



# Darganfod Hen Dai Cymreig

## Discovering Old Welsh Houses

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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project  
DATING OLD WELSH HOUSES

Nº 60 , Castle Street  
Beaumaris  
Anglesey  
C16th town house



In partnership with  
RCAHMW



*David Longley  
for North West Wales Dendrochronology Project  
Octob 2011*

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Very many thanks to Mr and Mrs Odell for  
access to Nº 60 and for interest in the project

#### **References and Sources consulted**

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Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, An Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Anglesey. London: HMSO 1937, clviii-clxii (Henblas)

Longley, D. Tudor Rose, Castle Street, Beaumaris, TAAS 65-84, (2010)

Bridge, M C. The Tree-Ring Dating of 60 Castle Street Beaumaris, Anglesey, Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory Report 2011/11



## Location

N 60 Castle Street, Beaumaris, Anglesey  
Grid Reference: <sup>2</sup>60430 <sup>3</sup>75970  
HER PRN 11047  
NPRN 412244



Nº 60 in 1829



Nº 60 in 2011



# Introduction

## Context

In April 1295 Edward I was at Llanfaes, a bowshot from the new commercial centre and castle he was determined to build on the Anglesey shore, at the northern seaward entrance to the Menai Straits. This was flat land, access to the sea, a major ferry crossing and a tried and tested commercial focus at nearby Llanfaes. Building at the new castle and town of Beaumaris was underway by 1295 and was soon to expropriate Llanfaes' commercial interests. Beaumaris received its charter in 1296.

An important concern was to populate the new town with settlers willing to take up tenancies in Beaumaris. Several would-be tenants arrived, mostly from the north-west of England, a major source of influence in the town. The plan was laid out with a focus around the crossing of two main streets, Castle Street and Church Street. The streets were lined with burgages, 80ft by 40ft (approximately 24.4m by 12.2m or 300 sq m). By the mid-fourteenth century, one hundred and fifty burgages had been let out. There were setbacks, thirteen or more burgages were lost to the storm and sea in the fourteenth century. In the early fifteenth century Owain Glyndwr's followers occupied the town for two years but Beaumaris survived. The town wall was yet to be built but when it was, in the early fifteenth century, thirty more burgages were destroyed in digging and building the ditch and wall.

Nevertheless there was expansion beyond the town walls which included Watergate Street. By the early seventeenth century, settlement had expanded north-west along Wexham Street, past Henllys Lane and south-east into Townsend. A lane, immediately outside the walls of the town on the west side, led to the shore at the Watergate.

The town survived the Civil War intact, structurally, but not without harm to certain reputations.

Beaumaris includes a good survival of 16th and 17th century buildings, albeit part hidden beneath later treatments. Beaumaris is one of the few timber towns in north-west Wales and it might be expected that timber framed structures or the evidence for them, might be found in Beaumaris. The fifteenth/sixteenth century Tudor Rose, a winged hall, is an example. Henblas on Church Street was one of the most important timber houses in Beaumaris before its demolition in 1869

The Castle Street thoroughfare continued along the axial road to what was known as Watergate Street (now an extension of Castle Street) one of the most important roads in the town. There were several inns, hotels and public houses on Castle Street and Watergate Street in the early nineteenth century. The Liverpool Arms stood on the old Watergate Street at the south west end of the town, a stone's throw from N<sup>o</sup> 60

During the mid-nineteenth century, several properties on either side of the line of the old town wall on the south side of Watergate Street and Castle Street were demolished and replaced by new housing on land partly reclaimed from the sea at what became Alma Street, Raglan Street and Bulkeley Terrace, across the road from N<sup>o</sup> 60.

## The house

N<sup>o</sup> 60 Castle Street is timber framed house with a south-facing gabled frontage on the street. The south end may have been opened to the roof as far as the entry cross-passage. Alternatively, the south end may have been floored at the outset with a commercial interest at ground floor level (the house was close to the port), and the upper floor used as the hall. The back (north) rooms were likeley to always have been on two storeys. Those rooms would have been private rooms or, perhaps, with a store or services downstairs.

If the hall was originally open to the roof from the ground floor, then a floor would have almost certainly been inserted by the later 16th century.

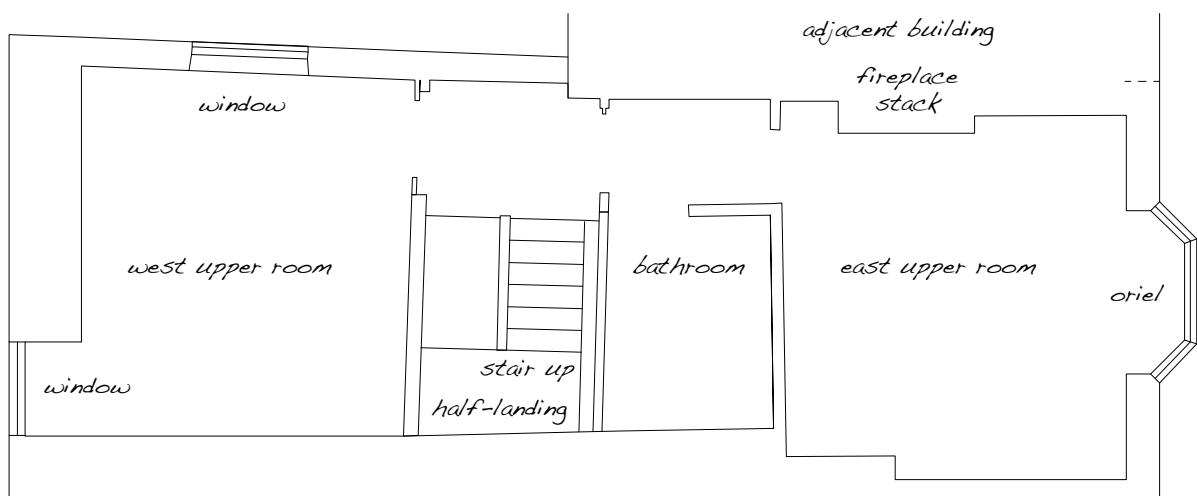


## Plan and ground floor

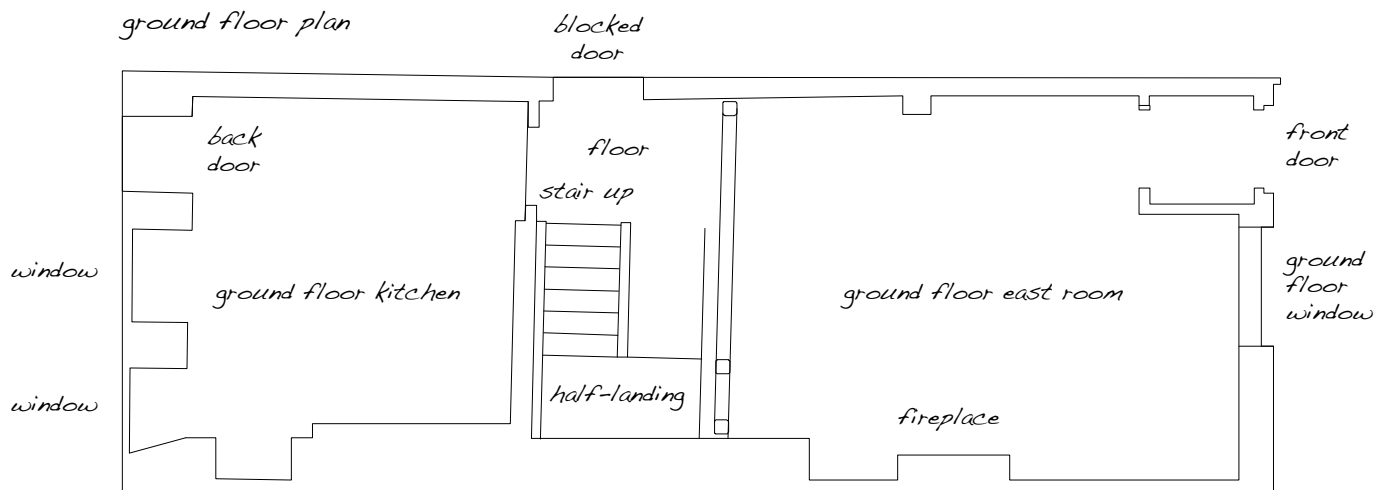
No 60 Castle Street is a compact property on two storeys. The external dimensions are 11.4 m long by 4.25 m wide. There is a yard at the back. The house stands with its southern gable fronting the road and perpendicular to it. The general size of a Beaumaris burgage in the middle ages would be approximately 24 m x 12 m. The house is almost exactly one sixth of a burgage which suggests that the plot was apportioned in 3 units. A house at the front and an equal length of yard to the back. Property boundaries in Beaumaris still retain the boundaries that echo the multiples or divisions of these burgages.

The exterior walls are about 600 mm thick on the west side and about 700 mm on the north gable which at one time, accommodated a chimney. The chimney stack above the roof is still in place. The wall on the north-east side is very narrow at about 250 mm.

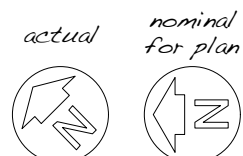
*first floor plan*



*ground floor plan*



No. 60 Castle Street plans  
Scale: 1:75



0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 M

The front, south room on both ground and first floor have been encroached upon on the east side, extending into the premises of № 60. The wall on the south-west side is also very narrow. In this instance the wall may have been pushed back from inside to extend the space. The south gable wall is 340 mm thick.

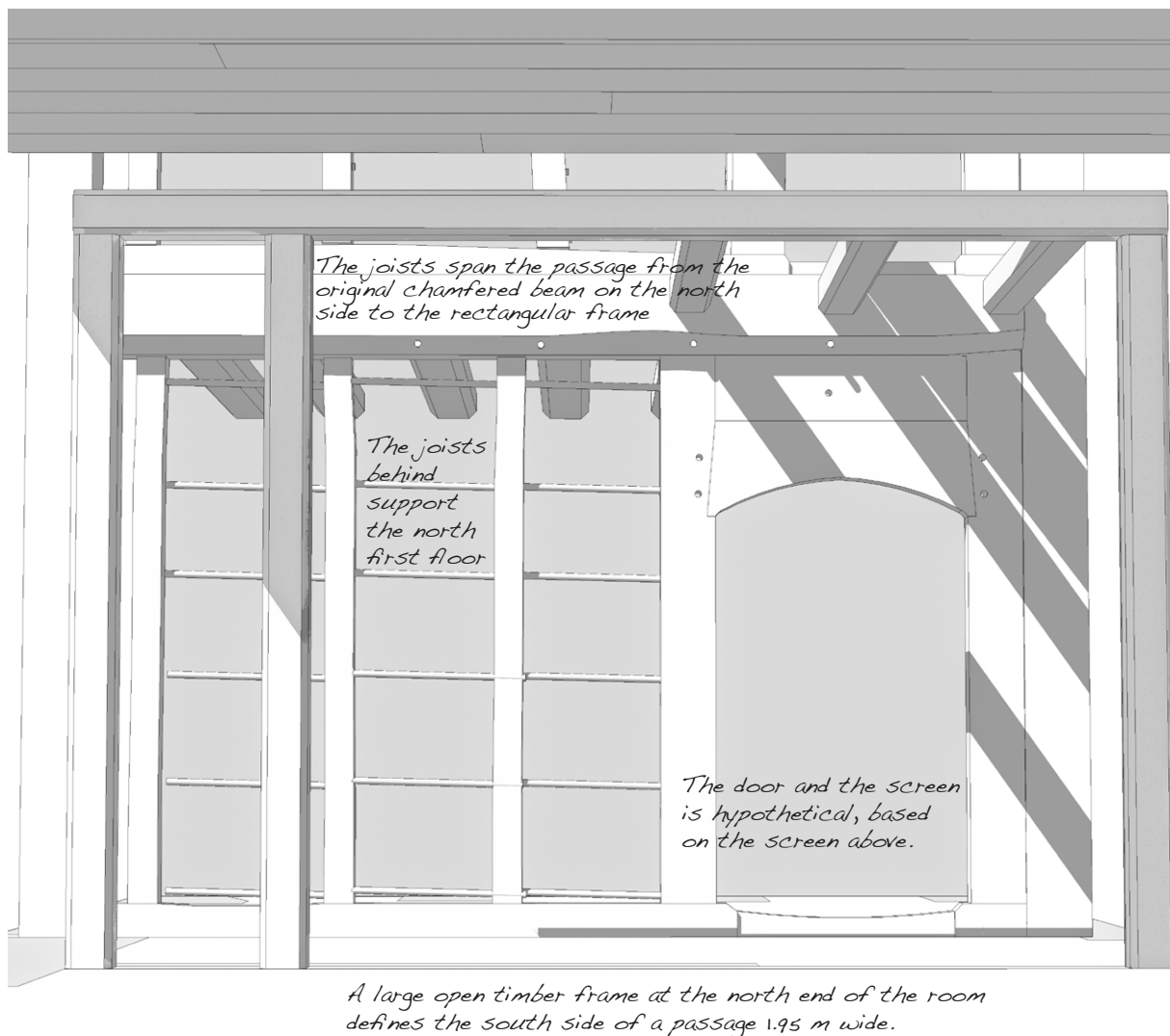
Houses on both sides have been built cheek-by-jowl against the east and west walls and have extended upwards twice as high. The encroachment on the east side seems unnecessary for so little extra space, 150 mm and an additional 320 mm for space for an external stack.

A plausible explanation might be that № 60 had in the past become un-tenanted or that the building was dilapidated or that the house remained a timber framed construction with considerably thinner walls. When rebuilding or re-cladding in stone became necessary № 60 would need to build tight up to the larger buildings on either side. The house does retain features and construction of components of earlier timber framing.

## The interior

The ground floor is accessed through a front door and internal porch on the south gable frontage.

The ground floor, south room, is 5.2 m long and 3.8 m wide. There is a fireplace in the west wall with a prominent stack rising above the roof level.



A large open timber frame at the north end of the room defines the south side of a passage 1.95 m wide. The north side of the passage is defined by the wall between the passage and the kitchen beyond. The timber frame is difficult to interpret, the posts and top-plate are substantial, roughly squared at 140 mm across with rudimentary chamfers. The frame rises 2.1 m from the floor to the first floor ceiling and the joists which support the passage ceiling are tenoned into the frame on the south side and into a heavy lateral beam on the north side.

The north, lateral, beam is 280 mm deep and 260 mm wide with broad chamfers either side and a broach stop on the south side. There are dowel holes in the chamfer but much of the length of the beam is obscured by modern panelling.

At the east end of the passage there is a blocked door with a timber lintel above.



*Large beam on the north side of the passage with broad chamfer and broach stop at east end*



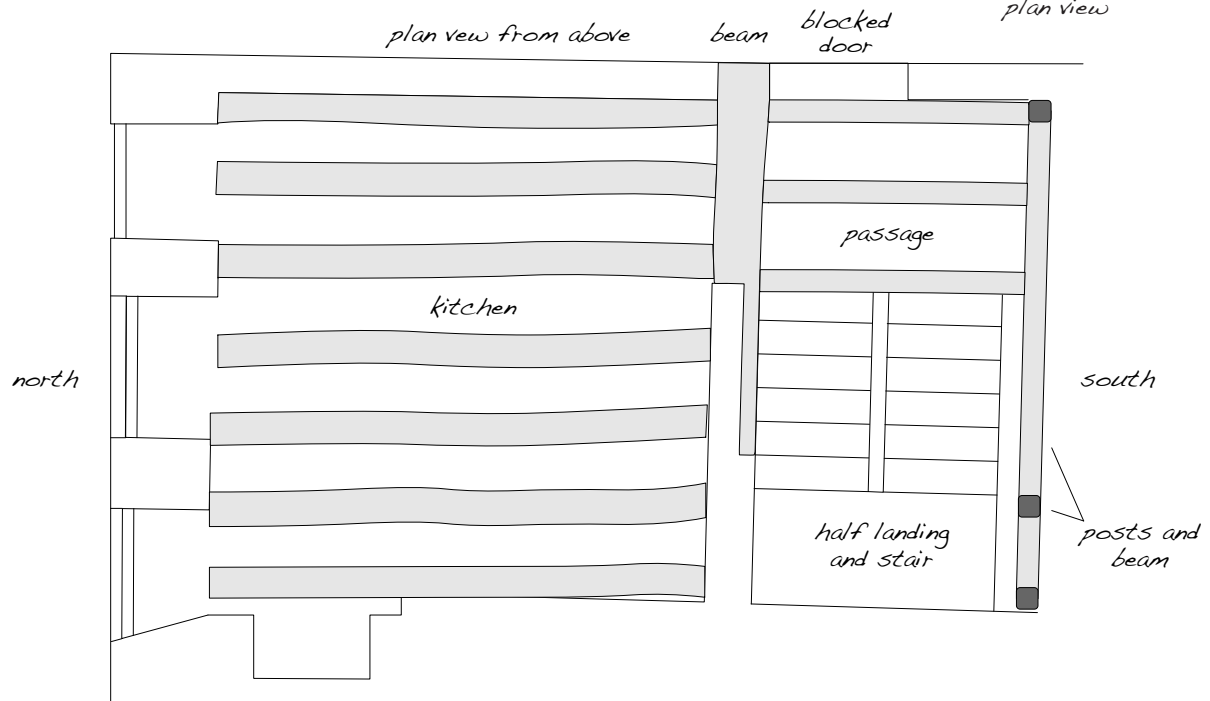
The north ground floor room, is square, 3.22 m north-south and west-east. There are window openings and a back door in the north wall. The central opening, however, may have occupied a fireplace, lately removed. There are seven large joists, visible in the kitchen ceiling, which support the first floor above. The joists are 215 mm wide with broad chamfers. The joists project around 80 mm below the present ceiling. There are recesses in the thick of parts of the west wall which may have been openings but are now blocked. There is a blocked door in the east wall.

Other than blocked recesses there are no openings in either the west or east walls on the ground floor. The adjacent tall houses restrict the possibility.



*large joists  
in the kitchen  
supporting  
the first floor  
room above*

*joists and  
beams above  
the ground  
floor kitchen  
and across the  
passage, looking  
downward in  
plan view*



*60 Castle Street joists and beams above kitchen and passage*  
Scale: 1:50

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 M

## The first floor

The south upper room is 3.38 west-east 3.6 north-south variable. There is an oriel window in the south gable. A prominent chimney stack belonging to the premises adjacent on the east side intrudes into this room.

A modern partition separates the south room with a bathroom adjacent. The passage discussed at ground floor level is carried up to the first floor. The north wall of the passage retains elements of a tall stud panel with dowel holes for horizontal staves and infilled with wattle and plaster and top and bottom rails. The early components are fixed to a modern stud wall.



*stud and rail partition with holes for staves, wattle and plaster*

*stud and rail partition with wind brace - attached to second truss, now masked by plaster.*

There is one opening in the north-west corner of the north upper room, on the north side of the gable. There is also a window on the east side, centrally placed. There is, perhaps a blocked opening on the east side of the passage, above the blocked door below.

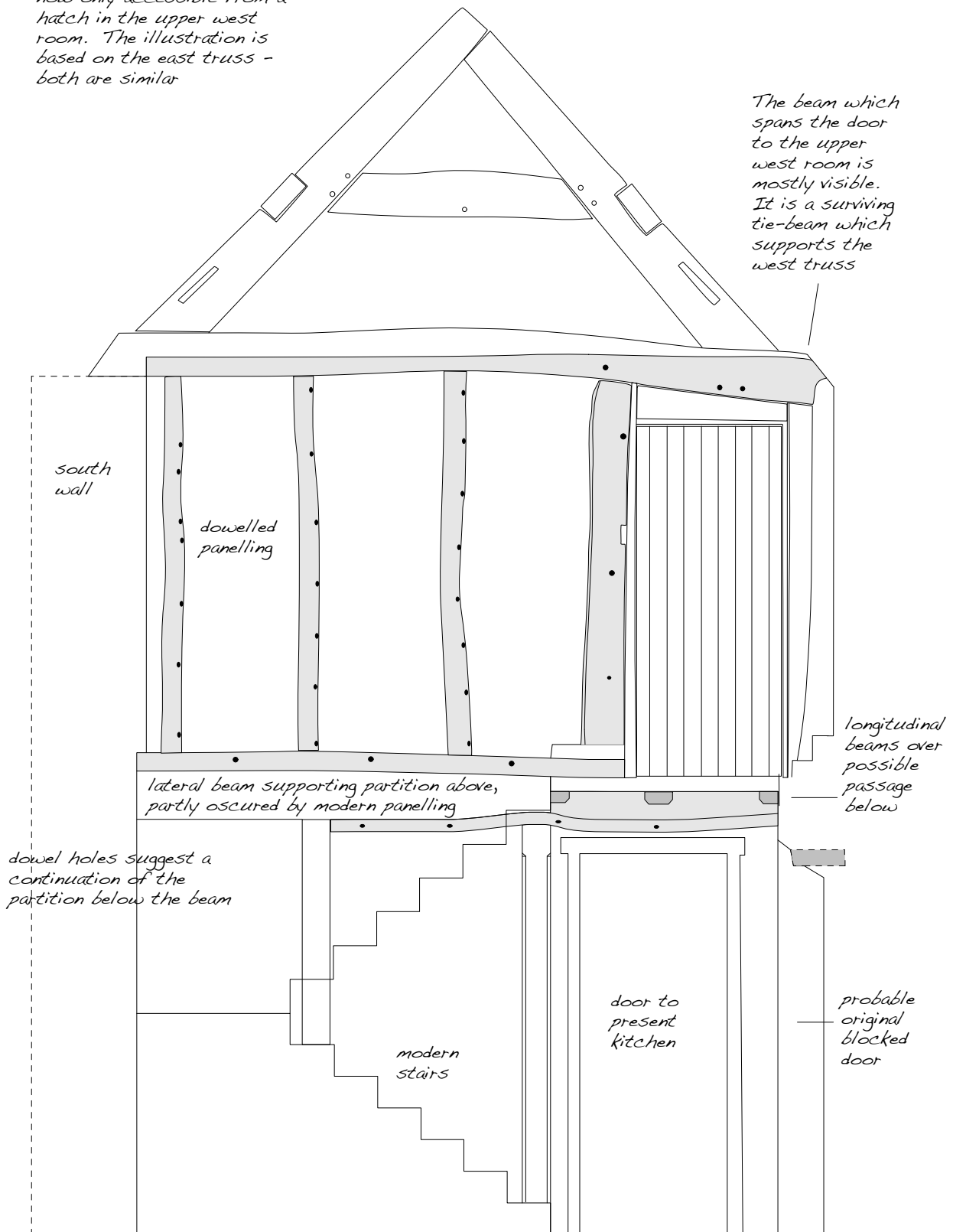
The most conspicuous feature on the upper floor, south room, is a collar-beam truss which once rested on a now truncated tie-beam and a crown-post, itself truncated, which once linked the crown-post and the tie-beam. There is now, a makeshift beam or secondary collar fixed to the back of the principals and the truncated crown-post. On the assumption that the modern bathroom had foreshortened the south room there might have been some logic in having removed the tie-beam of the truss to provide additional headroom.

An original wall-post carries down from the truss, below the first floor ceiling. Although it is not complete, the wall-post is a good indicator of original timber framing. Wind braces and purlins are still visible.

A second truss is partly visible in the closed attic space, above the partition on the north side of the passage. Part of a wind brace is visible in a light well in the ceiling roof, attached to the second truss. Encased wind braces in the corners of the north upper room, are visible against the south wall.

West truss: only part of this truss is visible and now only accessible from a hatch in the upper west room. The illustration is based on the east truss - both are similar

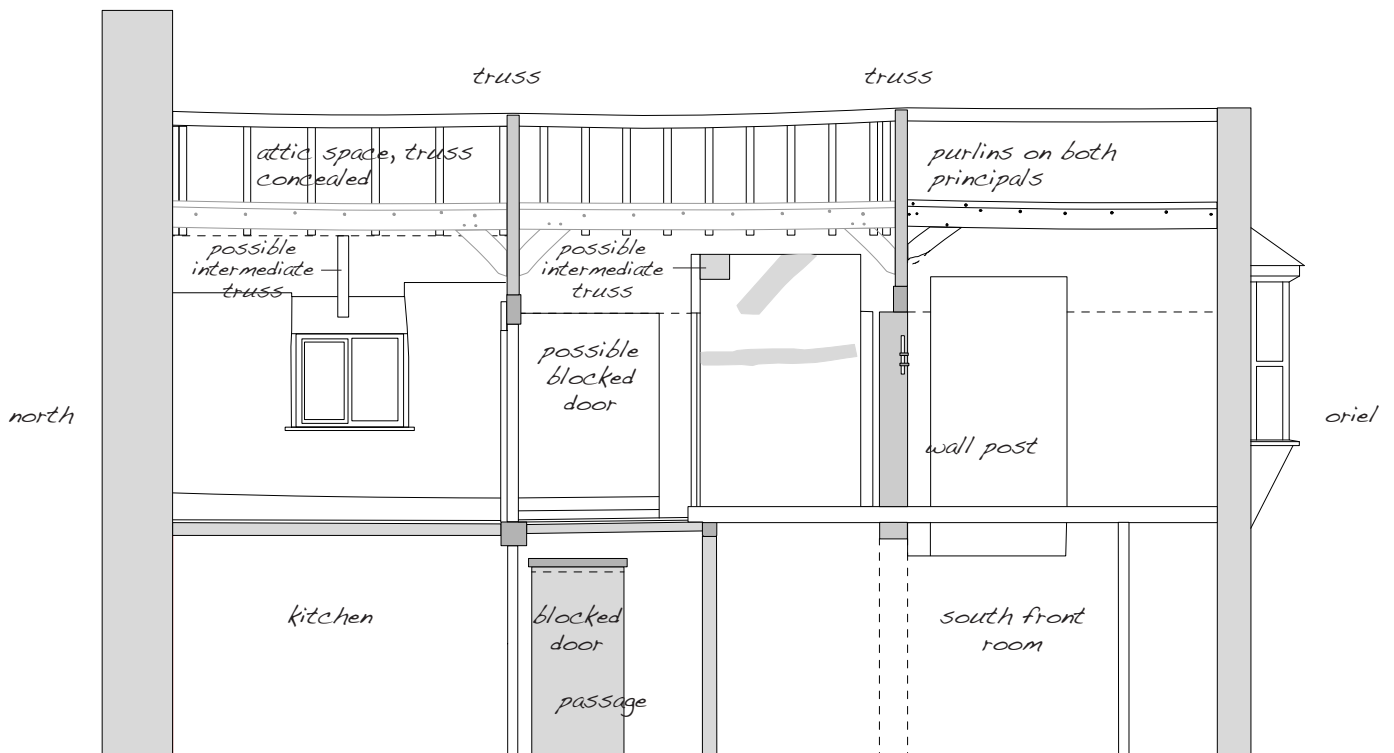
The beam which spans the door to the upper west room is mostly visible. It is a surviving tie-beam which supports the west truss







Collar-beam truss against the north wall of the south upper room. The near, square beam is modern and nothing to do with the truss. The lower of the two collars is a secondary feature, fixed behind the principals. A tie-beam has been cut away and the crown post, down from the original collar, has been truncated

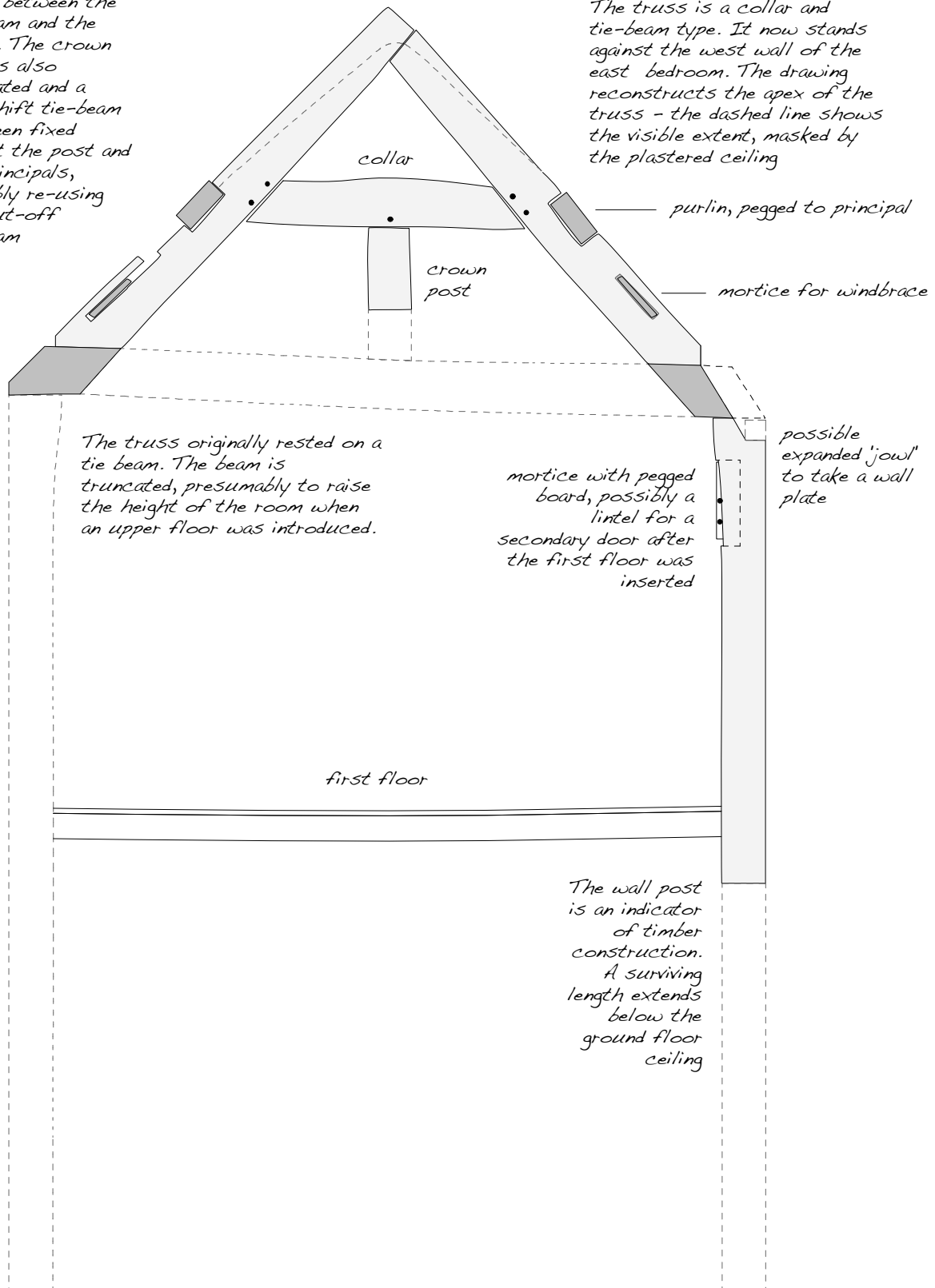


Castle Street no. 60 internal elevation, east wall  
Scale: 1:75

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 M

A crown post once stood between the tie-beam and the collar. The crown post is also truncated and a makeshift tie-beam has been fixed against the post and the principals, possibly re-using the cut-off tie-beam

The truss is a collar and tie-beam type. It now stands against the west wall of the east bedroom. The drawing reconstructs the apex of the truss - the dashed line shows the visible extent, masked by the plastered ceiling



The truss originally rested on a tie beam. The beam is truncated, presumably to raise the height of the room when an upper floor was introduced.

mortice with pegged board, possibly a lintel for a secondary door after the first floor was inserted

possible expanded 'jowl' to take a wall plate

first floor

The wall post is an indicator of timber construction. A surviving length extends below the ground floor ceiling

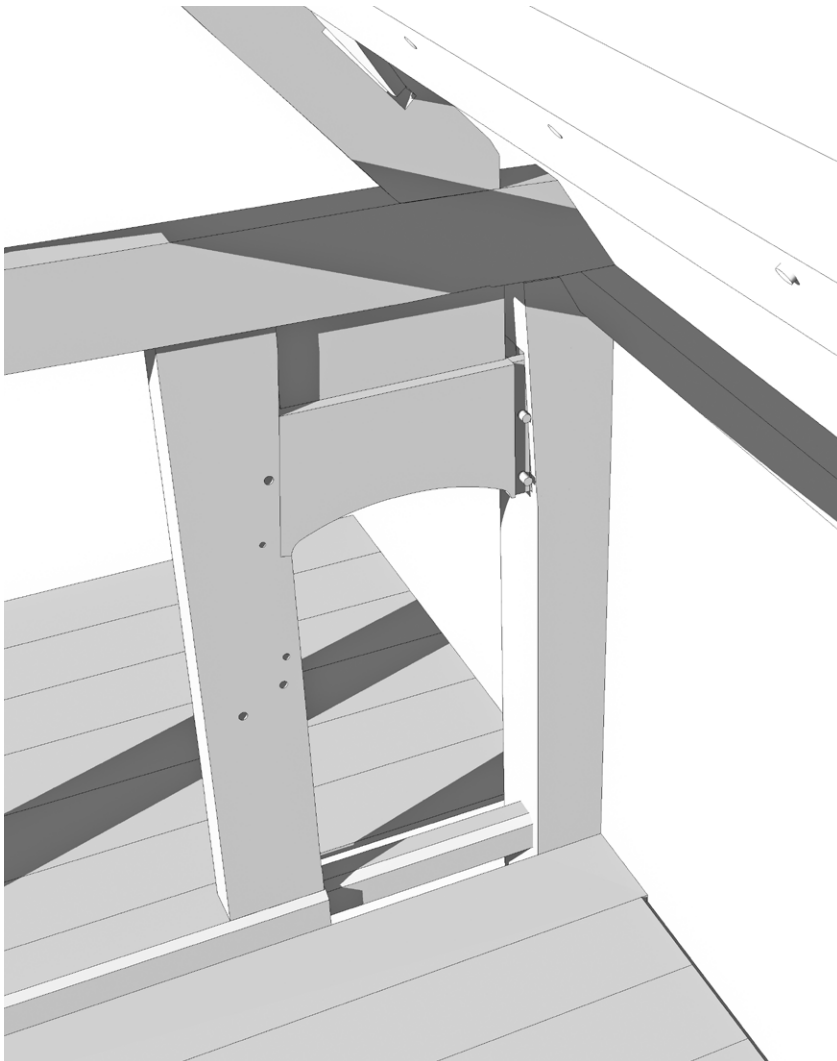
No. 60 Castle Street East Truss  
Scale: 1:30

0 1 2 3 M



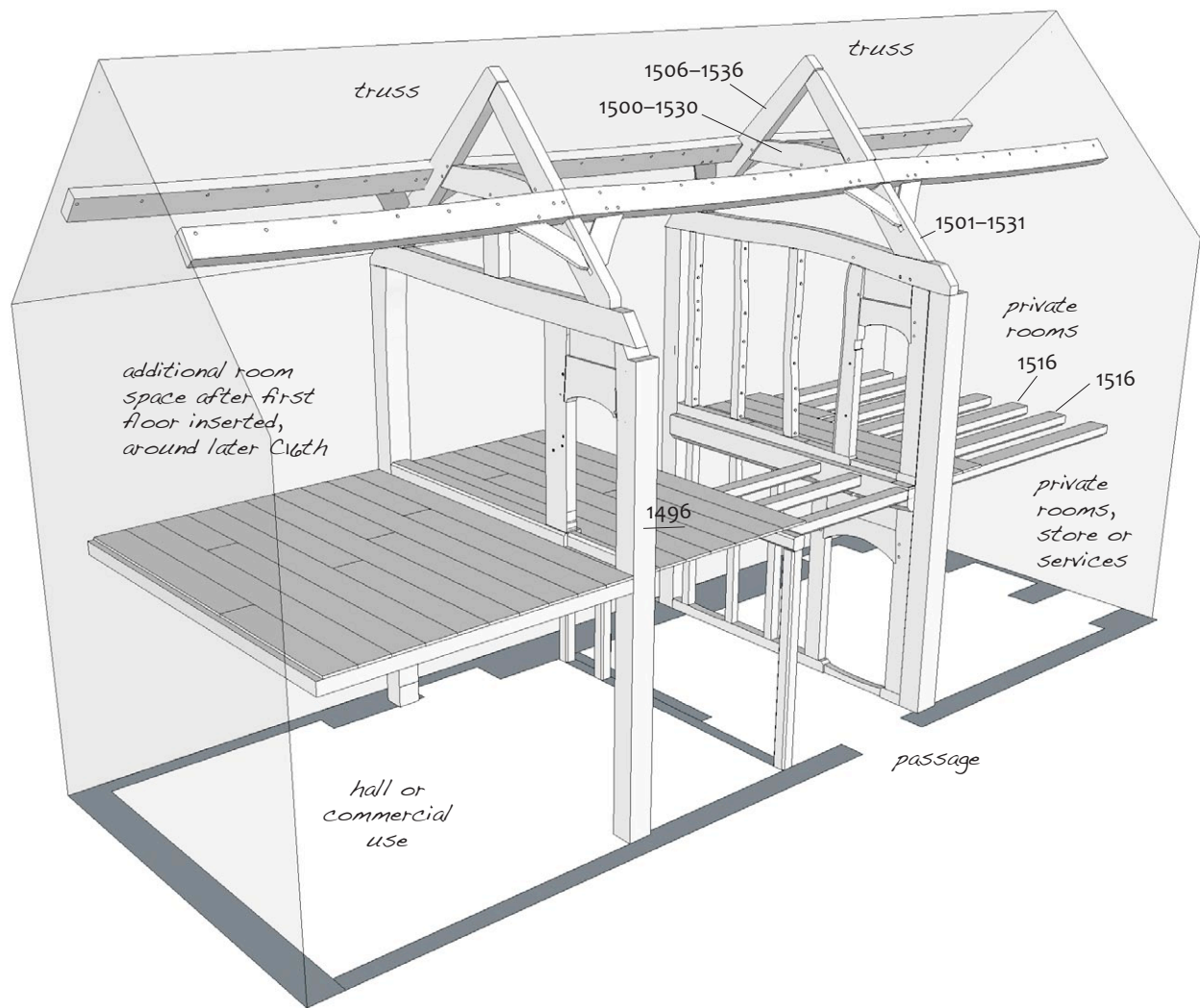
*Collar-beam truss, principal,  
purlin and wind brace joints*

*Hypothetical reconstruction  
of door on first floor, tenoned  
and pegged into mortice on  
wall-post*



*wall-post with mortice,  
tenoned and pegged joint*





Hypothetical reconstruction of the timber framed house at No. 60 Castle Street. The south end may have been opened to the roof as far as the passage, as described previously. Alternatively, the south end may have been floored at the outset with a commercial interest at ground floor level (the house was close to the port), and the upper floor used as the hall. The back (north) rooms were likeley to always have been on two storeys. Those rooms would have been private rooms or, perhaps, with a store or services downstairs.

If the hall was originally open to the roof from the ground floor, then a floor would have almost certainly been inserted by the later 16th century.

The mortice, tenon and pegged joint on the south-east wall-post below the tie-beam might indicate the presence of a door on the first floor. The style of the doors in this reconstruction is hypothetical but the position of the doors is likely to be correct.

Apart from the modern stair in the passage there is no direct evidence of access from ground to first floor. A ladder-style might have been placed in the passage or, alternatively, if the assumption of a second blocked opening above the passage on the first floor is correct, then there may have been a winding stair on the outside at the entrance to the passage.

## Dendrochronology

### *Summary of dendrochronology samples at N<sup>o</sup> 60 Castle Street by Martin Bridge*

Eight timbers were sampled from two trusses and associated purlins in the roof, and the rear ground floor ceiling. Six timbers were dated, and three retained complete sapwood. The east post to the front (south) truss was from a tree felled in summer 1496, whilst two ground floor ceiling joists were felled in the spring and summer of 1516 respectively. Careful analysis and recording of the building will be required in order to see if the whole structure was likely to have been built in 1516, or within a year or two after this date, making use of a timber felled around twenty years previously as the post to one of the main trusses, or whether the building was constructed around 1496 and the rear bay was added a couple of decades later.

Sample number	Timber and position	Dates AD spanning	No of rings	Felling seasons and dates/ date ranges (AD)
csbm01	Rear truss, east principal rafter	1393-1490	98	1501–1531
csbm02	Rear truss, west principal rafter	1396-1495	100	1506–1536
csbm03	Rear truss, collar	1403-1489	87	1500–1530
csbm04	Rear bay, west purlin	undated	<40	unknown
csbm05	Rear bay, east purlin	undated	40	unknown
csbm06	Front truss, east post	1391-1495	105	Summer 1496
csbm07	Rear grd flr, 2nd joist from east	1401-1515	115	Summer 1516
csbm08	Rear grd flr, 3rd joist from east	1411-1515	105	Spring 1516

The dendrochronology results are indicated on the relevant drawings on page

## Appendix:

Cadw listed building survey (summary)

Listed Grade II

Record No 5614

*A 2-storey house with gable end to the street, of scribed render, renewed slate roof, plain barge boards and finial, tall roughcast stack on the L side heightened against the wall of No 62 Castle Street, and thin brick stack to the rear. The front has a replaced panelled door on the R side under a small-pane overlight. To its L is a 4-pane horned sash window and above is a 2-light oriel window. Probably built in the C18 and shown as a house on the 1829 town plan.*

*Interior not inspected.*

*Listed for its special architectural interest as an C18 house retaining C19 character, and for its contribution to the historical integrity of Castle Street.*