

Wardington Manor Wardington Oxfordshire



Historic Building Investigation: Roof Structure - Southwest Wing



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WARDINGTON MANOR, WARDINGTON:

HISTORIC BUILDING INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING

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WARDINGTON MANOR, OXFORDSHIRE

HISTORIC BUILDING INVESTIGATION AND RECORD

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) has carried out a preliminary historic building investigation and record of the fire-damaged Wardington Manor on behalf of the architects Rodney Melville and Partners. Elements of the south west wing roof structure were examined with a view to identifying the nature of the surviving timbers and possible associated dates. Examination of the timbers revealed that much of the surviving material was from the first floor ceiling with very little remaining from the roof structure itself. Preliminary dendrochronological dating has confirmed initial observations that much of the ceiling and roof were mid 18th century in date with a few surviving elements reused from the 15th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This preliminary phase of historic building recording was requested by the architects Rodney Melville and Partners (RM&P) on behalf of Lord Wardington as an anticipated condition of Listed Building Consent [LBC] granted retro-spectively following fire damage to the building. Under normal circumstances, as a Grade II* listed building, LBC would be required in advance of any work beginning. However, due to the dangerous nature of the structures and the need to assess early on likely methods of conservation and restoration, special dispensation was granted by English Heritage to undertake minimal stabilisation and shoring work. Oxford Archaeology [OA] has been commissioned by RM&P to undertake a preliminary analysis of the remains of the roof structure over the south west wing.

1.2 LOCATION AND SCOPE OF WORK

- 1.2.1 Wardington Manor (SP 493 461) is located on the western side of the village, approximately 1 mile from the A361 Banbury to Daventry road and 6 miles from Banbury to the south west (Figure. 1). The collapsed roof structure is located in the south west wing of the house covering an area approximately 100m sq.
- 1.2.2 The recording was to include a photographic, written and drawn record of all three elements prior to any major restoration or conservation work being undertaken with a view to providing possible information on the phasing and historical significance, if any, of the elements observed. Any features of specific interest were to be recorded and Cherwell District Council, the Local Planning Authority (LPA), was to be contacted as appropriate. The primary aims and objectives are outlined in further detail below in §2.

1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.3.1 Wardington Manor is situated in the Banbury Hundred in the ancient parish of Cropredy (although Wardington was considered a separate civil parish after



1888).¹ The Manor is a substantial gabled house constructed primarily of local ironstone and of an irregular H-shape in plan (Figure 2, Plates 1 - 4). Although the earliest date for the construction of the house is currently open to speculation, it is apparent that the core of the surviving house is medieval in date, with documentary evidence attesting to the presence of a manor house in the mid-16th century. Ongoing historic building analysis at the house has recently confirmed this.

- 1.3.2 George Chamberlayne drastically remodelled the building in 1665, and then major alterations were undertaken between 1905 and 1914 by Clough Williams-Ellis. Further substantial works were undertaken between 1917 and 1923 for the first Lord Wardington by Randall Wells, restoring the existing original details with a high degree of accuracy and making any alterations in keeping with the Jacobean elements of the house.
- 1.3.3 During April of 2004 fire destroyed approximately 90% of the roof covering and timber structure below. As a result of the fire (Plates 5 - 12), an extensive programme of restoration and conservation work has been proposed by RM&P, details of which are currently being finalised and are likely to run until the latter part of 2005.
- 1.3.4 As referred to in a proposed *Written Scheme of Investigation for Building Recording and Archaeological Works* (prepared for RM&P in September 2004), future research, if commissioned, would include further research detailed research into the general historical context and narrative for the building and its immediate setting.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aims and objectives were:

- To make a preliminary record of the remaining elements of the south west wing roof structure, with a view to offering provisional dating information.
- To identify any elements of historical significance with a view of offering advice on how this might effect the programme of conservation and restoration.
- To record any features of archaeological interest (such as different material and construction) to the Local Planning Authority during the course of work as deemed appropriate.
- To produce a brief report detailing the findings of the work.
- To deposit the site archive with the LPA and the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record Office (SMR).

¹ See manorial history in *VCH Oxon* x.



3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 FIELDWORK METHODS AND RECORDING

- 3.1.1 The fieldwork for the watching brief was completed intermittently over August - October 2004. This included:
- 3.1.2 The Base Survey
- 3.1.3 The base survey for the programme of restoration and conservation work was commissioned by RM&P and undertaken by On Centre Surveys. Access to this data was kindly granted by Andrew Brookes of RM&P and this survey forms the base plans for figures 3.
- 3.1.4 The Investigation
- 3.1.5 The few remaining elements of the roof surviving *in situ* were examined, but the principal task was the investigation of the heavily charred timbers that had been removed from the building and placed on the Tennis Court.
- 3.1.6 The Drawn Record
- 3.1.7 The surviving timbers (64 in total) from the roof structure over the south west wing were sketched and measured as appropriate.
- 3.1.8 The Photographic Record
- 3.1.9 A full black and white negative and colour slide photographic record was made by OA of all three areas of the wing, with the charred timbers also being photographed individually. A wide selection of digital images were also taken through out the recording process at a resolution of 4000 DPI. Andrew Brookes of RM&P also kindly made available a selection of digital images taken shortly after the fire. Digital images were also supplied on an *ad hoc* basis by the building Contractors, William Sapcotes & Sons Ltd.
- 3.1.10 The Written Record
- 3.1.11 Notes were made of all three areas as part of the annotated drawings. Additional notes were taken as appropriate on site visits and further details, including measurements, were taken of the surviving timbers from the south west roof structure.
- 3.1.12 Dendrochronology
- 3.1.13 Daniel Miles (Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory) visited the site on Friday 22nd October to look at the timbers from the collapsed ceiling and roof structure from the south west side of the house, identifying 9 that could potentially be dated using the technique. DM also inspected the two medieval floors on the first floor, the main stair case and hallway and the remains of the former Butlers accommodation with a view to identifying useful areas for further dendrochronological work if so required. The initial phase of analysis (9 x 3" samples) taken from the burnt roof timbers is currently in progress.



4 DESCRIPTION

4.1 SOUTH WEST WING ROOF

- 4.1.1 The fire of April 2004 destroyed approximately 90% of the roof covering and timber structure below in the south west wing (Figure 3). The area of the house covered by this section of the roof extended to approximately 100 m². Little is known about the roof structure in this part of the house prior to the fire.
- 4.1.2 As a result of the intense heat of the fire much of the timber roof structure was reduced to ashes, with very few charred timbers remaining *in situ*. Those timbers that did survive the initial fire collapsed onto the two medieval timber floors below on the first floor. It is also of note that the weight of this collapsed debris has also contributed to the ongoing structural problems with both of the floors in these two rooms.
- 4.1.3 RM&P and the Contractors William Sappcotes & Sons Ltd. were able to photographically record the aftermath of the fire in this area of the south wing and have made these images available to OA. Sappcotes subsequently labelled the surviving timbers as to where they had fallen in which rooms and removed the timbers to a safe storage area outside of the house. In October of 2004 these timbers were then temporarily removed to the tennis court storage area to allow OA access to undertake preliminary recording and analysis of the timbers.
- 4.1.4 As part of the recording process the surviving timbers were photographed digitally, with colour slide and also with black and white print film. Approximately 2 - 4 images were taken of each surviving piece. Annotated field sketched and notes were then used to record the nature and size of the timbers along with any distinguishing features that may shed light on the timbers use within the roof structure and it possible age. It should be noted that many of the surviving elements were so charred as to be unrecognisable or make identifying their original use.

4.2 ROOF AND CEILING TIMBERS

- 4.2.1 A total of 74 individual timbers were observed and recorded that had survived the fire. Many of the timbers were heavily charred at one or both ends and a number of timbers were charred to an extent so as to make identification of their use or position within the ceiling or roof structure of the south west wing impossible. Many of the timbers had a variety of iron attachments to them that implied that elements of the roof had probably been subject to a considerable amount of repair and structural strengthening over the years. Many timbers had the remains of laths still attached to them, whilst it was also possible to identify a number of different peg holes and slots. The majority of the timbers recorded were oak although it was also noticeable that some elements had been constructed using elm. A brief summary of some of the main timber elements recovered and identified are listed below (Plates 13 - 20):
- 4.2.2 Principal floor joists
- 4.2.3 At least 4 (104, 114, 116, 148) sections of primary floor joist were recorded measuring from 17 by 12cm and 2.52m long to 20 by 21cm and 3.26m long. All had mortices for floor joists on both sides and retained elements of the laths that were originally affixed to them. Preservation appeared to be



generally good with only a small degree of charring on the examples identified. The size, spacing and character of the tenons suggested that the ceiling was a post-medieval structure.

4.2.4 Common Joists

4.2.5 At least 22 partial or complete remains of common joists were identified amongst the surviving charred timbers. The average size of the joists was approximately 15 by 8cm, and 2.10m long, and had been subject to various degrees of burning and charring. The tenons generally matched the mortices in the principal joists; i.e. they had central tenons with diminished haunches. A considerable number of the sides of the joists still showed their construction numbers and it was possible to re-construct part of a floor / ceiling using these and a surviving primary joist. The vast majority of the joists had lath, and occasionally plaster, remaining on them, surviving to varying degrees of completeness.

4.2.6 Principal Rafters

4.2.7 At least three principal rafters were identified amongst the charred material (nos. 102, 103, and 149), with possibly another two also found but too charred to be positively identified. Measurements ranged from 16cm x 17cm x 1.82m to 20cm x 18cm x 2.30m. The slots and mortices were clearly visible still on at least two of the examples. Two of the examples had suffered considerable burning at both ends and along their length although the third example had survived relatively unscathed. The rafters were in too poor a condition to be certain, but it seemed likely that they were from a post-medieval roof.

4.2.8 Common Rafters

4.2.9 At least eight common rafters were identified, possibly more, which were generally very badly charred. Dimensions varied from 15 by 17 cm and 2.35m long up to a possible length of 13cm x 13cm x 4.14m.

4.2.10 Purlins

4.2.11 Only one purlin (no. 168) was readily identifiable at the time of inspection measuring 11 by 8 cm and 3.87m long. This example was badly charred along its length and also exhibited ten peg holes (three filled) along its length; these holes would have been for fixing the rafters.

4.2.12 Sole Plates

4.2.13 Two potential sole plates were identified (101, 150?) measuring 20 x 12 x 70cm and 20 x 13 x 95cm, both heavily charred at one end. The pegholes and mortices were still clearly observed on both examples.

4.2.14 Possible reused medieval timbers

4.2.15 Three substantial timbers (129, 137, and 140) were picked out on a site visit by Julian Munby (JM) as possibly being of medieval origin. The three pieces were 15 by 16 cm and 2.40m long, 14 by 24 cm and 2.32m long, and 14 by 18 cm and 2.61m long respectively. All had a series of long chase mortices and elongated oval peg holes on their sides, and they had two heavily chamfered edges when viewed in section. In all instances the elongated peg holes were covered by the remains of lath and plaster and had clearly been reused. At the



time of the fire they were not likely to have been employed in their original position or role.

4.2.16 Miscellaneous

- 4.2.17 Many pieces of timber were either too charred or too small to make any reasonable statements concerning their use or age. Many obscure pieces of wood did have the remains of lath and plaster on them though and did give the strong impression that they would have formed part of the ceiling in some shape or form, rather than part of the timber roof structure. Many of the unidentifiable timbers also had iron work attached to them of which some are assumed to have been part of repairs or to provide structural strength.

4.3 **DENDROCHRONOLOGY**

- 4.3.1 Daniel Miles examined all the timbers for their potential for dating by dendrochronology. Out of the ten samples taken in this initial phase of investigation seven have so far provided reliable date ranges, five dating from the late 17th - mid 18th Century and two from the mid 15th Century. Dan Miles is currently preparing a more complete report on the results obtained from this initial sample.

4.4 **CONCLUSIONS - ROOF STRUCTURE**

- 4.4.1 It could be observed from inspection of the buildings and the surviving timbers that very little remained of the original roof structure from which to draw any detailed conclusions from. Indeed, as acknowledged above, many of the timbers looked at were from the ceiling and attic floor rather than the timber roof frame. However, from the material analysed it is apparent that the attic floor and ties over this part of the roof in the south west wing appears to have been predominantly post-medieval in date (17th - 18th Century) with possible later additions and alterations in the 19th century. From the surviving timbers observed only 3 were possibly medieval in date (based on the design and cut of the pegholes) and all of these had been reused to form parts of the ceiling and were certainly not forming part of the roof structure at the time of the fire.
- 4.4.2 Based upon the observations made from the very small number of surviving fragments of timber it would, therefore, prove impossible to provide anything approaching a faithful reconstruction of an altered Medieval roof frame in the south west wing.

Oxford Archaeology
November 2004



4.4.3

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- Sherwood, J & Pevsner, N *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire*, 1974
- Crossley, A & Lobel, M (eds) *The Victoria History of the Counties of England - Oxfordshire (Vol.X Banbury Hundred)*, 19//

6 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Wardington Manor, Wardington, Oxfordshire

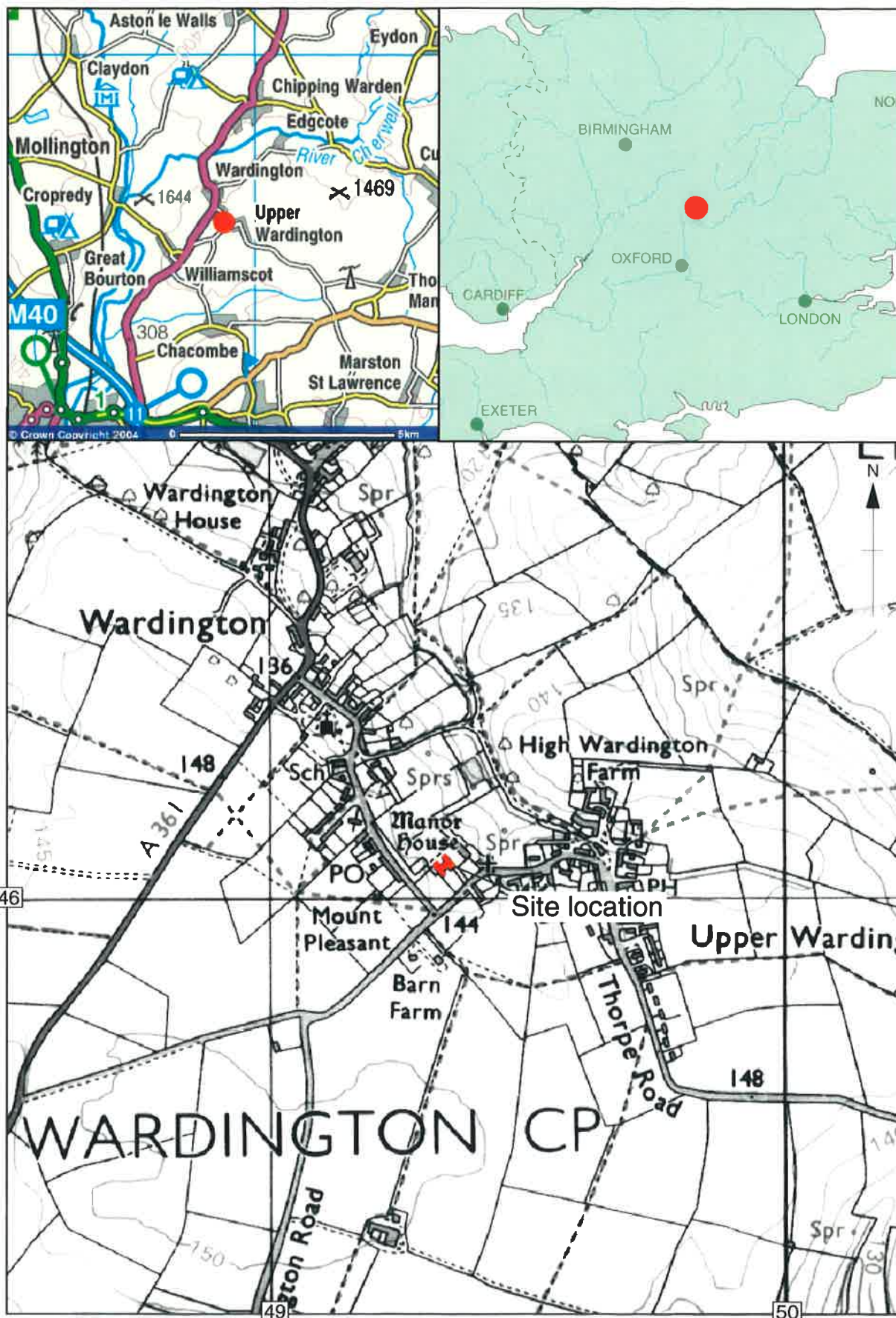
Site code: WAMA04

Type of evaluation: Historic Building Analysis and Recording

Date and duration of project: Work undertaken August - October 2004

Summary of results: Recording and analysis were undertaken of the remains of the roof structure from the south west wing of the house, the medieval joists from two rooms on the first floor and a stud wall at ground floor level between the library and the panelled smoking room.

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



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Figure 1: Site location

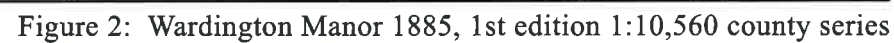


Figure 2: Wardington Manor 1885, 1st edition 1:10,560 county series

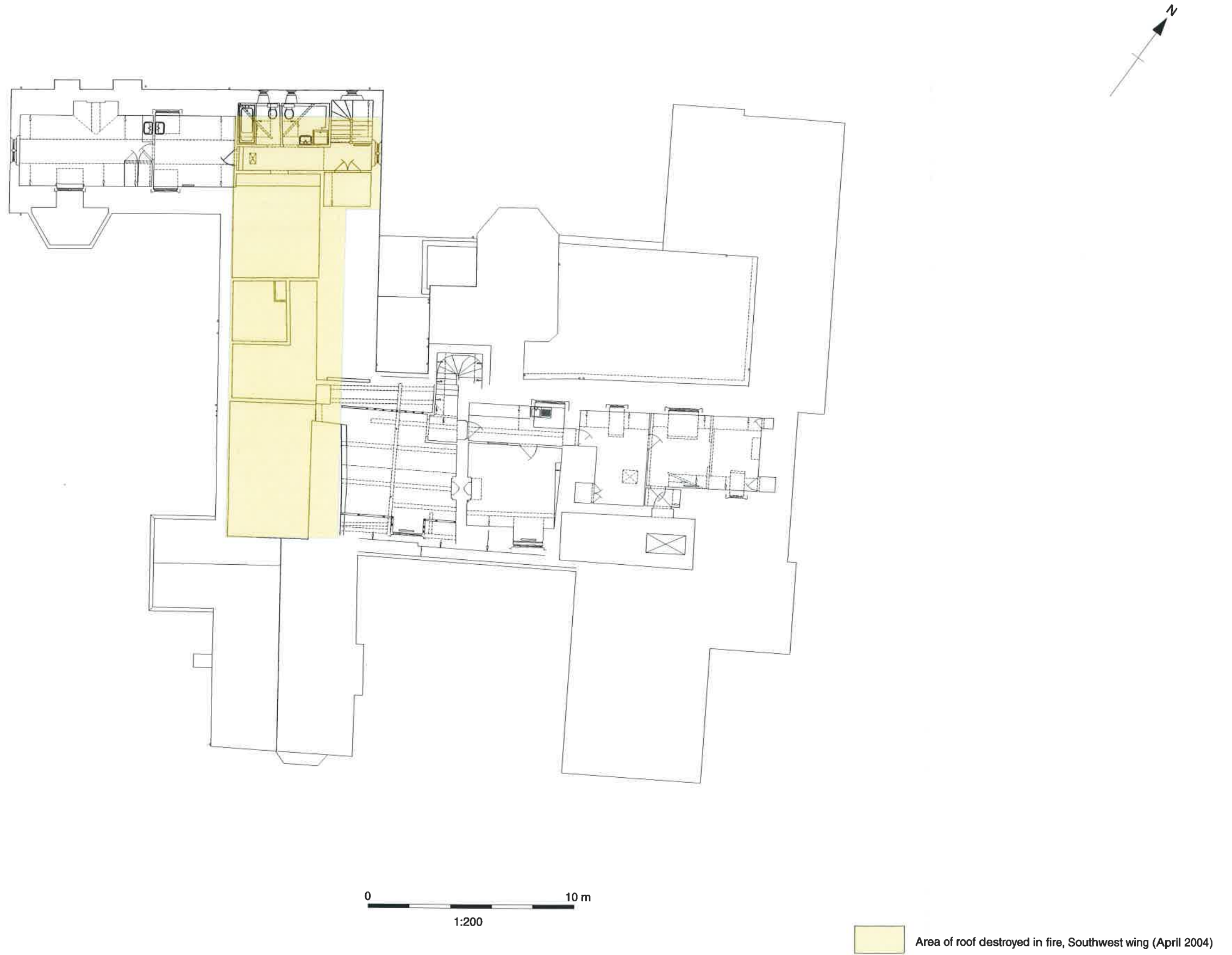


Figure 3: Second Floor



Plate 1: View north west - general view of house



Plate 2: View south east - general view of house

Plate 3: View north east - fire damage to roof on south west wing



Plate 4: View north west - general view





Plate 5: View west - collapsed roof above 1st floor



Plate 6: View south east - collapsed roof

Plate 7: View east - fire damage to roof structure



Plate 8: View east - fire damage to roof structure





Plate 9: View south east - 1st floor after clearing of roof debris



Plate 10: View north west - Extent of fire damage at north west end



Plate 11: View south east - 1st floor after clearing of roof debris



Plate 12: View south west - Extent of fire damage at north west end



Plate 13 : Damaged ceiling beam - south west wing



Plate 14: Charred rafters from south west wing

Plate 15 : Construction numbers on ceiling joist



Plate 16: Reconstructed section of ceiling





Plate 17: Deatial of charred primary beam - south west wing roof



Plate 18: Surviving section of ceiling - south west wing roof

Plate 19: Detail of possible reused medieval timber



Plate 20: Detail of possible reused medieval timber.





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