

‘BAD BEDS AND WORSE EATING’ THE RESTORATION AND REVIVAL OF THE NEW INN, STOWE

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In 2005 the National Trust acquired the New Inn at Stowe with the aim of restoring and adapting the dilapidated buildings to create a new visitor facility and garden entrance. Archaeological recording of the buildings commenced in the same year and continued as a watching brief during subsequent restoration works undertaken in 2010 and 2011. This article summarises the results of documentary research and archaeological recording undertaken since the inn’s acquisition. Construction appears to have commenced in 1717 and was almost certainly completed in the following year. Conclusive evidence for an earlier inn on the site has not been found: however, the buildings incorporate a number of re-used timbers, including a suite of roof timbers dating to c.1550. Major changes were made to the inn between 1782 and 1797, coinciding with a change in the dynasty of innkeepers responsible for its operation. The demise of the inn dates to c.1860, from which point it then operated as a farm leased from the Temple-Grenville family. It was sold into private hands in 1928 and its association with the newly formed Stowe School dates to 1923 when it was rented out to a succession of Masters seeking accommodation. The publication of this article coincides with the re-opening of New Inn as a facility for garden visitors, returning it to its former use after a hiatus of 150 years.

INTRODUCTION

Stowe’s New Inn has been claimed, rightfully or wrongfully, as Britain’s first purpose-built inn designed for the accommodation of garden visitors. Situated on the south-east edge of the park 1½ miles north of Buckingham (NGR SP682364), it is thought to have been built by Lord Cobham to serve visitors to his gardens, which he had begun landscaping from c.1714. Its location on the brow of a hill meant that the prospective visitor would have had a magnificent panoramic view over the western side of the gardens. Other purpose built estate inns were to follow: the Spread Eagle at Stourhead in Wiltshire and the Buckingham Arms at Blickling in Norfolk provide two of many contemporary examples built for the purpose of providing food, drink and accommodation for travellers making the pilgrimage to some of the most influential garden landscapes of the day.

Though situated at the head of the Buckingham Avenue (Fig. 1) it predates the formation of the

avenue by more than 40 years. It lay at the intersection of two locally significant roads, the east-west Radclive-Towcester highway, and the north-south road from Buckingham to Stowe, passing through Chackmore. Visitors intending to examine the gardens in the early 18th century could call at the New Inn to obtain refreshment and perhaps purchase a copy of Benton Seeley’s guidebook before progressing down the Bell Gate Drive to enter via the Bell gate. On entering visitors today are faced with the same spectacular view of the south front of Stowe House as they would have seen in the 18th century. It was never a coaching inn since it lay away from the route of any major road. However, a printed bill from the 1830s confirms that post-chaise carriages and attendant horses could be hired. A chaise was an enclosed carriage carrying two or three passengers and usually drawn by four horses. It was driven by a liveried postillion boy sitting on the left lead horse and the cost of hire over long distances was usually a shilling per mile (www.britannica.com).

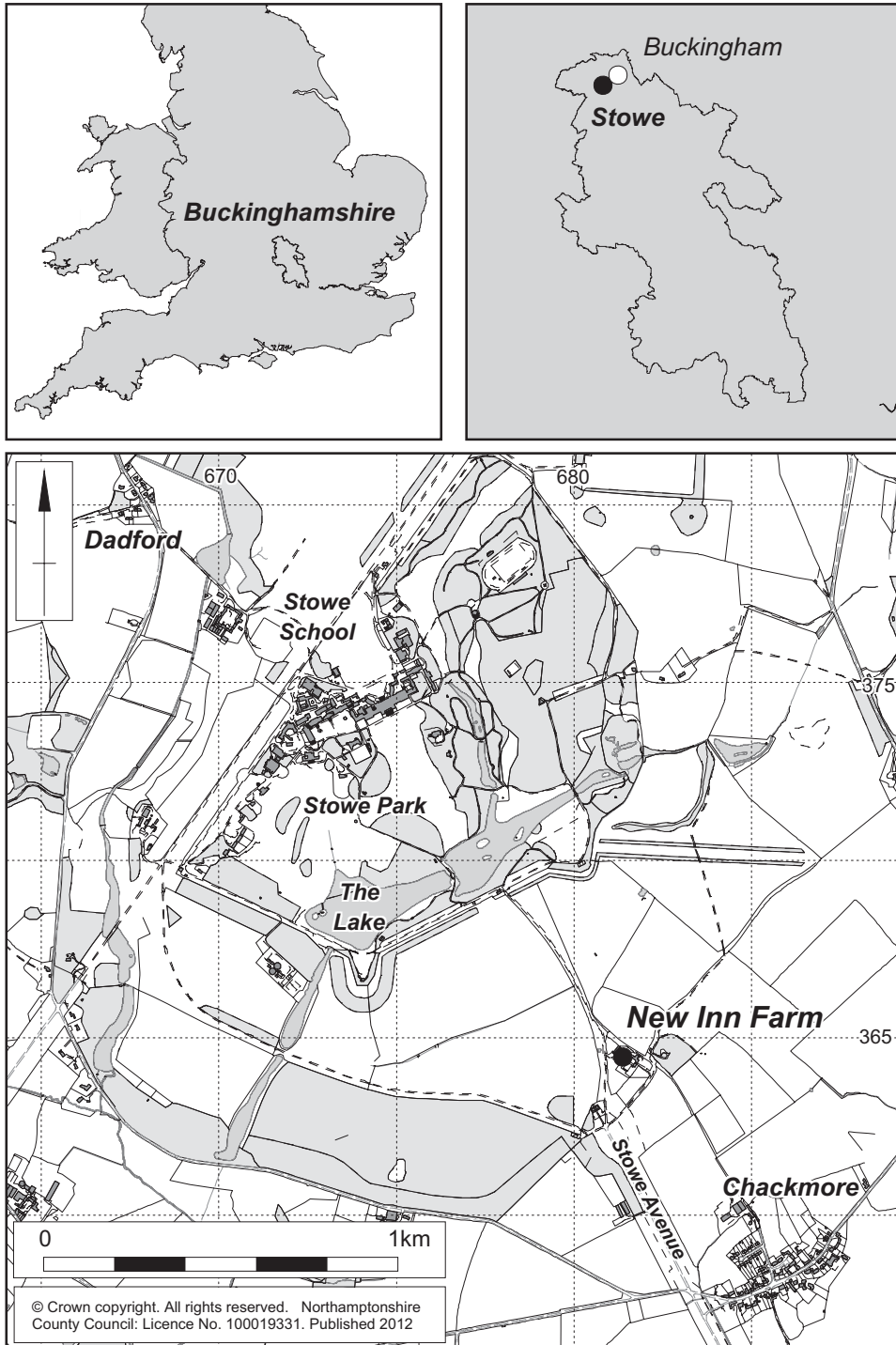


FIGURE 1 New Inn, site location

The buildings are grade II* listed. At the time of their acquisition in 2005 they were on the Buildings at Risk Register. Early 20th century photographs suggest the site was maintained in good condition until at least the 1920s. Deterioration probably set in after the sale of the property in 1928. After emergency works to stabilise the buildings in 2005 the National Trust commenced a major two year restoration programme in 2010 which saw the front range and some of the main courtyard buildings retained but the remainder of the courtyard and farmyard buildings to the south rebuilt on their original footprint. Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to undertake a watching brief over the restoration works and over the excavation of a number of service trenches.

This article provides a summary of the observations arising from this work and places the New Inn in its historical context. Very little alteration to the inn took place after c.1860 when it reverted to a working farm, consequently the configuration of public parlours, bedrooms, stables and domestic services survives in pretty much its original form. Layers of original decoration survived in most of the rooms, often trapped beneath later layers of plaster. The recovery of more than sixty wallpaper types represents an important collection, charting more than 200 years of interior decoration.

Thanks are due to the Buckinghamshire Historic Buildings Trust and to the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society for financial assistance with the recording works. Members of the BAS Buildings Archaeology Group assisted with initial measured drawing of some of the buildings. Thanks are also due to the volunteers who assisted with the retrieval of artefacts from under-floor-board debris and for assisting with the recovery of salvageable building materials.

HISTORY OF THE NEW INN

It is highly likely that the New Inn site has been of some importance since at least the Middle Ages due to its location on the crossroads of two highways, the road to Radclive from Towcester known as the 'Ratley Ridgeway' and the road from Buckingham to Stowe via Chackmore. An early reference to the area comes from the *Cartulary of Osney Abbey* (Salter 1936). Osney Abbey possessed a sheepcote (*bercharia*) at Stowe along which lay

two acres of land stretching up to the Radclive road that were granted to the abbey in around 1220. The sheepcote may have been located just to the north of the site within a prominent rectangular earthwork enclosure since it lay on the Radclive road and there are a number of neighbouring plots of land that may relate to the two acres.

A survey undertaken in 1633 of tenants and lands they had at Stowe records that one Thomas Jettes had, among other plots, land at 'Stow Shephouse', which is thought to relate to the same structure (Huntington Archive: STTM Box 3(7)). A conjectural reconstruction of the open field system by the National Trust (unpublished) based on the 1633 survey shows that the land on which the New Inn was to later stand lay at the junction of four open fields within the parish: the Middle Field, the Old Field and Nether (or Stockwell) Field in Lamport and Chackmore Field to the south (Wheeler *pers. comm.*). The Ratley Ridgeway passes just to the south.

Dating

The New Inn's construction date of 1717–18 is corroborated from several sources. Firstly, the Stowe estate day book for 1717 records joiners sawing timber for the New Inn (Bennett 1994). The inn receives several further mentions, including the carriage of items such as timber and stone to the site. Secondly, samples taken for dendrochronology dating from the east range gave a felling date for the timbers of 1717 (Bridge, 2006). They were probably incorporated into the building within 9–12 months of felling. In 1718 floors were being laid in the dairy, kitchen and cellars, suggesting that the buildings were nearing completion (Huntington Library: STTF Box 64 bundle 8). A second phase of dendrochronology sampling undertaken in 2011 gave a construction date of c.1782 for the dairy on the north side of the inn (Arnold & Howard 2010). It also suggested that the dairy roof contains re-used timbers dating from c.1550 (Fig. 18). A number of re-used timbers were identified in the inn during the 2010–11 works but these do not confirm an earlier building on the site. The absence of earlier foundations in any of the service trenches and the absence of artefact evidence pre 1717 counters the obvious suggestion of an earlier inn on the site.

Thomas Harris of Cublington has been suggested as the architect for the inn (Clarke 1968).

He was employed as Clerk of Works at Stowe House between 1713 and 1726 under Sir John Vanbrugh when Vanbrugh was busy designing several of the early garden buildings.

Innkeepers

Isaac Stopps appears to have been the New Inn's earliest proprietor, leasing the property from Lord Cobham. He is mentioned in connection with an advertisement in the Northamptonshire Mercury in 1724 (Milton Keynes Local Studies Library) asking for the return of a horse stolen by an Edward Harwood. During the early years the inn seems to have experienced a quick turnaround of innkeepers as a brief advertisement in the Mercury in 1734 indicates that a Mrs Hoskins, formerly innkeeper at the New Inn, had moved to the 'Lord Cobham's' (Cobham Arms) in Buckingham, and had been replaced by John Wasey. In April 1742 the Sun Fire Office issued a fire insurance policy to John Hodgkins (*sic*) at the New Inn for a total of £300. The insurance covered his household goods and stock in trade within the inn, and cellars under; the stock in the coach-house adjoining; stock, hay, straw and horses in a stable, granaries and lofts over, next to the coach-house; stock in a barn next to the stable; stock, hay, straw and horses in two stables next to the barn and stock, hay, straw and horses in one other stable (CBS: Wuldko Collection).

Visitors' accounts for this period are hardly flattering, complaining of the substandard state of services offered. Lord Perceval wrote to Daniel Dering in 1724, stating '*our Inn was a scurvy one and had not beds for all. Those of us who went to bed could not sleep for fleas and gnats*' (Clarke 1990). Dr Thomas Wilson observed in 1734 that the Inn had '*very bad beds and worse eating*' (Bevington 1994). Lord Cobham must have had serious concerns about the treatment of his guests as this led to the dismissal of John Hotchkins in 1743. Lord Cobham's agent wrote to him stating:

Mr Hodgkinson

My Lord Cobham for several years last having heard many complaints of the treatment of Gentlemen at your house, although you have very lately paid up your rent very well which you did not used to do, which occasioned his lordship to offer the bargain to another who has duly accepted.....by his lordships command that I

hereby confirm the notice given you some time ago by Mr Potts and myself that you must leave the bargain on Lady Day next. & you[?] of my Lord Cobham. I am your servant Leod Lloyd. A true copy' (Bennett 1994).

John Wasey's association with the New Inn appears to have been short-lived as the 1762 Seeley guidebook records Thomas Hodgkinson as the innkeeper. The garden guides, published between 1744 and 1827, are of particular historical value as the frontispiece records the name of the innkeeper between 1753 and 1788. Curiously the 1753 and 1756 editions record Mr Hoskins as innkeeper. This may be an error, or perhaps he returned to run the premises. Perhaps Lord Cobham's threat of dismissal was never carried out. Despite these changes it seems that the parlous accommodation previously noted continued to cause alarm. Writing in 1775 Mrs Lybbe Powys recorded that '*never were accommodations so wretched*' (Bevington 1989). A bill for entertainment at the New Inn in 1778 still survives (CBS: D13/17/2), and includes sums for sundries such as '*Meat for Chackmeare (Chackmore) Men*' and '*Dressing the Dinner*'. In 1781 one visitor recorded that he had hired a post chaise in Buckingham and left it at the New Inn while he toured the gardens (Bevington 1989). In the Land Tax Assessments of 1783 (Q/RPL/3/4), Thomas Hodgkinson is listed as having holdings taxed at £25.5s.4d, one of the largest listed holdings on the estate. He is described as a 'Dairyman' in his will of 1789 (CBS D/A/WF/105/2) and remained as the innkeeper until 1788 when he was replaced by Hannah Hodgkinson, who was presumably his wife. Between 1791 and 1794 the inn was run by Samuel Hodgkinson, either her son or a close relation.

The Bennett family took over the tenancy of the inn and its holdings in 1795 and remained there for nearly a century. It would appear that the Hodgkinson and Bennett families were related, as William Bennett is described in Hannah's 1795 will as her son-in-law (CBS D/A/WF/107/82). The Licensed Victuallers list records William Bennett as the innkeeper in 1795. Corresponding with the change of tenancy a number of repairs were ordered in 1797 and included '*mending the closet, plastering the Dining Room, Stocoin the Paler (stuccoing the parlour), rising the wall round the privy, leth and plastering the privy, laying a drain*

from the citchng, pitching above cutting holes for the beam and for the granary and wallingin the leth and plastering the granary' (Reading University Buc 11/1/22).

Decline of the inn and transition to a working farm

In 1800, the New Inn passed to William's nephew, George Bennett. Soon after a series of watercolour drawings of the house and gardens at Stowe were undertaken by Jean Claude Nattes; one of these, of 1809, shows the courtyard of the New Inn looking east towards the carriage entrance (Fig. 2, the originals are held by Bucks County Museums Service). The scene is enlivened by maids washing either laundry or dishes in the courtyard. From an archaeological point of view it is a valuable source as it shows the configuration of the buildings at this date, indicating that the two original stair towers attached to the courtyard elevation had been extended and the stairs reconfigured to form straight flights, as against the original winding form. The small 'office' or Tap Room with its bay window overlooking the courtyard had also been added by this date. Within the carriage arch the meat safe which can still be seen today is evident on the north wall.

George Bennett ran the inn until 1825, when his son Charles took over (Fig. 3). For some years he managed the inn in tandem with John George, probably a relation of his wife, and it would seem that standards had improved as Mary Sabilla Novello, writing in 1825, observed:

I had taken my abode at the New Inn, a pleasant hostelerie, situate halfway between Stowe and Buckingham, and wearing more the aspect of a snug farmhouse than of a noisy comfortless inn' (A Day in Stowe Gardens, 1825)

In the 1841 census Charles Bennett and John George are both listed as farmers and innkeepers, indicating that the inn business may have been gradually tailing off. In early 1831 some substantial repairs were being made to the roof which included the stripping and relaying of all the tiles (Huntington Library: STG ACS Box 108 (7)). Further repairs to the roof were made in April of the same year.

Two maps were made of the estate in the 1840s – an estate map by Henry Howard (Huntington Library U2 drawer 25 ST map 49) and the 1845 Tithe Map (Fig. 4). Both show largely the same detail. The 1845 Tithe Map and Tithe Apportion-



FIGURE 2 Engraving by J.C. Nattes, 1809: main courtyard looking towards the carriage arch

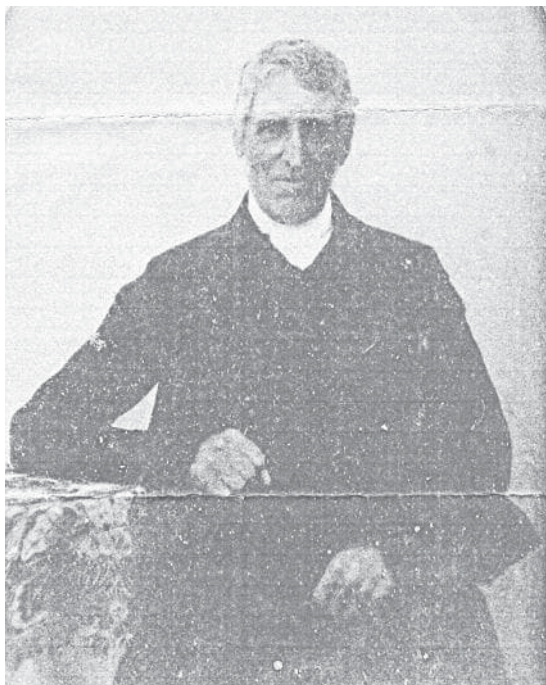


FIGURE 3 1870s photograph of Charles Bennett, the last innkeeper (source: New Inn Conservation Plan 2008)

ment lists only Charles Bennett, as do the trade directories from 1842 onwards, suggesting that John George had left for some reason. The 1843 Howard Estate Map indicates that some dairy farming was being carried out. The 1845 Tithe Map shows that the plan of the New Inn at that point was largely the same as it is at present. The Tithe Apportionment lists the buildings as New Inn. Clearly, the mixed functions of farm and inn were still being maintained at this point. The buildings on the Tithe Map shaded in pink indicate the domestic areas, while areas indicated in grey would have been the coach-house to the west, with barns and stabling to the north and south. A small building is shown to the south of the southern stable block but is not visible on later maps. Charles Bennett's land holdings are also marked.

The 1851 census lists only the Bennett family as living at the New Inn: Charles Bennett, his wife, four children, three visitors, two house servants and one farm servant. Charles Bennett is still listed as being both a farmer and an innkeeper. Interestingly,

the buildings to the west are also listed on the censuses under the New Inn, the male occupants listed as a farrier and a smith. This indicates that all the buildings were part of the same complex, with the smithy probably serving the horses of visitors to Stowe. The inhabitants of the smithy also seem to be from the Bennett family. It is around this time that there appears to be some confusion as to the function of the New Inn, since, in a catalogue for a timber sale in 1848, it is listed as New Inn Farm, whereas the 1851 census lists it as New Inn and subsequent timber sales catalogues from 1849 and 1851 state that catalogues may be had from the New Inn at Stowe. By 1854, Charles Bennett is listed in the trade directories as a farmer only, although in the Berkshire Postal Directory of 1856 he is still listed as an innkeeper. This probably gives a fairly accurate date for the demise of the premises as an inn. Four years later an act was passed for stopping up the public highway, the Radcliffe-Towcester road, and this would have removed much of the local passing traffic.

Charles Bennett is listed as the tenant of New Inn Farm in the 1871 census and up to 1876 in the trade directories. The next reference to New Inn Farm was in the 1881 census, when a William Wallin and his family are listed at the property, succeeding Charles Bennett, who had died in 1876 (copies of his will, residuary accounts etc. deposited with the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies in 2012). The census states he was farming 320 acres of land and employing seven men and three boys. The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1880 (Fig. 5) shows that New Inn Farm had changed little since 1845. Additions to the complex include a building attached to the north of the southern range, the 'milk cooling shed' (Fig. 8, G20). The map shows the gardens to the south in detail, with an orchard to the far south and various pathways. A hovel containing a copper and fireplace situated between the gardens and the Corinthian Arch and recorded in 2005 is depicted for the first time. The foundations of this building were recorded in 2005 (Prentice, Soden and Walker 2007).

Recent history

It is thought that New Inn Farm passed to the Gore Langton family in 1889 on the death of the 3rd Duke (Inskip and Jenkins, Cowper Griffith, Northamptonshire Archaeology, Rutherford 2008).

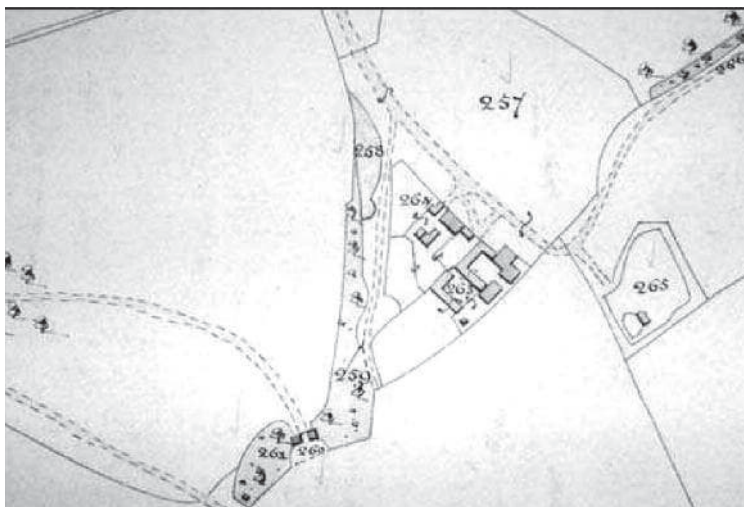


FIGURE 4 1845 Stowe Tithe Map

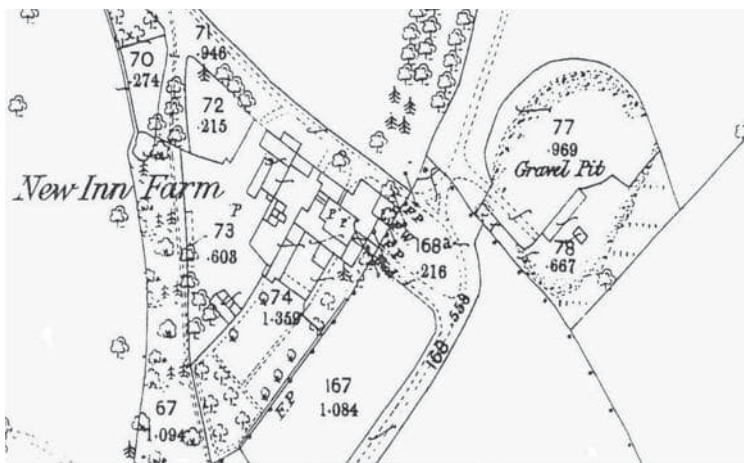


FIGURE 5 1880 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 25 inch map

Between 1901 and 1933 the leaseholders changed regularly until the lease devolved to the Tompkins family at that later date. New Inn changed ownership in 1928 when the farm and 151 acres were sold by Earl Temple of Wootton (1928 sale catalogue) to a Staffordshire industrialist by the name of Greenway. Between 1923 and 1934 part of the site was occupied by Herbert Neville and his family, Neville being Stowe School's first Art Master. Several other masters were to follow, estab-

lishing a link between Stowe School and the site which was to continue until the early 1950s. Herbert Neville's associations with the property remain to this day, as the Trust's restaurant has been re-named after the so-called 'Nevillery' tea room and tuck shop run by Herbert's wife. It continued under the Tompkins family until c.1950, the Tompkins living in the right hand-side of the inn alongside the School's tenants.

The National Farm Survey, which was under-



FIGURE 6 Early 20th century photograph of the front of the New Inn (source New Inn Conservation Plan 2008)

taken in 1941, shows that Mr Tompkins leased 175 acres of land at this point, nearly half of what William Wallin was farming in 1881 (The National Archives: MAF32/934/74). The owners were listed as the executors of Mr Greenway, Bilston, Staffordshire, who had acquired the property in the 1928 sale. The majority of the holding was under permanent pasture, although some acreage was taken up for growing fodder, such as turnips, swedes and beans. Only two full time workers were employed. The main economy of the farm was as a dairy farm, although with only sixteen cows in milk the holding was small. Other animals kept included seventeen sheep, five horses and 130 chickens and ducks. The house at this point still only had a well as its source of water.

The farm was bought by the Tompkins in 1947 and remained in the family's possession until it was acquired by the National Trust in January of 2005.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The following describes the New Inn as found in 2005 and prior to the restoration works of 2010–11. The main axis of the farm lies at about 45 degrees to grid north, therefore for convenience north is assumed to correspond with the right-hand range when entering the main courtyard. The approach to the New Inn is via the old Radclive-Towcester highway passing close to its east-front. Though

stopped up as a public highway in 1860 its course north of the inn can be traced as a broad lane hemmed-in between overgrown hedges. The inn comprises two adjoining courtyards (Figs 7 and 8), hereafter referred to as the main courtyard and farmyard, plus a third enclosed yard on its west side (the western yard). Evidence from the 1845 Tithe map suggests that at one stage this western yard was subdivided into two sections. The main courtyard is entered from a broad carriage arch in the centre of the east range and is fully enclosed by buildings serving the inn. The east range provided parlours and bedrooms for guests. The south range, and the west half of the north range, provided stabling, whilst the west range provided a carriage house with hay loft above. The eastern half of the north range contained the brewhouse, laundry and the kitchen. Projecting from the north side of the north range the two storey building accommodating the dairy is a later addition of c.1782. A small enclosure with a lean-to building against the east side of the dairy is thought to have served as a slaughterhouse (Fig. 14). A small building on the north-east corner of the enclosure served as a privy.

The yard was surfaced with pebble cobbles with kerbs of larger water-worn cobbles (Fig. 8). Later patches included blue moulded pavements, concrete, and stone slabbed thresholds. In the north-east corner of the courtyard there is a stone-lined well surmounted by a late 19th century cast-iron rotary

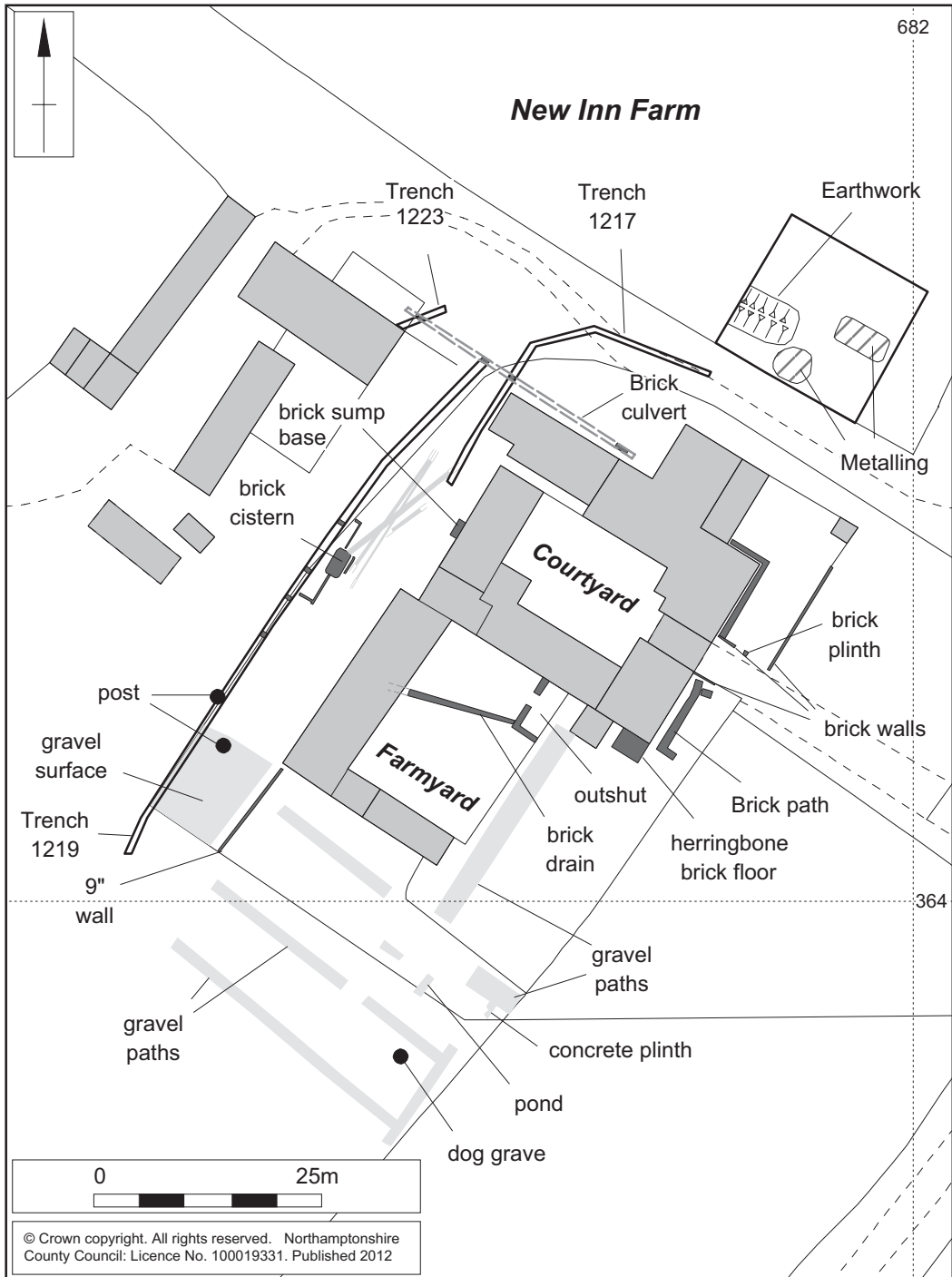


FIGURE 7 Plan showing the arrangement of yards, trenches and key features

pump. A concrete slab bordered by blue engineering bricks caps a brick-lined soft water cistern supplied by water coming off the roofs. The other slightly larger courtyard to the south formed a stock enclosure or farmyard containing a large threshing barn on the west side and an open-fronted hovel on the south side. The enclosure was completed by a brick wall on the east side of the courtyard. The farmyard was surrounded on its east and south sides by gardens extending as far south as the Bell Gate Drive. Evidence from the 1880 Ordnance Survey 25 inch map (Fig. 5), combined with evidence from the excavations, confirms that the gardens were laid out as a series of neat compartments divided by gravel paths. Two large yew trees flanking either corner of the principal elevation (Fig. 6) are probably contemporary with the original construction of the inn. Traces of neatly laid brick paths flanked by low walls were found outside of this principal elevation.

The buildings as they survive are built principally of brick. The standard brick-bond used throughout the main house was Flemish Bond, *i.e.* alternate headers and stretchers in each course. A chequer-board effect has been achieved with the regular use of darkened headers, seen to best effect on the external elevation of the east range. This has also been embellished with a moulded plinth and a protruding two course string or band at the first floor level, with a similar entablature at the eaves. While the east range has always been brick, the ancillary ranges were of brick where they faced externally, or timber framed where they faced into the courtyard. The interior-facing framing was later largely replaced with brick nogging, or with local Northamptonshire Ironstone where it faces onto the lower status farmyard. Internal walls and partitions are a mixture of brick or stud framing, with some being brick-nogged within the stud framing. Roof coverings seem always to have been clay tile with some slate additions.

The principal elevation of the east range has received considerable care in its construction (Fig. 20). The windows of the central and immediately-flanking bays represent later insertions, probably dating from the 1790s alterations when the parlours and principal bedrooms were reconfigured. The outlines of the earlier openings can still be detected, confirming that the parlours and bedrooms flanking either side of the carriage arch were originally lit by two separate sash windows,

rather than the single unit surviving today. These single units comprise three lights, the central light (12 panes) being an un-weighted sash reliant upon brass catches (rather than pulleys and weights) to take the weight of the lower sash and hold the window open. The flanking lights in each case (of 4 panes each) are similarly without weights but also lack the brass catches with which to lock the window open. The windows nearest both ends of the façade occupy the original openings, though the frames also date from the 1790s. They are identical in style but for their smaller size (12 panes only), lacking the 4-pane flanking sashes of their counterparts closer to the carriage-arch. In order to insert the current windows, the existing embrasures have been lowered by two brick courses and a new sill of moulded plinth-headers created. These sill bricks are probably reused items, taken from elsewhere in the complex, since some bear corner or edge damage which would be unlikely to occur in their current locations.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERIORS

In the following description the identification of rooms by function is conjectural, based on their location, layout, fixtures and fittings (Figs 8 and 16). Room numbers assigned during the recording form a useful means of cross-referencing (G = ground floor, F = first floor). The reception rooms for guests were contained solely within the east range of the main courtyard. This is principally of two floors but has an additional suite of interconnecting rooms built into the attic lit by dormer windows. Only two of the five attic rooms have fireplaces. They probably accommodated domestic staff but may also have been given over to servants attached to higher status guests. There are two cellars beneath the parlours, the southern cellar, accessed from the courtyard, still retains its numbered brick wine bins (Fig. 29). The northern cellar was accessed internally and probably served as a beer cellar and perhaps a store for non-perishable goods.

Parlours

Guests arriving by horse or carriage at the inn would pass beneath the central carriage arch and dismount in the courtyard. They would then enter the ground floor parlours on either side of the carriage arch. The two parlours on the south side

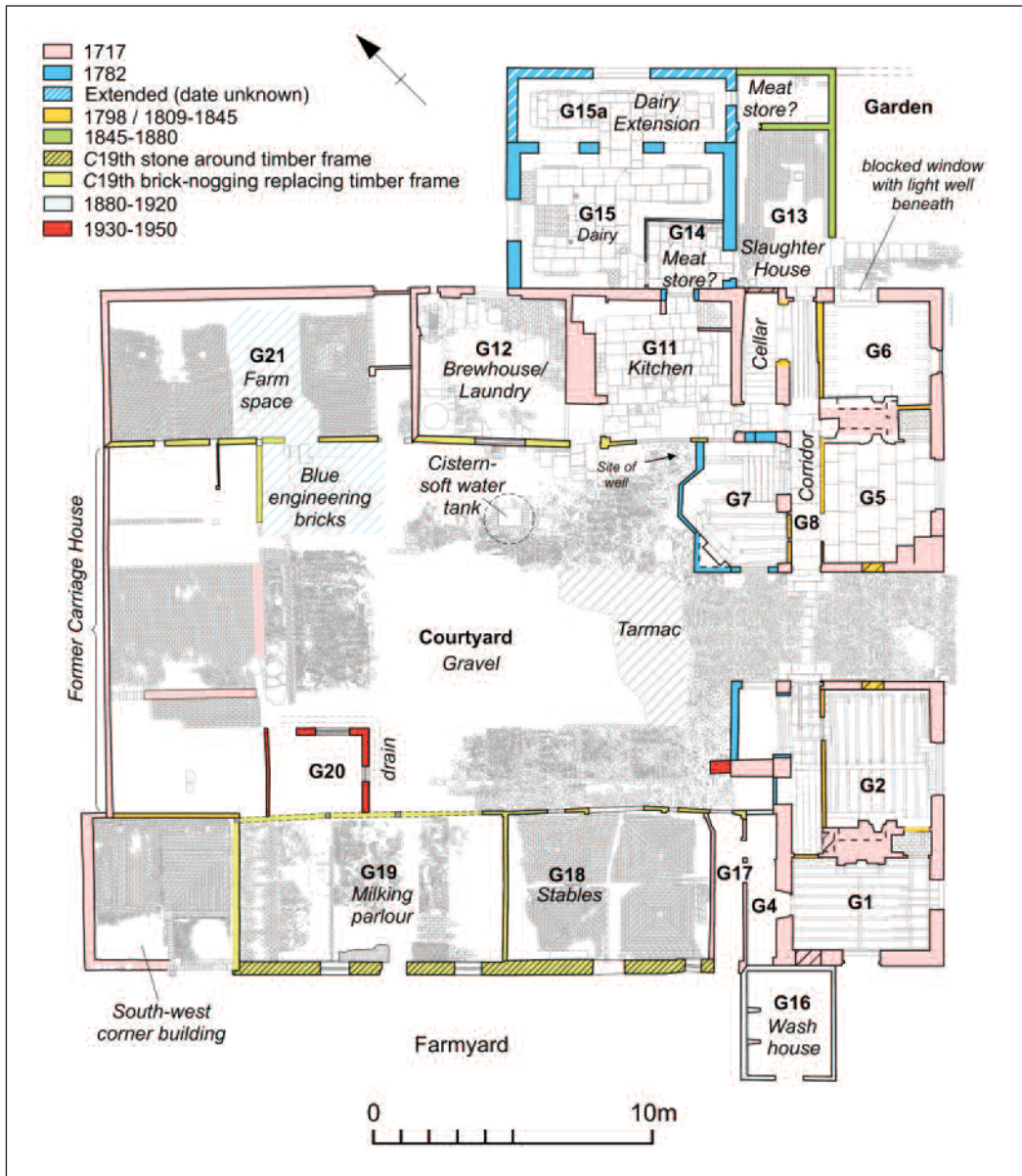


FIGURE 8 Plan of the main courtyard and ground floor rooms colour coded to show phasing

(G1 and G2) appear to have been higher status reception rooms which could perhaps be rented privately, whereas the two on the north (G5 and G6) were probably more communal, equating to today's public bar. The original centrally placed doorways leading directly into these parlours can still be seen

within the carriage arch (Fig. 21). They were probably blocked up in the 1790s when partitions were inserted into the parlours and new entrances created. This would have reduced the size of the parlours but would have helped to exclude draughts, increased privacy and separated the

parlours from the two dog-leg staircases.

Back-to back fireplaces serve each pair of parlours. The outlines of the original wood-fuelled fireplaces in parlours G2 and G5 are defined by large timber lintels with chamfer stops, suggesting re-use of pre-1717 timbers. There are smaller fireplaces to the back parlours G1 and G6. These openings have been reduced in size on more than one occasion, firstly to accommodate Victorian grates, and secondly narrower 1950s fireplaces. The removal of the mid 19th century brick blocking from G5 revealed a curved back wall to the 1790s fireplace which was lined with plaster and scored with lines imitating stone joints (Figs 9 and 22). The spaces between the ends of these fireplaces and the external east wall were sealed by cupboards inserted in the 1790s, however, these gaps originally allowed for unimpeded circulation either side of the fireplace between the adjoining parlours. Small cupboards were originally built into the west side of the G2 fireplace and the east side of the G5 fireplace, perhaps for drying boots and clothes. A third cupboard with three wooden shelves facing onto passage G8 was subsequently built into the west side of the G5 fireplace.

Staircases and passages

Access from the ground to first floor was gained by two staircases built into separate brick towers projecting into the courtyard. Prior to the construction of the passage walls in the 1790s these would have been accessed directly from parlours G2 and G5. As tight dog-leg staircases they must have proved inconvenient, especially for the inn staff tasked with carrying baggage and furniture to upper floors. They were therefore radically altered as part of a reconfiguration of *c.*1782, suggested by dendrochronology dating of a beam inserted to carry the surviving upper section of the north tower. An extension was similarly added to the north side of the south tower and a new straight staircase built over the original dog-leg stairs; the upper part of the original structure was found surviving in-situ when the 1780s staircase was removed in 2010 (Fig. 30). The Nattes view shows this extension. A similar addition on the south side of the north staircase seems to have been made as brick foundations for the extended tower were found in the Tap Room (G7, Fig. 10). This extension was itself soon removed when the tap room was added *c.*1782 and replaced by the existing

flight of stairs at the north end of passage G8. The south stair may have been used by guests, whereas the north stair may have led to a suite of first floor rooms used by the innkeeper.

Evidence from the 1809 Nattes engraving suggests that the original stair towers extended to the attic floor. The north stair tower still retains the top part of the staircase from the first floor landing (F10) to the attic. The original top section of the south staircase has been removed, though evidence for a blocked doorway leading onto it was found when part of the plaster was removed from the west wall of F6. The current southern access to the attic is via a narrow and inconvenient winding stair added to the southern face of the original stair tower. It can be seen on the Nattes engraving where the roof line shows a smaller additional pitched roof.

The 'Tap Room'

Dendrochronology dating of a beam running east-west across the ceiling of the Tap Room (G7) suggests this small room leading off the northern ground floor passage was added as an extension into the courtyard *c.*1782. The beam was inserted with some skill to carry the remaining upper section of the staircase tower; the brick foundations for the lower section were revealed when the floorboards were removed from G7. The likelihood is that this room served as both a public parlour and office for the innkeeper as the window in the west wall gave a commanding view over the courtyard. Guests could be seen arriving and an eye could be kept on domestic staff going about their duties in the yard! The bay window is a later addition post 1782, probably replacing a vertically hung sash window and providing a greater field of view. There were external shutters, as evidenced by a surviving shutter clasp on the exterior elevation. A small coal grate built into the south-west corner served to heat the room.

The north wall retains elements of the original timber framing of the north wall of the courtyard (Figs 11 and 23). A re-used window of three panes looking on to the kitchen was probably inserted when the tap room was built, allowing kitchen staff to see guests entering and leaving the room. The north wall also retains an unusual arrangement of diagonal timbers leading to a gap cut into the side of a cupboard facing onto passage G9. A thin piece of tin covers the gap. It has been suggested that this

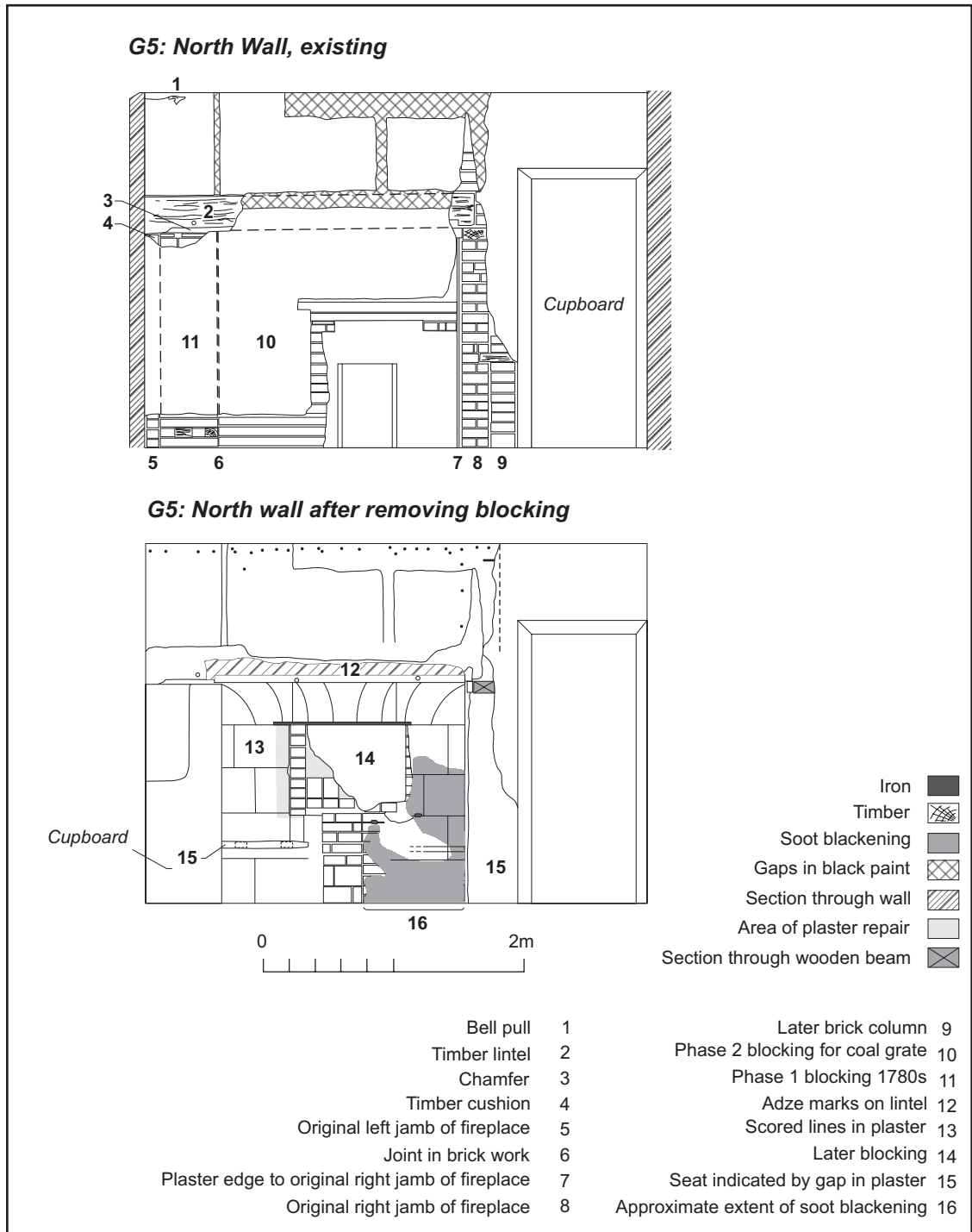


FIGURE 9 North wall of parlour G5 showing the outlines of the 1790s fireplace and associated features

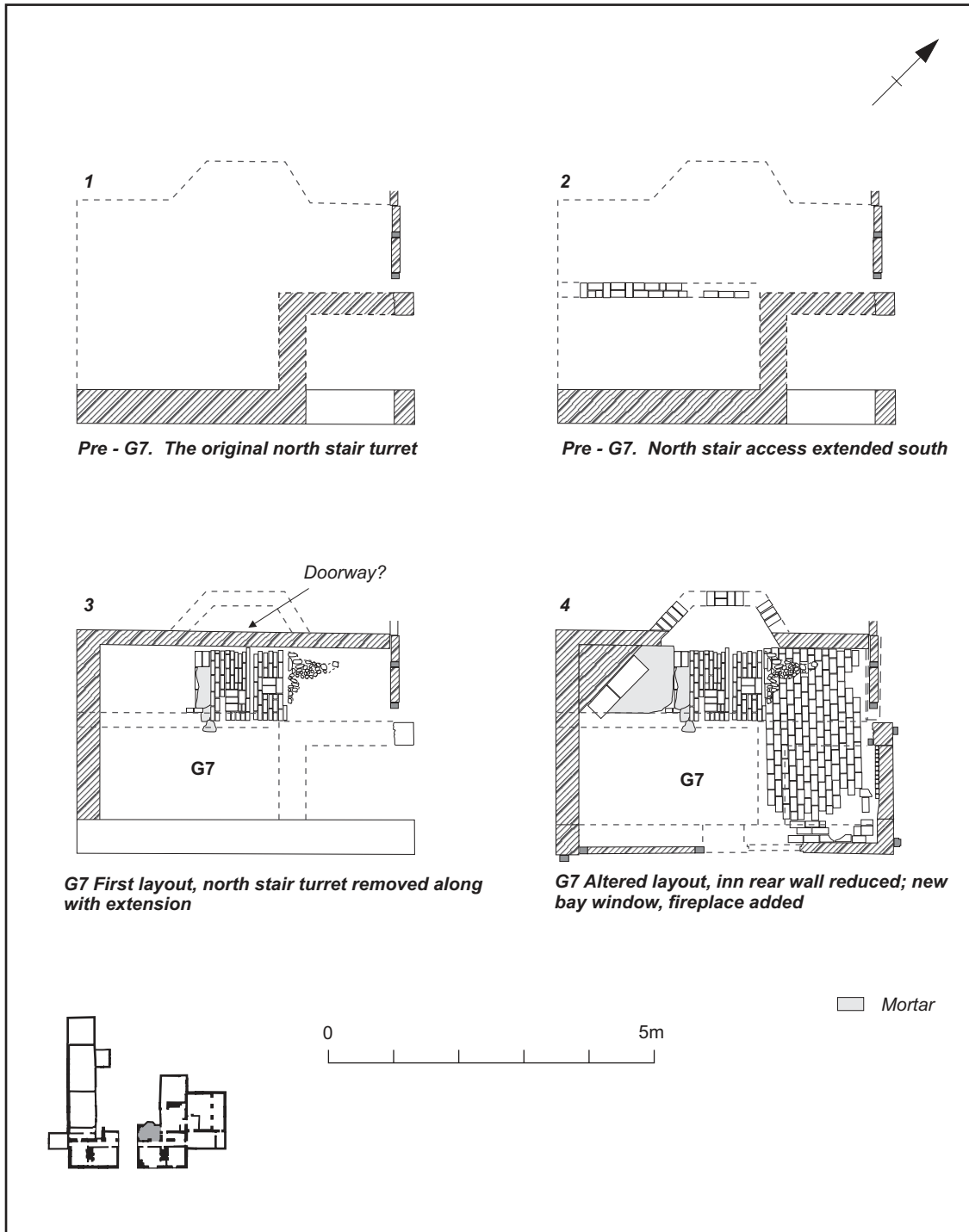


FIGURE 10 Plan showing the sequence of development of the Tap Room

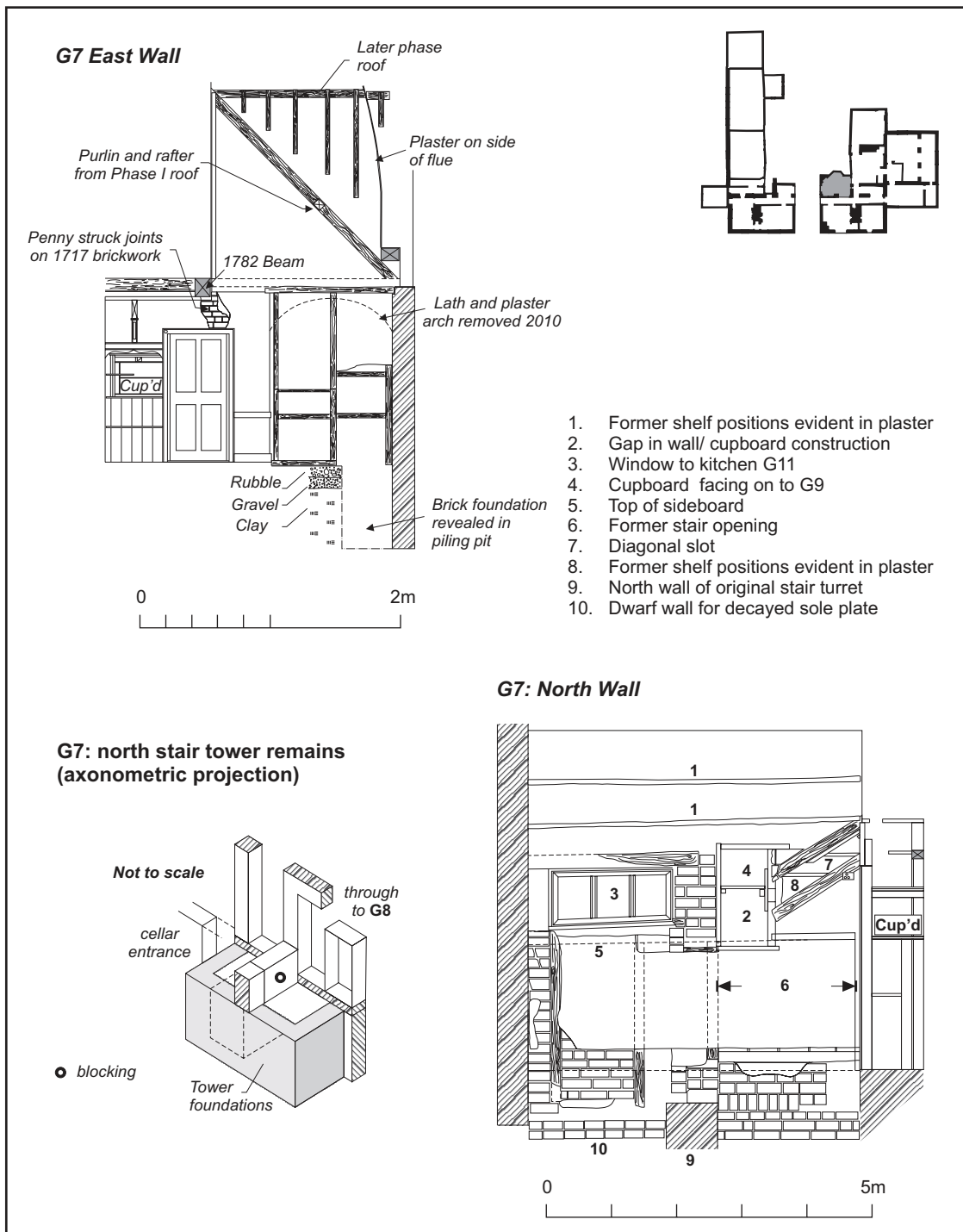


FIGURE 11 Elevations of the east and north walls of the Tap Room

feature might have served as a money ‘drop-box’ for coins deposited from the cupboard in the passage G8 to the cupboard facing onto G9. As the G9 cupboard lay behind a locked door it would have been relatively secure. The lower part of the north wall contains a wooden sideboard, which, together with the arched moulded frame above, probably dates from the c.1782 alterations. A serving hatch with shelving below in the east wall is probably contemporary with the sideboard. The arrangement for serving of food and drink at the New Inn is not clear: however, it is possible that the small G9 cupboard containing the drop-box may originally have had an open back and food could be passed backwards and forwards between the kitchen and the tap room. Barrels of ale may have been placed on the sideboard for convenience: however, it is more likely that ale would have been fetched directly from the north cellar upon demand. Several old paintings of inn interiors of this period, such as those by George Morland, show the ‘pot boy’ delivering quart measures of ale to patrons and this may well have been fetched directly from the cellars.

The existing doorway connecting this room to the adjacent passage marks the position of the doorway originally accessing the north staircase tower. This east wall incorporates in its southern section an opening blocked by a re-used sash window frame. The opening is thought to mark the entry position of the second phase staircase before it was quickly removed.

The Kitchen, Dairy and Laundry

These three rooms housing the domestic services are to be found in the north range of the courtyard. The dairy forms a two-storey extension on the north side of the north range and was added c.1782, at the same time as the Tap Room. Access from the courtyard to the kitchen and laundry is gained from an off-centre doorway surmounted by a bracketed awning in the south wall, with a small lobby then leading off to either room. The kitchen can also be accessed from the small lobby (G9) leading off passage G8. This lobby may have held some significance as it segregated the public and private areas of the inn and provided access to the north cellar. Access to the small cupboard backing onto the Tap Room was also gained from this space.

Archaeological and documentary evidence suggests that the rooms now identified as the

kitchen and laundry have been reconfigured and may not serve their original purpose. A 1718 bill in the Stowe estate accounts for work done by John Bunyan (Huntington Library) gives a number of measurements for stone floors laid in the kitchen, dairy and cellar:

‘The measure of the dary floor att the inn one sidd 16 foot ye other side 15 foot 2 inches content 142 foot, the middle arch in ye dary 4 foot long and 2 foot wide content 9 foot ½, the two outer arches in ye dary 4 foot long and 3 foot wise each content 24 foot whole sum of ye dary floor 157 ½. The measure of the kitchen floor one side 14 foot 3 inches the other side 16 foot 6 inches, content 2350 foot. The whole sum of ye floore 254 foot. The passage into ye cellar one side 3 foot ½ the other side 5 foot content 17 foot ½ the square of the cellar 11 foot 3 inches and 16 foot content 180 foot, ye corner of ye cellar 4 foot + 3 foot ½. The whole sm of the cellar 211 ½. The whole sum of all those floores at ye inn is 362300 foot. 623 foot at 2 pence three farthings ye foot comes to £7 2s 4d...John Bunyan 3 days att the new inn digging the wall and wallin £4 0s 0d the paving att ye new inn comes to 623 foot’.

The dimensions given for the kitchen correspond closely with today’s dimensions (14 feet 3 inches × 16 feet 6 inches as against 15 feet 9 inches × 16 feet). Dimensions for the ‘dary’ are given as 16 feet × 15 feet 2 inches, which corresponds very closely with the dimensions of the building currently labelled as the laundry – 17 feet × 16 feet 4 inches. Unless there was an earlier dairy attached to the north side of the north range it therefore seems likely that the room currently identified as the laundry (G12) started out as a dairy. Incidentally it is interesting to note the dimensions given for the passage into the cellar as these correspond closely with those of the lobby G9. The dimensions are evidently given from rooms moving from west to east, adding weight to the suggestion that the first named room is today’s laundry.

During the 2010–12 works it was determined that the existing ceiling and floor structure over the kitchen is a later insertion and the space was originally open to the top of the roof. The kitchen has a coal-fired iron range of early 19th century date built into the outlines of an earlier wood-fuelled fire-

place opening in the west wall. The range is possibly too small to have served the requirements of the 18th century inn: however, by the early 19th century trade is likely to have dropped off. The left side of the original opening survives: however, the right side has been removed, leaving the original timber lintel carrying the chimney breast suspended precariously by an iron strap. Excavation of the substrate to the flagstone floor revealed the original brick foundations for the missing right cheek of the fireplace (Figs 12 and 13). The northern corner of the west wall is occupied by crudely formed shelves. The remainder of the kitchen has been fitted-out with crudely made cupboards and shelves which are hard to date but were perhaps added in the early 19th century. A cupboard running across the base of the north wall hides an earlier window opening which existed until the dairy was added in *c.* 1782. When the flagstone floor was lifted a brick drain was uncovered, emerging from the adjacent laundry and curving to exit through the north wall. The drain would have to predate the construction of the dairy as its contents would otherwise have spilled into this room.

The large size of the dairy would suggest that it also served as a cold store for perishable foods. It is the only obvious space where foods could be stored, other than the cellars. The dairy is accessed either from a doorway in the east wall or from the kitchen via a doorway knocked through the brickwork of the north wall (Fig. 14). A small lobby (G14) has timber-framed partition walls carrying wire gauze screens, suggesting either this was used as a meat store, or it was carefully screened to prevent flies getting into the dairy. The floor of the dairy is set several feet below that of the adjacent kitchen and lobby and is reached via a flight of stone stairs. It is partially set below the surrounding ground surface, thus helping the dairy to remain cool and damp in summer. There are raised brick benches set over blocked brick arches on all four walls: surprisingly though, there are no stone surfaces which could be kept cool and clean. They may have been covered with timber planks which could be easily removed. The brick bench along the south wall retains a flagstone base for a stone sink. A hole in the stone connects with a narrow brick drain laid under the brick surface of the bench which runs towards the west wall (Fig. 24). Excavations in 2010 revealed a substantial brick culvert

running away from the west wall of the dairy towards the north-west corner of the complex. The dairy has been extended northwards after 1782 beyond the original north wall, which still retains the outlines of a central door and two flanking windows. The extended section contains identical brick benches.

The laundry (G12) is so-named because the surviving setting for a copper in the north-west corner of the room has a concave base, rather than the convex base required for draining a brewing copper (Sambrook 2011). A large stone 'slop' sink remains against the south wall and was probably used for washing clothes and washing dishes. It may have had a lead lining, if so this has been removed. There would certainly have been a brew-house at New Inn, as attested to by a bill of 1834 for supplying ale to men working in the gardens at Stowe. Brewing probably continued up until the time the inn ceased functioning in the 1850s. There are two surviving settings for coppers (the coppers having been removed by 2005), that in the south-west corner is a 1920s/30s addition used for mashing animal feed. It overlies the site of an earlier copper evidenced by a smoke-blackened brick flue which was exposed when the concrete floor was lifted (Fig. 12). The laundry copper in the opposite north-west corner may well date from the mid 19th century (Fig. 15). The coppers are set either side of a large open fireplace which clearly predates the coppers since the left cheek of the fireplace incorporates a splayed jamb for an earlier bread oven or oven grate associated with the aforementioned brewing copper.

The removal of the concrete floor led to the exposure of the remnants of an earlier brick floor incorporating several flagstones close to the laundry copper. Two brick-lined pits were also discovered at the base of the east wall at a slightly lower level than the brick floor. The best explanation of these is that they are ash pits set below an oven or grate. It is not clear as to what they relate to but it would appear that there was an earlier fireplace built into the east wall.

First floor bedrooms

The first floor of the east range contains a suite of six rooms (F1, F2, F7, F9, F11 and F14, Fig. 16) which would have provided guest bedrooms during the lifetime of the inn. Access to these was gained from either of the two staircases, the south staircase

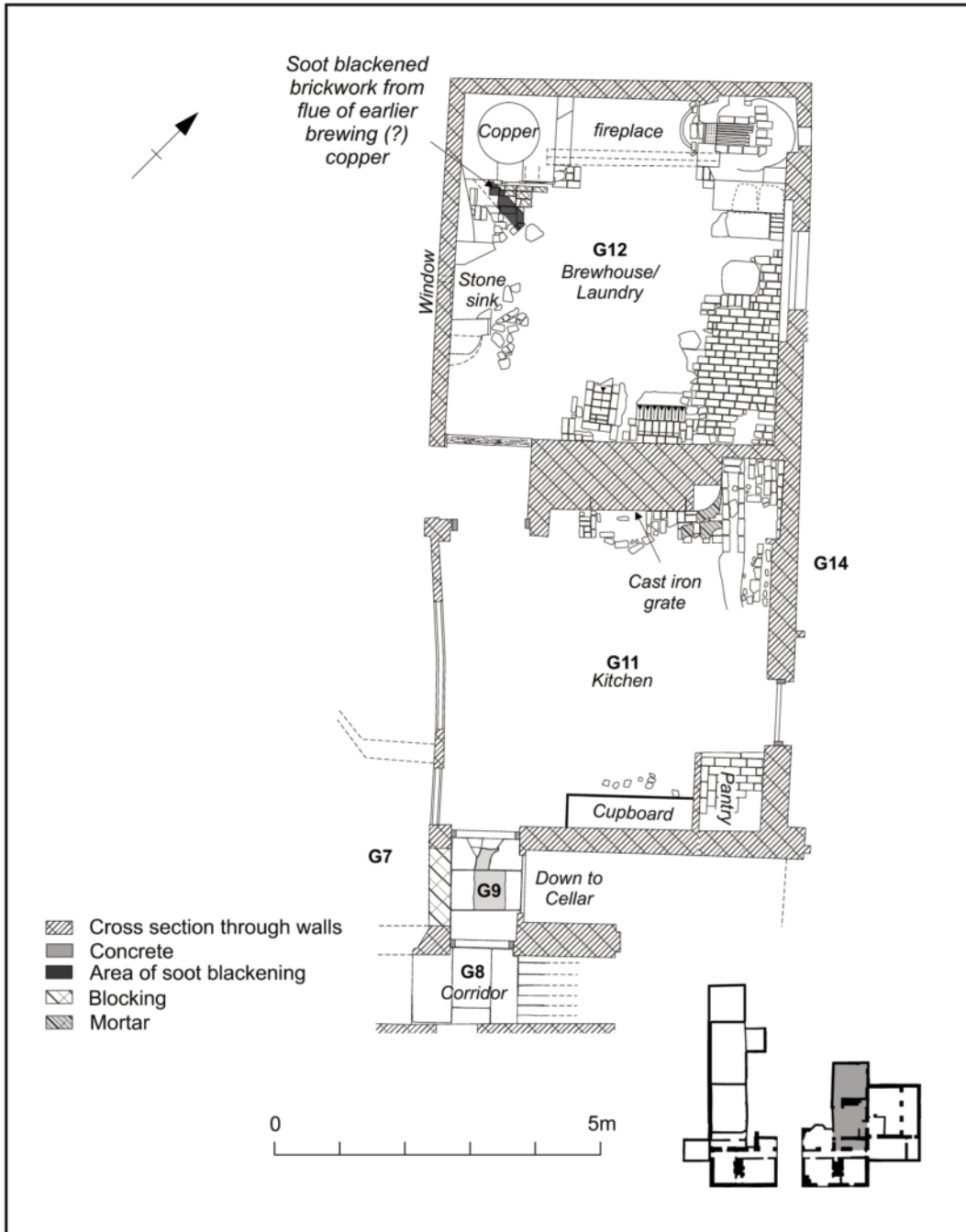


FIGURE 12 Plan of the kitchen and laundry showing features revealed after the removal of existing floors

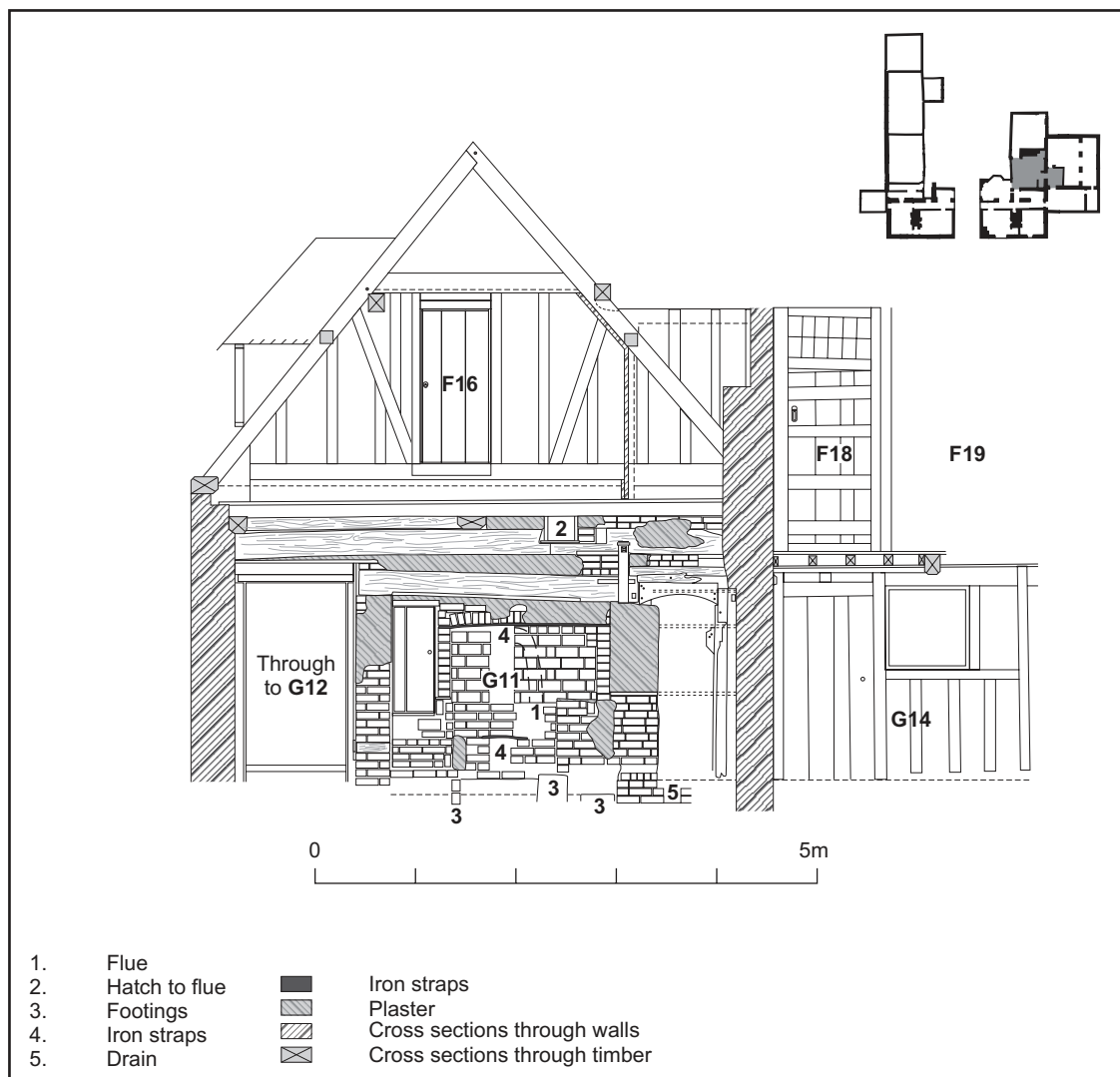


FIGURE 13 Elevation of the west wall of the kitchen

in its earlier dog-leg form turned onto a simple landing within the stair tower outside room F6. Later alterations have masked the original layout of this landing, however, the guest was probably faced with doors leading either into what was originally a single room formed by F1/F2/F5 (the partition is a later insertion), or into a single room formed by F6/F7. The partition dividing F6/F7 is a later insertion probably dating from the 1790s which created a separate passage: prior to this, guests would probably have had to walk through room F6/F7 to get to

rooms F9 and F10. It is uncertain where the landlord and his family slept, but they may have accessed the north end bedroom F14 from the northern staircase. Alternatively they may have had accommodation in the suite of first-floor rooms over the dairy after they were added in *c.* 1782. The single small fireplace in the rooms over the dairy suggests, however, that these rooms are more likely to have been used for accommodating domestic servants.

Only three of the six rooms (F7, F11 and F14)

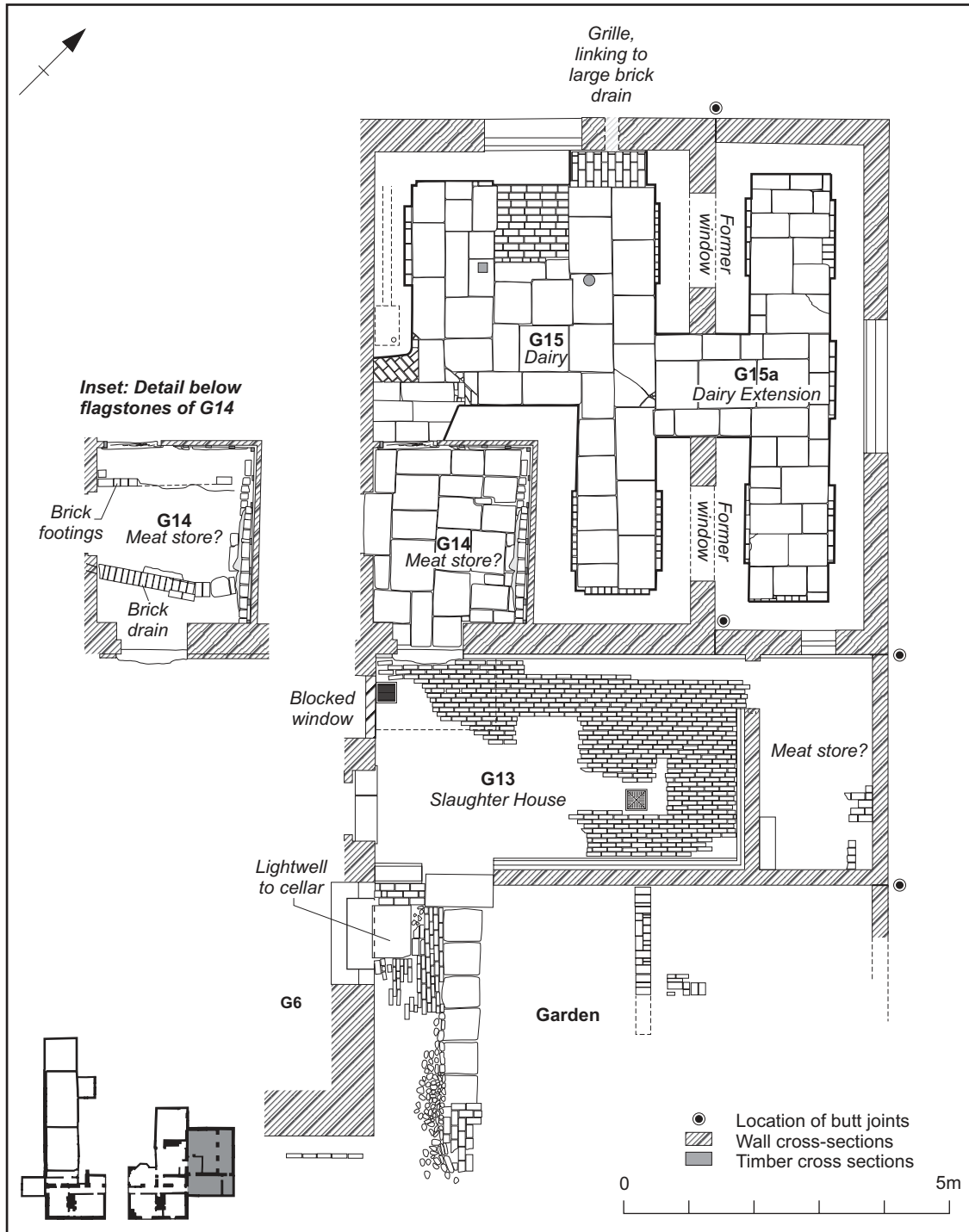


FIGURE 14 Plan of the dairy, meat store and slaughterhouse

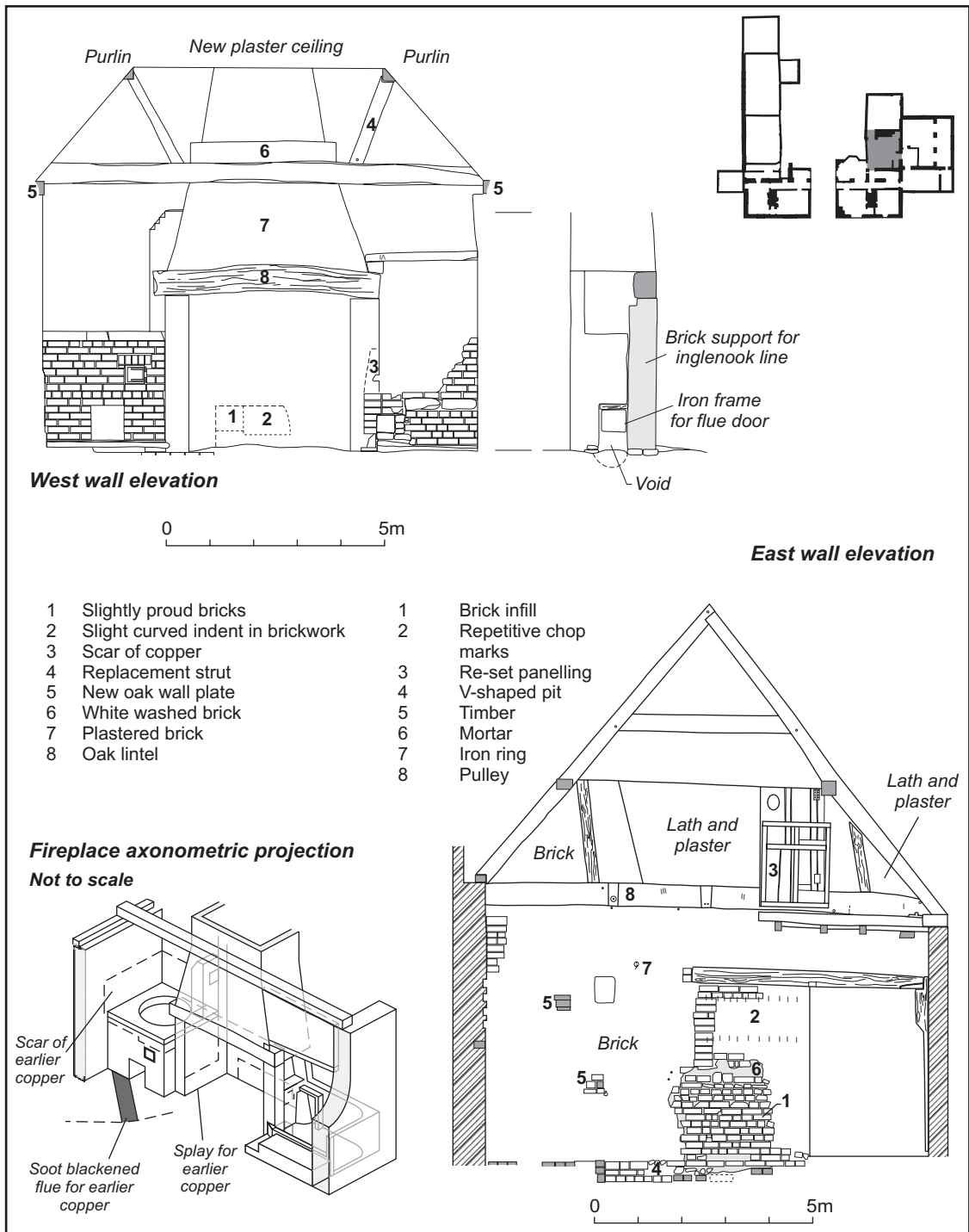


FIGURE 15 Elevations of the east and west walls of the dairy and axonometric view of the copper settings

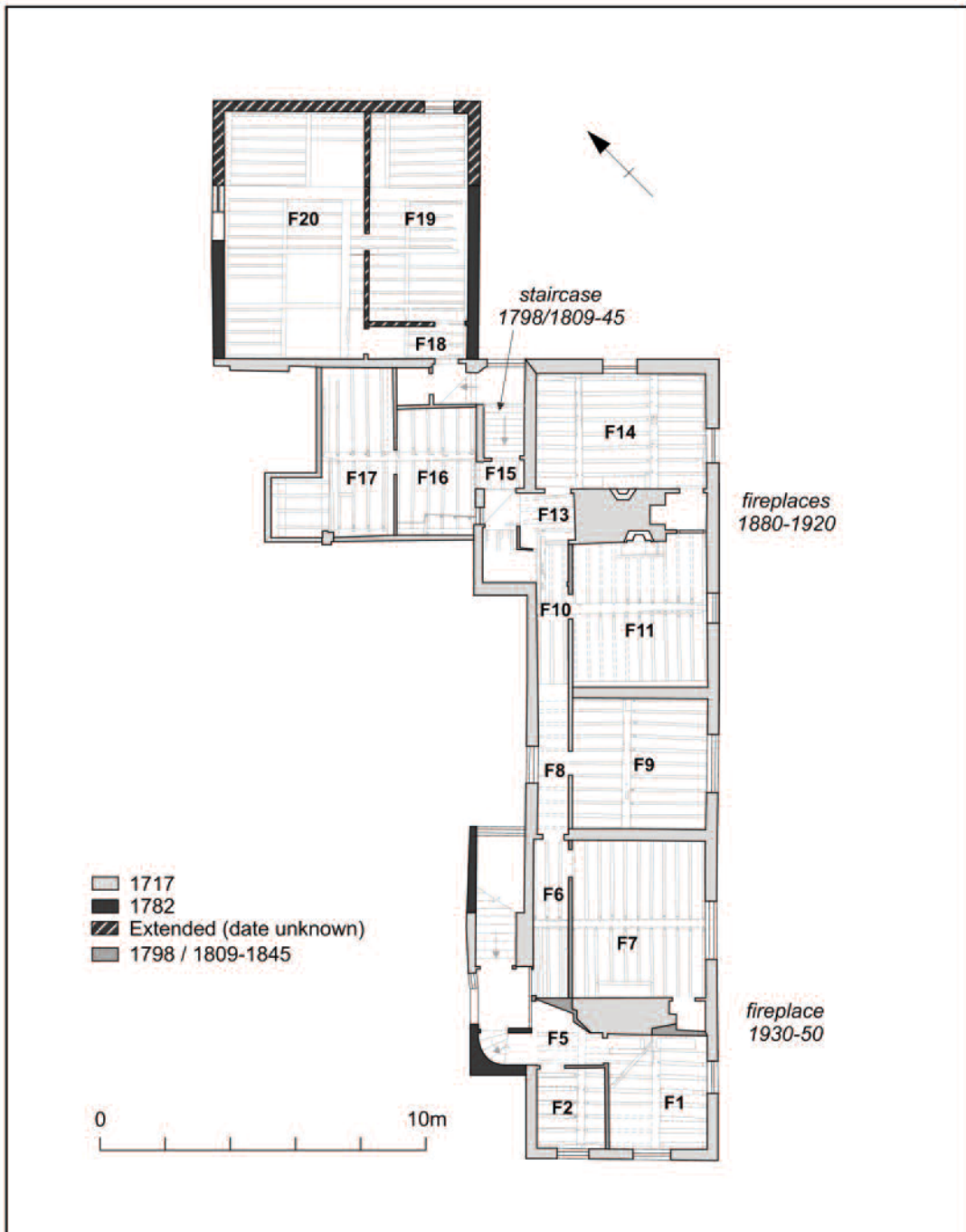


FIGURE 16 Phased plan of the first floor structure

were originally heated. F1 has a small iron grate in the north wall which is a 1930s insertion replacing an earlier larger fireplace. Room F9 lies over the carriage arch and consequently shows an increase in the floor height over the adjacent rooms. It would have been a difficult room to keep warm as it lies over the carriage opening (F7 and F11 lie over heated parlours) and this may explain the absence of a fireplace. It may therefore have seen seasonal use during the warmer months. It may have been designed for the personal servants of visiting guests who would have occupied the principal flanking bedrooms, F7 and F11.

Rooms F6/F7 and F10/F11 were the principal rooms in the suite. F6/F7 would have been paired with F1/F2/F5 and F10/F11/13 would similarly have been paired with F14. The evidence for this pairing comprises the current walk-in wardrobes accessed in the south-east corner of F7 and the same corner of F14. These were probably originally privies/closets which doubled as wig cupboards for powdering wigs. Although they are now only accessed from one side, in both cases the stud wall into rooms F1 and F11 retains evidence of the former doorway from these rooms. They could thus be accessed from either side. The bedrooms at New Inn are otherwise unremarkable in their appearance, with little or no trace of ornamentation other than applied dado rails. Skirtings are a later addition of the 1790s, the original form of the skirting consisting of a black painted band 10 inches in height. F7 has an applied timber circular section cornice but other rooms lack this detail.

Roof frames

On the main east range the roof (Figs 17 and 31) comprises five trusses defining six bays, the four middle ones being almost equal size, flanked by the end ones which are slightly smaller and comprise hipped gables. The frame of each truss rests upon an oak wall-plate which is continuous but for the small section at the junction with the stairs at the top landing in each tower. The wall-plate sections are joined by a distinctive splayed and tabled scarf joint, undersquinted at the point, each joint pegged in four places and containing an integral slot into which was inserted a face driven key on either side to tighten the joint before the pegs were hammered through.

The principal trusses are very plain and comprise a tie beam with a high-level collar simply

tenoned in at the upper purlin level. All along the sides the cheek-piece is in-filled with (often) waney-edged battens onto which lath and plaster has been applied to create a room wall. Where the tie beam meets the wall-plate it appears that the joint is a simple lapped dovetail, although this is not altogether clear since none of these joints have been fully exposed. The truss on either end of the roof incorporates a redundant mortice for an absent top purlin. This indicates either that in the design phase there was a possibility that the main house was to have been fully gabled, not hipped, or that the order for the roof carpenters did not specify a variation on two of the truss assemblies. Between the trusses lie two tenoned purlins on each face of each bay, each turned through 45 degrees to present a vertical side and a horizontal face. The common rafters have been cut to fit each space between the purlins/wall-plate, so they are all relatively short. There is no ridge-pole or plank: the rafters are individually bridled at the apex.

The overall form of the dairy roof is of three pitched roofs forming a U-shape around a central valley (Fig. 18). The valley had survived beneath the roof having been capped with an asphalt-covered flat roof in recent decades. Each of the slightly longer two (of the three) pitched sides comprises three bays plus a hip on the north end, while at the south the assembly springs from the north side of the kitchen range roof. The north side comprises the hipped corner either side of a single bay.

The dairy was extended northwards from its original north wall, at an unrecorded date but before the addition of the slaughterhouse. This extension can be seen in the first floor and in the roof. At first floor level as a butt joint in the brickwork, while plaster marks showing the earlier hip-line both survived. At roof level, careful measurement and observation of redundant mortices etc suggested that the extension had been a single bay, with the old end truss and hip being moved outwards (north) by the same single-bay measurement, and a new truss being introduced into the gap. This sequence is confirmed by the tree-ring dating results.

Each of the pitches incorporates a ridge-plank, while iron bolts have been used in the past to strengthen many of the principal joints around the roof. To both east and west there are timber remains which suggest a dormer window may have been

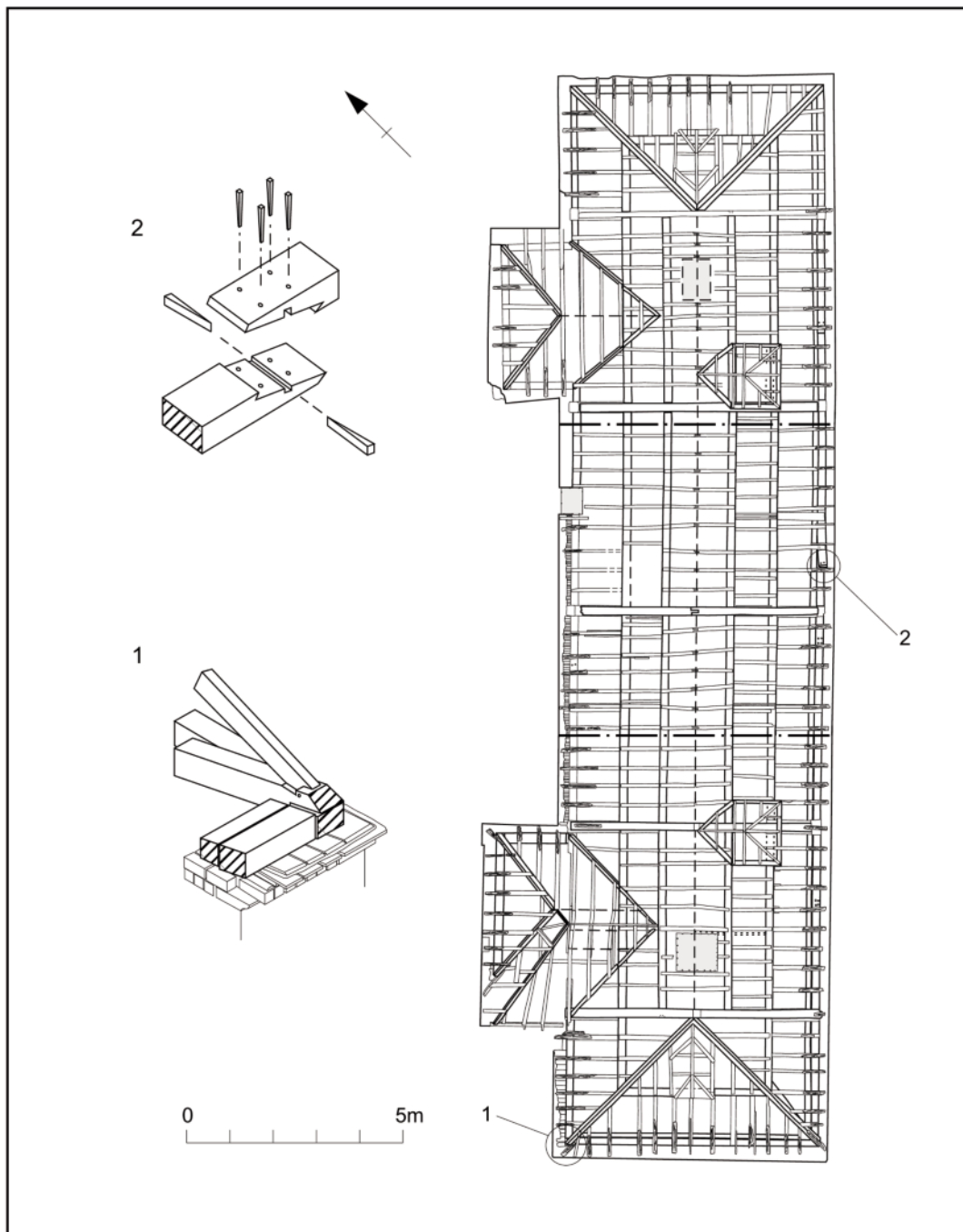


FIGURE 17 Plan of the roof framing of the east range

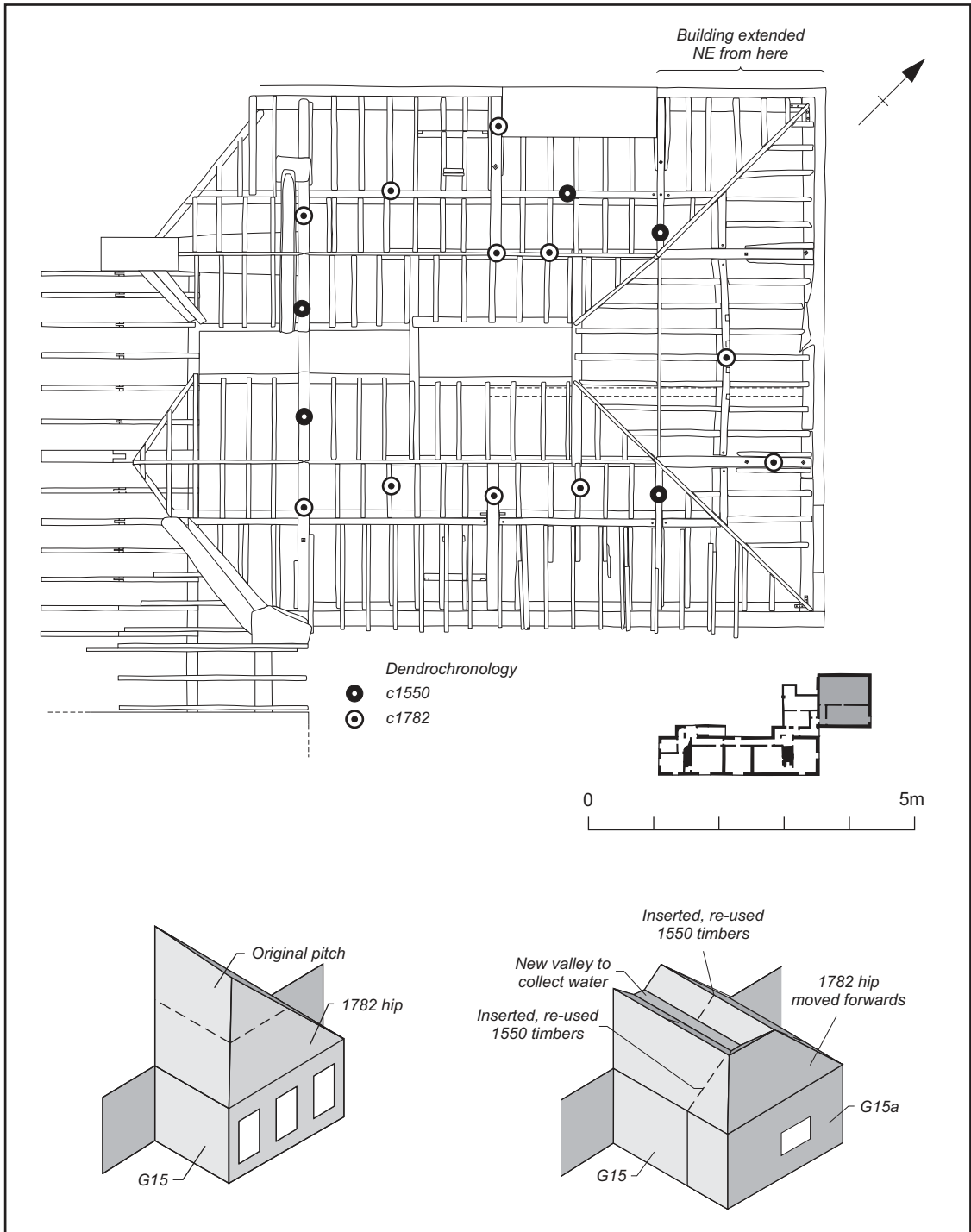


FIGURE 18 Plan and axonometric drawing of the dairy roof showing development

incorporated, but since the first floor rooms F19 and F20 appear to be integral to the layout, these can only have related to the dairy before extension or were cosmetic, merely increasing high level light into the upper rooms.

Stables and Carriage House

Accommodation for horses was provided in one of two stable blocks in the main courtyard. The entire southern range (G18/G19) was given over to this purpose, with an additional hay loft built over G18. Similarly the western half of the north range was given over to stabling (G21). There was a third group of stables associated with the smithy and cottage that lay to the west of the main inn complex. In 2005 the eastern half of the southern stables (G18) retained evidence of a brick floor laid in quadrants, with a grilled drain at the centre of each quadrant (Fig. 8). A timber and lath and plaster wall separated this space from the adjacent room G19. In latter years – probably since the 1950s – G19 had been used as a milking parlour with G20 built as a 20th century extension to house a small floor mounted motor and vacuum pump.

Unfortunately very little internal evidence survives to suggest the arrangement of stalls and the number of horses accommodated. The New Inn was relatively small in scale compared to the larger coaching inns, where upwards of 100 horses might be found, nevertheless it would still need accommodation for the horses of visiting guests. It would also need to provide a change of horse for guests bringing their own post-chaise carriage, as illustrated by the headed bills for 1834 and 1849. The 1742 insurance policy mentions four stable buildings, including two next to the barn which would have been the building on the west side of the southern yard. One of these was probably on the site of the derelict animal shelter on the southern side of the yard which was demolished in 2010. The floor pattern in G18 would suggest four horses, with perhaps a further four or six horses in G19. G21 contains a similar floor pattern to G18, though arranged in three bays rather than four quadrants. It may therefore have accommodated up to six horses. This would make 16 horses, with perhaps a further four horses accommodated in the stable on the southern side of the farm yard.

The Carriage House formed part of the west range of the courtyard. Unfortunately it was declared unsafe in the 1980s and demolished:

consequently the only record of this structure comes from archaeological evidence, with much of the floor and several of the internal partition walls surviving, and from photographs taken in the 1920s and early 1980s. From this evidence it is possible to deduce that it comprised three bays with the section housing the carriage (probably too small to house more than one vehicle) centrally located and open to the full height, *i.e.* open to the roof. The northern bay incorporated a pedestrian passage to the western yard and possibly a small room housing horse tack. Above it was a loading bay suggesting a hay loft. Unfortunately the southern bay is not clearly depicted in the photographs: however, it had a timber-framed wall facing onto the courtyard and therefore could not have provided accommodation for a second carriage. Additional stabling seems more likely.

THE SOUTHERN COURTYARD AND OUTLYING AREAS

In later years the southern yard seems to have had a purely agricultural use. However, as previously noted it may have provided additional stabling on its southern side. It was connected to the main yard by opposing paired doors set in the walls of the stables G18 and G19, also by a narrow pedestrian passageway (G17) at the east end of G18. As a large open space it would have been invaluable for collecting the animal waste generated by the inn before it was spread on the fields. No doubt some also found its way onto the kitchen gardens! On the west side of the yard stood a large timber-framed barn measuring internally 23 × 5.5m. Within this length the southernmost thirteen metres formed a threshing barn. This was of three nominal bays and comprised crop storage bays at either end with flanking double doors built centrally into the longest side walls. The timber frame was built on low brick walls and clad with horizontal clapboards. The clay tile roof did not survive, although elements of the collapsed trusses could be recovered. An aerial photograph of 1979 suggests that the barn had hipped gables, or half-hips at the ends, the north gable also containing a row of five individual windows.

The so-called animal shelter formed a lean-to structure against the south wall of the yard. This unremarkable (Fig. 25) structure resembling a shelter for livestock may have replaced an earlier

stables building. It comprised a five bay structure constructed of a simple but sturdy pegged oak frame, the southern ends of the trusses resting on piers built into the boundary wall, the northern ends resting on the wall-plate carried over upright posts. The front elevation was closed by weatherboarding. The low height of the wall-plate would exclude the use of the building by horses. At the east end of this structure a small square brick building projecting from the southern wall of the yard formed a privy, probably for use by garden staff and those tending the horses.

THE WESTERN YARD

Evidence from the 1843 Tithe map suggests that a third, fully enclosed yard, existed between the west range of the main courtyard and the smithy/cottage complex. Very little evidence for this survived above ground in 2005, with the exception of a short length of brick wall defining the west side of the north wall. It is likely that the west and south sides of the yard were also defined by brick walls, however, excavations for new building foundations did not reach this far across. Entry into the yard was gained via a gateway in the north wall. Evidence from the 1843 estate map suggests that the western yard was originally in two sections with a small livestock building attached to the north wall. The 1880 first edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 5) shows the two yards having merged, with buildings built into the north-west and north-east corners of the enlarged yard.

The north-east corner building still survived in a dilapidated condition in 2005, suggesting it may have been used as accommodation for a single horse. Excavations in 2010 on the west side of the yard revealed the outlines of a brick-built rectangular cistern set into the ground, measuring 2.7 × 1.1m and more than a metre in depth (Fig. 26). The rounded corners were evidently designed to prevent animals harming themselves when drinking from the cistern. The interior was subdivided by a large York stone slab set on edge. Two 7m lengths of brickwork extending north and south from the cistern and incorporating westerly returns appear to correspond with a three-bay structure shown on the 1880 Ordnance Survey map extending into the yard from the west wall. Taken together the archaeological and documentary evidence suggests the working farm attached to the New Inn was exten-

sive and probably had a key role in making the inn relatively self-sufficient. A degree of modernisation and rationalisation of the farm appears to have taken place between 1845 and 1880, perhaps associated with the demise of the inn.

EVIDENCE FOR INTERNAL DECORATION

The historical changes to the layout and design of the New Inn have fortunately involved accretions and minor alterations to earlier structures, consequently significant evidence for earlier decorative schemes, including original paint colours and wall-papers, has been retained. In their original design the two southern parlours (G1 and G2) were painted to their full height in a light yellow distemper with a black painted skirting to a height of 0.25m. The elevation was broken up by a dado rail applied over the plaster. A later layer of lath and plaster secured to vertical battens had then been applied in these two rooms, evidently to combat problems of rising damp (Fig. 19). It is possible that this alteration was part of the 1797 repairs as these included '*plastering the Dining Room*' and '*Stoccoing the Paler*' (Reading University Buc 11/1/22). Removal of this later lath and plaster revealed a light blue paint applied over the original yellow with a greyish stony colour applied below a dado rail (Fig. 28), traces of which were suggested by horizontal 'tide' marks in the paint. As part of this paint scheme a narrow (40mm) border paper had been applied around the door frames, windows, cornice and dado in G1. Traces of this hand-printed paper decorated with tongues of orange and blue on a black background survived (Fig. 27) and have been reproduced to recreate the 1790s appearance of these two rooms. Narrow glue marks indicated that a narrow border paper had been similarly applied in parlour G2 (Fig. 28).

Painted black skirtings characterised the remaining rooms of the inn, with off-white distempers applied to the first floor rooms. Timber skirtings were probably not introduced until the 1790s, though the dado rails seem to have been an original feature. Room decoration was otherwise plain, lacking decorative elements which one might have expected to be applied to ceilings and cornices. Parlour G5 retained evidence for an unusual fake marbled paint applied to the north wall above the fireplace opening. This consisted of a base coat of black paint to which a white lead-based paint had

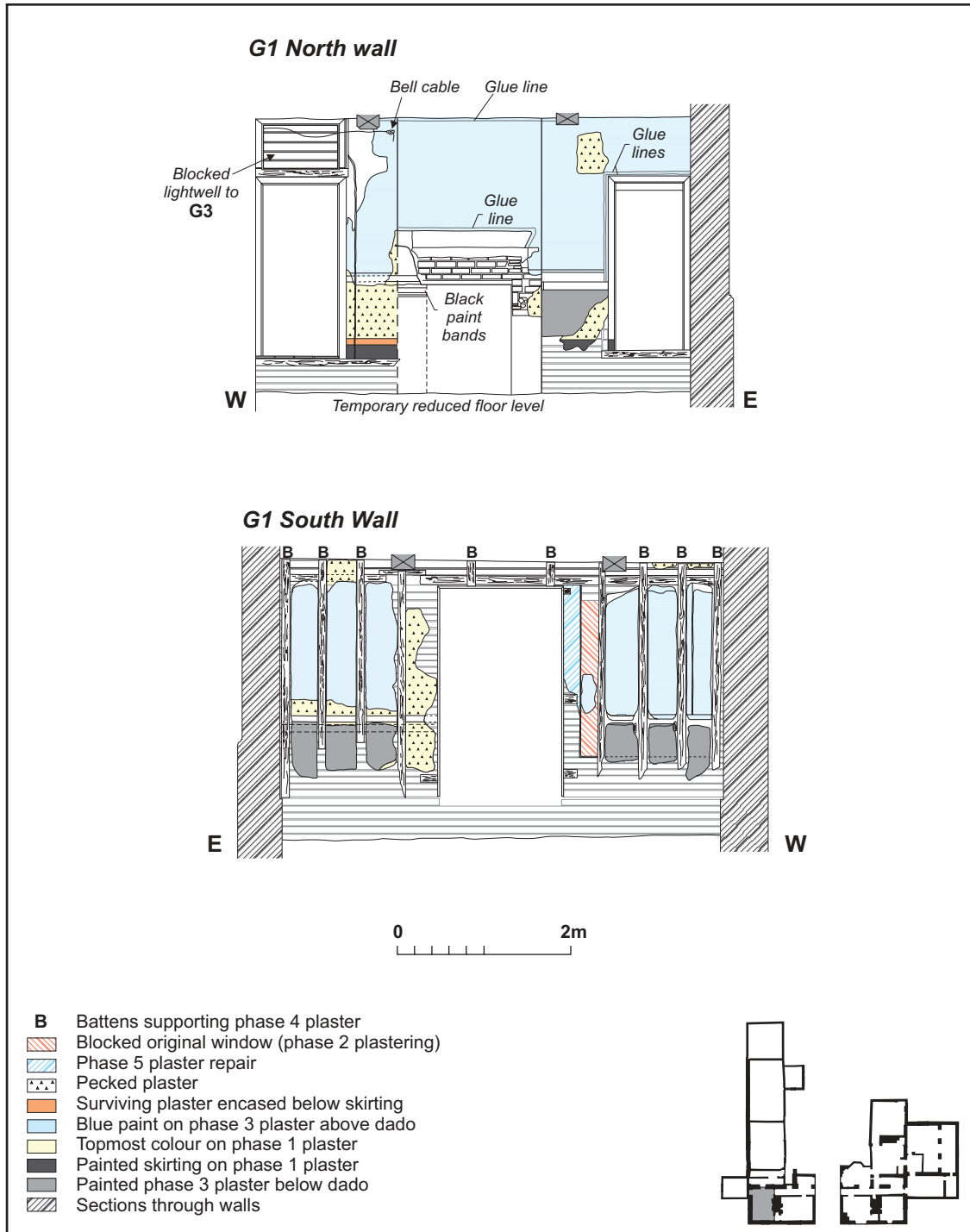


FIGURE 19 Elevations of the north and south wall of parlour G1 showing evidence of decorative schemes

East (main front) facade



East (main front) facade, interpretation

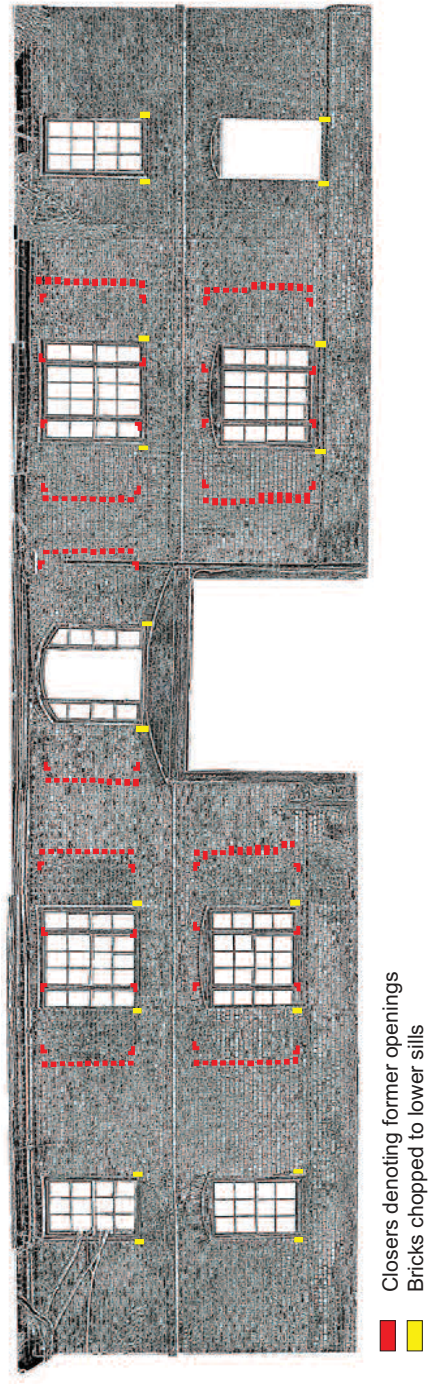


FIGURE 20 Principal elevation of the east range showing outlines of original window openings



FIGURE 21 Carriage arch showing blocked original doorway to parlour G5 and meat safe



FIGURE 24 Remains of stone-lined sink and drain in the dairy



FIGURE 22 Parlour G5 fireplace showing false-jointed lining on 1790s plaster



FIGURE 25 The animal shelter in the farmyard



FIGURE 23 North wall of Tap Room G7



FIGURE 26 Brick-lined cistern in the western yard



FIGURE 27 Remains of 1790s wallpaper in parlour G1



FIGURE 29 Wine bins in the south cellar retaining numbered bays



FIGURE 28 North wall of parlour G2 showing 1790s paint scheme



FIGURE 30 Original surviving treads for winding staircase in the southern tower



FIGURE 31 East range of the roof (looking north) after removing the tiles



FIGURE 32 *c.*1720 wallpaper from Erdigg with red circle illustrating location of New Inn fragment

been applied as a series of flecks, presumably by flicking the paint from a long-haired brush. As traces of this scheme were found on the 1790s partition wall it can be assumed that it was introduced after the passage walls were inserted.

Fortuitously New Inn retained evidence for a number of decorative wallpapers. A total of 62 papers were recovered, consisting of 53 main field papers and 9 borders (Bush 2011). The history of wallpaper manufacture is very much represented in the samples collected. They range from the early wallpapers, hand block printed in distemper, on to pre-joined sheets of hand-made paper, taxed as luxury items, through to the 20th-century machine-printed distempers. Design and fashions can likewise be traced through the surviving fragments. The size of the fragments varies from some full pattern repeats of 20th century papers to very small pieces where just a few centimetres have survived around door and window frames and at the tops of the walls. The survival of some papers is the result

of their concealment behind later layers of lath and plaster or behind applied skirtings and dado rails. The walk-in cupboard in F14 has a number of significant early 19th century wallpapers: these are no doubt end rolls as they can be traced elsewhere in the building. The earliest paper is a fragment of a block-printed paper found beneath one of the attic floors. It is decorated with an intricate floral pattern embellished with pomegranates and probably dates from 1715–20. It is not clear why it was introduced to New Inn, especially as it was found beneath what were probably servant's quarters. Only two other examples of this pattern are known to exist, including a complete sheet at Erdigg in North Wales (Fig. 32). Papers of this period were printed on single sheets, at considerable cost, and were often reused as they were attached to the walls with tacks rather than glue. A second early paper found in F6 dates from the reign of George I or II (1714–60) as it carries a tax stamp. One of the fragments from cupboard F14, dating from *c.* 1800, has

the very rare remains of a maker's mark 'Made and stained by W Harwood'.

In addition to the wallpapers, sections of old newspaper have been used as linings to cover over cracks and unevenness behind the papers. They include an 1883 copy of the Bucks Herald and Gazette found behind a picture rail in parlour G2, and recycled fragments of card from a notebook with the words 'New Inn' found filling a void in the cupboard of F14, placed there to provide a better surface for the overlying wallpaper.

EVIDENCE FROM RECOVERED ARTEFACTS

The supervised recovery and recording of artefacts from sealed spaces below floorboards and behind panelling provided valuable evidence for activities carried out in certain rooms. Such evidence can provide an indication of status and use of rooms. It can also provide a link with people who may otherwise go unrecorded. Such items may be the consequence of casual loss or deliberate placement, a child's toy secretly concealed behind a piece of loose skirting or an object imbued with some sort of emotional or ritualistic significance. By way of illustration a group of letters written in Italian and recovered from a plaster ceiling over room G4 provide evidence of a family that was living in the southern half of the east range in the 1960s. The removal of tongue and groove panelling attached to the north staircase (G10) revealed items 'posted' through a small gap in the panelling. They included two brass thimbles, a 19th century lid from a box of 'Antibilious Pills' prepared by Geo. Street, Chemist of Buckingham, and perhaps of particular relevance to the inn, a small folded scrap of paper recording the provision of 2 quarters of oats and 6 pence of beans to 'Mr Chetwood's Horse' and supper and ale to 'Mr Prestmajor's (?) servant'. There is very little documentation relating to the day-to-day workings of New Inn and such evidence is therefore of great value in recording what was provided, and at what cost.

Buttons, pins, needles, and hat pins are a commonplace find from beneath floorboards. Three lace bobbins point to lace-making taking place in the first floor rooms, perhaps after the demise of the inn. A number of coins recovered

from beneath floorboards relate to the commercial aspect of the inn, most of these coming from the Tap Room (G7), suggesting this was where payments were made for services received and possibly confirming the suggested money drop-box in the north wall. The coins range in date from a 1797 Cartwheel penny through to modern post-decimalisation coins (1971).

The presence of children living in the inn is evidenced by a bone nit comb and playthings, including a miniature china cup and saucer, clay and glass marbles, and several wooden animals, perhaps originating from a Noah's Ark set. Broken clay pipes are another common item. Most of these came from the rooms over the dairy (F19 and F20). They include several 19th century bowls and stem pieces and suggest that this was a smoking room, perhaps used by domestic servants rather than by visiting guests.

Room F7 produced 2 off-cuts from an eight-sided piece of oak timber measuring 80 mms across and two smaller pieces of octagonal-section timber measuring 45 and 40 mms across. These appear to be carpentry waste, possibly blanks from which thin wedges were cleaved off to be used as packing under floorboards?

Several of the clay tiles from the roof were noted to carry interesting inscriptions applied to the wet clay. These have already been commented on in an earlier article in *Records of Bucks* (2008) but in summary one contains a short poem reading 'For slat or tyle they will ware best and you all night may sleep at rest' whilst a second carries a series of tally marks. The third carries – inexplicably – the word 'Cunt'!

DISCUSSION

Several years of archive research, supported by investigation of the fabric of the New Inn and its surroundings, have led to an in-depth understanding. Situated at the convergence of several minor local roads, it was never a coaching inn but seems to have been built to fulfil a set of estate requirements. Primarily it was built to house an increasing number of guests visiting Lord Cobham's gardens. Cobham appears to have been mindful of the opportunities for polite tourism presented by his gardens and as their reputation increased, so did the number of visitors. Many of these visitors would have travelled what were then

great distances and would have required accommodation and refreshment. With a little stretch of imagination one can imagine Lord Percival or Dr Wilson sitting in one of the parlours reading up from the Seeley guidebook before making their visit to the gardens the following day. Cobham may therefore have built the inn for commercial gain as well as prestige, providing accommodation for garden visitors and perhaps also tradesmen involved with developing the gardens and house. No doubt it also served as a hostelry for local trade and for travellers on the Radclive-Towcester highway, with some attempt made at separating the polite and less polite patrons in the two groups of parlours.

It is clear from the few advertisements placed in the Northamptonshire Mercury that the inn provided a range of services extending beyond food, drink and accommodation. Post chaise carriages and horses were available for hire. The newspaper advertisements confirm that auctions of local property were held at New Inn (1809), as were sales of grass seed and trefoil (1733). The 1778 bill for entertainment confirms that functions were hosted at the inn and it is possible that one of the first floor rooms may have been used as an assembly room where local meetings could be held.

Unfortunately the prestige and reputation of the inn – in modern day speak what we would now call ‘visitor satisfaction’ (!) – seems to have been somewhat lacking. John Wasey’s offer that ‘...all Gentlemen, Ladies, and Others may receive as good Entertainment and kind Usage as at any Place in the said County...’ does not seem to have matched expectations. Perhaps, as with many things in life, it is the complainants who are heard most loudly! Compared to the larger coaching inns such as those in Stony Stratford or Amersham the New Inn would have been cramped and inconvenient with an insufficient number of modest-sized rooms lacking any privacy. The overall reputation of the establishment was not aided by the level of service and quality of fare that the visitor may have been entitled to receive. It was not until the improvements of the 1790s, corresponding with a change of tenancy, that the reputation of the inn changed. The Nattes view of 1809 reflects these alterations and conforms to the description of a ‘snug farmhouse’ given by Mary Sabilla Novello.

The decline of the inn was probably due to a number of factors, though primarily a decline in the

number of garden visitors. The Seeley guidebooks were still being produced until 1827, implying that garden visiting was continuing, though perhaps not at the level of the second half of the 18th century. The bankruptcy of the 2nd Duke of Buckingham impacted on the gardens as in the 1850s large areas of woodland planted as part of the 18th century garden design were felled and sold, though having said this, new areas of the gardens were being developed, hence the sale of ale to men working at the Palladian Bridge in 1834. The closure of the Radclive-Towcester highway in 1860 would have removed much commercial traffic; no doubt by this date the somewhat remote location of the inn would have mitigated against its prosperity. Conversion to a working farm followed, though in truth the farming aspect of the property may already have superseded its operation as a hostelry.

Inevitably, whilst a new understanding of the inn has evolved, a number of questions also remain unanswered. The archaeological evidence points towards the southern parlours as being of a higher status. However, it is not clear whether these served specific functions such as dining rooms, or whether they were for the exclusive use of better quality guests. Possibly their function and status changed over time, especially following the alterations of the 1790s. We do not know how the bedrooms were used and configured. Were they hired out as suites or as individual rooms? The probability is that they were used in a flexible manner depending on the demands of the guests. At least one of them probably served as a function room. The status of the attic rooms remains unresolved, as does their relationship to the first floor rooms. It is also uncertain as to where the innkeeper and their family lived, was it in the main range of the inn, sharing the same spaces as the guests and drinkers, or was it in self-contained accommodation in the north range? Questions remain as to the number of servants employed. The answers to some of these questions will come from comparative studies of other inns of this period. Comparative research with other inns linked to large estates may also prove fruitful and may determine the prime motivation of the owners responsible for their construction.

The Trust’s acquisition and restoration of the New Inn has seen it reunited with the Stowe estate, returning it to its original purpose at the heart of the gardens. It provides an entry to the gardens and a place of welcome and hospitality to visitors as it

would have done in the 18th century. Guide books are available, as they would have been in the 18th century. Beds may no longer be available and a tractor-drawn land-train now fulfils the same role as the horse-drawn post-chaise carriages hired in the 18th century. One would hope that the quality of fare and the welcome has changed somewhat from that meted out to guests in the 1720s and 1730s! Their aspirations may have changed, with the pursuit of pleasure as important as an informative and illustrious experience that the 18th century visitor may have expected. Nevertheless the inn once again offers a spectacular entry to the gardens using the route taken by our 18th century predecessors.

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