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The National Trust
Thames and Chilterns Region

CHASTLETON HOUSE

Archaeological Evaluation of Brewhouse/Kitchen
Garden and Additional Building Recording



Oxford Archaeological Unit
May 1993

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Interim Report

1. Introduction

A further evaluation exercise was undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) on behalf of the National Trust within the area to the N of the brewhouse range and to the W of the main house, presently laid out as a lawn and shrubbery with topiaried yew tree hedge borders. The work was carried out between the 26-29 April 1993, in order to ascertain the nature and extent of any surviving yard surfaces/pathways between the brewhouse range and the main house, concentrating in particular on the areas immediately exterior to the three doorways leading out of the brewhouse/tackroom buildings. In addition, a small amount of probing was undertaken within the area of the 1992 investigations to define the southerly extent of the cobbling within the brewhouse courtyard. This interim report of recent findings will be incorporated into a single report on the brewhouse and stables.

2. Summary

A total of 15 trenches were excavated by hand (see figure 1) and the results are summarised below (section 3 and table 1). Substantial cobbled surfaces were located within six of the trenches (10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 20). Four of these surfaces (10, 13, 14, and 20) probably represent a single, late, pathway layout which appears to respect the arrangement of yew tree hedges which border the central garden area. This pathway was noted to extend along the northern edge of the garden, and to lead to the gate at the extreme NW corner of the evaluation area. The absence of any surface within trench 9 confirms that this pathway did not extend W of the central doorway in the northern brewhouse wall. These surfaces (excluding that in trench 20) were of a similar nature to those located, during the 1992 investigations, immediately exterior to the two doorways leading out from the brewhouse to the S.

Trenches 10 and 11 revealed a second, lower metalled surface of worn limestone *c.* 0.09m below the surface represented by 10/2, possibly an earlier surface on a similar layout. Trenches 6-9 revealed no convincing metalled surfaces, though extensive root disturbance was noted, the rough predominantly unworn limestone layers encountered in these trenches could be interpreted as an original building level. (It should be noted at this point that the limitation on the size of the trenches imposed by the presence of scaffolding on the exterior of the brewhouse at the time of the evaluation made positive interpretation of layers rather problematical, particularly in the case of trenches 6-9).

The absence of any yard surfaces within trench 17 suggests that the series of pathways described above did not extend over the whole of the present garden area, but ran along the N edge of the brewhouse range and northwards to the kitchen/beer cellar access doors possibly enclosing a small kitchen garden to the W (see figure 1). Excavation of a larger area subsequent to the removal of scaffolding would facilitate a fuller understanding of the sequence of the pathways and of the layout and form of the garden area itself. Also, the question of possible drains leading northwards out of the brewhouse could be investigated further.

3. Trench descriptions

Trench 6 (0.75m x 0.50m)

Trench located immediately exterior to blocked doorway at W of brewhouse range. The trench was excavated by hand to reveal a rough layer of unworn limestone rubble, within a matrix of pale yellow/brown sandy silt (6/3). This layer was overlaid by 0.24m of topsoil and subsoil with much root disturbance in evidence, making identification as a distinct surface impossible, the layer could equally well be interpreted as an original building level. The fact that 6/3 was located at a height of 172.60m OD, some 0.44m below the step level of the adjacent doorway (173.04m OD) perhaps makes the latter interpretation more likely.

Trench 7 (0.75m x 0.50m)

Trench located 0.75m N of brewhouse wall approx. 7m E of trench 6. As with trench 6, much root disturbance was in evidence within this trench, and layer 7/3, similar in nature to 6/3 was not positively identified as a metalled surface. However, a layer of small cobble stones, seen in the N section only, at a height of 173.02m OD may represent the disturbed remnants of a cobbled surface.

Trench 8 (0.75m x 0.30m)

Trench located 1m E of trench 7. A very disturbed layer of limestone rubble (8/2) similar in nature to 6/3 and 7/3 was located at a height of 173.30m OD. Again, identification as a metalled surface was not possible.

Trench 9 (0.50m x 0.60m)

Trench located 1.80m E of trench 8, c. 2m W of central doorway to brewhouse range. 0.25m of heavily root disturbed topsoil overlay layer 9/2, again similar in nature to layers 6/3, 7/3, and 8/2. This trench provided negative evidence that surface 10/2 did not extend W of the central doorway.

Trench 10 (1.60m x 0.50m)

Trench located 0.65m from brewhouse wall, immediately E of central doorway. A substantial cobbled surface (10/2) was located at a height of 173.67m OD, overlaid by 0.04m of topsoil. The surface comprised smooth rounded pebbles up to 0.12m x 0.07m x 0.07m and had a max. depth of 0.13m. The trench was extended northwards to ascertain the N extent of this surface which was found to project 1.60m from the brewhouse wall. A second surface of worn limestone (10/4) was located within the N half of the trench below 10/2 at a height of 173.58m OD.

Trench 11 (0.70m x 0.60m)

Trench located c. 1m N of trench 10. 0.14m of topsoil overlay a compacted limestone surface similar in nature to 10/4. This surface was located at a height of 173.56m OD.

Trench 12 (0.50m x 0.50m)

Trench located c. 2m N of trench 11. 0.15m of topsoil (12/1) overlay a layer of loose limestone

rubble (12/2) within a matrix similar to 12/1. Beneath this layer was a fairly clean layer of pale yellow/brown silty clay (12/3) which in turn overlay a more compacted layer of flat limestone rubble, located at a height of 173.26m OD, which may represent a yard surface or an original building level.

Trench 13 (0.60m x 0.60m)

Trench located to the E of the evaluation area, exterior to the easternmost doorway of the N brewhouse wall. 0.08m of topsoil overlay a substantial cobbled surface (13/2) similar in nature to 10/2. The surface comprised smooth rounded pebbles up to 0.12m x 0.08m within a matrix of pale yellow mortar, and also contained fragments of tile and brick. The surface was located at a height of 173.82m OD.

Trench 14 (0.60m x 0.50m)

Trench located to the E of the evaluation area, c. 1.5m N of trench 13. 0.17m of topsoil (14/1) overlay a thin layer of modern building rubble comprising brick/tile/stone roofing slate. This layer in turn overlay a substantial cobbled surface (14/3) similar in nature to 13/2. The cobbled surface was located at a height of 173.73m OD.

Trench 15 (0.75m x 0.75m)

Trench located towards centre of garden area c. 5m N of brewhouse. 0.20m of topsoil (15/1) overlay an uneven possible yard surface (15/2) comprising flat worn limestone pieces up to 0.17m x 0.12m. This surface was located at a height of 173.04m OD (NB. same height as step to westernmost doorway to brewhouse range).

Trench 16 (1.40m x 0.30m)

Trench located towards centre of garden area c. 9m N of brewhouse. 0.14m of topsoil (16/1) overlay a layer of very loosely compacted limestone pieces within a matrix of yellow/brown silty clay (16/2). This overlaid a cleaner silty clay layer similar in nature to 12/3, which in turn overlay a compacted, weathered limestone surface (16/4). This surface was located at a height of 173.17m OD, and was cut away at the E end of the trench by a modern drainage pipe which ran SW-NE across the garden area towards a soakaway to the N of the evaluation area.

Trench 17 (0.75m x 0.75m)

Trench located in centre of garden area c. 12.5m N of the brewhouse and 15m W of the main house. The trench was dug by hand to a depth of 172.80m OD. No surfaces of any description were encountered and excavation ceased at this point. Evidence from this trench suggests that no yard surfaces have existed within this part of the evaluation area.

Trench 18 (0.75m x 0.45m)

Trench located c. 2m E of trench 15. 0.20m of topsoil (18/1) overlay a very rough surface of limestone pieces up to 0.17m x 0.15m (18/2) some of which exhibited signs of burning. This surface was located at a height of 173.18m OD.

Trench 19 (0.65m x 0.60m)

Trench located towards E of garden area c. 2m E of trench 16. 0.20m of topsoil (19/1) overlay a

mid yellow/grey subsoil (19/2) which was 0.24m deep and contained occasional limestone fragments and lenses of ashy material. This layer probably represents a former garden soil. Below 19/2 was a layer of firm yellow/brown silty clay (similar to 12/3) which in turn overlay a possible surface of flat, worn limestone pieces (similar to 12/4). This surface was located at a height of 173.23m OD.

Trench 20 (1.50m x 0.35m)

Trench located between garden and main house in extreme NW of evaluation area. 0.06m of topsoil directly overlay a well compacted surface (20/2) comprising small rounded pebbles and sub angular limestone pieces within a yellow gritty mortar matrix. To the W of the trench was located a single flagstone (max. visible dimensions = 0.47m x 0.35m). This surface was located at a height of 173.42m OD.

4. Building survey

In addition to the trenches described above (section 3), the opportunity for access offered by the presence of scaffolding was exploited and a small amount of building survey was undertaken within the stable/brewhouse range. The timber roof truss at the E of the brewhouse was drawn at a scale of 1:20 (see figure 2). Access below the floorboards of the tack room revealed an original flagstone floor surface at a distance of c. 0.97m below the current floor. To the E side of the N tackroom wall was located a blocked doorway (obscured by panelling in the tack room itself) which corresponds to opening 22 on the exterior elevation of the brewhouse range. The north elevation of the tackroom was drawn at a scale of 1:50 (see figure 3). Examination of the top of the E wall of the tack room revealed that it was of stone rubble construction faced with brickwork. This wall abutted the blocked doorway in the N wall and was obviously a later addition, thus rendering any relationship between the flagstone floor of the tackroom with the adjoining space to the E unidentifiable, though the possibility remains that a doorway and stairs originally connected the two.

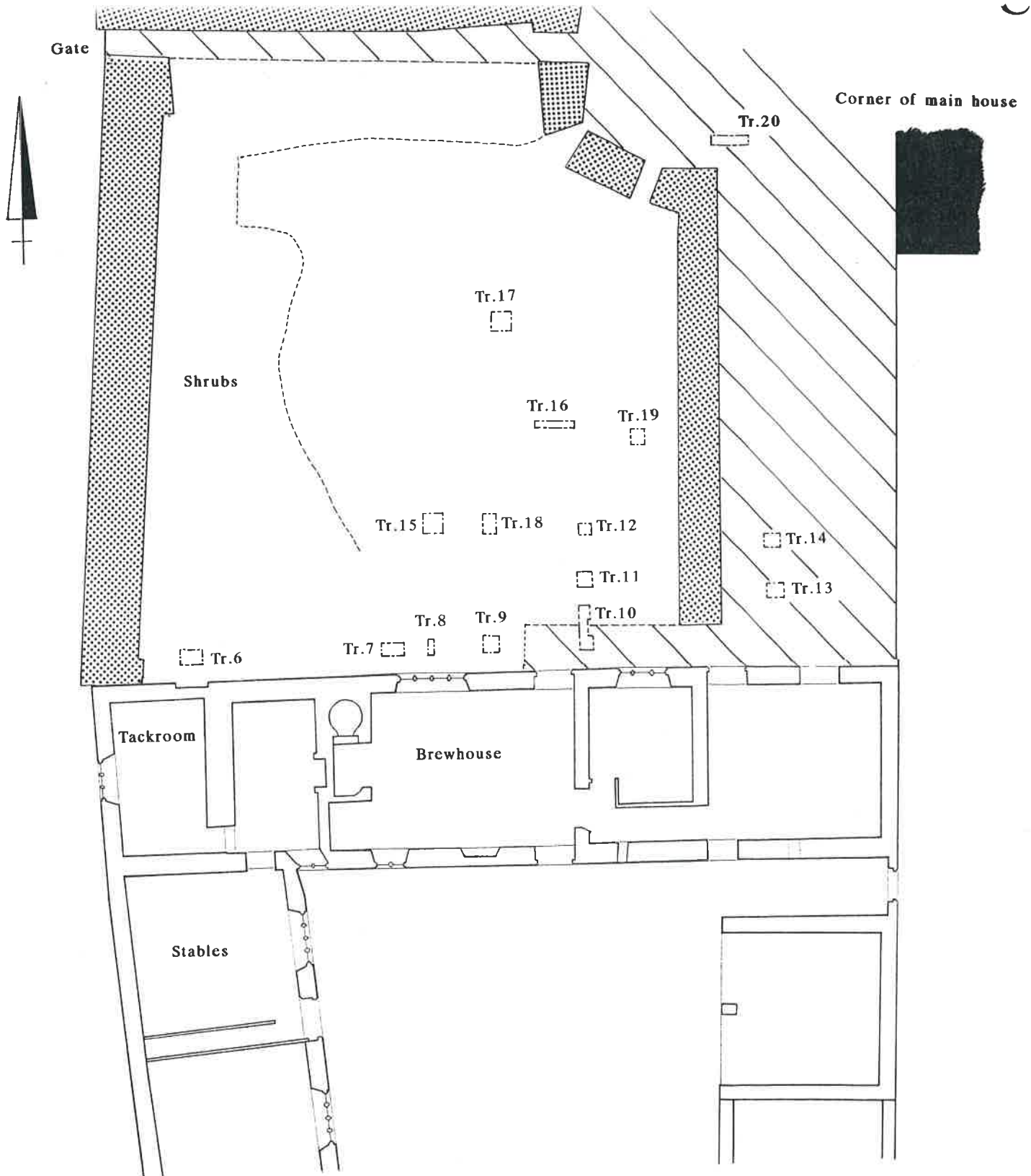
A survey of the wallplates was undertaken (see figure 4) and it was found that the N wall of the brewhouse included a number of original timbers displaying mortices for rafters. A piece of reused timber was noted in the stables, otherwise the wallplates were found to be have been replaced.

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


Table of contexts

Trench no.	Context No.	Context type	Comments	Depth
6	6/1	layer	topsoil	0.12m
	6/2	layer		0.12m
	6/3	?surface	poss. building level	
7	7/1	layer	topsoil	0.17m
	7/2	?surface	seen in section only	
	7/3	layer	limestone rubble	
8	8/1	layer	topsoil	0.15m
	8/2	layer	limestone rubble	
9	9/1	layer	topsoil	0.25m
	9/2	layer	as 8/2	
10	10/1	layer	topsoil (S of trench)	0.04m
	10/2	surface	upper cobbled surface	0.13m
	10/3	layer	topsoil (N of trench)	0.17m
	10/4	surface	lower cobbled surface	
11	11/1	layer	topsoil	0.14m
	11/2	surface	similar to 10/4	
12	12/1	layer	topsoil	0.15m
	12/2	layer		0.11m
	12/3	layer		0.11m
	12/4	?surface	poss. limestone surface	
13	13/1	layer	topsoil	0.08m
	13/2	surface	substantial cobbling	
14	14/1	layer	topsoil	0.17m
	14/2	layer	building rubble	0.04m
	14/3	surface	as 13/2	
15	15/1	layer	topsoil	0.20m
	15/2	?surface	compacted limestone	
16	16/1	layer	topsoil	0.14m
	16/2	layer		0.14m
	16/3	layer		
	16/4	layer	limestone surface	
	16/5	drainage pipe	modern	
17	17/1	layer	topsoil	0.20m
	17/2	layer		0.41m

Trench no.	Context No.	Context type	Comments	Depth
17 (cont.)	17/3	layer		
18	18/1	layer		0.20m
	18/2	??surface	v. uneven	
19	19/1	layer	topsoil	0.20m
	19/2	layer		0.24m
	19/3	layer		
	19/4	?surface		
20	20/1	layer	topsoil	0.06m
	20/2	surface	cobble & flagstone	



Key

-  Trenches
-  Yew tree hedges
-  Projected extent of upper cobbled surface



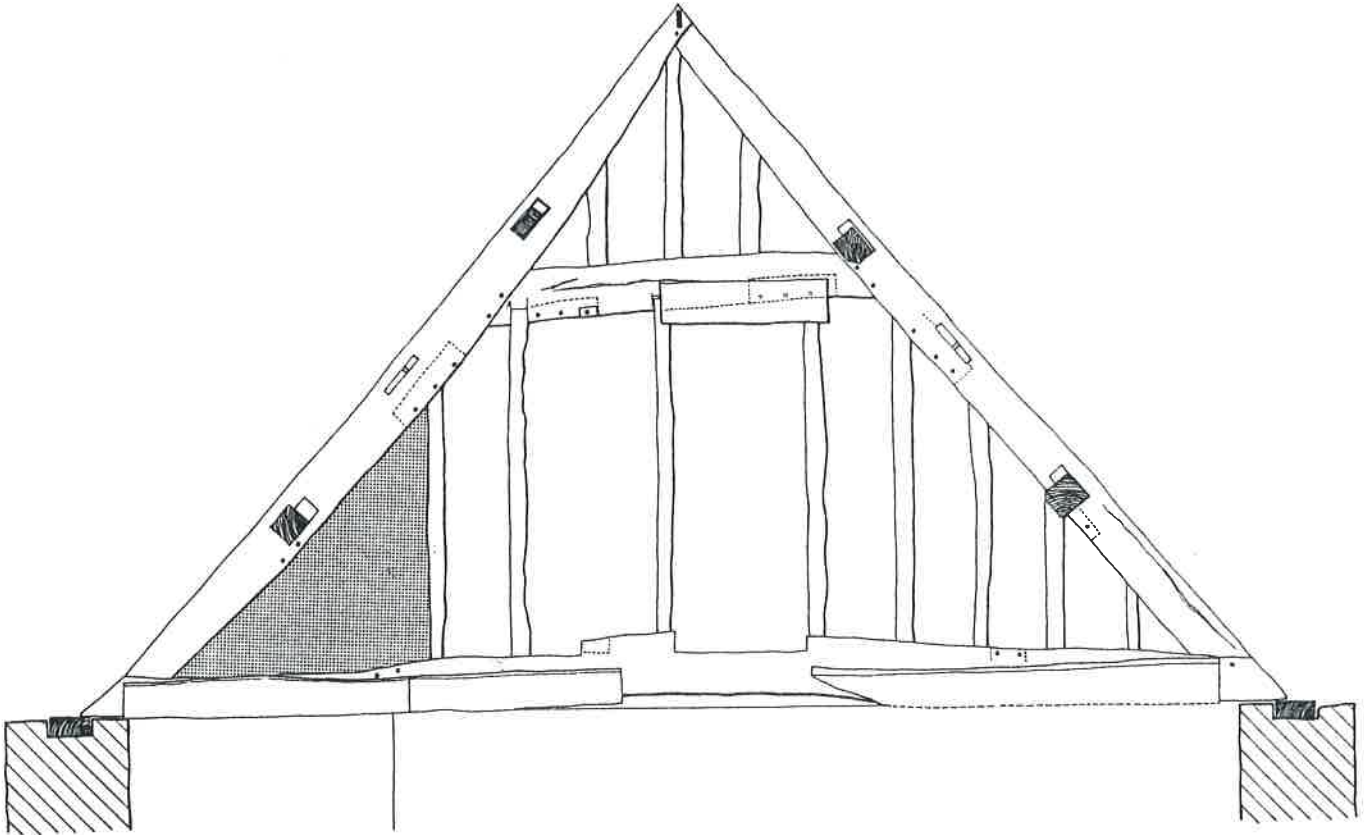


Figure 2: Elevation of truss, E of brewery range

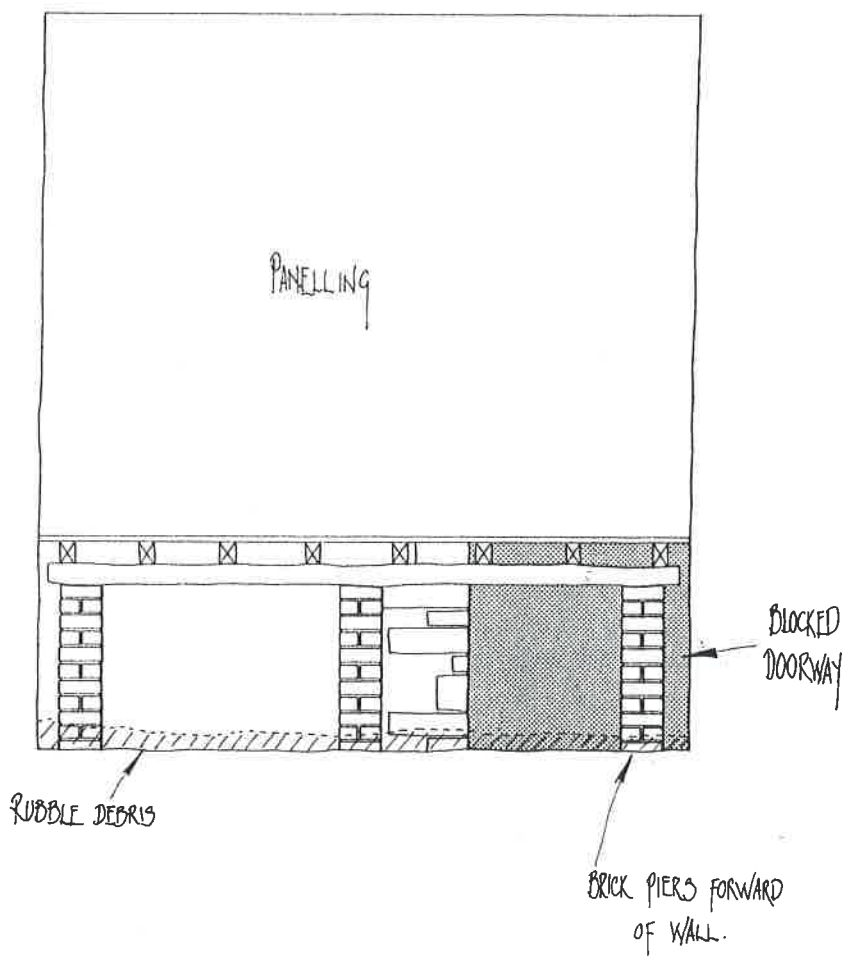


Figure 3: N elevation of tack room wall

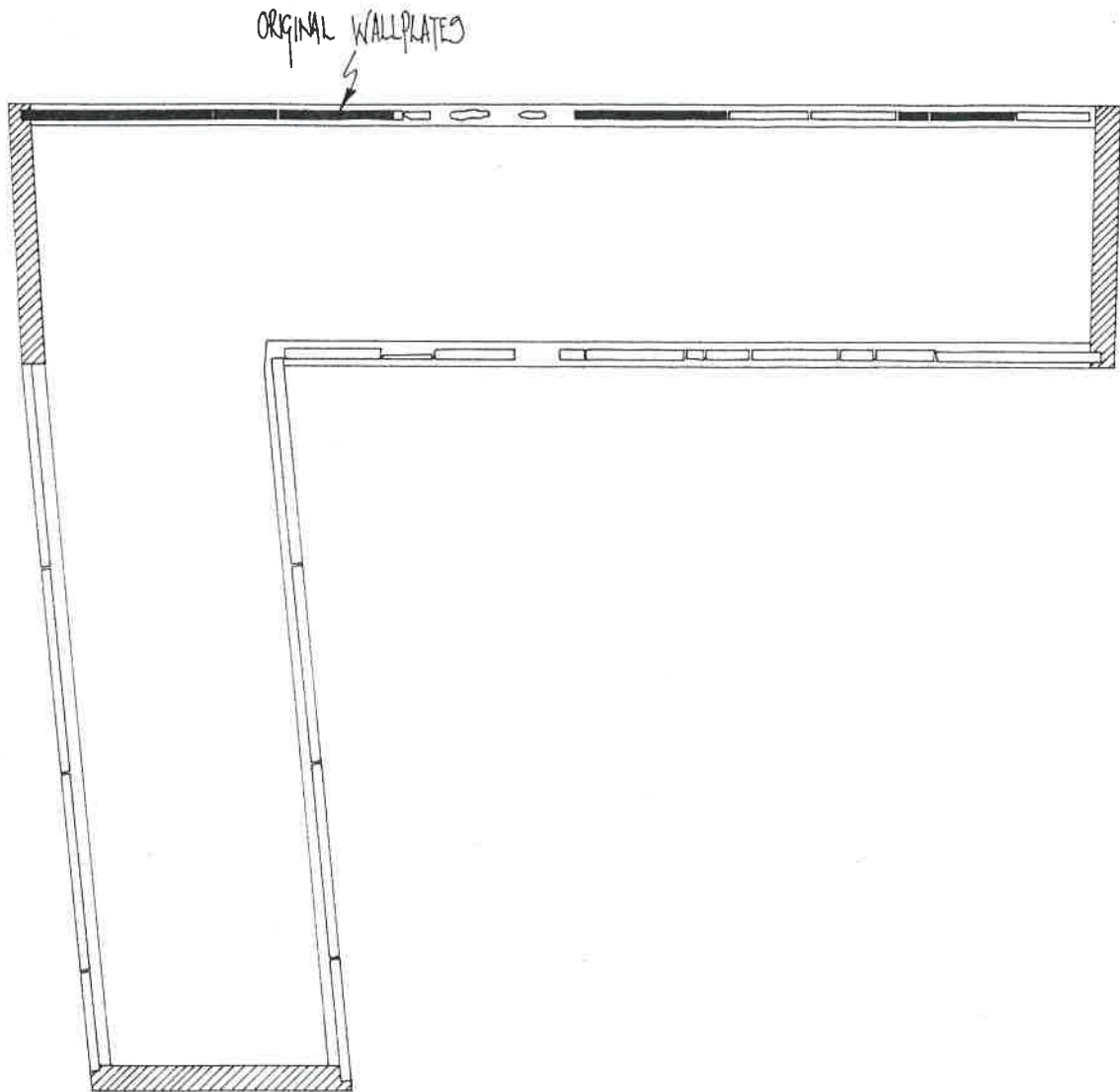


Figure 4: Incidence of wallplates



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