

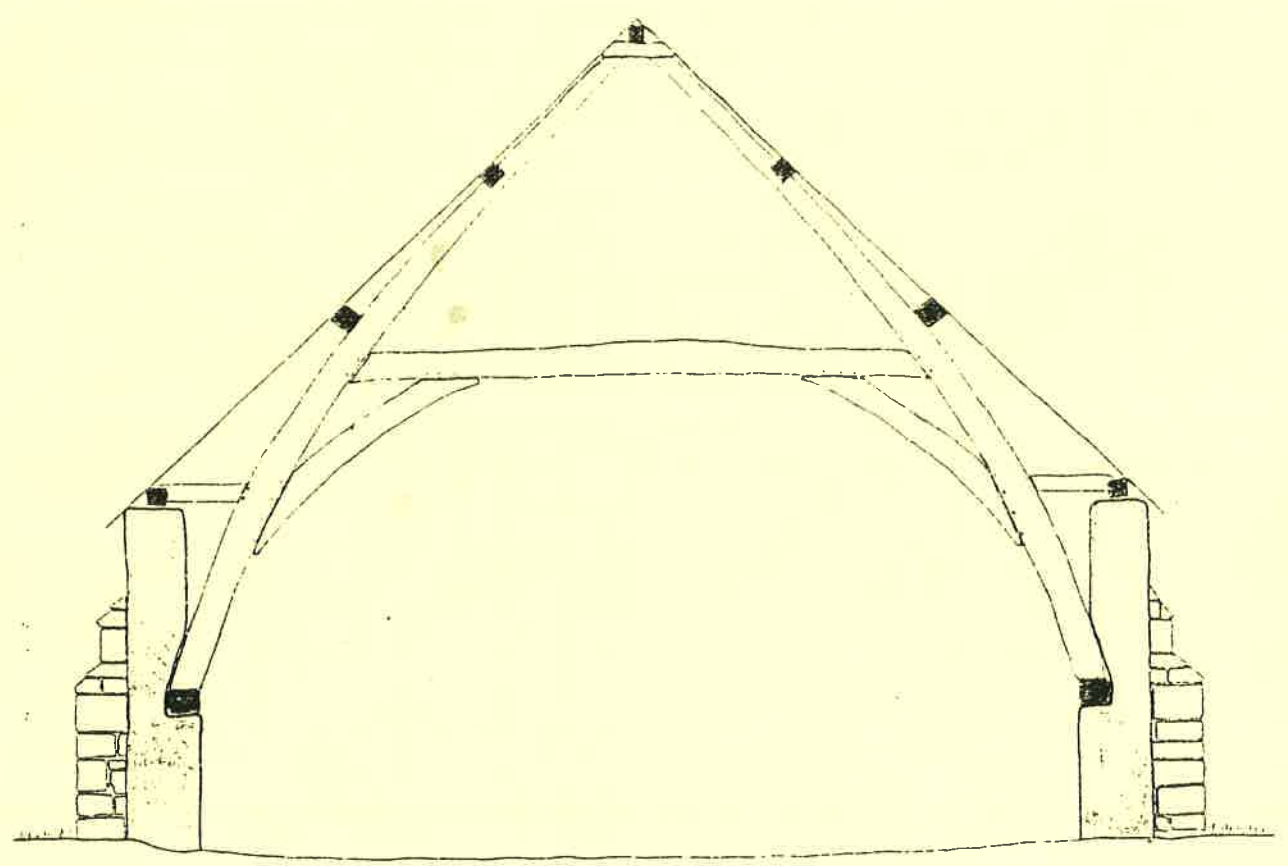
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Dorset County Council
English Heritage

Sydling St Nicholas, Dorset

An Architectural Survey of the Tithe Barn



Oxford Archaeological Unit
August 1988

Sydling St Nicholas, Dorset An Architectural Survey of the Tithe Barn

The rectorial barn at Sydling St Nicholas, Dorset was probably built in about 1400 by Milton Abbey as an 8-bay cruck barn with flint walls; only the sockets for the crucks survive, on the inside of the walls opposite the external buttresses. At a later date, most likely around the date recorded of the inscription recorded by Hutchins ('LVW 1590') the barn was reconstructed in aisled form in 10 or more bays with a queen-strut and collar roof. The east end was truncated and rebuilt in the 18th or 19th century.

Introduction

The tithe barn at Sydling St Nicholas was surveyed by Oxford Archaeological Unit in October 1991, and photographed in April 1992. The purpose of the survey was to investigate historical aspects of the structure of the barn, record the present condition of the barn in photographs, and provide measured drawings of its principal features. No detailed historical investigation was undertaken, beyond consulting the more obvious printed sources.

History

The barn at Court Farm, Sydling St Nicholas was the property of Milton Abbey, which owned the manor from its foundation, and the rectory (which was probably appropriated at a much later date); it passed to Winchester College after the Dissolution, when the rectory was one of the most valuable properties of the abbey. The building is comparable with the rectorial barns of appropriated churches (e.g. those of New College Oxford at Swalcliffe and Upper Heyford, etc.) where considerable investment was made in farm buildings within a few years of appropriation. Hutchins records an inscription *LVW 1590* on one of the beams, thought to refer to the tenant; this has not been found in the course of the present survey.

Description

General description: The Barn is built of finely coursed flint with buttresses and quoins in coarse shelly Ham limestone. The west end is original, with a central buttress and two high slit windows, but the east end has been rebuilt in flint and a fine chalky limestone (clunch), probably in the C18/19, and perhaps shortening the barn by one bay. There is one original porch at the north-east and another wide entry on the north side, while the two opposing entrances have been modified and probably widened from their primary form (most probably pedestrian doors). The present roof covering is of corrugated iron.

The original roof: The low external buttresses make 7 bays that do not correspond with the 10 bays of the internal aisled timber structure. Evidence for the primary roof is to be found on the interior (Photo 14), where the flint walls are offset at a height of about 2 m, above which and there are a series of blocked tapering sockets that probably housed the feet of cruck trusses. In one instance (the east side of the north-east porch) there is a large timber pad which may represent a surviving original footing for a cruck (Photo 12). Elsewhere, blocks of chalky limestone and flint rubble have filled the sockets for timber pads and cruck feet, whereas the ashlar plinths for the crucks on either side of the porches are of Ham limestone, of one build with the external buttresses.

The aisled roof: The cruck roof was replaced with an aisled timber construction of post-medieval type. Large posts (one at least of oak) stand on pad stones of Ham limestone and carry the arcade plate and tie beams, but without jowls; the posts are square in section, but have sapwood edges, occasionally waney, and in one instance bark is still present. Aisle ties are dovetailed over single wallplates and tenoned into the aisle posts with housed and diminished shoulders, and have a single brace from the aisle tie to the principal rafter (which is also tenoned into the post). Horizontal spacing pieces are tenoned between the principal posts just below the level of the aisle ties; there are mortices for such a spacing piece on the west side of Truss 1, but not on the east side of Truss 10, although this is the end which may have been truncated. The tie beams are of nearly square section and slightly cambered, and carry two queen struts to the principal rafters, which are joined by a single collar and tenoned at the apex (there is no ridge piece). The aisle posts are braced to the arcade plate and tie beams, the former being straight and the latter curved or elbowed, but all are of substantial scantling and rectangular in section but not thin planks of medieval form.

The arcade plate is scarfed in most bays with a double bridled joint suggesting erection from west to east. The posts and trusses are all faced, though not in the same direction, i.e. the members are all flush on the side that was laid on the ground at the prefabrication stage (see table).

There are three purlins: one in the aisle, and two above the tie beam; they are of substantial scantling, and are butt-jointed into the principal rafters, in one instance at least with a central tenon and diminished haunch above. The upper rafters run from the apex to the second purlin, into which they are pegged, and are each pegged to the back of the upper purlin; the lower rafters are tenoned into the second purlin and rest on the arcade plate. They are square in section and straight, but there are irregular numbers in each bay (see table).

The north-east porch has a simple roof (Photo 10) and no external arch, but

only a timber lintel (continuous with the wall plate) above the ashlar door jambs, similar to that in the north-west door; there is no evidence that there was originally any other arrangement in either instance.

Carpenters' marks on the aisle ties and braces occur in the form of long scribed Roman numerals run west to east from 1-VIII (Trusses 1 & 10 having no visible number), those on the south side having an additional signature stroke (see table). This confirms the evidence of the arcade plate scarfing that the barn aisles were built from west to east.

Later features: The western bay has evidence of having been staged at tie beam level, and there is a single tie on the end wall which may be reused (perhaps a cruck?). The aisle posts in the central section have iron staples and chains at low level, as if for tying up cows for milking. The east wall has a door and window above, both with brick jambs, probably contemporary with the rebuilt wall. The two openings in the south wall have been widened, the western one with an inserted concrete door frame and the eastern one with an irregular opening of brick and chalk limestone blocks.

Date

The stone walls and buttresses offer little evidence for date, and do not, for example, correspond with the type of buttresses used in the church, which was largely rebuilt in the 15th century. A date of around 1400 would seem likely, and corresponds with the cruck barns built elsewhere about then. The aisled construction is of post-medieval appearance, design and detail, though not of very late date, and would fit very well with the inscribed date of 1590 recorded by Hutchins.

Condition

The present roof appears to be reasonably waterproof. There has previously been water ingress on the south side, causing some failure in roof members, but this appears to have been arrested. Some of the aisle ties have failed by outward movement (?of the walls) and fallen free of the aisle posts, but there are only a few local instances of other failures of joints (e.g. plate scarfs). Most of the structural timbers are very substantial and appear to be in good condition (including most of the rafters), and there has been very little longitudinal movement of the trusses. The bases of some aisle posts have been replaced in recent years. Moss growth on the buttresses of the north front suggests a need for better throw-off of water from the roof on that side. Unless any of the roof members remain damp there appears to be little cause for concern, and only a minimal number of conservative repairs are called for.

Julian Munby, 5 August 1992
Oxford Archaeological Unit

References

- Dugdale ed. Caley, *Monasticon*, ii.344-54.
 Hutchins, *History of Dorset*, 3rd edn. iv.500.
 RCHM Inventory *West Dorset* (1952), 233.

Measured Survey Drawings

Surveyed by R. Tyler, October 1991.

- * Plan, scale 1:20
- * Section and elevation of Truss 5 from west, scale 1:20
- * Longitudinal elevation of north side, scale 1:20
- * Details of joint construction, scale 1:10
- * Hypothetical reconstruction of original cruck construction.

Photographs of Tithe Barn

Taken by David Stevens, Ramsbury Photographic Services, April 1992.
 Negatives retained: reference no. SYDLINGTB 92/0401.

External:

1. West gable wall.
2. East gable wall, south end.
3. North east porch, north elevation.
4. North east porch, west elevation from north west porch.
5. General view from north-north east.
6. East gable wall (including north east porch).
7. North wall, west end (including north west porch).
8. South wall, west end (including south west door).
9. South wall, east end (including south east door).

Internal:

10. Roof of north east porch, looking north.
11. Detail of former cruck base-pad on east side of north east porch.
12. East wall.
13. North side, aisle walls between east and west porches.
14. North side, ditto, former cruck base opposite buttress.
15. General view of roof, looking west from north east porch.
16. South west door.
17. General view of barn, looking west from east end.
18. West wall, showing possible reused cruck.
19. Vertical view of roof in bay 4 (west doors are in bay 5).
20. Detail of post and tie junction, truss 5, south side, looking south east.

BAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rafters	3	6	4	4	9	6	6	6	9	5
					(Door)				(Door)	(+1)

Table 1: Bay widths (number of rafters)

TRUSS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Facing	W	W	E	E	W	W	E	E	W	E
Marks	-	I	II	III	IIII	V	VI	VII	VIII	-

Table 2: Truss features (Facing direction and Carpenters' Marks)

*NB. Bay 1 is followed by Truss 1, etc; the doors occurring between trusses 4 & 5 and 8 & 9.
There is one common rafter between Truss 10 and the east wall.*

B.

RECORD CARD FOR SECULAR MONUMENTS.

4

3

(N.B.—Detail of special interest is to be entered here, but described fully on a separate card.)

1. Name and situation of Monument (with owner's Name and Address).

BARN at Court Farm.

50 yards SE. of church.

2. General appearance: (a) No. of storeys.

(b) Building materials.

(c) Roofs.

flint and freestone dressings
thatch and corrugated iron.

3. Historical development (with dates and small sketch plan).

According to Hutchins there is cut in a beam in the barn the inscription L.V.W. 1590, said to be for Lady Ursula Walsingham, the barn having been built for Sir Francis Walsingham. The E. wall is of later date; the barn must formerly have been longer than it is now. The S. porch is a modern addition or rebuilding.

4. Special features (if any).

5. Elevations: (Beginning with the main front, and mentioning, in the following order:—(a) Walls; (b) Gables; (c) Doors; (d) Windows; (e) Chimneys; (f) Rainwater heads and pipes.)

N. Elevation is in 7 bays with knapped flint walling and rough ashlar buttresses. The buttresses generally are of 2 stages but the second from the W. end is of one only and the 5th has been destroyed. The whole of the 3rd bay from the W is taken up by a doorway, and the 6th by a projecting porch flanked by single-stage buttresses; the porch has a hipped roof. There are no buttresses E of the porch and at the E end the wall finishes with a brick quoin. The lower part of the roof is of iron. The porch^{roof} upper part of the main roof, thatch.

S. Elevation. To the W are 4 bays divided by 2 stage buttresses with a doorway in the 3rd bay; its wooden lintel is in bad condition. The middle part of this side is concealed by later sheds. Opposite the N. porch is a smaller modern porch on the S. side. The lower part of the roof is of iron, the upper part thatch.

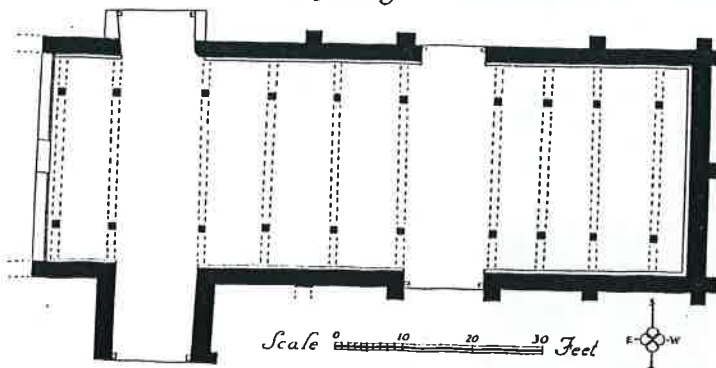
W. end. has 3 two-stage buttresses, that in the middle being higher than the others. The end is gabled, and in the upper part of the gable are 2 loop lights.

E. end. The wall is of later date than the rest. It is of flint and stone with brick dressings.

6. Grounds: (a) Gard

TITHE BARN at Sydling St. Nicholas

SY



Scale 0 10 20 30 Feet



P.T.O.

County.

Dorset

Parish.

Sydling

St Nicholas.

Sub-Commission.

No. of Monument.

7. Interior : (Disposition of rooms, if original, giving fittings as they occur (see list), beginning with the ground floor, following with the basement, and working up to the attics; staircases in the same manner.)

Fittings :

(Reminder list).

(1) Ceilings.

(2) Cupboards (fixed).

(3) Doors and Overdoors.

(4) Fireplaces and Mantel-pieces.

(5) Glass.

(6) Paintings.

(7) Panelling.

(8) Parquetry and floors

(9) Plasterwork on internal walls.

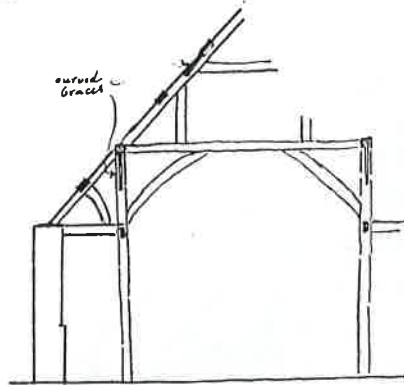
(10) Roofs and beams (internal).

(11) Screens.

(12) Tapestries.

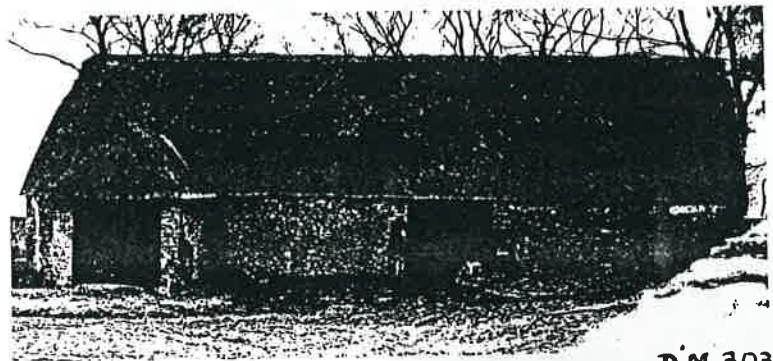
(13) Miscellanea (e.g., carving, ironwork, locks, &c.).

The barn has 10 roof trusses carried on square posts, freestanding, forming aisles. At eave level ties run from these posts to the walls, and longitudinal ties from post to post. Curved braces spring from the posts to the main tie beams and purlins. Above the main tie beams are queen posts and collars, and curved braces from principal rafters to the upper purlins.



One of the beams is said to be inscribed LVW 1590. v-sup.

The internal joints to the S. porch are in bad condition. The roof appears quite sound.



D.M. 303.

8. Condition : Moderate .

9. Visited by (with dates) : R.W.M^c . G.E.C.

10. Bibliography : Hutchins History of Dorset.

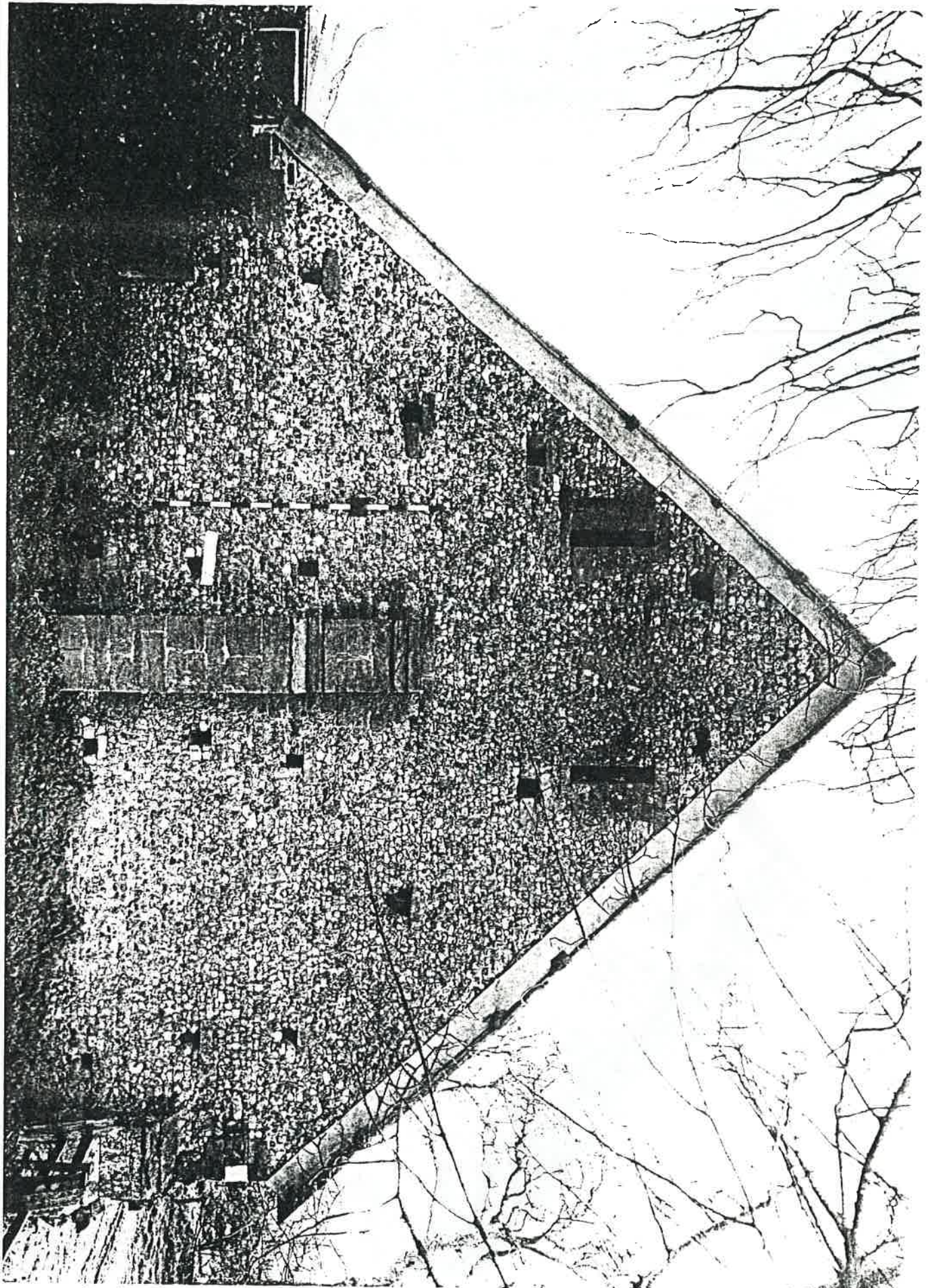
11. No. of Ordnance Sheet (6-in.) . XXX SE

12. Signature of Investigator. R.W. de D'Orwell

June 1939



D.M. 302.



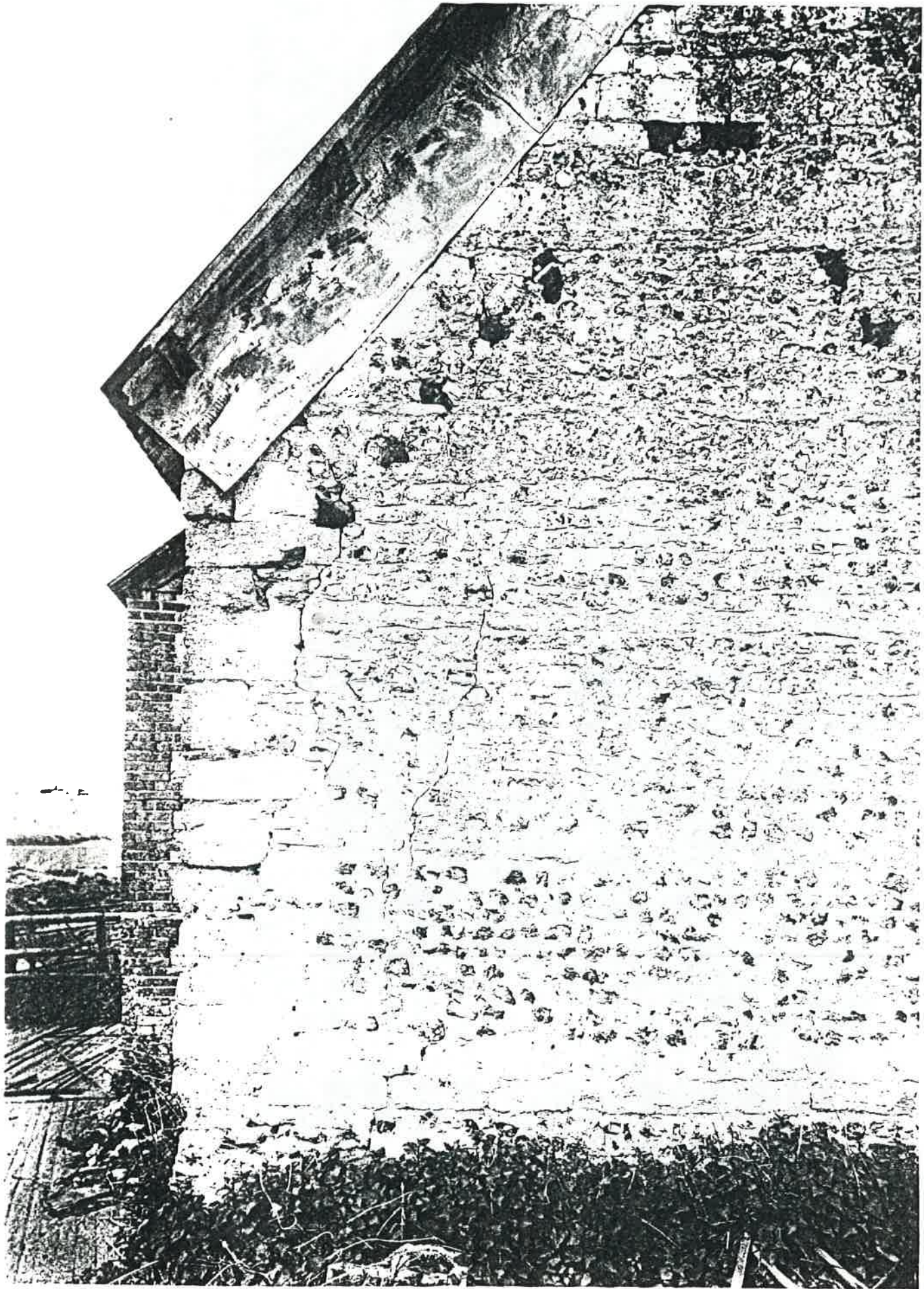
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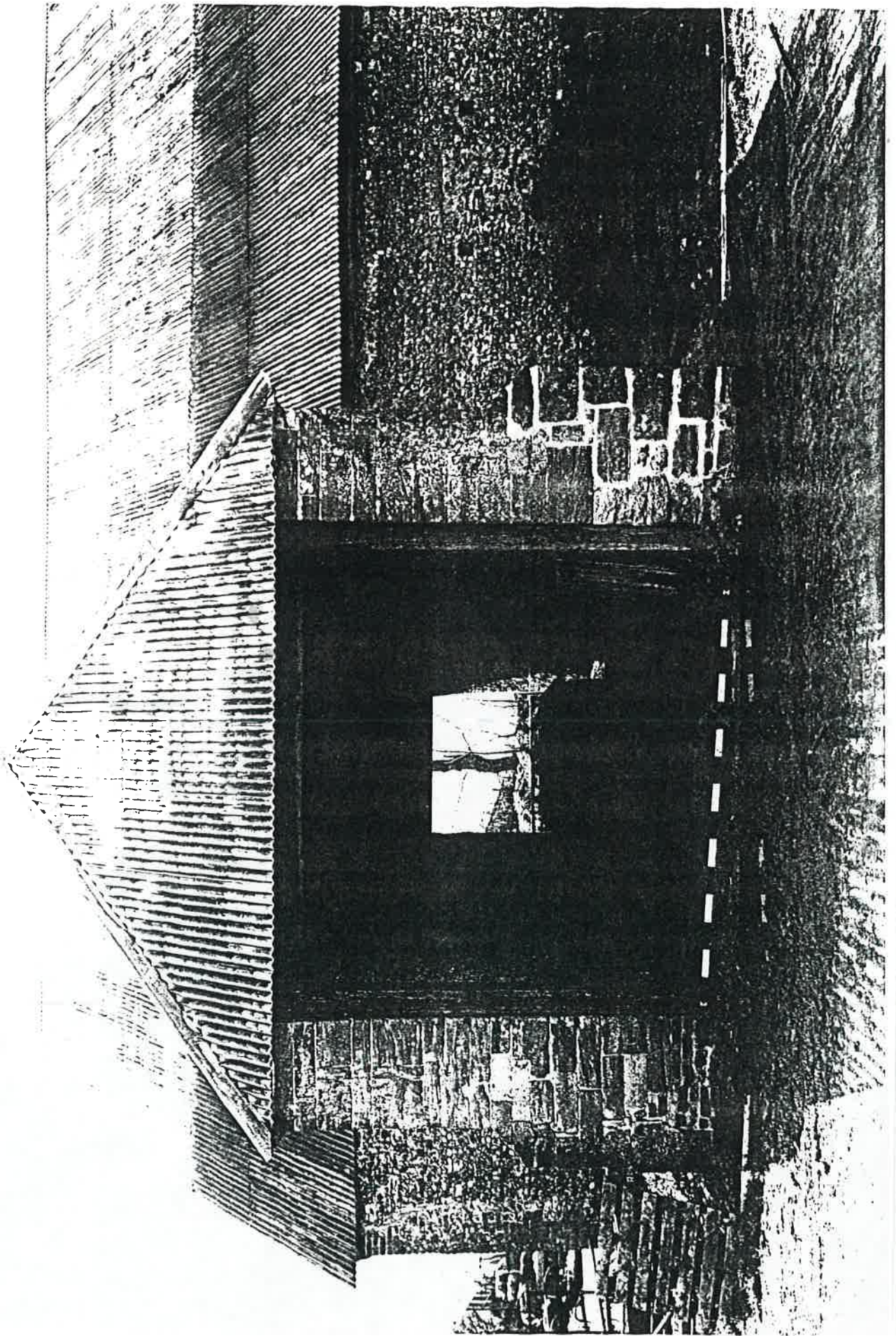
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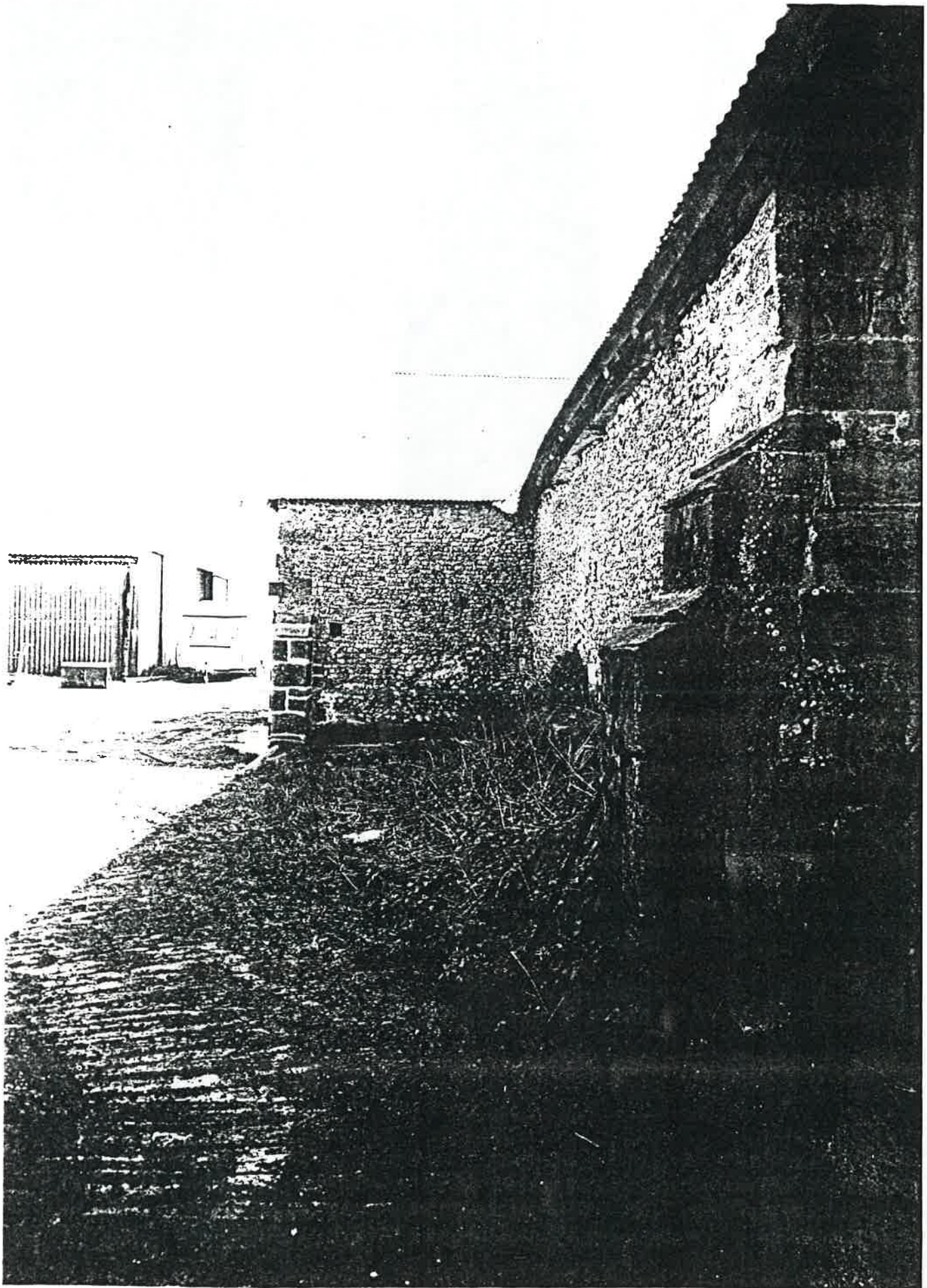
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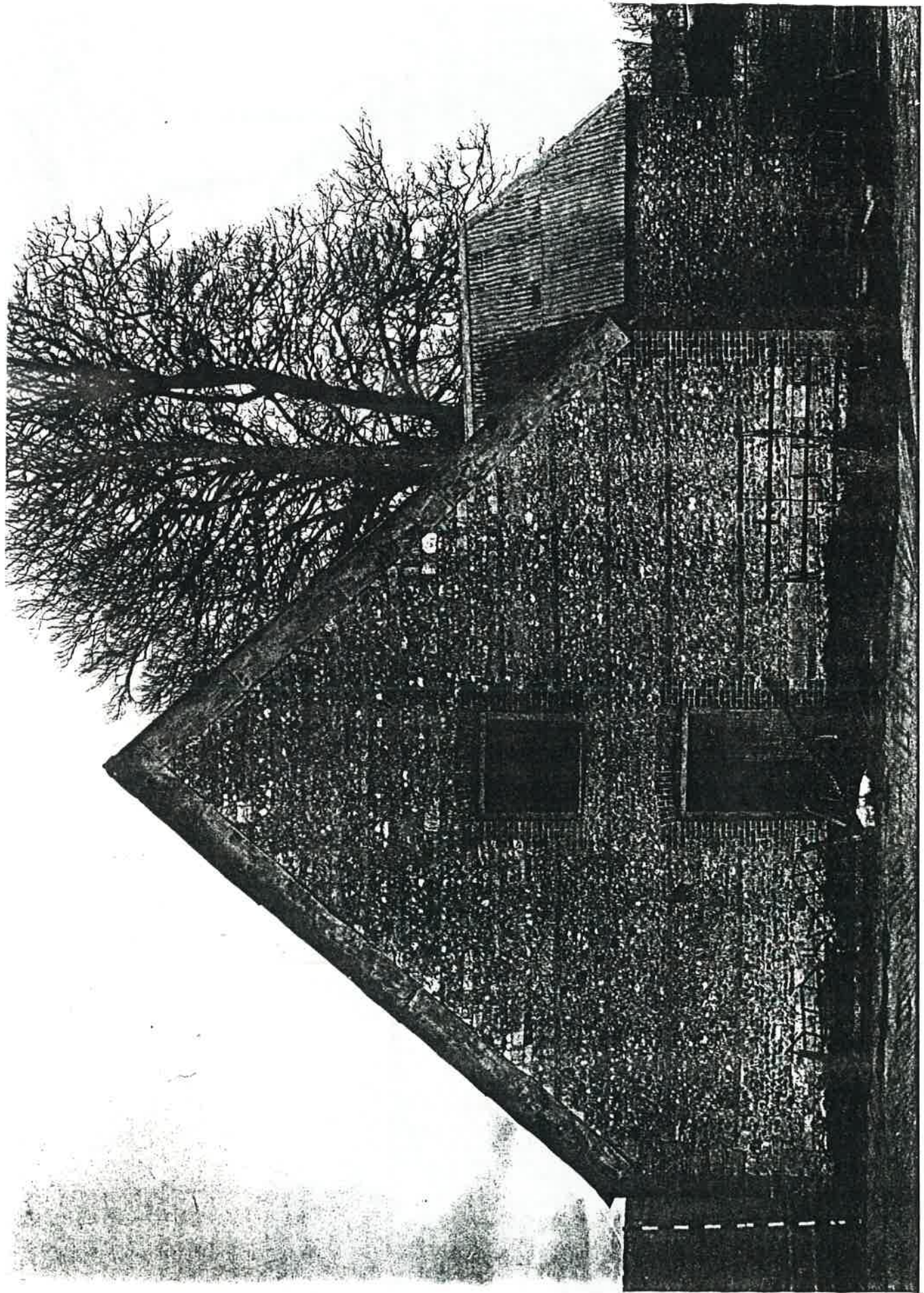
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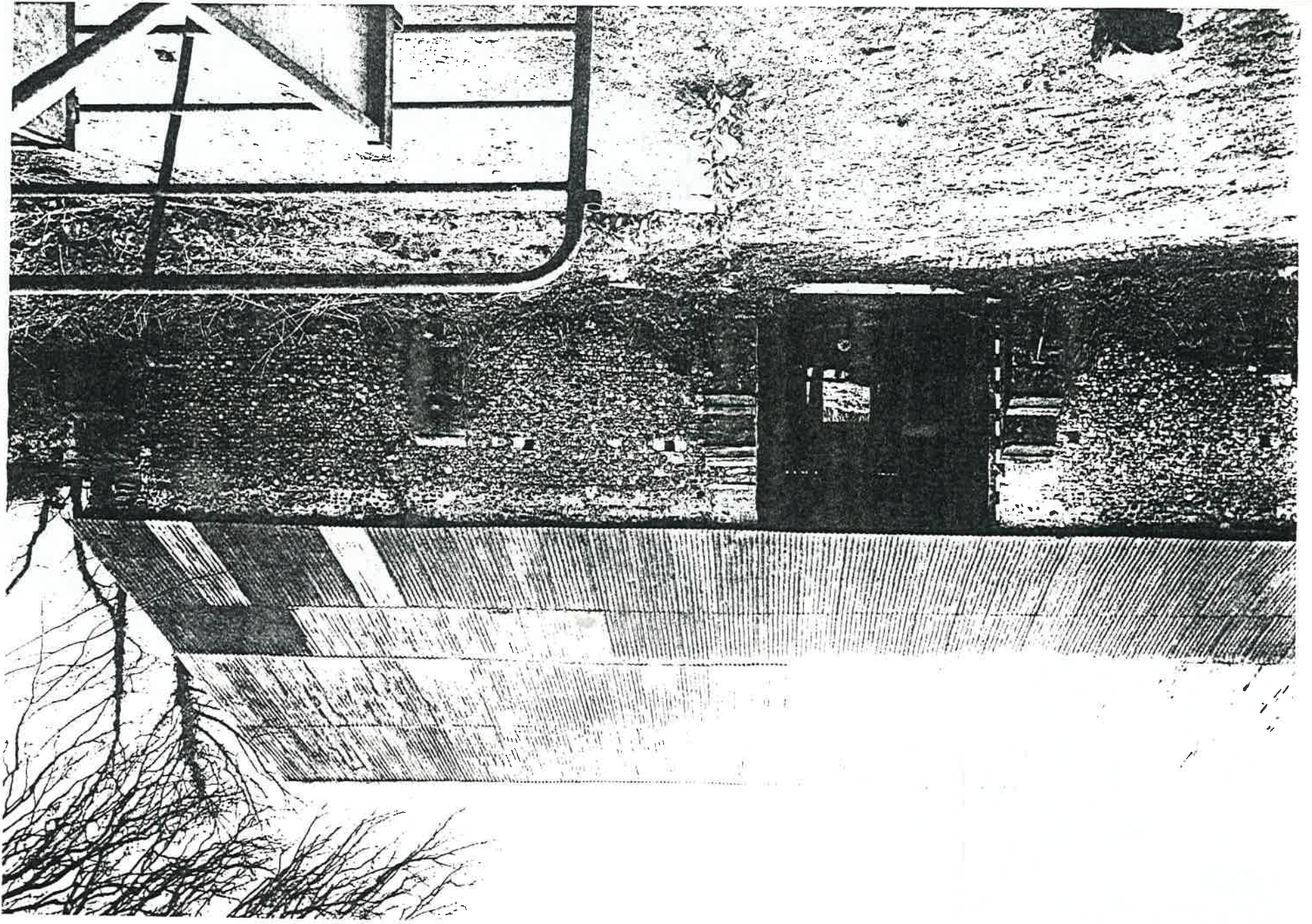




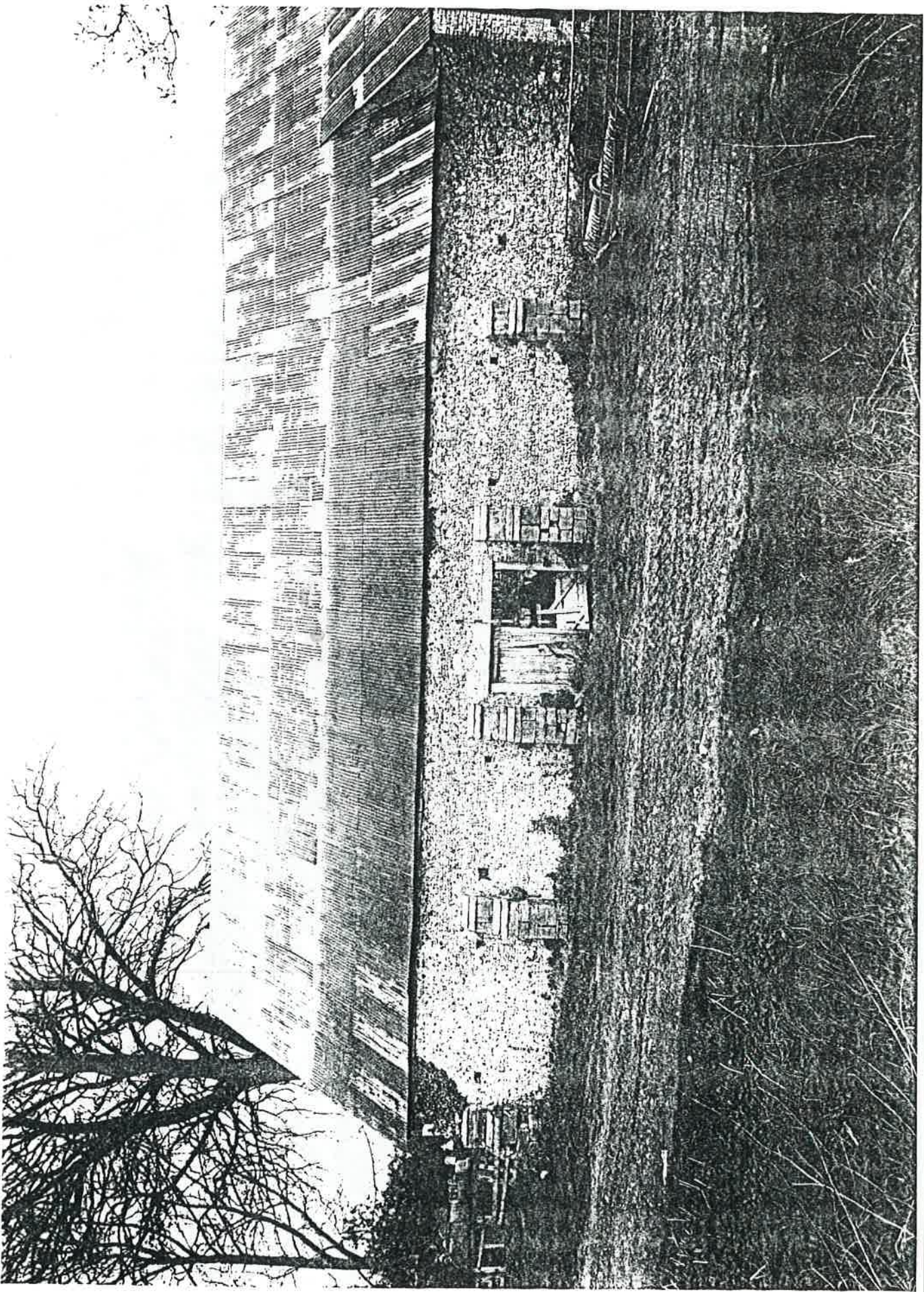


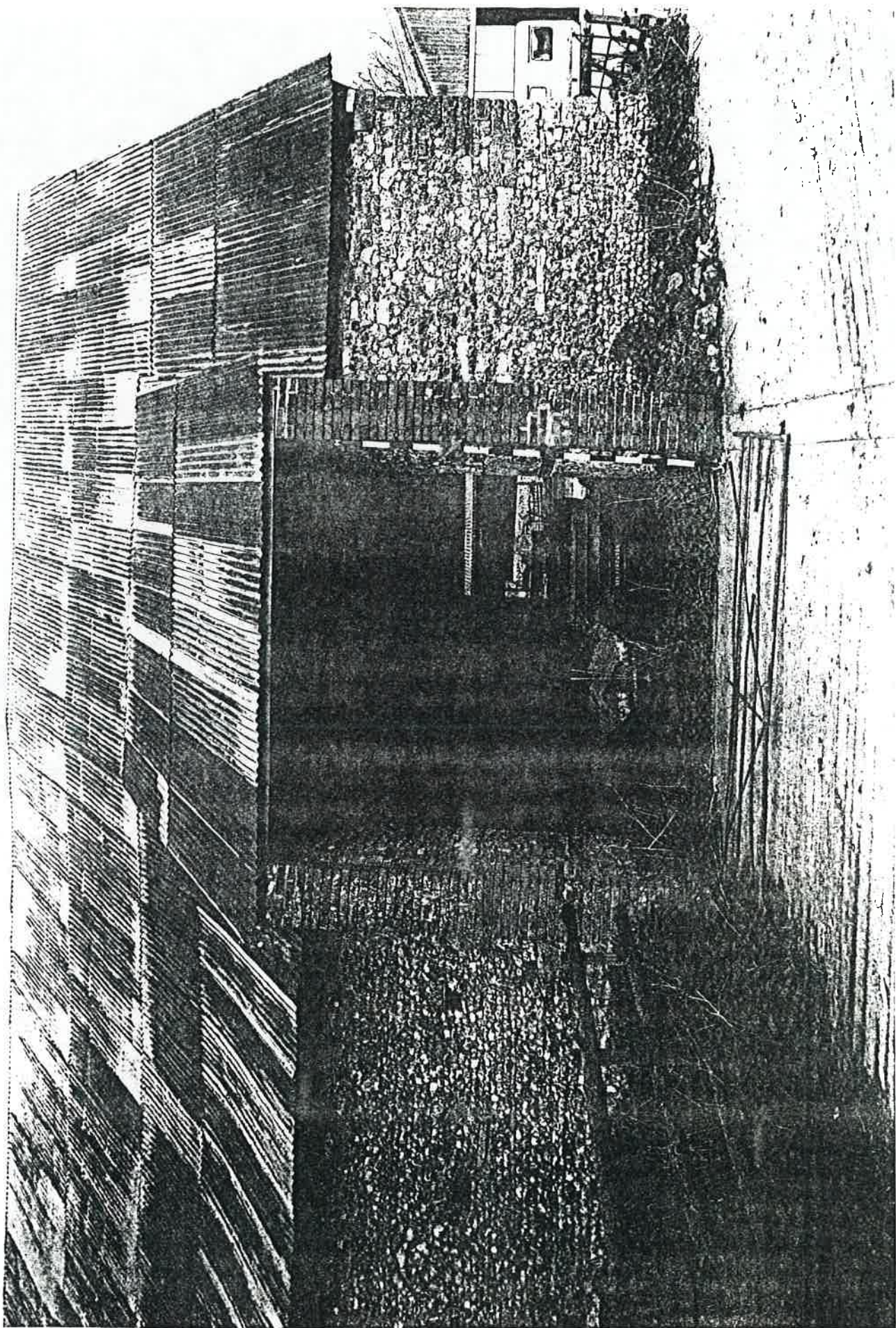


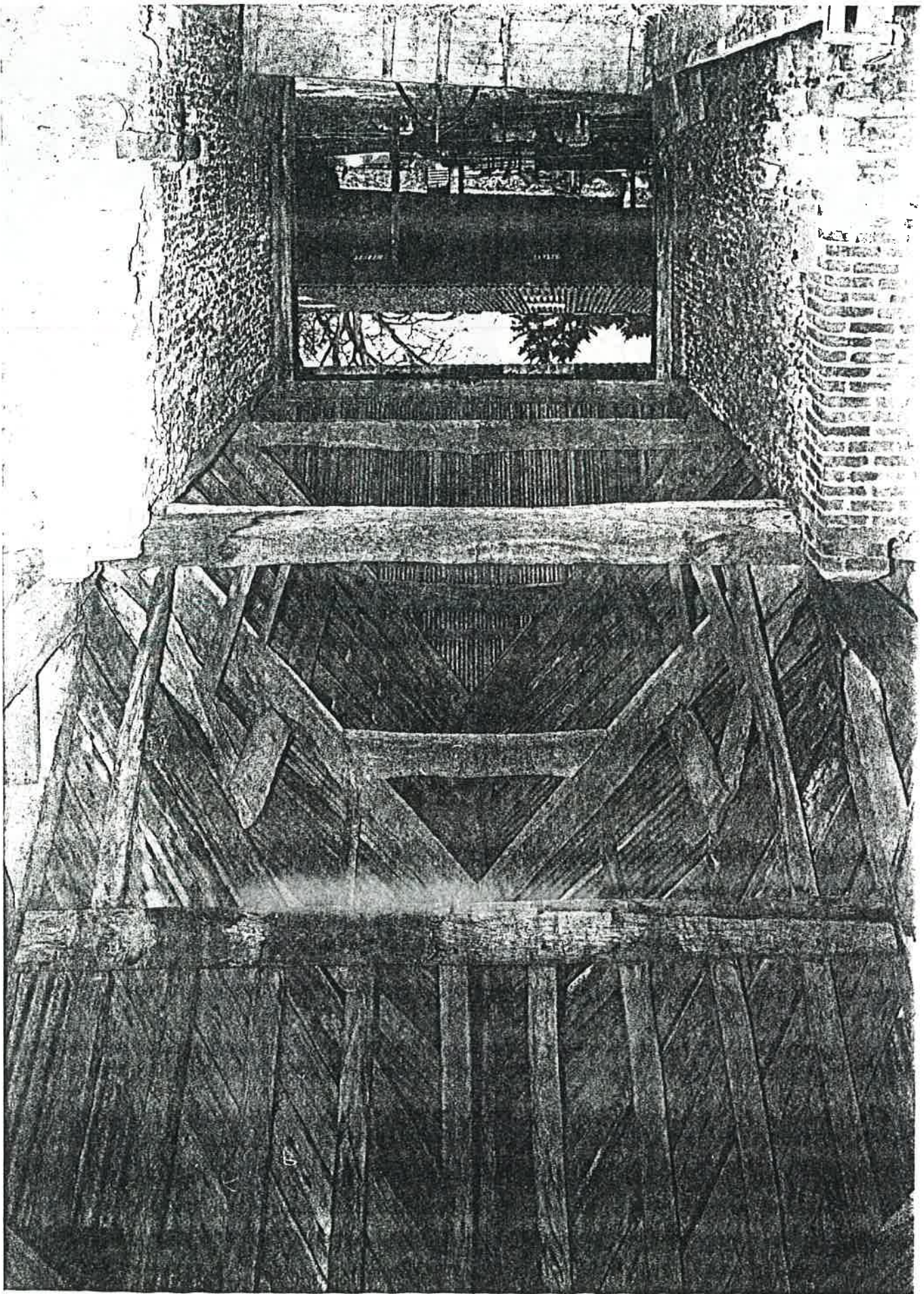
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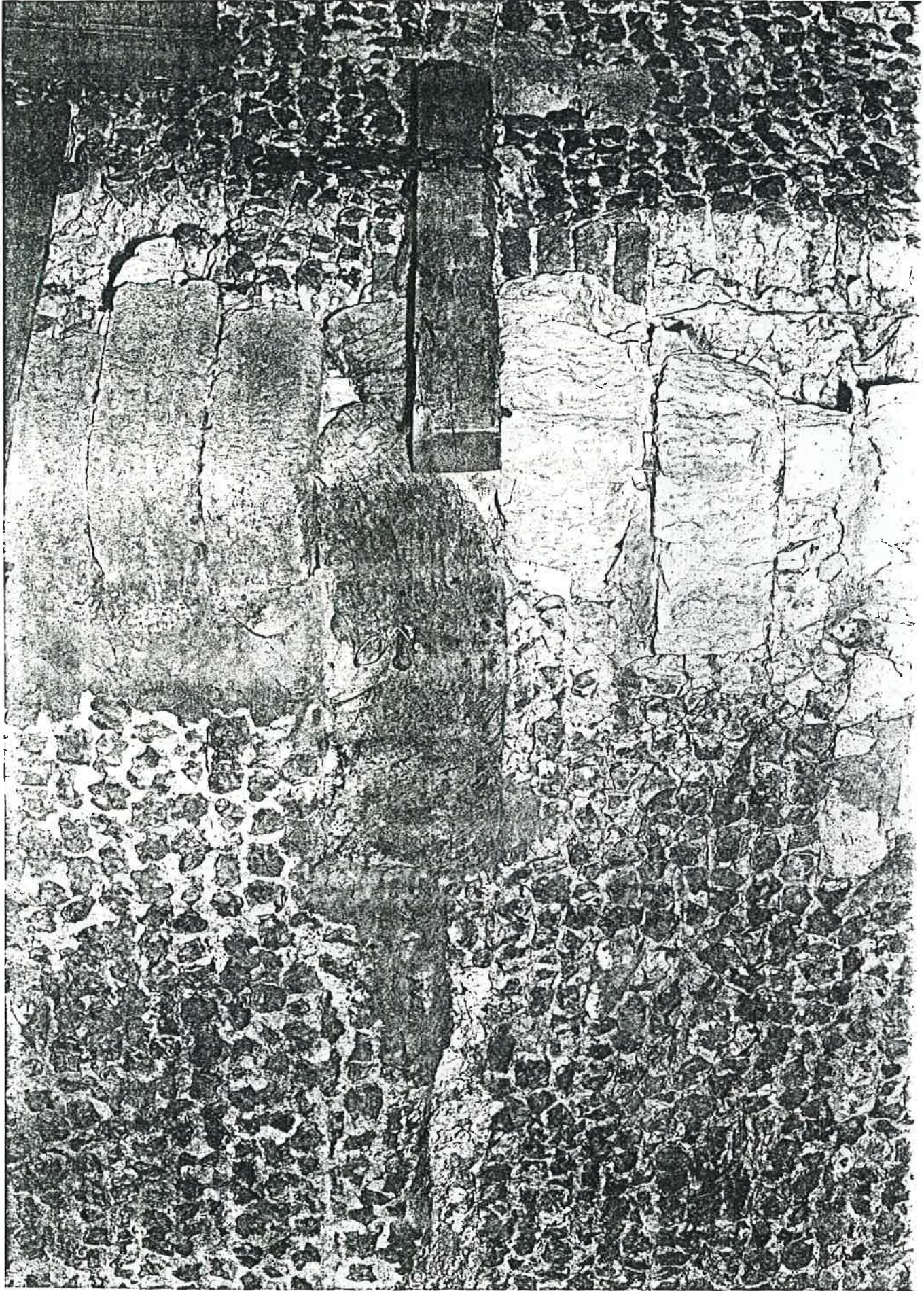


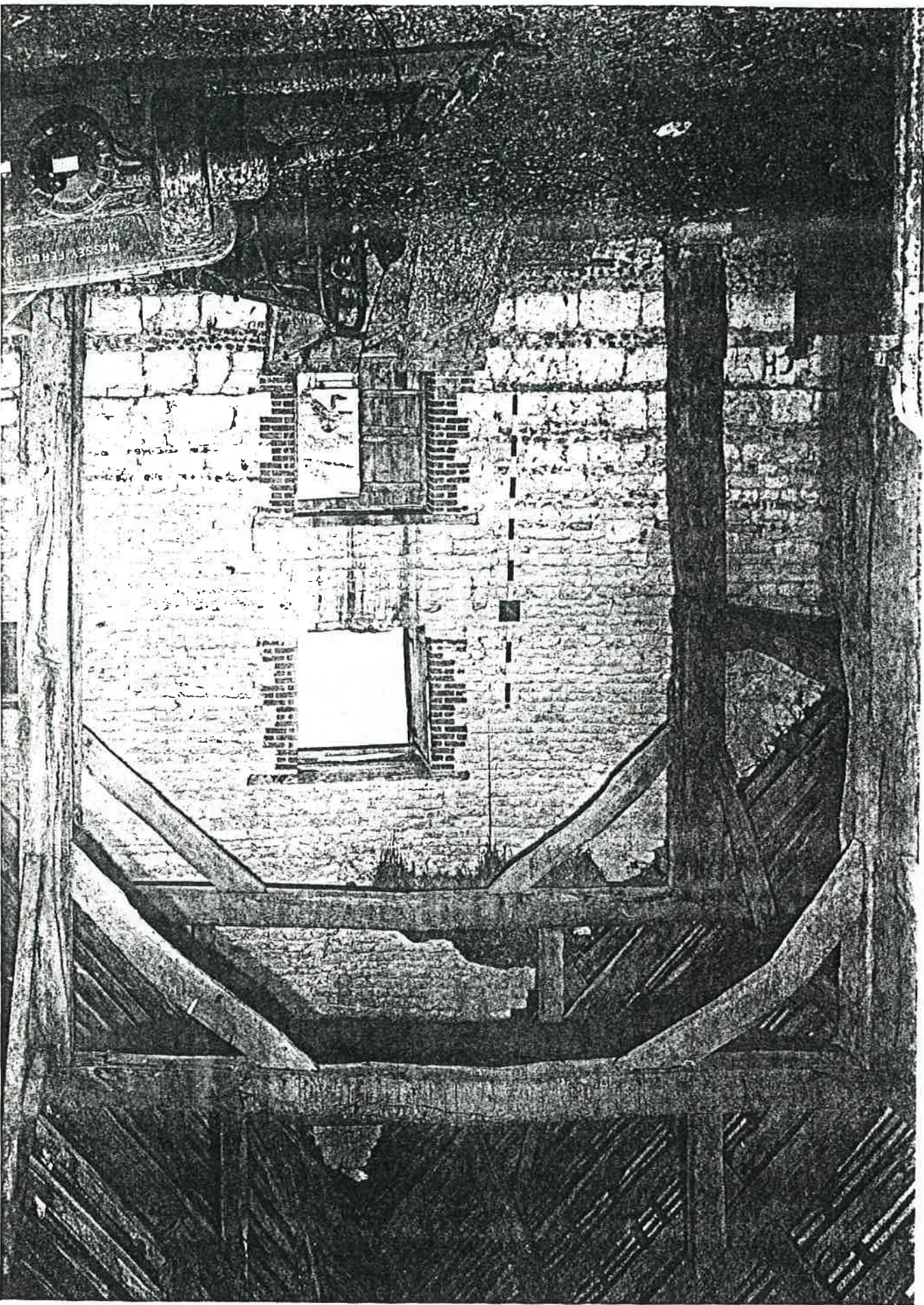
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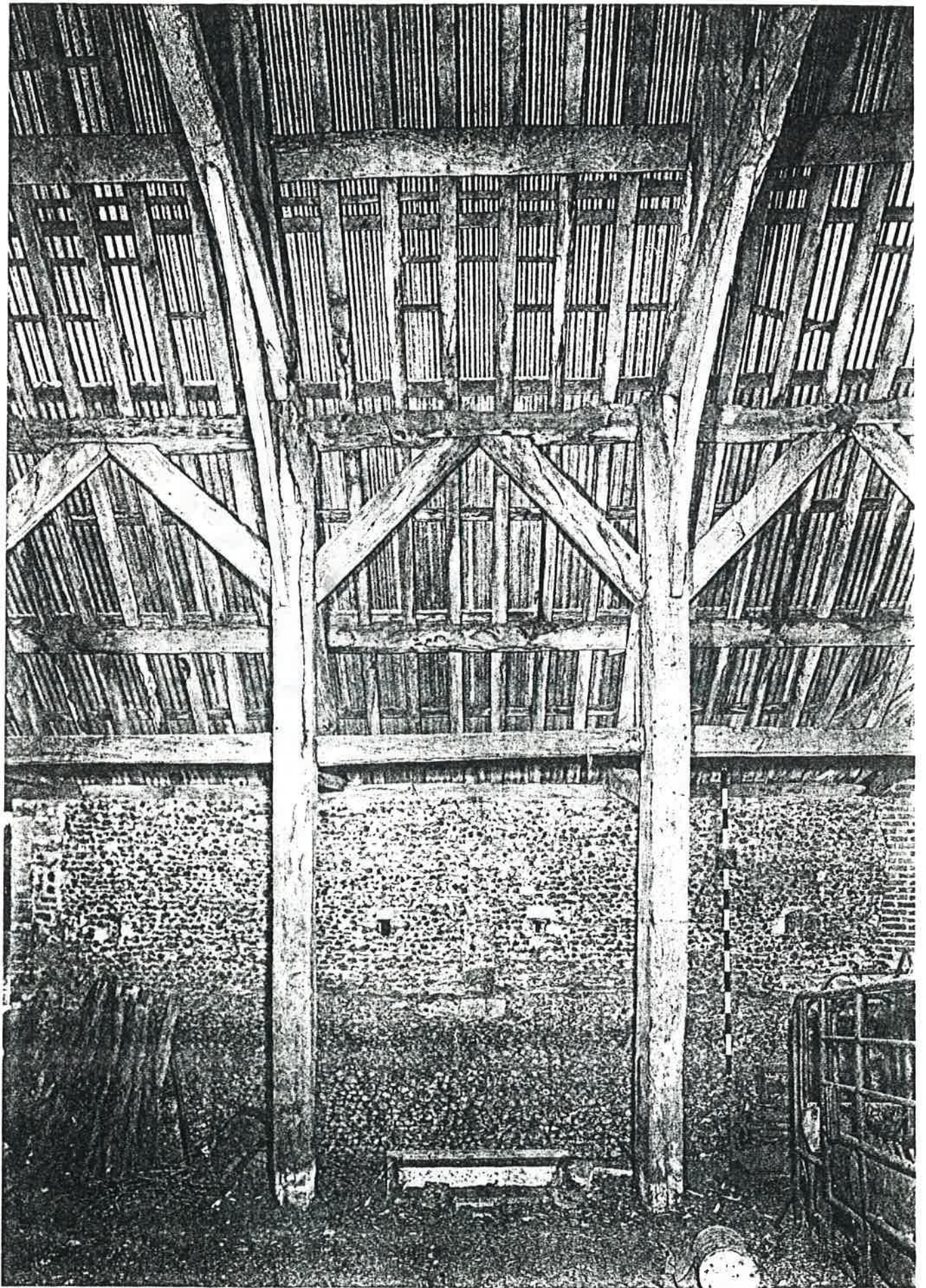






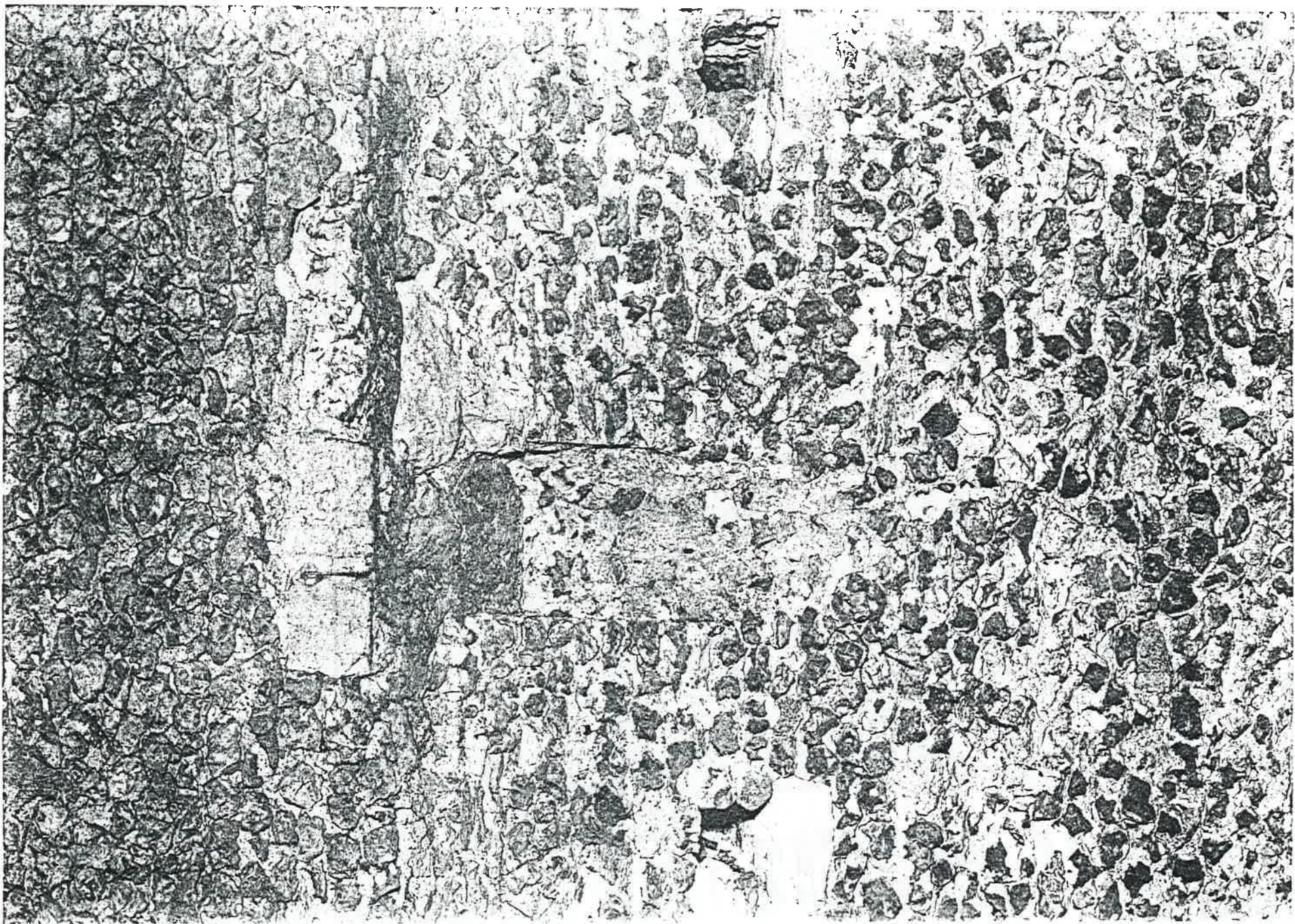


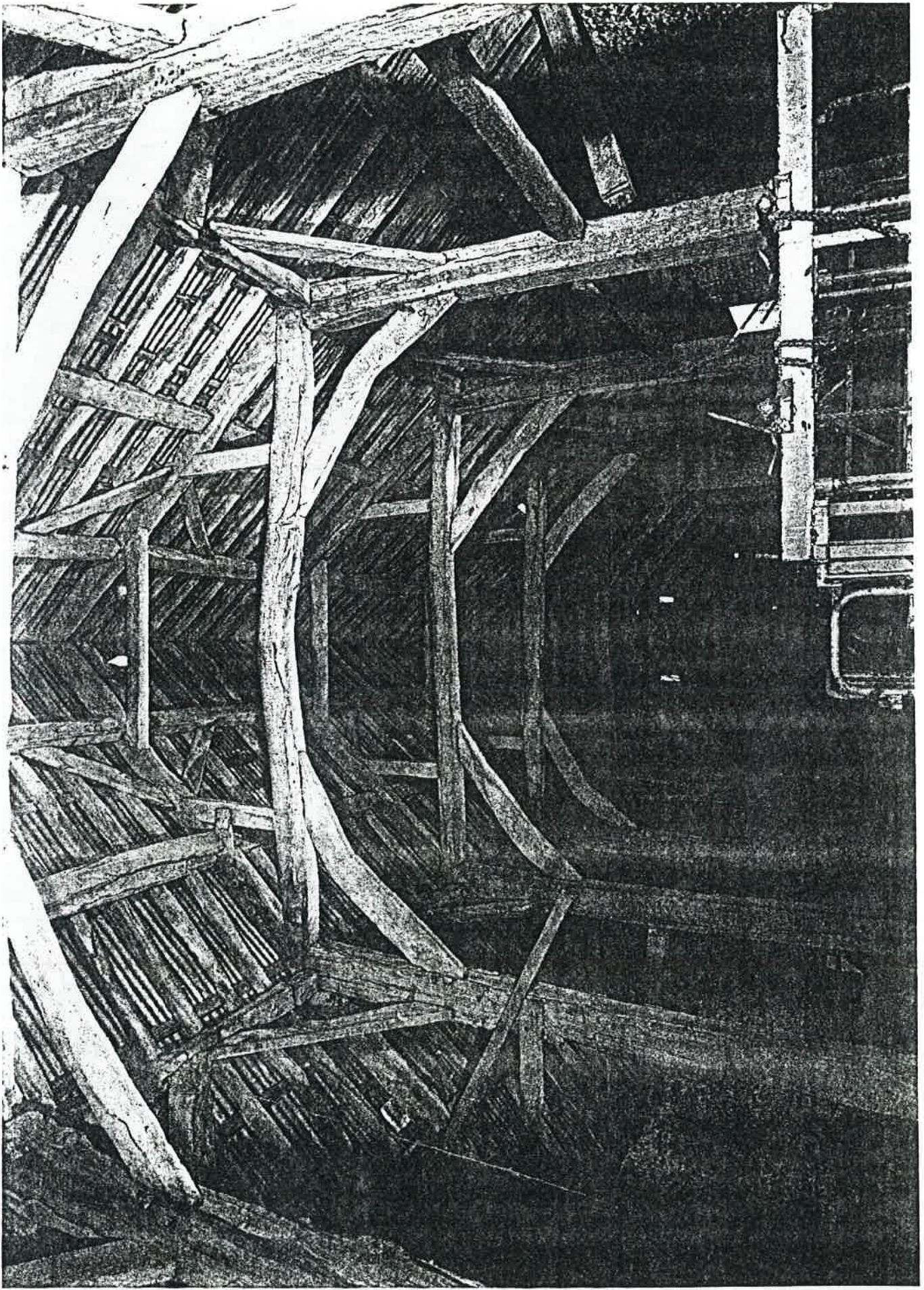


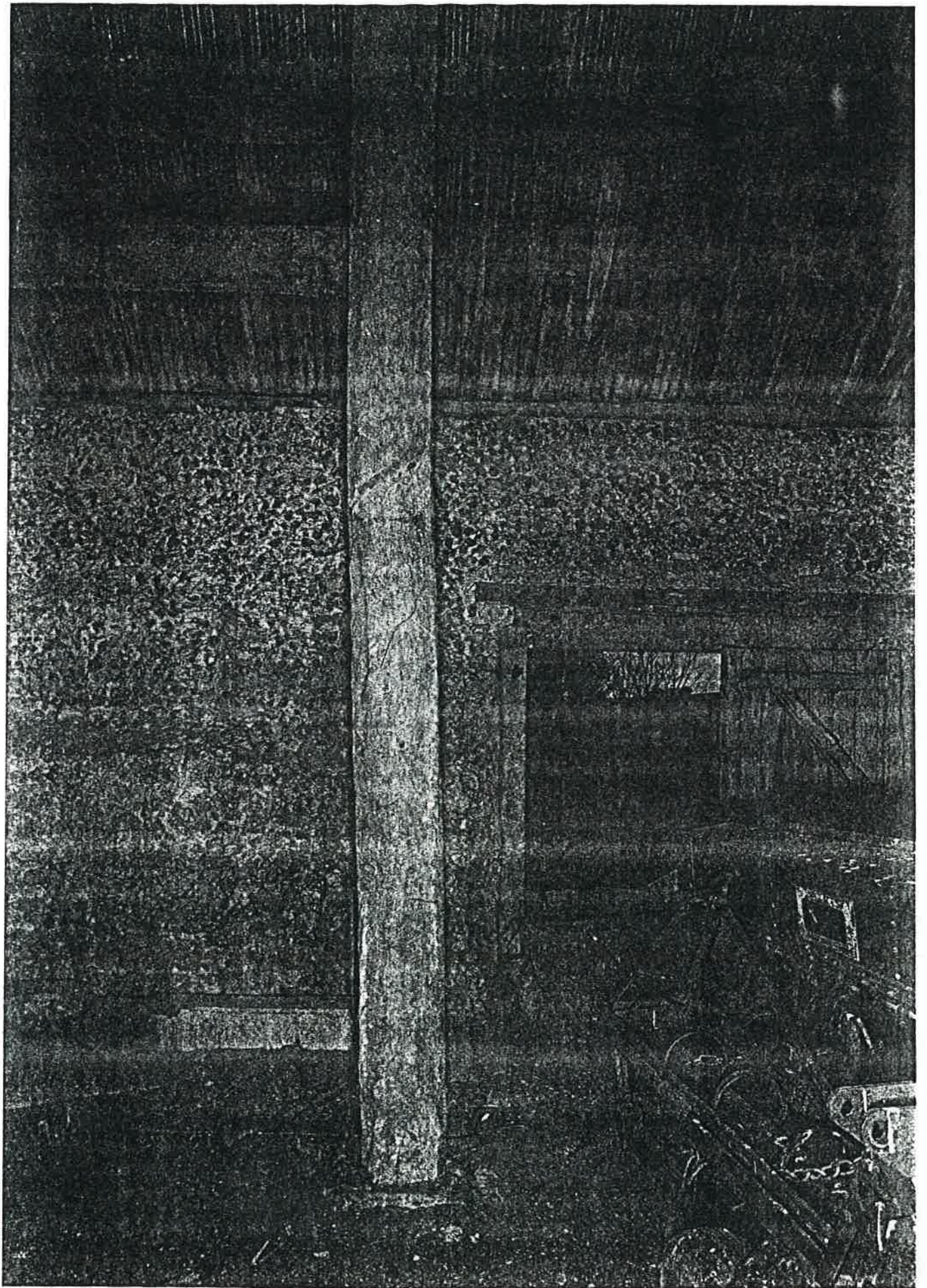


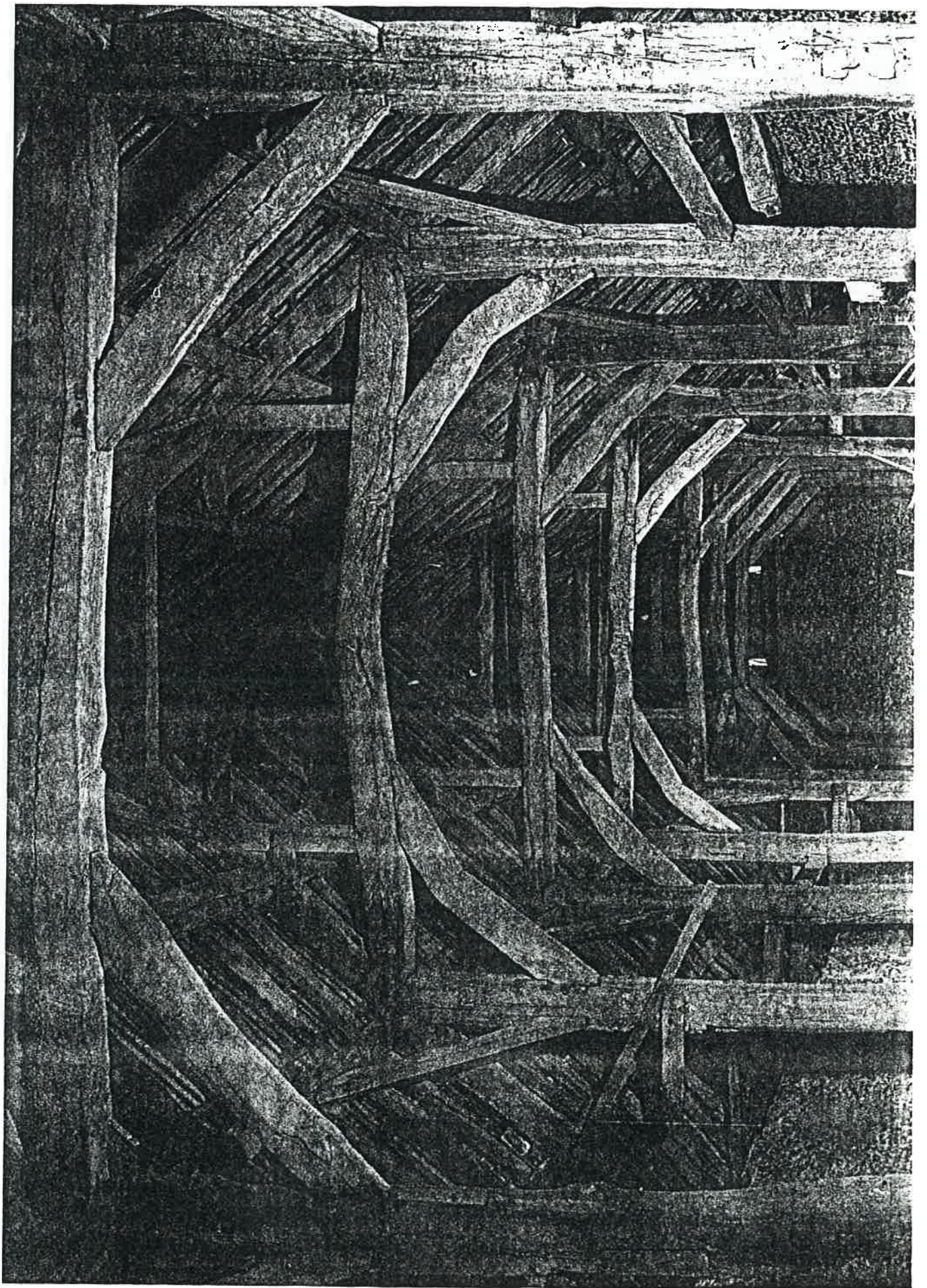
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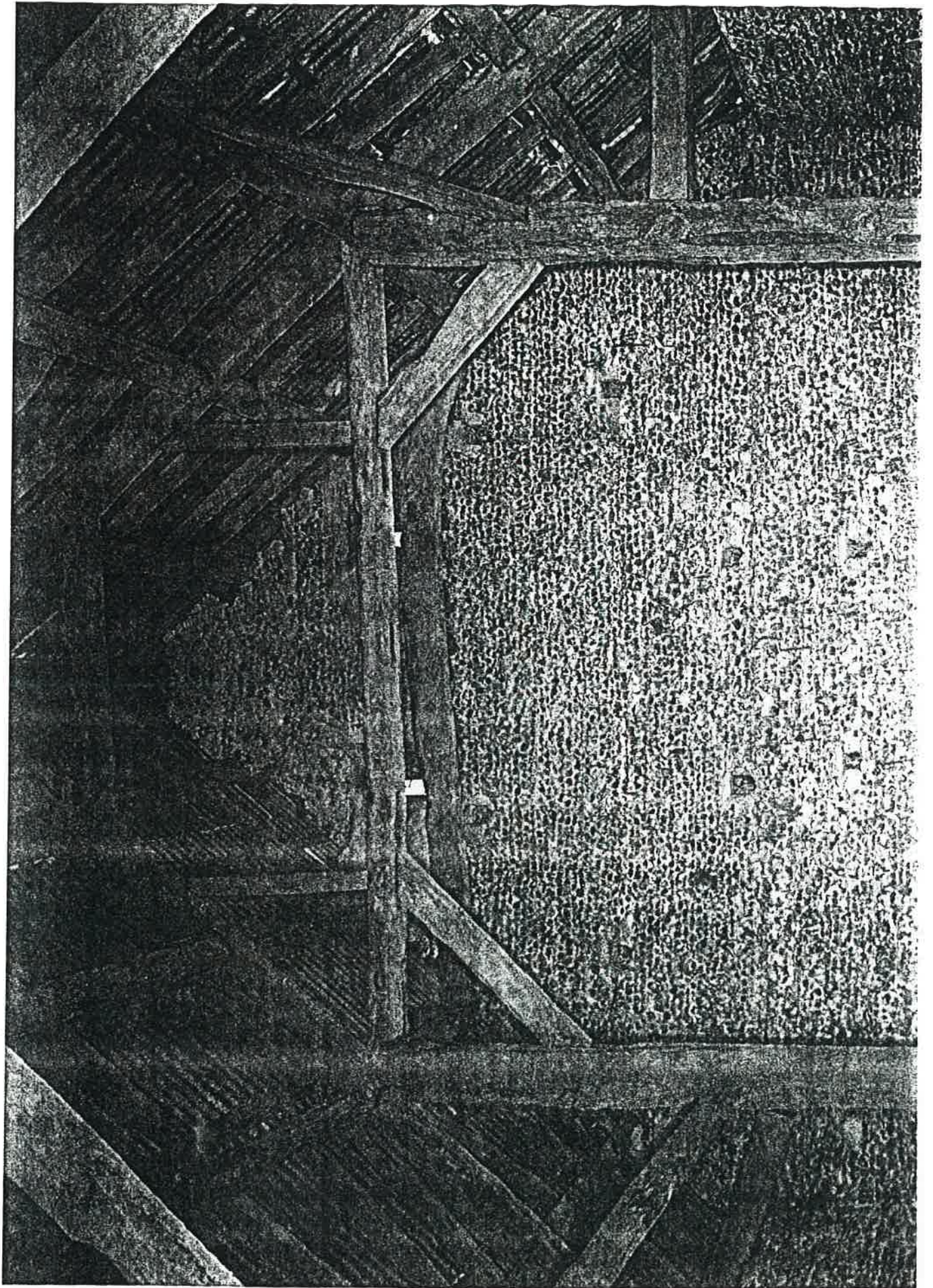
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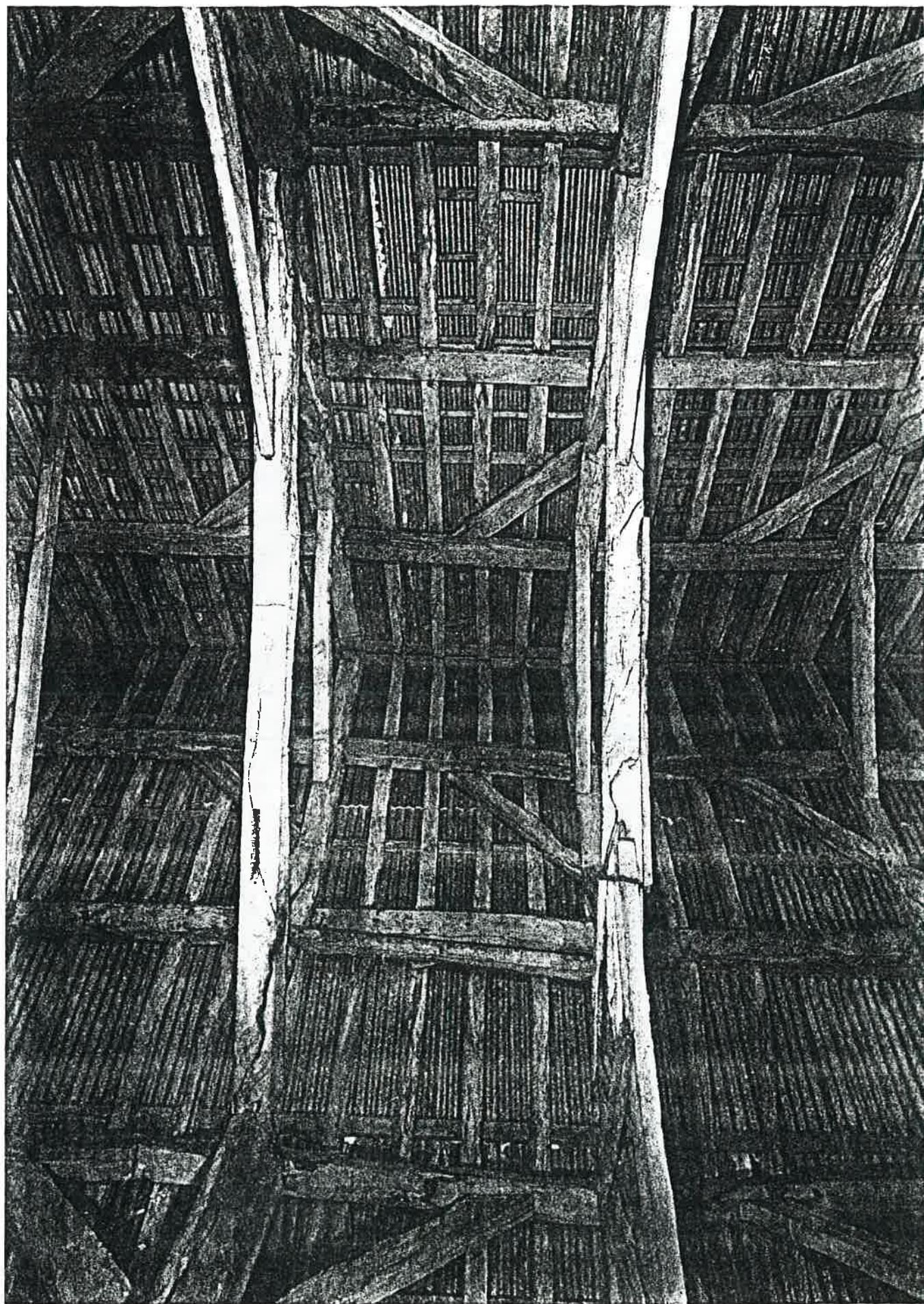


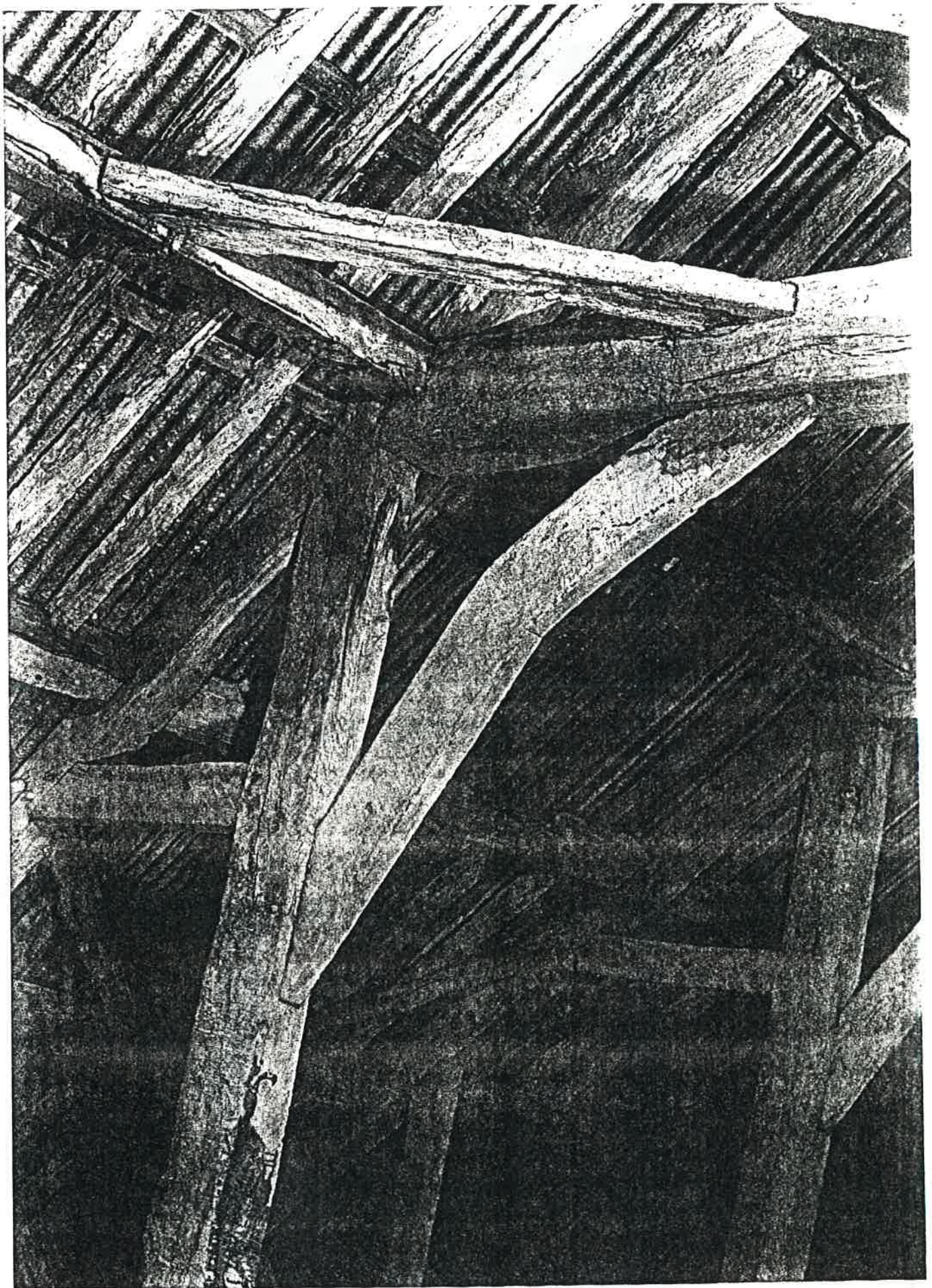


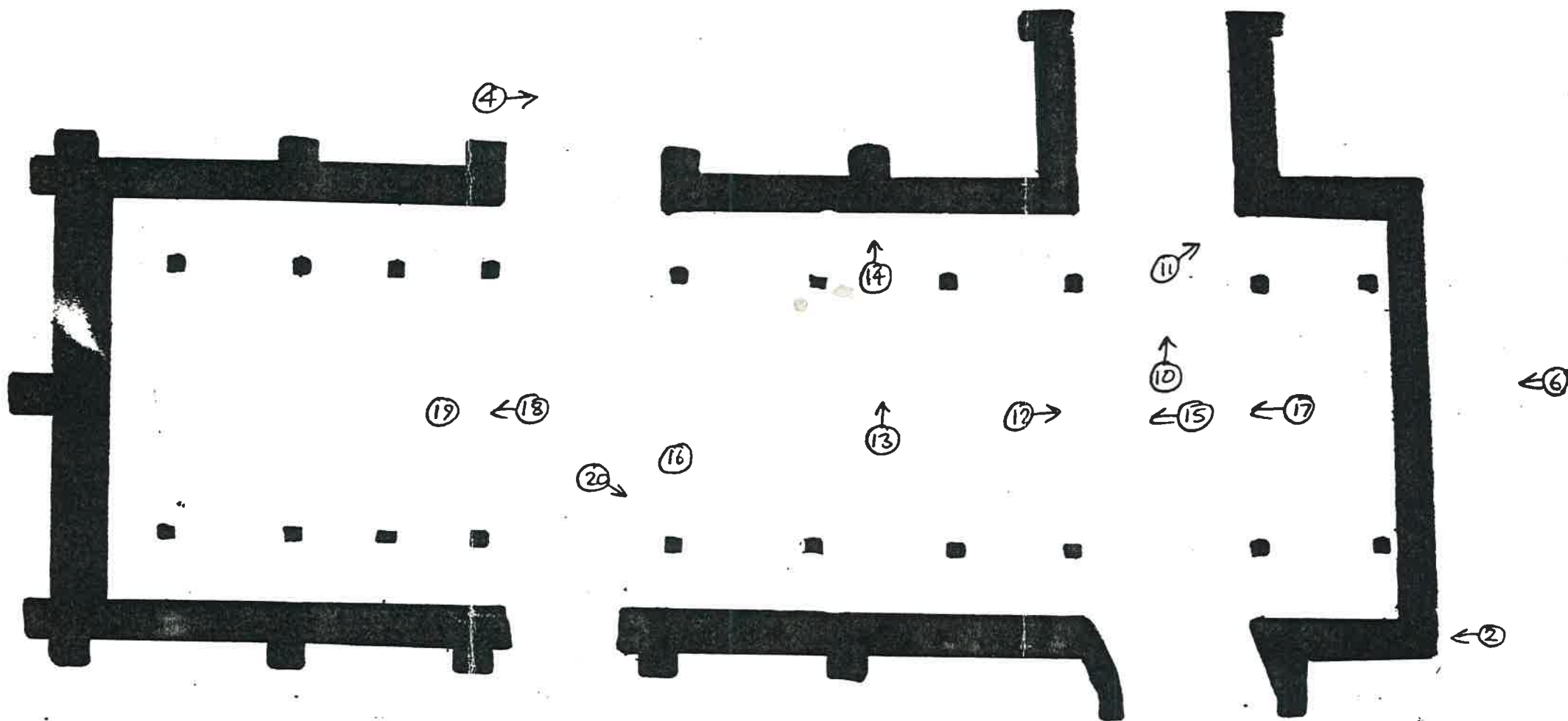












SYDLING ST NICHOLAS
TYTHE BARN

OAU/RPS

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD APRIL 1992 DAVID STEVENS





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