

Oseney Abbey Oxford: The Scheduled Monument



Historic Building Survey



November 2008

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Oseney Abbey, Oxford

The Scheduled Monument

HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY

Oxford Archaeology
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OSENEY ABBEY, MILL STREET, OXFORD: THE SCHEDULED MONUMENT

HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY

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OSENNEY ABBEY, OXFORD: THE SCHEDULED MONUMENT

HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out archaeological and historical analysis and recording of the scheduled surviving medieval building of Oseney Abbey at Osney Marina on the site of the former Osney Mill which itself is on the site of, and may incorporate some stonework from, the abbey mill. The work was requested by English Heritage in advance of a programme of repair, and possible adaptation to office use, of the building as part of a wider residential development of the Osney Mill site.

The recording programme consisted of georectified photographic elevations of the walls and metric survey of the roof trusses and rafters. The resulting photographic elevations and roof drawings are reproduced in this report with numbered phasing and labelling which is referred to in the descriptive text.

The surviving abbey building belonged to a range that once not only extended north to abut the mill range but also extended south in an abutting range. This incorporated at least two phases both with corner buttresses, gothic arched doors and windows although it did also contain square headed windows that might be later. Stylistically, the now lost southern range looked earlier, (perhaps 14th-century) than the existing range which it appeared (in historic views) to abut, but which contained square headed windows and doors and a depressed arch suggesting a 15th-century date.

The surviving building is faced with dressed stone on the east facade which faced in towards the main abbey precinct but is solid rubble with no facing on the west side. There are blocked upper windows to east and west suggesting there may have been an upper floor but these are probably later insertions. There is no definite proof for an early or an inserted upper floor, the interior has been largely whitewashed and any infilled joist or corbel sockets do not show in the masonry.

The south truss of the fine raised arcade roof sits directly on the south wall and is infilled with studwork, this construction may have been used because this range was built against a pre-existing range or the truss was formerly open and part of one longer building. Thus although the west wall is quoined at the corners and seems to integrate with the east and west walls it may be a rebuilt or altered. If the existing range had been built before the southern range one might have expected the gable wall to be totally of masonry and not incorporating a timber truss. There is a blocked doorway in the west wall and a window with later brick quoins that may be an 18th-century insert built after the southern range was demolished.

The current infill in the north and south trusses is of modern softwood studwork but the south and central trusses contain empty mortices in the soffits of the collars and in the central truss tie beam. These were for earlier stud or stave infill, which in the case of the central truss was an internal partition and in the south truss was a division between the north and south sections of the range. The

north truss was probably always open. There may also have been a loft floor or some structure inserted in the southern bay, as there are mortices for two beams or joists to be inserted between the central and south truss tie beams.

The primary function of the existing range is uncertain, it had a fine dressed facade and moulded doors and windows and a fine roof so appears to have been more than a storage range connected with the mill. The former southern part of the range (when drawn in 1720) had doors and upper and lower windows in each bay and some chimneys and appears to have been in later use, if not earlier, as two-storey accommodation, possibly for canons. There is a reference to this range being called the canons' buildings. Some reconstructions have interpreted this former southern part of the range as the bakehouse presumably because it was near the mill and had a substantial chimneystack in the early 18th-century historic view

The existing building was in poor order in the early 19th-century after the north part connecting it to the mill had collapsed or been demolished but it was patched up and a brick north wall added and the north truss closed. For a while it was connected via Victorian brick additions to the main mill and possibly used as part of the sawmill business, which was established in about 1824.

This survey was not commissioned as a condition survey. However some general observations on the condition were made and have been included. The main issues are probably the attached stone arch and the cladding of the north gable elements of the medieval roof.

This survey was intended to provide a record of the structure, in advance of and, to inform an application for scheduled monument consent for repair and possibly for a change of use. The scheduled monument is currently on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk Register which indicates it is in need of some conservation and repair and a secure future.

Outline planning permission has been obtained for development of the adjacent former mill buildings and it is hoped to undertake repair of the monument and possibly to convert it sympathetically to light office use or something similar. Such use with minimum intervention to the historic fabric should ensure a future for the building in which it would be used, maintained, accessible and appreciated and still retain all its historic character and significance.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 W. H. Munsey Ltd., commissioned Oxford Archaeology (OA) to carry out historic building investigation and recording of the scheduled former Oseney Abbey building. The work was requested by English Heritage in advance of a programme of repair and possible adaptation to office use of the building as part of a wider residential development of the Osney Mill site.
- 1.1.2 The mill buildings have been subject to a separate but concurrent survey by OA required by Oxford City Council to fulfil an archaeological condition on planning permission for conversion of the existing buildings to residential units (Oxford City Council reference; 03/02502/FUL).
- 1.1.3 The measured survey of the buildings, in addition to a separately prepared condition survey, will provide the basis for the specification for the repair works. This measured survey brief is based upon a framework provided by Chris Welch, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for English Heritage, South East Region.
- 1.1.4 The Scheduled Ancient Monument consists of a medieval stone range with a timber roof and represents the remaining element of a considerably longer range formerly extending north to abut the surviving mill building and south below what is now a development of 20th century flats. The 'raised aisle' roof type is unusual for what has been interpreted as a service building, although the lost south part of the range was a storied range retaining some evidence for internal partitions.
- 1.1.5 The range is shown on all old views of the remains of Oseney Abbey as a long range meeting the main mill building at right angles. Views drawn in the 1720's show in considerable detail the doors and windows of the building.
- 1.1.6 The south end of the range disappeared in the late 18th century and in the course of the 19th century the link to the mill was first severed and then truncated at the north end, leaving only the arch on the north-east side.
- 1.1.7 The various historical views of the range are discussed in detail in the historical background section of this report and referred to where relevant in the description and analysis of the building.
- 1.1.8 This work follows archaeological investigations by OA in the 1970s, 80s and 90s and the production of a desk based assessment (DBA) by OA in 2003 on the whole Osney Mill site, which incorporates the SAM, prior to the planning application. The DBA provided a summary of the archaeological potential of the area of proposed development and included a historical background to the site and description of the condition and significance of the existing buildings. The findings from all the previous work have been used, where relevant, in the present survey.

1.2 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

1.2.1 The Scheduled Ancient Monument is situated on the west side of Oxford approximately 1km from the centre of the city at Carfax (fig. 1). It forms part of the former area occupied by Osney Abbey complex, which was located on the site from the 12th to the 16th centuries. The building is located on the north side of the millrace taken off Osney Stream, which runs on the west side of the building (fig. 2). Directly to the north is the disused and partially collapsed Osney Mill while to the east is a series of light industrial units and to the south east is an extensive development of 20th century flats.

1.2.2 The area of proposed development lies on the alluvial deposits associated with the gravel floodplain of the River Thames, which splits into numerous smaller channels around Oxford. The underlying geology is Oxford Clay.

1.3 DESIGNATIONS

1.3.1 The site lies within the parish of St Thomas and the Osney Town Conservation Area. It is also within the designated Oxford City Council Area of Archaeological Interest for Oxford.

1.3.2 The surviving abbey building is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, No., OX 79, and Grade II Listed. The adjacent mill buildings are not included in the schedule or listed but are arguably in the curtilage of the listed abbey building and of Osney Mill House, which is also Listed Grade II.

1.3.3 The historic name 'Osenev' has now become 'Osney' and the historic spelling will be used here only in relation to the former Abbey.

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 The fundamental aim of the measured survey and building recording at Osney Abbey is to respond to the requirements of English Heritage for Scheduled Monument Consent in advance of a potential programme of restoration and conservation and reuse within the wider development of the entire mill complex.

1.4.2 The survey and recording sought to establish and understand the nature of the fabric, function and character of the building during all periods of its use along with the structural sequence of its development through history. The other main aim has been to create an ordered archive of the work, which will be deposited in a public repository.

1.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1.5.1 Oxford Archaeology would like to thank W. H. Munsey Ltd., for co-operation and assistance during the fieldwork and the staff of the Oxford local studies library and the Christ Church archivist for facilitating historical research.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

- 1.6.1 The recording programme was outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by OA at the request of W.H. Munsey Ltd., in response to a brief from English Heritage. The WSI was approved by English Heritage prior to commencement of the work.
- 1.6.2 The main form of recording was by georectified digital photography and metric survey. General record photography using colour digital images and black and white film was also undertaken.
- 1.6.3 The form of the recording and final report were further discussed at a site meeting with the EH inspector and some changes from the precise wording of the WSI were agreed. Namely that the internal and external wall elevations would be produced as scaled georectified photographs with digitised annotations relating to construction, phasing etc., rather than as purely digitised drawings taken from the photographs. The roof trusses and rafters however would be recorded by metric survey, as rectified photography would be impracticable for those elements, and the resulting information presented as CAD drawings.

2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1 The historical and archaeological background uses the available standard published sources and previous reports by Oxford Archaeology. Further material held by the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies at Westgate Oxford and by Christ Church was also consulted. The main Christchurch archive was unavailable but the Calendar of Estate Papers contained useful summaries of papers relating to repair and rebuilding at Osney mill, which included the medieval building.
- 2.1.2 This section also includes detailed descriptions and analysis of historic views of the abbey buildings which are extremely valuable as a record, of the now lost parts, of the range and its gradual reduction through the 18th and 19th centuries to the present fragment.

2.2 PRE-ABBAY EVIDENCE

- 2.2.1 No archaeological finds from the prehistoric period have been found within the area of proposed development and very little evidence of activity prior to the medieval period.
- 2.2.2 In 1897 a number of small bronze coins from several Roman emperors were found at Osney Mill, however no possible Roman occupation sites have been identified in the area and on current available knowledge the focus of activity during the Roman period appears to have lain on the east side of the modern city.
- 2.2.3 During the 19th century an early Saxon cremation urn was found near to the area of proposed development on its north side, and the existence of a cemetery dating to this period has been suggested. Evidence for activity during

the early Saxon period has been found at a number of other locations across Oxford, including barrow burials at the Radcliffe Infirmary in the north.

2.3 THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD: OSENEY ABBEY

- 2.3.1 An Augustinian Priory of St. Mary Oseney was founded by Robert D'Oilly in 1129 on the east side of one of the many Thames channels that came to be known as Osney Mill Stream. About 1154 it was raised to the status of an abbey acquiring increasing wealth and influence during the 13th century. The abbey held manors, churches and other property in more than 120 places in England and two churches and land in Ireland (*VCH Oxon ii*, 92). The standing remains of the abbey (the Scheduled Ancient Monument) is situated on the east side of the stream within the precinct of the medieval abbey.
- 2.3.2 Bernard of St Valery, between 1182-89, granted the monks a weir in the Thames with the watercourse running to their mill. There was more than one waterwheel by 1225 and by 1249 a fulling-mill had also been added. In 1412 four new mills were said to be taking water from the Castle Mill (*VCH Oxon iv*, 330).
- 2.3.3 The abbey was wealthy and in the 13th-century acted as a safe repository for monies belonging to local citizens. It is likely that the abbey profited by investing money in property in Oxford without giving interest on the sums deposited as usury was a sin. Such investment in property was largely curtailed by the Statute of Mortmain (*VCH Oxon ii*, 92).
- 2.3.4 The abbey is thought to have been much enlarged in the 13th-century (Squires, 89) and to have been one of the greatest of the religious houses. Important councils were held there and many privileges granted by various popes. These included that any catholic bishop might confer orders on the canons and the abbot was granted a seat in parliament. In 1481 the abbot was finally granted the right to wear a mitre and to confer minor orders on the novices (*VCH Oxon ii*, 92).
- 2.3.5 In the fourteenth century Oseney was well established and maintaining its position. A parliament was held there in 1330 and the Archbishop of Canterbury visited in 1384, in 1392 a Council of Bishops was held (Squires, 93). There seems to have been a general decline of the abbey in the later 15th-century for in the visitation of 1445 things were satisfactory but in his visitation in 1499 the Bishop of Lincoln found the house in debt and buildings in disrepair. Strict rules governing expenditure by the abbot including wages and maintenance of his servants and the stipends and maintenance of the canons were imposed until the debts were paid. Strangers were not to be invited to feasts at the abbey's expense and the prior was to keep out of taverns and disreputable places (*VCH Oxon ii*, 92).
- 2.3.6 In 1524 the current abbot resigned and was succeeded by the prior of St Frideswide's which was in process of suppression. Thomas Cromwell's officials visited Oseney in 1535 and ordered no canon should leave the premises for any purpose, Abbot Burton protested against this. He was accused of speaking 'obstreuous' words against the king in January 1537 and died in November of that year. Cromwell ignored a request for the new

abbot to be elected from amongst the Oseney brethren and nominated Robert King who was a Cistercian monk, not an Austin canon, and was Abbot of Thame and suffragen of Lincoln. King was elected and duly surrendered the abbey to the commissioners in 1539 (Squires, 95).

2.4 THE MEDIEVAL OSENAY ABBEY PRECINCT

2.4.1 The Oseney Abbey precinct was extensive during the medieval period with numerous ranges of buildings. Squires (1928, 92) lists some of these and in his appendices gives several sources for lists and dimensions of abbey buildings which included, beside the church and claustral buildings, the great barn, kilnhouse, conduit-house, schoolhouse, bakehouse, brewhouse, malthouse, slaughterhouse, tannery, timber-yard and four mills, to name but some, and so many tradesmen working there that it became known as 'Oseney Town'. Many of these service buildings would of course be expected to be present in any large religious house.

2.4.2 The abbey and cloister stood in the present Oseney Cemetery, and the high altar was beneath the railway or just east of it. Although no specific plan has survived, evidence of surviving buildings on historic maps and other documents and from a variety of excavations has been used to produce likely layouts. Using this information the positions of the church, mill and some adjoining ranges have been potentially identified. A major assemblage of knowledge was undertaken by Hurst in the early 20th century which was subsequently added to as a result of excavations during the development of Osney Marina in 1975 - 83 and work on the Cadena Bakery site in 1994.

2.4.3 The marina work was interpreted as showing that in the 12th century there had been a channel further east than the present course of the millstream and during the 13th century this was filled in and land on the west side reclaimed, enabling the abbey precinct to be extended. The present ruined Osney Mill located directly to the north east of the SAM occupies the site of the abbey mill from the 13th century, and the SAM itself was part of a north-south aligned range that formerly extended north to the mill and south to the site of a modern waterside residential development.

2.4.4 The maps and excavations have shown that the area of proposed development was covered with a number of different ranges of buildings during the medieval period. The layout is partly conjectural and it is not possible to state precisely what function the buildings served.

2.5 THE 16TH AND 17TH-CENTURIES: DISSOLUTION, DESTRUCTION AND CIVIL WAR

2.5.1 Oseney Abbey was surrendered by Abbot King to Henry VIII in 1539, but in 1542 it was converted into a cathedral for the newly created see of Oxford and King was rewarded for his compliance by appointment to the bishopric. However, by 1545 the cathedral had been transferred to Christ Church to the former St Frideswide's monastery church. Stonework from the abbey church and buildings was used in the construction of Christ Church which also received the bells.

- 2.5.2 According to Squires (1928, 96) the abbots and canons residences at Oseney were given to the use of the new Dean and chapter these being Dr London, (Cromwell's chief agent in Oxfordshire, and warden of New College) and six prebendaries. When the cathedral was transferred to Christ Church in 1545 the properties were surrendered to the king and were subsequently endowed to the new foundation.
- 2.5.3 In 1547 the mill and many of the ancillary buildings were leased to Stumpe, a clothier, who demolished many of the buildings. From 1554 until the 1580s other clothiers, the Atwoods, held the mill and, as Agas' map (fig. 3) shows, only the mill and the range of buildings along the stream survived. An agreement of 1564/5 leased the site to James and Thomas Atwood for 72 years and included a covenant that they '...shall find work for 2000 poor people in Oxford and towns adjacent in Cloth-making.'¹ This suggests that they had a large industry going, presumably a lot of out-workers were needed to process the wool, spin the thread and weave the cloth which was then finished at Oseney in the fulling mills. The mechanised fulling process involved large wooden hammers pounding the cloth in a solution containing a fulling agent (urine, fuller's earth or soap). This shrunk and compacted the fibres to produce a tighter weave. The hammers were known as fulling stocks and were typically water powered (Trinder 1992).
- 2.5.4 Milling continued on the site with a grist mill recorded in 1611. Unfortunately Oseney Mill lies at or beyond the edge of Hollar's Map, which just shows one building west of the abbey church and therefore gives no evidence for the mill and western range of abbey buildings.
- 2.5.5 Agas' map of 1587 and Hollar's of 1643 show, if accurate, that the demolition of the abbey buildings was a gradual process. The central tower and substantial sections of the church walls survived until at least the Civil War period. There was still some stained glass in buildings at the abbey in 1643 which survived 'after the powder house was blowne up there' (Symonds *Oxford Church Notes* 1643-4, fn., in Squires 1928, 97). John Aubrey, when an undergraduate, paid for a drawing of the remains of the west end of the church that was engraved by Hollar and used by Dugdale in his *Monasticon*.
- 2.5.6 During the Civil War the mill was used for the production of gunpowder. Oseney Mill lay outside Oxford's new defences, but Bernard De Gomme's plan shows a sconce, or guardhouse, on the island west of the mill, where the lock keeper's house now stands. This was presumably sited there to protect the powder supply. In 1659 new fulling mills were proposed for the site.
- 2.5.7 Part of the abbey site containing 'the remaines of stones & buildings of Oseney' was let to William Loe in 1670 'with liberty to fetch the same away'.²

¹ Ch Ch archives; Book of Evidences p.223

² Ch Ch Archives; Book of Evidences p.224

2.6 THE 18TH-CENTURY: ANTIQUARIANISM, BROLLIET AND FURTHER DESTRUCTION

- 2.6.1 Antiquarian prints and drawings, especially Burghers superb examples of 1720 (fig. 6) give detailed and valuable evidence of the western abbey range and of its gradual erosion to the present surviving fragments.
- 2.6.2 Burghers' work was commissioned by the antiquary Thomas Hearne to illustrate his *Textus Roffensis*.³ Burghers' engravings of his own drawings show east and west views of an extensive range of buildings, with early features to doors and windows, aligned along the mill stream with a north-south aligned cross wing at the north end. The mill, a lower building, straddles the millstream on arches and abuts the west end of the cross wing. The west end of the mill extends to the bank of a smaller bypass channel, which joins the mill race to the south. There is an embanked island between the two races and the east bank of the millrace is embanked, probably in stone masonry, with a culvert near the south end of the range. There is a lower, pitched-roof, building abutting the east gable of the cross wing, as the mill did on the west, and this has quoined corners to the east. This latter building also has a short wing extending south from it in front of the main range with a raised section projecting from the east roof slope with a large opening. This building has quoins at the south-east corner and then what appears to be either remnants of another building or a lean-to abutting the south end.
- 2.6.3 The engravings are very detailed and the existing building can be placed accurately within the range by means of the features: doors, windows and buttresses, shown in both the east and west walls. There is a join and slight change in height in the roof slopes at the south end of the existing building and the range, judging by the length of the surviving building, appears to extend about 40m to the south of it.
- 2.6.4 The southern section has the slightly lower roof and it also has walls offset to the walls of the northern section, which has straight buttresses at the southern corners. The south section has diagonal buttresses at the south end and a buttress on both east and west wall between the first and second bays from the north end. The east of these two buttresses is clearly diagonal (angled to the south) in Burghers' view, it is more difficult to tell with the west one as it is drawn as viewed from the south-west with shadow on the south side. There is also a straight joint above the east of these buttresses. This suggests that the south section is of two phases and that either the north part of the range was earlier and extended first by one bay to the south, and then that bay was extended by the more substantial six bay section, or that the bay with the diagonal buttresses is the south part of an earlier and larger building which was partially demolished and replaced to the north with the slightly wider range. The buttressed bay has a door opening with an arch and hood mould that appear semicircular. If this is accurate it may imply a very early date for this part but this seems unlikely if the archaeological investigations are correct in suggesting suggest that this range is on ground reclaimed in the 13th century.

³ Hearne's edition, with notes, of the 12th century texts from Rochester Cathedral recording Anglo-Saxon Laws and the early charters of the cathedral, Oxford, 1720.

- 2.6.5 The southern section has windows at ground and first floor level all along on both east and west and on the west wall has a large chimney stack at the south end, that could be serving both floors. A smaller stack is projecting from first floor level at the north and another between these, which appears to be truncated at the eaves. There is also the scar of a pitched roof of a lost lower addition, over an opening, on the east wall at the north end of the southern range. A blocked upper window is visible within the former extension but above the roofline is not shown, possibly because the external wall was rendered.
- 2.6.6 Compared to the northern part of the range, which is plainer and only has upper windows at the south end, and despite Burghers' caption, 'All these seem to be have been nothing but out-houses' which belies the evidence of the detail he has so faithfully recorded, the southern part gives the appearance of a two-storey domestic range. Squires (1928, 97) claims that the range was once known as the Canons' Buildings which might imply residence. The disposition of the openings indicates four lodgings within the southern section of the range. Aside from the possibly round arched door mentioned above there are gothic looking openings on both floors. In the ground floor east wall there are pointed door openings with hood moulds and traceried windows with square heads and hood moulds. There are also four small windows in the east wall on the first floor with square heads and hood moulds and in the west wall there are four small pointed windows in the first floor with what might be the remnants of tracery. There are other square and rectangular windows with what are probably timber lintels that are clearly later inserts.
- 2.6.7 The pointed doors and windows could perhaps be 14th-century whilst the square-headed windows look similar to the window in the surviving building and may be 15th-century in date. This might indicate a c14th-century construction date with 15th-century alterations and post-dissolution insertions. However square headed windows in combination with gothic arched doors are known from the 14th-century e.g. in the stone, ground floor, south wall of the north range at 26-8 Cornmarket, Oxford built as a courtyard inn in the late 14th-century (Munby 1992, figs. 5 & 14). There the windows as at Osney were of two lights but had ogee trefoiled archlets rather than the more rounded typically perpendicular archlets as in the surviving window at Osney. The detail of the tracery in the lost south range windows is not clear from Burghers' drawing and in any case the more rounded or flatter arched archlets were current in the late 14th-century as seen in a timber traceried window also at 26-8 Cornmarket (Munby 1992, fig. 14). The southern part of the range as depicted by Burghers would not be inconsistent with it range been monastic canons' lodgings, possibly used briefly by the cathedral prebendaries after the dissolution and subsequently perhaps inhabited by some of those working at the mill(s) and associated farm.
- 2.6.8 Burghers' prints also show a cross section of contemporary society at work, play and study at Osney. On the east side two men plough the field with an Ox-team whilst scholars in gowns and caps appear to be engaged in a form of archaeological investigation of the ploughed soil and nearby heaps of stones. To the west children fish in the millstream whilst gentry take a leisured stroll along the bank on the island.

- 2.6.9 Swaine writing in 1769 refers to Hearne (*Gulielmus Nubrigensis* p.798) recording that the ground of the abbey was first ploughed up in 1717-18.⁴ Much stone from the abbey was brought up by the ploughing. This may have focussed antiquarian interest on the site and probably explains why Hearne had Burghers draw the medieval range at that time and published it in his edition of the *Textus Roffensis* which otherwise is not directly related to Oxford or Oseney. This is also clearly why the drawings record in detail the ploughing, the piles of stone and the academic looking gentlemen investigating them.
- 2.6.10 An interesting interlude in 1755 involved the possible manufacture of china on the site by Jacques Louis Brolliet. Although Brolliet was clearly a talented gilder who had also learnt the secrets of soft paste porcelain from Chelsea, and went on to work at Sevres, he may have been something of a charlatan and not above committing some deception presumably for the benefit of his purse.
- 2.6.11 Brolliet placed an advertisement on January 11th for a public firing of china at 'the china manufactory at Oseney Mill' to answer 'scandalous and malicious reports' which were presumably to the effect that he was decorating china that he had bought in and was passing it off as his own manufacture. Apart from a further Oxford advertisement of January 25th the only other reference to the china manufacture at Osney is a letter of 1759 from the chemist Hellot recommending Brolliet to the director at the Sevres porcelain factory. This letter outlines in great detail the process used at Osney even down to the source of clay being dug a mile from Oxford.
- 2.6.12 Documents at Sevres show that Brolliet worked there in the painting workshop (atelier de peinture) and there is a note that his salary should not be reduced as he brought them the secret of transfer-printing but a few months later in 1760 he was sacked (Mellor 1997, 20-1).
- 2.6.13 No evidence of china manufacture has been found at the site to date so the truth of the matter remains in question. Even if, as seems likely, Brolliet did not regularly produce china at Osney, the fact that he advertised what may have been a one-off firing suggests that he had premises there and access to some form of oven or kiln. He may have conducted his business of decorating china there possibly in part of the medieval range.
- 2.6.14 Swain (1769) discussed the layout of the abbey buildings. He says that the Abbot's lodgings, built in the time of Abbot Leech (1235-49), were 'very large, fair and magnificent' and were 'in the ground adjoining to the mill head'. Nothing, according to Swain, then remained of them then but 'the great chamber adjoining to the hall' also built by Abbot Leech was standing in 1718.
- 2.6.15 Swain also mentions Burghers' views published in Hearne's *Textus Roffensis* and dismisses them as of no interest, '...as they give us no manner or idea of the Abbey in its former state, but only of some inferior buildings detached from it, I hardly think them worthy of our notice'.
- 2.6.16 Engravings from the late 1770s show that by that time the entire southern part of the range had been demolished but the northern section still extended to the east-west aligned wing (the mill range).

⁴ An edition of the *Historia Regum Anglice* by William of Newburgh published by Hearne in two volumes with a preface and notes, Oxford, 1719.

- 2.6.17 The 1777 views (fig. 7) from the east and south-east show a buttress at the south end of the east wall and an upper window just north of this with a blocked segmental arch below (as in Burghers' view). North of that arch is a square headed ground floor feature, which must represent the surviving blocked gothic window, and north of that a wide shallow segmental arched opening which is blocked with a small opening in the blocking. This is the now ruinous open arch attached to the surviving building wide enough for carts to enter by. There is an opening above this and another square headed opening just north of it. One of the drawings shows an upper opening at the far north end but the other has deep shadow obscuring this area. A copy of one of the drawings seems to possibly show two inserted door openings, one above the other, at the north end. The 1779 drawing (fig. 8) shows a straight joint but not the doors, however the mill range in this view may obscure them.
- 2.6.18 The adjacent Osney lock on the river, which forms the west boundary of the 'island' on which Mill House stands, dates to 1790 and was built following a major recutting of the river (Hibbert 1988, 297). The work was carried out by felons from Oxford County Gaol, whose Keeper was the architect Daniel Harris (Colvin 1978, 391).
- 2.7 **THE 19TH-CENTURY: FURTHER LOSS, CONSOLIDATION REPAIR AND REUSE**
- 2.7.1 Roberts (a student at Christ Church) writing in 1807 (published 1814), refers to a letter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1793 which stated 'all that remains at Osney are some old buildings at the mill'. Roberts, who had clearly visited the building, asserted, with youthful confidence, that 'Nothing will ever persuade me that the buildings now remaining were part of a Mill while the Abbey stood.' He thought the buildings were part of the Abbot's lodging and was impressed by the surviving arch and the roof. 'I believe our ancestor's knew too much of architecture, to erect a noble arch in so mean an edifice as a Mill...and the building of which it is the entrance, has a very handsome oak roof, which has timbers of an uncommon size, and was a handsome apartment'. He was probably on the right lines in affording the building greater importance than either Swain or the annotation on Burghers' views, which may have been the opinion of Hearne, himself.
- 2.7.2 There is a view of the abbey range which has been ascribed the date of 1815 by which time the north half of the north range, linking it to the mill range, had fallen or been demolished, however there is a view from the east that clearly predates this but is after the 1770s views (fig. 9). This shows the north end of the range gone with both east and west walls as rough stubs extending north of the remaining roofed section. The roof covers the now open arch and is one bay longer than the present surviving roof. The truss at the north end is open and exposed to the elements.
- 2.7.3 The east wall shows the buttress at the south end with two sloping coped offsets. North of this is an upper, long, rectangular, two-light window and north of this the existing square-headed two-light window with trefoil cusped tracery is shown. North of the latter is the wide arch with voussoirs and moulding or rebate shown clearly. The wall extends north of the arch further than it does now and includes a small door seen in the previous views but here shown in detail confirming it was an ancient part of the structure with square-headed ashlar surround with a rebate or moulding and ashlar walling above.

- 2.7.4 The 1815 view (fig. 10), perhaps only a few years, later shows the building in basically the same state but with the small door gone from the east wall, leaving only its south jamb as the end of the wall. This view also seems to show that the upper window has been shortened and blocked. The drawing also shows the north wall of the mill range with its openings and different roof levels.
- 2.7.5 Squires (1928) reproduces (plate LX) a view from a drawing by John Fisher dated to 1820, this shows the building from the same direction as the 1815 view and in the pretty much the same state. This view adds little except that the north end truss is complete whereas in the view dated 1815 this same truss appears to have lost its tie beam, wall posts, raised arcade posts and braces. This therefore casts more than a little doubt on the relative dates ascribed to these two views.
- 2.7.6 The archives of Christ Church contain correspondence from the various lessees of the mill premises describing extensive programmes of repair and rebuilding in the early 19th-century.⁵ Most of the work was undertaken on the main mill range itself and any works on the abbey building are not specified as such. It is clear however from the historic views and the surviving fabric it was included in the programmes of repair and used within the mill complex and the records give some insights into the possible uses of the building.
- 2.7.7 The mill was repaired prior to June 1820, allegedly employing 16 labourers and masons, in addition to millwrights and carpenters, and all the floors renewed.⁶ In 1827 Richard Vaughan claims to have spent £700 on new buildings.⁷
- 2.7.8 Badcock surveyed the properties of Christ Church here in 1829. Badcock lists a saw mill and corn mill but shows the mill complex incorporating the abbey building and extending west to the mill race as one block, with no divisions, and also one separate small building east of the abbey building (Salter 1929, 630-1). Vaughan's new buildings may thus have been the eastern block and/or buildings extending to the millstream and connecting the mill and abbey buildings. The lessees in 1829 who were also the occupiers are listed as H and T Vaughan. It is not clear what the relationship was between H and T Vaughan and Richard Vaughan was but Richard appears to have been actively running the business even if not the named lessee.
- 2.7.9 James Vaughan (the brother of Richard) writes in 1834 that due to competition with country millers the milling business suffered and sawing machines were erected.⁸ He seems to be listing all past works since taking on the mill to try and get a reduction in rent owing (Badcock mentioned the saw mill in 1829). There was a valuation by Badcock of the property at the same time and it would appear that Richard Vaughan had died and James had been his partner and may have been one of his executors and had inherited or taken over the lease.⁹

⁵ The original documents were not available due to redevelopment. The Calendar of Christ Church Estate Papers was the source for the information.

⁶ Ch Ch Ms Estates 77 f.285

⁷ Ch Ch Ms Estates 77 f.290

⁸ Ch Ch Ms Estates 77 f.292

⁹ Ch Ch Ms Estates 77 f.294

- 2.7.10 Badcock lists the buildings on the site which included a 'dwelling house part ancient and part modern of stone' (probably Osney Mill House), a 'large ancient corn mill of stone and timber and boarded...' and a '...sawmill adjoining erected ten years ago, timber framed, boarded...'. There was also a '...stable for four horses with loft, stone and slated; carthovel with two rooms over, brick and stone, slated...' There were in addition pigsties and a cottage at the corner of the churchyard and four new tenements. The abbey building, from later evidence (see below), seems to have become part of the sawmill and may have been so at the time of this survey but the description of the stable could fit the building. The carthovel being of brick and stone was probably a relatively recent construction of reused materials.
- 2.7.11 Through the 1830s and early 1840s James Vaughan complained about the continual expense of buildings and attempted to get reductions of rent or contributions from Christ Church towards the repairs. Underwood surveyed the mill for Christ Church in 1839 and reported on poor condition of floor beams and that 30 feet of the building was taken down and rebuilt. A year later he added an endorsement that 45 feet of the 80 foot mill had been 'done' by Vaughan.¹⁰
- 2.7.12 Underwood reported in November 1843 that in the previous four months the rest of the mill had been rebuilt, reusing old oak timbers and introducing new beams to support the floors.¹¹
- 2.7.13 There is a view of the abbey building from this period by William Delamotte and Orlando Jewett, also from the east, (fig. 11) and this shows evidence of the repair and rebuilding that affected this building and clear signs of saw-milling activity.
- 2.7.14 The main roof of the range had been reduced to its present size and the end truss has timbers with exposed faces but infilled, the east slope of the roof has a couple of large through the slates however. A shallower pitched roof has been fitted over the north part of the range at low level, just above the wide arch, but the northern extent of this is not shown. Double doors have been fitted to the arch and several orders of moulding are shown round the arch. The window with cusped tracery is clearly shown, blocked in the upper half but with the lower half of the mullion removed and the window open below an inserted transom. The upper window has been replaced with an inserted door, but there are no external steps to this. The buttress has been reduced, losing its lower offset.
- 2.7.15 The view shows rough and sawn timber stacked against the building and in the yard east of it and clearly the building had been made good since 1815 and put into use as part of the saw-mill complex built around 1824.
- 2.7.16 James Vaughan presumably died in 1845 and Christ Church sold the lease. The sale plan shows a building against the east wall of the range on the south side of the saw-mill yard (fig. 4). This was probably the building demolished in 2008, which abutted the abbey building. Delamotte's view of the abbey building was executed before this building was erected and therefore dates from between c1824 and 1845.

¹⁰ Ch Ch Ms Estates 77 f.303

¹¹ Ch Ch Ms Estates 77 f.309

- 2.7.17 The 1845 plan also shows a bone mill added to the back of the mill range between the mill race and bypass channel. This was built in a year or so before the sale. The corn mill at the time of the 1845 sale had a wheel and ‘..four pairs of the very best French stones’ and the bone mill and saw mill shared another wheel. ‘The saw mills have 3 machines and work 12 up and down saws, and a set of circular saws’.¹² The lease was sold to Jonathan Sheldon and by 1848 he had enlarged the house, and added another bone mill, a counting house a store and a stable.¹³
- 2.7.18 In 1863 it is noted that Sheldon had wished some years earlier to erect a steam mill at Osney but was put off due to having only a 21 year lease and therefore invested in building a steam mill at his premises in Eynsham and wishes to buy Osney Mill.¹⁴
- 2.7.19 A valuation of Christ Church property at Osney was undertaken by Francis Field in 1864.¹⁵ The total property was at this time only a little over 12 acres in extent. The list of portions includes a wharf and timber yard near the mill but the list of buildings does not contain a saw mill or a bone mill and the presumption must be that if these were still in operation they would have been mentioned and therefore they had probably ceased to operate.
- 2.7.20 The buildings listed in 1864 were the corn mill of brick, stone and timber with a slated roof; carpenter’s shop and cart stable of stone with slated roof; cottage of lath and plaster and slated; stone house and cattle shed, newly built of brick and slated; dwelling house of stone, lath and plaster and slated. The abbey building was possibly part of the corn mill complex by this time or, of the buildings listed, the carpenter’s shop would seem to be the only other likely alternative. The cart stable was probably the building attached to the east side of the abbey building shown in 1845 linking it to the separate block existing since before 1829.
- 2.7.21 The bone mill shown on the 1845 plan was replaced before 1876 by a new four storey brick built flour mill which abutted the back of the old mill range in place of the bone mill shown on the 1845 plan. The new mill is shown on the 1st edition OS map, (fig. 5). Presumably Christ Church still had an interest at this time as the estate papers include, in 1879, communications from Messrs., Donaldson and Davenhill to Sheldon about recommendations for a turbine at Osney,¹⁶ but there is no reference, in the Calendar at least, to the construction of the new mill.
- 2.7.22 Conversion to water turbine power seems to have been undertaken in the 1890s, there is a drawing by Hurst from this period showing the bypass channel empty of water with monastic stonework and an *in situ* jamb and springing of an arch in the embanking walls.¹⁷ W. H. Munsey took over the mill complex in 1898. It is not certain when the sawmill ceased to operate, and no doubt the abbey building

¹² Ch Ch MS Estates 77, f.333

¹³ Ch Ch MS Estates 77, f.338

¹⁴ Ch Ch MS Estates 77, f.354

¹⁵ Ch Ch MS Estates 77, f.356

¹⁶ Ch Ch MS Estates 77, f.368

¹⁷ Reproduced in Sharpe (*Oxoniensia* L, 1985)

had a subsequent function within the flour mill complex but what that was is not known.

2.8 THE 20TH-CENTURY: CATASTROPHE AND AFTER

2.8.1 During the Second World War the mill ran continuously, 24 hours a day, as did many small mills to keep up with demand caused by bombing of large mill complexes in the large cities and ports. Sadly after the war effort the brick mill was gutted by fire in 1945, the older mill range was less damaged but ceased operating as a mill from that time.

2.8.2 Fortunately, although the buildings were connected, or in very close proximity at the time, the abbey building escaped any damage during the fire. It was decided not to rebuild at the Osney site and the Munsey business purchased Clarks Flour Mill at Wantage in 1950. The business at Osney seems to have continued at the level of corn dealing until the 1960s and then the millrace was widened into a marina in the 1970s and 80s.

2.8.3 The more usable (east) part of old mill range was converted into a social club for the Marina and this use went on from the 1970s to 90s. Latterly it has only been used for storage. The brick mill has remained a gutted shell since 1945. The abbey building was scheduled and apart from repairs, including felt lining the roof and recladding the west roof slope with modern tiles, has remained unaltered and unused.

2.9 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

2.9.1 There have been two previous buildings surveys on the surviving medieval remains of Osney Abbey, one in 1979 by Oxfordshire County Museum Service (OCMS) and the other by the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments (England) (RCHME) in 1991 (not published). These were not extensive or detailed surveys, that by OCMS (Steane 1980) consisted of a simple plan and a somewhat schematised truss elevation.

2.9.2 A number of archaeological investigations have been carried out close to the area of proposed development, within the accepted extent of the precinct of Osney Abbey. Trial borings in Osney Cemetery c 100 m east of the site in 1951 found wall foundations. In 1962-3 construction trenches 60m south-east of the site produced medieval worked stone and other building material.

2.9.3 An extended programme of work was carried out by Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) between 1975-83 when the marina and housing on the south-east side of the area of proposed development were built (Sharpe, 1985). The work indicated that 'much of the site lies on what was at the time of the priory foundation still an island with a channel running to the E. This seems to have been infilled and the abbey precinct extended to the W at some time in the 13th century' (OA unpublished).

2.9.4 'The work of Sharpe indicated that after the westward expansion of the abbey precinct the site was occupied by a range of buildings running roughly N-S parallel to the line of the medieval and modern mill stream, the edge of which was revetted with a substantial wall. Within the SW corner of the expanded

precinct, formed by the mill stream and a new E-W aligned wall, situated a little to the S of the southern limit of the present site, was a complex sequence of structures, the plans and sequence of which cannot be resolved on present evidence' (OAU (Booth, P) 1994).

- 2.9.5 Further work in this area was carried out by OAU in 1994. When the site immediately south of the surviving building was developed. 'This produced evidence for a complex and well preserved sequence of buildings mostly relating to the western (river side) range of the outer courts of the abbey. The earliest structural traces were probably of 13th century date. At the south end of the site two buildings perhaps with an industrial function were separated by a narrow paved area. Further north a north-south wall line which can be related to', the former south range adjoining, 'the extant late medieval fragment of the abbey (and was not removed until the 18th century) superseded two earlier structures, the earliest again of 13th century date. Outside these structures to the west was an area used for pit digging' (OA unpublished).
- 2.9.6 A watching brief following the 1994 evaluation work included a trench which revealed the robber trench for the east wall of the former south part of the range, the wall was estimated to have been about 1m wide.
- 2.9.7 Four test pits were excavated in 2008 in connection with the proposed development and a watching brief was undertaken on these (OA 2008).
- 2.9.8 Pit one was excavated in the far north-east corner of the demolished outbuildings east of the scheduled monument and revealed two limestone floors. The second pit was dug on the south side of the south wall of the former outbuildings about five metres south of the abbey building and revealed brick walls and floors of the former buildings.
- 2.9.9 Pit three was located inside the brick built mill, against the east wall, and revealed the construction of the footings and floor bedding of that building. There was a layer of large limestone boulders 1.5m below the mill floor with 1.1m of oolitic gravel laid above it, above the gravel was a layer of clay silt with a bed of lime mortar and then the brick mill sub-floor above it.
- 2.9.10 The fourth pit was situated about five metres north of the north-west corner of the abbey building adjacent to the standing brick extension to the old mill range. This was designed to straddle the projected line of the western wall of the lost northern continuation of the abbey range. The remnants of a brick wall and footings of the demolished Victorian buildings were encountered and a deposit of clinker and ash from burning, possibly connected with one of the two chimneys contained within those buildings. No deposits relating to the medieval range were found.

3 **DESCRIPTION**

3.1 **INTRODUCTION**

- 3.1.1 The surviving structure (plate 1) consists of a medieval stone range, with a timber roof. It is the remaining fragment of a longer range that is shown on all old views of the remains at Osney as a long range meeting the mill building at

right angles. The detailed views drawn by Michael Burghers for Thomas Hearne (as discussed above) show with great clarity the doors and windows of the building and that it also extended southwards, below the modern housing, as confirmed by archaeological investigation. The south end of the range disappeared in the late 18th century, and in the course of the 19th century the link to the mill was first severed and then truncated at the north end, leaving only an arch on the north-east side.

- 3.1.2 The numbers in parentheses in the descriptions refer to the numbered features on the phased georectified photographic elevations and metric roof survey truss and rafter elevation drawings (figs. 12-22).

3.2 GENERAL

- 3.2.1 The building consists of a roughly square block about 7.5m north-to-south by 8m east-to-west. The walls consist of dressed coursed stone masonry, stone rubble masonry and brick masonry. All early openings are blocked, there is a louvered opening in the south wall and the 19th-century brick north entrance wall has a door and two glazed windows. The east wall has a blocked gothic traceried window and extends north beyond the covered building to incorporate a wide depressed arch that was formerly within the medieval range. There is a stone masonry pitched gable added to the top of the east wall for the 19th-century building that formerly abutted the range.

- 3.2.2 The roof is pitched, aligned north-to south, with very steep slopes. The east slope is clad in old stone 'slates', the west slope in small modern plain tiles. The gables are lath and render over the timber trusses. The north gable is a patchwork of different render repairs and pieces of plywood covering holes in the render and exposed areas of laths.

- 3.2.3 Internally the building is one room with no divisions. The roof is of the 'raised arcade' type of two surviving bays with three medieval trusses. There are wall posts, braced to the cambered tie beams, terminating at stone, and later inserted timber, corbels in the wall masonry. The stone walls are mostly whitewashed with some various sized areas of old lime plaster surviving. There is a rotten 19th-century joist and board floor seated on a low brick plinth.

3.3 EXTERIOR : DETAILED DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

- 3.3.1 *East elevation (fig. 12 & plate 2)*

- 3.3.2 The east elevation was the front of the medieval range and was of higher quality being constructed in coursed dressed stone as opposed to the rubble construction of the rear (west) wall.

- 3.3.3 The east wall has at the south end the remnant of the buttress (100) shown on the early views and a short stretch of wall north of the buttress in coursed dressed stone (101). Part of the coping of the buttress (102) has been cut away to accommodate the roof of the now demolished building that abutted the range (103). The lower east face of the buttress is rough where the lower offset, as shown in the early views, has been removed (104).

- 3.3.4 There is then an area of later rubble rebuild (105) reaching from the ground to a timber plate, the southern part of the rubble has an upper patch, probably a modern repair repointed in harder mortar (106) and below this an area pointed in hard yellow mortar (107). Above the plate (108) and the primary walling to the north there is a rubble gable for the demolished building (109). As discussed above map evidence tends to suggest this dates to before 1845 (plate 3). The gable and lower rubble rebuild appear identical and are probably the same phase and are almost certainly constructed of reused abbey fabric. They both date to after the Delamotte engraving of *c* 1840. The rubble rebuild replaces the upper door shown in that engraving and earlier blocking below it. A former arched opening in this position had already been blocked by 1720 but the voussoirs of the arch were still in place and remained so until at least 1779.
- 3.3.5 North of the rubble rebuild the primary dressed stone walling resumes (110) the stones exhibit quite fine diagonal tooling. The wall contains the integral moulded rectangular surround of a gothic window with two trefoil cusped lights (111) (plate 4). The cusping remains but the shaft of the mullion has gone. The window is blocked with stone rubble, the blocking being quite deeply recessed (112). Just north of the window is a modern rectangular stone plaque to Haggai of Oxford martyred in 1222.¹⁸ The stone is presumably recessed and mortared into the primary wall fabric (113).
- 3.3.6 At the north end of the wall is a wide depressed (three centred) stone arch integral with the dressed stone walling and now extending beyond the building but formerly within the front wall of the range. The arch and jambs have a continuous moulding but this is so worn as to be undefinable in detail. The arch itself consists of two rows of masonry. An inner or lower row of six moulded stones consisting of a large curved corner piece at each side (114), springing from the horizontal surface of an upper jamb stone, and four voussoirs between them (115). The upper row is composed of dressed voussoirs (116) between angled springers (117) but in the centre the large voussoirs are replaced by three smaller stones with rubble above (118) and this might be a later repair which has probably weakened the arch. The arch is in poor condition and has dropped somewhat, the joins in the lower voussoirs having opened up but has probably been like this for many years. Roberts (1814) writing in 1807 described the arch as ‘sunck and disjointed’ even then.
- 3.3.7 Above the upper voussoirs the arch has been capped with mortared stone probably in the later 19th or early 20th century (119). The north jamb of the arch is abutted by the red brick arch remaining from a demolished 19th-century mill building. The brick pier is probably supporting the weak arch and great care should be taken during any demolition work that the arch is protected and supported. The west elevation of the arch is discussed below (3.3.17).

¹⁸ A Christian deacon studying Hebrew in Oxford who decided to become a Jew. He changed his name, married a Jewess and was supposedly burnt for heresy as a result although Roberts (1814) refers to Thomas Wike a canon of Oseney in the 1290s recording that he was ‘degraded’ and put in prison on bread and water for the rest of his life. The inscription reads, ‘Near this stone in Osney Abbey, Robert of Reading, otherwise Haggai of Oxford, suffered for his faith on Sunday 17 April 1222 AD, corresponding to 4 IYYAR 4982’

- 3.3.8 *West elevation (fig.13)*
- 3.3.9 The west elevation consists largely of medieval rubble masonry laid to courses bonded with lime mortar (200). There are quoins of larger dressed stones at the upper south west corner, which seem integral with this wall and the south wall thus implying that this was the corner of a distinct phase as indicated by Burghers' drawings (201).
- 3.3.10 The drawing shows a buttress which appears to offset from the lower part of the wall. This has presumably been removed as the lower offset of the east buttress has. Surviving evidence for this might be that the lower part of the existing corner does not contain large dressed quoins but smaller rubble and this may mark where the buttress has been removed (202).
- 3.3.11 To the north in the upper part of the wall is a possible straight joint (203) which seems to relate to a stone jamb on the inside, the exterior seems to indicate that there may have been opening to the north of the joint whereas the internal evidence does not fully tally with this (see below). The masonry south of the straight joint (204) only extends a short distance north before it appears to be interrupted by an irregular vertical joint (205) and there is no obvious joint marking the south jamb of a possible opening.
- 3.3.12 Just south and below the centre of the wall is a square window opening with a timber lintel (206) (plate 5). The opening has been blocked in stone rubble masonry flush with the rest of the wall (207). The window is a later insert or the jambs are rebuilt; they are of rubble and some brick fragments and are out of sequence with the courses of the wall and bonded with a different coloured lime mortar (208). The window is shown in Burghers' 1720 view. The inserted south jamb of the window is in line with the irregular joint (205) above so may be part of a larger repair or alteration.
- 3.3.13 Towards the north end of the elevation there is evidence for at least two more window openings and possibly a door as well. There is a lower window with a timber lintel (209) blocked in coursed rubble (210) with a very clear straight joint between the south jamb and the blocking (211) (plate 6). The jamb is of plain rubble as the previous window but does not appear to be a later insert. The north jamb of the window is not clearly visible, it possibly coincides with a drainpipe fixed closely to the wall or the jamb was partly broken prior to blocking and so the blocking blends better with the walling on the north side. Below the window blocking and just north of the straight joint there is another straight joint (212) marking what might be the southern edge of blocking of a door or a rebuild of some sort. The walling south of this has an irregular edge (213) extending from the bottom corner of the window jamb and there is a narrow wedge of infill masonry (214) between this and the straight edge.
- 3.3.14 Possibly a door was inserted here into the earlier window and then was blocked later or this is just part of a rebuild repair (see below 4.3.15). The 1720 drawing shows the window as wider and shorter than the window to the south but with no signs of blocking or joints below it.
- 3.3.15 At the top north corner of the wall there is a blocked opening with straight joints to north and south (215) between the jambs is rubble blocking (216). The jambs might be rebuilt or insertions. There is no timber lintel and the

joints appear to extend to the top of the wall, in which case the wall plate may have doubled as lintel. This window is also depicted by Burghers.

- 3.3.16 There appears to be an irregular joint (217) running from the eaves just south of the upper blocked window lower south corner of the upper blocked opening to the upper south corner of the lower. The walling north of this is rubble of similar type of stone to the rest of the main wall but is not coursed as well and has a greater preponderance of larger roughly squared light grey stones. The irregular joint below the lower window mentioned above (213) might be the same as (217) and this is possibly the edge of the medieval fabric and everything north of this is rebuilt. In this case the upper window might be a later insert, however the south jamb of the lower window seems original and perhaps this was an original opening largely rebuilt prior to 1720 and blocked later.
- 3.3.17 The north end of the elevation has two distinct phases of brickwork, the earliest is just a rough patching and squaring up of the broken end of the wall (218), this is bonded with grey lime mortar with frequent charcoal inclusions which also extends south over some of the rubble as a repointing. This sort of mortar is generally quite late in date and here must date to after 1815 as the wall still extended further north in the 1815 drawing. Abutting this brickwork is the return of the brick north wall (219) which probably dates to after c1840 as at that time, as shown in the Delamotte drawing, the building extended further north with a low roof over the northern section.
- 3.3.18 *West elevation of Arch (fig.14)*
- 3.3.19 The west elevation of the arch, now exposed to the elements, is physically a continuation of the internal east elevation. But as this has become an external west facing elevation it is described here following on from the main west elevation and the numbering of features is also continued from the west elevation sequence.
- 3.3.20 The elevation shows the back of the arch head and the north jamb, the south jamb on this elevation is hidden behind the abutting brick wall. The arch head itself is only one course of stones wide and much narrower than the wall to either side. Therefore the lower and upper voussoirs seen on this side (220 and 221) are the same stones as seen in the east facing external elevation (115 and 116 respectively) and there is little to add to the description of them, except to say that from this side the deterioration of the arch is even more evident. This is especially true of the weathering of the inner faces and opening up of joints in the lower voussoirs. The rubble infill in the upper voussoir course (222 corresponding to 118) is also very clear.
- 3.3.21 There are a couple of courses of rubble (223) above the voussoir courses and then mortar capping, the rubble is flush with the voussoirs and there is no sign of the rere-arch that would have carried the full width of the wall as one would expect. There is no sign of springing for it in either surviving north or south jamb, both of which extend a short distance above the present arch head. It may therefore have sprung from the level of the lean-to roof or higher. The primary window opening south of the arch clearly had a stone head externally and timber lintel internally, this was quite usual for windows and doors in a thick stone wall and there may have been a stout inner timber lintel at some point above the arch with walling above it, but it is more likely, with a wide

arch, that there was a stone rere-arch and the view in figure 6 does seem to show the stones of the south jamb curving into an arch soffit at the back of the arch.

3.3.22 The inner north jamb of the arch (224) consists of large dressed stones although these stop short of present ground level, and rubble masonry (225) resumes north and below them. The medieval masonry ends in a vertical edge about one meter north of the arch. The dressed stone jamb and walling continues above the arch head creating a pier of masonry, now truncated and capped with sloping stone 'slates' (226). This pier probably supported a lintel or inner arch as discussed above. The straight edge at the north (227) is now abutted by a remaining piece of the brick south wall of a demolished 19th-century building. The straight joint is possibly the inner jamb of the former doorway, situated just north of the arch, and shown in the view in figure 6. Although one may have expected that jamb to also consist of dressed stone, in which case the present straight joint might be a repair or rebuild of the jamb.

3.3.23 *South elevation (fig.15 & plate 7)*

3.3.24 The south elevation consists of stone rubble masonry (300) roughly laid to courses capped with stone 'slates' (301) below the rendered gable. At the west end are dressed stone quoins showing this corner and the west wall are one phase (302). There appears to be an irregular (303) join just east of the quoins which possibly coincides with a line of cracks on the interior (see below) and may indicate some subsidence/settling of this wall. The rubble east of the join appears more random and may be a repair or rebuild (304). West of centre there is a horizontal timber (305) with possible blocking below (306) and this may have been a doorway connecting to the demolished south part of the range but the joints between the jambs and blocking are not very distinct.

3.3.25 Above and east of this is a central window opening with a timber lintel (307) and inserted brick jambs (308) and fitted with timber louvres. The 1779 drawing shows this wall in shadow so detail is difficult to pick out but there seems to be an opening in this position and straight joints below it indicating a door.

3.3.26 The window may have been inserted after demolition of the southern part of the range between 1720 and 1779. The window is now fitted with timber louvres but a photograph by Henry Taunt dated 1911 shows a glazing bar sash window of several panes fitted.¹⁹

3.3.27 At the east end the walling is bonded with the remains of the buttress (308). There is some disjunction of coursing; a possible join (309) and the buttress may have been added later or the wall west of it rebuilt. This elevation certainly shows no clear signs of the former southern range which abutted it or which it abutted.

3.3.28 The gable rendering is grey relatively modern pebbly render with a few later patches and underlying laths showing through one small hole. This is probably the same rendering as shown in the 1911 photograph.

¹⁹ Photograph held by Oxfordshire County Council Photographic Archive, Central Library, Westgate Centre, Oxford, ref. HT11337

3.3.29 *North elevation (fig.16 & plate 8)*

- 3.3.30 The lower north wall is a brick closing of the building after the adjoining lower roof to the north over the arch (as shown in the c 1840 Delamotte print) was removed. The brickwork (400) is laid in Flemish garden wall bond and contains a central door opening with a window to either side. The openings all have segmental brick arched heads with each arch consisting of two rows of headers (401). The windows have nine-pane glazing bar sashes and the doorway has a sliding double door of boards, each door is glazed with a plain single pane.
- 3.3.31 On the east the brickwork abuts the medieval rubble wall (402) which is faced with dressed stone to the north and here comprises the jamb of the medieval stone arch (403). To the west there is an offset in the brickwork where it returns south to abut the rubble west wall (404). The brickwork projects forward of the line of the gable and is capped with a short stone 'slate' clad lean-to roof (405). The cut end of a piece of iron lineshaft (406) projects through the slates with an oil stain below it extending down the wall surface. Above the stone roof to east and west the broken ends of the medieval stone masonry extend to the eaves (407). On the west the stubs of the double wallplate project from the elevation (408).
- 3.3.32 The gable wall above the brick façade is in poor condition and in need of repair, it is currently a patchwork of different render repairs and pieces of plywood covering holes in the render and exposed areas of laths (409).

3.4 **INTERIOR: DETAILED DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS**

3.4.1 *East elevation (fig.17)*

- 3.4.2 The elevation, which is the interior of the dressed stone frontage of the medieval building, consists of whitewashed rubble masonry with one large and one smaller area of old render or plaster. It is divided into two bays by the wallpost and brace attached below the tiebeam of the central roof truss.
- 3.4.3 At the north end of the elevation the brickwork of the 19th-century north wall abuts the medieval stone rubble masonry (500) which continues north outside the building and incorporates the large arch. The wallpost of the southern roof truss terminates at a stone corbel, which is the only primary corbel remaining (501).²⁰ Centrally placed in the north bay is a horizontal timber, which is the inner lintel of the blocked stone window with trefoil cusped tracery (502). The ends of the lintel are covered by old lime plaster, which extends above it to the eaves, covering the whole of the upper north bay (503), with some modern render repair patches (504). Below the lintel the window blocking (505) is flush with the adjacent masonry and difficult to distinguish from the rubble walling to the north due to the whitewash but to the south there is a clearer joint.
- 3.4.4 The wall post of the central truss terminates at a modern inserted timber corbel (506). South of the post the south bay consists of rubble (507) with a small patch of plaster in the top south corner (508). This rubble must be mostly the later post c1840 blocking which replaced earlier blocking of a lower arch and blocked the

²⁰ Corbels in this position do not generally take any of the weight of the roof structure but offer a satisfactory aesthetic termination to the wallposts.

upper door, which replaced an earlier window. The rubble cannot easily be distinguished from the medieval rubble of the inner wall fabric it abuts which illustrates the difficulties of interpreting this type of walling when it is rebuilt with reused stone and whitewashed. However there is a slight irregular offset in the rubble on the south, which probably marks the junction of the rebuild and the primary fabric (509). There is no remaining plaster on the rubble blocking and thus the two areas of plaster probably at least predate the blocking in around the 1840s and may be much earlier.

3.4.5 *West elevation (fig.18 & plate 9)*

3.4.6 The elevation consists of whitewashed rubble masonry with a few patches of old render or plaster; it is divided into two bays by the wallpost and brace attached below the tiebeam of the central roof truss.

3.4.7 The south bay contains within the stonework, at its upper south end, a timber plate (600) resting at its north end on a dressed stone jamb (601). The line of the jamb also extends above the plate to the eaves (602) and the inner wallplate is truncated at this point (603) and resumes just north of the end of the elevation. The plate is probably a later insertion as it interrupts the jamb. The three rafters above the missing piece of inner wallplate appear to have been replaced and their ashlar pieces have gone but whether this relates to the possible opening in the wall is uncertain. Plate 600 extends beyond the south edge of the elevation and no south jamb is visible.

3.4.8 On the exterior there is nothing to indicate a lintel but there is a possible straight joint in line with the stone jamb. However the straight edge is to the masonry to the south whereas on the interior the straight edge of the jamb indicating an opening is to the south so there is a discrepancy from the interior and exterior as to the position of the possible opening. And it seems that so much alteration has taken place that it is not possible to fully understand the sequence from a visual inspection.

3.4.9 If there was an opening south of the jamb it is blocked with rubble masonry (604) and this is of largely similar character to the rest of the walling. There is a possible lower limit to this where there is change in the size of the rubble from small pieces to large rough fragments in the lower part of the wall (605).

3.4.10 It is possible that the building was floored as it had upper and lower windows, but any physical evidence for this e.g. blocked joist sockets is obscured by the whitewash. The upper windows and any floors were probably post-medieval insertions.

3.4.11 The dressed stone jamb and timber lintel could therefore possibly represent not an opening through the wall but an alcove in the upper floor; the function of which is uncertain but could relate to a stairwell or other internal feature, however this is largely speculative.

3.4.12 Between the fossilised jamb and the central truss wallpost is a surviving area of old plaster, which also continues north of the wallpost up to the jamb of a former opening (606). The section north of the wallpost has a later repair (607) and some modern cement render repairs (608).

- 3.4.13 Just below and south of the wallpost corbel, which is a modern timber replacement, is the central inserted blocked window seen in the exterior elevation. Internally, the window jambs (609), lintel (610) and blocking (611) are clearly visible although whitewashed. At the north end of the elevation the blocked upper and lower openings, as discussed in the external elevation, are visible. The lower opening has a timber lintel (612) with straight joints (613) below it which extend to floor level this could as mentioned previously indicate a window that was later enlarged then blocked up. There is a second horizontal timber just above the lintel (614), which is not as long as the lower timber. This might indicate that a wider opening was inserted across an earlier and narrower one. Perhaps a window was inserted across a door rather than the other way round.
- 3.4.14 Erected against the wall fabric in the north bay is a square section post (615) with an iron bracket holding a lineshaft bearing attached to it (616). The post is a reused floor beam with a row of vertically twinned mortises for deep floor joists on the north and south faces. The haunches of the mortises in the beam have been cut at a slight angle to the face of the beam in a form known as a diminished or reduced haunch. This use of twin diminished mortise and tenons shows that this is from a relatively high quality/high status structure. Twin tenons would support deep narrow joists as deep as the beam giving a strong floor and a flush plastered ceiling that would allow a large area of decoration uninterrupted by a projecting beam soffit: such narrow joists were in use in high status structures by the middle of the 16th-century but not common in vernacular buildings until the early 17th-century. Diminished haunch mortise and tenons which are stronger in are known from the late 15th-century and become standard in the course of the 16th-century (Bettley and Pevsner 2007, 40).
- 3.4.15 The earliest currently known dated use of twin diminished mortise and tenons is at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge in Chingford which was actually built as a grandstand (the Great Standing) for viewing the hunt by Henry VIII (S. Sheppard 2008, 21). This has been dendrochronologically dated and many timbers were felled in 1542 just before use so construction is thought to have taken place in 1542-3 (Corporation of London 1997). The Osney beam if from the former abbey buildings possibly therefore represents post-dissolution insertion of floors, conceivably related to use of abbey buildings by the dean and prebends whilst the former abbey church was the cathedral in 1542-5.
- 3.4.16 The bracket and bearing attached to the former beam are in line with a section of lineshaft embedded in the north wall. This shows that power was brought into the building from the mill to run machinery, whether this was during the saw mill phase or was later and related to flour milling is not certain.
- 3.4.17 At the north end the rubble masonry extends slightly north of the wallpost of the north truss, which terminates in another inserted timber corbel, and abuts the brick masonry of the return of the later 19th-century north wall (617).
- 3.4.18 The 19th century floorboards have removed at this end of the wall and the stepped brick plinth which supports the floor is exposed (618).

- 3.4.19 *South elevation (fig. 19)*
- 3.4.20 This elevation consists of whitewashed rubble masonry (700) below the tie beam of the roof truss (701). The truss (plate 10) is medieval with infill of 19th-century softwood studs and laths supporting the exterior render. It does not appear to have been rendered internally as the northern truss has been (see section on roof below).
- 3.4.21 There is a large central window with brick jambs in this wall. The jambs are 18th or 19th-century in date (702). There was an opening in this position in the 1779 drawing; it may have been inserted after demolition of the southern part of the range after 1720. The window is now fitted with timber louvres (703) but a photograph by Henry Taunt dated 1911 shows a glazing bar sash window of several panes fitted.
- 3.4.22 The lower east and central part of the elevation has no whitewash and this is probably due to modern repair/repointing (704). Below the window there is an irregular offset in the masonry (705) which probably marks the edge of a main repair. This is not seen on the exterior and is thus an internal repair not a rebuild of a whole wall section.
- 3.4.23 Below and west of the window there is short horizontal timber in the wall (706) which is the lintel of a former door opening which has been blocked in rubble. There is a straight joint between the rubble wall and rubble blocking to the west (707) there is no obvious joint line visible to the east, the whitewash and later repairs obscure the phasing of the fabric.
- 3.4.24 West of the window above the blocked door is a large patch of plaster (708) and near the west edge of the elevation an irregular vertical crack or series of cracks shows some subsidence in the fabric here (709).
- 3.4.25 *North elevation (fig. 20)*
- 3.4.26 The lower part of the elevation consists of the later 19th-century brick facade (800) with segmental arched door and two windows (801) as in the external description. Above the masonry is a small lean-to roof consisting of softwood wallplate, common joists and battens (802). On the west side just above the wallplate is a section of iron lineshaft with a flange (803) embedded in the fabric; a black oil stain extends down the wall below this to the floor. This is in line with the bracket and bearing attached to the post against the west wall.
- 3.4.27 Above the brick masonry and lean-to roof the north gable consists of the medieval truss (plate 11) infilled with softwood studding to which laths have been nailed and these have been rendered on the exterior and the interior. Much of the internal rendering has gone (see also section on roof below).
- 3.4.28 The initial closing of the truss dates to before the c1840 Delamotte drawing but that shows the truss timbers exposed on the exterior so the laths and rendering over the face of the truss is probably late 19th-century work. The trusses themselves are described in more detail in the section on the roof.

3.5 ROOF STRUCTURE

3.5.1 *A note on numbering*

3.5.2 The numbering of main roof elements (starting at 900) in the following text refers to the roof drawings and is to aid the description and not in every case to identify individual timbers or features, e.g., all the tiebeams are 901, therefore only one truss elevation and one rafter elevation have been numbered (figs. 21 & 22). If a timber needs to be individually described it will be further identified in the text. Items of which there are many examples such as the rafters and gable studs are labelled with the group number on the drawings.

3.5.3 *General form of roof trusses*

3.5.4 The surviving roof consists of three medieval trusses; north, central and south (figs. 19-21 & plates 10-12) and two slopes of rafters; east and west (figs. 22-23 & plate 13) of which some are modern replacements. The roof is of the raised arcade type, in other words the form is as though the upper part of an aisled or arcaded building's roof truss with arcade posts and plates and aisle rafters has been cut off just below the arcade post braces and raised up and sat on the tie beam of a building without arcades. What would have been the slightly cambered aisled building's tie beam thus becomes a collar and the collar becomes an upper collar.

3.5.5 The raised arcade posts (900) are like queen posts in that they rise from a tie beam (901) and directly support the main purlin (902). Here they are also jowled and moulded (plate 14) to pass the purlin to support the collar (903) and unlike queen posts are braced with curved braces (904) to the main purlin which is really a raised arcade plate set square to the posts not the rafters as the upper purlin (905) is. The posts are also braced to the tie beam by curved braces (906) and although these only survive in the central truss the empty mortices for them can be seen in the posts on both end trusses (plate 15).

3.5.6 The upper collars (907), which are supported by single central struts (908) rising from the collars, clasp the upper purlins to the upper principal rafters (909) which rise from the collar to the apex of the roof. There are pairs of curved windbraces (910) bracing the upper principal rafters to the upper purlins in all four roof bays. The lower sections of the principal rafters (911) rise from the tie beams and are tenoned into the backs of the raised arcade posts and lower purlins. The upper principals diminish in thickness above the join with the upper collar and purlin.

3.5.7 The tiebeams of the central and north truss are braced by large curved braces (912) to wallposts (913) which terminate in corbels (914). This is to give extra support to the tie beams and indirectly to the entire roof with its weight of stone slates, which is large due to the high angle, and thus greater length, of the slope, and to give greater lateral stability to the roof structure. The corbels do not support the roof but offer a satisfactory aesthetic termination to the wallposts. Only the east corbel of the south truss is the primary stone example, the others are later timber replacements.

3.5.8 The south wall is immediately below the tie beam of the south truss and it is therefore not possible to ascertain if this truss was formerly an open truss with

wallposts and braces which would then indicate that the south wall is a later addition.

3.5.9 *Common rafters and wallplates*

3.5.10 The common rafters are, like the principal rafters, of two parts. The upper parts (915) rise from the top of the collars and extend to the apex of the roof. The lower shorter sections (916) are also of much larger scantling than the upper ones and rise from the outer wallplate (917) to the main purlin (902). Vertical ashlar pieces (918) are tenoned into the top of the inner wall plate (919) and rise to the soffit of the rafters to which they are also tenoned (fig. 26 & plate 16).²¹ Some of the ashlar pieces are missing revealing mortices in the lower rafters. Most of the lower rafters are medieval but some are replacements, possibly of 19th-century date, and have no ashlar pieces or mortices for them. The empty mortices for the missing ashlar pieces are also visible in the inner wallplate.

3.5.11 There are nine common rafters per bay thus there are 18 couples in the structure. Of these all 18 lower rafters on the east side of the roof are medieval and counting from the south 1-5, 9 and 14-15 have lost their ashlar pieces. On the west side six of the lower rafters are later replacements these being, from the south, nos., 2-4, 6, 8 and 12. Of the rest nos., 5 and 7 have lost their ashlar pieces.

3.5.12 *Carpenters marks*

3.5.13 Many of the lower common rafters have carpenters marks on their inner faces below the join with the ashlar piece and these are recorded in the site archive. They do not seem to be a numbered series on either side and only one opposing pair of rafters has the same mark. Possibly they located the rafters on the wall plates or located the ashlar pieces to the rafters (or both) but if so corresponding marks were not seen on the ashlar pieces or the plates, which are, though, covered in dirt and pigeon droppings.

3.5.14 *Rafter holes*

3.5.15 Some of the medieval lower rafters have lateral holes drilled through them near their bases and nearer the upper than the lower face. These phenomena are known simply as 'rafter holes', although in many known examples the holes in the side of the rafters are not drilled right through and are near the lower face. These occur mostly in rafter roofs although some are in purlin roofs (Charles 1974, 22-23). Charles (1974) considers they were for some form of iron dowel by which the rafter feet could be tied down to the wall plate or tied across the span to prevent initial springing up of green rafters away from the plate. This seems unlikely to have been the case here as these lower rafters are short and of substantial scantling.

3.5.16 These holes seem to occur mostly in higher status buildings and McCann (1978, 28) believes they were part of a gauging system to allow a perfectly

²¹ Dimensions of these timbers (taken in the south-west bay) are; lower common rafter 0.125 x 0.10m (5" x 4"); ashlar piece, 0.725 x 0.125 x 0.08m; inner wall plate, 0.24 x 0.11m; outer wall plate, 0.16 x 0.11m.

aligned roof to be constructed on imperfectly aligned walls or plates. He describes a somewhat unwieldy hypothetical gauge being like a huge mason's level that spanned between the rafter feet with dowels to engage the holes and a plumb line. Sometimes such holes were simply for affixing side sprockets.

3.5.17 *Infill, partitions and loft*

3.5.18 The north and south trusses both have infill consisting of softwood studs and straight bracing. The studs are morticed into the collars and tiebeam. They support horizontal laths which are rendered on the exterior. The north truss also has the remnants of internal lime plaster in the panels between the studs. The current infill is probably of late 19th-century date.

3.5.19 The undersides of the collars in the south truss and the collars and tiebeam in the central truss also contain empty mortises for former infill studs or staves.

3.5.20 In the case of the central truss this was clearly an internal stud partition which extended through the roof and below the tie beam either to the ground or to an inserted first floor. The braces to the wallposts in this truss have large empty mortises in their inner faces, which may have been for bracing associated with this partition wall.

3.5.21 In the case of the south truss, as mentioned earlier, because we cannot see the soffit of the tie beam we cannot be certain whether this was at one time an open internal truss. This truss was certainly a division between two parts of the abbey range and would have required infilling as a partition even if it was not originally an external wall.

3.5.22 The north truss does not appear to have mortices for earlier studs and was perhaps always open prior to the Victorian restoration, unless the current studs are reusing older mortices although this seems unlikely as it was not done so in the south truss.

3.5.23 There may have been a loft floor inserted in the south bay. The tiebeam of the central truss has two mortices regularly spaced in its south face and the tiebeam of the south truss has a corresponding chase mortice and a slot on its north face. It would seem that two joists had been inserted between the two tiebeams, possibly to support a loft floor, although the mortices are rather small. The inserted timbers may have fulfilled another function such as hanging or suspending items or perhaps for storing items such as lengths of timber either leant against or laid across them.

3.6 **OBSERVATIONS ON STRUCTURAL CONDITION**

3.6.1 The work undertaken did not include a detailed condition survey and one may follow using this survey as a basis. However it would seem of value to record here some observations regarding the present condition of the scheduled monument.

3.6.2 The masonry of the main structure is in general in good or reasonable condition, there are no areas that appear to be in danger of collapse. There is a vertical series of cracks at the west end of the interior south wall that are probably of some age and indicate historic subsidence. There are some areas,

particularly in the external south wall, where the bonding material has weathered badly leaving deep joints that may require some repointing.

- 3.6.3 The attached stone arch does appear to be in fairly poor condition: the arch has dropped and the inner voussoirs are weathered and the joints in them have opened up slightly. The dropping may have occurred prior to the early 19th-century (Roberts 1814) but it has weathered since then, especially on the west, since being open to the elements and not part of a roofed structure. The arch is currently supported to the north by the abutting brick pier surviving from the 19th-century mill extensions.
- 3.6.4 The roof is in generally good condition however the cladding of the north gable wall is in poor condition consisting of many repair patches to the rendering, some plywood patches over holes in the rendering and some open holes where rendering and laths are missing. On the interior the roof structure appears to be in generally sound condition. The north truss looks good internally but may have deteriorated a little where the north faces of the timbers are covered by the rendering and where moisture may have seeped through cracks and been trapped or where there are now holes in the render. The rendering of the south gable is in much better condition with only one small hole.
- 3.6.5 The central truss which is open and dry appears to be in good condition. The main (lower) purlin in the north bay of the east side has been subject to some water ingress but the hole in the roof slates that caused this has been repaired. The upper rafters are later insertions and appear to be in reasonable condition. Most of the lower rafters are original and these seem to be generally slightly weathered towards their bases and joints to the wallplates but these could not be examined closely. Many of the ashlar pieces connecting the inner wallplates to the rafters are missing, in places there are iron straps in place to prevent the wallplates from moving apart. The wallplates themselves are quite weathered looking but are probably sound. The spaces between the inner and outer wallplates are full of pigeon droppings and debris and this probably needs cleaning out.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 W. H. Munsey Ltd., commissioned Oxford Archaeology (OA) to carry out historic building investigation and recording of the scheduled former Osney Abbey building. The work was requested by English Heritage in advance of a programme of repair and possible adaptation to office use of the building as part of a wider residential development of the Osney Mill site.
- 4.1.2 The recording programme consisted of georectified photographic elevations of the walls and metric survey of the roof trusses and rafters. The resulting elevations and roof drawings are reproduced in this report with numbered phasing and labelling which is referred to in the descriptive text.
- 4.1.3 The surviving abbey building belonged to a range that once not only extended north to abut the mill range but also extended south in an abutting range that incorporated at least two phases. Both of which had corner buttresses, gothic arched doors and window although it did also contain square headed windows

that might be later. Stylistically the now lost southern range looked earlier (perhaps 14th-century) than the existing range which it appeared (in historic views) to abut but which contained square headed windows and doors and a depressed arch suggesting a 15th-century date.

- 4.1.4 The surviving building is faced with dressed stone on the east facade which faced in towards the main abbey precinct but is solid rubble with no facing on the west side. There are blocked upper windows to east and west suggesting there may have been an upper floor but these are probably later insertions. The upper window in the east wall was replaced with what appears, in a view of around 1840, to be a door which suggests there was an upper floor at that time. There is however no definite proof visible in the present structure for an early or a later inserted first floor, the interior has been largely whitewashed and any infilled joist or corbel sockets do not show in the masonry.
- 4.1.5 The south truss of the fine raised arcade roof sits directly on the south wall and is infilled with studwork, this construction may have been used because this range was built against a pre-existing range or the truss was formerly open and part of one longer building. Thus although the west wall is quoined at the corners and seems to integrate with the east and west walls it may be rebuilt or altered. If the existing range had been built before the southern range one might have expected the gable wall to be totally of masonry and not incorporating a timber truss. There is a blocked doorway in the south wall and a window with later brick quoins that may be an 18th-century insert built after the southern range was demolished.
- 4.1.6 Many alterations have occurred to the fabric of the walling and particularly in the west wall it is not possible simply from a visual inspection to fully understand the sequence and phasing of all the interventions to the structure.
- 4.1.7 The current infill in the north and south trusses is of modern softwood studwork but the south and central trusses contain empty mortices in the soffits of the collars and in the central truss tie beam. These were for earlier stud or stave infill, which in the case of the central truss was an internal partition and in the south truss was a division between the north and south sections of the range. The north truss was probably always open. There may also have been a loft floor or some structure inserted in the southern bay as there are mortices for two beams or joists to be inserted between the central and south truss tie beams.
- 4.1.8 The primary function of the existing range is uncertain, it had a fine dressed facade and moulded doors and windows and a fine roof so appears to have been more than simply a storage range connected with the mill. The wide depressed arch may, though, have been for cart access and certainly suggests it was not a domestic range, but there is no evidence for an opposing wide door giving access through the range. The former southern part of the range (when drawn in 1720) had doors and upper and lower windows in each bay, and some chimney stacks, and appears to have been in later use, if not earlier, as two-storey accommodation, possibly for canons. There is a reference to this range being called the canons' buildings. Some reconstructions have interpreted this former southern part of the range as the bakehouse presumably because it was near the mill and had a substantial chimneystack in the early 18th-century historic view.

- 4.1.9 The existing building was in poor order in the early 19th-century after the north part connecting it to the mill had collapsed or been demolished but it was patched up and a brick north wall added and the north truss closed. For a while it was connected, via Victorian brick additions, to the main mill and possibly used as part of the sawmill business which was established in about 1824.
- 4.1.10 An upper window in the east wall, above an arch that had been blocked since the 18th-century or earlier, was replaced with a door and then both were replaced with rubble walling before a new building was built against the east wall sometime before 1845. A stone rubble gable for the new building was added to the east wall. The building, which was probably a cart shed or stable originally, was demolished recently but the gable survives in the east wall of the scheduled monument.
- 4.1.11 This survey was not commissioned as a condition survey and the roof fabric in particular was surveyed electronically but not observed closely except for the lower parts. However some general observations on the condition were made and have been included. The main areas of concern would seem to be the attached stone arch and elements of the medieval roof. The arch is quite weathered and is abutted by, and probably supported by, 19th-century brickwork. The main issues noted in the roof are the lath and render exterior cladding of the north truss and the north-west main purlin which has previously suffered a little from some water ingress through a hole in the roof but this has now been fixed.
- 4.1.12 This survey was intended to provide a record of the structure, in advance of and, to inform an application for scheduled monument consent to repair the structure and possibly for a change of use. The scheduled monument is currently on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk Register which indicates it is in need of conservation and repair and a secure future.
- 4.1.13 Outline planning permission has been obtained for development of the adjacent former mill buildings and it is hoped to undertake repair of the monument and possibly to convert it sympathetically to light office use or something similar. Such use with minimum intervention to the historic fabric should ensure a future for the building in which it would be used, maintained, accessible and appreciated and still retain all its historic character and significance.

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<http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk>

<http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk> List description

APPENDIX 1: LIST DESCRIPTION

Building Details:

Building Name: OSNEY ABBEY

Parish: OXFORD

District: OXFORD

County: OXFORDSHIRE

Postcode: OX2 0AN

Details:

LBS Number: 245670

Grade: II

Date Listed: 12/01/1954

Date Delisted:

NGR: SP5040105885

Listing Text:

MILL STREET

1.

1485

(South End)

Osney Abbey

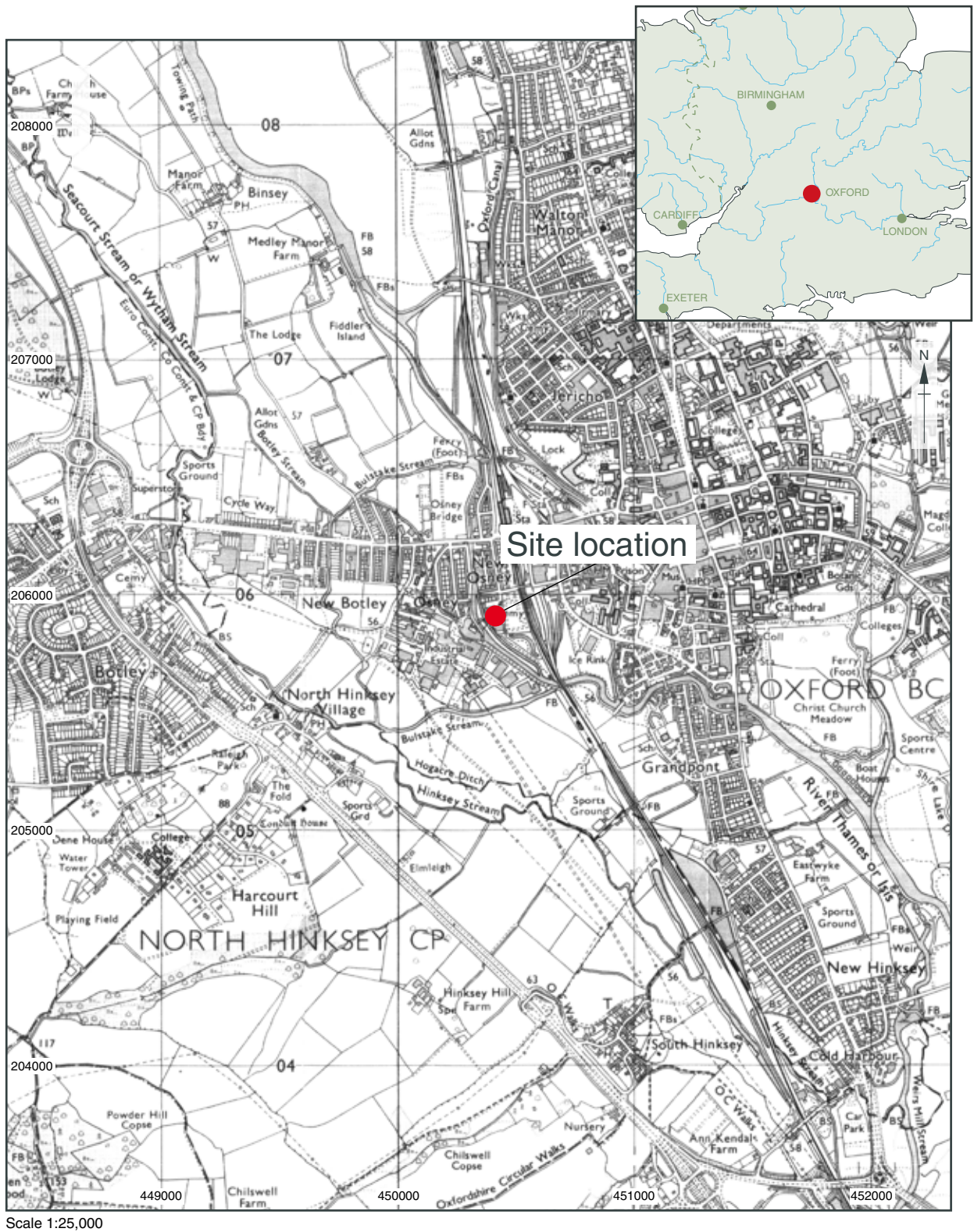
SP 50 NW 24/65 12.1.54.

II

2.

The Augustinian Priory was founded 1129. All the buildings have been destroyed except a rubble and timber-framed structure which may be C15 in date; it has a queenpost roof (?C16) and a blocked 2-light window. Joined to it by a wall on the North-East is a stone C15 archway with a 4-centred head and moulded jambs. There is a commemorative plaque to Haggai of Oxford, martyred in 1222.

Listing NGR: SP5041805895



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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Site plan

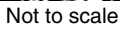


Figure 3: Agas' Map of Oxford, 1587

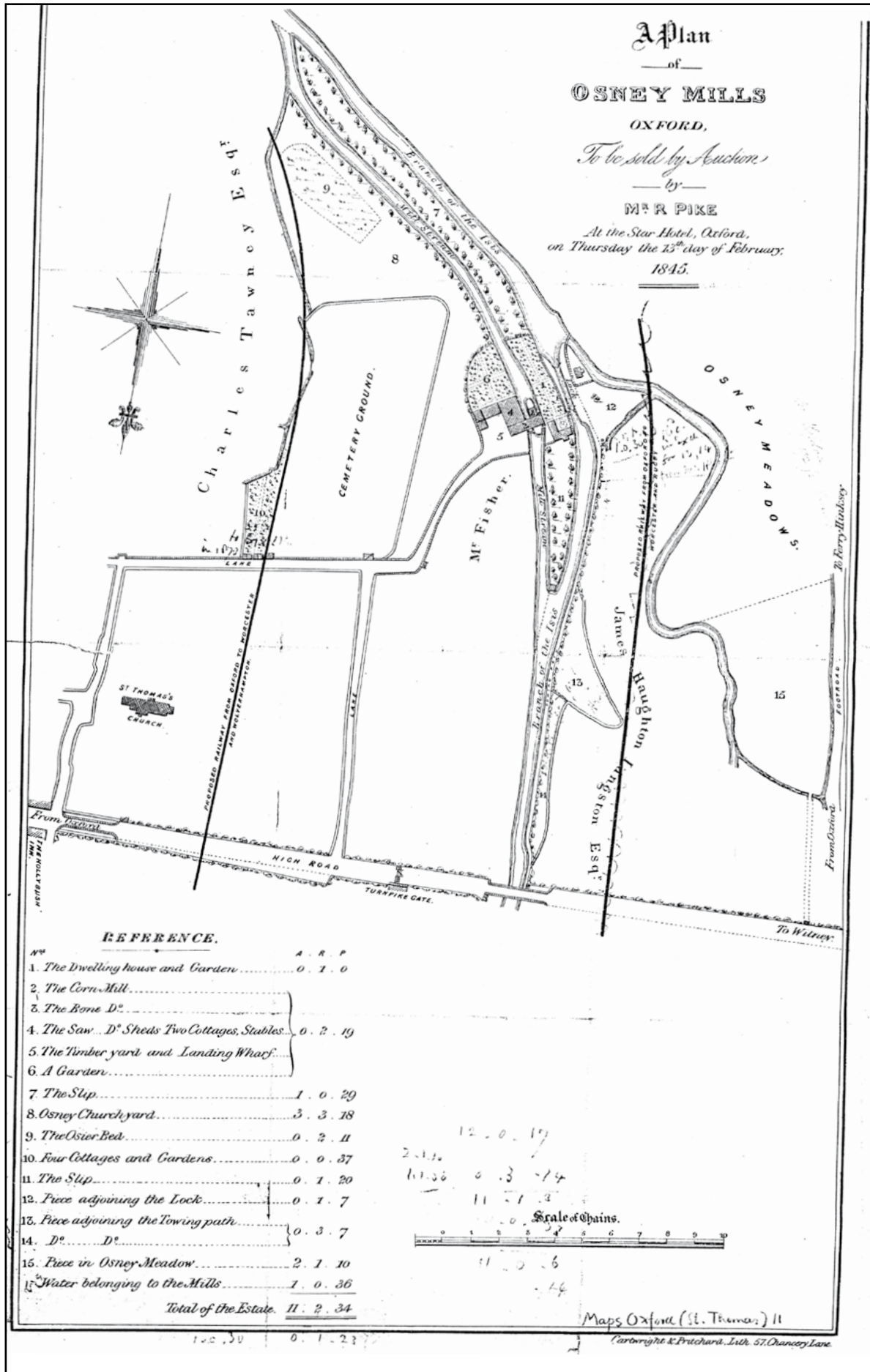


Figure 4: Sale plan, 1845 (Courtesy of Christ Church)

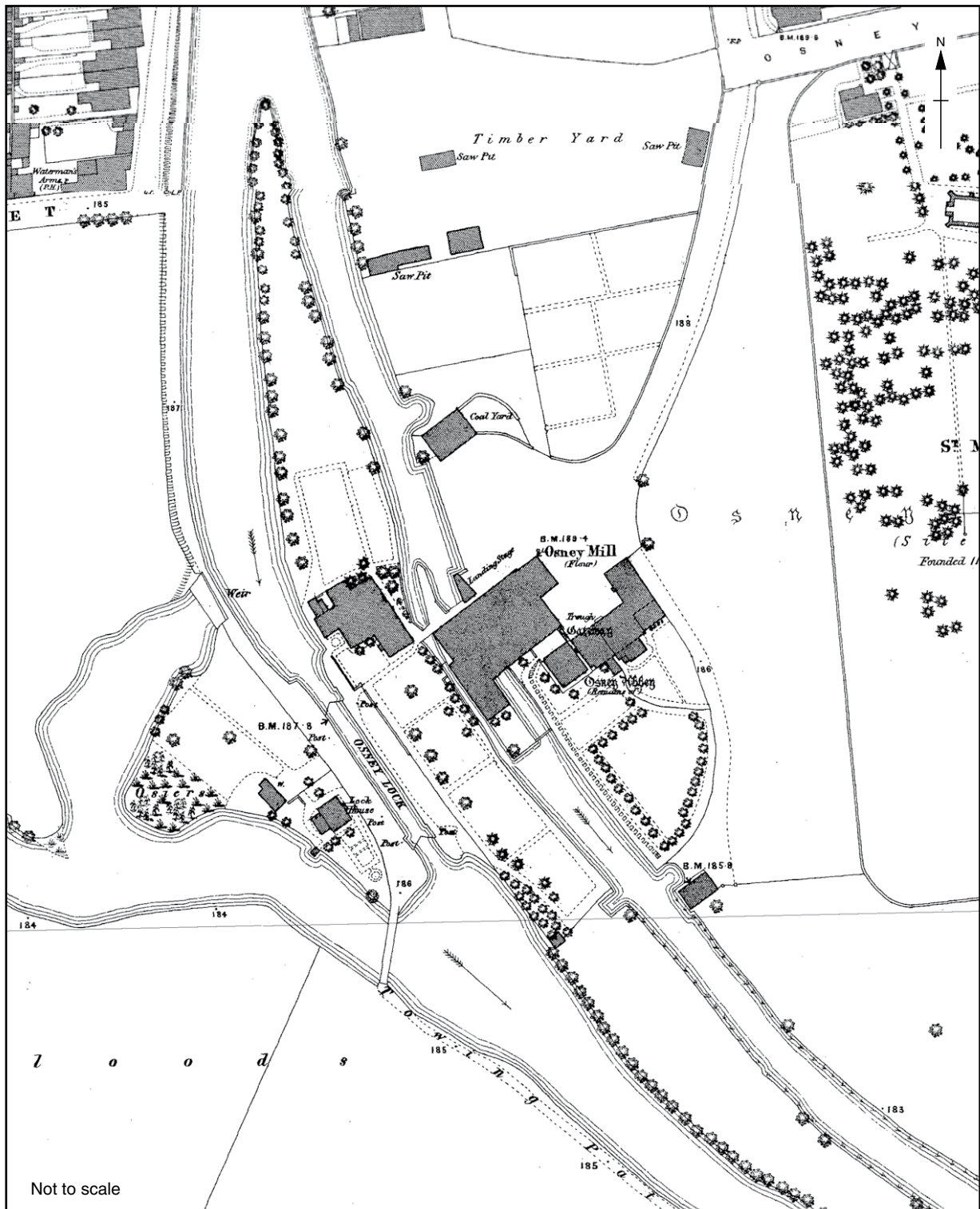


Figure 5: OS 1st Edition 1:500 Map, 1876

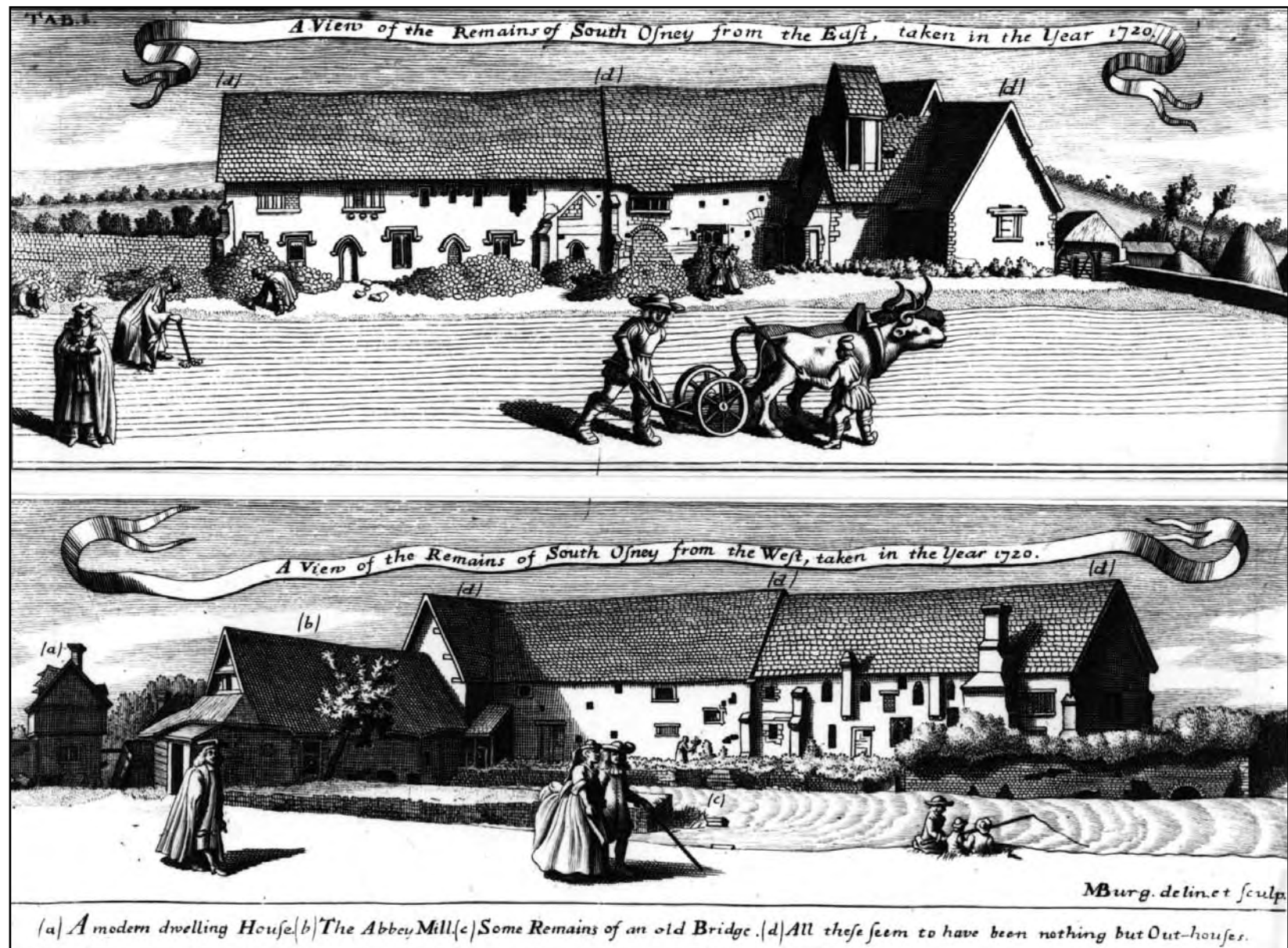


Figure 6: Remains of South Osney; Michael Burghers from Thomas Hearne, *Textus Roffense* (1720)

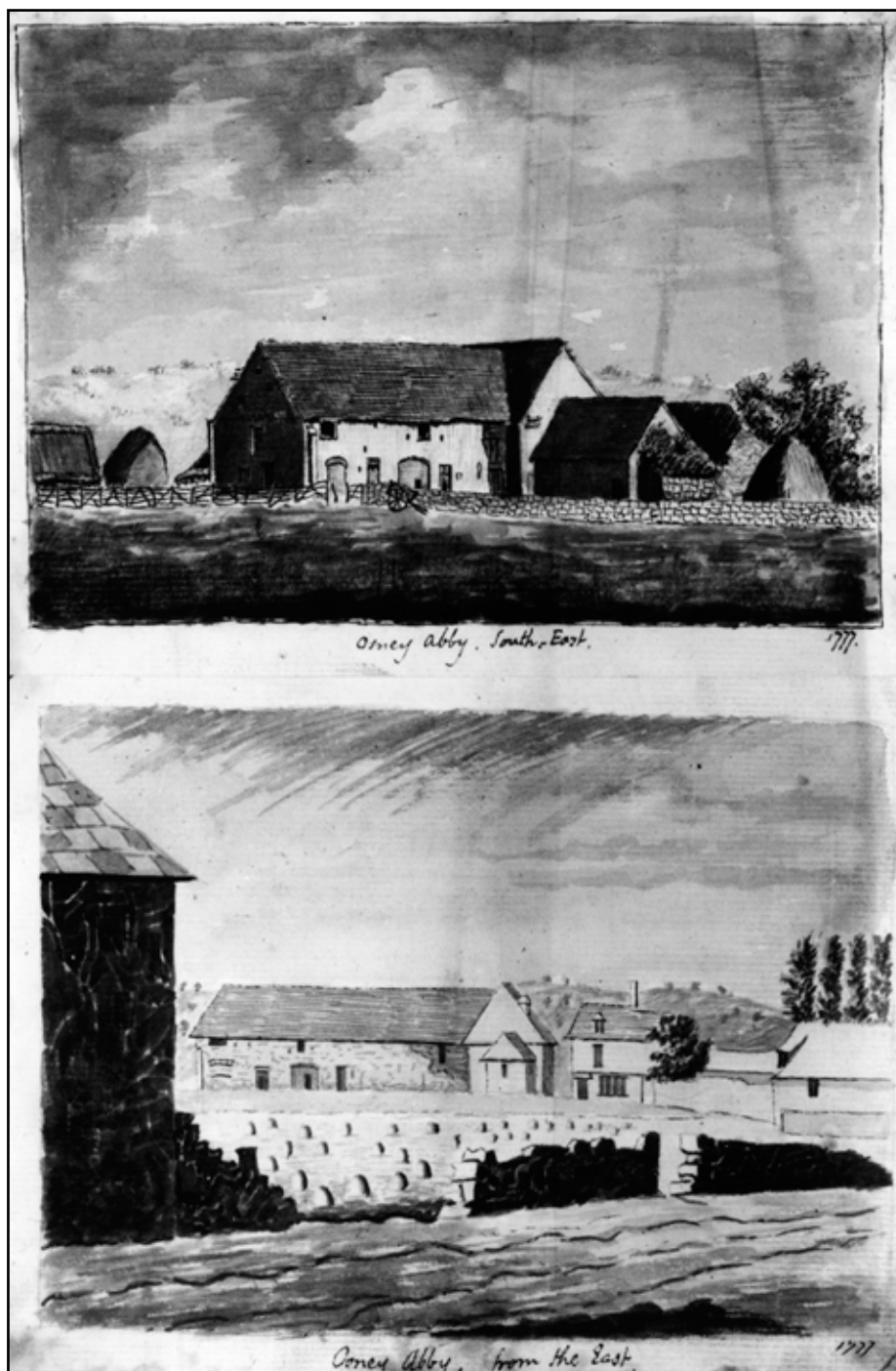


Figure 7: Osney buildings in 1777 from south-east and east, Bodleian Vet. A.5.d.1127



Figure 8: Osney in 1779, from Pridden Collection, Bodleian MS Top. Oxon d.281, f.107



Figure 9: Osney between 1779 and c1815 from the east, Bodleian MS Top. Gen.a.11 F.111

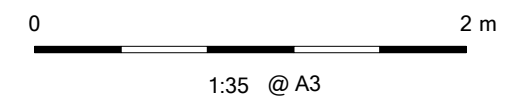
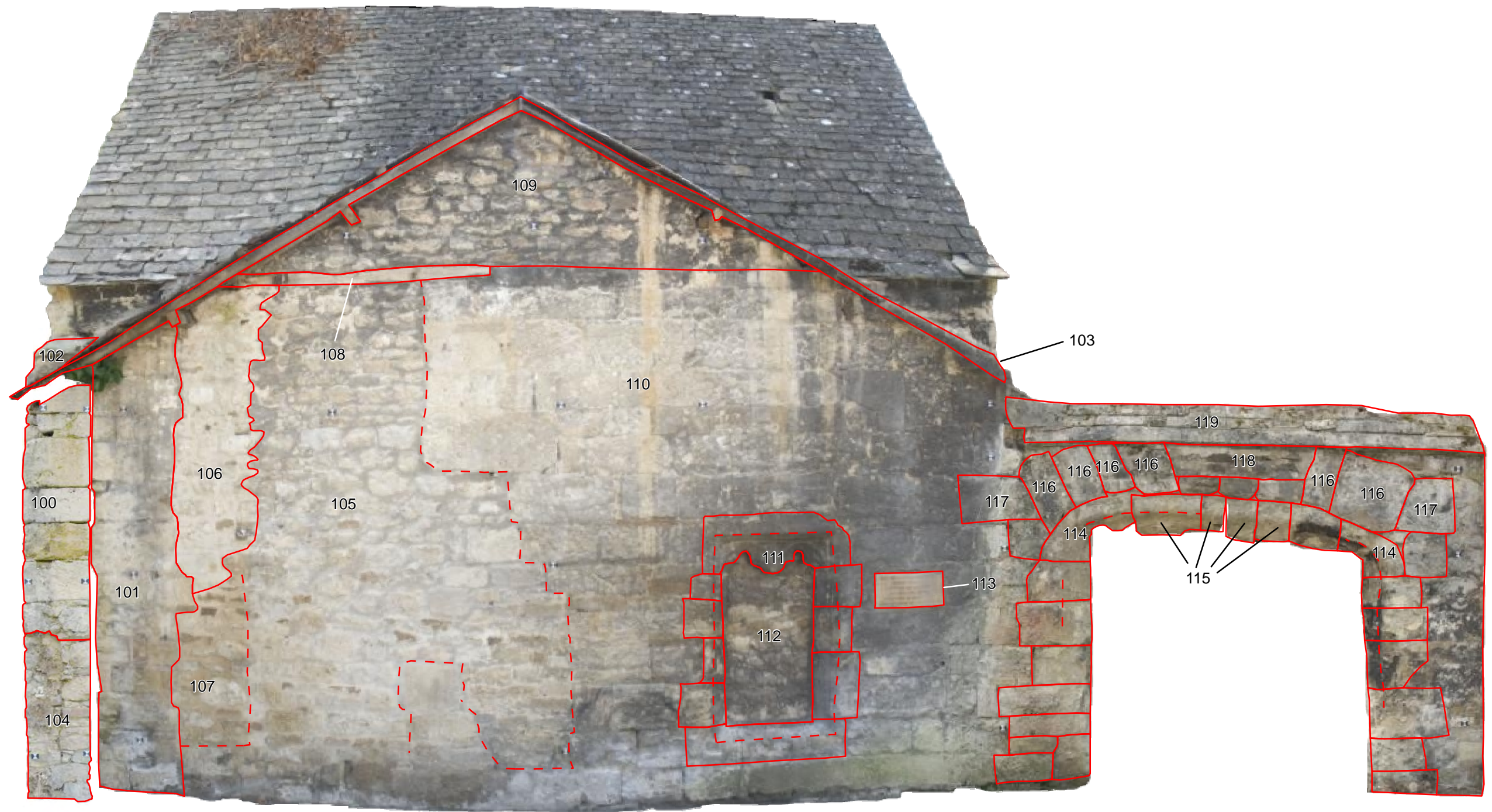


Figure 12: East external elevation



Figure 10: Osney in c1815 from the north-east, Bodleian MS Top. Oxon C.313, f82

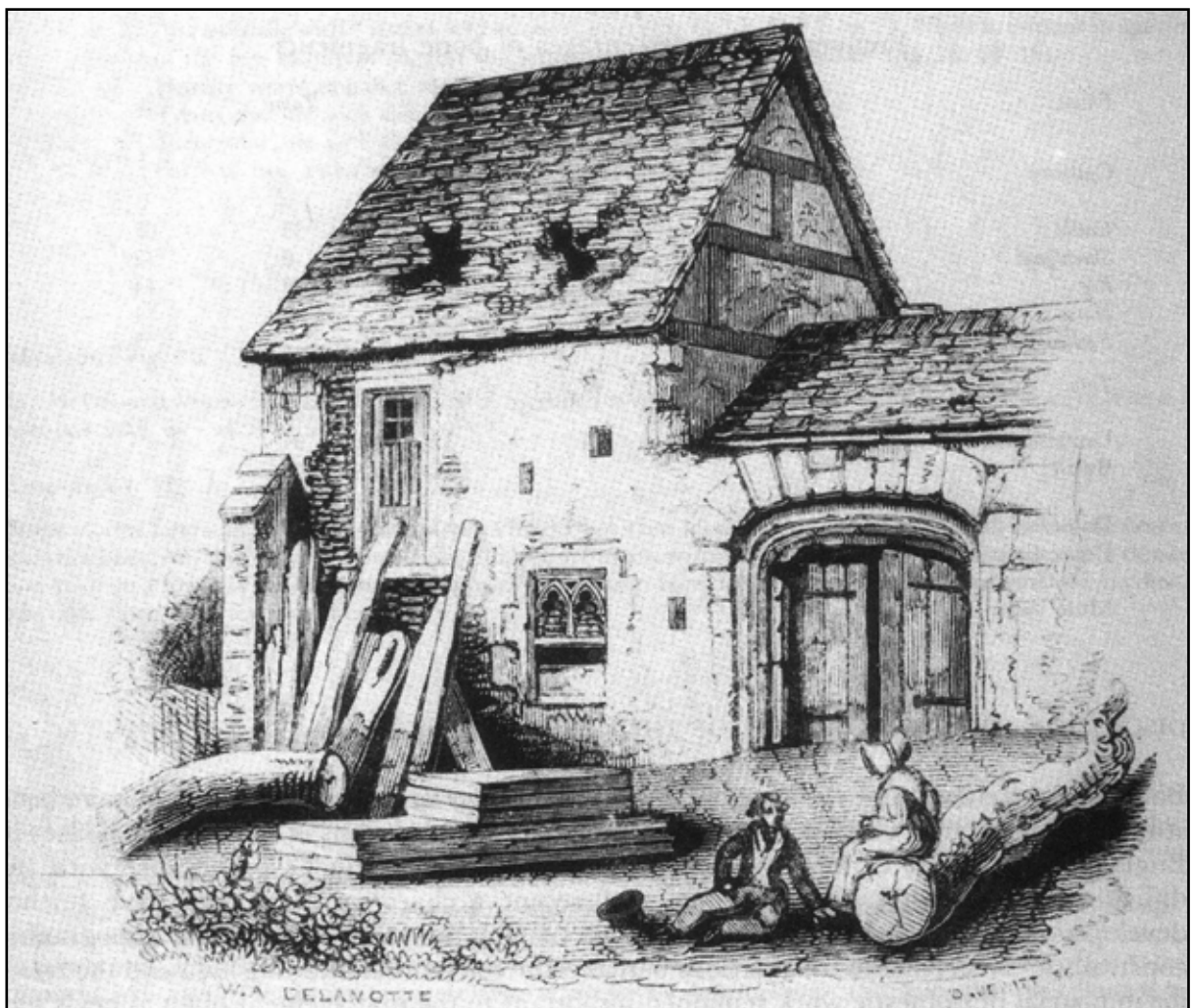
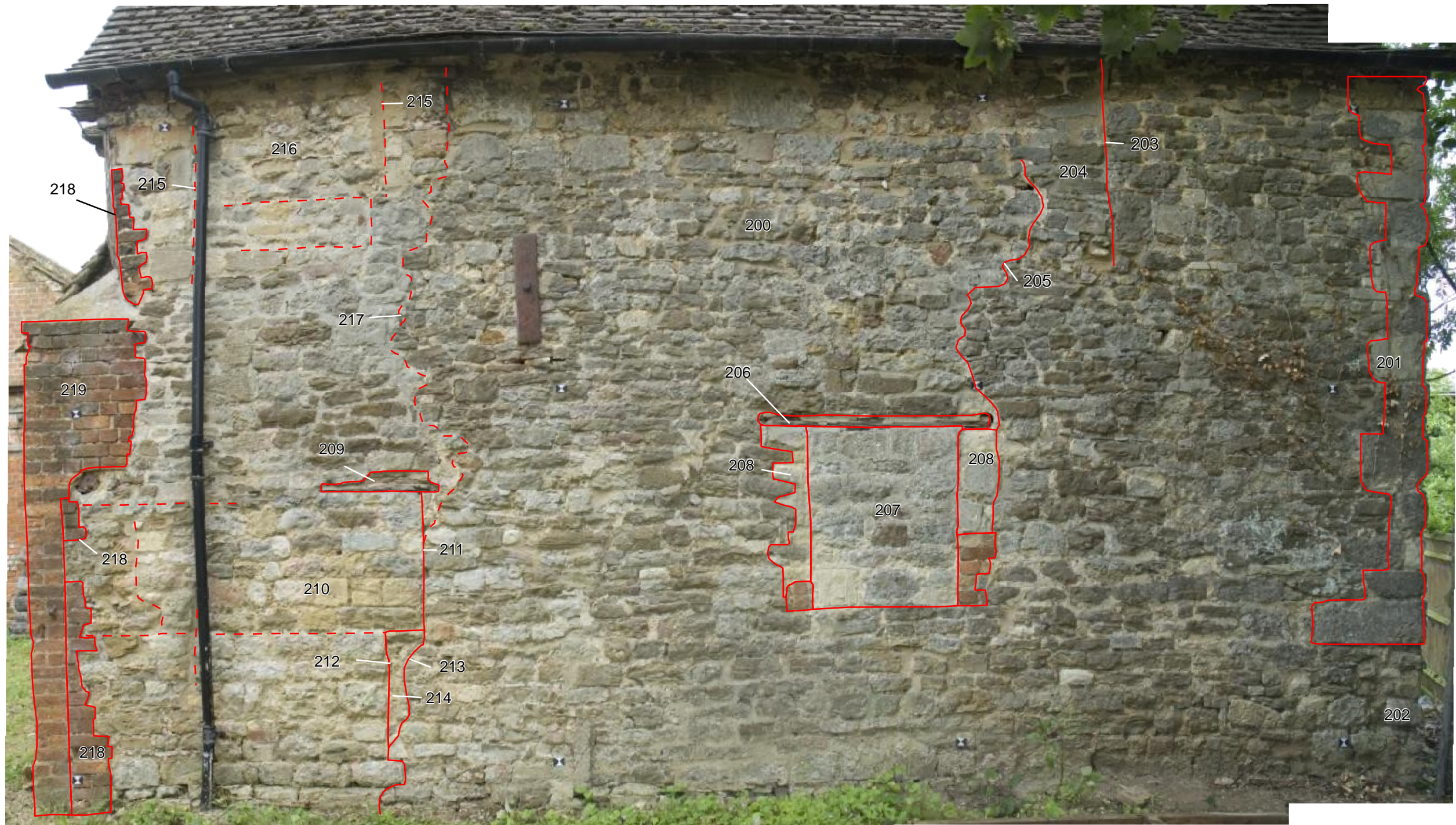


Figure 11: Osney Abbey remains from the north-east between about c1824 and 1845, engraving by William Delamotte and Orlando Jewett, Bodleian Vet. A.5.d.1127 f.300b



0 2 m
1:25 @ A3

Figure 13: West external elevation

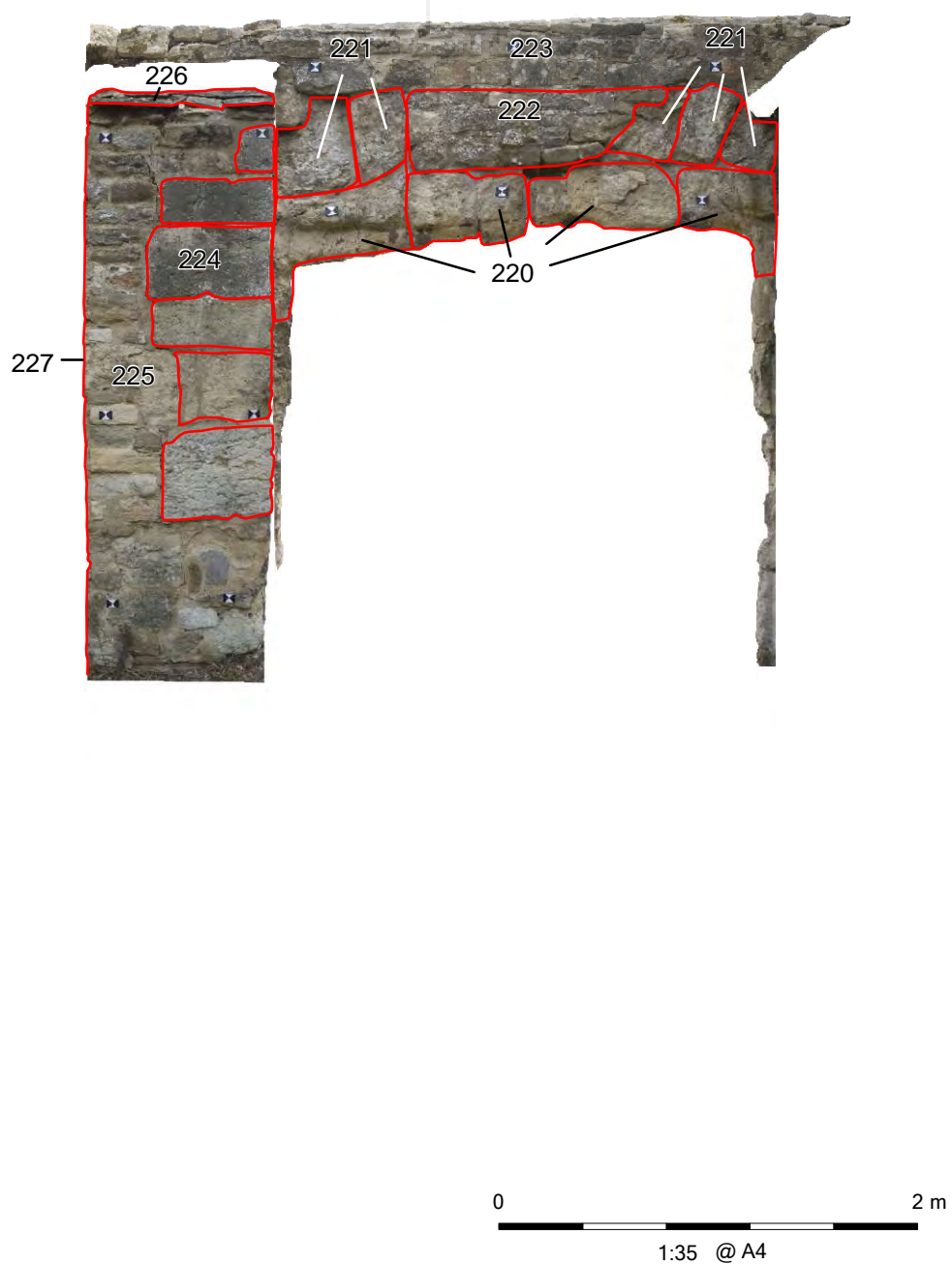


Figure 14: West elevation of arch



0 2 m
1:40 @A3

CHECKED BY:

Figure 15: South external elevation

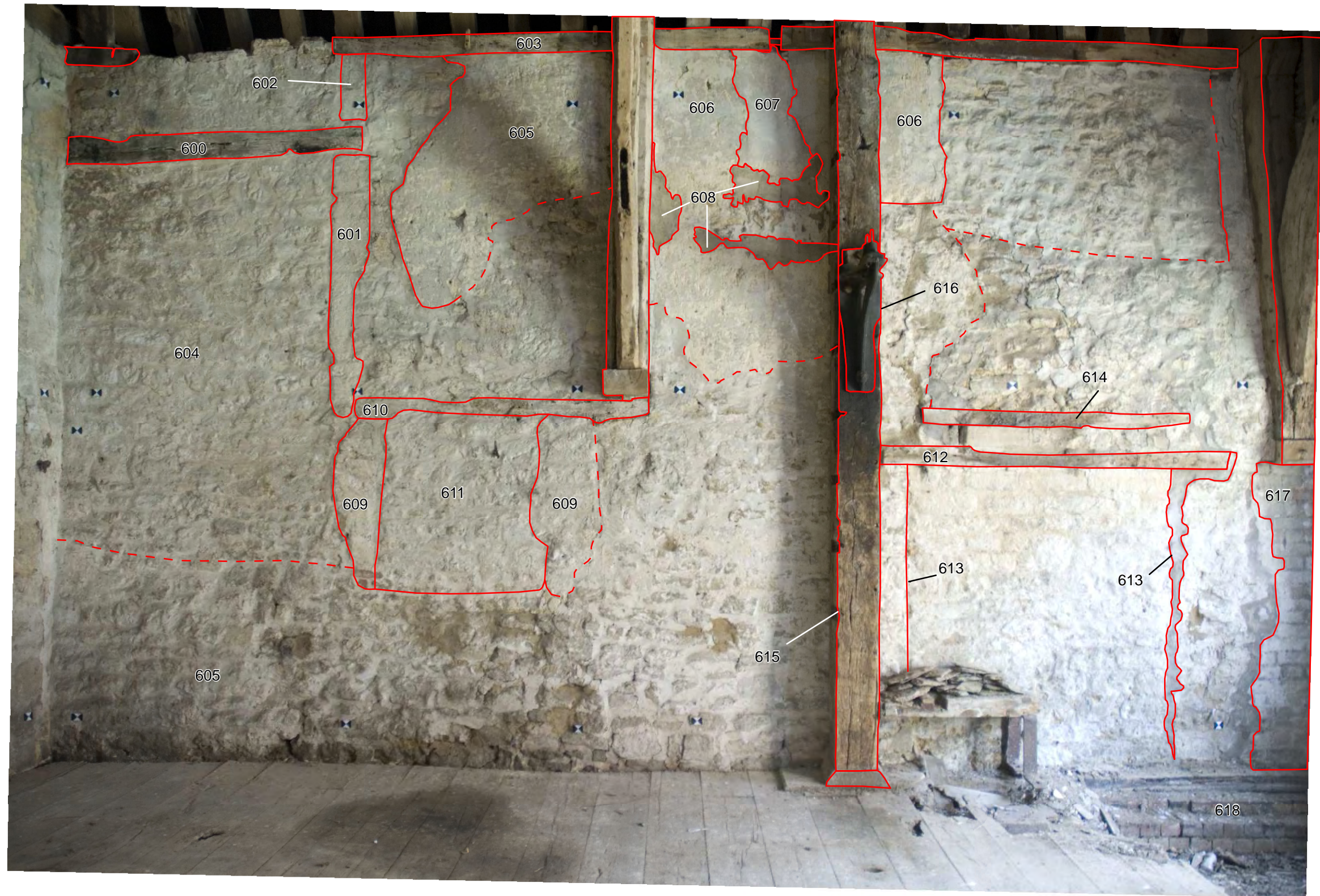


0 2 m
1:40 @ A3

Figure 16: North external elevation

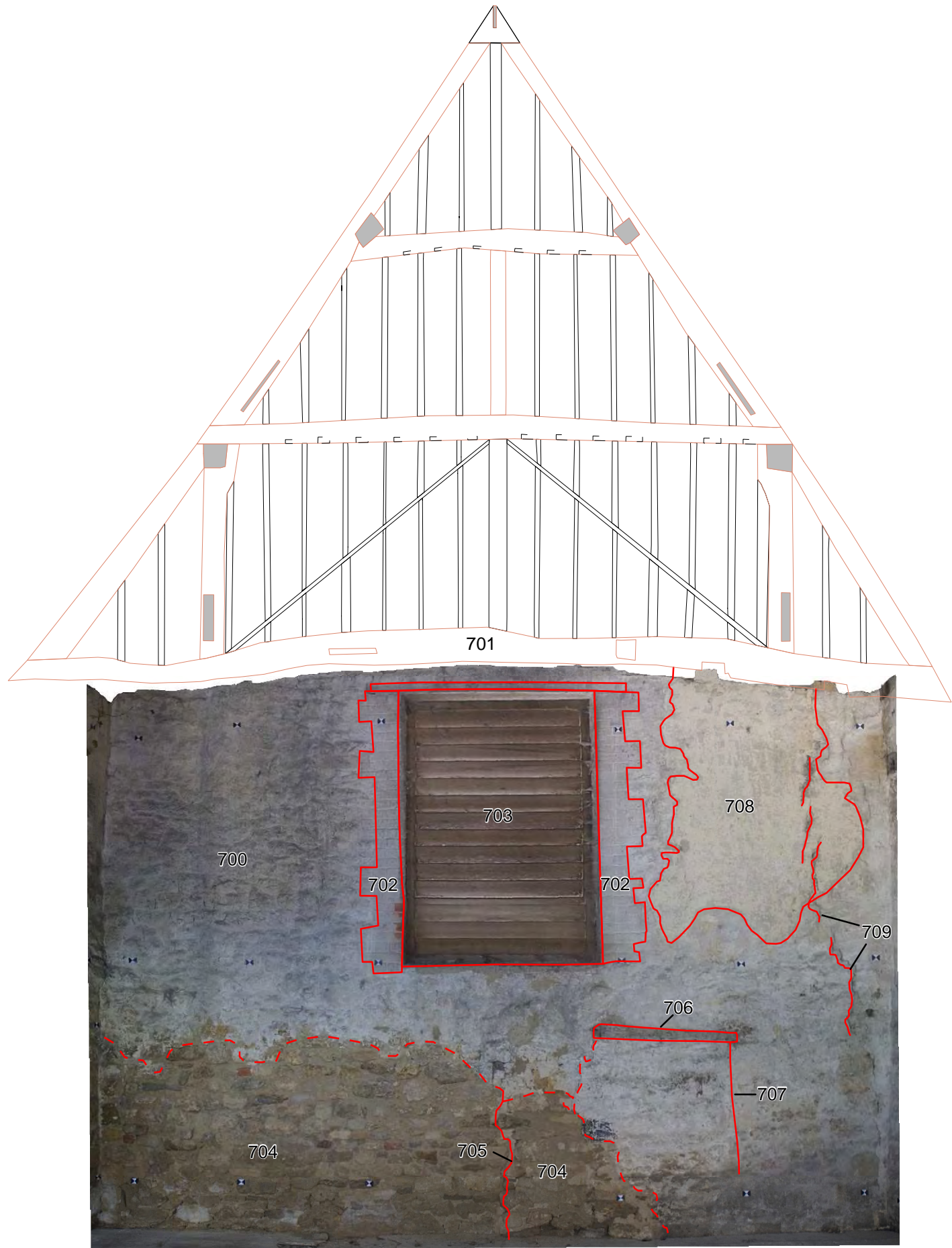


Figure 17: East internal elevation



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1:25 @ A3

Figure 18: West internal elevation

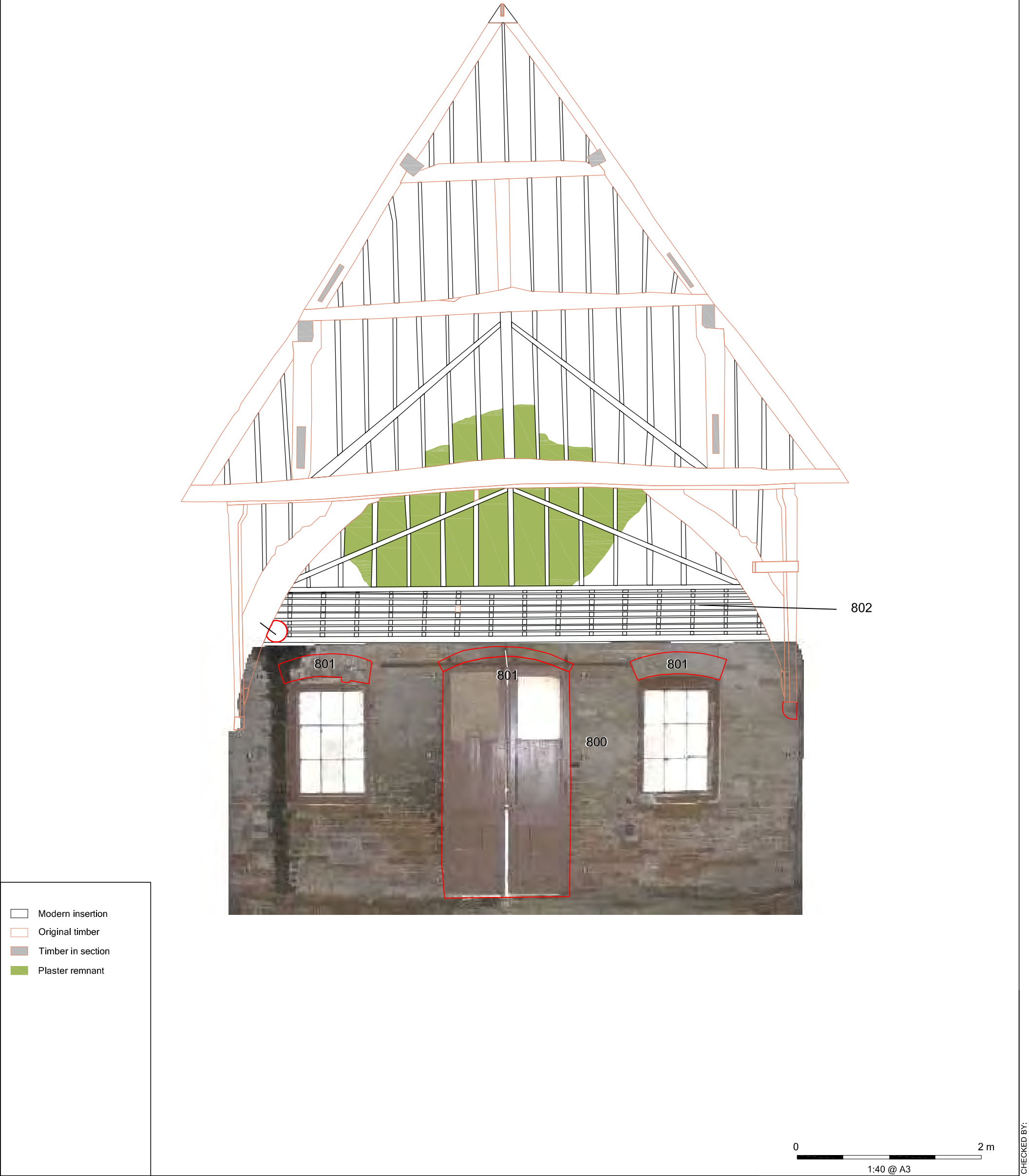


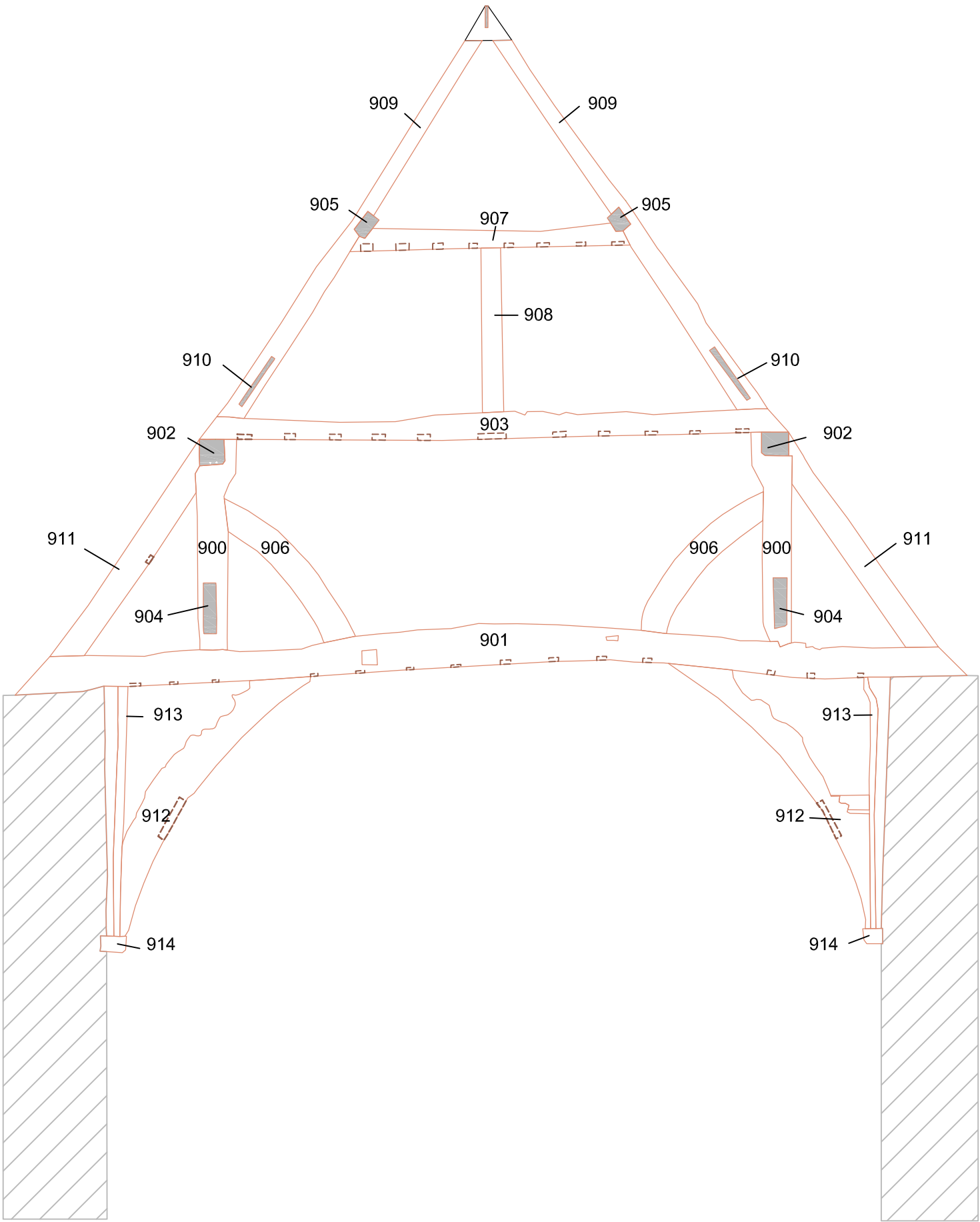
Key:

- Original timber
- Modern insertion
- Timber in section

0 2 m
1:40 @ A3

Figure 19: South internal elevation





Timber in section

0 2 m
Scale at A3x1:40

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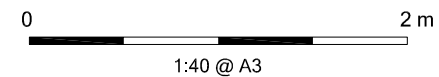
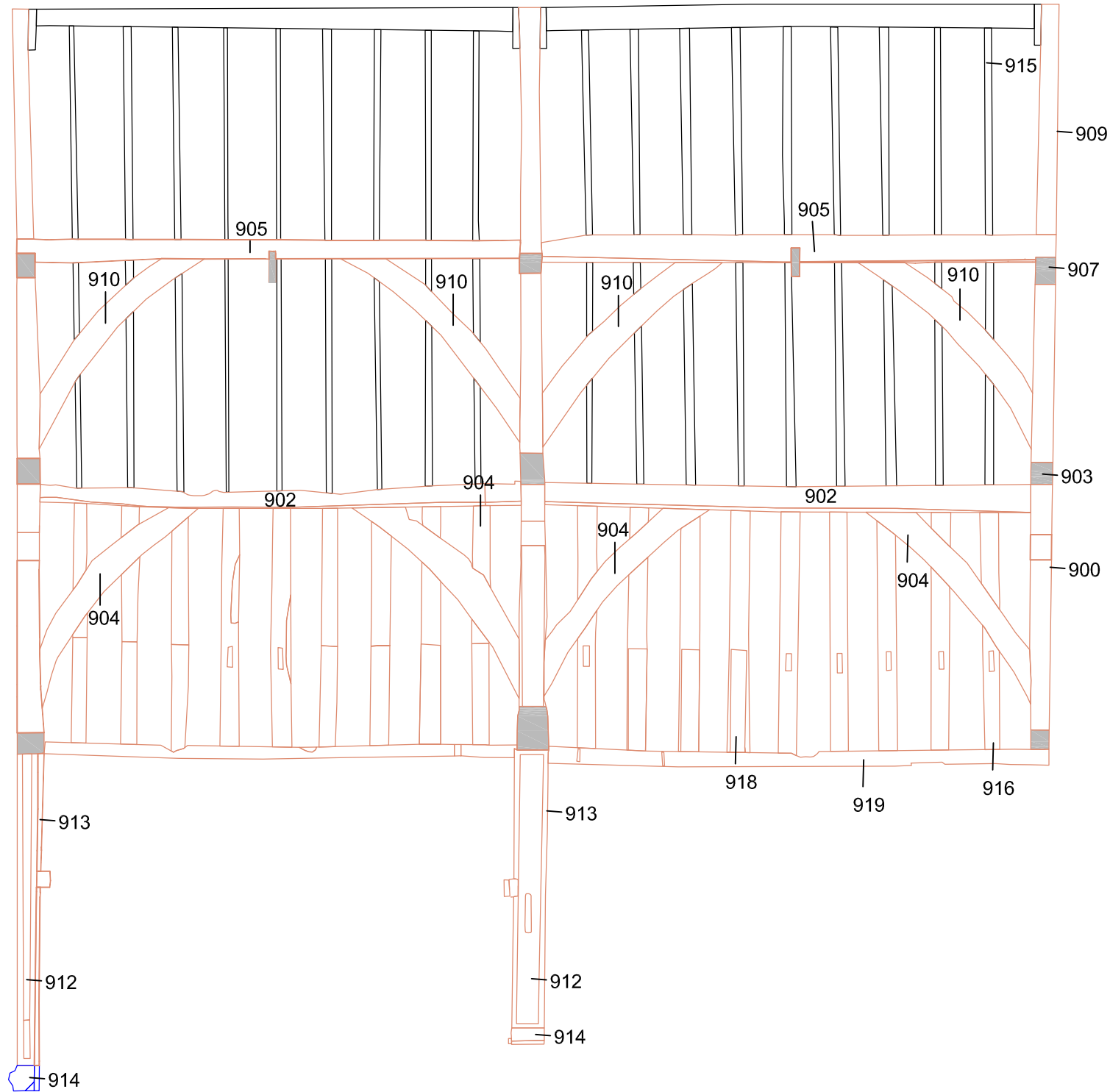
Figure 21:Central roof truss

Modern insertion

Original timber

Timber in section

Stone corbel



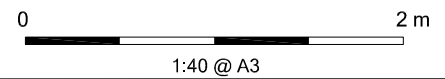
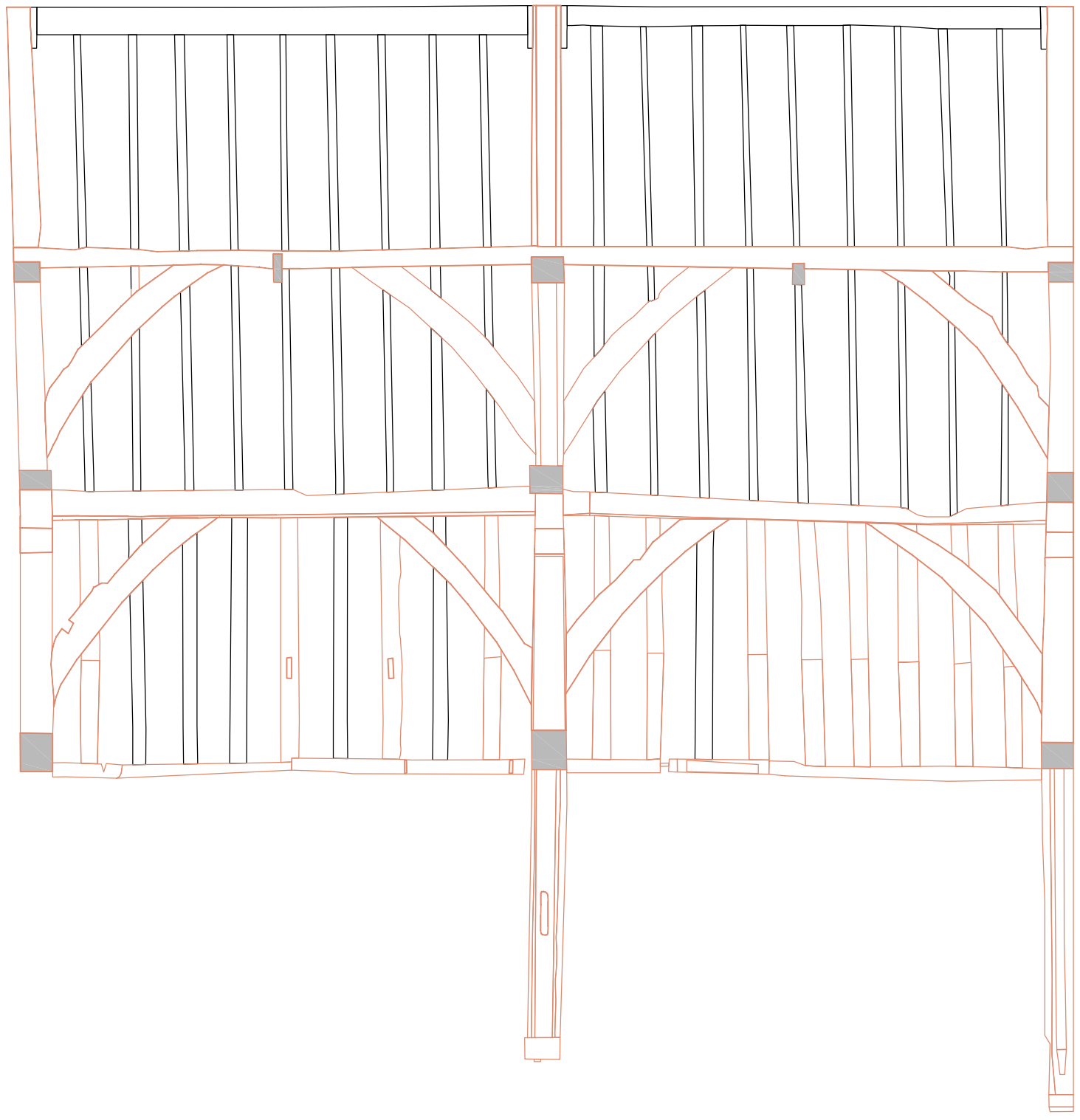
CHECKED BY:

Figure 22: East slope of roof

Modern insertion

Original timber

Timber in section



CHECKED BY:

Figure 23: West slope of roof

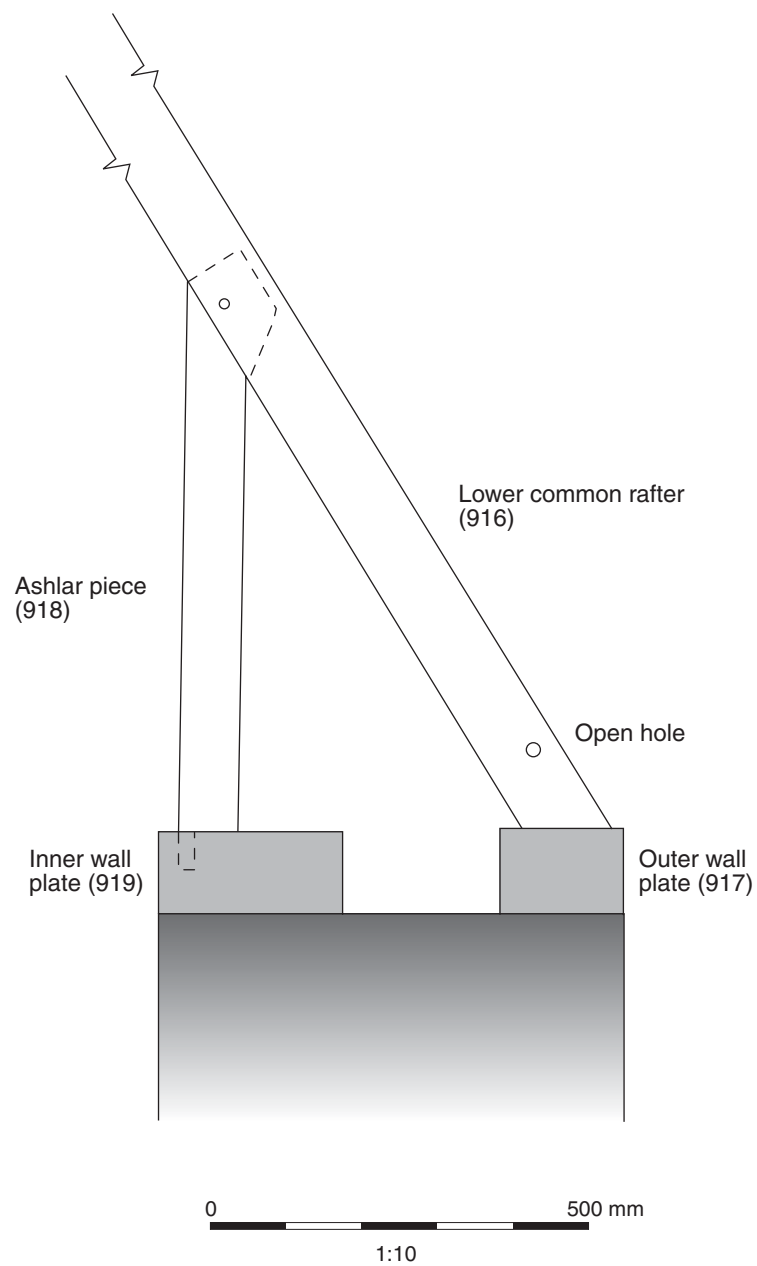


Figure 24: Section through base of roof on west side looking south



Plate 1: The abbey building and mill buildings from the south-east



Plate 2: East elevation of the abbey building



Plate 3: View in 2005 showing the attached structure since demolished



Plate 4: Moulded window head in east wall



Plate 5: Blocked inserted window in west wall



Plate 6: Blocked openings and rebuilt masonry in west wall



Plate 7: Oblique view of south wall



Plate 8: View of north elevation of wall and gable



Plate 9: North end of interior west elevation



Plate 10: South roof truss with later infill



Plate 11: North roof truss with studwork infill



Plate 12: Central open truss looking north



Plate 13: West slope of roof showing rafters and bracing



Plate 14: Moulded top of raised arcade post in central truss



Plate 15: West end of central truss showing complex bracing arrangement



Plate 16: Detail of wallplate, rafter and ashlar piece construction



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