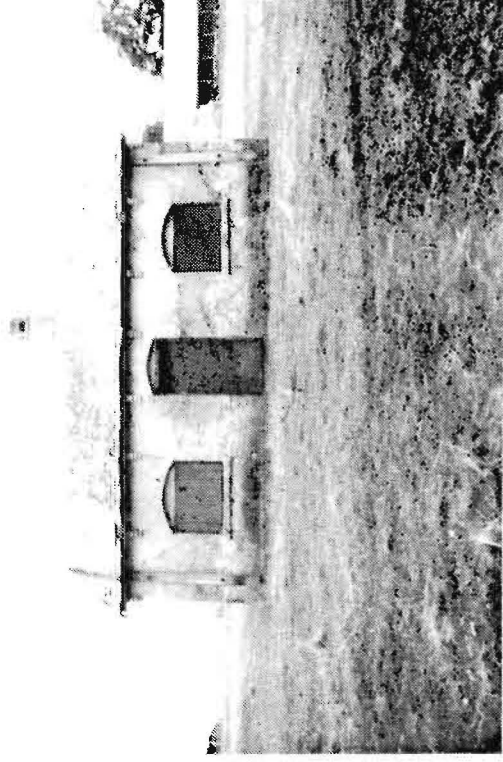
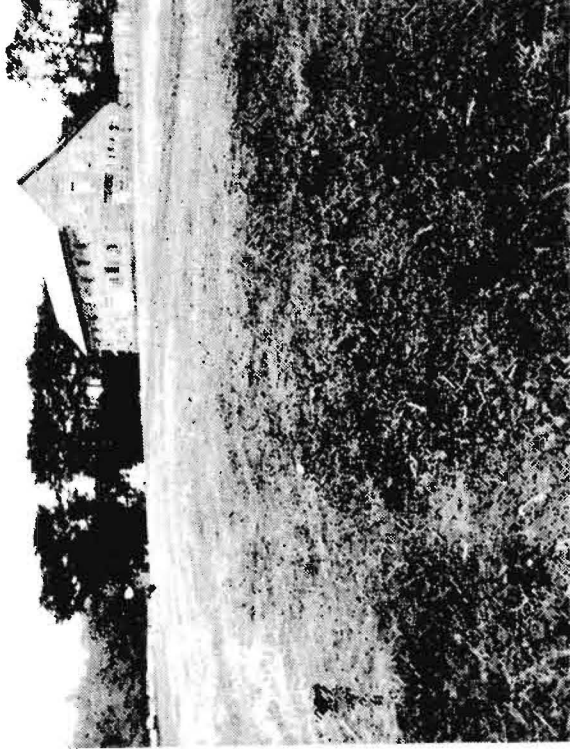


WOOL MEMERS



Blacksmith shop Woolshed Ciderhouse Pumphouse

A Study

W O O L M E R S

Blacksmith shop; Woolshed; Ciderhouse; Pumpinghouse;

A Study

Miranda Morris-Nunn

Drawings:

Elizabeth Watson-Brown

Gonzalo Ascui

Photography:

Mark Bartkevicius

Queen Victoria Museum

Launceston

1986

funded by the Australian Heritage Commission

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose	1
Introduction.....	2
Materials.....	3
Blacksmith shop.....	4
Woolshed.....	11
Ciderhouse.....	20
Pumphouse.....	23

PURPOSE

The initial aim of this project was a detailed study of the blacksmith's shop, both because of its antiquity and its completeness. As the study progressed it became clear that although the age of workshop was not in doubt, it was not as intact as had first been the case (most of the tools had been removed). More importantly, it became evident that to look at the blacksmith's shop without consideration of context was of limited value. The interrelatedness of Woolmers, aesthetically, functionally and socially is one of its strongest points. Ideally, a detailed study of the entire complex of buildings, as well as site recordings of those no longer extant, was called for and is in deed recommended as a future project. However, in the interim this study has been extended to include the pumphouse as a symbol of the picturesque Thomas Archer was clearly aiming to achieve, and the woolshed which was central to the pastoral activity at Woolmers. An unexpected bonus in the latter building was the ciderhouse which had been built into it. The blacksmith's shop stands as evidence of the degree to which this early community had to be self-sufficient. Its full importance became most apparent during the recording of the woolshed. In this building alone the quantity of nails used in the green wood construction and the number of brackets, hinges and latches pointed to an enormous output.



WOOLMERS IN THE MID NINETEENTH CENTURY

Pencil drawing by Anna Maria Nixon showing the pumphouse. The large building on the top of the hill is the granary. The ferryman's cottage in the foreground is now gone as are the other buildings in the drawing.

Sketch held at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery.

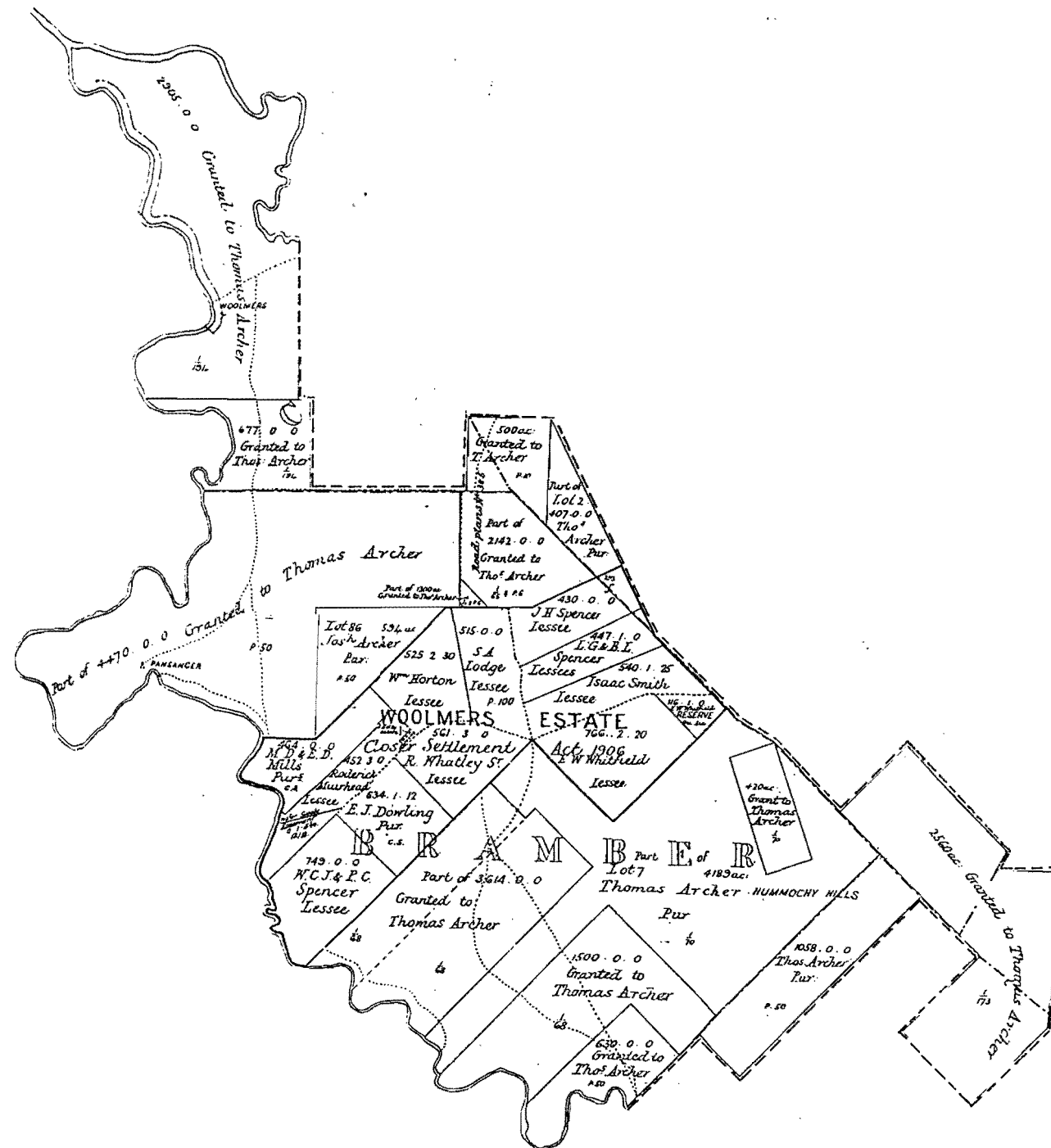
INTRODUCTION

Woolmers, the residence of the late Mr T. Archer, was, according to Butler Stoney writing in 1856, well worthy of a visit 'on account of its beautiful and valuable collection of paintings and the very fine and extensive gardens'.¹ Certainly, both the paintings and the gardens reflected his concern with the picturesque and the selection, siting and design of his estate shows him to have been a child of the English landscape movement engendered by William Kent in the 1730s. While the ideal of the *ferme ornée* may never have been far from his mind, practical concerns were of over-riding importance. Thomas Archer's probable agricultural training in England and his work experience in the Commissariat Department² in Van Diemens Land ensured that his feet were firmly on the ground when he started out on the enormous undertaking that was to become Woolmers.

Everything had to be made from scratch; timber felled and pitsawn, shingles split, clay dug and bricks made, cobbles selected, nails, hinges, latches and bolts forged carts and farm implements crafted, land cleared and buildings erected. Not only did the support services, which would have been available to Thomas Archer in his home country of Hertfordshire, not yet exist in Van Diemens Land, but he found himself providing these services to others. Hence in 1822 Ensign White, who was supervising a roadgang in the district, was instructed by his superior to have his tools repaired at Woolmers' forge.³ Four years later the surveyor, John Helder Wedge noted in his diary that he had 'called on Mr Thomas Archer at Woolmers to borrow a spirit level (a very bad one)'.⁴

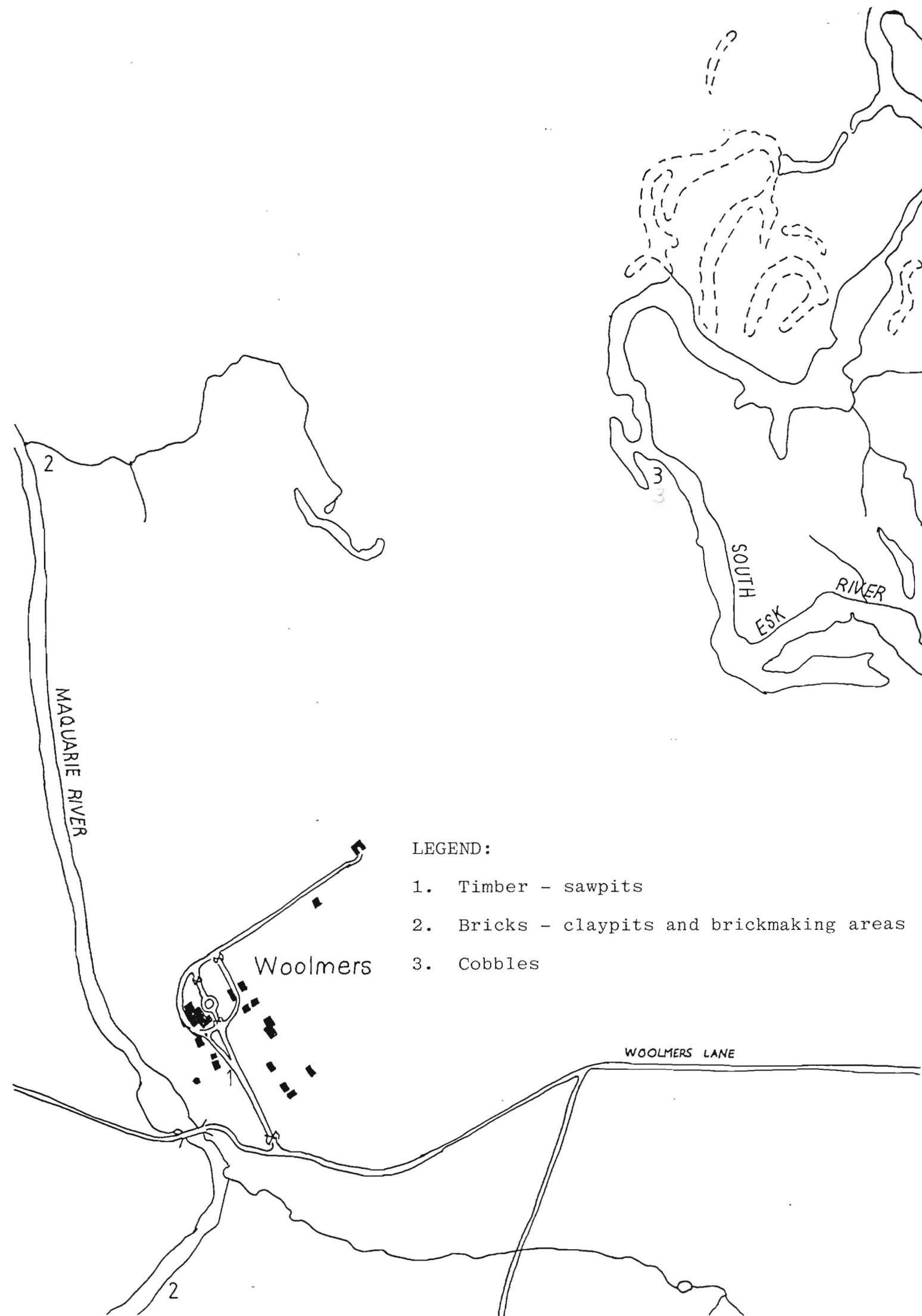
Thomas Archer received his initial grant during his period with the Commissariat, where he had held a position from his arrival at Port Dalrymple in 1813 until his resignation in 1821. This was some 2400 acres granted by Governor Macquarie. Under Lieutenant Governor Sorell he received a further five hundred acres, but by 1825 he was in search for more because he was 'now very much distressed for Land to depasture my stock upon, and very much cramped for room to divide my flocks of sheep in such a manner as to ensure the best success from improvements in crossing'.⁵ A combination of grants and purchases had swelled the estate to about 10 000 acres by the turn of the century.⁶

Woolmers, in its heyday, consisted of a 'small township of buildings'.⁷ There were enough people (and sheep) on the estate in 1817-1818 during the height of the bushrangers' reign of terror, when many people fled to the towns and flocks were decimated, for a district constable to be stationed at the farm.⁸ By 1825 he was employing 'about Forty Convicts besides a number of Free People'.⁹ The Land Commissioners described everything as being 'on a most extensive scale. Carpenters, Sawyers, Bricklayers, Blacksmiths and a long list of Labourers' not to mention the 'hundred working Oxen'.¹⁰ He also owned a 'numerous herd of Cattle of the English Breed, to prevent deterioration in which I have imported from Sydney some of Mr Marsden's best Suffolk Bulls; and I have as well a valuable Stud of Horses and brood Mares, most of which have been imported at considerable expense from New South Wales'.¹¹ By 1836 the number of his servants had grown to eighty,¹² and according to his obituary, 'when transport was abolished in 1839 he was among the first to import free immigrants for his extensive establishment and the buildings he reared for their reception still stand as evidence of his desire to render them more comfortable than they could have been in England'.¹³



EXTENT OF WOOLMERS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

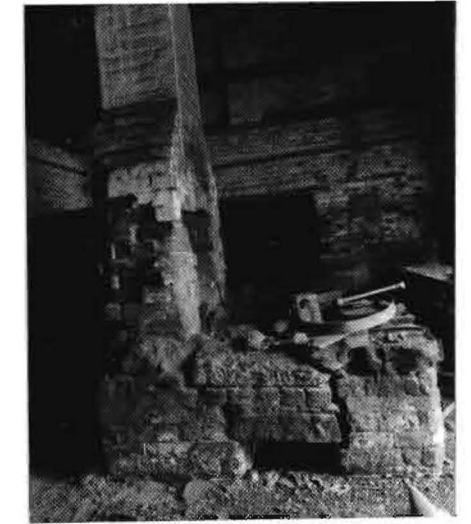
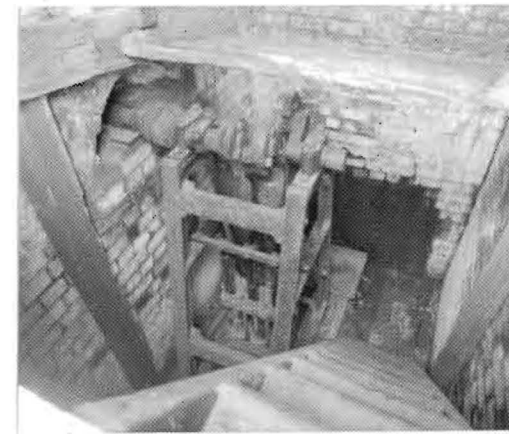
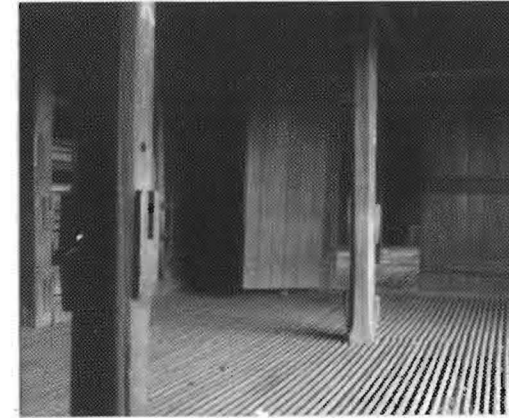
W. Scott. Survey Office, Hobart. 1902 photolithographed 1947 with alterations showing land withdrawn under the Closer Settlement Act.



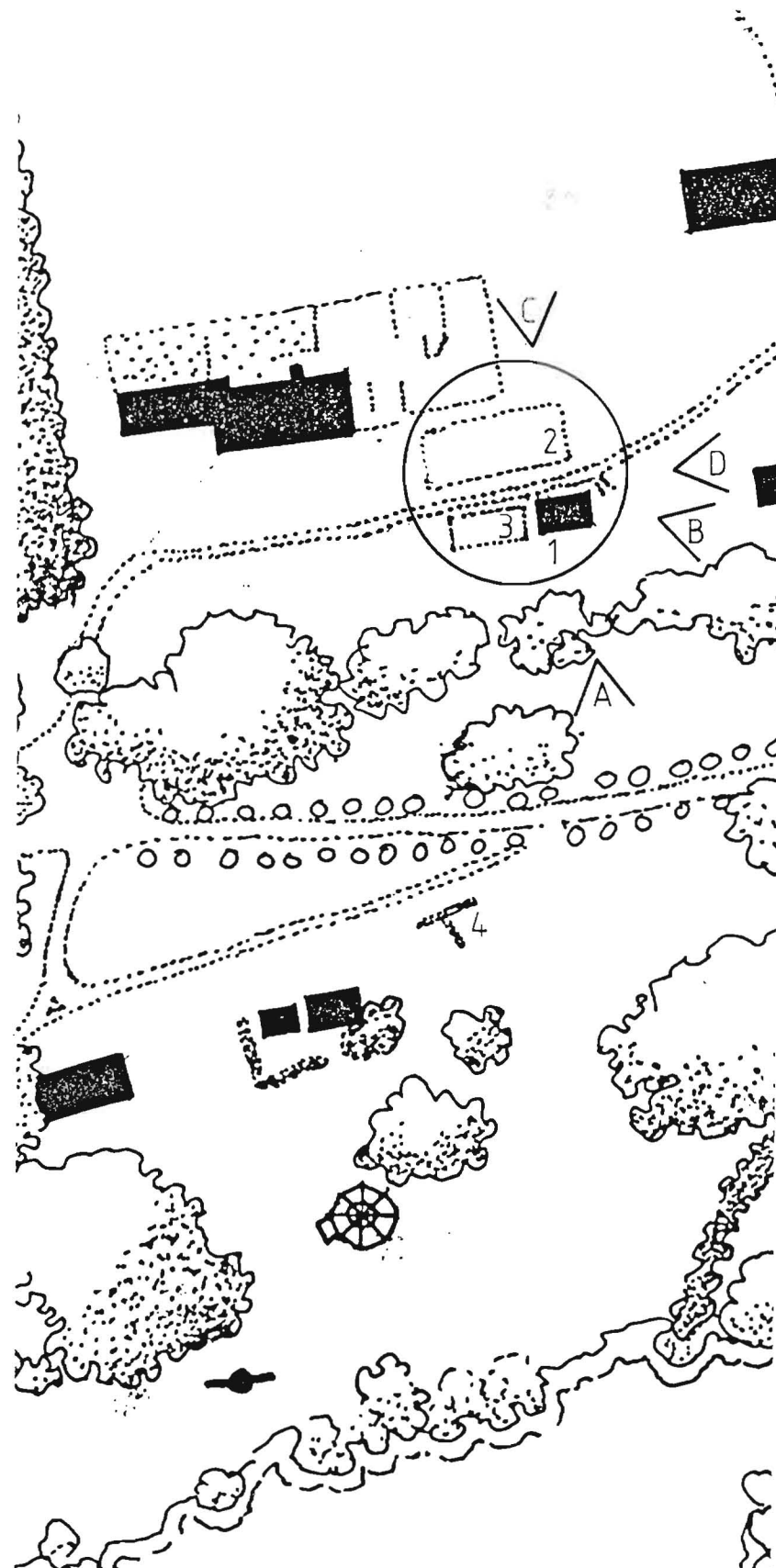
LEGEND:

1. Timber - sawpits
2. Bricks - claypits and brickmaking areas
3. Cobbles

Materials



BLACKSMITH SHOP



LEGEND:

- 1 Blacksmith shop
- 2 Possible site of carpentry shop
- 3 Possible site of wheelwright/cooperage
- 4 Sawpit



A



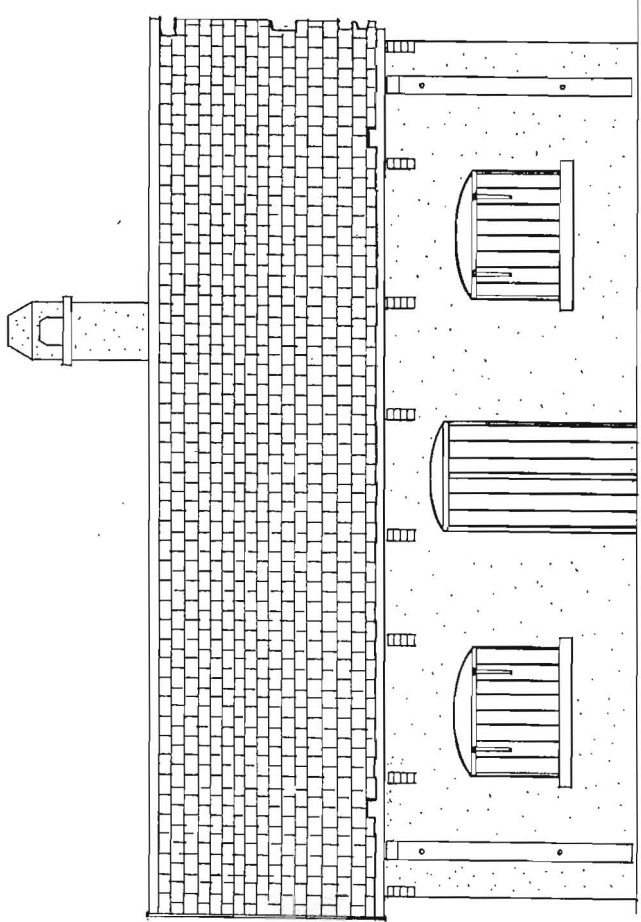
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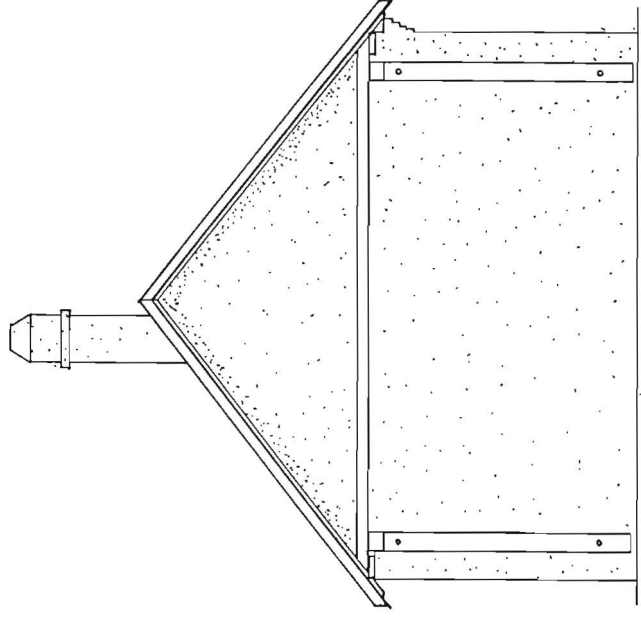
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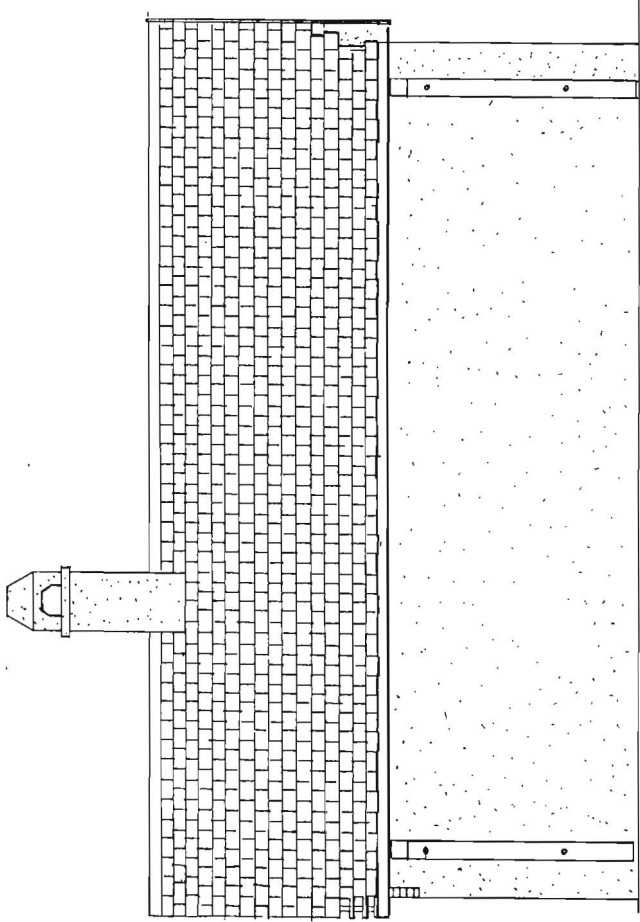
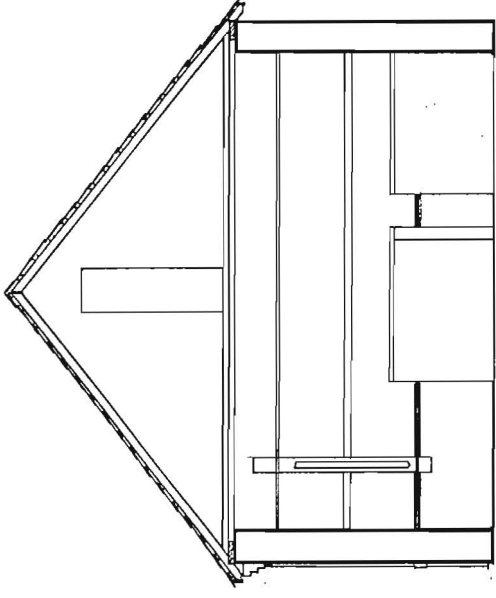
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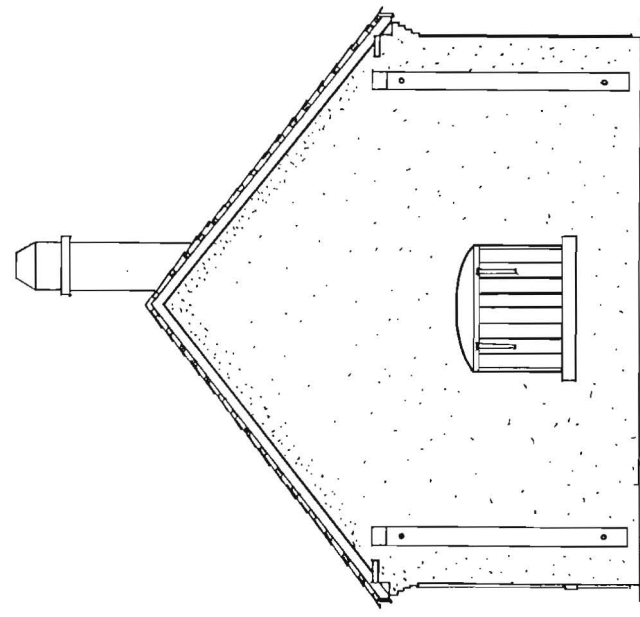
WEST



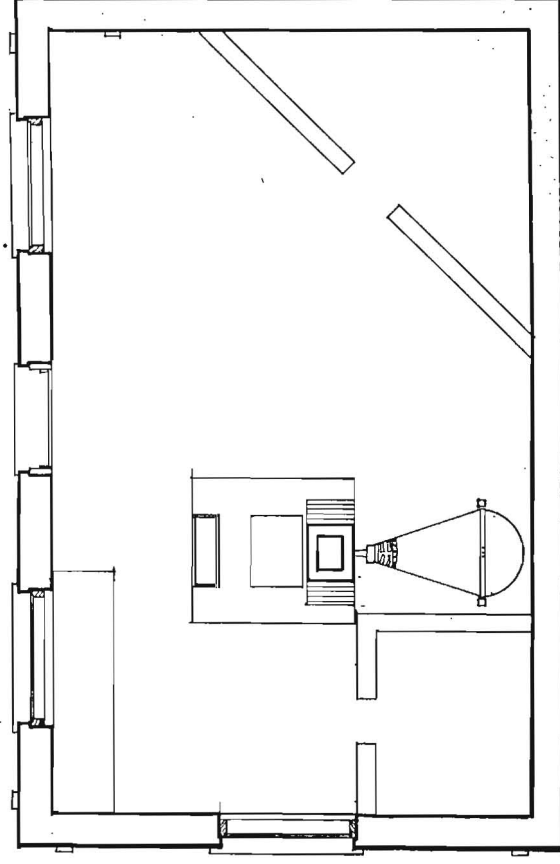
NORTH



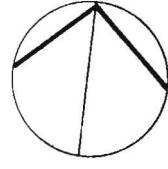
EAST



WEST



SOUTH



'The Lieutenant Governor has written to Mr Archer at whose residence a Forge is about to be erected, to allow his Smith to repair such of your Tools as require it; and you will therefore apply to him on the Subject as soon as your gang is hutted'.

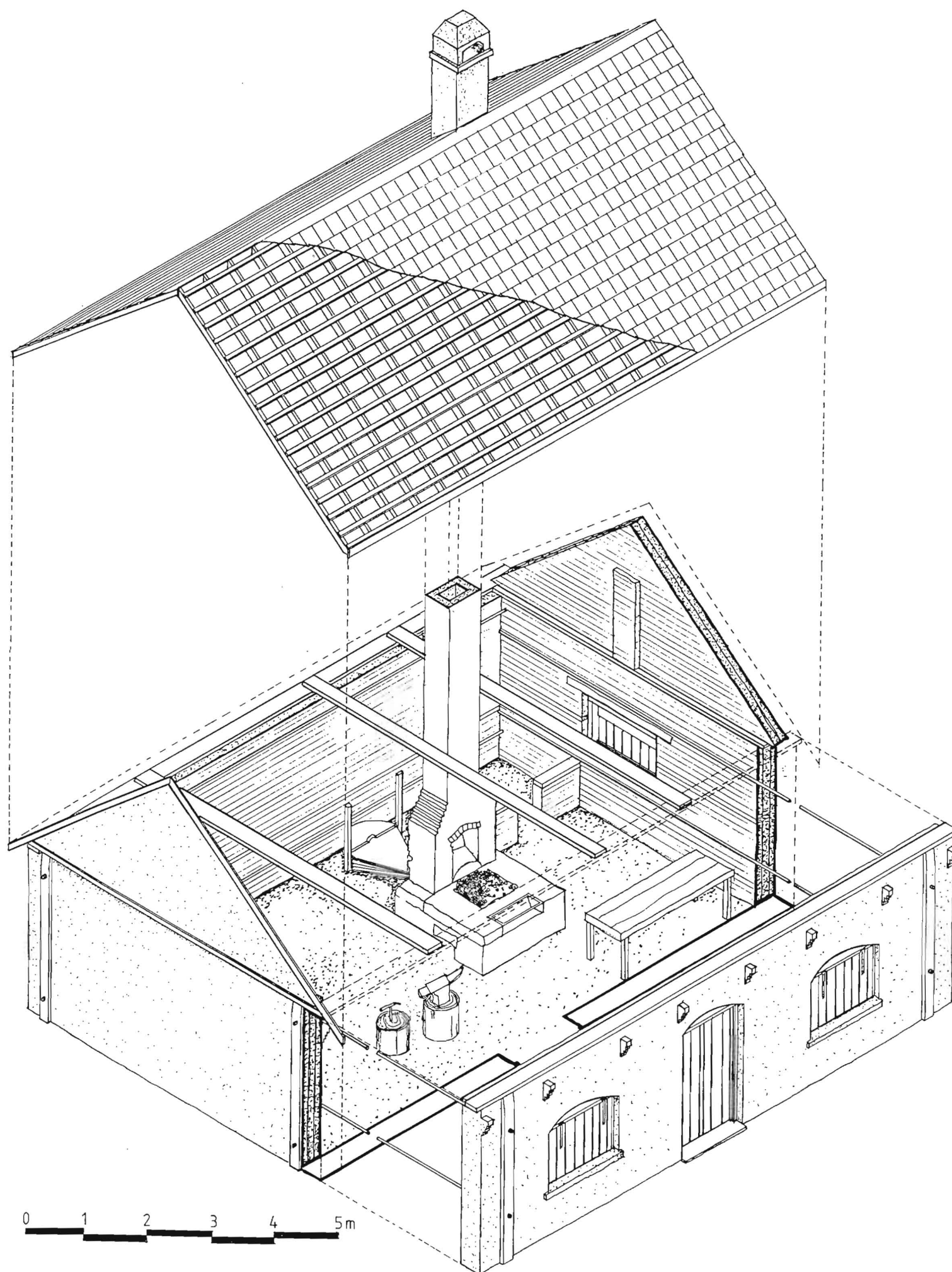
Lieutenant H. E. Robinson to Ensign White
14th January 1822

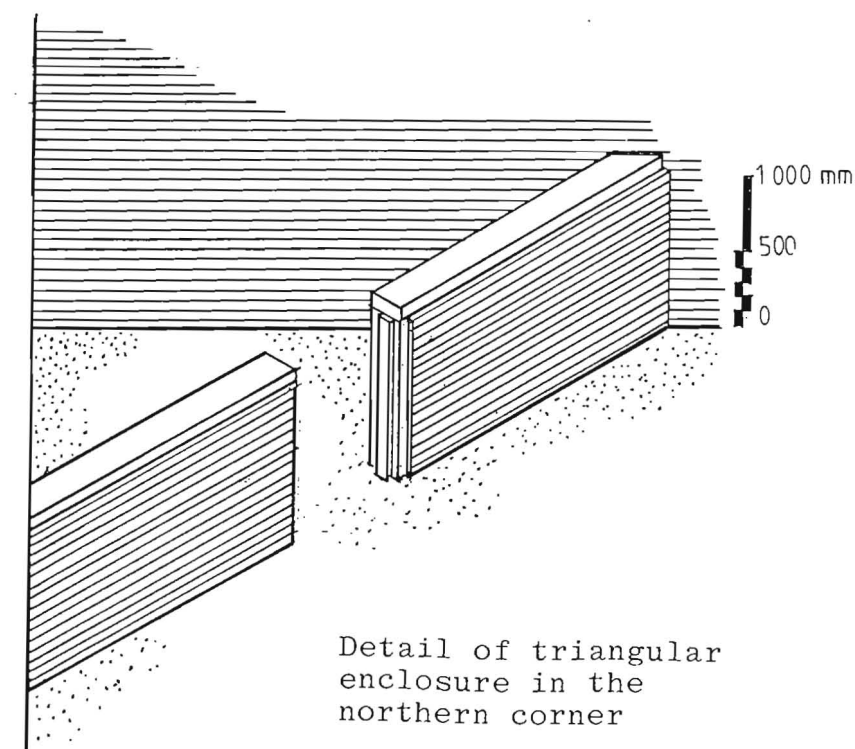
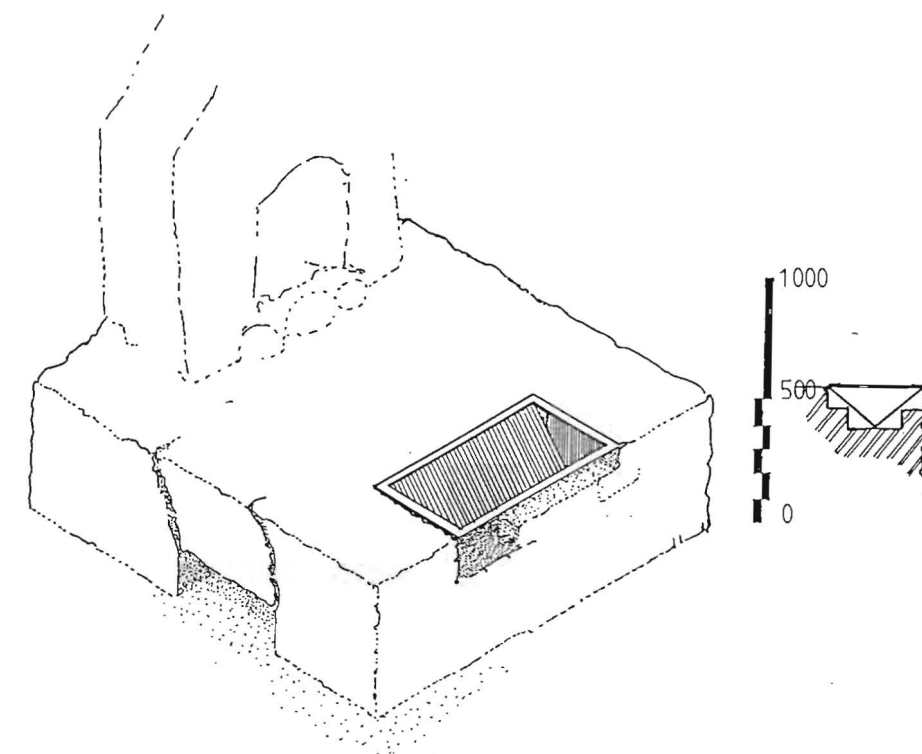
Evidence of the blacksmith's labour is to be found in every building on the Woolmers estate. Apart from all the hinges, latches, nails and brackets used for the actual construction of the estate buildings the blacksmith's daily work would include horseshoeing, farm implement repairs (and possibly fabrication) and making wheel strakes. How often outside work was expected of him is difficult to determine but the scarcity of skilled craftsmen suggests that the reparation of tools for the roadgangs would not have been an isolated case.

The blacksmith's shop is the last remaining of what appears to have been a group of three buildings. Its survival can be attributed to the materials of which it was constructed to ensure that it was fire-proof. Bricks for the walls were made on the estate but the slate for the roof must have been imported at some cost. The only other building to be given a slate roof on the estate at this time was another high fire risk structure, the bakehouse. Woolmers itself, like all the buildings, had to be content with shingles. In spite of the urgency which must have attended the construction of the blacksmithy and the crudely functional designs of most English workshops, this one is not devoid of architectural conceit. The chimney, for instance is quite elaborate and can be seen repeated on several other buildings on the estate. Functional elements such as the stepped brick eaves brackets and the semi-blinded arched windows are delightfully resolved. Clearly visible from the main approach to Woolmers house it was important for the blacksmith's shop to present a pleasing image to visitors. John Loudon, the spokesman on landscape design for Thomas Archer's generation of gentlemen farmers advised that the best way of varying a dull country scene was to erect picturesque farm buildings.¹⁴

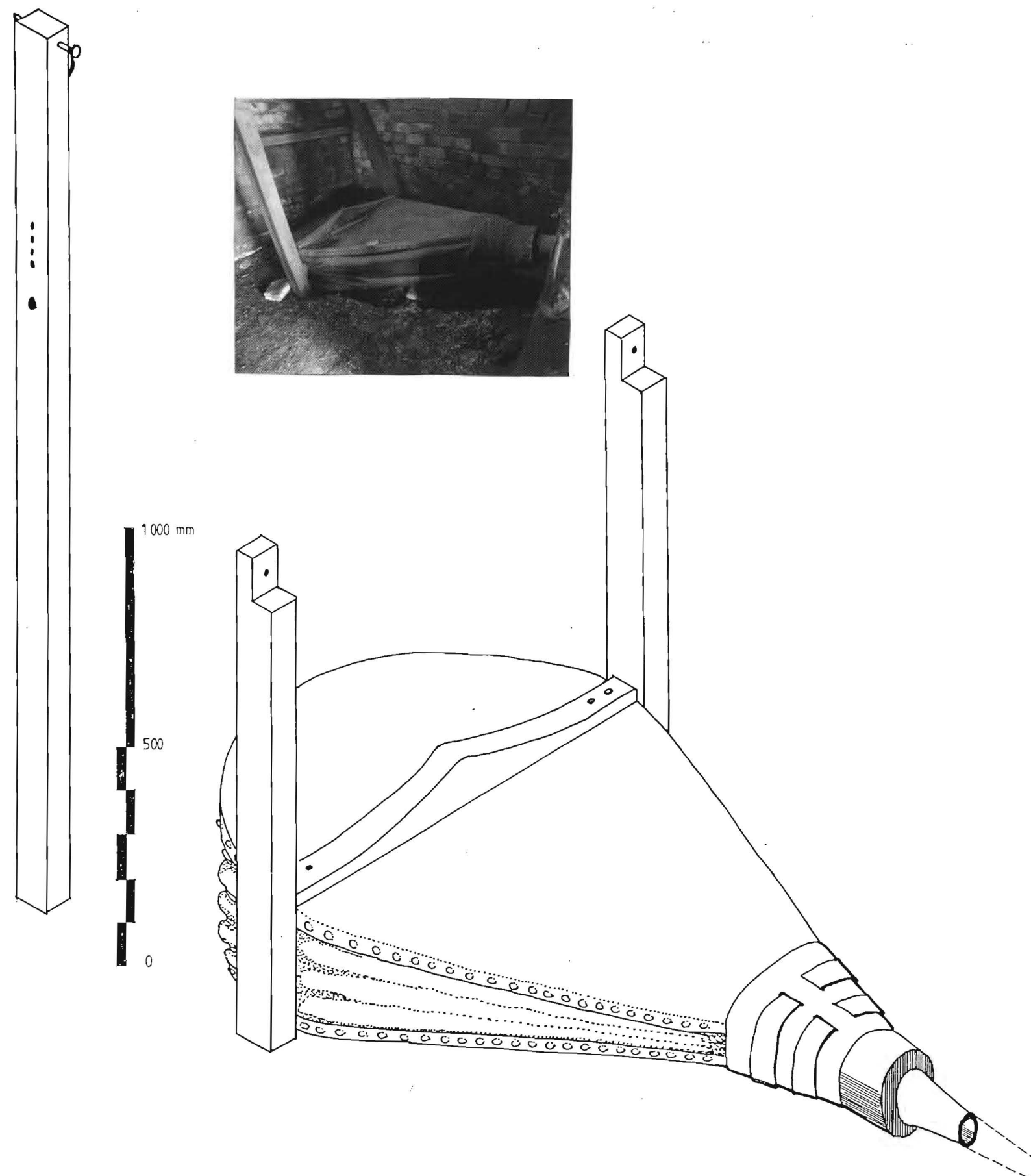
The interior, away from public scrutiny, is necessarily utilitarian with its earth floor and brick forge slightly off centre. Large bellows were operated to the rear of the forge, probably by means of a lever. Two anvils remain affixed to now rotting blocks of tree trunk. Work benches were fixed against the walls either side of the doorway, each lit by a window opening. Fuel was stored to the right and rear of the forge and possibly in the triangular enclosure to the left. Unfortunately, the tools have been removed.

While the blacksmith's shop was essential at the beginning of the settlement, several social changes would have made it less so as the colony grew. Work would have eased considerably once all the structures were up; the growth of the nearby township of Latour, now Longford, saw the emergence of independent blacksmiths; mass-production of many articles traditionally crafted at the forge, such as nails and hinges, made it less viable to make them on the farm; as these became more easily available so also did spare parts for farm machinery. Nevertheless a mobile forge found in the workshop indicates that some smithing work, at least, was being undertaken after the 1880s.





The other buildings with which the blacksmith's shop formed a trio are no longer extant. A rise in the ground to the left of the blacksmiths's shop indicates a structure of slightly larger dimensions. The dip in the ground to the rear of these sites suggests that the third building was much larger and may have had flooring. The present owner believes this to have been a carpenter's workshop. This would make it likely that the smaller building was a wheelwright's and cooperage, both skills needed on the estate and which would require easy access to both carpenters and blacksmiths. A closer archaeological study could well reveal more.



Products:

ON BLACKSMITH SHOP:

Latch:

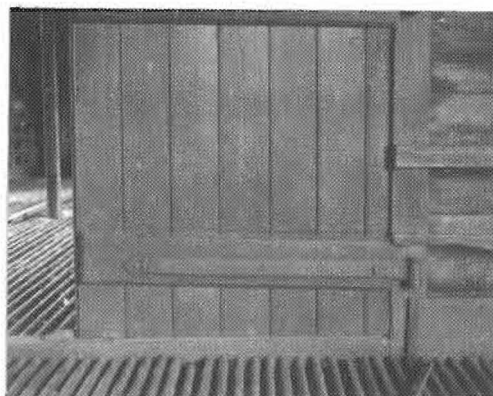


Hinge:

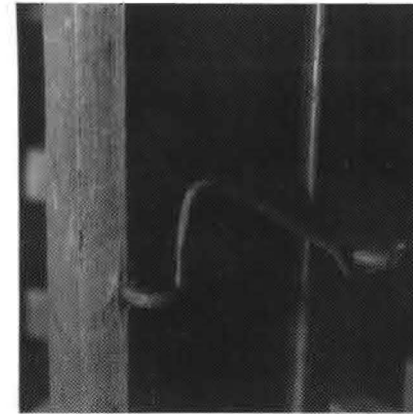


ON WOOLSHED:

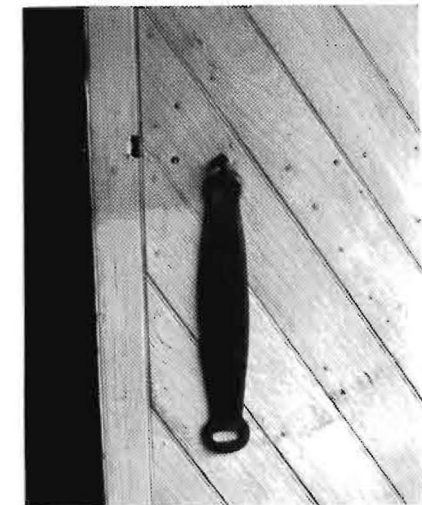
Hinges:



Hooks:



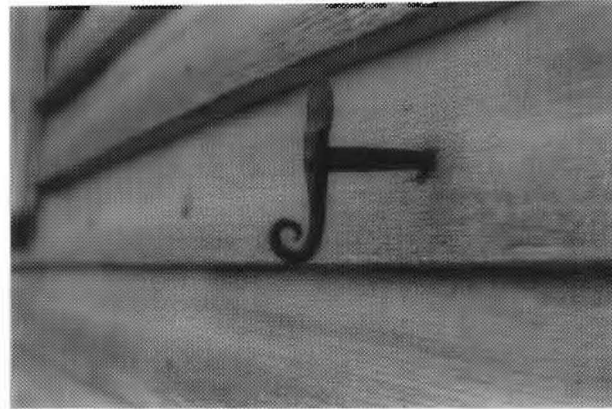
Latches:



Bar holders:



Shutter fastener:



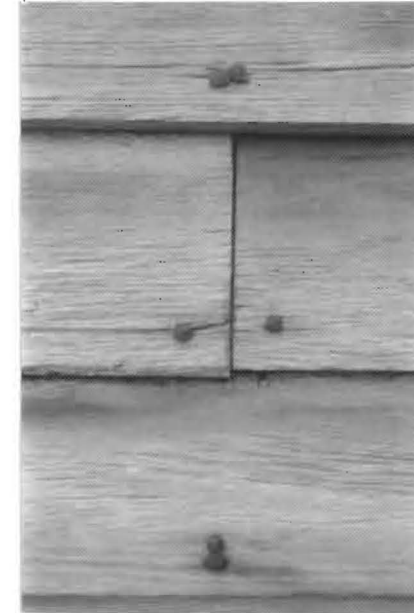
Gutter bracket:



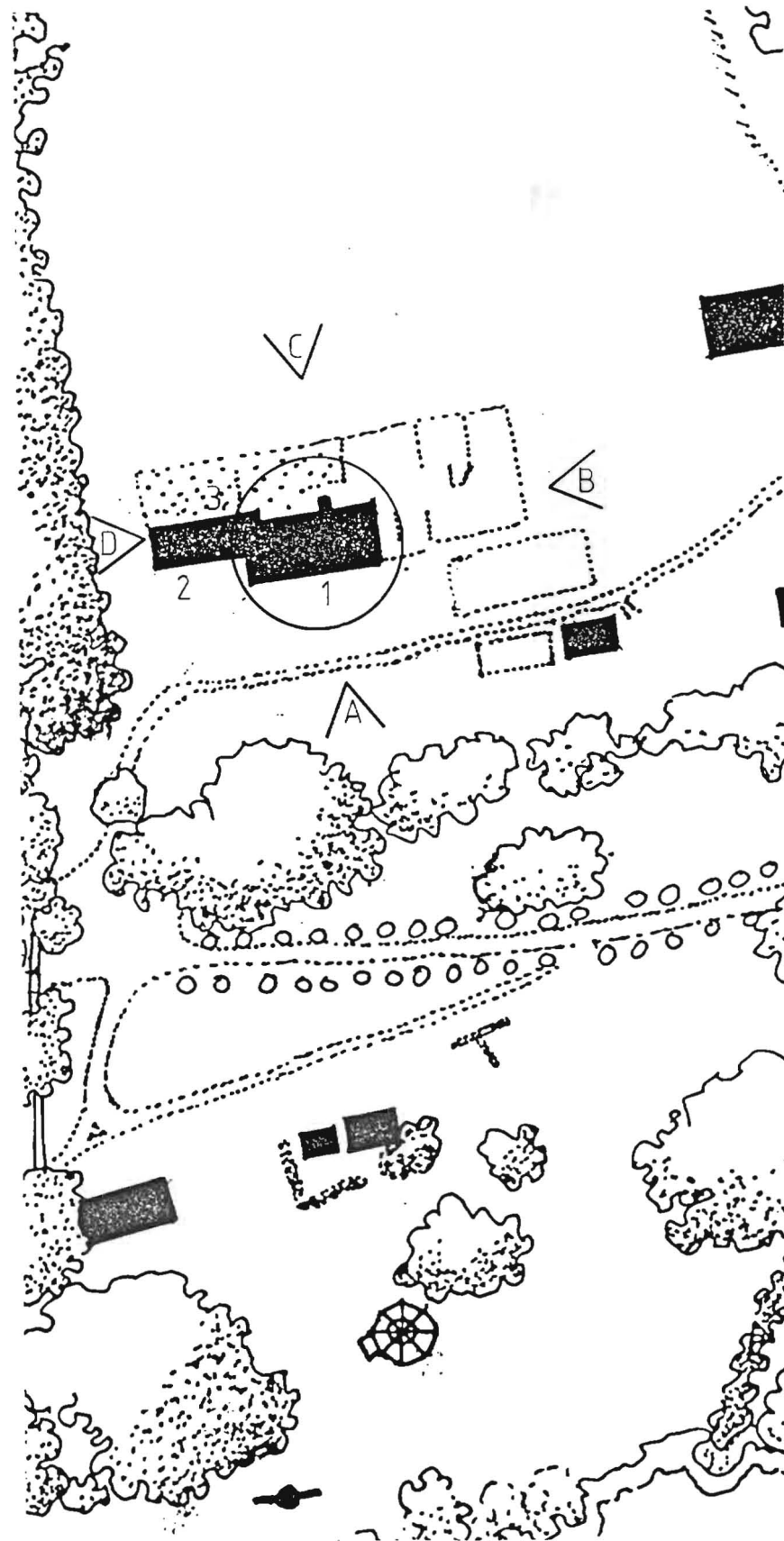
for V-shaped
timber guttering



Nails:



WOOLSHED



LEGEND:

- 1 Woolshed
- 2 Ciderhouse
- 3 Cobbled holding yard



A



B

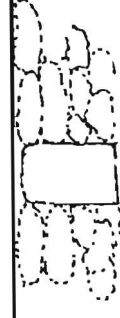
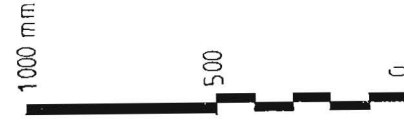
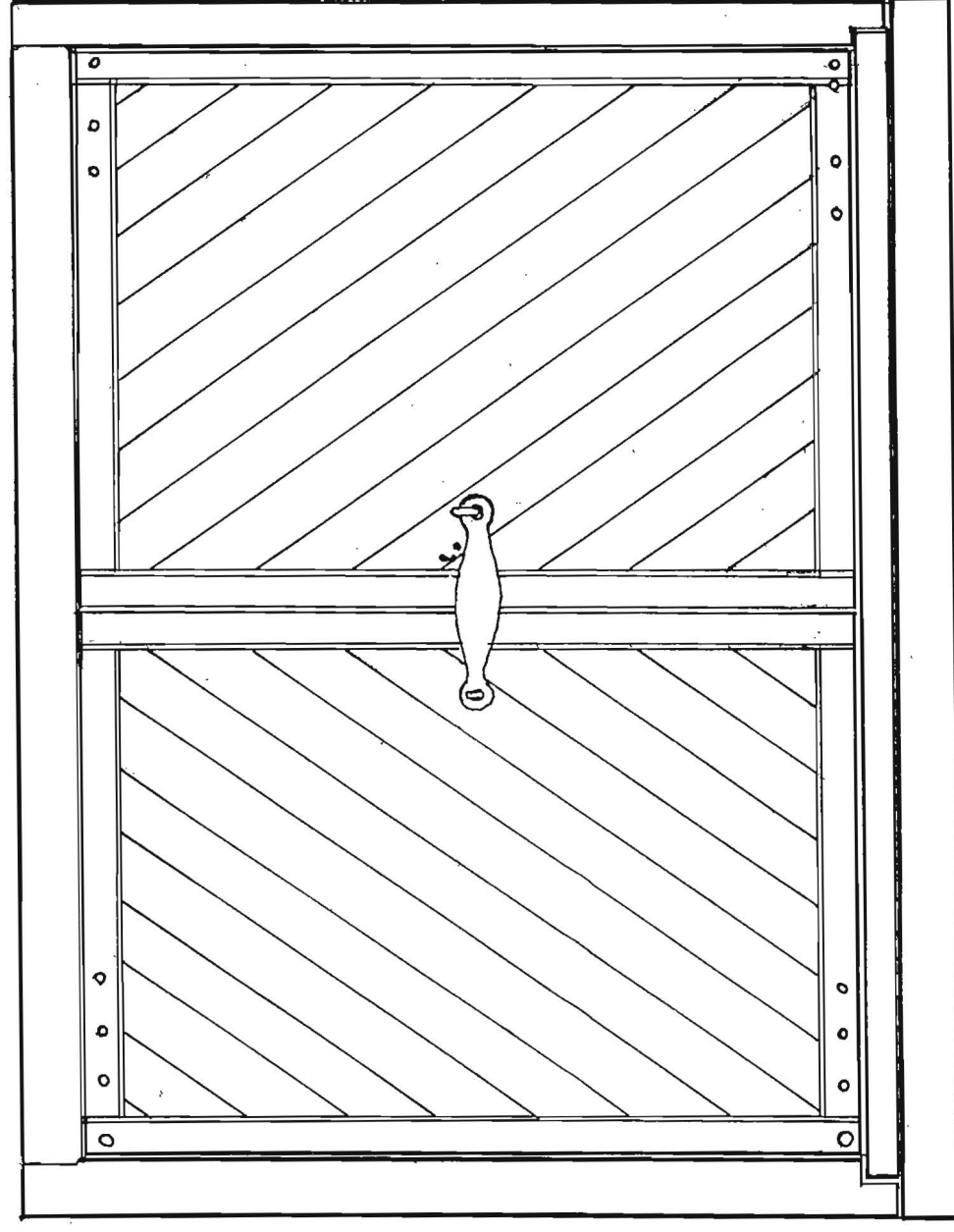
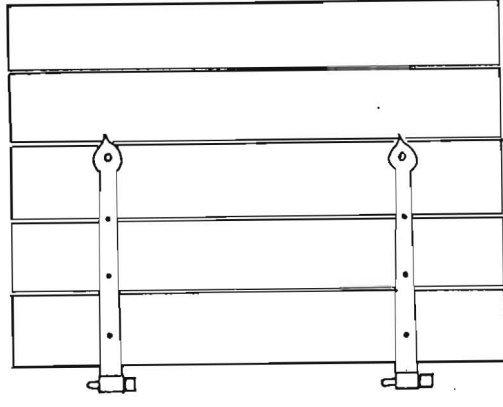
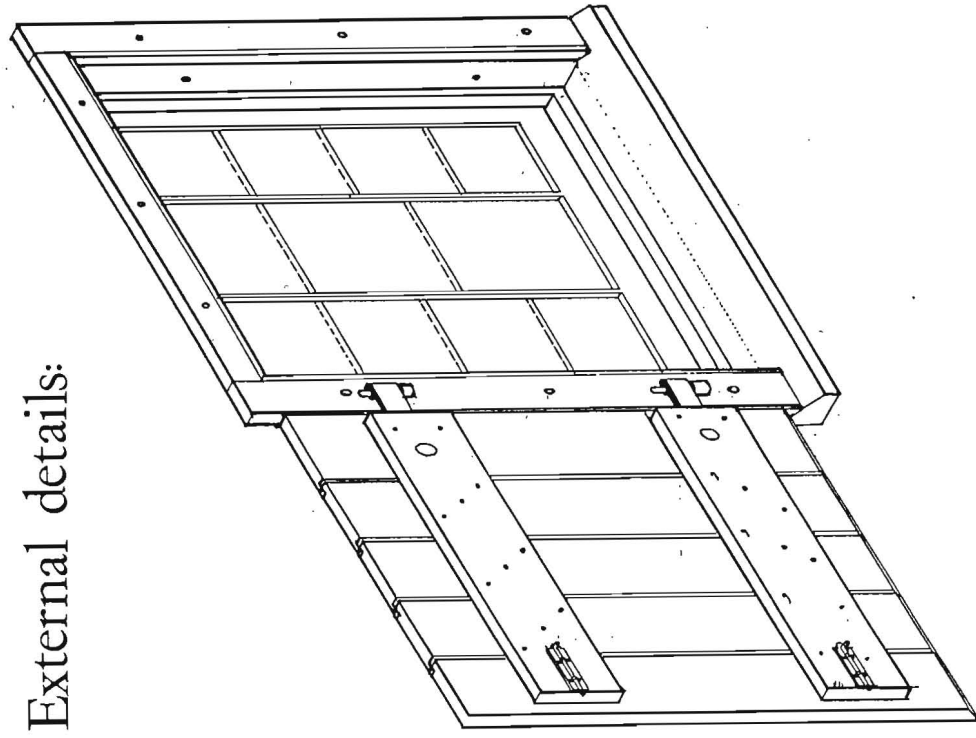


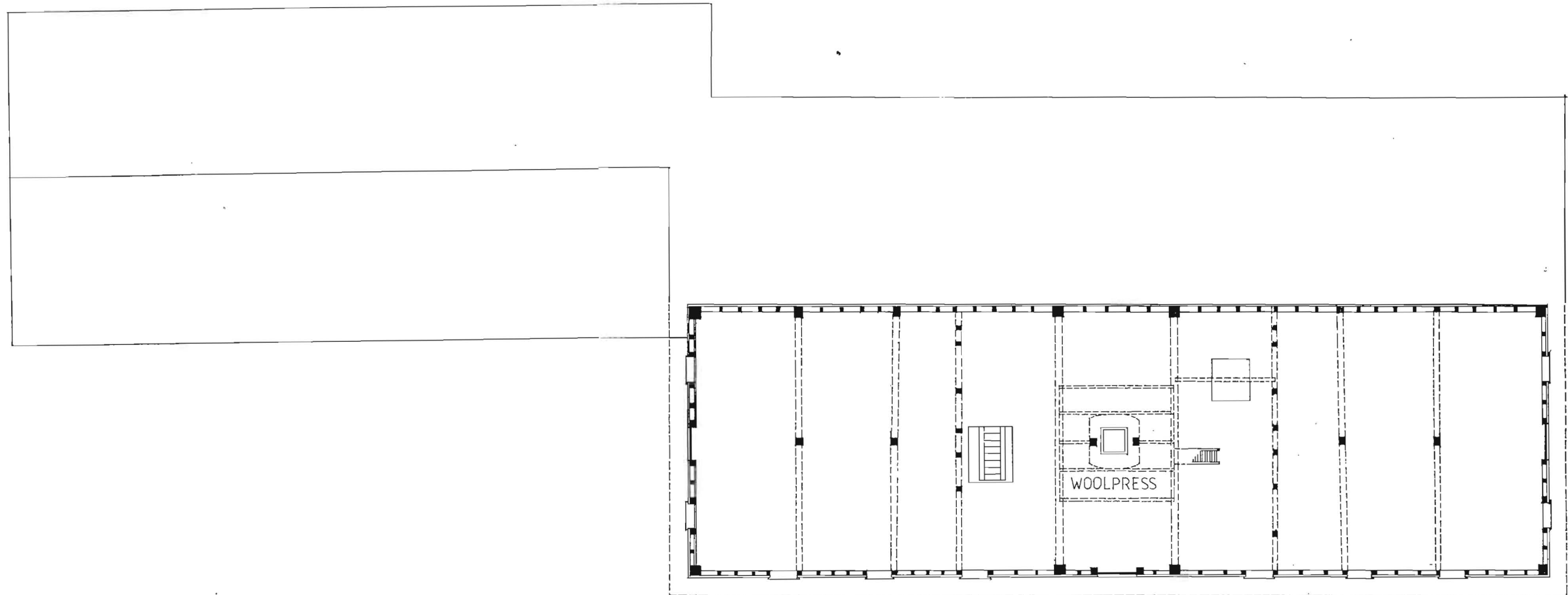
C



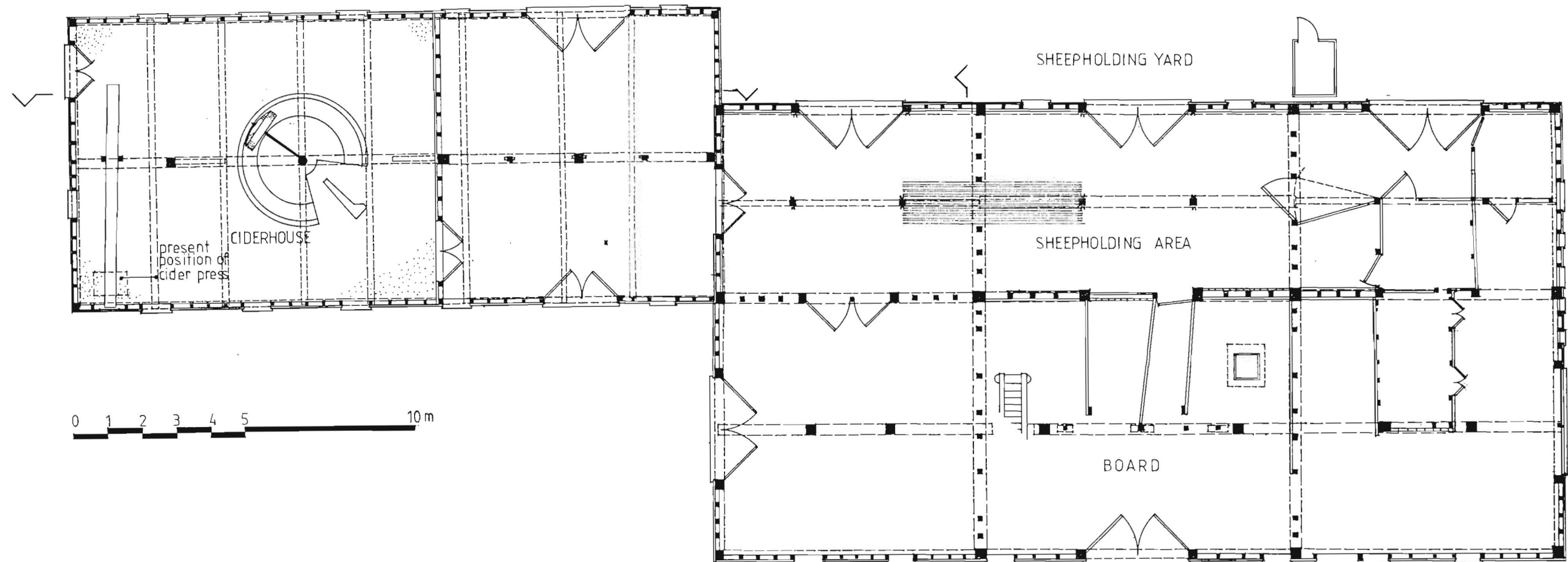
D

External details:

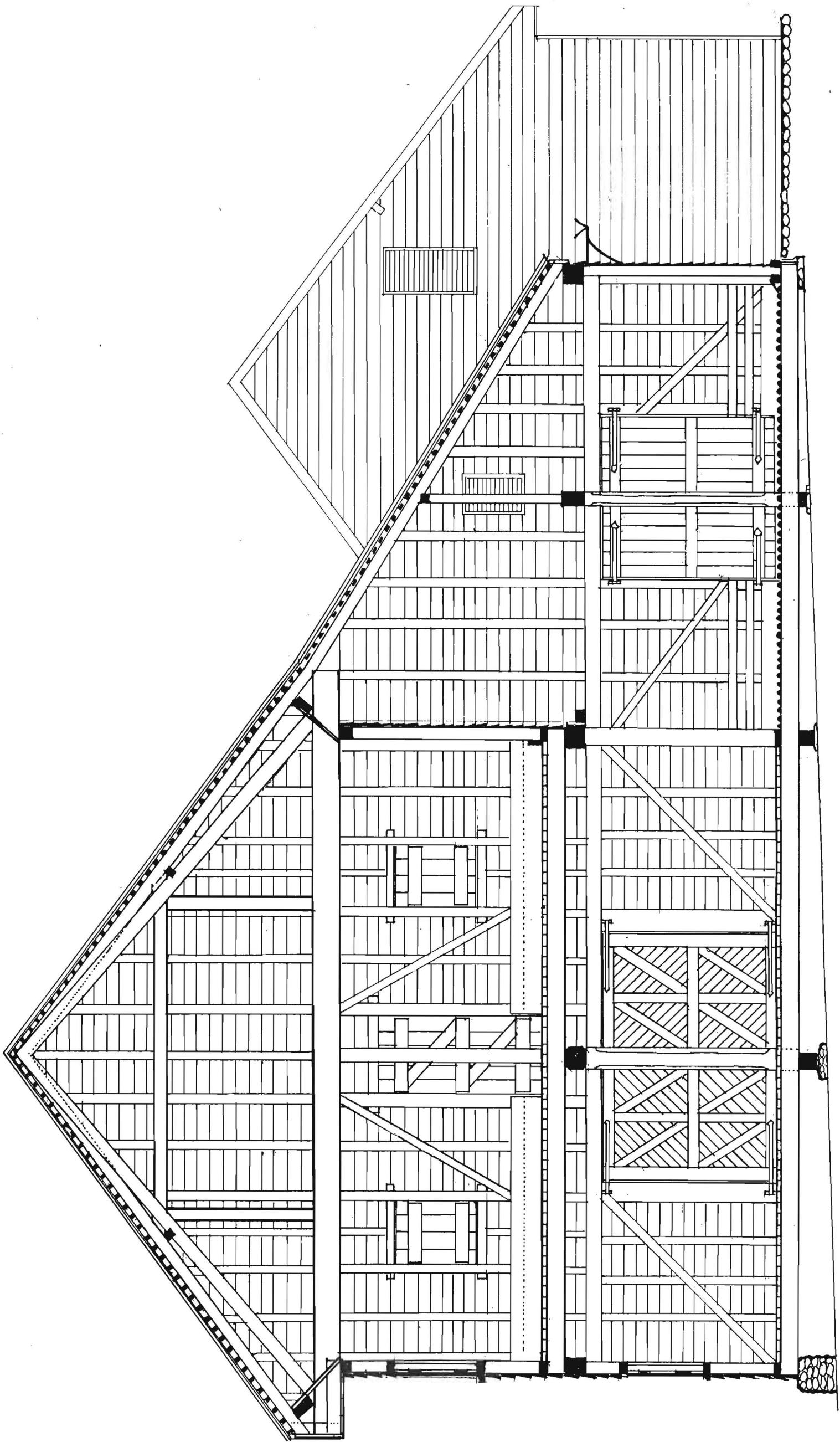




UPPER FLOOR PLAN

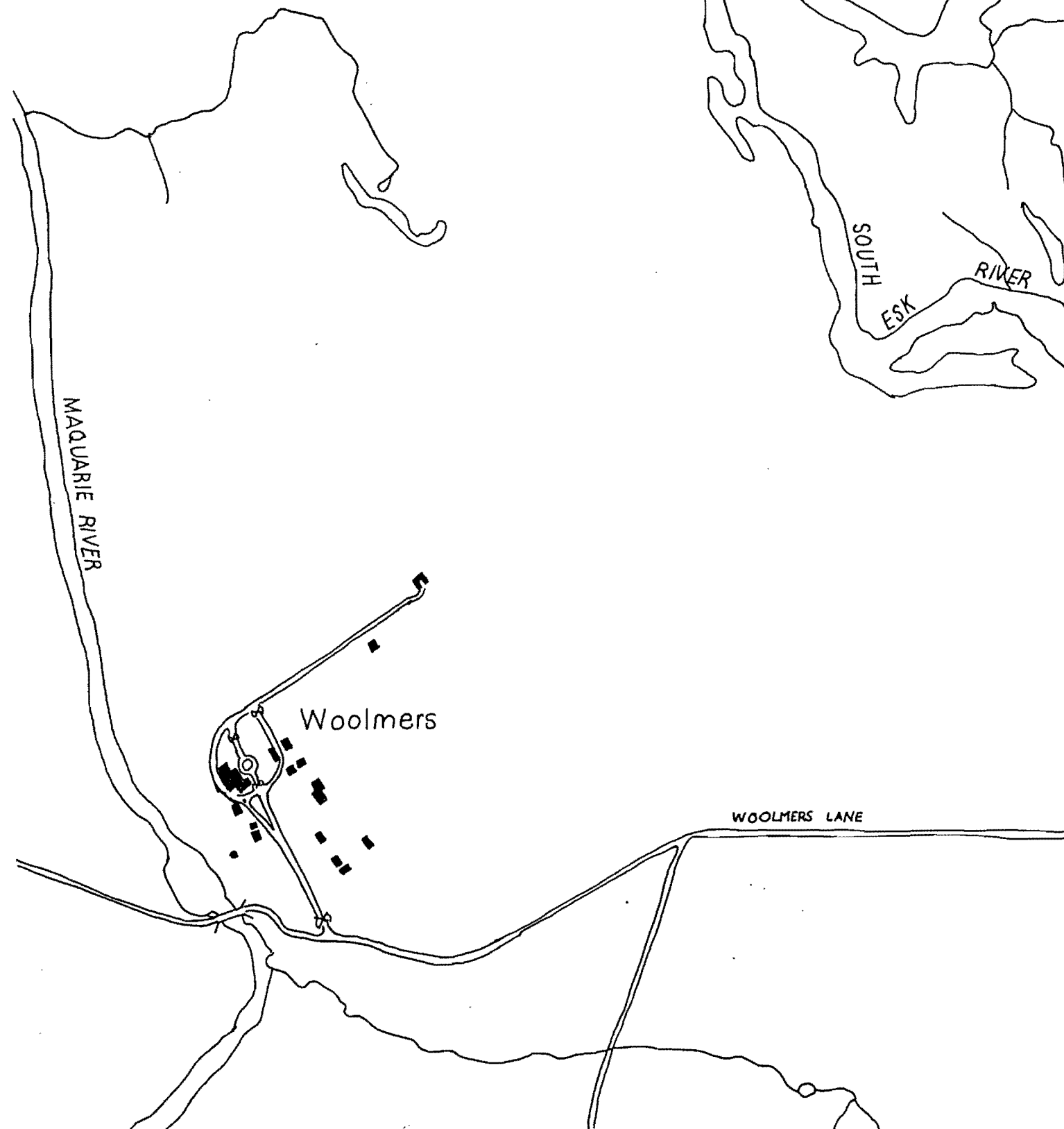


LOWER FLOOR PLAN



LEGEND

- 1 Sheepwashing area
- 2 Woolshed



THE WOOLSHED

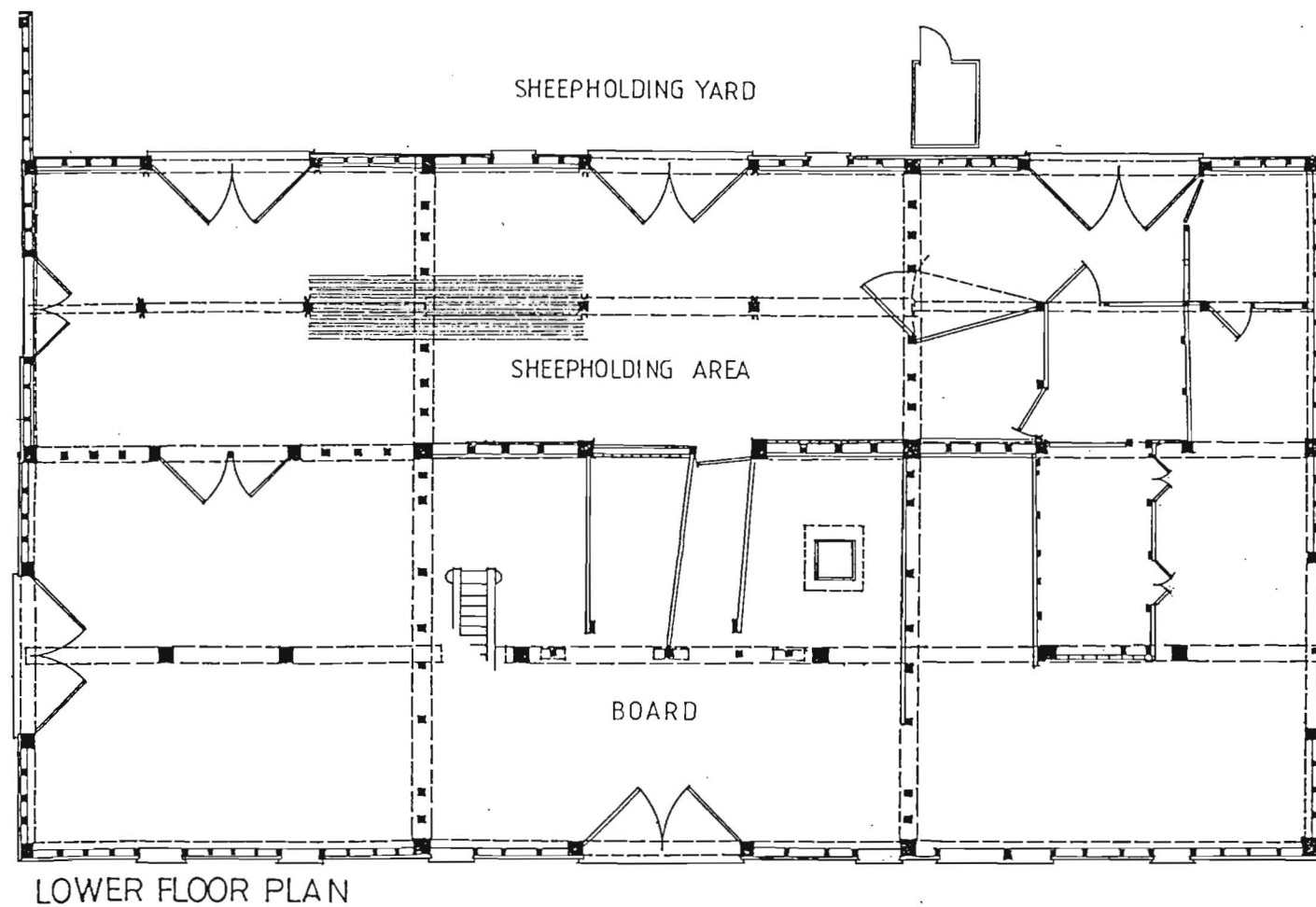
Traditionally, in England, shearing took place if not outside, in the barn. Space was at a premium and an annual two-week activity did not warrant a building of its own. In Australia, on the other hand, land was less precious, flocks larger and building materials plentiful. It was in this country that the shearing shed really came into its own.

The exact date of this shed is unknown. It is evident, however, that Thomas Archer was a significant sheepfarmer by 1820 when his grazing license at Hummocky Hills was renewed,¹⁵ as he was selected as one of the major recipients of MacArthur's Cape Merino cross breeds (falsely sold as pure Spanish Merinos)¹⁶ of which only half survived the journey from New South Wales. Recipients were selected by Lieutenant Governor Sorell on the basis of his assessment of their industry and likely efforts to improve the wool of their flocks.¹⁷ Thomas Archer, whom Sorell had described three years earlier as 'a very right thinking well disposed young man',¹⁸ was able to purchase ten for £73/10/-. Extensive building was going on at Woolmers in 1826 when Archer was visited by one of the Land Commissioners. Although the woolshed isn't specifically mentioned 'about ten thousand sheep' are.¹⁹ Thomas Archer's own assessment the previous year was that he had 'upwards of Six Thousand Sheep most of which have been very highly improved by an importation of Pure Merino's from England, about Five years ago...'.²⁰ By 1836 he was described as having 25 000 sheep and sending seventeen wagons of pressed wool to London every year at a value of £6000.²¹

It is likely, then, that the shed was built in the early 1820s when his purchase of the Macarthur lambs indicates his interest in wool rather than mutton.²² Massive posts and beams some transversing the entire depth create the basic structure of this building; each one is bevelled. Elaborate graffiti on the main beam visible from the entrance proclaims that:

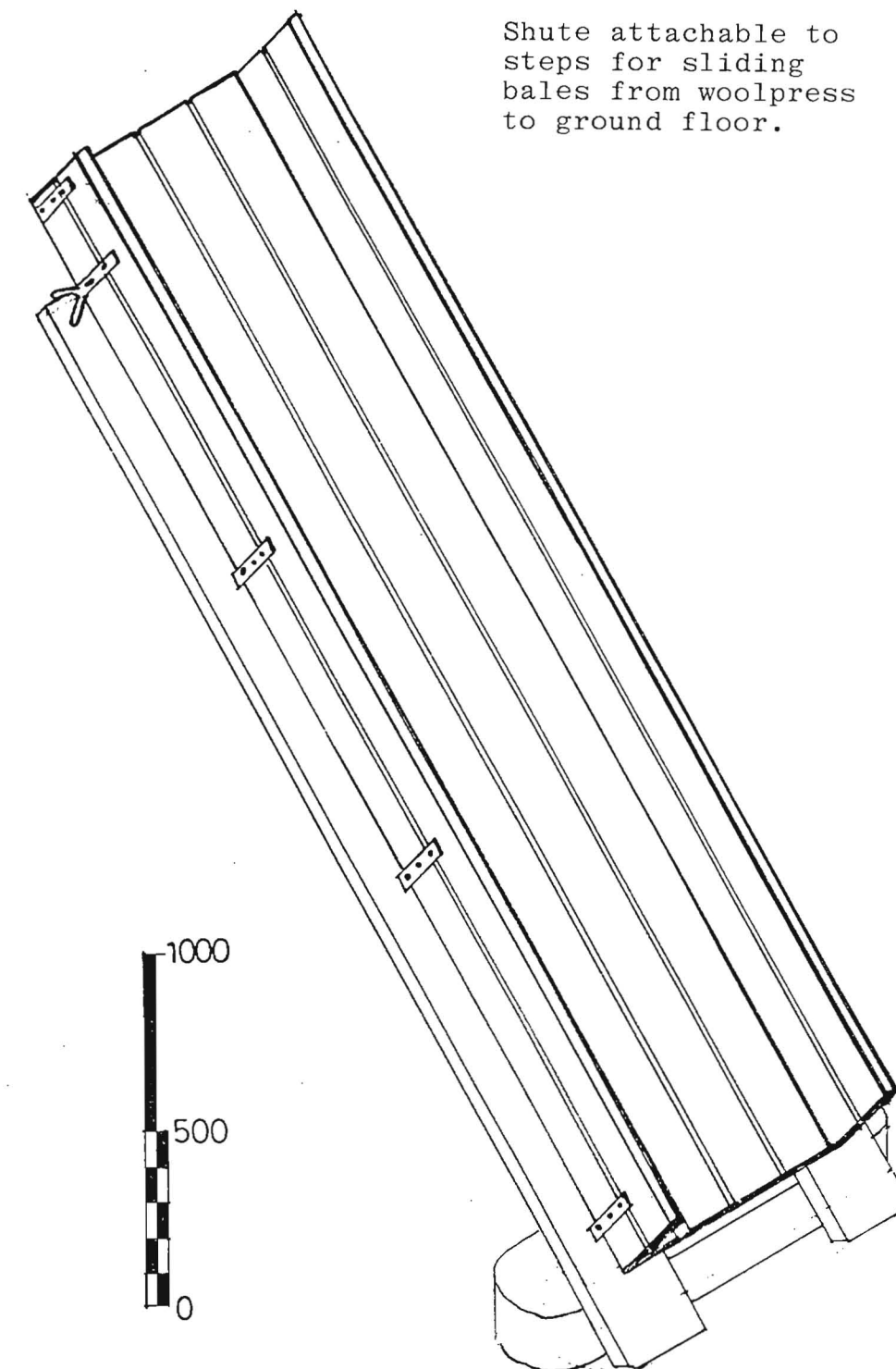
ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN THIS DAY WILL DO HIS DUTY ADMIRAL NELSON
DUKE OF BRONTË TRAFALGAR 1805

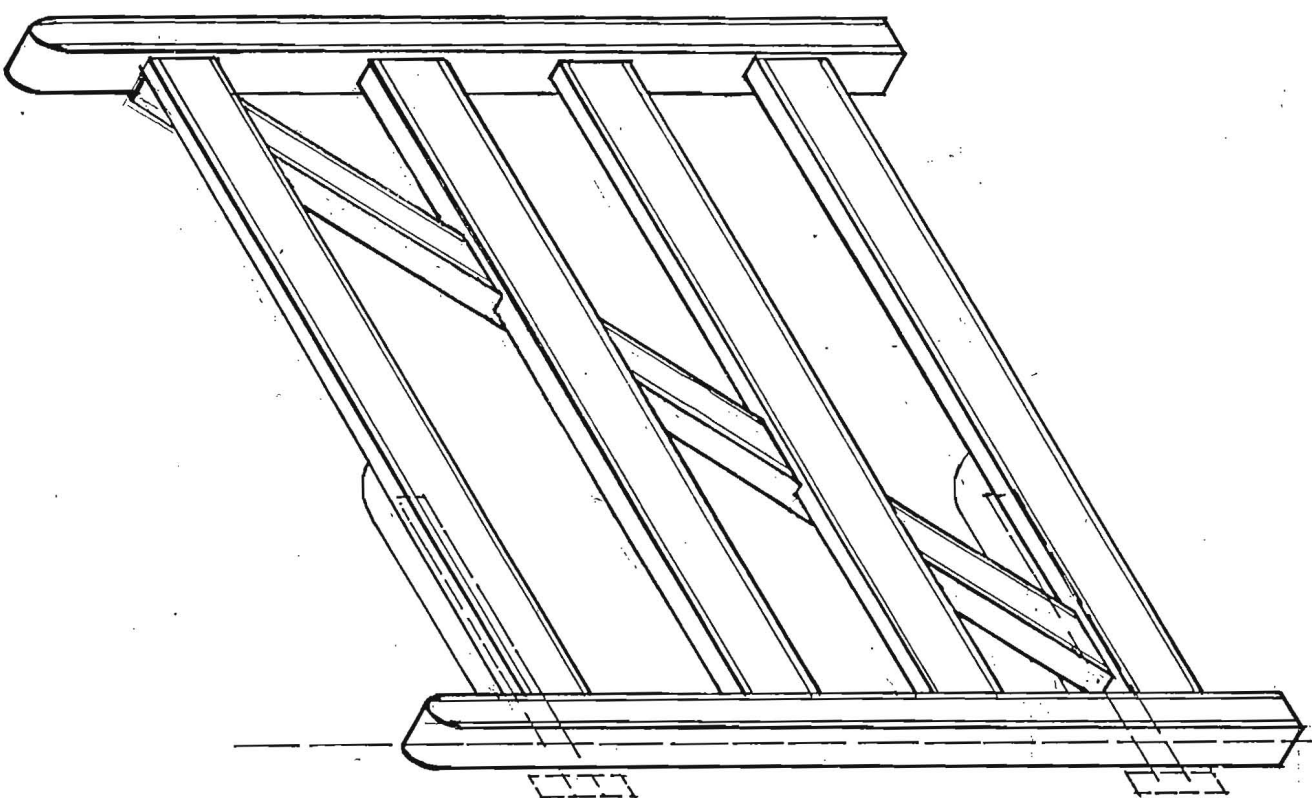
written by one who was reputed to have been there. Ironically it was partially due to the Napoleonic and Spanish wars and the consequent non-availability of woolsheep from Saxony and Spain that the wool industry became established in Australia. The pitsawn weatherboard building is of two storeys. The high fire risk of lanolin and timber is acknowledged by the Cornwall Insurance Company's metal fire badge which is still attached above the upperstorey central door opening. The lower storey consists of the board and the holding pens. The latter have a slatted floor made of lengths of saplings split in half. On the upper floor the screw woolpress dominates. Apart from the actual screwing mechanism, the press may well have been constructed at Woolmers. Many of the structural details are similar to those on the Cider press. Even in this most functional of buildings doors and shutters on both floors and the gates are beaded. Outside and to the rear the holding yards were cobbled so that the sheep, once washed, would remain clean while they dried and produced enough lanolin to make the shearing smooth.

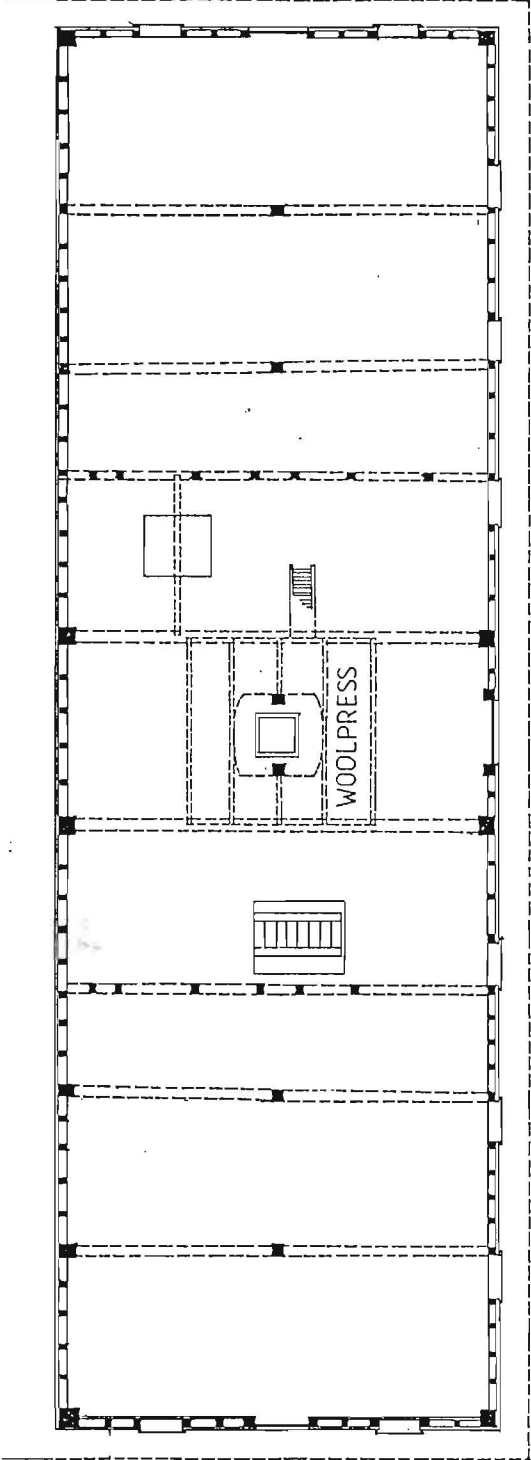


Graffiti

ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN THIS DAY WILL DO HIS DUTY ADMIRAL NELSON
DUKE OF BRONTE TRAFALGAR 1805

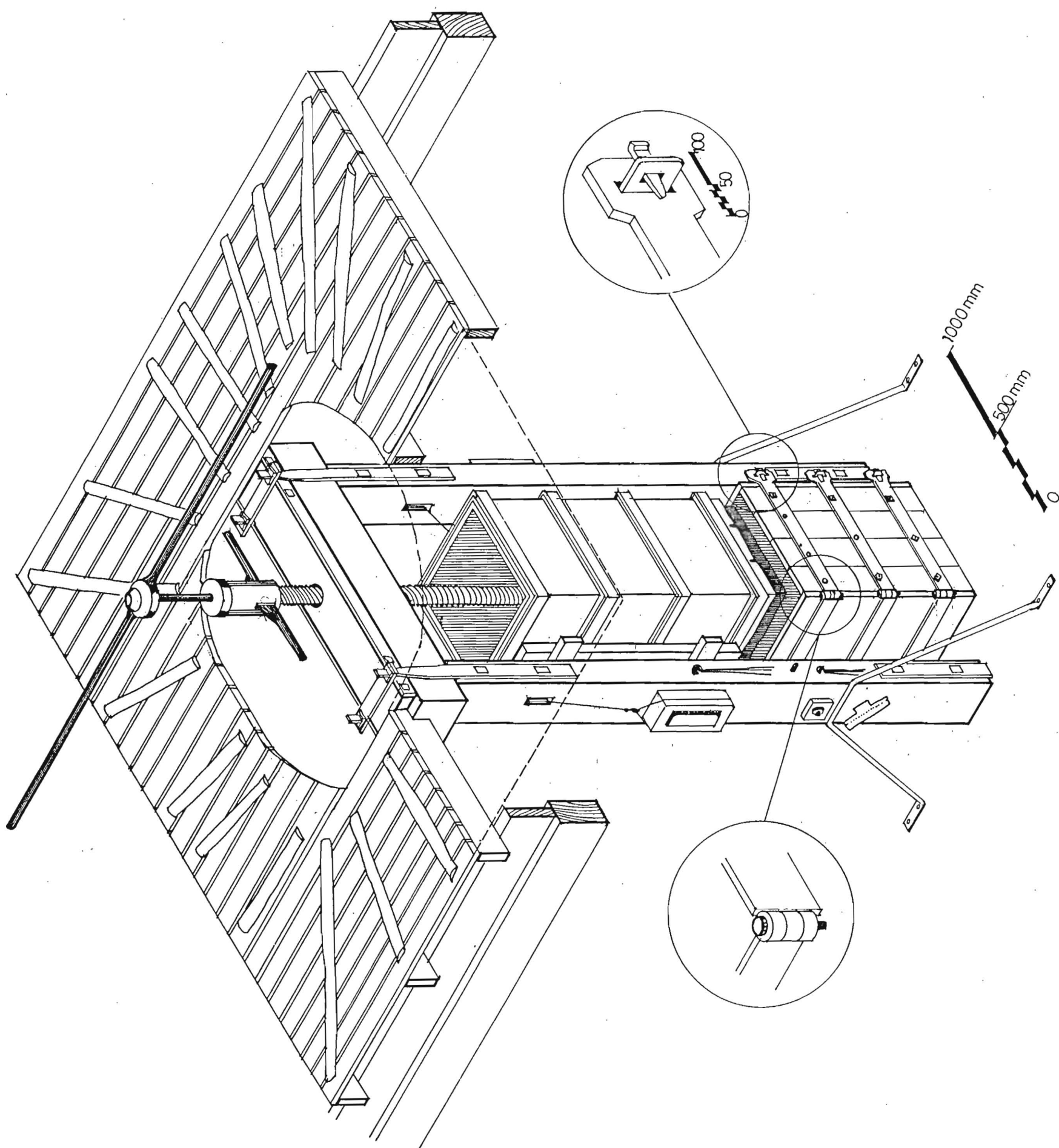




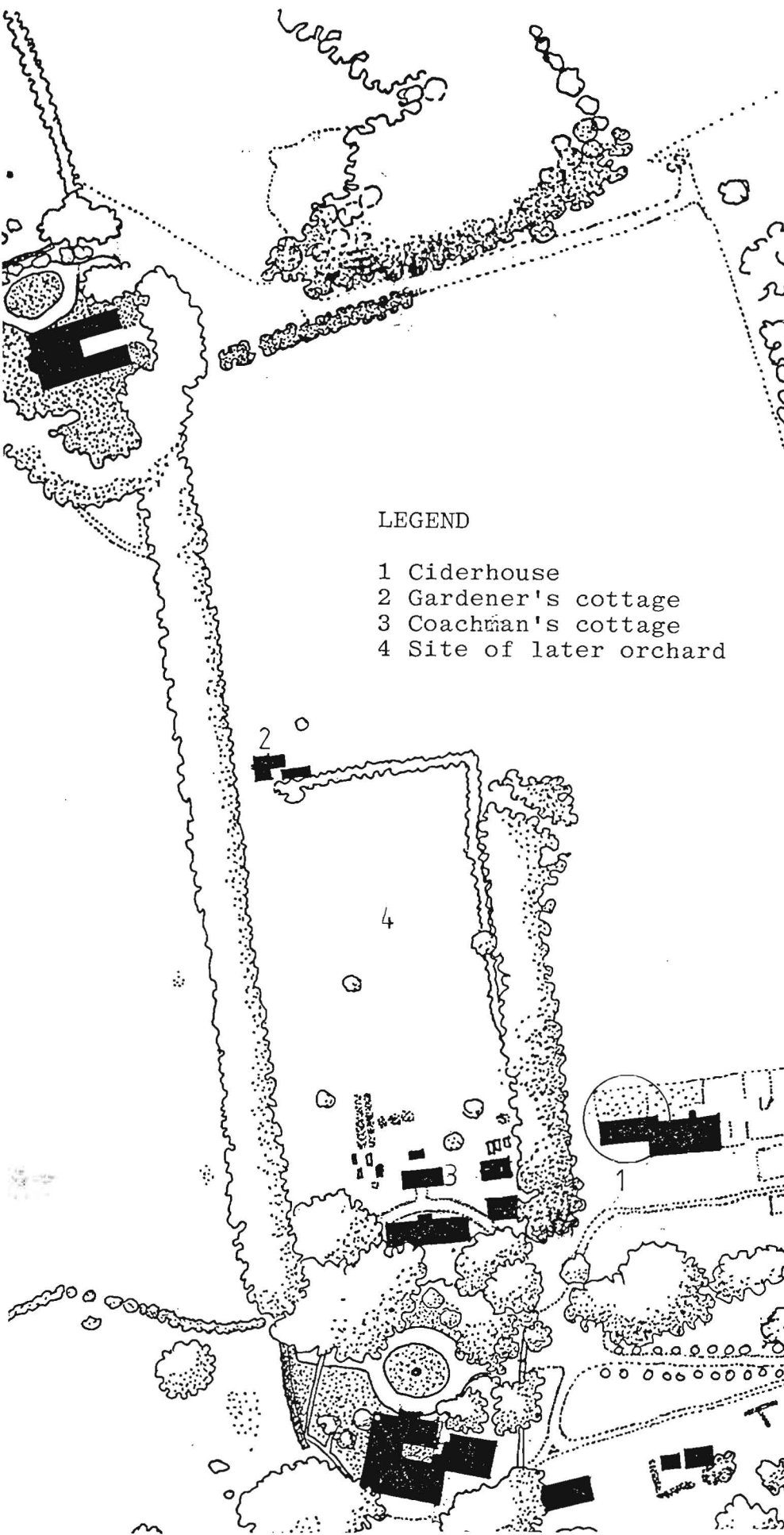


UPPER FLOOR PLAN

Woolpress



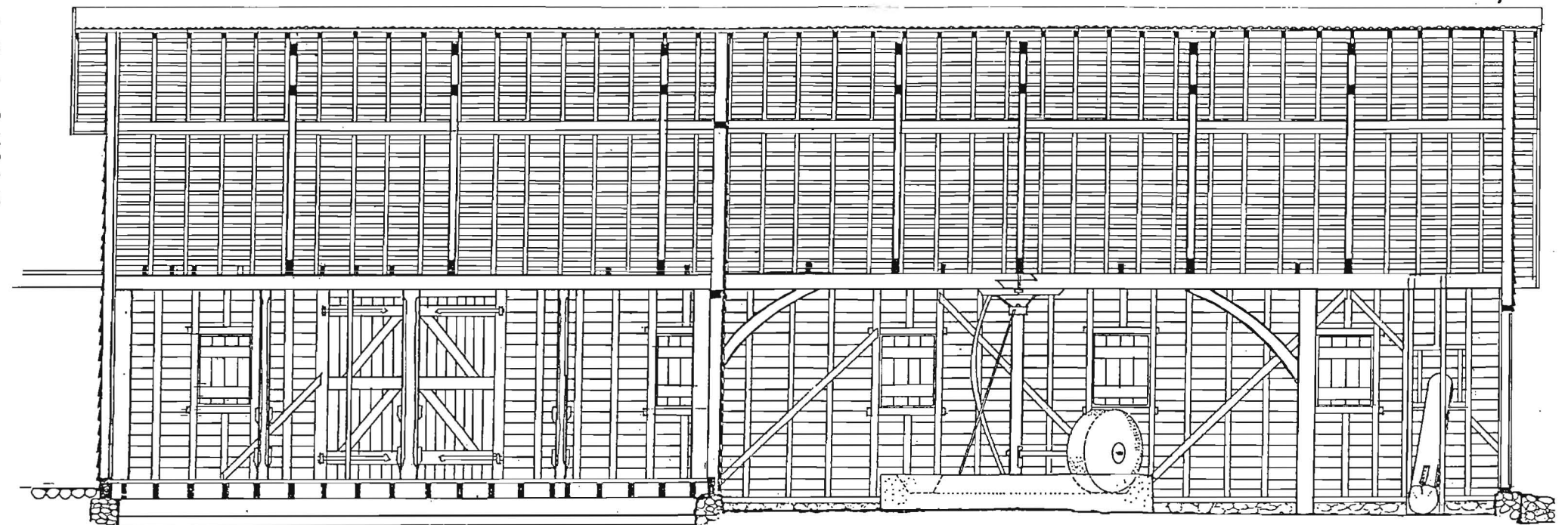
CIDERHOUSE



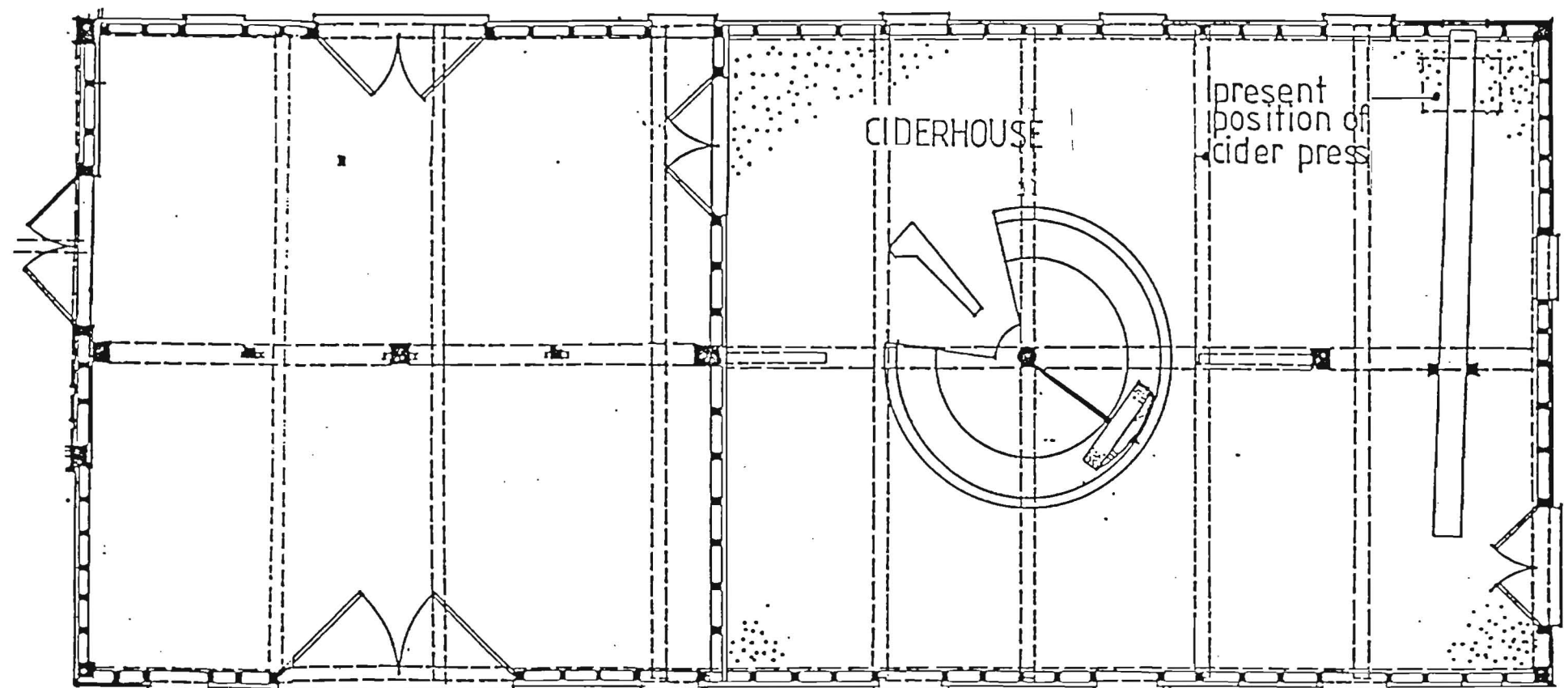
LEGEND

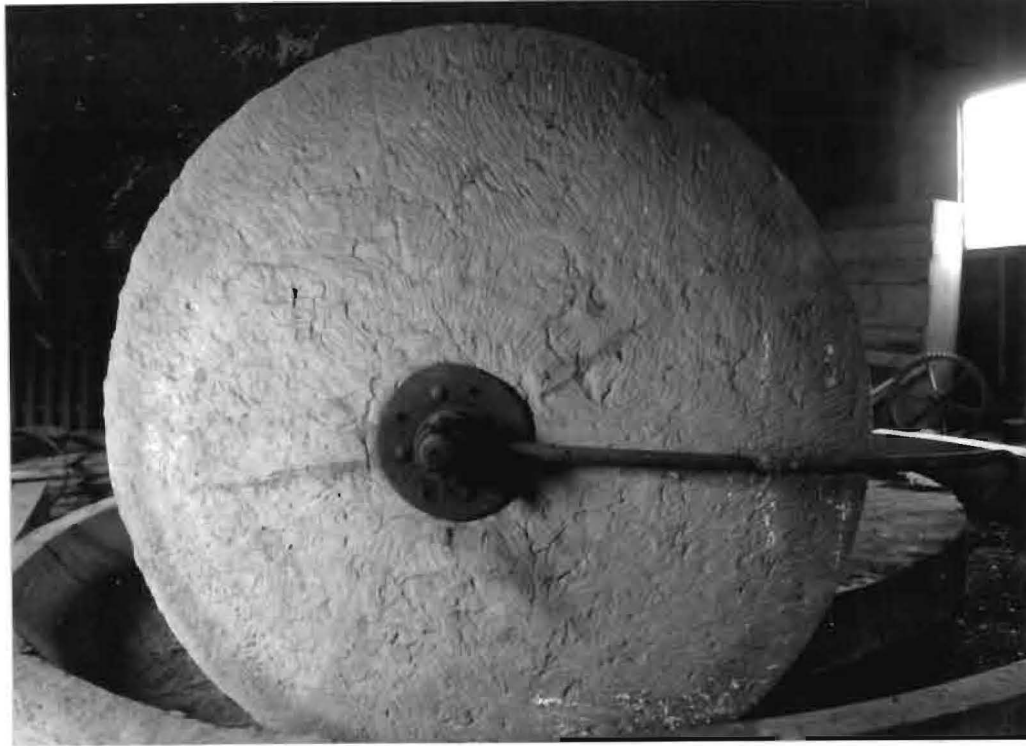
- 1 Ciderhouse
- 2 Gardener's cottage
- 3 Coachman's cottage
- 4 Site of later orchard

Between thewars an orchard was planted between the coachman's and gardener's cottages. There is no evidence that this was also the site of the earlier orchard although the proximity to both gardener and apple press would have been an advantage. It is likely that the original site was larger; orcharding was not as sophisticated in the nineteenth century and only two or three tons of apples to the acre could be expected.²⁶



0 1 2 3 4 5 m



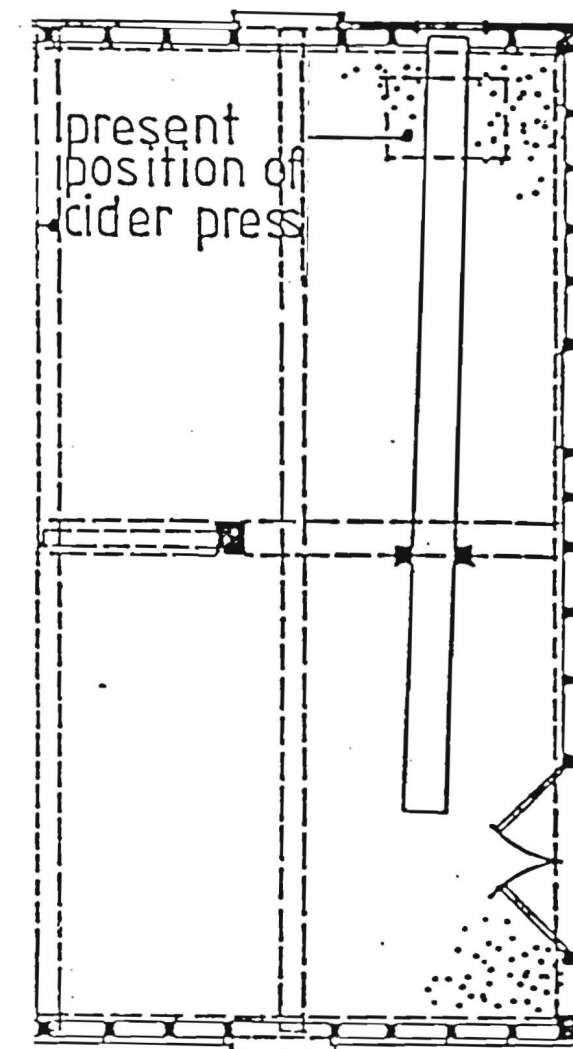
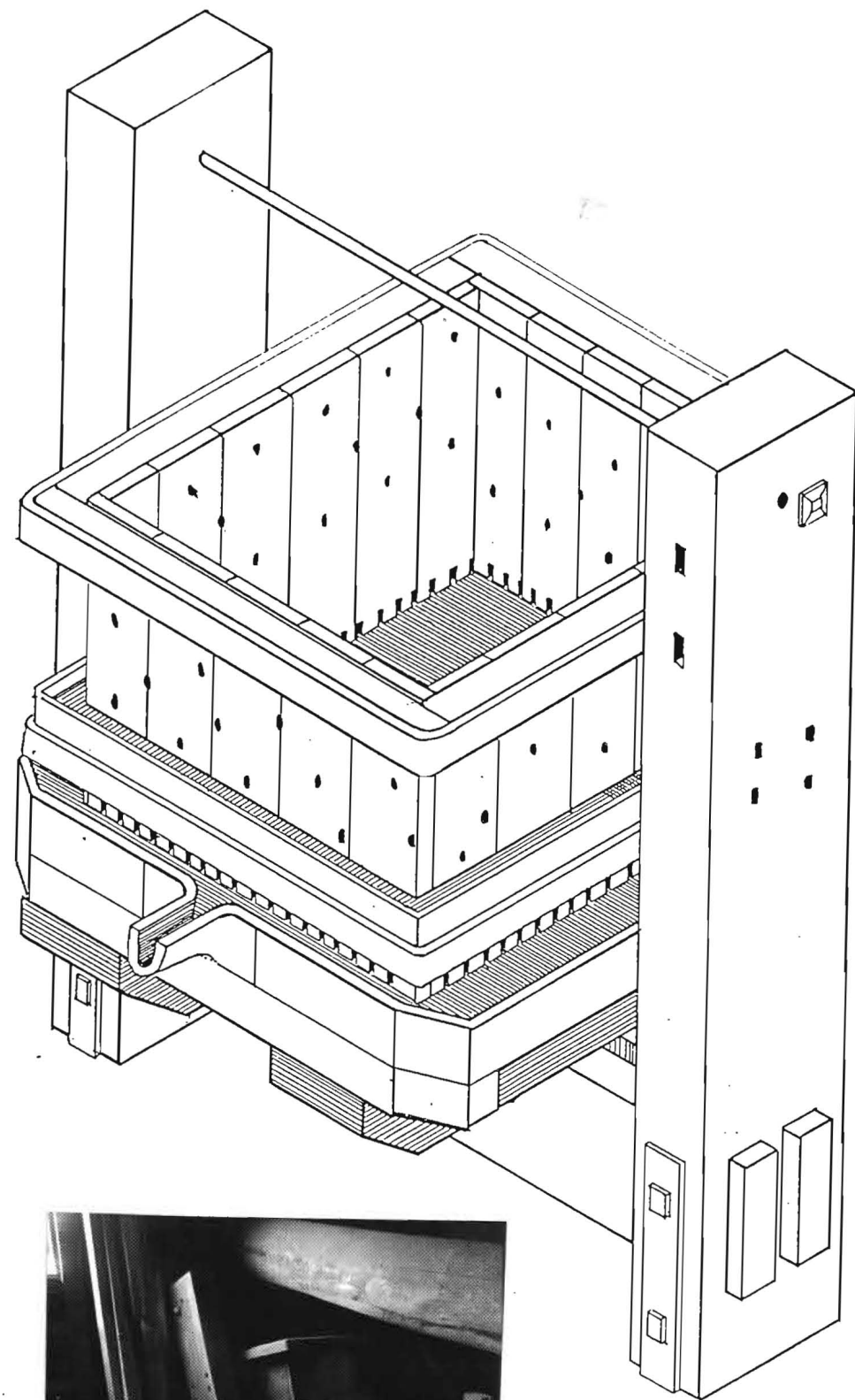


The cider house was built into an extension of the woolshed. It was in operation during the Victorian goldrush when the Archers were exporting cider to Ballarat and Bendigo. This was no small press set up to fill the needs of the estate workers, although in England it was customary to provide each person with half a gallon of cider daily.²³ With eighty servants - forty gallons even home consumption might have merited a fairly substantial press.

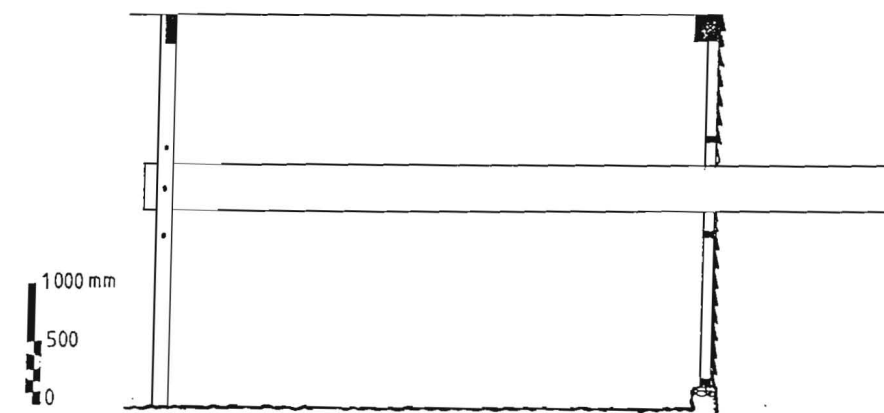
Most of the earth floor space is taken up by stone mill; the sandstone of which it is made is said to come from the Patersonia area. The vertical wheel would have been horse-driven while the cider maker with a stick knocked apples from the hundred weight or so which had been placed on the central pier into the circular trough. When the mill bed was covered with crushed apples one or two buckets of water would have been added. While milling continued the cidemaker would have scraped the 'must' or pulp from the sides. This part of the operation would have been complete when the pulp kept its shape when it was squeezed.²⁴

Once milled the pulp would be pressed. In the cider making areas of England various types of press were used. In Somerset and Devon barley straw was used as a binder, in Herefordshire horse hair sacking; but the Woolmers press is typical of the eastern counties where, because a variety of fruits were pressed, a box was used in place of a press bed.²⁵ Most presses were operated by one, two or three screws. There is no sign of a screw part on this press. Instead a pole 4.3m in length and 400mm in diameter which in its original position was held horizontally above the press and extended through the wall of the building. Beneath this extremity there is a dip in the ground. The press itself is not in its original position but leaning against the wall. It would seem that it was centred somewhere along the length of the pole. Some kind of leverage system may have been used but exactly how this worked is unclear.





Plan of pole/lever in present position



Elevation of pole/lever in original position

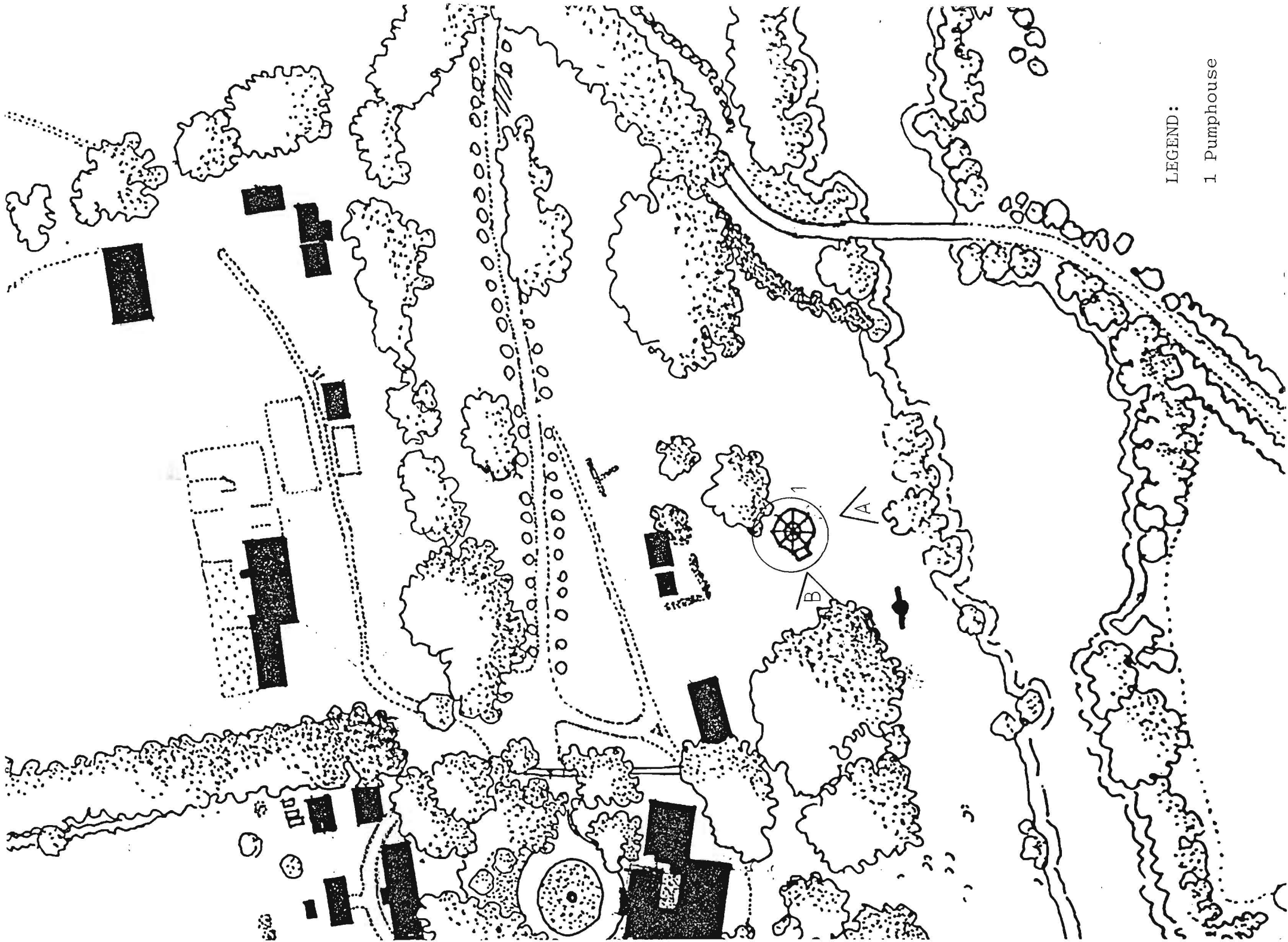
PUMPHOUSE



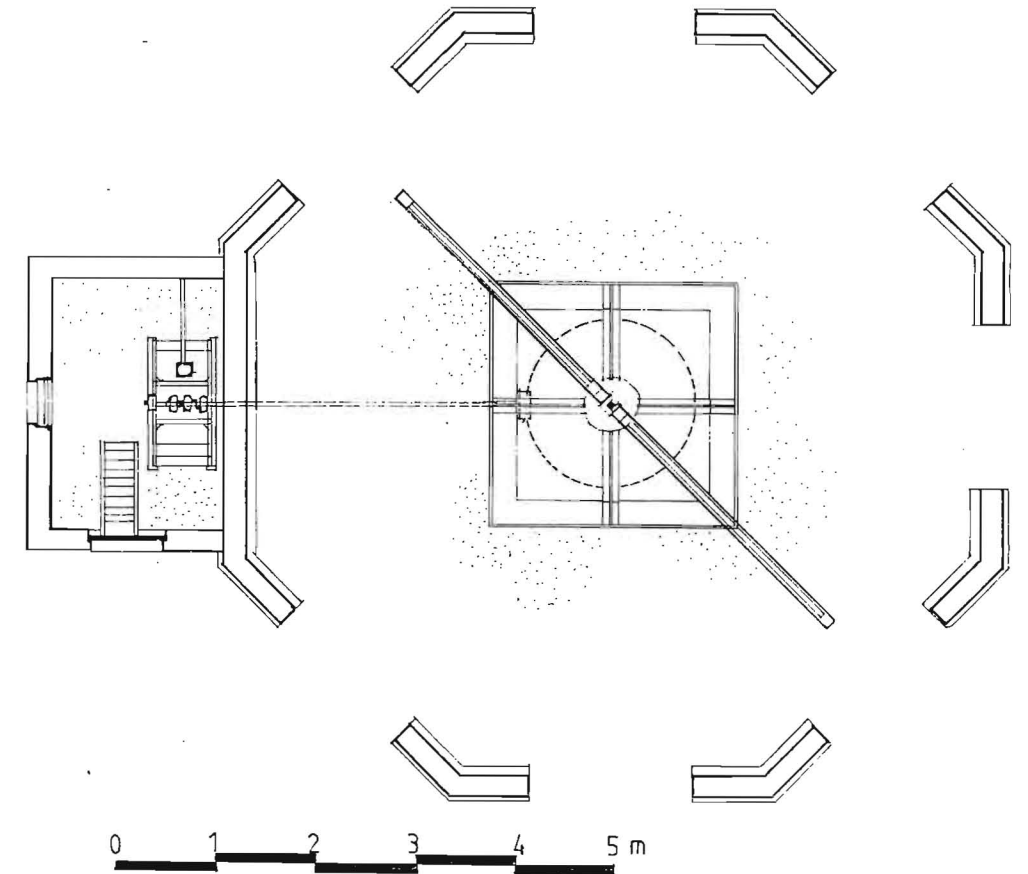
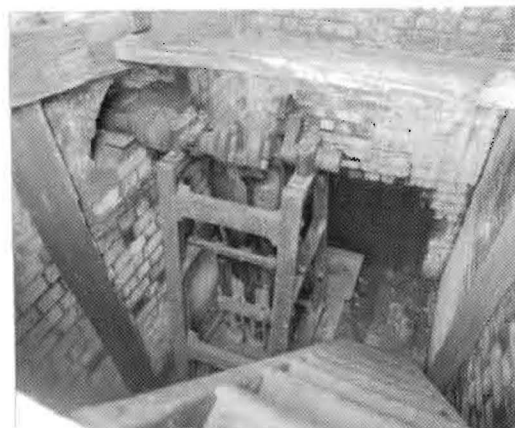
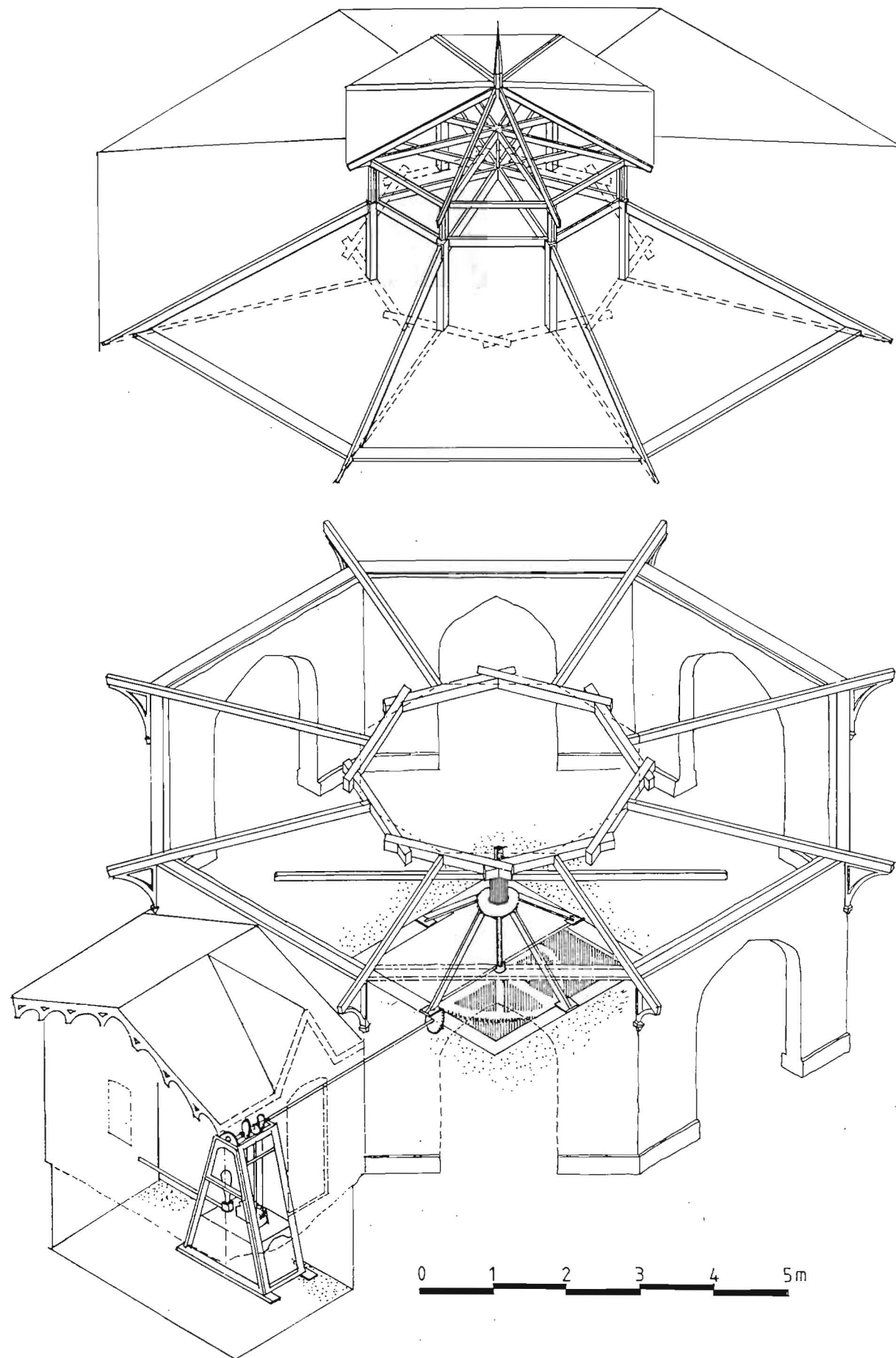
A



B



PUMPHOUSE



Built in 1841 the pumphouse is the first Woolmers building to be seen by those approaching the estate from Longford and the only one to be seen clearly by those passing through. It is unashamedly picturesque, intending to catch the eye, conspicuously placed as it is on the riverbank with trees planted to show it off to best effect. It was appreciated by Mrs Nixon who recorded it in her sketchbook in the mid nineteenth century and later it was chosen to represent the area covered by the Western Railway line in the *Handbook of Tasmania* of 1914. The main Oriental part of the structure housed the horse which moved around a central pivot. The horse power was transmitted by gear ring to the pumping machinery made by Braithwaite, Milner and Co of London which is housed in the small Gothic extension. The coalbrookdale fountain on the central lawn in front of Woolmers house was placed there in celebration of the installation of the waterworks.

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