

# Rofford Hall Chalgrove Oxfordshire



**Historic Building Investigation  
and Recording**



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Rofford Hall, Chalgrove, Oxfordshire

*Historic Building Investigation and Recording*

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**Table of Contents**

<b>SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Background.....	4
1.2 Aims and objectives.....	4
1.3 Methodology.....	5
1.4 Current development.....	5
<b>2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3 SUMMARY OF PHASING.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4 EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	6
4.2 North elevation.....	7
4.3 South elevation.....	8
4.4 East elevation.....	9
4.5 West elevation.....	9
<b>5 INTERNAL DESCRIPTION.....</b>	<b>10</b>
5.1 Ground floor.....	10
5.2 First floor.....	13
<b>6 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>17</b>

**List of Figures**

Fig. 1	Site location map
Fig. 2	Phasing plan
Fig. 3	First edition Ordnance Survey map (1872)
Fig. 4	Ground floor plan
Fig. 5	First floor plan
Fig. 6	Elevation of north wall



## Rofford Hall, Chalgrove, Oxfordshire

### *Summary*

*Oxford Archaeology (OA) has undertaken a programme of historic building recording and investigation at Rofford Hall near Chalgrove in Oxfordshire. The work was in advance of and during a programme of refurbishment and other works at the house.*

*The building is an attractive and interesting multi-phase structure in which the original building is a four-bay wide box-frame building of probable 17th-century date. Although this building is partially encased within later structures or obscured by secondary re-facings its timber frame remains at least partially intact. The primary timber-framed south front has been entirely replaced by a Georgian brick front and the original west wall has similarly largely been lost but the primary framing in the north and east walls substantially survives. Four of the five original trusses largely survive and are each slightly different versions of the same basic type. The trusses each retain evidence of former doorways within them showing that there was once an attic storey above the first floor. This is also confirmed by evidence of a former ceiling which extended up higher than the current (secondary) ceiling. Thus the first floor and attic storeys would have had very low floor to ceiling heights of c.1.7 m. Evidence suggests that the original house would have had a baffle entry, adjacent to the very large, surviving chimney stack.*

*The original house was extended in several phases, the main one of which was of probable late 18th- (or possibly early 19th-) century date. This taller structure extended the house to the west and enclosed the western end of the Phase I building. The Georgian extension would have made the house into quite a large farmhouse and several features suggest that it would have had some architectural pretension. Among these the clearest are the front door in the south elevation with cast-iron fanlight and the partially surviving staircase. The largest of the other extensions was of 20th-century date.*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by Mr J Mogford to undertake a programme of building investigation and recording at Rofford Hall, near Chalgrove in Oxfordshire (NGR: SU6250 9850). The recording relates to a programme of building works at the house which includes the demolition of some parts of the building, the construction of new extensions and a substantial internal renovation. Due to the historic nature of the house (listed Grade II) planning permission and listed building consent for the development was granted by South Oxfordshire District Council with the condition that a programme of building recording be undertaken both prior to the start of the works and during it. This is in line with national planning guidelines (PPG15).

### 1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 The principal aim of the project was to create for posterity a record of the building prior to its alteration in the current development concentrating particularly on the building's structure, construction, development and use. As well as recording the building the work also aimed to investigate and interpret the archaeological evidence within the building's fabric, particularly evidence revealed by the works, to understand the phasing and development of the house.

### 1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The recording consisted of three main elements: a drawn survey, a photographic survey and a descriptive survey.

1.3.2 The drawn survey consisted principally of floor plans at scale 1:50, based on a pre-existing survey of the house, adding features such as constructional details and phasing evidence to the plans. In addition the rear elevation was drawn at 1:50, again adding archaeological evidence to the existing survey. The photographic survey consisted of a comprehensive 35mm survey (black and white prints and colour slides), both internal and external, of general shots and detailed features. The written survey complemented the drawn survey and consisted of further descriptive and interpretative notes. The site work was undertaken on 2 and 10 July, 13 August and 2 October 2001. The investigation has also included a limited programme of historical research.

1.3.3 The archive, consisting of the photographs, slides, negatives, site drawings, a copy of this report and further site notes will be deposited with the County Museum Service.

### 1.4 Current development

1.4.1 Although Listed Building consent was granted for a refurbishment and programme of works at Rofford Hall some of the details of the development were determined subsequent to the granting of the permission and in consultation with the South Oxfordshire District Council's Conservation Officer. For example while the construction works were being undertaken on site it was proposed to rebuild a substantial section of the western section of the rear (north) wall of the house due to the poor condition of the wall. In consequence an historical assessment of the wall was undertaken by OA at the request of the Conservation Officer to inform his decision on what proportion of the wall could be rebuilt. In addition there were several other areas within the building where the details evolved in agreement with the Conservation Officer as the nature of the building became clear during the development.



- 1.4.2 The current development consists of a large number of elements including: the removal and replacement of the probable late 18th-century staircase which was in a very poor condition; the creation of a new doorway in the primary east wall of the house to allow access to a new extension and the removal and replacement of a relatively modern staircase.

## 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 Rofford Hall is c.10 miles south-east of Oxford. It is c.1 mile north-west from Chalgrove and 2 miles south-east of Little Milton. It is within the parish of Chalgrove and is historically within Ewelme Hundred. The Victoria County History for Ewelme Hundred has not yet been produced so the readily available historical information is limited but material has been consulted at the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies and Oxfordshire Archives. The earliest map to have been located is the First Edition 25 inch:1 mile Ordnance Survey map of 1872 which shows a considerable complex of buildings including the current house. One of the interesting features of the map is that the main (indeed only) approach is along a track from the south whereas now this road no longer survives and access is now from the west. The possible reason for this was the construction of Chalgrove Airfield during the Second World War the western boundary of which would have overlain the historic, southern approach to the Rofford Hall. This explains why the main approach to the house is from the rear (or side) rather than to the front of the house as would be usual.

## 3 SUMMARY OF PHASING

- 3.1.1 The current building at Rofford Hall has developed in three main historical phases together with several 20th-century extensions (See Fig. 2). This section also includes a brief overall description of the structural frame of the original house.
- 3.1.2 **Phase I** consists of a timber-framed, four-bay wide farmhouse at the south-east corner of the existing building with a large chimney in the second bay from the west. The main entrance to the building would have been from the south in the same location as the current small entrance hall immediately adjacent to the chimney stack. The house would therefore have been a baffle-entry house and it is probable that the original staircase was also within this entrance hall. From the roof truss type and carpentry detailing this building appears to probably be of 17th-century date. Over half of the timber box-frame of the original building survives. It consists of five cross frames (each one incorporating a truss) and two wall frames. The southern wall frame has been entirely removed (probably in the Phase III works detailed below) and replaced by the existing brick wall but the northern wall frame partially survives with many secondary alterations. The north wall appears to have consisted of a sole plate on a tall stone plinth, five full-height storey posts, nine studs, two horizontal mid rails and a wall plate. The best surviving cross frame is that at the east end of the building (Cross Frame I) and is described below in the external description section.
- 3.1.3 **Phase II** appears to consist of a small, stone-built outshut extension immediately to the north of the original house. The structure now houses a staircase but this was inserted in recent decades and from the stonework and the age of the roof members the extension appears to be of later 17th- or early 18th-century date. It also appears that the outshut may have originally formed part of a larger structure which projected to the north (see below). Although the roof members are relatively old it is possible that they have been reused and it may be that this structure was constructed after the Phase III building.



- 3.1.4 **Phase III** consists of a substantial Georgian expansion to the original house towards the west and north. This is likely to be of later 18th-century date (or possibly early 19th). The extension consists of a tall, rectangular plan building which encloses the western bay of the Phase I house extending east as far as its chimney stack. The western bay of the south front of the original house was also refaced in this phase to match the new building. This building is substantially of stone with brick dressings but there is a large patch of irregular brickwork in the rear (north) elevation. This is probably 19th-century patching or rebuild.
- 3.1.5 **Phase IV** consists of several smaller alterations to the building and two extensions probably of 20th-century date. Among the alterations are a small linking structure with lean-to roof between the north-east corner of the Phase III building and the Phase II lean-to. The two extensions are to the north and east of the house.

## 4 EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Rofford Hall is two storeys tall, with a small cellar in the north-east corner, and it has a T-shaped plan. Each phase of the roof is gabled (that above Phase III being double gabled) and it is entirely covered with 20th-century clay tiles. The wall construction is largely of stone with brick dressings but there are other areas of brick, modern render and brick nogging. Towards the centre of the house is a large brick chimney stack with four diagonally-set shafts. The only other chimney is at the west end of the Phase II building, projecting from the centre of the southern gable.
- 4.1.2 Shortly before the start of the current recording project two 20th-century extensions to the house were demolished to be replaced by new structures. Although they were not recorded by OA some photographs were taken of the overall complex by other contractors prior to the demolitions which show the extensions. The older of these two structures appears to have been that to the east of the house adjacent to the Phase I building. This was a mid 20th-century brick-built garage with an asbestos covered gabled roof. The most interesting feature of the structure shown by the photographs is that the lower part (1.5 m?) of the south wall is of stone. It therefore presumably survives from an earlier building or may be a section of garden wall. The other recently demolished extension projected from the central part of the north elevation of the house and was constructed of plain, exposed concrete block. It was another plain garage and had two large, full-height openings in its east wall but without garage doors. A photograph survives from the earlier 20th century (believed to have been from 1920s - 30s) which confirms that this garage replaced a previous earlier building on a similar footprint (See Pl.1).

### 4.2 North elevation

- 4.2.1 The north elevation (rear) divides into three main sections: the single-storey eastern section is of uncoursed stone rubble (with partially surviving lime wash) and forms the front of the outshut (Phase II) added to the original building possibly in the early 18th century. This wall incorporates a window and door (both of later 20th-century date) but the feature of most archaeological interest is the lintel from a blocked opening to the east of the current door. It is likely that this would have been a former doorway which would have led into a small hall (G9) or ante-room off the kitchen. At its west end the front wall of the lean-to returns to the north for a short distance before being truncated by a



- later concrete block structure. This stone wall suggests that this was part of a previous structure which projected to the north.
- 4.2.2 The central section of the north elevation is of concrete block and survives from the recently demolished structure (detailed above).
- 4.2.3 The western section of the elevation forms part of the Phase III structure added to the original house probably in the later 18th century. This part of the wall is of archaeological interest and divides into three main elements: the western half is formed of red bricks of probable later 18th- or 19th-century date (bonded with lime mortar); the upper part of the eastern half is of stone and the lower part of the western half is of green-painted lime plaster which survives from a formerly abutting single-storey building. As detailed above in Section 3 (Summary of Phasing) the patch of brickwork in the western half is believed to be an area of secondary rebuild but the bricks do appear to be similar to those which form the dressings and dentil course in the Phase III building. It is therefore possible that the stone walls were incorporated into the Phase III structure from a previous stone building and that the brickwork is primary to Phase III rather than later patching.
- 4.2.4 The most interesting feature within the stone part of the wall is a large brick-lined bulls-eye window with a quatrefoil design. The brickwork surrounding the window is not rubbed and is of a low quality consisting of a brick keystone, conventional bricks forming the two upper quarters of the circle, and truncated horizontally-laid bricks forming the lower two quarters of the circle. The window strongly appears to have been inserted into the pre-existing stone wall and therefore it was presumably a post-Phase III addition to provide light at the head of the internal staircase. The bulls-eye is believed to be contemporary with the rest of the brick rebuild in this elevation.
- 4.2.5 The brick western part of the wall is set on a thicker stone base apparently contemporary with the rest of the stone wall showing that almost certainly the entire wall was originally of stone. The brickwork was probably rebuilt in the mid 19th-century possibly when two sash windows were inserted. The windows are each 8-over-8 sashes and they are out of alignment; the lower window being slightly to the west of the upper. There is a straight joint at ground floor level immediately beneath the eastern jamb of the upper window suggesting that the two windows were originally in alignment but that the lower one was moved, probably at the time of the construction of the building from which the green-painted area of lime render survives.
- 4.2.6 The ends of 14 first floor common joists (together with one principal joist) project through the wall and are visible from the outside. From the fact that the joists are visible and the general irregularity of the wall it can be assumed that the wall was formerly rendered. This is supported by a surviving patch of a scoured cement base render for an upper coat and by what appears to be a thin fragmentary layer of render over other parts of the wall. A brick dentil course at eaves level extends along the north elevation over both the brick and stone parts of the wall which dates to the construction of the current queen-post roof in the late 18th or early 19th century (Phase III).
- 4.2.7 The western half of the north elevation (including the bulls eye window and the secondary brick wall has had to be taken down in the current development and rebuilt in rubble stone to match the other walls. A bulls eye window to match the previous window has been reinstated.



### 4.3 South elevation

- 4.3.1 The south elevation forms the front of the house towards which was historically the main approach to the house, and it divides into two distinct sections: the lower Phase I house to the east and the taller Phase III structure to the west. The earlier part of the elevation is covered with a hard rough-cast render and has four windows all of which are softwood casements of mid to later 20th century date with central mullions. The aerial photograph previously referred to which is believed to have been taken in the 1950s or 60s shows that at this date the two western windows consisted of three vertical lights and the eastern ground floor window was also different to the current window and appears to have consisted of a large sash with margin lights. The eastern first floor window is obscured in the photograph. To the west of the windows is a plain door (also partially obscured in the photograph) of relatively recent date and there is a brick dentil course which extends around the shallow eaves of the elevation punctuated by the two upper windows.
- 4.3.2 The dominant part of the elevation is the taller, 3-bay structure to the west with symmetrical arrangement of windows around a central front door. The wall is of uncoursed rubble stone with red brick quoins, window jambs, lintel facings and parapet which hides the eaves. The main brick dressings appears consistent with a late 18th century date but the brick parapet was added at a later date, probably in the 20th century. From the mid 20th-century aerial photograph the elevation appears to be entirely of the same light colour suggesting that the brick parapet and dressings may not yet have been built. It is more likely however that the consistent colour on the photograph is due to the wall having been covered with a render similar to that surviving on the eastern part of the elevation. There is evidence of a render having been roughly removed from the wall, particularly in the rough face of the brickwork. The 6-panelled front door (with fielded panels) is historic (possibly primary) and is beneath a primary square-headed fanlight with elegant cast-iron glazing bars. A moulded softwood architrave surrounds both the door and fanlight and towards the centre of the door is an iron knocker in the shape of a hand. Although the door is now neglected it would have formed an elegant entrance to the building and shows the architectural decoration present in parts of the Georgian extension.
- 4.3.3 None of the primary windows survive and although fragmentary frames survive in very poor condition from two windows even these appear to be of mid 20th-century date. These are both at first floor in the central and eastern bays and although they were boarded internally, thus preventing a close inspection, they each consisted of two main tall lights with a casement towards the top. The aerial photograph from the 1950s/60s shows each of these two windows with a 12 light (6 over 6) sash. The photograph shows a similar sash in the western first floor window but this has now been fully lost as has the window beneath it at ground floor. The aerial photograph shows a window with mullion and transom at this point similar to one of the east side of the door. This window has been replaced by modern French doors and the opening apparently narrowed. The jambs are formed of modern brick.

### 4.4 East elevation

- 4.4.1 The east elevation largely consists of the gable end of the Phase I house although until recently this was partially obscured by an adjacent (although not adjoining) 20th-century brick garage (detailed above). The upper part of the wall is covered by a 20th-century render but this has largely been removed from the lower part of the wall as part of the current works to reveal the primary timber framing of the original house. The modern

render incorporates within it the impression of timber framing although this does not reflect the actual constructional arrangement of the posts and beams beneath. The visible section of the timber cross frame consists of a sole plate (or sill beam) set on a rubble stone plinth (1.3 m high), a girding beam at first floor, corner posts rising to eaves height and three further posts between sole plate and girding beam. In addition there are two bracing struts between the sole plate and corner posts and further vertical posts between the angled braces and cross beam. The timber framing is all pegged, with chiselled Roman numeral carpenter's marks and is severely charred, clearly showing that this part of the building has suffered from fire damage. The panels between the framing is filled with brick nogging using small (4.8 cm tall average) and old (17th century or possibly earlier) bricks. It is apparent from the east elevation that the brick south wall is built against the timber framing (rather than brick nogging incorporated into the framing as in the east wall) and this wall must therefore have been refaced. The east end of the Phase II lean-to is of rubble stone (with partially surviving limewash) and abuts the timber frame and the stone plinth. One feature of interest is a rendered band across the base of the chimney stack immediately above (and following) the current roofline. This band continues around to the north and south faces of the stack. This may be evidence of a previous thatched roof which would have been substantially deeper than the current modern tile covered roof.

#### 4.5 West elevation

- 4.5.1 The west elevation is entirely of uncoursed rubble stone with brick quoins and there is a feature of some interest in a fossilised shell which is incorporated into the stonework. The upper part of the wall consists of two gables (the northern lower than the southern) and a plain rectangular chimney stack projects from the wall at the centre of the taller gable. The lower part of the stack is of rubble stone with brick quoins and the upper part is entirely of brick. The footings survive of a small former building immediately in front of the west elevation towards its north end. The structure would have been c.2 m by c.1.5 m and the brick suggests that it would have been of 20th-century date. Although it appears to have abutted the west elevation of the house there is no clear imprint of it against the wall.

## 5 INTERNAL DESCRIPTION

### 5.1 Ground floor

- 5.1.1 *Phase I:* That part of the ground floor which comprises the Phase I house consists of G5, G6 and G7. **G5** is a living room and forms the western end of the original house although it has now been enclosed by the Georgian extension. Although the room retains its original dimensions and some fragments of historic fabric this is largely hidden and the room retains little of its historic character. The floor is a modern concrete slab and the walls and ceiling have modern plaster. The east wall has a fireplace with 20th-century brick surround and a low, contemporary brick band across the full length of the wall. The south (external) wall has a pair of modern French doors which replaced the previous window and the jambs to either side have been reformed.
- 5.1.2 Behind the modern plaster however more historic fabric survives and the west wall, which would originally have been the external gable, is of most interest. This wall has been covered by two secondary phases of covering (19th- and 20th-century studs with plasterboard) but these have been partially removed by the current works and this has confirmed the survival of the primary pegged-oak, timber-framed wall. The base of the primary cross frame consists of a sole plate (26 cm wide x 18 cm tall) set on a tall rubble

stone plinth (115 cm tall). The two primary corner posts partially survive although the lower section of the northern post has been removed and set on a concrete block pier. The southern post is inset immediately from the later (late 18th-century) refaced south front. Towards the centre of the frame is a former doorway between G5 and the Georgian hall (G3) with apparently 19th-century softwood jambs and lintel but covered by the modern studs and plasterboard. Immediately to the north of this is a 70 cm wide area of brickwork with rendered surface (possibly 19th century) whose upper section was not fully exposed. Although only the lower section of the frame was exposed this was sufficient to confirm the survival of raking struts similar to those visible at the other end of the building on the external face of the east gable.

- 5.1.3 The primary post at the south-east corner of the room also survives (again just inset from the refaced south wall) and this frame extends north before abutting the primary chimney stack. There is a small fireplace utilising the stack with a simple 20th-century brick surround.
- 5.1.4 The north wall of G5 was also originally external but the primary frame of this wall survives less substantially than that to the east. The western two-thirds of the timber-framing have been removed and replaced by modern studs clad with plasterboard but the primary structure survives within the eastern third of the wall (visible from within the adjacent G4). The primary rubble stone plinth (similar to that in the west wall) survives in this section together with the original sole plate and a primary post. From this point the primary wall continues east adjacent to the large chimney stack.
- 5.1.5 **G6** is to the east of G5 and is a small entrance lobby adjacent to the central chimney stack which creates a baffle entry house. This lobby has been halved in size by the construction of a small east-west partition with 20th-century brick nogging inserted around reused studs and a stop-chamfered joist. This creates a small cloakroom immediately adjacent to the chimney. The arrangement (particularly the fact that the fireplace is set back from south wall thus creating the lobby) suggests that this is likely to have been the location of the original entrance into the Phase I house and that the hall probably also incorporated the original staircase up to the first floor (before the grander Georgian staircase was added). The relatively large size of the lobby would make this the obvious location for the staircase, probably in a curve or L-shape with the lower flight against the chimney stack.
- 5.1.6 **G7** is a large kitchen occupying the two ground floor bays of the primary house to the east of the chimney stack. They would originally have been two separate rooms with a wider western room (with fireplace) and narrower eastern room without fireplace (for pantry or other unheated purpose). The floor above appears to be substantially primary and is supported by two 28 cm wide east - west axial joists (or binders) which meet close to the centre of the room at an oak Samson post (19 x 14 cm) with four load-spreading, curved brackets supporting the joists above. The Samson post must clearly be a secondary insertion dating to when the cross frame between the two original rooms was removed. The west end of the binder is supported by a pier within the chimney stack and the east end by the central post in the end frame. The binder has chamfered lower edges with stops at each end and either side of the post. The Samson post also supports a north-south principal joist across the building which is machine sawn and inserted at the same time as the Samson post (probably in the 19th century) when the cross wall was removed. Each end of the principal joist are supported by plastered masonry piers projecting slightly from north and south walls, again contemporary with the joist and Samson post. The underside of the common joists are visible; they are tenoned into the binder and project beneath the existing secondary ceiling. They appear to be largely primary and

have lath marks visible to their underside. They are laid at c.42 cm centres and are of inconsistent size (8 - 15 cm wide) although their full height is not visible.

- 5.1.7 The primary timber framing of the south wall in G7 has been entirely removed at ground floor (except for the two corner posts) and replaced by the Georgian brick wall (plastered internally and rendered externally). The primary east wall largely survives but is most clearly visible outside (detailed above, see 4.4.1). The lower part of the primary timber frame of the originally external north wall has been substantially removed at ground floor but above this the upper part provides one of the most clearly visible surviving sections of the primary frame. There is a mid-rail beam at 1.8 m above ground and above this rest three primary studs which rise to the wall plate. This framing is particularly visible as it is in the open space adjacent to the staircase in the Phase II lean-to extension. Beneath the mid rail the primary framing (and plinth) has been replaced by thin reused studs with modern brick nogging infill. It appears that when the adjacent Phase II lean-to was constructed (or at some after it was built) the original north wall of G7 was removed (beneath the mid rail) thus creating a large single space but that the wall was then reformed in the mid to later 20th century when the staircase in G8 was inserted. The eastern section of the north wall also appears to have been replaced by later studs (although at an earlier date than the modern studs in the western part of the wall) and the plinth also no longer survives in this part of the wall. A modern door leads down two steps to a small larder (G9) off the kitchen which appears to have formerly been an entrance lobby (detailed below). The chimney stack at the west end of G7 has a fireplace with secondary (19th/20th century) plain softwood mantel and surround.
- 5.1.8 **Phase II:** As referred to above the Phase II part of the house is the single-storey catslide-roofed extension (or lean-to) immediately to the north of G7. This comprises two rooms: G8 which is a hallway that fills the main part of the extension and G9 in the eastern corner. The outshut roof is supported by a large (25 cm tall) oak purlin itself supported by half trusses (raking strut and tie to each). One is located immediately to the west of the stairs and the other at the east end of G8 dividing it from the small modern WC. The purlin is clearly historic (C17th?) but it could well be reused. The existing staircase is plain and has probably been inserted in the last 20 years. The room is illuminated by a modern window with two deep softwood mullions, the same date and type as those in the south wall of Phase I and elsewhere in the house.
- 5.1.9 **G9** is a small room at the east end of the Phase II outshut which is accessed down two steps from the Phase I kitchen (G7). The west wall of the room is a modern partition and formerly continued 1 m further west to include an area which now houses a modern WC. Old studs beneath a half-truss survive from the original west wall of the room and, as referred to above (see 4.2.1), a central doorway in the north wall would have allowed access into this room. Although the partition is relatively old the studs are nailed and are probably of 19th-century date. The room would presumably originally have formed an entrance hall rather than a larder off the kitchen it appears to have been in its more recent phase.
- 5.1.10 **Phase III:** The Phase III part of the ground floor is to the west and north of Phase I and is formed by G1, G2, G3, G4.
- 5.1.11 **G1** is a reception room at the south-west corner of the house. The internal faces of the west and south walls are covered with a hard 20th-century render and the north wall is formed of brick (probably 19th century) in which a wide (2.65 m) opening has been formed beneath a pair of rolled steel joists. The east side of the room is formed by a stud partition (with plaster removed) primary to this part of the building (late 18th/early 19th century) which divides the room from the main entrance hall. The partition incorporates



a primary doorway towards its southern end and it consists of three main posts: immediately to the north of the doorway; at the northern edge of the partition; at the mid point between the other two posts. The partition is strengthened by four horizontals (including sole-plate immediately above ground floor and upper plate immediately beneath first floor) and by two raking braces. Several members have been replaced by modern softwood (although most of the primary truss survives) and the primary members have lath marks.

- 5.1.12 Among the most impressive features of the room is a very large (33 cm x 38 cm) north-south principal joist which has clearly been reused from a previous building and which has a variety of empty mortices from the previous and current building. There are two tiers of mortices (ie separate ceiling and floor joists) and among the mortices from the previous building are ones which would have held joists set diagonally across the room. The north end of the principal joist is supported by the two rolled steel joists referred to above and the south end is supported by a further steel I-section lintel over a window in the north wall. The north-south principal joist supports two east-west binders, north - south common joists and north - south ceiling joists.
- 5.1.13 Although the window in the south wall is no longer in-situ it appears that the primary window would have extended down almost as far as the ground but that this was replaced with a smaller window and the panel beneath infilled with modern brickwork. The 20 cm deep modern concrete floor has been lifted as part of the current works and this has revealed a further concrete floor surface beneath. This is to remain in-situ in the development.
- 5.1.14 **G2** is to the north of **G1** and is historically a separate room from it although the two spaces have been linked by the creation of a wide opening beneath a pair of steel joists. The floor in **G2** is c.75cm higher than that in **G1** which allows for a small, low half-cellar beneath **G2**, the only cellar in the house. A pair of small staircases at the north end of the hall (**G3**) provides access down to the cellar (**C1**) and up to **G2**.
- 5.1.15 The most interesting feature of the cellar is that its walls are of uncoursed stone, including that to the north which is of brick above ground (see 4.2). This distinction corresponds to the evidence of the north elevation and suggests that the entire north wall was originally of stone (presumably all dating to the Georgian Phase III) and that the area of brickwork relates to a post-Georgian rebuilding phase. The cellar is lit by a small, softwood-framed window immediately above ground level while **G2** is lit by a large softwood sash (8 over 8) which appears to have been moved a short distance within the wall (see 4.2 above). The underside of the ground floor is visible above and consists of simple common joists which span the full width of the cellar. Although there is no ceiling above the room there are lath marks to the underside of the joists confirming that there was formerly a plastered ceiling.
- 5.1.16 **G3** is a hallway which extends the full width of the Phase III building. At its south end is the doorway which formed the main entrance into the building after the construction of Phase III (detailed above in external description) and at its north end is a dog-leg staircase, the lower section of which had been removed prior to the current. From its surviving fragmentary section the staircase is clearly historic and probably original to the Phase III extension. It has an elegantly curved handrail supported by simple square-section balusters and a slender turned newel post. It has an open string at the outer edge of each step and a curved fascia on the landing between the flights of stairs. Along with the attractive door and fanlight the staircase is the clearest indication of the architectural pretension of the Georgian building even though it is now in a very poor condition.



5.1.17 **G4** is to the north of the Phase I house, towards its western end, and is within the Phase III part of the building. The north wall of G4 has been substantially removed, to allow for the northern projection, and replaced by modern concrete block with a wide central opening beneath rolled steel joist. Modern partitions which created a small room had been removed prior to the current study from the south-west corner of the room and a hardboard partition supported by modern studs divides the south eastern corner of the building from the adjacent hall (G8).

## 5.2 First floor

5.2.1 *Phase I:* At first floor the Phase I house consists of F5, F6, F7 and F8.

5.2.2 **F5** is of the most interest in relation to the development of the house in that although it forms part of the original building it has been enclosed by the taller Phase III roof and the original roof (purlins and rafters) within this bay has been removed. The east wall of the room consists of the large rubble chimney stack with curved northern face and the Phase I truss (in Cross Frame IV) immediately in front of it. This truss comprises a tie-beam, principal rafters and a pair of collars and there are two pairs of purlins (each clasped between collar and principal rafter) which have been truncated immediately beyond where they pass through the truss.

5.2.3 The frame remains of a former doorway within the truss immediately to the south of the chimney stack formed by two primary posts which rest on the tie and rise to the upper collar, thus interrupting the lower collar. The door would have allowed access into a corridor adjacent to the chimney (F6) where it is also believed that the primary staircase would have been located (see 5.1.5) This door clearly relates to a previous attic floor c.1m above the current first floor.

5.2.4 The truss (together with the door) has been infilled with old studs (with lath marks) but the fact that these continue up above the northern principal rafter to a Phase III ceiling joist (immediately above the height of the original upper collar) suggests that these studs are secondary. This is confirmed by the fact that there is older (primary?) plaster on the west face of chimney behind the studs. Where this wall continues above the original truss on its south side (and the upper part of its north side) it is of painted brick as this is an external wall. The uppermost sections of the two principal rafters have been removed and replaced by brickwork having been made redundant by the wall and taller roof. There is a fireplace with 19th-century cast-iron grate in the chimney stack where its curved northern face increases its width.

5.2.5 The west wall of the room is the original gable end of the Phase I house and the primary cross-frame (Cross Frame V) survives partially in-situ within the wall, although the roof truss has been removed. The two corner posts survive (the northern one jowled) together with two cross beams (c. 18 cm x 24 cm): one immediately above first floor level and a tie-beam at the primary eaves level (c.1 m above the existing first floor height). Between the beams there are three smaller studs and there are sloped mortices in the upper face of the tie beam (towards each end) confirming the former location of the bases of the removed principal rafters. It is useful to note that the primary truss members have chiseled Roman numeral carpenter's marks of the same style as those on the cross-frame members at the opposite end of the primary building. The chiseled carpenters marks (rather than scratched/inscribed) are clearly post-medieval in date.

5.2.6 The inner face of the south wall in G5 is covered with a hard modern render while the north wall is largely of modern studs. The only primary studs which survive in the north wall are those which formed part of the two cross frames either side of the room together



with one other towards the centre. Much of the floor is covered with large modern boards but a section has been lifted to confirm that the floor beneath was of double construction with separate north-south common floor joists and beneath them smaller north-south ceiling joists. The joists appeared to date to the Phase III alterations. Further detail on the roof above G5, particularly the Phase III structure is included below.

- 5.2.7 **F6** is immediately to the south of the chimney stack and although it is now an ante room off the room to the east (F8) it was originally a corridor between the rooms either side of the chimney stack and it is also believed to have been a landing at the head of the primary stairs. Lath marks on the rafters confirm that the ceiling in this area was formerly plastered and these lath marks continue above the current (secondary) ceiling at tie-beam level. As detailed above there is an attic doorway within Cross Frame IV (to the west side of F6) and there is a corresponding door opening in Cross Frame III to the east of the stack (detailed further below). F6 is reached by descending four steps from F8 and it is possible that the lower floor level was a landing on the staircase.
- 5.2.8 Immediately to the north of the chimney stack is a narrow corridor (35 cm wide) adjacent to the sloped face of the stack. The frame of the north wall at this point remains intact, consisting of three primary studs and there is evidence of a former window which would have illuminated the corridor. In the underside of the wallplate at this point there are two diamond shaped holes and between these is a smaller circular hole. The circular hole would have secured a strut (possibly iron) which would have braced the window. Beneath these holes is a corresponding groove in the upper face of the mid-rail. A brace now cuts through where the window would have passed and is presumably a secondary insertion, although it is tenoned and is not a recent alteration. Unlike in the former corridor to the south of the stack there are no lath marks in this area from a former ceiling above the tie-beam height.
- 5.2.9 **F7** is the room immediately to the east of the chimney stack within Bay II of the primary house. The west side of the room is formed by the chimney stack and Cross Frame III including the substantially surviving roof truss immediately in front of the chimney which is slightly different to the truss previously described in F5. It has a tie-beam, two principal rafters and two collars which clasp two tiers of purlins but the lower collar is interrupted by three posts. Two of these posts frame a former doorway to the corridor immediately south of the chimney stack while the other post is beneath the upper purlin on the north slope. In essence the truss is an adapted version of the Queen post truss which survives in Cross Frame II (described further below).
- 5.2.10 The east wall of F7 is formed by Cross Frame II but although the truss substantially survives the primary frame below this has been removed and replaced by a secondary stud frame (secured by nails). Although this frame is shown to be secondary by the fact that it is secured by nails rather than being tenoned like the primary frame it is relatively old (certainly pre-20th century) and reuses old studs. The common studs are typically 12 x 8 cm and a relatively recent doorway has been created at the north end, flanked by 20th-century posts. There is a further doorway (primary to the frame) towards its southern end which has been subsequently blocked with an infill post. A small section of the tie-beam has been removed to allow a slightly greater height to the doorway.
- 5.2.11 Above this studwork is the surviving primary queen post truss comprising tie-beam, principal rafters, collar, queen posts and two short spurs between the queen posts and principal rafters. The truss would have been closed (other than a central doorway between the queen posts) as beneath each of the two spurs are two small vertical struts. Unlike the studs in the frame below the truss these are tenoned and primary. The upper tier of purlins is clasped by the collar while the lower is clasped by the spurs.



- 5.2.12 The existing ceiling within F7 (partially removed during the current works) is at the height of the lower collar and lower purlins but this is clearly a secondary insertion probably of 19th-century date. This ceiling is supported by a large (30 x 22 cm) east-west joist along the spine of this part of the house together with north-south common ceiling joists the outer ends of which are nailed roughly to the primary purlins. The large principal ceiling joist is of oak and is reused with some empty mortices and some reused to house the inner ends of the common ceiling joists. However, there are lath marks on the rafters which continue above this ceiling and these, together with white-wash to the upper purlin, show that the original plastered ceiling continued up to the height of the upper collar and purlins. The higher primary ceiling corresponds with other evidence, (particularly door frames above the tie-beams in each of the trusses) which show that there was formerly an attic floor which would clearly have required a higher ceiling than that existing above the first floor.
- 5.2.13 At the start of the current exercise, and when the initial recording was undertaken, the northern section of the bay was part of a modern corridor with stud partitions immediately to the south of the primary north wall of the building. These partitions, together with modern plasterboard to the other walls and a modern plaster ceiling, were removed during the refurbishment and as the corridor was a relatively recent insertion the entire bay has been included here as part of F7.
- 5.2.14 The north wall of the room (formerly part of the corridor) retains its five primary oak posts including those at either end which form part of the cross frames. The posts vary in size but are on average 24 cm wide by 13 cm deep. The wall plate and rail also survive and evidence in these (and isolated evidence elsewhere) appear to confirm that the structure would have been clad in wattle and daub. This evidence includes regular holes in the underside of the wall plate to secure staves and grooves in the mid rail beneath.
- 5.2.15 The primary framing of the south wall appears to have been entirely removed from within F8 having been made redundant by the later masonry wall (rendered externally, plastered internally).
- 5.2.16 The west wall of the room comprises Cross Frame III, which substantially survives immediately in front of the primary chimney stack and which (as detailed above) incorporates an attic door above the tie-beam immediately to the south of the chimney stack. A secondary brick skin (plastered) has been added to the stack, partially in-filling the cross frame and beneath its tie-beam. Two primary posts survive to the south of the stack adjacent to the short flight of stairs to F6.
- 5.2.17 **F8** is the room within Bay I at the east end of the house and is similar to F7 in that the northern part of the room was a corridor prior the current works and that the room was originally beneath an attic. This is shown by the door in Cross Frame II (referred to above) and by lath marks again confirming that the ceiling formerly continued above the current ceiling to the upper collar.
- 5.2.18 The current ceiling is again supported by a large reused oak principal joist (30 cm x 22 cm) at the height of the lower collar (or height of spurs in Cross Frame II) and common ceiling joists nailed roughly to the lower purlin. The west wall of the room is the primary stud partition within Cross Frame II which has been detailed above. The northern wall (originally part of the north wall of the primary house) retains two original posts and there is a mortice in the wall plate to confirm that there was originally a third post but this was removed and replaced by a pair of more widely spaced studs to allow a doorway into the small bathroom (F9). The primary frame of the south wall appears to have been entirely removed (other than the post at the south-east corner) by the secondary masonry





skin added to the outer face of the building possibly when the Phase III house was constructed. The window within this wall is modern and of a similar style to several others in the house with a single, deep softwood mullion. The east wall of the room is covered with modern plaster although the beams immediately above the floor (mid-height cross-beam) and at eaves height (tie-beam) are visible. The eastern bay is the only part of the primary building in which a ridge piece has been added (secondary, C19th).

- 5.2.19 **Phase 2: F9** is a small modern bathroom immediately to the north of F8 awkwardly squeezed into the upper part of the Phase II outshut. The room is accessed down a short set of steps from F9.
- 5.2.20 **Phase 3:** That part of the first floor which forms the Georgian Phase III expansion to the house consists of F1, F2, F3 and F4.
- 5.2.21 **F1** is the room at the south-west corner of the house. Its north wall is a primary to this part of the house and is formed with old studs (possibly late 18th century). The east wall is a contemporary stud partition covered with modern plasterboard to the west side but exposed to the east facing the hall (detailed below, see 5.2.22). The south and west walls are both covered with a modern render and the fireplace in the west wall retains its 19th-century grate and tiled surround but has lost its mantel. The ceiling has been removed but the supporting structure remains in-situ with lath marks to its underside and consists of east-west common ceiling joists tenoned into the tie-beam of Truss 7.
- 5.2.22 **F2** is immediately to the north of F1 and is divided from it by the primary partition previously referred to. The room was formerly accessed from the hall (F3) through a doorway at the head of the stairs but this has been infilled with modern studs. A small room has been created at the western side of F2 by the addition of a modern stud partition.
- 5.2.23 **F3** is the hall and landing at the head of the staircase and is divided from F1 and F2 by the primary (ie Georgian) partition previously referred to. The partition spans the full width of the Phase III house and comprises four principal posts which flanked two primary evenly-spaced doorways: that to F1 still survives while that to F2, immediately at the head of the stairs has been infilled with modern infill studs. The overall frame is strengthened with three raking braces between the two doorways and the two end posts. Each of the three main sections of the partition has six common studs and all the partition members have lath marks which continue to the height of the former ceiling below the tie-beam of the truss. As detailed above the upper section of the dog-leg staircase rising to F3 survives while the lower section has been lost. The hand-rail is supported by plain square-section balusters and at the head of the stairs it continues south for a short distance before returning to the east to allow a reasonable amount of head room for the lower flight.
- 5.2.24 **F4** forms part of the Phase III house and is to the north of the western end of the Phase I building. Much of the north wall has been removed to allow the modern concrete block projection (with modern, plain softwood rafter roof).
- 5.2.25 **Phase III Roof description:** The roof over the Phase III house is M-shaped and is supported by six pairs of typical late 18th-century queen-post trusses. The valley between the trusses is off-centre (and in line with the north wall of the primary house) so that in each pair one truss (the southern) is almost twice the width of the other. The pair of trusses at the west end of the building are immediately adjacent to the double-gabled stone wall while the easternmost pair of Phase III trusses are in line with (and above) Truss IV of the original Phase I house. Thus the Phase III roof encloses the westernmost bay of the original house as far as the large primary chimney stack. The chimney also



determines the location of the easternmost small truss but to gain extra space (and apparently to link with the end of the Phase II lean-to) the roof slopes beneath the truss similarly to a gambrel (or gablet) roof. This truss (at the eastern end of F4) has brick nogging in its uppermost section above the upper collar.

- 5.2.26 Each of the 12 Phase III trusses (six large and six smaller) is formed of regular machine-cut softwood (possibly pine) and consists of a tie-beam, a collar, two queen-posts and two relatively small principal rafters secured at their heads with a yoke. Each pair of common rafters is secured at their heads with a ridge piece. The main members are all pegged.

## 6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1.1 Rofford Hall is a Grade II listed building which has grown in a number of distinct phases and is interesting for a number of reasons. The most significant part of the building is the original box-frame house which has been much altered since its first construction but which retains enough of the primary frame to give a good indication of its form. The original building, which is likely to be of 17th-century date, was a four bay wide house with very large brick chimney stack, a tall rubble stone plinth and possibly a thatched roof. Each of the five cross frames survives at least partially intact (although the truss at the west end has been lost) and over half the framing in the north wall survives but the original south wall was almost entirely removed when this wall was refaced.
- 6.1.2 Although the significance of the original building could be said to have been compromised by the fact that it has been much altered it is one of the charms of the house that there are surviving fragments in different areas. These can be pieced together like a puzzle to form an idea of the original building and the fact that some parts have been incorporated into later phases of the structure also gives the building a fuller sense of having evolved and developed over time.
- 6.1.3 The other main historical phase (other than the Phase II outshut) consists of a major expansion dating to the late 18th or early 19th century which would have converted the building into a relatively large farmhouse with at least some architectural pretension. The queen-post roof trusses are typical for the later Georgian period as is the elegant fanlight over the front door and the relatively slender staircase (only a small part of which survives). Evidence suggests that this range was originally entirely stone built but a large section of the rear wall was then reconstructed in brick.
- 6.1.4 A further alteration of some note, which probably post-dates the Georgian expansion, was to alter the floor and ceiling heights in the original building so that rather than having a first floor and attic each with very low ceilings (c.1.7 m) it only had a single upper storey with a more generous ceiling height.

Oxford Archaeology

February 2009



**Appendix A. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

Site name: Rofford Hall, Chalgrove, Oxfordshire

Site code: LMROFH01

Grid reference: SU6250 9850

Type of evaluation: Building recording and investigation

Date and duration of project: site work undertaken July - October 2001

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES.

The archive will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museums Service.



## Appendix B. LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

Location : CHALGROVE, SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE, OXFORDSHIRE

IoE number : 248879

Date listed : 18 JUL 1963

Date of last amendment : 18 JUL 1963

Farmhouse. Early/mid C18. Uncoursed limestone rubble, brick quoins and dressings; gabled old tile roof; brick end stacks, large right end external stack has 4 diagonally-set flues. Double-depth plan. 2 storeys; symmetrical 3-window range. Flat brick arch over 6-panelled door set in moulded wood architrave with decorative fanlight. Similar arches over late C19/C20 casements. Brick parapet with stone coping. Sashes and quatrefoil lunette to rear, 2-storey, 2-window range to right, of limestone rubble with stucco front and gabled old tile roof; 6-panelled door with flat hood and C19 casements. Rear one-storey-and-attic wing of similar materials. Interior not inspected but likely in be of interest.

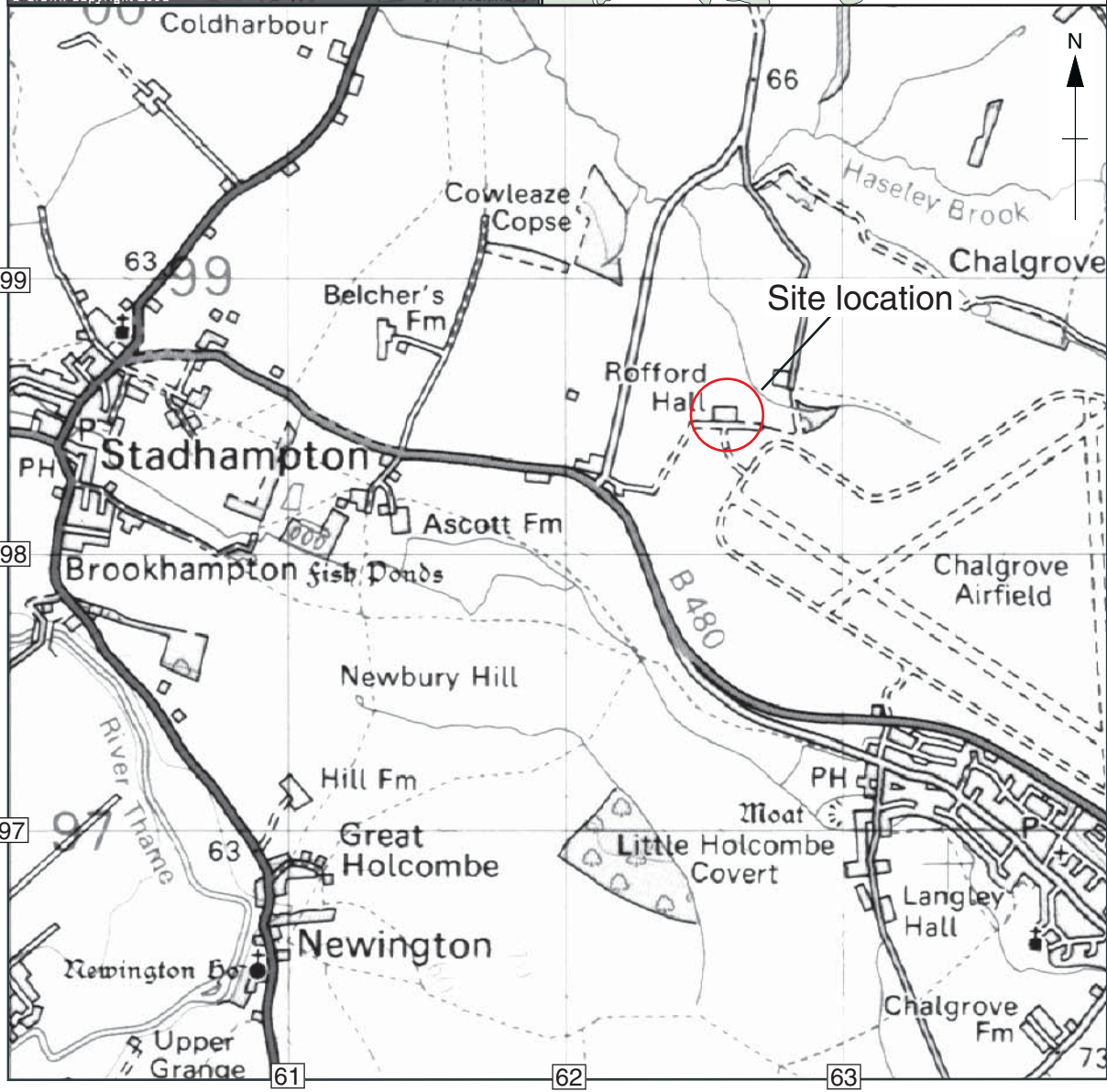
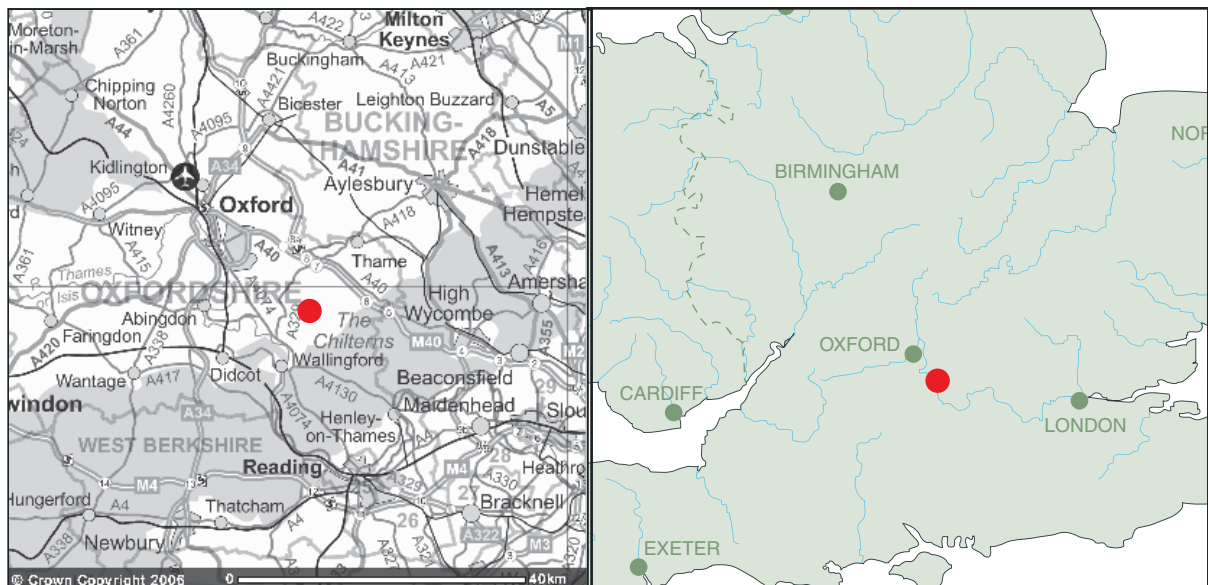
Location : CHALGROVE, SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE, OXFORDSHIRE

IoE number : 248880

Date listed : 03 APR 1987

Date of last amendment : 03 APR 1987

Barn. Mid/late C18. Uncoursed limestone rubble, brick ventilation slits and porch quoins. Half-hipped asbestos sheet roof. Central porch with hipped roof. Late C19 outshut to front of left bay. Interior: 3-bay collar-truss roof with curved under-principals and clasped purlins. Included for group value.



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

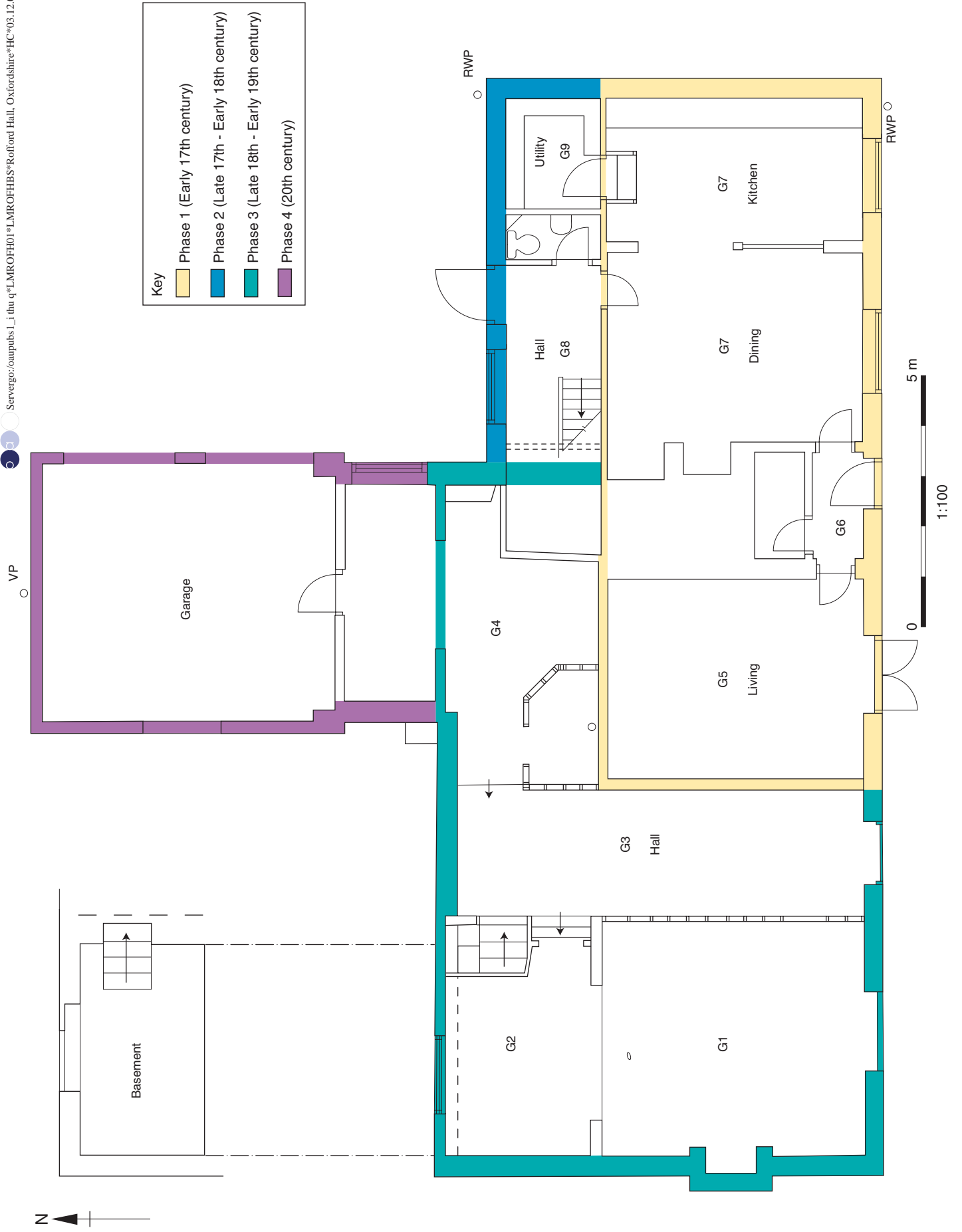


Figure 2: Phasing plan

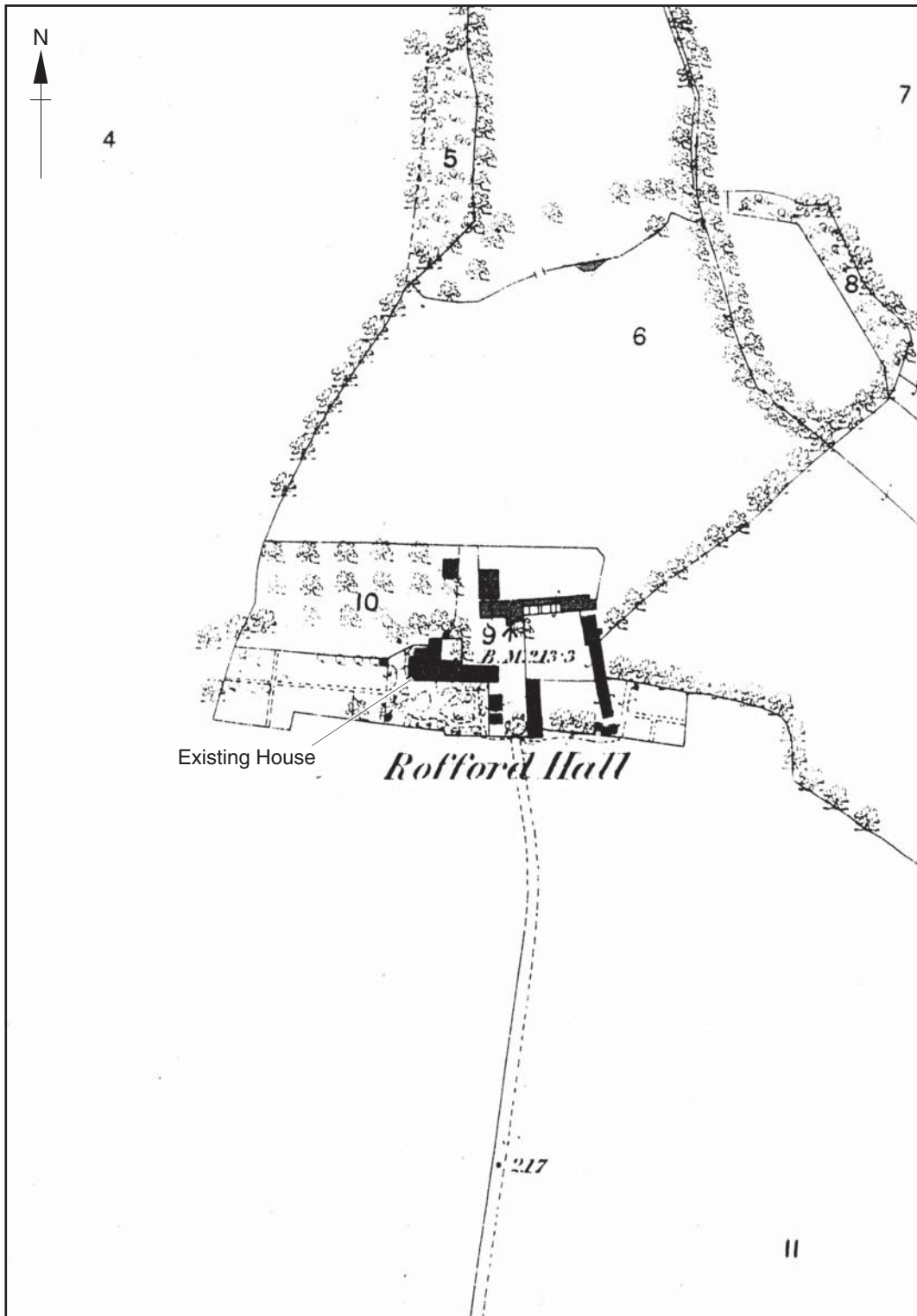


Figure 3: First edition Ordnance Survey map (1872)

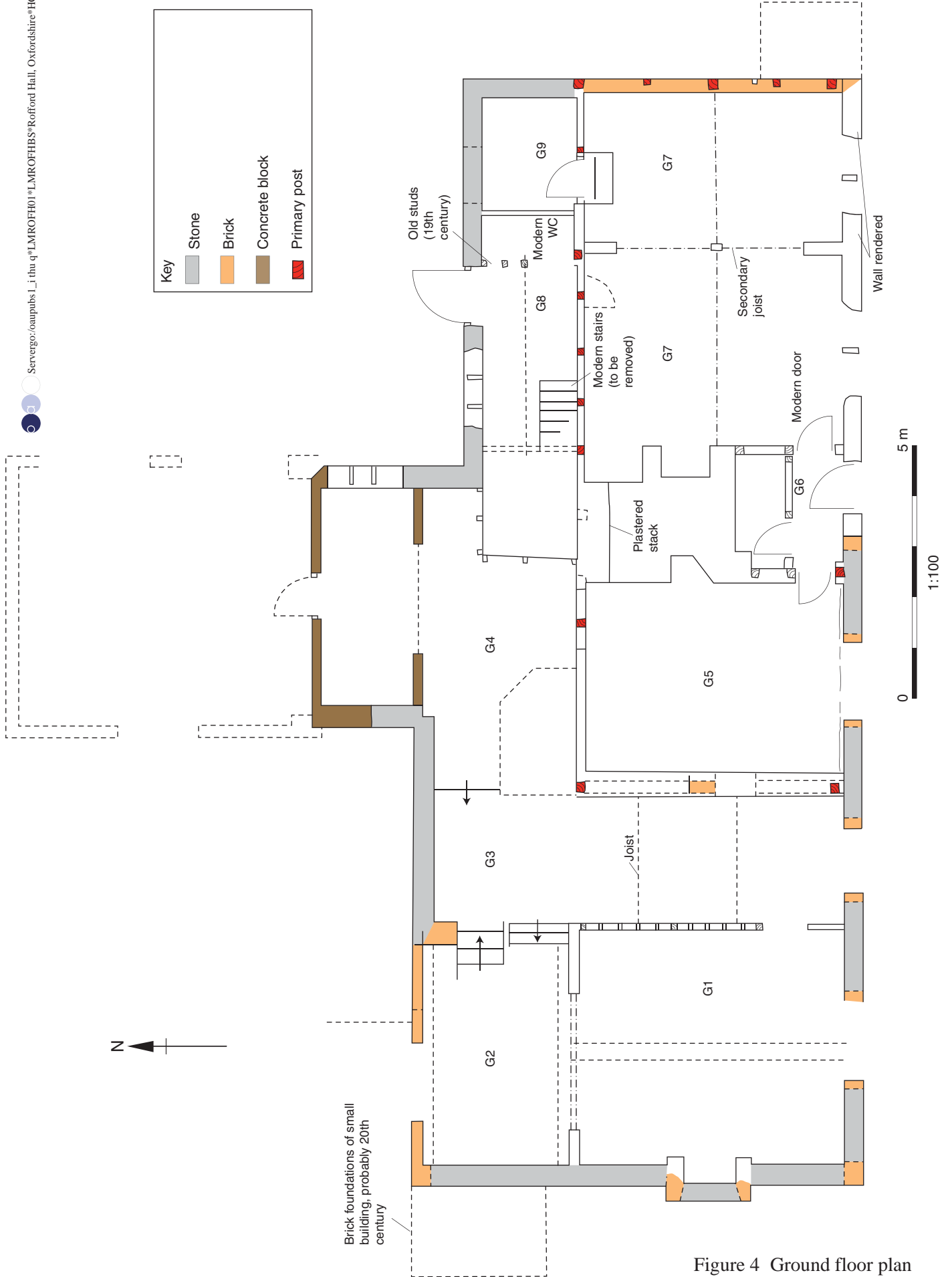


Figure 4 Ground floor plan



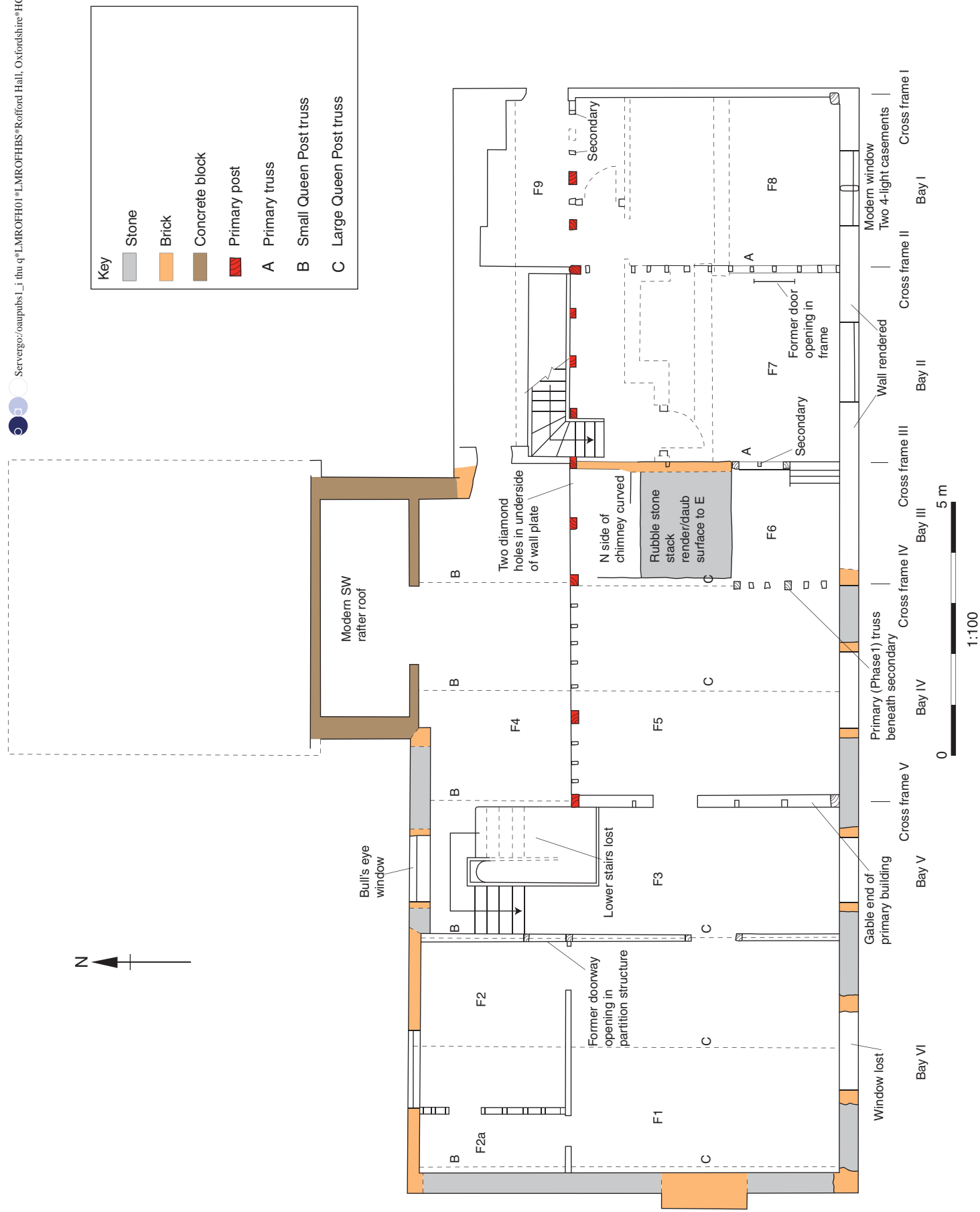


Figure 5: First floor plan

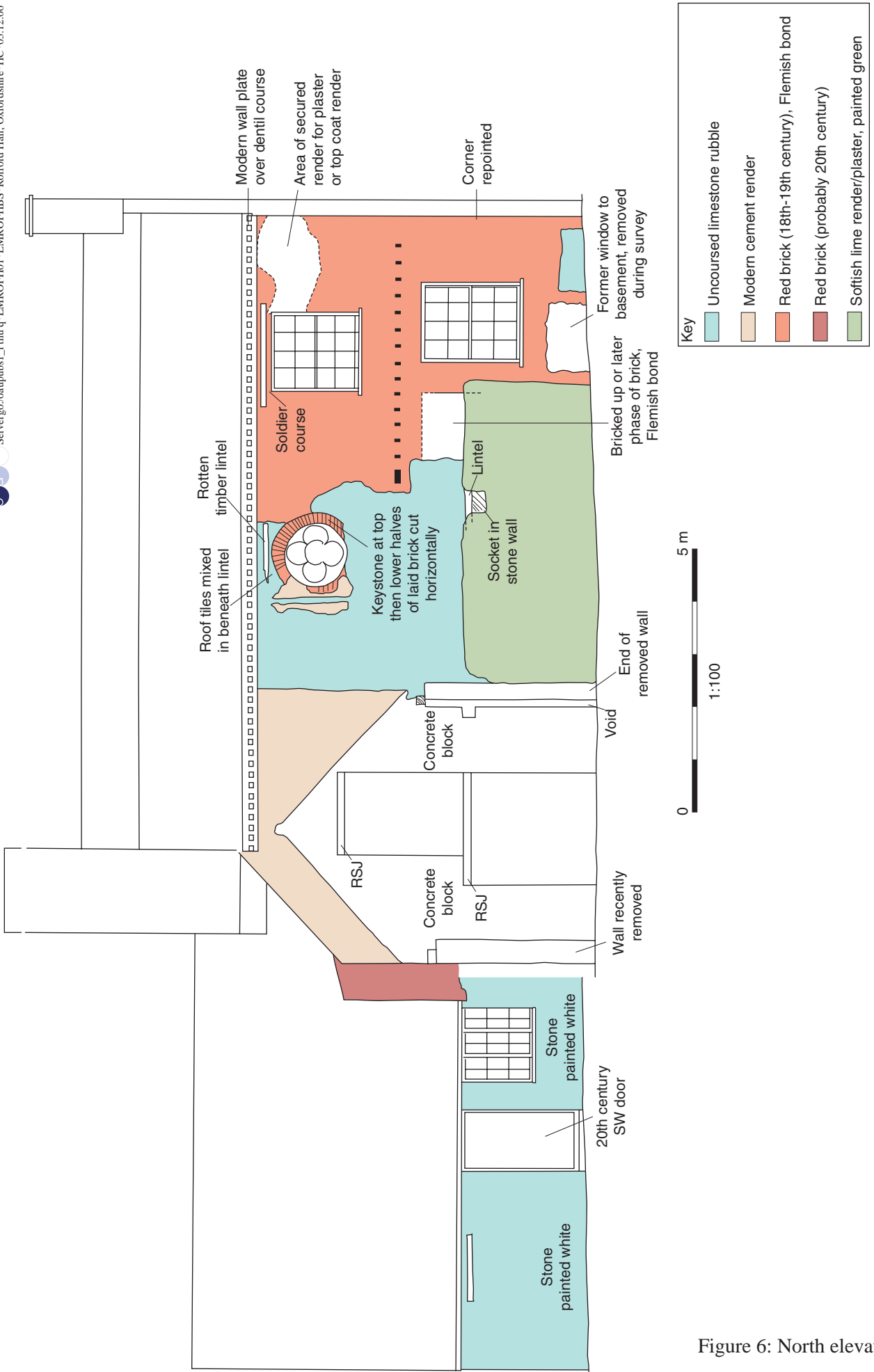
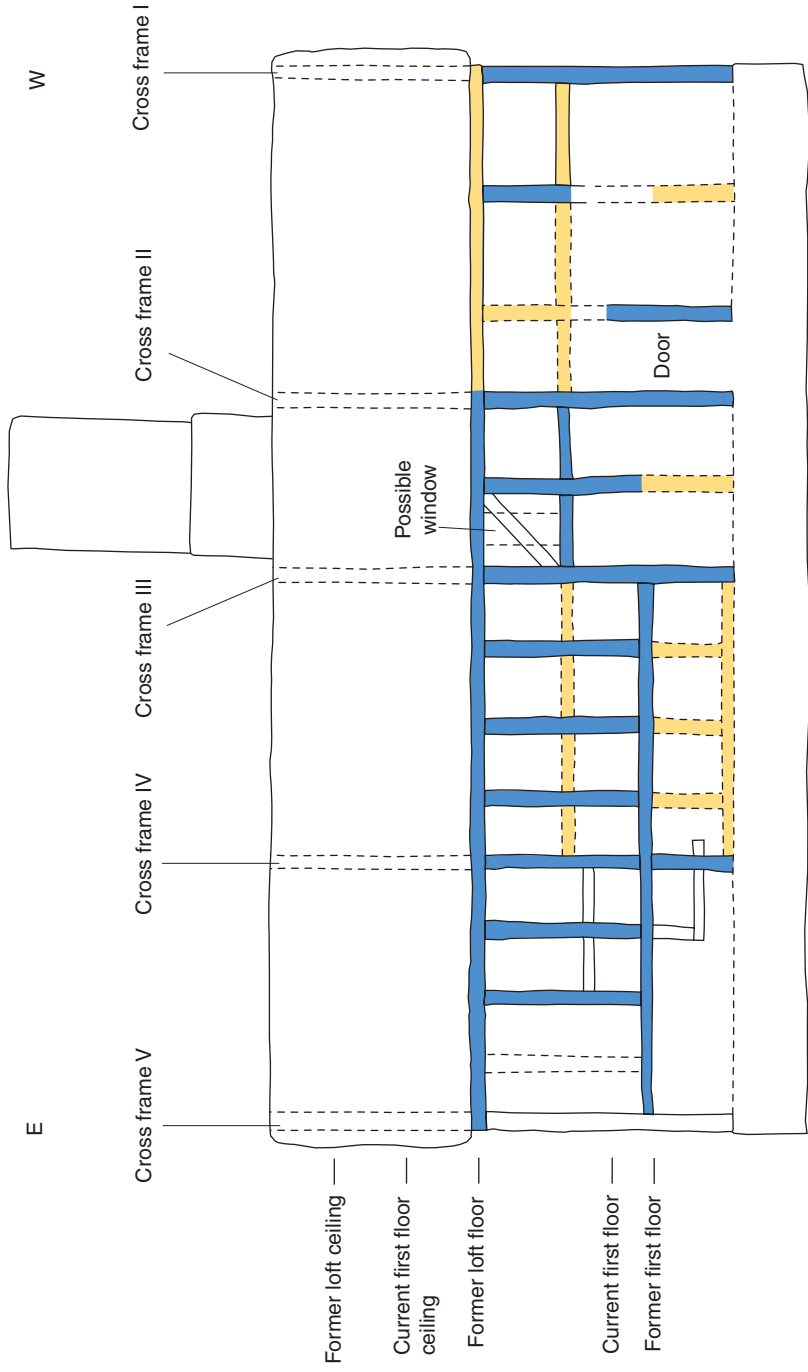


Figure 6: North elevation



Key

- Surviving timber frame
- Former timber frame surmised from empty mortices etc
- Conjectural frame



Figure 7: Framing in north wall of primary house



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Plate 5: Knocker on front door



Plate 6: Front door in Georgian extension



Plate 7: Primary framing in east elevation





Plate 8: Primary building from south-east



Plate 10: Bulls eye window in north elevation



Plate 9: Rear (north) elevation





Plate 11: West elevation



Plate 12: Cellar beneath Phase III house



Plate 13: Kitchen (G7) in primary house





Plate 14: Primary studs in north wall of house (G8)



Plate 15: Very large reused joist in G1



Plate 16: Georgian partition between G1 and G3





Plate 17: Cross Frame II at first floor looking east



Plate 18: Primary truss and chimney in east wall of F5



Plate 19: Truss detail in Cross Frame II





Plate 20: Tie and rail in East wall (Cross Frame I)



Plate 21: Secondary door between F3 and F4. Truncates primary tie-beam



Plate 22: Westward view in Phase III extension (F4)



Plate 23: Staircase in Georgian extension (F4)



Plate 24: Queen post trusses above extension (F4)



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