

**THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

# **Parliament House, Machynlleth, Powys**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**



**CPAT Report No 674**

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Powys  
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**N Jones, R J Silvester & R Hankinson**  
February 2005

Report for The Owain Glyndŵr Institute

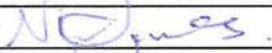
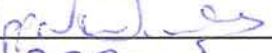
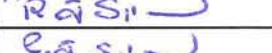
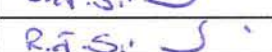
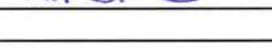
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## CPAT Report Record

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## SUMMARY

A programme of archaeological evaluation and recording, undertaken by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, has provided significant new information, particularly in relation to the dating of the present building. Although the building has traditionally been associated with Owain Glyndŵr, the results from dendrochronological dating of roof timbers clearly demonstrates that the roof was constructed from timbers felled in the summer of 1470.

Evaluation trenches to the rear of the building have provided evidence for occupation during the late medieval and early post-medieval periods, including a rubbish pit against the rear wall of the building.

A building survey has produced a comprehensive record of the building's fabric which has been further augmented by a programme of documentary research.

It is generally believed that Owain Glyndŵr was crowned Prince of Wales in 1404 somewhere near this site, and subsequently held a parliament in the town. The building known as the Parliament House is considered to be a rare example of a late medieval Welsh town house dating from 1470. As to whether it was, however, the traditionally named senate house that was built on the original site of the first parliament or even a part of it cannot be unequivocally demonstrated.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In October 2002 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Mr Michael Goulden, acting on behalf of The Owain Glyndŵr Institute of Machynlleth, Powys, to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation and recording at the Parliament House, in Machynlleth, in advance of proposals to refurbish the existing building and construct a new building at the rear of the plot. The architectural and historical significance of the building have led to it being designated as a Grade I Listed Building (LB 62/C/38; PRN 1270).
- 1.2 The building lies on the north side of Heol Maengwyn, Machynlleth, and has been considerably altered during its history, having been a row of cottages during the 19<sup>th</sup> century prior to extensive restoration works during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The importance of the building lies in its alleged association with Owain Glyndŵr and the claims that this was at least the site of the building where Glyndŵr held the first Welsh Parliament in 1404. It is uncertain, however, whether any of the surviving structure dates from this period and the programme of evaluation and recording was designed in part to investigate the history of the building.

## 2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 Machynlleth lies on the south side of the valley floor of the Afon Dyfi in western Powys and the historical county of Montgomeryshire, approximately 1km to the south-west of its confluence with the tributary Afon Dulas. The town is overlooked by the prominent valley floor knoll of Pen yr Allt on its north side, which separates it from the main course of the river, but the site is generally relatively level and low-lying. Almost all of the town lies between 10m and 30m OD, while Pen yr Allt rises to approximately 80m OD.
- 2.2 The Parliament House is located on the north side of Heol Maengwyn (SH 74800083), which carries the A489 trunk road heading east from the centre of Machynlleth (fig. 1).
- 2.3 The solid geology of the area consists of mudstones and siltstones belonging to the Llandovery Series of rocks, the earliest division of the Silurian era (1994 British Geological Survey map). On the valley floor, these rocks are more likely to be concealed beneath fluvio-glacial silts and gravels of the Pleistocene era. The soils in the immediate area of the evaluation consist of fine loamy or silty soils belonging to the Manod Association (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map).

## 3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The historical significance of the Parliament House lies in its claimed association with Owain Glyndŵr, who came to prominence in 1400 when he led a Welsh uprising against the English. Early successes led Glyndŵr to be crowned Prince of Wales in 1404, at which time he established a parliament at Machynlleth, the town being proclaimed as the capital of an independent Wales. The precise location of the Parliament building is not recorded and other Parliaments were subsequently held at Dolgellau and Harlech. The tide turned against Glyndŵr from 1407 and by 1413 the rebellion was at an end.
- 3.2 It would be pleasing to recount that the history of Parliament House is well documented and readily elucidated from the time of its construction through to the present day. Sadly, it is only for the last one hundred years that such a claim can be made.
- 3.3 It has been suggested that because of a disastrous fire at Wynnstay, the home of the Watkins Williams Wynn family, in 1857 most documents relating to Machynlleth were destroyed (Jones 1996, 7). Regardless of whether this was indeed the case - and it must be noted that there are large collections of Wynnstay documents in the National Library of Wales which have never been more than cursorily catalogued (NLW 1994, 191) - it is certainly true that little known documentation relevant to the urban development of Machynlleth has as yet come to light from before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.4 Machynlleth held an expanding population during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and it has been suggested that during this period both Parliament House and Royal House, another of the town's



historic buildings, were divided into separate dwellings (Davies 1991, 11). There is no solid evidence to support this contention, other than that it is a reasonable assumption. That successive members of the Williams-Wynn owned what is now known as Parliament House is, however, not in doubt. Consequently, it is more than likely that one of the buildings depicted on John Probert's map showing the Williams-Wynn holdings in Machynlleth in 1763 (*NLW/Wynnstay Deposit Vol 3, 84*) is the Parliament House, but unfortunately the scale of the map is too small to be certain which house it was, and even if the depiction was more precise there is no further information on the map or its accompanying schedule that would be useful.

- 3.5 Notwithstanding this lack of evidence it seems certain that from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century at least, Parliament House was on the itinerary of many an affluent traveller through Wales. Thus the Rev William Bingley in 1801 noted that:  
 "an ancient building, constructed of the thin shaly stone of this country, and now converted into stables, was pointed out to me as that in which Owen Glyndŵr summoned the chieftains of Wales in 1402" (Bingley 1814, 352).
- 3.6 This needs to be set in context, however, for there was an alternative view current in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, articulated by T O Morgan, one of the leading lights of the Cambrian Archaeological Association. He claimed that:  
 "the ancient senate house, wherein the nobility and gentry of Wales held their sessions, was situated in Maengwyn Street, the principal thoroughfare of the town. It stood till a very recent period, and had a most venerable appearance, exhibiting marks of great antiquity, being built of the perishable shale stone of the country. At the back was a flight of stone stairs leading into the great room or hall of state, and here beams and rafters of curiously carved wooden and other symbols of pristine importance of the building were to be seen. Having fallen into a dilapidated state, the greater part was a few years since taken down and other buildings erected. A spacious arched porch or entrance is now the only external sign of the once honourable destination of the original edifice (Morgan 1851, 35)".
- 3.7 Some years previously Samuel Lewis in his *Topographical Dictionary* had remarked that "part of the senate house.... is still remaining", suggesting that there was a local belief, passed on to Lewis, that a portion of the Parliament House had already been demolished (Lewis 1833).
- 3.8 Fifteen years later when the Cambrians visited Machynlleth their report indicated an ambivalent attitude:  
 "On the return to Machynlleth, the so-called parliament house of Glendwr was inspected. There seems to be some question whether the existing house, or the adjoining one but lately removed by Earl Vane was the house in question. The remains, however, of the still existing building (now two small cottages) consisting [sic] of a pointed doorway and massive wooden roof which may have been contemporary with period. It is true there are no particular indications of moulding or ornament on the latter, but its size and proportions show that it was intended for an important building" (Anon 1866, 543)
- 3.9 By 1871 a different slant on the events was being promoted, namely that the Parliament House was still standing but had been "condemned to the ignoble purpose of a stable", and that it was no more than a porch that had been taken down by Earl Vane (Jones and Lloyd 1871a, 327). To what extent this view was influenced by the writers' identification of a drawing (fig. 2), one of several that had been made in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, cannot be determined.
- 3.10 There are few broadly contemporary drawings of the building. E Pugh's pen-and-ink sketch of Glyndŵr's Parliament House appeared in published form in 1814 and may have been used in several different volumes. There is also an original, but undated pen-and-wash drawing by Thomas Wakeman in the National Library of Wales which may throw a little light on the architectural detail of the building.
- 3.11 Jones and Lloyd had identified the drawing which they reproduced in 1871 as appearing originally in a periodical called *The Youth's Instructor and Guardian* in August 1845, where it accompanied an article compiled by an anonymous lady believed to be acquainted with Machynlleth. Her description of the building stated that:  
 "its exterior appearance is barn like, and is now used as a granary, etc, a small part at one end having been fitted up as a dwelling-house. Its exterior exhibits great age; at the back are the ruinous remains of a stone staircase, which led into the great room in which are curved ribs, etc, of timber" (Jones and Lloyd 1871b, 441).



- 3.12 Jones and Lloyd went on to note that the building was still in the ownership of Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, and was now divided into three dwelling houses and the upper part was used as a store room for wool. The oak roof was still in a good state of preservation, "exhibiting some architectural pretensions". The building was 60' long by 20' deep, while their suggestion that the building might be converted into a room for public purposes to some degree predicts later events! The drift of this slightly later note also implies that their comment about its use as a stable was perhaps inaccurate and based on a misconception, although it does mirror Bingley's statement seventy years earlier (Jones and Lloyd 1871b, 441).
- 3.13 By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Parliament House was being used as both a dwelling and a flannel manufactory, and was divided into two separate holdings. In 1896 the Trustees of the Wynnstay Estate sold the western half of Parliament House to Mrs Ann Roberts and two years later the eastern part, comprising a weaving mill with two houses and two gardens extending over an area of 1360 square yards, was sold to William Pugh, a flannel manufacturer who died eight years later. A plan accompanying the sale (fig. 4) identifies the plot in question as being that now occupied by the Owain Glyndŵr Institute, together with the eastern half of the present Parliament House. The plan also depicts a short rear wing at the eastern end of Parliament House, a pump (or well) in the rear yard, as well as several small buildings in the area behind both properties. These structures are also depicted on the Ordnance Survey mapping of 1889 (fig. 3) and 1901, which have been used here to produce a plan comparing the then layout with that of the present day (fig. 5). Interestingly, the 1889 map depicts 'Parliament Houses, Site of Parliament House'.
- 3.14 David Davies, the MP for Montgomeryshire, purchased the Parliament House for £870 in 1906 from William Pugh's heirs (*Powys County Archives/ M/D/HPA/3/7/1*) and, three years later, two small cottages adjoining it but on the other side of the main archway, with the aim of presenting them to the town. He also funded the restoration of Parliament House. Local stone set in a matrix of clay or earth mixed with chopped straw local stone had been used for the building, and the windows facing the street were uncovered beneath their plaster covering. The architects employed by David Davies claimed that the building dated back to 1400/01. A contemporary photograph (fig. 6) shows the front elevation after the demolition of the adjoining archway.
- 3.15 A sketch showing part of the northern elevation of Parliament House was published in the *Manchester Guardian* in July 1907 (fig. 7). This depicts a pointed arch over the main entrance, which was then partly infilled as a window, to the east of which was a door with a window above and part a rear two-storey wing. It is also interesting to note that a chimney stack is depicted projecting above the ridge, just to the west of the arched (blocked) doorway.
- 3.16 The Owain Glyndŵr Institute was built in 1911 (Davies 1988, 33) and conveyed to Machynlleth Urban District Council in the following year. In 1981/2 the Old Parliament building was converted into an Interpretative Centre focused on life of Glyndŵr.

#### **4 BUILDING SURVEY (figs 8-16)**

- 4.1 The current programme of building recording involved a detailed survey of the main external elevations, together with ground and first-floor plans and elevations of the internal trusses and partitions. The survey was largely conducted using digital total station surveying equipment, with additional hand measurement and rectified photography for external architectural details.
- 4.2 The results from the survey were processed using AutoCAD13 to produce a series of elevations and plans, which were subsequently converted to Mapinfo6 format to produce the illustrations accompanying this report. Details of the digital and photographic archive are provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 The existing building dates from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century but has been extensively rebuilt, particularly by David Davies of Llandinam who purchased it in 1906 (see 3.14). The present rubble exterior represents an interpretation of the original appearance. The building now has a slate roof, although was previously roofed in rough stone tiles with ceramic ridge tiles (see 6.18 below). There are low rubble chimney stacks at either end.



**South elevation (fig. 8)**

- 4.4 The south elevation, fronting Heol Maengwyn, displays a single storey in local slate rubble, with several blockings indicating former ground and first-floor openings. The present elevation is that of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century restoration with a single entrance towards the west end, a tall boarded and studded door and five windows, each with diamond leaded glazing. The doorway and windows all have matching stone segmental arches.
- 4.5 The window to the west of the doorway is set within the blocking of a former doorway, the threshold stone for which is still visible. The blockings for three other doorways are visible to the west of the present entrance, two beneath existing windows, and the third between the easternmost windows. An early 20<sup>th</sup>-century photograph (Plate 7) shows two adjacent doorways at the eastern end, with a window alongside, the blocked opening for which can still be identified. What is interesting is that the stone segmental arch of the present eastern window is clearly visible in the photograph between the eastern doorway and window, indicating the existence of an earlier window which was subsequently restored. Although the building presently has a single-storey elevation, blockings for four first-floor windows can be identified, all of which are also shown in the photograph.
- 4.6 Set back to the east of the building is a pointed arched gateway, with pitched slate roof and boarded gates linking the Parliament House to the Owain Glyndŵr Institute.

**North elevation (fig. 9)**

- 4.7 The northern, rear elevation is also is that of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century restoration, with two-storeys and several blockings indicating former ground-floor openings. The pre-restoration appearance of the building is indicated by the early 19th century drawing (fig. 2), which shows a dormer and three small first-floor openings, the evidence for which has since been lost. The roof is shown with stone slab coping on either gable.
- 4.8 The large double-doored arched entrance to the east of the centre had previously been partly blocked and a window inserted. To the east of the entrance is a blocked doorway and two windows with stone segmental arches, each having been doorways at some point. These were presumably associated with a rear wing which is depicted by the Ordnance Survey in 1889 and is shown in the sketch of 1907 (fig. 6). There is now little evidence for the rear wing, although a vague line in the masonry to the east of the main rear entrance may indicate the point at which it was tied in to the main building.
- 4.9 To the west of the entrance is a blocked window with two windows beyond, both with pitched stone lintels, the eastern window, with a two-centred head, having previously been a doorway. At the western end is a flight of stone steps leading to a first-floor entrance with a gable above. The date of the steps is uncertain, although the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century drawing shows a lower flight rising from the east, along the face of the wall, to a low doorway below first-floor level which presumably led to an internal staircase. The present steps may well have been in place by the 1880s as a structure is indicated here on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500 map.
- 4.10 The first floor has hipped dormer roofs over three tall windows, two at the east end and one at the west, with four smaller windows in the centre, each with stone segmental arches.

**Ground floor (fig. 10)**

- 4.11 The interior of the building is divided into four unequal bays between the principal trusses, the central bays being open to the roof, while the end two bays are both lofted. The building is presently an exhibition centre, with the western end having been adapted for an audio-visual display area and gift shop, with modern stairs rising to the first-floor loft. Modern timber panelling, extending into the window recesses, hides the internal walling and any architectural details. A large fireplace at the eastern end, including an oven, has a cobbled floor at a level somewhat lower than the raised timber floor throughout the rest of the ground floor. This may indicate that original, or at least earlier, floor levels may survive throughout the building, preserved beneath the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century timber floor.
- 4.12 The loft at the eastern end is supported on two lateral beams with transverse joists and a timber staircase in the south-east corner. There is no visible evidence for a central fireplace on the western side of Truss 6 which is suggested by the position of a chimney depicted in the sketch of 1907 (fig. 6).



**First floor, trusses and partitions (figs 11-16)**

- 4.13 The first floor has two central bays open to the roof, Bay 2 and Bay 3, and two lofted end bays, Bays 1 and 4. Access to the western loft in Bay 1 is via an external staircase, and by a recently inserted internal staircase. The loft is divided into two sub-bays by Truss 2 and has modern panelling obscuring any architectural detail; as a consequence Trusses 1 and 2 were not recorded during the present survey and the position of other roof timbers in Bay 1 is only given approximately in fig. 11. Bay 2 is divided into three sub-bays, while Bay 3 has two sub-bays. The eastern loft is accessed via an internal wooden staircase in the south-east corner of Bay 4. The loft is also divided into two sub-bays by Truss 4 and has exposed trusses and roof timbers.
- 4.14 All of the visible roof trusses are arched collar trusses typical of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with through purlins. The three principal trusses (trusses 3, 6 and 8) also each have a tie beam with a king strut rising to the collar, and wattle infill below, partitioning the building into its separate bays. The two partitions against the lofts (trusses 3 and 8) also have matching central windows below the tie beams. The roof timbers are generally plain, with the notable exception of the fine ogee braces in Bay 2 which, together with the hollow moulding on Trusses 4 and 5, indicate its higher status, presumably as the main open hall.

**5 DENDROCHRONOLOGICAL DATING**

- 5.1 A programme of sampling was undertaken by Dan Miles and Michael Worthington, of Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory, to determine the date of key roof timbers. A total of fifteen samples were taken from twelve roof timbers, only three of which produced a definitive felling date. Table 1 provides a summary of the results.

Table 1: Summary of Dendrochronological sampling (for locations, see fig. 11).

Sample no.	Timber and position	Date range present within sample	Felling seasons and dates
phm1	rafter, rear bay 3	1442-1469	summer 1470
phm2	rear upper purlin bay 3	1335-1429	after 1440
phm3a	rear middle purlin bay 3	1421-1466	-
phm3b	rear middle purlin bay 3	1447-1469	-
phm3	mean of phm3a and phm3b	1421-1469	summer 1470
phm4	rear principal rafter truss 7	1360-1447	-
phm5	rear middle purlin bay 3	1355-1451	after 1462
phm6	rear principal rafter truss 4	1306-1400	after 1420
phm7a1	rear principal rafter truss 2	-	-
phm7a2	rear principal rafter truss 2	1382-1445	1456-86
phm8	collar truss 2	1359-1431	after 1442
phm9a	rear middle purlin bay 1	-	-
phm9b	rear middle purlin bay 1	1388-1449	1460-90
phm10	front upper purlin bay 1	1352-1442	after 1453
phm11	front middle purlin bay 1	1335-1424	after 1453
phm12	rafter, front bay 1	1437-1469	summer 1470

- 5.2 The results from the dendrochronology have provided a secure date for the construction of the present building, the roof timbers for which were felled in the summer of 1470.

**6 EVALUATION**

- 6.1 The evaluation was initiated in connection with proposals to construct a new building to the rear of the plot and the trench layout was therefore designed in part to evaluate the archaeological potential of this area (Trench A), and also to evaluate a small area against the rear of the building (Trench B) in the hope of identifying features and deposits associate with the building's earlier history.



Numbers in brackets in the following text refers to individual context numbers assigned to features and deposits during the excavation, the full details of which are available in the site archive.

**Trench A (19.4 x 1.5m; fig. 18)**

- 6.2 The more recent overburden in Trench A was removed by machine under close archaeological supervision, with all subsequent cleaning and excavation being carried out by hand. At the lowest level of the excavation two features were identified which had been cut into the natural subsoil, a orange stony silt (5), and sealed by an overlying layer of pale orangey-grey clay silt (4) up to 0.3m thick and containing pottery of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century date. A small sub-circular scoop or post-hole (10), measuring 0.2m in diameter and 0.08m deep, lay towards the south end of the trench, while a shallow gully (8), up to 0.5m in width and 0.07m deep was aligned roughly north to south, extending beyond the limits of excavation. No finds were recovered from the dark grey silt fill (11) of the scoop/post-hole (10), while the fill (9) of the gully contained finds of 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>-century date.
- 6.3 At the southern end of the trench, layer 4 was overlain by a layer of very dark grey gritty silt (3), which was 0.2m thick and extended northwards for 4.5m before fading out. Layer 3 contained a significant quantity of 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>-century ceramic material from large vessels and two sherds of 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>-century pottery. The nature of layer 3 suggests that it may represent a dump of material and it seemed to have been deliberately sealed by a deposit of pale brown sandy silt (22), which was 0.1m thick, containing coal fragments and flecks of mortar, which only extended 0.3m beyond the north end of layer 3.
- 6.4 Overlying layers 4 and 22 was a deposit of dark grey stony clay silt (2), which varied from 0.25m to 0.45m in thickness. This also contained finds of relatively modern date. At the north end of the trench, layers 2 and 4 had been cut by a linear gully (6), 0.6m wide and 0.65m deep, which also cut into the top of the natural subsoil (5) and crossed the trench on an east/west alignment. The fill (7) of the gully contained some large lumps of lime, possibly intended for producing mortar, and was evidently of relatively modern date. Both the gully and layer 2 were sealed by the topsoil, a grey-brown silty loam (1), between 0.1m and 0.15m thick.
- 6.5 With the possible exception of the small scoop/post-hole (10), all of the identified features and layers were confirmed to be no earlier in date than the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The mixed distribution of finds throughout the layers, to the extent that 19<sup>th</sup>-century pottery was even found immediately above the natural subsoil, suggested that the general area was extensively disturbed, possibly in association with the restoration of the Parliament House in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Trench B (3.0 x 2.5m; fig. 19)**

- 6.6 Restricted access and the proximity of the Parliament House itself led to Trench B being excavated entirely by hand. The area was paved with large, irregular slate slabs (12) set a layer of dark grey loose silty gravel (13), generally 0.1m thick. The excavation revealed the southern part of a steep-sided oval or sub-circular pit (26), which had been cut into the natural subsoil, an orange to grey compact gravelly (30). The pit measured approximately 1.0m deep and 2.5m in diameter, although its overall shape and dimensions were not defined as its north side had been partially cut by the footings for a revetment wall constructed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to support the adjoining raised lawn area, the wall forming the northern limit of the excavation.
- 6.7 The pit contained a series of fills, the earliest of which consisted of a pale orangey-brown sticky silt (29), up to 0.05m thick. This was sealed by a deposit of brown sticky silt (28) which was very wet and contained preserved organic material including straw, wool, animal hair, plant fibres, and fly pupae (see 6.13-6.17), together with a single small sherd of green-glazed pottery, of likely 16<sup>th</sup>-century date. A small number of slate slabs were present in the layer, one of which had a peg-hole indicating that it was used as a roof tile. The general appearance of layer 28, together with its contents, suggest that it represents a deposit of domestic rubbish.
- 6.8 Layer 28 was sealed by a greyish to orangey-brown gravel deposit (27), up to 0.3m thick, which may have partly originated from the weathering of the pit sides, but also include a possible stone roof tile, as in layer 28. Above layer 27 was a distinctive stony layer (25), up to 0.3m thick, consisting of flat slate slabs within a matrix of pale brown silt (25). Some of the slabs again had peg-holes indicating that they were roof tiles, while broken fragments of partially glazed ceramic ridge tile were also recovered from the base of the layer. The evidence from this group of deposits suggests that while the pit was open, stone roof tiles were occasionally lost from the building until a



time when the building was re-roofed, the debris (25) sealing the pit, with the ceramic ridge tiles having been the first to be removed. It seems likely that the contents of the pit included a high proportion of organic matter which, as it decayed, led to subsidence of the overlying deposits, as indicated by the profile of layer 25 and the angle of the stones within it.

- 6.9 Layer 25 was sealed beneath two later deposits, a pale grey-brown silty gravel (23), up to 0.25m thick, which contained flecks of daub and occasional stones, and layer 21, a pale grey-brown stony clay silt (21), up to 0.1m thick.
- 6.10 Subsequent to the deposition of layer 21, a steep-sided gully or drain (18) was cut immediately to the south-west of the pit, running north-west, away from the building. The gully varied between 0.6m and 0.8m wide, with a depth of 0.5m and was filled with a mixed layer (19) of gravel and silt. The fill contained finds of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date and had chips of glazed ceramic drainage pipe in its base. Examination of the south-east end of the gully seemed to confirm that it continued beneath a later drain (14).
- 6.11 The area immediately adjacent to the building had been heavily disturbed by the installation of a glazed ceramic drainage pipe within a trench (14) 0.62 wide and 0.5m deep. The southern edge of the trench was formed by the rear wall of the building (20) against which a sloping layer of mortared stone (31) was visible in the base of the trench, presumably constructed to deflect water away from the wall.

#### **Finds**

- 6.12 Although the majority of artefacts recovered from the excavations consisted of pottery dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a number of sherds of earlier pottery were also recovered. Of particular interest are nine sherds of 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup>-century pottery, including a very small sherd of green-glazed white fineware from layer 28, within pit 26 in Trench B. The upper fill of the pit (context 21) also contained a single sherd of an internally glazed jar rim of similar date, although the deposit had sunk into the pit rather than being a contemporary fill. The remaining seven sherds of 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup>-century pottery included partially glazed and unglazed jug and jar rims, handles and bodysherds, together with a sherd of an internally glazed cooking pot. Unfortunately, these were all residual finds in much later deposits, but they do provide an indication of the types of wares in use around the time that the building was constructed.

#### **Assessment of Biological Remains** by Dr Fiona Grant

- 6.13 A bulk soil sample of approximately 25 litres was taken from context 28 for the purposes of palaeoenvironmental examination. A single one litre sub-sample was processed and assessed to provide an indication of the nature of the remains preserved within the sample.
- 6.14 The sub-sample was disaggregated by hand and visually examined, before being subjected to wet sieving (to 1mm) and flotation. Both the flots and the residues were sorted by hand and rapidly examined under a binocular microscope in order to assess the variety of biological remains.
- 6.15 The organic fraction of the sample appears to consist mainly of compressed straw and plant fibre, in addition to which fragments of moss, birch bark, grain husks and a variety of seeds were identified. Insect remains appear to comprise mainly fly pupae, while animal hair, a tiny wad of sheep wool and a single fragment of charcoal was also extracted.
- 6.16 The material identified suggests a mixture typical of a medieval midden or rubbish pit. Straw and other plant fibres (such as hay or rushes) may derive from floor or stable sweepings. Weed seeds, grain husks, food remains, and in this case, possibly also the animal hair, are often incorporated within such sweepings. Moss was frequently used in the past as a sanitary dressing or as lavatory paper and its presence suggests the pit was also used for the disposal of latrine waste. This may also explain the wads of wool. Grain husks may also indicate the presence of faecal material, and fly pupae demonstrate favourable conditions provided by rotting food material or faecal waste. The presence of birch bark is intriguing as it has a variety of uses, such as a dye-stuff or for containers, or alternatively it may simply result from a firewood chip incorporated into the general floor sweepings.
- 6.17 The assessment demonstrates the wealth of palaeoenvironmental potential within the sample. Further analysis of the bulk sample would identify the plant, insect and animal material more



closely, and allow a more in-depth interpretation of the economy and environment of the building and its household. For example, more precise identification of the insect remains could enable the presence of a range of specific materials to be highlighted. The identification of the seeds might illuminate local environmental conditions, or the exploitation of specific species. An indication of the diet and other activities of the householders might also be acquired by the identification of the various plant and animal materials.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The programme of archaeological evaluation and recording at the Parliament House has provided significant new information, particularly in relation to the dating of the present building. Although the building has traditionally been associated with Owain Glyndŵr, the results from dendrochronological dating of roof timbers clearly demonstrates that the roof was constructed from timbers felled in the summer of 1470.
- 7.2 The evaluation trenches to the rear of the building have also provided significant evidence for occupation during the late medieval and early post-medieval periods. Although it seems that much of the rear area has been disturbed, possibly during the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century refurbishments, several sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from later contexts, indicating the possibility of earlier occupation on the plot. The trench against the rear wall of the building revealed a rubbish pit containing organic remains and a single sherd of 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup>-century pottery, as well as a number of stone roofing tiles and sherds of ceramic ridge tile, revealing what was perhaps the original roofing for the building.
- 7.3 The building survey has produced the most comprehensive record of the building's fabric to date, identifying a number of former window and door openings in the front and rear elevations, as well as providing accurate plans and elevations. The history of the building has been further augmented by the programme of documentary research which has uncovered a number of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century illustrations which have greatly assisted the interpretation of the building.
- 7.4 In conclusion it is generally believed now that Owain Glyndŵr was crowned Prince of Wales in 1404 somewhere near this spot, and subsequently held a parliament in the town. The building known as the Parliament House is considered to be a rare example of a late medieval Welsh town house dating from 1470. As to whether it was, however, the traditionally named senate house that was built on the original site of the first parliament or even a part of it cannot be unequivocally demonstrated.

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 8.1 The writers would like to thank the following for their assistance during the project: Ian Grant, CPAT; Michael Goulden; Dan Miles and Michael Worthington, Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory; Richard Suggett, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW); Dr Fiona Grant; Brian Roberts; the staff of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; and the staff of the National Monuments Record, RCAHMW, Aberystwyth.

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### 9.2 Cartographic sources

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- Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:2,500 Montgomeryshire 25.12, published 1901
- 1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map (Sheet 2 - Wales) and Legend (1:250,000 scale)
- 1994 British Geological Survey map of Wales (Solid edition at 1:250,000 scale)



**APPENDIX 1****PROJECT ARCHIVE****Site archive**

30 Context record forms  
 2 black and white negative films  
 2 colour slide films  
 1 colour print film  
 Photographic catalogue  
 1 A1 site drawing  
 3 A4 site drawings

**Digital archive**

Penmap trench location plan: ogph.pts

Trench A plan and section Tra.dwg, dxf and mapinfo

Trench B plan and section Trb.dwg, dxf and mapinfo

**Building survey**

EDM survey	Parlhous.pts and 1191plan.dwg
EDM survey loft in Bay 4	Parlhous2.pts and 1191pl2
First floor plan	1stfloor.dwg, dxf and mapinfo
First floor timbers	1sttimb.dwg, dxf and mapinfo
Ground floor plan	grplan.dwg, dxf and mapinfo
Ground floor timbers	grtimb.dwg, dxf and mapinfo
North elevation	nelev.dwg, dxf and mapinfo
South elevation	selev.dwg, dxf and mapinfo
Elevations of Trusses 3-8	truss3 - truss8.dwg, dxf and mapinfo

**Finds****Context 1**

1 sherd Pearlware, 1780-early 19<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Coal Measures Buffware, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Stoneware, 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 2 sherds glazed red earthenware, 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 2 sherds printed Developed Whiteware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 2 sherds Developed Whiteware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century

**Context 2**

1 sherd Slipware, 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century  
 2 sherds Creamware, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Coal Measures Redware, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 4 sherds Stoneware, 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Pearl ware, 19<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Developed Yellowware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 4 sherds printed Developed Whiteware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Industrial Slipware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 clay pipe, 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century

**Context 3**

1 internally glazed jug handle/body, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 unglazed jar body, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century

**Context 4**

1 internally glazed cooking pot, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 internally glazed jar base, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 unglazed body sherd, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century  
 3 sherds Mottled ware, 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century  
 3 sherds Coal Measures Redware, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 3 sherds Coal Measures Buffware, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Stoneware, 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century

1 sherd Developed Whiteware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd printed Developed Whiteware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 5 clay pipe stems, 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century

#### **Context 7**

2 sherds Coal Measures Redware, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Basalt ware, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 3 sherds Creamware, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 2 sherds White Stoneware ware, 19<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Pearlware, 19<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd bone china, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Developed Whiteware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Refined Redware teapot lid, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 clay pipe, 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century

#### **Context 9**

1 sherd Local red earthenware, 18<sup>th</sup> h-20<sup>th</sup> century

#### **Context 13**

1 jug/jar rim in local red earthenware, ?15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century  
 3 sherds Stoneware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 2 sherds Developed Yellow ware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 2 sherds Developed Whiteware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Industrial Slipware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century

#### **Context 15**

1 sherd Industrial Whiteware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 2 clay pipe, 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century

#### **Context 19**

5 sherds White ware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 clay pipe, 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 4 fragments glazed drain pipe

#### **Context 21**

1 internally glazed jar rim, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 unglazed jar rim, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 internally glazed jar body sherd, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 unglazed body sherd, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Midland Purple ware, 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century  
 7 sherds Coal Measures Redware, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd stoneware, 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 1 sherd Tin glazed earthenware 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 2 sherds Coal Measures Buffware, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century  
 2 sherds refined redware, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century  
 22 clay pipe stems, 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century

#### **Context 23**

1 fragment unglazed tile

#### **Context 25**

7 fragments ceramic ridge tile  
 5 stone roofing tiles

#### **Context 27**

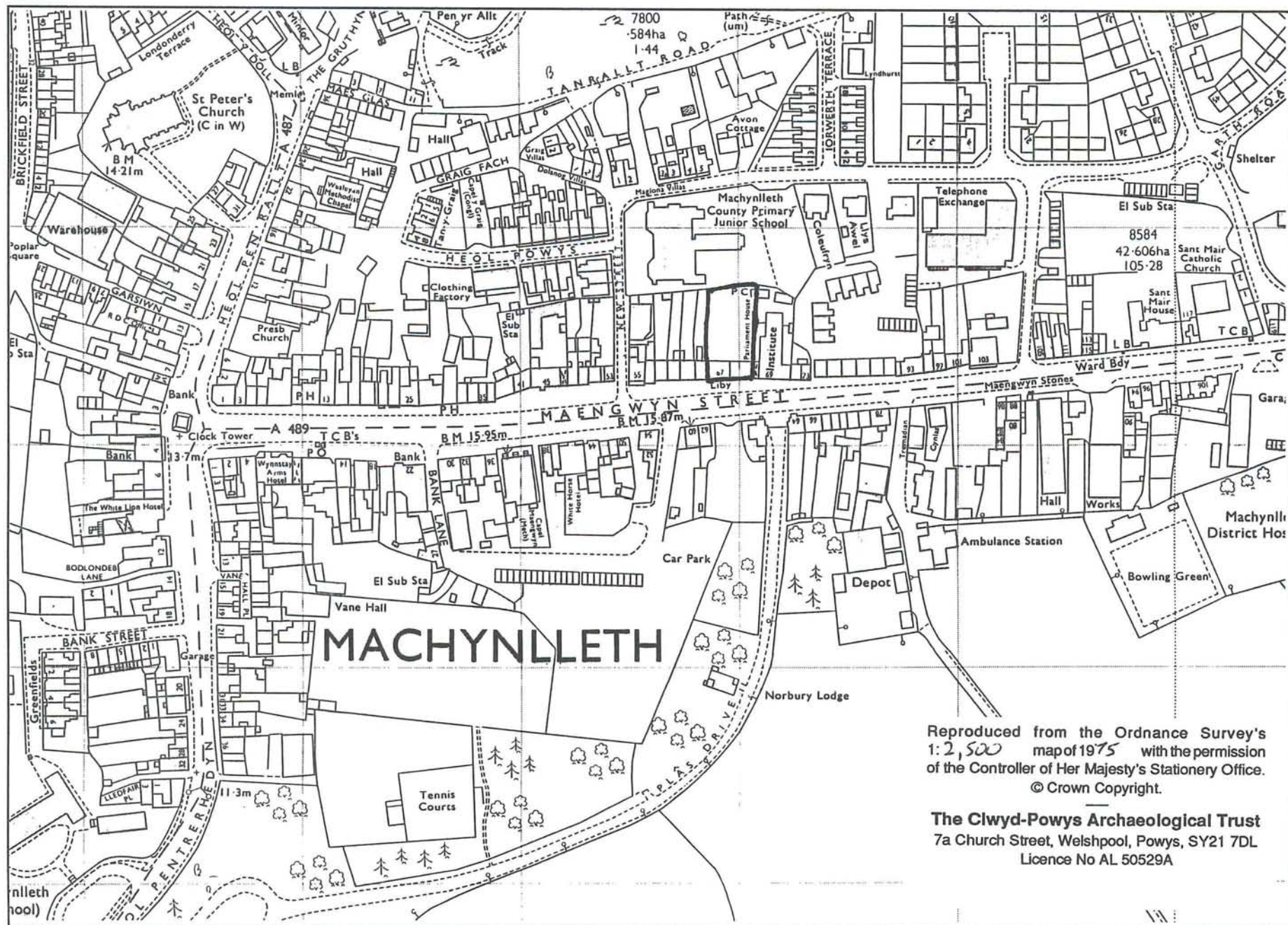
1 stone roofing tiles

#### **Context 28**

1 green glazed whiteware jug rim, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century  
 3 fragments daub  
 2 stone roofing tiles



Fig. 1 Location



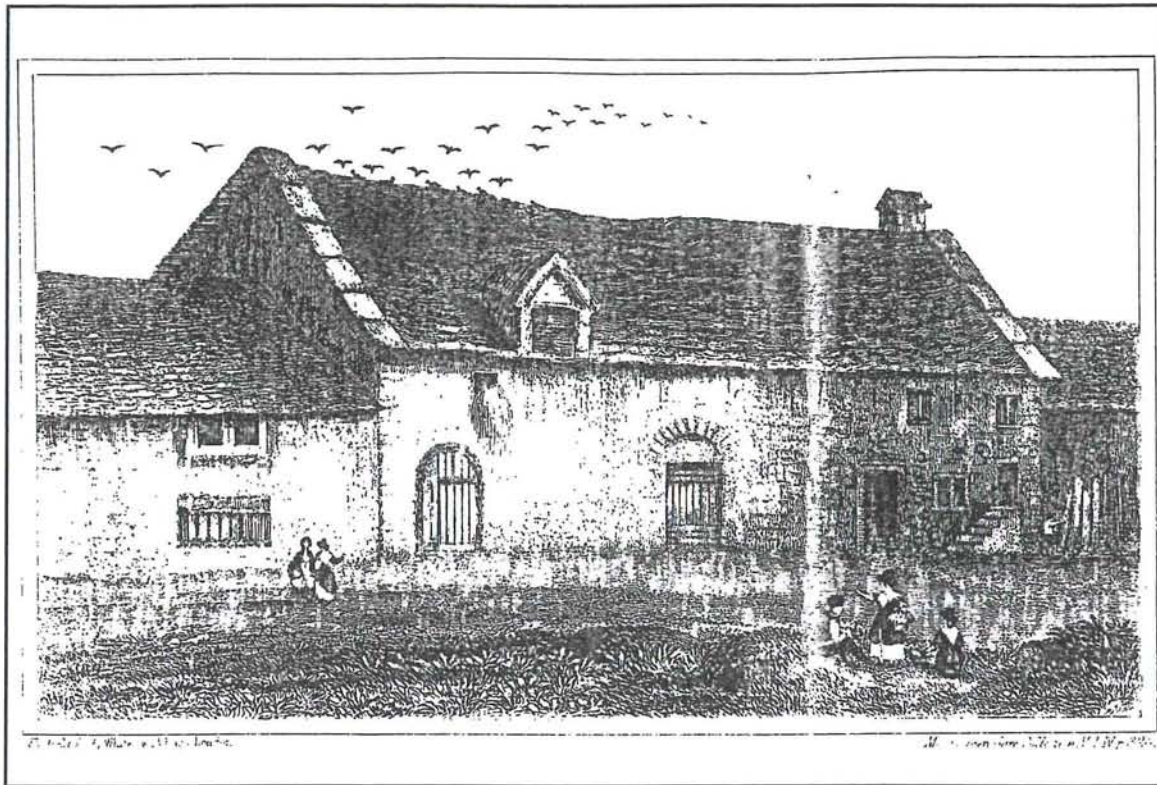


Fig. 2 Early 19th-century drawing of Parliament House, reproduced in 1871 (Jones and Lloyd 1871a)



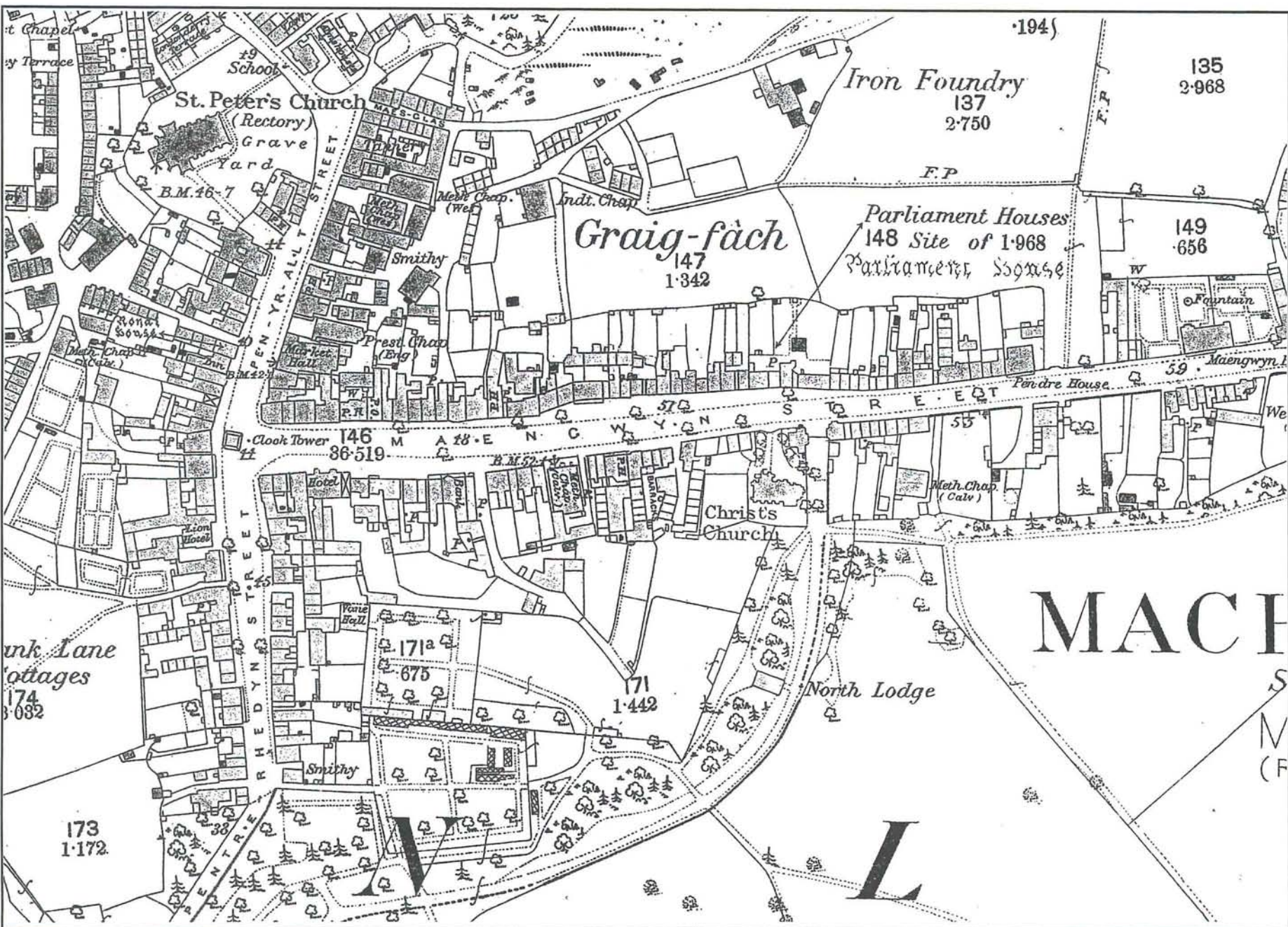


Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500, Montgomeryshire 25.12, surveyed 1887, published 1889

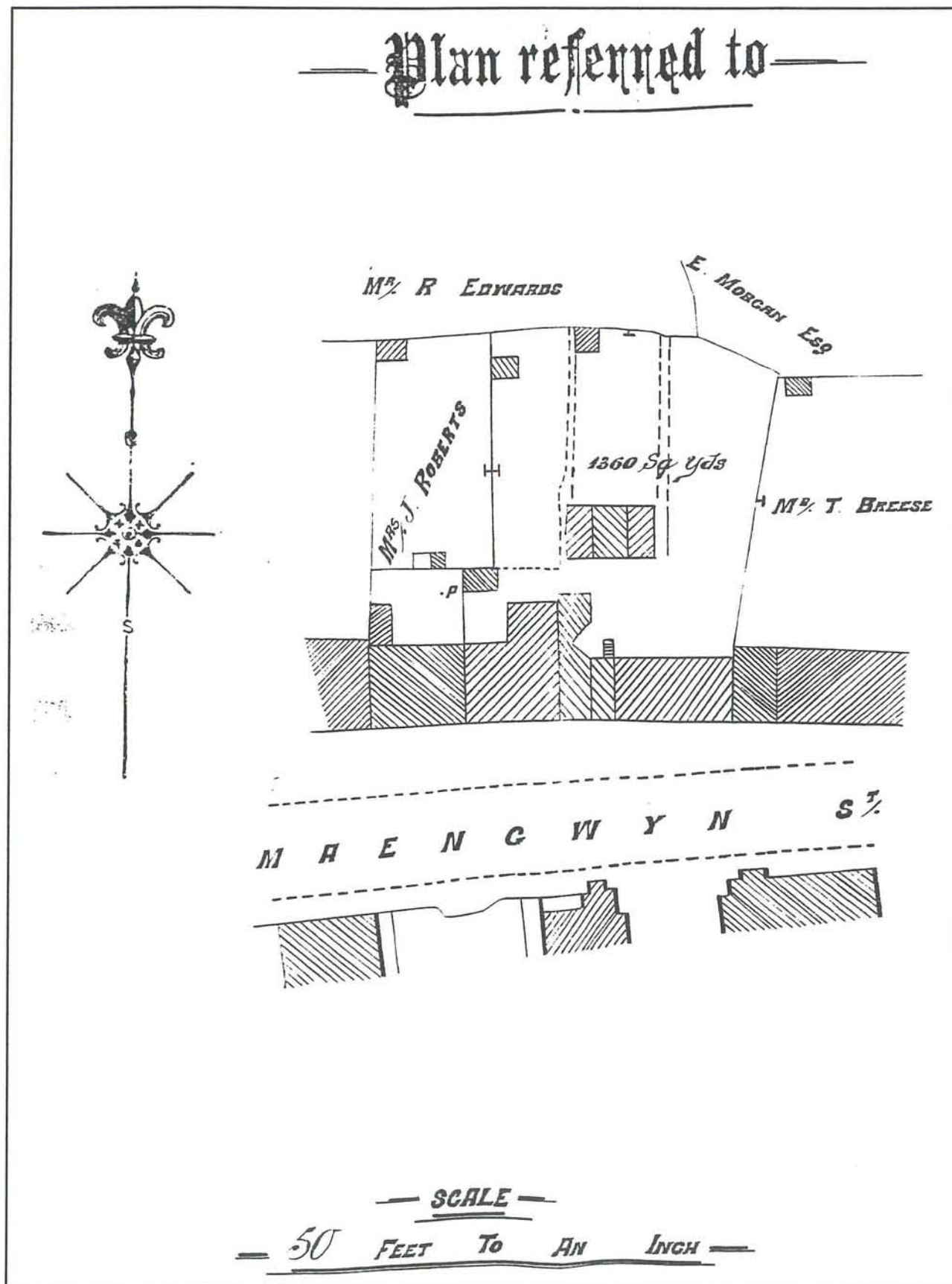


Fig. 4 Plan of 1896 referring to sale details



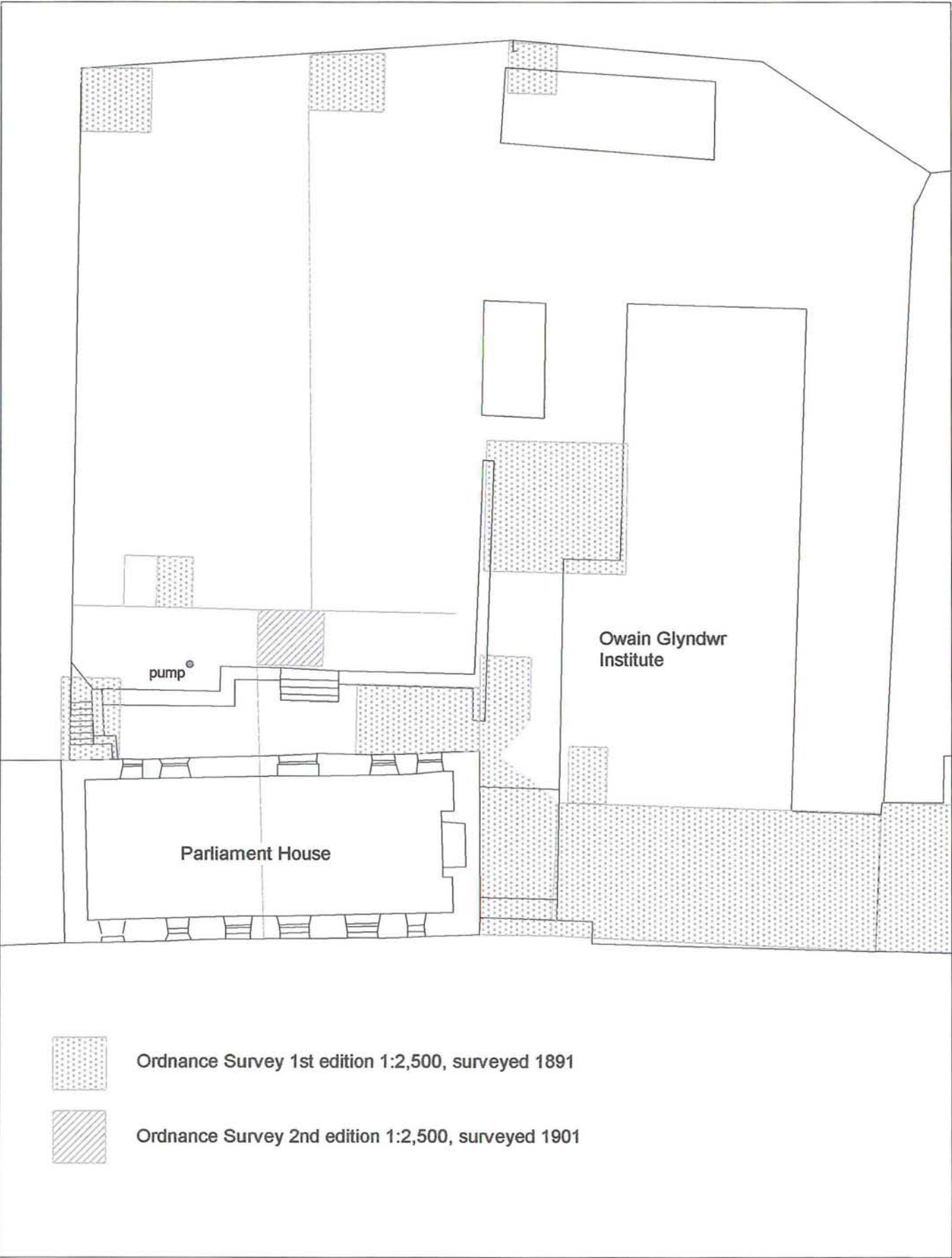


Fig. 5 Comparision between present day plan and Ordnance Survey mapping of 1891 and 1901, scale 1:250

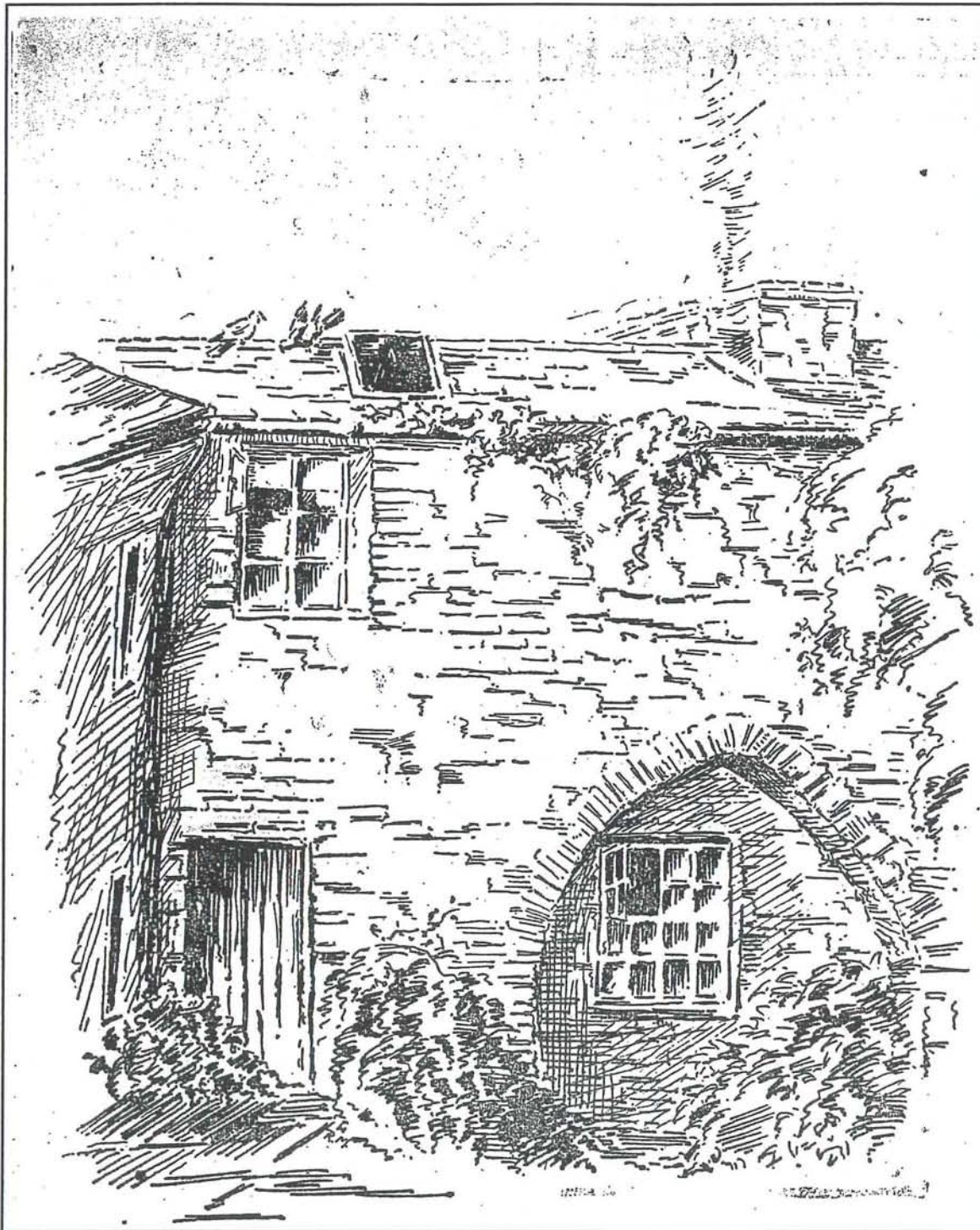


Fig. 6 Sketch of Parliament House published in the Manchester Guardian, 1907



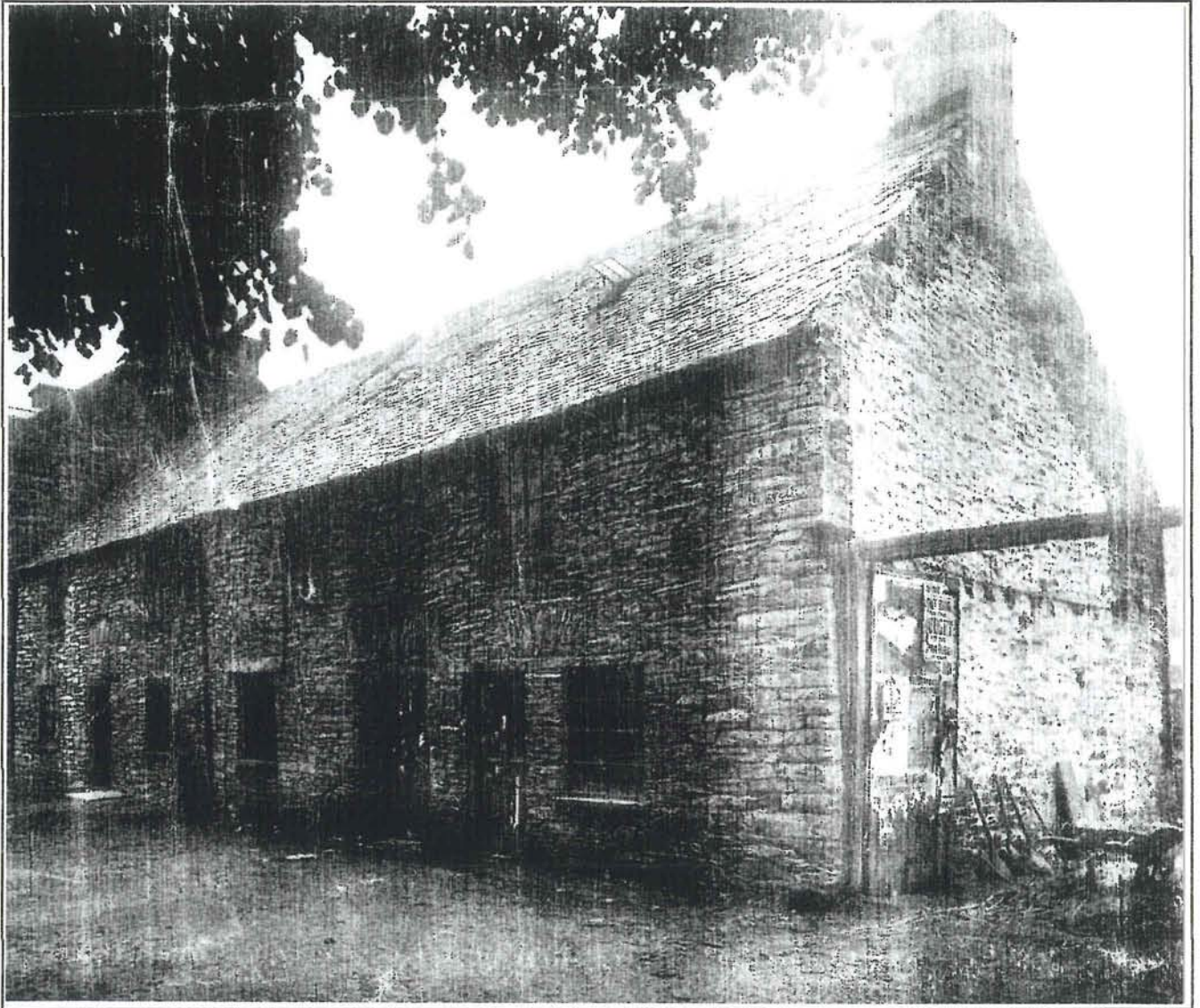


Fig. 7 Photograph of the front elevation c. 1911



Fig. 8 South elevation, scale 1:50





Fig. 9 North elevation, scale 1:50

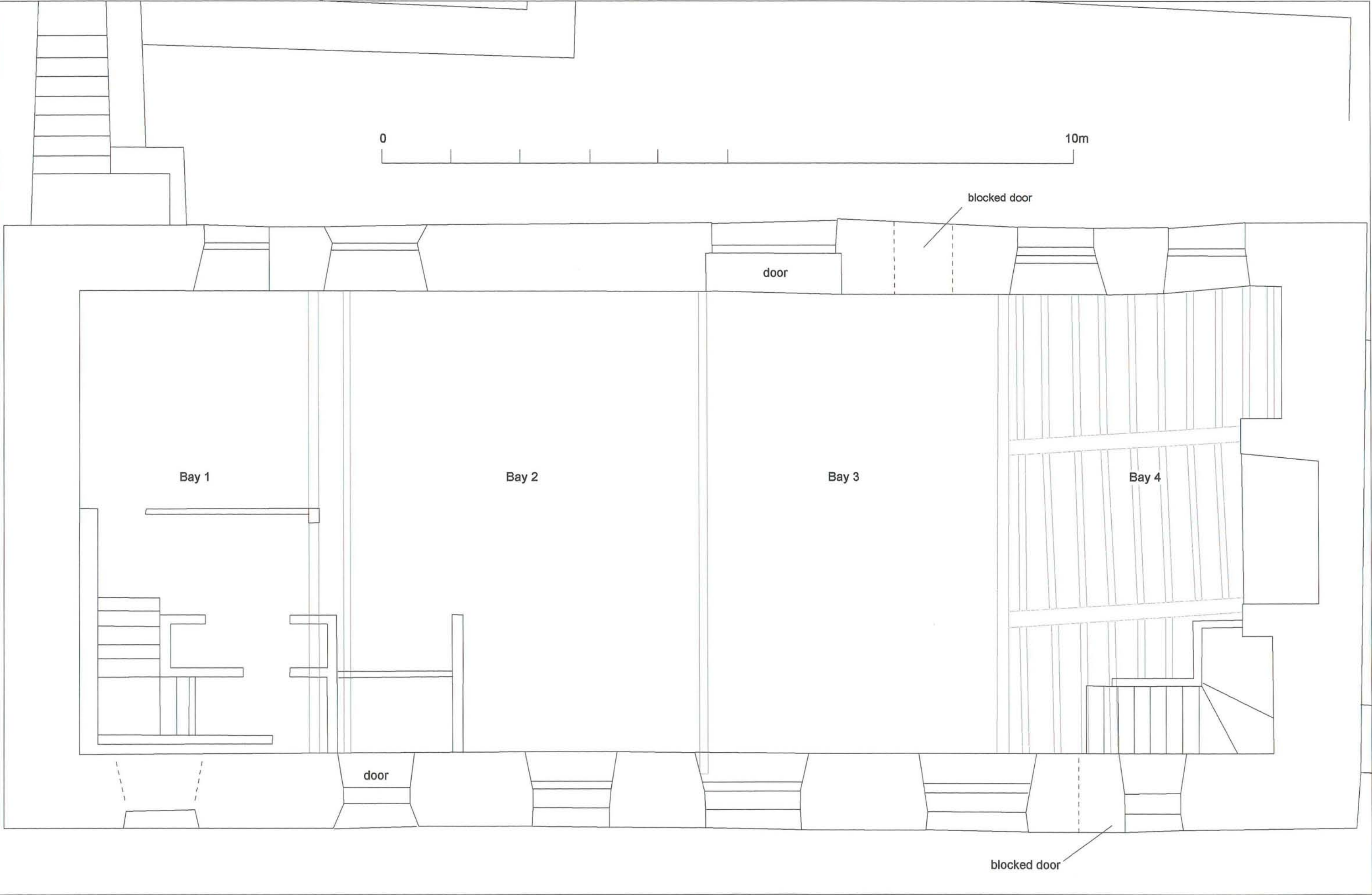


Fig. 10 Ground Floor plan, scale 1:50



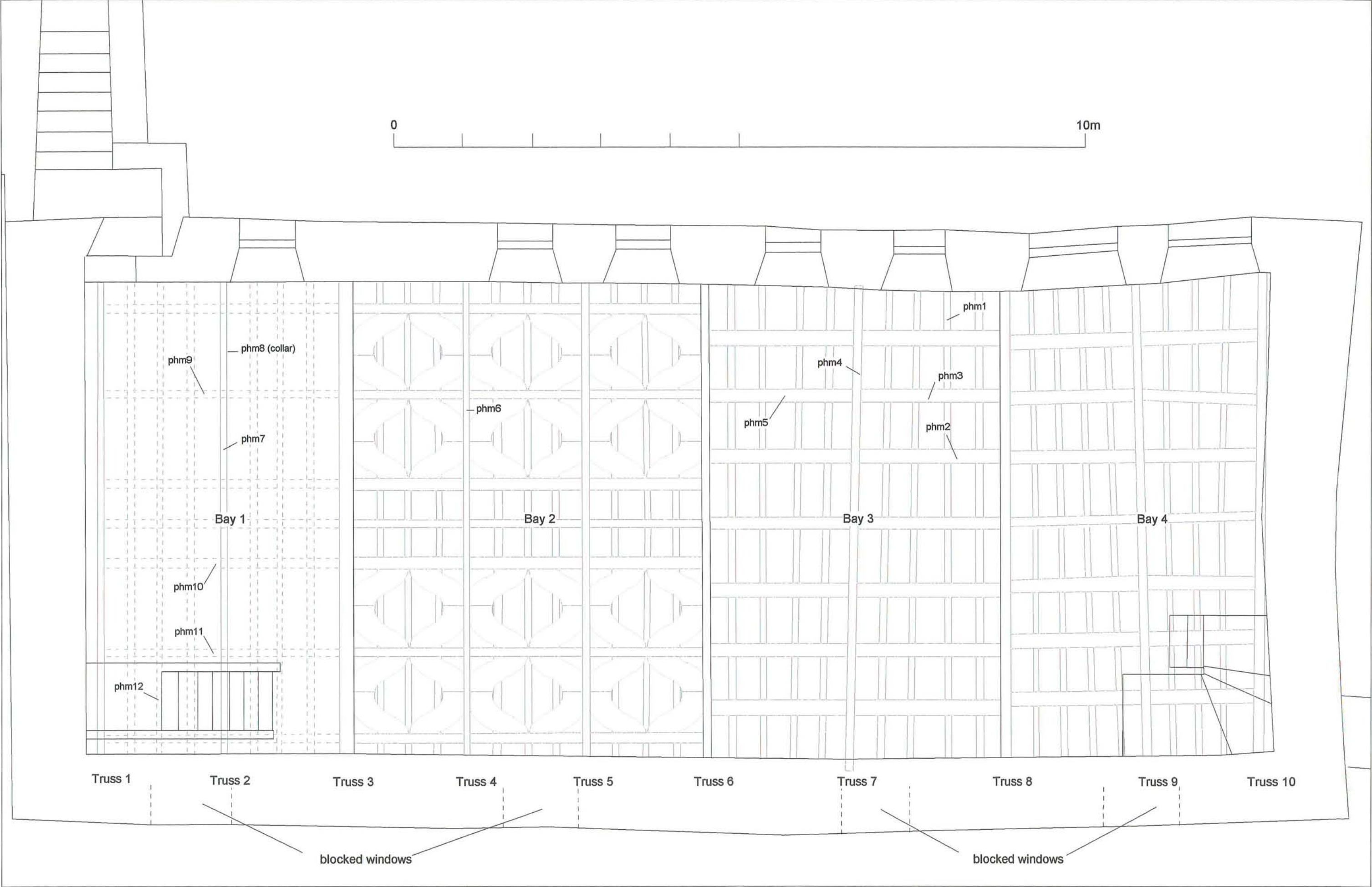


Fig. 11 First Floor plan showing roof timbers and location of dendrochronology samples, scale 1:50

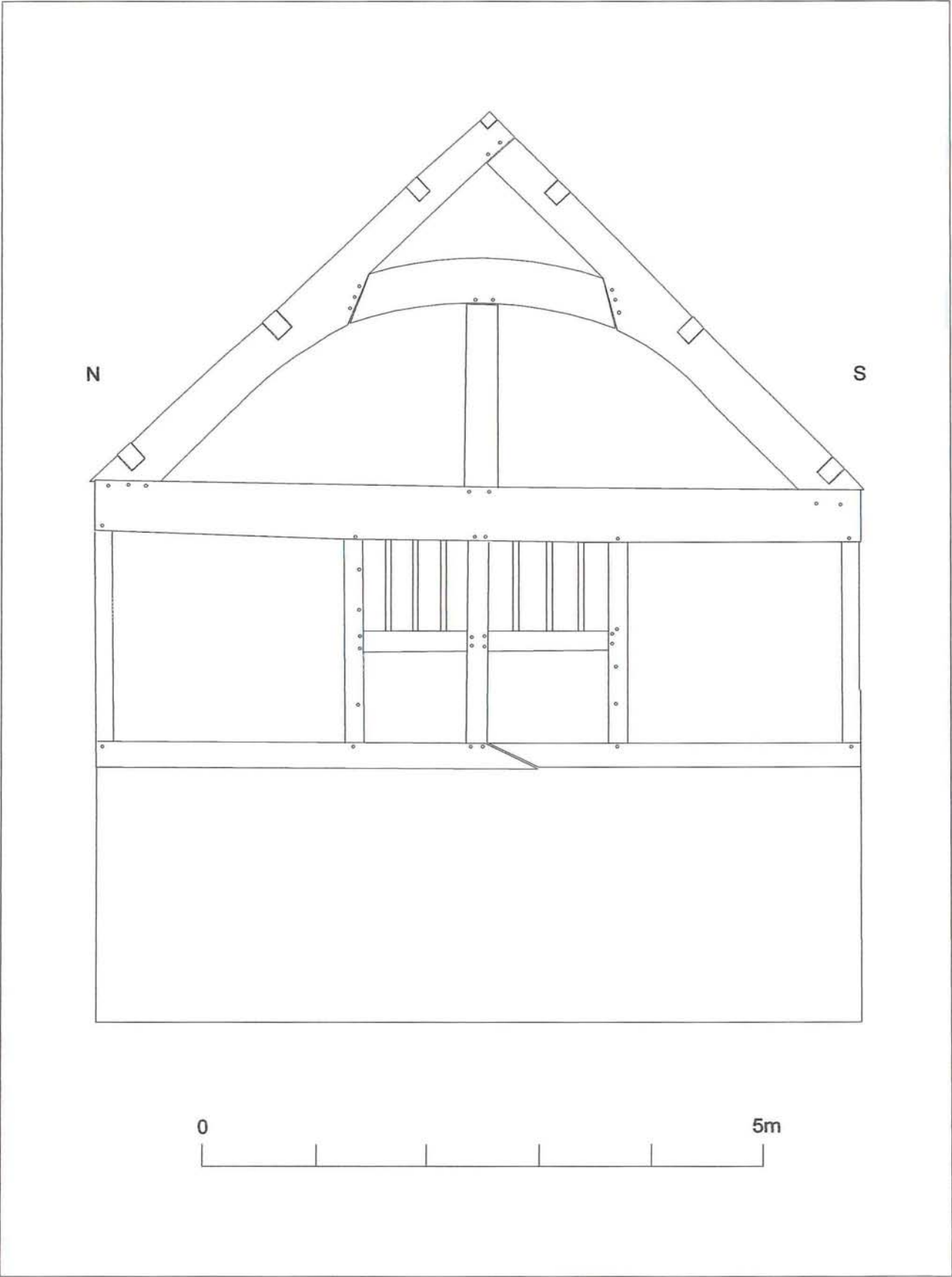


Fig. 12 Truss 3, scale 1:50



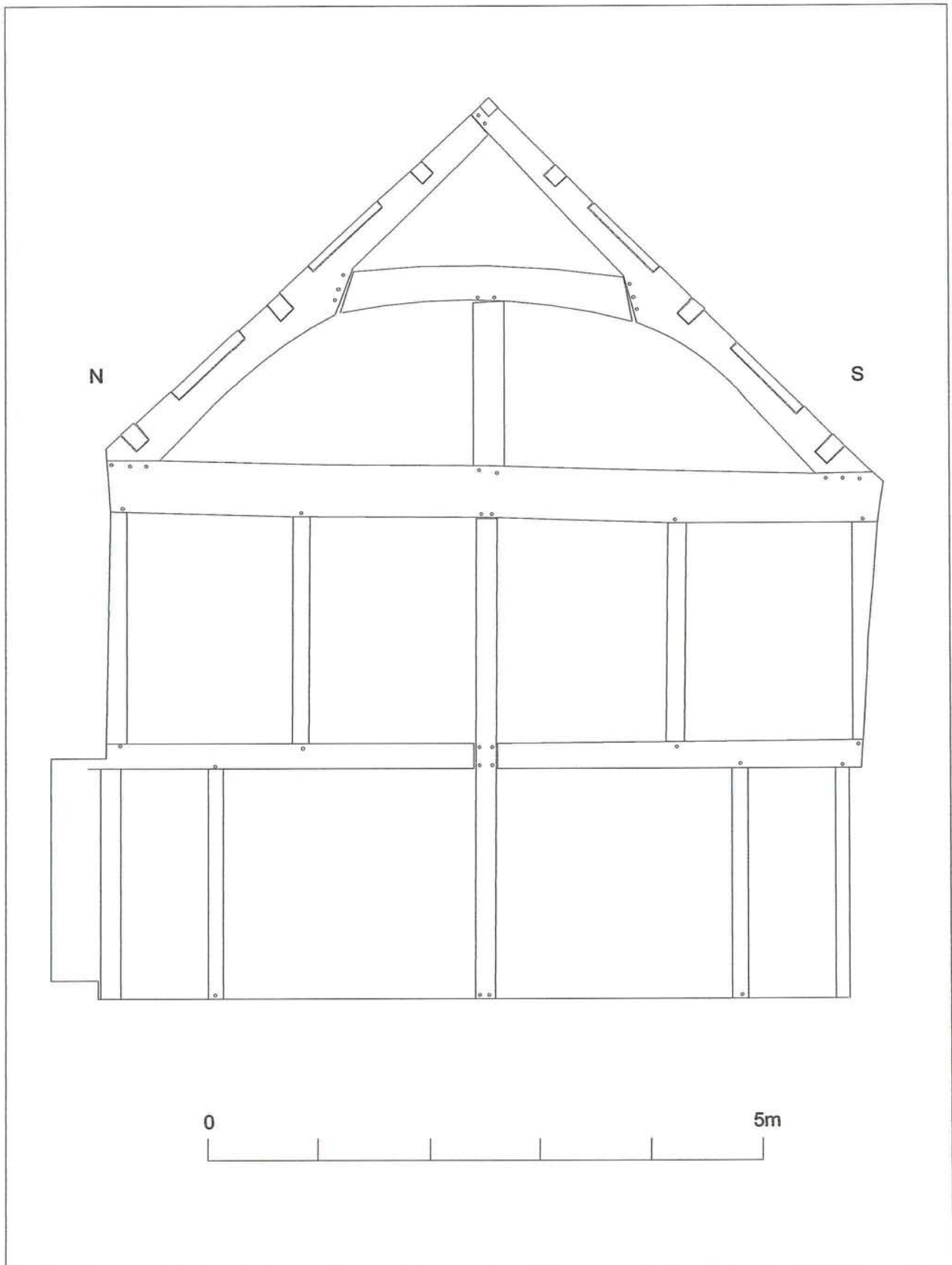


Fig. 13 Truss 6, scale 1:50

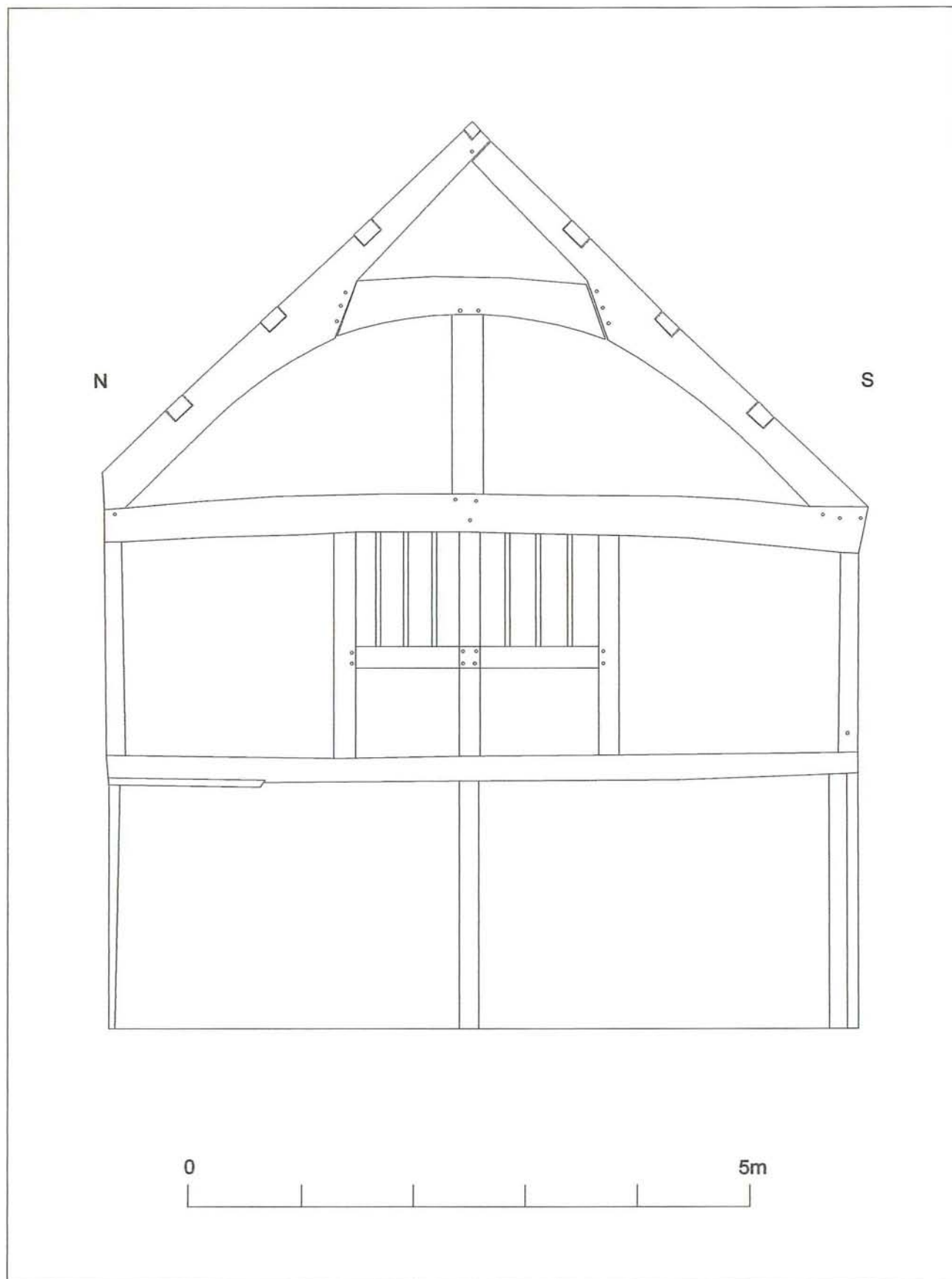


Fig. 14 Truss 8, scale 1:50



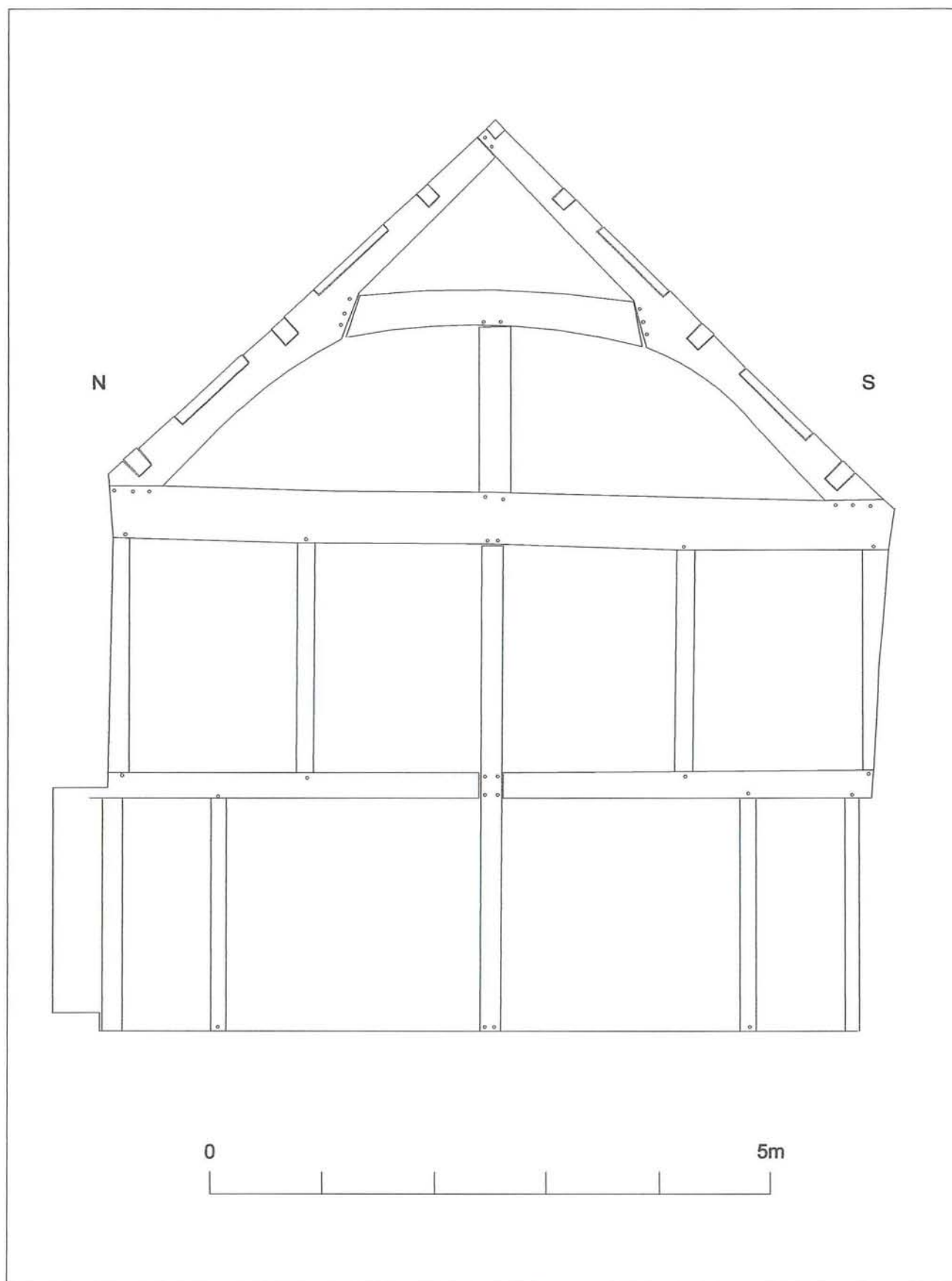


Fig. 15 Truss 10, scale 1:50

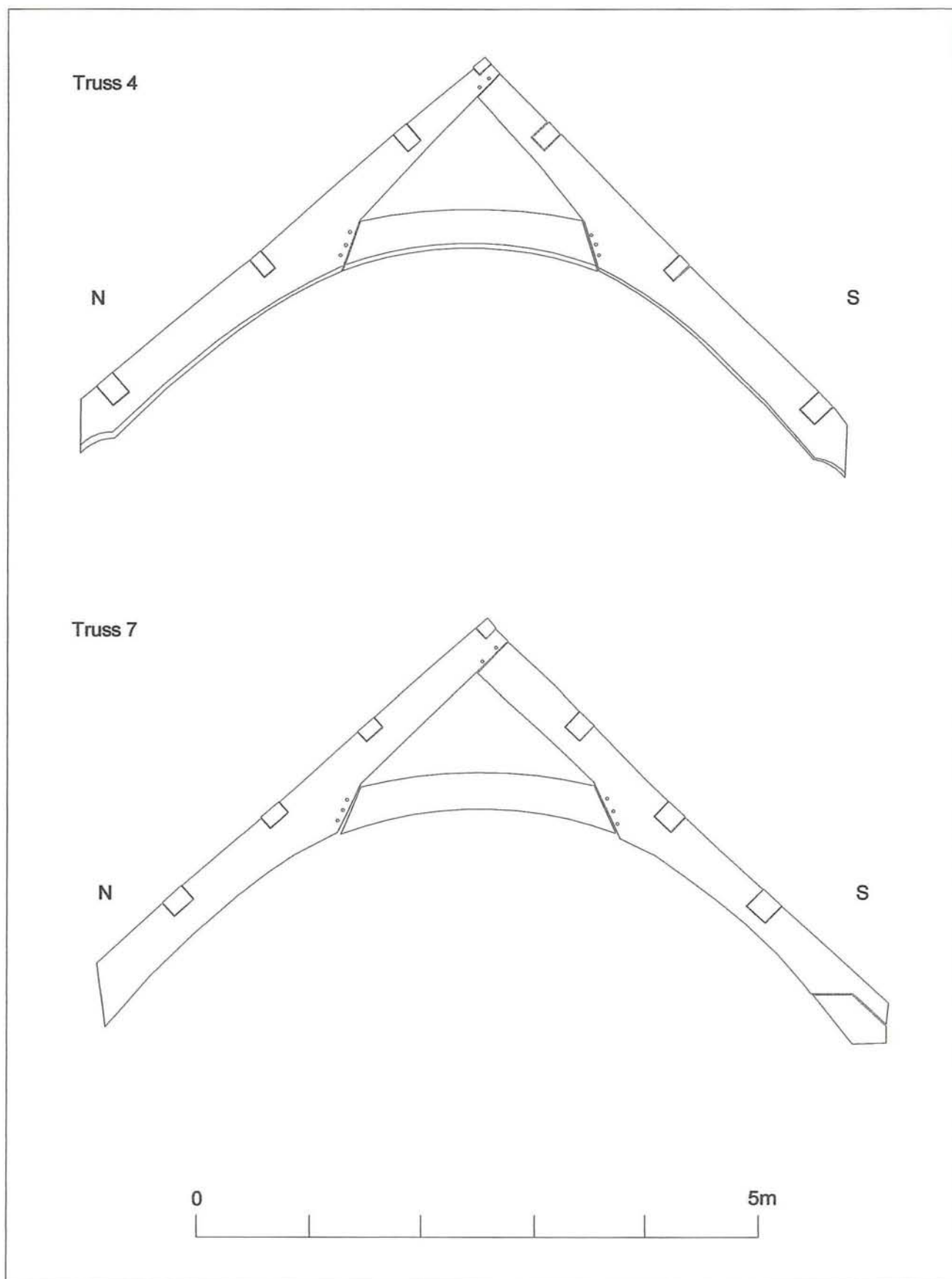


Fig. 16 Trusses 4 and 7, scale 1:50



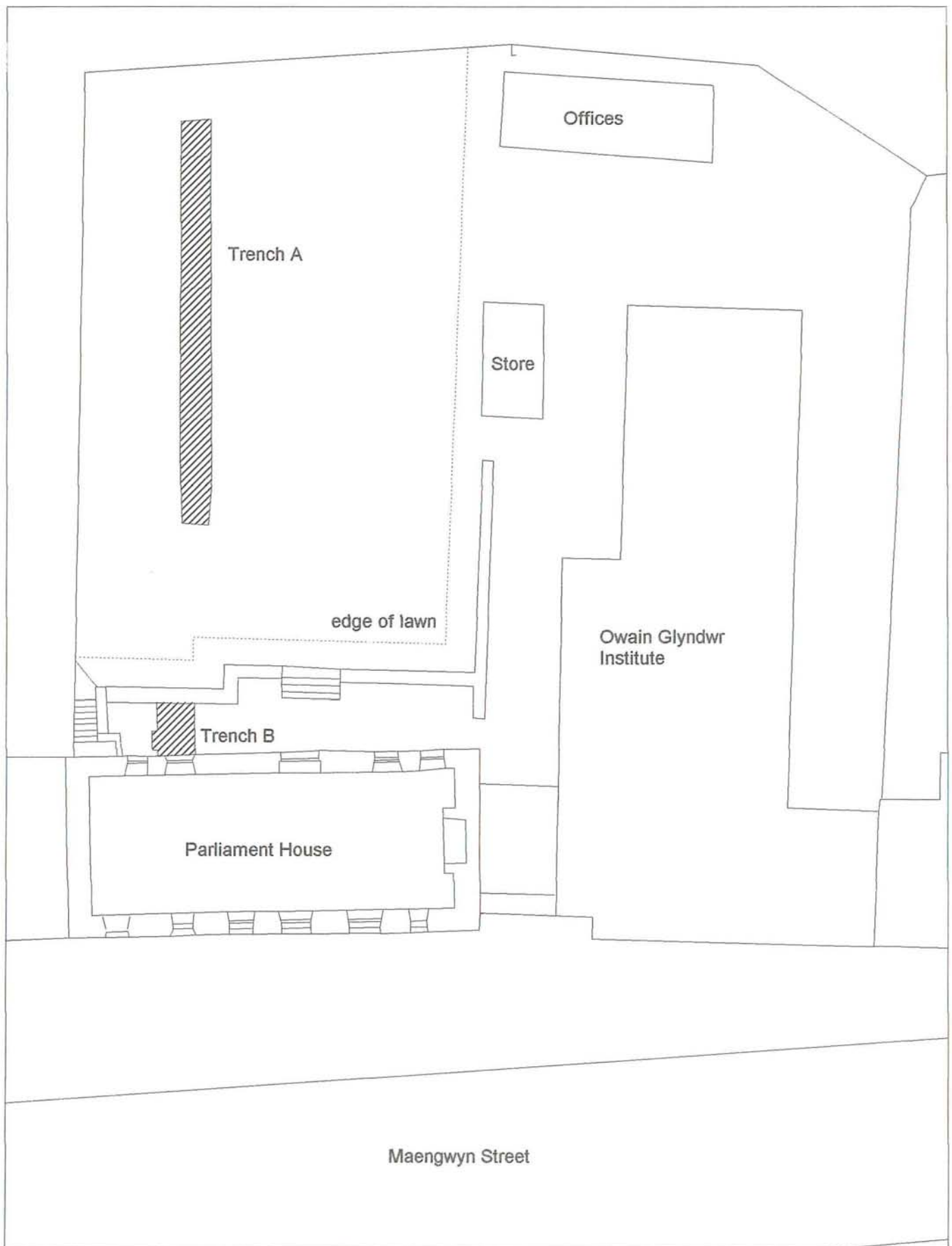


Fig. 17 Location of excavation trenches, scale 1:250

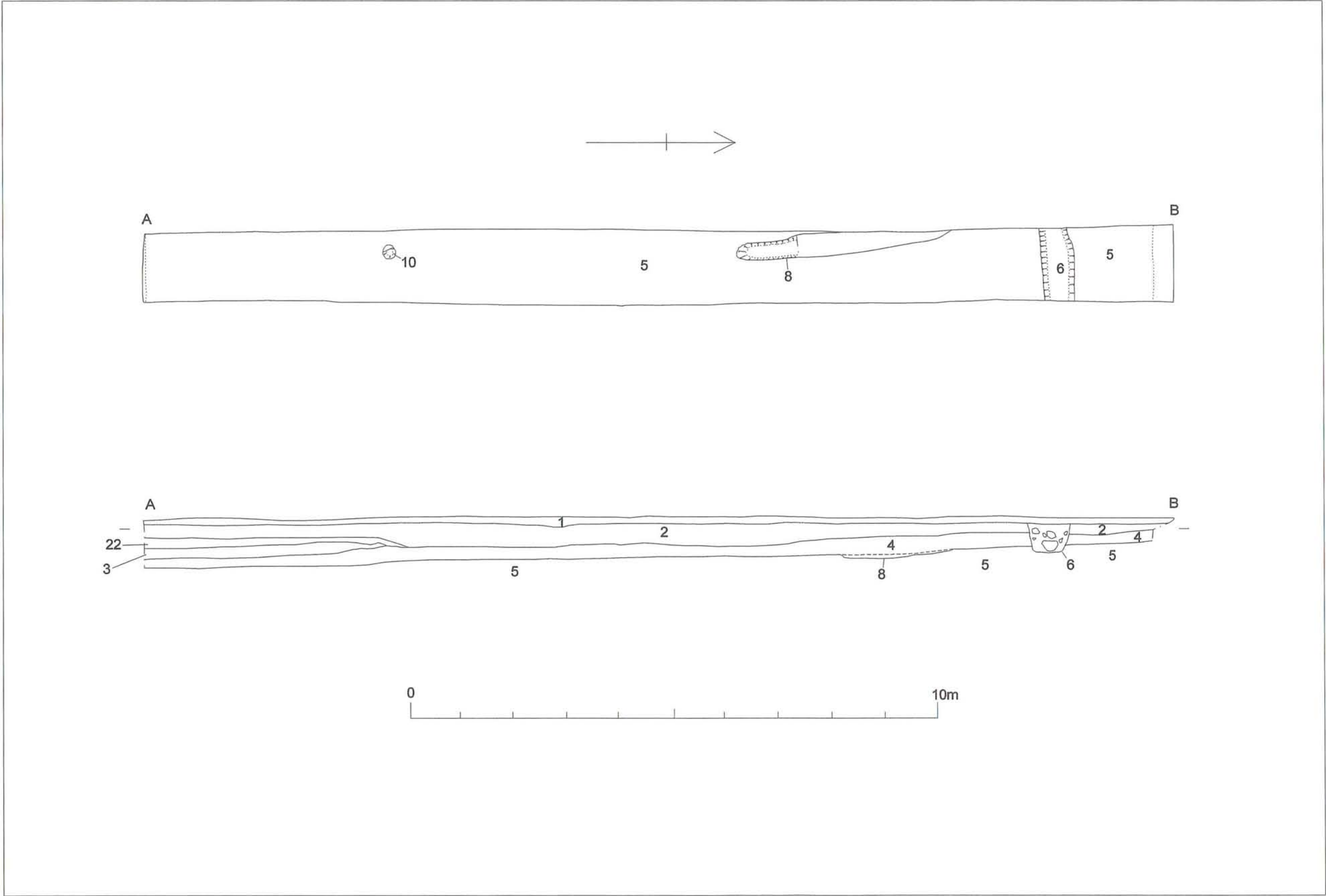


Fig. 18 Trench A plan and section. Scale 1:7,500



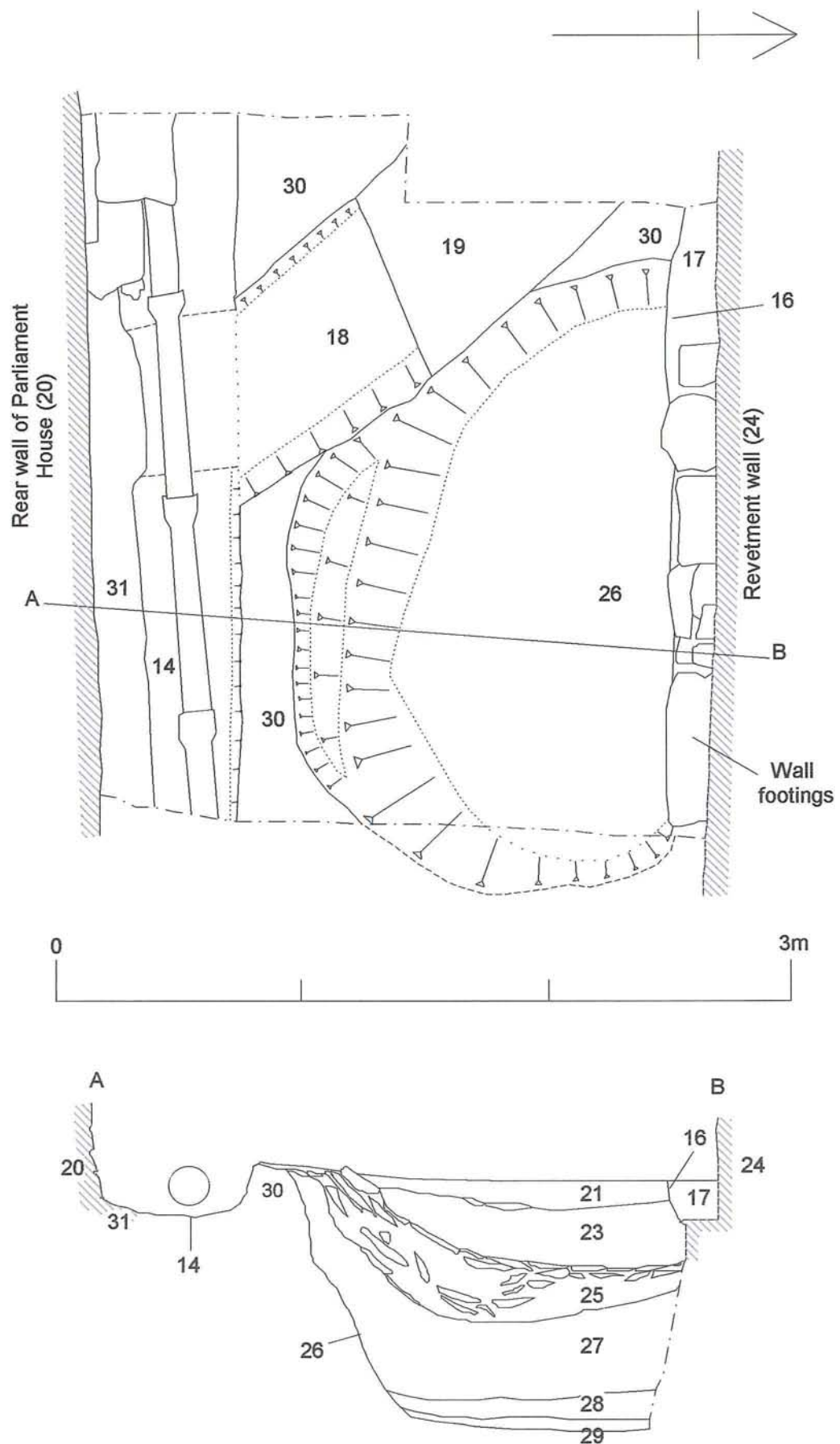


Fig. 19 Trench B plan and section Scale 1:25

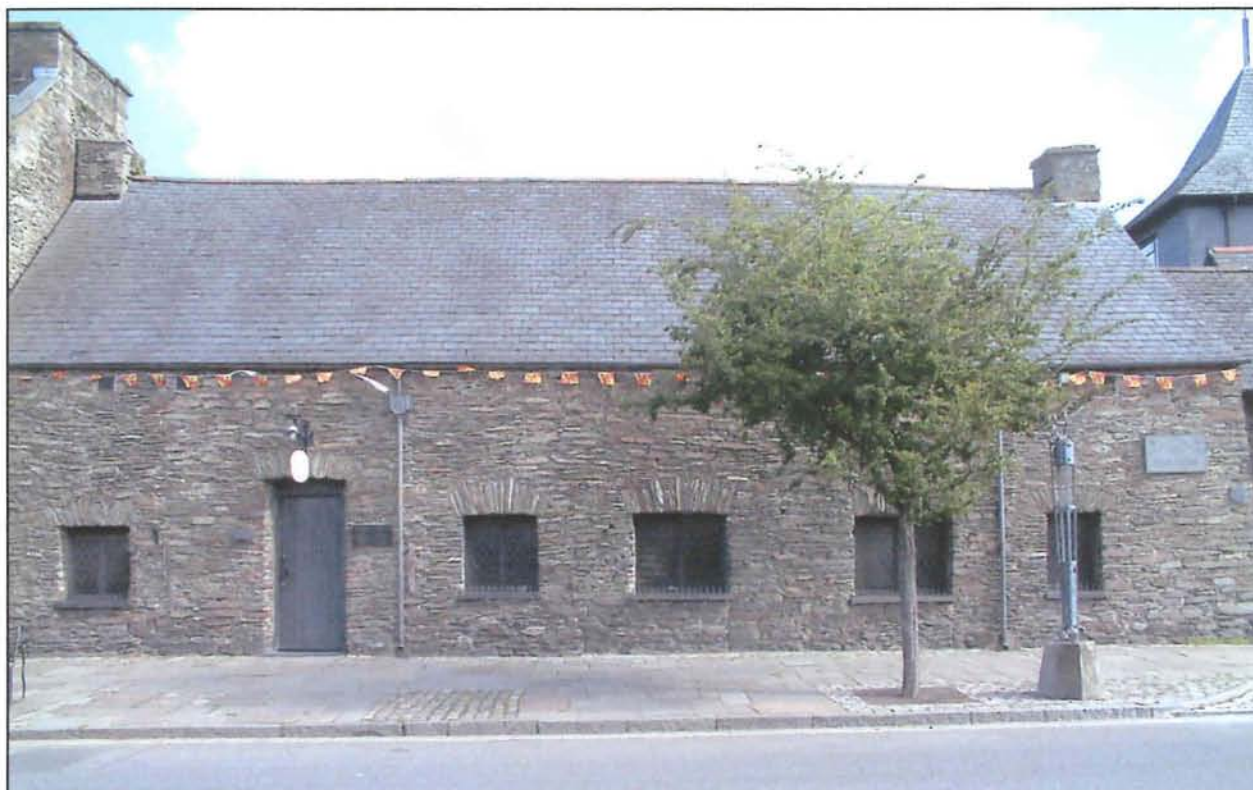


Plate 1 South elevation (Photo CPAT 1694.01)



Plate 2 North elevation (Photo CPAT 1694. 31)



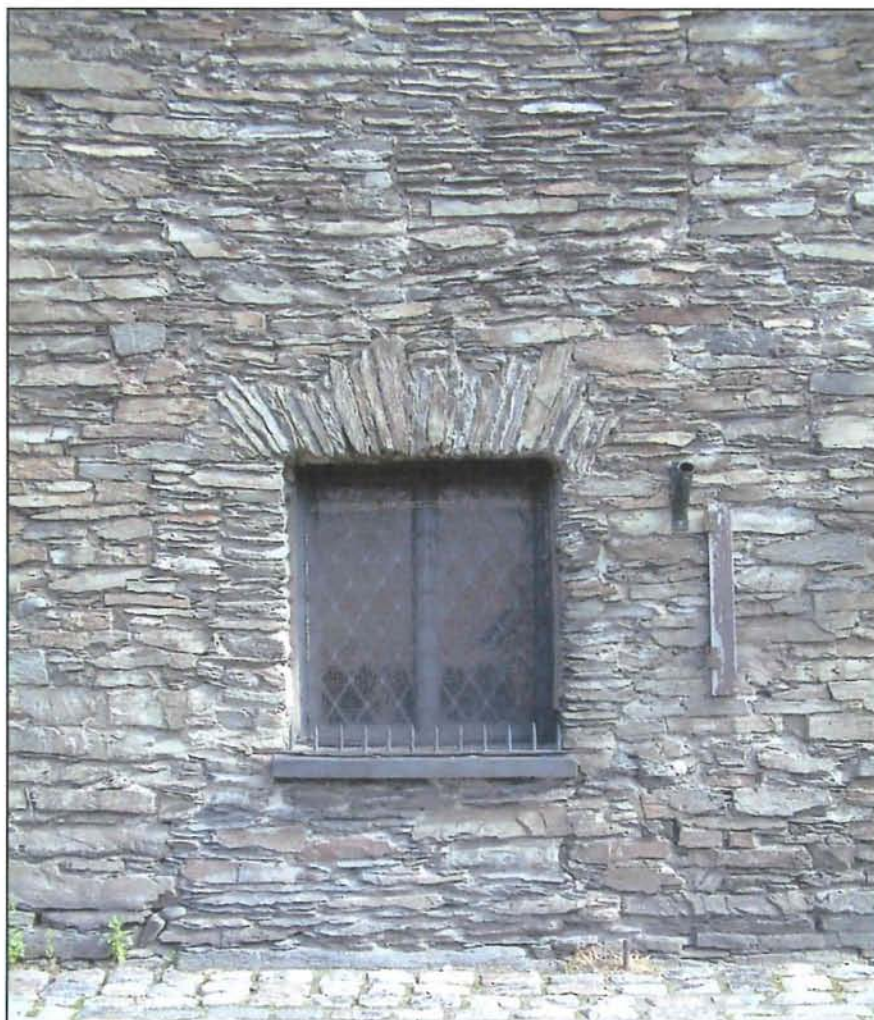


Plate 3 Window at east end of south elevation with blocked door and window openings (Photo CPAT 1694.08)



Plate 4 Blocked door in north elevation. Drain pipe marks location of rear wing (Photo CPAT 1694. 43)