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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project:  
**The Gatehouse, Beaumaris**

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GAT Project No. 2113

Report No. 853

March, 2010



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Prepared for  
North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

March 2010

By  
Andrew Davidson  
&  
Tanya Berks



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# North West Wales Dendrochronology Project: **The Gatehouse, Beaumaris**

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## **Contents**

Location	1
Introduction	1
Methodology	1
Survey report	1
Dendrochronology sampling	3
Conclusion	3



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## The Gatehouse, Beaumaris

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### Figures

Figure 1	Location map	4
Figure 2	1914 Ordnance Survey Anglesey County Series	5
Figure 3	The Gatehouse Beaumaris ground floor plan	6
Figure 4	The Gatehouse Beaumaris first floor plan	7
Figure 5	The Gatehouse Beaumaris second floor plan	8
Figure 6	Trusses 1 and 2.	9
Figure 7	Building elevation showing truss 1.	10

### Plates

Plate 1	Ground floor living room, showing fireplace.	11
Plate 2	Ground floor living room, showing frontdoor.	11
Plate 3	Ground floor living room, showing ceiling timbers.	12
Plate 4	Ground floor living room, showing staircase.	12
Plate 5	Ground floor dining room, showing fireplace.	13
Plate 6	Ground floor dining room, showing frontdoor.	13
Plate 7	Ground floor dining room, showing ceiling timbers.	14
Plate 8	Ground floor dining room, showing window.	14
Plate 9	Stairway showing blocked window.	15
Plate 10	Rear bedroom.	15
Plate 11	Rear bedroom.	16
Plate 12	Bathroom, showing timbers	16
Plate 13	Front bedroom	17
Plate 14	Front bedroom	17
Plate 15	Front bedroom showing ceiling timbers	18
Plate 16	Front bedroom showing chamfered beam	18
Plate 17	Staircase leading and blocked window	19
Plate 18	Door leading to attic	19
Plate 19	Truss 1 in second floor front room	20
Plate 20	Truss 1 in second floor front room	20
Plate 21	Truss 1 detail	21
Plate 22	Truss 2	21
Plate 23	Truss 2 detail	22
Plate 24	Attic room, showing timber detail	22





## **North West Wales Dendrochronology Project**

### **The Gatehouse, Castle Street, Beaumaris, Anglesey. NGR SH 60477601**

#### **Location**

Castle Street, Beaumaris  
Community Council: Beaumaris  
County: Anglesey  
PRN: 11045  
NPRN: 15633  
Listed Building Status: II, Record Number 5609

#### **Introduction**

This report contains the results of a survey undertaken to complement the dating of timbers at The Gatehouse, Castle Street, Beaumaris, as part of the North West Wales Dendrochronology project. The survey was undertaken on 26 February 2010 shortly after the dendrochronology sampling. Documentary research will be undertaken by volunteers to accompany this survey, and separate reports will be issued describing the results of the documentary survey and of the dendrochronology sampling.

A brief for the survey was provided by North West Wales Dendrochronology Project, and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust provided a design to meet the specification of the brief.

#### **Methodology**

The survey was undertaken using a combination of reflectorless EDM and hand survey. The results from the surveys were overlaid onto architect plans prepared by Bowen Dann Davies partnership in 1981 when alterations were made to the house.

#### **Survey report**

The Gatehouse lies at the lower (south-west) end of Castle Street in Beaumaris. It is so named because it lies on the site of the original gatehouse located through the town wall on Castle Street, and clearly shown on John Speed's plan of the town in 1610. One of the very few surviving sections of medieval town wall lies on the north side of the property, and extends beyond the present property a short distance to the north-west. The house therefore lies immediately outside the former town wall. The town wall was built as a direct consequence of the Glyndwr revolt, though an attack on the borough by a small Scottish landing party in 1381, when a number of houses were damaged, must have encouraged the idea, and as early as 1315 the burgesses had been petitioning the King for a wall (Carr 1982, 240). In 1407 a grant of ten pounds was made for the construction of a ditch, and the returns of 1413-14 reveal that some thirty burgages had been destroyed by the construction of a new stone wall (Carr 1982, 245-6). Repairs were undertaken to the wall in 1536-8 for which detailed accounts survive (Knoop and Jones 1935). Virtually all the wall has now gone, and the remnant by Castle Street is one of only two short lengths surviving.

The Gatehouse fronts on to Castle Street and is of 2½ storeys. It is flanked by taller buildings either side. The front is pebble-dashed with rendered quoins, the pitched roof is of slate, with a single chimney on the left gable. The front door is slightly

right of centre, and is flanked by two windows on the ground floor, with two above on the first floor and two modern dormers on the second floor.

The present house consists of a three-bay range fronting Castle Street and a rear wing of two bays with a lower roofline. A modern kitchen has been added to the rear of the front bay alongside the earlier wing, and a modern extension has been added to the end of the rear wing.

On the ground floor the principal range is now a single room, divided by large chamfered beams. The beam along the north-east wall lies on heavy stone corbels. This is echoed also on the first and second floors, and may indicate former timber framing on this end of the building, to keep it away from the town wall against which it currently abuts. Squared joists rest on top of the beams, but are not notched in. There are no mortise joints visible to suggest any of the principal beams once carried a partition. The rear door opens into the modern kitchen, and this has an outer frame of chamfered limestone slabs, of 14<sup>th</sup> century appearance, and very possibly reused from the original gatehouse. A fireplace projects into the room on the south-west wall, and a wooden lintel supports the chimney, which rises up through the first and second floors. The present staircase rises up alongside the fireplace to the first floor.

The rear wing is reached from the present kitchen. It is a small wing, divided longitudinally into two bays by a single large chamfered beam which supports squared joists. A large fireplace lies at the north-west end of the room, with a narrow space alongside that might formerly have led to a door. A large modern opening or window pierces the wall between this wing and the present kitchen.

A blocked window and possible door are visible in the south-west wall off the first stair landing. The first floor is essentially two large bays divided by a chamfered beam. Squared rafters run between these and the two walls – a chamfered beam supports the joists on the inside of the north-east wall, as on the ground floor. The north-west rafters appear to be largely supported by the fireplace lintel, though all is blocked up here so it is difficult to be sure of this. In the south corner of the room is an alcove alongside the project stack – this may be a blocked door also.

The rear wing is of two bays divided across the room by a chamfered beam. Another, slightly smaller, beam runs across the front of the stack at ceiling level. The fireplace is blocked, though a small door allows entry to part of the space behind. Alongside the stack an alcove leads to another door.

On the landing to the second floor is another blocked opening in the south-west wall. The roof space of the rear wing is also reached through a small door which lies half way up the stairs, but also above the level of the stairs. The second floor is the attic space. The principal roof truss, a collar beam truss with raking struts, divides the room into two bays. The former slots for wide purlins are visible in the principal rafters, but these have been removed and square purlins inserted. The rafters are not visible, but it is likely these were renewed with the purlins. A single upright on the south-east side runs between the floor and the principal rafter. A tennon for one on the opposite side shows a second one has been removed.

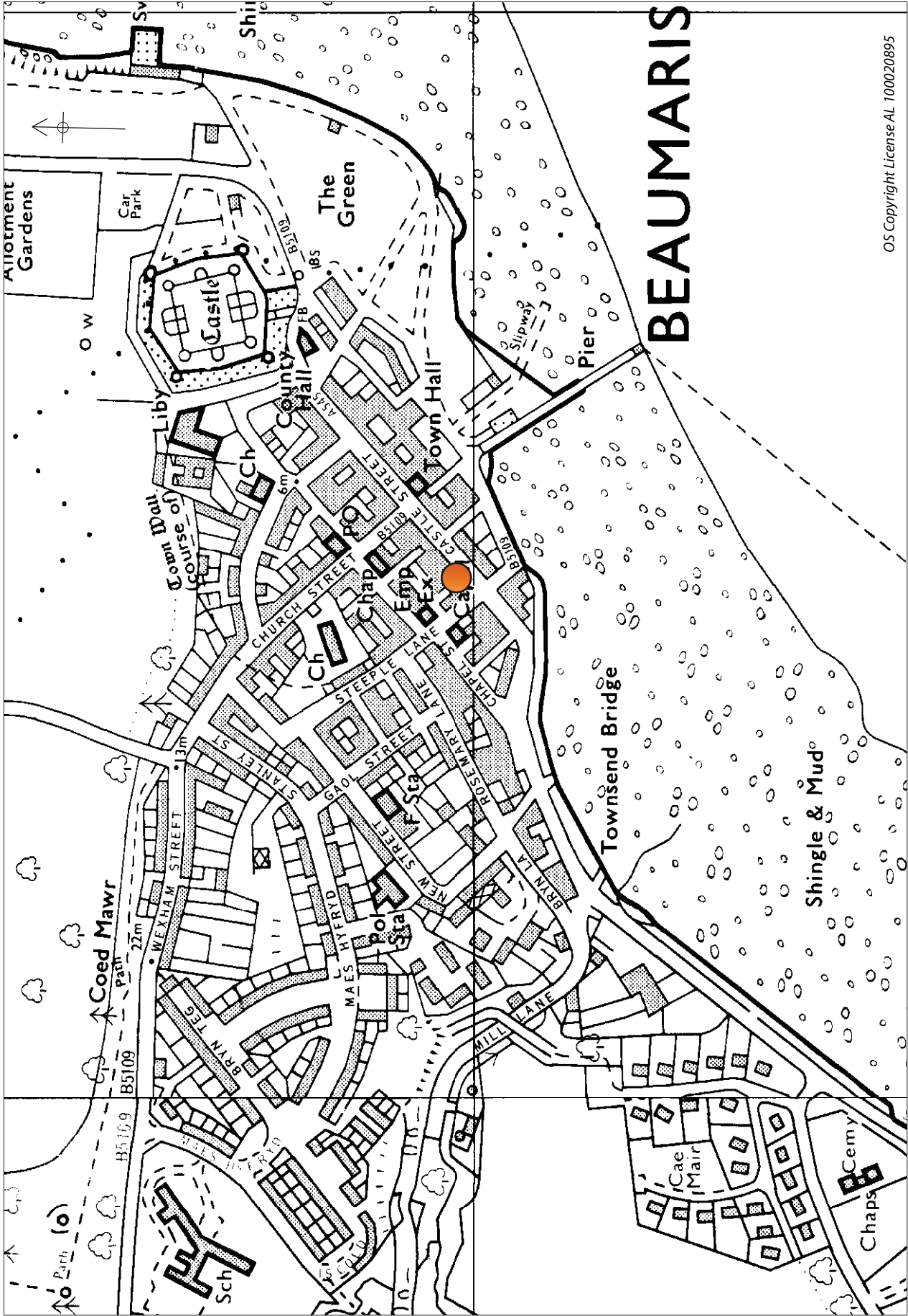
The second floor of the rear wing has access from a small door part way up the stairs. This is divided into two bays by a simple truss. The two principal rafters are jointed at the top with a through mortise and tennon, and a ridge beam lies in the 'V' created by the through principals. A single purlin is located on each side. The squared rafters are pegged through the purlins.

#### **Dendrochronology sampling**

Ten samples were taken from the main house, one from an axial beam on the ground floor, two from joists on the ground floor, four from joists on the first floor and three from the collar beam truss. Two samples were taken from the rear wing, one from each of the principal rafters of the centre truss.

#### **Conclusions**

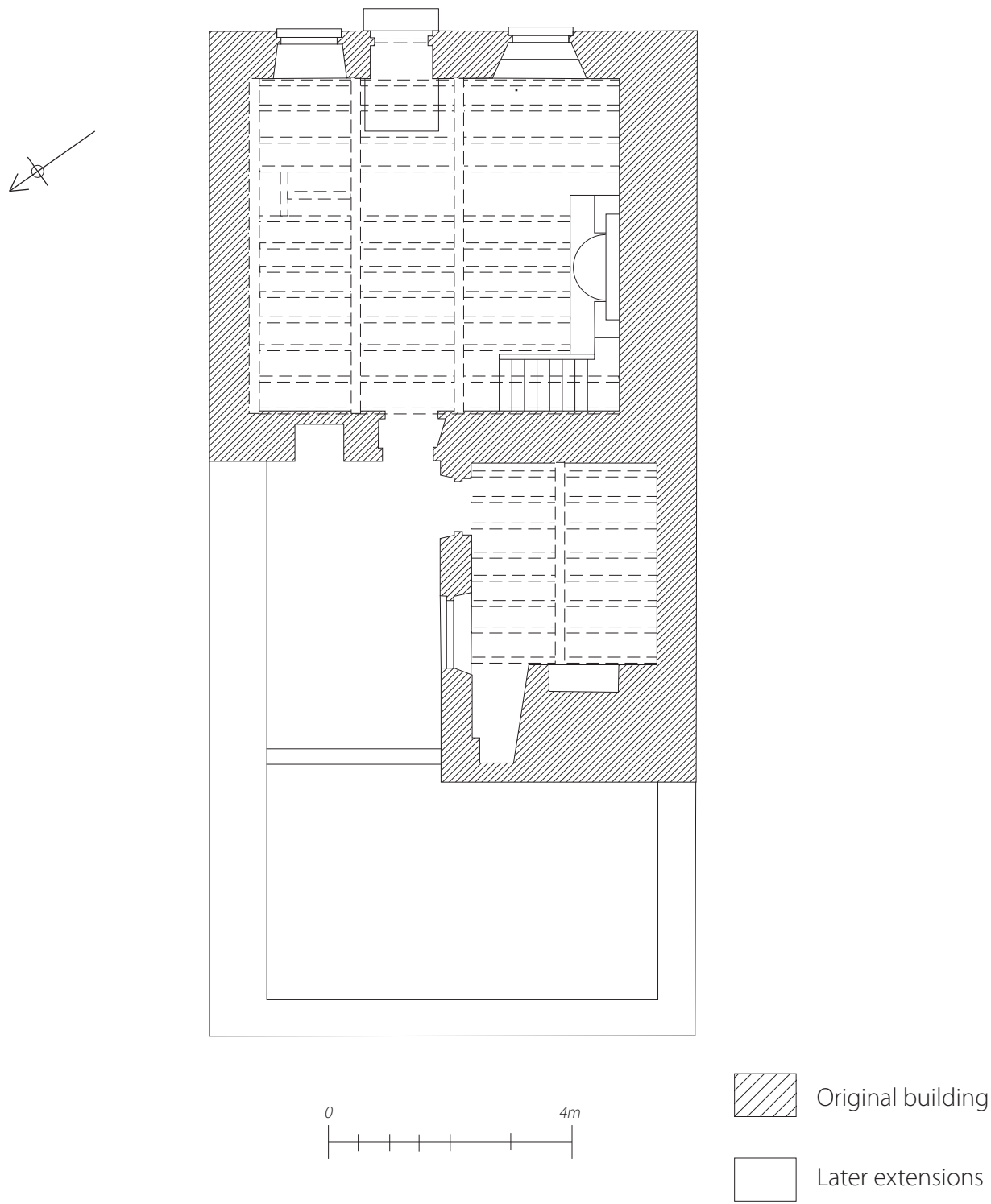
A small town house of three bays lying immediately adjacent to and outside a surviving section of the former town wall. A doorway from the medieval gatehouse appears to have been rebuilt into the north wall of the house. A rear wing has been added onto the north side. The house survives largely intact, though there is little indication of earlier internal divisions. The roof truss and axial beams on the ground and first floor suggest a mid-17<sup>th</sup> century date. This conflicts with the Listed Building description which suggests 18<sup>th</sup> century.



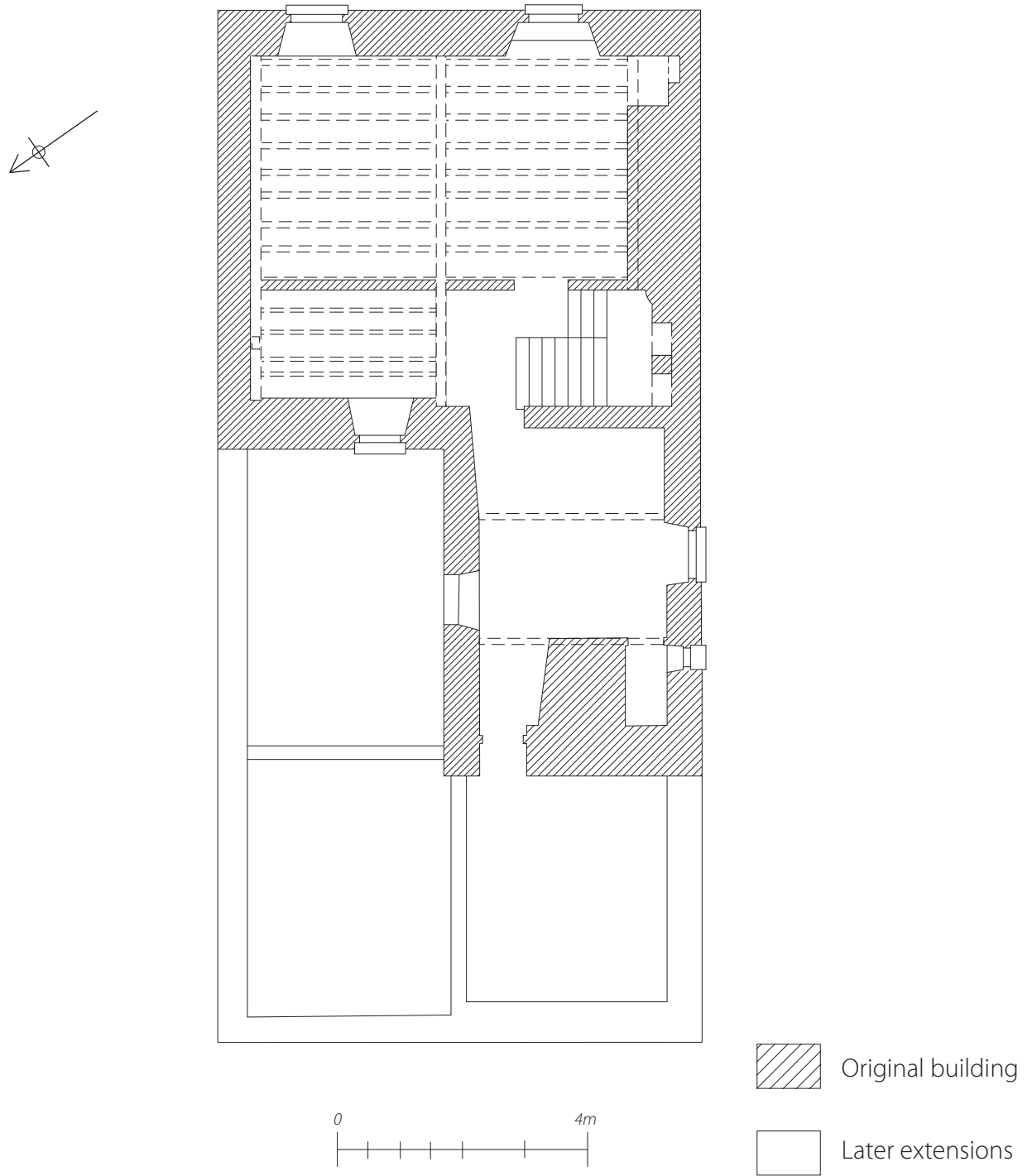
OS Copyright License AL 100020895

Figure 1: The Gate House location (Scale 1:5000)

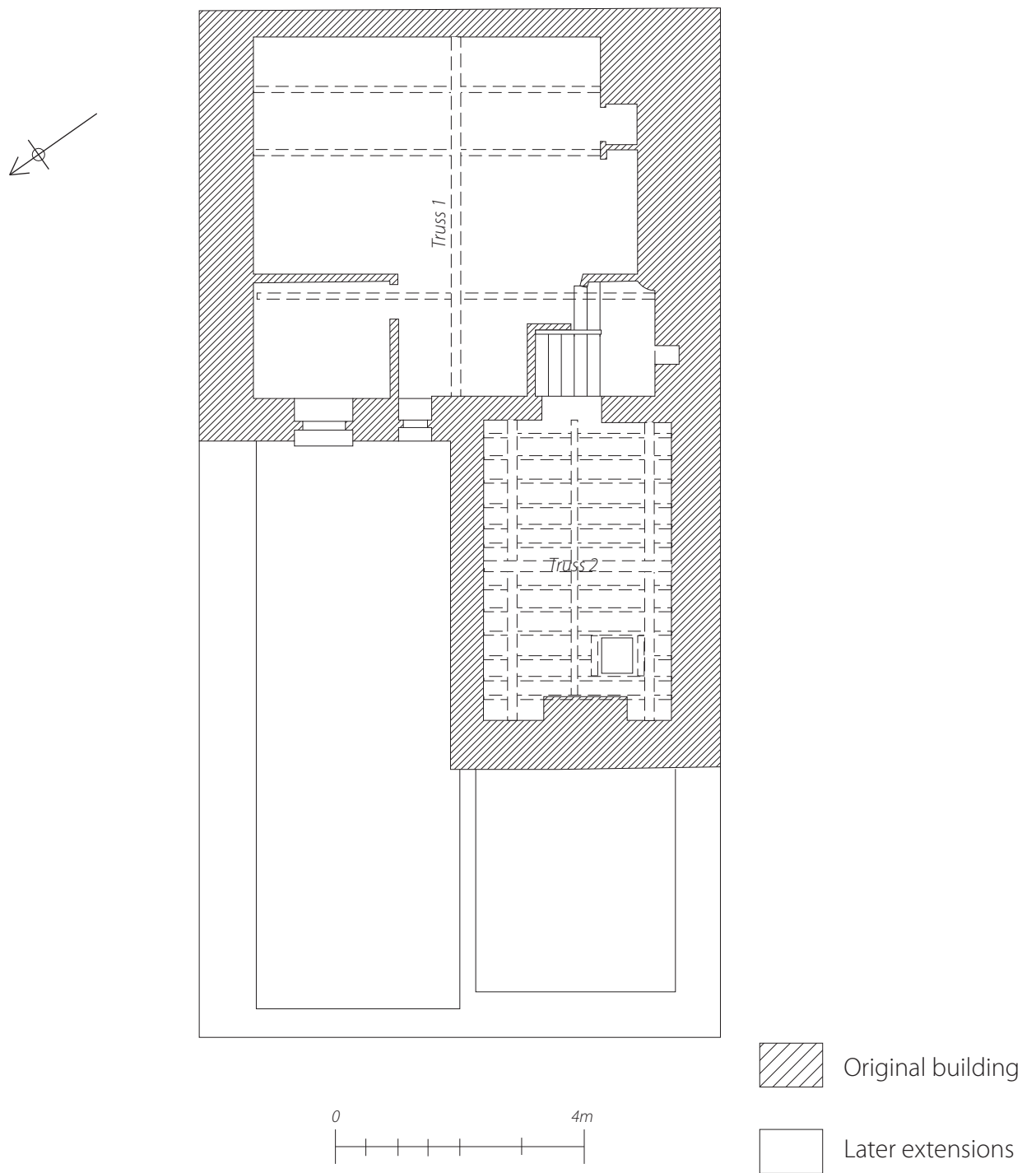




**Figure 3:** The Gate House, Beaumaris. Ground floor plan.

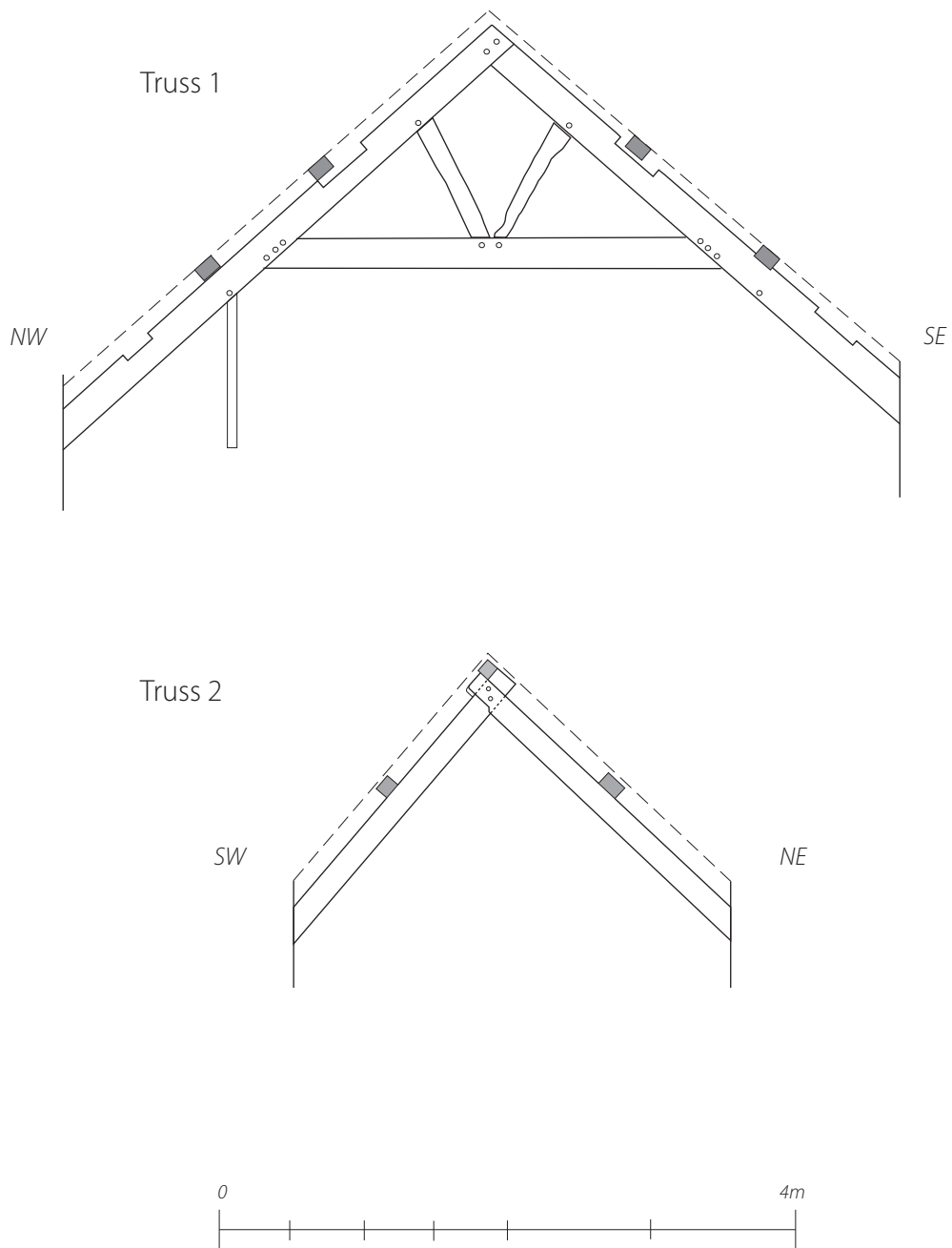


**Figure 4:** The Gate House, Beaumaris. First floor plan.

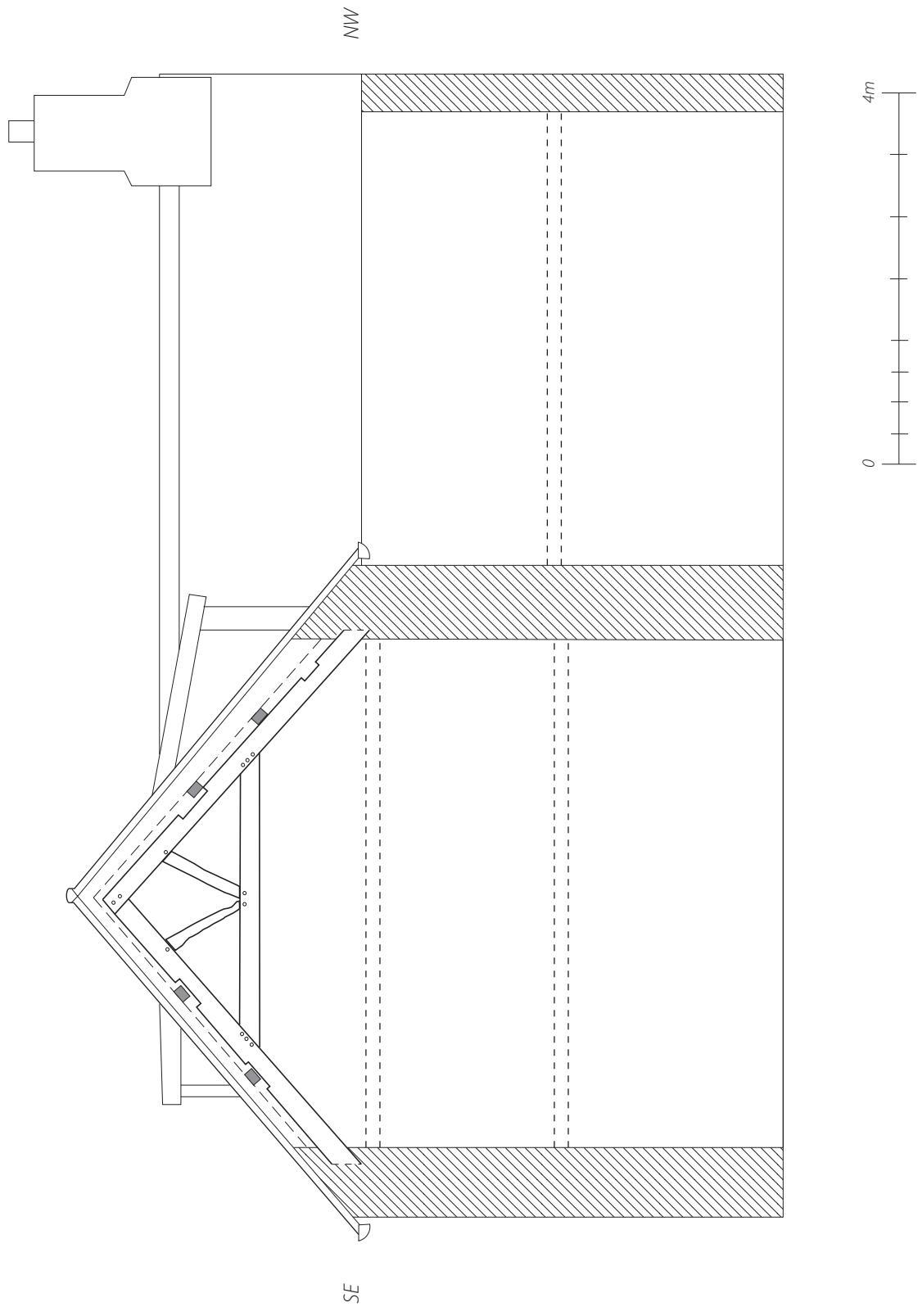


**Figure 5:** The Gate House, Beaumaris. Second floor plan.





**Figure 6:** Trusses 1 and 2. Location can be seen in figure 5.



**Figure 7:** Building elevation showing truss 1.



**Plate 1:** Ground floor living room, showing fireplace. Facing south-west



**Plate 2:** Ground floor living room, showing frontdoor. Facing south-east



**Plate 3:** Ground floor living room, showing ceiling timbers. Facing north-west



**Plate 4:** Ground floor living room, showing staircase to first floor. Facing south



**Plate 5:** Ground floor dining room, showing fireplace. Facing north-west



**Plate 6:** Ground floor dining room. Facing south-east



**Plate 7:** Ground floor dining room, showing ceiling timbers. Facing south-east



**Plate 8:** Ground floor dining room. Showing replacement window through to kitchen. Facing north-east



**Plate 9:** Stairway, showing blocked window. Facing south-west



**Plate 10:** Rear bedroom. Facing north-west



**Plate 11:** Rear bedroom. Facing south-east



**Plate 12:** Bathroom, showing timbers. Facing north-west





**Plate 13:** Front bedroom. Facing North-east



**Plate 14:** Front bedroom. Facing south



**Plate 15:** Front bedroom, showing ceiling timbers. Facing North-east



**Plate 16:** Front bedroom, showing chamfered beam. Facing south



**Plate 17:** Staircase leading from first floor to second floor, showing blocked window. Facing south-west



**Plate 18:** Door leading into attic, showing staircase to first floor. Facing north-west



**Plate 19:** Truss 1 in second floor front room. Facing east



**Plate 20:** Truss 1 detail in second floor front room. Facing east



**Plate 21:** Truss 1 detail in second floor front room. Facing west



**Plate 22:** Truss 2 in attic room. Facing south-west



**Plate 23:** Truss 2 detail of the collar beam truss ridge beam, Facing north-west



**Plate 24:** Attic room, showing timber detail. Facing north-west

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