

White Hart Hotel Chipping Norton Oxfordshire



Historic Building Recording and Analysis



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THE WHITE HART HOTEL
CHIPPING NORTON, OXFORDSHIRE
HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND ANALYSIS

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THE WHITE HART HOTEL

CHIPPING NORTON

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND ANALYSIS

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Chase Homes to carry out archaeological and historical analysis of the White Hart Hotel Chipping Norton prior to and during its conversion to residential and retail use. This important local building retained its elegant 18th-century stone frontage, behind which lay the remains of earlier timber-framed structures.

During building work a number of elements were exposed. These included the main timber frame of the building and an almost intact late medieval timber gallery at the rear. A high quality stone cellar was also examined. During the building work much was revealed about the historic development of the building as well as its decoration and its fixtures and fittings.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 LOCATION AND SCOPE OF WORK

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Chase Homes Limited to undertake a programme of building analysis and recording at The White Hart Hotel, Chipping Norton (NGR SP 31442712; Figure 1; Plate 1). The building work involved the conversion of the former hotel buildings into a number of self contained flats and retail units. This required the re-ordering and consolidation of the main part of the hotel and its subdivision into separate units. The stables and ancillary buildings at the rear of the site were also either converted or demolished. In all twenty dwellings and two retail units were created in addition to the construction of seven new buildings. Building work (and archaeological monitoring) took place throughout 2003 and 2004.

1.1.2 The building recording work reported here is part of a broader archaeological programme of excavations and watching briefs within the curtilage of The White Hart Hotel. This report should be used in conjunction with the accompanying excavation report which details the results of excavations and watching briefs (OA 2005). Previous archaeological evaluations have been undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services in August 2002.



- 1.1.3 The White Hart Hotel (Listed Grade II*) is situated in the heart of the historic core of Chipping Norton. The Hotel is situated between the High Street and Albion Street both of which run on a north/ south axis. The building has a prominent place within the town with the north-west elevation fronting onto the High Street and market place.
- 1.1.4 The main limestone façade dates to the 18th century. Behind this façade however lies a far older group of buildings with a number of timber framed elements. At the rear of this main block are two flanking wings with a narrow yard in-between. This was part of the former coaching yard (the arch giving access to the street was blocked in the 1920s). The hotel sits in a narrow plot of land which rises steeply from the High Street to Albion Street at the rear (Figure 2). Within this long narrow plot the main hotel buildings sat at the lower end. The former stables and cart sheds and part of the modern hotel accommodation lay on the rising land at the rear (Plates 2-6). A roadway runs down from the rear entrance on Albion Street to the yard at the back of the hotel.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1.2.1 The building recording work was requested by North Oxfordshire District Council in advance of work on the historic fabric. The main aim was to produce a record of the building, prior to its alteration. During restoration work new features were also recorded as they were revealed. This took a broad approach concentrating on the structure, construction, layout, surviving fixtures and fittings within the building. This facilitated an understanding of the age, phasing and significance of the building in its entirety. In addition, a more targeted approach was undertaken on features which were likely to be lost during the conversion.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

- 1.3.1 The investigation was carried out to RCHME level II. This level of recording reflects the fact that although the building is of historical interest, it is to be converted rather than demolished, and major loss of historic fabric is not anticipated.
- 1.3.2 The recording work was undertaken using three principal survey techniques: photographic, drawn and written:
- *The Photographic Survey* used 35mm black and white prints and colour slides. Digital photographs were also taken of selected details.
 - *The drawn survey* was largely based on a pre-existing survey, provided by Chase Homes. This consisted of floor plans, external elevations and cross sectional elevations showing trusses and chimney stacks. Detailed drawings of features of interest exposed during building work or omitted from earlier surveys were made as and where necessary. Traditional hand measured survey techniques



were used and the drawings were created with pencil on archivally stable drawing film. Drawings were at 1:10, 1:20 and 1:50 depending on the significance and needs of the structures recorded. All drawings were annotated. Wall paintings were traced at 1:1 on plastic drawing film. The gallery exposed at the rear of the building was partially surveyed with a reflectorless EDM and partly hand drawn.

- *The written survey* complements the photographic and drawn survey in providing a descriptive and analytical interpretation of the building. Proformas were completed detailing the nature, extent and relationship of features.

1.3.3 Cartographic and documentary research was undertaken to gain a further understanding of the development of the building. This took place at the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, and included historic maps, photographs and documentary sources.

1.3.4 A site archive including photographs, negatives, site notes, the full report on the building record and other documentary material will be deposited with the County Museum Service.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 The White Hart Hotel is located in the heart of the old market town of Chipping Norton, between the High Street and Albion Street, fronting on to the Market Square (see above). The site occupies an area of 120 m by 17 m (approximately 0.2 hectares), lying at approximately 205 m OD. Chipping Norton lies within the hundred of Chadlington, 18 miles north-west of Oxford and 73 miles north-west by west of London. The geology is loam overlying Chipping Norton limestone.

2.1.2 Historically, Chipping Norton first emerges as Norton, a farming settlement in the Saxon kingdom of Mercia. However, archaeological evidence relating to Roman residence has been found, which includes coins and sherds of pottery (Anthony 1984). During the Norman period, in 1081, the church and living were granted to St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester, and in 1086 the Domesday Book records the ownership of the manor as Ernulf de Hesdings. 'Chipping', is a corruption of Ceapan meaning a market or place of trade. The market place, in which the White Hart is located, was laid out in 1205. Around the market place many of the original buildings were rebuilt in the 18th century with Georgian fronts, earlier styles are still evident in New Street.

2.1.3 In the Middle Ages the wealth of the Cotswolds was based on the wool industry. Chipping Norton was one of a number of towns and villages that saw increased growth and some fine buildings financed by the profits of the wool trade. The importance of the wool trade slowly dwindled in the 17th and 18th centuries, although the town remained an important



commercial and trading centre, as is attested by numerous post-medieval buildings.

- 2.1.4 The Victoria County History covering Chipping Norton has not yet been produced but the history of the town has been covered by several publications, the most extensive of these is Meades (1984), and Historic Towns in Oxfordshire (Rodwell 1975).
- 2.1.5 The early history of the White Hart itself is unknown although the name may be suggestive of an early origin (the white hart being the livery badge of Richard II and a common pub name throughout England). The inn is fortunate in that a number of early probate inventories survive for the property. These have been transcribed by the Chipping Norton Historical Research Group (CNHRG) and OA is grateful to them for supplying copies of these. The following chronology for the site has been established by the HNHRG (see Appendix 1).

1611 Will and inventory of Thomas Raynesford

1614/15 Death of Thomas Raynesford

1633 Death of Richard Coleman (inventory survives) succeeded as innkeeper by his son William

1635 William Diston and William Cornish granted a wine licence

1639 William Coleman died

1649 Owner Henry Cornish died and left the White Hart to William Diston

1666 Trade tokens of William Diston issued

1675 Innholder Richard Allen died (inventory survives)

1676 William Diston died leaving inn to his son Giles

1694 Innholder John Pettypher died (inventory survives)

1784 Innholder was William Heynes

1850s Innholder William Heynes

1871 Innholder Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Pointer

1907 Mrs Pointer died and was succeeded by Mr and Mrs Edwin James

- 2.1.6 The 17th-century inventories are particularly useful in that they give many details of the hotel's basic layout as well as furnishings and fittings. What they show is that from even as early as 1615 the inn was divided into a number of separate lodging rooms each known by an individual name (eg the *Harrford Chamber* or the *Queenes Chamber* and interestingly the *Chappell Chamber*). Each of these chambers was equipped with a number of beds which included featherbeds and truckle beds. As well as the chambers there was a brewhouse, a hall and a kitchen. The pattern of well furnished chambers is repeated in the later inventories, these also list the furniture and fittings in greater detail and make it clear that the inn was a large establishment complete with many



- of the requisites required by visitors of the better sort. By the inventory of 1694 the inn is almost luxuriously furnished with turkey work (woven) chair covers and numerous carpets.
- 2.1.7 Although these early inventories only tell us about the 17th-century history of the inn it is likely that the building fulfilled the same function of accommodation for better off guests in the 16th-century and it certainly continued in this role into the 18th to 20th centuries.
- 2.1.8 Historic map evidence shows the development of buildings on the site from c 1770 to the present day. The earliest map consulted was the 1770 enclosure award map. This is a copy of the map which is held at Farrant & Sindon Solicitors, that has been amended using the 1770 Awards Document (Grantham, 1997, 11). The map shows little detail of structures and significant monuments such as the site of the castle (located to the north-west of the town centre) are not depicted. The landscape around Chipping Norton is predominately enclosed fields and the layout of the roads are much as today. The map depicts buildings within the centre of the market place while strips of enclosure are shown to the east of the market place (the approximate location of the White Hart Hotel has been annotated on the map). It is unclear whether these strips of enclosure are meant to represent enclosed land or structures. It is more likely that they depict enclosed land as this detail continues beyond Albion Street where later maps show little evidence of structures (see Figure 6).
- 2.1.9 Davies' map of 1797 shows the town of Chipping Norton, illustrating that it was considerably developed by this time. This map, however, is not entirely accurate as roads detailed in the 1770 enclosure map are not shown. Examples are Albion Street, to the east of the High Street and Church Street, to the west. Structures in the location of the White Hart Hotel are depicted for the first time, although the level of detail is not enough to discern individual elements.
- 2.1.10 The Ordnance Survey one-inch map of 1814-15 and the Bryant Map of 1824 (Figure 4) show less detail than Davies Map. Structures, however, are evident to the immediate east of the High Street and it is therefore likely that the White Hart Hotel is included amongst these.
- 2.1.11 The Ordnance Survey 25-inch town plan of 1880 is the first detailed map of Chipping Norton, the layout of the town is much as in the present day. The plan of the White Hart Hotel shows two long ranges projecting westwards towards Albion Street. There are no intermittent breaks shown in the length of the ranges which would suggest that structures extended without break between the High Street and Albion Street.
- 2.1.12 The Ordnance Survey Map of 1922 provides further detail of the hotel. The archway entrance to the rear ranges is depicted. A structural break is shown on the south-east elevation which aligns with the contemporary footprint of the building. The north-east range is detailed as having only a minor break in the structure, which is in close proximity to Albion Street. This does not align with the contemporary footprints of the building.

3 DESCRIPTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 This recording programme is based on two periods of investigation. The first of these took place in September 2003 and was aimed at gaining an overall understanding of the building. This phase took place after initial clearance of the building but before the 'soft strip' and large areas of historic fabric were still hidden by 20th-century partitions and wall coverings. Later recording took place throughout 2004 and concentrated on previously unseen features which had been revealed during building work.

3.2 THE WEST (STREET) RANGE

3.2.1 The north-east elevation is the building's main frontage and looks out over Chipping Norton's central market place (Plate 1). This elegant 18th-century front is made of neatly dressed ashlar formed from an orange/cream limestone. The range is three stories in height and 6 bays in length. The two centre bays are recessed whilst the outer bays project slightly towards the road. The fenestration consists of large rectangular sash windows. The sides of the range are hidden from the exterior by adjoining buildings. The rear (eastern) part of the range is partly obscured by the two rear ranges but the part that is visible is very different in character from the front elevation (Plate 2). This rear elevation is a simple gable made up of rendered brickwork. The range has a slate covered roof and two stone stacks.

3.2.2 The main facade of the building remained essentially unaltered during building work. The only major intervention was the re-creation of the former coaching arch, which gives access from the street to the yard at the rear. This arch was blocked during the early 20th-century (as shown on historic photos) and replaced by a three-light sash. Other work on the facade was mostly limited to the cleaning and repair of stonework and the replacement of windows.

3.2.3 As work progressed it became apparent that the symmetrical 18th-century stone frontage was applied to a far more complex multi-phased building within and that although this had been long suspected more survived of these earlier buildings than was originally foreseen.

3.2.4 *Basement and cellars (Figure 6)*

3.2.5 Two cellars lie beneath the street range. Under the north end lies a vaulted brick basement accessed through a hatch by a narrow stair. And under the south end lies a stone vaulted cellar made of high quality limestone. This stone cellar is now accessed by a hatch but formerly it was accessed by a stair (this partially survives). This led into a chamber with central column supporting the vaults. On the street side a small alcove projects out under the pavement. On the jambs of the alcove pintles survive which show it was once gated and may have once had access to the street level. This exceptionally well-built and rather elegant cellar is likely to belong to the 17th or (less possibly) the 18th century and

is very different in nature from the hotel's two other more utilitarian brick cellars.

- 3.2.6 A smaller brick cellar may be found beneath the northern part of the range. This cellar is a simple brick vaulted structure accessed by a stair leading down from the bar above. The cellar has a number of built-in brick shelves and alcoves and was clearly used as a beer cellar up until the hotel closed for business. The brickwork all appeared to be 19th-century in date and there is no suggestion that this particular cellar was of any great age.

3.2.7 **Ground Floor (Figure 3)**

- 3.2.8 The ground floor was latterly used as the hotel's bar and lounge areas. The rooms were decorated in a mock historical style with modern half panelling on some walls. The floor was entered from the street through a central door. This led to a small (20th-century) glazed lobby which in turn led to the bar area. Upon entering one would find the bar to the left (the north) and a lounge to the right (the south) directly ahead lay the staircase to the second floor which was set in a tall (19th-century) arched opening.

- 3.2.9 The two spaces were not divided, and a large cased steel beam on the ceiling between the two showed where the structural walls on either side of the demolished coaching arch had once stood. Most of the walls were stone although the former coaching arch had been blocked in 20th-century brick. The west wall (to the left of the early fireplace) had been rebuilt in modern cut stone with two faux niches. The bar itself was entirely modern although built in a mock Victorian style.

- 3.2.10 Although this floor had been extensively altered and rearranged in the 19th and 20th centuries some early features of interest remained. Two fine fire surrounds remained in situ (one in the south room and one on the north wall) although these would have both originally been divided by the coaching arch. These surrounds were made of good quality limestone. They consisted of a shallow four-centred arched over the fireplace and supported a large projecting mantel. Large poppy headed stops were present on the jambs. The fireplaces were lined with brick cheeks and all the fire furniture was modern. The style of the stonework suggests that these rather grand fireplaces were installed in the 17th century.¹

- 3.2.11 A smaller fireplace sat in the corner of the north room (bar area) and this corner fireplace had a simple wooden mock-historical surround (probably of early 20th-century date). The central panel on this however was a re-used and cut down (the corners of the design were irregularly cut off) carved panel with a late 17th-century palmette and lozenge design. This proved to be one of a number of re-used pieces of this type found throughout this building.

3.2.12 **First Floor (Figure 4)**

- 3.2.13 The first floor is accessed through a staircase running up the rear of the building, which was demolished during the current rebuilding. It was

¹ See *Fixtures and Fittings in Dated Houses*, CBA



almost entirely made of softwood and its detailing of machine turned stair rods and balusters all indicate a modern (20th-century) origin.

- 3.2.14 The stair gives access to a corridor running along the rear of the building and this in turn gives access to two main rooms. When the site was first visited by OA the larger (south room) of these rooms was subdivided into a suite by a number of 20th-century lath and plaster and plasterboard partitions. The northern room (the Churchill Suite) was a far smaller space and had not been subdivided.
- 3.2.15 The corridor leads to a staircase at the south end which gives access to the floors above. This staircase was similar in materials and construction to the stair from the ground floor and like this stair it is probable that this was a late 19th or even 20th-century feature. The corridor itself was lit by a large (late 19th or early 20th-century?) group of windows overlooking the yard to the east. On the north side was a plastered wall pierced by the entrances to the two above mentioned rooms.
- 3.2.16 On stripping the plaster a simple timber frame was revealed along almost the entire length of this dividing wall. The southern part of this wall however was made of limestone rubble walling with neatly dressed quoins. The timber framed wall was almost intact although there were some areas of repair and alteration and at least two doorways had been cut into it. The wall was constructed entirely of oak and other hardwoods with sparsely spaced vertical members supporting a rail. A few diagonal braces gave rigidity to the structure and some of these may have been inserted at a later date. It is clear that this framing was never intended to be exposed and in appearance it is strongly suggestive of a late (possibly 19th-century) date.
- 3.2.17 *South room*
- 3.2.18 The large south room was accessed by a door in the southern (stone built) end of the corridor. Almost all of this room was hidden behind 19th and 20th century lath and plaster or plasterboard partitions and it was only when these were removed that the layout of earlier room phases became clearer.
- 3.2.19 Beneath the modern wall treatments the room was found to be entirely panelled (Plate 10). This panelling was almost universally painted in a bright pea green (which was found throughout the hotel). The three tall windows each sat in deep bays the splays of which were again covered by panelling. The panels were rather simple with small fields surrounded by moulding at the base and large plain fields above. This extended right round the room including above the fireplaces. Two previously hidden doorways were found (one complete with door) each of these had been inserted into the panelling at a later date.
- 3.2.20 There was little to date the panelling although in appearance it was suggestive of the first part of the 19th century. The panels within the windows were different in form and when they were removed they were found to have chip carved diamond shaped lozenges (with central medallion) on their rear (hidden) side. As well as these lozenges there were scars on the panels left by hinges and catches. This style of carving is entirely consistent with the second half of the 17th century and although this device was reused in the later 19th century the character of

the carving suggested these were genuine 17th-century work. They may have therefore been used from elsewhere and may even have been the shutters from the earlier windows which were replaced by the 18th-century facade we see today.

- 3.2.21 The panelling was removed during the building work and the walls beneath were exposed. At the front of the building there was a single phase stone wall, which was joined to earlier stone north and south walls. A smaller stone wall at the north end and the timber framing made up the rear wall. The fireplaces at each end of the room both had severely damaged remains of similar fire surrounds to those seen on the ground floor. The damage to these had been caused by the cutting away of their faces, this presumably occurred when the panelling was added.
- 3.2.22 Much of the south wall was still covered with a layer of plaster which had been hidden by the later panelling. On this plaster surface were the very fragmentary and faint remains of wall paintings (Plate 12). The paint only survived in isolated patches many of which were very small and all of which were faded. It was clearly possible to see however that the paintings that remained showed a pattern of large stylised flowers and tendril like branches (see Figure 9 for reconstruction).
- 3.2.23 In addition to photography OA recorded these fragmentary remains by taking a 1:1 tracing on acetate, which was then digitised. It was noted that the pattern was a repeat design on both sides of the chimney breast and that the surviving part of the pattern on the right could be used to reconstruct the more fragmentary pattern on the left. This pattern was made up of a band of small orange flowers and leaves at the base above the rose tendrils supporting large round flowers with upturned petals and red centres and groups of smaller long fluted tulip like flowers. It was noted that to the left (east) of the chimney breast the pattern began higher up the wall leaving a blank area (perhaps a low item of furniture sat here?).
- 3.2.24 A speculative and conjectural reconstruction based on the slight evidence which remains is presented as Figure 9. Although to modern eyes this pattern looks rather crude and odd and it does not relate to other known Oxfordshire wallpaintings, it does appear remarkably similar to the large embroidered hangings popular from the 16th to the early 18th centuries. The repeat pattern of very large stylised flowers in particular has much in common with designs found on local textiles.²
- 3.2.25 *North room*
- 3.2.26 To the north of this room lies a smaller room known during the latter life of the hotel as the 'Churchill Suite'. This room is notable for its being almost entirely panelled. It was lit from the west by tall 18th-century windows and accessed from the east by a door to the corridor. It had a small modern en-suite bathroom attached to the east side which lay under the main staircase.

² Nearby Chastleton House (NT) retains many of its early textiles including a number of large hangings.



3.2.27 The most notable feature of this room was the panelling which consisted of small flat fields in pegged frames. An area of decorative panelling sat behind the hotel bed and was made up of chip-carved roundels and lozenges. Whilst this was almost certainly early work it was out of place and must have been removed from an item of furniture. The remaining panelling may be largely 17th century in date although parts were clearly 19th or early 20th-century additions.

3.2.28 *Second Floor (Figure 5)*

3.2.29 The second floor was approached up a 19th-century staircase which rose from the north end of the first floor. The simple timber frame which made up the corridor of the wall on the first floor below, extended up to the second floor and forms the rear wall of the rooms on this floor. There are three main rooms on this floor, although these were again subdivided during the building's latter use as a hotel. A corridor runs along the rear and this gives access to the rooms.

3.2.30 The timbered walling exposed during building work was essentially the same in character as that below although it was noted that a few of the members were reused moulded timbers. The east west walls however were stone and of the same in character and build to those beneath.

3.2.31 A curious feature was the alignment of the main floor joists in the central room. These were clearly not perpendicular with the partition walls and indeed partially ran under one of these. This may suggest that the floor timbers relate to an earlier arrangement pre-dating the 18th-century façade, possibly when the building was made up of several unconnected properties.

3.2.32 *Roof*

3.2.33 The roof structure was only accessible through a hatch above the main stair. The roof is made up of a simple queen post roof of large trusses supporting identical softwood common rafters which in turn support the Welsh slate roof. It is clear that no early features survive in the roof and the entire structure appears to have been replaced at a late date, most probably in the later 19th century.

3.3 THE NORTH RANGE

3.3.1 The north range is a long narrow building lying on the north side of the narrow yard (Plate 8). This two storey building has a projecting jettied first floor facing into the yard. The rear (north) wall is stone built and terraced partly into the hillside. During the latter life of the hotel the lower part of the range was taken up by a large function room and several smaller auxiliary rooms. These were divided from each other by late 20th century brick or concrete partition walls. On the floor above lay an east-west passage (partly projecting over the yard on the jetty) giving access to a number of rooms. This passage was at a slightly higher level than the Market Street range and was accessed by several steps. On the west end of the jettied range a small stone range housed a spiral stair which gave access to the passage from the yard.

3.3.2 *Ground Floor (Figure 3)*

The ground floor was made up of a set of lavatories and entrance hall at the west end and a large central room at the east. A small unconnected room lay in the stone built block to the east. The stone built block was made of neatly dressed ashlar and matched a similar block on the south side of the yard. An integral stone spiral stair allowed access to the gallery from the yard below. The elegant arched doors and sash windows in this block suggest a late 18th-century date for this addition. The large room on the ground floor contained a function room (decorated in a 1980s or early 1990s style). The room had a raised dais area at the east end (built on a concrete raft) and stud and plasterboard walls. The windows appeared to be all late 20th-century and were a pastiche of historical fenestration complete with faux 'bulls eye' glass. As well as the main function room there were lavatories and a store room (all late 20th-century). No historic features were clearly visible.

3.3.3 After the removal of modern fittings however the construction of the range became more apparent. All the internal partitions were confirmed to be modern as was the floor and the plasterboard walling. The north wall was exposed and was revealed to be a stone wall made up of large irregular stones and with no clear phasing apart from limited areas of patching. The wall had a slight projecting batter at the base and this supported a shallow buttress with timber banding which lay about half way along its length.

3.3.4 The south wall was made up of small coursed limestone blocks on the western side and whitewashed brick on the eastern. The flooring was entirely 20th-century and no historic features survived. The ceiling however was largely intact and was made up of a number of large trusses relating to the timber frame above (see below). At the west end these were missing and had been replaced by later work.

3.3.5 *First Floor (Figure 4)*

3.3.6 The first floor is partially encased with the hotel's front range, although before the addition of the rear corridor this would not have been the case. The floor within the body of the hotel is at a slightly lower level and the main part is accessed up three steps, this is no doubt to compensate for the pronounced slope of the ground in the yard. These steps led to a corridor (with bowed outer wall; Plate 14) and on the north side of this corridor lay three hotel rooms (with modern inserted bathrooms). Each of these rooms was lit by a sash window in the stone built north wall. At the far (east) end of the corridor a spiral stair in the stone range led down to the yard. A storeroom was sited on the first floor of this stone block.

3.3.7 Before building work it was clear from the building's exterior that the first floor was an early feature and was made up of a projecting corridor supported on a timber rail (held by the trusses of the room below). After the clearance of many modern plasterboard and later lath and plaster concretions by the contractors, the scale and importance of these early remains became apparent. What was revealed was an almost complete late medieval timber gallery, which (due to the size and quality of its timbers) had survived in an almost unspoilt condition (Plates 15-16). This gallery survived for a length of almost 21 meters from the interior of the hotel to the stone range at the rear. This framing survives along almost the entire length although a small part of the central area has been



replaced with later and inferior framing resembling that in the main range of the hotel.

- 3.3.8 The main part of the gallery to survive was the east-west timber framed wall which made up the inner face of the gallery, this was complete with original doors, windows and substantial areas of fabric. The outer wall of the gallery was also well preserved and encased in the later jetty wall. A small north-south element of the framing survived and was situated at right angles to the west end of the gallery (within the west block; Plate 11). Although some early beams supported the gallery and survived in the function room beneath and some elements of the roof structure survived, these were only fragmentary and the gallery was by far the most important surviving early element.
- 3.3.9 The gallery is made up of a bowed outer wall looking over the courtyard, and despite later infilling it is clear that it was unglazed and had a solid wall to waist height with rail and roof supports above. This gallery rose from a lower west portion to a higher eastern gallery and this division in height was to compensate for the sloping level of the yard.
- 3.3.10 The gallery gave access to a number of rooms at the rear; these lay behind a close-studded half-timbered wall which ran the entire length of the building. Light for the rooms was provided through unglazed but shuttered windows and a number of mullions and shutter hinges relating to these survive in-situ. The inner wall and the outer gallery wall were both made up of large close studded timbers and these were filled with plastered boards set into notches. Both the rear and gallery wall supported large rails which in turn supported trusses which may have held a ceiling above the gallery. The doors (only one of which remained unblocked) had chamfered frames with small carved stops at their bases. At the east end two adjacent doors gave access to separate rooms.
- 3.3.11 As the gallery was preserved beneath later accretions, elements survived of colour schemes which are so often obliterated in half-timbered buildings. Large areas of red and green paint were noted on all the early elements of the frame and areas of panelling were often covered with a thin light pink colour wash. These remains were fragmentary and undated but it is possible that some elements relate to an early colour scheme. Fragments of wallpaper were also found on the frame. This part consisted of an elaborate repeat arabesque pattern of interlinking green and red tendrils (Plate 13). Although the pattern is suggestive of an early 17th century date the pattern is of an unknown type and the paper lacks any stamp. Despite its seemingly Jacobean design it is possible that the paper is in fact 19th century in origin.
- 3.3.12 Whilst utilising some old timbers the roof was detached from the frame and was a simple trussed roof with plain purlins supporting a slate roof, as with the main roof this and has the appearance of being a late (19th century) repair or modification. The north wall of the block was made of stone rubble and was pierced with a number of casement or sash windows which looked into the adjoining property. There were two small fireplaces on the north wall, both of which had the remains of 19th-century iron grates which had been covered by modern plasterboard partitions.



3.4 THE SOUTH RANGE

3.4.1 The south range mirrors the north across the yard but in construction and appearance it was quite different (Figure 2; Plate 9). As with the north range a smaller stone building was appended to the northern side. The main part of the building was of brick and whitewashed stone. On the ground floor was a large projecting glazed structure. This was probably associated with the re-arrangement of the 1920s. On the roof of this structure sat an iron fire-escape consisting of walkway and stairs, this led up to another set of escape stairs leading up to the second floor of the main (west) building.

3.4.2 Above this inserted structure the first floor is stone built and was lit by five sash windows. There was accommodation in the attic level and this was lit by two dormer windows. As elsewhere the roof was slate covered apart from the limestone covered dormers.

3.4.3 *Basement*

3.4.4 A small brick cellar was found under the main part of the range. This is accessed through a very narrow hatch and is entirely brick lined with integral shelving which was most probably used as wine storage. It had no physical connection with the other cellars on the west range.

3.4.5 *Ground Floor (Figure 3)*

3.4.6 The main part of the ground floor ground floor was occupied by a dining area in the glazed extension and by a kitchen to the rear. 20th-century alterations had removed much of any early features on this floor and the timber framing visible on the walls was entirely modern and purely decorative. After removal of plaster a broken fireplace lintel similar to those seen in the west range was found reused as building material in a wall which pre-dated the glazed 20th-century extension. A small stone stair at the west end of the main range and leading up to the first floor is also an early feature. The ground floor of the eastern stone extension contained a small office which was not physically connected to the main part of the range.

3.4.7 *First Floor (Figure 4)*

3.4.8 The first floor contained two main rooms (excluding the small western extension) which during the later history of the hotel were further subdivided by a number of partitions (both lath and plaster and plasterboard) into a corridor and small rooms. When the partitions were cleared it could be clearly seen that these were once two rooms, each decorated in a different manner. The western room had a crude plaster cornice of repeated large dentils running around the top of the walls. In appearance it is suggestive of an early date (late 17th-mid 18th-century?). The eastern room had curious bowed walls that tapered towards the base and were in appearance not unlike the sides of a barrel vault (Plate 7). These features are problematic and remain mysterious; perhaps the most likely explanation is that the floor was once much lower and that there was once an elaborate plasterwork ceiling with recessed walls. There is little evidence to support this but many large urban inns were once graced with tall 'ballrooms' or halls which were used for functions and even on occasion as courthouses.



3.4.9 *Attic Rooms (Figure 5)*

- 3.4.10 A small suite of rooms may be found in the attic space and were accessed through the second floor of the west range. These rooms were used as staff accommodation in the latter years of the hotel and were decorated and fitted in a late 20th-century style. Timbers belonging to the roof were exposed including large plain purlins. A number of more irregular and slight timbers were false and added to give the room a more historical atmosphere.

3.5 STABLES AND OUTBUILDINGS

- 3.5.1 To the rear of the main hotel buildings, a number of smaller outbuildings line either side of the property aside the central roadway (Figure 2; Plates 2-6). Excluding the modern chalet accommodation at the top of the site (Plate 4) these are all made of local yellow limestone supplemented with areas of brickwork. The ancillary buildings were not recorded by OA but this is a brief overview of the buildings standing in 2003. It was noted from scars on the property's exterior walls that there had been other structures along the yard but these had been demolished during the occupation of the hotel.
- 3.5.2 The ancillary buildings of the White Hart were built to either side of the narrow roadway at the rear of the hotel and the rear walls of these buildings are on or form part of the boundaries with the adjacent properties. Almost all were built of yellow limestone either in dressed blocks or in rubble. There was however extensive use of brick both for detailing and internal features.
- 3.5.3 The largest buildings were the two storey stables near the west end of the group and adjacent to the hotel (Plate 5). The southern stable (B on Figure 2) was built of good quality ashlar with door and window heads in dark engineering brick. It retained the stall divisions, cobbled floor, hay racks etc and was clearly built as stabling (Plate 6). Opposite on the north side of the roadway lay a large two-storey building made of ashlar but with the doors and window arches being made of dressed stone (A on Figure 2). The ground floor of his building was also a stable with the associated fittings. The upper floor may have provided a hay loft or accommodation (this was unsafe and not accessed by OA). The building was roofed in corrugated iron.
- 3.5.4 The remaining buildings comprised a number of open cart sheds with limestone rubble walls and roofs supported at the front by wooden columns (C on Figure 2; Plate 3). These buildings may also have acted as stabling for horses. A small modern 'chalet' type block (1960s?) stood at the east end of the yard and provided additional accommodation to the later hotel (D on Figure 2; Plate 4).

4 PHASING AND DEVELOPMENT

4.1.1 *Medieval*



The White Hart certainly lies within one (or possibly two?) burgage plots of the medieval town. The early origins of the building are at present unclear but both the name (the white hart being the livery badge of Richard II) and the surviving early buildings indicate that there may have been an inn here from an early date. The origin of the inn may be established by further historical research from as yet unavailable or unknown sources.

4.1.2 The form of the medieval and early post medieval buildings was largely speculative before the recent alteration works. It is now clear that while little remains of the medieval buildings on the street front, there are substantial remains of a timber framed gallery on the north range. This gallery presumably (on purely stylistic grounds) dates to before *c* 1550.

4.1.3 *Post Medieval*

By the 17th century the inn was a large and well equipped establishment, as shown by contemporary inventories. In form it retained at least one old timber range at the rear and substantial parts of the building were framed although there were large areas of limestone walling. The presence of large, good quality 17th-century stone fire surrounds attest to the importance of the inn.

4.1.4 In the 18th-century the inn was used as a meeting place of the local corporation and was even the scene of a riot in 1745. By the middle of the century the inn was provided with its elegant stone-built front elevation, with classical coaching arch. The basic form behind this façade however would have remained much as before.

4.1.5 Other 18th or early 19th-century additions included decoration of the large panelled room on the first floor and the plasterwork on the first floor of the south wing. Similarly the remains of a possible vaulted ceiling in this wing may relate to a tall “ballroom” or “courtroom” which may have been the meeting place of the corporation.

4.1.6 *19th Century*

4.1.7 In the 19th century the inn underwent a number of additions and alterations, perhaps the most important of which was the replacement of almost all the roof structures on the west and north ranges. This may have been partly cosmetic to lower the roof line; it may have also been due to structural problems or decay of the early framed building. In the later part of the 19th century the new stairs were added to the west range and many of the windows were replaced.

4.1.8 The brick cellar under the west and south ranges were 19th-century additions and would have increased the hotel’s storage space. The stabling at the rear also appears to be largely 19th century in date although it is presumably built on the sites of earlier buildings with the same function.

4.1.9 *20th Century*

4.1.10 The 20th century alterations were mostly internal and included at least two major re-orderings of the guest accommodation, the kitchens and the bar area. A drawing of 1915 (Figure 11) shows the rear of the hotel and apart from the open coaching arch and lack of glazed structure on the south side it appeared much as it did in 2003.



- 4.1.11 The arch was blocked in *c* 1925 and replaced by a three light window (Figure 10 shows the front of the hotel just before this work, in *c* 1920). The removal of a supporting wall which flanked the coaching arch necessitated the insertion of a steel girder across the new open bar area. At perhaps the same time the new glazed dining area was provided on the ground floor of the south wing and this entailed the demolition of the entire exterior wall. Similar work creating a function room in the north wing entailed the removal of the wall facing into the yard and its replacement with a modern copy.
- 4.1.12 Other 20th-century work was largely cosmetic and consisted of new decorative schemes. The opening up of the bar area and the creation of a mock historical décor (using some original pieces probably retrieved during building work). The re-ordering of the accommodation with en-suite rooms and plasterboard walls was a process which continued until the hotel's final days.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 The White Hart is a fine example of a large country town Inn which developed from at least the 17th century (and probably much earlier) to the late 20th century. The building has undergone successive phases of addition and embellishment to meet changing tastes and circumstances. Despite some major alterations however, it retained a number of early features which have allowed some analysis of the history and development of this venerable building.
- 5.1.2 Particularly significant (but fragile) survivals included the successive schemes of decoration in the large (south) chamber of the first floor. This allowed one to trace the appearance of the room from a brightly painted Tudor or Stuart phase, through a panelled 18th-century phase to subdivision to small hotel rooms and bathrooms in the 20th century.
- 5.1.3 The most important surviving element of the historic building however must be the timber framed gallery in the north wing. Although this area was clearly expected to retain some early features, its state of preservation and scale was unexpected and quite remarkable. The gallery was so intact that it allowed the creation of a reconstruction drawing showing the gallery as it may have looked in *c* 1540 (Figure 8).



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Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

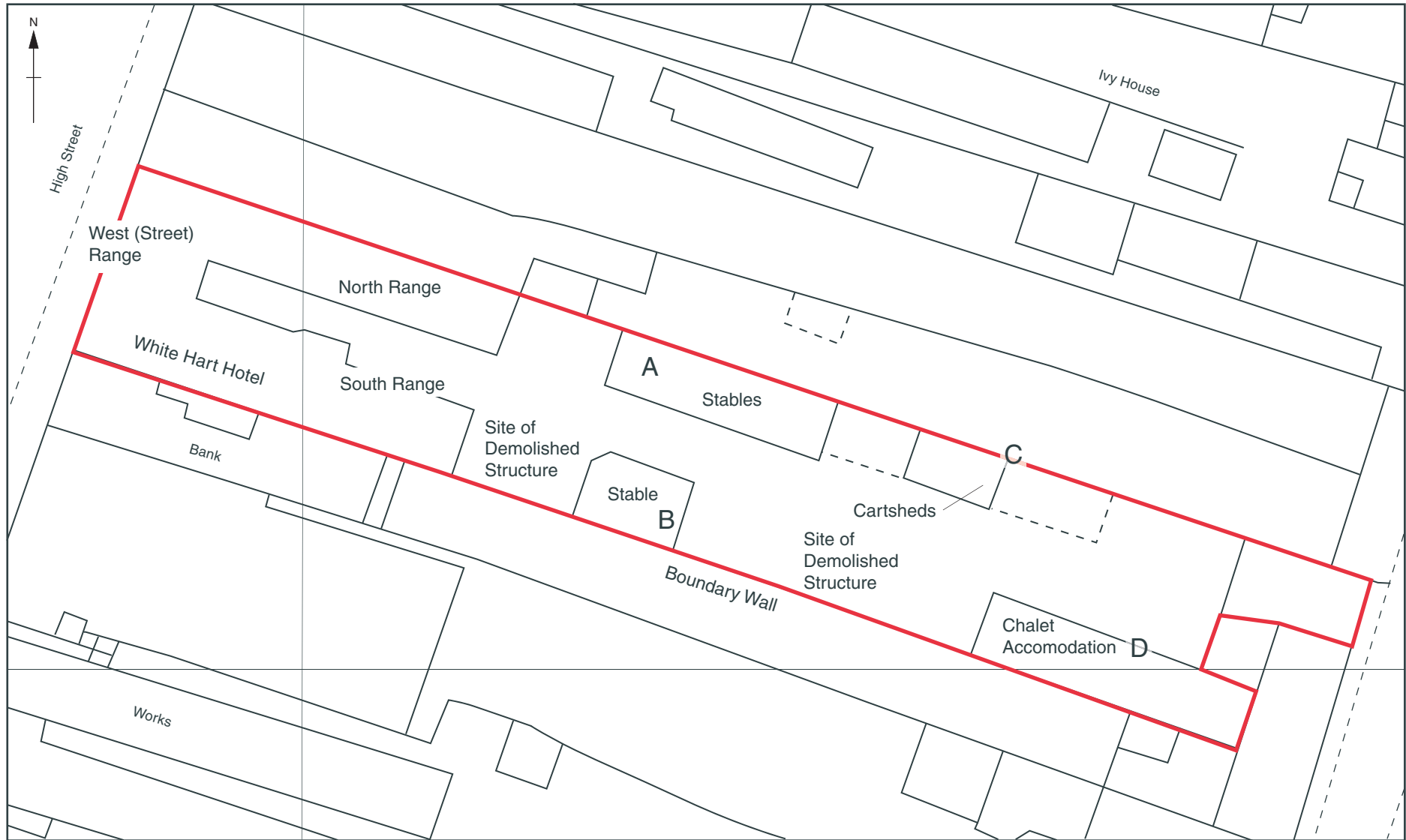
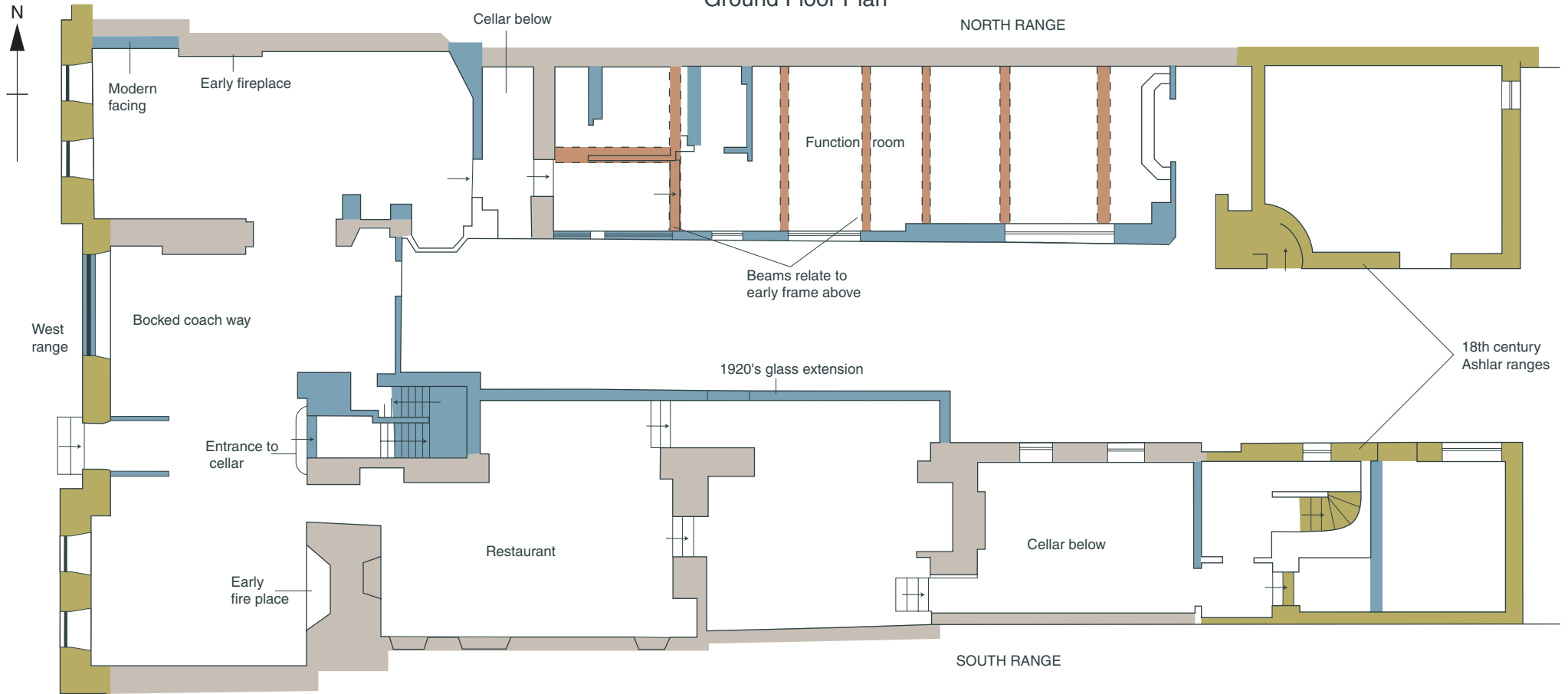


Figure 2: Site plan of The White Hart, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire

Ground Floor Plan







- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
|  | Early timber framed elements |  | 18th century stone walling |
|  | 'Early' (pre 18th Century?) stone wall |  | 19th-20th century walls |

Figure 3: Ground floor plan

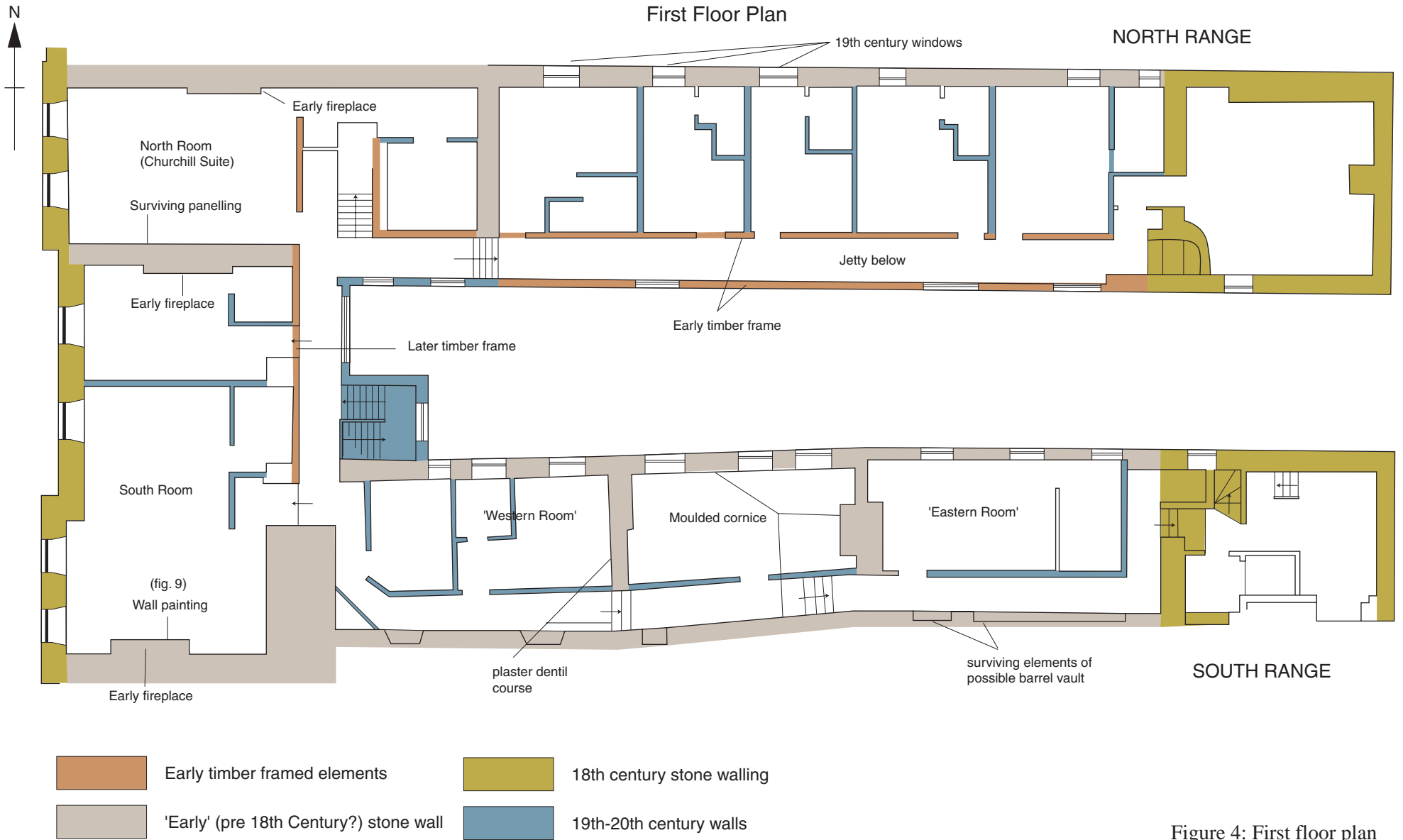


Figure 4: First floor plan

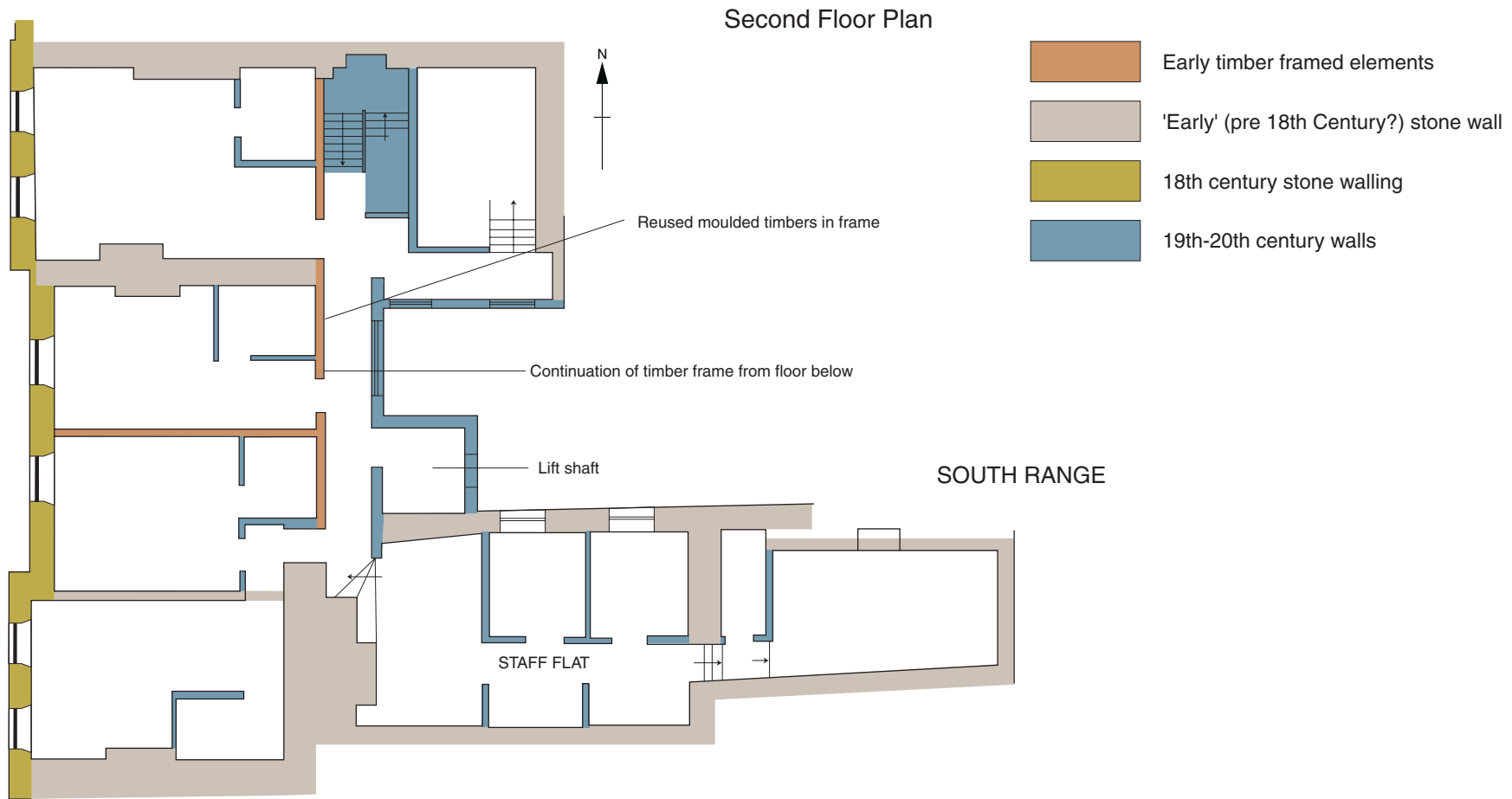


Figure 5 : Second floor plan

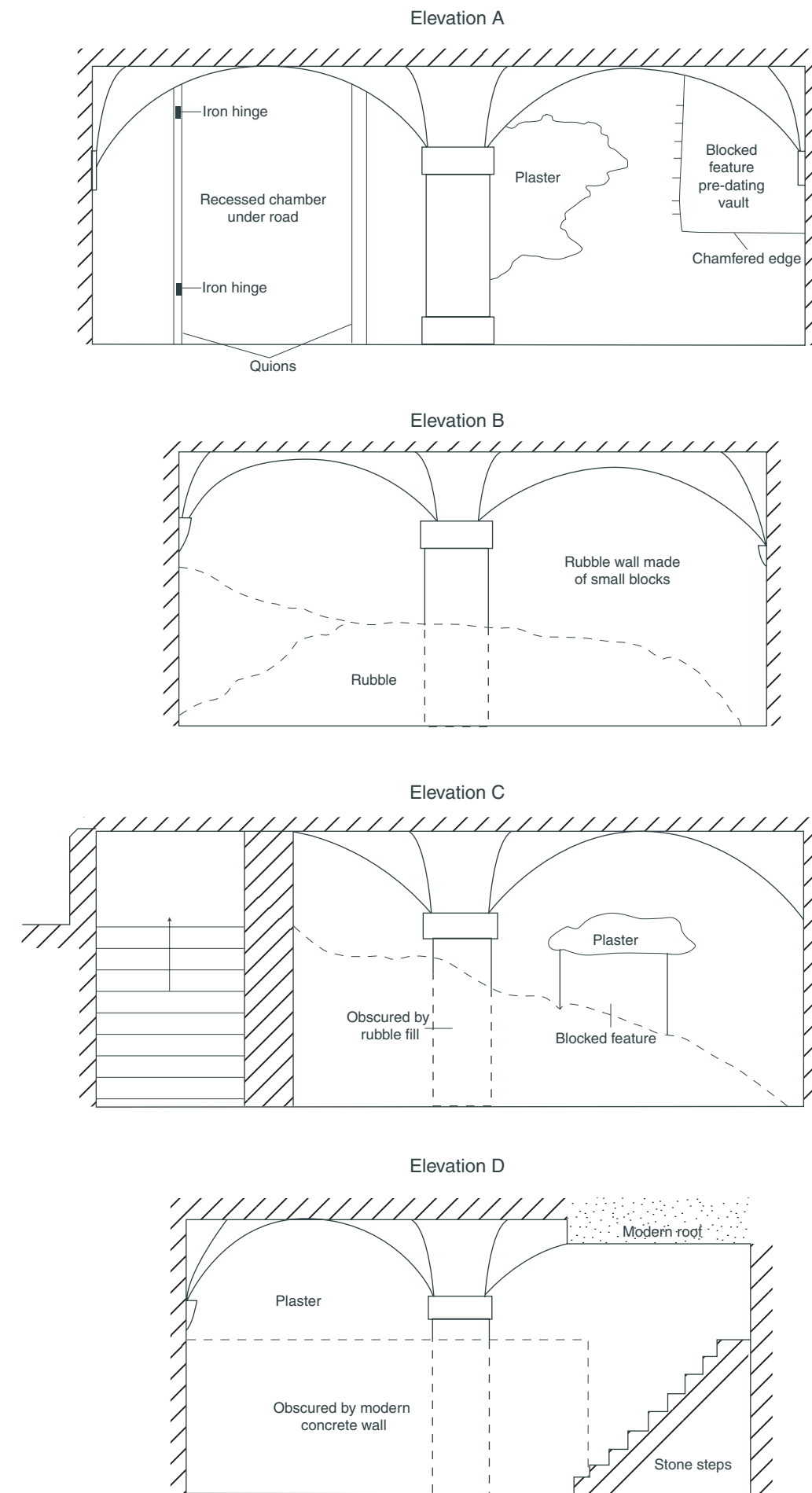
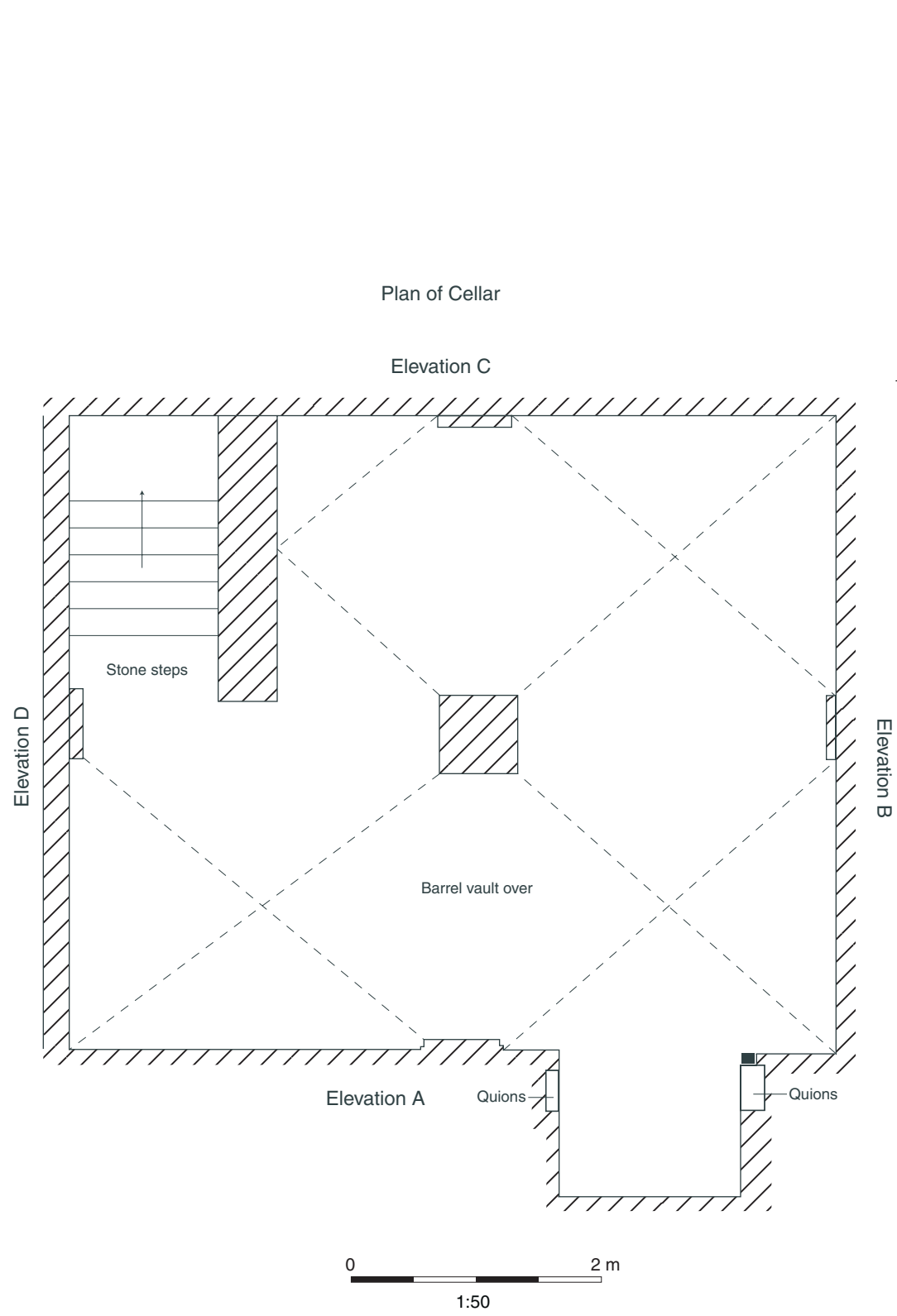


Figure 6: The south cellar, The White Hart Chipping Norton

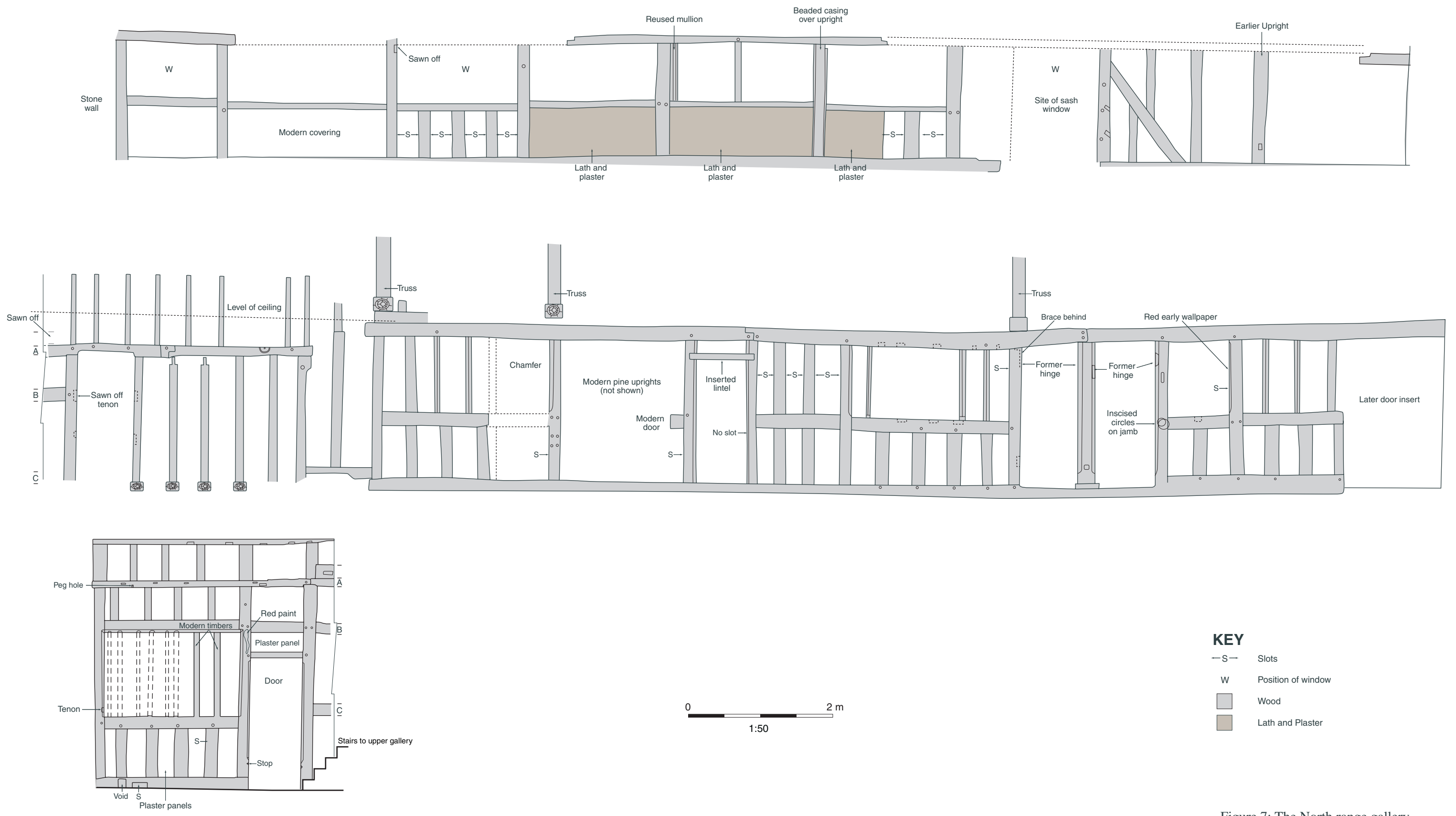


Figure 7: The North range gallery



Figure 8: Reconstruction of the timber gallery in the North Range C.1540 by Peter Lorimer



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1:20

Figure 9 : Conjectural reconstruction of wall paintings in the first floor south chamber, brighter fragments survived to 2003 in part

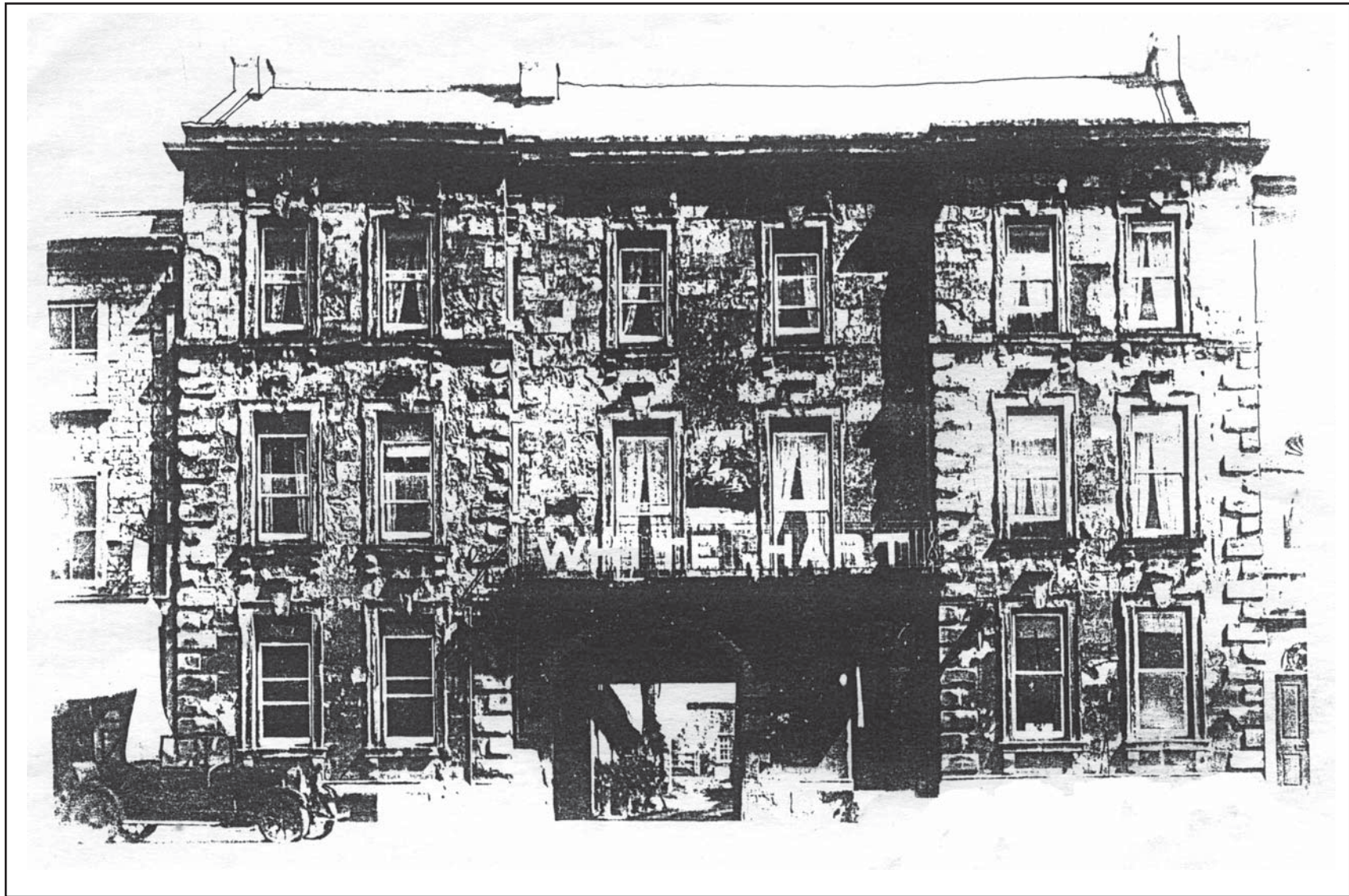


Figure 10: The White Hart c.1920 © Chipping Norton Museum of Local History



Figure 11: The Yard 1915, © Chipping Norton Museum of Local History



Plate 1: The White Hart, Market Place



Plate 2: The rear of the hotel

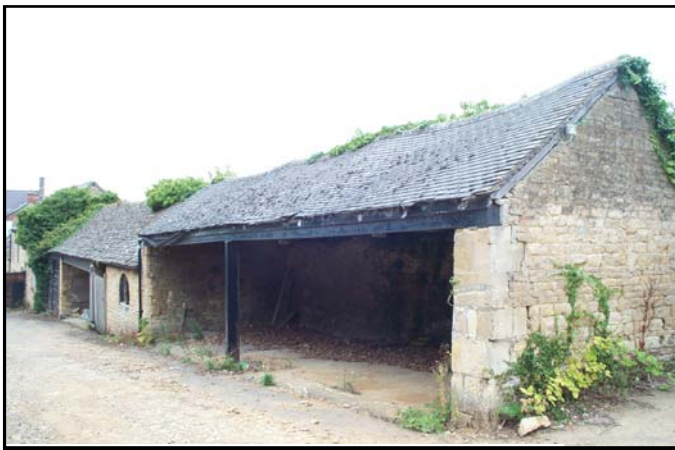


Plate 3: Cartshed at the rear of the inn



Plate 4: "Chalet" accommodation at the rear of the inn



Plate 5: Stabling at the rear of the inn



Plate 6: Stable interior (detail)



Plate 7: Bowed wall in the South Range



Plate 8: The North Range 2003



Plate 9: The South Range 2003



Plate 10: The West Range, south room panelling 2003



Plate 11: The North Range gallery (west end)



Plate 12: The West Range, south room Wall painting under panelling 2003



Plate 13: The North Range gallery (west end)



Plate 14: The North Range gallery
Prior to strip 2003



Plate 15: The North Range gallery post
strip 2003



Plate 16: The North Range gallery, east end (interior)