

BOLTON HALL
(THE SOUTHERN HOUSE)
EDLINGHAM, NORTHUMBERLAND

AN HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT
SEPTEMBER 2020



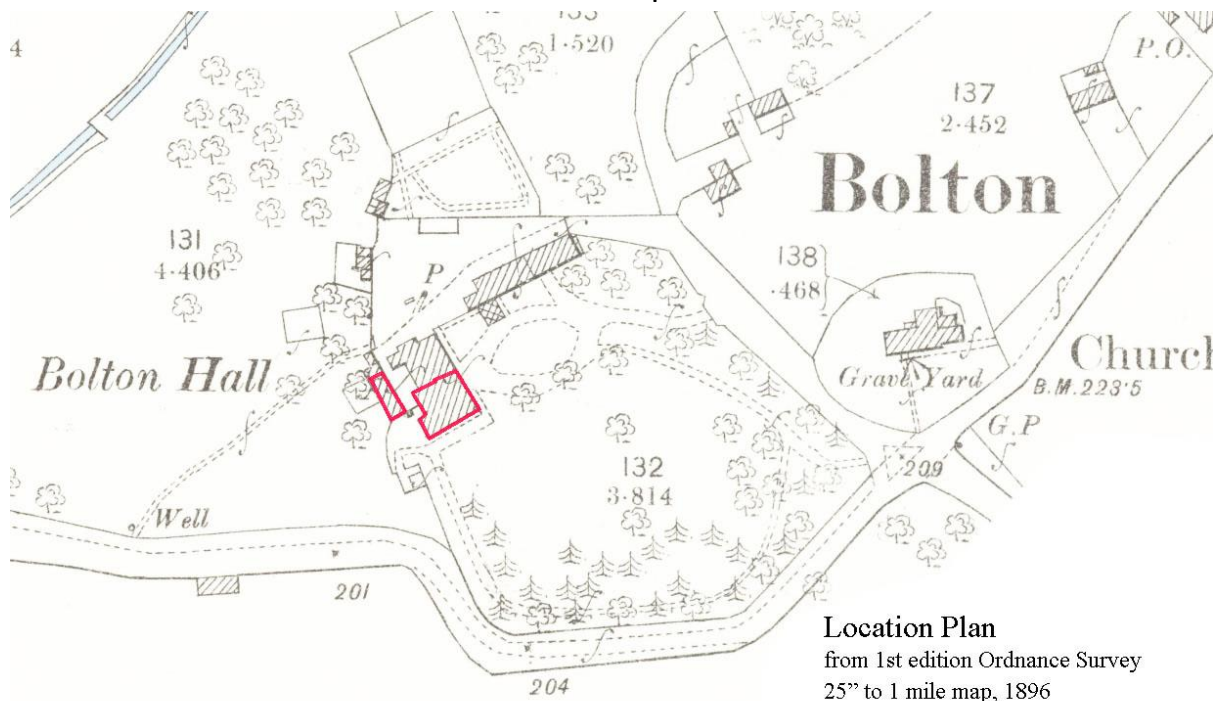
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BOLTON HALL (THE SOUTHERN HOUSE)

Bolton is a chapelry in the parish of Edlingham, and lies 7 km west of Alnwick in Northumberland. Bolton Hall (NU 10494 13659) is a small country house, which lies 120 m west of the medieval chapel.



In the medieval period Bolton was known for its hospital, founded by Robert de Ros in the early 13th century, which at the Dissolution came, together with the manor, into the possession of the Collingwood family. Bolton Hall, then known as Bolton House, is said to have been at one time a dower house for Shawdon Hall. In 1697 the Manor of Bolton was sold by John Gascoigne to William Brown of Ewart, who in 1702 was [High Sheriff of Northumberland](#). In 1748 his grandson Nicholas Brown was also high sheriff, and then of his son-in-law, Matthew Forster, another high sheriff of Northumberland in 1765. After his death his sister Dorothy sold the house to William Burrell; in 1904 a Captain W M Burrell was in residence¹. The Newcastle architect John Dobson is said to have been responsible for the South Wing in the early 19th century²

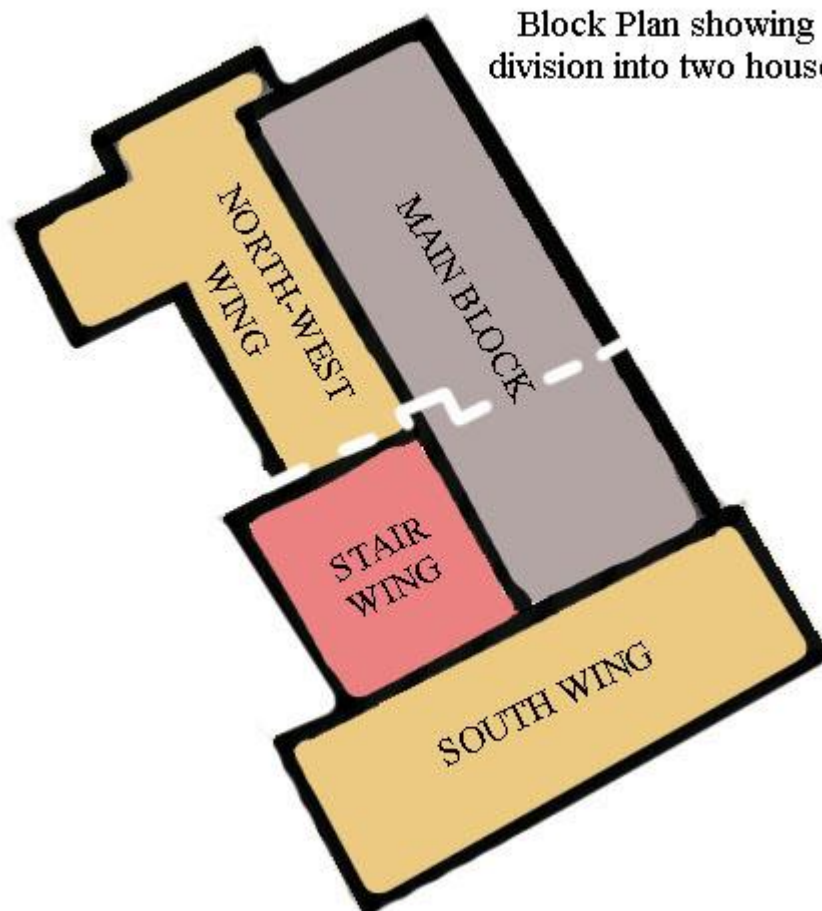
¹ [Northumberland County History VII \(1904\) 226](#)

² Cited in the List Description (and referenced to Dobson's Obituary in the [Newcastle Daily Journal](#) 16 Jan 1865), but not mentioned in the list of Dobson's works by Faulkner and Gregg (1987) [John Dobson Newcastle Architect 1787-1865](#)

The house is approached from the east; its main axis is in fact north-west to south-east, but for the sake of simplicity in the following description this is taken as north-south. It is now divided into two properties, and this report deals only with the southern, which comprises the South Wing, the Stair Wing and south end of the Main Block, the latter being the earliest part of the building.

BOLTON HALL

Block Plan showing division into two houses



Description

The East Front.

The Main Block, to the right, is of five bays (only the first two are part of the Southern House) and two storeys, built of close-joined squared stone with ashlar dressings, with a graduated Lakeland slate roof. The wall has a chamfered plinth. The doorway is in the first (southernmost) bay; 20th century glazed doors are set in an architrave surround under a pedimented hood carried on big moulded brackets. The bays are slightly irregular; the openings in the first are set close to the south end of the wall, and in the second bay the ground floor window is slightly wider than the others and set a little to the south of the one above; there is a longer gap between openings of the fourth and fifth bays than the others. The doorway in the fifth bay (to the Northern

House) has original been a window. The windows are all in similar architraves to that of the door, and are renewed four-pane sashes (with horns). Some of the large blocks of their surrounds do not course in with the adjacent masonry, so they might be insertions. There is certainly disturbed fabric around and below the third-bay ground-floor window (now part of the Northern House) which seems likely to have been the original position of the doorway now in the southern bay. The roof has a series of four tall stacks (two to the Southern House) to the ridge, all of ashlar, with moulded cornices.



Set forward slightly to the left is the rather taller east end of the South Wing, one bay wide and two storeys high, built of similar close-jointed/ashlar stone with slightly different more vertical tooling. It has a square plinth, a broad band to the first floor, smaller sill bands to the windows of both floors, and a moulded eaves cornice below the hip-ended Welsh slate roof. It has a single central window to each floor, with a renewed four-pane sash.

The South Front

Looking out across a broad lawn, this is the show front of the house, and typical of John Dobson's Classical work in being relatively plain but of high quality. It is of five bays and two storeys, with a central part-glazed doorway between plain pilasters carrying an open pedimented hood, with four-pane sashes as on the east. The doorway and also the first-floor windows in the second and fourth bays have no function other than in external appearance, and do not appear internally.



The West Elevation

Like the east front this is in two parts. Set forward on the right is the west end of the South Wing, which is exactly like the east end. To the left is the Stair Wing, which is of two bays and three storeys (although still a little lower than the adjacent South Wing). In the angle between the two parts is a small buttress-like projection, with a sloped top a metre or so below the eaves. This could be taken as a relic of an earlier structure, but its stonework courses in well with the South Wing, and it has the same square plinth. The Stair Wing is built of coursed squared stone, with cut angle quoins, except for the top floor, which has no quoins and looks to be an addition; this is especially noticeable

on the north gable, where there is a clear horizontal break-of-build with greyer stone above. At ground-floor level the west wall has from left to right (north to south) a large 20th century window, a doorway with a recent lintel but older alternating-block jambs³, and a small window to the under-stair bathroom, with some brickwork in its north jamb. On the first floor is a large four-pane sash window in a surround with irregular upright blocks in its jambs, and the large round-arched stair window, again a four-pane sash, with impostes and keystone to its head. On the added top floor are two smaller square windows, now blocked, with four-pane sashes simulated in paint. The north gable of the Stair Wing has a moulded kneeler of 18th-century character (perhaps re-set) and a truncated stack to the gable.



West face of the Stair Wing, showing added top floor in greyer stone

³ Disturbed masonry adjacent to and above its south jamb probably relates to the removal of the jamb of a gateway into the yard, the other side of which survives attached to the Outbuilding (see separate description)

The Interior

The interior of the house has suffered little major alteration since the earlier 19th century (apart from being divided into two properties, and the loss of the first-floor fireplaces). Most of the doors are of six fielded panels, set in moulded architraves, and the windows have fielded-panel shutters and are set in recess usually carried down to the floor. Most rooms have old plaster moulded cornices.

The front door of the house opens into the Sitting Room, which has a good modillion cornice; an old part-glazed inner doorway hangs on the line of the internal face of the east wall. At the north end of the room is a fireplace in a stone architrave with beaded mouldings, flanked by a pair of shelved recesses with moulded architraves; at the south end of the west wall is a segmental-arched opening, behind plaster, into the stair hall.



Sitting Room, looking north-east

On the south of the stair hall are a pair of doorways into the principal; reception rooms which take up the ground floor of the South Wing, the

Drawing Room to the east and the Dining Room to the west, both of which have skirting boards and dado rails. The Drawing Room has a stone fireplace very like that of the Sitting Room; the doorway to the left and shelved recess to the right have swept cornices.



Drawing Room fireplace and doorway to hall, with corniced architrave

The Dining Room has a more recent grey marble fireplace, [perhaps of the later 19th century, with to the left (west) a shelved recess with a triangular arched head. On the north of the Stair Hall is a doorway into a small room/lobby with a blocked three-centred arch in its north wall, and a doorway on the west into the Kitchen, which has been completely modernised.

The stair is of open-well type, with open strings, simple moulded newels, carved tread ends, two tick balusters per tread and a moulded and ramped handrail which sits uneasily on the newels. Beneath the stair is a doorway into a small understair room, now a toilet. At first floor level there is a frieze with Greek Key ornament, which abuts awkwardly on the surround of the big stair



window, suggesting that it is secondary. The surround has pilasters and a moulded archivolt with impostes and key-block. The stair rises to a landing; the horizontal balustrade ends against the north wall with a newel post rather than a pilaster, suggesting that it is re-used.

Stair Hall looking west

From the east end of the north wall of the landing opens a lobby with three doorways. That on the east opens into a north-south passage, with an inserted cupboard (re-using an 18th century two-panel door) on the south and a 4-panel door on the east into the bedroom above the Sitting Room. The passage (which has a moulded cornice) was blocked at its north end when the house was sub-divided; its south end section, beyond the inserted cupboard, is accessed by a door of six field panels, on old strap hinges, at the south end of the west wall of the bedroom. On the east of the bedroom the two windows have window seats in their internal recesses.

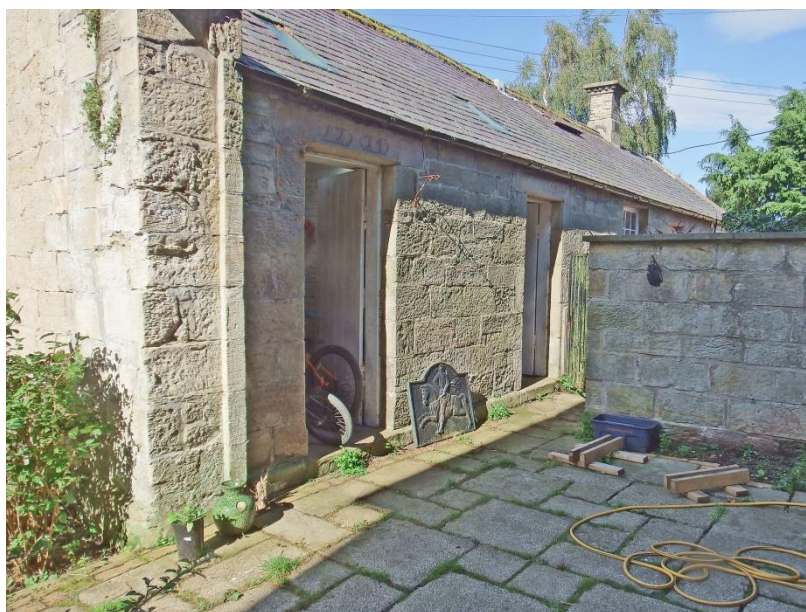
A hatch in the roof of the passage gives access to the roof-space; in the space between a full-height cross wall on the north and the taller South Wing wall on the south is a roof of four narrow bays, with fairly rustic collar-beam trusses which have been oddly adapted by the removal of the lower parts of their western principals, and substitutions of new timbers at a shallower angle, which clearly took place when the adjacent Stair Block was heightened.

Returning to the lobby, a door on the north leads into a modern bathroom in what appears to have been a small dressing room, opening off the bedroom to the west by a three-centred arch, now infilled. A door on the west of the lobby leads into the bedroom, which has a window set beneath its window.

From the main landing a further straight stair rises to the south, to the first floor of the South Wing, which is set c 2.5 m above the level of that of the rest of the house. This stair has very similar detail to the main stair below, and seems almost certainly to be the former top flight of the latter, re-positioned when the South Wing was added in the early 19th century. The main stair hall has a dentil cornice, and there are also dentils to a the cornice over the broad opening at the head of the stair, which is flanked by half-round Tuscan pilasters, and to the lobby beyond, which has doorways into the two large end bedrooms and a smaller central one. The end bedrooms have shallow projections from their north walls where there used to be fireplaces, and the western also has an old door at the south end of its east wall in the central room, which may have originally been a dressing room.

The Outbuilding.

This is a single storey north-south range (running parallel to the house) on the west side of its rear yard (right) . It is built of squared roughly-tooled stone, with Welsh slates on the front (east) slope of its roof and smaller thick Scottish slates on the rear. The front wall



is of five irregular bays; the first, second and fourth have boarded doors, in narrow chamfered surrounds, the third a 16pane sash window (renewed, with horns) and the fifth a pair of modern boarded garage doors. The southernmost doorway re-uses an old lintel, from a slightly wider opening, with the date '1734', the figures raised within two sunk nowt-ended panels. On the ridge between the fourth and fifth bays is a stack with a stone base, a shaft of engineering brick with a cogged cornice.

The south end of the building is set at a slightly skew angle; at its east end is the rebated jamb of a former yard gateway. The rear wall has only one small

window, set south-of-centre, with a chamfered lintel clearly re-used from a wider opening.



Re-used '1734' doorhead

Internally the walls are whitewashed, and under-drawn ceilings conceal the roof structure. The southernmost bay is divided from the remainder of the building by a thin brick full-height cross-wall. The second bay, which has a flagstone floor, has old stone benches on the south and west, with at the south-east corner a deep bowl (right), pendulous below a square top slab, neatly tooled and carved from a single piece of stone. Between the second and third bay is a thick stone wall, with what looks to be an inserted opening at its centre. The third and fourth bays are a single large room, now with a concrete floor. At the east end of the north wall is a projecting hearth which has what is probably an older moulded stone re-used as its lintel, and a brick set-pot added to the west; behind this, at the west end of the wall, is a blocked opening that seems to have had a crude round arch cut into a single large lintel.



a

The Development of the House

Bolton Hall is quite a difficult building to interpret. The Main Block is clearly the oldest part of the house as it stands today. It is possible that it may be dated by the doorhead re-used in the North West Wing (the back door to the Northern House) which has the inscription B



above WM, above 1689⁴, (above) but if so where was this originally? The architectural details of the Main Block, with its central doorway more recently moved to the south end, would all tally with an early 18th century date. Did the '1689' doorhead come from some part of the house demolished when the North-West Wing was built, in the early 19th century?

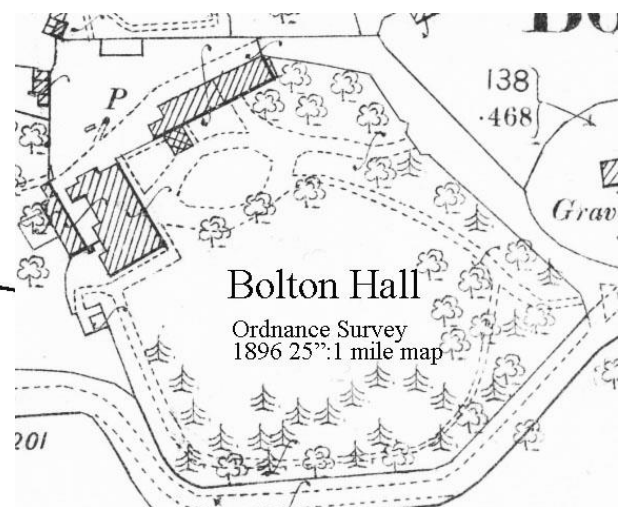
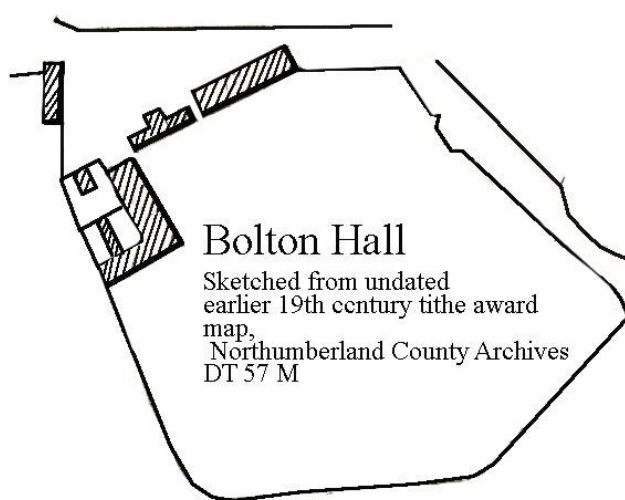
The Stair Wing is clearly an addition to the building, and could be of the later 18th century. Its position, at the south end of the Main Block, hints that it may have served an earlier part of the building replaced by the 19th century South Wing, as does the positioning of the openings of the southernmost bay of the Main Block, hard up against its south end.

The Stair Wing might originally have had a roof gabled east-west; this is suggested by the fabric change in its north gable, which looks to have been raised from a horizontal eaves line rather than an earlier lower gable. Quite soon after it was built a new upper floor was added, and the roof reconstructed in its present form. The stair itself, of broadly late 18th/early 19th century character but with little dateable detail, may go with this remodelling,

⁴ These may stand for William and Margaret Brown, but the date is a mystery, eight years before William Brown purchased the Manor of Bolton; is it a retrospective commemoration of the date of their marriage?.

and probably had an additional flight serving the low rooms (servant accommodation) in the upper floor of the wing.

Then came the construction of the South Wing, probably replacing an earlier part of the house⁵. The ascription to John Dobson seems likely, but its precise date is a little uncertain as he worked over a considerable part of the 19th century. He reconstructed the stair into its present form, and probably added the North-West Wing, to provide additional accommodation for the servants displaced from the top floor of the Stair Wing. The Outbuilding may be part of this scheme of works as well.



The 1st edition Ordnance Survey 6":1 mile map of c 1860 shows the footprint of the house much as it is today. More recent changes have been relatively minor; what were probably 12-pane sash windows were replaced by the present 4-pane sashes (perhaps in the earlier 20th century) and the house was sub-divided into the present two properties perhaps in the 1970s. It seems likely that this was the time that the front door was moved from the central to the southern bay of the east front, and a new doorway was created in the northernmost bay.

Peter F Ryder September 2020

⁵ An undated early-19th century plan of Bolton Township Plan (Northumberland County Record Office, ref DT 57M) appears to show the building in an earlier form, in an L-plan with the south wing extending as far as the western property boundary (which it now ends short of), but it is difficult to be certain about its accuracy or detail.

Appendix I

Bolton Hall Listing

Small country house, now divided into 2 dwellings. North-east range late C17, refenestrated and stair wing added in mid-C18; south block (replacing earlier structure) and north-west range early C19, probably by John Dobson. C17/18

parts squared stone with cut dressings, south block squared tooled stone, north-west range squared stone with tooled-and-margined quoins and dressings. Welsh slate roofs except for blue Scottish slates on north-east range

South front 2 storeys, 5 bays, symmetrical. Plinth, sill and 1st floor bands, moulded eaves cornice. Central old half-glazed door flanked by panelled pilasters carrying open-pedimented hood; 4-pane sash windows. Hipped roof.

East elevation in 2 sections: Left bay with similar detail. Older right part 5 irregular bays; rusticated quoins at right end. At left C20 glazed double doors in open-pedimented classical doorcase moved from centre bay; at right end a half-glazed door with radial overhead. 4-pane sash windows in inserted architraves. Coped right gable on moulded kneelers; 4 tall stepped-and-corniced stacks, to ridge and right end.

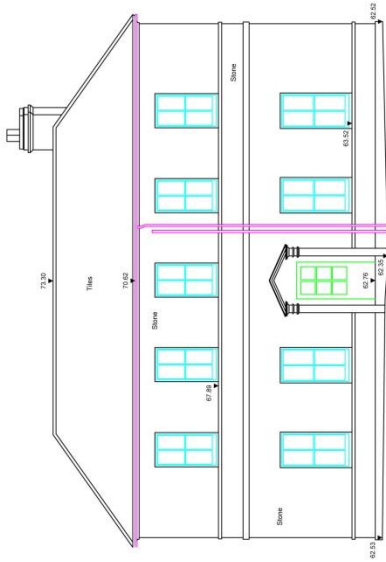
West elevation has 3-storey 2-bay central stair wing, with round-arched stair window and trompe l'oeil windows beneath eaves; early C19 lower left part with

boarded door and 10-pane overhead in re-set moulded surround with lintel B

inscribed W M (William & Mary Brown) 1689. 12- and 16-pane sash windows.

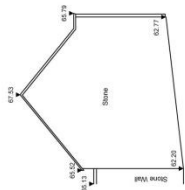
Interior: South part has sitting room with c18 moulded stone fireplace, and enriched modillion cornice. Two high rooms with moulded cornices in south block; (the south door does not relate to any internal feature). Dogleg stair with stick balusters, ramped handrail and carved tread ends; stair window has panelled surround and pilasters. Greek key frieze at 1st floor level, dentil cornice. Upper part of stair re-set as straight stair to 1st floor south block; stairhead screen on half columns.

North part: Dining room has chamfered segmental-arched fireplace and panelled dado. Fielded-panel doors, shutters, some panelling and old grates. Segmental vaulted cellars with arched brick wine bins.



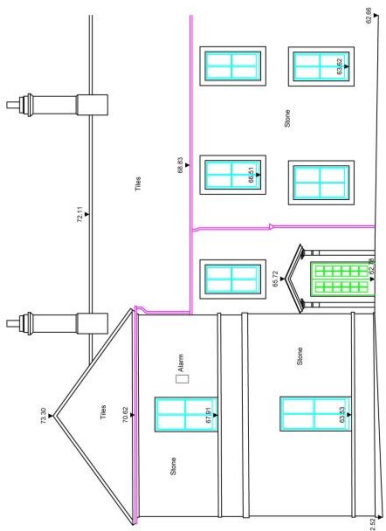
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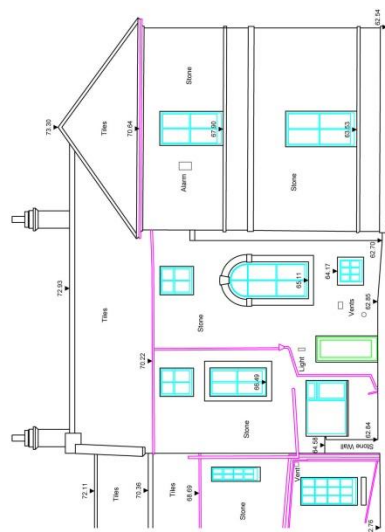
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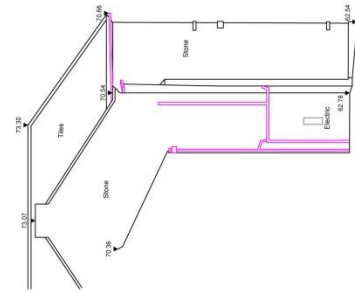
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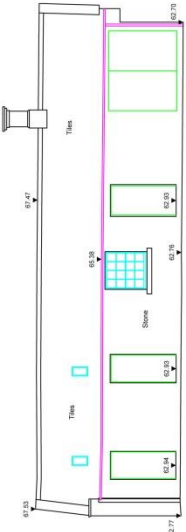
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Elevation 4

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Elevation 5

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