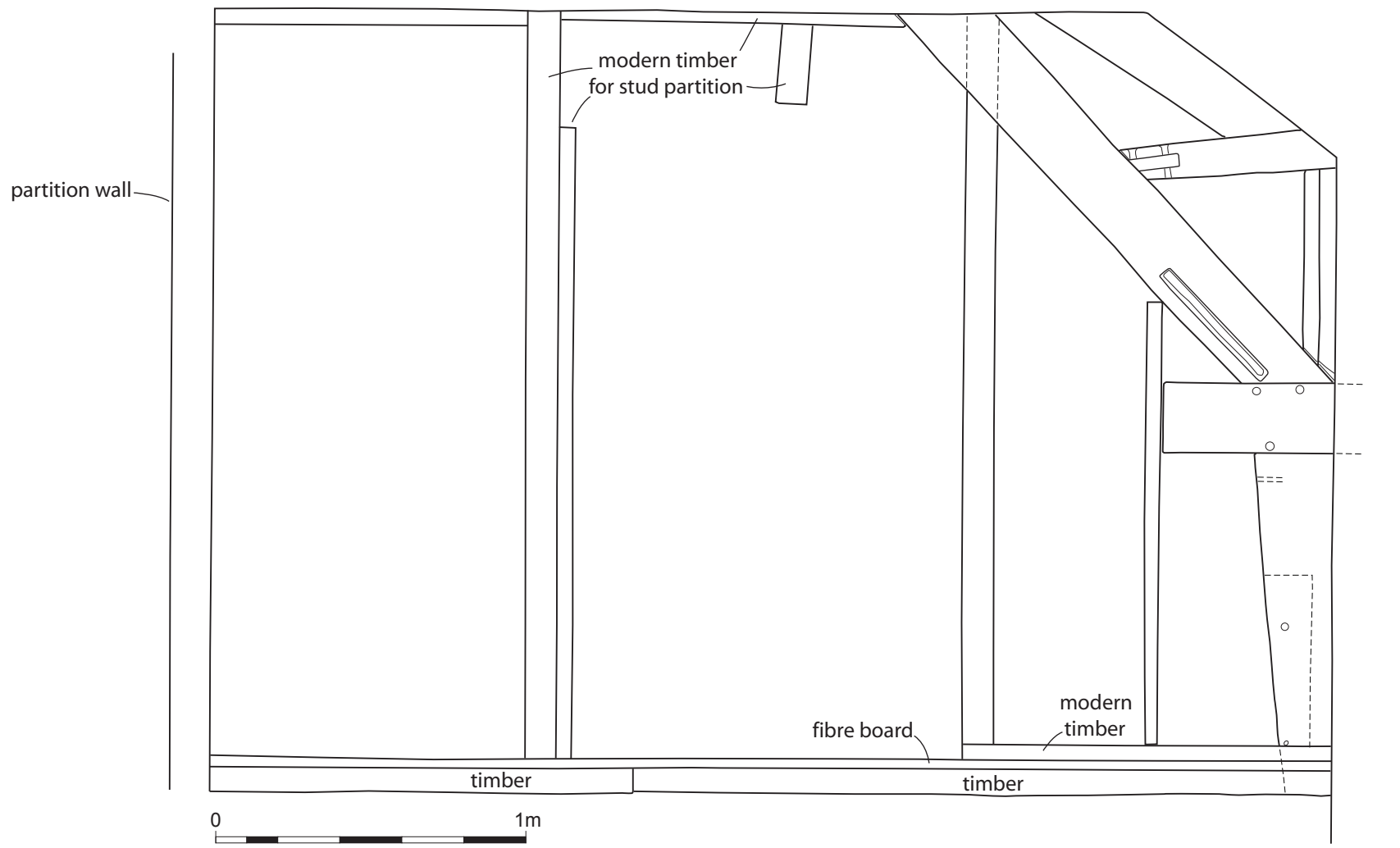
Figure 8





Room 10, west-facing elevation

Figure 9



*First floor, Room 18*

*Figure 10*

12. **Plates**



*Plate 1: Moat House from the south west*



*Plate 2: West elevation of Moat House showing timber post and rail*



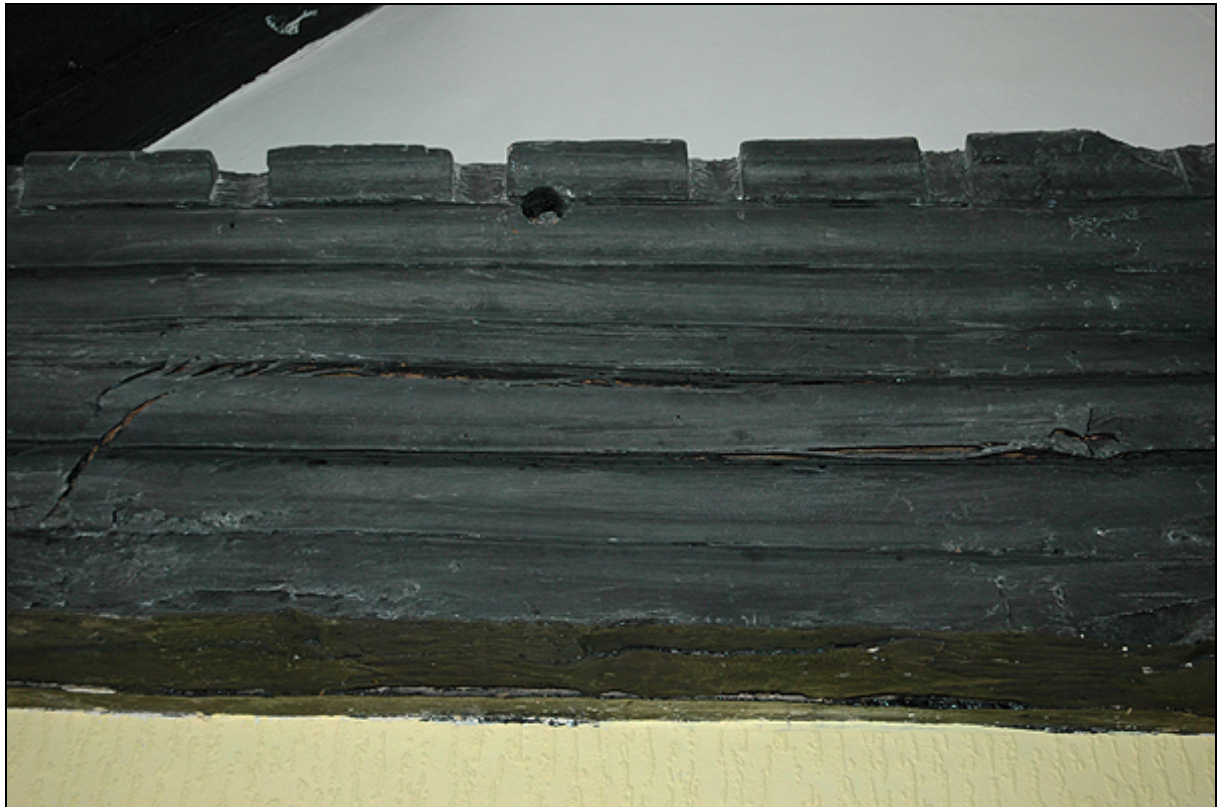


*Plate 3: Rear of Moat House from the north east*



*Plate 4: First floor, room 22, timber-frame*





*Plate 5: First floor, room 23, carved tie beam detail*



*Plate 6: Blocked opening in c1800 building*



*Plate 7: West wall, with chimney, of c1800 building*





*Plate 8: Position of hearth on interior of c1800 building*



*Plate 9: c1825 extension to phase 1 building*





*Plate 10: Room 21, cut off tie beam extending beyond length of principal rafter*



*Plate 11: Room 20 showing c1825 stud partition with reused timbers*





*Plate 12: Hop or grain hole in floor of room 21*





*Plate 13: Ground floor, room 16, of original phase building, inglenook added c1825*



*Plate 14: Bread oven on west side of inglenook*





*Plate 15: Bread oven on east side of inglenook*



*Plate 16: North elevation of c1850 extension*



*Plate 17: Position of former staircase*





*Plate 18: c1875 extension to the c1825 addition*



*Plate 19: Chimney stack at rear of c1875 extension*





*Plate 20: 1920s/30s extensions to north of house*



*Plate 21: Bow window on extension of former stable*





*Plate 22: 1960s nursing home extension*



*Plate 23: Lift, on the first floor*



*Plate 24: Staircase leading from hall*





*Plate 25: Open plan dining room*



*Plate 26: 1980s/1990s bedroom extension*





*Plate 27: Interior of 1980s/1990s bedroom*



*Plate 28: Carved tie beam in room 23*