
John Edwards' Warehouse Menai Bridge



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prepared by
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'John Edwards' Warehouse', Menai Bridge

Prepared for Gareth Cleaver, Menai Bridge

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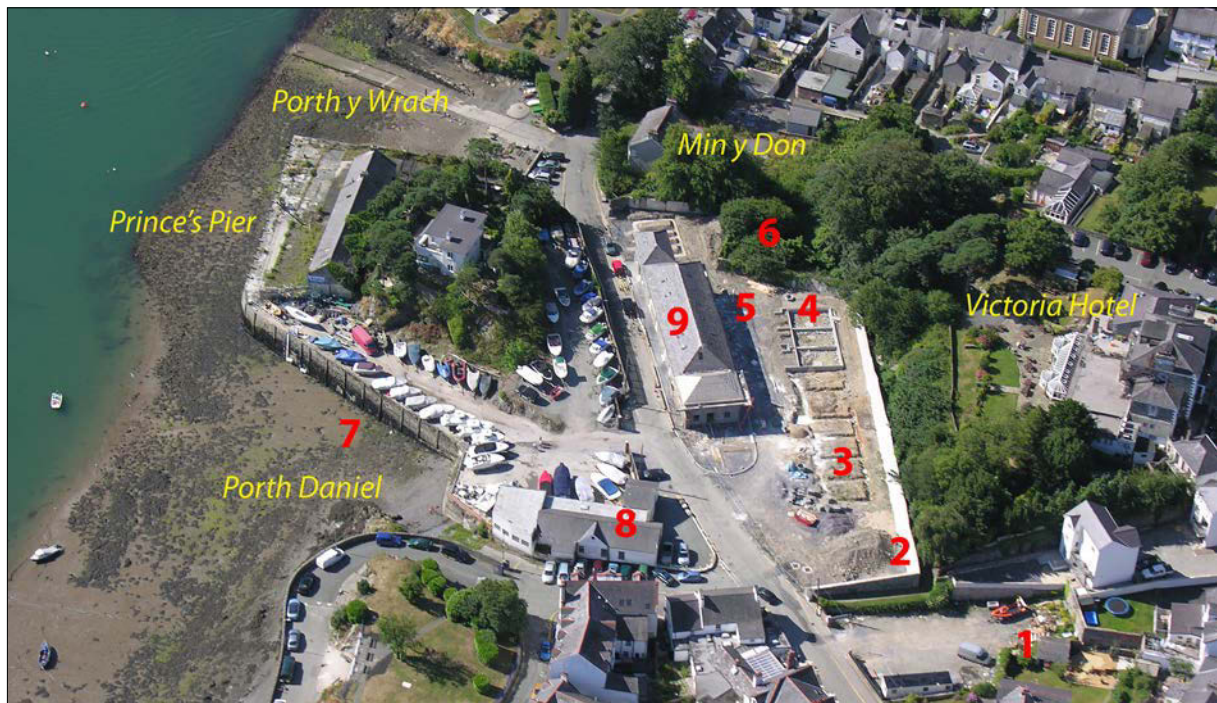
with a report on a watching brief and excavation by John Roberts

This report presents the results of a measured survey, watching brief and excavation undertaken in advance, and during the course, of the redevelopment of a property on the Menai Straits shoreline at Water Street, Menai Bridge.

The property, formerly in the possession of William Roberts and Company, comprises a woodyard and associated storage and machine sheds and, in particular, a large double warehouse (Listed Grade II) fronting Water Street. More recently, the warehouse had been used for storage by the University of Wales, Bangor.

In 2004 an assessment was undertaken by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust within the area of the woodyard, associated buildings and warehouse and, on the seaward side of Water Street, a wharf and additional structures used for machine sawing. The 2004 assessment provided descriptive information and advice to the planning process on the archaeological implications of a proposed redevelopment of the site and made recommendations in respect of certain features which are listed below.

Arising from these recommendations, a programme of measured survey and assessment excavation was required as a condition of approval for the development to proceed. Measured survey was required in respect of the warehouse, a listed building. Excavation was required in the central area of the woodyard where former nineteenth century coaching stables, serving the George Inn to Porth y Wrach 'Bangor Ferry', were believed to have stood.



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John Edwards' Warehouse

Location and Topographical Setting

The site under consideration stands on the Anglesey shoreline of the Menai Straits on the eastern side of the headland of Cerrig y Borth at Menai Bridge (Porthaethwy). The rocky headland rises to around 25m OD, dropping relatively steeply to the waterline on the south and south-western sides and more gently on the eastern side. The outcrop of hard schist rock which forms the headland constricts the channel of the Menai Straits at this point to 150m at low tide and 260m at high tide, the narrowest along the length of the Straits. This hard rock has also created a scatter of small islands in the stream, both south-west and north-east of the headland itself. Prominent rock outcrops also occur on the shoreline. To the north-east the shoreline is indented and some of these embayments, in particular, Porth Daniel and Porth y Wrach, have been used as convenient landings for small boats and contribute to the importance of the location as a long-standing ferry crossing.

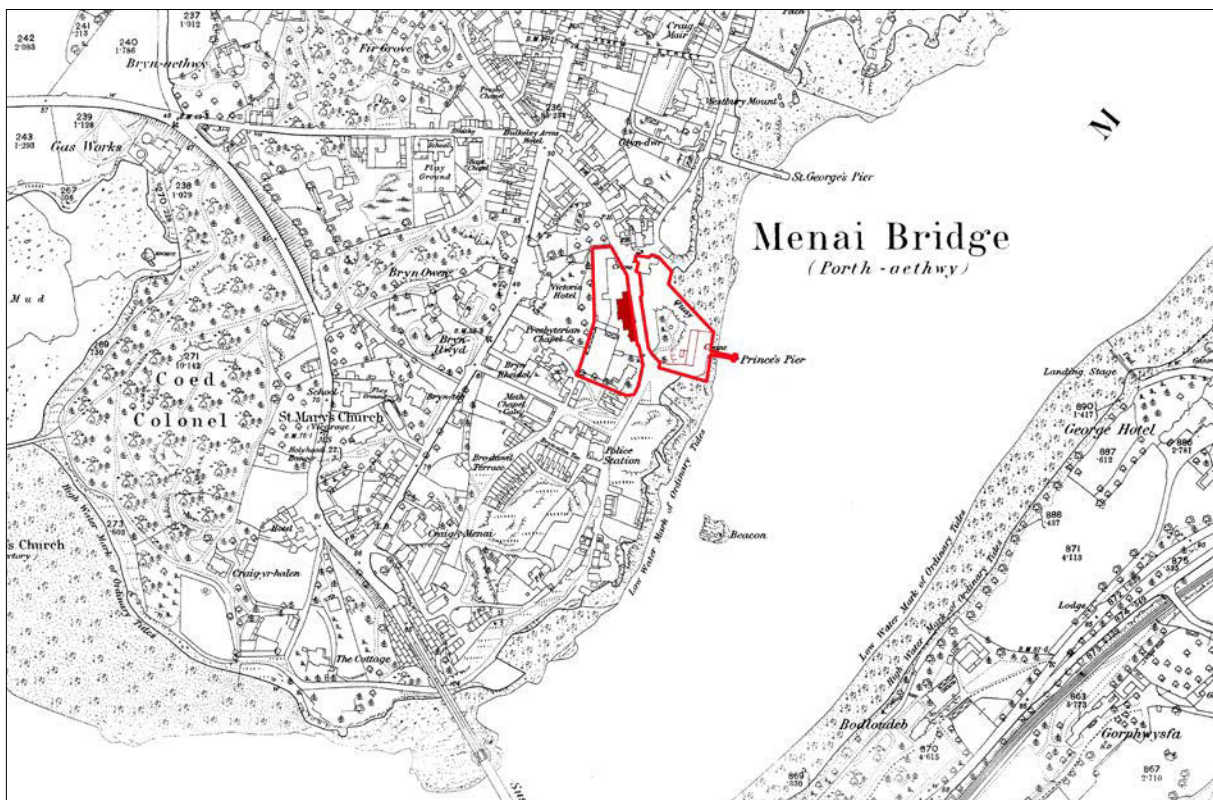
The development site is on the eastern flank of this headland, extending eastward, over a distance of approximately 100m from the 10m contour to the

waterfront. The structures on the western side of the area are terraced into the rocky slope. The site comprises a complex of commercial buildings, yards and a tidal wharf flanking the road now known as Water Street or, in Welsh, Stryd y Paced and formerly more commonly referred to as Packet Street.

To the west of Water Street, the development is bordered on the north by a private house, gardens and sheds, formerly the site of the Star Inn. On its west side the site shares a common boundary with the grounds of the Victoria Hotel. On its south side the site shares a boundary with the grounds of Min y Don, a private house (now demolished). On its east side, the site is bordered by the wharf - flanked on its north side by The Liverpool Arms public house, the Pier House and by Porth Daniel, an inlet of the Menai Straits and on its south side, Y Bonc, a prominent rock outcrop on which stands a private house. Alongside the Straits, stands the Prince's Pier, a warehouse and the present Pier Master's House.

The red outline marks the area of the warehouses, woodyard and wharf. The warehouse is further highlighted in dark red.

Fig.1 Location



Historical Background and context

For close to a thousand years, perhaps longer, the Porthaethwy ferry maintained the means for travellers to cross between the mainland of Caernarfonshire and Anglesey on that reach of the Straits. This was not an incidental crossing, it was a strategic and valuable resource. During the Age of the Princes the ferry was in the hands of the freeholders of the medieval township of Porthaethwy (much later to become Menai Bridge). Notwithstanding, the Prince ensured that there would also be a royal interest in this important ferry and so placed an enclave of his own demesne tenants at Porthaethwy, sharing the costs and the profits with the freeholders.

Much later, at the very end of the sixteenth century, a train of events, which included the transfer and acquisition of grants and Crown leases, brought the lease of the Porthaethwy ferry into the hands of the Williams family where it remained until 1794. At that date Holland Williams, the leaseholder, bought out the fee farm and Crown rent absolutely.

In 1686 Lord Clarendon, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, famously remarked, with reference to Anglesey, that 'never was, or can, come a coach into that part of the country'. But all this was to change during the following century. Road improvements, particularly round Penmaenmawr and across Anglesey in the 1760s, encouraged wheeled traffic to venture further west towards Bangor and the Menai Straits. The road over Penmaenmawr was turnpiked in 1765 and, after 1808, coaches travelled to the Straits from London via Shrewsbury, Llangollen and Capel Curig.

The Bishop of Bangor, who owned the important Porthesgob ferry, plying out from the Garth headland, saw an opportunity to expand his operation. In 1768 he established an Inn on a tenement in his possession at Cae'r Glowr. Litigation ensued, however, and the Bishop was ousted as an intruder for operating within Porthaethwy water. Depositions taken as early as 1588 testified that the north-eastern limit of the Porthaethwy water and its corollary, the south-western limit of Porthesgob water, lay at Porth Daniel, - the inlet where the Davies family were later to build their timber wharf.

From about 1777, the tenement at Cae'r Glowr was developed as the George and Dragon Inn under the management of William Jackson. This became known as Bangor Ferry and took full advantage of trackway access to the shore on both sides on the Straits. On the Anglesey side the landing was the inlet of Porth y Wrach, a good wide slipway. Coaching stables were established at the George and Dragon on the Caernarfonshire side and within

a very short distance of Porth y Wrach on the Porthaethwy shoreline (again, within what was to become the curtilage of the Richard Davies/William Roberts woodyard).

These were the ferry's busiest years. The last full year in operation, in 1825, saw 20,000 passengers and 800 carriages cross the Straits at Porthaethwy. The operators, however, had not risen to the challenge and there were several complaints of sharp practice and poor maintenance, in respect of both the ferry boats and the Porthaethwy ferry house. The Act of Union of January 1801, had provided a catalyst for action and an alternative solution. Politicians now, as well as the general public, required safe and speedy connections between London and Dublin. The solution did not come immediately but the result was an engineering masterpiece – the new London to Holyhead post road and, more specifically, the Menai Suspension Bridge, both designed and engineered by Thomas Telford. Construction of the bridge was begun in 1818 and completed in January 1826. The immediate impact on Porthaethwy was dramatic.

Developments after 1826

The population of the parish of Llandysilio in 1811 totalled 300. The headland of Cerrig y Borth was intractable common land. The principal activity on the headland concerned the operation and servicing of the ferries. The only road of consequence was that which hugged the shoreline of the Straits, providing access to landings, and struck north from Jackson's coaching stables at Porth y Wrach towards central Anglesey and Holyhead. By 1821, with the bridge works underway, the population had risen to 493. At the height of activity, four hundred men were at work on the bridge and at the limestone quarries near Penmon. Lodgings were provided, shops opened to supply groceries and hardware, men stayed and married locally.

In 1826 the suspension bridge opened and the Porthaethwy ferry closed. The owner of the ferry, Miss Silence Williams, was compensated in the sum of £26,394 for a notional loss of thirty years future revenue. In consequence of the compensation, the ferry lands along the shoreline became Crown property. In June 1814 an Act for Inclosing Lands in the Parishes of Llandysilio and Llaneilian had been drawn up. The Act did not come into force immediately because of uncertainties regarding the land required for the suspension bridge and the new road. The principal recipients, however, included the Earl of Uxbridge (later the Marquis of Anglesey) and John Price of Cadnant. On the north-west side of the shoreline road, the now-redundant

Jackson's coaching stables, near Porth y Wrach, were shown to have been an intake of the common. The adjacent land, also shown to be part of the common, is identified as a component of the Marquis of Anglesey's allotment under the Act. These two parcels of land were to become the nucleus of the woodyard and warehouse operation on Water Street. In 1827 the enclosure award was enacted.

Almost all the dwellings and structures which stood along the shoreline of Cerrig y Borth in the first decade of the nineteenth century were associated with the operation of the ferry and the lodging and stabling of customers and horses. The large influx of population associated with the construction of the Menai Suspension Bridge had a very significant impact on the development of the town. Commercial opportunities presented themselves. Waterfront land became available and a new spirit of entrepreneurial enthusiasm was in the air. The business operation of one family firm, Davies and Sons, made a very significant contribution towards the growth of Menai Bridge during the nineteenth century. Messrs Davies and Sons were based on the site which is now the subject of this assessment and survey.

Richard Davies senior was born in Llangristiolus in 1778. He established a very successful general store in Llangefni. He soon appreciated the potential of selling at a discount, for cash, at the point of import. This philosophy was embraced by his sons. Richard Davies senior's watchword in business was: 'un pris a dim coel, y pris isaf ac arian parod' 'one price and no credit, the lowest price and ready money'. His business sense led him to identify locations where goods could be imported by sea and where there existed a market on the spot. His first venture in this direction was to establish a base at Red Wharf Bay in the 1820s, where limestone-quarry workers provided the market. By the late 1820s, however, he was trading in Menai Bridge.

A lease of 25 April 1828 made between the Marquis of Anglesey and Richard Davies of Llangefni, shopkeeper, identifies the circumstances: 'In consideration of the said Richard Davies having heretofore at his own costs and charges, erected, built and completed a warehouse and timber yard with other improvements upon part of the land hereinafter demised ... being formerly a part of a certain common called Cerrig y Borth, situate in the parish of Llandesilio ... together with the said warehouse timber yard and appurtenances as the same are more particularly delineated and described in the map or plan thereof in the margin of these presents and being now in the occupation and possession of the said Richard Davies ...'. The lease was for three lives and thirty-one concurrent years.

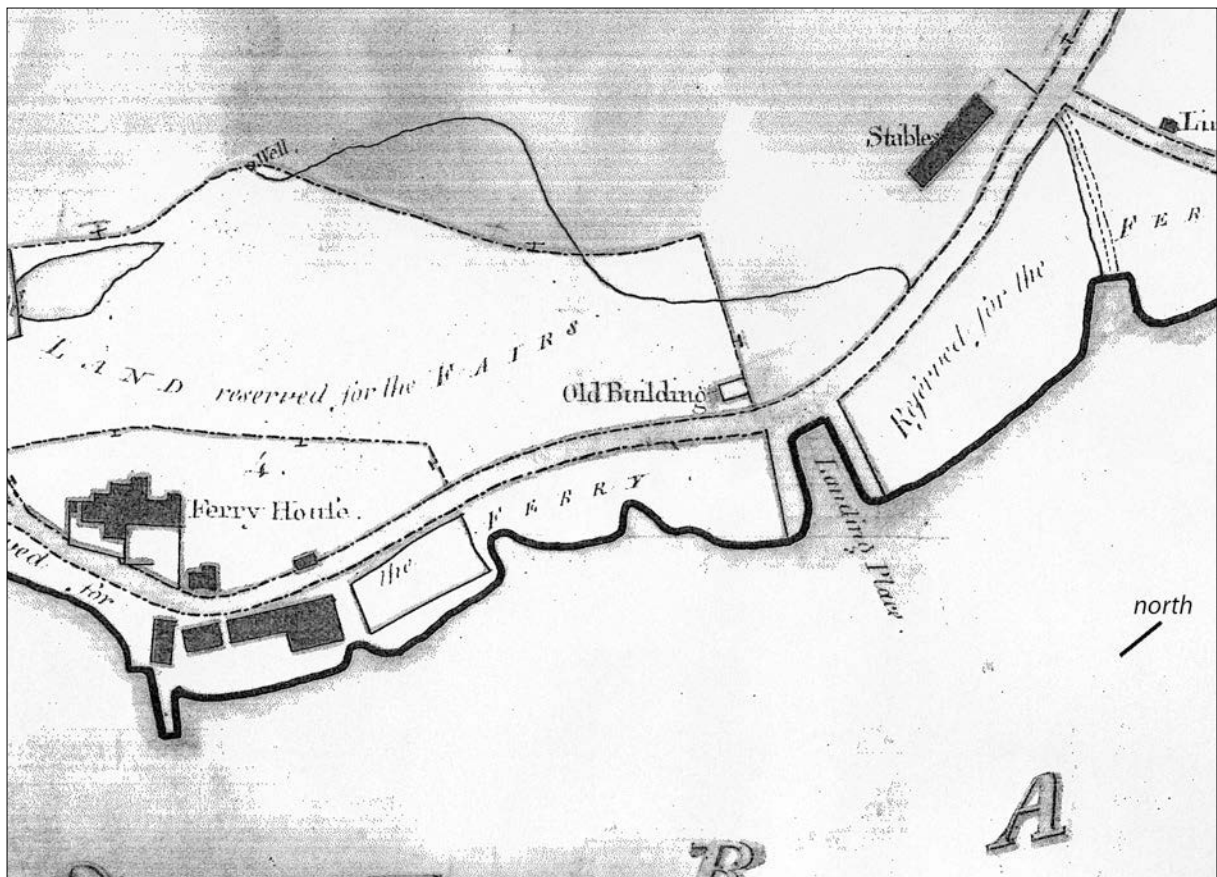
The plan identifies the plot as immediately adjacent and to the west and north-west of Porth y Wrach. It formed part of the award out of the common land to the Marquis of Anglesey in 1827. It is clear, however, that this plot had been encroached upon by Davies before this date and that it may have been enclosed some years previously. William Alexander Provis' survey of the Straits, undertaken during his tenancy as resident engineer for Telford during the construction of the suspension bridge, was published in 1828. However, the survey may be as early as 1818. This plan shows an enclosure along the western side of the highway that was to become Packet Street, and between the southern boundary of Jackson's posting stables and the northern boundary of the land reserved for the ferries. It does not, however, show any buildings on the site. The warehouse which is shown on Davies' lease of 1828 and which, according to the lease, had already been built, is located in a position now occupied by a part of the range of warehouses known as the John Edwards Warehouse and the William Roberts woodyard.

In the words of Henry Rees Davies, grandson of Richard Davies of Llangefni, pencilled in his notebook before a St. David's Day speech in Menai Bridge, in 1913:

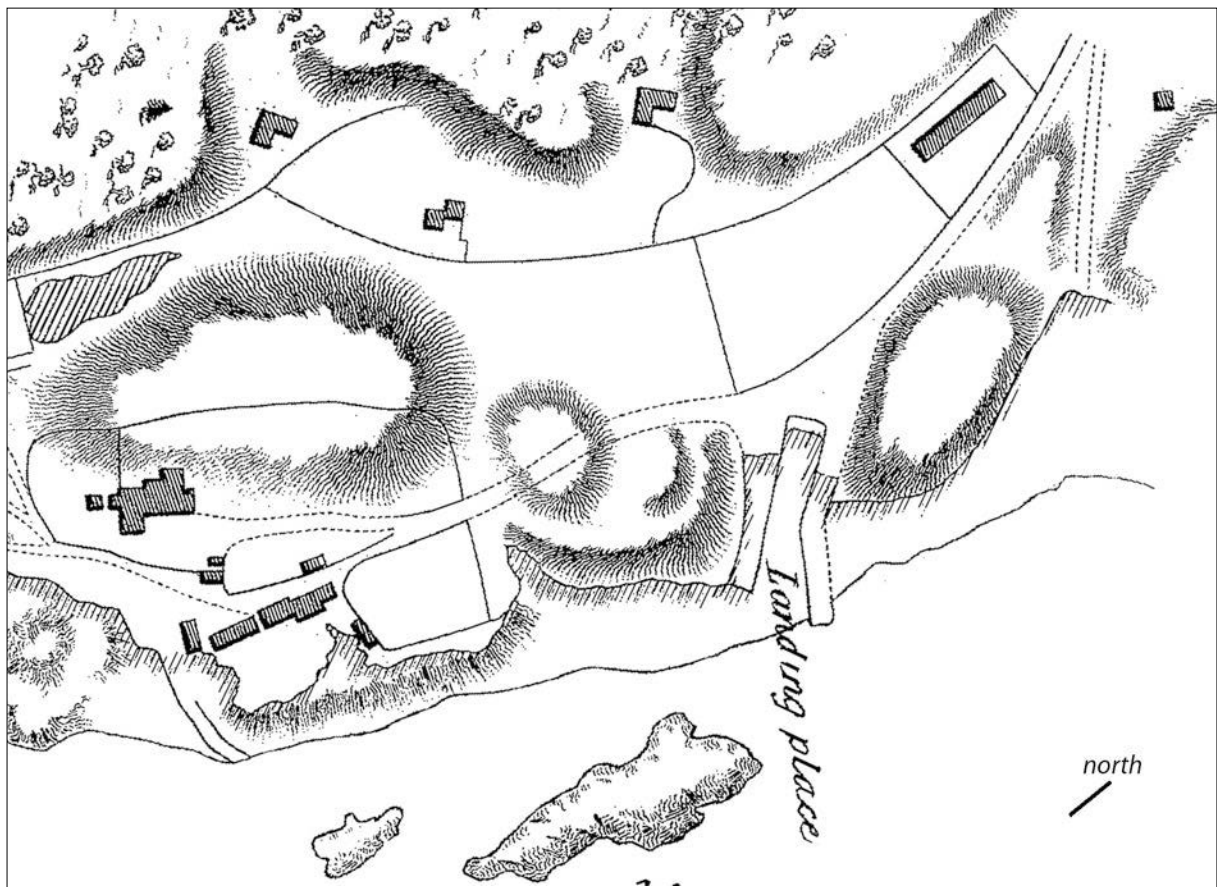
'Richard Davies and Sons ... took over the old coach stables [Jackson's coaching stables] and leased some adjoining property from the Anglesey Estate and presently proceeded (there being no watchful Urban District Council to say them, nay!) to squat on and to enclose certain of the lands reserved for the ferry. A little later they built the wharf to which the Prince's Pier is now attached and cargoes began to be imported from England and abroad. Menai Bridge had now become the business!'

Initially a certain William Hughes ran Davies' operation in Menai Bridge but, by 1830, Davies' son John, then aged 21, had moved in to take over. Richard Davies junior, his brother, became a notable figure in Non-Conformist Radical politics. His position was almost iconic and he has been described as 'exemplifying the new free-trade economic order and as an almost legendary symbol of the new Liberal Non-Conformist middle class' (DWB, 148-9).

In 1841 we can identify John Davies, Merchant, as resident in the 'Warehouse'. Living there with him were William Griffith, clerk, Owen Pritchard, warehouseman and Thomas Jones and Thomas Hughes, Carters. There were also two female servants. We cannot be certain but it is possible that this was the same structure as the warehouse built by Richard Davies before 1828. The detail



Enclosure award map, Menai Bridge, c.1815
 William Provis' survey for the suspension bridge, c. 1818-26



of the sequence of construction of this building will be discussed separately, below. The business had expanded and was continuing to do so at an increasing rate and would have made good use of the landing at Porth Daniel.

By 1843 it would seem that a house had been built within the southern half of the plot acquired by lease from the Marquis in 1828. The Tithe map shows a structure against the southernmost boundary of the property and within the same curtilage as the warehouse. The schedule shows exactly the same area, 2 roods, 31 perches, as identified in the 1828 lease and Richard Davies and Sons answer for the property, described as warehouse, house and garden. It is not until 1851 that we can identify the house as Min y Don. By reference to a Plas Newydd rental of 1859, we are able to identify more clearly the layout of Min y Don, centrally disposed within its own curtilage.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the Davies' business had expanded to occupy the waterfront area from Bonc Mostyn, to the north, to Bonc Pegi, to the south, and the area of the former Porth Daniel Stables in addition to the land of the 1828 lease which now included the private house of Min y Don. The Davies family, now established at Menai Bridge with the company under the management of John Davies, saw the potential of the North American trade. The business had previously invested in locally-made coastal vessels, but now, in 1843, Richard Davies and his sons bought their first British North American ship, built at St. John's, New Brunswick, 137 ft long and 795 tons (Eames, 1973, 219-222).

The Davies' ships took Penrhyn slate and emigrants to the New World and returned with North American timber to Menai Bridge. The early voyages called principally at Quebec, St. John's and New Orleans and, in Britain, at Liverpool. As the business expanded and the nature of trade changed, the Davies fleet made longer and more distant journeys and made more use of the larger ports of Liverpool, London and Cardiff for Far-Eastern and Australian destinations. Coastal trade, still remained important and the wood-yard supplied much of the building boom along the North Wales coast. During the 1870s iron ships were brought into the fleet and between 1875 and 1877, seven sister ships named after Welsh counties were commissioned from Roydens shipbuilders. During the 1880s the fleet comprised eighteen ships, sailing principally to San Francisco, Rangoon and Rio de Janeiro, although by this stage in the firm's career, no large ship had berthed at Menai Bridge since 1868.

John Davies, the imaginative entrepreneur of the firm's early expansionist phase, died in 1848, aged 39. His brothers Richard and Robert took over. The firm now had many interests, with managing clerks administering different aspects of the business.

The National Census for 1851 records Richard Davies (junior), timber merchant and ship-owner, in residence at Min y Don. With him in the house were David Jones, a visiting Calvinistic Methodist Minister from Dolwyddelan, and William Roberts and Richard Hughes, both described as clerks. William Roberts was to run the timber yard and Richard Hughes, a cousin of the Davies brothers, ran the shipping business. John Edwards ran the wholesale warehouse.

John Edwards (wholesale and provisions merchant, as the trade directories would have it) was trading under his own name from Packet Street (Water Street) from at least 1850. Richard Hughes and Co was the name registered at Lloyds, for the shipping interest, from the 1860s, to differentiate it from other aspects of the business. The Davies brothers, nevertheless, retained managing ownership of many of the ships (Eames, 1973, 240). It is not until the 1880s, however, that Hughes and Co. appears in the directories. William Roberts ledger and account books begin in 1838 and there is a lot of mutual business enacted (A.R.O. WM.1078/1,2,3). The construction work on the Britannia Bridge in the late 1840s also saw a surge in business at the timber yard.

The copy letter books of William Roberts do not begin until 1869. However, the earliest letters, from the 1860s and 1870s are sent above the signature: William Roberts, for R Davies and Sons. Notwithstanding, as was such with Richard Hughes, it is not until the 1880s that William Roberts and Co, Packet Yard, appears in the Trade Directories.

The shipping business came to an end with the death of Robert Davies in 1905. The firms of John Edwards and William Roberts continued to trade well into the twentieth century under the original names. William Roberts was sold in 1927 but the new owners retained the name and were still in business at the Water Street timber yard in 2004. Timber continued to be brought to the wharf by sea as recently as the 1970s.

Structures and Features within the Development Area

The following descriptions repeat and amend those identified in GAT Report 539, 2004. See the frontispiece illustration for location

A detailed description of the warehouse, feature 9, accompanies the new survey drawings.

Feature 1

Structures on the boundary of the yard between Crag Side and the path to the Victoria Hotel at the north end of William Roberts woodyard.

This area was in use as a car park by William Roberts and Company and has a rough tarmac surface over most of the area. The western boundary is represented by the back wall of a stone-built outhouse to an adjacent property and, in the north west corner, a random-coursed rubble masonry single-story structure with slate roof. Adjoining this to the north are lengths of rubble-coursed masonry with blocked openings. The northern boundary is represented by a modern garden wall and the eastern boundary flanks Water Street. The single-storey stone building and the lengths of masonry wall adjoining, in the north west corner of the site are of local interest in that they represent a surviving component of outbuildings associated with The Star public house, a hostelry established on the site between 1818 and 1826.



Fig. 4 Outbuildings associated with the former Star public house

Feature 2

The perimeter wall of the covered wood store in the northern part of the William Roberts yard on the west side of Packet Road.

This wall is of random-coursed rubble masonry, mortared and roughly pointed in places. The stone is local schist except that more rounded and smaller pebbly stone appears to have been used in the east wall. This is particularly visible on the inside face of the wall at the north east corner where the junction with the north wall is oblique. The wall encloses a roughly rhomboidal area: straight along the northern face for c. 17m; straight along the western face for 50m to the point of junction with the gable end of the northernmost of two former stone-built sheds standing perpendicular to the line of the wall; and curving from north-west to south along the eastern face for 42m, to the entrance to the timber yard. There are indications on the exterior face that this wall has been raised from, perhaps, an original height of c. 3m, in order to accommodate the roofing of an interior space of the wood store. There are also indications that the perimeter wall was lower than in the more recent past, at about 2m - 2.5m high at the junction of the wall and the north office of the warehouse. On the north and west faces the increase in height has been achieved in stone. Along the east wall, the height has been raised with brickwork. The area enclosed by this boundary has been levelled by cutting into the rock slope on the western side.

Internally the west wall now stands around 6m in height. Some small roughly-made holes are visible in the wall. These would have taken timbers for shelf supports. There is a slight batter on the eastern wall towards

the north end where the wall stands 4m high. The internal height reduces to 3m towards the southern end.

This wall corresponds very closely to the plan of an enclosure mapped by W A Provis around the site of the Porth Daniel Stables between 1818 and 1826. This correspondence extends to the curvature of the boundary on the east side. The southern return of this wall (in c. 1818) corresponds to the point of junction of the present wall with the northern of the two perpendicular stone sheds referred to above. The Porth Daniel Stables, which served as posting stables for The George - Porth y Wrach ferry crossing prior to the closure of the ferry in 1826, were also mapped during the preliminary proceedings towards the enclosure of Llandysilio Common. The enclosing boundary mapped by Provis is not evident on the enclosure map but a short stretch of wall, approximately corresponding to the north wall shown on Provis' map, is visible.

The perimeter wall has now (2008) been removed on its eastern side, flanking Water Street, and has been partially replaced by a modern low wall to the north of the warehouse.



Fig.5 and 6. Northern perimeter wall

Feature 3

The interior of the covered wood store.

A wood store had been created by roofing the space defined by the boundary wall described as Feature 2. The floor was concrete. Four longitudinal bays running north-south, were defined by roof supports of steel girders (west side) and timber posts (east side). The roof over the two western bays and along the north side were pitched corrugated iron. The roof against the eastern wall was flat, supported by timber joists.

It is evident from the 'Enclosure' map of 1815 and W A Provis' map of 1818-1826 that the long rectangular Porth Daniel posting stables once stood centrally within the area defined by the enclosing walls of this wood store. The Porth Daniel posting stables were an important component of the operation of the Porthaethwy ferry at the George Hotel - Porth y Wrach crossing. It was from here that the mail coaches left for Holyhead on the Anglesey leg of their journey.

No evidence of this structure now survives above the surface of the ground. However, it would seem that the roofed areas within the present yard had been built up around the shell of the old stable building, in the space between the stables and the north and west wall of the enclosure. This process can be seen to have already reached something close to its early twentieth century appearance by 1859. A Plas Newydd estate survey plan of that date shows the footprint of a long structure in exactly the position of the stable building planned by the Enclosure Map and Provis' map. This feature is said by H R Davies to have survived into the early twentieth century and would appear to be mapped on the 1910 OS 25 inch survey.

A requirement of the present survey was that an archaeological watching brief and recording should be undertaken in the area of the stable building in advance of any development. The results of this watching brief and limited excavation are presented below.



Fig. 7. Interior of covered wood store

Feature 4

Stone-built sheds perpendicular to western perimeter wall in the south-west corner of the proposed development area.

Two, two-storey, stone-built sheds stood side by side, perpendicular to the western perimeter wall, towards the south-western corner of the wood yard. Together they occupied a footprint of approximately 15m by 15m. The fronts, that is the east sides facing the interior of the yard, were deliberately open at ground level at the time of the 2004 assessment. The stub ends of the ground floor walls on this side were refaced and strengthened in brick. Otherwise the lower walls were of stone rubble. The eastern gable ends at first floor level were timber clad. The upper east gable of the southern shed was in-filled with brick although original stone-work survived at the south east corner. Where visible the first floor walls were clad with chipboard and the roof clad with plywood. Externally the roofs were pitched corrugated iron, aligned east-west.

Although obscured by undergrowth, the external western gable ends retained much of their original stone-work. The frames of original small windows (blocked) were visible at two levels in the external gables, which ran in-line with the western perimeter wall. One of the windows had an extractor fan inserted. The ground floors were lately in use as circular saw benches, the upper floors, for storage. The upper floor of the southern shed was approached by external wooden steps from the yard.

These buildings or their precursors on the same footprint are recorded on the Plas Newydd estate survey of 1859. On the evidence of this 1859 plan and comparison with Provis' 1818-1826 plan, it would appear that they were built at the northern end of the parcel originally leased in 1828. That is to say, the northern wall of the northernmost of these two sheds abutted the southern boundary of the Porth Daniel stable yard. However, they are not shown on the Tithe survey of 1843, where the warehouse and a house are both indicated within the precise plot demised in 1828. Furthermore, there is an indication on the 1859 plan of a second boundary aligned on the south wall of the southern shed which corresponds to a division in the construction of the 'John Edwards' warehouse. This possible boundary will be discussed under the heading of the warehouse.

These sheds, therefore, were built before 1859 and probably after 1843. They represent part of the development of the complex of structures servicing R Davies and Sons commercial activities after 1828. Encroachments were being made on to adjacent plots of land including the former stable yard and the wharf during the 1830s. These structures had been heavily altered from their original condition and were demolished in December 2004-January 2005, in advance of the redevelopment of the site.



Fig. 8. Stone sheds against western perimeter wall

Feature 5

An extension on the back (west) side of the warehouse.

A two-storey extension had been added to the warehouse on its west side, perpendicular to the line of the warehouse. The west wall of this extension ran obliquely north-east to south-west where it once abutted an earlier structure in this position. The dimensions are 6.8m north-south and between 11 and 14m east to west. The structure was brick-built with metal window frames and was accessed via doors in the west wall of the warehouse at both ground floor and first floor levels. There is a bricked-up opening adjacent to the current door in the warehouse wall at ground floor level. There was an external door in the south wall with steps leading up from the surface of the yard or garden behind the south end of the warehouse. There was a hatch allowing goods to be transferred between first and second floor levels. The first floor was supported by steel girders. The roof was slate.

The extension was demolished in 2005.



Fig. 9. Brick-built structure against west wall of warehouse

Feature 6

Structures behind (on the west side) of the southern warehouse unit and against the western perimeter.

In the area behind the brick building described above, as an westward extension of the warehouse, there were two further buildings against the western perimeter of the complex at its south-west corner.

The first was accessible from the brick-built structure. It was irregular in plan with a width of 8m at its eastern end, the north and south walls converging to within 4m of each other at the western end. This structure stopped 5m short of the perimeter wall. The space between this building and the wall had been filled-in with a brick and breeze-block shed. A structure of this shape and dimensions stood in this location before 1859. The walls were of stone rubble, heavily rendered in places. There was a bricked-up opening in the east wall and a large opening with a timber lintel central to that wall. The roof was pitched and the trusses were timber king-post style with side-posts and braces similar to the trusses in the warehouse roof. The roofing material, however, was corrugated iron, in very bad repair. The timber floor had been suspended on joists supported by narrow brick walls along the base of the rubble walls. The joists had rotted, however, and much of the floor had collapsed.

To the south of the previously described structures and sharing a common alignment was another building, the two long sides of which (north and south) were of stone rubble construction. The eastern gable end was open and the western end, continuing the line of the perimeter wall, was of modern breeze-block construction. The roof was pitched, corrugated iron, in poor condition. The length of this structure is now 14m and the width is 7m. In 1859 a long (25m) building or shed stood here. It is reasonably clear from the OS Survey of 1889 that this length comprised two structures laid end to end and that they were unroofed. They lay without roofs into the 1930s on the evidence of the 10,560 OS map of that period. However, an aerial photograph of 1947 shows that one of these (that which was roofed and in a dilapidated condition) had been brought back into service by that date.

All of these structures, mostly in bad condition in 2004, had been demolished by January 2005.

Feature 7

The Wharf

Porth Daniel, a natural inlet, has been recognised as a landing place since at least the sixteenth century and probably for centuries before that. A track from the highway is shown leading to Porth Daniel in 1815 and Richard Davies must have made good use of it when he established his business at Menai Bridge circa 1828. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Davies family firm had built a wharf in the 1830s (see above) and their intentions in this respect are corroborated by the Government Office of Wood's admission that the business was close to securing a lease on the land by 1838.

The wharf lies between Porth y Wrach, on the south side, and Porth Daniel to the north. At high tide the wharf is washed by the sea on the north, east and south sides. At the lowest tides the base of the wharf wall is dry where it meets the shoreline. The inlet of Porth y Wrach served as a convenient landing for the Bangor Ferry, plying from the Caernarfonshire shoreline at the George and Dragon Inn, later the George Hotel, from at least the 1770s. The coaching stables belonging to the George, on the Anglesey side, stood 100 m north of the slipway. Porth Daniel was long recognised as the north-eastern limit of the Porthaethwy ferry and, while not a formal or regular landing for the ferry, will have been used as a point of access to the Straits and for loading and off-loading goods and cargoes. Tracks from the shoreline road to Porth Daniel are recorded on John Evans' late eighteenth-century map and on the Enclosure Award map of 1815.

The land had been identified on the Enclosure Award map as being 'reserved for the ferries'. The ferries no longer in operation after 1825 and the former owner, Miss Jane Silence Williams, had quit the property, having been compensated by the Crown, in consequence of the construction of Telford's Bridge. The Davieses took the opportunity of making good use of this, now untenanted, land and built the wharf. The area between the two inlets, sometimes known as Bonc Daniel, comprises 2900 sq. metres in total although 1000 sq. metres (one quarter of an acre) is now occupied by a conspicuous rocky knoll with a private house built on it. The total area of the wharf with its warehouse, access road and other structures comprised 1900 sq. metres. Immediately to the west of the wharf, across the shoreline road now called Water Street and formerly Packet Street, stood the large warehouses built by Richard Davies and Sons.

In 1913, Henry Rees Davies, in researching material for his monumental study of the Menai Ferries, made enquiries as to the precise date of construction. His correspondent, Mr. R.W. Roberts, searched the Bill Books, Cash Books and Ledgers of Richard Davies and Sons to no avail: 'I can find no date when the timber wharf was built, or the warehouses'. Nevertheless, some indication of when the Prince's Pier Wharf was built may be extracted from a long series of correspondence between the Government departments, the Office of Woods, Board of Trade and several interested parties in Menai Bridge, between 1865 and 1897. The issues concerned applications for leases on the shoreline, imputations of encroachment, applications for improvements at the wharf and the acquisition of Crown or Common land by the Llandysilio Improvement Commissioners. One document emanating from the Office of Woods in 1884 summarised the Government view in a Memorandum. Several encroachments had been identified along the waterfront between Carreg yr Halen and Bonc Mostyn from as early as the 1830s. Some had acquired leases from the Crown. In 1837 it had been agreed that a lease should be granted to Davies and Sons on three plots which included: an area on Bonc Mostyn overlooking Porth Daniel; the entire area of Bonc Daniel, part of which became the Prince's Pier, with the inclusion of the rocky 'bonc' itself; and Bonc Peggy which much later became the bowling green on Water Street. The terms of the lease had been set out and sent to the Treasury in 1838 but, on account of a legal discrepancy, the lease was never completed. Nevertheless, John Davies, then running the Davies family business in Menai Bridge, installed a steam engine, saw mill and smithy at the head of the Porth Daniel inlet and almost certainly built the wharf at the same time. In 1841 the Marquis of Anglesey made a clear statement to the Office of Woods that Bonc Mostyn, to the north-east of Porth Daniel and Bonc Peggy, to the south-west of Porth y Wrach, had not then been enclosed. The conclusion to be drawn is that the plot between the two inlets, Bonc Daniel, had been enclosed. The Government's understanding was that Messrs Davies commenced occupation of the Bonc in 1837-8.

There are other, practical reasons to suppose that the wharf was coming into use in the late 1830s. John Davies had taken shares in a number of locally built ships, bringing timber and general goods to Menai Bridge (Eames 1973, 217). A steam-powered saw mill implies the presence of a significant quantity of raw material to process.

The wharf was built to facilitate the commercial expansion of Richard Davies and Sons who were importing goods and materials, including timber, to their Packet Street warehouses, adjacent to the wharf. During the 1840s Messrs Davies bought and managed several North America ships, carrying emigrants to North America and the Southern States, exporting slates to New Orleans, Boston and other destinations and regularly returning to the Menai Bridge wharf with cargoes of timber from Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. During the busiest years, 1846 to 1848, Davies ships made fifty voyages, thirty-three of which used the Menai Bridge wharf.

After 1849, the emphasis of Davies shipping turned to long haul destinations in South America, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, using the larger ports of Cardiff, Liverpool, Plymouth and London more regularly. Nevertheless, the North American timber trade was not neglected and a steady procession of, on average, three voyages a year, continued to bring Canadian timber to Menai Bridge up to 1865. The last big Davies ship to use the wharf was the Lord Stanley, which sailed out of Menai Bridge, bound for Montevideo, on 9th September 1868,

The business grew. Divided into three components, this included the shipping business, later registered as Richard Hughes and Co; a wholesale grocery business trading under the name of John Edwards and a timber yard which continued to trade until recently on the original site, as William Roberts. All of this was focussed on the warehouses, timber yards and wharf either side of Packet Street on the Menai Bridge shoreline at Porth Daniel.

The quay is a substantial one and judging by photographs taken at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has changed very little in the intervening period (Steel, 1996, p.17). The mooring area of the quay is 60m long on the north east side of Ponc Daniel. Beyond this, along the Straits, southward and outside the redevelopment area, runs the prince's pier with its mid-nineteenth-century warehouse and Harbourmaster's Office. The three sides which face the two inlets and the Straits are revetted with an almost vertical wall, battered slightly inwards, of large irregular stone blocks derived, mostly from the local schist. The south-eastern corner of the wharf is strengthened by large ashlar blocks in good courses. The north-eastern corner has been repaired in its upper courses with coursed smaller stone.

The surface of the quay is now concrete, with concrete reinforcement at the edges. The quay was built, very largely over a pre-existing area of projecting coastline. The revetment wall on the north side is stone with vertical timber battens fixed at around 4m intervals. There is a row of recessed 1m square emplacements at approximately 5m intervals set back 2m from the quay edge. There are low masonry foundations of sheds close to the rock outcrop of the Bonc but these are not recorded on any map and do not appear to have been structures of any significance

By the 1860s the Old St. George's Packet Pier, at Bonc Mostyn, was in decay. A lease to the City of Dublin Steamship Company had been arranged by 1866. It made commercial sense to sublet part of the pier to the steamship company at a time when Davieses' large freighters were no longer using the wharf. Nevertheless, although the long haul business of the shipping arm of Davies and Sons had ceased to operate from Menai Bridge in the 1860s, the wharf continued to be used for smaller vessels. Timber continued to arrive in the Straits. Stocks were stored at Cadnant and secured by running a chain from the shore to Ynys y Gaint. When required the timber was floated on the tide to the Davies' wood yard (trading as William Roberts) (Anthony 1974, 17; NA. CRES 37/1573).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Menai Bridge Urban District Council had acquired the foreshore of Porth y Wrach and the site, fixtures and fittings of the old St. George's Packet Pier on Bonc Mostyn (Anthony 1974, 17-18). Messrs Davies and Sons, however, continued to retain their use of the north side of the wharf at Porth Daniel.

Davies and Sons ship owners, registered as Richard Hughes and Co, ceased trading in 1905.

In 1967 the Urban District Council acquired the Crown rights to the wharf for £2,500 (Anthony 1973, 64). William Roberts Woodyard continued to occupy the northern part of the wharf facing Porth Daniel and continued to import and trade in timber but the last cargo of timber to come in by sea arrived at the wharf in the early 1970s

Fig. 9. The timber wharf in 2004



Feature 8

Structures in the area of the wharf at the junction of Packet Road and the track to the shore.

At this location stands a small group of conjoined, slated, pitched roof structures. It was here, or close by, that Richard Davies set up a steam engine and saw pit in 1838 (PRO CRES 49/4 CRES 39/33).

In 1866 W G Haslam responded to an enquiry from the Office of Woods concerning a plan his father John Haslam had made in 1847. One of the features W G Haslam was able to identify on that map was a saw pit and smithy in the occupation of R Davies and Sons on exactly this spot. The building, or buildings are mapped again in 1859 by the Plas Newydd Estate. Neither of the plans conform exactly to the buildings which survive. However, comparison of these plans with the OS mapping of 1889 allow us to identify that the western, and part of the northern, portion of at least the shell of the buildings is a survival from the 1840s if not earlier. The present building was lately in use for processing timber with a planing-machine.

The north and western walls are random coursed rubble. The north wall has three windows, splayed internally, of sixteen panes each. The external facade on the north side displays a central pitched gable. The floor is now mostly concrete. There are, however, areas of square stone sets towards the western end and in the central area of what might have constituted the original core of the structure, a well worn timber floor concealing a large cavity below. This was not accessible during the field visit in 2004 and was not part of the subsequent survey remit. The possibility exists, however, that it may relate to the documented saw pit or perhaps even to the operation of the steam engine.



Fig. 10. Structures in the area of the wharf



Fig. 11. Roofed sheds in woodyard, 2004

Feature 9

The 'John Edwards Warehouse' and offices

The warehouses and attached offices are a listed building, Grade II. The listing description specifically refers to the warehouses as an impressive early 19th century warehouse retaining much historic character and original detail. The justification for listing is supported by the building's association with the economic growth of Menai Bridge in the early 19th century following the construction of Menai Suspension Bridge in 1826, and the continued importance of maritime trade. It contributes to the historic character of the lower, quayside area of Menai Bridge.

This range of buildings which include two conjoined warehouses, with offices at each end, stands on the west side of Water Street, with the woodyard behind and to the north. The timber wharf, Prince's Pier and the Straits lie directly across the road to the east.

The first warehouse was built a little before 1828. The circumstances of the location and the offer of a lease by the Marquis of Anglesey to Richard Davies, with the warehouse already built, are described above. A small marginal plan accompanies the Marquis' lease. This is not dimensionally accurate but does give a clear indication of the location of the property and the warehouse. A more accurate plan of the boundary of this and other parcels is provided by William A. Provis in 1818-1826, confirming the site as immediately inland and to the north-west of the Porth y Wrach landing place. The warehouse delineated on the lease document shows the rectangular warehouse with its northern gable hard against the north boundary of the property and the eastern long side coterminous with the property's eastern boundary.

By the 1850s a second warehouse had been built, end-on to the first, and to the south. Additional structures which we can take to be offices, on the basis of their layout and later use, were added at the north and south ends. The next available and detailed plan of the developing warehouses can be referred to in an estate survey of Plas Newydd (Marquis of Anglesey) properties in Menai Bridge. Here we see the two warehouses, with the northern of the two, exactly as expected, at the boundary of the original lease property and the second warehouse to the south. This observation is confirmed by overlay of the estate map on the mapped boundaries of Provis' survey. In addition, the map shows structures to the west of the warehouses and the private house of the Davieses to the south, all within the original leased plot. However, additional structures can be seen flanking the inner side of the former Jackson coaching stables curtilage on the north and the west. One of these structures, centrally disposed, may be, or be a replacement of, the coaching stables themselves. The office at the north end of the warehouse had also encroached into the area of the coaching stables yard.

This pattern of infill hardly changed, notwithstanding replacement and repair, until the late twentieth century, when additional corrugated iron sheds were placed within the northern part of the yard.

The first (c. 1828) warehouse

The first (north) warehouse is 15.10m long by 9.53m wide, externally, with walls 0.62m thick. It stands on ground which slopes gently from north to south. At the north end the eaves are 5.10m above the present road surface and at the south end, 5.47m above the road. The ground floor surface is boarded (new boards) horizontal and raised above the external ground surface. At the southern end the ground floor boards are 500 mm above the road.

The seven lateral beams which support the first floor are themselves propped by timber piers 200 mm square, alternately disposed in pairs (see plan). The southernmost pair are set 2.62 m apart and 2.62 m in from the side walls. The next pair are set 6.32 m apart and 0.79 m from the side walls, and so on. The more widely spaced piers and their associated beams have been boxed and, are, perhaps replaced, supported or even, modern additions. The boxed beams are deeper than the visible originals, which suggests the possibility of steel girder underpinning. The visible timber piers have chamfered edges down their length with 45 degree angled chamfer stops, 200 mm from their ends.

The first floor boards are 2.5m above the ground floor and the attic boards are 5.36m above the ground floor. The apex of the roof is 3.10m above the attic boards.

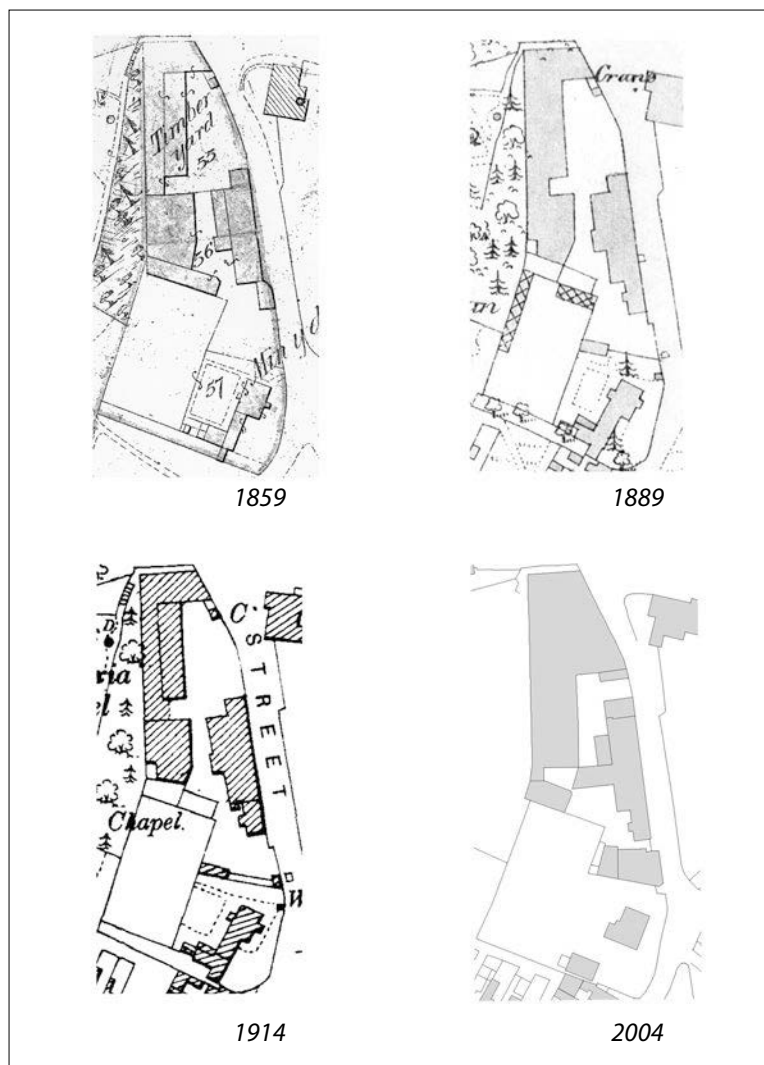


Fig. 12. Sequence of warehouse and woodyard structures as mapped by Plas Newydd Estate and Ordnance Survey

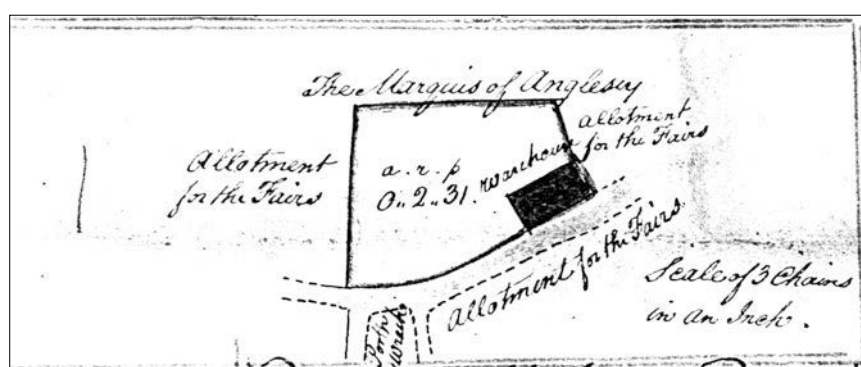


Fig. 13. Marginal plan appended to lease from Marquis of Anglesey to Richard Davies, 1828

Fig. 14. Simplified plan and elevation of warehouse and offices

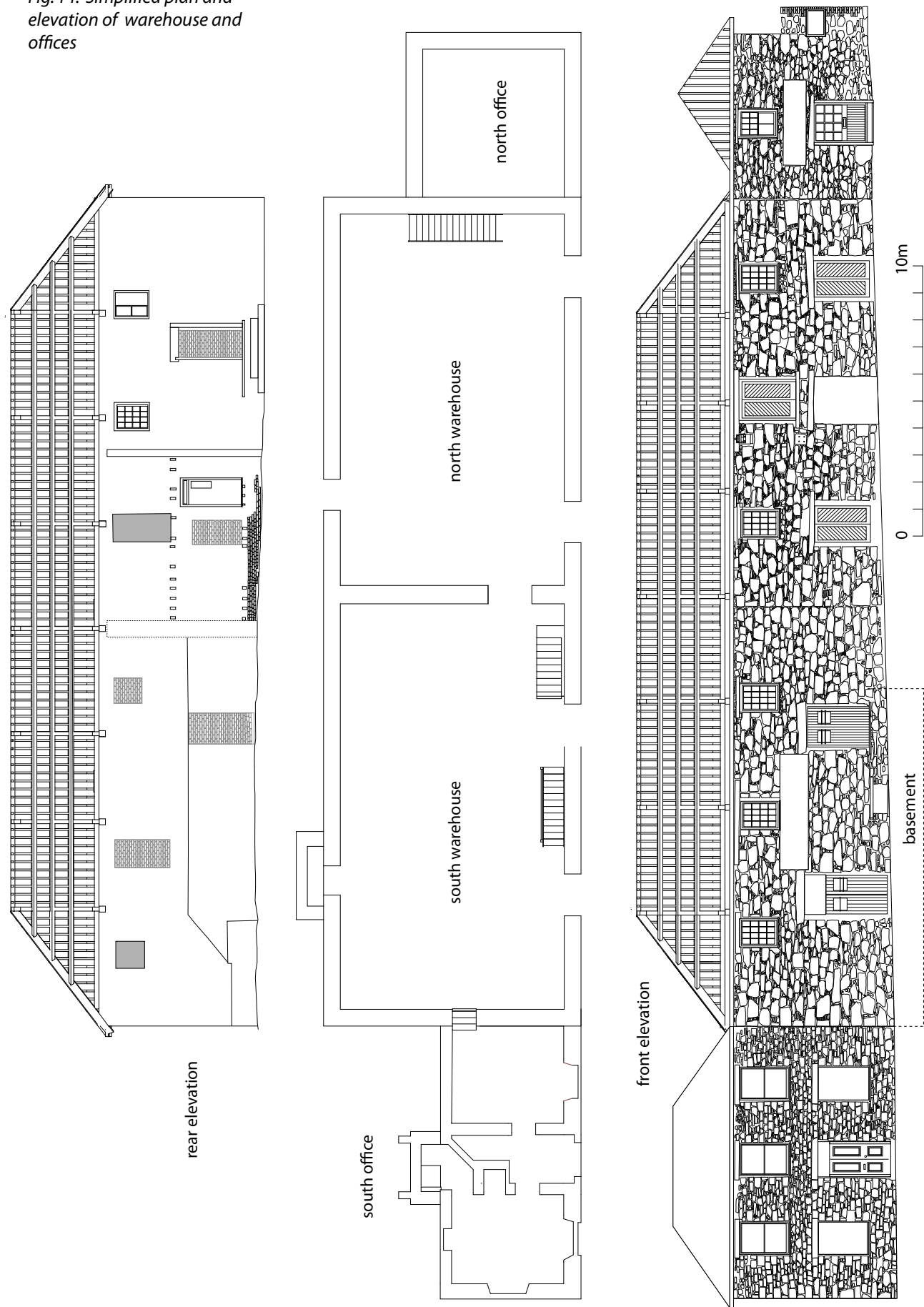


Fig. 15. Plan of warehouse on ground floor showing disposition of beams and piers

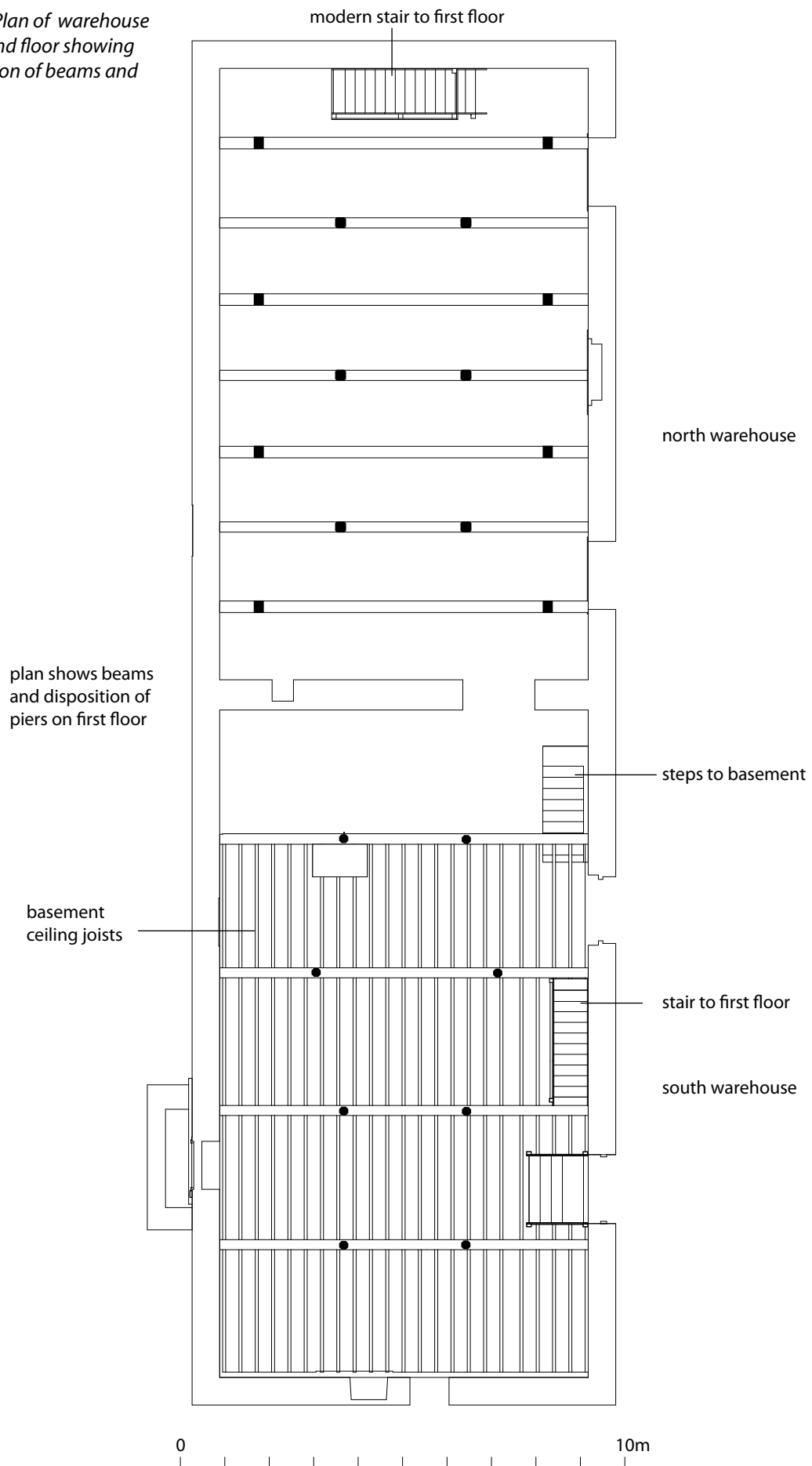
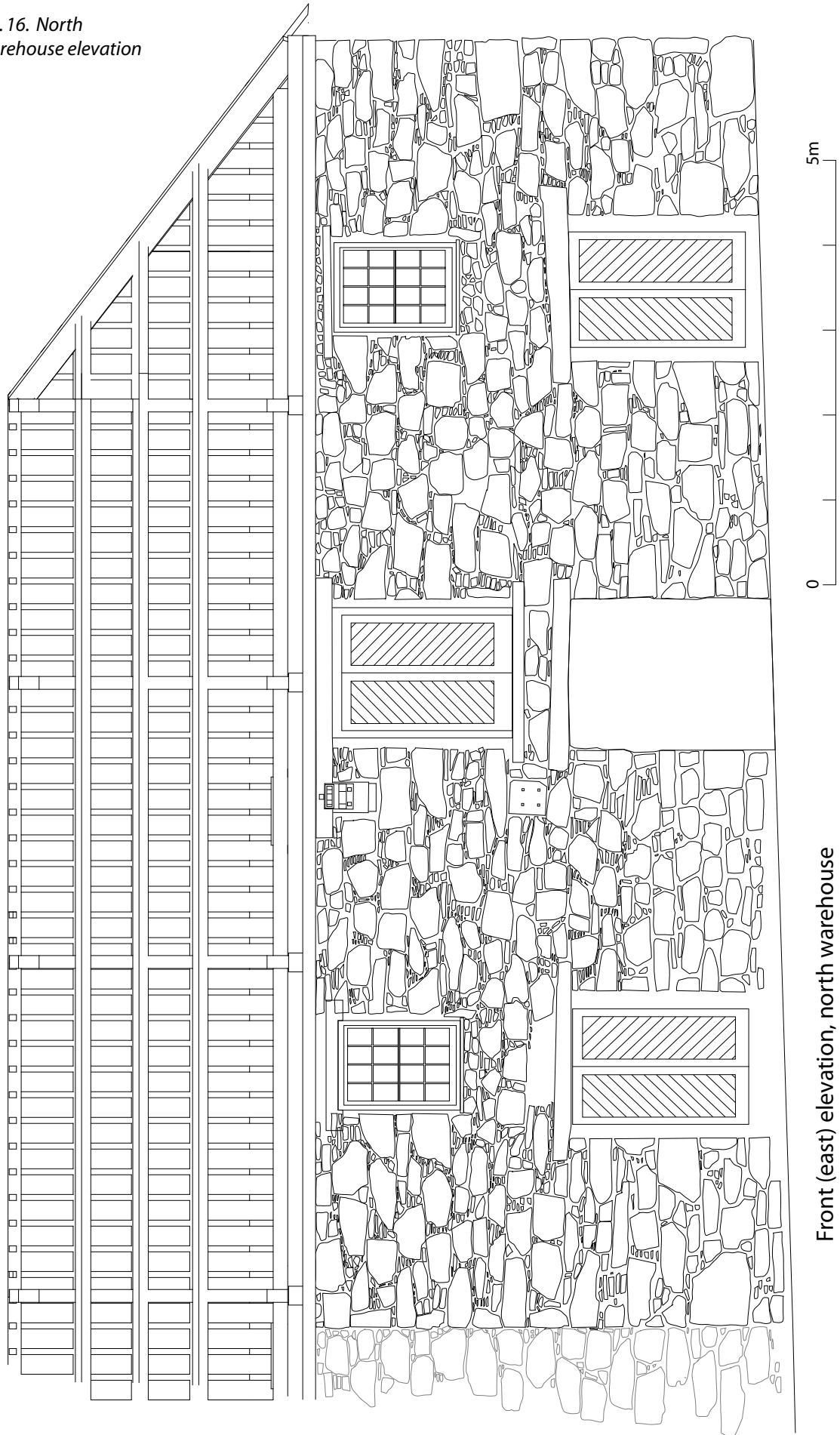


Fig. 16. North
warehouse elevation



Front (east) elevation, north warehouse

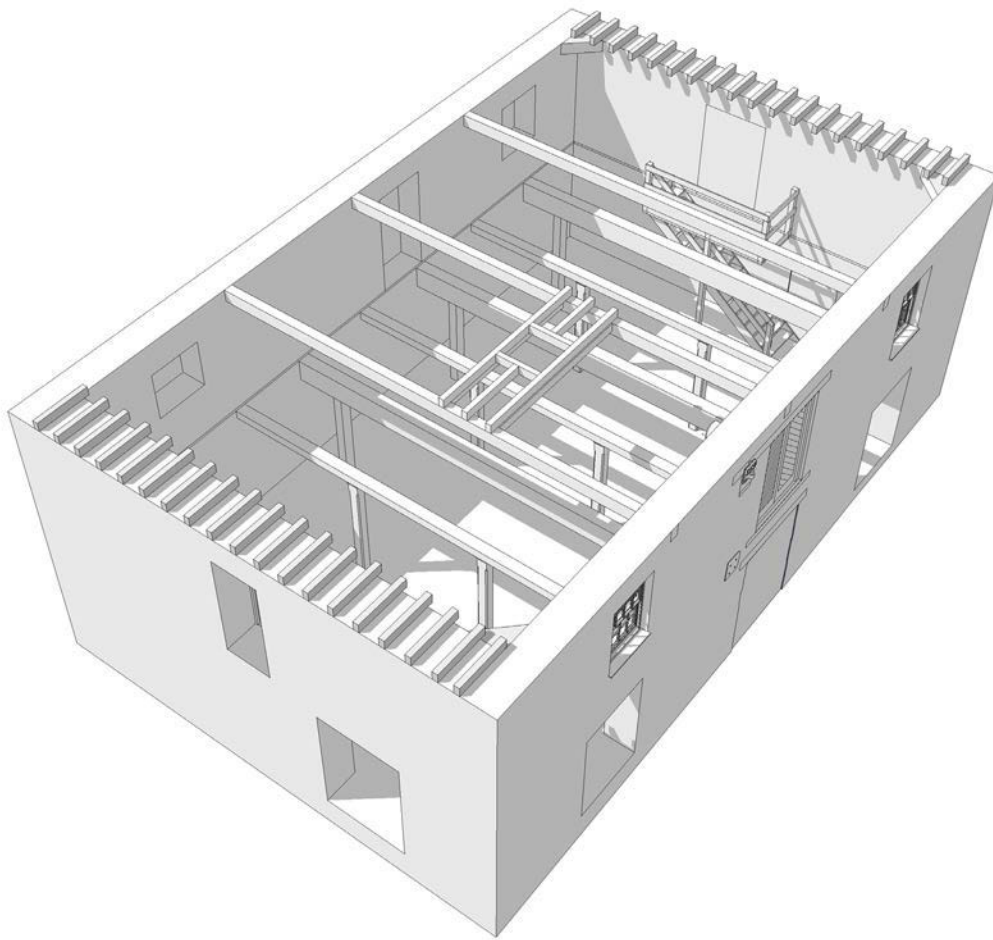


Fig. 17 and 18. North warehouse, internal features, including attic beams and trap door access

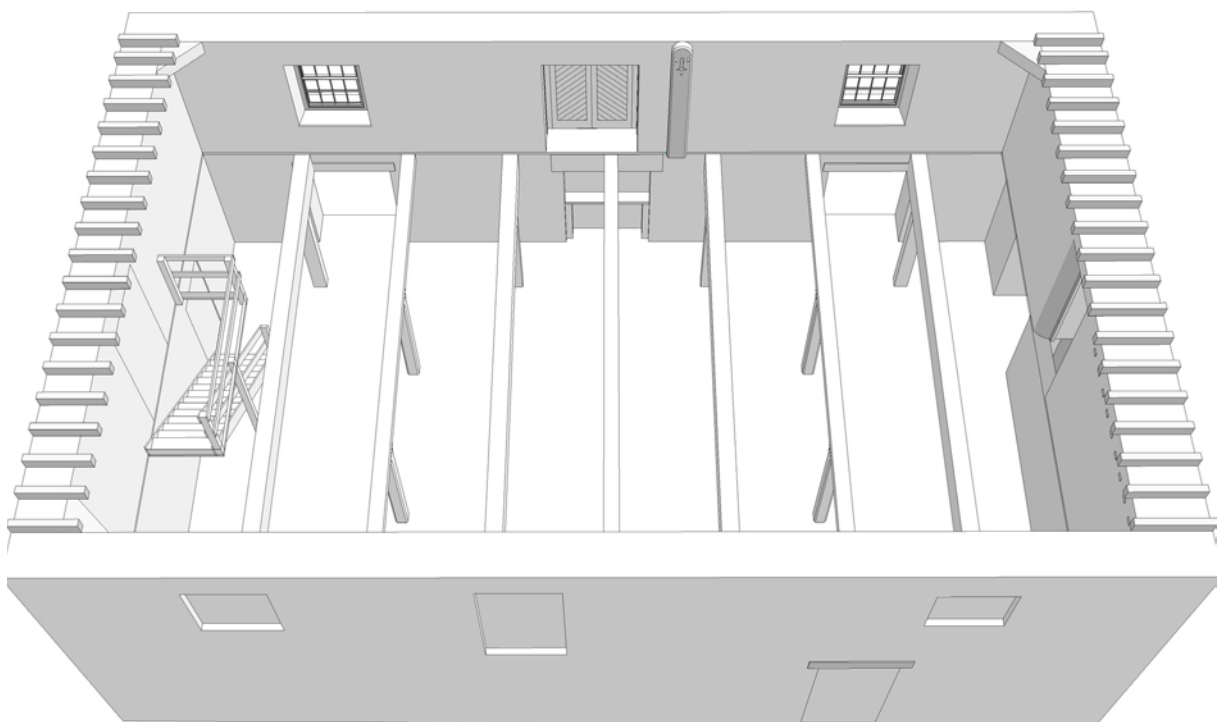




Fig. 19. North warehouse: ground floor beams and pier

Fig. 20. North warehouse: attic beams, joists and trap access.





Fig. 21. North warehouse: First floor, showing eaves of original 1828 warehouse. Later addition, beyond

Fig. 22. North and south warehouses: butting join visible



External front elevation

The walls are random rubble and predominately of the local schist. The stonework on the elevation facing Water Street is pointed but not rendered. There are three openings on the ground floor on this elevation, large enough (1.54 wide, 2.08m above the interior floor) to accommodate double doors. The central opening is now blocked. It may originally have been intended for a through door but at some period a counter was inserted at 1.08m above the interior boards. The openings to each side now carry identical modern tongue and groove doors. All of the three openings have slate lintels at the same height.

There are three openings on the first floor. The central opening has the same dimensions as those on the ground floor and now carries a modern door, identical to those on the ground floor. This opening was used to bring goods in to the first floor of the warehouse. Components of the hoisting and pulley mechanism are still visible on the external face immediately to the top left of each of the two central doors and, internally, to the right of the first floor door.

The first floor door is flanked by two identical windows, occupying openings 1.03m by 1.42m. The openings are splayed to 1.15m internally. The windows comprise two sliding sashes, each of eight panes, four over four. The glazing bars are typically early Victorian style converging to an arrete on the interior side. The windows have slate sills and lintels.

The northern external elevation

This face has been obscured by an office, added later but in place by the 1850s. There is a blocked door towards the eastern side of the north wall of the warehouse, which presumably communicated between the warehouse and the office. To the left of the door (viewed from the office) there is a small opening at about 0.5m above the ground floor which would appear to have contained a safe. There is a second door, to the right of centre, blocked, which gave access to the first floor of the warehouse, from the office.

Rear (west) elevation

The rear elevation is rendered and bears the marks of additional structures built up against the rear wall. There is a blocked door on the ground floor to the right of centre. There is a second door, on the first floor, to the left of centre. Both of these doors are bricked up flush with the external and internal faces of the rear wall and have not been used for some time. There are two blocked windows to the left and right of the first floor door.

The roof

The roof is a replacement of the original c.1828 warehouse. It is continuous along the length of both the original structure and the additional second warehouse; length of 30-57m and a span of 9.52m. The apex of the roof, at the ridge piece is 3.07m above the attic floor boards and 3.5m above the underside of the beams. The roof is hipped and has a pitch of 34 degrees along its length.

The structure of the roof comprises seven lateral beams, which span the width of the warehouses, and horizontal perpendicular beams, 4.10m in length, to carry the floor boards in the hips. The beams which form part of the trusses above the first warehouse are, more or less, directly above those visibly original piers and beams on the ground floor. There are no counterparts to the ground floor ceiling boxed beams in the attic trusses. The beams and attic trusses above the second warehouse do not directly correspond to the position of piers and beams on the basement and ground floors of the second warehouse. The trusses are of king-post type with vertical and raking posts stabilizing the principal rafters. The raking posts from king posts to principal rafters are offset upwards on the east side to provide head room for access along the length of the attic. The principal rafters support three lines of purlins, which carry the rafters at 30cm (1ft) intervals.

The central truss (of seven) rests on the south wall of the original warehouse. There is a trap door access from the first floor of the north warehouse to the attic in the third bay of the roof space from the north. There is a stairway access to the roof space from the first floor of the second (southern) warehouse adjacent to the south wall of the first warehouse. This wall became a party wall when the second warehouse was built.

The roof covering was of slate.

The second (south) warehouse

The second warehouse was built during the 1840s or, perhaps, the early 1850s. It is appended directly on to the pre-existing wall of the first warehouse, so that the southern wall of the first warehouse became the north

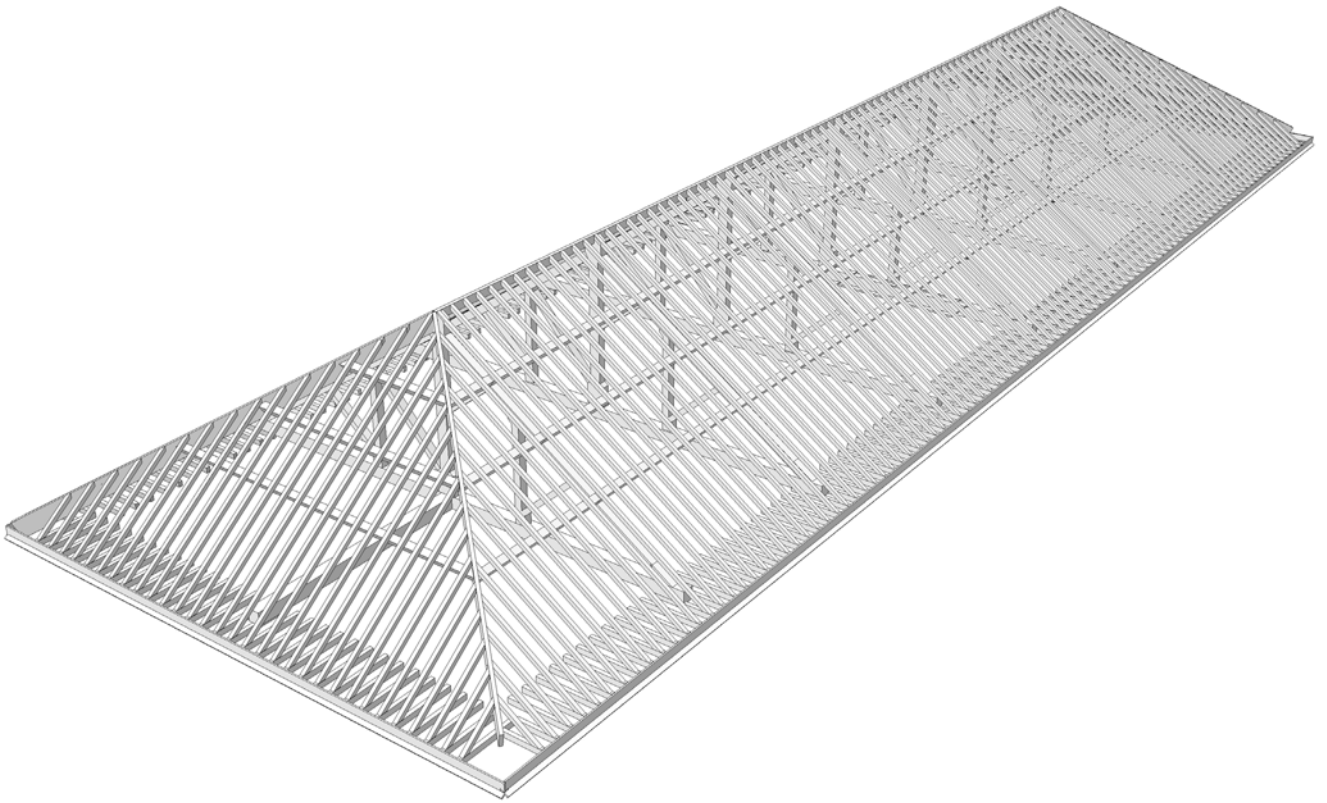


Fig. 23. Roof structure, showing rafters, trusses and purlins

Fig. 24. Roof structure from the north



Fig. 25. Roof structure, showing rafters, trusses, purlins and position of attic floor

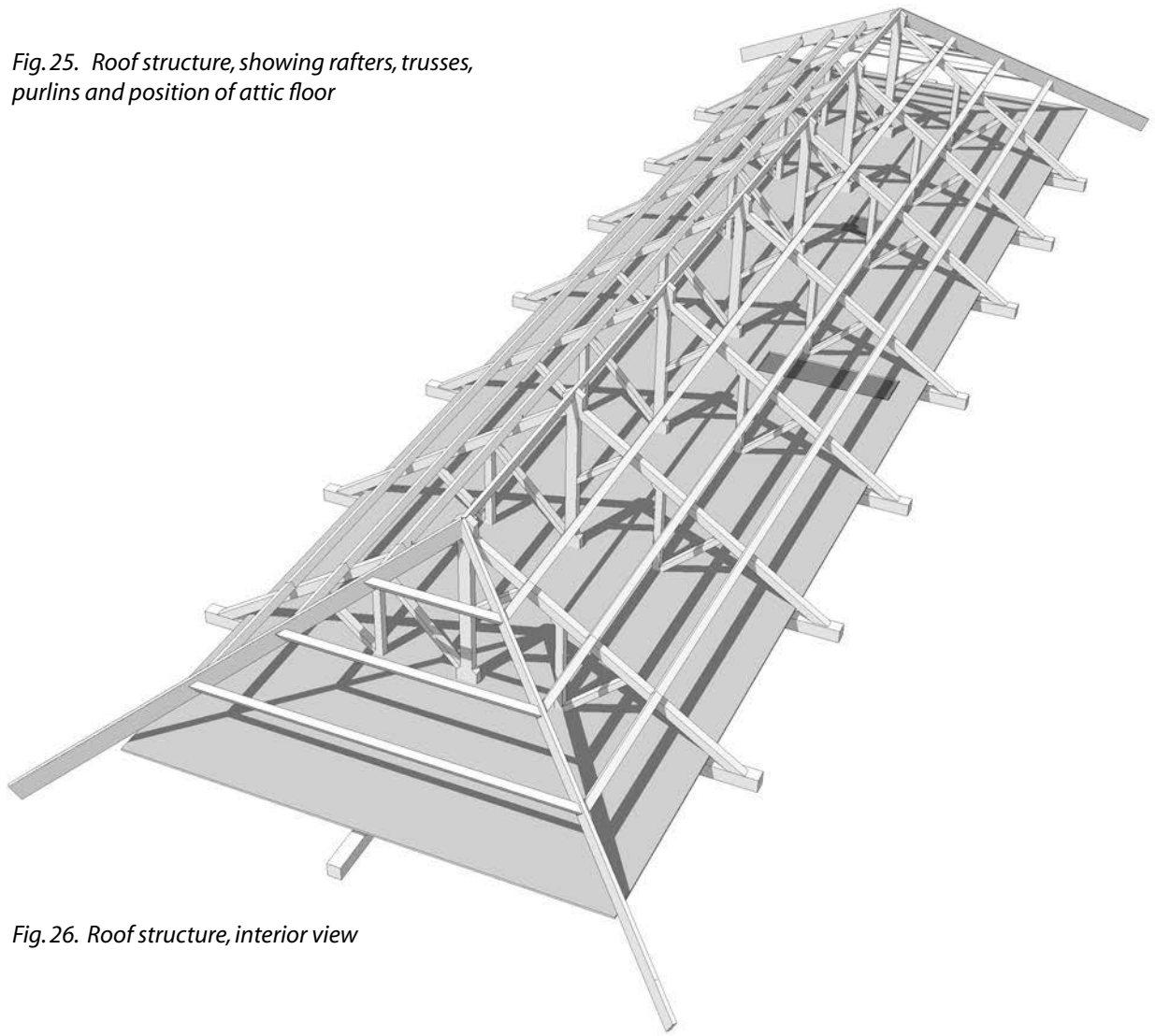


Fig. 26. Roof structure, interior view



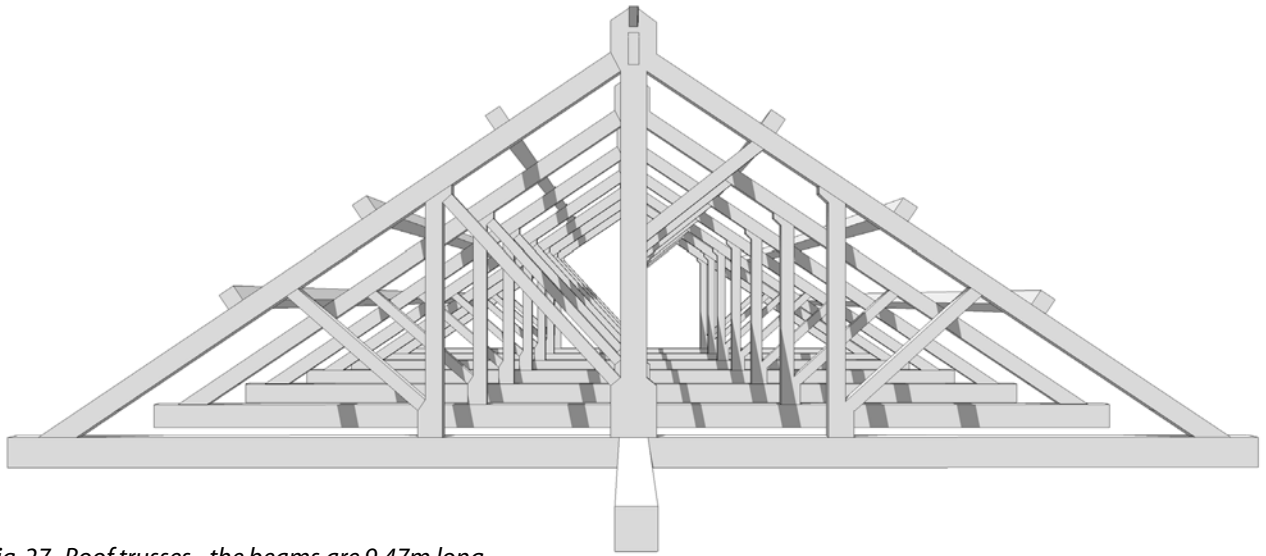


Fig. 27. Roof trusses - the beams are 9.47m long

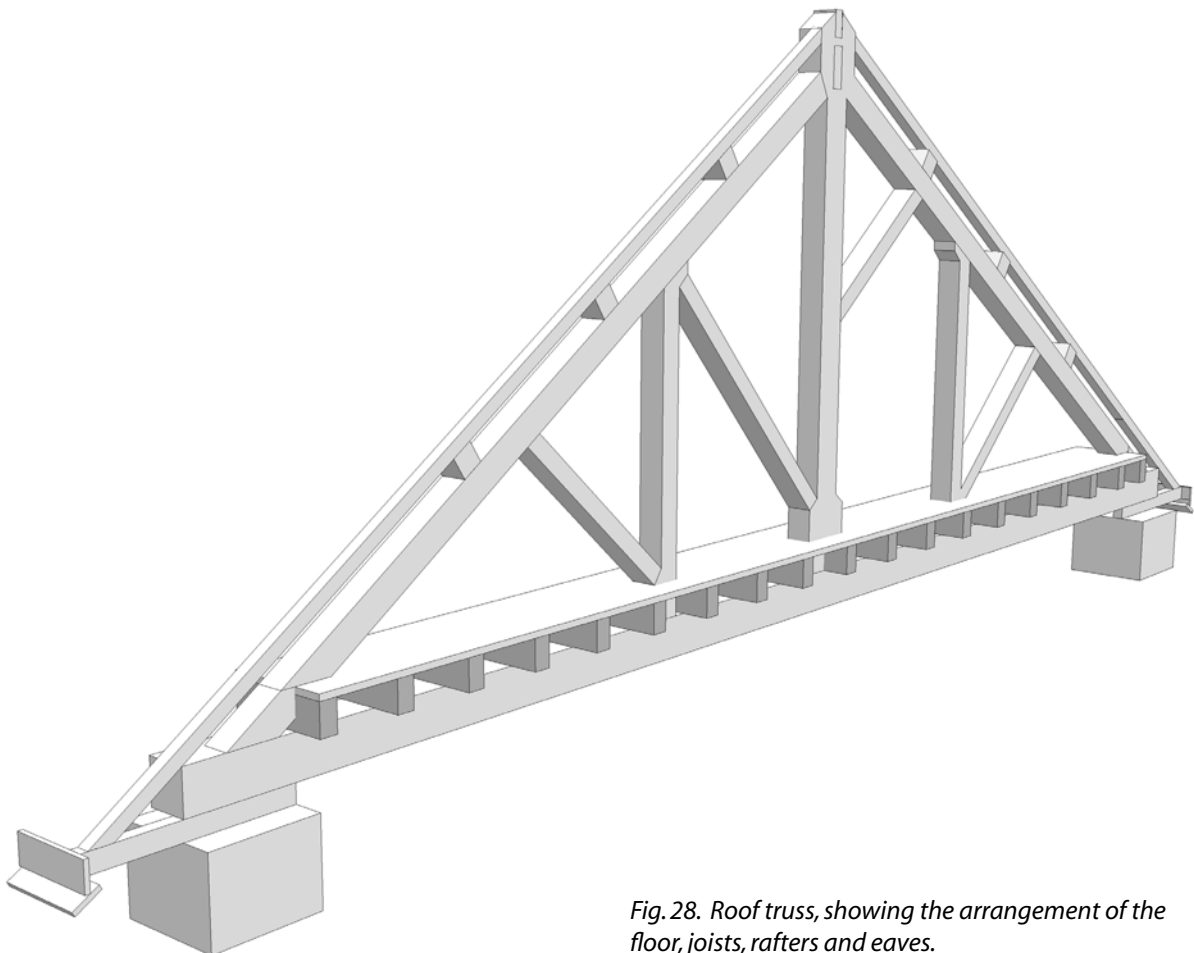


Fig. 28. Roof truss, showing the arrangement of the floor, joists, rafters and eaves.

wall of the second. The total internal length of the second warehouse is 15m, in comparison with the 13.75m length of the first warehouse. The two warehouses share the same roof line and the ground floors and first floors are very closely on the same level (there is a small step of a few centimetres from the first floor of the north warehouse to the first floor of the second warehouse).

External (front) elevations

The southern warehouse walls are of random rubble in a very similar style to the north warehouse. The stone is again, predominately schist, a very common and local building material for houses, commercial and public buildings in Menai Bridge during the nineteenth century.

There are two openings on the ground floor, both of which accommodate double warehouse doors. The ground continues to fall to the south and the northernmost of the two door-openings is necessarily raised above the external surface in order to maintain a level throughout the warehouse, for the internal floor. The second door, to the south, however, is taller at 3.09m and reaches down almost to the external surface. Access through this door was up a short flight of steps to the ground floor. A panel (now boarded) above the door may have lit the steps or carried a trade name and is likely to have been a customer access to the warehouse. The two doorways, despite their different heights, were provided with slate lintels at the same level. A small opening at ground floor level, between the two doorways, is boarded and bolted but may have provided small goods access to a basement below the ground floor.

The first floor is lit by three windows of identical kind to those on the floor of the first warehouse. There is, central to the south warehouse facade, a large rectangular plaster sign with the pointed legend, John Edwards (Wholesale Grocer).

Rear elevation

The left side of the rear elevation of the southern warehouse carries the marks of the side walls of a two-storey structure appended perpendicular to the warehouse. The pitched roof of this added structure was keyed-in to the warehouse roof (not shown in the elevation drawing).

There is a door at ground floor level and a door at first floor level, within the projecting walls of the added structure, both of which communicated between the first and ground floors of the warehouse and the additional structure. These doors had been open until very recently. There is a blocked, bricked-up opening to the left of the door on the ground floor.

There is a blocked (bricked-up) ground floor doorway to the right of the rear elevation of the southern warehouse. This was once approached by two stone steps and a third, moulded slate, step. The opening carries a large slate lintel, bearing an indecipherable legend, perhaps a tradesman's entrance to the warehouse.

There are two windows at first floor level of similar dimension to those on the front facade, either side of, and above the doorway. The left hand window comprises two sashes, each with eight panes, four over four. The right hand window is boarded and the glazing bars have largely been removed.

The south warehouse basement

The slope of the external ground surface towards the south offered some potential for additional storage space in the construction of a half-basement beneath the south warehouse floor. The basement measures 11.88m in length from the south wall of the warehouse and 8.22m in width. The depth of the basement is 2m. The basement is now accessed via eleven concrete steps in the north east corner of the ground floor. It is probable, however, that an original access was provided in the north-west corner of the basement using a 'companion-way' style ladder. A bricked-up recess in the west wall adjacent may indicate the former presence of a goods chute. Again, adjacent to the suggested ladder access, there remains a still usable trap door-and-hoist sequence on ground and first floor. There is another door, at basement level, in the south wall, accessed by an external ramp.

The ground floor is supported above the basement cavity by chamfered timber piers, similar to those in the north warehouse (see plan for disposition). The space between the piers is 2.6m and the piers are set 2.6m from each of the long walls. More recent brick piers have been employed to provide additional support. The south-eastern corner of the basement has, in recent times, been isolated and tiled as a washing facility.

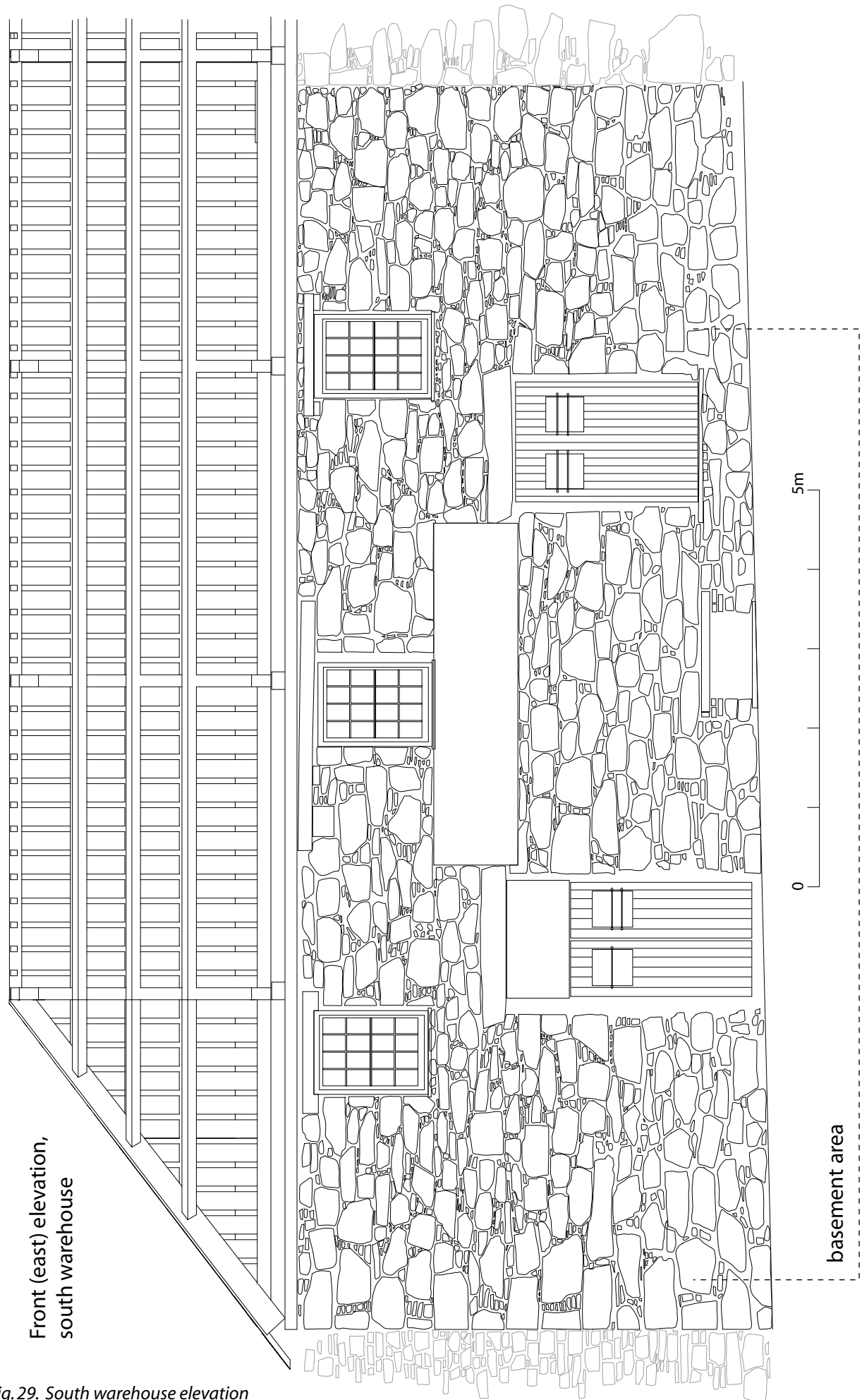


Fig. 29. South warehouse elevation

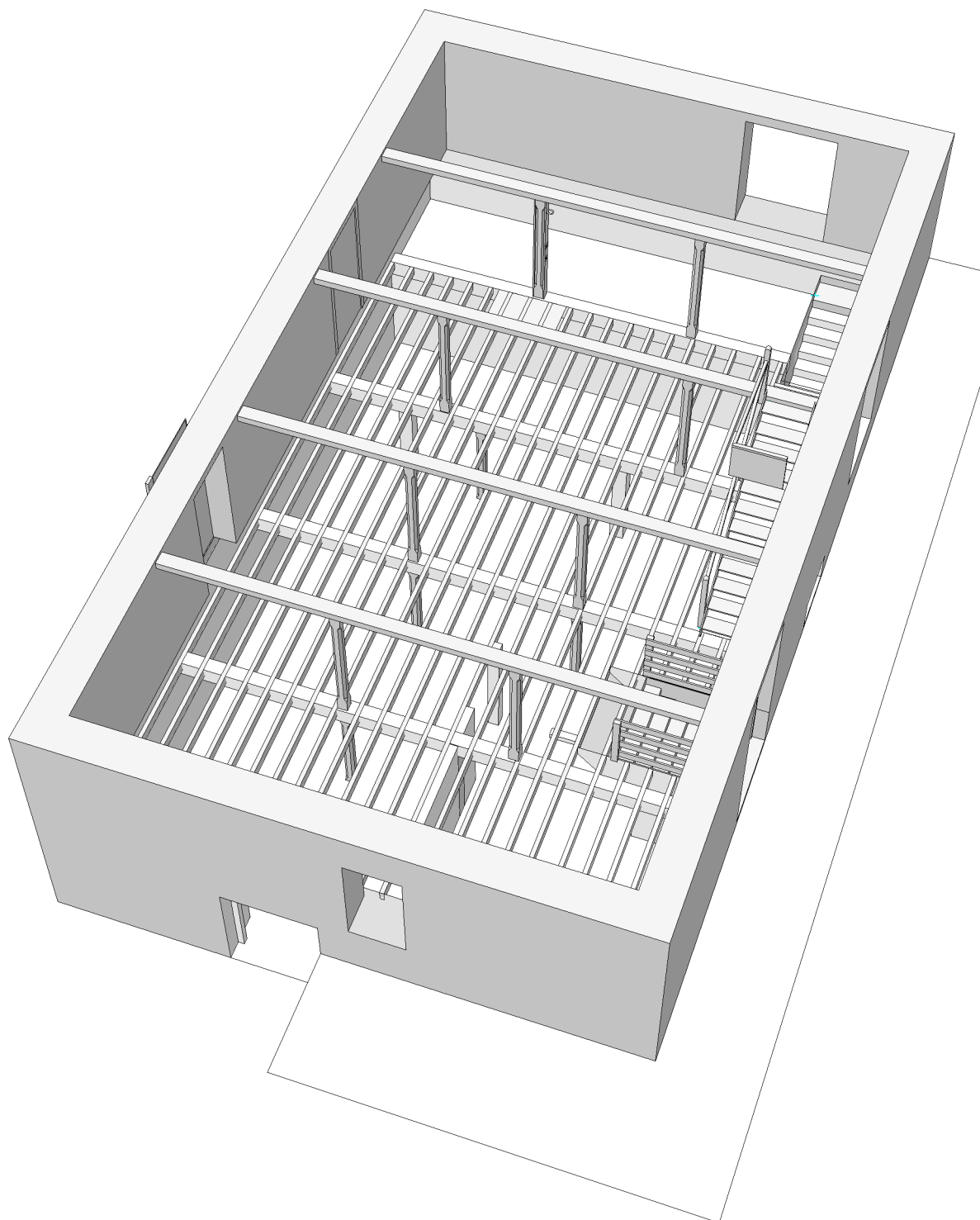


Fig.30. South warehouse - arrangement of beams and piers in basement and on ground floor

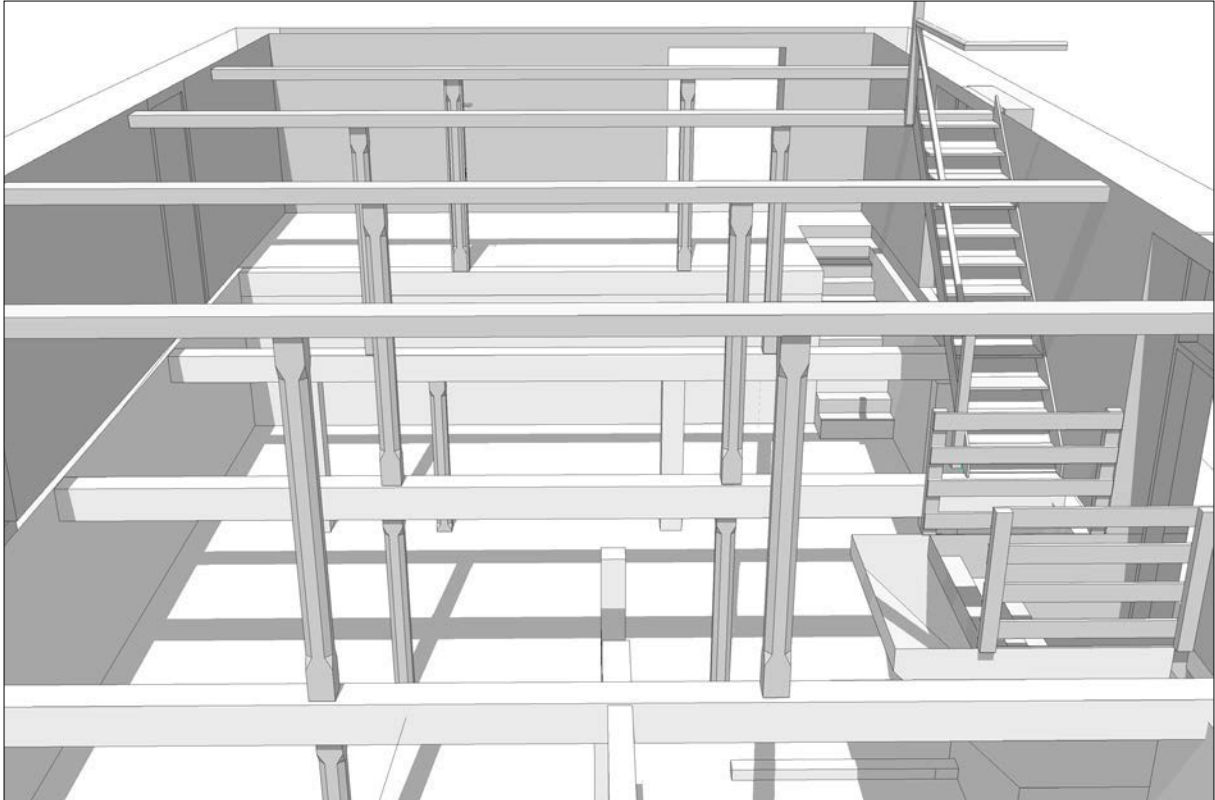


Fig.31. South warehouse - arrangement of beams and piers in basement and on ground floor -perspective view

Fig.32. South warehouse - basement beams and piers



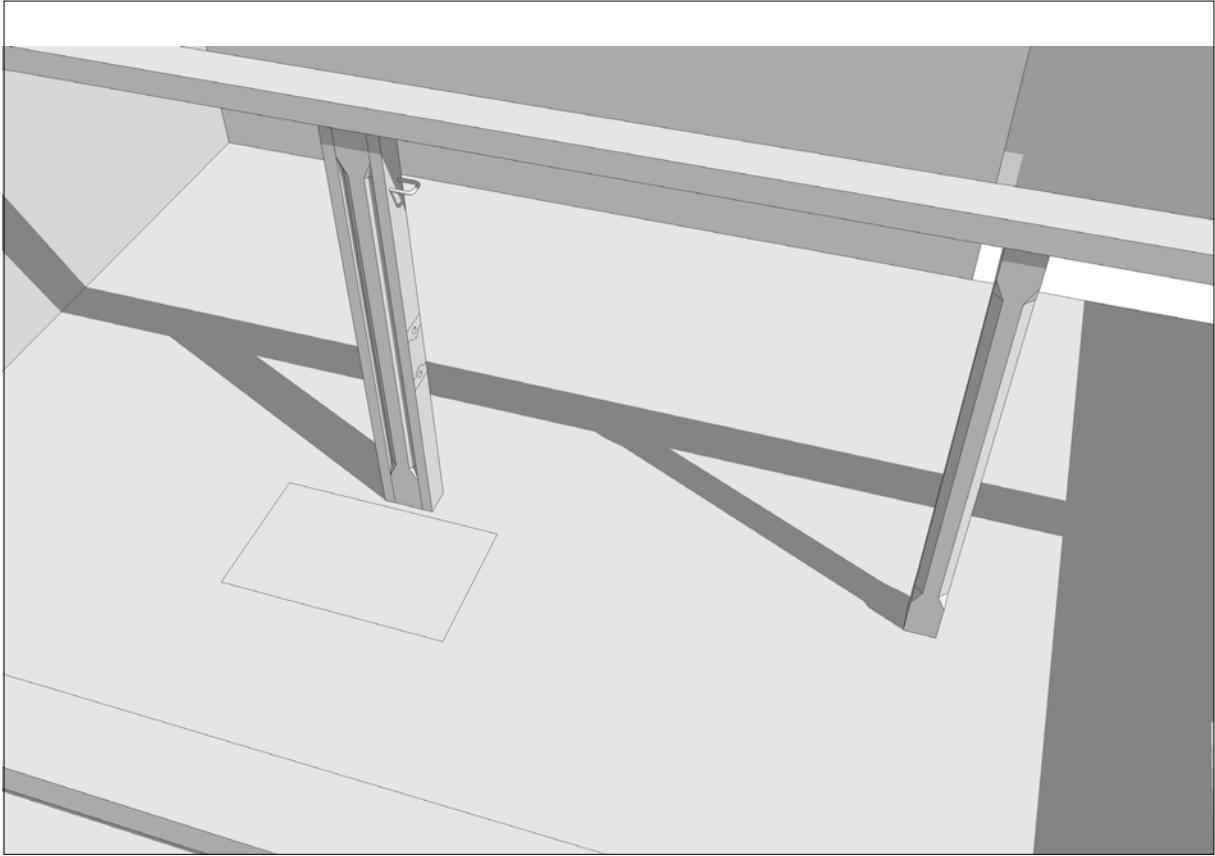


Fig.33. South warehouse - trap-door and hoist on ground floor

Fig.34. South warehouse - basement trap-door and ladder access

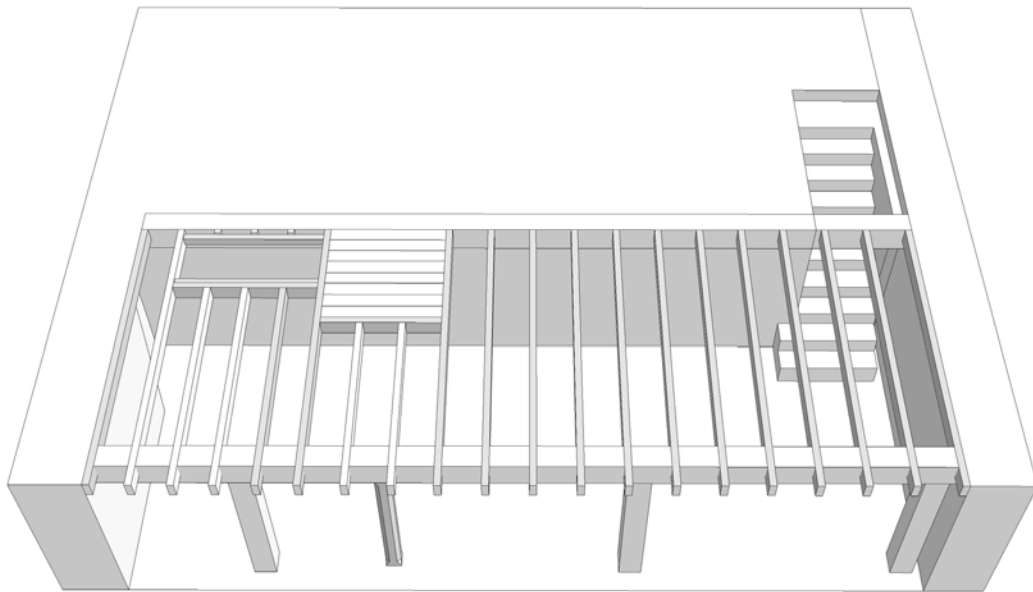




Fig.35. South warehouse - basement trap-door and ladder access (photograph)



Fig.36. South warehouse - basement chute



Fig. 37. South warehouse - ground floor pier, and ladder access to first floor

Fig. 38. South warehouse - ground floor piers





Fig. 39. South warehouse - ground floor hoist, and trap-door



Fig. 40. South warehouse - first floor pulley, trap-door and attic stair

The ground floor

A flight of wooden stairs against the inside east wall of the warehouse gives access to the first floor, chamfered timber piers stand on the line of the basement beams to support the beams above. The ground floor ceiling is 2.46m above the ground floor boards.

There is an opening for a door in the right hand (east) side of the north wall of the south warehouse, communicating with the north warehouse, and a door slightly off-set to the east side of the south wall of the ground floor at 3.13m from the south-east corner. The door gives access to the south office adjacent. There is a blocked window opening adjacent to the door, on the right hand side.

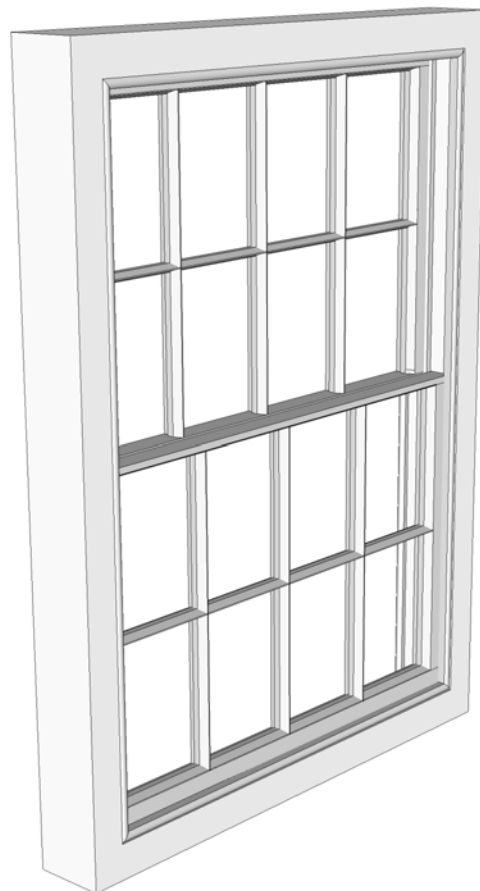
First floor

There is a wooden stair against the north wall of the south warehouse which provides access to the attic.

Three beams support the attic floor and carry the roof trusses. The number and disposition of these beams does not correspond to those of the basement ceiling and ground floor and there are no piers to support the beams in either warehouse.

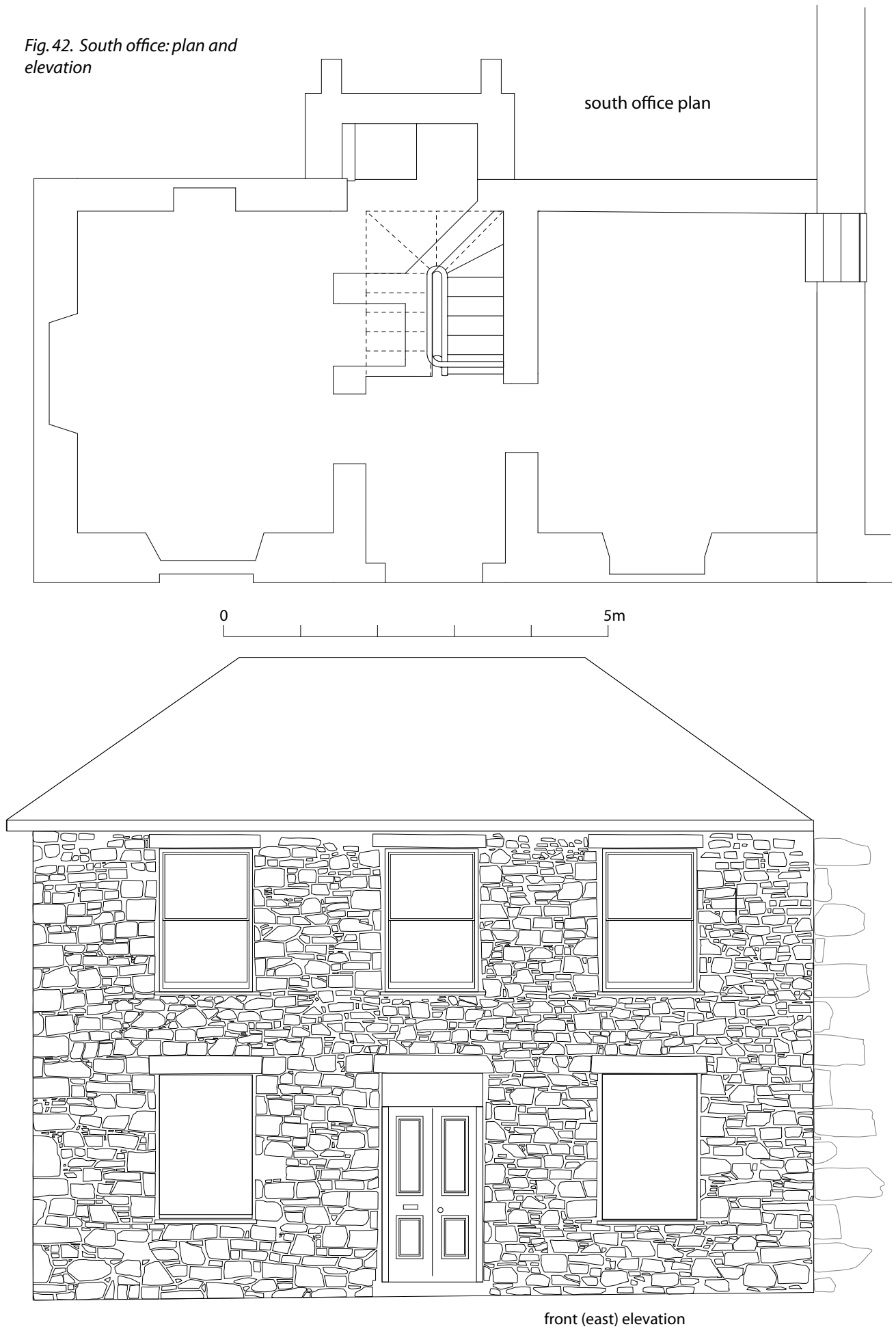
The northern of the three beams in the first floor ceiling carries a pulley-wheel directly above a trap-door in the first floor boards. There is another trap door, immediately below, in the ground floor.

There is a door, approximately central to the north wall which communicates within the north entrance. There is another door in the south wall, above the ground floor door, which gives access to the south office.



*Fig. 41. Typical warehouse window.
Total dimensions: 1427mm x 1060mm*

Fig. 42. South office: plan and elevation



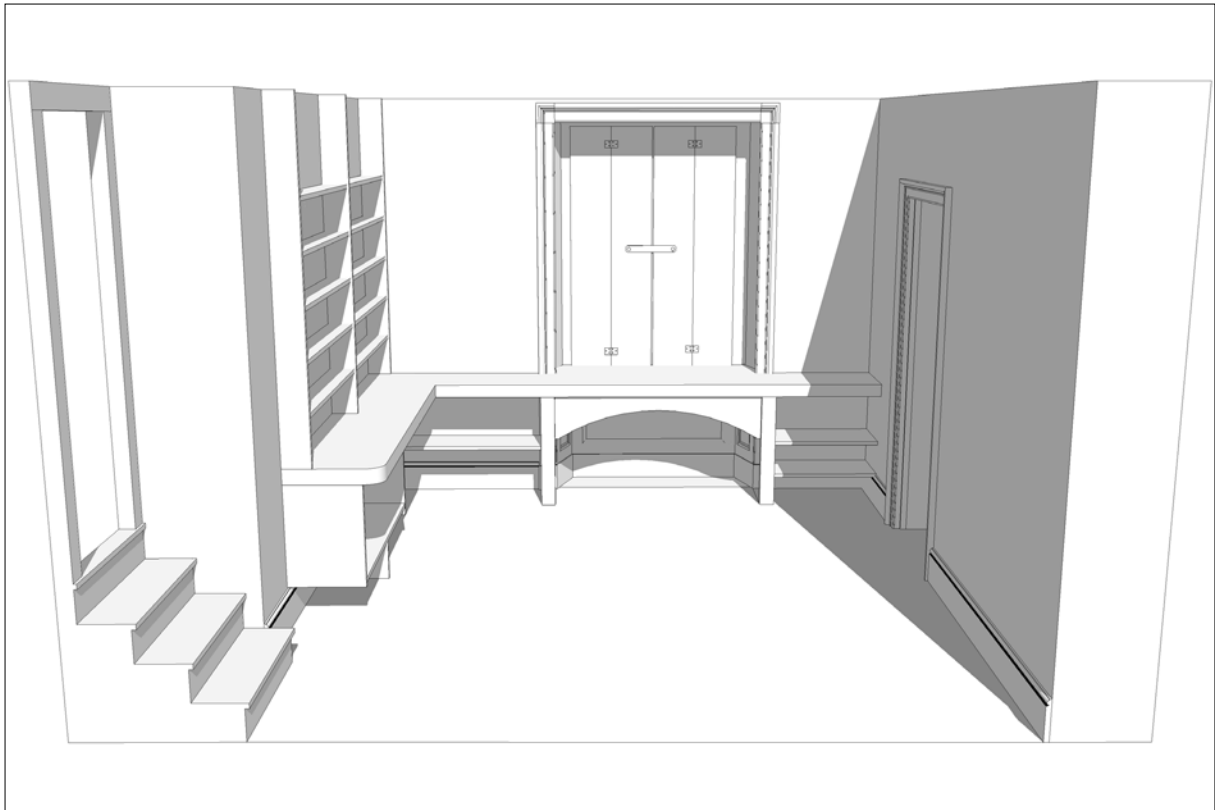


Fig. 43. South office, north room - ground floor, showing shuttered window, counter and shelves. The left-hand doorway leads to the warehouse

Fig. 44. South office, south room - ground floor, showing shuttered windows, architraves, cornice and fireplace in west wall



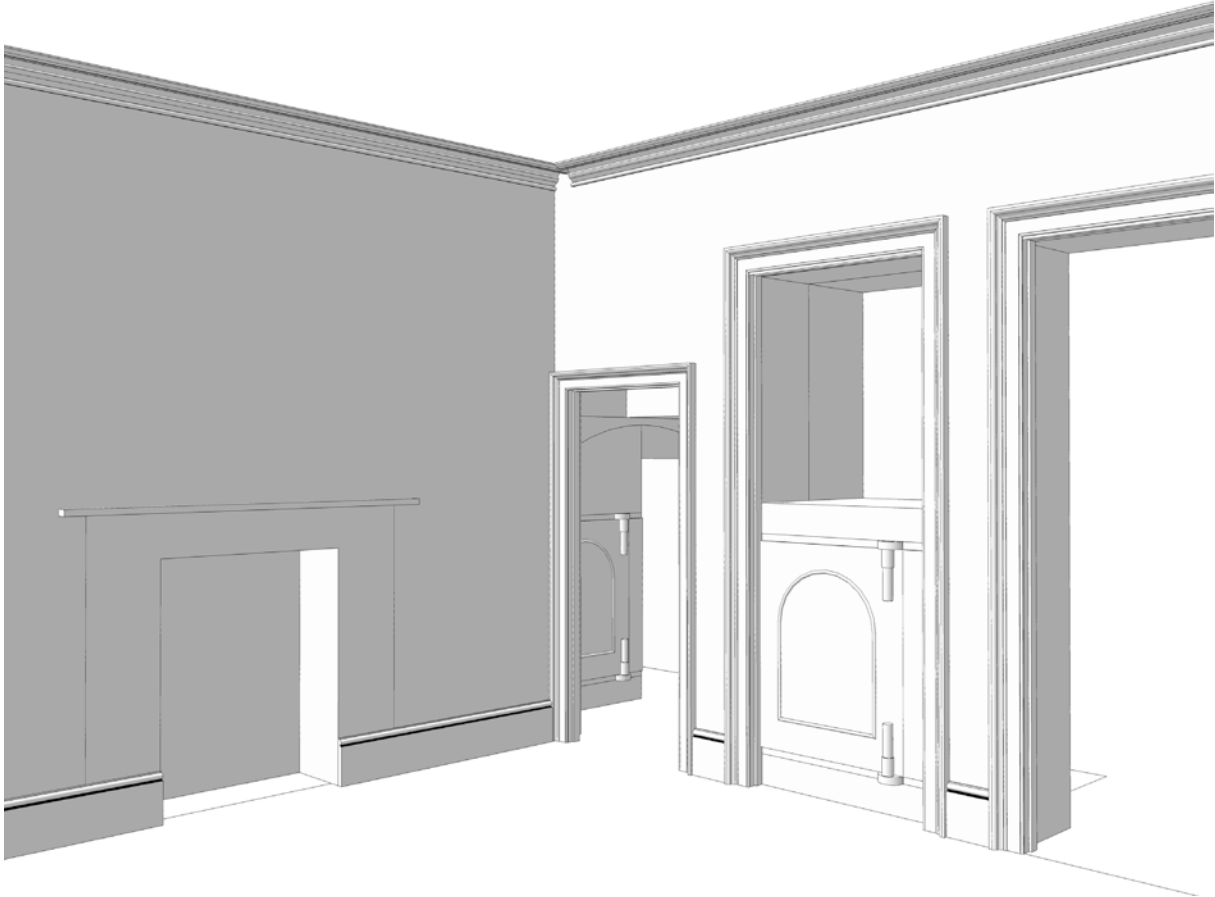


Fig. 45. South office, south room - ground floor, showing safes in 'cupboard' and alcove under the stairs.

Fig. 46. South office and warehouses from Water Street





Fig. 47. South office roof showing blocked position of chimney stacks



Fig. 48. North office roof showing structure

The south office

An office or similar structure is recorded at the south end of the warehouses in the late 1850s. The estate map which identifies this to be the case suggests that the 'office' was offset into the road by about 3m. If the map evidence, and this interpretation, is correct then the present office must be a later rebuild. The OS 1:2500 map of the 1880s shows that a ground plan very close to that which survives at the present was in place at that time. Another reason for questioning the contemporaneity of the south office and the south warehouse and north office additions is the extensive use of black limestone in the construction of the office, in contrast to the ubiquitous use of local schist in the other structures. Nevertheless, the plan of 1859 presents a distorted representation of the 'office' and its juxtaposition with the warehouse, and it is possible that a genuine offset in the boundary wall of the property, to the south of the warehouse, has caused the surveyor to misplace the office. The hornless sashes and typical early Victorian glazing bars in the south office windows suggest a date of construction before rather than after 1850.

Front (east) elevation

The front elevation is of heavily pointed irregular coarsed black limestone, of smaller size than stone work in the adjacent warehouse. There is a tall opening, fronted by two steps, centrally disposed on the ground floor of the south office. The opening is 1.3m wide and 2.7m tall above the front step and below a slate lintel. The opening accommodates a wood-paneled door, 2.25m tall, above which there is a glazed light (lately boarded) which carries the painted legend, 'Offices, Sale Room'.

There are two large window openings (1.8m x 1.20m), lately boarded, which flank the central door. The openings have slate sills and slate lintels. The first floor has three window openings (1.84m x 1.20m) symmetrically disposed with the windows and door below. The windows comprise two hornless sashes, each occupied by a single pane of glass. However, a more detailed examination reveals that the original glazing bars have been removed and that sashes formerly comprised six panes (three over three) in each sash. The openings have slate sills and lintels. It is probable that the ground floor windows were installed to the same pattern.

South elevation

The stonework is predominantly black limestone, in similar fashion to the front elevations, with some use of local schist in the lower courses. There are two windows, centrally disposed, one above the other on ground and first floors. The windows are of closely similar dimensions to those on the front elevation except that these retain their glazing bars. The moulding on the blazing bars is lambs tongue.

Rear (west elevation)

The rear elevation is pebble-dashed. There is one window on the first floor at the junction with the south wall of the warehouse which is of the same pattern as the windows on the front elevation. There is a 2.7m rectangular projection extending centrally from the rear elevation for a distance of 1.11m at ground level and 1.55m at half-landing level. The extension at ground level houses a safe; the half-landing accommodates toilet facilities. There is a small metal-framed casement-style window of two lights in the toilet. The upper light is top hinged.

The interior of the south office

The central door in the eastern wall of the south office opens into a small internal porch and, beyond, into a hallway and stair-well. The stairs turn at half-landing level, where there are toilet facilities, to reach the first floor rooms from the ground floor hallway, doors open to a north rook and a south room.

The south room is most likely to have been the office for the wholesale grocery business. The windows on the east and south elevations, described above, are set, internally within alcoves which reach from the floor almost to the ceiling at 2.78m. The alcoves are defined by moulded architraves and the recesses are paneled from the floor to the window sill at 0.84m. Hinged wooden boarded shutters secure the window openings. There is a fireplace centrally disposed in the west wall.

In the north wall of the south room there is a large cupboard-like recess which, in the more recent past, housed a strong safe. To the left of this cupboard, within the external projection on the west side, there was, recently, a second safe.

The room to the north of the hall was, most probably, the 'Sale Room'. A shuttered alcove, similar to those in the south room faces east, towards Water Street. Counters and shelves are ranged along the north and east

Fig. 49. North office elevations

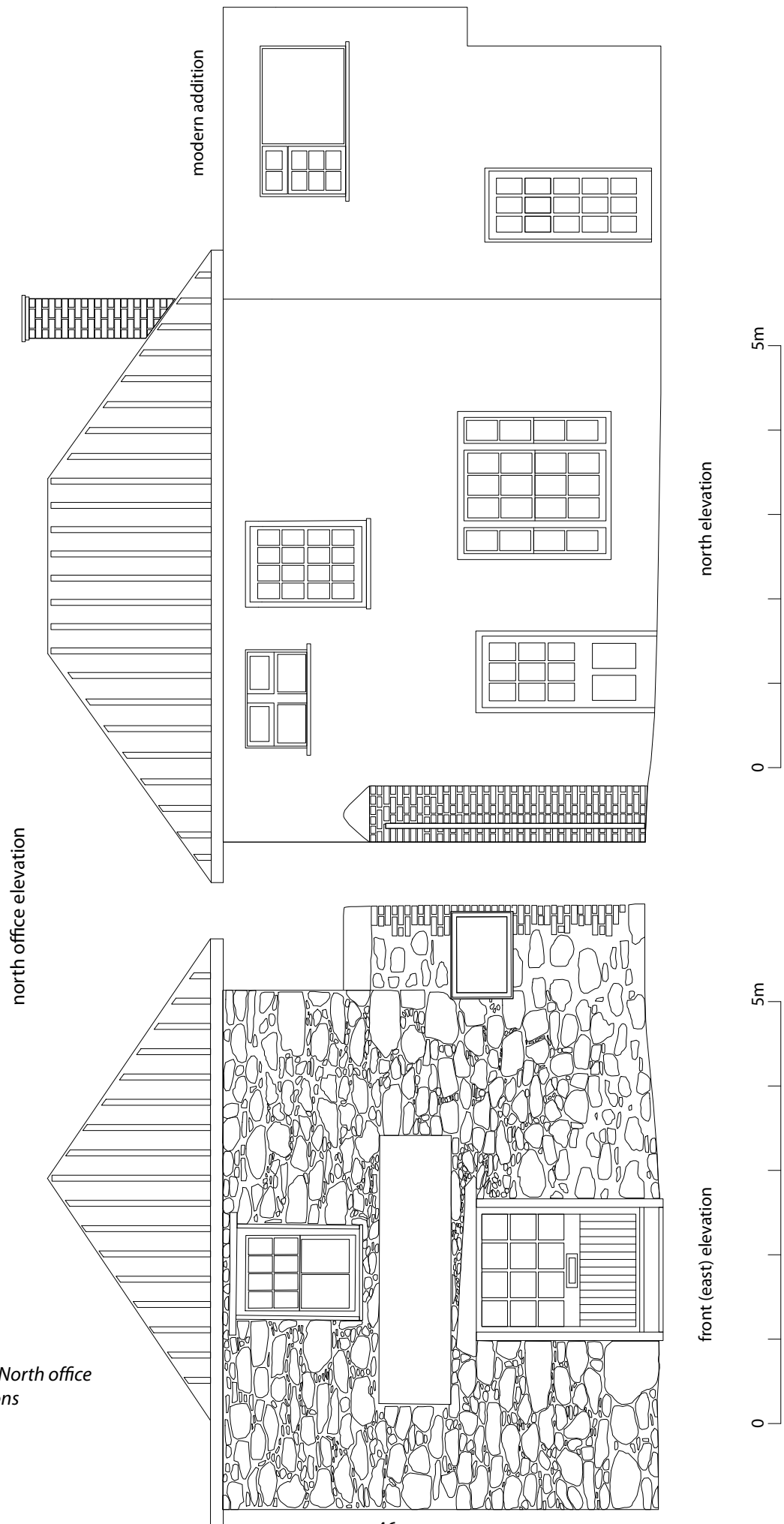




Fig. 50. North office from north-west



Fig. 51. North office, showing blocked door in north wall of warehouse.

walls. A flight of four steps in the north-west corner of the room provides access to the raised ground floor of the south warehouse. A fireplace is provided in the west wall of this room too.

We might expect the two upper rooms to provide private accommodation for the office manager or clerk. The northern of the two upper rooms has a doorway access to the first floor of the south warehouse. Both upper rooms have fireplaces in their west walls.

The south office roof

The roof is of hipped construction, sharing a valley with the south end of the warehouse roof. The eaves, at 6m above the road, are at the same level as the warehouse eaves and these form a continuous overhang along the length of the two warehouses and two offices.

The roof structure is of similar design to the warehouse roof, but on a reduced scale. The roof line rises 2.24m above the eaves in comparison with the 3.6m height of the warehouse roof. Two king-post trusses are employed, with raking posts to the principal rafters. A single purlin, and support at the level of the wall plate, underpin the rafters. The chimney stacks had long been removed from the roof space before this present survey was undertaken.

The north office

The front elevation is predominantly local schist of random rubble construction. The perimeter wall of the woodyard abuts this office and there is a possibility that a part of the woodyard/coaching stables curtilage has been incorporated in its construction. The north office remained in use as a working office within the structure of the woodyard until 2004. This was not the case in respect of the south office, which had been neglected for some considerable time. In consequence, the interior of the north office had been modified considerably and an additional unit had been appended to its western end in the recent past.

Front (eastern) elevation

There is one large opening at ground level, 1.66m wide, 2.15m tall, beneath a slate lintel. The present door which occupies it is modern tongue-and-groove with glazed panes above. There is a window opening, above the door on the first floor, 1.12m wide by 1.45m tall, with slate sill and lintel. The window comprises two sashes. The upper sash retains its glazing bars, four panes over four. The glazing bars have been removed from the lower sash and the sash re-glazed.

North elevation

The north elevation is pebble-dash rendered. There are two components visible. The first, capped by a hipped roof, incorporates the original north office of the mid-nineteenth century. The second, to the west, with flat roof, is a modern addition.

The original office has two openings on the ground floor. To the left (east) there is a modern door, half-paneled with glazed panes above. To the right there is a large opening, 1.74m wide by 1.81m high. This accommodates an original window of two central, vertically sliding, sashes, flanked on either side by narrow side panels, of two sashes, vertically sliding. The central sashes each comprise six panes, three over three. The side sashes each comprise two panes, one over one. The sashes are hornless and the glazing bars are lamb's tongue type.

At first floor level, above the door, there is a squat opening occupied by a modern casement window of four lights. The upper two lights are top hinged. There is a second opening, centrally placed in the north wall at first floor level which accommodates an original window of two vertically sliding sashes, each of eight panes, four over four. The sashes are hornless. Internally there are blocked door openings in the south wall of the office (north wall of the warehouse) which once gave communication between the office and the warehouse on both floors. These have been described above.

The roof

The roof is hipped, presenting a triangular, pyramidal profile viewed from the front (east) and a trapezoidal profile from the north. The structure of the roof employs no separate structural truss. The stability of the roof is achieved by tying the wall plate on each side to the hip-rafters at each corner and by tying the purlins, in similar fashion, to the hip-rafters at about two-thirds of the height of the ridge. The common and jack rafters are supported by the purlins and wall plates. The roof is of slate.

An original chimney stack survives above the west wall of the office.



Fig. 52. Shipping marks on timber in main warehouse roof and on basement beams



Archaeological excavation Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during construction work at the former William Roberts Woodyard, Menai Bridge. The aim of the watching brief was to investigate any potential remains of the posting stable built before the construction of the woodyard in 1828. The general location of the stables was known from contemporary map evidence, but the structure had been subsumed by the later woodyard. The watching brief identified the foundation cut for the western elevation of the stables as well as a fragmented cobbled surface also from the stables. The foundation cut was shallow with no associated artefacts and appeared to have been truncated by the construction of the woodyard. This was most evident where a large foundation cut associated with the woodyard was visible towards the centre of the watching brief area, orientated along and cutting into the posting stable foundation cut. A brick-built floor surface was visible towards the northern end of the watching brief area associated with the woodyard.

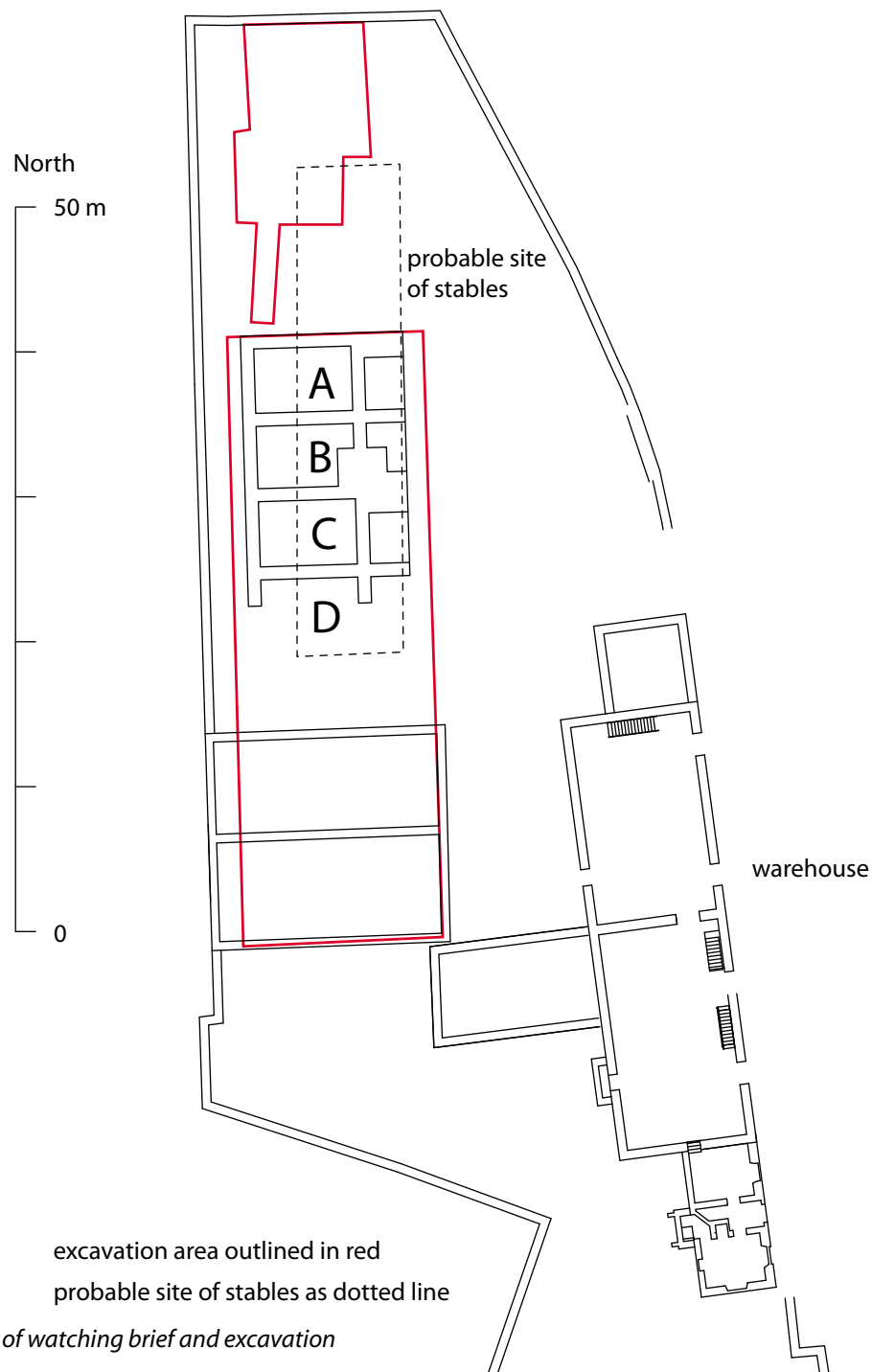


Fig. 53. Location of watching brief and excavation

Introduction

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked to undertake an archaeological watching brief at the former site of a warehouse complex belonging to William Roberts' Woodyard (SH55777192), Menai Bridge, in advance of a new housing complex.

The basic requirement was for a watching brief of the proposed area, in order to assess the impact of the proposals on the archaeological features within the area concerned. The importance and condition of known archaeological remains were to be assessed, and areas of archaeological potential identified and recorded.

The watching brief was undertaken on the 9th and 12th of January, 2006.

The aim of the watching brief was to monitor the groundworks within the former warehouse complex (Figure 1), specifically monitoring the excavation of the foundation footings of the building scheme and investigating any archaeological remains. The excavation work was undertaken by a 16-tonne 360° tracked excavator and the exposed areas cleaned by hand.

Results of the Archaeological Watching Brief

The watching brief focussed on the central and northern portion of the site, investigating the footings of the new development. The central excavation covered an area c. 24.5m by 11.0m in area and the northern excavation covered an area c. 20.0m by 17.6m in area. The depth of the footings in the central excavation varied between 0.60 and 0.80m and the footings in the northern excavation averaged over a metre in depth. The ground surface of the warehouse complex had been stripped prior to the excavation of the footings.

The Central Excavation Area

The footings measured between 1.0 and 1.50m in width and between 0.60 and 0.80m in depth and divided the excavation area into four sub-areas, each c. 24.0m² in size. These sub-areas were designated A, B, C and D during the watching brief. Sub-area A revealed evidence of both the posting stable and the warehouse complex. The north-facing section of sub-area A revealed that the foundation cut for the posting stable measured c. 0.60m in width and 0.50m in depth and cut into an orange-brown clay-silt that sealed colluvial/glacial deposits. The function of the clay-silt was unclear but it did not appear to be a cultivation deposit. The fill of the foundation cut was a friable brown clay-silt with frequent inclusion of sub-angular and sub-rounded stone. The eastern side of the cut had been truncated by a pit dug to support a wooden post (the remains of which was visible in section and in plan). The post and the pit were interpreted as twentieth century in date due to the inclusion of frogged brick in the backfill and concrete to support the post. The cobbled surface was visible in plan as a discrete spread covering c. 8m² but its full extent could not be determined due to modern disturbance, but a further patch of cobbling was identified to the east of sub-area A proving that it continued in this direction. The south-facing section of sub-area A contained more evidence of modern disturbance, but also revealed evidence of landscaping below the cobbled surface, comprising layers of stone, clay and silt, loosely mixed that appeared to have been built up to provide a level surface to support the cobbles. This landscaping layer had been deposited onto the natural glacial silt.

The foundation cut of the posting stable continued into sub-area B on the same north-south orientation. The cut had been truncated by another foundation cut containing a 0.80m wide stone-built foundation, north-south aligned with an east west return. The stones were sub-angular in shape, up to 0.80m wide and stood at least two courses high. There was no evidence of bonding material used. The foundation blocks had been truncated by the cutting of the new footings for the development so it was not possible to determine the full extent of the structure. What was clear was that it post-dated the posting stable and was most likely part of the warehouse complex. The posting stable continued southwards into sub-areas C and D on the same orientation. A modern pipe was visible running northwest to southeast within sub-area C that appeared to be made from plastic. Within sub-area D there was more evidence of landscaping associated with the construction of the posting stable: on the north-facing section, the posting stable cut both the natural colluvial and glacial deposits, whilst also cutting a stone and mortar-rich deposit, 0.50m thick. A series of landscaping/levelling layers continued eastwards from this area. Their exact relationship to the deposit cut by the posting stable could not be determined due to the intrusion of a modern cut filled with aggregate, but it was assumed they were concurrent due to the similarity in the appearance of the deposits.

The North Excavation Area

The north excavation was located c.2.00m north of the central excavation. The posting stable was visible continuing northwards into this area and, in a footing dug for the north excavation, the remains of a brick wall was visible butting against the stable foundation standing two courses high. The wall had been severely truncated but was interpreted as part of the warehouse complex. The only other activity noted within the northern excavation was modern drainage towards the eastern boundary wall.

Conclusion

The evidence for the posting stable was limited to part of the western elevation of the structure and a truncated cobbled surface. No evidence for the north, south and east elevations were identified. What was revealed, however, was evidence for landscaping/levelling activity prior to the construction of the stable, represented by a series of stone-rich deposits dumped onto the colluvial/glacial layers. Evidence for the woodyard included a stone-built foundation course that truncated the posting stable and a brick-built wall that butted the stable. No other activity was identified.

The complete archive for this project is filed as G1839

Fig. 54. Plan of features excavated

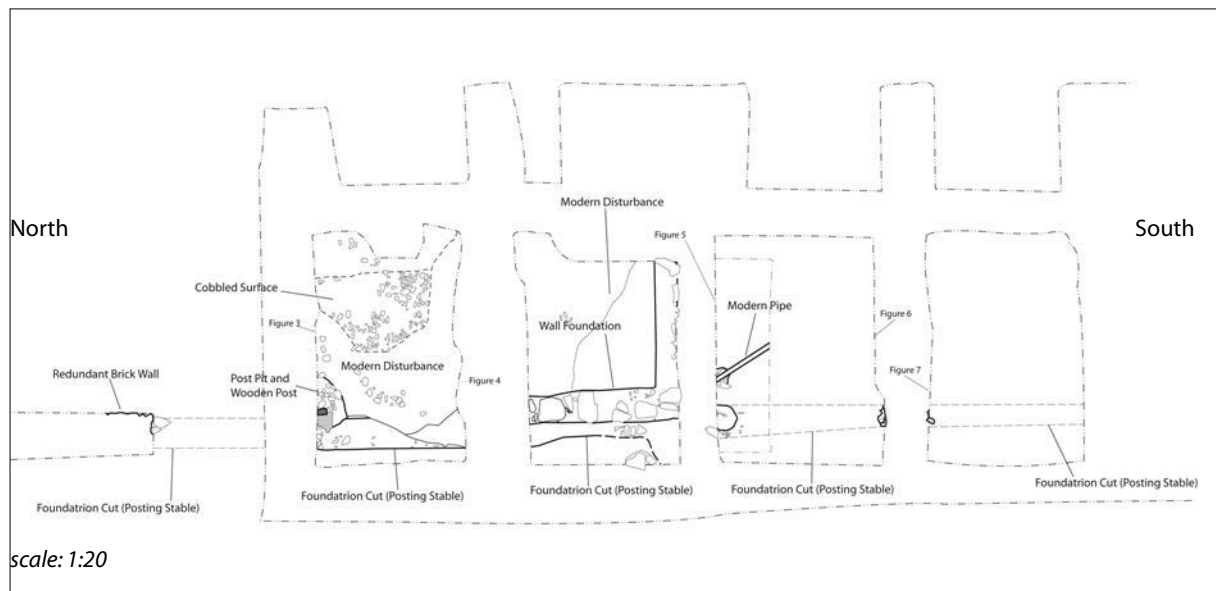


Fig. 55 and 56. Views of features excavated from north-west and north



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