

Yew Tree Cottage  
Maids Moreton  
Buckinghamshire



Historic Building Recording and  
Archaeological Watching Brief



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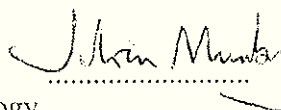
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YEW TREE COTTAGE  
MAIDS MORETON  
*HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING  
AND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF*

CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Background .....	1
1.2	Aims and Objectives .....	2
1.3	Methodology .....	2
1.4	Geology and Topography.....	2
<b>2</b>	<b>Historical and archaeological background.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Building Description.....</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1	Introduction.....	4
3.2	Exterior .....	4
3.3	Interior.....	6
3.4	.....	9
<b>4</b>	<b>Archaeological watching brief.....</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1	Test pits .....	9
4.2	Foundation trenches for new extension .....	10
4.3	Finds and Palaeo-environmental remains.....	10
<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Bibliography and references .....</b>	<b>12</b>

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2	All Souls College Estate Map (1595)
Figure 3	1803 Inclosure map
Figure 4	First edition Ordnance Survey map (1885)
Figure 5	Second edition Ordnance Survey map (1900)
Figure 6	Site plan within Maids Moreton
Figure 7	Floor plans
Figure 8	Elevations
Figure 9	Cross section through house and extension
Figure 10	Site plan and location of test pits and sections
Figure 11	Sections through test pits

## YEW TREE COTTAGE, MAIDS MORETON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

### HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

#### SUMMARY

*Oxford Archaeology has undertaken a programme of archaeological works at Yew Tree Cottage, Maids Moreton in Buckinghamshire in advance of the refurbishment and extension of the house (NGR SP 703 355). The works included building investigation and recording, archaeological test pitting within the house and archaeological watching brief during the excavation of foundation trenches for the new extension.*

*The main cottage is cruck-framed and although the roof has been raised in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the cruck blades and much of the rest of the original roof structure remains in-situ enclosed by the modern rafters. The cruck blades rise from a low stone plinth up to a yoke at the apex which supports a square set ridge piece. Each pair of blades is braced by a collar immediately below purlin level. Dendrochronology has not been undertaken as part of the current project but the original cottage is likely to be of later 15<sup>th</sup>- or 16<sup>th</sup>-century date. A single storey extension was taken down in the current works to allow the construction of the new range and this previous extension was of late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date.*

*Three test pits were excavated within the property; two exposed a compact clay material used as a firm base for the construction of the cottage. This was overlain by a thin layer of mortar in which the stone slab floor was embedded. A further test pit in the hall revealed the 20th century foundation trench for the stone plinth to support the timber frame of the cottage. Foundation trenches excavated at the rear of the cottage for the new extension found no evidence of archaeological features.*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by Derek Pratt to undertake a programme of archaeological works at Yew Tree Cottage, Maids Moreton, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 703 355). The work has been undertaken as a condition of planning approval granted by Aylesbury Vale District Council for the renovation of the house, the demolition of an old extension and the construction of a new extension (Planning Application No. 01/00650/APP). The archaeological works comprised building recording, archaeological test pitting within the house and archaeological watching brief during the excavation of foundation trenches for the new extension. The work was undertaken due to the building's architectural interest (listed Grade II) and archaeological potential.
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Sandy Kidd, Senior Archaeological Officer at Buckinghamshire County Council. OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

## 1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 The main of the building recording work was to create an archival record of the structure prior to its alteration and partial demolition and to deposit this record in a public archive for posterity. The work concentrated on the construction, history and development of the building.

1.2.2 The aims of the below ground investigation were:

- To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- To determine the condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present beneath the building, in order to aid interpretation of the date of the structure, and to establish if the building was constructed on the site of an earlier structure.
- To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

## 1.3 METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 The building recording comprised three elements: a drawn record, a photographic record and a written descriptive record. The drawn record was based on a previous architectural survey of the building with architectural detail and interpretive annotation added to it. The drawn record included ground and first floor plans, elevations and a cross section. The photographic record was undertaken using 35mm black and white print and colour slide film. It included general views and specific details. The written record consisted of additional descriptive and analytical detail to complement the other surveys.

1.3.2 The archaeological watching brief involved the excavation of three test pits inside the cottage prior to floor reduction and the installation of under floor heating. It also included the monitoring of the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new extension. All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 1.4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

1.4.1 The parish of Maids Moreton is located c.1 m north of Buckingham within Buckinghamshire. The village lies in the south-west of the parish, along the Buckingham to Towcester road, and a mile north-east of Buckingham station on the Bletchley and Banbury section of the London and North Western railway. Yew Tree cottage (SP 7034 3550) is towards the north western end of the village and at the centre of the parish

1.4.2 The parish of Maids Moreton covers about 1365 acres, the ground slopes from a level of about 400 ft. above the ordnance datum in the north-west to about 270 ft

in the south-east. There is a gentle upwards slope towards the north-west of the parish and the soil is clay and gravel (Victoria County History).

## 2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 The village is relatively well covered by historic maps which provide a good indication of the age of Yew Tree Cottage. The earliest map of Maids Moreton is Thomas Langdon's All Souls College Estate map dated 1595-6. This plan (Fig. 2) is detailed enough to show individual buildings together with plots of land and Yew Tree Cottage appears to be shown broadly with its current form (but without the secondary extension). The village is shown with a relatively long, linear form and Yew Tree Cottage is shown towards the far (NW) end away from the church. The fact that it is some way from the church implies that the site was probably not part of the original village and may have formed part of a later (although probably still medieval) expansion.
- 2.1.2 As with any historical map such as this caution should be shown when relying on specific details. There is no guarantee that the current building is not a later rebuild on the footprint of the building shown on the plan and the survey techniques used were clearly much less accurate than those used today. However the structural form of the building (detailed below) is consistent with a building potentially pre-dating this map and from other identifiable features on the map it does strongly appear to be in the same location as the current building. Therefore there is a strongly likelihood that the current building is that shown on the plan and that it is therefore of 16th-century date (or earlier). The cottage is at the north-west end of a thin narrow parcel of land labelled *Abbott of Oseney*. Oseney Abbey was dissolved 50 years before the date of this map and the lands passed to Christchurch college, Oxford.
- 2.1.3 The next map is the inclosure map of 1803 (Fig.3) and this again shows Yew Tree Cottage on a long, thin strip of land. The existing extension at the east end of the south elevation is not shown but there is a small similar, building in this location, detached from the main cottage. The strip of land with Yew Tree Cottage is shown as No.80 on the plan and labelled *Stutts Close*. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 (Fig. 4) shows the cottage with the adjoining extension at the east end of the south elevation. By this date the cottage formed part of a wider but shorter plot of land (combined partly with the previous narrow adjacent plot). The 2nd edition OS map of 1900 again shows the cottage with a similar form but the long extension is divided into two parts: that part immediately adjacent to the cottage shares the same roof line as the main building but a break is shown between it and the main, longer extension. This confirms physical evidence current recording that there was formerly a low lean-to attached to the main extension. The 1923 edition shows no significant differences in Yew Tree Cottage to the previous map.
- 2.1.4 The cottage is reported to have been used as a butchers shop during the turn of the last century and was an off licence during the post-first war period (pers comm neighbour).



- 2.1.5 Yew Tree Cottage is c.50 m east from a circular earthwork shown on OS maps which may be a medieval mill mound (Pevsner, 1994). At the south-east corner of the parish (c.2 km from Yew Tree Cottage) is a larger circular banked enclosure which may be a small iron age hill fort (Pevsner, 1994). The village contains many timber-framed houses and cottages with brick or plaster filling and thatched roofs.

### 3 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1 Yew Tree Cottage is a three bay wide, two storey building with a rectangular plan and small secondary projection at the east end of the south elevation. It has an austere exterior with recent rough-cast covered walls and regular 20th-century concrete tile gabled roof but this masks a more interesting core to the cottage. The building has a cruck timber frame on a stone plinth and the original, lower roof structure with dormer windows remains largely intact encased within the current, significantly higher roof profile. The original roof would almost certainly have been thatched (like many others in Maids Moreton). There are two brick chimney stacks projecting through the roof ridge: the original (or historic) chimney is one bay in from the east end and a later (probably 19th-century) chimney is in the west end wall.

#### 3.2 EXTERIOR

- 3.2.1 The *north elevation* (front; Plate 1) is of white painted render with a 75 cm tall rubble stone plinth. The lower half of the plinth is painted black but the upper half is covered with the same render as the rest of the wall. The top of the stone plinth is indicated by a distinct shoulder in the western half of the elevation but this gradually disappears in the central part of the elevation and there is no visible shoulder in the east half. Immediately to the west of the westernmost ground floor window the shoulder returns vertically up the elevation to form a vertical step. There are two doors in the elevation: one towards the east end and the other towards the west, and immediately to the west of each door is a three light window (probably 20th century).
- 3.2.2 At first floor the elevation divides into three bays with 3-light mullion windows (again 19th-century) in the central and eastern bays. These two windows are beneath the current horizontal eaves but it is apparent that they (together with a former window within the third bay) were formerly dormers which projected above a much lower roof line. This is shown on this elevation by sloped outlines within the render, to either side of each former dormer, which clearly indicate the former roof outline. Those parts of the wall between each window have been heightened to create the current horizontal eaves. Immediately beneath the two first floor windows is a continuous oak sill (obscured beneath the render) which runs the full length of the elevation and is the original wall plate. At its east end it rests on a cross beam within the east gable, the end of which is visible in the north

elevation. The vertical step towards the west end of the elevation (referred to above) continues up to the original wall plate.

- 3.2.3 The *west elevation* (side; Plate 2) is again covered in white painted render but this has come away in several patches towards the base on the southern side of the elevation to reveal coursed stone blocks. At the centre of the elevation is the projecting stack from a secondary (probably 19th-century) chimney. The west wall is gabled and at the current roof line there is a relatively modern softwood barge board. As detailed above the primary roof was lower than the current roof and the line of this is visible within the elevation. This is shown by the outline of a former gable c.1.2 m beneath the current roofline with the ends of a single purlin to each slope of the former roof *in situ* and visible within the elevation. The end of the primary wall plate from the south elevation is also visible.
- 3.2.4 The *east elevation* (side; Plate 9) is again covered with white render and a small part of this has come away towards the base revealing roughly coursed stonework. The gable has barge boards at its top and similarly to the west elevation the outline is visible of the former lower gable c.1.2 m below that existing. The end of the north wall's primary wall plate is visible within the elevation (below the current plate) as is the end of the single primary purlin on the northern slope. Immediately below this purlin is a visible section (c.1 m long) of the face of a cruck blade. From the exposed section this timber appears to be a waney principal rafter but evidence within the building (detailed below) confirms that this is a cruck blade.
- 3.2.5 The *south elevation* (rear; Plate 2, 3) is again largely rendered and it has two extensions: At the east end is the main larger extension (detailed separately below) and towards the west side is a small 20th-century brick porch with WC (Plate 4). To the west of the porch is a substantial coursed stone pier, at approximately three-quarter height, supporting the west end of the elevation. There is a single 3-light mullioned window (19th-century) immediately east of the porch and two similar windows at first floor. The original arrangement at first floor would have been the same as the front of the building with three dormer windows projecting above a roof line lower than the current eaves. The distinction between the two phases of render around the windows is much more apparent than on the front elevation. The two existing first floor windows form the central and western of the three windows, although the windows themselves are replacements (probably 19th century) and where the eastern window would have been is now abutted by the southern projection. The sloped outline of the former lower roof which passed over the windows is visible within the wall.
- 3.2.6 The *southern extension* (Plate 5) projects from the eastern third of the south elevation. It is single storied (with cellar and small attic) and has a concrete tile covered gabled roof. The west wall is of brick (18th/19th century) but the south wall is of a crude timber framed construction clad in lath and plaster and incorporating a small window and door. There was formerly a basic lean-to adjoining to the south of the main extension but this had been demolished prior to the current survey. Evidence survived to show that this had a weatherboarded west wall and in its final form it had a corrugated metal roof, although this probably replaced a previous roof. From the exterior the extension is a lot smaller and



lower than the original cottage but it is worth noting that the eaves of the extension would have been at the same low height as the original eaves of the main cottage. The ridge would probably have been just below the original ridge of the cottage.

- 3.2.7 Evidence within the building confirms that the extension is a secondary addition (detailed below) and its structure appears of 18th or very early 19th-century date. As referred to above the 1803 Inclosure map shows a building in this location but clearly detached from the main cottage so presumably the current construction dates to the early 19th century while possibly incorporating elements from the previous structure.
- 3.2.8 The extension is being demolished and replaced in the current works and this work has revealed evidence about the primary building. This includes the primary wall plate of the cottage which was truncated where the extension adjoined and the first floor rail (Pl. 11). The most interesting feature exposed was a small area where the extension's west wall had abutted. This section had not been covered by the later roughcast render (confirming that the rough-cast post-dated the extension) and in it survived a stud, staves and some fragmentary remains of wattle and daub. This was clearly the historic cladding of the building.

### 3.3 INTERIOR

- 3.3.1 **General:** The interior of the primary building is a single bay deep and three bays wide. Although it has undergone significant alteration since its original construction the main primary structure of the cottage at least partially survives and comprises four cruck frames dividing the three bays. Some evidence of each of these frames survive although much has been removed or covered (detailed below). It has a full cruck frame in which the blades rise from a low stone plinth up to a yoke at the roof apex. The apex, in which a wide, square-set ridge piece rests on the yoke is one of the standard apex types for cruck frames as detailed in Nat Alcock's 1981 study of cruck buildings.
- 3.3.2 The **ground floor** of the primary building comprises three main rooms: between the central room (G3) and the western room (G1) is a cross passage (G2) while between the central stack and the eastern room (G5) is the main chimney stack. **G1** is the living room and the walls are plastered (lime plaster) and painted with a low, plain skirting. A small area of the plaster has been removed from the south wall (c. 15 cm x 20 cm) and this revealed brickwork which appeared 19th-century in date. These may be reused and may relate to the construction of the small 20th-century WC extension on the external face of this wall. The floor has secondary softwood floorboards (late 19th or 20th century) and there is a 1930s tiled fireplace in the west wall. There is 19th-century panelling beneath the window, a built-in cupboard immediately to the east of this and a 19th-century 6-panel door with a plain contemporary architrave (Pl. 18).
- 3.3.3 **G2** is immediately to the east of G1 and is a cross passage through the cottage between the main front and rear doors. The walls to each side of the passage are stud partitions but they were not exposed in the current works so their date and

form could not be verified. The most attractive feature of the passage is the floor which is formed of irregular limestone flags of various sizes and shapes.

- 3.3.4 The central room at ground floor is a kitchen (G3) and the northern part of this space is formed by a straight flight of stairs. The stairs are accessed from the corridor (G2) and are divided from G3 by a lath and plaster covered stud partition. This partition was partially exposed during the works which revealed that the studs were of elm and the rough hand-split laths were wide (probably pre-19th century). The floor of G3 is formed of brick pavers and the walls are covered with the same lime plaster as G1 with a small amount of hair. There is a modern sink in the north wall beneath the window but elsewhere there survives a quantity of moderately historic (largely 19th-century) joinery. This includes a softwood mantel and surround around the fireplace at the centre of the east wall, a dado rail, a door and architrave to G4 and a built-in cupboard immediately to the south of the fireplace (Pl. 17). The window is a 3-light casement with softwood ovolo glazing bars (probably 19th-century). There is a small free-standing, cast-iron stove within the historic fireplace. Although the whole south wall is plastered (other than the window) it has a thick base (stone plinth) and above this the plaster sounds hollow (suggestive of a timber frame).
- 3.3.5 To the north side of the large chimney stack is a lobby (G4) between the kitchen (G3) and the scullery to the east (G5). The floor of the lobby is of square brick paviors (23 cm<sup>2</sup>) and to the north side of this is a door which leads to a cupboard beneath the stairs. The floor beneath the stairs is of irregular stone flags (same as in cross passage) and the base of a cruck blade is visible within this area (on the stone plinth). The thick laths within this low cupboard beneath the stairs are plastered with relatively early looking (pre-19th century) plaster (Pl. 12). This suggests that there was probably not originally a set of stairs in this location.
- 3.3.6 The easternmost room (G5) is a scullery and it has a stone flag floor with irregular stones of the same character to those in the cross passage and corridor (Pl. 15). The 3-light mullion window in the north wall is of 20th-century date and beneath it is a shallow trough sink set on a brick (possibly 18th-century) base (Pl. 14). The walls are all plastered but a timber frame is partially visible within the east wall. This frame appears to comprise 6 waney posts set on a brick plinth but the full dimensions of the posts are obscured by plaster (Pl. 13).
- 3.3.7 The large brick chimney stack within the west wall comprises a washing copper in its north side with a covering board fixed over the top (Pl. 16). The former fire opening itself has also been boarded over. The ceiling is plastered and incorporates a large east-west principal joist with chamfered undersides.
- 3.3.8 To the south of the scullery is the secondary (probably early 19th-century) projection. The eastern part of this is a corridor through to the rear yard but the rest of the area comprises a small room at ground floor (G6), a small cellar beneath this and an attic above. The ground floor room (Pl. 8) has timber common joists, orientated east - west, supported by a north to south principal joist (off centre located towards the west) and with floorboards matching those in G1 (19th/20th). When the current survey was undertaken the floor structure was

severely rotten and only very limited access into the room was possible. The west wall of the projection is of brick while the south wall is a crudely constructed stud frame covered with lath and plaster and incorporating the remains of a small iron window at the west end. At the north-eastern corner of the room is a small set of timber stairs down to the cellar, accessed from the primary scullery (G6), with a stud partition enclosing it. The walls of the cellar are of rubble stone but the ground floor joists are supported by brick piers which project from (but not bonded to) the stone walls (Pl. 6). The cellar floor incorporates a brick ledge (c.55 cm wide x c.45 cm high) around the outer walls which enclose a square sunken area (Pl. 7). Each of the ledges incorporate a timber beam at its front which presumably would have formed part of a former suspended floor above the sunken void. It may be that the suspended part of the floor was to provide a relatively dry area for storage.

- 3.3.9 The corridor through to the rear yard has a rough stud partition flanking its west side and the brick boundary wall to the east. The attic is accessed by a quarter-turn staircase accessed from the south end of the corridor adjacent to G6. The attic floor was too fragile to allow any access during the current recording exercise.
- 3.3.10 The layout of the *first floor* retains its general historic form with the two largest rooms at either end (F1 to west, F4 to east) and a slightly smaller room in the central bay together with the staircase, landing and corridor. The walls of the western room (F1) are all plastered and papered but each of the oak cruck blades project slightly from the face of the wall and are partly exposed (Pl. 21). The purlins are similarly visible (though plastered) and project immediately below the ceiling. As referred to in the external description the original roof of the cottage was lower than that currently existing and the surviving windows were originally dormers. This is clearly shown in F1 (and in the other first floor rooms) as the ceiling is low relative to the external roof profile and to either side of each window it has the distinctive sloped profile of a dormer (Pl. 22). The 3-light mullioned windows to north and south are probably of 19th-century date and there is an attractive fireplace in the west wall with a duck's-nest grate of late 18th or early 19th-century date (see Pl. 23). The door to the corridor is also probably of later 18th or early 19th-century date. The room has irregularly sized old oak floorboards (20-40 cm wide).
- 3.3.11 At its head the staircase winds around to the south where it meets an east to west landing (F2) linking the bedrooms. The stairs are probably of 19th-century date. The floor has irregular oak floorboards, similar to those in F1, and at the west end there is a cupboard within which the cruck blade is visible (Pl. 24). The central first floor bay is significantly wider than the westernmost as it is above both the cross passage and the kitchen, and therefore the bedroom in the central bay (F3) is almost as wide as F1 is long. Unlike the other first floor boards those in F3 are regular and narrow (similar to those in G1) and of later 19th or 20th century date. The walls are plastered and papered but the cruck blades are again visible and similarly to F1 the low original ceiling remains intact with a dormer profile around the window.

- 3.3.12 The easternmost room (F4) is generally similar to the others at first floor: it has old, irregular oak floorboards, a fireplace (late 18th/19th century) in the west wall with plain but elegant surround, a 4-panel door (18th/19th) the walls are plastered, there is a 19th-century 3-light (with mullions) casement in the north wall and the room retains its low primary ceiling with sloped sides to each side of the window indicating the profile of a dormer. However, the southern side of the ceiling has been more altered as this is where the secondary projection abuts the primary building. The ceiling from this slope has been partially removed (below the purlin) which reveals that the rafters to the lower part of this side of the room are relatively modern and probably date to the re-roofing of the house and extension (Pl. 20). The primary rafters above the purlin partially survive in-situ. The modern ceiling is however at the same low height as the primary rafters to match the north slope. A steel joist has been inserted where the extension meets the main cottage to replace (at a higher level) the original wall plate. It is supported by modern brick piers to each side.
- 3.3.13 The removal of the ceiling from the lower part of the south slope allows a partial inspection of the surviving primary roof structure which has been encased within the higher modern roof. The cruck blades rise to a yoke at the roof apex which supports a square-set ridge piece. Each pair of cruck blades is braced by a collar immediately above the ceiling and below the purlin level.

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

### 4.1 TEST PITS

- 4.1.1 The three test pits measuring 3 m x 1 m x 0.30 m were to be excavated in the three rooms of the house, but the floor in the south end of the house had been laid in the 1950s and consisted of 0.2 m thick concrete on 0.08 m thick hardcore. This had beams laid in concrete with floor boards fixed to them. The test pit for this room was moved to the hallway of the house. The other test pits were set out in the centre of the other two rooms (See Figs. 10, 11).
- 4.1.2 **Test Pit 1:** This test pit was excavated in the north end room of the house. It cut into a compact dark reddish brown sandy clay (2) re-deposited material used to make up floor base in the cottage. It was sealed below a 0.02 - 0.05 m thick layer of light brown coarse sandy mortar (1) bedding for the stone slab floor of the room.
- 4.1.3 **Test Pit 2:** This test was excavated in the centre of middle room of the cottage and cut into a compact dark reddish brown silty sand and clay (4) re-deposited material to make up floor base. This was sealed below a 0.06 m thick layer of light brown coarse sandy mortar (1) bedding for the stone slab floor of the room.
- 4.1.4 **Test Pit 3:** This was excavated in the hall way of the cottage and extended from the back door to the base of the stairs. It cut into a compact dark reddish brown silty clay (5) with flint which appeared to be disturbed ground make up. It had been cut by a linear cut (6) with vertical sides and flat base, which only 1m x 0.14 m x 0.26 m was exposed. This was the foundation trench for the stone plinth to



support the timber frame of the cottage with dark brown silty sand loam (7) filling between the wall and cut. This had been cut a shallow cut (8) with sloping sides rounding to a flat base, which was filled by a dark brown silty sand (9) with three pottery sherds. This was a 20th-century cut into the rear of the cottage for the insertion of present back door and construction of brick toilet on back of the cottage.

#### 4.2 FOUNDATION TRENCHES FOR NEW EXTENSION

- 4.2.1 The trenches for the new extension were 0.5 m wide and 3 m in depth due to ground weakness from the cellar in the old extension. This cut into the natural Gravel (11), which was sealed below a 1.4 m thick layer of reddish brown clay (10). This had been cut by foundation trench (6) with stone plinth wall (14) of rough hewn stone blocks with a light brown clay bond. This had been cut by the construction trench (12) for the cellar and old extension. This had a 0.4 m wide brick wall with lime mortar (13) with dark brown silty sand loam (15) with rubble filling the void between the cellar wall and cut. The rest of the area of the new extension was covered with 0.20 m - 0.35 m thick topsoil (16) over natural clay (10).

#### 4.3 FINDS AND PALAEO-ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

- 4.3.1 The three fragments recovered from fill (9) were post 18th-century red earthen ware.
- 4.3.2 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

### 5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 Yew Tree Cottage in Maids Moreton is a modest building whose unprepossessing exterior, with 20th-century rendered walls and modern roofline, hides the core of a more interesting and significantly older property. The list description dates the cottage to the 17th century but it only makes reference to external features so presumably the interior was not seen as part of the listing and it is likely that although it is much altered the core of the house pre-dates the 17th century.
- 5.1.2 The key element of the building that the listing makes no mention of is the fact that it has a cruck timber frame and the four pairs of cruck blades appear to survive fairly substantially. There is a distinctive distribution pattern for cruck buildings as they are found commonly in the north and west of England and Wales but not in the east. Distribution diagrams have been plotted which shows a clear (although wavy) dividing line between the west with crucks and the east without and these place Buckinghamshire in a frontier area close to the dividing line (see Alcock, 1981). Alcock's study has identified a moderately large number of cruck buildings in Buckinghamshire although not Yew Tree Cottage and none in Maids Moreton. Alcock identifies eight crucks in Buckinghamshire with the same apex type (blades held by saddle/yoke carrying ridge piece) as that at Yew Tree Cottage.



- 5.1.3 Crucks are generally seen as a medieval building type but in some areas the technique is known to have continued until the late 17th century and even later for certain specific building types. A plan of Maids Moreton dated 1595 shows a building on the current site of Yew Tree Cottage and from the cruck frame and general construction it appears very likely that the building shown on the plan is essentially the same building as that surviving today (although much altered). Yew Tree Cottage is therefore likely to be 16th or even 15th-century date. The extension which was replaced in the current works is likely to be of very early 19th-century date. Dendrochronology has not been undertaken as part of the current project but this cottage would appear to be an ideal candidate for such a dating technique at some time in the future.
- 5.1.4 Although the cottage has the core of a very old building it has clearly undergone significant alterations since its original construction. However the general layout is probably still relatively close to that of the original and the much of the internal joinery and general decoration is still relatively historic: probably dating to the later 18th and 19th century. Among the features of interest are the stone flags at ground floor, the first floor boards, doors, cupboards, windows, sink and washing copper. Another feature of interest revealed by the works was a small surviving area of external wattle and daub which would have been the original cladding of the building. It may be the modern roughcast which now covers the building was applied on top of the wattle and daub and the original cladding may at least partially survive.
- 5.1.5 The most substantial 20th-century alteration to the building has been the reconstruction and raising of the roof. This has altered the external form of the building by converting what were dormer windows into conventional windows beneath a wall plate, but the new structure was merely constructed above the remains of the original roof and this now survives encased between the ceiling and the new roof.
- 5.1.6 The results from the watching brief revealed that the test pits exposed compacted clay material from the construction of the cottage used to build up a firm base. This was overlain by thin layer of mortar to bed in the stone slab floors. The test pit in the hall way showed the foundation trench for the stone plinth and later construction phase with the addition onto the rear of the cottage. The foundation trenches for the new extension did not expose any archaeological features at the rear of the cottage.

Jonathan Gill  
James Mumford  
February 2005

## 6 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- Alcock NW     *Cruck Construction: an Introduction and Catalogue*. CBA Research Report No. 42 (1981)
- D Wilkinson Ed, 1992; *OAU Fieldwork Manual*
- OA 2002     *Yew Tree Cottage, Duck Lane, Maids Morton, Buckinghamshire* Written Scheme of Investigation

## APPENDIX I     SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** Yew Tree Cottage, Maids Morton, Buckinghamshire

**Site code:** MAYEW 02

**Grid reference:** NGR SP 7034 3550

**Type of archaeological work:** Excavation of test pits and monitoring of foundation trenches, historic building recording

**Date and duration of project:** The building recording was undertaken on 7, 12, 27 November 2002. The watching brief and test pitting works were undertaken on the 22nd and 23rd of April 2003.

**Area of site:** 3 test pits 3 m x 1 m and extension area 4 m x 6 m.

**Summary of results:**

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: 2002.132

## APPENDIX II     LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Location : MAIDS MORETON, AYLESBURY VALE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

IoE number : 400395

Date listed : 22 AUG 1983

Date of last amendment : 22 AUG 1983

SP 7035

MAIDS MORETON

DUCK LAKE  
(east side)

7/82

Yew Trees

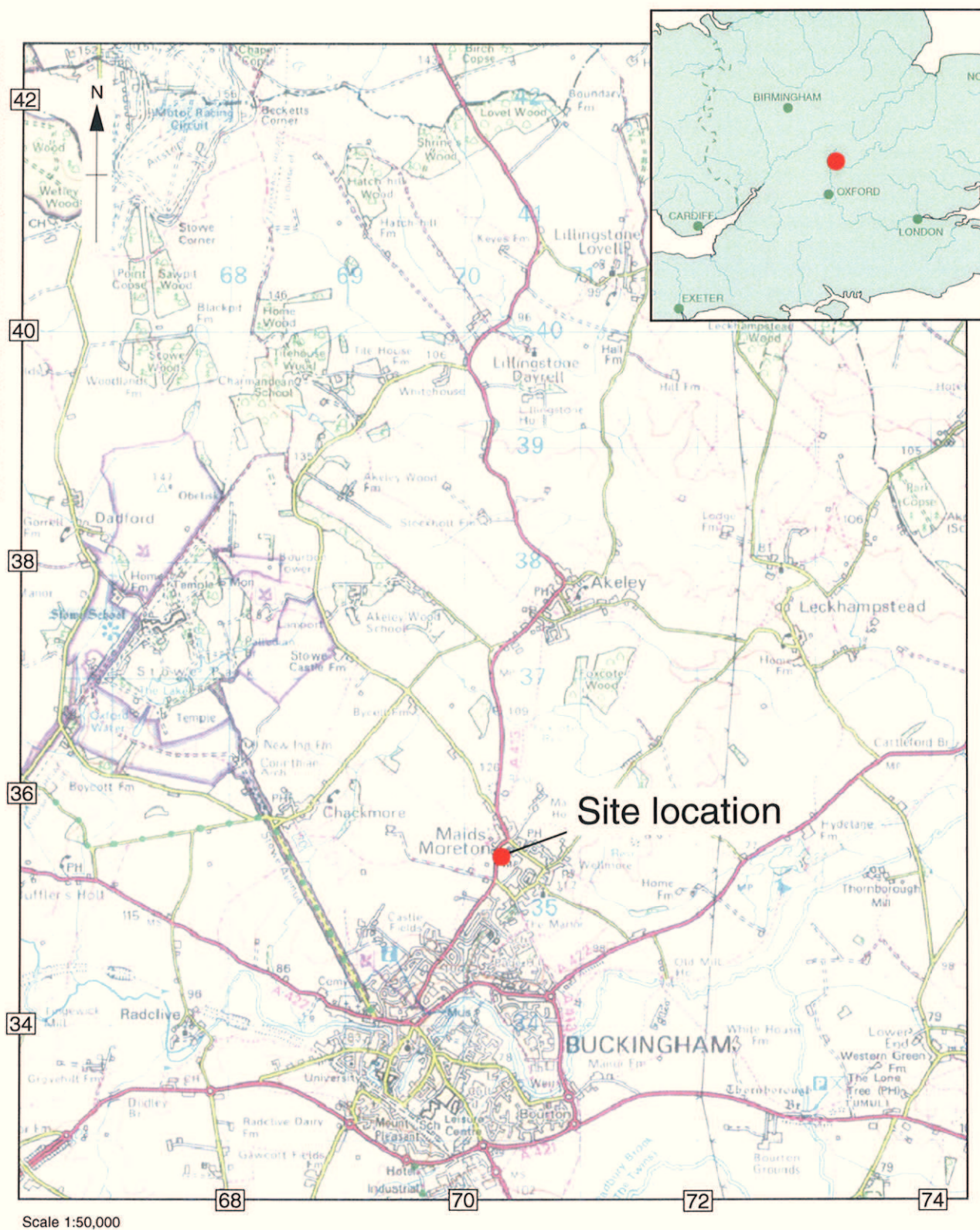
II

Small house. C17 altered. Render and roughcast over timber frame and stone plinth. Right-hand gable wall of rendered rubble stone, slightly projecting to front and rear. Concrete tiled roof, brick stack between left-hand bays and another partly external to right gable. Two storeys, raised eaves, three bays. Ground floor has 3-light windows with wooden mullions to outer bays. 3-light C19 barred wooden casements to first floor left hand bays. Ledged doors to left and between right hand bays.



### APPENDIX III ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer					
2	Layer					
3	Layer					
4	Layer					
5	Layer					
6	Cut					
7	Fill					
8	Cut					
9	Fill					
10	Natural					
11	Natural					
12	Cut					
13	Wall					
14	Wall					
15	Fill					
16	Layer					



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Figure 1: Site location



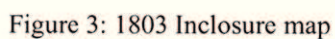
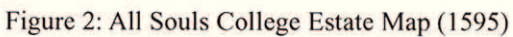






Figure 4: First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1885)

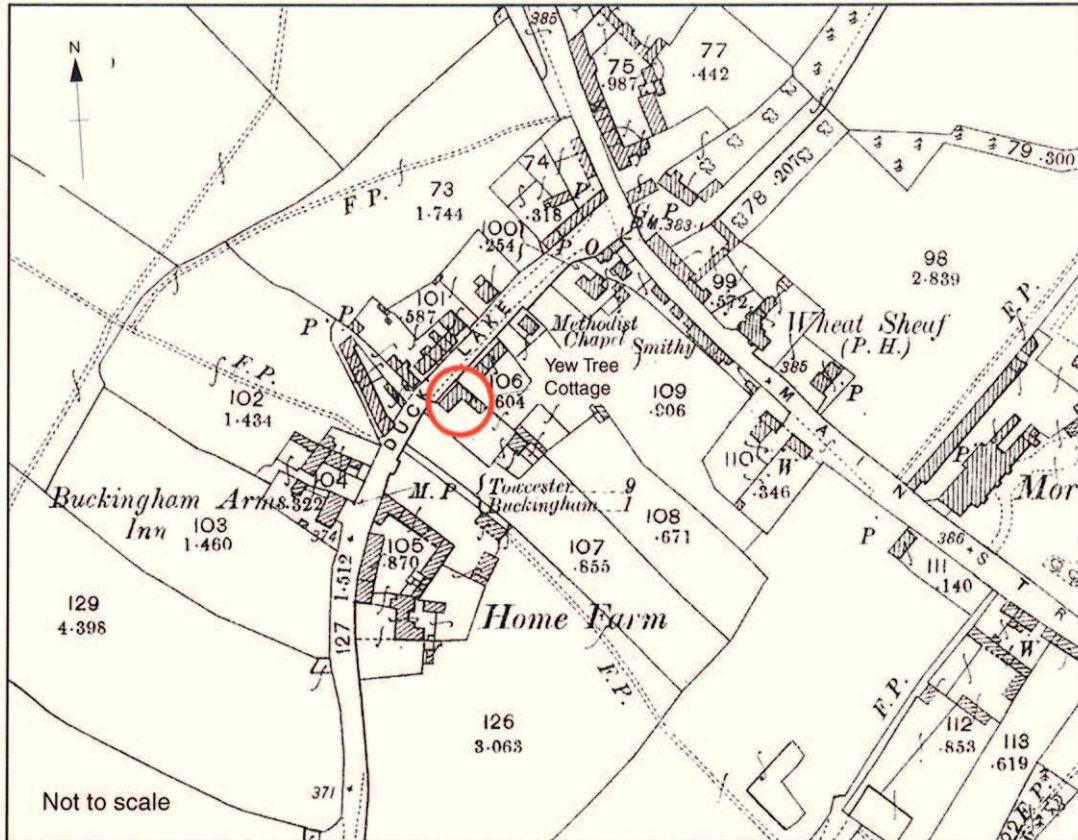
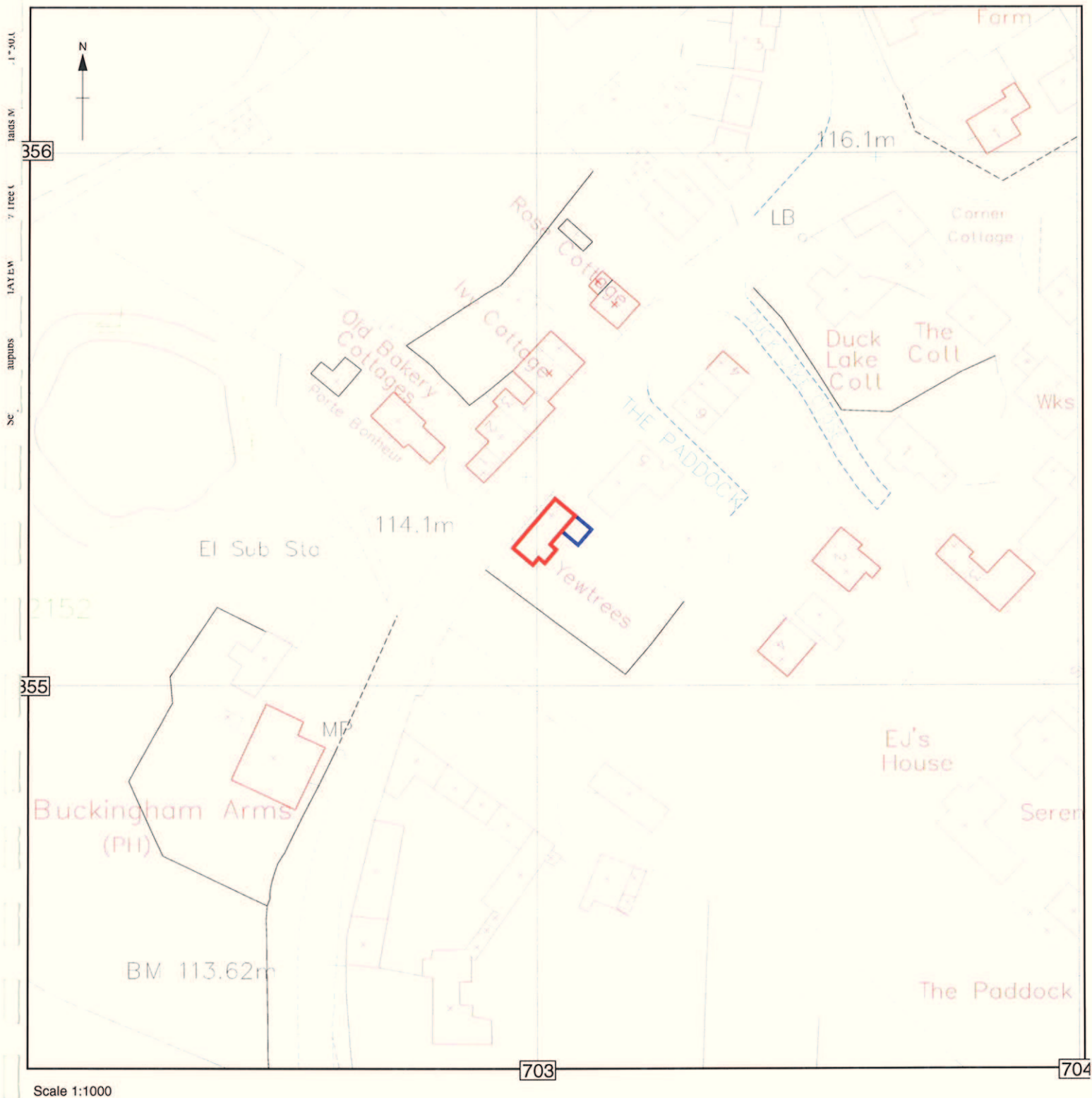


Figure 5: 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map (1900)



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- Existing house
- Old extension

Figure 6: Site location

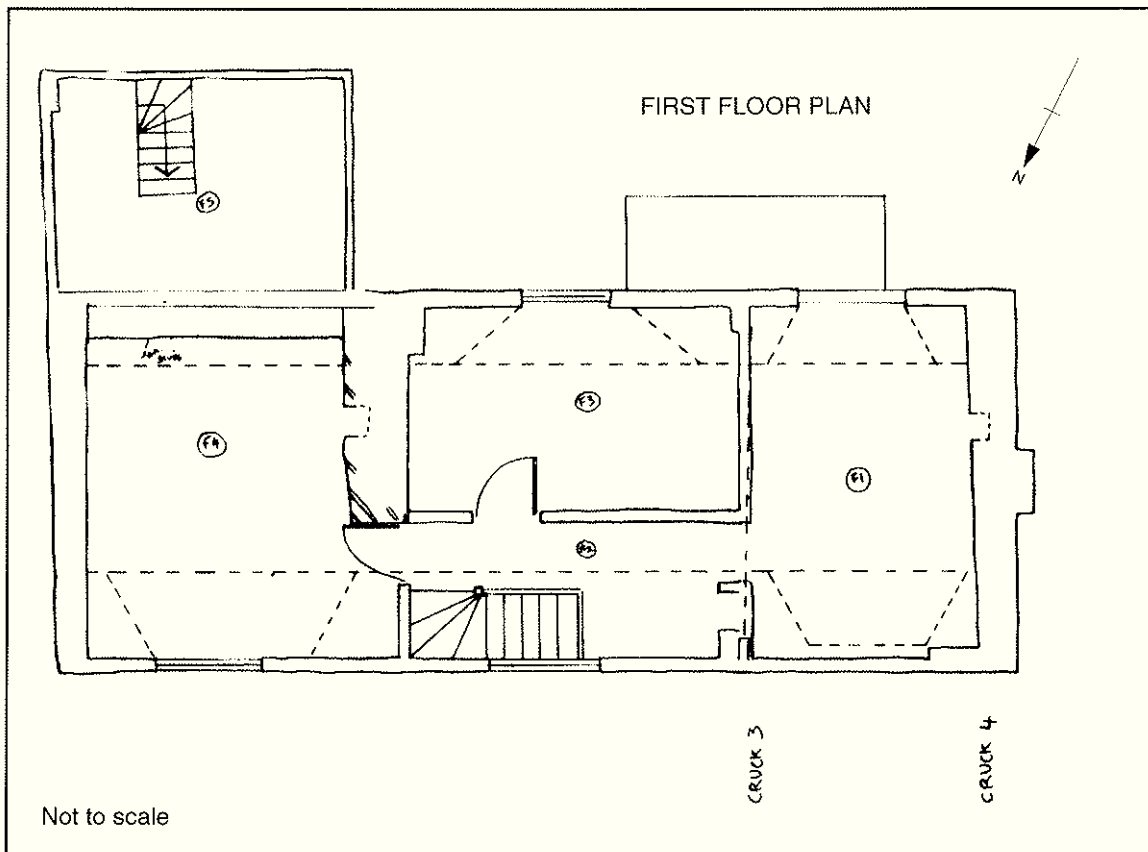
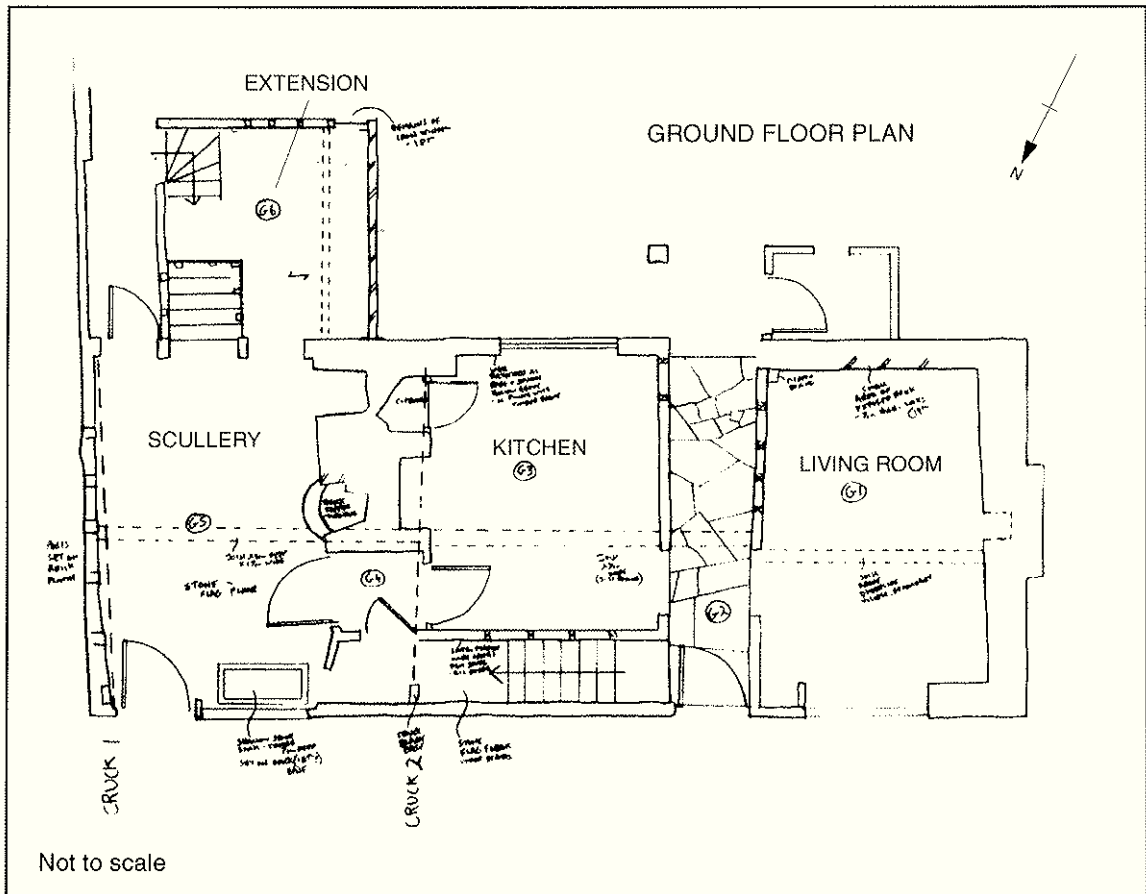


Figure 7: Floor plans



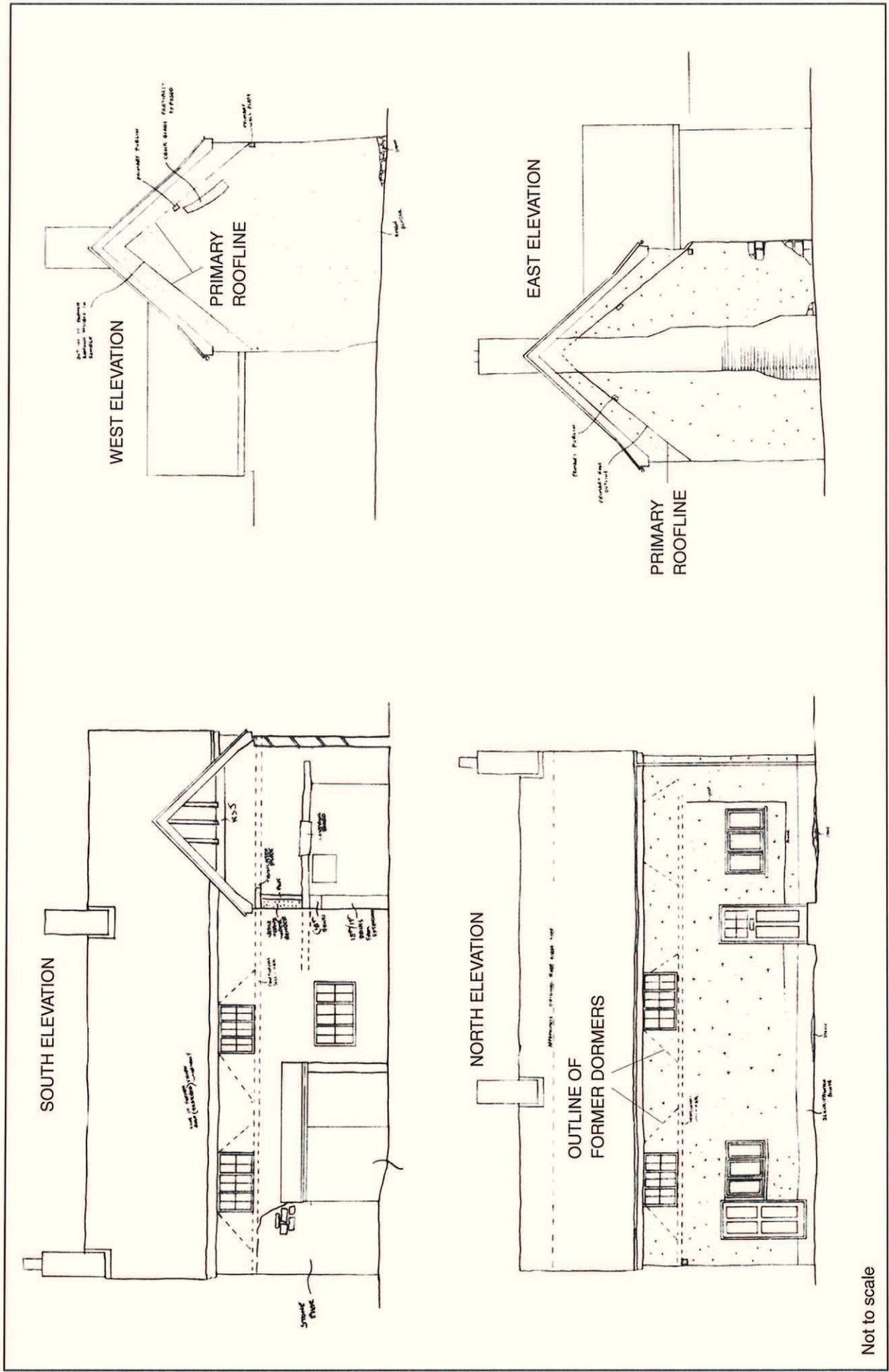
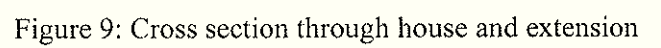


Figure 8: Elevations





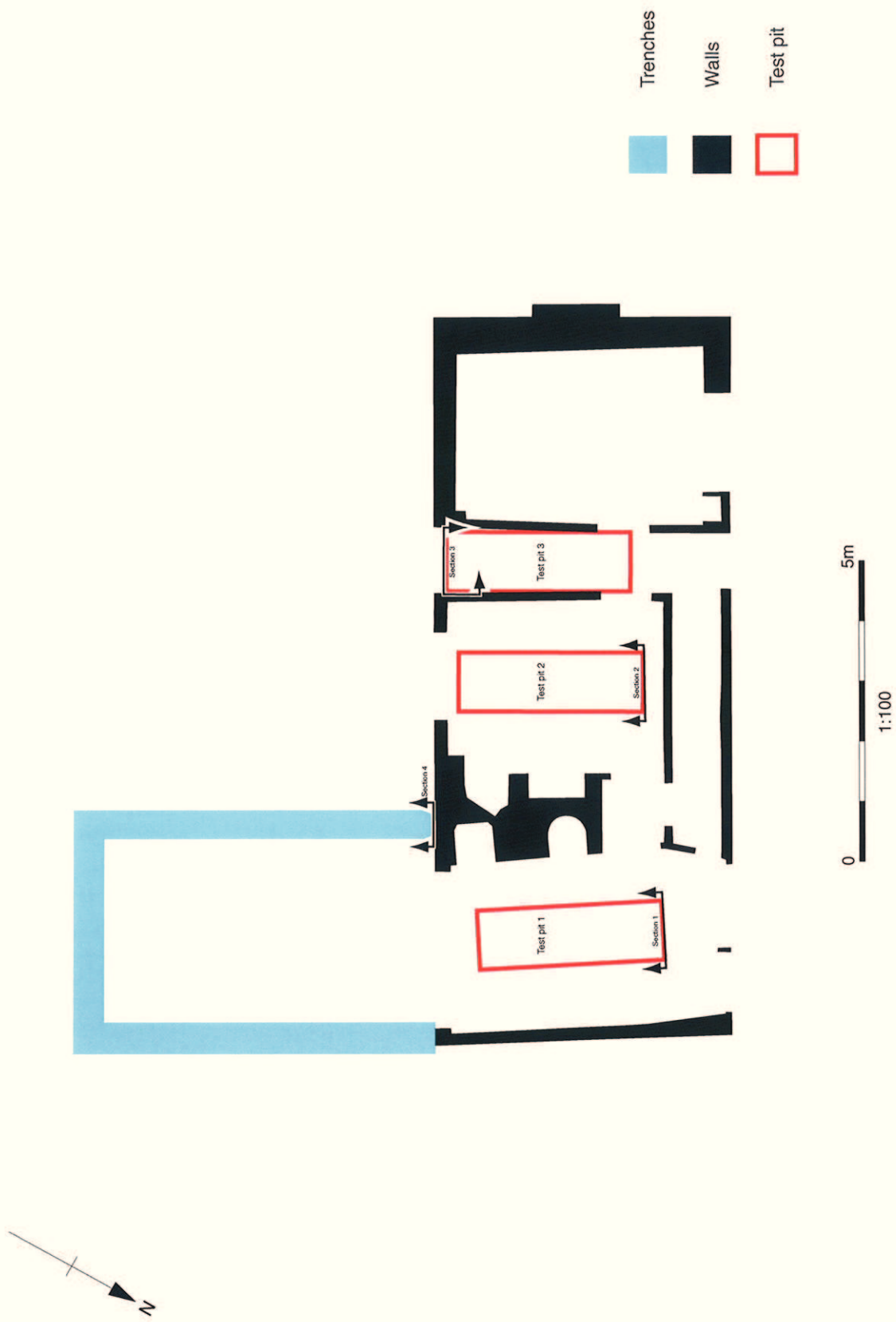


Figure 10: Site plan and location of test pits and sections



Plate 1: North (front) elevation of house



Plate 2: House from south-west



Plate 3: South (rear) elevation of house



Plate 4: 20th-century porch to rear elevation





Plate 5: Extension at east rear end of elevation



Plate 6: Cellar beneath extension (after demolition of extension)



Plate 7: Timber frame in floor of cellar



Plate 8: Ground floor room in extension





Plate 13: Timber framing within east wall of scullery (G5)



Plate 14: North wall of G5 showing stone sink beneath window



Plate 15: Irregular stone flag floor in scullery (G5)



Plate 16: West wall in G5 incorporating fireplace and copper





Plate 17: East wall of kitchen (G3)



Plate 18: North wall of G1



Plate 19: Hall (F2) at first floor



Plate 20: Junction at first floor between main house (F4) and projection (F5)





Plate 21: North wall of F1. Note partially exposed cruck frame



Plate 22: North wall of F1



Plate 23: Late 18th or early 19th-century 'ducks nest' fireplace in F1



Plate 24: Part of cruck frame visible in first floor cupboard (F2)



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