



The Cricketers

Market End

Tree-ring date: 1403-29

Market hall or house

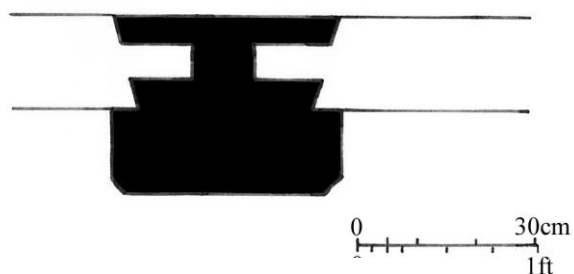
1575 rental: 'The Towne House'

Description

The Cricketers occupies a commanding position on the south side of the east end of West Street where the road narrows. The street frontage now has a brick façade which dates from a major refurbishment probably in the early 19th century, but within it is a substantial timber frame measuring about 6.7 x 7.1m. The building was recorded after a fire in 2010.

The frame was most clearly visible at ground floor where there are timbers of massive scantling. A large axial beam 16 inches wide, reinforced originally by braces at each end, runs east-west between the storey posts in the flank walls of the building. The mouldings on the soffit of this beam have been removed. None of the other visible timbers have mouldings apart from chamfers. The joists on the north side of the axial beam were originally jettied to the street. These joists, 7 inches wide, are jointed to the axial beam with housed centre tenons with spurred soffits.

The walls had narrow studding, with studs 6-7 inches wide at 16 inch centres. The posts do not have jowls. At the south-east corner, part of a compression brace could be seen, together with the wattle and daub infill

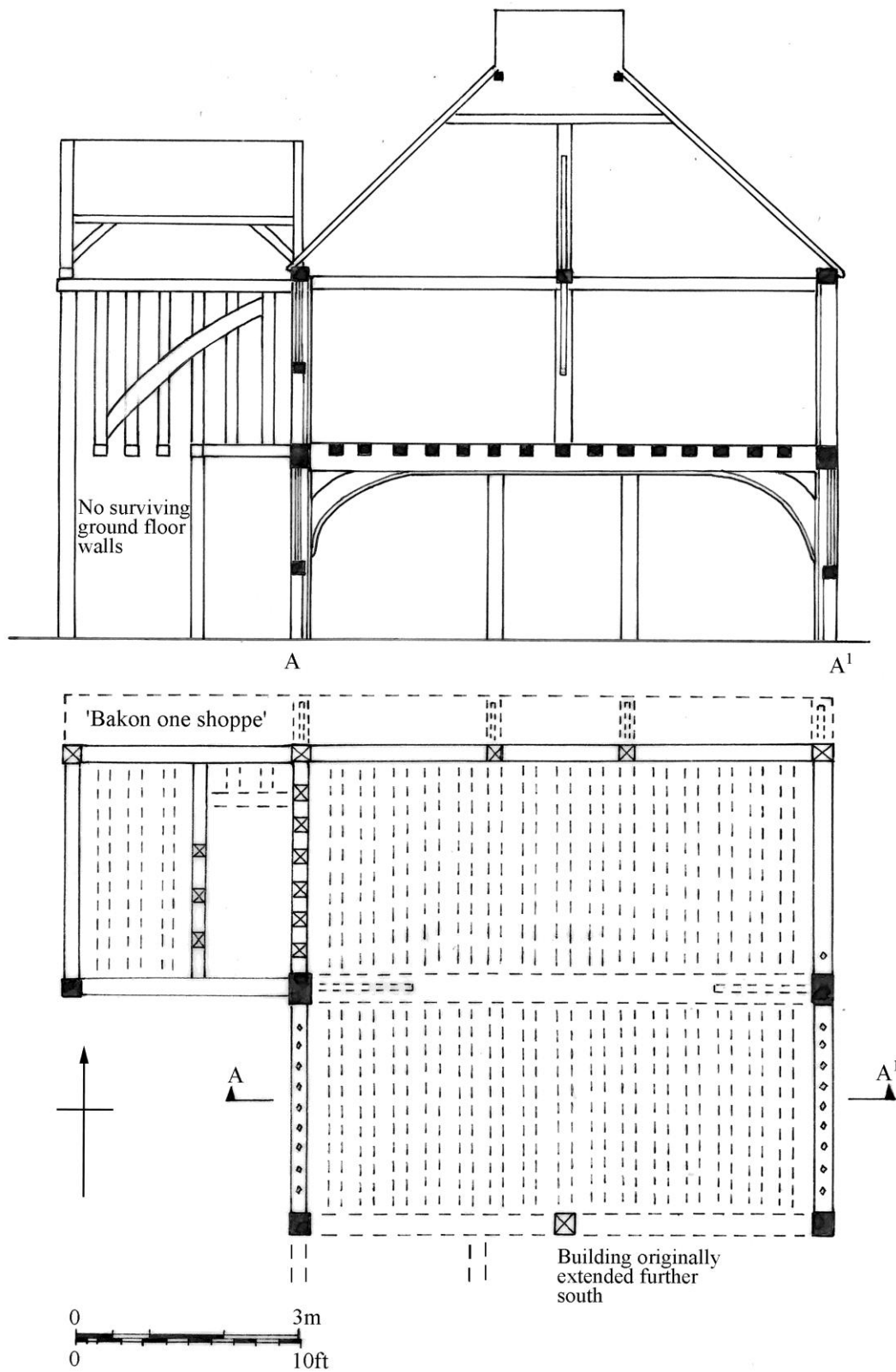


Typical floor joist joint

which was made with three vertical oak laths at centres of about 3 inches tied to three horizontal ones.

The west wall in its southern bay at ground floor had an unusually large window with nine large diamond mullions 4 inches square. A gap in the framing at the north end of this wall at first floor, together with a mortice for a door head in a stud, shows that there was a door here which must have been reached by an external stair. No evidence was found for an internal stair. In the southern bay of the west wall at this level, there was a shutter groove and three diamond mullions for a window.

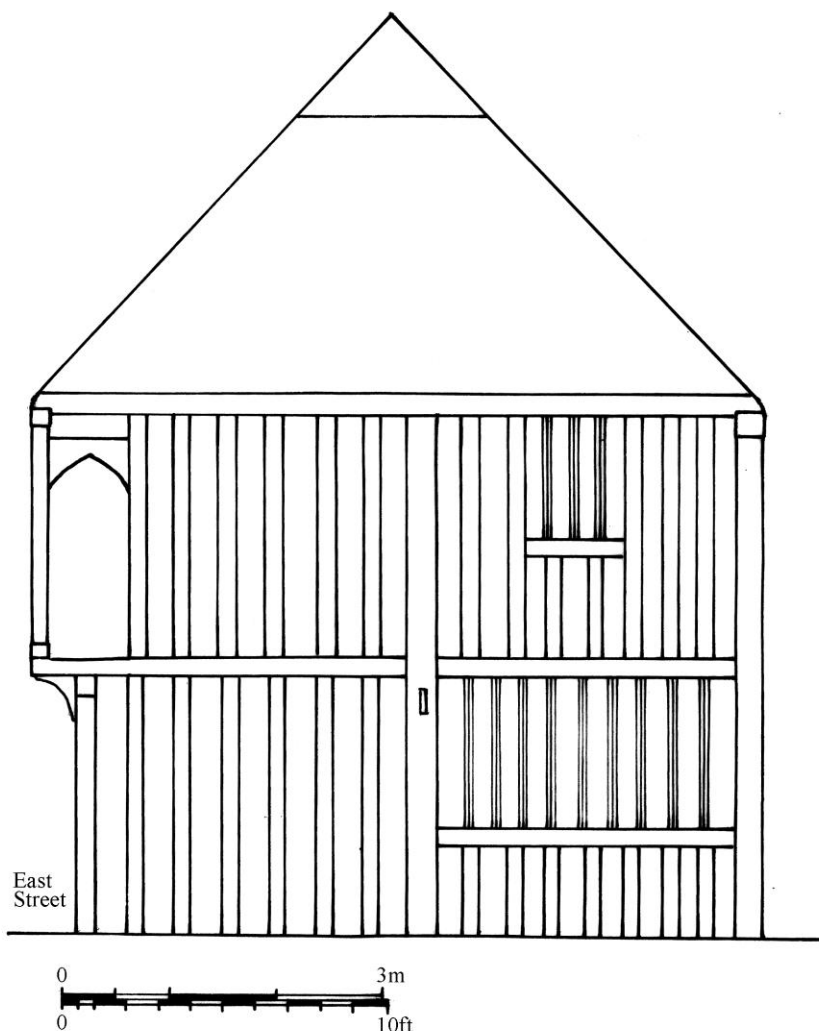
A large diamond mullion window like that of the west wall, existed in the south bay of the east wall at ground floor. There was a window, possibly of similar size, in the north bay as well. A mortice for one mullion was seen, but the mid rail here did not otherwise show clear evidence for studs or mullions, its soffit probably having been trimmed back. The east wall was fully framed at first floor with studwork, except at the north-east where there was a gap wide enough for a door, but more likely a window as there seemed to be a shutter groove in the top plate.



Plan and section of the Cricketers

The south wall is not easy to interpret, its fabric having been largely rebuilt. A mortice in the south face of the south-west corner post indicates that it extended

further south, and it seems that the wall has been reconstructed after alterations took place on this side. The top plate has been replaced: neither the central north-south tie-beam, nor the rafters, seem to be properly jointed with dovetails or bird's mouths. The mid rail has no mortices in its soffit for studwork, showing that this side was open at the ground floor. Lamb's tongue chamfers on its inner arris are of a type normally dated to the later 16th century, indicating that this timber is also a replacement. The rail is in poor condition, its top surface cut back and eroded, but it seems to comprise two timbers, a narrower one at the top 6ins deep forming a rebated edge over a larger one 13ins deep, as if for boarding or plaster placed against it. Below the level of the rebate, there are in the south face recesses and at least one mortice at regular one foot intervals. The wall above the mid rail included old studs with wattle and daub, but these timbers seemed reused or repositioned. These features have been seen as evidence for a pentice roof on this side of the building.



Reconstructed west elevation of the Cricketers.

The central north-south tie-beam has three mortices in its face for a crown post and braces rising to it, all now missing. In the soffit of the tie-beam, at its ends, are large mortices for braces. An eroded mortice in the post at the south end of the tie-beam could have housed a brace descending from the tie-beam. The existing roof is

pyramidal in form, rising to a short east-west ridge with gablets. The collar purlin of the crown post construction was fixed into mortices in the rafters in the east and west pitches. The attic space had been plastered, and painted on it at one point was a crude heart shaped cartouche enclosing the partially legible inscription 'These shambles repaired at theNehemiah'. The reference is to Nehemiah Lyde, a Hackney merchant who bought the lordship of the manors of Little and Great Coggeshall in 1693. An inscription formerly recorded his restoration of the Long Bridge in 1705 (Beaumont 1890, 110, 235).

A structure 3.3m long and corresponding in width to the front bay of the building was added to its north-west corner. It has substantial floor joists like the main building, with a trimmer for a stair trap. The mortice for this trimmer is set into the girt of the main building and cuts into one of the mortices for the studs (no longer existing) of the side wall, showing this structure was a later extension. On its south side, the joists were supported by a girt which was a reused timber (a former floor joist with mortices for relatively narrow joists with soffit tenons) and must have been a replacement for the original timbers at this point. None of its fabric survived at the ground floor. The south wall at first floor was fully framed up, with a tension brace, but the west wall had a central post with openings, presumably windows, either side of it. The structure had a small crown post roof, indicating it was built before the end of the 16th century.

Discussion

The Cricketers was clearly not a domestic building. Its structure, combined with documentary evidence, shows that it was one of Coggeshall's most important buildings. Its location indicates it must have had a role in the marketplace, and its form suggests a use as a market house or court hall, or indeed both. It dominated the Market Street triangle, with the meat market on the west side and the fish market on the east. Documents reveal it to have been the Town House, where the manorial court for Great Coggeshall would have held its sessions. When the infamous Coggeshall murderer George Craven was arraigned in 1600, it would have been at this building, prior to his march along East Street to the gallows. In the 18th century it was called the Old Hall, or the Shambles, and its drainage problems were mentioned in the Manorial Court Rolls for 1775 (Beaumont 1890, 120). It is also identified as the shambles or meat market. It is unclear whether this function was original to it, and how it was combined with the court use. The butchers' stalls may have been in it or around it, and indeed their location and arrangement no doubt changed through the centuries. It is difficult to imagine the shambles actually being housed in it, but that is the implication of the 17th-century inscription in the roof.

The evidence indicates that the ground floor was put to market use, and the first floor served for the court. The north side on the street was apparently virtually open sided, or else may have had shop windows either side of a large central entrance. The very wide mullion windows in the end walls would have made this space light and airy. The building extended further on the south side, but there is insufficient evidence to reconstruct this part of it, the best suggestion probably being that there was a pentice or lean-to roof which could have formed a canopy over stalls. Beaumont (1890, 233) records that the roof of the back part of the Shambles collapsed in 1686. If the collapse indeed affected the rear of the building worst, then this may well have been the time when the southern part was dismantled. The painted inscription formerly

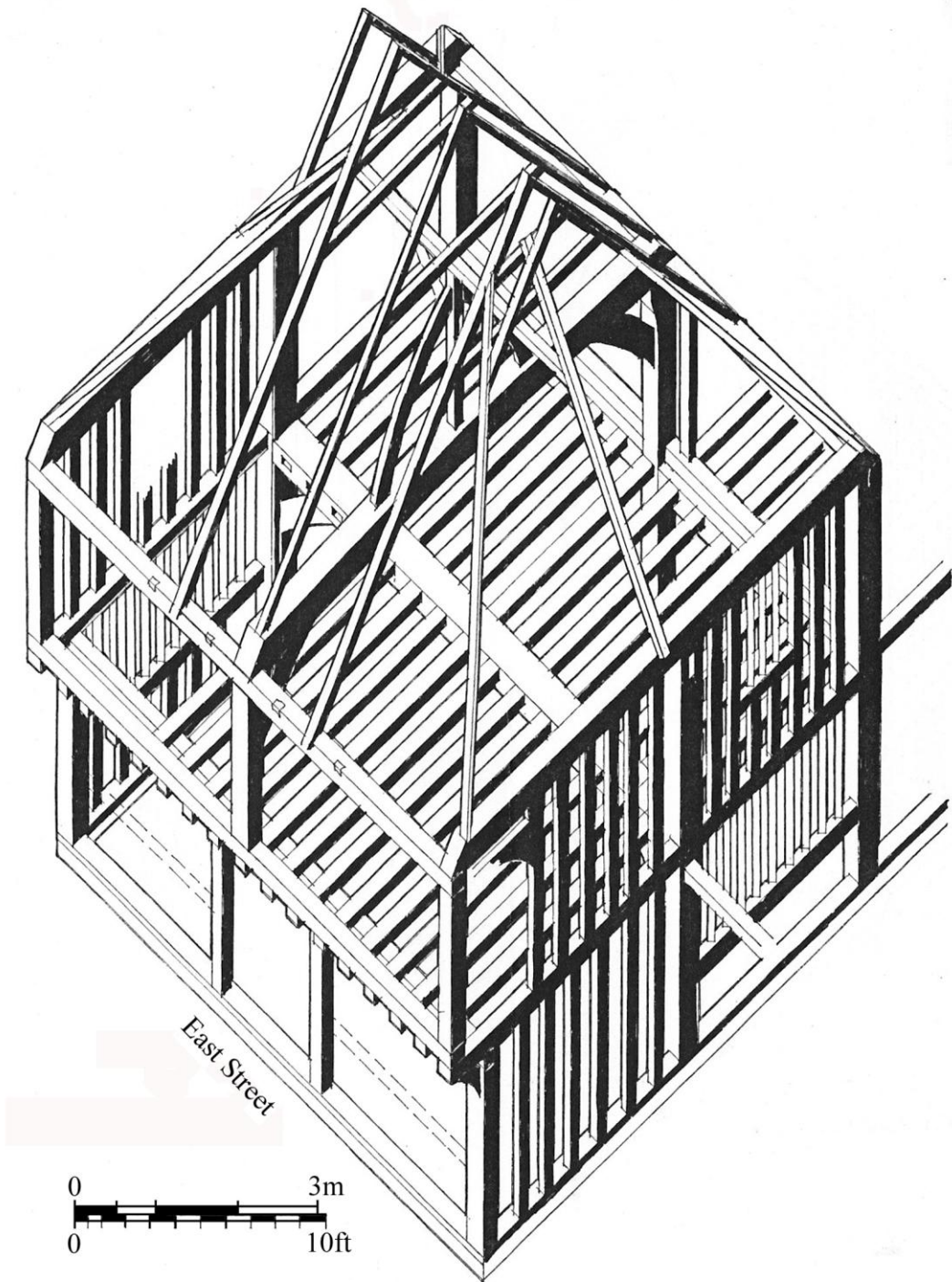
inside the roof (and no longer extant after the fire) shows that the Shambles were restored by Nehemiah Lyde, the lord of the manor, sometime after 1693.

Like the ground floor, the first floor was a single undivided space, large enough to house court sessions. Access seems to have been via an external stair on the west side to an upstairs door. This changed with the construction of the small building with a stair trap at the north-west corner which provided new covered access. The large two-light window in the side of this would have effectively formed a balcony which could have been used for announcements relating to the proceedings of the court. The ground floor of this structure was apparently a shop, its dimensions corresponding with those of the property listed by the 1575 rental on the west side of the Town House, the entry for which reads 'Bakon one Shopp by Indenture 10 feet *fynoure*'.

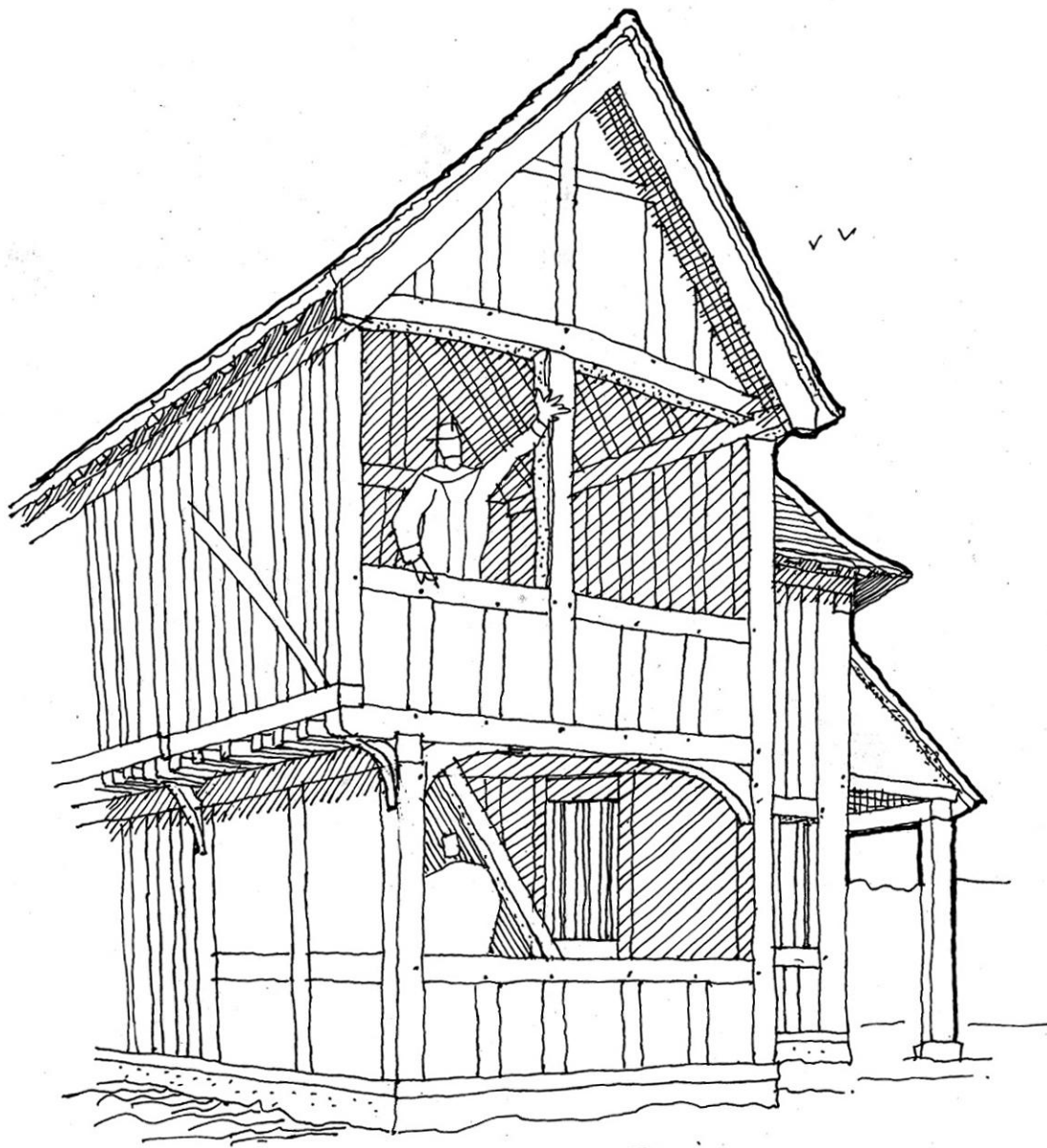
Later history

In the late 18th or early 19th century, the building was refurbished. As well being given the brick front, it was slightly enlarged so that it became a rectangle measuring 10.6 x 9.0m. A staircase was provided in the extension on the south-east (if it did not already exist). A neo-classical shop window with Corinthian columns was inserted on the east side. Three brick chimneys were built, one with a corner fireplace. Arched entrances and passages typical of the provincial Regency style were formed inside. The windows are all small pane sliding sash with narrow glazing bars and no horns. These changes must have occurred about the time that it became a public house. It acquired a more commonplace appearance, with most people accepting it as a Georgian building and not being at all cognizant of its extreme age or its seminal role in the history and development of the town.

On its west and south side are modern extensions relating to the use of the building as a public house. The 1st edition OS map of 1875 shows a building on the west side of the Cricketers and a large one, probably stabling and outbuildings, to the south, both lost. In 2010, the public house was damaged by arson and closed, its roof being the part which suffered worst.



Axonometric reconstruction of the Town House



Reconstruction of how the east side of the Town House would have appeared when the shop was added to it.