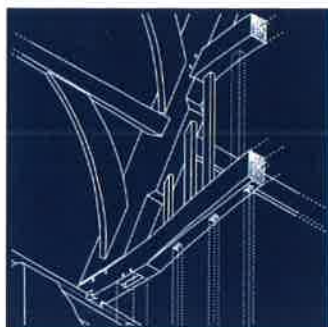


# The Grapes Public House Abingdon Oxfordshire



## Historic Building Recording



**Oxford Archaeology**

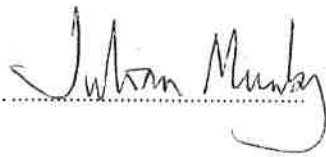
24th March 2003

**Client Name: Sampson Associates**

Issue N<sup>o</sup>: 1

OA Job N<sup>o</sup>: 1252

NGR: SU 4955 9705

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**Client Ref No:** ~  
  
**Document Title:** The Grapes Public House, Abingdon, Oxfordshire  
  
**Document Type:** Historic Building Recording  
**Issue Number:** 1  
  
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**Invoice Code:** ABHSTGWB  
**Site Code:** ABHSTG02  
  
**Archive Location:** Oxfordshire County Museum  
**Museum Accession Number:** 2002:72  
  
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**Position:** Project Officer, Buildings Department  
**Date:** March 2003  
  
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# The Grapes Public House, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

## *HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING*

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# THE GRAPES, ABINGDON, OXFORDSHIRE

## HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

### SUMMARY

*Oxford Archaeology (OA) has carried out a programme of building recording works at the Grapes Public House in Abingdon. The recording was in the form of a watching brief during a refurbishment at the pub particularly during works to expose two ground floor piers. The main pier was found to be constructed of good quality dressed stone with clearly defined quoins. One of the quoins had a groove cut in the corner which probably housed a window frame. The other quoin is likely to be one end of cross-passage through the original (possibly late 14<sup>th</sup>-century) house, which had previously been identified by JM Steane. The other pier was of uncoursed rubble stone.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by Sampson Associates (Architects and Interior Designers) to undertake of programme of historic building recording at The Grapes Public House in Abingdon (NGR: SU4955 9705). The building is listed Grade II and due to its historical significance the recording has been requested by Grant Audley Miller, Conservation Officer at Vale of White Horse District Council, as a condition of planning approval for a programme of building works at the pub. A previous assessment report on the building (*Report on the Archaeological and Architectural Significance of The Grapes*. J Steane, Nov 2001) highlighted the historical significance of the building and identified areas where any future construction works should be observed. This assessment is included here as Appendix IV. The current recording work was therefore targeted towards areas obscured when the initial assessment was undertaken but exposed by the current development. The principal such area was a large pier at the centre of the ground floor.

### 1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 The main objective of the project was to observe the removal of plaster from a large pier at the centre of the ground floor of the pub and to record the structure beneath. A more general aim was to produce a photographic record of other areas of the building, particularly those areas affected by the works.

### 1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The recording consisted of three main elements: a drawn record, a photographic record and a written, descriptive record. The drawn record comprised a plan and elevations (scale 1:10) of the pier. The photographic record consisted of both general shots and specific details (colour slides and

black and white prints) of the pier as well as the wider building. The textual record provided additional descriptive notes.

- 1.3.2 The site work was undertaken on 25-26 March 2002. The project archive will be deposited with the County Museums Service (see Appendix II for details of the archive).

## 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 Detailed historical research has not been undertaken either as part of the current works or John Steane's previous assessment but a number of principal sources have been consulted to provide some historical background. The earliest map consulted is the 1844 Christ's Hospital map of Abingdon which appears to show two street frontage buildings on the current site with a narrow passageway between the two from the High Street to a small yard at the rear (Fig 2).
- 2.1.2 However this part of the building is known to have been essentially a single structure substantially earlier than 1844 (probably from the 14<sup>th</sup> century) and the passageway shown on the map must therefore be a ground floor cross passage through the building.
- 2.1.3
- 2.1.4 The next map is the first edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (1875) which shows that already by this date there was a public house called *The Grapes* on the site of the current building (see Fig 1). The outline of the main building facing the High Street and the principal building to the rear is broadly the same on the OS map as the current building. However there have been some minor alterations to the footprint of the building, particularly at the northern end of the rear yard.
- 2.1.5 The Grapes Public House is located on the south side of the High Street where the High Street becomes Ock Street and connects with Bath Street. It is c.150 m west of the market place and immediately south-east of The Square (labelled Cattle Market on first edition OS map).

## 3 DESCRIPTION

### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 As detailed above this recording programme is targeted on specific areas exposed by the current works rather than being a full descriptive record of the entire building. A broader assessment and description of the building has been previously produced by John Steane but a summary description would also be useful here. The building has been divided into seven principal phases reflecting its historical development although in some areas this division has limited relevance to the current building as very little survives below roof level of the early phases. The phasing has been largely taken from John

Steane's report and, as acknowledged in that study, it is in some areas a provisional assessment of the building's development.

### 3.2 Summary of Phasing

- 3.2.1 The original building (**Phase I**, see Fig 4) was a rectangular-plan hall house of probable later 14<sup>th</sup>-century date located within what are now the main rooms of the public house fronting onto the High Street. It was set back by c.2.5 m from the current front of the pub and while its east end was in line with the east end of the current building its west end was probably inset c.1.5 m from the current west end. The eastern half of the primary building was extended in the late 16<sup>th</sup>-century with a small gabled projection (**Phase II**) to the south and then in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with a further gabled projection to the north (**Phase III**). **Phase IV** is also of 17<sup>th</sup>-century date and consists of the extension of the western part of the original building to the north. The north facade was refronted in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (**Phase V**) and then a long detached service building (**Phase VI**) was added to the rear of the main pub in the early/mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. **Phase VII** consists of the addition of a number of small separate linking structures constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries between the other main blocks.

### 3.3 Description

- 3.3.1 The only clear indication of the extent and form of the **Phase I** building is provided by the primary crown post roof which substantially survives although the west end was removed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to allow the construction of the Phase IV building (see Steane for detailed description and illustration of roof structure). This building appears to have been a large ground floor hall house with a cross passage. Below roof level the only substantial feature which survives from the Phase I building is the large ground floor pier which is the main subject of this recording exercise (see 3.4 below for more detail).
- 3.3.2 In the eastern half of the ground floor of this part of the building there are two small secondary piers which were exposed during the current works. These small piers are both of two-phased brickwork. The northern half of each is of mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick and the southern halves are of 20<sup>th</sup>-century date. It appears that the piers would originally have formed part of a single larger stack but they were amended in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to allow a passage between the two. The piers support a 20<sup>th</sup>-century chimney stack. To the west of these piers, at the centre of the ground floor within the bar servery, is a further large pier exposed by the current works. This was found to be entirely of 20<sup>th</sup>-century brickwork. The first floor joists in this part of the building are of probable later 19<sup>th</sup>-century date.
- 3.3.3 Significant elements survive below roof level of the small **Phase II** extension which projects to the south at the east end of the primary building. This includes the gable which is jettied at wall plate level and partially surviving



mullioned windows at ground and first floors (see Steane report for detail on these windows).

- 3.3.4 **Phase IV** consists of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century enlargement of the west end of the primary building with the construction of a new, taller structure which extended the front of this part of the building up to its current alignment. This building was originally orientated east - west with gables at each end but this form has been partially lost with the refronting (and raising of this part of the building) in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Phase V)
- 3.3.5 **Phase V** is the refronting of the main facade of the pub with rough cast and the insertion of sash windows.
- 3.3.6 **Phase VI** is a long north-south brick-built extension to the rear of the pub constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is two storeys tall and provides the pub with a function room, a lounge, an office and a small kitchen. Although Block B is now linked to Block A with 20<sup>th</sup>-century infill the two structures would originally have been separate with the hip-roofed northern end of Block B c.2.5 m to the south of Block A. Between the two there is a small external yard with a set of stairs leading to a cellar beneath Block A.
- 3.3.7 One of the curious features of the Phase VI building is that although it is a tall structure it is only two-storied and the first floor (saloon) has a relatively low (modern) ceiling. The walls extend c.2.5 m above the first floor windows which strongly suggests there was a storage loft but there is no staircase up to it and no clear evidence of former loading doors in the gable. The current ceiling in the first floor saloon is proportionally low for the room and is almost certainly lower than the primary ceiling above. One clue to this is that in the north gable there is a wide double-brick arch c.0.5 m above the current window (which is itself below a square-headed brick lintel). This arch is above the height of the modern ceiling and may be from a taller primary doorway. It is possible that the saloon was originally a much taller grander room than it currently is and the void above the ceiling was part of this room but this seems unlikely. If this was so it is likely that the first floor windows would have been correspondingly taller. No doubt some further investigation at some time in the future would resolve this issue.
- 3.3.8 **Phase VII** comprises a large number of small alterations to the building undertaken in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and possibly some in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century). These are almost entirely in the area at the centre of the site between the two earlier main blocks but also include the brick refronting of the west elevation (probably early 20<sup>th</sup>-century) when the adjacent building was demolished. This is of Flemish bond red brick and incorporates a new chimney stack the same age as that over the east half of the main pub (through Phase I roof).

### 3.4 Central pier

- 3.4.1 The main focus of the current investigation and recording are two large piers at the rear of the main public bar and in line with the rear wall (E-W) of the original Phase I building. The piers are aligned approximately with the current (19<sup>th</sup>-century) entrance into the building from the High Street and due to the piers location it had been speculated that they may survive from one end of the cross passage of the medieval hall (Phase I). The 1844 Christ's Hospital map (Fig. 2) appears to a cross passage through the building at this location.
- 3.4.2 The two piers flank a short set of steps linking a bar servery within the main pub to a corridor at the rear of the building. The east pier is roughly rectangular (125 cm x 90 cm) and has a 20<sup>th</sup>-century stud frame adjoining to the south-east. The west pier is also broadly rectangular (c.75 cm x 55 cm) and has an RSJ post (enclosed by modern boxing) against its north face. Each pier was covered by modern plaster but this has been removed in the current development, together with other adjoining modern features, to expose the construction of the piers.
- 3.4.3 The *east pier* is the larger of the two and is constructed of good quality dressed stone blocks of irregular size bonded with a lime mortar. The primary stone extends to a height c.2.2 m above the current ground floor. Above the stonework modern studs (to the south) and brickwork (to the north) continue the line of the pier up to the ceiling. Both the south-east and south-west corners of the pier have clearly defined quoins but the northern side has been rebuilt in modern (mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century) brickwork thus obscuring the original extent of the pier.
- 3.4.4 The largest blocks (eg 38 cm x 30 cm) form the south-east corner of the pier and there is a rebate (3 cm x 7 cm) formed within the corner of the stones from a height of 1.1 m above the modern floor level to at least c.2.2 m above the floor (where it becomes obscured by modern plaster). The rebate is suggestive of a window jamb, into which a timber frame would have been fixed, but the fact that the quoin continued down beneath the rebate suggests a full height opening (or that this was a free-standing pier) and that the window rebate would have been a secondary insertion. There were one and a half large dressed blocks immediately beneath the rebate but beneath this there was an oak bearer and rubble stone beneath this. The construction of this part of the wall (ie the bearer and the rubble) contrasts with the rest of the pier and must be a secondary insertion, presumably replacing a primary quoin. The bearer has been truncated and is at the same height as the sill of an adjacent window (N-S, 50 cm to the east of the pier). This window has been enclosed by later extensions (and it has therefore been blocked) but it originally formed part of the Phase II extension to the primary building, possibly undertaken in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The insertion of the oak bearer and the removal of the



lower part of the quoin probably date to this extension as does the formation of the rebate to take a small window.

- 3.4.5 The east face of the pier is 70 cm deep but the northernmost 20 cm have been rebuilt in modern brick. The division between the primary stonework and the brick is very irregular, with no clear edge to the stonework, and it strongly appears that the stone would originally have continued further to the north.
- 3.4.6 The south-west corner of the pier is also a clearly defined quoin constructed of dressed stone blocks although the stones are generally smaller than those to the south-east (eg 20 cm x 30 cm). The quoin extended the full height of the pier (ie 2.2 m above floor level) showing that this must have either been the corner of a building, a doorway into a building or a cross passage through a building. The primary stonework to the west face of the pier extends further to the north (90cm) than the east face although that to the upper half of the pier has been replaced in modern brick. There is no clearly defined quoin at the north-west corner and it appears that the stonework would have originally continued to the north.
- 3.4.7 The *western pier* was smaller (c.75 cm x 55 cm) and its southern face is not in line with that of the larger pier (inset c.20 cm). The main part of the pier is constructed of uncoursed rubble stone but both the east face and the angled west face have been refaced in modern brick in a way that suggests that the wall was originally part of a longer east-west wall. Both the rubble construction and the fact that the pier is inset slightly from the east pier suggest that the west pier dates to a later phase of the building although still of some considerable age (possibly 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century).

#### 4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1.1 Although it has been substantially altered since its original construction The Grapes Public House retains elements of what was probably a 14<sup>th</sup>-century hall house. The most significant element of the building is the roof with crown-post truss and smoke-blackened timbers but as this has been assessed previously and is unaffected in the current development it has not been covered in the current study. The main focus of this study was a pair of large ground floor piers, one of which was found to be constructed of large dressed stone blocks and probably survives from the same 14<sup>th</sup>-century building as the crown post roof. This pier has clearly defined quoins at its south-west and south-east corners and probably survives from the south end of a cross passage through the original building and between the two piers. A cross passage at this location appears to be shown on the 1844 Christ's Hospital map. There is a shallow rebate cut in the south-east quoin which would have held a window frame but this was almost certainly a secondary addition.

Jonathan Gill  
24 March 2003

## **APPENDIX I      BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

### **Published sources**

Thomas MJ      Abingdon in Camera: Portrait of a Country Town 1850-1950 (1978)

### **Unpublished sources**

Steane JM      Report on the archaeological and architectural significance of The  
Grapes

## APPENDIX II SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** The Grapes Public House

**Site code:** ABHSTG02

**Grid reference:**

**Type of evaluation:** Building Analysis

**Date and duration of project:**

**Summary of results:**

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

### List of Archived Items

Two sets of black and white photographs (contact sheets)

Two sets of photographic negatives

Two sets of colour slides

A copy of this report

Primary site drawings (plan and elevations of stone pier - 1:20)

Various recording notes

## APPENDIX III LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

Location : ABINGDON, VALE OF WHITE HORSE, OXFORDSHIRE

IoE number : 250390

Date listed : 10 DEC 1971

Date of last amendment : 10 DEC 1971

752

24 HIGH STREET (South side)

SU 4997 1/271

II

GV

Late C18 or early C19 front elevation, core probably timber framed. Three storeys. Stucco. Slate roof on paired modillions. Three storeys. Two windows double hung sashes, moulded flush frames, glazing bars. First floor windows have frieze, with lozenge and circle ornament and cornice. The building is coved above the modern ground floor shop front fascia board. Nos. 20, 24 to 28 (even) and The Grapes Inn form a group.

Location : ABINGDON, VALE OF WHITE HORSE, OXFORDSHIRE

IoE number : 250391

Date listed : 10 DEC 1971

Date of last amendment : 10 DEC 1971

752

26 HIGH STREET (South side)

SU 4997 1/272

II

GV

Early C19, brick, flood eaves cornice. Two windows, flat arches in gauged brick, glazing bars. Modern ground floor shop. No. 20, 24 to 28 (even) and The Grapes Inn form a group.

Location : ABINGDON, VALE OF WHITE HORSE, OXFORDSHIRE

IoE number : 250392

Date listed : 19 JAN 1951

Date of last amendment : 19 JAN 1951

752

28 HIGH STREET (South side)

00200003

SU 4997 1/2/3

19.1.51

II

GV

Part of tile premises of The Grapes Inn. Probably originally C17 boxed out in C18. Gable end to road. Rough rendered, timber framed. Two windows, flush frames, double hung sash with glazing bars, frieze and cornice. On ground floor double hung sash window flanked by pilasters and panelled door under fascia. Nos. 20, 24 to 28 (even) and The Grapes Inn form a group

Location : ABINGDON, VALE OF WHITE HORSE, OXFORDSHIRE

IoE number : 250393

Date listed : 10 DEC 1971

Date of last amendment : 10 DEC 1971

752

HIGH STREET (South side)

SU 4997 1/366

The Grapes Inn

II

GV

Rough rendered. Apparently mid C19 but may conceal earlier core. Gable to road. Three storeys. Moulded wood eaves cornice and blocking course. One window on second floor, no glazing bars, frieze and cornice. Three windows on first floor, all with frieze and cornice, central window is of two lights. Ground floor has fascia board, two-three light windows. Double three panel door. Nos. 20, 24 to 28 (even) and The Grapes Inn form a group.

**APPENDIX IV    REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL  
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GRAPES PUBLIC HOUSE BY JOHN STEANE**

27 JAN 2002

# **Report on the archaeological and architectural significance of The Grapes Public House, High Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire**

## **1. Introduction**

Following an invitation to provide a quotation to carry out an archaeological investigation by the Sampson Associates, architects and designers employed by Green King Pub Partners, Westgate Brewery, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, John Steane, Consultant Archaeologist was commissioned to do this survey. He consulted with Mr Grant Audley Miller, the Conservation Officer of the local planning authority, the Vale of the White Horse District. He visited 'The Grapes' on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2001 and, in company with Mr Audley Miller and the publican, Mr De Silva, explored the building. It quickly became apparent that here there were substantial remains of a 14<sup>th</sup> century hall house with a largely intact crown post roof. This building had been enlarged by building short wings to the south (16<sup>th</sup> century) and to the north (17<sup>th</sup> century). At the time it was not easy to ascertain what proportion of the ancient building had survived at ground floor level. Mr Audley Miller specified that any investigation of the ground floor had to be seen in the context of the building as a whole. Accordingly Mr Steane assembled a small team, Mr James Ayres and Mr Mark Fitzgerald to help him in an archaeological/architectural survey. The results far exceeded expectations in the interest and importance of the building displayed. Visits were made on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> November. Work was done on the libraries on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> November.

## **2. Location**

### **2.1**

Abingdon is an ancient historic town. It is perhaps the older of two 'proto' towns dating back to the Pre-Roman Iron Age in southern and central England (the other is Colchester, Essex). Archaeological excavation over the period 1975-2000 has demonstrated that it was fortified before the Roman Conquest. It was intensively occupied during the Roman period (Rodwell 1975) and became an early Christian ecclesiastical centre based on the Church of St Helen, and the monastery, famous in late Anglo Saxon England. The town grew up around the market place at the gate of the abbey. High Street was certainly occupied on both sides along westwards to the junction of Ock Street by c1500.

### **2.2**

The buildings which were the predecessors of The Grapes occupied the north west corner of a bunch of long narrow sites, all approximately of the same width which may have been part of a medieval planned development of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Grapes were strategically placed to take advantage of the clientele who frequented the Square, so called, formerly the Cattle Market. There was certainly a public house of this name 120 years ago as the first edition of the 25 inches to one



mile Ordnance Survey map shows. Doubtless research in the Directories would take the story back further, while study in the census records would reconstruct the families and others who have lived and worked here from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*see map*

### 3. The Archaeological and Architectural significance of the building.

#### 3.1 The Roof.

This, like in many old buildings, is the best preserved element of the structure and offers an explanation of the other features preserved less well in the lower part of the building. As the photographs and isometric drawing accompanying this report show the roof consisted of a core of medieval date, with additions. The dating of the various elements is provisional and may well have to be revised when, and if, building works are undertaken.

*drawing 1  
photos  
1-42*

#### 3.2

The medieval element consists of one and three quarter bays of a ground floor hall house dating probably to the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The range runs east and west. The east gable consists of a cambered, smoke blackened tie beam 31cm X 13cm which supports a post. This is straight braced to along smoke blackened collar purlin (or crown purlin as it is sometimes called) which runs down the centre of the building. This timber measures 10cm X 14cm and is chamfered (3cm) wide on the angles of the soffit. The walling above the tie beam consists of oak studs covered in smoke blackened rough plaster, all coeval with the structural timbers. There are a series of slots on the soffit of the tie beam (see isometric diagram) for details indicating the former presence of studding and similar wall below. The tie beam is joined to the lower purlin for it might be considered to be a wall plate except that the rafters project considerably beyond and below it on either side) by two diagonal straight braces.

*isometric  
sketch.*

*17, 18, 19,  
20*

#### 3.3

The smoke blackened common rafters in this eastern bay are nine in number and are between 12½cm and 16cm apart and are connected by a series of collars, scribed carpenter's marks were noticed on two. They are tenoned into the top sides of the horizontal plates. These are considerable baulks of oaken timber 18cm X 18½cm. The northern one has a long groove roughly cut out of its inner side suggesting that it is a second hand piece of timber. The southern one has a series of mortices cut into its inner side again demonstrating a former function and has been re-used for its present purpose.

*drawing 2*

#### 3.4

The central truss is made of two cambered tie beams. The lower one (24cm deep) has a series of tree-nail holes bored into the lower part. Examination of the under-side showed a long jugged slot with portions of timber still adhering. These suggested the remains of arched braces cut back to allow the insertion of the ceiling of the first floor. The upper cambered collar provided a base for the smoke-blackened crown post. This was a high quality neat piece of carpentry. The details and dimensions are

*23, 24*

*26*

shown in the accompanying diagrams. It was connected to the collar purlin east and west by curved braces and to the collar by similar curved braces. All members were smoke-blackened.

Isometric  
19.

### 3.5

The western of the two bays of the medieval roof was less well preserved. It had only three of its original five common rafters intact. Also the bay had been truncated probably in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when an A frame had been built up in the void. This consisted of the fifth of the medieval common rafters, a straight tie beam and collar and a series of studs, 8½cm X 4cm, to which was attached a lathe and plaster partition. Carpenter's marks were chiselled, a feature likely to date the carpentry to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

25

### 3.6

The house had been extended in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century to the south by one bay and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the north by a single bay. This latter brought the building up to the line of High Street. It is possible that this 17<sup>th</sup> century extension which is gable end onto the High Street was a replacement of a medieval structure which could have run parallel or at right angles with the roof already described. During this period it is likely that the cellar accompanying the 14<sup>th</sup> century house was enlarged. The cellar will be described later. No detailed examination was made of the roof to the north and south of the medieval roof described in 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5. A comment will be made when the north front is described.

27-28

## 4.1 FIRST FLOOR

Considerable portions of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century extension survived on the ground and first floor. This bay was defined by a gable which projects on a jetty at the level of the wall plate of the main (medieval) roof. Beneath this jetty the wall has been advanced a couple of feet to form a projecting bay. It is in the western face of this projection that two single light windows survive on the ground and first floors. These oak windows with their ovolo sections are typical of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Transoms (horizontal members) in such small windows (see diagrams) are an unusual feature and their presence suggests that the windows that once corresponded to them (since replaced) showed this component. The existing window on the south facing first floor with its timber mullions (though without transoms) may be an early 19<sup>th</sup> century re-working of the original. The curious window (a casement allowing ventilation) may even be a reference to a pre-existing transom (James Ayres' suggestion). The architrave which surrounds this window is certainly similar to and may be by the same hand that formed those on the north front. The ground floor window is mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and extends to the corner of the original structure in an improbable (and structurally deleterious way. The whole structure is of timber frame on a stone plinth which rises from the cellar to the window sills of the ground floor. From the top of the ground floor upward this elevation is clad in rough cast of the same kind and, very likely the same date as that on the north front (the early 19<sup>th</sup> century).

9, 10

5,  
15, 16  
41.

Drawing 3

9, 10

## 4.2

The oak bressumer which supports the gable and its return on the east and west wall plates has been worked in oak in a late 16<sup>th</sup> century approximation of a cornice. Two elements of this moulding have been carved with gouged 'feathers' which 'hand' and are seemingly centred on the gable (the central part of this moulding is damaged, as is the (replaced) three light window on the first floor). It seems that this symmetry, together with the 'cornice' was a vernacular attempt at classicism. This, apart from the medieval roof, is a reason for treasuring the remains of this interesting and important building.

drawing 3  
9.10

## 4.3

The North Front. This Regency façade overlays the earlier buildings but does not visually unify them. The flush sash windows, at this late date, are a consequence of the timber-frame structure which was, at the same time, clad in rough cast of a similar character to that which clads the south front of the building described in 4.1. The windows on the western gable of the unit of the Grapes facing the High Street (excluding the 20<sup>th</sup> century ground floor) are organised symmetrically and the central window of the second floor may occupy a gable which is now not visible behind a high parapet (a false front) surmounted by a cornice. I did not examine the roof of this part but from the rear it seemed to be low pitched, tile covered and supplied with dormers possibly to north and certainly to south. The two windows on the first floor of the last building are not symmetrical and to accommodate the western window the pitch of the gable (and roof slope) has been raised. All this is visible inside the roof where it is clear that the 17<sup>th</sup> century design was symmetrical to begin with. All the windows above the ground floor have classical architraves with deep friezes and cornice (to match the parapet). Only the two windows of the first floor east building retain glazing bars organised in an early 19<sup>th</sup> century form, dividing the sashes into an eight over eight (pane) arrangement.

1, 2  
3. 4

3. 4

3. 4

## 5.1

We now come to the ground floor. There seems little doubt that most, if not all, of the structure of the medieval building has been removed at this level. A number of small scale archaeological interventions were made by removing plaster (mostly behind pictures) so that the structure behind could be examined. These are marked on the ground plan supplied by the architects. <sup>L have</sup> Shaw supplied an overlay to indicate their positions.

- 1) An opening in the plaster revealed that at least part of this masonry mass was of rubble stone, corallian limestone to be specific and mortar. In this it corresponded to the stone plinth course seen outside in the yard leading to the cellar.
- 2) An opening was made on the piece of wall immediately to the west of the 16<sup>th</sup> century window and revealed that there was a soft wood upright and an oiled wood batten behind plaster stretched on wire mesh. All this appeared to be modern.
- 3) The position of the central chimney is marked now by two masonry blocks. An opening in the plaster on the inner face of the more southerly of the two revealed

39

42

modern brick, mortar and chips. The ancient chimney seems to have been completely removed. The upper part of a modern chimney with bricks which are c1930-40 in date is still intact in the upper part of the roof. It has, of course, cut through a number of the 14<sup>th</sup> century trussed rafters and their collars, but miraculously, has not touched the crownpost described.

- 4) The wall behind the bar appeared to us to have already been removed.
- 5) Plaster removal revealed the lower part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century window, the upper part of which is visible in the bar. We suggest that you give consideration to carefully revealing and stabilising this. 41
- 6) This masonry mass was revealed to be of stone and we think it may be in situ evidence for a through passage at this point in the medieval house. Accordingly it is an important piece of the structure of the listed building and the plans should be mitigated to avoid destroying it.

## 6.1

The cellars. It is possible that the 14<sup>th</sup> century building, and maybe its predecessor (because there is no reason to rule out the possibility that there was an earlier building on the site dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century) was cellared. Cellars are notoriously difficult to date since they rarely contain datable architectural features if they are not vaulted. The eastern wall of the cellar seems to be the foundation of the neighbouring (medieval) building. It is composed of large limestone rubble – uncoursed on but slightly battered (ie leaning inwards) with a length of oak timber – a sole plate lying on top. Jointed into this are the stubs of at least three timber uprights. There is a straight joint in the limestone rubble wall on the north face of the cellar suggesting there may have been an opening onto the street whose level is likely to have been a metre or so below the present level in medieval times. There is a blocked opening, possibly window, in the east wall and another in the north west wall. Another such blocked feature is seen in the south wall. The cellar has clearly been enlarged when the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century wings, already described, were added. A narrow (19<sup>th</sup> century?) passage leads through to the much smaller cellar under the west building. This is accessed by a doorway in the west wall which leads to a passage opening onto the High Street. It is difficult to link the evolution of the cellarage with the rest of the building unless archaeological work is done at the junction of the cellar and the ground floor. 11, 12  
13, 14

## 7.

Discussion. This will be brief. Here at 'The Grapes' is an important fragment of a 14<sup>th</sup> century town house, such as would have been occupied by a prosperous merchant. The house would have been heated by a central fireplace at ground floor level possibly to the east of the present stack. It would have been open to the roof for two bays. The smoke blackening is found both to west and east of the central truss and the crownpost. The medieval house has been shortened at the western end and is quite likely to have had at least one more bay which would have provided a solar (a first floor chamber) and ground floor service room. There may well have been a detached kitchen out at the rear. This would have been of a flimsier construction.

Crownpost roofs are characteristic of the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and lasted through to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They are mostly found in south east England but recent work has traced a number of examples in the Midlands. This one at The Grapes has curved braces and went with a camfered tie beam which was arch-braced. The last would have given a stylistic flourish to the hall.

It has been added to in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the wing with the jettied front was added. At the same time it would have had floors and ceiling inserted and probably a central stack. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century a narrowed floored north wing was added and in the 19<sup>th</sup> this was enlarged so that there was a roof within a roof. Much of the external facades both north and south are 19<sup>th</sup> century in date.

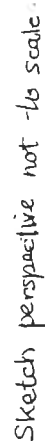
## **8. Conclusions**

Clearly some adjustment to the client's proposals may be necessary in the light of the above report.

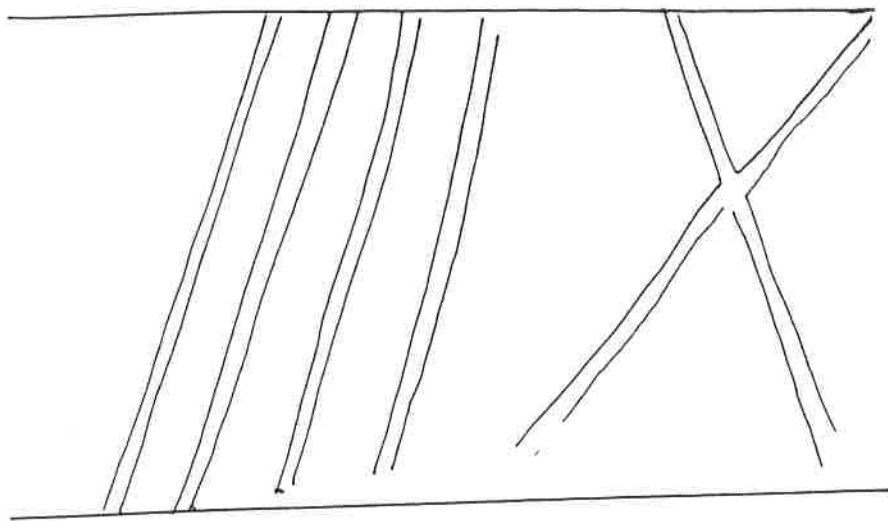
- 1) In particular the window should be opened up and made a historic feature. It does not seem to figure on the architect's plan.
- 2) Secondly it is undesirable to lose any of the masonry block at the south end of the through passage since this indicates the extent of an early opening which may well go back to the time of the 14<sup>th</sup> century roof above.
- 3) The same is true of the masonry block to the west of this. It should be possible to redesign the bar to take cognisance of this.
- 4) The discoveries made in this investigation might well prove an interesting selling point if a suitable graphic panel is designed to inform customers of them.
- 5) I would suggest that an archaeological watching brief should be arranged if planning permission is granted and the works go ahead.

***John Steane FSA, MIFA***  
***29<sup>th</sup> November 2001***

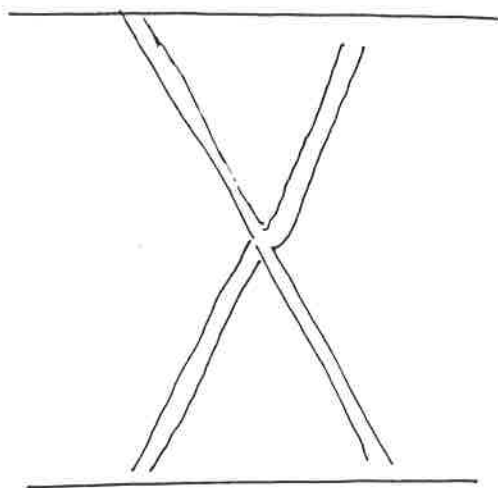




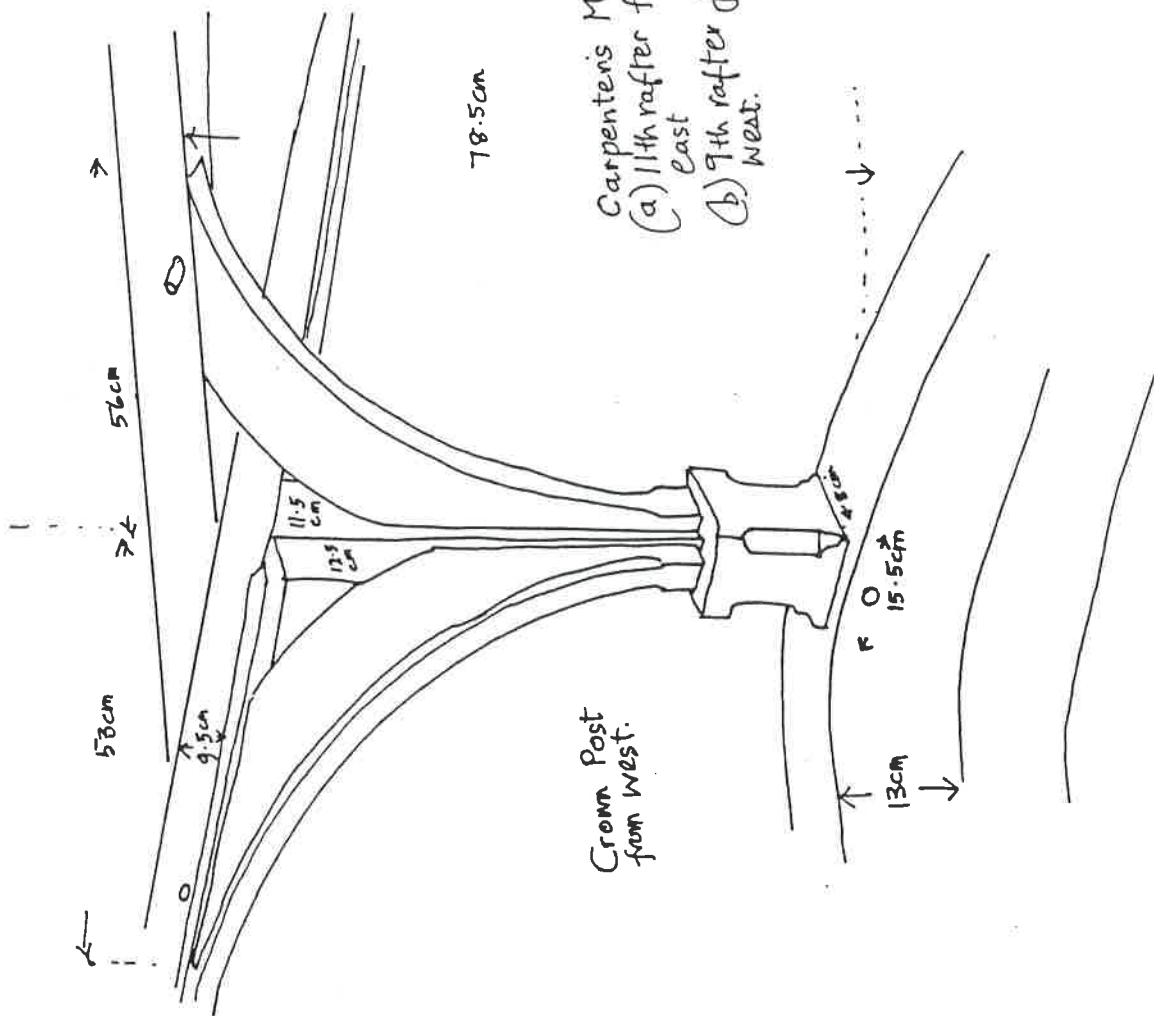




(a)



(b)



Crown Post  
from West.

78.5cm

Carpenter's Marks  
(a) 11th rafter from East  
(b) 9th rafter from West.

13cm  
15.5cm

58cm

74

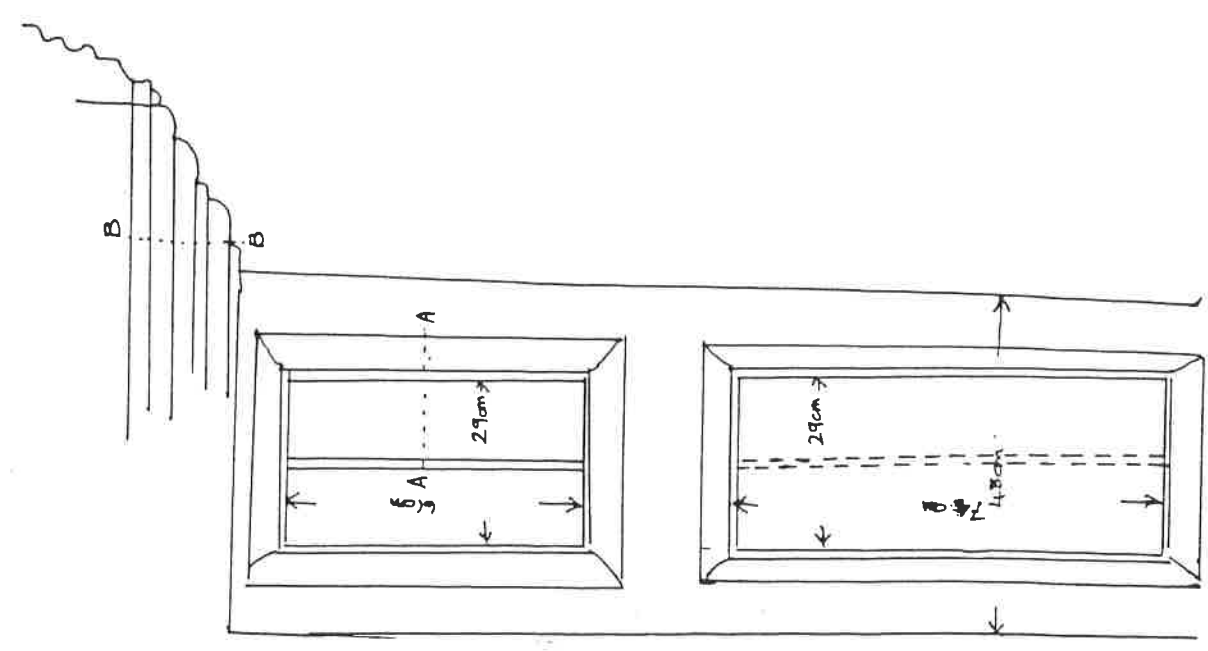
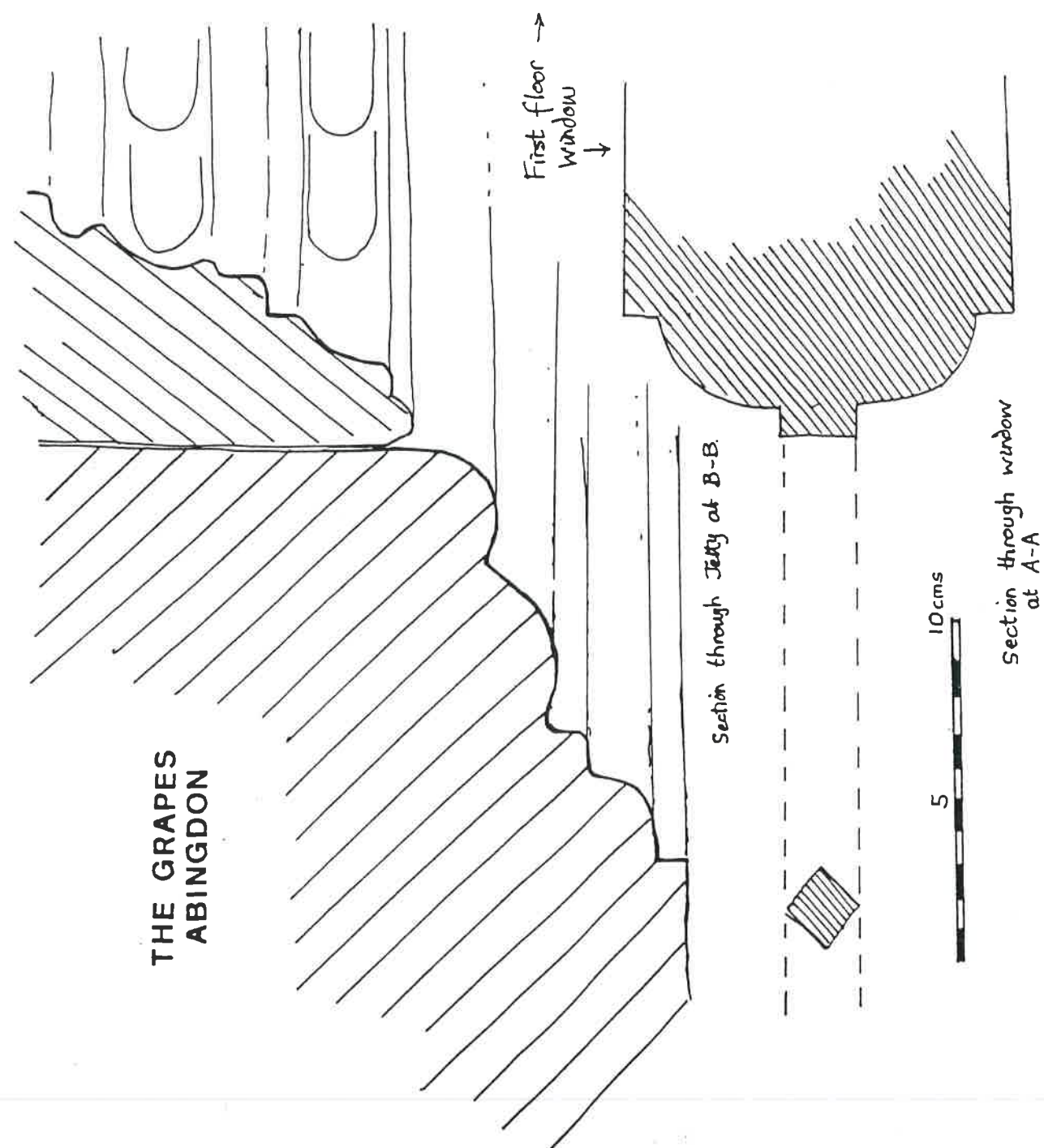
56cm

9.5cm

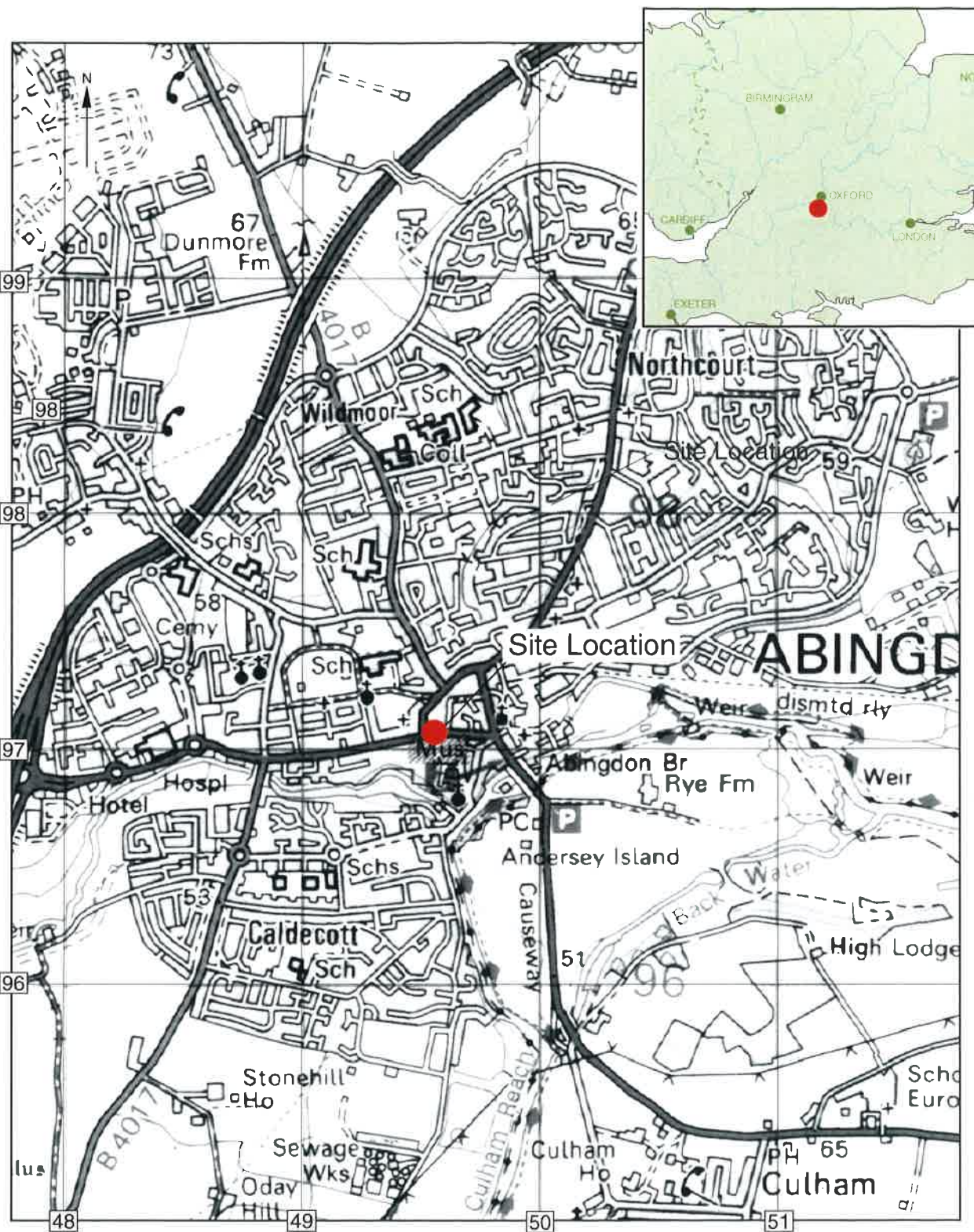
11.5cm

13cm

DRAWN BY S







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Figure 1: Site location.





Figure 2: 1844 Christ's Hospital Map of Abingdon. (Site of Grapes circled)





Not to scale

Figure 3: 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map (1875)



Figure 4: Phasing Plan



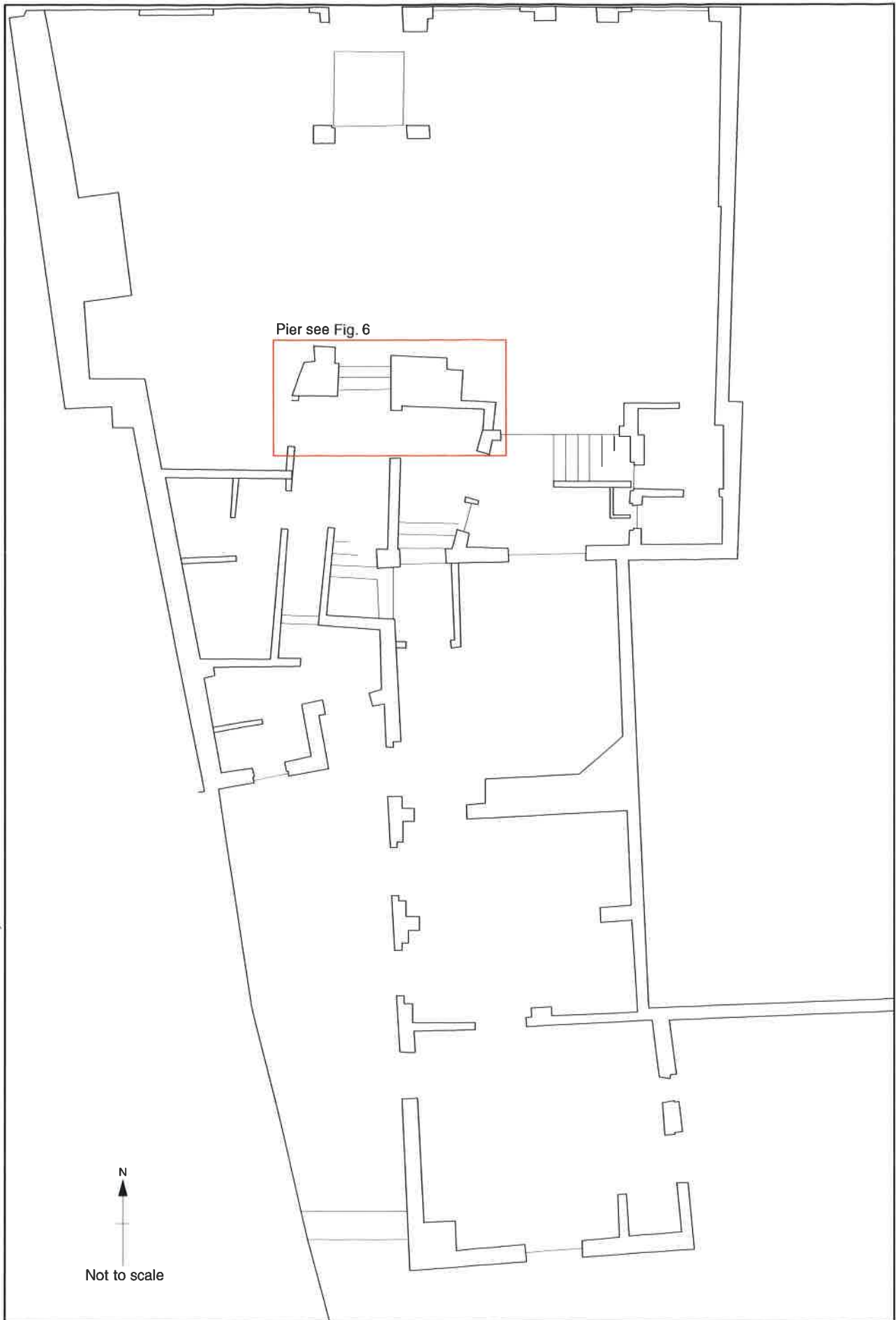


Figure 5: Ground Floor Plan

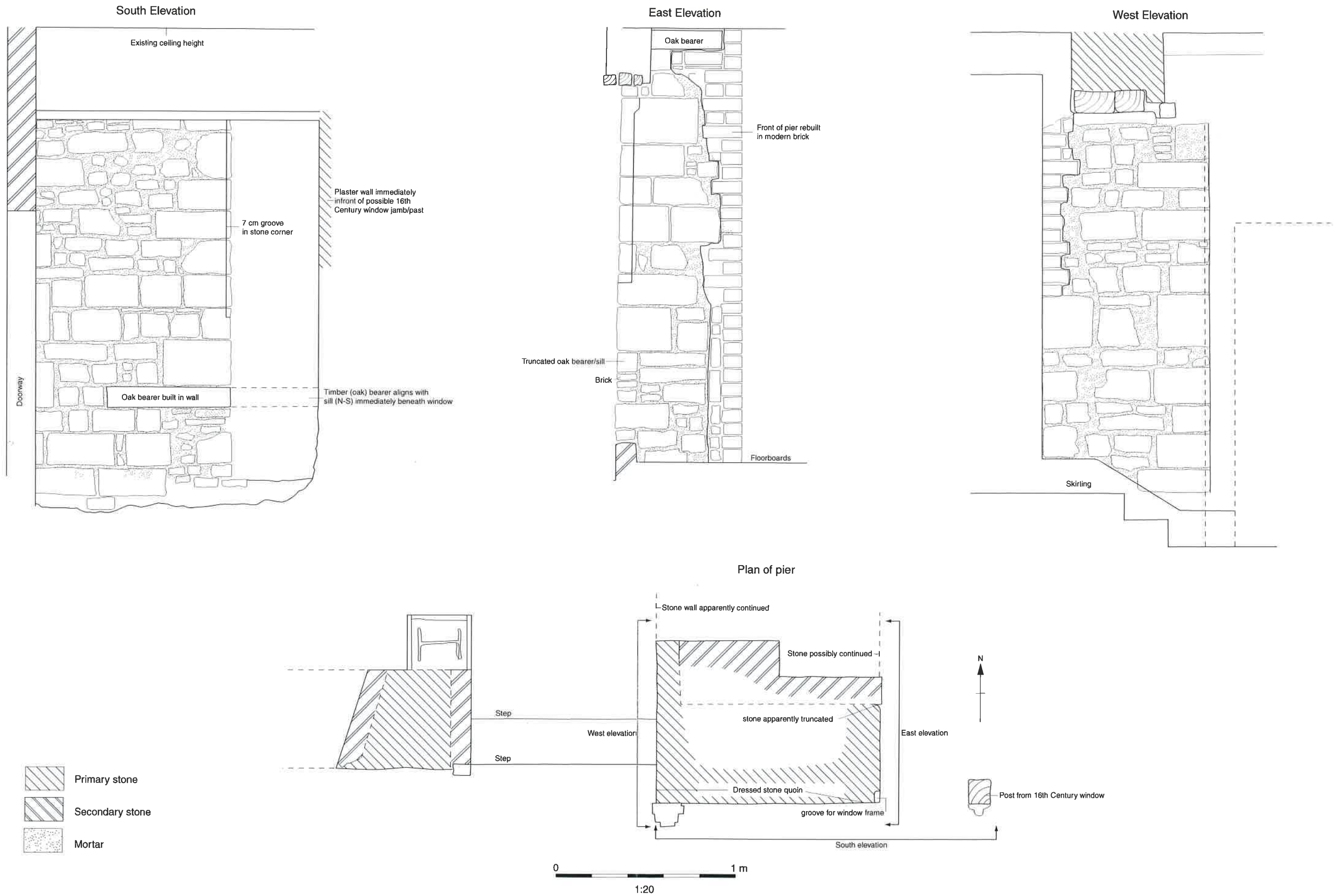


Figure 6: Plan and Elevation of Ground Floor Pier



A photograph of a stone wall in a room. The wall is made of rough, light-colored stone blocks. A doorway is visible on the right side of the wall, with a wooden frame. To the left of the doorway, there is a window with a wooden frame and multiple small panes. The floor is made of stone or concrete. A wooden beam or plank is leaning against the wall on the left side. The lighting is somewhat dim, and the overall appearance is aged and rustic.

Plates 1 to 4





Plate 6: General view of bar area



Plate 5: North-east corner of pier



Plate 4: Exterior of mid 19th Century rear extension



Plate 7: Late 16th Century bay added to primary building



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