

**THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

# **Tan House, Pool Quay, Powys**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING**



**CPAT Report No 810**

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING**

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July 2006

Report for Gwynfor Humphreys on behalf of Higgins and Pugh Property Developers

**The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust**

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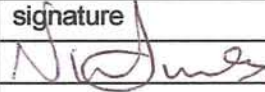

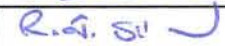
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## CPAT Report Record

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was invited by Gwynfor Humphreys, on behalf of Higgins and Pugh Property Developers, to prepare a specification of works for undertaking a programme of archaeological recording in connection with proposals to renovate the Tan House, near Pool Quay, in Powys. The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, acting as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, determined that a programme of archaeological recording should be undertaken and produced a brief detailing the works required (BUI 615).
- 1.2 The original brief required a detailed Level 4 Building Survey, together with internal trial trenching. However, owing to the unstable condition of the building, the brief was later modified to a Level 2 Building Survey with no requirement for internal trial trenching.

## 2 LOCATION

- 2.1 The Tan House is situated 1.8km north of Pool Quay (SJ 2537713070), with access now provided via a new track leading from Coppice Lane (Fig. 1). The building is sited on the edge of a river terrace, above the flood plain of the River Severn and about 170m west of the Montgomeryshire Canal.

## 3 DESK-BASED STUDY

- 3.1 The desk-based study involved the examination of all the readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial, and photographic sources for the immediate area. Repositories consulted included the following: the regional Historic Environment Record (HER), held by CPAT at Welshpool; the National Monuments Record, maintained by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) in Aberystwyth; and the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.
- 3.2 The building is recorded in the HER (as PRN 8,424), although there are no details of its history or character. The earliest available evidence for a building on this site is a plan dated 1618 in the Powis Castle manuscripts at the National Library of Wales (Powis Castle M141). Unfortunately, it was not possible to reproduce the plan which shows two buildings, one of which is presumably the house and the other which may have been a barn.
- 3.3 The tithe survey for Guilsfield, Tirymynech Township, dated 1845 (Fig. 2), shows the plan of the building very much as that of the present day, with a small outbuilding near the north-east corner and a single, long barn alongside the access track. The Apportionment records the owner as the Earl of Powis and the tenant as William Higgins, listing the following details of the house and surrounding fields:

1	Tanhouse meadow	pasture
10	Part of the Werns	mown
10a	Part of the Werns	mown
261	Little Pwllymarl	
376	Bakehouse patch calves croft	arable
377	Big field before the Door	arable
378	Cae Seat	arable
379	Little field before the Door	arable
380	Fowl piece	arable

381	Middle meadow	pasture
383	Alder patch	pasture

- 3.4 The Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1:2,500 map of 1886 (Fig. 3) again shows a similar ground plan, although by this date the barn has been enlarged to form an L-shaped structure with the principal axis aligned east to west.

#### 4 BUILDING SURVEY

- 4.1 The rapid building survey was conducted on 6-7 June 2006 and comprised an external photographic survey, together with basic measurements and a written description. Owing to health and safety considerations recording was generally limited to the exterior, with internal detail gleaned from existing plans produced by Powys County Council and made available by the client.
- 4.2 The surviving elements of the Tan House consist of the main house, comprising three main phases of construction, together with a two-phase timber-framed barn to the east, much of which had already been lost some years previously (Fig. 4). A well to the north of the building had recently been infilled and was no longer readily identifiable.
- 4.3 The original building appears to have been of timber, box-frame construction, rising to three storeys including the attic, with only the northern part of the building now surviving. This comprised two bays which were built on top of a substantial random stone plinth extending over the edge of the river terrace, such that the ground level to the rear (north) of the building afforded direct access to a cellar. At ground-floor level the bays are each divided into two rooms with stairs to the cellar descending from the north-western room with access to the first floor via a matching staircase rising from the south-eastern room (Fig. 5).
- 4.4 At the time of the first site visit on 28 April 2006 the two bays were unstable but substantially intact, although the southern gable had already partly dropped following the failure of one of the supporting posts. By the time the building survey was undertaken five weeks later this gable had fallen further, along with part of the northern gable, and the day following the survey the building all but collapsed.
- 4.5 It was not possible to make a full record of the timber framing as none of the elevations was complete and accessible. The southern elevation (Fig. 6; Plate 1) revealed that the trusses were formed by jowled posts with a substantial tie beam and principal rafters above, each with a pair of purlins. The purlins each had joints indicating the former existence of matching purlins for at least one further bay to the south, for which no visible trace survived. In addition, the framing above the tie beam clearly formed a door at attic level, rather than a window.
- 4.6 On the east elevation (Fig. 8) the lower part of the timber frame, and the northern end of the first floor, had been replaced in brick, probably during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The surviving timbers showed simple box framing with four posts and a single rail between each. The frame was infilled with wattle and daub panels, most of which still survived.
- 4.7 The northern elevation (Fig. 7; Plate 2) had also been partly replaced in brick although the surviving timbers provided a reasonable indication of the original construction. The box frame for the first floor included an original window opening, now partly blocked, which had a substantial moulded sill. The roof truss was similar to the southern elevation, although with a single window in the upper section of framing. An external door into the cellar had been inserted through the plinth, above which were two windows set within the later brickwork. The western side of the original building could not be accessed owing to health and safety considerations.



- 4.8 The building was extended, probably around 1800, by the addition of a timber-frame wing on the western side of the northern two bays (Plate 1). This implies that by this time the southern part of the original building had already been lost. The two-storey extension had a single room on each floor and was constructed in a noticeably less substantial box frame than the original, with brick infilling rather than wattle and daub. The extension measured 4.4 x 4.3m and was founded on a sill beam resting on a low stone plinth. At ground-floor level three of the elevations had slanting struts in each corner, while the eastern side, against the original building, had a brick chimney stack with a fireplace on each floor. Access was directly from the original building with a door on the ground floor to the south of the chimney and on the first floor via three steps rising from the landing. The surviving first-floor window in the south elevation had the original cast-iron casement. The roof trusses were formed by a tie beam and principal rafters with single purlins supporting a slate roof with ceramic ridge tiles. A brick-built privy was later added against the west elevation, possibly during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.9 During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the building was extended again with the addition of a lean-to kitchen range on the north-west corner, measuring 5.8 x 3.7m. This was of random stone construction with a slate roof, and included an oven which projected slightly from the western wall, with a boiler alongside (Plates 4 and 5). The extension had windows in the west and north walls with a door on the east side at the top of a flight of three stone steps. A doorway in the north-west corner of the original building provided the internal access.
- 4.10 The surviving elements of the barns comprised part of the west end of the main barn, with a later northern extension surviving more or less intact (Fig. 10). The original barn was of timber frame construction standing, at least in part, on a low stone plinth. Very little survived to indicate its dimensions or internal layout, although the west end appeared to have been divided into stalls with a feeding passage along the northern side. Further to the east an area of cobbling was visible which probably formed the floor in a section of the barn with no upstanding remains.
- 4.11 The later extension was also of timber-frame construction and stood on a platform revetted by dressed-stone walling which extended upwards to form a low plinth (Plate 6). The timber framing had a sill beam on top of the plinth with posts rising to support the first floor and wall plate and external vertical weatherboarding. The hipped slate roof was supported on two simple king-post trusses with a tie beam resting on the wall plate, principal rafters and central post with no struts (Plate 7). At ground-floor level the barn was entered via a door in the south-west corner, the interior being divided into two with a feeding trough running the length of the east wall (Plate 8). On the first floor the barn was open-plan with a loading door in the west elevation and a connecting door on the south side leading to the earlier barn.

## 5 TRIAL EXCAVATION (Fig. 11)

- 5.1 The trial excavation was undertaken on 29-30 June 2006 at the request of the curator to investigate the potential for buried archaeological remains relating to the lost southern part of the original building. An area measuring c. 4.6 x 4.3m was mechanically stripped of overburden under close archaeological supervision. Thereafter, all excavation was undertaken by hand. A full drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout and details of the Site Archive are provided in Appendix 1. Numbers in brackets in the following text refer to individual contexts recorded in the Site Archive.
- 5.2 In the northern part of the excavation, closest to the standing building, a well-made cobbled surface (02) was revealed immediately below the topsoil and rubble (01). This was composed of random edge-set cobbles with deliberate edging along the south and east sides formed by small



edge-set slabs. Artefacts recovered from amongst the cobbles included several sherds of 19<sup>th</sup>-century pottery which were not retained.

- 5.3 A small extension was excavated by hand at the north-east corner of the excavation to investigate a line of three slabs (10) which continued the line of the plinth supporting the standing building. There was no evidence for any foundation trench and it appeared that the stones had been laid directly on the ground surface, probably to provide support for a sill beam. There was also no suggestion of a continuation of the stones further to the south or a return to the west. It may be significant, however, that the southern end of the stones coincided with the northern edge of the cobbles which lacked any formed edging. This may suggest that the cobbles had been laid against an existing structure on the northern side. A layer of gritty clay (11) to the north of the cobbles and west of the stones could be associated with flooring inside the building, but it is perhaps more likely to be an earlier ground surface.
- 5.4 To the south of the cobbles there was a remnant of a rough stone surface (08) and a small patch of flat slabs (04), both of which also contained 19<sup>th</sup>-century artefacts. A spread of large slabs (05) had the appearance of a path, along the western side of which were the remains of a roughly-built lime-mortared stone wall (06).

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The programme of recording and investigation has revealed significant new details regarding the history and development of the Tan House. It appears that the building originally consisted of a single range aligned north to south, of solid timber-frame construction the style of which suggests a late 16<sup>th</sup>-century date for construction. This is supported by a map of 1618 which depicts a house at this location.
- 6.2 The original building comprised at least three bays, the northern two being built on a substantial stone plinth. The building had three storeys including the attic and was built with heavy timber framing. Evidence from the excavations suggests that the southern section of the building may have been founded on a sill beam which rested partly on the ground surface with some stone slabs used for levelling. It is possible that the lack of a stone sill in the southern part of the building caused the timbers to decay and ultimately led to its loss. The southern extent of the building is not known, although the presence of a cobbled yard which respects the eastern side of the building may be significant, possibly indicating the original limits. The excavated evidence suggests that the cobbles may be a later yard, although the lack of any edging along the northern side does suggest that they were laid against an existing structure.
- 6.3 The cartographic evidence suggests that by the 1840s the southern part of the building had been removed while two extensions had been added on the western side. The first addition, dating from around 1800, consisted of a small timber-framed wing with brick panels. It had a single room on the ground and first floors and a brick chimney against the west wall of the original building. Some years later a stone lean-to kitchen range was added to the north-west corner which included an oven and boiler. A small brick-built privy was later added to the west end.
- 6.4 By the 1840s a barn had been built to the east of the house which was later enlarged by an addition on the north-west corner to form a L-shaped structure. At the time of the building survey the earliest section of the barn had almost disappeared although sufficient remained to indicate that it was of timber-frame construction with a cobbled floor. The later extension survived almost intact and consisted of a two-storey timber barn with weatherboard cladding.



## **7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 7.1 The writer would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Wendy Owen, CPAT; the staff of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; and the staff of the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

## **8 REFERENCES**

### **Cartographic sources**

Lordship of Street Marshall, 1618, Powis Castle collection M141, NLW

Tithe Survey for Guilsfield parish, Tirymynech Township, 1845

1<sup>st</sup> edition 25" Ordnance Survey map, Montgomeryshire 16.9, published 1886.

**APPENDIX 1****SITE ARCHIVE**

11 context records

1 A1 plan

82 digital images – Film 2136

Digital drawings – dwg, dxf and mapinfo formats

Barn	ground plan of barn
East	east elevation
Excplan	excavation plan
Ground	ground floor plan
North	north elevation
Plan	overall plan
South	south elevation
West	west elevation

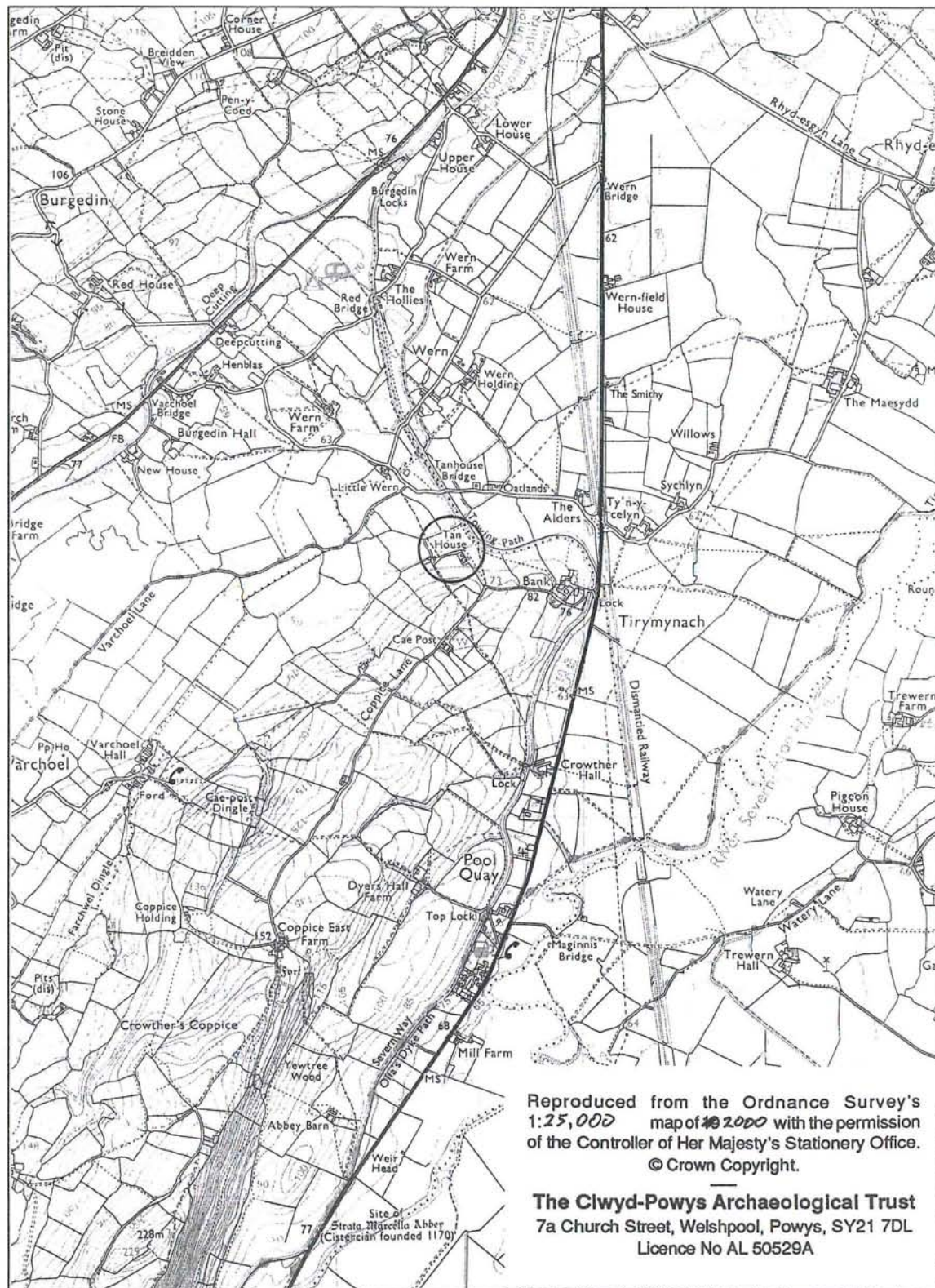


Fig. 1 Location



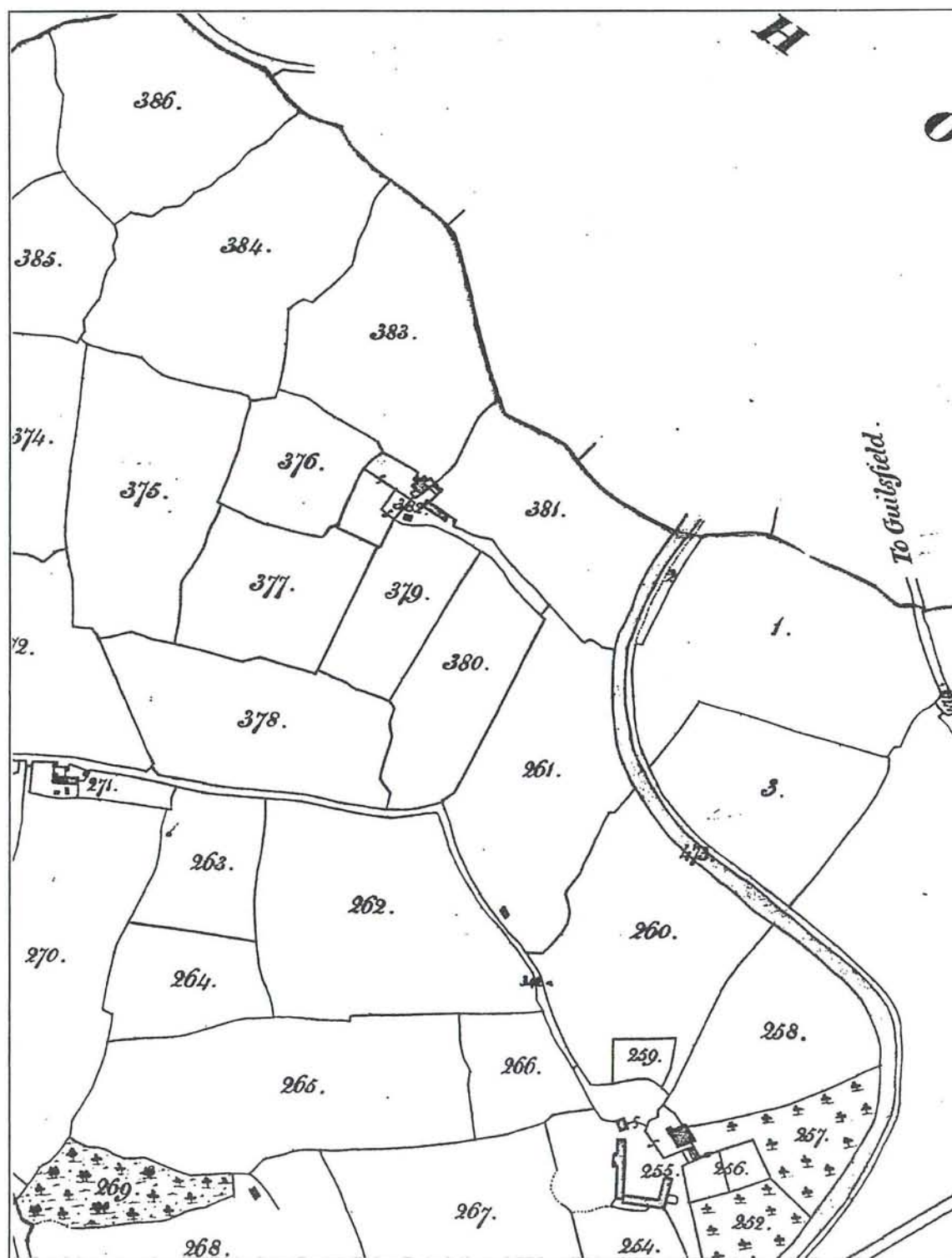


Fig. 2 Tithe Survey for Guilsfield parish, Tirmynach Township, 1845

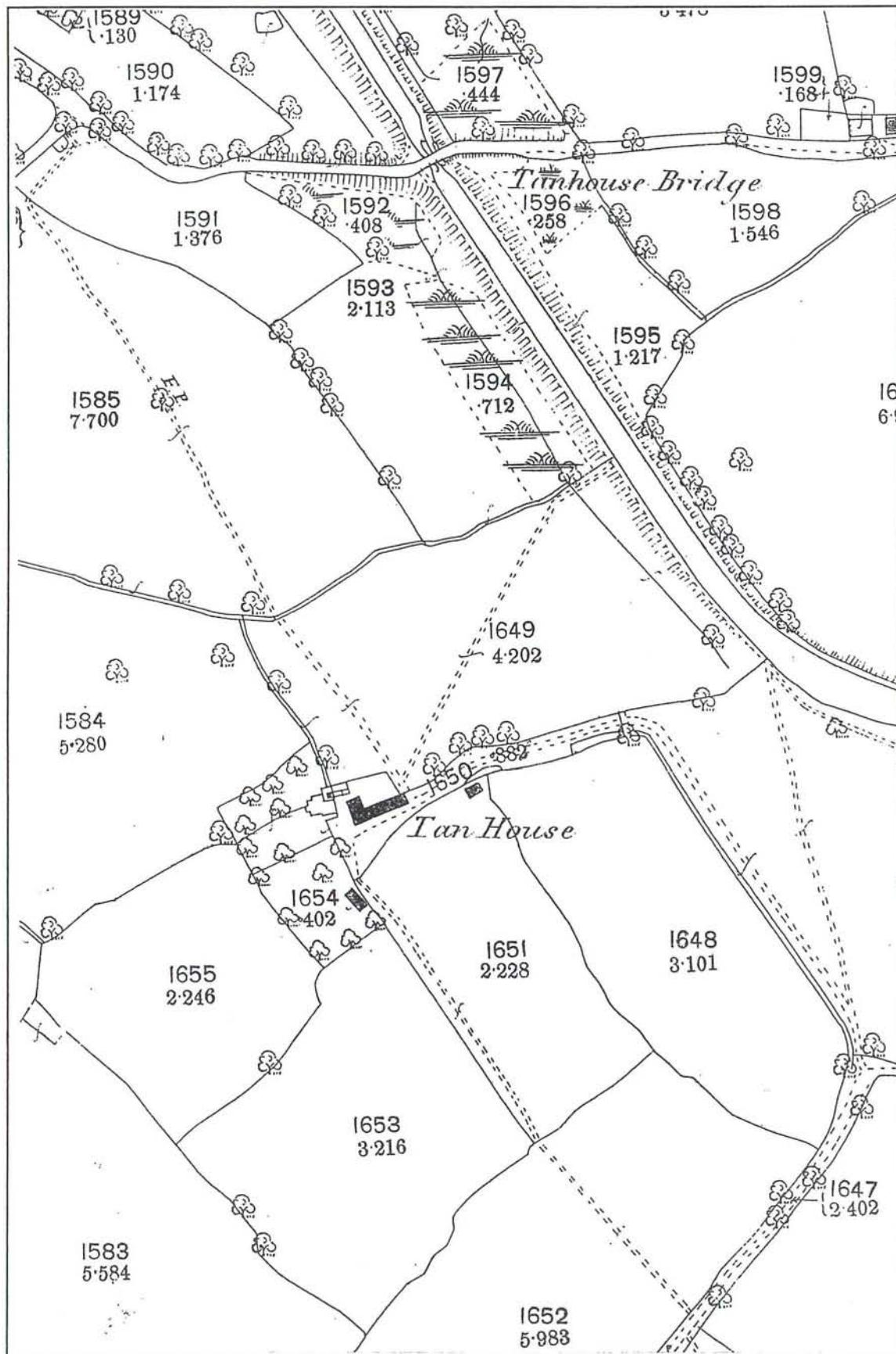


Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition 25", 1886

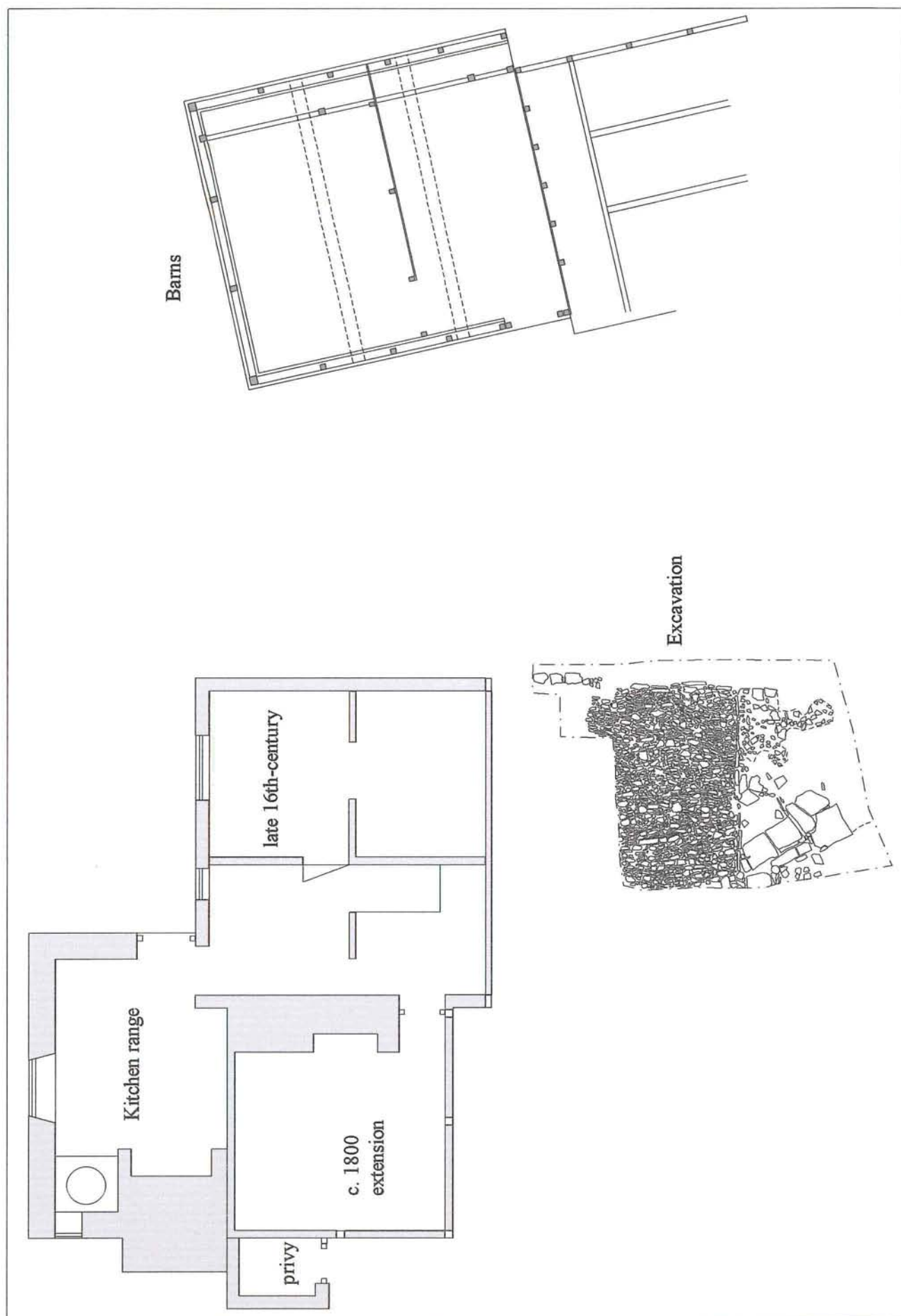


Fig. 4 Overall plan, scale 1:100



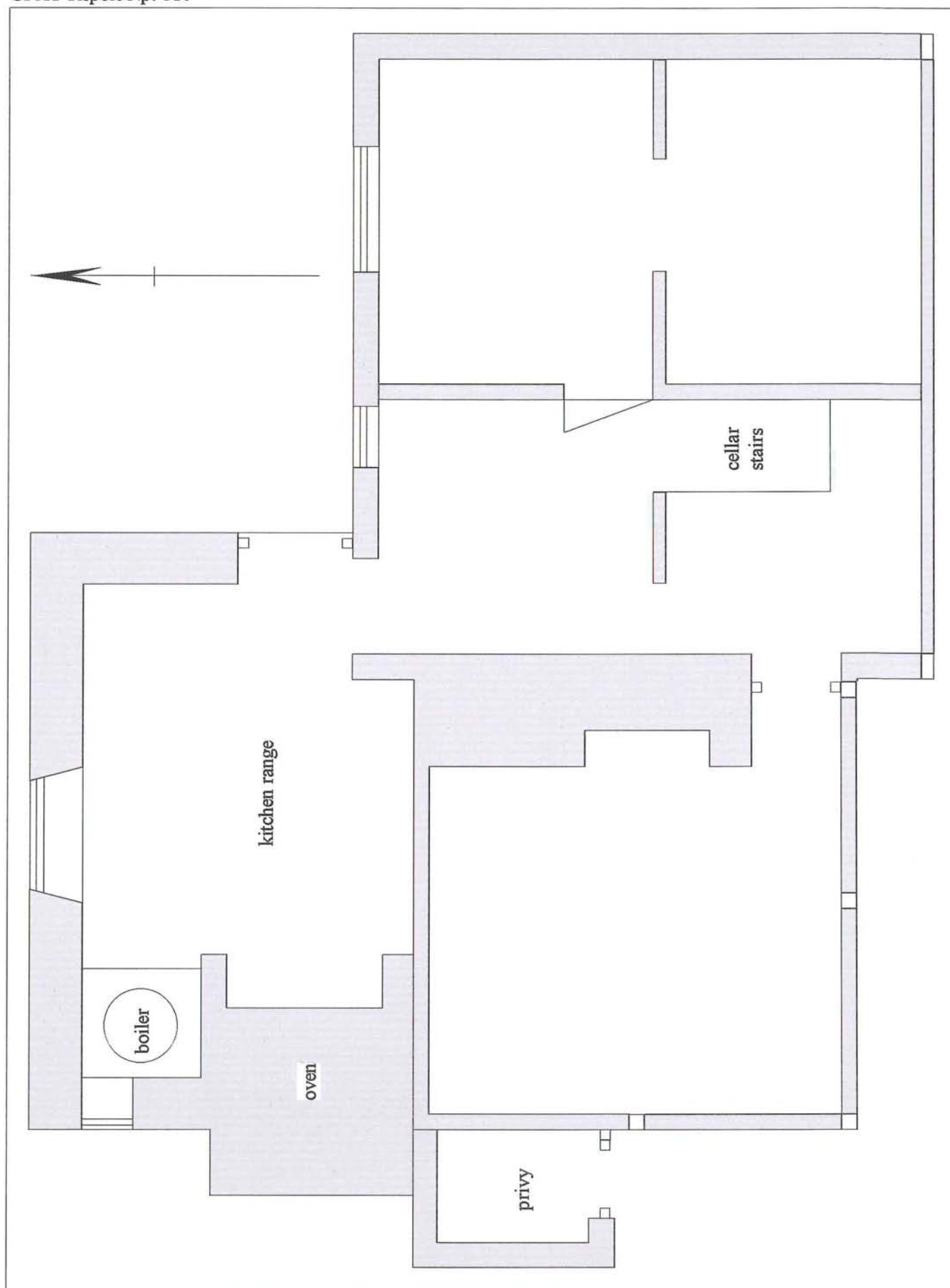


Fig. 5 Ground plan, scale 1:50

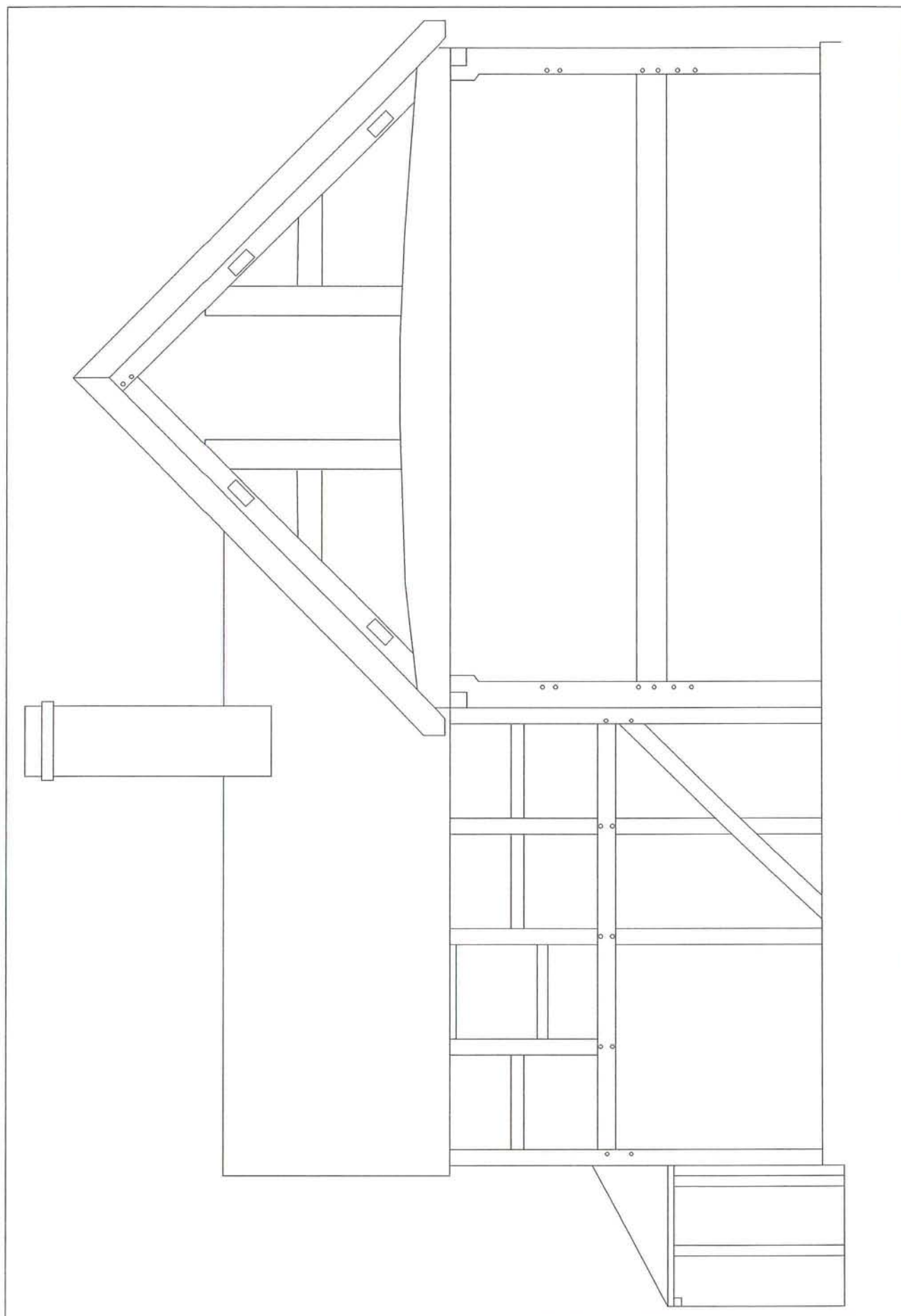


Fig. 6 South elevation, scale 1:50

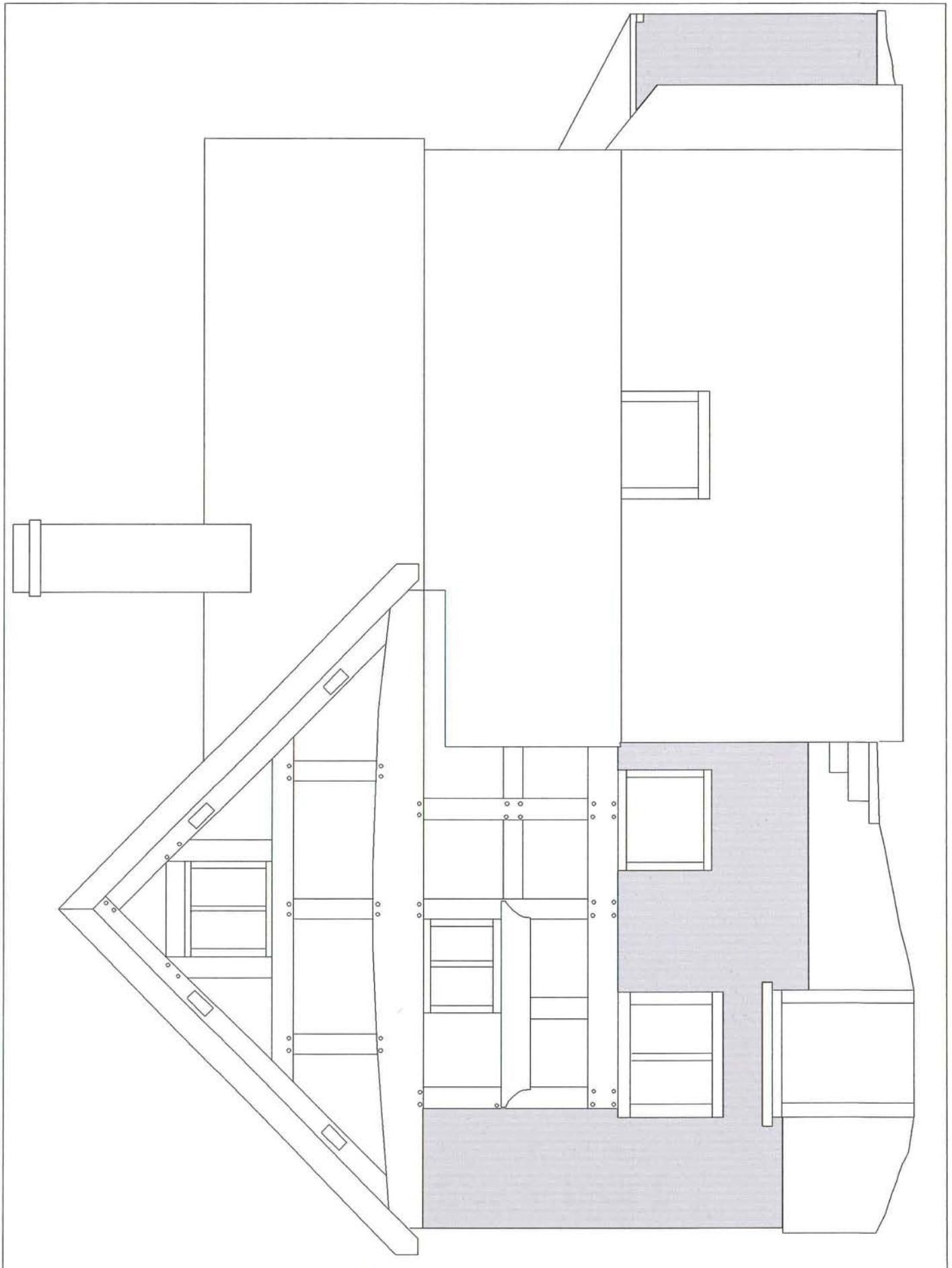


Fig. 7 North elevation, scale 1:50



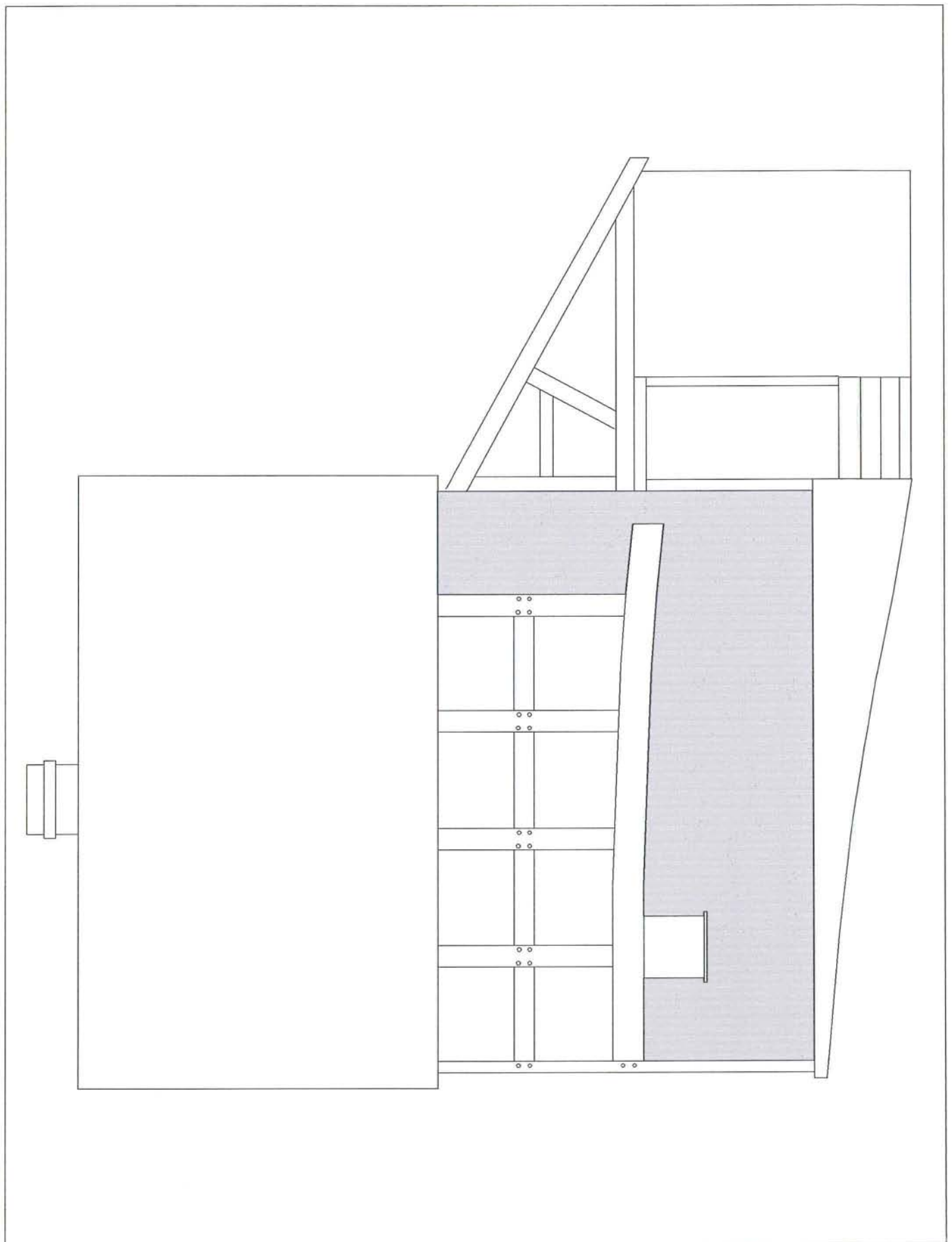


Fig. 8 East elevation, scale 1:50

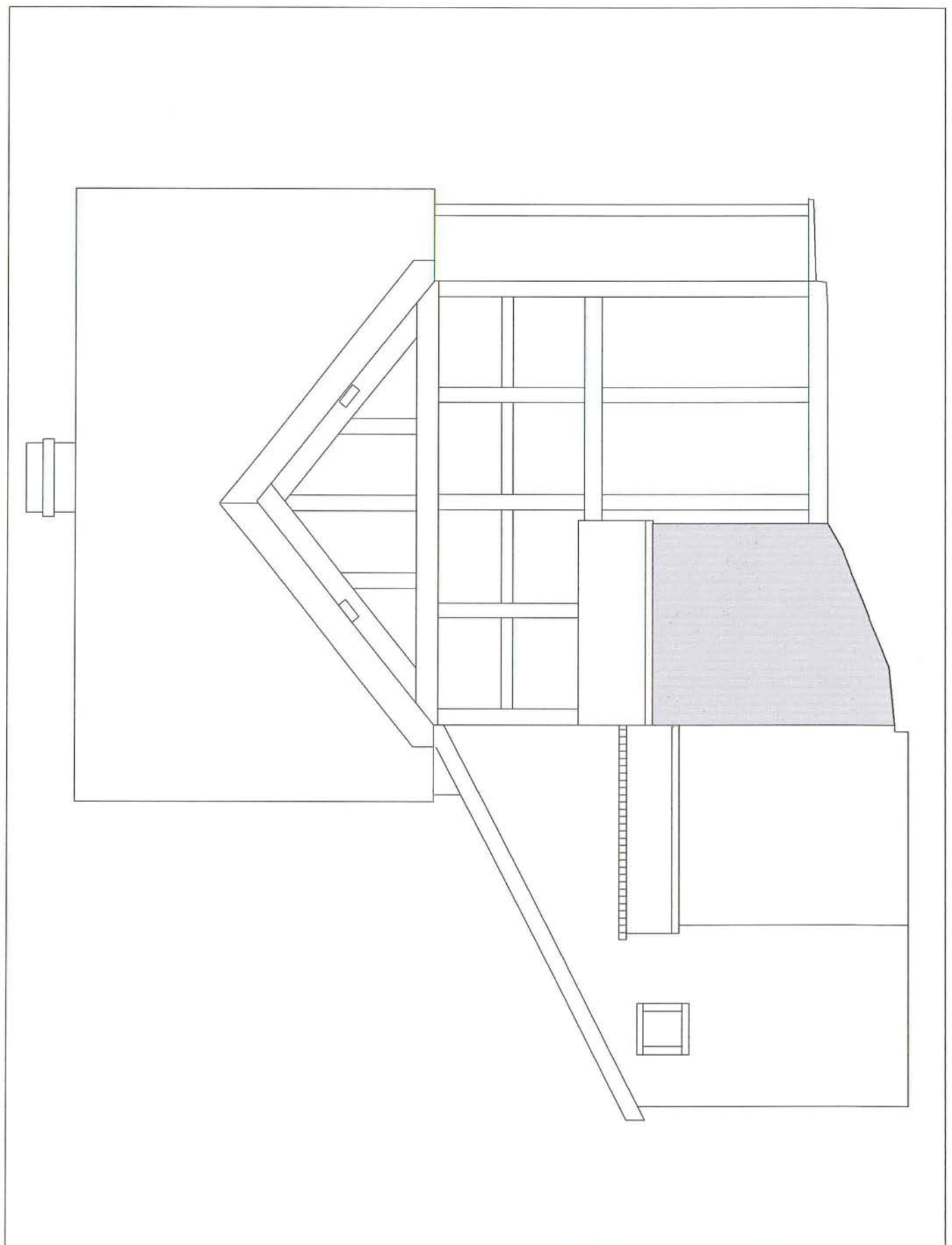


Fig. 9 West elevation, scale 1:50

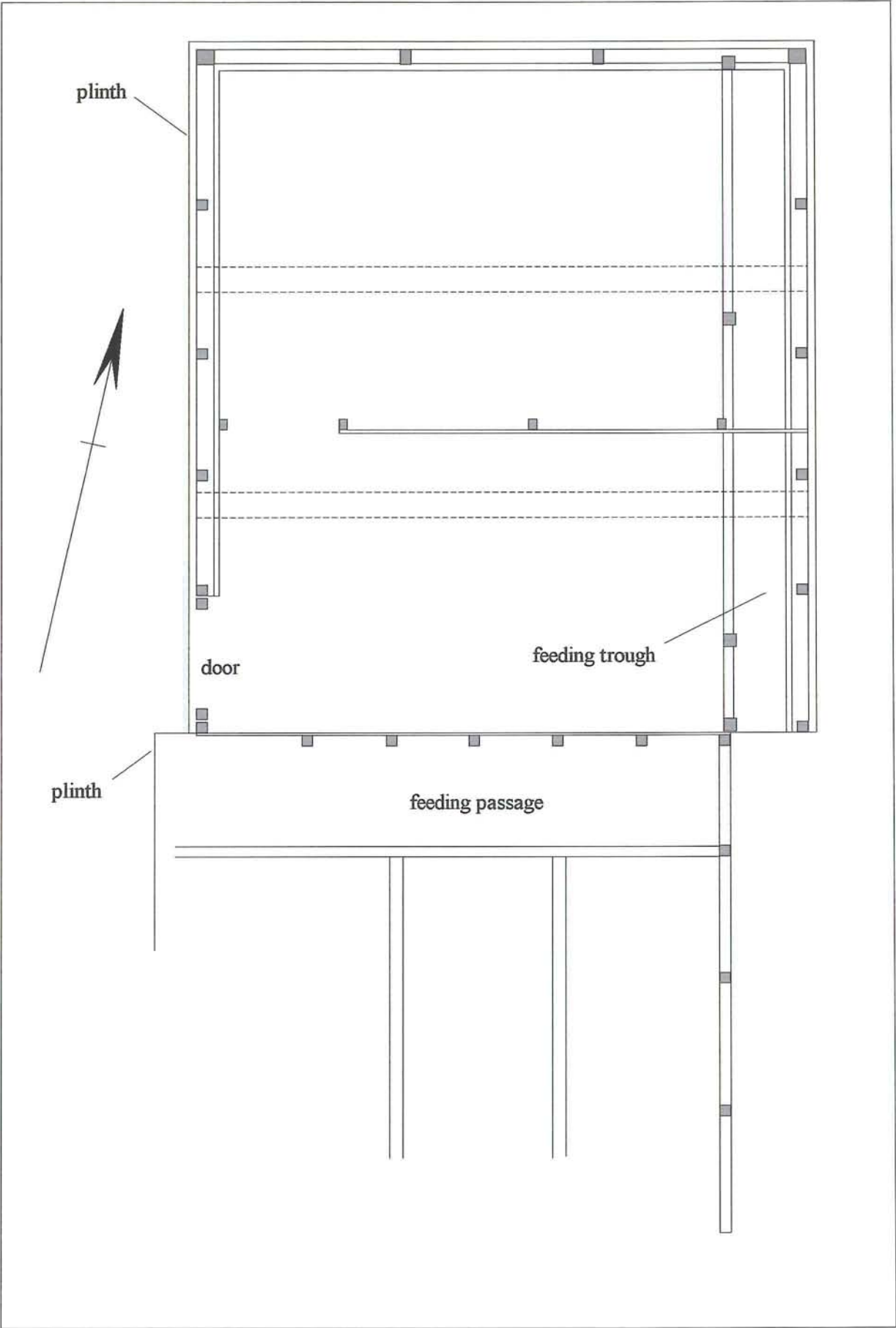


Fig. 10 Ground plan of barn, scale 1:50



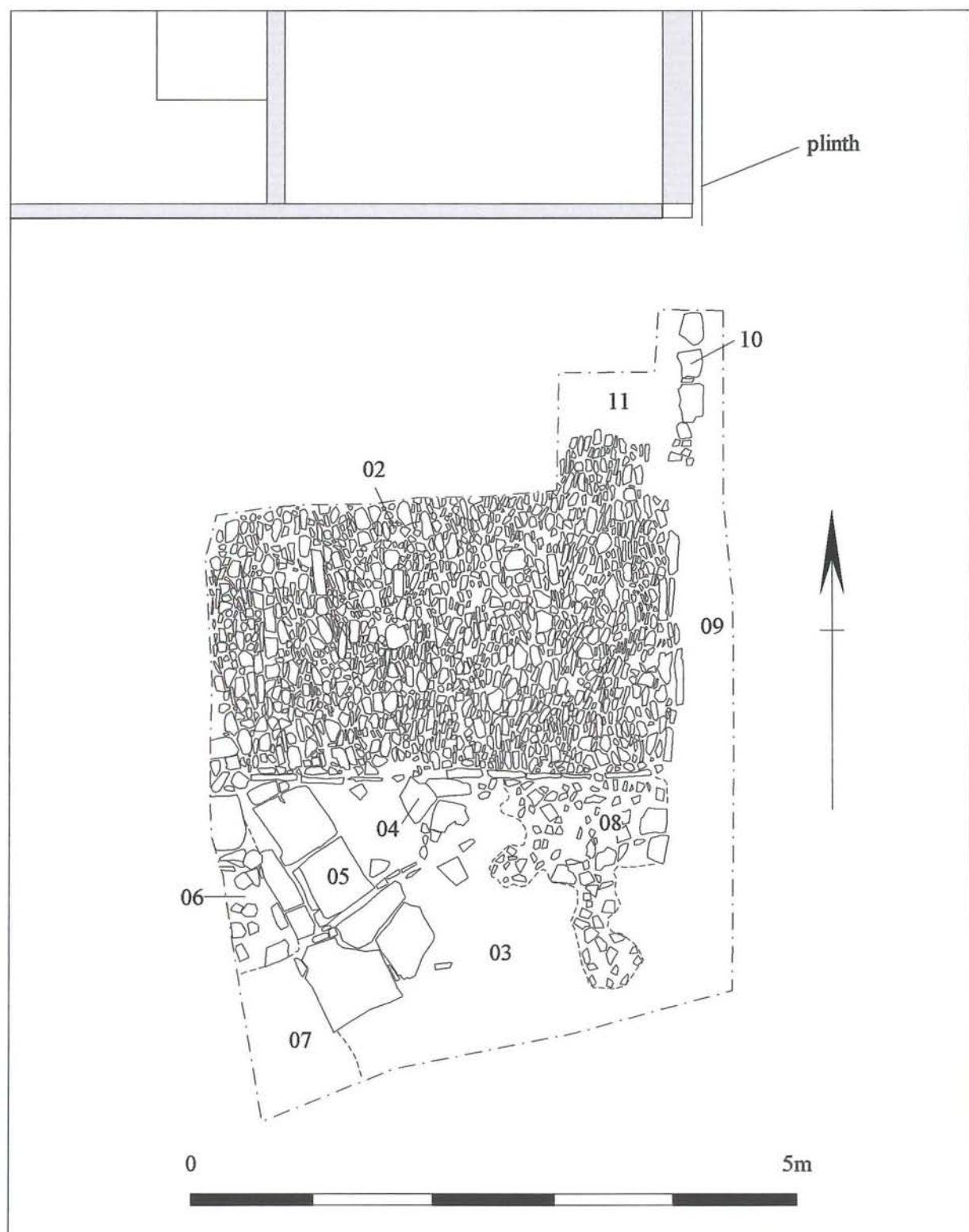


Fig. 11 Plan of excavated area



Plate 1 South elevation showing collapsed southern gable and later box-frame extension



Plate 2 North elevation showing later kitchen range





Plate 3 East elevation



Plate 4 West elevation showing the projection for the oven and later brick privy





Plate 5      Oven with boiler to right



Plate 6      Barn viewed from north-west showing stone plinth and hipped roof





Plate 7 Barn first floor showing roof truss



Plate 8 Barn interior showing northern end and feeding trough





Plate 9 General view of excavation showing path (05) and cobbled yard (02)



Plate 10 Cobbled yard (02)