Archaeology South-East

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An Archaeological Interpretative Survey of Former Oast House at Pound Farm, Fletching, East Sussex

Commissioned by Mackellar Schwerdt on behalf of Mr Matthew Jarman

Project Ref. 3189

by David Martin FSA IHBC MIFA & Barbara Martin AIFA

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIVE SURVEY OF

FORMER OAST HOUSE AT POUND FARM, FLETCHING, EAST SUSSEX

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Archaeology South-East
Institute of Archaeology
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2007

STANDING BUILDINGS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIVE SURVEYS
AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

ABOUT THESE SURVEYS

The intended purpose of an *Archaeological Interpretative Survey* is to give an overview of the date, sequence of construction, and principal architectural features of a building. As such, they should not be regarded as a detailed archaeological record, nor should they be taken as definitive. Further research, particularly that undertaken during building works, is likely to refine and extend the archaeological record.

These reports are aimed at three groups of user, namely those owners who wish to know more about their property, those persons (architects and planners) who are charged with the responsibility for both conserving the buildings and ensuring that they are carefully adapted to the needs of the future, and finally the academic carrying out wider historical or archaeological research,. A secure use for the future is, in our opinion, the only way of ensuring the long-term survival of any historical building.

INVESTIGATIVE TECHNIQUE

Unless noted to the contrary, the assessments involve a visual inspection of the fabric, both internally and externally, including any accessible roof voids and basement areas. Except where building works are being carried out, intrusive techniques are inappropriate. Interpretation of the fabric and fittings therefore relies principally upon inspection of the visible evidence. As part of the interpretative procedure, a measured outline survey of every property is undertaken.

THE WRITTEN REPORT

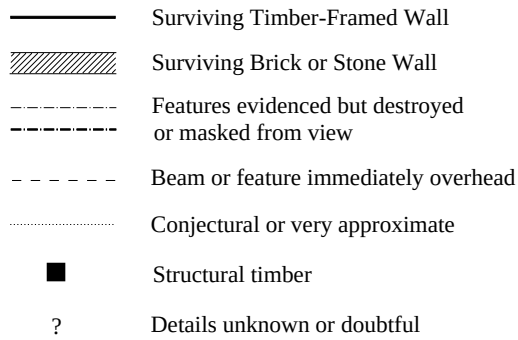
For ease of reference the written reports are divided into sections under a series of headings and sub-headings. The typical sequence of headings is as follows:-

1 Location of the building.
2 Sequence of development.
3 Detailed architectural description, arranged period-by-period.

THE DRAWINGS

A set of drawings produced from an measured outline survey is included within the body of each report. The purpose of these drawings is to identify the features included within the written text and to illustrate, as far as is known, the form of the structure during its various stages of development. For clarity the drawings have been prepared in the form of scale 'sketches', rather than detailed archaeological record drawings. For reasons of economy, the making of detailed archaeological drawings is restricted to stripped-out or exceptionally important buildings.

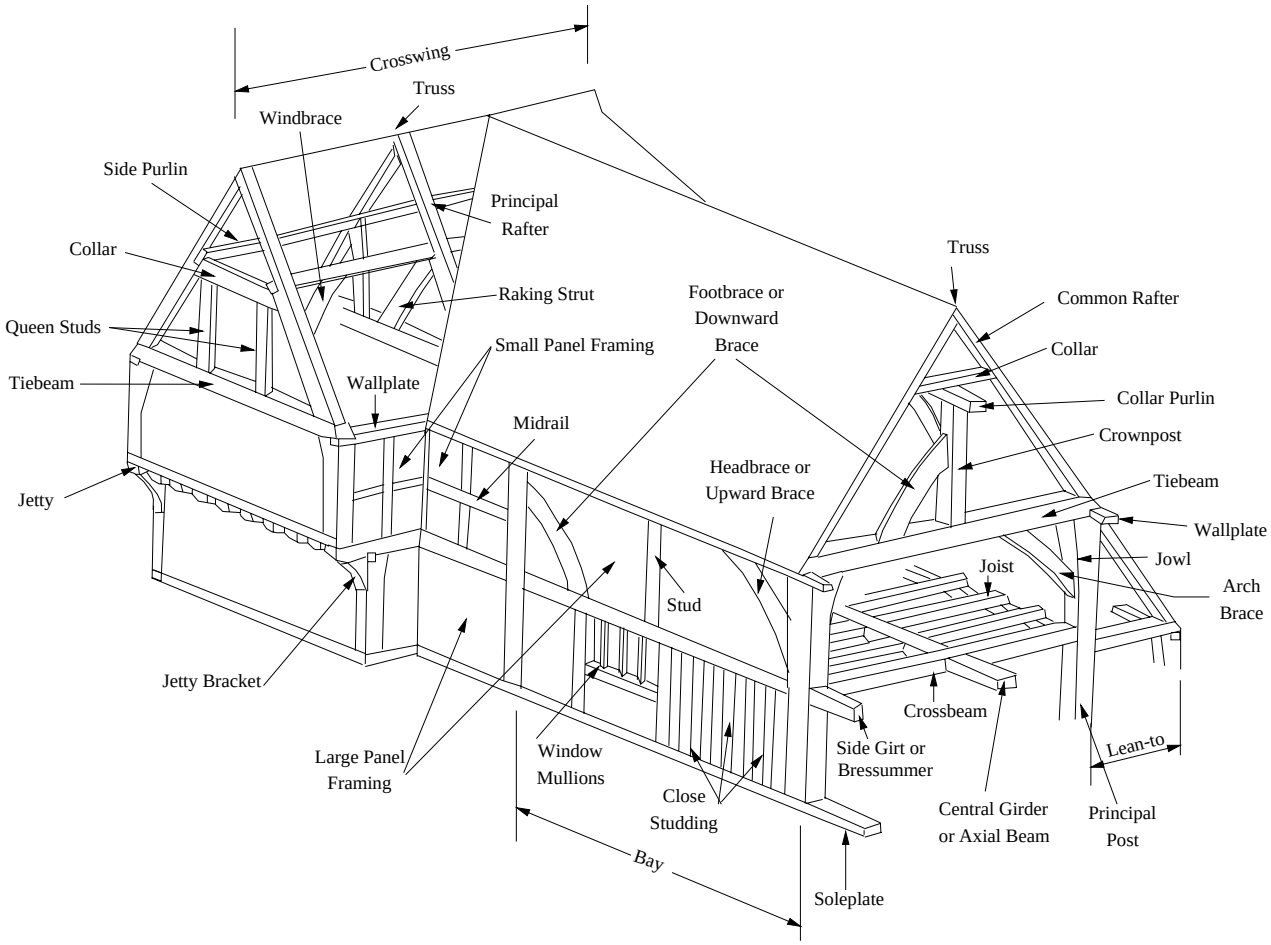
The symbols as used in the drawings attached to this report are as follows:

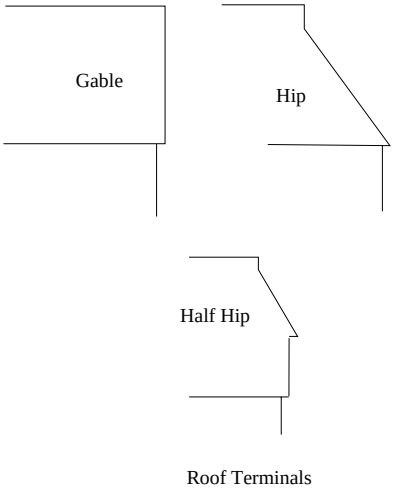


OTHER CONVENTIONS USED -

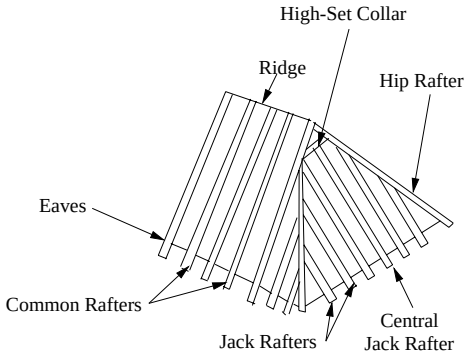
1 Doors are shown in plan only where known: hence rooms may appear to have no obvious means of access.

2 With the exception of rafters, wallplates, and some chimneys and roof-lines, sections show features cut by or immediately adjacent to the cutting line only.





Roof Terminals



Component Timbers of a Hip

GLOSSARY OF PRINCIPAL TERMS

REPORT NO. 1672

FLETCHING - FORMER OAST HOUSE AT POUND FARM

NGR TQ 4087 2499

LOCATION

This former oast house is a detached structure sited close to the rear (south-western) corner of Pound Farmhouse, which is a 15th-century hall house set back from the western side of Sheffield Green, 1.6 miles to the NW of Fletching church. For an account of the house *see* Archaeology South-East report dated 2000 (ESRO HBR 1/1368). Access to both structures is from the east via a private drive from the A275. They are constructed parallel to one another, both being aligned upon a WNW-ESE axis (hereafter assumed east-west) with their principal elevations facing north.

OVERVIEW OF THE BUILDING

The outbuilding, built initially as an oast house, was constructed in *c*.1800, most likely during the opening years of the 19th century [**Period A**]. It incorporated an integral oast kiln at the eastern end with storage area and an open-fronted wagon lodge to the west, the latter two having a stowage area/cooling floor above. All ground-floor walls are of ashlar masonry, whereas the first-floor walls of the kiln area are of brickwork and those of the stowage area weatherclad timber studding. Despite the loss of the oast house's fittings, the period-A structure survives in a very complete form.

It is not clear when the oast house was converted to new use, but it seems to have been quite late: perhaps early in the 20th century. Already by that date the eastern first-floor window in the north wall had been converted into a first-floor external doorway (evidenced by a pair of hinge pintles) and one of the windows in the south wall had been blocked. Being unlit, when the building was put to new use windows (since modified) were punched through the north and south walls of the kiln. The original drying floor of the kiln had been elevated two steps above that of the stowage area. In order to better utilize this area the floor was now rebuilt lower so as to coincide with that of the stowage, and the projecting lower part of the eastern wall was thinned down to half-brick thickness so as to coincide with the upper part of the wall. No adjustments were made to the thickness of the side walls which, in consequence, now incorporate a ledge part way up the wall. The conical flue which had projected through the roof was taken away. On the ground floor the hearths were removed from the eastern end, new window openings were cut through the north and south walls, and low-level vents which served the oast's hearth area were blocked. The stair ladder giving access to the first floor was removed and the floor trimming blocked. Otherwise the change-of-use

required no further modification to the building.

It seems to have been late in the 20th century that the two intruded windows openings in the former kiln area were modified by rebuilding the jambs and adjusting the cill levels: the intruded ground-floor window in the south wall was enlarged at the same period, as too were the first-floor windows at the western end of the cooling floor. Whereas the southern and northern first-floor walls of the stowage area are clad in weatherboarding, the upper part of the western end wall is today tile hung, but whether this had always been the case is unclear.

All work carried out since period A is excluded from the more detailed architectural description which follows.

LISTED STATUS OF THE BUILDING

Pound Farmhouse was listed grade II on 26th November 1953, its listed building reference being TQ 42 NW 18/787. The description in the list entry is purely for the purpose of recognition and is normally, therefore, primarily based on external appearance. The date is given as C15. [Source: English Heritage, Images of England - website]. The description must not be treated as a comprehensive schedule of those elements which are legally protected as, no matter what the grade, the legislative cover not only relates to both the interior and exterior, but also extends to any building within the curtilage which predates the 1st July 1948. Thus, although the former oast house is not listed in its own right, it is protected as a curtilage building.

DETAILED ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

PERIOD A (*c.*1800, probably Early 19th C) [Drawing Nos. 1672/1-2]

LAYOUT

The oast house measures 12.30 metres (40’4”) x 4.85 metres (15’11”) and comprises a single range of two storeys throughout. At the eastern end was the in-built hop kiln, originally with an elevated slatted drying floor served from beneath by hearths. On the ground floor to the west is a single-bay enclosed area (hereafter referred to as a store) with, beyond that, a two-bay open-fronted wagon lodge. On the first floor this entire western three-bay area served as a cooling floor with a pocketing area in the south-western corner.

As the reconstruction plan in Drawing No. 1672/1 illustrates, an off-centred doorway in

the east wall of the wagon lodge leads into the ground-floor store, which not only served as a place to keep the charcoal fuel, but also allowed access to the hearths of the kiln and (via a stair) to the first floor. The hearths have been removed but were formerly serviced via the central doorway in the east wall of the store. These hearths required ventilation, this having been achieved via a small low-level opening (now blocked) in the centre of the south wall, augmented by two further vents (also blocked) flanking the doorway in the internal western wall. Because the latter did not link directly to the exterior, the store itself was likewise fitted with low-level vents, one each at the eastern end of its north and south walls.

On the first floor the drying floor of the kiln measures 4.45 metres x 4.60 metres (14'7" x 15'1") internally and was originally set 430 mm (1'5") above the cooling floor. In consequence, it was accessed from the cooling floor (within the stowage) by two steps, the scars of which are evidenced on the jambs of the centrally-placed doorway which interconnected to the three-bay stowage area to the west. This latter area is open to the roof and has first-floor walls which measure 1.60 metres (5'3") from floor to top of wallplate. The stairs rose against the southern wall with the head located at truss B-B, the collar within the roof of which is braced from beneath in order to triangulate the frame: a tiebeam at this location would have restricted access from the stairs and would have divided up the cooling area. Within the next truss west the tiebeam is trimmed by queenposts. In the floor in the south-western corner is a trap above which would have been located the hop press, with the hop pocket suspended beneath it.

WALL DESIGN

The ground-floor walls are constructed using ashlar sandstone blocks having two distinct styles of dressing – some are grey-yellow and have very accurately cut edges and a smooth dressed surface, whilst others are more yellow and have distinctive indented tooling. The blocks are mixed within the same walls. The evidence suggests that at least some of the ashlar is reused from another building. The sandstone walls are constructed off of a square-topped plinth, partially buried below ground level towards the eastern end. The open front of the wagon lodge is divided into two bays by a secondhand central timber post which is supported by a reused widely-chamfered ashlar block.

Although now thinned internally within the east wall, at first-floor level the northern, eastern and southern walls of the kiln area are constructed in one-brick-thick Flemish-bonded brickwork for the first ten courses, above which the thickness reduces to a half-brick skin. Within the eastern and southern walls this upper part is laid in stretcher bond, but within the northern wall (facing the house) Flemish bond is maintained, but with the header bricks snapped in half. At the junction between the brickwork of the kiln and timber stud walls of the stowage area the brickwork terminates in narrow piers formed using bricks laid on edge. The western (internal) wall of the kiln area at first-floor level is of regularly-spaced studwork interrupted by raking struts, the tiebeam at this point being trimmed on either side of the doorway leading to the drying floor of the

kiln (*see* Drawing No. 1672/2, Truss A-A). Nail holes on the kiln face of the timbers indicate that the partition was once lath and plastered, giving it a smooth surface within the kiln.

The tiebeams over the end walls meet the wallplates in level assembly, though elsewhere standard assembly is utilized. The side and end walls of the three-bay stowage area rise from a soleplate which sits over a course of header bricks laid on top of the masonry ground-floor walls. The first-floor frame is of regularly-spaced studwork with raking struts triangulating the corners (see 'Longitudinal Section X-X, Showing Wall Detail' and 'Truss D-D' in Drawing No. 1672/2. The framing within the north and south walls was originally identical). The studs at the trusses are of slightly heavier scantling than the common studs, and here the joints are pegged, as is also the case with the jambs of the window openings. Regardless of whether pegged or not, all joints are of mortice-and-tenon type. The studwork was designed to support external weathercladding, the base of which was tilted forward by the slightly projecting brick string-course which caps the masonry. Internally the studwork was left exposed to view: there was never any internal plasterwork to the stowage area.

OPEN TRUSSES

Two trusses cross the stowage area, these being marked B-B and C-C in the reconstruction drawings. The eastern of these (B-B) does not incorporate a tiebeam at wallplate level: instead the joints between the principal rafters and collar are reinforced by arched knee-braces which are bolted through to both the collar and the rafters. By using this form of truss headroom could be maintained across the full width of the building at this point – this area of the stowage was utilized as the cooling floor during hop drying. Truss C-C, in contrast, incorporates stub tiebeams which are trimmed into two heavy-scantling queen posts which rise from floor to roof collar. All joints in this truss are of pegged mortice-and-tenon type. In this way the wallplates were tied together to prevent spreading, whilst allowing unimpeded access through the entire length of the stowage area at centre span. Triangulation is maintained by including raking struts beneath the stub tiebeams.

WINDOWS AND VENT OPENINGS

Although only two now remain open (both enlarged in size) four window openings are evidenced within the northern and southern timber-framed walls at first-floor level. The windows are formed using studs which incorporate pegged mortices for the former window cills. Cut into the inner face of the wallplates midway between the two jambs of each opening is a neatly-formed notch, perhaps suggesting some form of louvre arrangement fixed to a central 'mullion' – a not uncommon feature at this date.

There is a small rectangular ventilation opening immediately above plinth level in each of the northern and southern externally walls, against the western face of the internal

partition at A-A, with another, narrower vent further east in the south wall (*see* Plate 1). There are two further vents at a similar level in partition A-A, capped by segmental brick-on-edge arches. All are now blocked.

Plate 1
Blocked vent in north wall (others in south wall similar).

DOORWAYS

Access into the ground-floor store room and the eastern kiln area is via original openings in the stone partitions. That leading from the open-fronted wagon lodge into the store has a heavy timber surround and retains a plank-and-ledge door.

On the first floor the door jambs and head of the opening giving access from the stowage area to the drying floor of the kiln survives and, as already noted, the jambs of this trim the tiebeam. The drying floor was originally at a higher level than that of the stowage area, accounting for the impression of steps visible on the inside faces of the jambs. The bases of the jambs retain timber slides for lift boards which prevented the drying hops from cascading out of the drying floor onto the cooling floor (see Plate 2).

Plate 2
Base of door jamb leading into drying chamber (right). Note slides for lift boards, impression of steps and lath marks on righthand face of studs, terminating at former floor level.

FLOORS AND CEILINGS

The floor with the eastern kiln area has been reconstructed at a lower level, but its original level is indicated by a number of features. For instance there is an offset part way up the first-floor storey height caused by the difference in thickness of the brickwork: this offset supported the north-south aligned joists. The floor level is also indicated by the point at which the nail holes for the former plaster covering on A-A terminated, by the cut-out for the steps visible in the door jambs, and by fixing holes on the studs indicating how the westernmost joist was supported against the wall, this joist having been trimmed by the steps rising through the doorway (Plate 2). The remainder of the building's first floor is

constructed using joists which run east-west, being jointed into the crossbeams at each truss. All are of 65 mm x 110 mm section and have neatly blunted lower leading edges.

There were no first-floor ceilings, though a sloping plastered skeeling did separate the kiln area from the stowage to the west (*see* 'Roof' below).

Plate 3
Blocked stair trimming in ceiling of store.
(The darker joist is inserted).

STAIRS AND HATCHES

Access to the first floor was via a stair ladder which rose against the northern wall of the central room: its position is evidenced by a neatly-formed trimmed opening through the floor joists (Plate 3). Two notches in the eastern face of the crossbeam of B-B indicates the position of the stair carriage. The stair has been removed and the trimming blocked. When not in use, the stair trap was protected by a hinged door-like boarded hatch, the three ledges of which are still evidenced by neat rebates cut into the trimmer joists in order to allow the hatch to lay flat when in its closed position.

Framed into the south-western corner of the first floor is a square (900 mm x 810 mm) trimmed opening in the floor joists. This is now used for ladder access, but its original purpose was for suspending the hop pockets for use in conjunction with a hop press (removed) sited above.

ROOF

The roof over the range is of clasped-side-purlin construction with hipped terminals at each end. Framed in five bays, the side purlins are carried at the trusses by collars, that at truss B-B being strengthened from beneath by the use of knee-braces rising from the principal rafters, fixed to rafters and collar by bolts. Trusses A-A and C-C incorporate heavy 'queen posts' which rise from the crossbeams to mortice and tenon into the collars, the tiebeams being trimmed into the posts.

The principal rafters are fully jointed at their heads using a traditional bridle joint, the ridgeboard being interrupted by the trusses. At their heads the common rafters (which are more rough in appearance than the principal rafters) are nailed to the side faces of the ridgeboard.

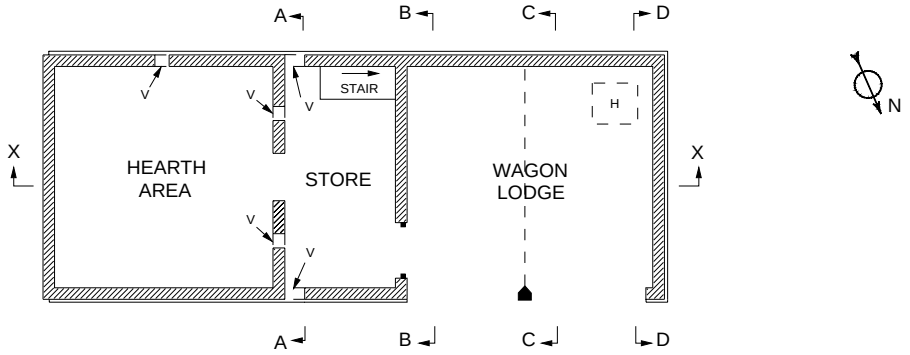
Rising from the eastern face of the tiebeam within truss A-A are sloping 'rafters' which extend up to lay boards fixed beneath the roof slope in order to form a plastered skeeling, funnelling the hot air from the kiln up through the roof and out through a

Plate 4
Remains of skeeling rising from truss A-A. Note the way the door trims the skeeling.

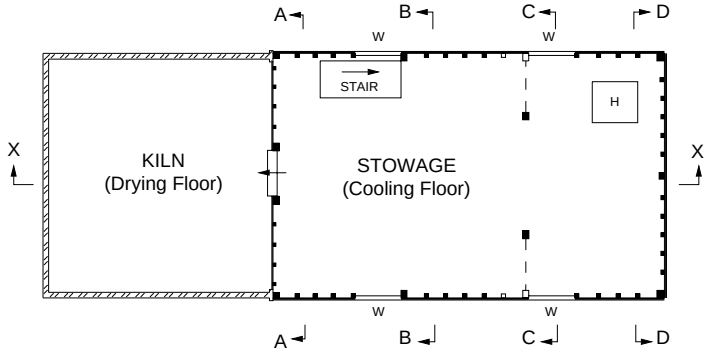
Plate 5
Support for former cowl.

conical flue (now removed - Plate 4). The underside of these sloping rafters were originally masked by plaster, and usually the same is true for all the roof slopes within the kiln area, but not in this instance. Just beneath the head of the hip is a high-set collar, and there is another collar two rafters to the west. These are still linked by a timber which formerly carried the spindle for a rotating cowl (Plate 5). The pair of rafters positioned between the high collars has been replaced, indicating that these were originally part height, so as not to impede air flow up through the roof 'flue' and cowl. Halvings cut into the side faces of the rafters beneath the high collars are further evidence of the 'flue'.

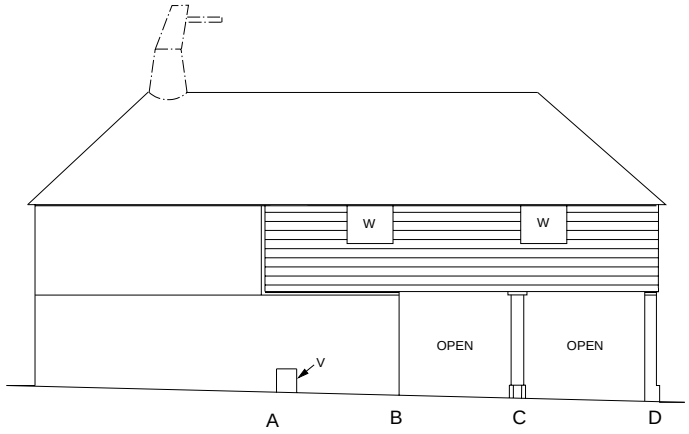
V = Low-level vent
W = Window
H = Hatch in floor



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

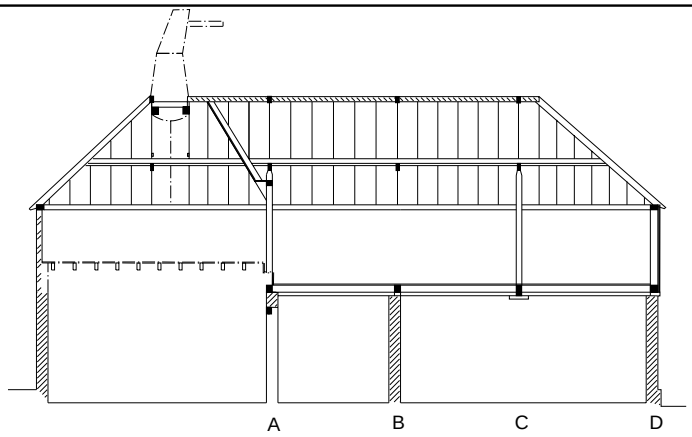


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

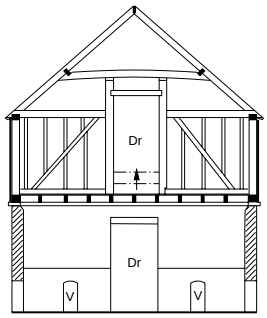


NORTH ELEVATION

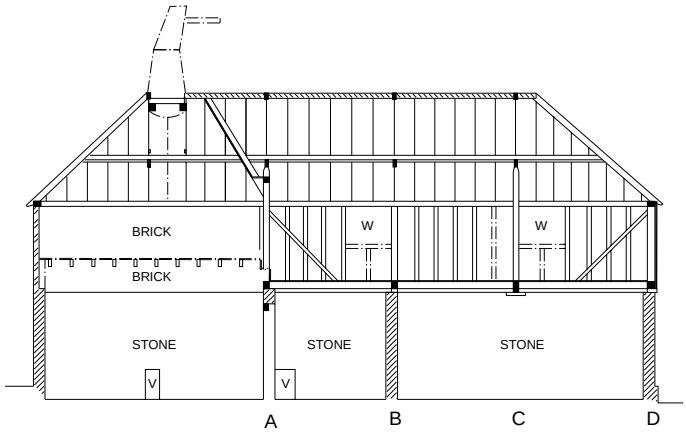
OAST HOUSE AT POUND FARM, FLETCHING, EAST SUSSEX PERIOD-A RECONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS				Site Ref **P67/04**
				Drawing No. **1672/1**
Drawn By **J Clubb**	Revision No -	Date of original survey **2007**	Date of this revision **2007**	



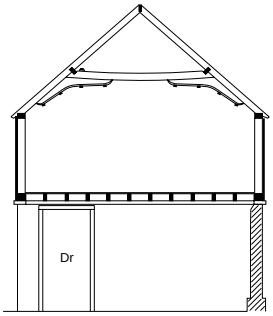
LONGITUDINAL SECTION X-X



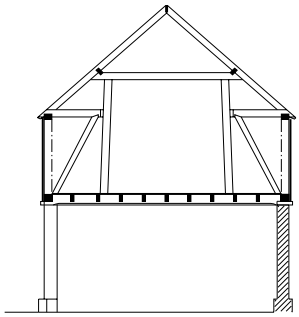
TRUSS A-A



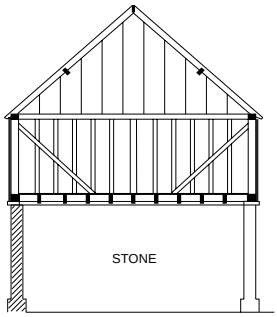
LONGITUDINAL SECTION X-X
SHOWING WALL DETAIL



TRUSS B-B



TRUSS C-C



TRUSS D-D

OAST HOUSE AT POUND FARM, FLETCHING, EAST SUSSEX PERIOD-a RECONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS				Site Ref **P67/04**
				Drawing No. **1672/2**
Drawn By **J Clubb**	Revision No -	Date of original survey **2007**	Date of this revision **2007**	

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