

CHURCH HOUSE, RECTORY
LANE, ARELEY KINGS,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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21st July 2003

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Project 2347
Report 1170
WSM 32761

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Evaluation and historic building recording at Church House, Rectory Lane, Areley Kings, Worcestershire

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Part 1 Project summary

An evaluation and recording of an historic building and adjacent land was undertaken at Church House, Areley Kings, Stourport on Severn, Worcestershire (NGR 8020 7090). The work was requested by Stephen Taylor of Stainburn Taylor Architects on behalf of the Worcestershire Historic Buildings Preservation Trust Limited. The Trust intends to restore the existing grade II* Listed Building and build an extension to the rear (north-west) and have submitted a planning application to Wyre Forest District Council (reference number WF/02/1164-5). The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate what its location, date and nature were.

The building recording established that Church House, Areley Kings is a small timber-framed structure built in 1536 as a church house. These buildings were built by parishioners in order to hold celebrations of feast days. The celebrations were called 'church ales'. This was because ale was drunk and sold to raise money for charities and also because it was brewed for the feast. 'Church ales' were originally held in the nave of the church but were later moved into the churchyard. Church houses were then built in the churchyard specifically to hold the celebrations. Beer was brewed and stored on the ground floor of the building and the 'church ales' were held on the first floor. The evaluation trench revealed a rubble spread that represents the results of alterations to the building and a very truncated cut feature dated to the post-medieval period. The trench was not extensive enough to reveal the function of the feature.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An evaluation and recording of an historic building and adjacent land was undertaken at Church House, Areley Kings, Stourport on Severn, Worcestershire (NGR 8020 7090). The work was requested by Stephen Taylor of Stainburn Taylor Architects on behalf of the Worcestershire Historic Buildings Preservation Trust Limited. The Trust intends to restore the existing grade II* Listed Building and build an extension to the rear (north-west) and have submitted a planning application to Wyre Forest District Council (reference number WF/02/1164-5). It is considered that a site of archaeological interest may be affected (WSM 12808) by the proposed works.

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999) and the *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (IFA 1999).

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section (HEAS 2003a) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2003b).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the evaluation of the historic building were to carry out a photographic and drawn survey was also to include a dendrochronological dating of primary timbers by an appropriate specialist (see Appendix 3). The results of the building recording aimed to provide a complete documented account, description and visual record of the building for inclusion in the county historic environment record.

The project also included the excavation of a trial trench to the rear (north-west) of the existing structure. The trench was placed within the footprints of the proposed extension and aimed to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains.

More specifically the following aims have been identified.

- The building evaluation aims to ‘provide the district conservation officer and planning committee with sufficient information on the history, character, date and techniques of construction, phasing and significance of the structure on which to base their comments regarding any intended works’ (HEAS 2003a).

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). In addition the following sources were also consulted:

Cartographic sources

- 1st edition (1884) and 1903 and 1999 Ordnance Survey maps.

Documentary sources

- Place-names (Mawer and Stenton 1927).

- County histories (VCH 1924).
- Site archives.

2.2 Fieldwork

2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2003b). Fieldwork was undertaken between 24th and 25th June 2003.

Analysis of the development of the building, including annotation of existing plans and further survey drawing and a photographic survey were carried out. Black and white and colour photographs were taken using 35mm cameras with zoom lenses and digital photographs were also taken. Cross-sections and elevations of the building were drawn and can be seen as Figures 5 - 8. A phased plan was produced and can be seen as Figure 9.

A trench measuring 9.00m by 1.20m, amounting to just less than 11m² in area was excavated over the site area of approximately 96m², representing a sample of 11.25%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 10.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a mini-digger excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

2.2.2 Structural analysis

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

2.3 Artefacts

2.3.1 Artefact recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 2). This in principal determines that all finds, of whatever date, must be collected. However, in this case only a sample of later material was collected from the spoil during machining. All artefacts were recovered from stratified deposits.

2.3.2 Method of analysis

All hand retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on *pro forma* sheets.

Pottery fabrics are referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst 1994).

2.4 Building recording

The project conformed to the specification for a level 3 survey as defined by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (RCHME 1996) but with the following exceptions.

- A number of trees and vegetation prevented the north-west exterior elevation from being fully photographed.
- A large amount of furniture and debris was present on the ground floor and prevented parts of the north-west and south-east elevations from being photographed.

2.5 The methods in retrospect

The obstruction of the north-west elevation exterior was unavoidable due to the presence of a number of protected trees. Any obscuring low growing vegetation was removed where possible. Detail photographs of interesting features of the framing of the building were taken despite the obstructions. The obstructions encountered within the building did prevent the photography of limited areas of the internal framing (on the ground floor only). However, as these areas were accessible from the exterior only a minor extent of the building was affected and was not considered to significantly impede the aims of the building recording.

The location of the evaluation trench excavated to the rear (north-west) of Church House was severely restricted by the presence of several trees, one of which (to the south-west of the evaluation area) was protected by a preservation order. As such the trench was placed north-west to south-east running at 90° to the building and was machined to a length of 9.00m. However as the trench was excavated within the footprint of the proposed extension the revised location allowed for a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. The proximity of several trees to the evaluation trench also resulted in the presence of prolific root activity including the base of a recently truncated tree, which obscured a large proportion of the south-east end of the trench. This activity may have affected the level of surviving *in situ* remains within the evaluation trench as well as prohibiting excavation in the proximity of the substantial tree base.

3. Topographical and archaeological context

The village of Areley Kings lies to the south-west of the town of Stourport and is close to the town boundaries (Fig 1). Church House lies within the church yard of St Bartholomew's Church in the north of the Areley Kings village. Church House is a grade II* timber-framed building with brick extensions. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey shows the building clearly with one of its brick extensions already in place (Fig 2). The 1903 Ordnance survey shows the further extension also in place (Fig 3). Church House is mentioned in 'The Buildings of England' (Pevsner 1992, 71) and its listing description is extensive.

The church of St Bartholomew's is built on the prominent Saint Hill overlooking the River Severn and the valley of the Burnthorn Brook. The prominence of the hill suggests that the site was occupied by a form of earlier settlement. The name of Areley Kings has been used for the village since the 16th century. The first documented name is *Erneleia*, which was recorded c 1138. This Anglo-Saxon form of the name meant 'the clearing of the eagle' (Mawer and Stenton 1927, 29 and 30) which suggests that there may have been a Roman settlement on the site that has now vanished. The manor of Areley Kings was part of the manor of Martley from early times and dues were still paid to Martley into the 17th century (VCH 1924, 228). Martley was a royal manor and it is from this link that Areley Kings gets its name (Cooke 1991, 1).

The Sites and Monuments Record for the area of Areley Kings under study here has a number of records of interest (Fig 4). The Church of St Bartholomew (WSM 8136) is originally of 12th and 14th century date but was much altered, restored and rebuilt in 1885-6 by F. Preedy (Pevsner 1992, 71). The Church was possibly the centre of a deserted or shrunken medieval village (WSM 32551). The rectory (WSM 12801) is of the early 17th century but has been altered and added to in the mid 18th century. In the garden of the rectory is a small garden house (WSM 29040) that was built in 1728 as a two-storied summerhouse or gazebo by the Revd Richard Vernon (Pevsner 1992, 71).

Only one earlier piece of work has been carried out in the Areley Kings area. This fieldwork was carried out on the route of the Blackstone to Astley aqueduct at Dunley Road, Areley Kings. The

excavation revealed evidence of a long lived Roman agricultural site that included an aisled building, ditched enclosure and a number of pits (Hemingway and Buteux, 1992).

4. Description

4.1 Building description

Church House is situated on the south-east edge of St Bartholomew's churchyard. It is a small three-bay timber-framed building constructed in box framing. The first floor is jettied with a continuous jetty around three sides of the building with the north-east gable being the exception. The first floor oriel windows are in their original positions and there is evidence of a blocked doorway on the north-west elevation. Pevsner describes Church House as 'timber-framed and small' (Pevsner 1992, 71). Although he does pose the question 'Or was it the priest's house?' (ibid.). Church House is a grade II* Listed Building and is described in the listing information as follows:

'Circa mid to late 16th century; late 20 century extension. Timber-framed with plastered and painted brick infilling to panels. Clay plain tile roof with gabled ends. PLAN: Three remaining bays; truncated at the right (north-east) end; left (south-west) bay originally partitioned from the other two bays; first floor jettied on three sides and open to the roof, the narrow right (north-east) bay originally partitioned off. EXTERIOR: Two storeys. Jettied south-east front; left (south-west) end and rear (north-west) on rounded joist ends and curved brackets to the posts; dragon-posts on the south and west corners; ground floor two small circa early 19th century 2-light metal casements and plank door to left; first floor hatch to right of centre with plank door and two 20th century casements above. Brick single-storey lean-to on left (south-west) end with late 20th century stair turret rising through it. Rear (north-west) three windows, late 20th century casements, first floor left of centre remains of oriel with shallow cill on jowled stud. North-east gable end, brick ground floor, late 20th century casement on first floor to left. INTERIOR: Ground floor one room, framed ceiling with chamfered beams and unchamfered joists, on jowled storey-posts; south-east bay with dragon-beams and redundant mortices for missing partition. First floor open tie-beam and queen-strut trusses with two tiers of tenoned purlins, lower purlins with straight wind-braces, all stop-chamfered except for the wind-braces; intermediate collar-and-tie-beam truss at north-east end with redundant mortices for partition.' (DoE 2000, 589-1/11/87)

4.2 Building recording

The building recording produced a number of photographs, which are reproduced as Plates 1-20 in appendix 2. Cross section and elevation drawings were also produced and can be seen as Figures 5 – 8. A phase plan was produced from on site analysis. This can be seen as Figure 9.

Architecturally, the building appears to have built in the mid 16th century. Its location in the church yard suggests that it was built for use by the church. In the early 18th century it was altered for use as a school by the Rector and then in the late 18th century the school was closed and it was used as a stable. Following this it was used for stabling horses while their owners were at church. The 19th century saw the brick extensions added to the south-west gable. In the 1950s the building was used as the headquarters of the Areley Boy Scouts and in the late 1970s, the building was restored and used as a church hall.

4.2.1 Phase 1 – 1536 (Fig 9)

In 1536 a small timber-framed building was built (Plates 1 and 2) in the churchyard of St Bartholomew's Church, right on the southern boundary. It consisted of a three-bay, two storey, box-frame structure (Plate 3). The foundations were of Highley stone (Plate 4). Dendrochronology (Plate 5) has dated the timber to the winter of 1535/36 (for full report see Appendix 3) and it is probable that the building was constructed soon after this in 1536. The entrance to the building was on the churchyard (north-west) side of the structure, evidence of which can be seen in the framing (Plate 6). The upper floor was jettied with a continuous jetty running around the three sides of the building, the north-east gable being the exception (Plate 7). The corners were held with a dragon beam and curve-topped angle posts. The main beams along the sides of the building also have curved braces matching the angle posts. The two large windows on the first floor were oriel windows supported on cove struts (Plate 8) and were probably mullioned. There were two

partitions in the interior building, one on the ground floor at the south-west end and one on the first floor at the north-east end. The partition on the first floor marked the position of stairs leading to the ground floor. The timber-frame infill was wattle and daub, a number of panels of which still exist (Plate 9). The building had a thatched roof.

The building was constructed by the people of the parish as a church house in which to hold feasts, or 'church ales', and to brew and store ale. It went out of use as a church house in the late 17th century but was still used. The original Listed Building description states that 'at one time the church ales were brewed there' (DoE b, 2/8) and it is recorded that they were still being brewed in the 18th century [Plaque (Plate 10)].

4.2.2 **Phase 2 – Mid 1700s** (Fig 9)

In the mid 1700s Church House was repaired and converted into a school. A number of parishioners entreated the then Rector to convert the building and he agreed on condition that they pay for the repairs and conversion. The Lord of the manor, Selby Mucklow, contributed £5 5s to the scheme and the building was converted. This included the removal of the ground floor partition leaving an open room on the ground floor (Plate 11). The infill panels of the framing were probably repaired with brick where necessary at this time. A Matthew Wagstaff and his wife taught in the school until it was closed later in the 18th century (Cooke 1991, 11).

4.2.3 **Phase 3 – 1789** (Fig 9)

In 1789 Rector Thomas Vernon closed the school so he could keep his horses there (Cooke 1991, 11). Very little was done to the building at this time. The ground floor had a brick floor inserted with a narrow brick drain within the floor. The first floor was used as a hayloft and a hatch was inserted into the first floor framing on the south-east elevation (Plate 12) as a pitching door. The same elevation had a number of hooks and rings added to the timbers (Plate 13). These were used to tether horses and to hang bridles on.

4.2.4 **Phase 4 – c.1820** (Fig 9)

By around 1820, the building was being used for the stabling of horses whilst their owners were at church (Cooke 1991, 11). At this time a brick-built room was added to the south-gable of the building (Plate 14). Its bricks measured 3" (7.6cm) by 9 1/2" (24.2cm) by 4 3/4" (12cm) and were coursed in Flemish Stretcher Garden-wall Bond with three rows of stretchers to every row of Flemish Garden-wall Bond. The extension was of a single-storey with a single-pitch roof attached to the gable of the church house and had an internal fireplace. The extension did not alter the gable of the building and the jetty remained intact within the room (Plate 15). The grooms used the room whilst waiting for their masters to finish at church (Cooke 1991, 11). The north-east gable was also replaced at ground floor level with brickwork in this period. The bricks measure 2 3/4" (7cm) by 9 1/2" (24.2cm) by 4 3/4" (12cm) and are coursed in Flemish Stretcher Garden-wall Bond.

4.2.5 **Phase 5 - c.1890** (Fig 9)

Around 1890 another brick extension was added to the south west gable of Church House (Plate 16). This extra space was a bier house (Cooke 1991, 11). This was a room to store the bier, which was used to carry coffins to the graveyard. This extension is also single-storey with a single-pitch roof. The bricks measure 3 1/4" (8.2cm) by 9" (22.8cm) and are coursed in Stretcher Bond.

4.2.6 **Phase 6 – Early 20th century**

In the early 20th century the building was renovated and tidied up. The first floor was used as the headquarters of the Areley Boy Scouts (DoE 1950, 2/8). The ground floor was possibly still being used as a stable or as a store.

4.2.7 **Phase 7 – Late 1970s (Fig 9)**

The late 1970s saw the restoration of the building. By this time it was listed grade II (it was relisted as grade II* in May 2000) and planning permission was applied for and granted in 1977. The floor and the windows of the building were replaced and a staircase was added to the south-west gable (Plate 17) of the building cutting through the roof of the groom's room (Plate 18). A kitchen was inserted behind the first floor partition (Plate 19) in place of the original staircase. The building was sympathetically restored and the first floor was used as a church hall for meetings and events whilst the ground floor was used as a store. The restoration included the replacing of the exterior joints on the south-west gable (Plate 20).

4.3 **Deposit descriptions**

The list of contexts is presented in appendix 1, with Table 1 summarising the artefacts recovered. The trenches and main features recorded are shown in Fig 10.

4.3.1 **Phase 1 - Natural deposits**

Natural deposits comprised a compact orange-brown coarse sand and gravel and was encountered at the north-west end of the trench at a depth of 0.85m (42.39m AoD) below current ground level (43.14m AoD).

4.3.2 **Phase 2 – Post-medieval deposits**

The only post-medieval activity encountered in the trench was a single cut feature, context 107, filled by context 106. The cut ran north-east to south-west and was only visible at its north-eastern edge which was located approximately 5.50 metres north-east of the building. The north-west and south-east extents of the feature were located beyond the limits of excavation and the south-east edge appeared to have been truncated by a substantial tree base and roots. A slot through the feature revealed a vertical north-east edge sloping slightly towards to a flat base at 2.19m (41.98m AOD) below current ground level. The feature was filled by a compact, friable, dark brown, sandy-loam with occasional root action and inclusions of rounded pebbles rare inclusions of tile, ceramic and lime mortar (106). The feature was sealed by subsoil/made ground layer 101 and was cut through subsoil layer 108. To the north-west a spread of rubble (105) may have been truncated by this feature, however as the area was heavily disturbed by root action a direct relationship could not be observed.

The rubble spread (105) was dated within a timeframe of 13th – 18th century on the basis of artefactual evidence recovered during excavation. The rubble included fragments and broken blocks of Highley sandstone as noted in the footings of the Church House. The presence of this stone in the rubble suggests that it represents the results of alterations to the building during the post-medieval period, possibly during the insertion of brickwork underpinning below the sill beam on the north-east elevation of the building.

4.3.3 **Phase 3 - Modern deposits**

The modern deposits in the trench comprised a 20th century water drain (103) with a plastic coupling and its associated cut at the south-east end. The topsoil (100) and made ground/subsoil (101) were also dated to the modern period on the basis of artefactual evidence retrieved during machining.

4.3.4 **Undated deposits**

No artefactual material was recovered from the subsoil layer 108 however the stratigraphic relationship with the cut feature 107 indicates that it either dates to or pre-dates the post-medieval period.

4.4 Artefact analysis

The assemblage comprised stratified finds from four contexts and unstratified material. It dated from the medieval to modern period, and was generally in quite good condition (ie, the overall level of abrasion was quite low) See Table 1 for details of the assemblage.

Context	Material	Type	Date range	Total	Weight
100	Plaster / mortar			1	1586
100	Pot	Post-medieval red ware (Fabric 78)	Post-medieval	1	4
100	Stone			1	706
100	Tile	Flat roof tile	13th - 18th C	3	596
100	Tile	Flat roof tile	Post-medieval / Modern	1	782
100	Mortar			2	70
101	Tile	Flat roof tile	13th - 18th C	4	494
101	Brick			3	760
101	Glass	Vessel	Modern	2	10
101	Mortar /			3	52
101	Pot	Post-medieval red ware (Fabric 78)	Post-medieval	2	46
101	Tile	Flat roof tile	Medieval / Post-medieval	2	13
101	Pot	Malvernian unglazed ware (fabric	12th C	1	8
105	Pot	Post-medieval red ware (Fabric 78)	Post-medieval	2	18
105	Tile	Flat roof tile	Modern	1	18
105	Tile	Flat roof tile	13th - 18th C	6	506
106	Tile	Flat roof tile	13th - 18th C	7	952
106	Glass	Window		1	1
106	Mortar			2	6
106	Pot	Stoneware (fabric 81)	Post-medieval	1	3
106	Pot	Post-medieval red ware (Fabric 78)	Post-medieval	1	79
106	Slag			1	25

Table 1, the assemblage

4.4.1 Medieval

One sherd of Malvernian unglazed ware (fabric 56) from context 101 was the only material definitely attributed to the medieval period. A large amount of flat roof tile recovered from several contexts may have been later medieval or post-medieval in date. No context had a *TPQ* date in the medieval period.

4.4.2 Post-medieval

The majority of the material recovered dated to the post-medieval period. This was almost exclusively flat roof tile (13th – 18th century) and pottery. Context 106 had a terminus post quem (TPQ) date of post-medieval.

4.4.3 Modern

Modern material was recovered from contexts 101 and 105.

4.4.4 Undated

Plaster, mortar, brick, stone and glass were recovered, but could not be closely dated.

4.4.5 Significance

The large amount of building material probably comes from alterations to nearby Church House, however it may have been bought in from elsewhere to create firmer ground around existing buildings. The small amount of pottery and glass would also be consistent with the activities associated with a church house, as the building appears to date to the 16th century and has been in use in one form or another until relatively recently.

5. Discussion

5.1 Building recording

Prior to the Reformation, the church was the centre of the parish. All important events and matters took place in it and there was no other place large enough for people to gather together. Baptisms, marriages and funerals all took place in the church as did social meetings, activities, plays and at festival times people drank and danced within it. It was the celebration of feast days, of which there were more than a hundred in the calendar prior to the Reformation, that gave rise to ‘church ales’. Ale was brewed, usually by the churchwarden who was in charge of organising the ‘ales’, specifically for the purpose of being sold at the celebration in order to raise funds to repair the fabric of the church or for other good causes. In the middle of the 15th century, church authorities began to believe that the church should be a place purely for worship. As a result the celebrations were moved out into the churchyard.

Church houses can be ‘roughly dated from the middle of the 15th century to near the middle of the 17th century’ (Cowley 1970, 15). Few church houses still exist today and the majority of these are in the south-west of England. Devon has the largest number surviving, 64 in all, but this is a very small number of the total of church houses there would have been across the country. Worcestershire has two known examples, Church House and The Mughouse, Claines (WSM 1066), although this latter building is an older structure converted for use as a church house. These buildings were constructed close to churches, in the churchyards or near by, and were used specifically for housing the ‘church ales’. The majority of the church houses were built on given or leased land with donations from the people and were therefore not controlled by the bishop or archdeacon. They were usually two-storied and had an exterior staircase for first floor access. The ground floor was used for the brewing and storing of ales and the first floor for holding the celebrations. The two major celebrations were Whitsuntide and May Day. The latter, with its pagan revels of the May pole, May game and May Queen, was the most popular.

By the end of the 16th century the Puritan movement began to spread. Therefore the belief that the ‘church ales’ were wrong and against the laws of God was disseminated among the populace of the country. They believed that ‘1. They profane the Lord’s sabbath; 2. They produce drunkenness; 3. They corrupt the youth; 4. They inculcate sexual immorality’ (Cowley 1970, 56). Both James I and Charles I supported the traditional view that sports and pastimes should be allowed and encouraged on Sundays. James I ordered that every minister throughout the country should read a declaration from the pulpit in favour of sports to be used after Sunday services. This declaration, known as the ‘Book of Sports’, was reissued by Charles I in 1633 after a Puritan attempt to outlaw Sunday games in Devon. The Puritans greatly resented the way in which both James I and Charles I encouraged Sunday sports and games. They deplored, as they saw it, the desecration of the Sabbath and the excess of ‘church ales’. Indeed there were numerous references to ‘disorders accompanying church ales, to bastards conceived after the festivities and to what Devon magistrates in 1600 coyly referred to as ‘many inconveniences which with modesty cannot be expressed’ (Betty 1987, 102). One Puritan member of the clergy after reading the ‘book’ declared:

‘Neighbours there is noe commanded to use these recreations as in this booke is here specified, but these lawes are left to everyone’s descretion whether you will use them or not use them, therefore I doe advise you rather to obey god’s lawes rather than the lawes of the King’ (Ibid.).

By the end of the 17th century most of the church houses were left unused as the Puritan ideals had gained support with the outbreak of the Civil War. Following the Restoration the ‘church ales’

were not revived. The church houses were not closed as a result of any particular order but were forced to close by the pressure of the local people. Following their closure, they were used for church meetings and a number were used as poor houses. Later on they became houses and very few are left surviving. Many were demolished in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries as social changes influenced building style.

Jettied buildings are one of the most familiar of timber-framed buildings. The main flourish of the practice of building jettied structures was in the 16th century and it did not die out until well into the late 17th century. Jetties were used on all types of building both simple vernacular structures like stables and larger richer buildings such as castles. Jettying is believed to have developed for use in towns as a means of increasing the floor space of buildings and by gaining legal encroachment on to the street or market place. It is possible that this was the case for towns but a large number of jettied buildings can be found in rural locations where there was ample space for building. In these situations, as in Church House, it is more likely that jetties were used for decorative purposes and were meant to impress. Brunskill compares jetties to the cornices used in classical architecture – ‘the attention paid to this feature especially in the Early Renaissance in Italy may have had some influence in a much changed form in the timber-framed walling’ (Brunskill 1987, 60). Certainly jetties were built to be seen and it is rare to find a jettied building not highly visible from street, alley or market place whether in a town or the countryside.

5.2 Evaluation trench

The trench did not reveal any definite evidence of a continuation of the adjacent burial ground into the evaluation area. However it should be noted that headstones were present as little as 5m to the north-east of the trench.

The only cut archaeological feature, context 107, was observed only at its vertical north-west edge. The feature extended to a considerable depth of 41.98m AoD (2.19m below current ground surface). The vertical edge did initially suggest a grave cut, but as both the north-east and south-west edges of the feature was beyond the limit of excavation the dimensions would exceed that expected of such a feature. Furthermore no trace of a coffin or human remains were observed. However it is possible that the cut represents the only surviving edge of a burial removed during the post-medieval period, resulting in the truncation of south-east, north-east and south-west extents of the original grave cut.

The presence of a rubble spread containing Highley sandstone may represent the debris of reconstruction/alteration on Church House. The presence a large block of Highley sandstone extant in the brickwork underpinning of the north-west sill beam indicates that the sill beam may have originally sat upon a stone plinth. As such the rubble spread would constitute the debris of alterations which took place in the post-medieval period.

6. Significance

Church House is a listed grade II* building (DoE 2000, 589-1/11/87). The listing reports that it is of mid to late 16th century. The dendrochronology dates show that the building was constructed in 1536. This construction date is in the middle of the period when the church houses were being built. Church House stands as the only known surviving custom-built church house in the county and one of only two known surviving buildings used as church houses, the other being the Mughouse, Claines. Although the building has been unused for a number of years its original form and function are clearly recognisable. Most of the fabric of the structure is original despite the number of restorations that have been carried out. The significance of the building is increased by the amount of original fabric still in place on such a rare structure.

There would normally have been one church house for every parish in the late medieval period, and therefore there would have been hundreds of church houses in Worcestershire alone. Most of these buildings have been lost due to the abolition of church ales by the Puritans in the 17th century. Some church houses were used as poor houses, others were converted to private houses and many were just abandoned and eventually demolished. The survival of Church House is therefore of local and regional archaeological significance.

‘Church ales’ played an important part of the social life of a parish in the medieval and early post-medieval periods. Before church houses came into use, ‘church ales’ and the celebration of feast days had always taken place in the nave of the church. It was not seen as irreverent to drink, dance, perform plays and barter for goods in the church because the nave was seen as belonging to the people. ‘Church ales’ provided fund raising for the church and the community of the parish. They also provided a social link between the parishioners. Following the removal of ‘church ales’ from the church, this social function was kept alive by their celebration in the church house. ‘Church ales’ involved the brewing and selling of beer. This function was carried on at Church House into the 18th century, after the church houses were closed. Church House is therefore also historically significant as a reminder of past practices.

7. **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.

An evaluation of an historic building and adjacent land at Church House, Rectory Lane was undertaken on behalf of Stephen Taylor of Stainburn and Taylor Architects on behalf of the Worcestershire Historic Buildings Preservation Trust Limited at Areley Kings, Stourport on Severn, Worcestershire (NGR SO 8020 7090); SMR ref 32761). The building recording showed that Church House was built in 1536. It was constructed specifically for the purpose of holding ‘church ales’, feast day celebrations, after they were removed from the church. It has been little changed over the years and was used for brewing ale up to the early 18th century. The original structure survives very well within the fabric of the building. Two 19th century structures that were added to Church House were necessary as its function changed to a school, then a stable and finally a hall. The evaluation trench revealed deposits that did not date earlier than the post-medieval period.

8. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

2	Fieldwork progress records AS2
3	Photographic records AS3
2	Colour photographic film
2	Black and white photographic films
1	Matrix sheets AS7
1	Trench record form AS41
8	Scale drawings (Including 4 annotated existing survey drawings)
1	Box of finds
1	Computer disk

9. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Stephen Taylor of Stainburn Taylor Architects, Mr Bill Wood, and Mr Mike Glyde.

10. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation were led by Anna Deeks and Shona Robson-Glyde. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Simon Woodiwiss. Fieldwork was

undertaken by Anna Deeks and Shona Robson-Glyde; finds analysis by Erica Darch and illustration by Carolyn Hunt. Shona Robson-Glyde prepared the photographs. Martin Bridge contributed the dendrochronology report.

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Plaque on wall in entrance way of Church House, transcribed document from 1784.

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12. **Abbreviations**

WSM	Numbers prefixed with 'WSM' are the primary reference numbers used by the Worcestershire County Sites and Monuments Record.
WCRO	Worcestershire County Records Office.
NMR	National Monuments Record.
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record.

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Site area: North-west of Church House

Maximum dimensions: Length: 9.00m Width: 1.50 – 1.15m Depth: 0.90 – 0.40m

Orientation: North-west – South-east

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Medium orange/brown fine soft sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains occasional medium flecks of charcoal, pebbles, rare tile and rare ceramic.	0.24 – 0.30m (bottom)
101	Subsoil	Pale orange/brown friable sandy silt with worm sorting and frequent root action present throughout. Cut by water pipe trench (104).	0.24 – 0.30 m (top) 0.62 – 0.90m (bottom)
102	Fill	Compact mid brown sandy silt with occasional small rounded gravel, charcoal flecks.	0.21m (Top)
103	20 th century water pipe	Water pipe with plastic coupling	0.21m (Top)
104	Cut	Cut for water pipe running north-west – south west	0.21m (Top)
105	Rubble spread	Distinct area of rubble spread including tile, Highley sandstone, ceramic within a mid brown sandy silt matrix. Possibly disturbed by 107 to south-east.	0.50m (top) 0.66m (bottom)
106	Fill	Friable dark brown sandy silt with inclusions of tile, ceramic, charcoal flecks and rounded gravel. Frequent root action present throughout	1.03. (top) 2.19m (bottom)
107	Cut	Only visible at north-west edge, which falls vertically to a flat base. Cut appears to be running north-east – south-west.	1.03. (top) 2.19m (bottom)
108	Subsoil	Friable orange brown sandy silt with rare rounded stones and charcoal flecks	0.66m (top) 0.85 (bottom)
109	Natural	Orange/brown coarse sand and gravel	0.85m

Appendix 2 Photographs

List of Plates

Plate 1: Church House from the south

Plate 2: First floor, interior facing south-west

Plate 3: Church House from the south-east

Plate 4: Stone foundation on north-west elevation of building

Plate 5: Dendrochronology sample being taken by Martin Bridge

Plate 6: Position of former doorway on north-west elevation of the building

Plate 7: North-east gable of Church House

Plate 8: First floor oriel window with cove strut

Plate 9: Wattle and daub panel on north-east gable

Plate 10: Plaque in entrance hall

Plate 11: Ground floor interior looking north-east

Plate 12: Hayloft door on south-east elevation

Plate 13: Ring and hook on south-west elevation

Plate 14: South-west gable of the building with added 1820s extension

Plate 15: Groom's room (entrance hall) facing north-west

Plate 16: South-west gable with 1890s added extension

Plate 17: Staircase added to groom's room

Plate 18: Staircase rising through groom's room roof

Plate 19: First floor partition, facing north-east

Plate 20: Replaced exterior joints on south-west gable



Plate 1: Church House from the south



Plate 2: First floor, interior facing south-west



Plate 3: Church House from the south-east



Plate 4: Stone foundation on north-west elevation of building



Plate 5: Dendrochronology sample being taken by Martin Bridge



Plate 6: Position of former doorway on north-west elevation of the building



Plate 7: North-east gable of Church House



Plate 8: First floor oriel window with cove strut.



Plate 9: Wattle and daub panel on north-east gable



Plate 10: Plaque in entrance hall



Plate 11: Ground floor interior looking north-east



Plate 12: Hayloft door on south-east elevation



Plate 13: Ring and hook on south-west elevation



Plate 14: South-west gable of the building with added 1820s extension



Plate 15: Groom's room (entrance hall) facing north-west



Plate 16: South-west gable with 1890s added extension



Plate 17: Staircase added to groom's room



Plate 18: Staircase rising through groom's room roof



Plate 19: First floor partition



Plate 20: Replaced exterior joints on south-west gable

Appendix 3 Dendrochronology report

Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory
Report 2003/23

**THE TREE-RING DATING OF
CHURCH HOUSE, ARELEY KINGS,
WORCESTERSHIRE
(NGR SO 801 710)**

Summary

Eight samples from the ten extracted from a range of structural elements of this building were dated. They appear to form a single batch of timbers, many having similar heartwood-sapwood transition dates, and were most likely felled at the same time. One timber retained complete sapwood, and was felled in the winter 1535/6. The most likely date of construction is therefore **1536**, or within a very few years following. An intermediate truss of uncertain date has been shown to be part of the primary construction of the building

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July 2003

**THE TREE-RING DATING OF
CHURCH HOUSE, ARELEY KINGS,
WORCESTERSHIRE (NGR SO 801 710)**

BACKGROUND TO DENDROCHRONOLOGY

The basis of dendrochronological dating is that trees of the same species, growing at the same time, in similar habitats, produce similar ring-width patterns. These patterns of varying ring-widths are unique to the period of growth. Each tree naturally has its own pattern superimposed on the basic 'signal', resulting from genetic variations in the response to external stimuli, the changing competitive regime between trees, damage, disease, management etc.

In much of Britain the major influence on the growth of a species like oak is, however, the weather conditions experienced from season to season. By taking several contemporaneous samples from a building or other timber structure, it should be possible to crossmatch the ring-width patterns, and by averaging the values for the sequences, maximise the common signal between trees. The resulting 'site chronology' may then be compared with existing 'master' or 'reference' chronologies.

This process can be done by a trained dendrochronologist using plots of the ring-widths and comparing them visually, which also serves as a check on measuring procedures. It is essentially a statistical process, and therefore requires sufficiently long sequences for one to be confident in the results. There is no defined minimum length of a tree-ring series that can be confidently crossmatched, but as a working hypothesis most dendrochronologists use series longer than at least fifty years.

The dendrochronologist also uses objective statistical comparison techniques, these having the same constraints. The statistical comparison is based on programs by Baillie & Pilcher (1973, 1984) and uses the Student's t test. The values of 't' which give an acceptable match have been the subject of some debate; originally values above 3.5 being regarded as acceptable (given at least 100 years of overlapping rings) but now 4.0 is often taken as the base value. It is possible for a random set of numbers to give an apparently acceptable statistical match against a single reference curve - although the visual analysis of plots of the two series usually shows the trained eye the reality of this match. When a series of ring-widths gives strong statistical matches in the same position against a number of independent chronologies the series becomes dated with an extremely high level of confidence.

One can develop long reference chronologies by crossmatching the innermost rings of modern timbers with the outermost rings of older timbers successively back in time, adding data from numerous sites. Data now exist covering many thousands of years and it is, in theory, possible to match a sequence of unknown date to this reference material.

It follows from what has been stated above that the chances of matching a single sequence are not as great as for matching a tree-ring series derived from many individuals, since the process of aggregating individual series will remove variation unique to an individual tree, and reinforce the common signal resulting from widespread influences such as the weather. However, a single sequence can often be successfully dated.

Growth characteristics vary over space and time, trees in south-eastern England generally growing comparatively quickly and with less year-to-year variation than in many other regions (Bridge, 1988). This means that even comparatively large timbers in this region often exhibit few annual rings and are less useful for dating by this technique.

When interpreting the information derived from the dating exercise it is important to take into account such factors as the presence or absence of sapwood on the sample(s), which indicates the outer margins of the tree. Where no sapwood is present it may not be possible to determine how much wood has been removed, and one can therefore only give a date after which the original tree must have been felled. Where the b is still present on the timber, the year, and even the time of year of felling can be determined. In the case of incomplete sapwood, one can estimate the number of rings likely to have been on the timber by relating it to populations of living and historical timbers to give a statistically valid range of years within which the tree was felled. For this region the estimate used is that 95% of oaks will have a sapwood ring number in the range 11 - 41 (Miles 1997).

CHURCH HOUSE, ARELEY KINGS

This three-bay Grade II* listed building is thought to have been built in the mid to late 16th century. It is timber framed with painted brick and plaster infill, and jettied on three sides. The ground floor consists of a single room, having a framed ceiling with chamfered beams and unchamfered joists, on jowled storey posts, the SW bay having two dragon beams. On the first floor the tie beam and queen strut roof is open, showing two tiers of purlins and straight windbraces. An intermediate truss forms a narrow bay at the NE end of the building: part of the tie and one strut having been removed. It has redundant holes showing that it used to have a partition. Dendrochronological investigation was requested by the Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeological Service, who were undertaking recording work at the time of this work.

SAMPLING

Assessment and sampling was carried out on 25th June 2003. All samples taken were given the prefix ARK , and their positions are described in Table 1, and illustrated, where appropriate, on Figs 1 - 3. The intermediate truss at the NE end of the building was cored to see whether or not it was part of the primary building, as this was unclear at the time of sampling. Elsewhere, a range of structural elements were sought, preferably with sufficient rings and sapwood.

Samples were labelled and removed for further preparation and analysis. They were mounted on wooden laths and polished with progressively finer grits down to 400 to allow the measurement of ring-widths to the nearest 0.01 mm. The samples were then measured under a binocular microscope on a purpose-built moving stage with a linear transducer, attached to a desktop computer. Measurements and subsequent analysis were carried out using DENDRO for WINDOWS, written by Ian Tyers (Tyers 1999a).

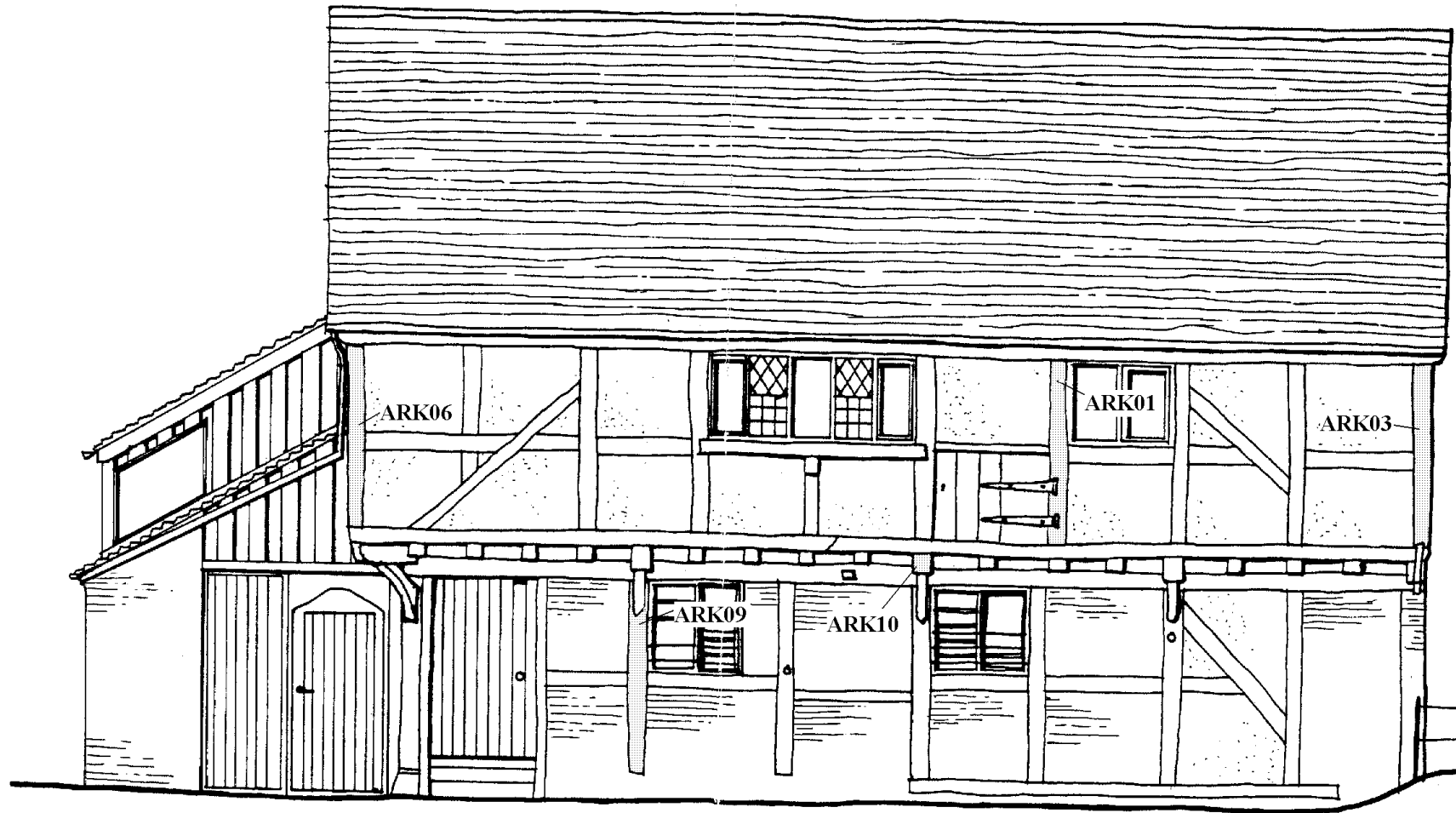


Figure 1: South elevation of Church House, showing the timbers sampled for dendrochronology. Adapted from drawings supplied by Anna Deeks

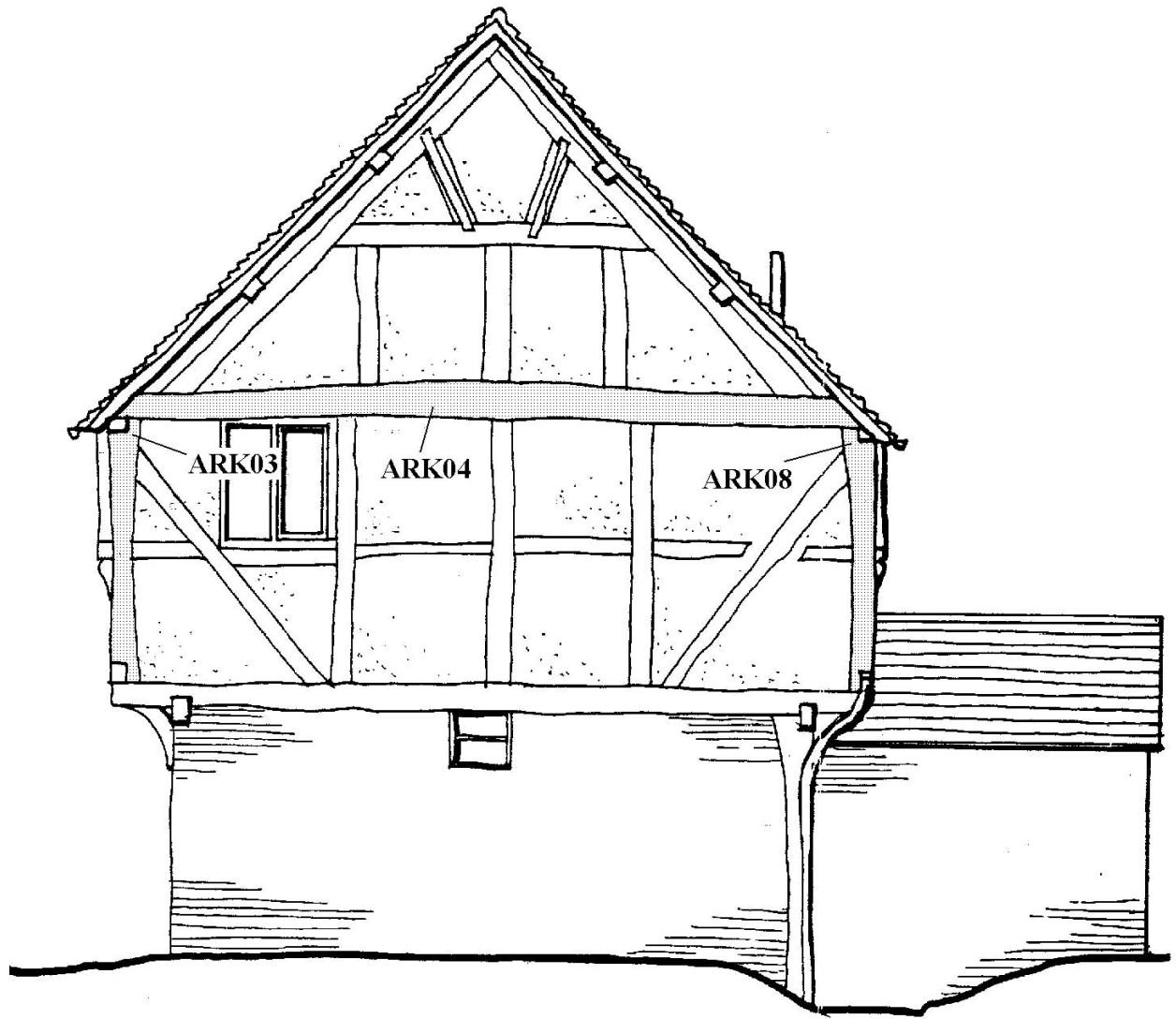


Figure 2: East elevation of Church House, showing timbers sampled for dendrochronology. Adapted from drawings supplied by Anna Deeks

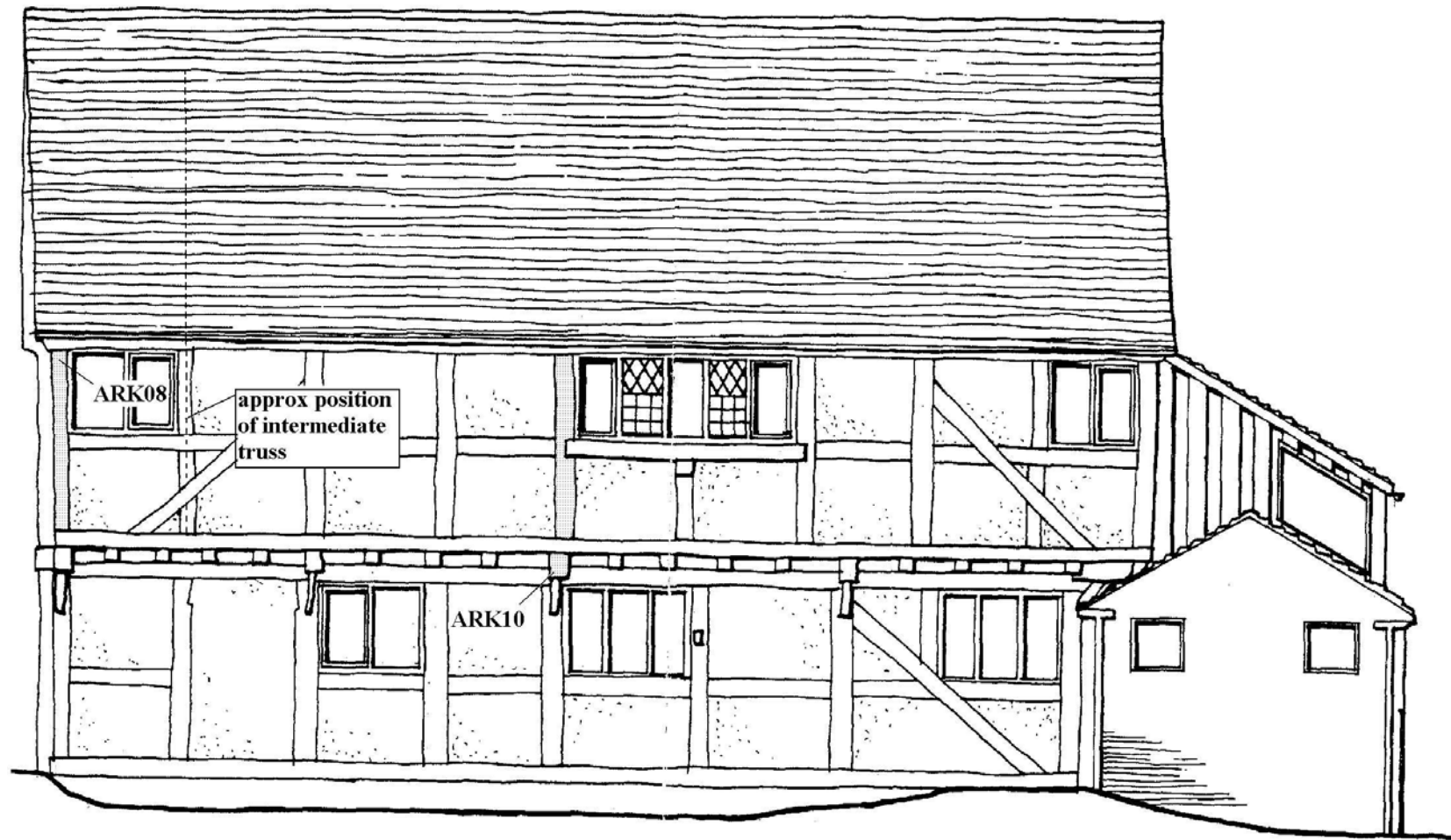


Figure 3: North elevation of Church House, showing timbers sampled for dendrochronology. Adapted from drawings supplied by Anna Deeks.

RESULTS

All the timbers sampled were of oak (*Quercus* spp.). Details of the location of the samples, along with other information about each sample, their date span and interpreted likely felling dates are given in Table 1.

Most of the timbers matched well against each other (Table 2). One timber, ARK06 had a very 'sensitive' ring-width series (i.e. had marked year-to-year variation in width, with some sudden growth rate changes, and this timber did not match the others, despite its length (103 years). It should be noted that the crossmatching of sample ARK08 with other dated samples was relatively weak. This sample was remeasured to make sure that no mistakes had been made. No errors were found. It was dated independently against the database, and its relative position of overlap was confirmed (Figure 4). Its weak crossmatching against the other series led to this sample being excluded from the site chronology *ARELEY*, which therefore consisted of eight samples, covering a span of 171 years.

The site chronology, *ARELEY*, was dated by comparison with a large number of regional multi-site, and individual site chronologies. This established its date as 1365-1535 – the best results being shown in Table 3.

Table 1: Timbers sampled from Church House, Areley Kings, Worcs.

h/s = heartwood-sapwood boundary, C = complete sapwood, winter felling, * = sample included in site chronology

Sample number	Origin of core	Total no of years	Average growth rate (mm yr ⁻¹)	Sapwood details	Date of sequence AD	Felling date of timber AD
First Floor						
ARK01*	Post, truss 3 south	88	0.94	h/s	1417 - 1504	1515 - 1545
ARK02*	Post, truss 3 north	89	1.06	13	1433 - 1521	1521 - 1549
ARK03*	Post, truss 4 south	114	0.64	24	1400 - 1513	after 1531
ARK04*	Tie, truss 4	151	1.25	11	1365 - 1515	1515 - 1545
ARK05*	South prin. rafter, int. truss	105	1.26	26C	1431 - 1535	winter 1535/6
ARK06	Post, truss 1 south	103	0.75	-	undated	unknown
ARK07*	Tie, int. truss	136	1.25	16	1384 - 1519	1519 - 1544
ARK08	Post, truss 4 north	122	0.95	-	1360 - 1481	after 1492
Ground Floor						
ARK09*	Post, truss 1 south	126	1.21	h/s	1378 - 1503	1514 - 1544
ARK10*	Floor beam, truss 2	116	1.47	-	1379 - 1494	after 1505

Table 2: Crossmatching between the individual dated samples from Church House, Areley Kings

<i>t</i> - values								
SAMPLE	ARK02	ARK03	ARK04	ARK05	ARK07	ARK08	ARK09	ARK10
ARK01	-	5.0	6.7	4.6	6.5	3.1	6.8	4.9
ARK02		-	3.5	3.3	4.6	-	3.2	5.3
ARK03			3.1	3.5	4.3	4.0	6.2	5.3
ARK04				-	6.7	3.4	5.8	7.9
ARK05					7.1	-	6.5	5.4
ARK07						-	7.0	6.1
ARK08							4.0	-
ARK09								6.9

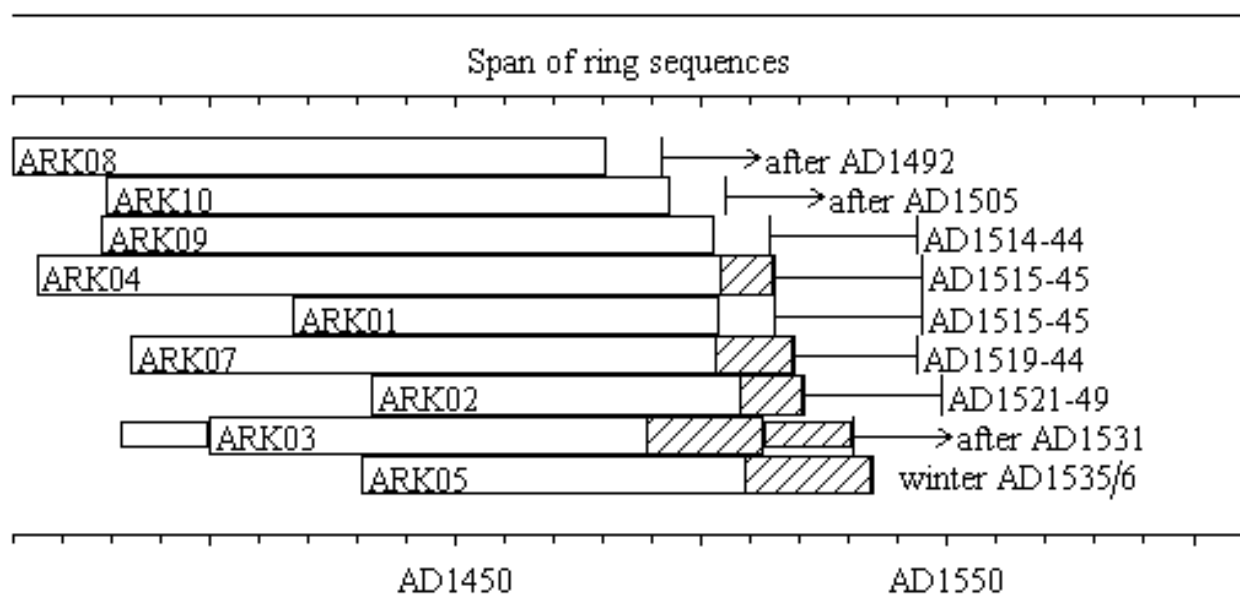


Figure 4: Bar diagram showing the relative positions of overlap of the dated samples, along with their interpreted likely felling date ranges. Hatched sections represent sapwood, narrow bars indicate additional unmeasured rings.

Table 3: Dating of the site chronology *ARELEY*. The upper section contains regional chronologies, the lower section contains individual site chronologies.

			<i>ARELEY</i> AD 1365-1535	
Dated reference or site master chronology	Lab code	Spanning	<i>t</i> -value	Overlap (yrs)
Shropshire (Miles, Oxford Dendro Lab)	SALOP95	881-1745	13.0	171
Wales (Miles, Oxford Dendro Lab)	WALES97	404-1981	11.9	171
Hereford & Worcester (Siebenlist-Kerner 1978)	GIERTZ	1341-1636	10.7	171
London (Tyers per comm.)	LONDON	413-1728	10.1	171
British Isles (Pilcher and Baillie pers comm.)	BRITIM	401-1981	9.8	171
Oxfordshire (Miles, Oxford Dendro Lab)	OXON93	632-1987	9.3	171
Southern England (Bridge 1988)	SENG	1083-1589	8.2	171
Vowchurch, Herefordshire (Nayling 2000)	VOWCH	1364-1602	11.7	171
Bromyard, Herefordshire (Nayling 2001)	LBG-T10	1368-1543	11.2	168
Mercer's Hall, Gloucester (Howard <i>et al</i> 1996)	GLOUC_MH	1289-1541	11.2	171
Cathedral Barn, Hereford (Tyers 1996a)	HEREF_CB2	1359-1491	10.9	127
Booth Hall, Hereford (Boswijk and Tyers 1997)	HIGHTOWN	1302-1489	10.9	125
Westgate St., Gloucester (Tyers and Wilson 2000)	66GLMEAN	1209-1518	9.8	154
Farmers Club, Hereford (Tyers 1996a)	HEREF_FC	1313-1617	9.4	171
Brook Gate, Salop. (Miles and Haddon-Reece 1993)	BROOKGT	1362-1611	9.0	171
Wick, Worcs. (Bridge 1983)	WICK	1257-1496	8.7	132
Bowhill, Exeter (Hillam pers comm.)	EX_BOWHL	1292-1467	8.7	103
Bedstone, Salop. (Miles and Haddon-Reece 1995)	BEDSTONE	1341-1560	8.6	171
Mamble, Worcs. (Tyers 1996b)	MAMBLE_B	1348-1582	8.5	171
Fiddleford, Dorset (Bridge 2003)	FIDDLE2	1433-1553	8.4	103

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

The good level of crossmatching between these timbers, and the similarity in the heartwood-sapwood transition dates, strongly suggest that this is a single group of timbers, probably all felled in the same year, or over a very short period. Only one timber, a principal rafter from the intermediate truss, retained full sapwood to the bark edge, this being a timber felled in the winter of 1535/6. It seems most likely therefore that the building was constructed in **1536** – or within a very few years thereafter.

The intermediate truss has been shown to be made from timbers from the same batch as the remainder of the primary construction, indeed it is a timber from this truss that gives the precise felling date.

The high level of crossmatching with other sites is remarkable, and probably reflects the fact that these series are relatively long, several samples having over 100 years, and that the database now contains several sites within the neighbouring region. The results strongly suggest that the building was constructed from local timbers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anna Deeks made the arrangements for access, supplied drawings and made me welcome on my visit to the site. I would like to thank my fellow dendrochronologists for permission to use their data, and Dan Miles for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this report.

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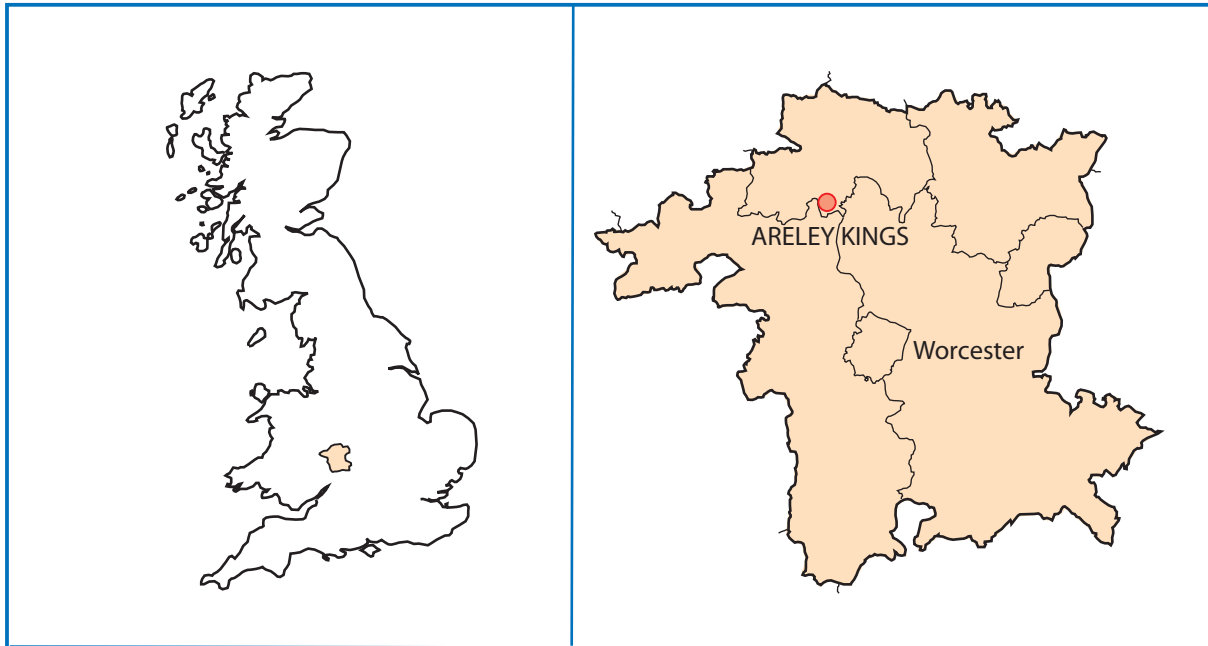
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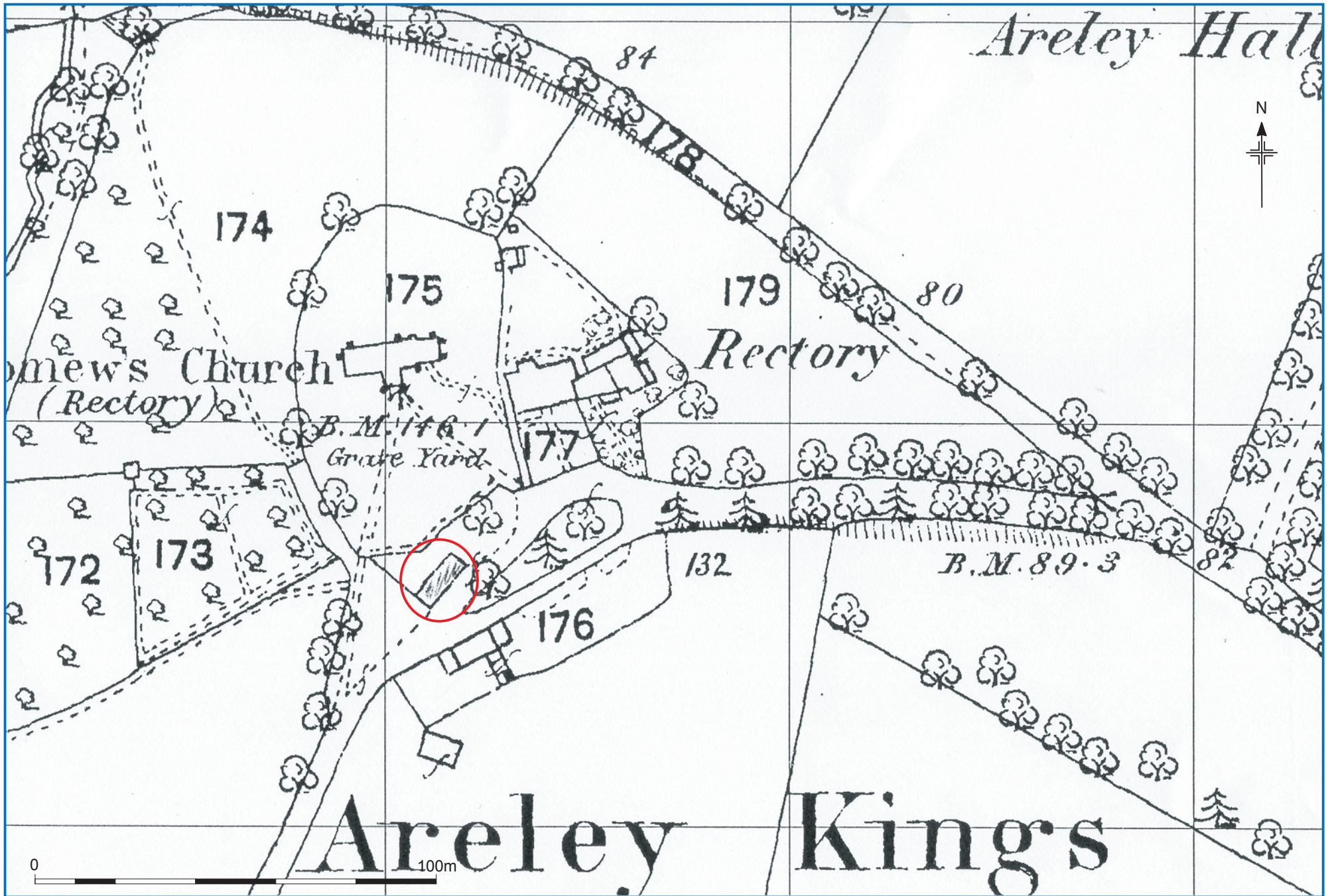
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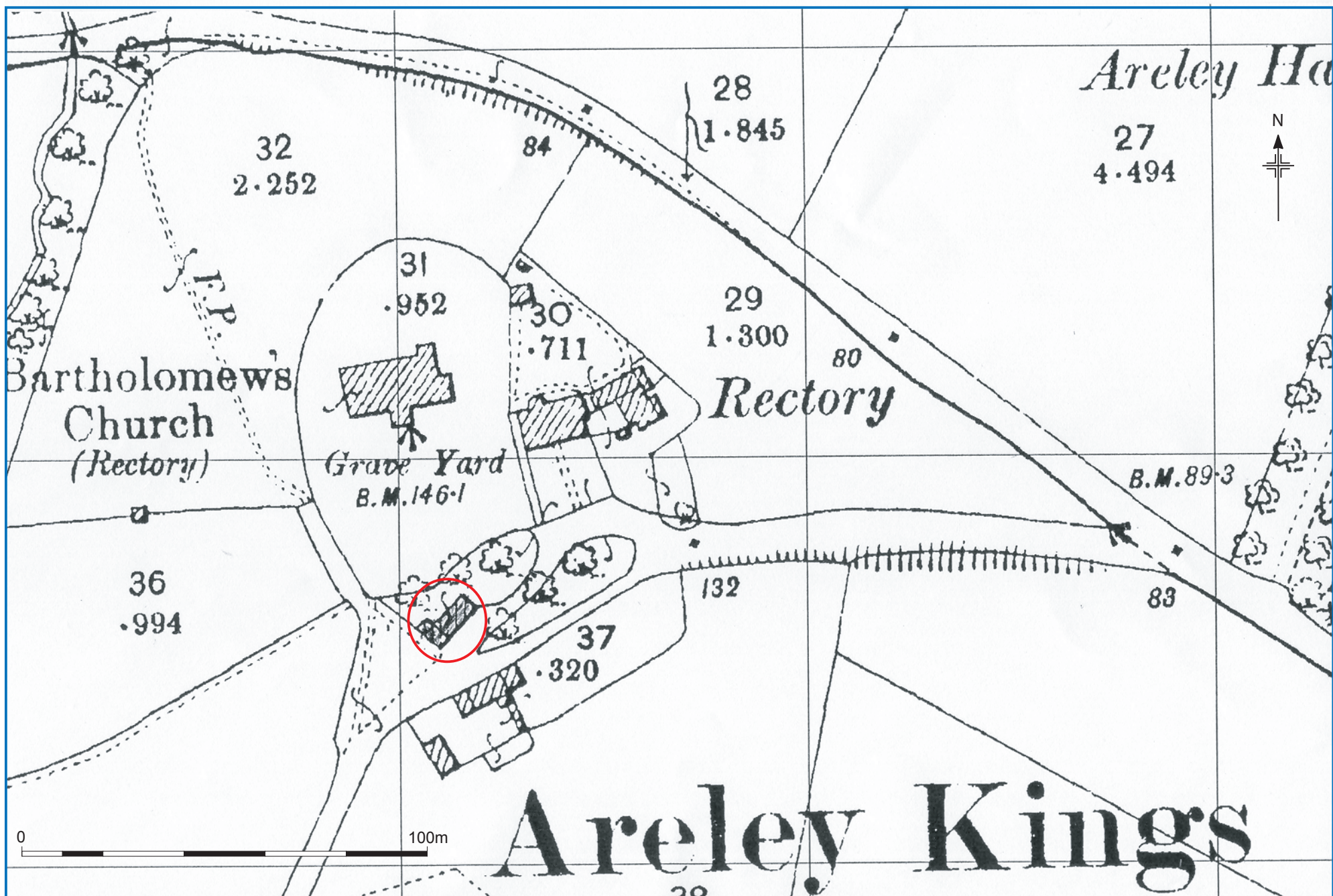
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Location of Church House.

Figure 1

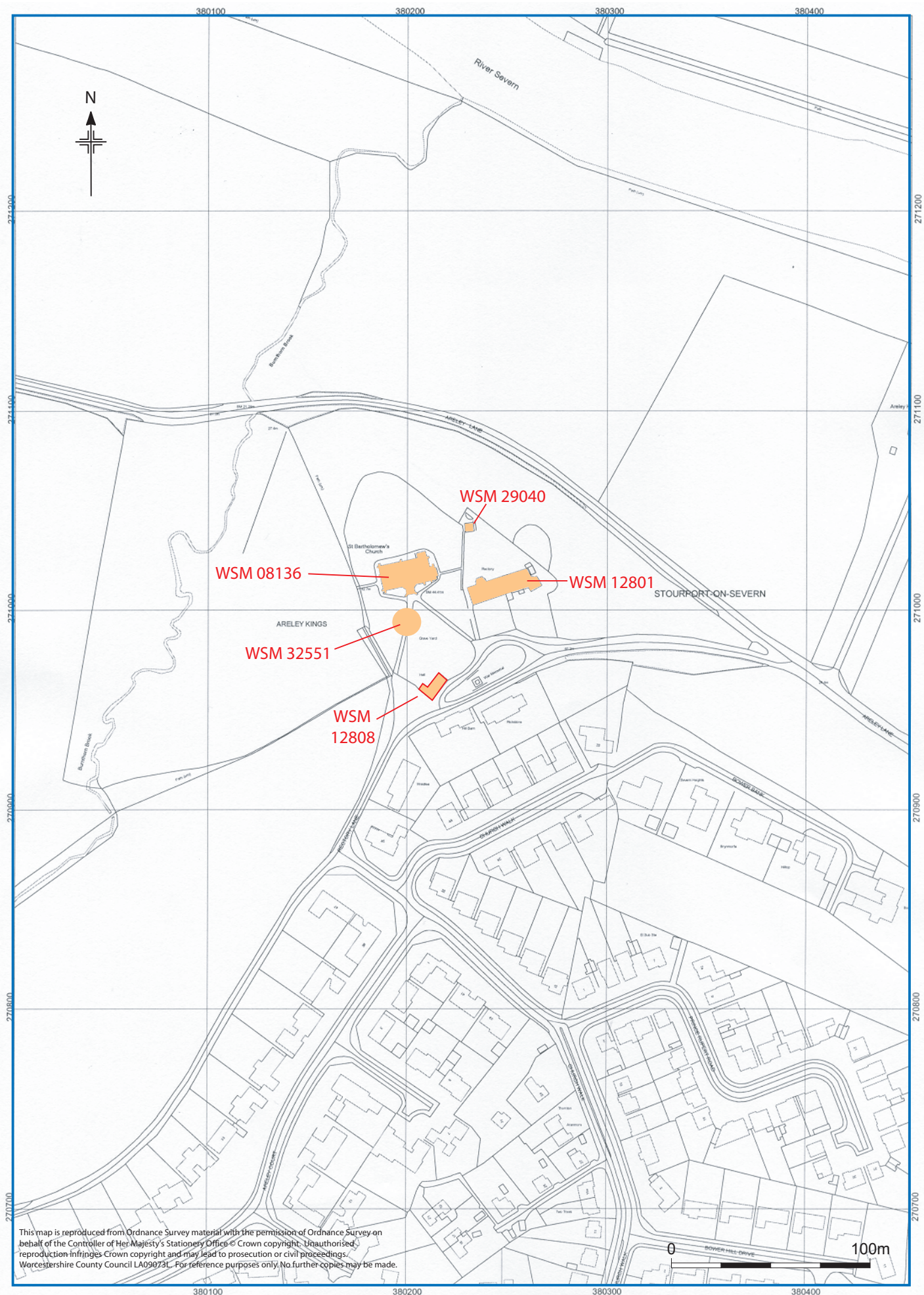




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Extract from 1903 Ordnance Survey.

Figure 3



Sites in the vicinity

Figure 4

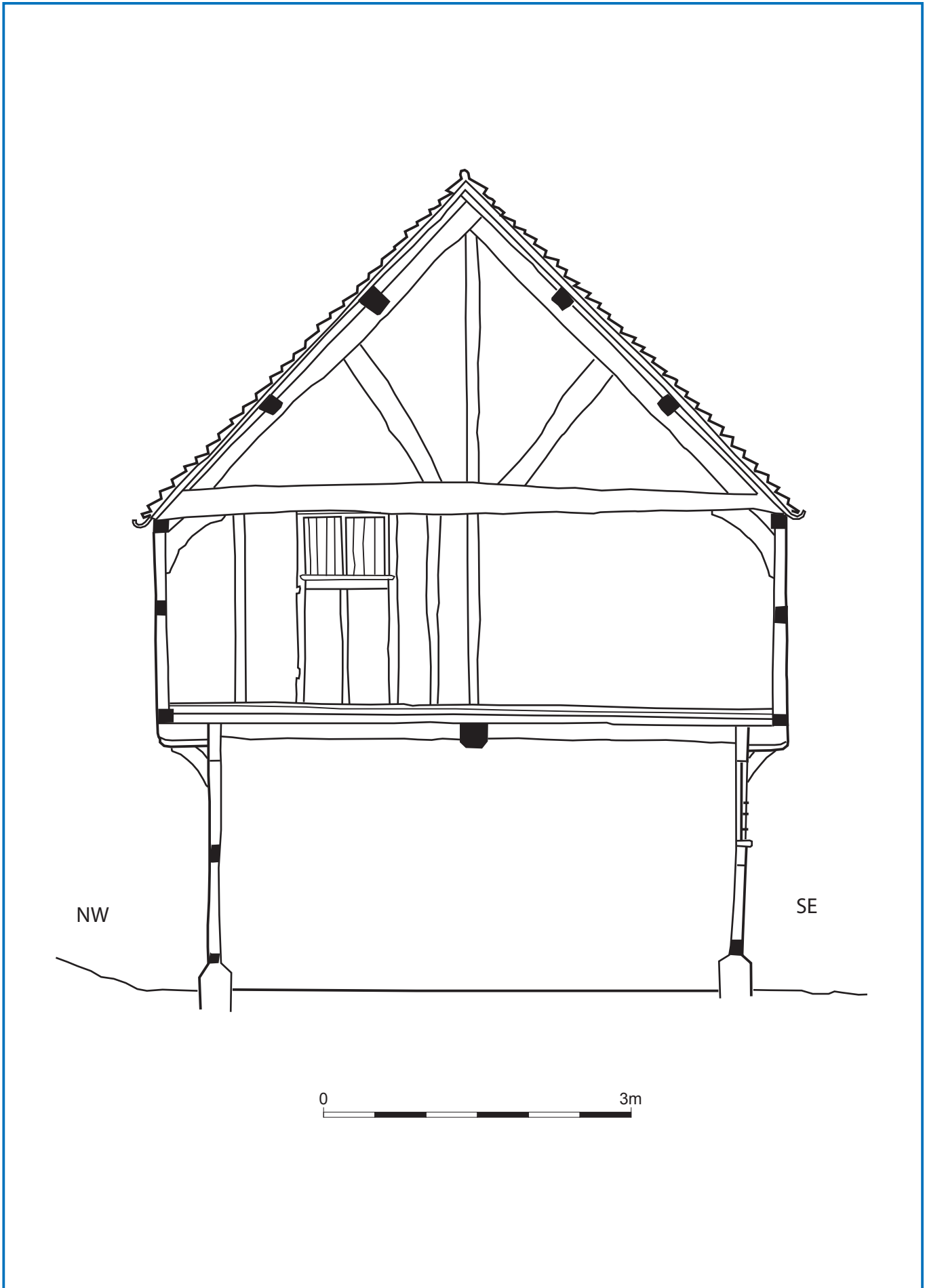
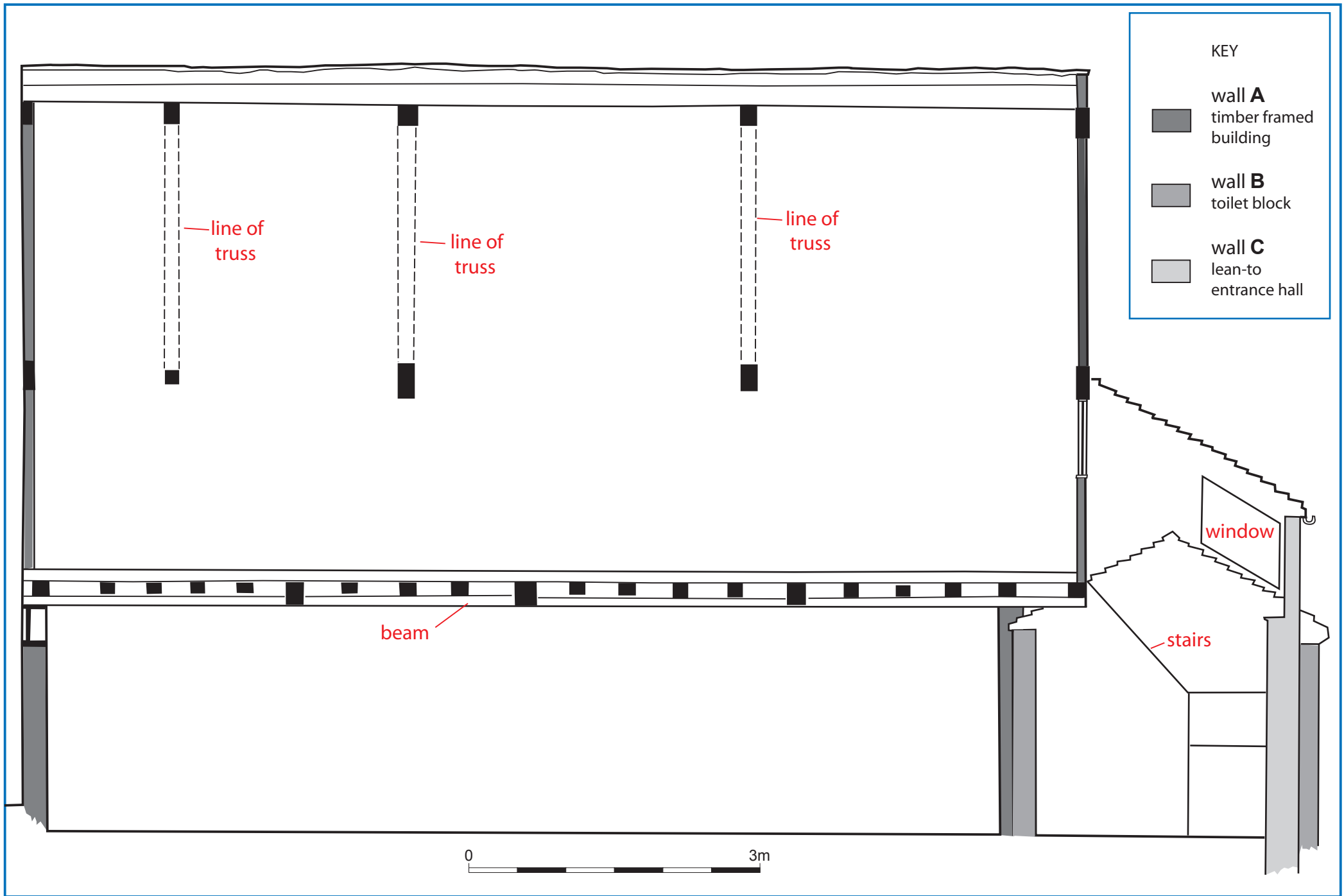


Figure 5

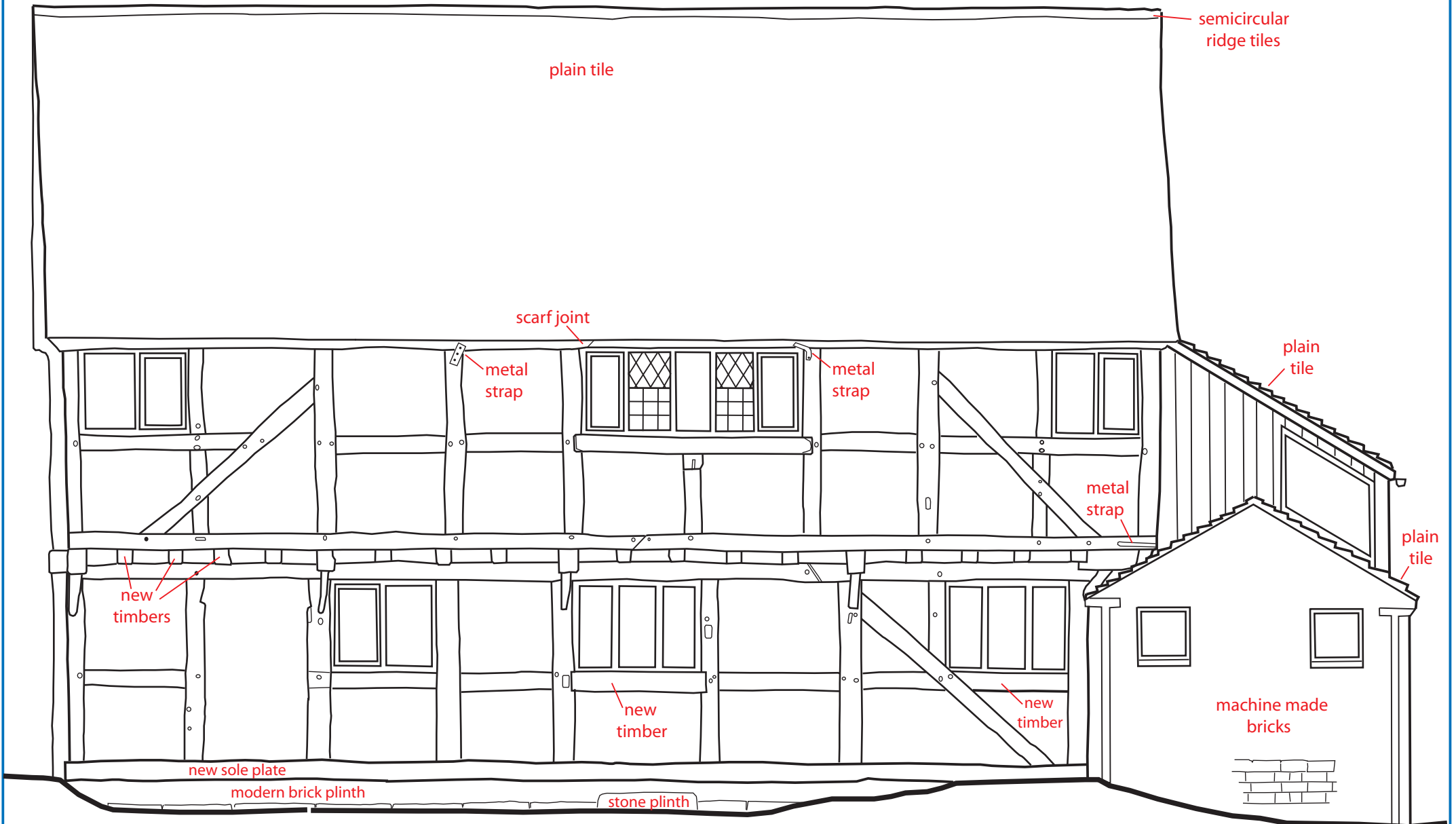
NW-SE cross section facing SW (after Stainburn Taylor Architects drawing no. 1772/02)



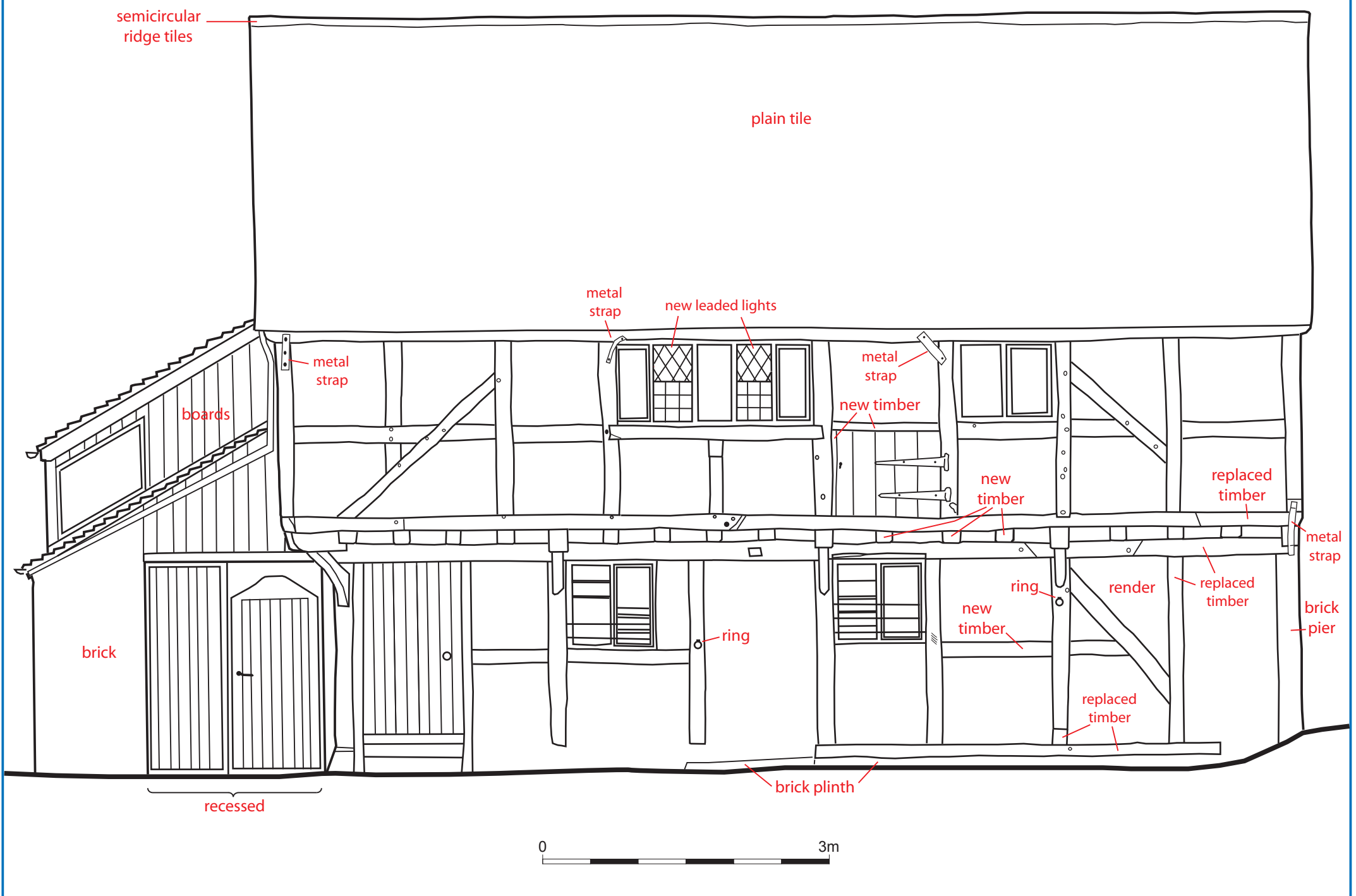
E-W cross section through Church House

Figure 6

EXTERNAL NORTH ELEVATION

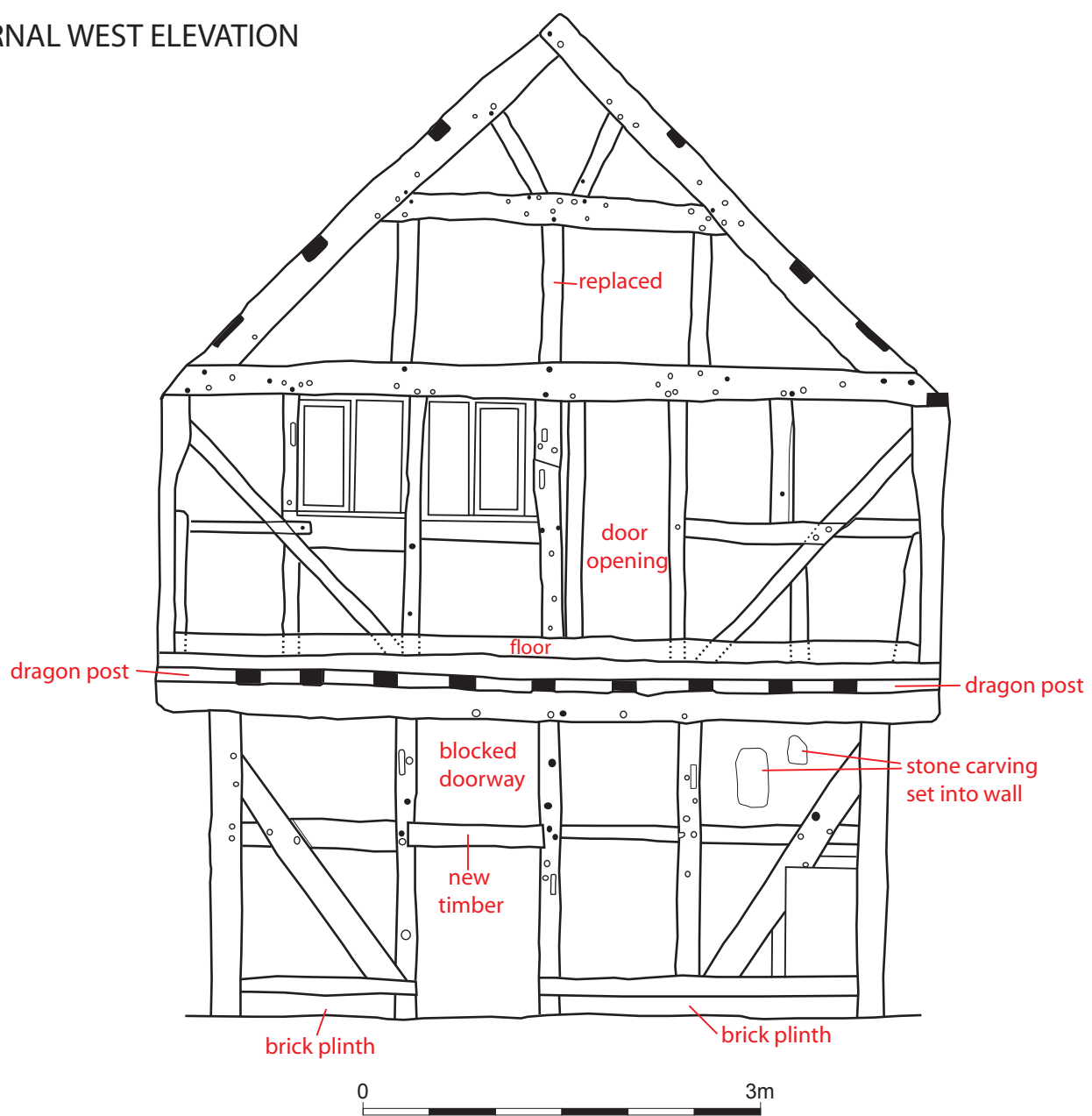


EXTERNAL SOUTH ELEVATION

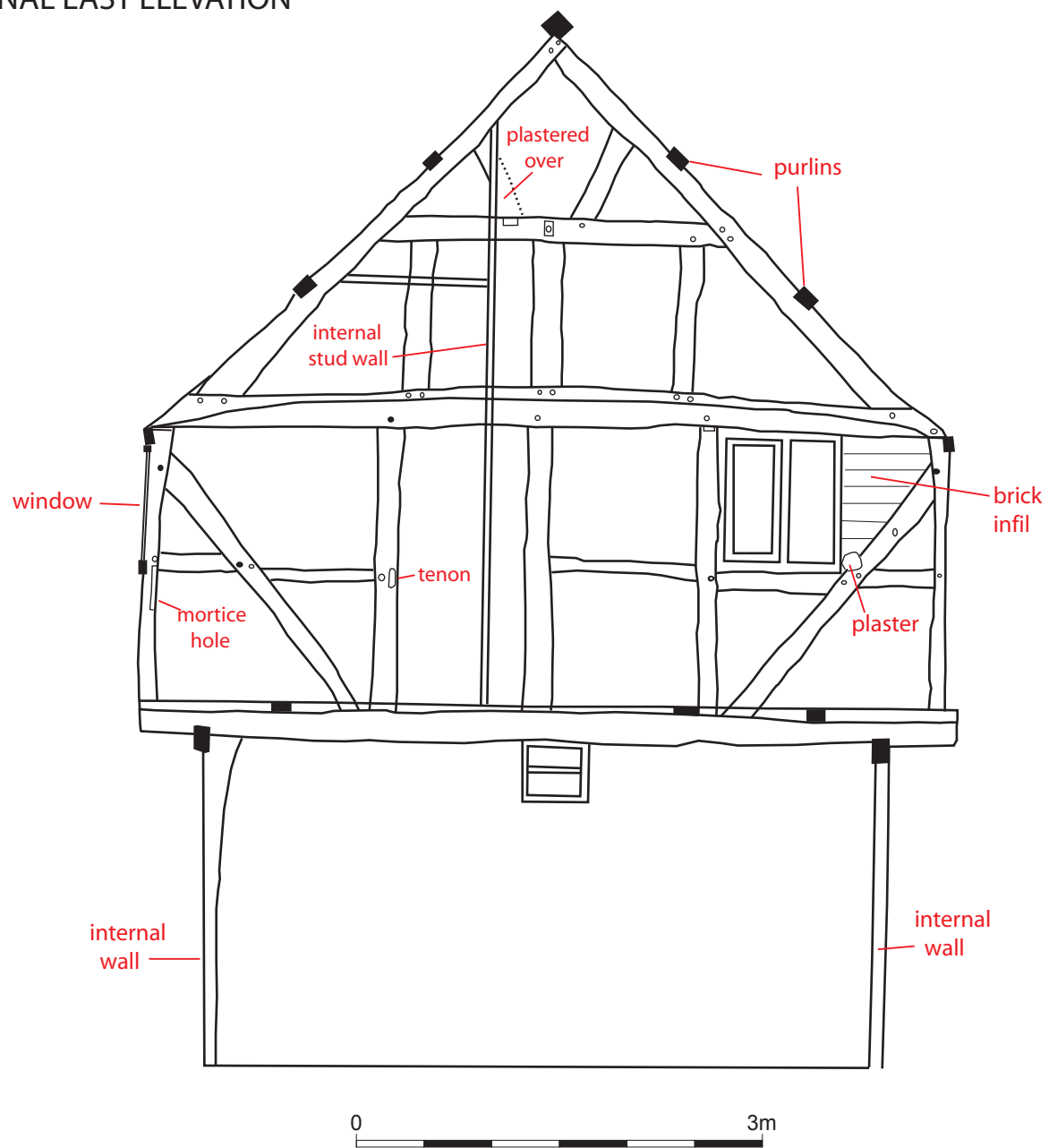


North and South internal elevations (after Stainburn Taylor Architects drawing no. 1772/02).

INTERNAL WEST ELEVATION








INTERNAL EAST ELEVATION

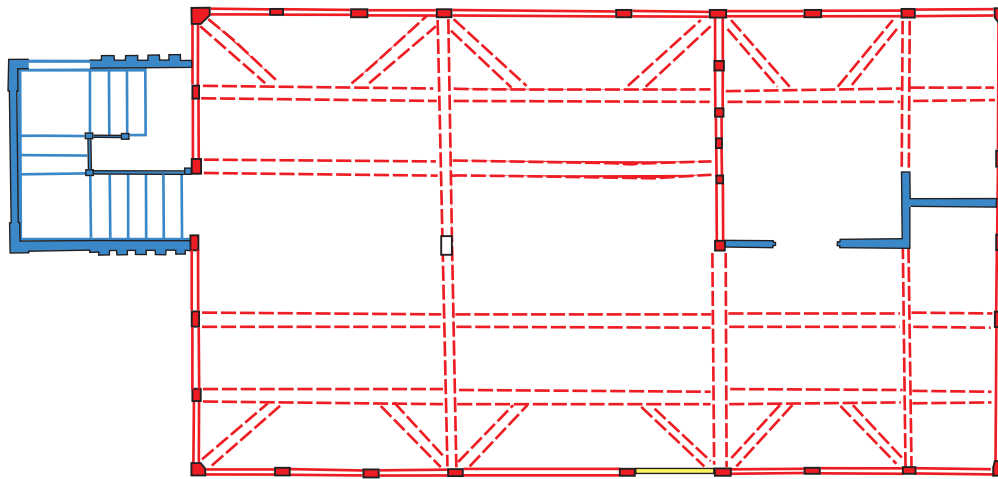


East and West internal elevations.

KEY

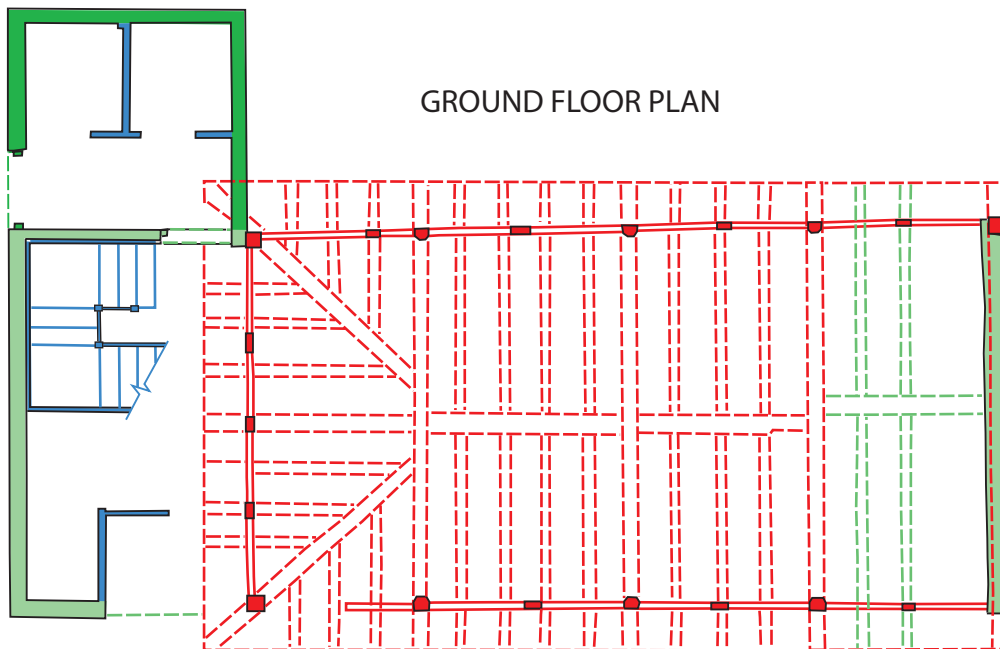
-  Phase 1: 1536
-  Phase 3: 1789
-  Phase 4: c1820
-  Phase 5: c1890
-  Phase 7: late 1970s

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

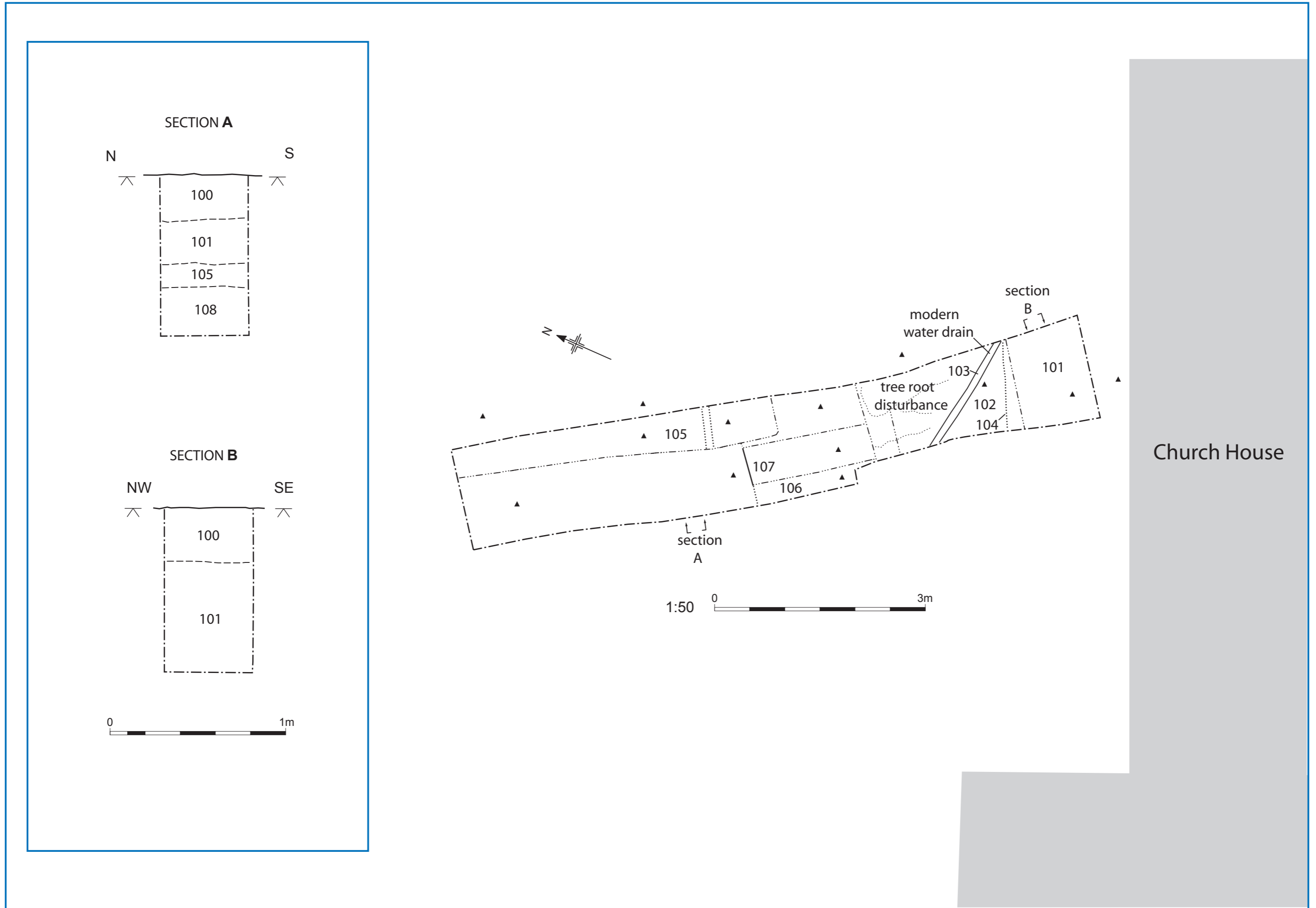


0 5m

GROUND FLOOR PLAN



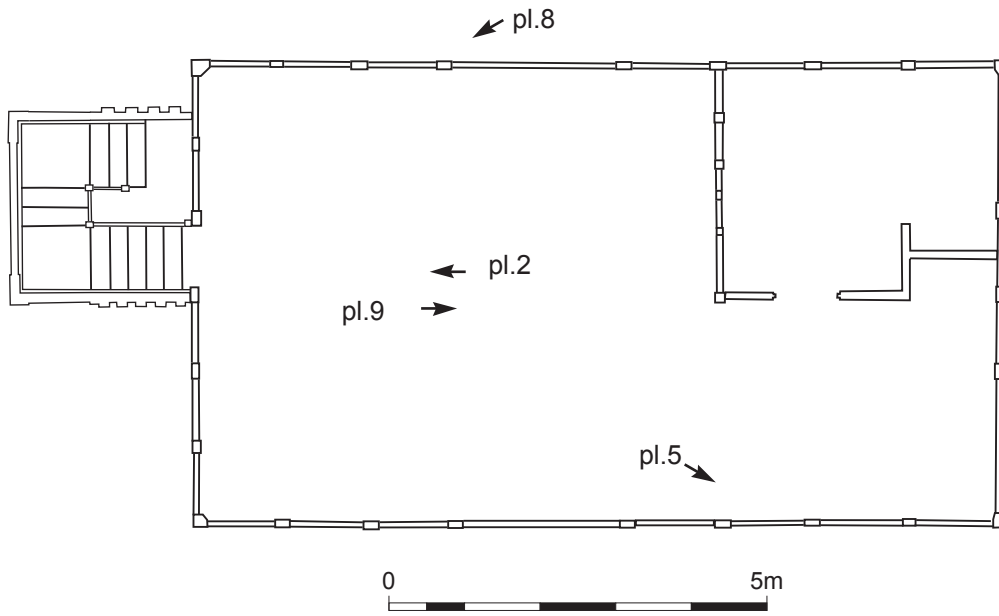
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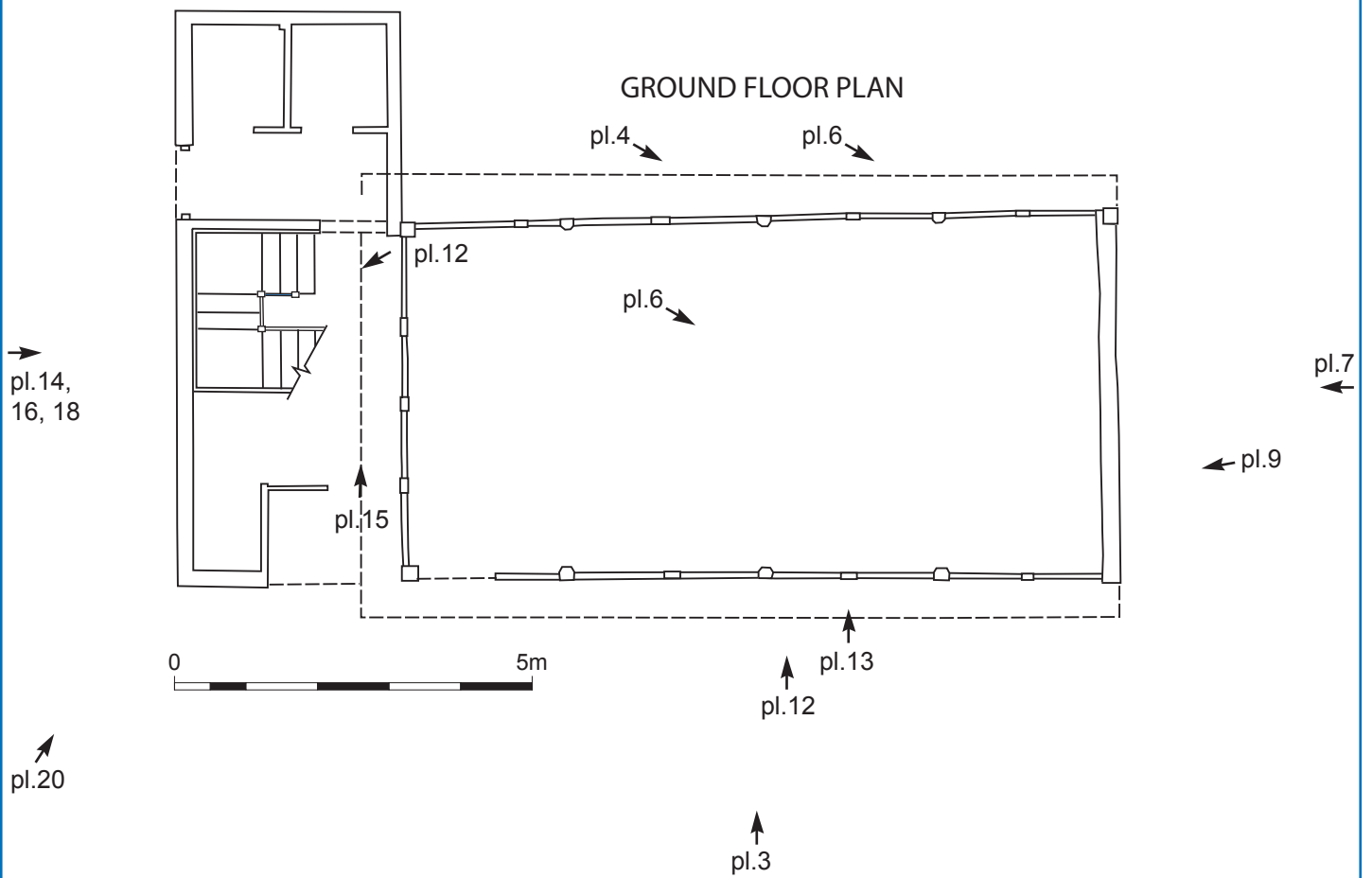
Trench plan and sections.

Figure 10

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



Location of photographs (plates).

Figure 11