

# The Kings Arms Desborough Northamptonshire



## Historic Building Recording



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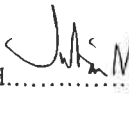
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# The Kings Arms, Desborough, Northamptonshire

## *HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING*

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# THE KINGS ARMS, DESBOROUGH, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

## HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

### SUMMARY

*Oxford Archaeology (OA) has carried out a programme of building recording and investigation at the Kings Arms Public House, Desborough, Northamptonshire. The work is in advance of a refurbishment and extension to the pub and it has been undertaken as a condition of planning approval for the works. The original inn is an ironstone building of probable early 18<sup>th</sup>-century date and it is notable for its relatively plain but attractive vernacular construction similar to that of many buildings in this part of Northamptonshire. Desborough itself, however, has lost many such buildings and the Kings Arms is now a fragmentary reminder of how the village would once have appeared. The main phasing of the inn is relatively straightforward with several 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century extensions to the rear but one of these extensions consisted of a rebuilding of an older rear range, probably contemporary with the original inn, which is likely to have been a stable block which may have served coaches and travellers passing through Desborough.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by Montage Design Co to undertake a programme of historic building recording at The Kings Arms, High Street, Desborough, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP8020 8335). The work relates to the proposed refurbishment and extension of the pub. Due to the historic interest of the building planning approval for the development has been granted with the condition that a programme of building recording be undertaken prior to the start of site works. This is in line with national planning guidance (PPG15). The building is currently unlisted but it has been put forward for listing as a building of special architectural or historic interest.

### 1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 The main aim of the work is to produce for posterity a record of the building prior to its refurbishment and alteration. The work particularly concentrates on the building's structure, construction development and use.

### 1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The recording programme was generally undertaken to Royal Commission Level III (with minor modifications as outlined in the County brief) and consisted of three main elements: a drawn survey, a photographic survey and a written survey. The drawn survey consisted of plans and elevations of the

building (scale 1:50) with additional sketches of specific features. The plans and elevations were based on a pre-existing survey of the building which was traced onto archivally stable permatrace. These were then enhanced with annotation to detail the construction and phasing of the structure together with other features of interest not indicated on the base survey. The photographic survey used 35 mm film (colour slide and black and white prints) and consisted of general shots and specific details (internal and external). The written survey complemented the other surveys and consisted of descriptive notes to explain and interpret the building. The site work was undertaken entirely before the start of stripping-out and building works. There was no watching brief element to the works (ie recording after the start of stripping out works to record previously obscured features) and therefore in some areas such as the first floor of the main inn the historic fabric was hidden by modern plaster.

1.3.2 A programme of historical research has been undertaken at the Northamptonshire Sites and Monuments Record, the Northamptonshire Record Office, the Northamptonshire Local Studies Centre.

1.3.3 The site work was undertaken on 13<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> November 2002. A project archive will be ordered and deposited with Northamptonshire Museum Services (or other agreed body). It will include all site drawings, photographs (contact sheets), slides, photographic negatives, a copy of this report and other site notes. A copy of this report will also be deposited with the Northamptonshire Sites and Monuments Record.

## 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A programme of historical research has been undertaken to add to the background understanding of Desborough and the Kings Arms. All the available maps, photographs, secondary sources and other documents were consulted but unfortunately the information available was somewhat limited and the only available historical maps were the later 19<sup>th</sup>-and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ordnance Survey maps. There is a map of Desborough produced at sometime between 1741 and 1776 which could have been particularly useful but this, and several other documents, were inaccessible due to building works being undertaken at the Northamptonshire Record Office.

### 2.2 Desborough

2.2.1 Desborough is a parish and village towards the northern end of Northamptonshire. It is 15 miles north of Northampton, six miles north-west of Kettering and is historically within the hundred of Rothwell a larger town 2 miles to the south.

- 2.2.2 There is known to have been activity in the Desborough area dating back at least 4000 years, shown by Bronze Age urns discovered in and around the town and the Desborough mirror, a piece of Celtic art now in the British Museum. The settlement was listed in the Domesday book and St Giles Church is believed to have been constructed in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century but the village appears to have grown relatively slowly before the post-medieval period.
- 2.2.3 In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries Desborough developed into a large village, probably based largely on the textile industry generally and weaving in particular, an important small-scale trade throughout Rothwell Hundred. The local weaving industry went into decline in the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and local manufacturing began to be centred around other branches of the textile industry, particularly silk, pillow lace and velvet.
- 2.2.4 Desborough and the wider vicinity is located in a band of ironstone and this has been locally quarried for centuries to provide a good building stone which gives the older local buildings (including the main subject of the current study) their vernacular character. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, and well into the 20<sup>th</sup>, it also provided employment for many people in Desborough as the ironstone was more intensively exploited to feed the Northamptonshire ironworks. This was largely stimulated by the opening of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway line through Desborough in 1857 and a large quarry was established immediately to the north of the town.
- 2.2.5 Desborough developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to become a small but locally important industrial and manufacturing centre based principally on quarrying, the textile industry and the boot and shoe industry, another trade that had developed rapidly in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. Due to this industrial development a Co-operative society was established in the town in 1863 and this had a major impact on the development of the town. The society expanded and branched out into numerous local industries as well as into farming, retailing, housing and other social provisions. In 1898 the society even purchased the manor of Desborough.
- 2.3 **The King's Arms**
- 2.3.1 The Kings Arms is located within the historic centre of Desborough which was well established by the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is at the west end of the High Street at the junction with the main road through the town. Although its alignment has changed slightly in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century this road was the Market Harborough to Kettering turnpike road which was established in 1751 and the toll gate is reported to have been immediately south-east of the Kings Arms, between it and the George Inn, the only other surviving historic pub in Desborough (*Discovering Desborough: A leaflet produced by Kettering Borough Council*). At this location the Inns would have benefited from both

locals and the trade of people passing through Desborough on coaches along the turnpike road.

- 2.3.2 The earliest available map showing the Kings Arms is the first edition Ordnance Surey 25" map of 1886 (Fig. 2). As referred to above there is an earlier plan of Desborough, produced between 1741 and 1776 immediately before the enclosure of the parish, but this is currently inaccessible. The 1886 map shows the original pub fronting the street (Phase I) with the two main rear projections (Phases II and III) and the further range to the north (Phase IV) which at this time was detached but is now connected to the main pub (see below for phasing analysis). The main thing that the map highlights is how the area surrounding the Kings Arms has changed. The pub was then part of a continuous street frontage curving around the corner and it faced the other side of the High Street rather than, as now, a wide open space created by the realignment of the main road through the town. Another point of some interest is the fact that there appears to be an open yard adjacent to the centre of the north-west side of the rear (Phase IV) range with a route through onto the northbound street (Harborough Road). The reason why this is of interest is the fact that there is a wide arched opening (now blocked) at this point in the north-west wall of the rear range which suggests that this building is likely to have been stables with a wide cross passage through it. The arch now faces immediately onto a retaining wall but the map suggests that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the yard was lower and horses could have exited from the stables to this side. The Northamptonshire Record Office would not allow the map to be photocopied due to its age and fragility but a tracing was made of the main central area and this is included here as Figure 2.
- 2.3.3 The next available map is the second edition OS map of 1900 (Fig. 3). This shows the Kings Arms broadly similar to the map of 1886 again with the rear range detached from the Inn to the front. The cross passage is this time indicated with a cross but the map shows that the route through to the Harborough Road from the north-east side of the passage had by now been blocked by new buildings. There is however a route through to the road in the external passage between the rear range and the main inn.
- 2.3.4 The next map is the OS map of 1926 (Fig.4). The only main difference between this and the earlier maps is that by now the main inn to the street front had been linked to the rear range by a small infill block.
- 2.3.5 Trade directories can provide valuable information regarding the history of a commercial premises such as the Kings Arms and they can add something of a human dimension to a study. (See bibliography to see which directories the information below is taken from). The earliest directory is 1849 and this shows that at this time the proprietor of the Kings Arms was William Essex who was listed as *baker and vict* (victualler). He presumably died and the running of the Inn was continued by his wife because in the 1854 Kelly's Directory the Kings Arms is listed under Mrs Jane Essex. Mrs Jane Essex is

again listed as the proprietor of the Kings Arms in the 1861 and 1866 directories but by the 1869 directory Joseph Crick had taken over the operations of the Kings Arms from Jane Essex who was once again listed as a baker. It is interesting to note that in the previous directory (1866) Joseph Crick had been in charge of the George Inn. Both the 1874 and 1877 directories list the Kings Arms under Joseph Crick but by 1894 the Inn had passed to Charles Henry Crick. In 1898 and 1906 it was listed under Arthur Hornsby but in 1920 and 1924 it had passed to Samuel Crick. The last directory consulted was that of 1940 which showed Ronald Panter as the proprietor.

### 3 DESCRIPTION

#### 3.1 Introduction: phasing

- 3.1.1 The Kings Arms has developed in five relatively clear phases (see Fig 5). The original part of the house (**Phase I**) is a three storey tall, rectangular-plan, ironstone building which faces onto the High Street. This building is probably of 18<sup>th</sup>-century date and has a slate covered gabled roof with plain stone raised ridges. There also survives a separate ironstone wall to the rear of the original building which has been incorporated into a later structure. This suggests that there was originally a further rear range (probably stables) contemporary with the Phase I building.
- 3.1.2 The original building was then extended to the rear with two separate brick-built projections each probably constructed relatively close together in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. **Phase II** is believed to be the older of the two projections which extends from the western part of the rear of the pub. This is a tall single storied gabled structure which incorporates a cellar. **Phase III** is the similar, but shorter, brick projection from the eastern end of the rear wall. This block is also two storied with slate-covered gabled roof and incorporates an extension to the cellar.
- 3.1.3 **Phase IV** consists of a linear range running north - south to the rear of the main pub from which it was originally detached. The front (east) wall is of brick (19<sup>th</sup>-century brick similar to Phases II and III) but the rear wall and north gable are of ironstone similar in character to that of the main building. Clearly this building incorporates the substantial remains of a similar previous building which probably served as the stables to the rear of the pub (or coaching inn). That the building was originally a set of stables is suggested by a wide arched entrance within the rear stone wall. Even though half the external walls of this building are probably contemporary with Phase I this building has been included here as Phase IV as the extent of the rebuilding has rendered it essentially a later structure.
- 3.1.4 The Phase IV range was originally detached but it was then connected to the main pub in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with a single storey link and a further single storey infill (**Phase V**).



### 3.2 External description

- 3.2.1 The *south elevation* (front) is entirely formed by the Phase I building. It is of squared coursed ironstone (average size 20 cm x 14 cm) set on a plinth which has been refaced with 19<sup>th</sup>-century blue bricks (English bond, 7.5 cm x 22). There are three first floor windows (6-over-6 sashes) each one beneath a lintel of stone voussoirs and a keystone. There are two further mid-spaced stone lintels showing that there must originally have been five first floor windows. The former windows have been blocked with ironstone keyed into the primary coursing. There is a central ground floor doorway surrounded by cement-rendered jambs and lintel but behind the cement render the top of a further similar stone lintel is visible. To the west of the door is a blocked window and a sash window, each beneath stone lintels, matching the arrangement on the first floor. The original arrangement has been lost to the east of the door and replaced by a secondary projecting bay window beneath a long timber lintel. There are three dormers within the roof which appear to be primary although the windows themselves are largely secondary. Each dormer sits immediately above a break in the primary moulded stone eaves although the sill of each is formed of secondary chamfered blue bricks. To each side of the roof there are plain stone raised ridges thus enclosing the roof slates.
- 3.2.2 The *east elevation* consists of elements of all five phases of the Kings Arms. The gable of the original building is again of coursed ironstone set on a secondary blue brick plinth although the construction of the upper third of the elevation is obscured beneath a modern cement render. Presumably the whole elevation was previously covered with the render but most of it has come away or been removed. The only window is a single sash (6-over-6) at ground floor. There are raised stone roof ridges and a brick (18<sup>th</sup> century, probably primary) chimney stack at the apex. The side of the Phase III building is flush with the primary wall and is formed of 19<sup>th</sup> century red brick (Flemish bond 8 cm x 22 cm). There is a single small casement window below the eaves and a brick chimney stack primary to this part of the building. Behind the Phase III building, but projecting beyond it, is the similar Phase II projection again of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Flemish bond red brick. This has two brick segmental arches, reflecting the openings into the bar area within the building, but the wall is largely obscured by the single storey 20<sup>th</sup>-century link (Phase V) in front of it. The link is constructed of light brown brick (6.5 cm x 21 cm) and has a flat roof. It incorporates central double doors and 4-light mullion windows to either side. Beyond the link (and partially behind it) is the Phase IV range which would have originally been detached from the main pub. Although the rear of this range is of earlier brick this elevation is of 19<sup>th</sup>-century red brick (English bond 8 cm x 22 cm). There are seven first-floor openings each beneath brick segmental arches. Six of these are windows with upper casements and the seventh (2<sup>nd</sup> from the west) would originally have been a window but has been converted in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century to a fire escape door onto the flat roof of the Phase V link.

- 3.2.3 The *west elevation* includes elements of Phases I, III and IV. The Phase I gable end is of coursed ironstone. Similarly to the east elevation the west elevation has raised roof ridges and a brick chimney stack at the apex. To the north of this is the side of the Phase II projection but this wall is entirely rendered thus obscuring its construction. To the north of this is the rear wall of the originally detached Phase IV range. The quoin of this wall (and the gabled south elevation of it) is of 19<sup>th</sup>-century red brick but the rest of the elevation is of earlier coursed, squared ironstone similar in character to the original part of the pub. The brick quoin is neatly keyed into the stonework and it is likely that the original stone building extended further to the south but that its end was capped at this point when the structure was rebuilt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.2.4 A small brick wall survives immediately in front of the stonework c.1.5 m north of the quoin. This survives from a secondary lean-to against the stone wall. Immediately north of this is a stone retaining wall which abuts and projects from the main wall. The ground level to the north of this wall is c.1.5 m lower than that to the south and this exposes a stepped plinth within the stone wall c.1 m above the lower ground level. There are two first floor windows, similar to those on the east elevation but beneath long timber lintels. The windows are secondary (dating to the brick conversion or probably later) but the lintels and openings appear primary.
- 3.2.5 The most significant feature of the elevation is a 3 m wide former opening, to the south of the centre, which has now been infilled with pink 20<sup>th</sup>-century brickwork. The opening is created by a shallow 4-centred brick arch (probably 18<sup>th</sup>-century bricks) and the jambs are also of brick keyed into the stone. The opening allows access into what is now a narrow, overgrown passage adjacent to the higher ground level of the built-up car park but presumably there would originally have been a larger low area into which this opening would have exited. The most obvious suggestion that the wide doorway provides is that this building was originally a long stable block to the rear of the inn and that the Kings Arms served as a coaching inn where travellers could stay while passing through Desborough and their horses could be rested. It is likely that there would have been a similar wide opening in the east elevation prior to its conversion and it may be that the doorway was originally central which would mean that the original building's south end would be overlain by the north end of the current Phase II building.
- 3.2.6 The *north elevation* of the Phase IV building is of ironstone and presumably survives from the probable 18<sup>th</sup>-century (Phase I) stable block. However whereas the upper third of the gabled wall is of coursed ironstone, similar in character to the primary inn, the lower two thirds is of uncoursed ironstone of a rougher character. Towards the centre of the lower section of wall is an area of rebuild (again in stone) which may be a blocked doorway. At each side of the north elevation there are low walls which project slightly towards the north and continue the main front and rear walls. Each has been truncated but

they suggest that there would probably have been small lean-tos or other ephemeral structures adjoining at this end of the building.

### 3.3 Internal description

- 3.3.1 The *cellar* consists of two areas beneath the Phase II and Phase III buildings. That beneath Phase II is c.two-thirds the length of the above ground building and the same width. It is accessed via a staircase against the rear wall of the original building which appears to be secondary although possibly just a replacement of a previous staircase in a similar location. The west and east walls are of old (19<sup>th</sup>-century) painted brick but the north wall is more recent (20<sup>th</sup>-century) painted brick. This suggests that the cellar may originally have extended further north, possibly with the same footprint as the above ground building. There are three concrete block piers along the west wall which supports the ground floor joists. At the south-east corner of the room there is further 20<sup>th</sup>-century brick flanking an opening through to the cellar beneath the Phase III building.
- 3.3.2 The most interesting feature of the Phase III cellar is the eastern half of the south wall which is constructed of stone, painted white. This wall is directly beneath the primary rear wall of the Phase I pub and the two are clearly related. It raises the possibility that there was a cellar beneath the original stone building and that this was the outer wall of that but it is more likely that the low level of the wall merely relates to the build up of the external ground level to this side of the building and that this wall was originally a more shallowly buried foundation.
- 3.3.3 There are two brick piers within this part of the cellar which support the west wall of the Phase III building above ground. The piers are buttressed by relieving brick arches apparently primary to this part of the building. This strongly suggests that this part of the cellar was added to an existing cellar which is one of the main reasons for believing that the Phase III building post-dates Phase II. The north wall is of 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick (painted white) and it incorporates a barrel slide from ground level.
- 3.3.4 The *ground floor* of the original building (G1, G2) is now effectively a single open space although it is partially subdivided by a central severy and a small lobby off the entrance. The original form of the ground floor has been substantially lost and the decoration, surfaces and finishes all date to pub refurbishments undertaken in recent decades. The eastern half of the rear wall has been removed to further open the ground floor and unite the space with the Phase III building. The central area has also been removed to partially link the space with Phases II and V. Both the Phase II (G4, G5) and Phase III (G3) parts of the ground floor are parts of the main bar area and have been refurbished in recent decades similarly to Phase I. Phase II consists of two rooms partially linked by a wide opening supported by a post. At the north end of Phase II is the ladies lavatory (G7) which was created in the 20<sup>th</sup>-

century when the former gap between Phases II and IV was infilled. It is likely that this was undertaken at the same time as the construction of the single storey Phase V (G6). This is probably of mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century date and is a corridor that links each of the other phases.

- 3.3.5 The ground floor of Phase IV now divides into three distinct areas: the south end is part of the pub (accessed by the Phase V corridor) and consists of the gents WC (G9) and the kitchen (G8); the central area comprises two garages (G10, G11) accessed from the yard to the east; the northern third has been divided into three small rooms (G12-14) that provide access and service space for the large hall upstairs.
- 3.3.6 The original form of the south end (kitchen and WC) has been lost (or obscured) by modern decoration and fittings but the central area is more interesting in relation to the current study due to its unplastered walls allowing the construction beneath to remain visible. The south wall of G10 is of painted brick contemporary with the Phase IV rebuilding of this part of the building (19<sup>th</sup>-century) and the eastern half of the north wall is of similar brickwork. However, the western half of the north wall is of primary (18<sup>th</sup>-century) ironstone, predating the rebuilding, and the west wall comprises the primary 3m wide arched opening detailed above (see 3.2.5). The opening has now been infilled with 20<sup>th</sup>-century brickwork but the arch is still visible. The northern end of the arch fits well with the stone cross wall and this is clearly the primary arrangement of the jamb but the south end of the arch continues c.30 cm beyond the brick cross wall confirming that this wall is secondary to the arch. The wide opening and the surviving section of stone cross wall both strongly suggest that there would originally have been a cross passage through the building (probably stables) at this point. The construction of the first floor in G10 is obscured above a basic unplastered plasterboard ceiling. The floor above is strengthened by an RSJ supported to each side by modern brick piers.
- 3.3.7 G11 is broadly similar to G10 with painted (unplastered) walls, a concrete floor and wide double garage doors to the east of 20<sup>th</sup>-century date. The west wall and the west half of the south wall are of primary stone but the north wall and the east half of the south wall are of 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick. There is no ceiling and it is possible to see that the first floor above is supported by 22 cm tall softwood joists almost certainly contemporary with the Phase IV rebuilding, which are themselves supported by a softwood north-south principal joist. Directly beneath this joist a secondary RSJ has been added (similarly to G10) to strengthen the floor. It is supported to each side by 20<sup>th</sup>-century brick piers.
- 3.3.8 The northern third of the Phase IV building consists of three featureless rooms each of which relate to the large hall upstairs. Each of these three rooms has a concrete floor and modern plastered (or plasterboard) walls and ceiling so the construction of the walls beneath is obscured. G13 is a small entrance hall,

G12 appears to be a changing room and G14 includes a simple 20<sup>th</sup>-century staircase. There are two RSJs running north-south along the spine of this part of the building.

- 3.3.9 The **first floor** of the primary building provides living accommodation and similarly to the ground floor its primary form has been largely lost due to 20<sup>th</sup>-century alterations. There is a living room to the west (F1) and three bedrooms to the east (F2-4). The walls are all plastered and the decoration throughout this part of the building is modern. There is a small hall towards the centre of the first floor which retains the primary staircase up to the second floor and which is probably part of the primary arrangement but little visible survives of historic interest. It is likely that the primary staircase down to the ground floor was also located in the area of this central hall but this has been removed and replaced by more modern stairs in the Phase II building. There is no first floor within the Phase II building but the taller Phase III extension incorporates a bathroom and kitchen. Again this area has been refurbished in recent decades and retains nothing visible of historical significance.
- 3.3.10 The only other building at the Kings Arms with an upper storey is the long Phase IV range which has a single open first floor hall and a small boxed-off area at the south end which houses the boiler, water tank and pipes. The walls are all clad in plasterboard other than a small area towards the southern end of the east wall where the plasterboard has been removed and within the boxed off area at the south end. These areas show that the east and south walls are of painted brick but the west wall is of painted stone.
- 3.3.11 There is a modern ceiling the full length of the room, other than within the small boiler room at the south end where it is open to the roof, but the lower halves of four trusses are visible beneath the modern ceiling. The trusses clearly date to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century rebuilding of the Phase IV structure. Each truss consists of a tie beam (machine-cut softwood, 17 cm x 7.5 cm) and two principal rafters (14 cm x 7.5 cm). The principal rafters are secured to the tie beam by two evenly spaced, circular, iron tie-rods with square bolts to the undersides of the tie. Each principal rafter has a wedge-shaped block fixed to its upper face which supports a single purlin which runs over the principal. The common rafters run over the purlin (rather than being notched or tenoned) and thus there is a gap between the roof slope and the principal rafters. On the upper face of each tie beam, at its central point, is a triangular shaped softwood block with a semi-circular shape cut in its apex. Presumably the blocks acted as bearers for a circular horizontal bar (or shaft) along the length of the building. The bearers look relatively historic (probably 19<sup>th</sup> century) but they are clad in black paint thus largely obscuring their age and nature.
- 3.3.12 The upper part of each truss is obscured above the modern plasterboard ceiling but an indication of the form of the upper part of the roof is visible in the boxed off area to the south where there is no ceiling. In this area the common rafters are visible, formed of machine-cut softwood, ridge-piece and

- primary ceiling joists with lath marks suggesting that although the current ceiling is a secondary (20<sup>th</sup>-century) feature there was always a ceiling at this height dating from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century rebuilding.
- 3.3.13 There are three phases of floor board in this hall. The primary boards appear to largely survive but they have been covered with large modern covering boards over much of the floor and an area of smaller secondary boards towards the centre.
- 3.3.14 The hall does not appear to have been used recently but a few posters suggests that it may have been used as a small gym (or similar).
- 3.3.15 The only area in which there is a *second floor* is within the primary building. This storey is within the roof space but it is part of the original arrangement of the building rather than being a secondary converted loft. This is principally shown by the fact that the primary wall plates within the front and rear walls are c.1.5 m above second floor level. The second floor is the only part of the primary building to survive close to its original form. It consists of two principal bed rooms, one towards each end, divided by a narrower bay which incorporates a smaller bedroom to the south and the hall at the head of the stairs to the north.
- 3.3.16 Each gable end is stone built so there are only two trusses. Each of these is contained within a primary stud partition but their outlines are substantially visible and they are similar to each other. They are of relatively simple construction consisting of a pair of principal rafters secured together by a collar immediately below the ceiling (1.9 m above floor). The principal rafters taper from 30 cm tall towards their base to 23 cm tall where they meet the collar. The collar is at least 20 cm tall but its upper face is obscured by the ceiling.
- 3.3.17 An unusual feature of each of the two trusses is that although the collar is tenoned to the principal rafter the joint in each case is secured with an iron forelock bolt rather than a conventional timber peg. Each iron bolt is circular in section and has a round head to its west side. On its east side the bolt's face has been flattened and a slit created in it like a needle. An iron wedge passes through the eye to secure the bolt and there is a circular washer between the wedge and the collar. Due to each truss being partially plastered over the northernmost joint on each of the two trusses is obscured but similar forelock bolts are visible in the southern joint of each truss.
- 3.3.18 The principal rafters are inset from the slope of the ceiling showing that the purlins, which are not visible and thus must be immediately above the ceiling, must pass over the principal rafters (rather than notched or tenoned into them) and the common rafters must similarly pass over the purlins.
- 3.3.19 The primary oak floor boards largely survive although in some areas they have been covered over with large modern boards. They are of irregular size

but are up to 27 cm wide. Each room largely retains its primary lath and plaster ceiling and plastered walls with rough white wash. The primary plaster (on the internal stud walls) has an ochre coloured daub as its base with straw mixed in. The doors are also historic (probably 19<sup>th</sup> century) and of a plain character. The decor is generally basic with no skirting boards or architraves. The primary stairs survive but they are simple and rudimentary and the hand rail shows no concern for architectural embellishment. There is a small hatch between the staircase and the second floor room immediately to the south.

- 3.3.20 Sections of plaster have been removed from the rear walls of the two main rooms adjacent to the secondary projections. The roof above the Phase III projection is visible and it is a standard 19<sup>th</sup>-century common rafter (softwood) roof with a single purlin to each pitch.
- 3.3.21 The attic is illuminated by three dormers with window seats. The dormers themselves appear to be primary although the windows are secondary replacements.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1.1 The Kings Arms is a building of considerable local significance within Desborough and the wider vicinity. The original building is an attractive vernacular structure constructed in the local ironstone similarly to many in this part of Northamptonshire. However the building is particularly important in the context of Desborough as so few other historic buildings, particularly ironstone buildings, survive. Whereas the historic framework of the neighbouring town of Rothwell substantially survives with a large proportion of ironstone buildings much less survives within Desborough to show how the village would have appeared before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Kings Arms is one of the few buildings that does provide some such indication.
- 4.1.2 Providing a date for stone buildings can be notoriously difficult and it is frequently more problematical than for brick or timber framed structures. This is due to the fact that building stone from the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century can look very similar to that from the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century and there is not the same diagnostic dating evidence that is visible in brick types or timber framing techniques. However there is enough evidence in this case to suggest that the Kings Arms is likely to date to the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century.
- 4.1.3 The fact that it is located close to the centre of Desborough in an area known to have been well established by the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, together with stylistic evidence in the design of the building, suggest strongly that the building does not post date 1750. However other evidence, particularly within the roof with metal pin rather than timber peg securing the collar to principal rafters and the loft as a primary feature, suggest that the building is unlikely to pre-date 1700. In addition the square-headed stone lintels with voussoirs and a keystone also suggest an early to mid 18<sup>th</sup>-century date.

- 4.1.4 Among the more interesting features of the overall building is the stone rear wall in the predominantly brick rear range with wide arched opening (now blocked). The stone appears to be contemporary with the original inn and the evidence suggests this was a stable block behind the inn with a through passage towards its centre. The mid 18<sup>th</sup>-century map of Desborough, held at the Northamptonshire Record Office but currently inaccessible, could be of great value in determining the primary layout of the inn and stables.
- 4.1.5 The phasing of the later extensions all appears to be relatively straightforward and the limited map evidence available corresponds with the physical evidence. Two 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick projections were added to the rear of the pub and the rear range was rebuilt again in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the rear range was linked to the main pub and a long corridor added.
- 4.1.6 The Kings Arms is currently unlisted but it is understood to be under consideration for listing and it would appear to meet the criteria of being of special historical or architectural interest. As mentioned above it is of attractive vernacular construction with many similarities to other local buildings such as the raised gable ridges, the stone lintels (voussoirs and a keystone) and ironstone construction. Desborough is an old settlement with a long a varied history and yet it contains only 6 listed buildings, including 2 church monuments and a milestone. It is of great importance to the character and historic interest of the village that the old buildings that do survive are retained and in the case of the Kings Arms listed.

Jonathan Gill  
Oxford Archaeology  
December 2003



**APPENDIX I      BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

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**Trade Directories**

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1898 Kelly's Directory of Northamptonshire

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1920 Kelly's Directory of Northamptonshire

1924 Kelly's Directory of Northamptonshire

1940 Kelly's Directory of Northamptonshire

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Post Office Directory of Northamptonshire 1869

Post Office Directory of Northamptonshire 1877

1866 Royal Directory Printing and Publishing Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer  
for Northamptonshire

Whellan 1849 History, Gazetteer and Directory of Northamptonshire

Whellan & Co 1874 History, Gazetteer and Directory of Northamptonshire

**APPENDIX II      SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:**

**Site code:**

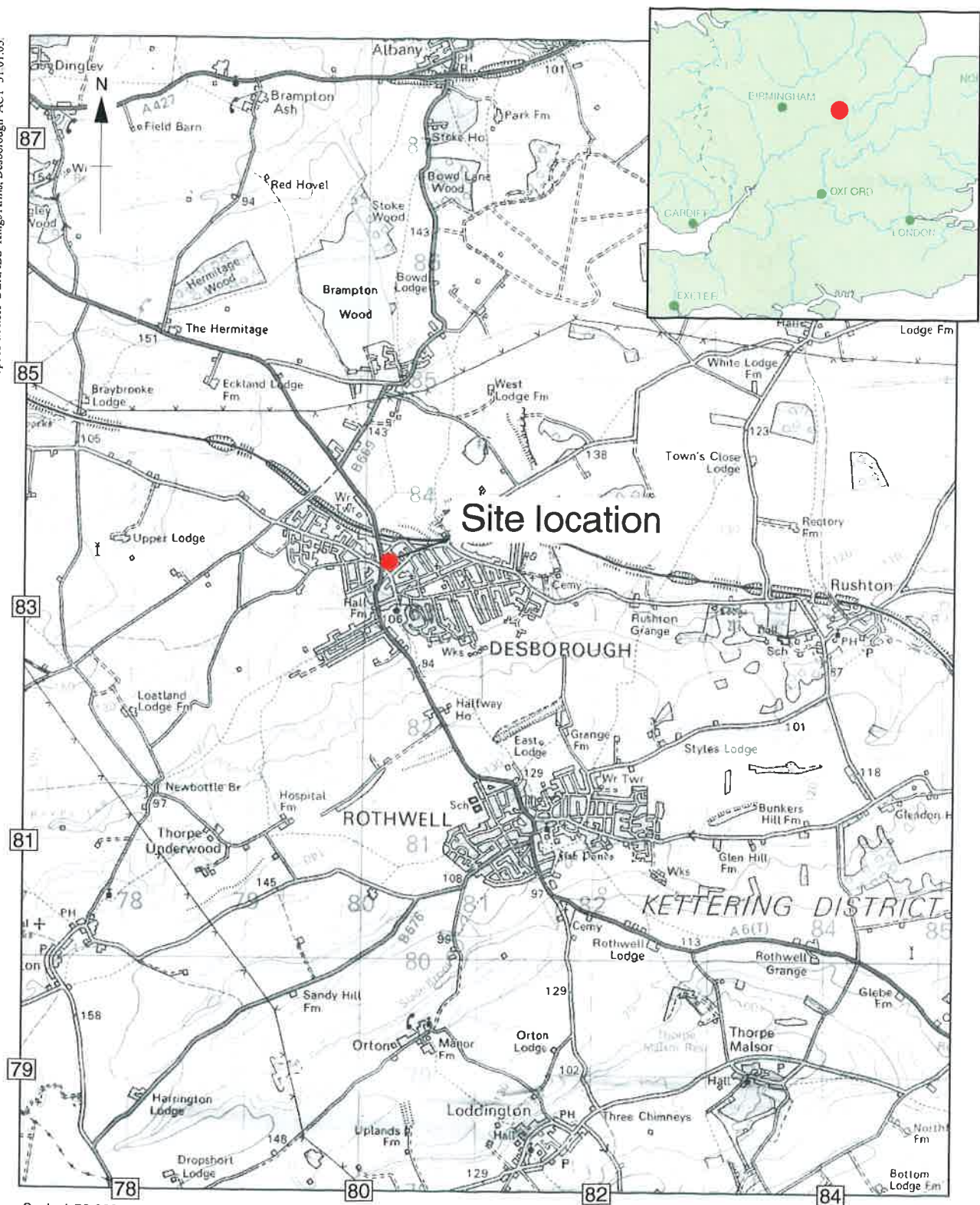
**Grid reference:**

**Type of evaluation:** Building Analysis

**Date and duration of project:**

**Summary of results:**

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



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

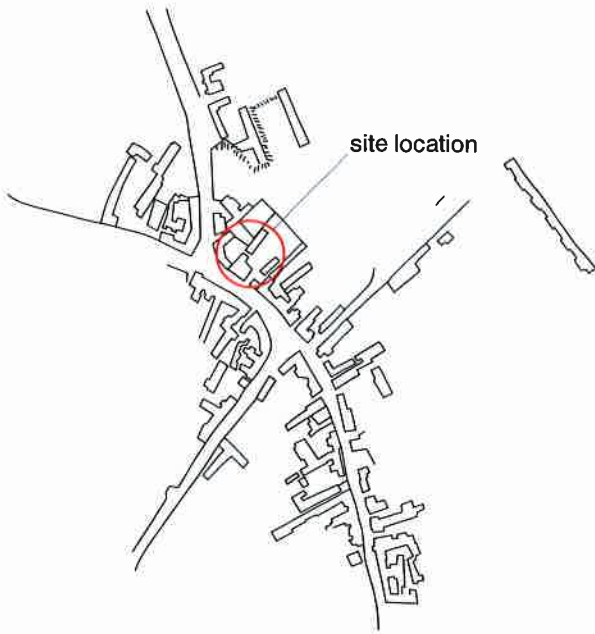


Figure 2: 1st edition 25" Ordnance Survey Map, 1886 (tracing from original)

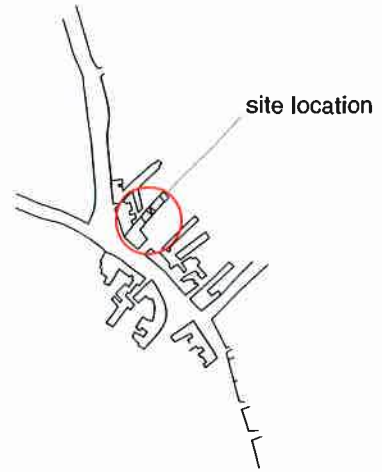


Figure 4: 1926 edition 25" Ordnance Survey Map, (tracing from original)

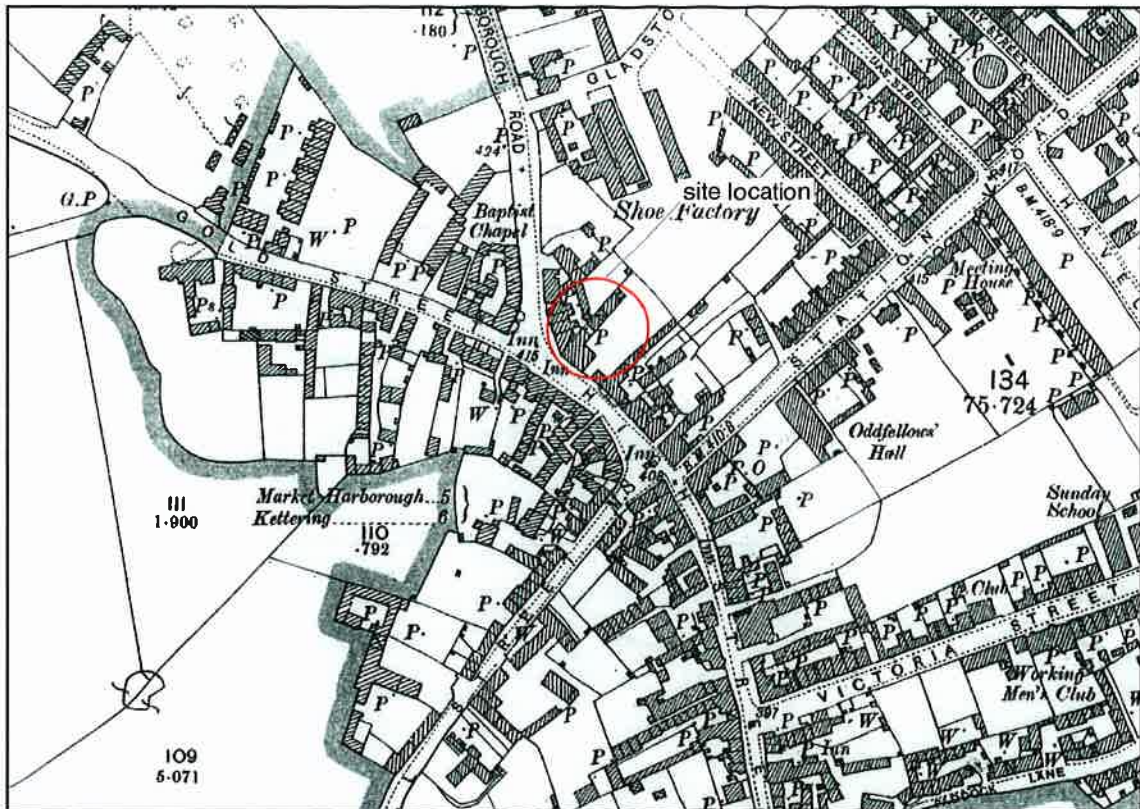


Figure 3: 2nd edition 25" Ordnance Survey Map, 1900

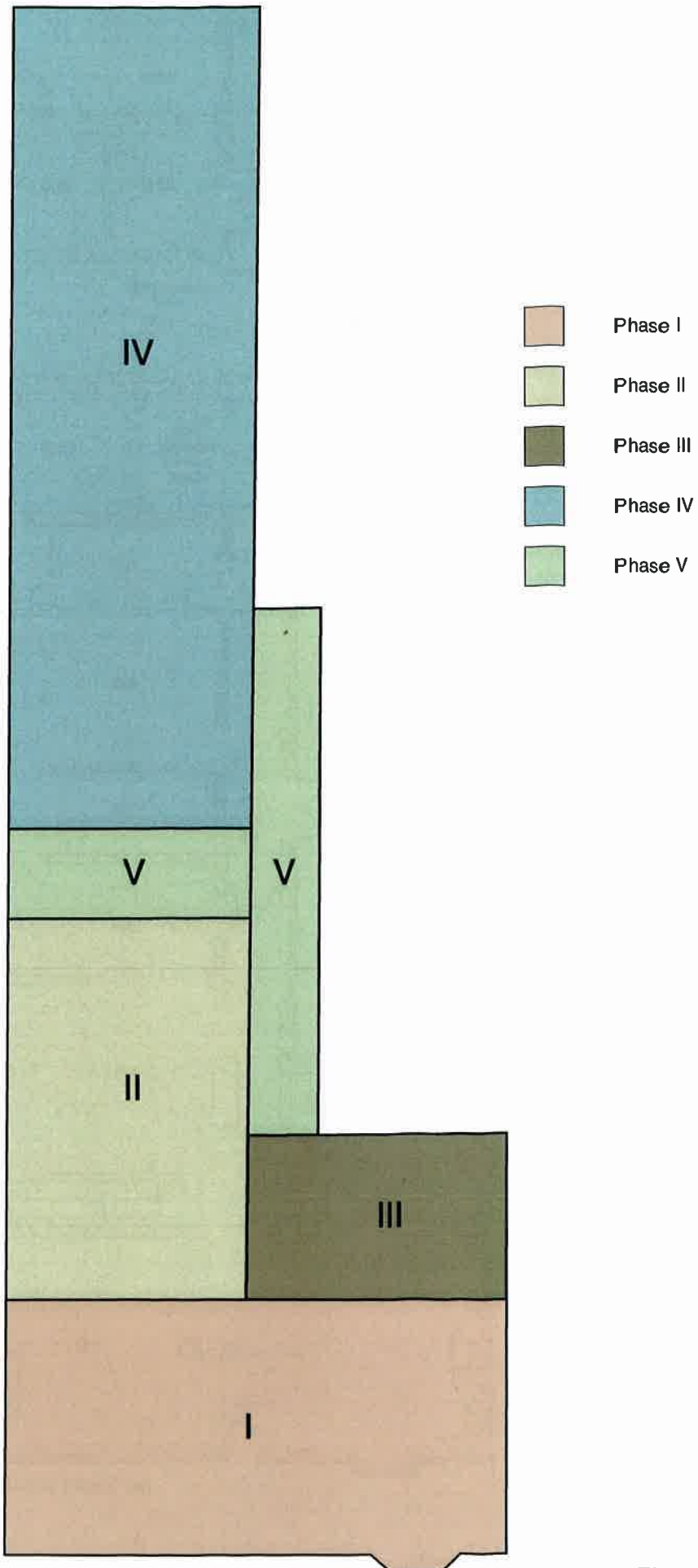


Figure 5: Phasing plan

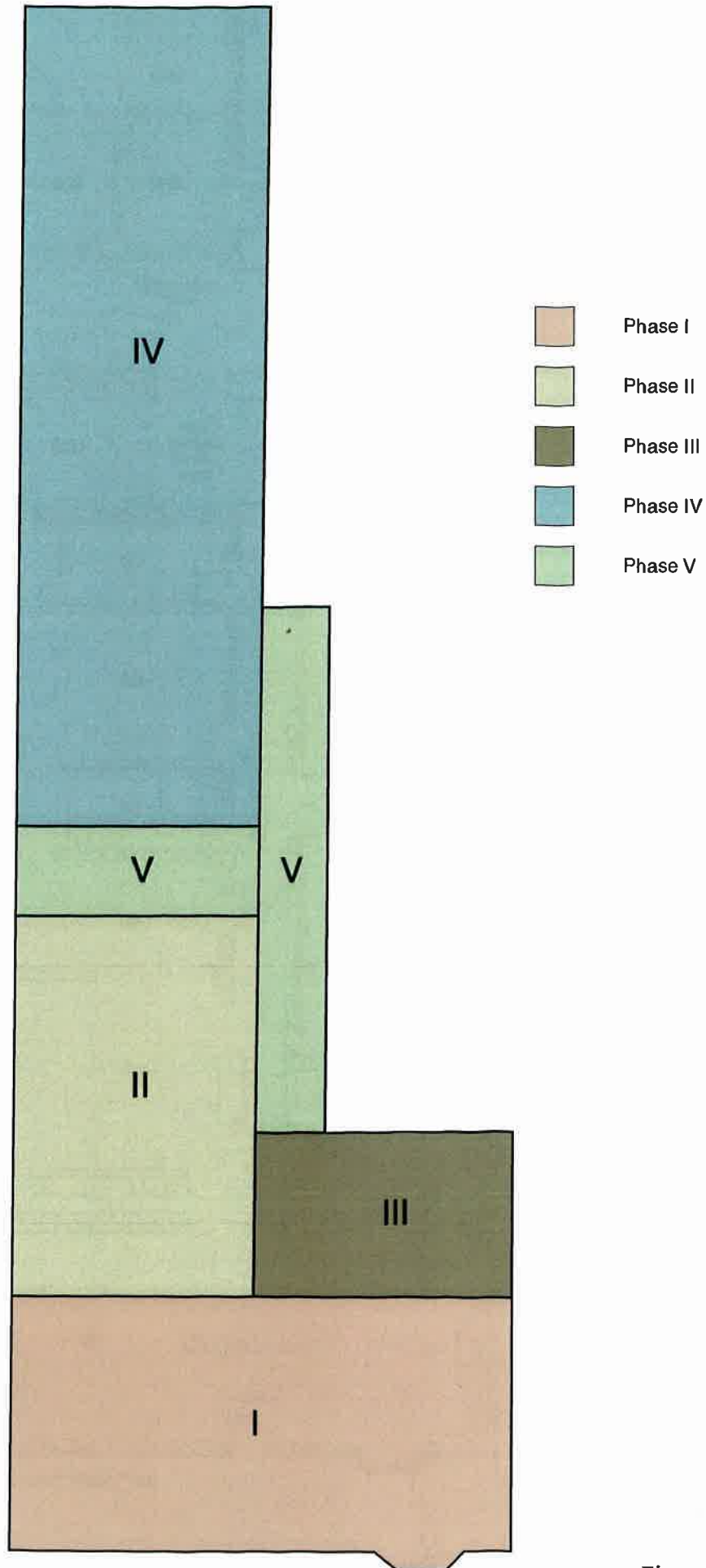
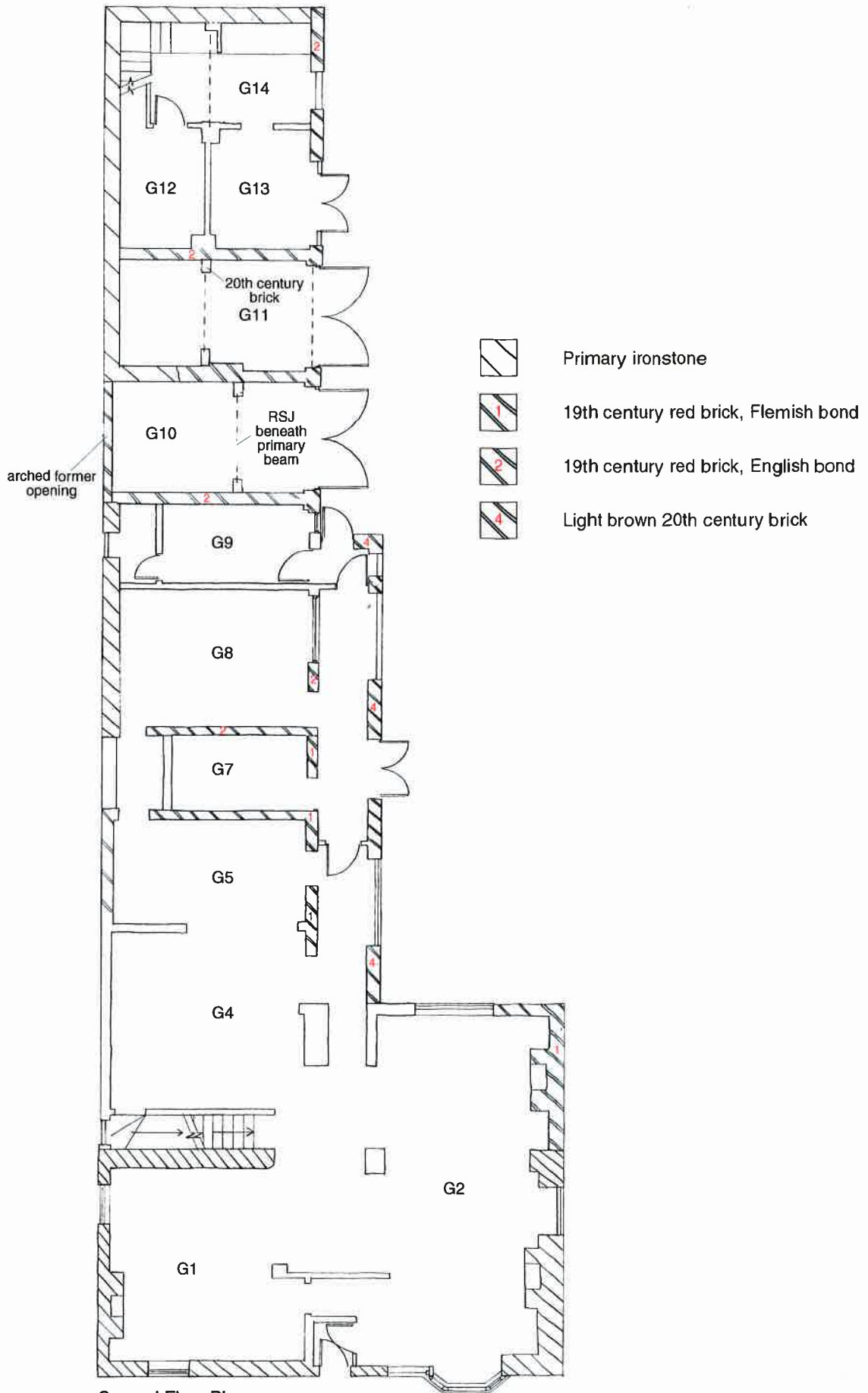


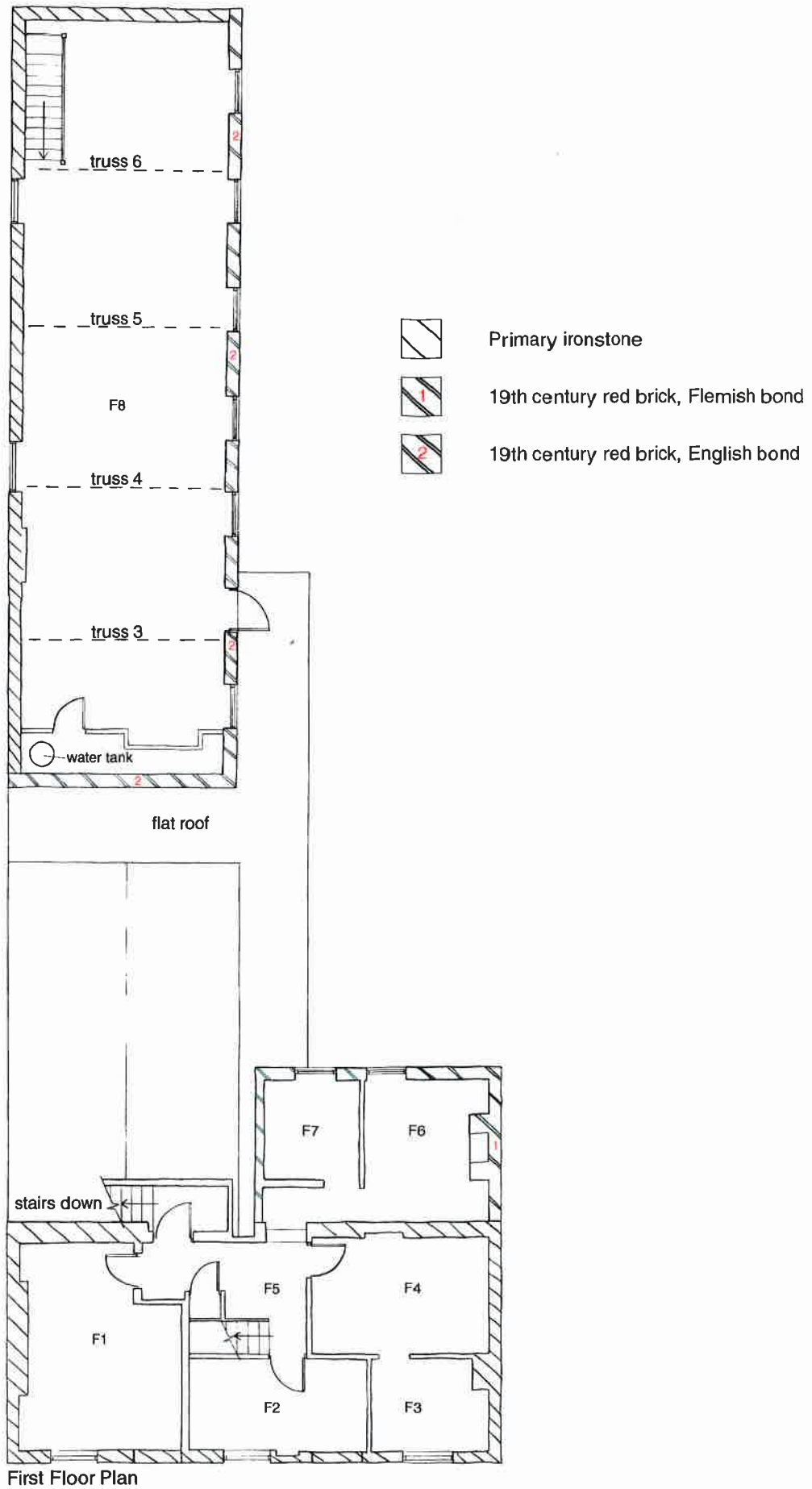
Figure 5: Phasing plan



Ground Floor Plan

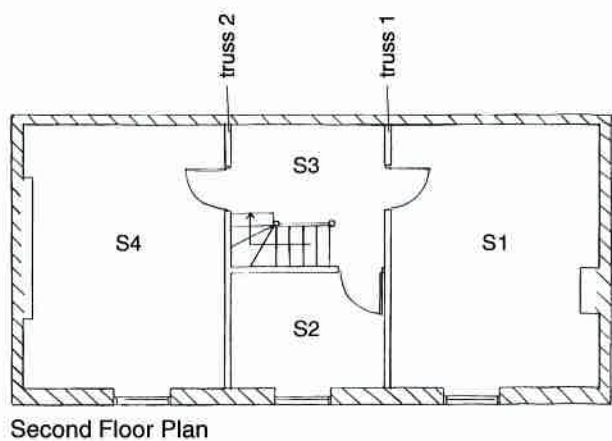
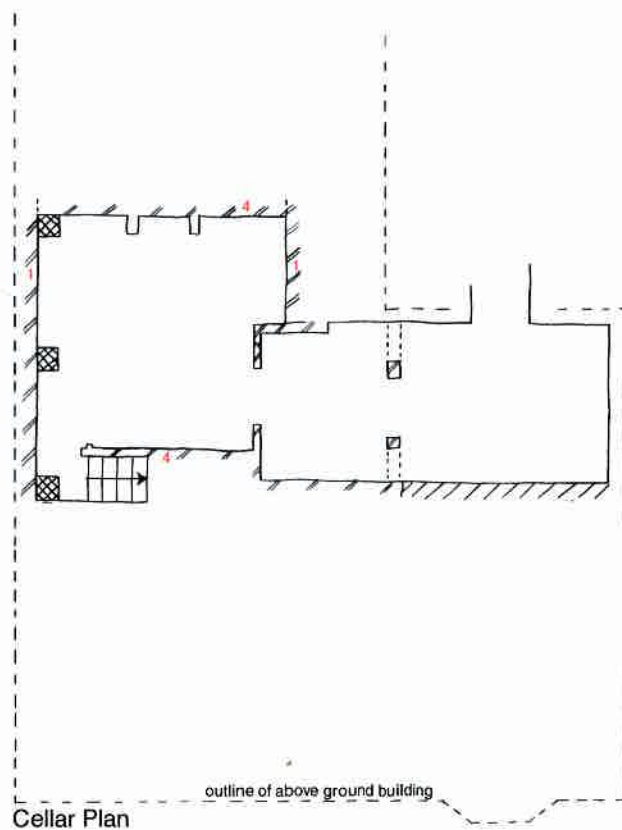


Figure 6: Ground floor plan



First Floor Plan

Figure 7: First floor plan







-  Primary ironstone
-  19th century red brick, Flemish bond
-  Light brown 20th century brick
-  Concrete block










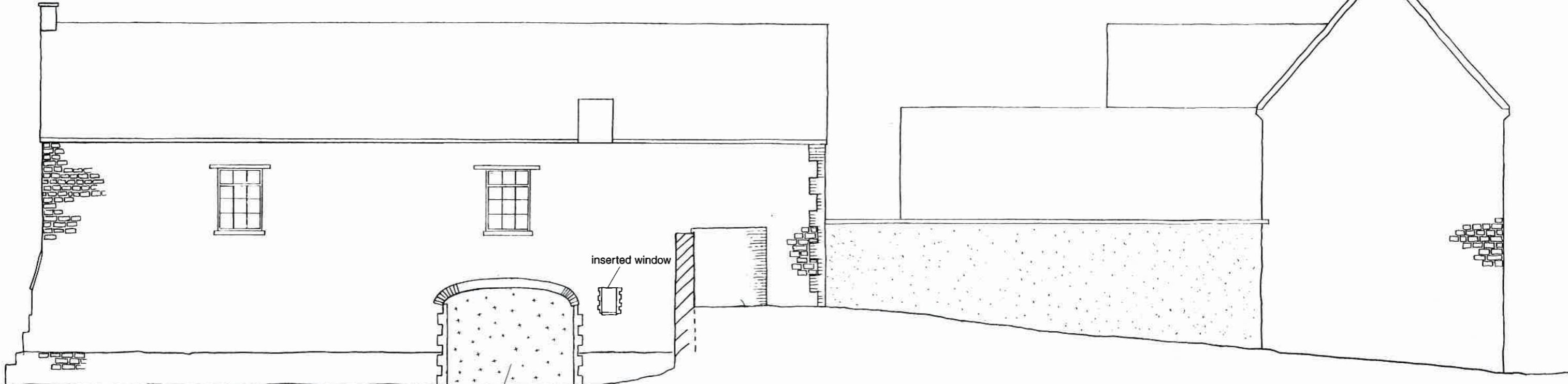
Figure 8: Cellar and 2nd floor plan





East Elevation

-  Primary ironstone squared & coarsed  
- various sizes 15-30 cm x 10-15 cm high
-  19th century red brick, Flemish bond
-  19th century red brick, English bond
-  Light brown 20th century brick
-  Pink 20th century infill brick
-  20th century render
-  19th century blue brick, English bond  
7.5 cm x 22 cm



West Elevation

former arched doorway in primary stables  
arch formed of 18th -century bricks

inserted window

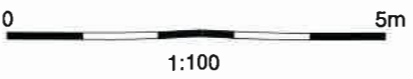


Figure 9: Elevations I



South Elevation

19th century blue brick plinth

blocked window

20th century render



Figure 10: Elevations II



Plate 1: View of south front of Phase I pub



Plate 2: Detail of front of pub showing blocked window



Plate 3: East side of original ironstone pub with 19th-century brick extension



Plate 4: Rear (west) face of former stable block



Plate 5: Blocked arched opening in rear of former stable block



Plate 6: Inserted window and edge of former arched opening



Plate 7: General view of pub from north-east



Plate 8: East face of Phase IV extension



Plate 9: Junction between four secondary extensions



Plate 10: North wall of rebuilt former stables



Plate 11: Interior of first floor of Phase IV building



Plate 12: Internal view of blocked arch in former stables



Plate 13: View within S1



Plate 14: Detail of forelock bolt in truss between S1 and S2



Plate 15: View within S1



Plate 16: Stairs at second floor level and internal window to S2



Plate 17: View in east half of cellar



Plate 18: View in west half of cellar



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