



Darganfod Hen Dai Cymreig

Discovering Old Welsh Houses

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Please note that these reports are being updated as part of an ongoing programme of revision. Older reports sometimes refer to the old names of the Group. Between 2005 and 2012 also known as The Snowdonia Dendrochronology Project, then the N W Wales Dendrochronology Project and then the Dating Old Welsh Houses Group.

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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project:

Gronant, Holyhead



GAT Project No. 2113

Report No. 854

March, 2010

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Gronant, Holyhead

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Prepared for
North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

March 2010

By
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&
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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project:

Gronant, Holyhead

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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project:

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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

Gronant, Llanfachraeth, Anglesey. NGR SH 32708517

Location

Community Council: Llanfachraeth

County: Anglesey

PRN:

NPRN: 261

Listed Building Status: II*, Record Number 24,468

Introduction

This report contains the results of a survey undertaken to complement the dating of timbers at Gronant, Llanfachraeth, as part of the North West Wales Dendrochronology project. The survey was undertaken on 10 February and 22 March 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 plans prepared by RCAHMW.

Survey report

Gronant is an isolated settlement, lying in relatively low-lying ground at a height of 30m OD. It is approached along a private road from the A5025 road between Llanfachraeth and Llanfaethlu. The private road runs through low-lying wet ground, so this may be a later approach to the house, and it might originally have been approached from the east. The parish boundary between Llanfachraeth and Llanfaethlu passes the north side of the house, between the house and the farmyard.

There are two houses of sub-medieval date, joined by a 19th century extension, with farm buildings lying to the north, and another group of out-buildings to the south. The two houses lie at right-angles to one another. For convenience the house lying on a north-south alignment will be called House A, and the one lying at right-angles on an approximate east-west alignment will be called House B. The corner between the two houses was infilled in the 19th century with a connecting wing which forms part of House B. There is no internal link between Houses A and B.

House A External

House A had become derelict by the 1980's when it was substantially rebuilt by the then owner. It is a two storey sub-medieval house built of largely uncoursed rubble with wood lintels and a modern pitched slate roof. A through passage divides a two bay hall from a single bay outer room. The hall fireplace and chimney back on to the passage, and are served by a tall diagonally set square stack. Two smaller, later, chimneys have been built into the external gables at the north and south ends. The west front has two sash windows lighting the hall, and a single window lighting the outer bay. The first floor windows form the same arrangement, but with a small window under the eaves and above the door. Much of the upper masonry has been rebuilt, so it is difficult to be sure this is the original arrangement. The window arrangement on the east front is similar, though the two windows lighting the hall are almost conjoined, whereas there are two separate windows lighting the first floor. There are no external corner quoins visible at the north-west corner. Here the wall continues into a half-width extension, with lower roof. Because of the later renovation works it is difficult to be certain, but the present evidence suggests this is contemporary with the original structure. This is surrounded by later extensions to north and east. To the south of the house is the connecting range which joins houses A and B.

House A Internal

The ground floor interior contains the through passage, hall to south and outer room to north. The interior was largely used for storage, and not all details were visible during the visit. The through passage, however, had the stone wall of the chimney to the south and the remains of a post and panel partition to the north. The west passage doorway retains its original frame, partly repaired, of wooden posts either side supporting a Tudor arched lintel. On the inside is a moulded wooden lintel. Similar moulded lintels can be seen over the west doorway and over the windows in the hall and outer bay.

The post and panel screen has lost most of its timbers. The top and bottom rails remain, and so does the single door into the outer bay. The top rail is moulded on the lower corner, the moulding pierced by peg holes for the posts and panels. Towards the west end of the passage the two posts either side the door into the outer bay survive, with the lintel forming a Tudor (shallow pointed) arch. Above the lintel is a central post with two panels either side. The top rail is in to parts, the east side being narrower than the west side. The ceiling joists lie on top of the top rail.

The outer bay is now a single room. There is a door in the north-west corner leading into the north extension. The window lintel is moulded. It was not possible to gain entry into this room.

The hall is entered on the north side of the fireplace. The ceiling is supported on a heavily moulded beam which runs the length of the room from north to south, from the east wall of the fireplace through to the south gable wall. The largely original joists lie on top of the beam. Access to the fireplace was not possible, nor was the south side of the room clearly visible. The two closely spaced 12 pane sash windows on the east and those more widely spaced on the west both have heavily moulded internal lintels. The south wall contained a small fireplace, with a wide arched full

height recess to the west, full height cupboard to the east, and a former blocked door in the south-west corner. This would have originally led into the connecting wing.

Modern stairs lead from the north-east corner of the hall to the first-floor chamber above. The room above the hall is a single room open to the roof, of three bays separated by two collar beam trusses with raking struts. The original purlins are no longer present, though the notches in the trusses survive, and later square section trusses (no longer load bearing) sit within them. The trusses are no longer load bearing, as the weight of the modern roof is carried on steel girders that stretch the length of the building. A ridge beam is carried in a notch at the apex, but this may be secondary, perhaps the same date as the later purlins. The chimney takes up a large part of the north wall. Between the east wall of the chimney and the east wall of the house the roof was supported by single beams which carried purlins. Again the original purlins are gone, and these beams are no longer load bearing. Wall paintings, discovered and restored c. 1986, can be seen on the east chimney wall and the south wall. From dado level below the paintings are largely of vertical stripes in yellow and red, with a foliage pattern in grey above, the two separated by an egg and tongue border. A more complex large foliage pattern with an interlaced border lies on the south wall.

The outer bay has a modern plaster ceiling. The wall south wall of this room has a straw rope partition, and remains of another one lie in the adjoining room. In the north-west corner a door leads into the small north extension. The doorway has an early wooden frame, certainly of 18th century appearance if not earlier.

House B External

House B lies on an approximate east-west axis, at the south-east corner of House A. On its west end it joins the connecting range, whilst attached to the east gable is a lower former stable and loft, whilst attached to the north side on the east end is another 2-storey extension, a former carriage house and loft.

The south front has a modern porch in front of an off-set door. To the left is a large single window. Above are three windows, now four-pane sash, all off-set to the left. The north front contains a nearly opposing doorway, a single window east and three windows to the west. Above are four equally spaced four-pane sash windows. Changes in the masonry suggest the window openings are partly a later insertion. On the ground floor the window west of the door was also formerly a door.

House B Internal

Internally the house is of two rooms. To the east is a kitchen, and to the west a single large hall. A large square axial beam runs longitudinally from east to west across the two rooms, though it may be two timbers joined within the dividing wall. This supports a later ceiling. A large fireplace occupies the east wall of the kitchen, the chimney supported on a large beam. These are the only two early timbers visible in the house. The west gable wall shows no evidence of an internal fireplace, however the external face (now enclosed by the connecting wing) is some 1.5m wide, and appears to include a chimney which would originally have been external. This is used by a fireplace in the connecting wing.

The principal ceiling beam in the kitchen is chamfered and has clear mortise holes for supporting former joists, though the present joists are supported on top of the beam. There is no evidence of a former partition. The beam in the adjoining room has no similar joist holes – this is also chamfered, and again with no evidence for a screen.

The first floor is reached by a stair in the connecting wing. Bedrooms open off a long continuous corridor which runs along the north side. The roof trusses visible are of relatively small planed timber, and though all painted and partly obscured, appear of 19th century date.

Connecting wing

The connecting wing, possibly of early 19th century date, links the south gable wall of House A with the west gable wall of House B. The south roof gable is hipped. 20-pane sash windows light the rooms from west, whilst the south elevation contains a horizontal re-set stained glass window. The east elevation has a small 4-pane sash window which lights the stairs, with a pitched-roof bell-tower rising from the wall above. Internally this range is accessible only from House B, though there is a blocked door in House A which would have formerly led into it. The range contains a large west facing room, the stairs to House B and a small lavatory.

Dendrochronology sampling

Seven samples were taken at Gronant in total. Building A five timbers from the main hall range were sampled. Building B the axial beam and mantel beam in the kitchen were the only timbers were sampled.

Conclusions

Gronant is an interesting example of the unit system, with two apparently near contemporary houses. House A, despite having been largely rebuilt, contains significant remains, including the wall paintings, roof trusses, post-and-panel partition and heavily moulded ceiling timbers and lintels. House B is less easy to define, and it must have been largely rebuilt, perhaps in the early 19th century, though it almost certainly retains elements of a sub-medieval cross-passage house.



Figure 1: Gronant location (Scale 1:15000)

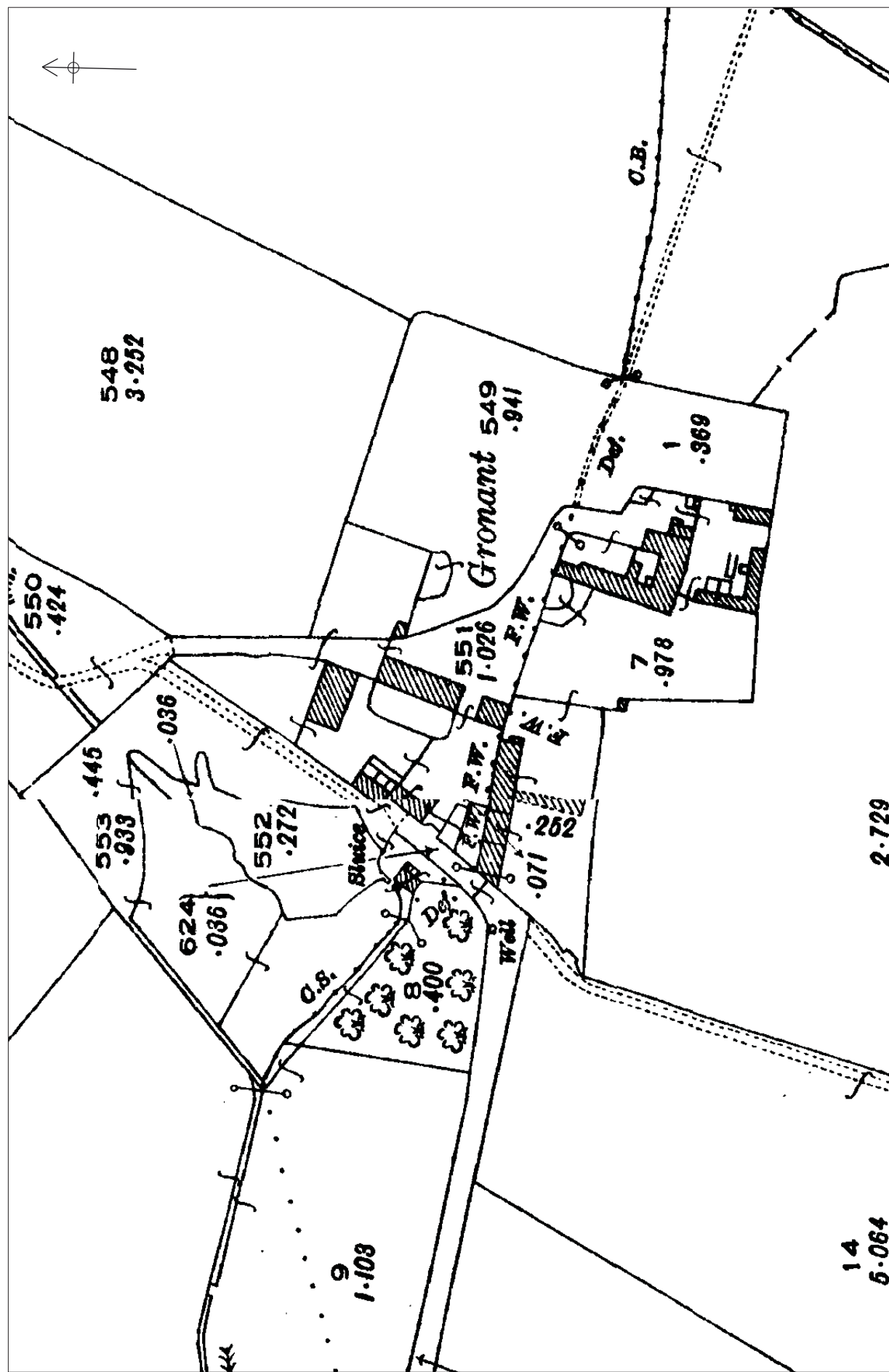


Figure 2: 1924 Anglesey county series. Ordnance Survey. XX.1. Scale 1:1500

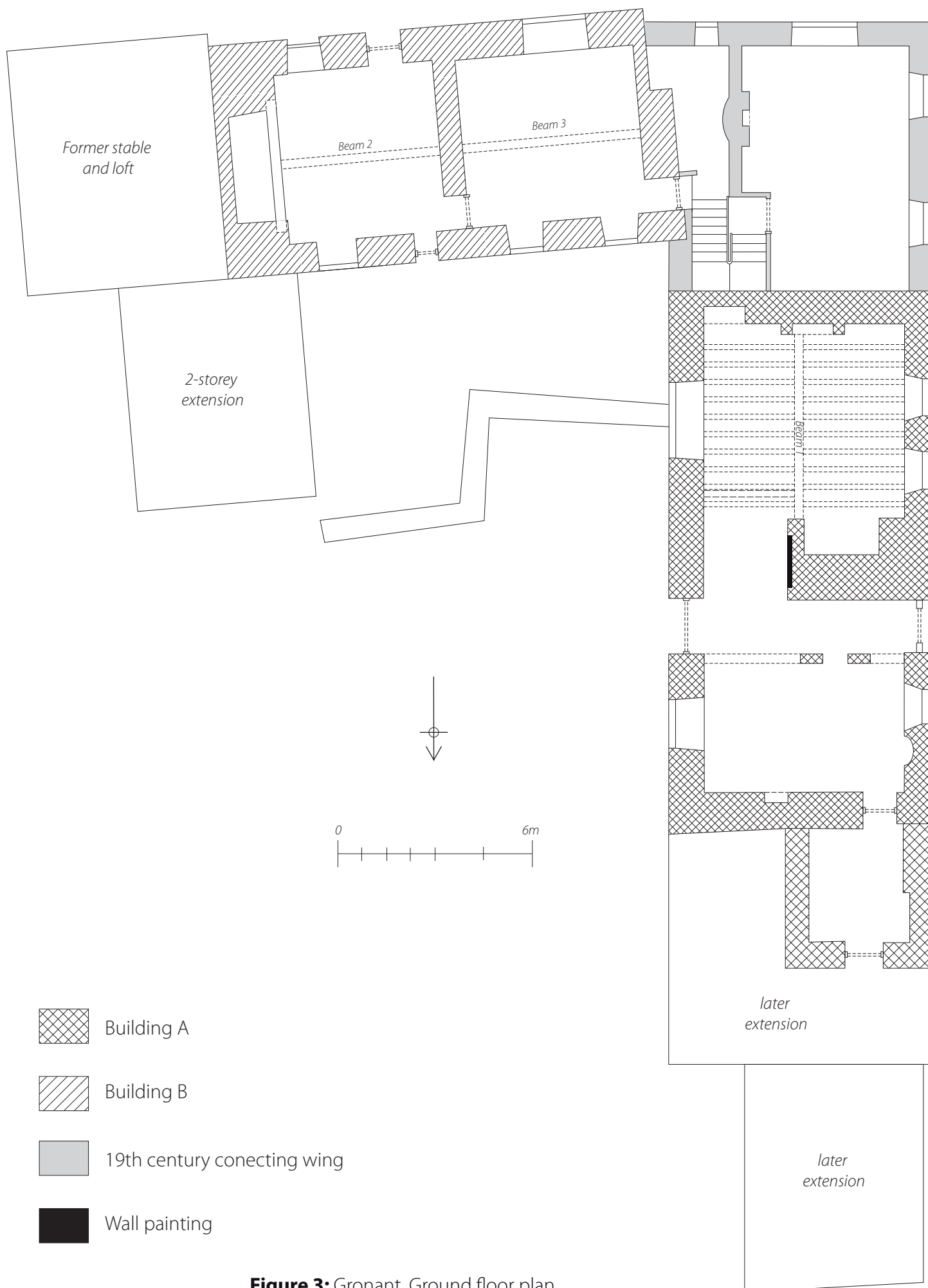


Figure 3: Gronant. Ground floor plan

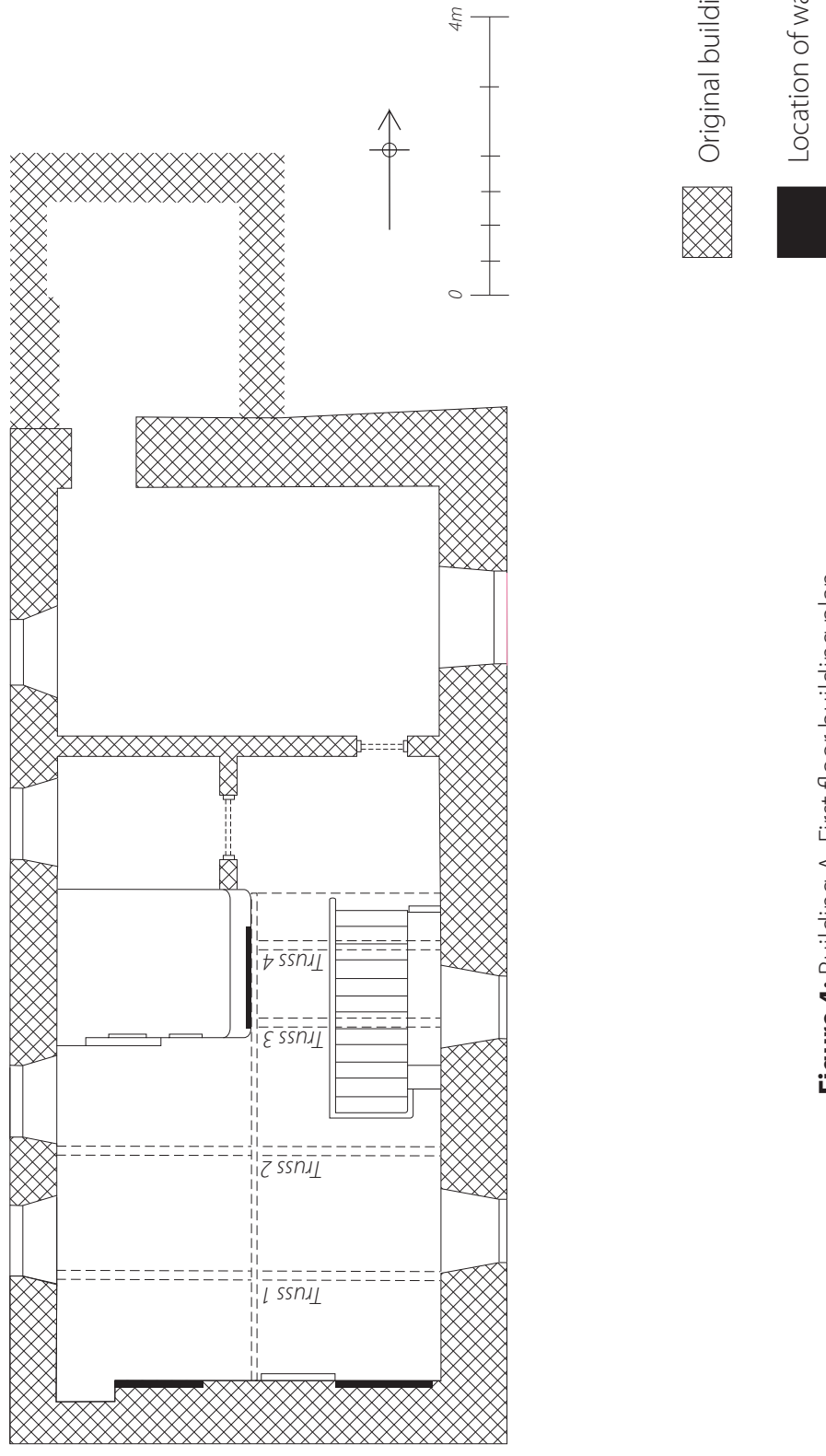


Figure 4: Building A. First floor building plan.

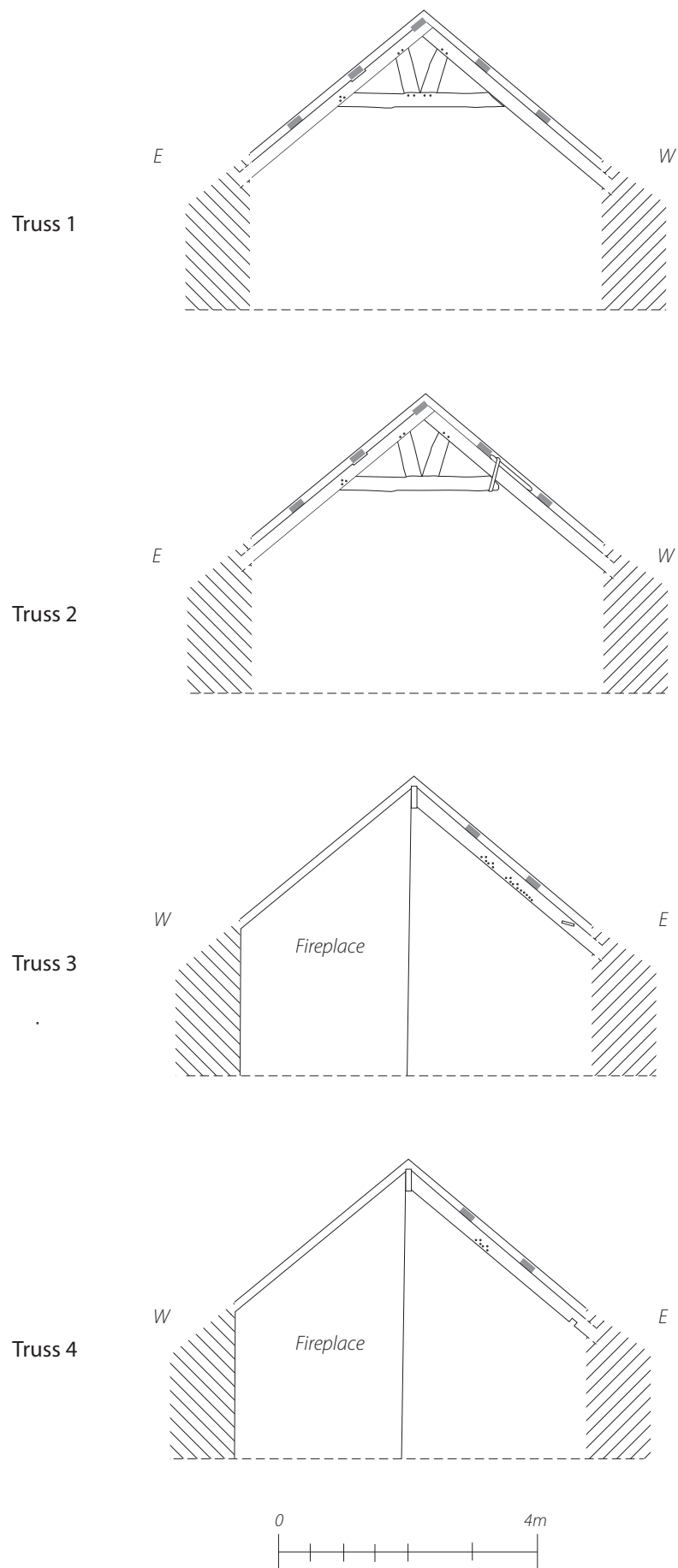


Figure 5: Trusses in building A. Located in figure 3.

E

W

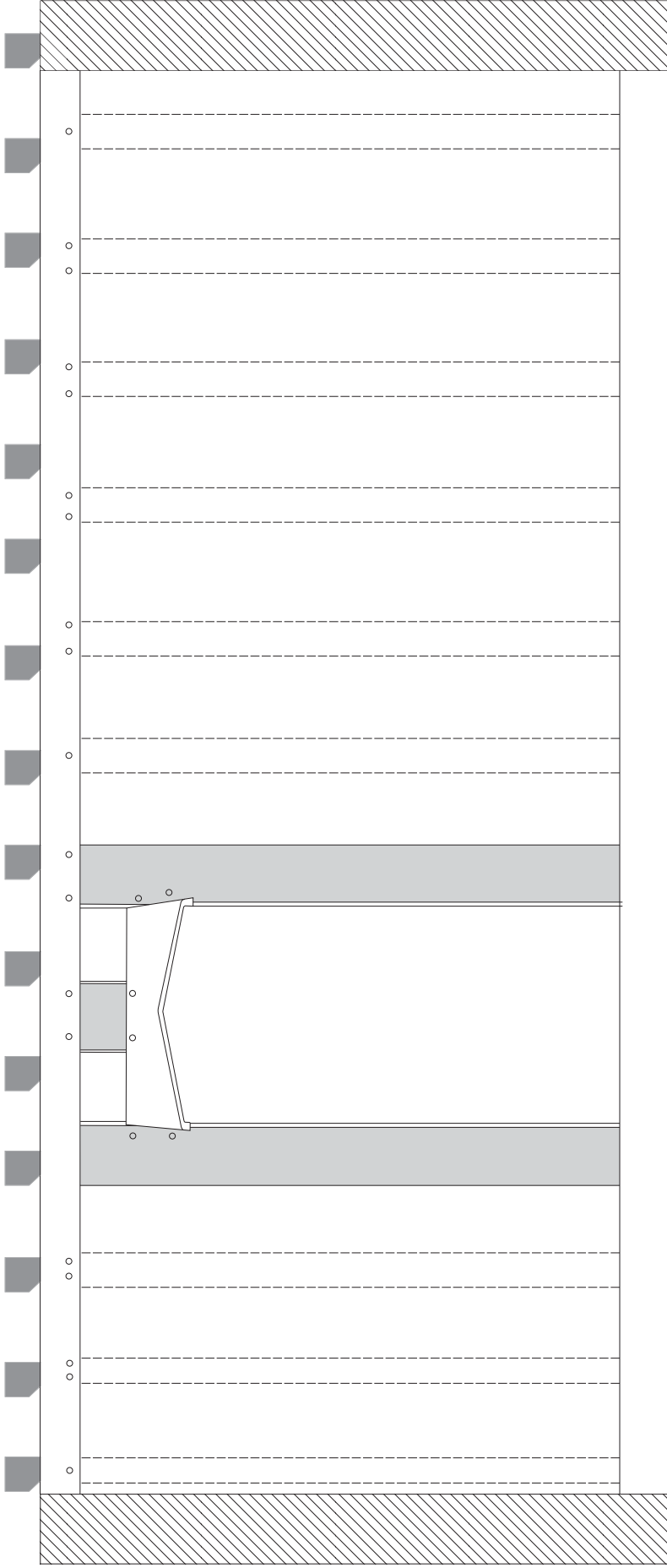


Figure 6: Screen building A.

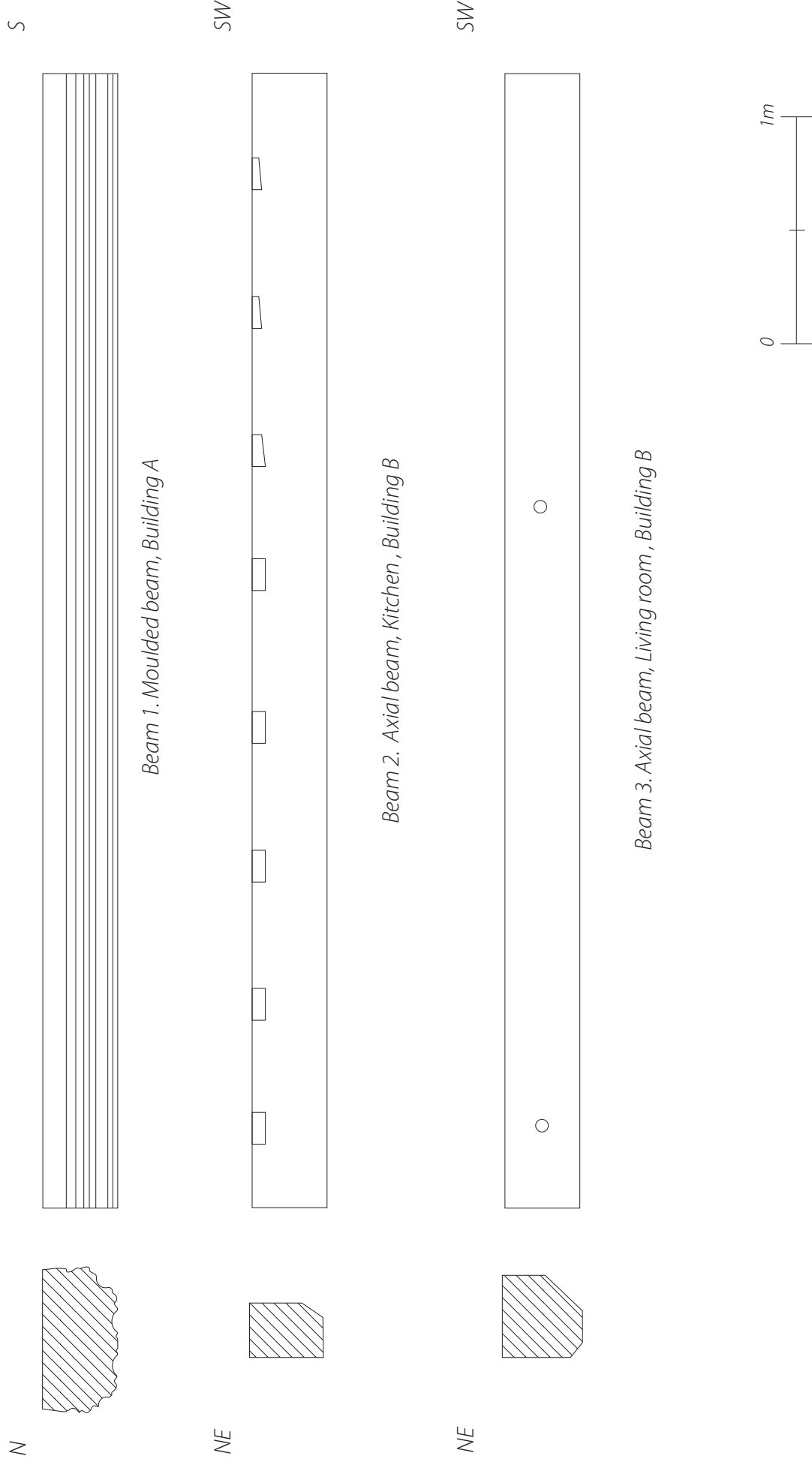


Figure 7: Timber profiles from building A and B (see figure 3 for location)



Plate 1: Gronant west facing elevation showing building A to the north and the 19th century infill extension to the south.



Plate 2: Gronant west facing elevation of building A, showing doorway which leads into the west passage, which retains its original frame supporting a tudor arched lintel



Plate 3: Gronant south facing elevation showing connecting 19th century wing, with re-set stained glass window and building B



Plate 4: Gronant south facing elevation of building B, showing a large single window on the ground floor and three windows above which are now four-pane sash



Plate 5: Gronant south facing elevation showing building B and the modern porch



Plate 6: Gronant south facing elevation of building B, showing possible original foundations



Plate 7: Gronant south facing elevation showing building B and the attached lower former stable and loft



Plate 8: Gronant west facing elevation of building B and the attached 2 storey building



Plate 9: Gronant north facing elevation showing building B with four sash windows on the first floor, two 12-pane windows to the east and a four pane to the west. The change in masonry shows that the window east of the door was once a door



Plate 10: Gronant facing north-east showing building A and B and the 19th century connecting wing bell tower with a small four pane sash window



Plate 11: Gronant east facing elevation of building A



Plate 12: Gronant south-west facing image showing later extensions to building A



Plate 13: Gronant building B kitchen facing south west showing a large fireplace and axial beam



Plate 14: Gronant building B living room facing south west showing the large square axial beam which runs east to west across the entire of building B



Plate 15: Gronant building B living room facing south showing two 12 pane sash windows



Plate 16: Gronant building B facing north showing the external chimney now blocked



Plate 17: Gronant connecting 19th century wing facing south, showing re-set stained glass window



Plate 18: Gronant connecting 19th century wing facing west, showing fireplace



Plate 19: Gronant building A. Post and panel screen



Plate 20: Gronant building A. Post and panel screen, detail



Plate 21: Gronant building A. West passage door detail facing east.



Plate 22: Gronant building A, ground floor 12-pane sash windows facing east



Plate 23: Gronant building A. Heavily moulded beam



Plate 24: Gronant building A, first floor 12-pane sash windows facing east



Plate 25: Gronant building A, first floor. Wall paintings discovered and restored in c. 1986. Facing south.



Plate 26: Gronant building A, first floor. Wall paintings discovered and restored in c. 1986. Facing west.



Plate 27: Gronant building A, first floor. Truss 1 facing south



Plate 28: Gronant building A, first floor. Truss 2 facing north

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