

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT AND
RECORDING OF
RUSCOMBE HOUSE,
RUSCOMBE ROAD, TWYFORD
BERKSHIRE
NGR SU 79137 76308**

*On behalf of
Mr C Sheridan*

FEBRUARY 2013

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Ruscombe House, Ruscombe Road, Twyford

Historic Building Assessment and Recording

SUMMARY

A building assessment and subsequent recording was carried out on Ruscombe House, Ruscombe Road, Twyford, Berkshire (NGR SU 79137 76308). Planning and listed building consent has been obtained for alterations to the rear of the property around the entrance to the kitchen and also to the basement. The building is a grade II listed building, normally interpreted as of the early 19th century with later 19th century alterations. 18th century maps place a building on this piece of land, which does not necessarily conform exactly but could indicate that a structure lay on the site earlier. There are certain recognisable inconsistencies with how the house was put together. Recording work was carried out during the process of development.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location

The buildings is located on the north side of the village / suburb of Twyford (NGR 79137 76308), on the road leading to Ruscombe. Twyford was created a parish in the later 19th century and prior to this had been part of the parish of Hurst (VCH 1923, 247-60). Hurst parish was divided into four liberties, of which Twyford was located in that of Broad Hinton, which formed a detached part of the county of Wiltshire.

The geology in the vicinity of Ruscombe Road is formed by sand and clay beds (BGS 2000 sheet 268). To the east are the fourth river terrace deposits, and to the east at the junction with the London Road are remains of the Taplow Gravels or third river terrace.

1.2 Commission

This historical report was commissioned by Robert Stephenson of RSA Architects on behalf of Mr C Sheridan.

1.3 Aims of Investigation

Planning permission has been obtained to make slight alterations to the exterior and interior of the building. This involved part of the kitchen wall and basement wall being knocked out and a stairwell inserted to provide access from the ground floor to the basement. A ground floor wall was removed along with a further wall in the basement. In the western part of the basement the floor levels in two rooms were reduced.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Designations

The building is a grade II listed building (EHID 41402; SU 79137 76308), and is catalogued as followed.

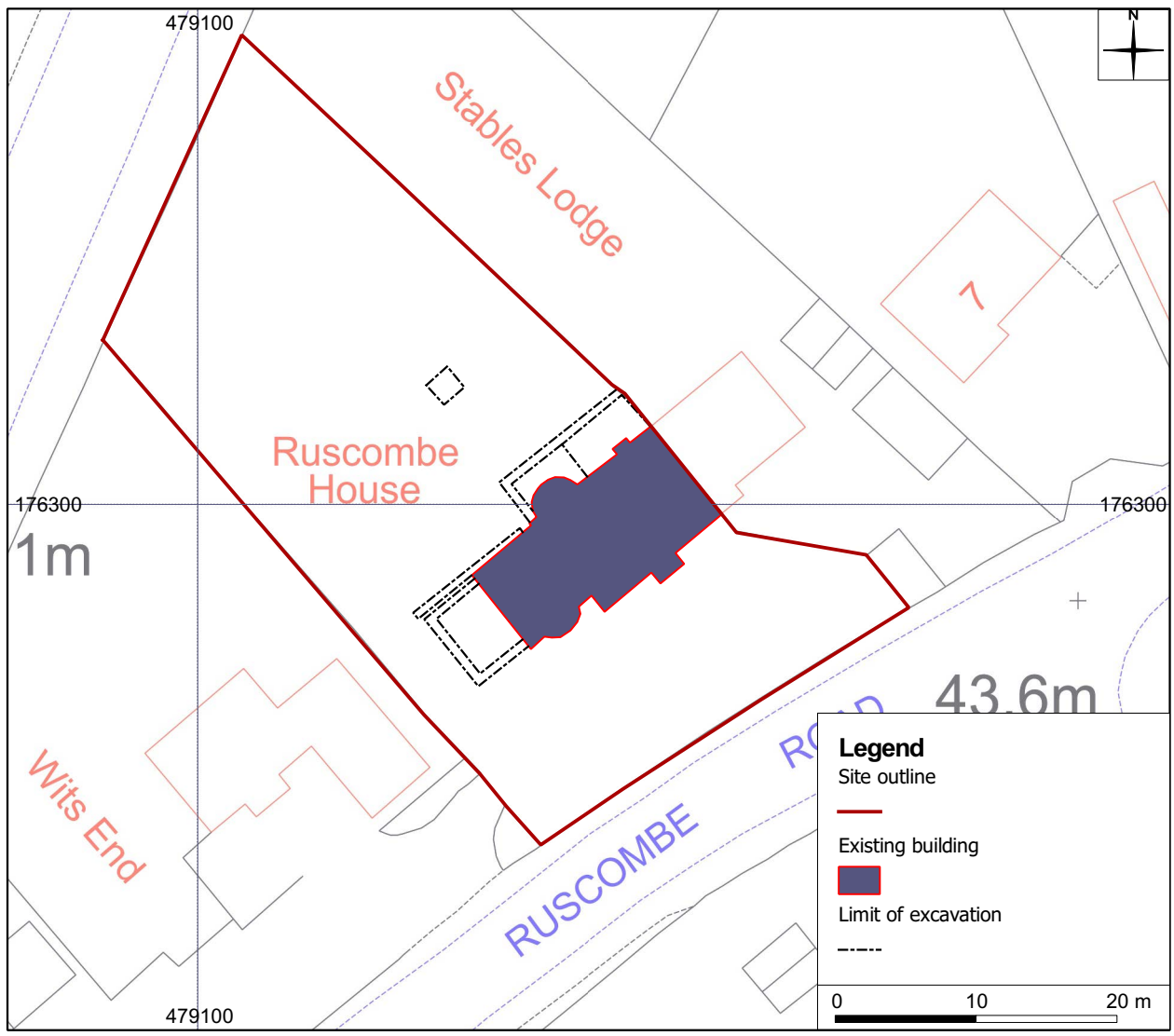
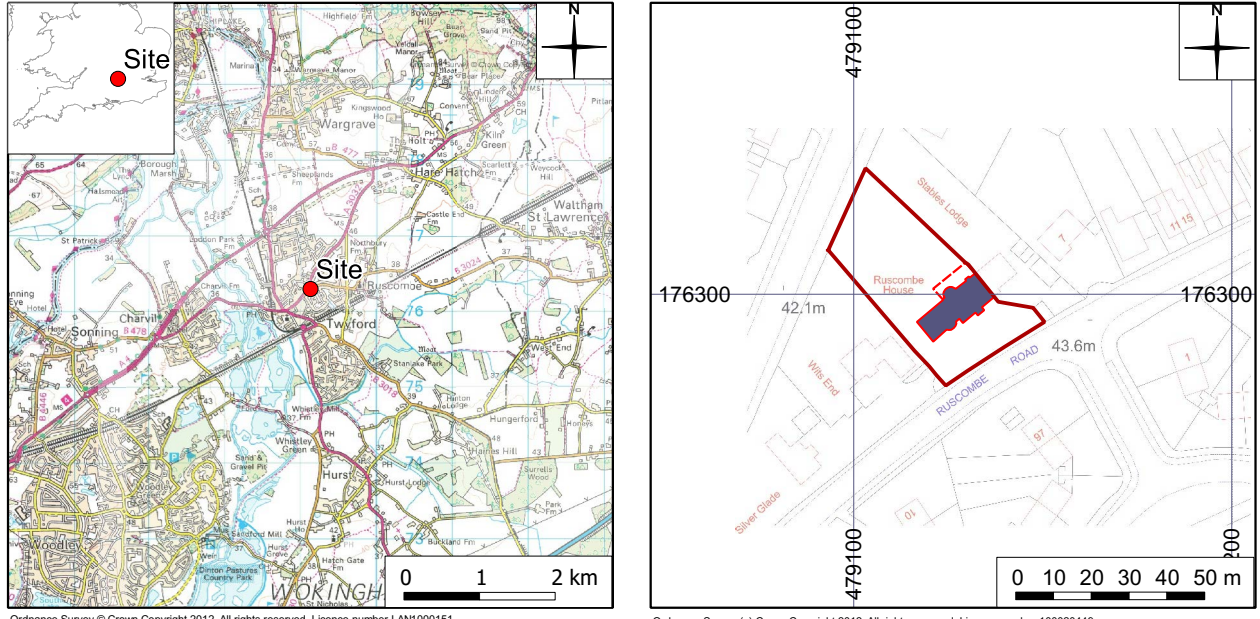


Figure 1. Site location

House, now divided into 2. Early C19, altered C20. Orange brick. Hipped slate roof. 2 storeys and cellar. South east front: flat eaves on widely spaced cut brackets, 4 flanking chimneys. Main part of 3 bays tall 4-pane sash windows, 6-panelled entrance door in centre in half glazed porch. Flanking lower 2-storey wings with similar eaves and roofs, right hand has 2 irregular bays; left has similar smaller windows and C20 bow on ground floor.

2.2 History of Development

Twyford originated as part of the manor and parish of Hurst, which was a manor and chapelry of the manor and church at Sonning (VCH 1923, 247-60). The earliest accounts of Hurst are accounted under the name of Whistley, later Hurst alias Whistley, and it is known that this parish which formed part of the Forest of Windsor was originally divided into four liberties called: Whistley, Broad Hinton, Newland and Winnersh. Twyford was located in the liberty of Broad Hinton, which was formerly a detached part of the county of Wiltshire. On certain maps (see below) it is apparent that Ruscombe House lies in a detached parcel of land assigned in a later 19th century parochial arrangement to Broad Hinton and not Twyford, and that this small piece of land formed part of the detached part of Wiltshire.

The reasons for such complicated parochial arrangements have been discussed on numerous occasions most notably by Whybra (1990), who carried out a historical reconstruction of the county of Winchcombeshire (which existed in the 10th and 11th centuries). In its larger arguments it noted that the complex historical northern boundary of Gloucestershire and southern boundary of Worcestershire was created through the complex early medieval arrangements of church holdings and parochial arrangements. Estates and parishes controlled by Worcester Cathedral, Pershore Abbey and Evesham Abbey ended up in the county of Worcestershire, while those held by the abbeys of Gloucester, Winchcombe, and to a lesser degree Tewkesbury, ended up in Gloucestershire. This arrangement can most easily be explained if Ruscombe House stood on a parcel of land that was originally attached to the church at Sonning. Sonning church was the mother church of Hurst, and was a church held anciently of the bishop of Salisbury. Hence the parcel of land was allotted to the distant county of Wiltshire.

The earliest reference to Whistley is in 968 when 10hides were conveyed to the abbey of Abingdon (Gelling 1979, no.110). This grant is not likely to include Broad Hinton.

The 10 hides at Whistley were held by Abingdon Abbey in 1086 (Morgan 1979, 3.1, 7.1), but due to the later territorial associations it is unlikely that the land was located in this estate. The bishop of Salisbury held an estate at Sonning covering 60 hides, of which the land at Ruscombe could be a parcel.

Ruscombe House was probably located later on a holding of the Earl of Salisbury which formed part of Ashridge Hundred and one of the manors of Broad Hinton or Hinton Pipard (VCH 1923, 247-60). In 1256 there is a grant for assarting in Windsor Forest at Broad Hinton.

The name of Twyford is first recorded as Tuiford' in 1170 (Gelling 1973, 135) and is a reference to a double ford on the River Loddon. Twyford is first accounted as a settlement in 1551, when a croft called Tybyn Hatch is named (VCH 1923, 247-60). At the dissolution of the monasteries much of the land at Twyford was held by Abingdon Abbey. In the early 16th century the main manor at Twyford was attached to the manor of Hurst, but as we have already noted Ruscombe Manor appears to have other territorial associations with Broad Hinton and Wiltshire.

The earliest map (see below for maps) of Twyford is of 1723 (BRO D/E Z9 P1), which shows the area as open fields and lacks the London Road turnpike. Rocque's map of 1761 (BRO PM67/1-2) does show a house on the property in what was part of Common Field. The two later maps dated 1812 (BRO Q/RDC/61A) and (BRO D/E Z9 P2), also show a building on this plot. However the building is drawn against the London Road. One could argue that this is not the same structure, but



Map 1723 (BRO D/E Z9 P1)



Map 1761 Rocque



Map 1812 (BRO Q/RDC/61A)

Figure 2. Early Historical Maps (1)



Map 1812 (BRO D/E Z9 P2)



Map 1842 (BRO D/D1/73)



Map 1872 (OS XXX 10)

Figure 3. Early Historic Maps (2)

No structural remains have yet been identified in this area along the London Road, and it is possible that this is Ruscombe House and that it was simply located incorrectly on the map of 1812; a common problem in early maps. The title map of 1842 (BRO D/D1/73) shows the main block

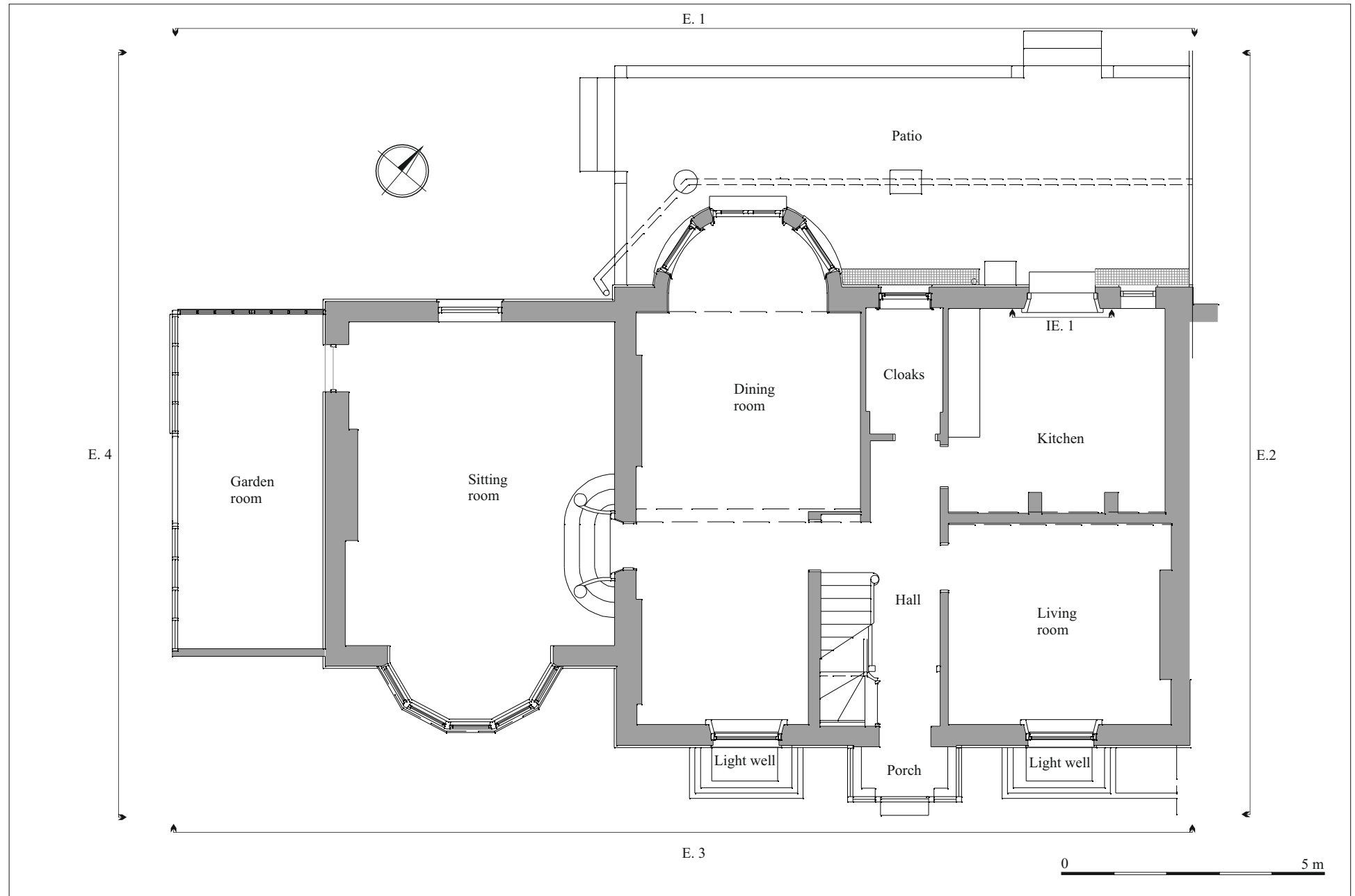


Figure 4. Ground floor plan



Elevation 1. Southeast facade



Elevation 2. Northeast facade



Elevation 3. Northwest facade



Elevation 4. Southwest facade

0 ————— 10 m

Figure 5. Elevations

with the porch added on the south side. The first Ordnance Survey map of 1872 (OS XXX 10) shows the east and west wings added to the building.

Prior to 1875 Ruscombe House was used as an alehouse called The Bowl and Pin, and was claimed to have haunted cellars (Graham 2006, 5).

In 1875 Ruscombe House came into the hands of William Gordon Stables. Stables was trained in medicine at the University of Aberdeen and after this joined the Royal Navy (Graham 2006, 5-9), but after he left the navy and settled at Ruscombe House he became a freelance journalist. The house was alternatively known as The Kennel, then Gordon Grove, before becoming known as the Jungle. Descriptions of the house and photographs survive of the house from c. 1900, when the building is described as being of two wings and buried under wisteria and ivy. Stables was a prolific author and wrote 135 books, most of which were written in a timber structure called the wigwam.

3: I DESCRIPTION OF RUSCOMBE HOUSE

3.1 Introduction and general description

The building is a red brick structure containing three floors (ground (Fig.4), first (Fig. 7) and basement (Fig.8)), and consists of four components. Three of the components form Ruscombe House, while the fourth, the Stables, now forms a separate property (and as such will not be described here).

3.2 The Southeast elevation (Figure 5, E1)

The main block dominates the southeast elevation. It contains a symmetrical design with a central front door with glazed porch with architrave and cornice, which is of a style that becomes fashionable in the mid 18th century, but continues in use into the early 19th century. The door is of six panels and two treads take one up to the level of the plinth. This is flanked on the ground floor by a sash window with eight glass panes and brick lintels which has a pitched design moving away from the centre. The first floor has three sash windows of similar design to those on the ground floor, and which are aligned with them. The plinth continues out either side of the porch, and below this line there are spaces for window lights, also aligned with the window settings above. The windows in the basement are three light casements with mullions. The roof is hipped and brick chimneys are evident at either end of the main block of the façade.



Plate 1. Southeast façade

To the west is a further addition to the building also in a matching red brick. There is a brick plinth, above which stands a large bow bay window that dominates its wall space. The bay has a similar cornice and architrave to the porch. The window has five casements, which are divided with smaller units above containing six glass panes and twelve panes below. Above this is a small window with brick lintel (matching earlier described lintels) and eight glass panes. The roof is hipped at the west end and a matching chimneystack at the west end.

To the west of this is a conservatory or orangery, which has a white wall of wooden plank panelling, under a further hipped roof.

3.3 The Southwest elevation (Figure 5, E4)

Of the main block one can see a blank brick wall, with two chimneystacks with brick water tablets and two pots. The end of the hipped roof is also visible. The side of the front porch (see above) and large bow bay window to the rear and front can partially be seen (see above and below).

There is a lower structure in front of the main block, which comprises the western extension. This wall is also of a red brick, but which has an offset window with brick lintel and a window of eight panes. There is one central chimneystack designed with a similar water tablet to those on the main part of the house.

In front of the western extension is the conservatory or orangery. This is timber framed with white wooden plank panelling, with a hipped roof of a lean-to. There is a central double door with panelling in the lower part and six pane windows above. Either side are four casement windows with eight panes in each.

3.4 The Northwest elevation (Figure 5, E3)



Plate 2. Northwest elevation

The northwest elevation is the rear elevation. The wall is of red brick, in the centre ground floor there is a sash window with four lights; the arch above has a segmental arch. It is the only arch like this in the whole of the exterior. Above this are the remains of a tile set in a gauge in the bricks, which forms the outline of a porch, which is suggestive of this window originating as a door. Above this is the remains of a sash window and lintel that matches those on the front. There are the remains of an earlier lintel adjacent and up to the left, providing evidence of a smaller group of windows originally. On the east side of the central windows are a door and window on the ground floor and a sash window on the upper floor. The double doors on the ground floor have lower panels with eight lights above and a brick lintel. The adjacent window has six lights and no

lintel. The sash window above is similar in design to those on the front. The first floor window and lower door are out of alignment. The bricks around the first floor window are of a different colour and it is probable that this window, or perhaps more likely the lower window and kitchen door have been inserted. The mortar around the lower features appears to have been altered. To the west of the central segmental arch is the large bow bay window, with three large sash windows with brick lintels above (matching most of the other windows in the main block) and two windows flanking a central door on the ground floor (the windows match those above and the door matches that of the kitchen door).



Plate 3. Northwest elevation details

On the west side there is a further red brick wall with a mullioned window divided with horizontal transom. The upper part of the casement contains four panes, and the lower part ten panes. There are two roof lights in the hipped roof above (modern).

To the west of this are the timber framed orangery, with wooden white panelling below and windows above.

The roof is hipped and chimneys are visible either side.

There was a low retaining patio wall broken by steps, the patio was paved with laid bricks.

Observations from excavations (Fig. 10)

The removal of the patio enabled further observations to be made to the structure. There was evidence of a plinth, and stairs that once belonged to a central doorway. The plinth contained the remains of an earlier coal shoot. To the east of this and below the present ground level was a rectangular window with wooden lintel. The window had been blocked by a further outer layer of bricks. To the east of this it was apparent that the wall had been altered and that a later window once looked out into a small well light (see below).

3.5 The Northeast elevation (Figure 5, E2)

Little of the northeast elevation is visible, as it is obscured by the eastern extension (now called The Stables) which is not described in this report. Of Ruscombe House parts of the red brick wall on the main block is discernible. On the south side there is a window with eight lights and a brick lintel. The east side of the porch is visible with windows, cornice, architrave and plinth. To the rear is the large bow bay window.

There are two chimney stacks with water tablets and two pots a piece. The roof is the end of a hipped structure.

3.6 The Roofs

The central block contains a slate hipped roof with two chimneys on either side. The roof of the stable wing rises above the eaves and butts up to the central roof. The roof on the western extension is also a slate roof that is hipped and joins the main block just below the eaves. There are two roof lights on the north side.

3.7 The interior ground floor

Entering the porch on the south or present front façade, one enters a lobby placed under the twist of the stairs in the main hall (Fig.4). There is a door that accesses a set of stairs leading down to a cellar and the door into the hall proper is a double door with lower panels and six lights above. In the hall beyond this there is a door straight-ahead, and two doors located on the east side and a door and lower treads of the stairs on the west side. The two doors on the east side are panelled doors and have original mouldings, with fleuron designs in the upper corners. The door to the north has a similar moulding, with fleuron design near the ceiling, and is set under window lights. The west door does not contain the original mouldings; there is an arched alcove in the wall adjacent the door. The east wall has panelling up to a central dado rail, and a similar panelling is on the west wall rising up the wall with the stairs.

The door to the north enters a room containing toilet facilities, the surround of the opposite window has moulded features. The ceiling also contains moulded features.



Plate 4. Patio door in kitchen

The rooms to the east contain various details which can be described as early, though later evidence may suggest some is not original. The door into the kitchen is a panel door with a moulding on the kitchen side with fleuron design. The north wall of the kitchen contains a window and a door. The door is double (described externally) that has an early moulding with a fleuron design, if original it is likely to be used from elsewhere in the house. The smaller window adjacent

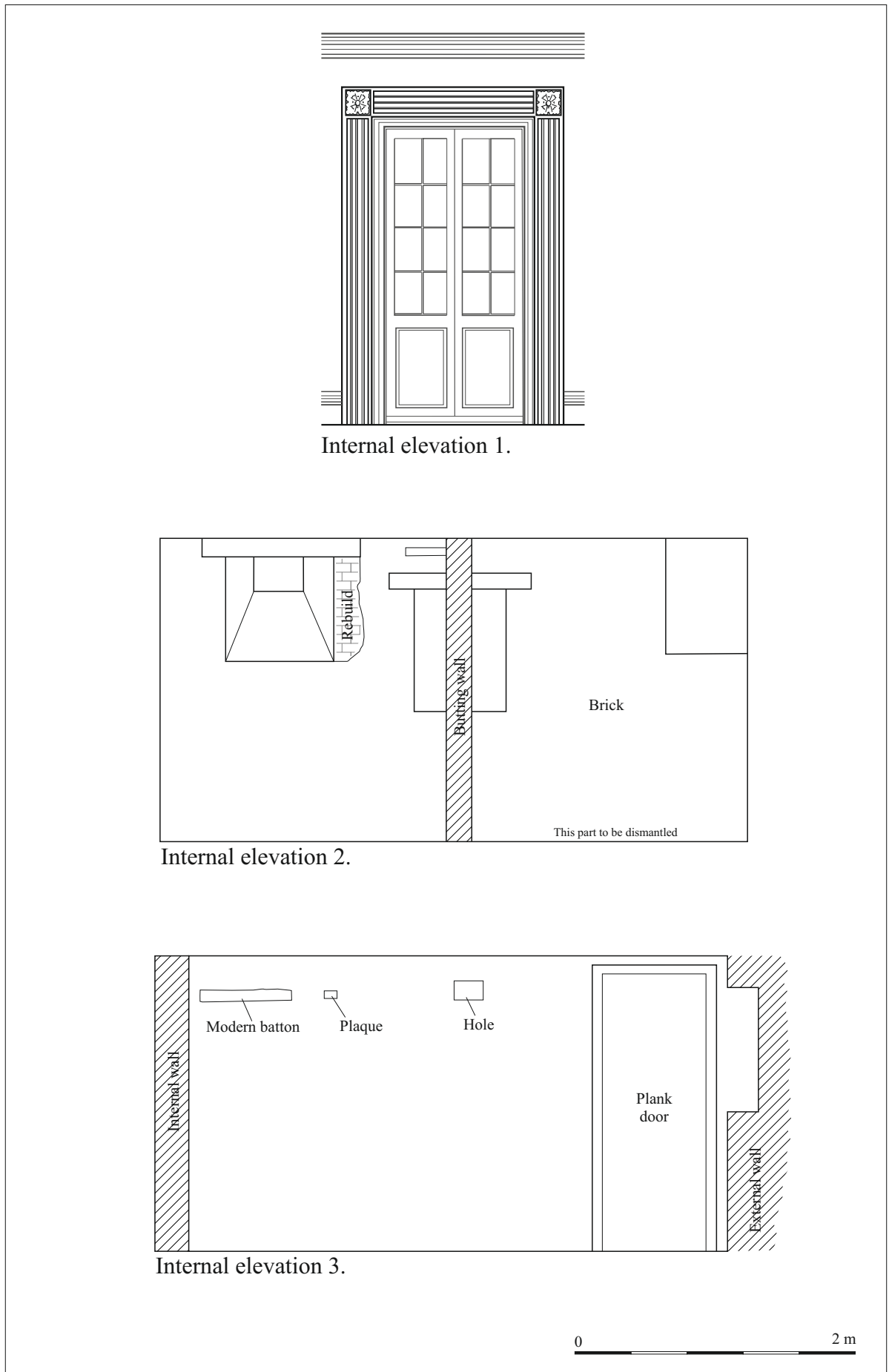


Figure 6. Internal elevations

to it could be a later insertion; it has no details to date it. There is a moulding that runs around the edge of the ceiling (not original see below), while the skirting board is moulded, it is low in height. The fake remains of a chimney breast are placed in the south wall; this from its touch is a later wooden insertion. The original chimney would have been on the east wall (as evident in the basement and first floor and roof).



Plate 5. Part of the segmental arch in the kitchen chimneybreast

Observations made by the removal of material in this room has enabled it to be determined that the chimneybreast was not removed, but that its side alcoves were blocked up to carry piping. This means that the moulded ceiling architrave is later. In the blocked space a sample of the original moulding survives with ball flower design. This, therefore, raises questions on the dating of much of the moulding and as to whether it is a later insertion of the Victorian or Edwardian period. The remains of a segmental arch could be seen in the brick chimneybreast. The plaster walls and ceilings were of lathe work. The remains of two large chamfered transverse beams were apparent in the ceiling void, one in each room.



Plate 6. The remaining earlier ceiling plasterwork



Plate 7. The large chamfered transverse timber beams

The other room (southeast) contains the remains of a fireplace and chimney breast on the east wall. The fireplace is a modern insertion, though the piece is older, perhaps Victorian. The gap between the fireplace and surround has been filled with machine cut slate, the same as the hearth. Modern ceramic tiles have been used as a packing. The lower wall contains panelling similar to the hall, which the fireplace surround overlaps leaving no margin at the junction. There is original moulding around the south window with fleuron design. The window wall and the chimneybreast wall have been fitted on dry lining. The wall between this room and the kitchen, may be a 20th century insertion (as stated in the previous paragraph), but it had to replace an earlier lathe and timber construction. The panelling has been placed above the skirting and is nearly on the same plane. The panelling's proportions are correct for the original moulding in the south window wall and also matches the hall, it is likely that this has been removed and refitted. The ceiling also contains moulding, which unlike the kitchen is probably original.

Observations made in this room by the removal of plaster and other materials indicate that there was a segmental arch in the fireplace, and that in the ceiling there was also a large chamfered transverse beam. The beam in this room showed signs of axe work, thus implying an earlier date and perhaps reuse. The other joists were smaller and with no sign of chamfering.

The door in the west wall of the hall opens up into a room that runs from front to back of the house. The window in the south wall contains moulding with a fleuron design, which is of an early date. Some of the walls have panelling similar to the hall; however, the panelling extends across the chimneybreast, thus indicative of later adaptation. In the north wall of the room is the large bow bay window, here the mouldings have been inserted and do not match those observed in the rest of the house. The ceiling moulding may be original in the front, but one suspects that it has been reworked or matched in the back with the insertion of the bay window. The north fireplace contains some details.

A door in the west wall has a moulded surround, but undoubtedly not original. This has a panel door that opens onto a small flight of stairs with iron banisters with wooden finish. A fireplace faces this, which probably contains original features of the extension, as is the panelling. A large window is set in the north wall and a large bow bay window in the south, with built-in seating. The ceiling mouldings are the most elaborate in the property, echoing a blocked surround of a door or window. In this case it is reminiscent of classical temple architecture. A door lies in the northwest corner, panelled below, six window lights in the upper part of the door, and window lights inserted above this. It is possible that when this west extension was added that the moulding in parts of the property may have been replaced.

The last room on the ground floor is the orangery or conservatory. There is a double door in the west wall (described already), flanked by four casement windows covering the length of the wall. The north wall also has windows along its length, while the south wall is all of wooden panelling. The ceiling contains timber beams, but these do not contain traditional wood working techniques.

Observations at the removal of the orangery noted that the structure had been extended out over a capped well (see below).

3.8 The interior of the first floor

The stairs are a dogleg staircase with an iron banister and wooden panelling on the wall. This curves around under a sash window, for which the decorative moulding is less elaborate than others in the house and is possibly not original. The landing has five doors leading onto it. Only one of these doors contains original mouldings with fleuron designs. The moulding of the ceiling is one of the more elaborate in the house and contains acorn type patterns in the small corner patterns rather than fleuron designs. This moulding is probably original.

On the east the doors enter into two rooms, the door to the southeast room is a panelled door with a later moulded surround. The fireplace is probably original and the moulded surround with fleuron design around the window is also probably an early feature. The window in the east wall is probably of an early date, with timber surrounds, although the moulding is not the same as the other window. There is no moulding in the ceiling but an architrave band set below.

The bedroom on the north side has no original mouldings and it is highly likely that the wall between this room and the small bathroom north of the landing has been moved. One unusual feature is the remains of a wall protruding from the east wall, which may be all that remains of an elaborate chimneybreast. It is possible that these rooms and cellar below may have contained the remains of the largest chimneybreast in the building.

The hatch to the attic is in this room. The roof contains no distinct traditional timbers but is braced by a series of cross beams.

The small room north of the landing is now used as a bathroom and has been extensively refurbished.

The room on the northwest side of the landing is the only room containing the original architrave with fleuron design on both sides. The bow bayed window on the north side has three windows with mouldings but they are not elaborate. The fireplace is probably original, and there is an architrave band that survives below the ceiling, which appears to be a more notable feature on the first floor.

A door in the west wall leads into two rooms; both have been reworked, and contain no original features bar the window in the wall. This is a small attic space.

The front room on the west side has relatively recent architrave around the door entering, though the panel door may be older. The fireplace is simple in design and plainer than the others and may be a later addition. The window in the south wall contains an elaborate architrave surround with fleuron decoration and there is an architrave band set below the ceiling. A door in the west, probably a recent insert leads to a newly refurbished room operating as a bathroom. The window is probably the only surviving early feature.

3.9 The interior of the cellar

The door under the stairs leads to a further flight, which in turn leads to a floor level that would appear to have been reduced at sometime. There is a small hall with plank doors placed at the east and the west ends (Fig.8). The door on the east side leads into a room with a range set in the chimneybreast on the east wall; this is probably of an early date, although the floor has probably been reduced here. The window in the south wall has three casements and mullions with cockspur latches. There is a plank door to a room leading to a compartment under the stairs.



Plate 8. Outline of earlier window in basement



Plate 9. Fireplace in basement, with segmental arch alongside

Observations after mortar stripping in this room revealed the remains of an alcove with a rounded/segmental headed arch to the right of the fireplace and a butt joint in the north wall.

A further door lies in the northeast corner, also of plank construction. This leads into a room which has been divided (probably in the 1960s when a boiler was inserted). The east wall contains a blocked entrance to the Stables, while the north wall contains a central blocked window that may show the original size of the windows in the whole of the main block. A further opening exists to the east and an inserted coal shoot to the west. The wall has been removed.

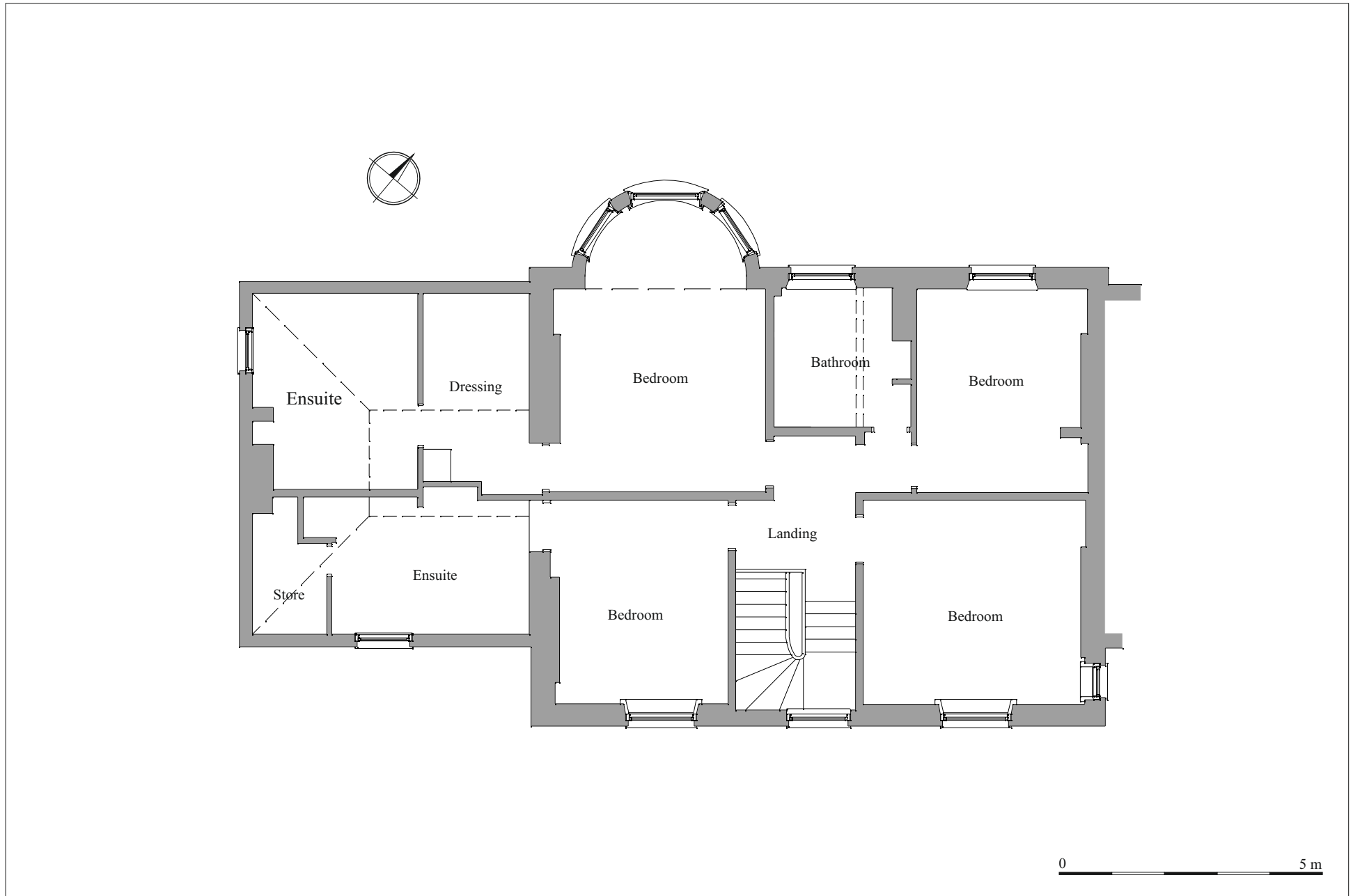


Figure 7. First floor plan

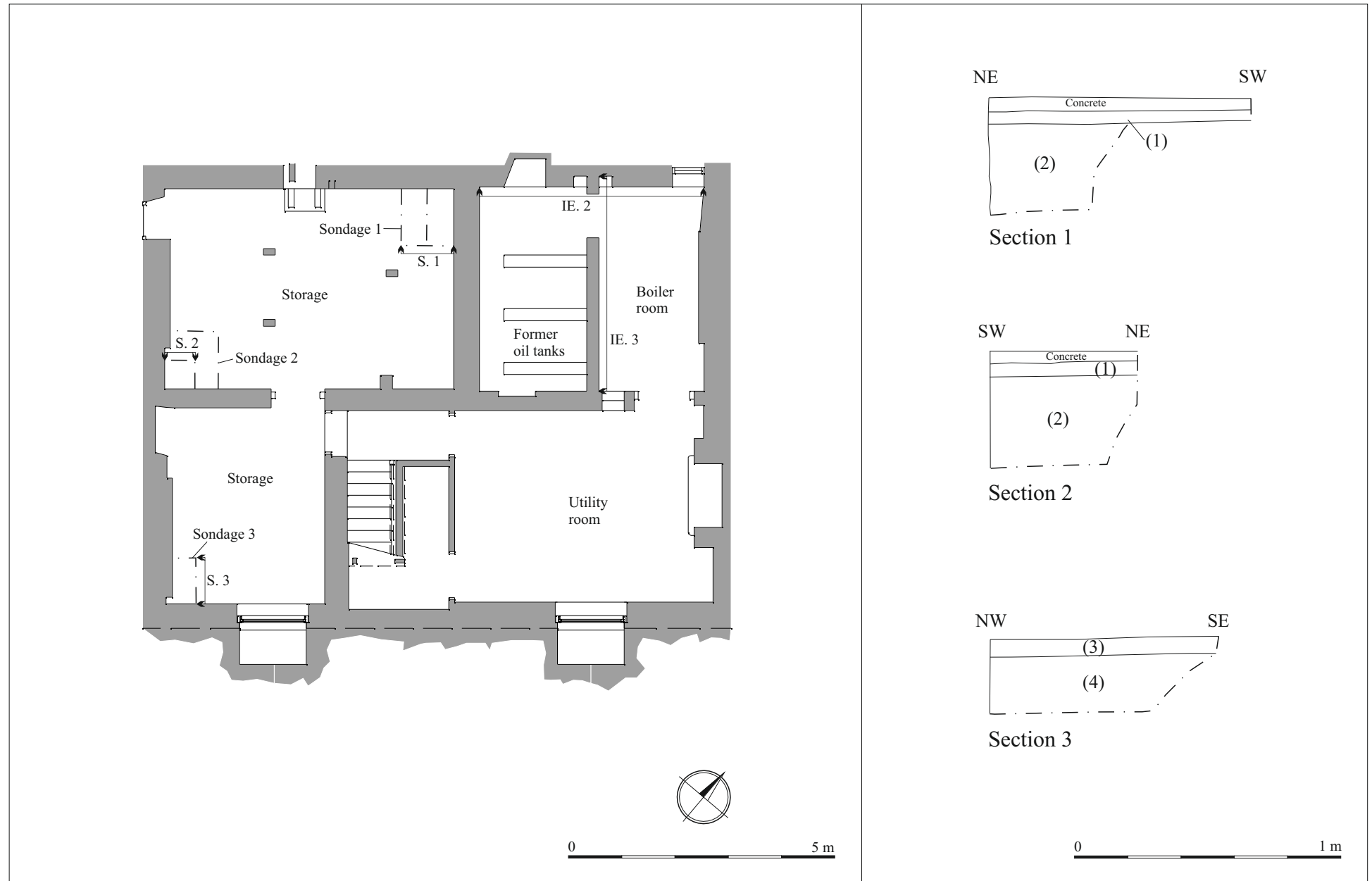


Figure 8. Basement plan and sections

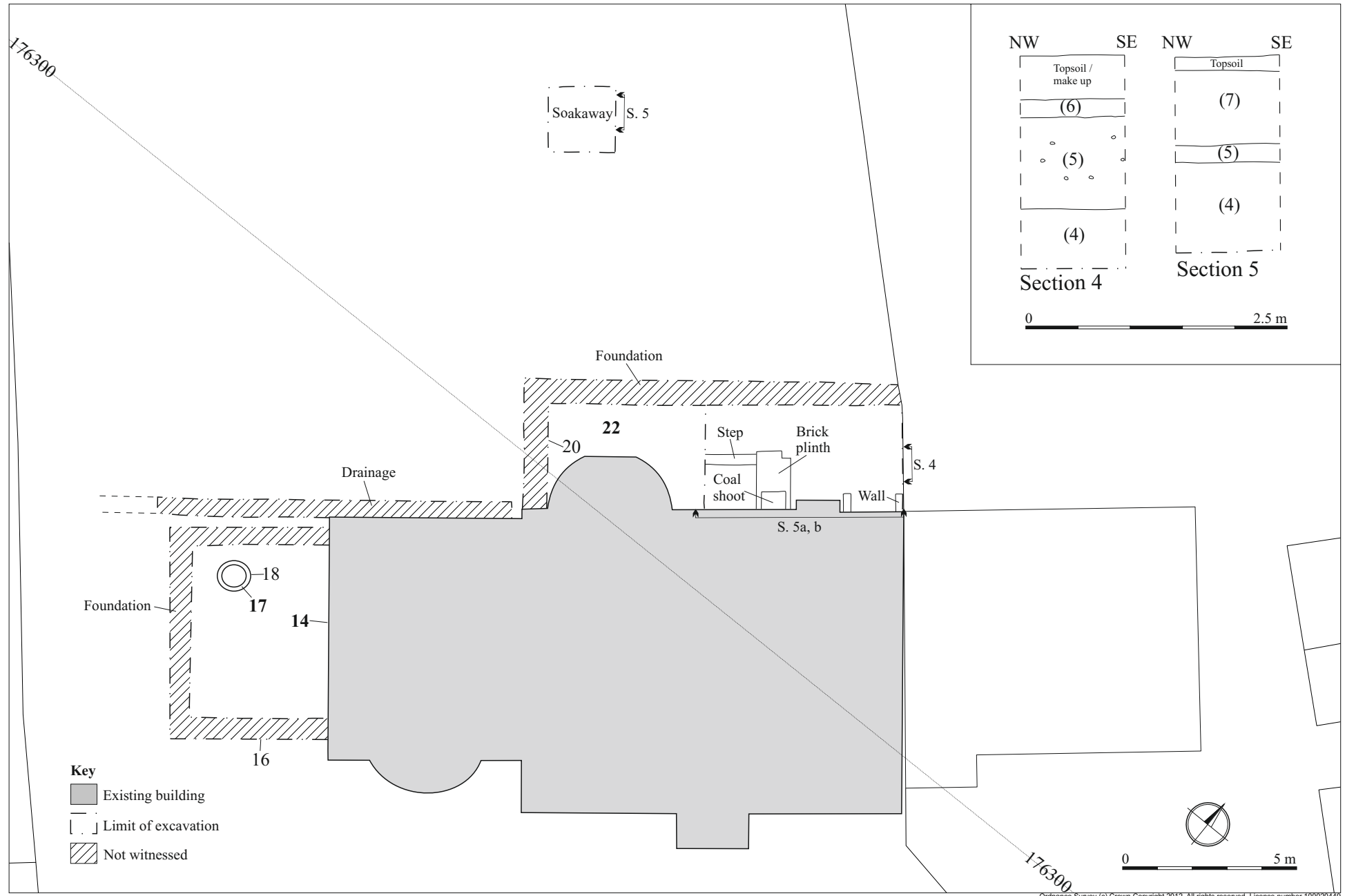


Figure 9. Trenches cut externally

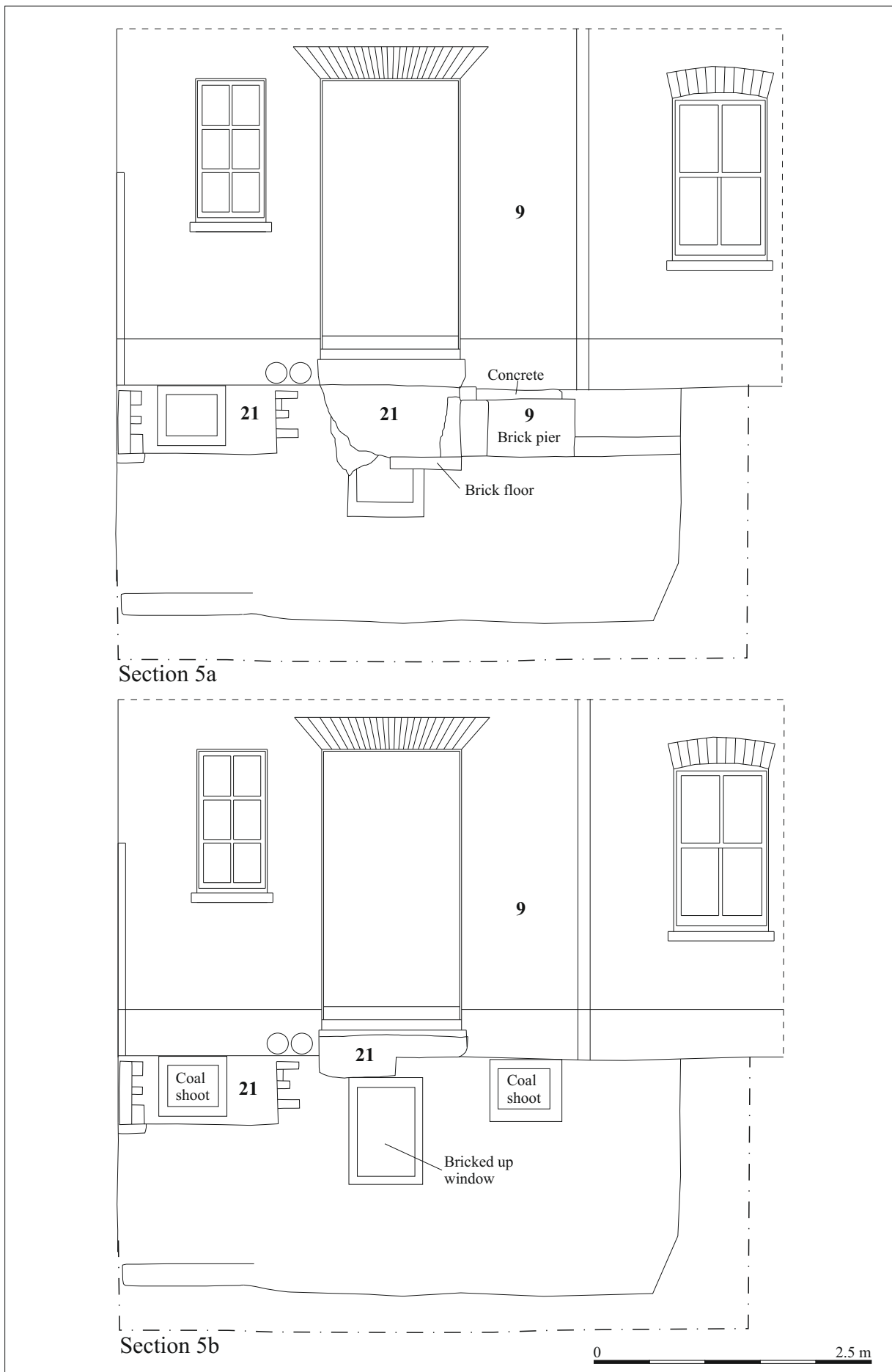


Figure 10. Sections to rear of property

On the west side of the cellar the floor layers are higher (Fig.8). The southwest room contains a red brick floor, and a mullioned window in the south wall. There is a chimneybreast in the west wall.

A plank door located in the north wall leads to the remaining northwest room of the cellar. Here there is a series of open beams forming the ceiling, and a chimney breast in the west wall. There is a blocked door in the west wall, which must predate the addition of the west wing. In the north wall is an opening, an original window, perhaps slightly modified, through which it is possible to see the foundations of the large bow bay window on the north side.

3: II EXCAVATIONS AT RUSCOMBE HOUSE

Excavations were carried out on the northwest and southeast side of the building, and also internally in the basement which identified some interesting details and an extremely important find. Excavations were carried out on the northwest side of the building for the kitchen and basement extension. A soak-away was also excavated on the northwest side of the building. The Orangery was demolished on the southeast side of the building and new footings inserted (these were not witnessed). The old patio retaining wall was removed on the northwest side of the building and a new foundation and drainage inserted. These were not witnessed by the archaeologist, but reports of a well and later measurements after the event have been included. The excavations can be split into two major periods of activity; the earliest is Palaeolithic in date, while the latter is of an 18th to 19th century date with later developments.

The lowest deposit was a natural deposit (2) a compact yellow clay sand (Fig. 9). This was probably a lens in layer (4) or the interface at the base with the clays. Sealing this or surrounding it was layer (4), a red orange sand, which probably represented part of the river terrace deposits. This deposit was uncovered in the excavation for the kitchen extension, the soak-away, and the underpinning and sondages excavated in the house. Covering deposit (4) was layer (5) a grey clay sand with pebble inclusions. A piece of extremely burnt flint was recovered from this deposit. The context (5) is a natural terrace deposit of the Ice Age and it is thus indicative of human activity on the terraces at that date.

Truncating the top of deposit (5) were the foundation cut 10 for the central part of the house, a rectangular block with a sunken central area, and an extension on the northwest side. The walls 9 contained a large rectangular foundation for the house and pier supports on the northwest side with steps and a coal shoot that was joined to the original wall (Fig. 10). This is the second indication that there was originally a door set centrally in the northwest wall, with porch line evident above ground and the plinth and stairs below the raised area of the patio. Alongside this in the wall were the remains of a square-headed window (but with no decorative lintel). It is perhaps indicative that the earliest structure only used decorative lintels sparingly or not at all.

These actions can either be placed in the later part of the 18th century or at the beginning of the 19th century (Fig. 8). Sitting on the truncated natural in the basement was deposit (1), in sondages 1 and 2, a stone layer covered with a skim of concrete, sealing deposit (2), part of the natural. Also above the natural (4) was context 3 a laid red brick floor.

During the cutting of foundations for the replacement for the Orangery the remains of a well was uncovered (Fig. 9). This was not witnessed, but the features were noted later. It is assumed that the well was cut into the top of layer (5), though this is only assumed. The well cut 18 was of a circular shape some 0.8-0.9m across and reputedly 3.9m to 4m in depth. The internal wall 17 was constructed of brick, but these were not seen and only later replacements were visible on the upper levels as part of the well wall had collapsed. The internal aperture of the well was probably about 0.65m. Apart from tumble the well had not been backfilled. This well could be part of the Phase 1 or Phase 2 developments.

Almost certainly part of the Phase 2 developments was the cutting of the foundations of the southwest extension and one can probably assume (though was unable to confirm as it was not witnessed) that the bay window was added at this time. Although these cuts truncated the natural

layer (5) the walls butt up to the earlier build 9, and must stratigraphically relate to this. Foundation cut 12 was for the large bay window, and the later bay window masonry was inserted into the cut. The foundation cut 14 for the larger southwest extension was filled by the masonry walls 13.



Plate 10. Remains of the brick plinth with coal shoot



Plate 11. Features below the line of the patio northwest wall

There were masonry alterations 21 to the back wall at this time around the kitchen door where a step extends down the wall covering earlier windows. The patio wall cut 20 butted up to the cut 10 of the main building and was filled by the patio retaining wall 19. Sat between the walls of the patio, bay window, kitchen door rebuild and main wall of the building was a makeup layer (6) a light brown clay with mortar and brick inclusions. The deposit is narrow near the party boundary but becomes deeper and extended around the surviving plinth. This was capped by brick paving 22.

In the latter part of the 20th century the foundations were cut 16 for the Orangery. This was constructed of brick, timber and glass 15, and the floor capped the well 17.

Outside the line of the patio retaining wall 19 was deposit (7), sealing deposit (5), a compact grey sand layer with brick and flint inclusions. This again would appear to be a dump layer created during the construction of the house. This was sealed by deposit (8) which also butted up against

the patio retaining wall and orangery wall. Context (8) was a moderately compact grey black silt sand. In neighbouring beds this is about 0.3m deep, but on the back lawn 0.1m deep.

4 ASSESSMENT

4.1 Phasing the building

The earliest map of Twyford is of 1723 (BRO D/E Z9 P2), which shows the area as open fields and lacks the London Road turnpike. Rocque's map of 1761 (BRO PM67/1-2) does show a house on the property in what was part of Common Field. The two later maps dated 1812 (BRO Q/RDC/61B and BRO D/E Z9 P1), also show a building on this plot. However the building is drawn against the London Road. One could argue that this is not the same structure, but no structural remains have yet been identified in this area along the London Road, and it is possible that this is Ruscombe House and that it was simply located incorrectly on the map of 1761 and the map of 1812; a common problem with early maps. If this is the building being depicted it is as a simple rectangular block, and the reason it is incorrectly drawn is perhaps that the structure may have originally been orientated towards the London Road after the turnpike road was constructed. There are certain features in the house which may suggest that the front façade of the building has been switched. The smaller segmental arch in the northwest wall (central ground floor window) has the remains of a pitched roofed porch line, indicating it was previously more elaborate. With the removal of the patio on the northwest side the remains of a brick pier and steps were uncovered, which is again indicative of there being a far grander entrance on this side of the building. An earlier blocked window was found under the alterations that saw the insertion of the kitchen door. It is also the case that the present front doorway enters the house under the stairs; most houses of this type would have an entrance through a central lobby in to the hall and face the stairs. Certain surviving components in the kitchen and bedroom above are indicative of **this** fireplace being the showiest or largest. The ceiling beams are perhaps reused, or, if not, indicative of the brick house replacing something even older that has so far produced no other supporting data.

The tithe map of 1842 (BRO D/D1/73) shows the main block with the porch added on the south side. This map and the architectural detail are indicative of the house being re-orientated from 1812 to 1842, with the building undergoing enlargement of its windows in that time period.

The first Ordnance Survey map of 1872 (OS XXX 10) shows the east and west wings added to the building. This suggests that the Stable and west wing were added from 1842 to 1872. The patio to the north of the property appears to be shown on this map. In none of the other maps of the Ordnance Survey dated 1899, 1932, 1966, or 1972 are the bow bay windows indicated. However, a picture reproduced by the Twyford and Ruscombe Historical Society (Graham 2006, 6) shows William Stables outside the property, and the window above the west wing bay window is located in its present position in the wall. It is likely that this bay forms an original feature of the construction. The Ordnance Survey Map of 1932 does show an addition on the north side of the premises, but the extension is located in the vicinity of the kitchen door and not the bay window. It is likely that stylewise the bay window on the north was probably added at a similar time to the other, though this can not necessarily be confirmed simply by style.

The Orangery is probably a later addition and is only truly shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1972. It is possible that this may have been added slightly earlier, but that the maps do not show this, a date of the 1950s or 1960s is possible.

4.2 Listed status

The building is a grade II listed building.

4.3 Historic and Architectural Assessment

Map evidence, though not conclusive, may indicate that the main block originated in the mid 18th century and that it was originally orientated with its main façade towards the northwest. This is indicated by the signs of a central porch on the north and the configuration of the stairs and entrance. If this is not the early structure drawn in the incorrect location, then this will have to be confirmed by archaeology or survey. The transverse beams in the ceiling look old and out of place with the property (they either indicate reuse from elsewhere or a brick rebuild around something older, the former is more likely).

The building was revamped in the Regency period and the building's main façade possibly switched. Larger windows and mouldings were probably added at this time, and it is this phase which all later additions appear to take as their lead.

The east and west wings were probably added in the later Regency period or in the early Victorian period. I am assuming that the large bay windows were possibly added at this point, though it is possible that they could be additions of c. 1870, when bay windows became more common and fashionable. The bay in the west wing was probably added by the 1870s if a later insertion.

The Orangery was added in the mid 20th century. The map of 1932 shows that there was an extension added to the kitchen in the 20th century, the structure no longer exists and we have no indication of its nature. There is a possibility that part of this wall may have been reworked in the 20th century, although the main kitchen door/window reused the moulding of the earlier build.

5 THE CURRENT PROPOSAL

The planning permission covered an agreement to put an extension on to the northwest wall of the property. This entailed part of the removal of the external wall of part of the cellar and kitchen. The cellar contained original features below the patio, but also shows that there has been reworking of elements in the wall. The kitchen wall may also have been reworked, although the reworking reuses earlier detail and components.

The wall between the two east rooms on the ground floor was removed. This wall had already been removed and replaced in the past, and it is quite evident that the chimneybreast in the kitchen is a mock feature, as the original chimney and fireplace are now evident on the east wall.

A wall in the cellar was removed; this was inserted when the boiler and heating system was inserted on 18/10/60, which was dated. It is not an original feature and is only a rough brick wall. The floor layer has also been dropped and the walls underpinned.

The orangery has been demolished and will be replaced.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The majority of what was proposed, the removal of the two internal walls on the ground floor and cellar, will have no affect on the original fabric of the building, as these have previously seen alterations. The removal of the external walls has seen the removal of an original window frame in the cellar. The architrave around the external kitchen door was a feature of the reworked Regency, which has now been removed. The small side window is probably indicative of alterations in this wall in the 1920s and 1930s. The orangery was removed and a well uncovered.

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