

Boleskine House, Foyers

Existing Fabric Record Report

by LDN Architects LLP

October 2019



Revisions:		

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## Historical Context

This report should be read in conjunction with the report, 'Boleskine House, Foyers - An Understanding of the Built Form' by M. Lidster, dated 18 September 2019.

The working hypothesis is that there was a building on the site that appears on Roy's mapping of 1747-55.

The property is then purchased by Col. Archibald Fraser in c.1760 and underwent various stages of redevelopment through until c.1830.

Aleister Crowley's ownership lasted from 1899-1913.

There are a set of drawings produced for A E Priestley Esq by George Gordon & Co, Inverness showing an alterations and an extension to the NW dated 1926

Extensive alterations took place while the house was owned by Jimmy Page from 1970-1992

A further set of drawings show alterations in 1996 while the house was owned by the McGillivray family.

The first fire took place in 2015.

The building listing (dated 1971) talks about a pink harled structure with ashlar dressings but the building has since been rendered and painted white.

This document is structured by reference to the proposed room numbering on the attached plans.

Job Ref: BOLESKINE HOUSE

Drawing Title:  
**AS-EXISTING  
ELEVATIONS**

Drawing Status:

AS EXISTING

Architect Drawing No:

F1925 LMS/002

Scale:

1:100 A2

Date:

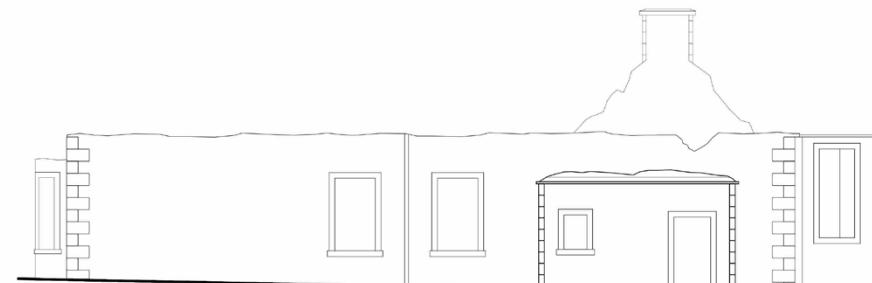
Oct 19

Drawn:

HG

Reviewed:

SM



NORTH EAST ELEVATION

Scale 1: 100



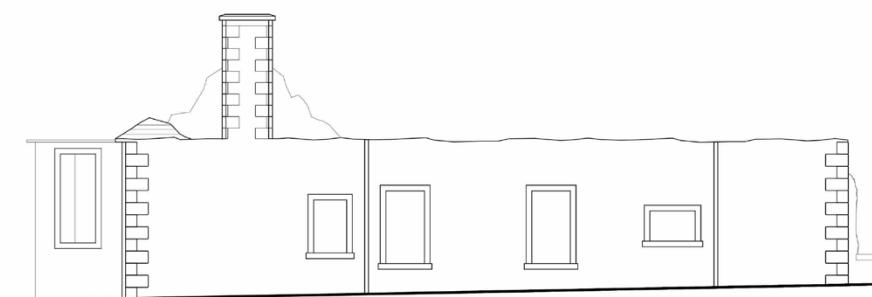
3D VIEW NORTH

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SOUTH EAST ELEVATION

Scale 1: 100



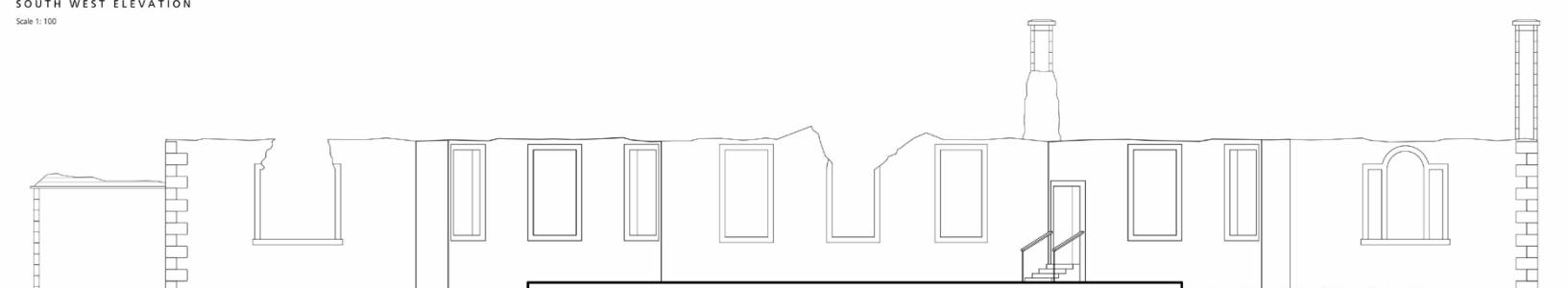
SOUTH WEST ELEVATION

Scale 1: 100



3D VIEW SOUTH

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NORTH WEST ELEVATION

Scale 1: 100

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Job Title:  
BOLESKINE HOUSE

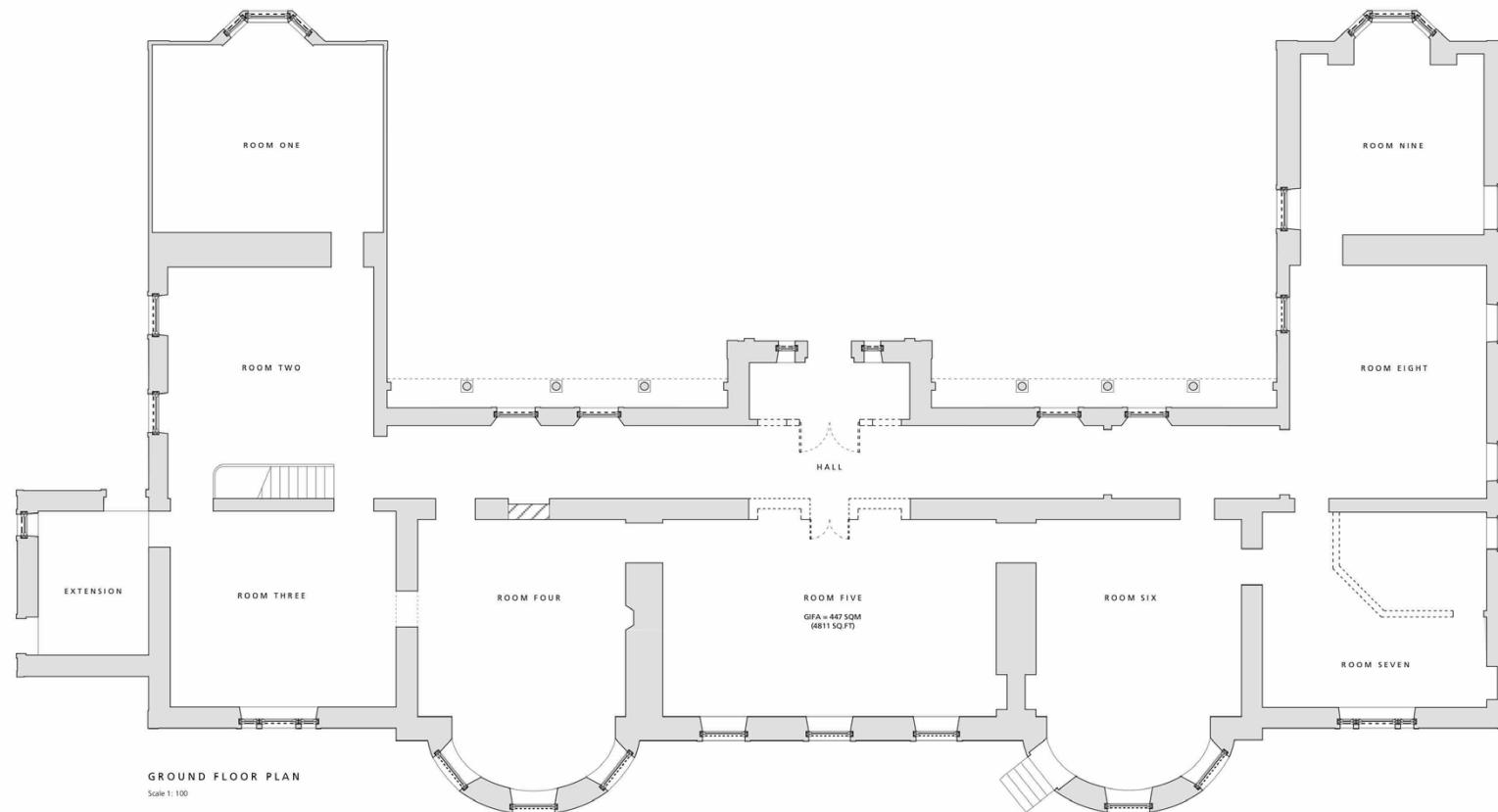
Drawing File:  
**AS EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN**

Drawing Status:  
**AS EXISTING**

Architects Drawing No:  
F1926 L(MS) 001

Revision:  
-

Scale: Date: Drawn:  
1:100 BA2 Oct 19 HG  
Revisions:



3D VIEW LOOKING NORTH WEST

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3D VIEW LOOKING SOUTH EAST

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## ROOM ONE

Description: Eastern Return Wing, South-East corner.

Present on plans in 1926 but noted on drawing dating from 1970 'This part of wing to be reconstructed as originally' so removed in the intervening period.

Rebuilt in timber frame (drawings dated 1996) with a single leaf of blockwork as its external skin. Precast reconstituted stone dressings to bay window and quoins.

Timber frame now burnt out leaving blockwork skin (2380mm high) free standing. Wall shows signs of distress, evident in extensive cracking in cement render finish.

Existing concrete floor within. 1996 drawing shows this is set 60mm below original floor level and had a floating timber floor.

Evidence of surviving cement roughcast on North-East wall shows that this current construction is a later extension and for a period this wing was truncated. Sandy Gracie drawing from 1996 notes that doorway into extension created at this time.



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## ROOM TWO

Description: Eastern Return Wing, centre.

Rubble masonry construction up to window head level, above which wall has been rebuilt in concrete brickwork roughly 1.0m high.

Ceiling joists at 2750mm F-C which is roughly 1.0m short of the current wallhead.

Drawings from 1996 do not show this as rebuilt but do show modern gang nail trusses and a new Spanish slate roof over this wing. This suggests that the rebuilding of the wall heads took place when the house was extensively remodelled in 1970.

Solid concrete floor flush with Room One and therefore 60mm below First Floor Level.

Rubble built South-East wall to Room One is 960mm thick and contains evidence of a larger infilled fireplace and a more recent smaller range. This wall is patched in brick and retains some modern gypsum plaster. The 1996 plan drawing shows a bathroom in this vicinity. This wall varies slightly in build from the external wall to which it is attached suggesting that it may have been built at a different time. The chimney wall was inserted within the wing to divide and service the space.

The West wall to the courtyard is also a different construction to the other external wall to the East. It is constructed of smaller rubble and had vertical timbers embedded (since replaced in cut brick)

The East wall comprises larger fieldstone rubble brought to rough courses with sandstone dressings at the two windows. The safe lintels over these windows have been replaced with steel joists. As is the case, except where specifically noted, this rubble is metamorphic in nature and appears to comprise of local schists.

The South wall dividing Room Two from Room Three survives as a masonry pier (350mm thick), connected at high level to the East and West walls with blockwork infill above concrete lintels.

This central pier retains vertical and diagonal built-in timbers and includes a fire damaged king post. It therefore bears similarities to the West (courtyard) wall and is assumed to be of a similar date. As noted below, this wall retains evidence of harl on its rear side suggesting that it was once an outside wall. It is however unclear whether the timbers which are deeply embedded in the wall were built at the same time as the masonry surround or whether an earlier timber structure has been infilled and retained within a later masonry structure.

A stone staircase descends into a vaulted basement, the final winders hidden by debris. This basement is narrower than the room above. 3340mm, as opposed to 6300mm and shorter – 3600mm, as opposed to 5600mm. The vault is a shallow arch varying from 1350mm – 1800mm. One might have expected that if built at the same time this basement and the structure above would have shared their plan footprint. This suggests that the vault might predate the later structure.



## ROOM THREE

Description: North-East corner.

Expressed as a recessed wing to the central block on the North-West Elevation and characterised by channelled quoins and dressings in yellow sandstone.

Built in coursed local rubble (600mm thick) with yellow sandstone dressings and highly expressed quoins which have chamfered corners on 3 sides to create a shadow in the channels, the fourth side designed to take a harl finish. Wallhead at approximately 4250mm. No interventions at wallhead in blockwork.

Surviving evidence of a Palladian window. Mullions now missing but clear evidence from photos that this matched that at the opposite end of the Lochside elevation. This suggests that these two wings either side of the central structure are of similar date and design and the window styles suggest that they date from the 1760-1830 period.

1926 plan shows this area subdivided into back kitchen areas. Wallhead chimney on East wall above extension (now lost) and fireplace lintel just visible behind rubble and Esse (?) stove. Concrete brickwork with Carlite browning plaster shows where flue broken into to insert lining.

Solid floor with ceramic tile finish as the space below is partly vaulted – see above.

Walls against both Rooms Two and Four retain external lime harl (and evidence of pockets at high level against Room 4) suggesting that this block has been inserted into the internal corner of an earlier plan form.

Modern serving hatch (?) cut through wall to former Dining Room (Room Four), formed in concrete brick and timber lintels.



## EXTENSION

Description: Later addition to North-West over an earlier doorway.

Appears on plan dating from 1926 and shown on 1970 elevation with a piended roof. Seen in photo from 1912.

Masonry construction 530mm thick. Built in local red sandstone (probably Black Isle suggesting that it was brought in when road transport had improved) with evidence of surviving lime finishes on the hard within to confirm that it is a later addition.

Lower single storey construction with originally an external doorway leading to an internal timber stair to a low basement (c. 1800mm) containing the boiler.

Red sandstone margins to corners and openings with a modern cement harl set proud.

Construction appears sound, wallhead approximately 2900mm.



## ROOMS FOUR, FIVE & SIX

Description: Reads as a 3-bay central block facing the Lochside.

On the North-West (Lochside) elevation this element reads as a symmetrical elevation with two semi-circular bay windows and a central arched topped window over which was a piended roof (in photos).

These three rooms appear to be the original core of the building potentially predating 1760. They are built in random rubble, comprising local field rubble but with granite dressings to corners and openings (hidden below later expressed rendered margins within an overall cement harl). Thus, they differ from the surrounding wings and lack the channelled quoins seen on the wings.

These rooms had suspended timber floors pre-fire with a ventilated solum.

The wall to the South West (Entrance Hall/Corridor) preserves evidence of external harling on the hall side and at least one closed window suggesting that this passage is a later addition or has been remodelled and was once open to the air. As this South-West wall varies 500 – 380mm thick when the North-West side is 670mm thick and yet shows evidence of being an external wall, this suggests that while an external wall, it was protected. This supports a theory that it opened onto a covered loggia or roofed passage behind a colonnade. Plaster finishes in the South West end of the hall disguise the opposite end of this wall but the assumption is that it is symmetrical.

Two chimney walls divide Rooms Five from Four and Six. That between Rooms Four and Five has collapsed and lies within Room Five. This debris includes modern clay flue liners; evidence that the chimney has previously been disturbed.

The chimney between Rooms Five and Six remains in situ but appears unstable as it is no longer stabilised by the adjacent walls as these high-level masonry connections have been weakened where stonework has fallen when safe lintels have been lost in the fire over the doorway to Room Six and the wall press on the opposite side of the chimney stack.

This chimney has yellow sandstone margins with a harled finish and so may date from later than the lower structure, which is characterised by granite dressings. As it matches the chimney to Room Seven it suggests that it was altered when the wings were added probably shortly after 1760. The lack of surviving mortar in the masonry following the 2015 fire and a built-in horizontal now fire damaged timber at its base suggests this must be taken down temporarily.

One window in Room Six has been altered fairly radically by being both widened and shortened to create a door to a terrace, the alterations disguised by the render. Internal access will reveal whether the earlier window opening survives.

On the South-West side of this range, backing on to the corridor, the central opening on axis with the main entrance comprises a central doorway with two flanking openings formed in timber which appear to have been altered. All three openings have shallow fanlights. However, on either side of this, within Room Four, there is a suggestion of former doorways that may predate this axial approach.

There is no safe access to Room Six, but the chimney it shares with Room Five has two flues and the structural opening to Room Seven appears wider than the present doorway.



## ROOM SEVEN

Description: North-West wing.

The fabric forming Room Seven balances the recessed fabric of Room Three and includes a matching Palladian window of the same dimensions and matching channelled quoins. The width of this bay matches that of Room Three and hence this suggests it is of a similar age and design intent. A lack of access to Room Seven prevents finding evidence for external harl where it backs onto Rooms Six and Eight that would confirm that Room Seven is an extension built to infill a n internal corner between two earlier structures but this is the supposition.

As this room retains much of its modern finishes and part of its roof, it is not possible to see the masonry sub-structure which would confirm this.

This was most recently a bedroom and has been subdivided to include an en-suite bathroom.

This space has a suspended timber floor and probably a solum up to 600mm deep.

There is a wallhead chimney on the West wall that in total stands 7500mm high, approximately 3.0m above the wallhead.

This chimney has dressed sandstone margins, but lacks the harling seen on the adjacent chimney above Room Six. It is however of similar deign and potentially age.

The West window to the en-suite is of a different size and proportion to the others and quite likely a later addition as it includes a rendered margin which will probably be found to cover concrete dressings. In the 1926 drawing it is shown as a wall press. In the 1970 plans it exists as a window.

If, as suspected, the extension proposed in 1926 was built and then subsequently removed, this West chimney wall would have been extensively altered, becoming an internal wall, the extension entered via Room Eight.

However, the window in Room Eight shown as a doorway in the 1926 plans appears undisturbed externally and has a stone sill which one might have expected to have been lost and replaced in concrete.



## ROOM EIGHT

Description: Western return wing, centre.

Room Eight was the site of the most recent fire and is filled with debris, but it has distinct similarities to the construction seen in Room Two in the other symmetrical wing.

Hence the North wall backing onto Room Seven and the 350mm thick East wall to the courtyard have built-in timbers in a rubble matrix, comprising small stones and the suggestion of a king post in the same relationship. Unlike in Room Two, these have not been infilled in brick and so have been burnt away

The large opening to the courtyard has been altered in red brick at a later stage to create an additional window. The size of the original opening suggests an outbuilding doorway.

The East and West walls have been heightened at probably the same time as the alterations took place at Room Two, with the upper 1.0m rebuilt from lintel level in concrete block and timber safe lintels replaced with steel lintels.

The West wall differs in construction (and at 580mm, is much thicker than the East wall to the courtyard) and the yellow sandstone dressings to openings suggest that it is of an age with Rooms Seven and Three. Surviving finishes disguise any alterations made in 1926 to the North West window.

The South chimney cross wall, at 800mm, is thicker and in construction terms appears to differ from both the external walls and may be of a different age and appears to have been inserted into an older construction which may have then been subsumed into a later alteration as there is surviving harl on the chimney cross wall within Room Nine.

This chimney wall stops short of the wallhead and has dressed stones at the opening into Room Nine, with a recess on the opposite side of the fireplace. A lack of debris suggest that this chimney had been taken down before the fire. Its chimney has been blocked up. The 1926 plan suggests this area contained two bathrooms.

A notch in the masonry, where Room Eight meets the hall, suggest the line of a previous subdivision?



## ROOM NINE

Description: Western return wing.

In common with Room Eight, the wallhead to the external walls has been rebuilt from ceiling level upwards in concrete block and rubble stone over the bay. The bay window lintels replaced in concrete.

It is built in random rubble with yellow sandstone dressings and finished in a cement render.

The elevation drawing from the 1970s show the chimney on the cross wall in place, as well as a wallhead chimney on the West elevation (now closed up). It implies that this wing was re-roofed, suggesting that the rebuilding of the walhead date from this time.

There is a later horizontal window on the West elevation, altered in concrete brick.

The masonry build to the outside walls is consistent and at 580mm thick, is not dis-similar to Rooms Three and Two, particularly in the handling of the dressed openings.

On this basis, we suggest it is of a similar age, although potentially built later based on the harl on the chimney cross wall.



## HALL

Description: South west entrance corridor.

The external courtyard elevation is a symmetrical set piece with a shallow four-bay loggia or colonnade either side of the central pilastered projecting entrance flanked by narrow sidelights. Porch linked to outer bays by shallow loggia supported by slender Roman Doric columns; deep continuous entablature.

The central porch is slightly clumsy at the window sills either side of the door, suggesting alteration.

This external wall is built in coursed field rubble with sandstone dressings. Unlike other walls, it had horizontal timber grounds to take internal lath and plaster finishes, suggesting a different date.

There are risband joints at either end of this wall where this 'screen' junctions the wings, suggesting that it is a later addition and probably dates to nearer 1830 than 1760. This implies that the pilasters were also cut into the earlier wings at either end of the colonnade. If the courtyard side of Rooms Two and Eight were rebuilt when the colonnade was built, they presumably would have horizontal grounds?

There is the potential that the porch enclosure differs in age from the hall screen wall itself.

It is also possible the surviving finishes at the West end disguise variations either side of the porch where granite dressings can just be seen on one side but not the other.

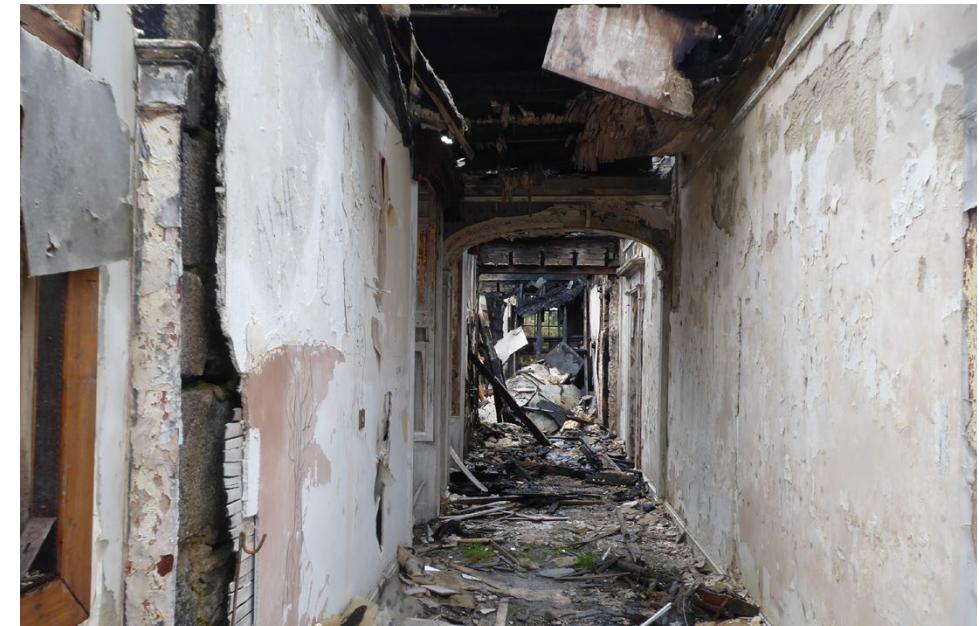
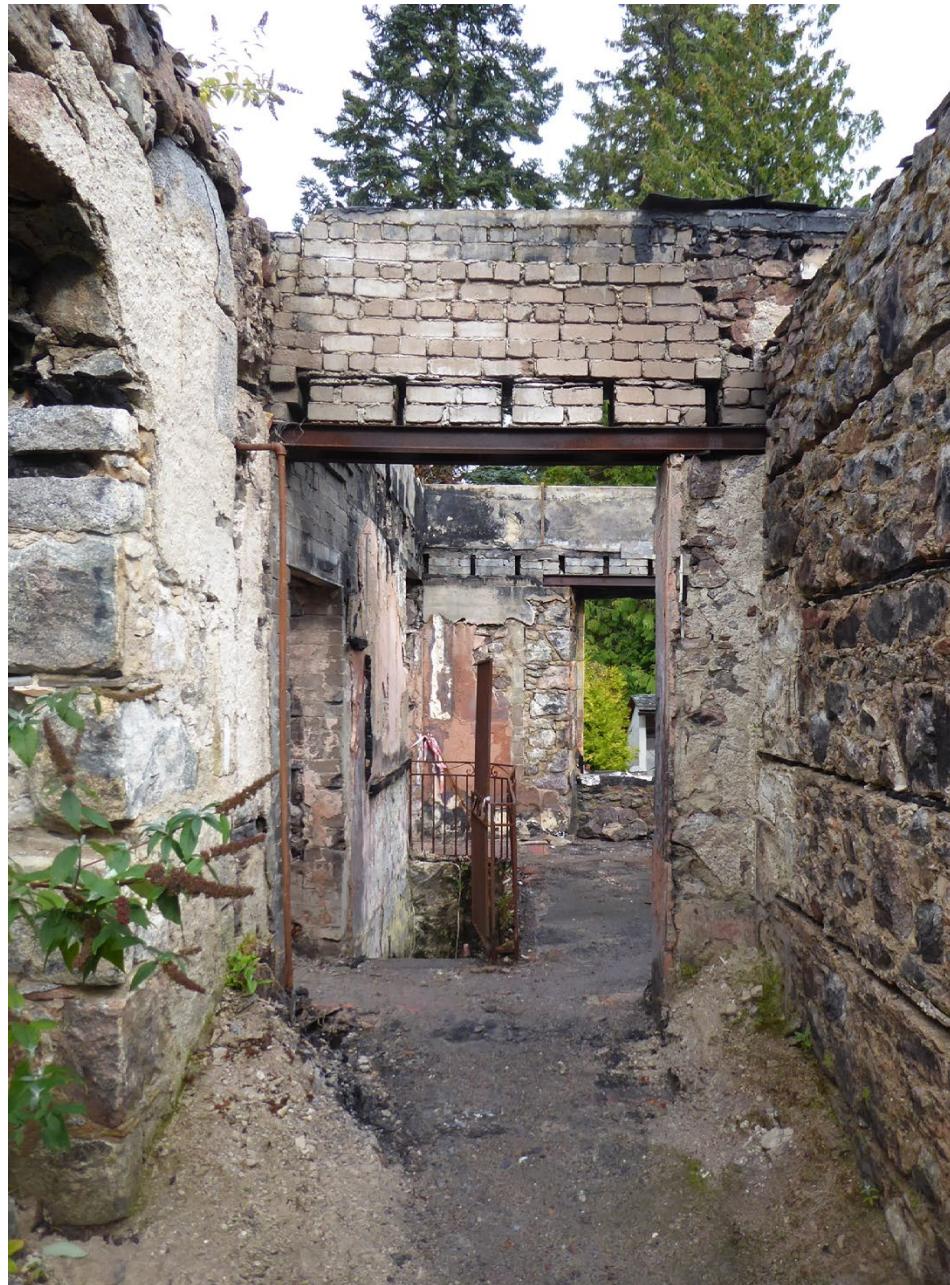
At the entrance there is a steel structure within the ceiling, suggesting alterations.

The opening into Room Four, exposed by the fire, appear cruder and may be an alteration.

As noted above in the text for Rooms Four to Six, there is evidence of old openings and external harl on what is now the North internal wall of this Hall/Corridor. Given the present triple opening to Room Five is on axis with the current entrance, we assume the older symmetrical but closed up openings to Room Five predate this 'screen' wall.

Good surviving evidence of period finishes within hall. The doorcase into Room Six from the corridor appears to be different in style, but in keeping with the period of the remainder of the hall.

Modern detailing to leadwork and colonnade soffit suggesting alterations. This is similar to the slightly projecting eaves detail used throughout where the eaves have been boxed in with a non-traditional detail. In turn, this suggests that the majority of the roof has been reworked at one time



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## Tentative Conclusions

A rubble built harled structure with granite dressings existed on the site close to the Government Road. It may have served as a staging post and overnight staging post, supply depot or barracks.

It may have had outbuildings of potentially timber construction which may have originally had masonry fireplace walls or had these added and which included a cellar. Together this formed a South facing courtyard.

Between 1760 and 1830 this was extended in various phases by the Fraser family, adding wings that incorporated earlier material and then extending these southwards.

These wings formalised the overall design and incorporated Palladian features and the channelled masonry that were made fashionable by William Adam's *Vitruvius Scoticus*, published between 1748-1812.

One of the later alterations (possibly early in the 19th century) was a more formal colonnade added to the courtyard elevation with associated alterations on the South side of the central block.

Later in the 19th century a two-storey service block was built over the side door on the East.

Photos from the early 20th century show multiple dormers, indicating an upper floor of limited accommodation.

An extension may have been built to the West in 1926, but this has now disappeared.

Major alterations took place from 1970 and again when ownership changed in 1992 through 1997.



## Appendices

A      Fabric Record Drawings

Drawing Title:  
**AS-EXISTING ELEVATIONS**

Drawing Status:

**AS EXISTING**

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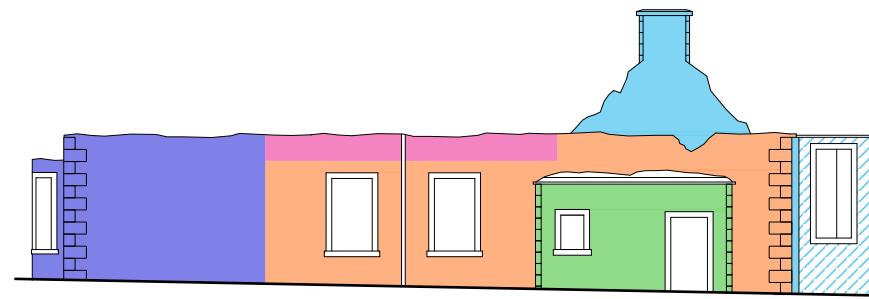
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**KEY**

blue pre 1760 original core

orange perhaps pre 1760 alterations

pink perhaps contemporary with original core

Possible phases between 1760 and 1830 under ownership of Colonel Archibald Fraser:

orange - phase 1

green - phase 2

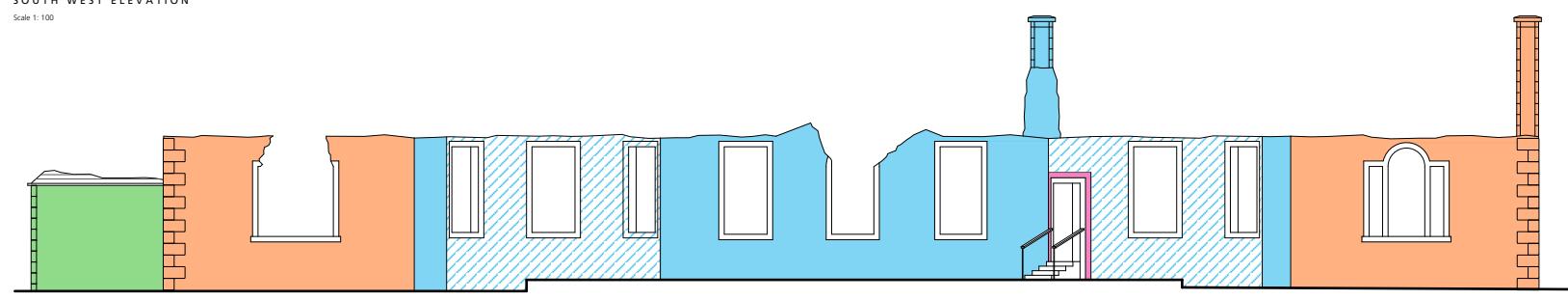
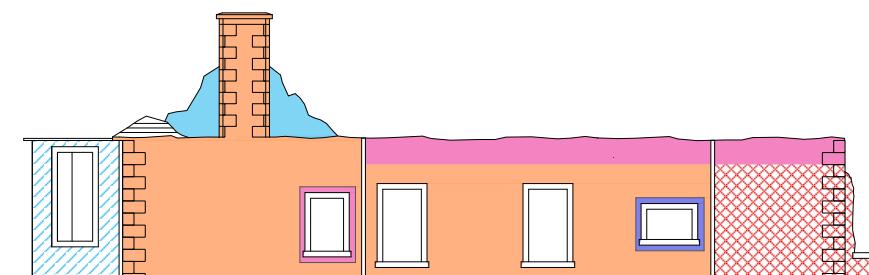
red - phase 3

purple - phase 4

green Victorian extension in place by 1903

pink 1970

blue 1996



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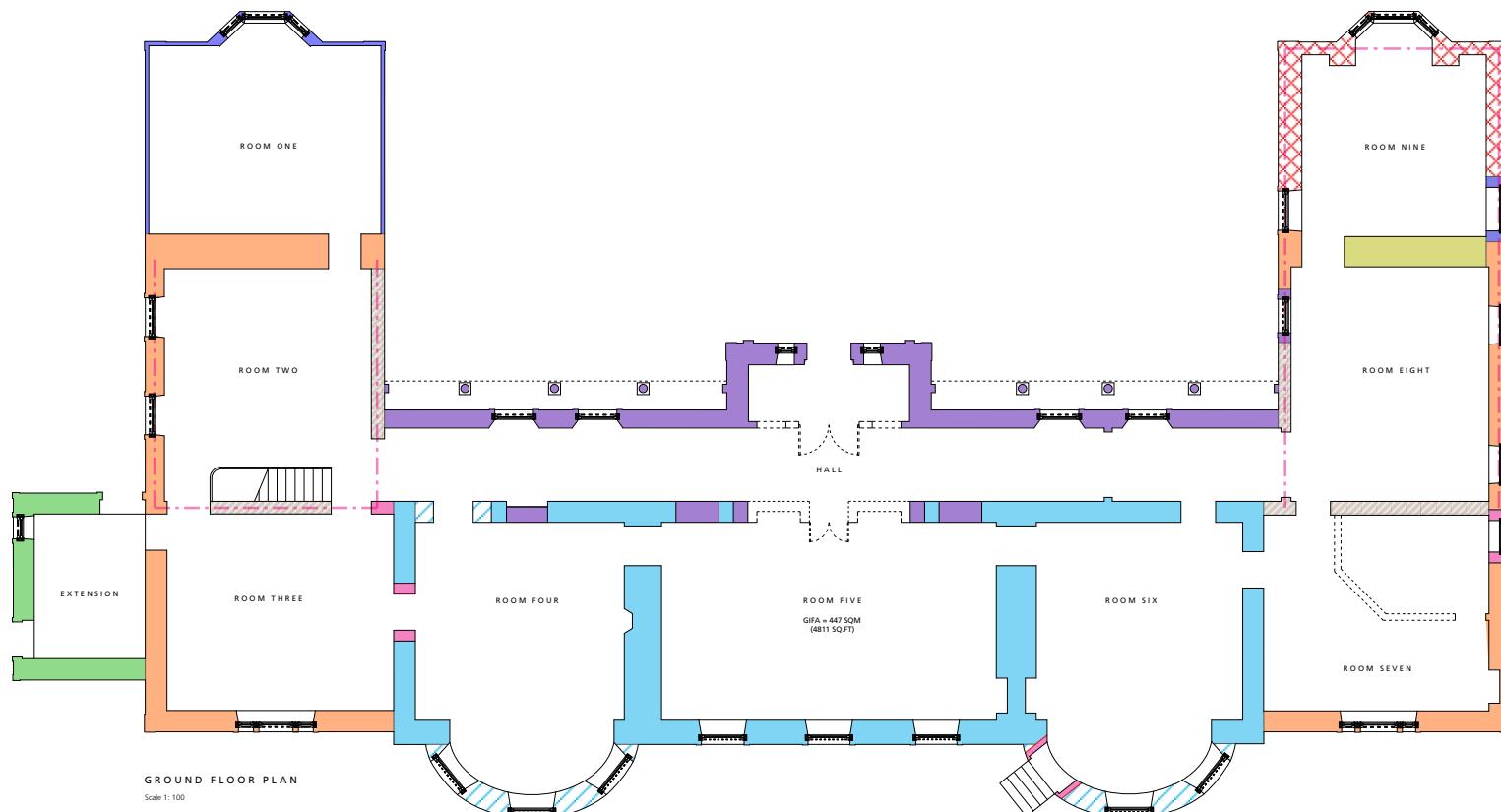
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5m



### KEY

█ pre 1760 original core

█ perhaps pre 1760 alterations

█ perhaps contemporary with original core

Possible phases between 1760 and 1830 under ownership of  
 Colonel Archibald Fraser:

█ - phase 1

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█ Victorian extension in place by 1903

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