

**An archaeological watching brief,
survey and building recording at
Great Greenfields,
Gransmore Green, Felsted, Essex
September-October 2009**

**report prepared by
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**on behalf of
Foxley Builders**

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1 Summary

Great Greenfields is a medieval moated enclosure containing a Grade II listed building. Recent building works inside the moated enclosure consisted of the renovation of the listed building (house) and the construction of a western extension (with a basement) to the building. Building works connected with the construction of a cart-lodge and the refurbishment of an existing annexe had no archaeological implications and were not included in this project.

During the renovation of the house and the construction of the extension, a three-part archaeological project was undertaken. This work involved a watching brief on the excavation of the pit for the basement for the extension to the house; a detailed survey of the moated enclosure; and a photographic and drawn record of four original windows which were exposed in the listed building during the renovation work.

Pottery from the watching brief indicates that occupation of the site began between the 12th and 14th centuries, sometime before the construction of the house in the 15th century. Other pottery recovered indicates activity here in the prehistoric and Roman periods. However, the main period of activity was medieval. The watching brief identified three medieval features in the pit dug for the basement, including a pit, a ditch, and a deep pit or ?well. Medieval pottery sherds collected from the moat indicate tipping of domestic debris into the moat in the later medieval period.

The survey of the moat has allowed a brief analysis of its form, and a comparison of the current layout of the moated enclosure and its buildings with the cartographic record.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1** This is the archive report on an archaeological watching brief, moat survey and building recording undertaken on the Great Greenfields moated enclosure and its listed building. The work was carried out on behalf of Foxley Builders by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in September and October 2009. Post-excavation work took place in October and November 2009.
- 2.2** The site, Great Greenfields (formerly Greenfields Farm), covers an area of 0.85 hectares, and is centred at NGR TL 6955 2198. It is situated in Gransmore Green to the north-east of the village of Felsted in the district of Uttlesford, Essex.
- 2.3** A planning application was made to Uttlesford District Council in January 2008 (planning application no UTT/0756/09FUL) for the construction of an extension with basement to the west of the Grade II listed building (house), the construction of a cart-lodge to the south-east of the house, and renovation work to an existing annexe to the north-east of the house. As the development site lies within a medieval moated site, the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management (HEM) team recommended that a full archaeological condition should be placed on the planning application. This condition states:

'... No development or preliminary groundworks of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant, and approved by the planning authority ...'

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation) produced by CAT (CAT 2009) and approved by Richard Havis of the ECC HEM team.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with CAT's *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE) and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

- 2.4** Much of the construction work on the site involved renovating the Grade II listed building itself, constructing the extension and the cart-lodge, and renovating the annexe to the north-east. Intrusive works on the site involved the construction of an extension with a basement against the western side of the house and the construction of the three-bay cart-lodge to the south-east of the house. The cart-lodge was built on a raft to minimise disturbance to any archaeological deposits which might survive in its footprint. Most of the services to the buildings on site already existed, including a sewage-treatment plant to the south-west of the house (not shown on Fig 2). However, the construction of the basement did involve the disturbance of archaeological deposits.
- 2.5** Archaeological recording on the 5th and the 6th October involved the examination and recording of the sides of the 8 x 5m pit dug out for the basement of the extension. Most of the sides of the pit were still visible. However, the pit had been backfilled on the northern side, so a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless bucket was used to remove the hardcore infill. The edge of the pit was cleaned and examined and all archaeological features identified were recorded in a combined section (Sx 1-Sx 19; Figs 3-4).
- 2.6** A detailed survey to locate the existing buildings within the setting of the moated enclosure was carried out using a total station (Fig 2). In addition, elevations of the renovated house were prepared to show the original windows and record their relation to the renovated house (Figs 5-7); the windows were also photographed (Plates 2-3).

3 Archaeological background

This section is based on records held by the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER).

The development lies within a moated enclosure (EHER no 1274). It is occupied by a timber-framed listed building dating to the 15th century, if not earlier (EHER no 37104), with later alterations.

The moat is approximately 5-6m wide, and is partially water-filled at certain times of the year. It is possible that the moated enclosure is earlier than the house, because many moated sites in Uttlesford have their origins in the 12th and 13th centuries (HEM 2009).

The moat today is similar in appearance to how it is shown on the first edition OS map of 1881.

4 Aims

The watching brief aimed to preserve by record any archaeological features destroyed by this development. The moat survey aimed to produce an accurate survey of the present condition of the moat, and to show the setting of the listed building (house) within the moated enclosure.

The building recording aimed to record the early features of the house by measured survey and photography.

5 Results

5.1 The watching brief (Figs 2-4)

The pit dug out for the basement of the extension was excavated by contractors. The sides were subsequently cleaned by hand by CAT staff, and photographed and drawn (the latter at a scale of 1:10; Figs 3-4). Work on the sections was conducted from above due to the depth of the pit and the confined nature of the space between the edge of the pit and the newly-constructed basement.

A layer of dark-brown clayey topsoil (L1) covered the site. It sealed L2, which had abundant inclusions of chalk, peg-tile and daub, and rare charcoal and oyster shell, and contained ten sherds of pottery ranging in date from prehistoric (probably

Bronze Age), to Roman and medieval. This layer was only seen in sections 18-19 (Sx 18-Sx 19). The date-range of the finds in L2 may indicate that this layer has been redeposited. L2 was not present in the sections along the western or southern sides of the pit dug out for the basement. Here, L1 sealed a medium brown silty-clay (L4) with few inclusions and no observable finds.

The pit dug out for the basement had removed L1-L2 (where present) and the natural layer (L3) to a maximum depth of 1.6m below modern ground-level. L3 was a hard, orange/brown clay with frequent chalk flecks and nodules increasing in frequency as depth increased (they were very common at 700mm below ground-level).

Six archaeological features were identified around the edges of the pit dug out for the basement. Two of them were modern (F2, F4). F2 was a large modern rubbish-pit. Finds included residual prehistoric (probably Bronze Age) and early medieval pottery sherds, along with modern building materials and plastic. F4 was a large area of modern construction disturbance. It had two distinct lenses, ie a dark silty clay layer overlaid by redeposited natural clay. The profile and edges of the feature indicate that it was excavated using a mechanical excavator.

Three features contained medieval pot sherds, ie F1, F5, F6, and they all had brown silty-clay fills with frequent inclusions of charcoal and daub. F1 was a medieval pit. F5 was a relatively deep, straight-sided pit, the base of which was 1.35m below ground-level and over 1m into the natural chalky clay. A feature this deep may originally have been dug as a well and subsequently infilled. Six fragments of pottery recovered from its upper fill date to the medieval period. Only a small part of F6 survived, so it is difficult to determine if it had been a small pit or a ditch.

The remaining feature was F3. As with F6, only a small part of this feature survived. It included a large lump of daub (seen in section), and a rim of either prehistoric or Roman date. The feature could be prehistoric or Roman, or it could be medieval with residual material. The fill of F3 was the same as the fills of the medieval features.

Archaeological contexts in watching brief

Context number	Type	Sections	Date
F1	pit	Sx 18, Sx 19	medieval
F2	pit	Sx 17, Sx 18	modern
F3	pit	Sx 17	?medieval
F4	construction disturbance	Sx 9-Sx 11	modern
F5	deep pit or ?well	Sx 2-Sx 4	medieval
F6	small pit or ditch	Sx 2	medieval/ post-medieval
L1	topsoil	Sx 2-Sx 6, Sx 9-Sx 19	modern
L2	layer	Sx 18, Sx 19	post-medieval
L3	natural	Sx 3-Sx 6, Sx 9-Sx 19	geological
L4	cultivated soil	Sx 2-Sx 6, Sx 9, Sx 11-Sx 17	medieval to modern

5.2 The moat survey

The moat survey was conducted using a total station, and plotted in CAD onto an OS base map. A combined length of 278m of the various parts of the moat were surveyed.

In plan, the moat is essentially an irregular rectangle with its south-eastern corner cut off. The reason for its irregular form, as indicated by the EHER (EHER no 1272) may be that it originally formed one half of a double moat with the moat at Poplars, the property which lies to the south-east. That moat, to the south of the Poplars house, is V-shaped, irregular and incomplete, and has a maximum width of 3m. Its eastern part diminishes in size as it heads north-east, where it connects with a pond.

Its western part comes to within 40m of the Great Greenfields moat. However, it is not proved that the two moats were originally connected.

On average, the Greenfields moat was between 5m and 6m wide, and between 1.1m and 1.5m deep. Although soft underfoot (in September), there was no water in the moat, which is partially water-filled at certain times of the year.

Near the middle of the western side of the moat there is a small internal inlet or pond. The pond, which is shown on the 1881 and 1897 OS maps, has been mostly infilled, probably recently. Where it isn't infilled, it is comparable in depth to the rest of the moat.

The enclosed area within the moat is around 0.65 hectares in size (1.6 acres), which is considerably larger than Hedges' average figure for moated enclosures in Essex of 0.5-1.0 acres (Hedges 1978, 68). Assuming that the house was the centre of an agricultural complex, it seems likely that ancillary buildings, both farm buildings and service buildings for the house itself, would have been inside the moated enclosure and probably near to the house (Rigold 1978, 42). However, the enclosed land to the south of the buildings is shown as open on the 1881 and 1897 OS maps and thus may have been used as pasture, orchard or perhaps just as a large garden. The land within the moated enclosure is flat and the ground-level is comparable to the ground-level outside.

With the exception of its north-eastern corner, the Great Greenfields moat is now lined by well-established trees, mainly on both sides of the moat. On the 1881 OS map, the line of trees continues along the northern part and around the north-eastern corner of the moat.

An east-west ditch connects to the moat at the point where its southern part turns to the north-east. At this point, the moat is noticeably narrower than elsewhere on the site being between 0.8m and 1.2m wide, and V-shaped in profile. There is no cartographic evidence that this ditch was ever a part of the moat system.

Comparison of the current site layout with the OS maps of 1881 and 1897 shows three principal changes (Plate 1). First, a causeway now crosses the south-eastern part of the moat, providing access to a small grass-covered field. Second, a 28m-long stretch of the northern part of the moat has been infilled, probably recently; certainly after 1950. Third, although the only buildings within the moated enclosure on the 1881 OS map are the house and a rectangular outbuilding to the north-east (on the site of the annexe which was being renovated during the works on the site), a range of buildings had been constructed over the north-eastern corner of the moated enclosure at a date after 1881, and had been demolished at a date between 1923 and 1950. This part of the moated enclosure is now clear of buildings, and the moat is infilled.

The north-south aligned lane which currently gives access to the site is present on the Chapman and André map of 1777. It almost certainly has earlier origins, and it may have led to the original entrance to the moated enclosure. Unfortunately, because this part of the moat was built-over between c 1897 and 1923, and is infilled, we cannot know whether this was the original entrance, and, if so, what form it took. Hedges suggests a number of configurations for moat entrances in Essex (Hedges 1978), and the curve and slight in-turn of the moat at the eastern end of its northern part may indicate that there was originally an out-turned entrance here with either a permanent bridge or a causeway across the moat.

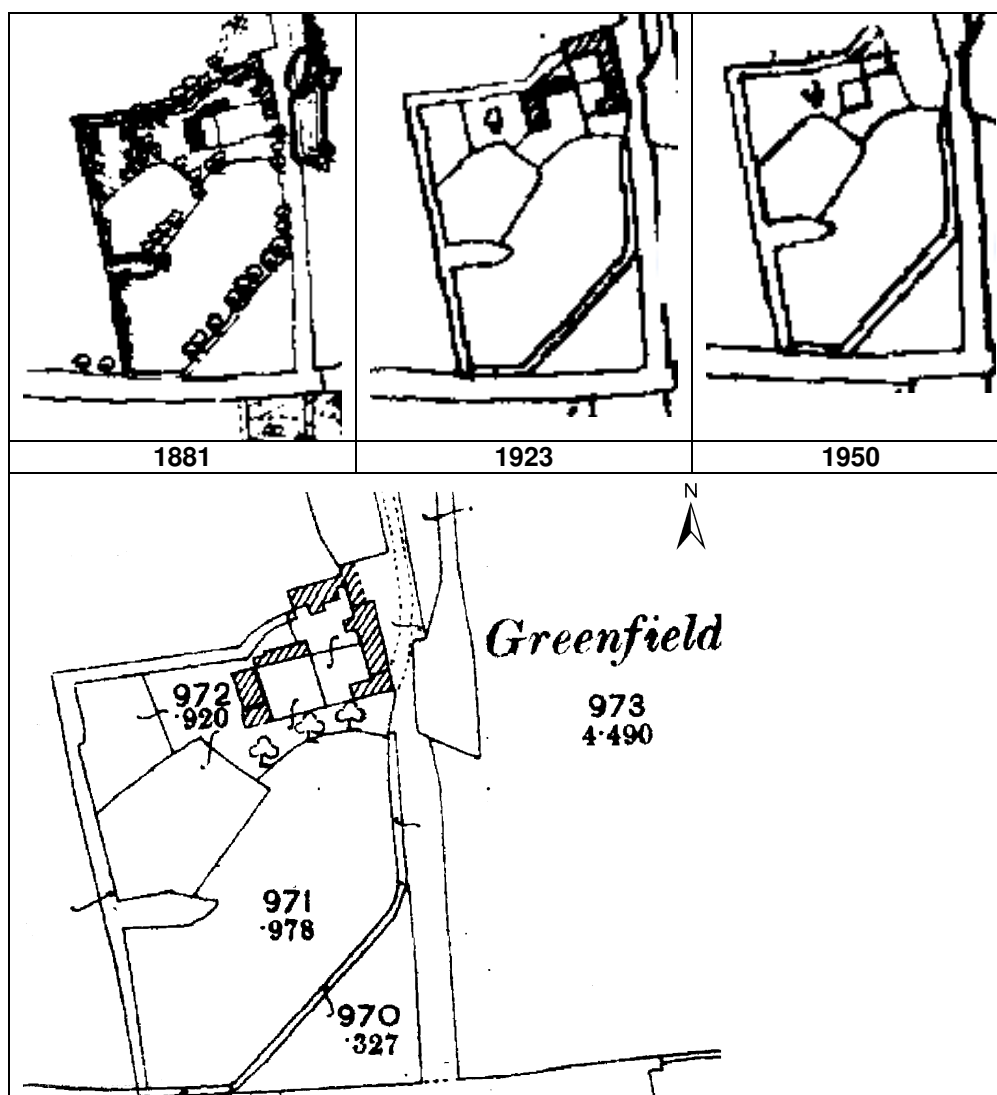


Plate 1: extract from OS 1897 map (with thumbnails above of OS maps 1881, 1923, 1950).

Also of possible interest are the two dry ponds to the north-east of the moated enclosure which are connected by a ditch of similar depth and profile to the moat itself (Fig 2). Both ponds and the adjoining ditch are shown on the 1881 OS map, and one pond, possibly the southern one, can be seen on the Chapman and André map of 1777. Whether these ponds are associated with the moated enclosure of Great Greenfields is uncertain, but their proximity suggests that it is probable. The northern pond appears to be transected by a track joining the lane from the east (Fig 2). As this track can be seen on the Chapman and André map of 1777, this indicates that the pond pre-dates 1777.

5.3 Historical features of the listed building (Plates 2-3, Figs 5-7) *by Christopher Lister*

Set within a moated enclosure, the Great Greenfields house is a Grade II listed building (listed building no 122616), dating to the 15th century or earlier, with later alterations. The original structure was an open hall with a two-storey cross-wing. An upper floor lit by a dormer was subsequently inserted into the hall. The house is timber-framed and plastered and, prior to the renovation, had two window ranges of diamond-lead casement windows.

The roof of the north wing has been altered, and there is an inserted off-centre square red-brick chimney-stack with a moulded base and three brick panels decorated with a circle, a fleur-de-lys and a diamond. The chimney stack dates to the 16th century.



Plate 2: ground-floor original windows flanking modern replacement, view east.

During renovation works, which included the replacement of the windows and front door and the addition of a gabled porch above the front door, four original windows were uncovered (Plates 2-3). These originally flanked the windows which were replaced by the diamond-leaded casement windows. Each of the newly-discovered windows contained a central ovolo-moulded mullion flanked by two narrow diamond-shaped ones (Fig 6). The diamond mullions blocked the opening which itself would have been closed with either sliding or folding shutters; oiled cloth or thin sheets of horn may also have been used. No evidence of shutters was observed around any of the windows. The central mullion was twice the width of the diamond mullions and was ovolo-moulded, a style which became prevalent in the 16th century.



Plate 3: first-floor original windows flanking modern replacement, view east.

Both windows on the ground floor were intact, but with some damage, and only one mullion survived. The first-floor south window was also intact. The first-floor north window has been repaired.

6 Finds: the pottery, and other finds

by Howard Brooks with Stephen Benfield

Introduction

This is the report on the pottery and other finds from the site. This report is by HB, with thanks to Stephen Benfield for identifying the prehistoric and Roman sherds.

Description of pottery

Because of their small number, the prehistoric and Roman sherds have not been ascribed to fabric types. For the medieval and later sherds, fabrics present are as follows (after *CAR 7*): Fabric 13 (early medieval sandy ware, 12th-early 13th century); Fabric 21 (sandy orange ware, 13th-16th century); Fabric 22 (Heddingham-type ware, 13th-14th century); and Fabric 51b (flowerpot).

Comment

This small but interesting group of pottery (43 sherds, 319g) demonstrates activity on this site in the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods.

The prehistoric and Roman material was mostly residual in later (ie medieval) features, but F3 contained only a prehistoric or Roman rim. F3 may, therefore, be a prehistoric or Roman feature. There is also a group of grey ware sherds which could be either Roman or medieval in date.

The medieval period is the largest component of this group (29 sherds, 252g, which is 79% of the whole group by sherd weight). This material indicates that the main activity was in the medieval period. It is more difficult to relate the pottery specifically to the house or to the moat. Having said that, the medieval material in the moat indicates that tipping of domestic debris, ie including pottery, into the moat was probably going on at some time in the later medieval and post-medieval periods. If the flowerpot sherd is intrusive, then the period of tipping could be exclusively later medieval, as is shown by the pottery and the peg-tile (which could be medieval).

Catalogue

F1

Finds number 1

12 sherds, Fabric 13 (early medieval sandy ware), 96g.
1 sherd, Fabric 22 (Heddingham-type ware), 3g.
1 piece of daub, 22g.

F2

Finds number 2

1 prehistoric sherd, oxidised surface, dark grey fabric with flint grits, probably Bronze Age, 7g.
1 sherd, Fabric 13 (early medieval sandy ware), 8g.

F3

Finds number 3

2 pieces of a simple, out-turned rim, prehistoric or Roman?, 6g.
1 burnt flint, 7g.

F5

Finds number 4

5 sherds, Fabric 13 (early medieval sandy ware), 24g.
1 sherd, Fabric 22 (Heddingham-type ware), very fine, micaceous and unglazed, 1g.

F6

Finds number 5

3 sherds, Roman or medieval grey ware?, 6g.
1 sherd, Fabric 22 (Heddingham-type ware), dimpled green/brown glaze, 2g.

L2

Finds number 6

5 sherds, Roman or medieval grey ware?, 24g.
1 prehistoric sherd, oxidised surface, dark grey sandy core, probably Bronze Age, 6g.
1 Roman sherd, 1st century AD, 2g.
1 sherd, Fabric 21 (sandy orange ware), reduced, with a green glaze over thin white slip, 4g.
1 sherd, Fabric 22 (Heddingham-type ware), 2g.
1 piece of daub, 4g.
1 peg-tile fragment, 30g.

U/S from moat

Finds number 7

6 sherds, Fabric 13 (early medieval sandy ware), three with shell on surface, 112g.
1 sherd, Fabric 51b (flowerpot), 16g.
1 peg-tile fragment, 7g.

7 Discussion

The pottery recovered from the pit dug out for the basement of the extension demonstrates activity on this site in the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods. The prehistoric and Roman material was mostly residual in later, ie medieval, contexts, but F3 contained only a prehistoric or Roman rim and may, therefore, be of that date. There was also a group of grey ware sherds which could be either Roman or medieval in date, from L2.

The main period of activity on the site, however, was in the medieval period, when the moat was dug and the timber-framed house was constructed.

Medieval features were observed in the edge of the pit dug out for the basement of the extension. Conclusions about these features must, however, be tentative, given that they were not fully excavated. Three, possibly four, medieval features were identified including two pits (F1, F3) and a deep pit or ?well (F5).

The location of the features towards the east of the pit dug out for the basement along with a probable layer of accumulated material (L2) could suggest a western boundary for domestic activity. Moreover, the presence of a homogeneous soil (L4) throughout the more westerly sections of the pit dug out for the basement could suggest the edge of land cultivation within the moated enclosure.

The high proportion, and indeed in F2 and F1 the exclusive presence, of Fabrics 13 and 22 in the pottery assemblage suggests significant activity on the site in the 12th-14th centuries. The pottery evidence is difficult to relate specifically to the house, which has been dated to the 15th century or earlier, but does suggest that occupation of the site, if not necessarily the house itself, began at an earlier date. The earlier medieval pottery also corresponds to a time when there was a peak in moat construction in the mid 13th and mid 14th centuries (Le Patourel 1978, 27). Medieval pottery sherds collected from the moat indicate that tipping of domestic debris, ie including pottery, into the moat was probably going on at some time in the later medieval period.

The moated homestead would probably have been domestic and agricultural in function (Hedges 1978, 65); it is notably large with a sizeable area of land to the south of the house. The width of the moat is also notably large at 5m-6m; moat widths usually range from 3m to 6m wide (Taylor 1978, 8). The survey of the moat has allowed a brief analysis of the moat's form and a comparison of the current layout of the site with the cartographic record.

None of the features observed in the house implied a date earlier than the 15th century for the house, although, in all probability, the moated enclosure is earlier and would have been occupied by a contemporary building, most likely an earlier phase of the house. The clay excavated to create the moat could have been used for wall construction.

Recording within the house was focused on the four mullion windows which had been covered over externally but were still visible internally. They formed the side elements of two pairs of windows each consisting of two small mullions flanking a central larger window (later replaced).

Parts of the timber-framed house are well-preserved and so is part of the moat. A significant length of the moat remains unaltered, and modern agricultural practices have been restricted to outside the moated enclosure. Some evidence of modern disturbance of archaeological deposits was noted in the edge of the pit dug out for the basement of the extension; however, these were isolated, and elsewhere preservation was good. Thus the moated enclosure of Great Greenfields and the Grade II listed building within it remain an important resource for understanding the form, function and history of medieval moated homesteads in Essex.

8 Archive deposition

The paper archive and finds are currently held by CAT at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, but will be permanently deposited with Saffron Walden Museum under accession code SAFWM 2009.39.

9 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Foxley Builders for commissioning and funding the work. Site work was undertaken by A Wightman and C Lister.

The project was monitored by Mr Richard Havis for the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team.

10 References

Note: all CAT reports, except DBAs (desk-based assessments) are available online at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk> in .pdf format.

- | | | |
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11 Glossary

Bronze Age	period from 2,500 to 700 BC
context	on an excavation site, a specific location (especially of finds)
ECC	Essex County Council
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, maintained by ECC
feature	something excavated, ie a wall, a floor, a pit, a ditch, etc
HEM	Historic Environment Management team of ECC
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c AD 1500

modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
post-medieval	after c AD 1500 to c AD 1800
prehistory	the years BC (prehistoric)
residual	an earlier find in a later context, eg a Roman coin in a Victorian pit
Roman	the period from AD 43 to AD 410, approximately
U/S	unstratified

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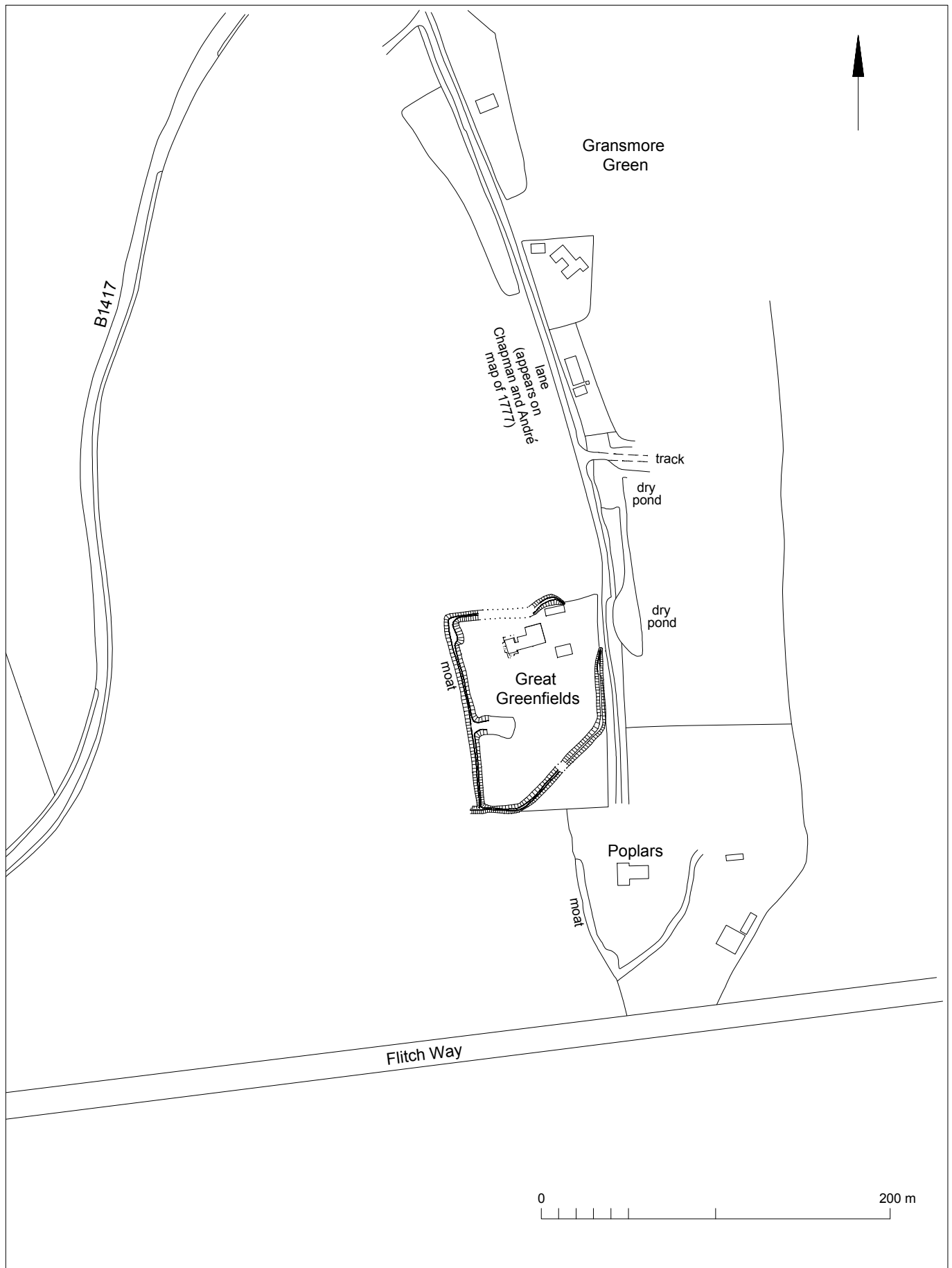
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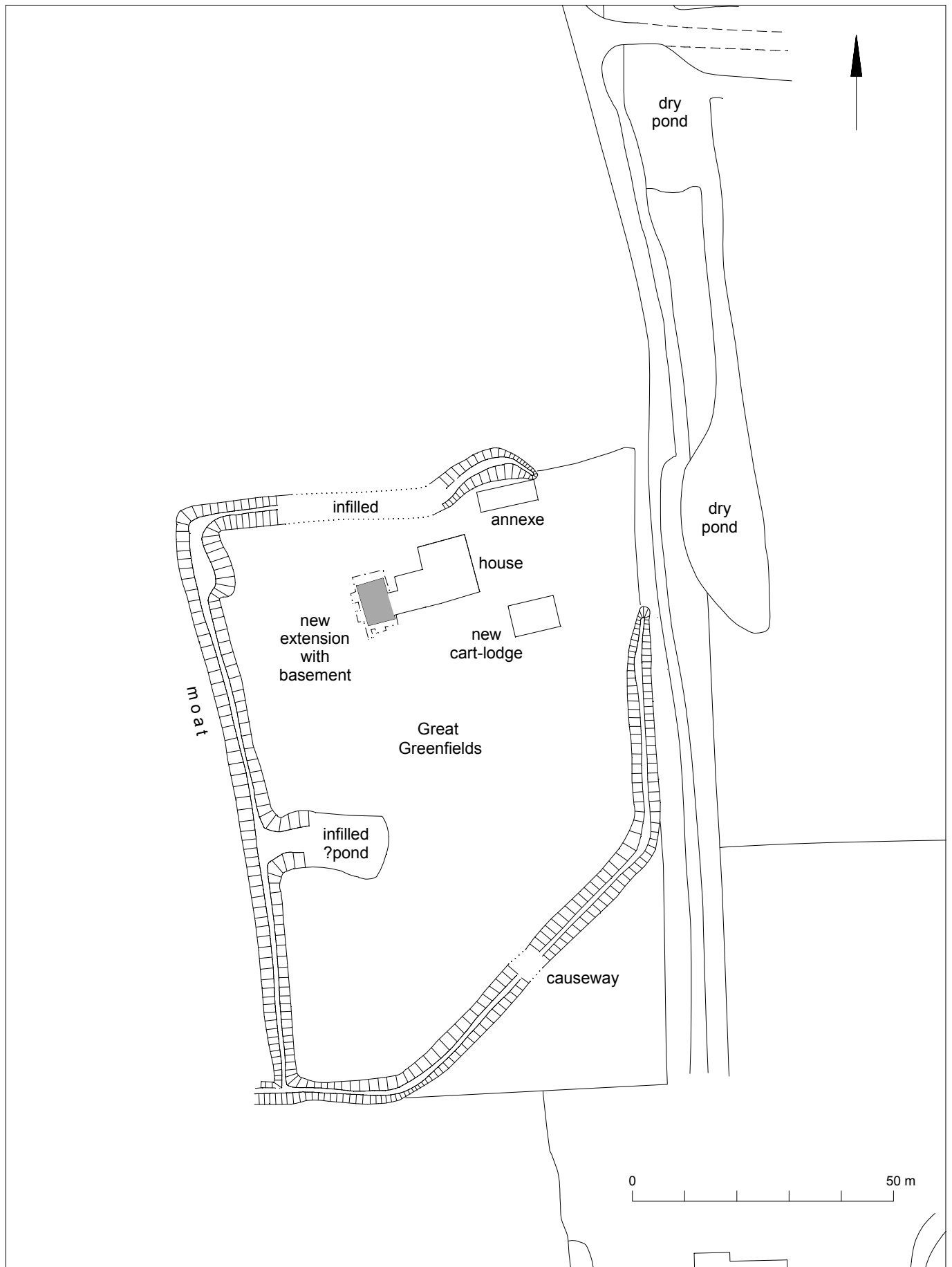
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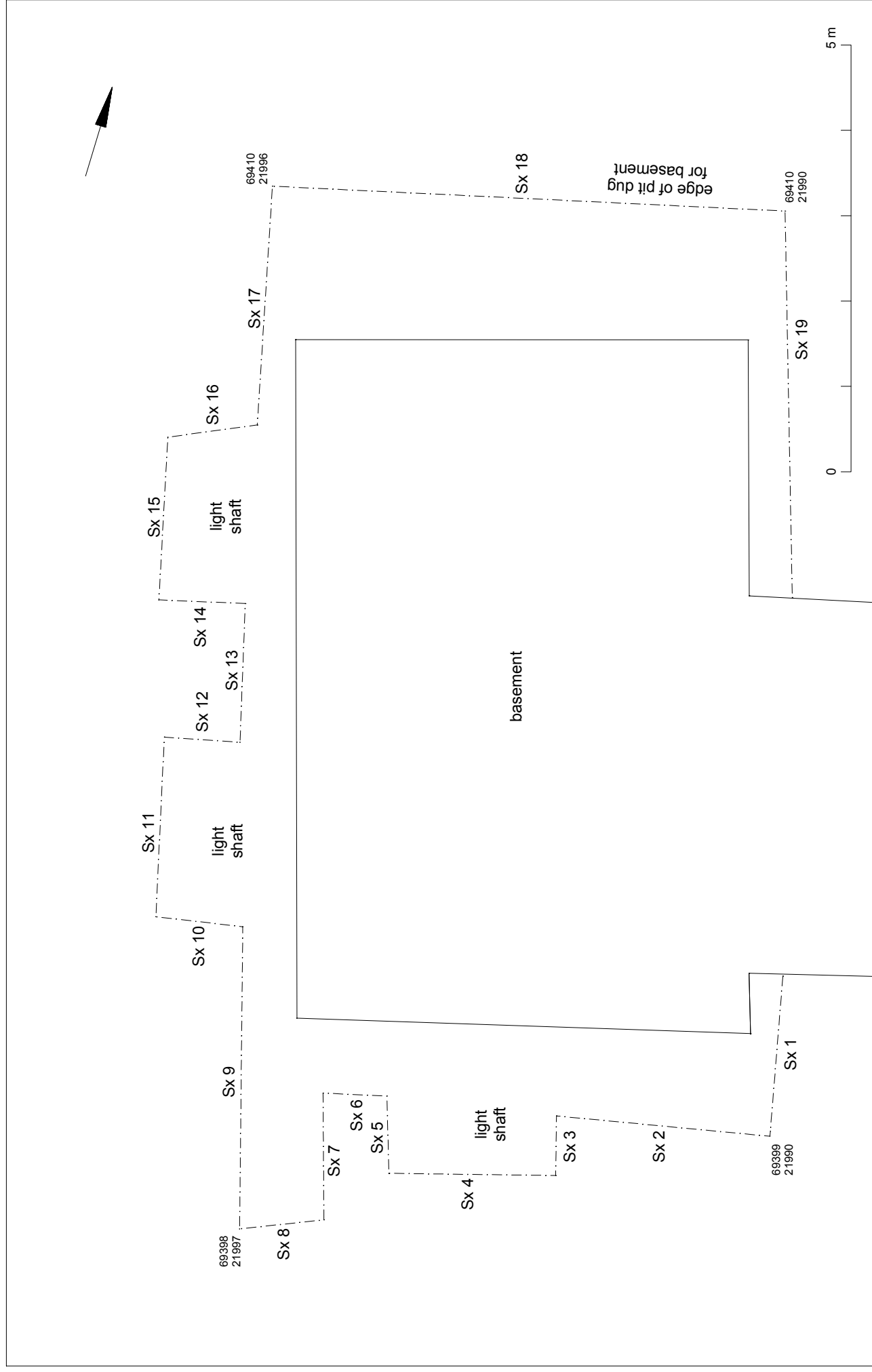
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Fig 1 Site location.



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Fig 2 Surveyed moat, and existing and new buildings.



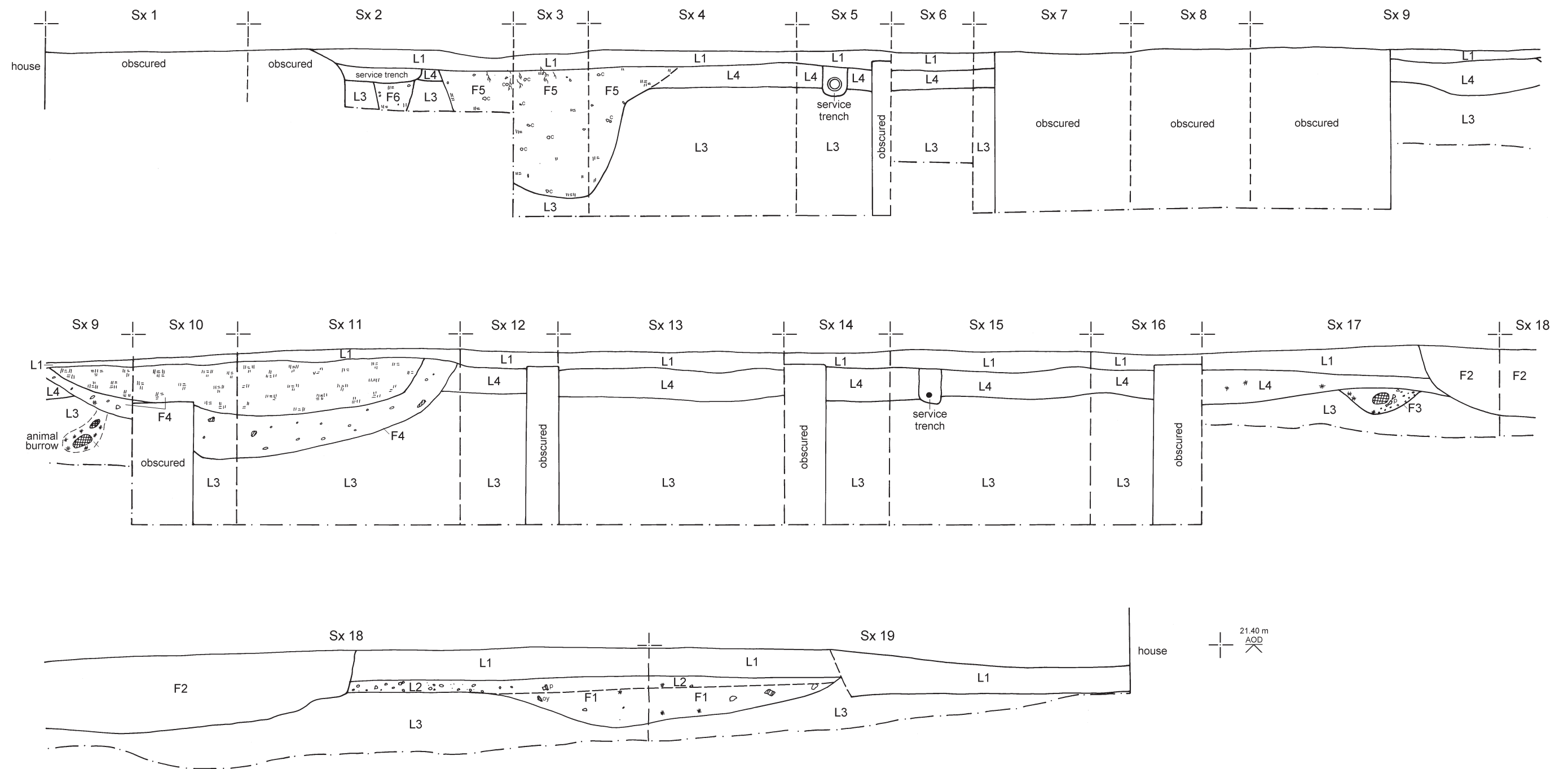


Fig 4 Combined section (Sx 1-Sx 19).

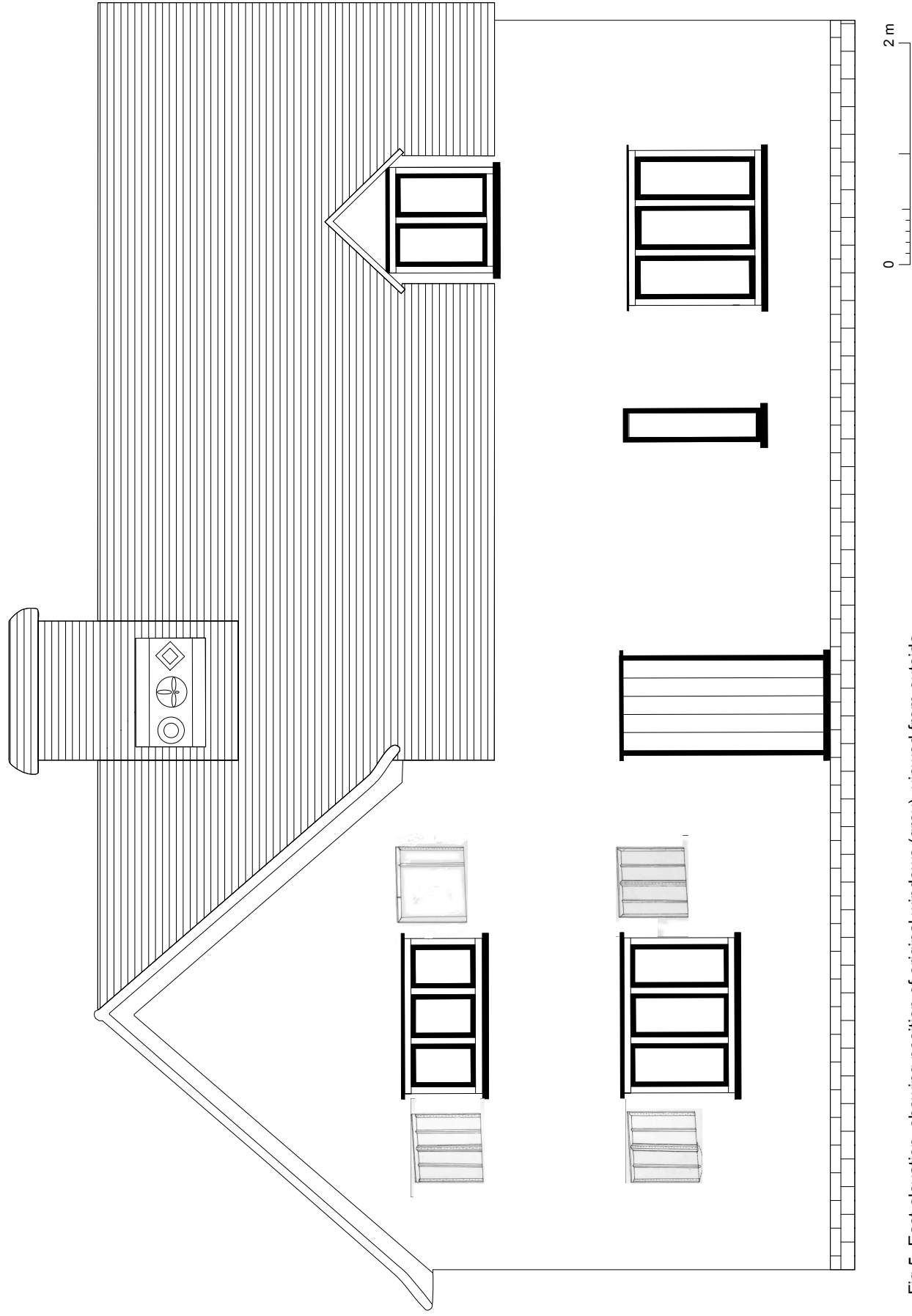


Fig 5 East elevation, showing position of original windows (grey), viewed from outside.

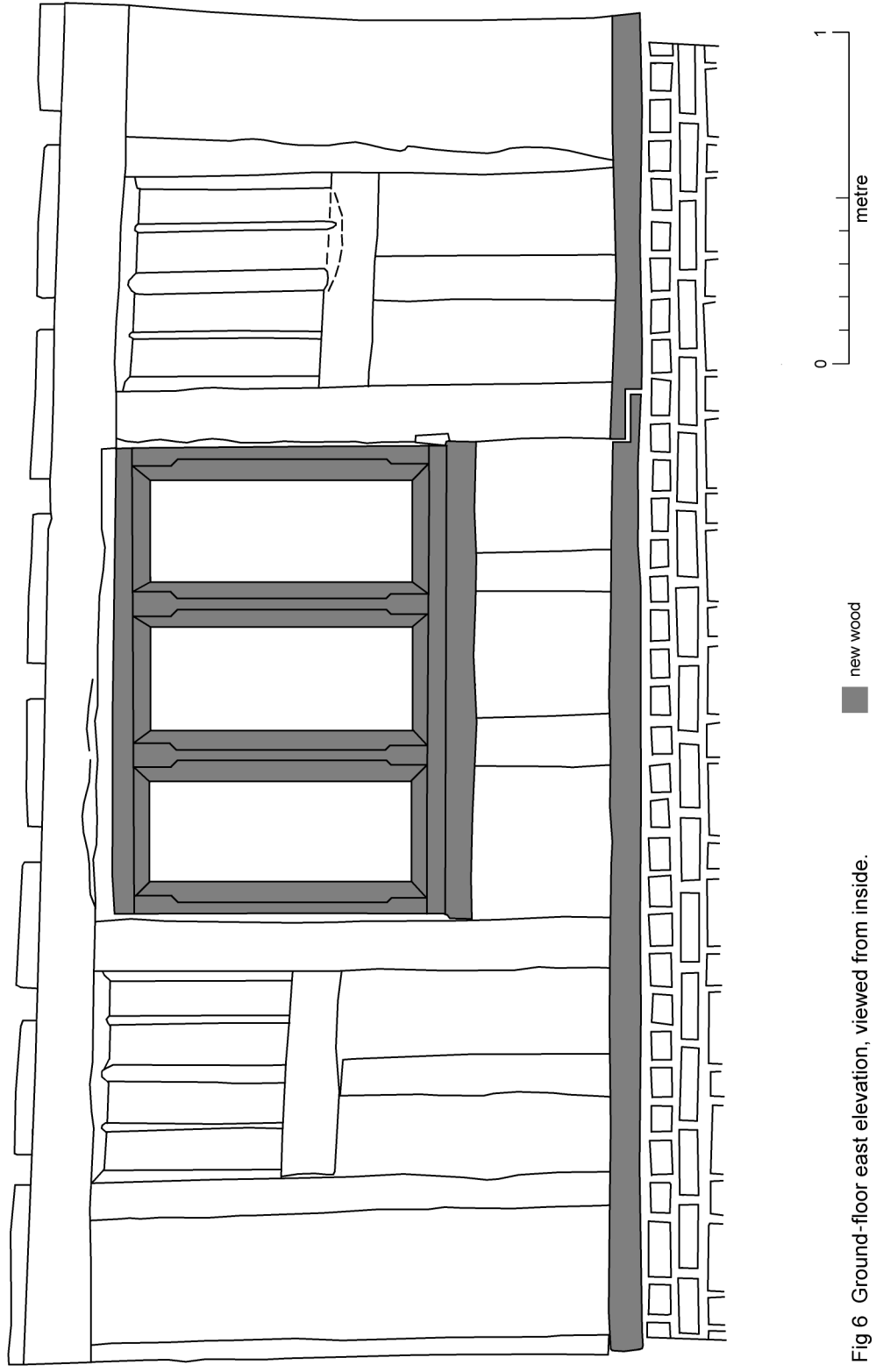


Fig 6 Ground-floor east elevation, viewed from inside.

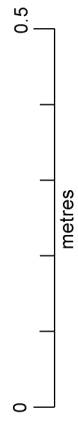
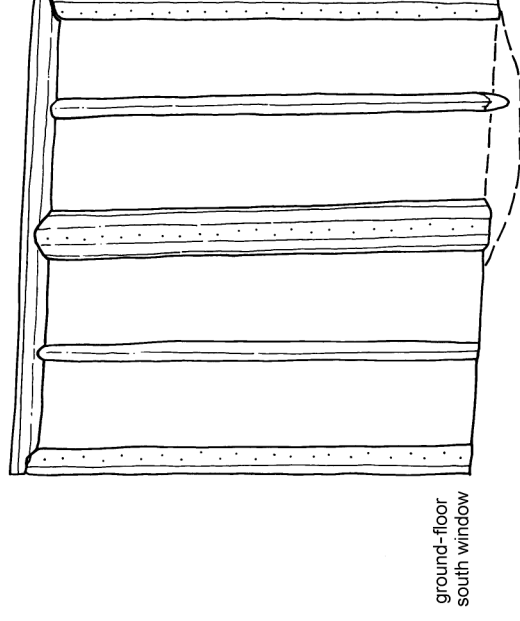
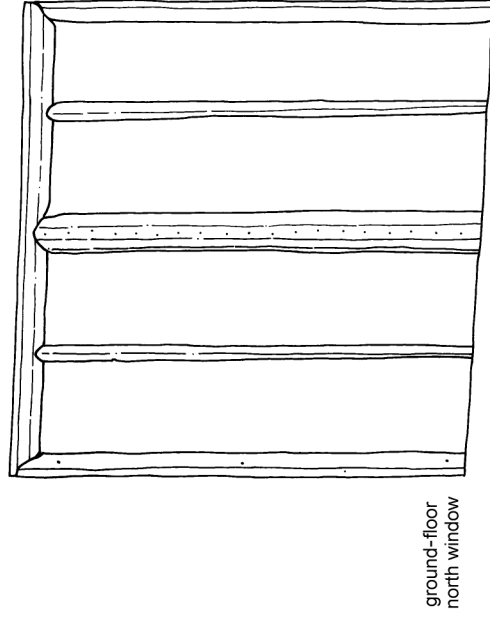
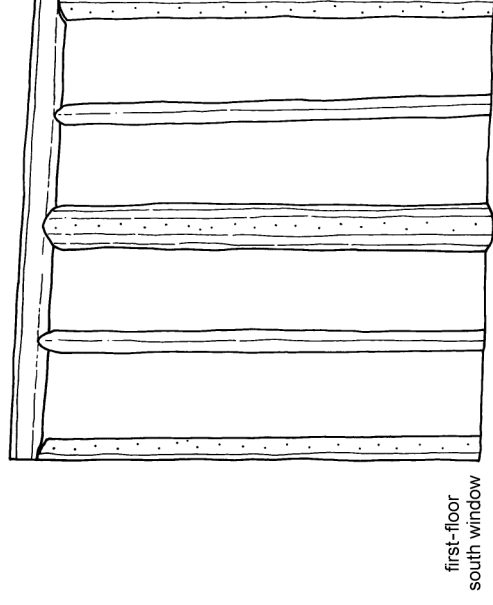
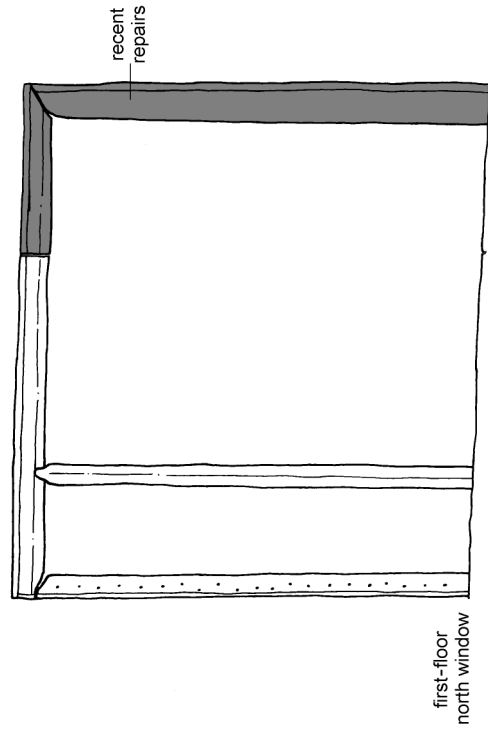


Fig 7 Ground-floor and first-floor original windows, viewed from inside.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Site address: Great Greenfields, Gransmore Green, Felsted, Essex	
Parish: Felsted	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 6955 2198 (c)	Site codes: CAT - 09/9d HEM - FL GG 09 Museum accession - SAFWM 2009.39
Type of work: Watching brief, moat survey, building recording	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: September and October 2009	Size of area investigated: moated enclosure - 0.85 hectares basement pit - 40m ²
Location of curating museum: Saffron Walden Museum	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER nos: 1274, 37104
Final report: CAT Report 531 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: prehistoric, Roman, medieval, post-medieval, modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p><i>Great Greenfields is a medieval moated enclosure containing a Grade II listed building. Recent building works inside the moated enclosure consisted of the renovation of the listed building (house) and the construction of a western extension (with a basement) to the building. Building works connected with the construction of a cart-lodge and the refurbishment of an existing annexe had no archaeological implications and were not included in this project.</i></p> <p><i>During the renovation of the house and the construction of the extension, a three-part archaeological project was undertaken. This work involved a watching brief on the excavation of the pit for the basement for the extension to the house; a detailed survey of the moated enclosure; and a photographic and drawn record of four original windows which were exposed in the listed building during the renovation work.</i></p> <p><i>Pottery from the watching brief indicates that occupation of the site began between the 12th and 14th centuries, sometime before the construction of the house in the 15th century. Other pottery recovered indicates activity here in the prehistoric and Roman periods. However, the main period of activity was medieval. The watching brief identified three medieval features in the pit dug for the basement, including a pit, a ditch, and a deep pit or ?well. Medieval</i></p>	

pottery sherds collected from the moat indicate tipping of domestic debris into the moat in the later medieval period.

The survey of the moat has allowed a brief analysis of its form, and a comparison of the current layout of the moated enclosure and its buildings with the cartographic record.

Previous summaries/reports: None

Keywords: prehistoric, Roman, pottery, medieval, cut features, moated enclosure, 15th-century, house

Significance: *

Author of summary:
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Date of summary:
December 2009