

Hutton + Rostron Environmental Investigations Limited

Grandpont House, Oxford: Chimney investigation

Site note 1 for December 2023-January 2024, job no. 160-42

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES

Hutton + Rostron Environmental Investigations Limited carried out site visits to Grandpont House, Abingdon Road, Oxford during December 2023-January 2024 in accordance with instructions from Xavier Bosch by email on 15 January 2024. Drawings provided by Studio Stassano were used for the identification of structures. For the purpose of orientation in this report, the building was taken as facing west onto Abingdon Road

1.2 AIM

The aim of this survey was to investigate chimneys for construction, condition and viability for refurbishment. Recommendations are provided for remedial works as part of the proposed refurbishment scheme

1.3 LIMITATIONS

This survey was confined to the accessible structures. Concealed timbers and cavities have been investigated where necessary by the use of high-powered fibre optics. The condition of concealed materials may be deduced from the general condition and moisture content of the adjacent structure. Only demolition or exposure work can enable the condition of timber to be determined with certainty, and this destroys what it is intended to preserve. Specialist investigative techniques are therefore employed as aids to the surveyor. No such technique can be 100 per cent reliable, but their use allows deductions to be made about the most probable condition of materials at the time of examination. Structures were not examined in detail except as described in this report, and no liability can be accepted for defects that may exist in other parts of the building. We have not inspected any parts of the structure which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible and we are therefore unable to report that any such part of the property is free from defect or in the event that such part of the property is not free from defect it will not contaminate and/or affect any other part of the property. Any design work carried out in conjunction with this report has taken account of available pre-construction or construction phase information to assist in the management of health and safety risks. The sample remedial details and other recommendations in this report are included to advise and inform the design team appointed by the client. The contents of this report do not imply the adoption of the role of Principal Designer by H+R for the purposes of the Construction (Design and Management) (CDM) Regulations 2015. No formal investigation of moisture distribution was made

2 STAFF ON SITE AND CONTACTS

2.1 H+R STAFF ON SITE

Tim Jordan
Ellen Wise

2.2 PERSONNEL CONTACTED

Mr Xavier Bosch
House residents

3 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As described within attachments, chimney systems were a mixture of types, ages and condition. A few flues remained in use although most were redundant and some stacks had been demolished entirely. Typically, there were defects related to weathering damage of external stacks and inadequate detailing for through-ventilation of flue voids in order to disperse moisture accumulations

Recommendations are detailed within attachments. Generally, the external stacks require varying degrees of repair and all flue risers are recommended for sweeping-out to clear debris and reinstate at least a trickle through-movement of air. There are various areas where further consultation is required in relation to potential structural defects, fire performance and potential asbestos materials. H+R can provide further consultancy advice to the project team as design details are developed for the chimneys and other elements of building fabric

4 H+R WORK ON SITE

- 4.1** H+R inspected specified parts of the building fabric using all available access and exposure
- 4.2** H+R deployed visual, tactile and specialist equipment techniques to interrogate the fabric

5 PROPOSED ACTION BY H+R

- 5.1** H+R will advise on repair and conservation, so as to minimise the risk of decay after refurbishment if instructed
- 5.2** H+R will advise on remedial detailing, so as to minimise the risk of damp and decay problems after refurbishment if instructed
- 5.3** H+R will advise on conservation of original fabric with regard to damp, decay and salt damage, as necessary and if instructed
- 5.4** H+R will review proposed remedial details as these become available if instructed
- 5.5** H+R will return to site to inspect sample remedial details if instructed
- 5.6** H+R will liaise with conservation and historic building authorities, if instructed, so as to ensure the cost-effective conservation of original fabric

6 INFORMATION REQUIRED BY H+R

- 6.1** H+R require up-to-date copies of project programmes, as these become available
- 6.2** H+R require copies of up-to-date lists of project personnel and contact lists as these become available
- 6.3** H+R require copies of proposed remedial details for comment as these become available
- 6.4** H+R should be informed as a matter of urgency if further significant water penetration occurs onto site; so that advice can be given on cost-effective remedial measures, to minimise the risk of cost or programme overruns and so as to minimise the risk of damp or decay problems during the latent defect period

7 ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

- 7.1** H+R require formal instructions for further investigations and consultancy on this project
- 7.2** H+R require confirmation of distribution of digital and printed copies of reports and site notes

Attachment A

SCHEDULE OF OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

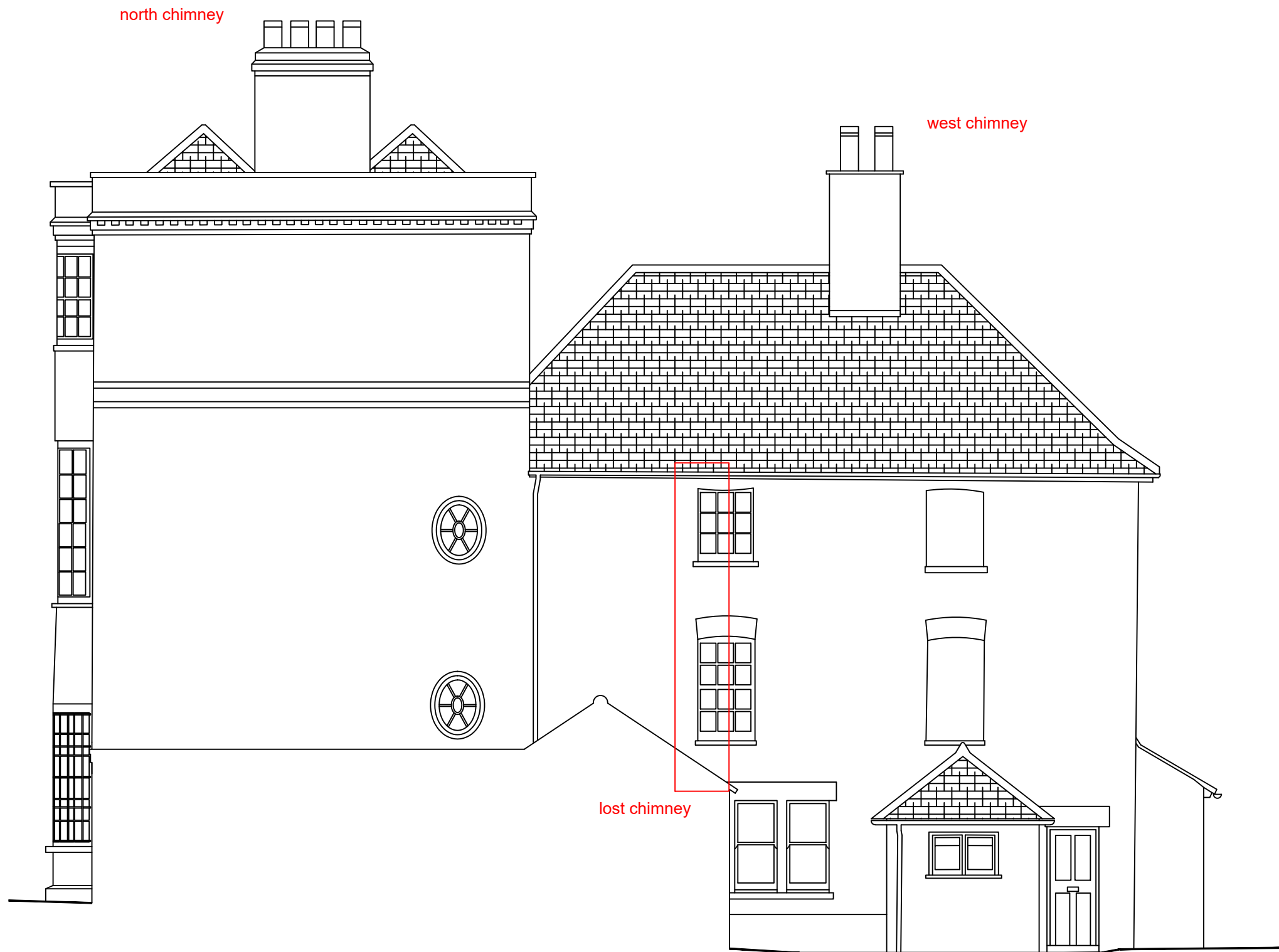
REFERENCE	ITEM	OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS	CLIENT COMMENTS
SN1.1 MAIN HOUSE, NORTH CHIMNEY				
SN1.1.1	Main house North chimney External stack	<p>4no. flues, assumed to have originally served two fireplaces at second floor, one fireplace at first floor and one fireplace at ground floor. Stack measured 2300mm high and 1860x600mm in section</p> <p>Internal fireplaces were lost or dis-used which limited airflow within the flue risers</p> <p>Pots were not fitted with cowls which allowed direct water penetration</p> <p>The brickwork stack above parapet level has been re-built (apparently within the last 150 years). Round yellow clay pots were also non-original. Presumably the re-build was to correct previous material deterioration in the original stack. The pronounced southward lean of the stack was suspected to be a recurrent defect which may have affected the original stack too. Leaning chimneystacks can develop by the effects of rain and flue gasses ('sulphate attack') but in this case it might also relate to movement of the timber frame which supports the north gable brickwork</p> <p>Flaunching mortar and pointing was cement-based. This has cracked and fallen-off in recent decades</p>	<p><i>H+R recommend that this stack is taken-down to parapet level and re-built to match the geometry and appearance of the original south stack (i.e. 1700mm height, limewashed lime render finish, corbeled head, square yellow clay pots)</i></p> <p><i>All dis-used flues should have cowl vents fitted within pots to shed direct water penetration whilst facilitating airflow</i></p> <p><i>A lead DPC/tray could be incorporated when the stack is re-built</i></p>	
SN1.1.2	Main house North chimney Second floor	The north-east and north-west bedrooms retained the original chimneybreasts with 'press-cupboards' alongside. However, the fireplace apertures appear to have been blocked and plastered-over	<p><i>Both fireplace apertures should be re-opened and all debris swept-out of the flues</i></p> <p><i>A traditional fireplace surround could be reinstated or an insulated board wall lining installed. In either case, a trickle vent airbrick should be installed to allow airflow to run up the flue (from interior fireplace to exterior pot). The fire officer should review detailing of this; intumescent closures for the vents may be needed</i></p>	
SN1.1.3	Main house North chimney First floor	The chimneybreast, fireplace and decorative surround remained. The flue entrance itself had been closed with a board	<p><i>Board to be removed from the fireplace and all debris swept out of the flue</i></p> <p><i>Assuming that the fireplace will not be used in future as an open fire, a sensitively detailed closure should be provided for the flue entrance. This should include an air vent to allow airflow to run up the flue (from interior fireplace to exterior pot). The fire officer should review detailing of this; intumescent closure for the vent may be needed</i></p>	
SN1.1.4	Main house North chimney Ground floor	The chimneybreast, fireplace and decorative surround remained. The flue entrance itself was assumed to have been closed with a board	<p><i>Board to be removed from the fireplace and all debris swept out of the flue</i></p> <p><i>Assuming that the fireplace will not be used in future as an open fire, a sensitively detailed closure should be provided for the flue entrance. This should include an air vent to allow airflow to run up the flue (from interior fireplace to exterior pot). The fire officer should review detailing of this; intumescent closure for the vent may be needed</i></p> <p><i>H+R can provide further advice on the north chimney, if instructed. Any proposals to reinstate operation of chimney systems for combustion should be according to the design of a fire engineer</i></p>	

REFERENCE	ITEM	OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS	CLIENT COMMENTS
SN1.2 MAIN HOUSE, SOUTH CHIMNEY				
SN1.2.1	Main house South chimney External stack	<p>4no. flues, assumed to have originally served two fireplaces at second floor, one fireplace at first floor and one fireplace at ground floor. Stack measured 1700mm high and 1860x600mm in section</p> <p>Internal fireplaces were lost or steel-lined which limited airflow within the brick flue risers</p> <p>Pots were not fitted with cowls which allowed direct water penetration. The steel flue liner (1no.) was also missing a cowl</p> <p>The brickwork stack appeared original. The protective render coating was in a fragmentary state (missing in several patches). The render had likely originally been limewash although this has long since weathered-away. The south gable, within which the chimney was built, has been purposely stripped of the original protective render, leaving it vulnerable to driving rain. An original lead flashing remained at the upper string course projection</p> <p>The yellow clay pots were of two slightly different designs and had been seated at irregular heights (indicating previous replacement/repairs)</p>	<p><i>At this stage, H+R believe that the stack can be retained in-situ, subject to replacement of the original lime render and reinstatement of a limewash finish. The existing pots should also be lifted and re-laid into new lime mortar flashing</i></p> <p><i>All dis-used flues should have cowl vents fitted within pots to shed direct water penetration whilst facilitating airflow</i></p> <p><i>Restoration of the stack and the south gable façade should be co-ordinated (i.e. rendering and limewashing throughout in common materials)</i></p>	
SN1.2.2	Main house South chimney Second floor	The south-east and south-west bedrooms retained the original chimneybreasts with 'press-cupboards' alongside. However, the fireplace apertures appear to have been blocked and plastered-over	<p><i>Both fireplace apertures should be re-opened and all debris swept-out of the flues</i></p> <p><i>A traditional fireplace surround could be reinstated or an insulated board wall lining installed. In either case, a trickle vent airbrick should be installed to allow airflow to run up the flue (from interior fireplace to exterior pot). The fire officer should review detailing of this; intumescent closures for the vents may be needed</i></p>	
SN1.2.3	Main house South chimney First floor	The original chimneybreasts remained although the fireplace aperture has been blocked and plastered-over	<p><i>The fireplace aperture should be re-opened and all debris swept-out of the flue</i></p> <p><i>A traditional fireplace surround could be reinstated or an insulated board wall lining installed. In either case, a trickle vent airbrick should be installed to allow airflow to run up the flue (from interior fireplace to exterior pot). The fire officer should review detailing of this; intumescent closures for the vents may be needed</i></p>	
SN1.2.4	Main house South chimney Ground floor	The chimneybreast, fireplace and decorative surround remained. A modern 'log-burning' stove has been installed within the fireplace aperture and a flexible steel liner run up the brick flue void. H+R suspected that there may be various non-compliant aspects of the stove installation (e.g. lack of cowl and potentially under-size flue diameter)	<p><i>At this stage, H+R would caution against use of the stove</i></p> <p><i>As part of the refurbishment scheme, H+R would suggest that the stove and flue liner should either be removed, replaced or at least overhauled. Caution is required in relation to potential asbestos-containing materials within the stove/liner installation</i></p> <p><i>H+R can provide further advice on the south chimney, if instructed. Any proposals to reinstate operation of chimney systems for combustion should be according to the design of a fire engineer</i></p>	

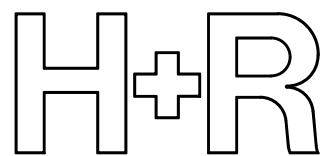
REFERENCE	ITEM	OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS	CLIENT COMMENTS
SN1.3 MAIN HOUSE, WEST CHIMNEY				
SN1.3.1	Main house West chimney External stack	<p>8no. flues, assumed to have originally served two fireplaces at first floor, two fireplaces at mezzanine level and four fireplaces at ground floor. 3no. flue heads have been closed with a mortar capping</p> <p>Internal fireplaces were almost all lost or steel-lined which limited airflow within the brick flue risers</p> <p>Pots were not fitted with cowls which allowed direct water penetration. Flue gasses being run up brick chimney flues can be an increased risk of cracking and material deterioration</p> <p>The brickwork stack has been re-rendered in the past using cement. The stack has been partly enclosed when the central valley roof has been infilled with a pitched roof (see photos). There was a 'shoulder'/step in the chimney which was now enclosed within the roof void</p> <p>The yellow clay pots were of various slightly different designs and had been seated at irregular heights as part of previous replacement/repairs</p>	<p><i>At this stage, H+R believe that the stack can be retained in-situ, subject to replacing the finish using lime render and limewash. The existing pots should also be lifted and re-laid into new lime mortar flashing (those missing pots and any found to be damaged should be replaced to a matching design)</i></p> <p><i>All dis-used flues should have cowl vents fitted within pots to shed direct water penetration whilst facilitating airflow</i></p> <p><i>There is the option to restore the original central valley gutter roof design (in which case, further re-rendering works would be required to the chimneystack currently enclosed by the modern roof pitch). As mentioned below, in light of structural movement, there is also the theoretical option to totally demolish the west chimney system (subject to LBC)</i></p>	
SN1.3.2	Main house West chimney First floor	<p>Both (2no.) fireplaces have been infilled and plastered-over without ventilation. The chimneybreast itself appears to have dropped in relation to the perimeter walls, resulting in the timber floor structure sloping inwards. This seems to have been a historic issue (unknown if it may be incrementally ongoing, perhaps there are differential foundations below the facades/vs. chimneybreast?)</p>	<p><i>Structural Engineer to review movement in the structure</i></p> <p><i>Both fireplace apertures should be re-opened and all debris swept-out of the flues</i></p> <p><i>A traditional fireplace surround could be reinstated or an insulated board wall lining installed. In either case, a trickle vent airbrick should be installed to allow airflow to run up the flue (from interior fireplace to exterior pot). The fire officer should review detailing of this; intumescent closures for the vents may be needed</i></p>	
SN1.3.3	Main house West chimney Mezzanine	Findings as per first floor	<i>Recommendations as per first floor</i>	
SN1.3.4	Main house West chimney Ground floor	<p>According to the original number of pots externally, H+R expected that there might be 4no. flues serving ground floor level. However, there was limited evidence of this at time of survey. A large fireplace (east side) has been infilled with a fitted cupboard. 2no. gas boilers had been ducted into a flue at the south side (unknown if the full height of the flue was steel-lined on the basis that no terminal was apparent at roof level)</p>	<p><i>At least 2no. fireplace apertures (east and west sides) should be re-opened and all debris swept-out of the flues. Traditional fireplace surrounds could be reinstated or an insulated board wall lining installed. In either case, trickle vent airbricks should be installed to allow airflow to run up the flues (from interior fireplace to exterior pot). The fire officer should review detailing of this; intumescent closures for the vents may be needed</i></p> <p><i>Given the deflection seen at first and mezzanine level, the Structural Engineer may consider if there is need to underpin the chimneybreast. Theoretically, and subject to LBC, an alternative option might be considered to totally demolish the west chimney system</i></p> <p><i>As part of the refurbishment scheme, H+R would suggest that the gas boilers and flue liners should either be removed, replaced or at least overhauled. Caution is required in relation to potential asbestos-containing materials within the boiler/liner installation</i></p> <p><i>H+R can provide further advice on the west chimney, if instructed. Any proposals to reinstate operation of chimney systems for combustion should be according to the design of a fire/heating engineer</i></p>	

REFERENCE	ITEM	OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS	CLIENT COMMENTS
SN1.4 OTHER CHIMNEYS				
SN1.4.1	Main House North extension Lost chimney	As shown on drawings, a chamfer-wall fireplace has been closed and the external stack demolished in the past	<i>At this stage, H+R would suggest leaving this chimney system in its current form (there seems little benefit in attempting restoring it to operation)</i> <i>H+R can provide further advice, if instructed</i>	
SN1.4.2	Stables Cottage wing Derelict stack	As shown in photographs, the cottage at the east end of the stables (which has been purposefully 'ruined' by removing the roof) retains its original chimney. This presents as a freestanding brick shaft within the centre of the floorplan. The head of the flues within the chimneystack have been terminated at a mortar capping	<i>Depending on whether the cottage is to be revived into a habitable space on future refurbishment, the chimneystack could be restored by providing through-ventilation detailing and ensuring that internal plaster finishes are isolated from contact with the brickwork. Subject to LBC, the design team might consider an alternative option of entirely demolishing this chimney system</i> <i>H+R can provide further advice and comment upon detailing, if instructed</i>	
SN1.4.3	Stables Lost chimney	As shown on drawings, there appears to have originally been a single-flue stack towards the east end of the stables (central to the ridgeline)	<i>At this stage, there seems little benefit in restoring this chimney to operation. Depending on proposed layouts internally upon refurbishment of the stables, it may be beneficial to consider demolishing the redundant chimneybreast</i> <i>H+R can provide further advice, if instructed</i>	

Attachment B

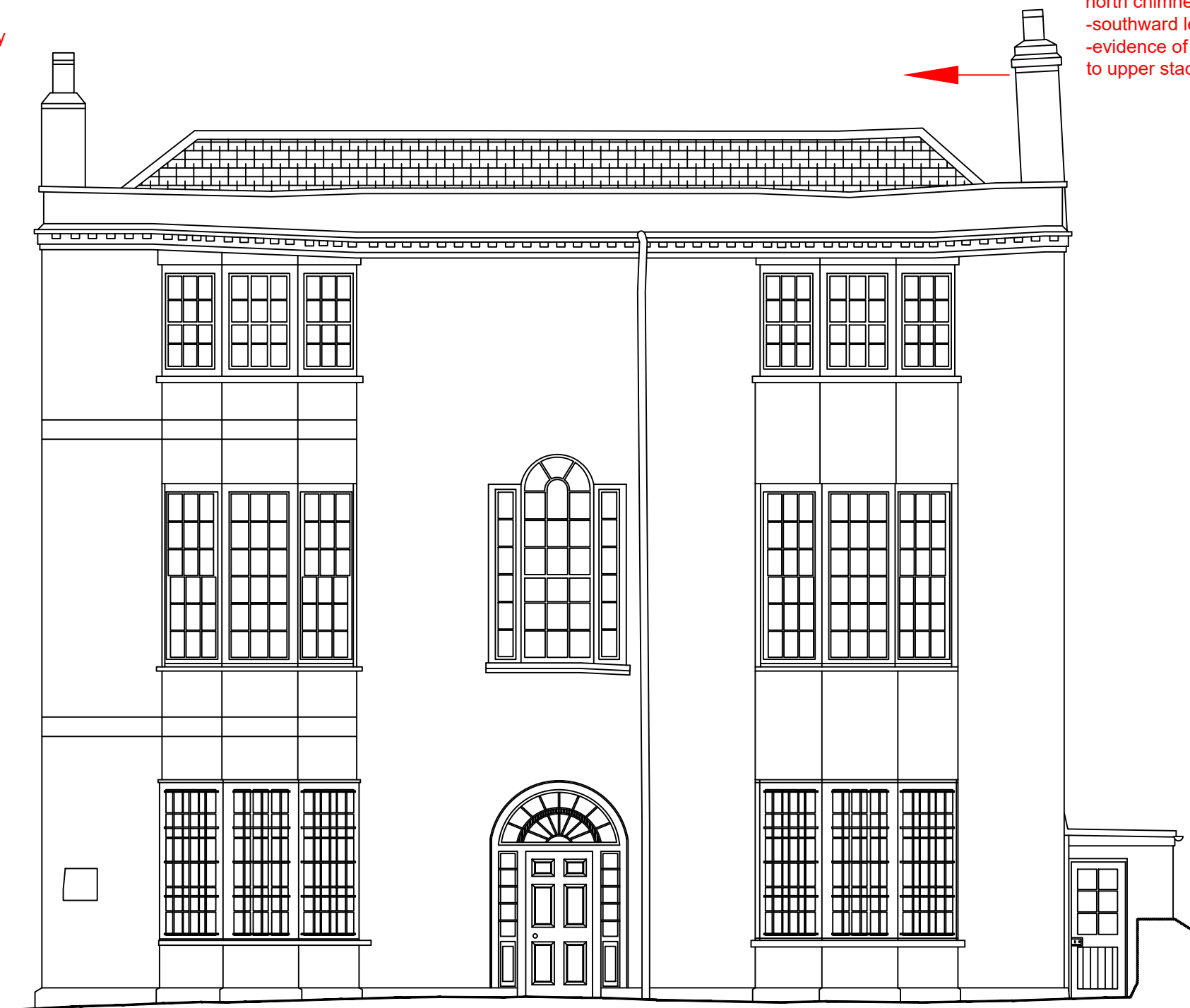


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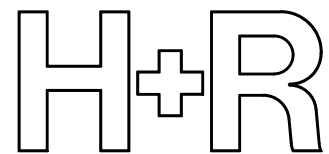
Grandpont House, Main House - North elevation
Chimney investigation
December 2023 - January 2024

south chimney



north chimney:
-southward lean apparent
-evidence of previous re-build
to upper stack

Key:

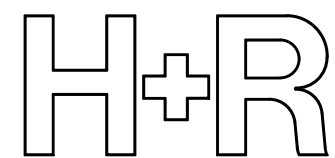


Grandpont House, Main House - East elevation
Chimney investigation
December 2023 - January 2024

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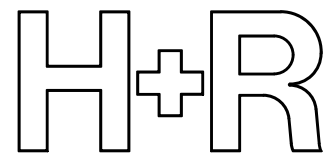
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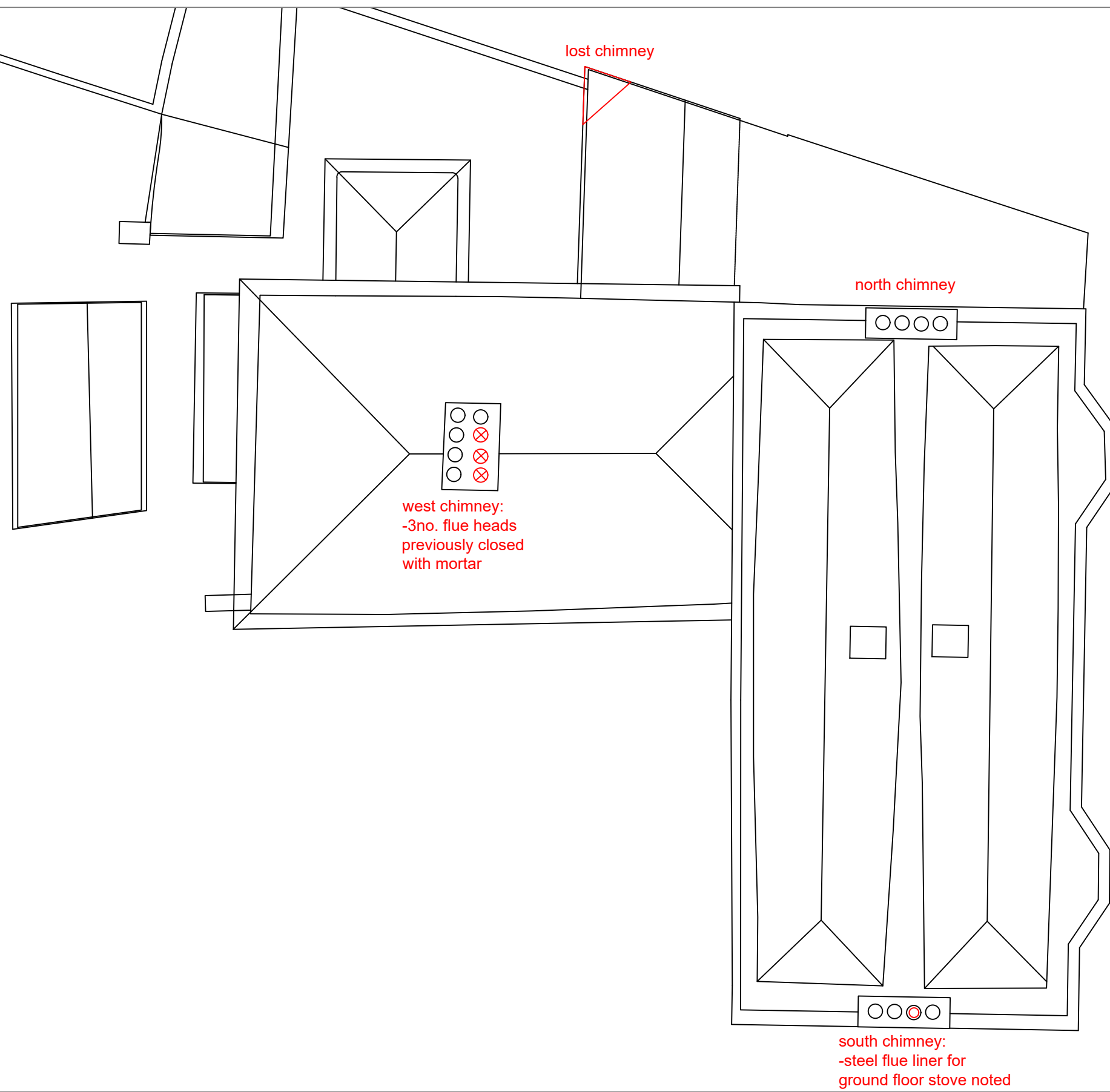
Grandpont House, Main House - South elevation
 Chimney investigation
 December 2023 - January 2024



Key:



Grandpont House, Main House - West elevation
Chimney investigation
December 2023 - January 2024

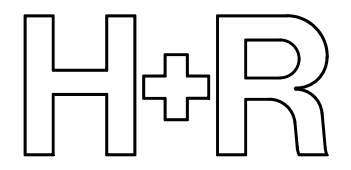


west chimney:
-3no. flue heads
previously closed
with mortar

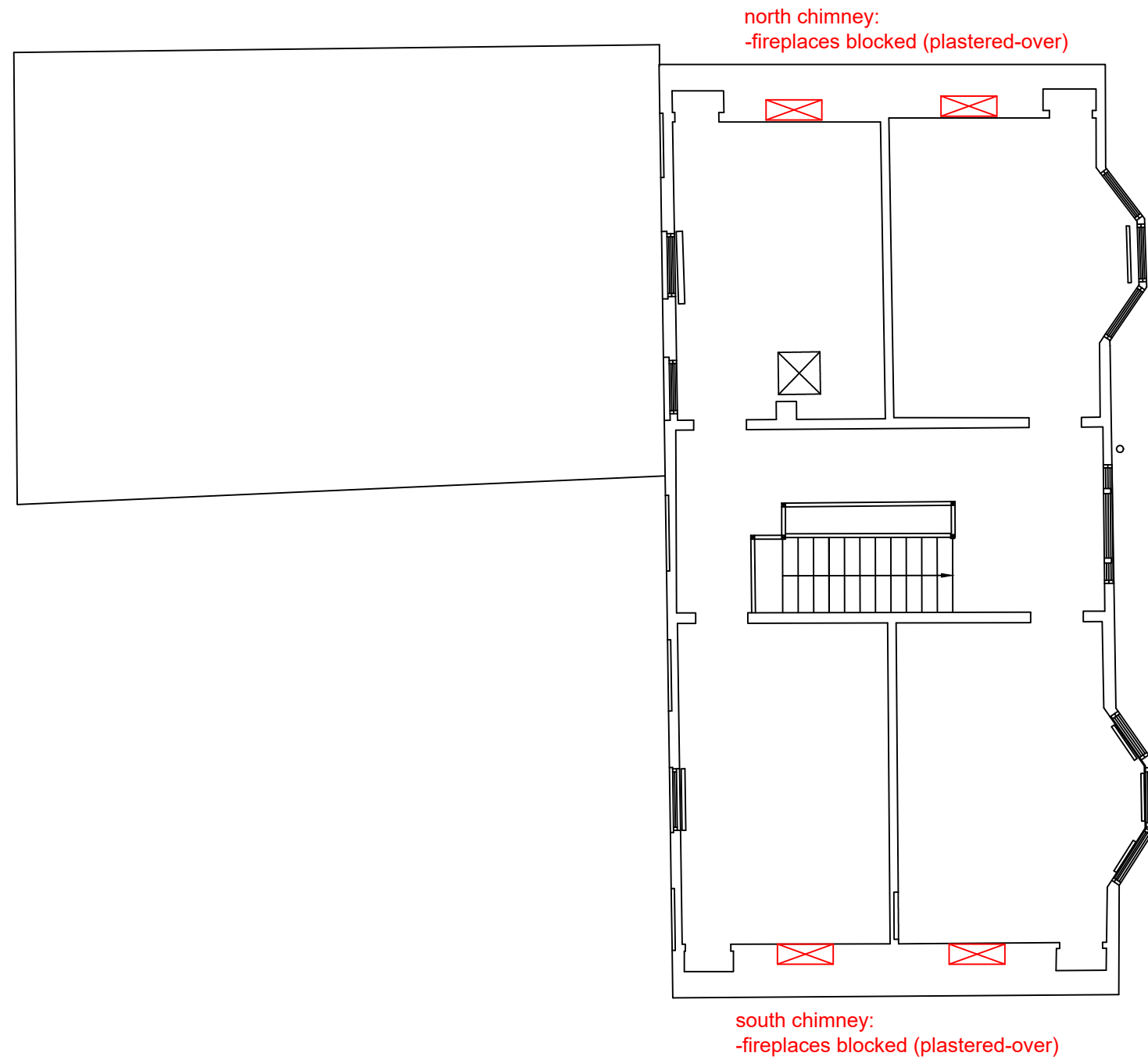
north chimney

south chimney:
-steel flue liner for
ground floor stove noted

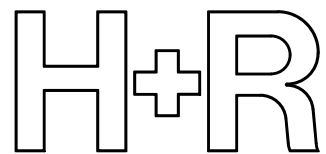
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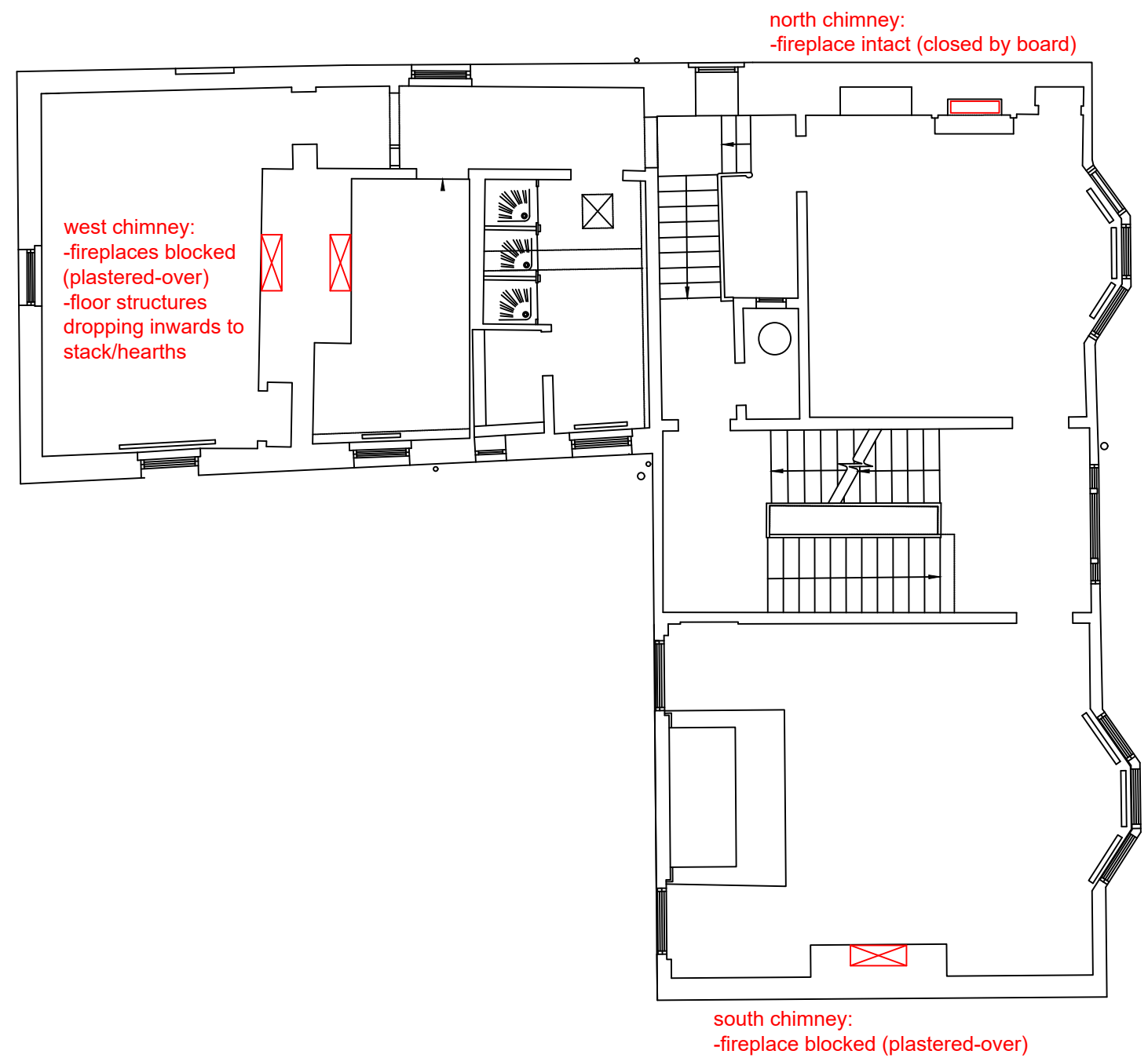
Grandpont House, Main House - Roof
Chimney investigation
December 2023 - January 2024



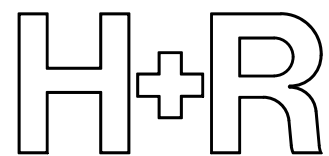
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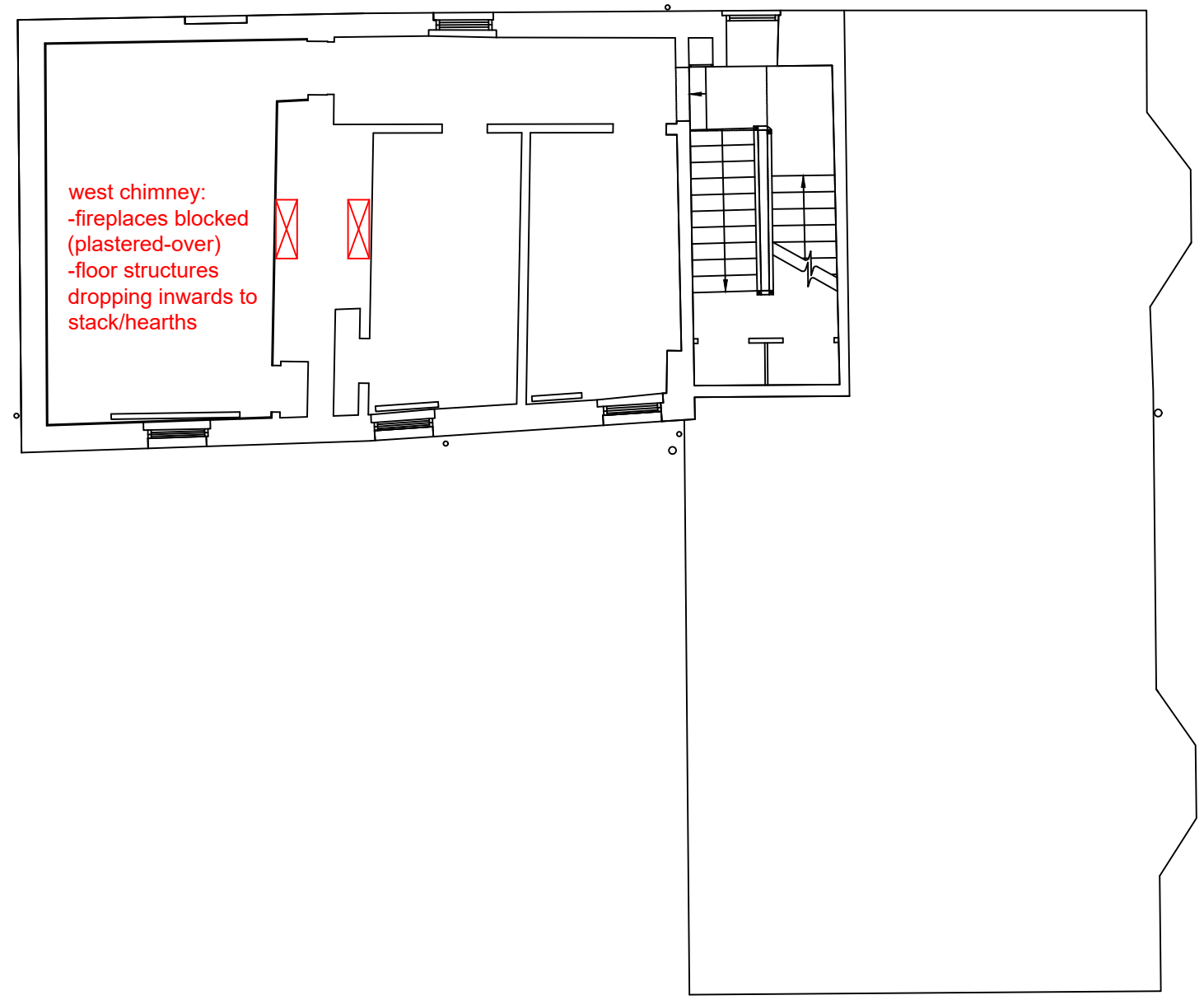
Grandpont House, Main House - Second floor
Chimney investigation
December 2023 - January 2024



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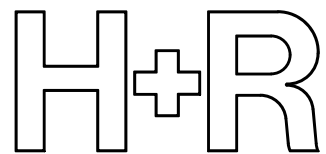


Grandpont House, Main House - First floor
Chimney investigation
December 2023 - January 2024



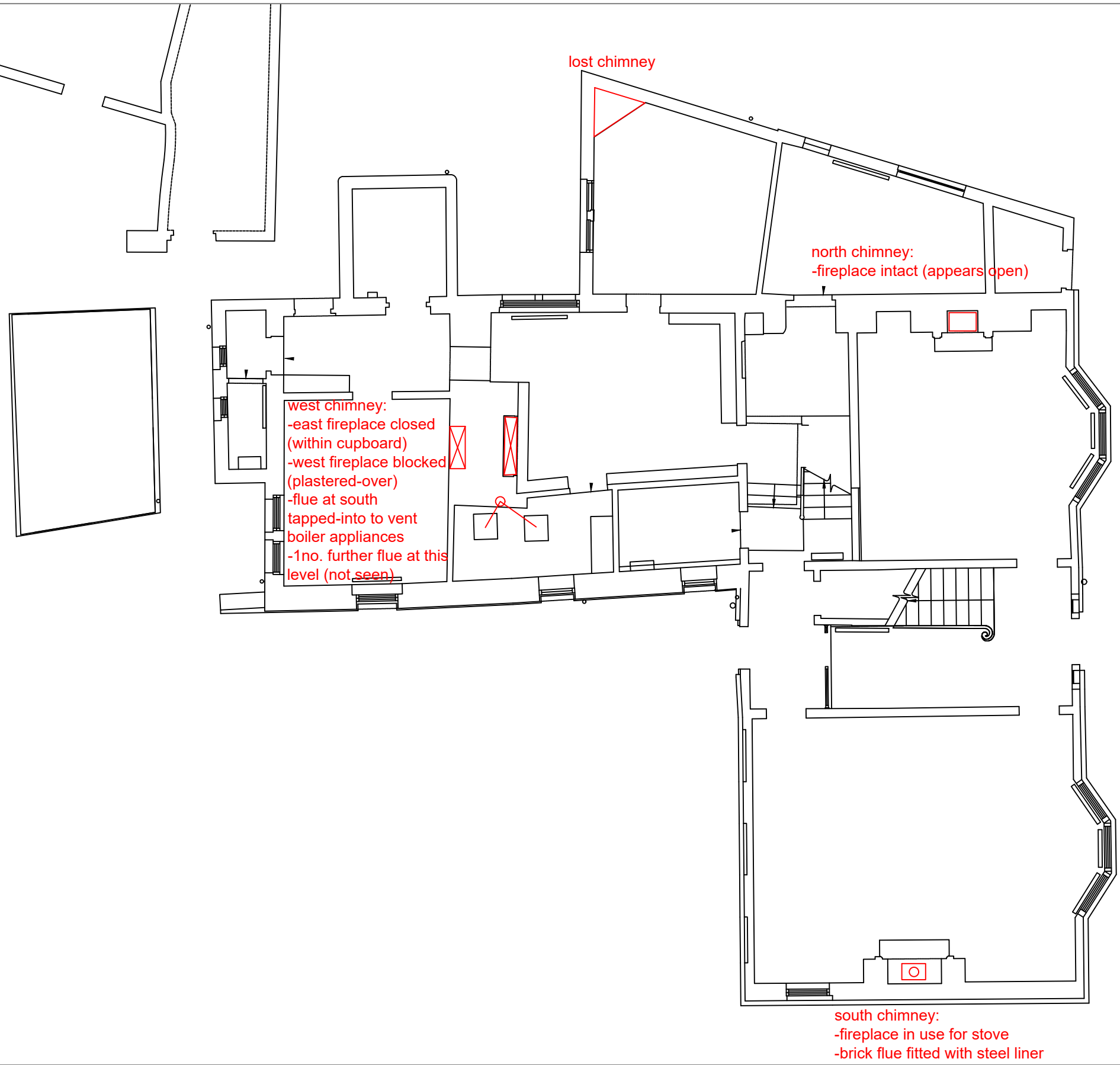
west chimney:
-fireplaces blocked
(plastered-over)
-floor structures
dropping inwards to
stack/hearths

Key:

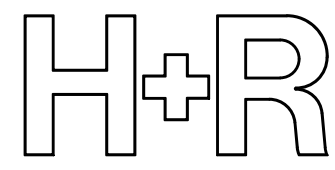


Grandpont House, Main House - Mezzanine above ground
Chimney investigation
December 2023 - January 2024

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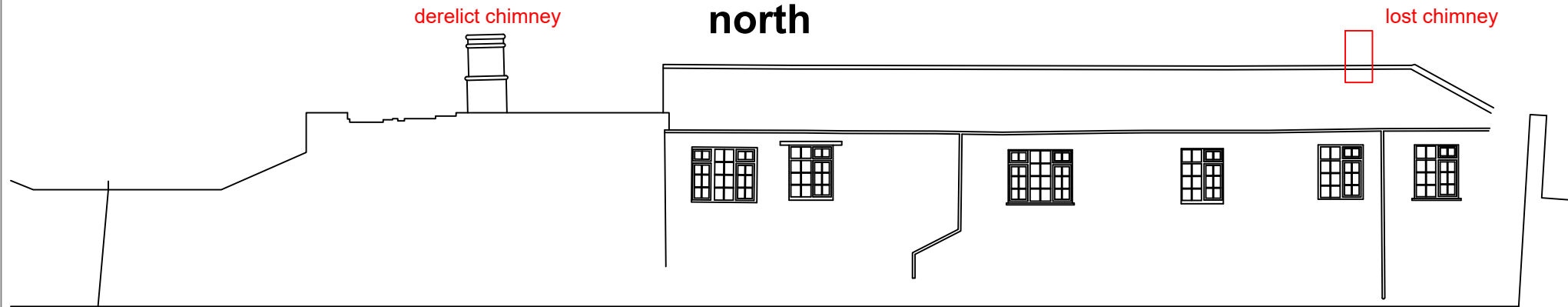


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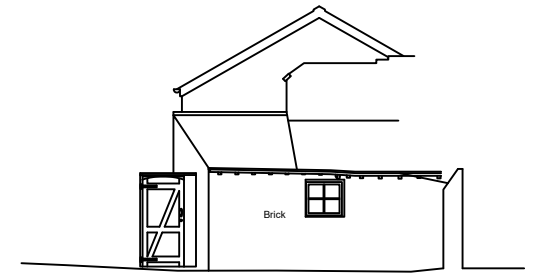


Grandpont House, Main House - Ground floor
Chimney investigation
December 2023 - January 2024

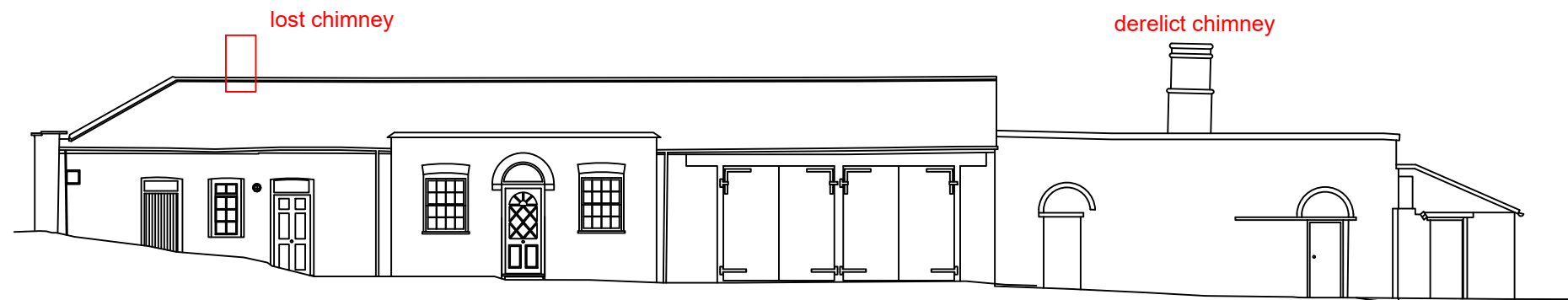
north



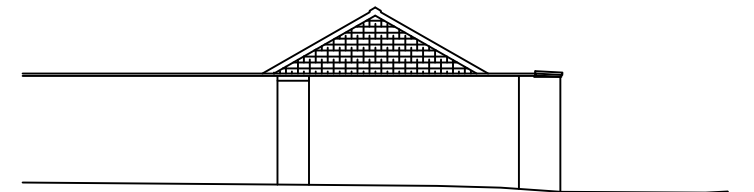
east



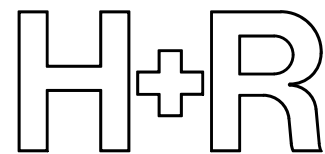
south



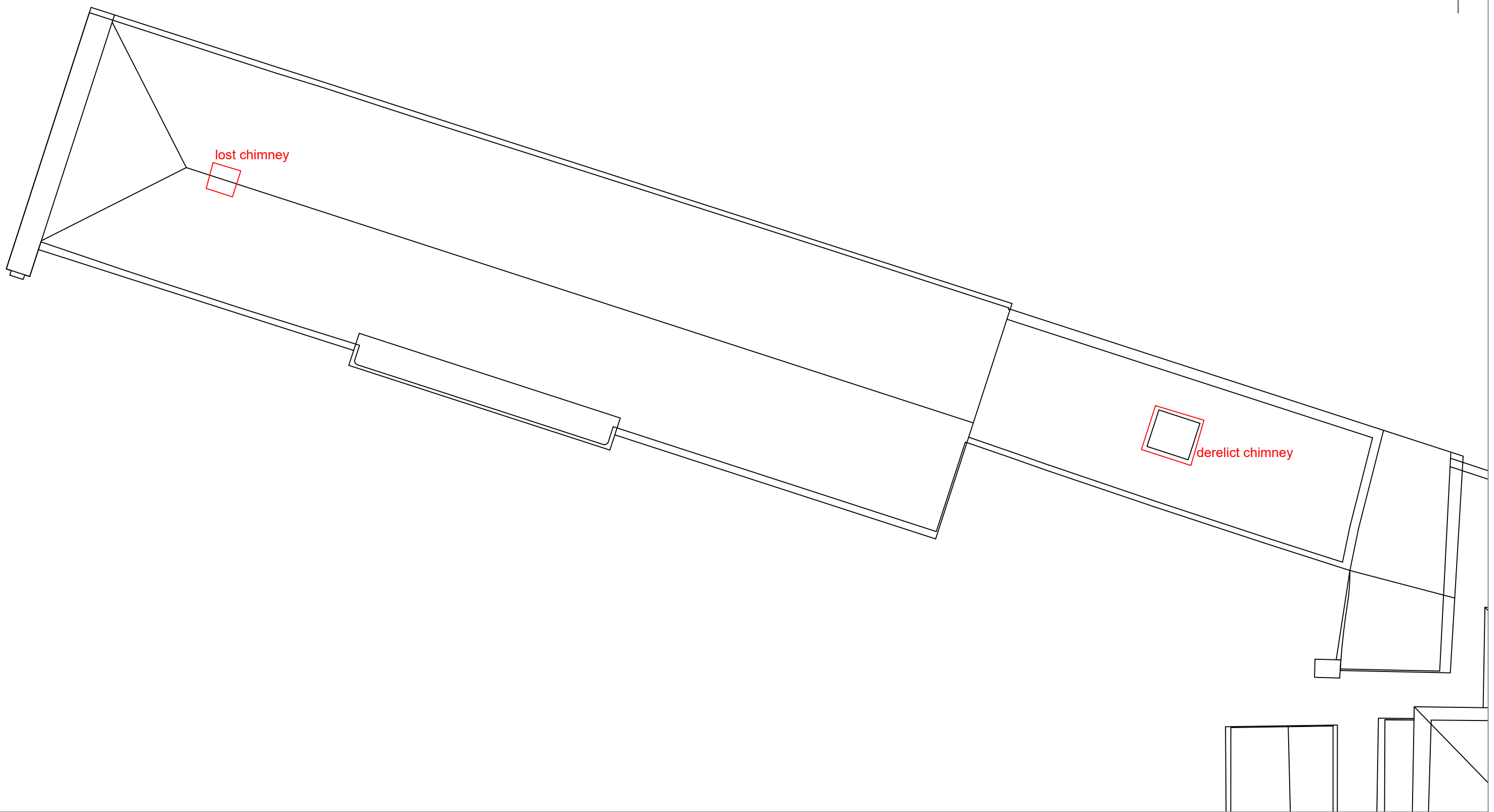
west



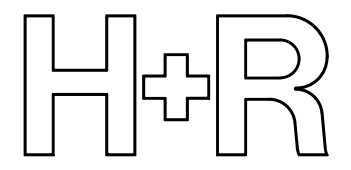
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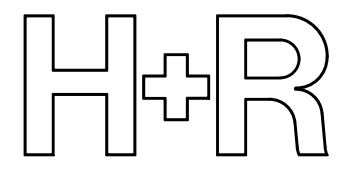
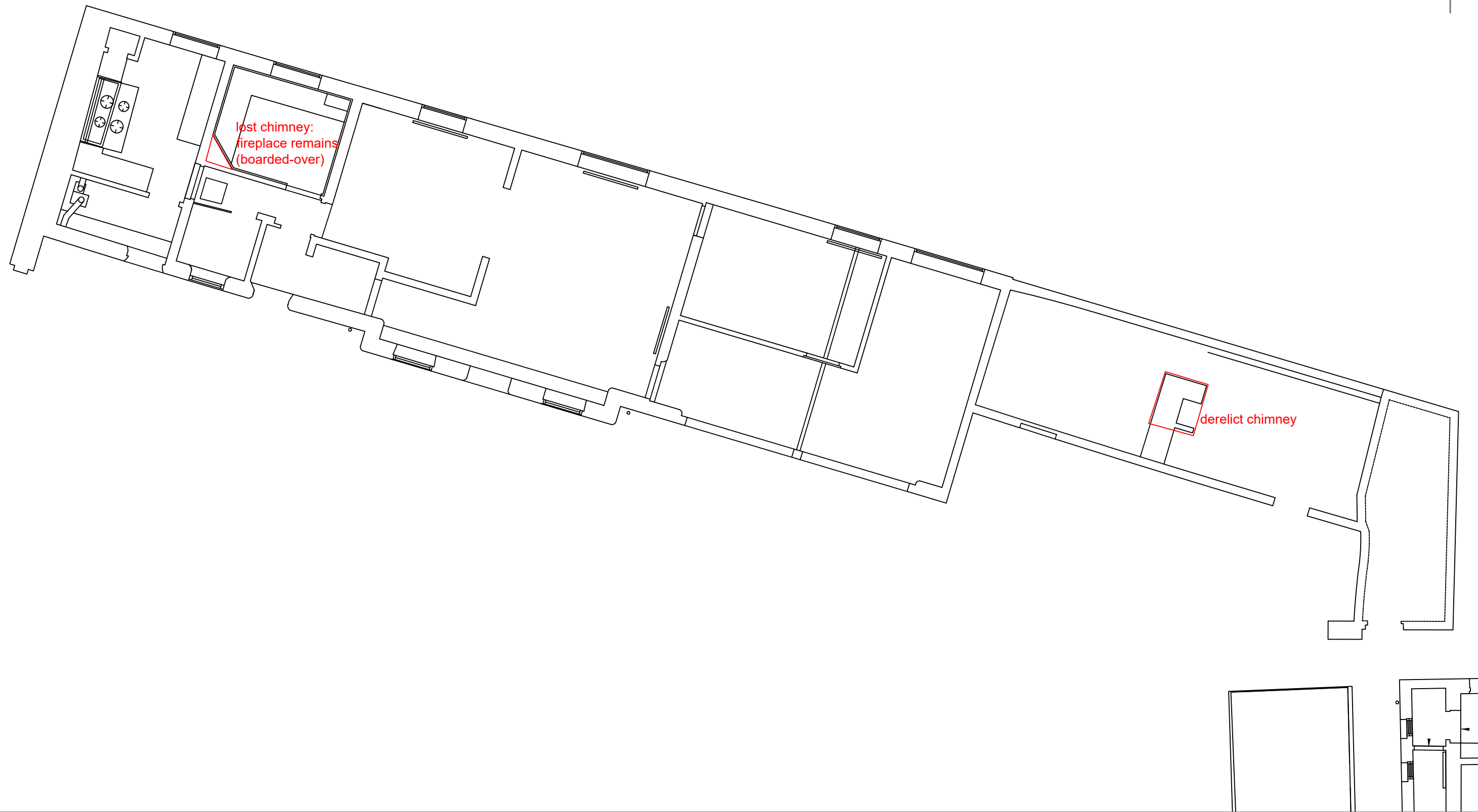
Grandpont House, Stables - Elevations
 Chimney investigation
 December 2023 - January 2024



Key:



Grandpont House, Stables - Roof
Chimney investigation
December 2023 - January 2024



Grandpont House, Stables - Ground
Chimney investigation
December 2023 - January 2024

Attachment C



Fig 1:

Main house

North chimney

External stack; showing north and east faces

Note mortar failure and cracked flaunching

Note stack was a non-original re-build



Fig 2:

Main house

North chimney

External stack; showing south and west faces

Note stack has developed a southward lean (presumably a progressive issue given that it has been re-built in the past)



Grandpont House

Photographs

December 2023-January 2024

Not to scale

Hutton + Rostron Environmental Investigations Ltd, Netley House, Gomshall, Surrey, GU5 9QA

Tel: 01483 203221 Email: ei@handr.co.uk

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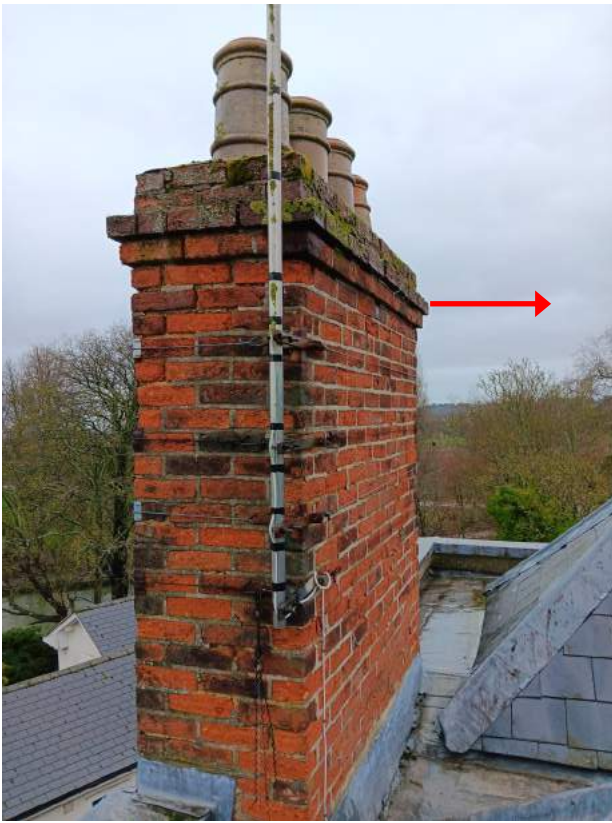


Fig 3:

Main house

North chimney

External stack; showing mortar failure and southward lean

Note TV aerial attached by wire straps



Fig 4:

Main house

North chimney

Second floor; showing lost fireplace vent in north-west room



Grandpont House

Photographs

December 2023-January 2024

Not to scale

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Tel: 01483 203221 Email: ei@handr.co.uk

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Fig 5:

Main house

North chimney

Second floor; showing lost fireplace vent in north-east room



Fig 6:

Main house

North chimney

First floor; showing fireplace (flue entrance closed by board)



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Fig 7:

Main house

North chimney

Ground floor; showing fireplace

Note that the chimneybreast (at all floor levels) was flanked by 'press cupboards'



Fig 8:

Main house

South chimney

External stack; showing north and east faces

Note render failure and degraded flaunching

Note stack was original although pots have been altered/replaced over time

Note metal flue liner serving ground floor stove



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Fig 9:

Main house

South chimney

External stack; showing south and west faces

Note render failure and degraded flaunching

Note redundant TV aerial bracket

Note remainder of south elevation has been stripped of the original protective render (lead flashed cornice/drip remains)

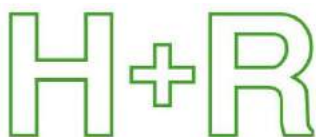


Fig 10:

Main house

South chimney

External stack; showing render failure and irregularly seated chimneypots



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Fig 11:

Main house

South chimney

External stack; showing render failure



Fig 12:

Main house

South chimney

Second floor; showing lost fireplace vent in south-west room



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Fig 13:

Main house

South chimney

Second floor; showing lost fireplace vent in south-east room



Fig 14:

Main house

South chimney

First floor; showing lost fireplace vent



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Fig 15:

Main house

South chimney

Ground floor; showing stove appliance installed within fireplace



Fig 16:

Main house

West chimney

External stack; showing north and east faces

Note poor state of non-original cement render

Note 3no. missing pots (flues have been capped without ventilation)

Note original corbelled head detail has probably been lost in the past



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Fig 17:

Main house

West chimney

External stack; showing south and west faces



Fig 18:

Main house

West chimney

Roof void; showing original central valley previously enclosed by a larger pitched roof (a large part of the chimneystack has been internalised as a result)



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Fig 19:

Main house

West chimney

Roof void; showing original central valley which drained through the chimney stack via a small arched aperture



Fig 20:

Main house

West chimney

First floor; showing lost fireplace vent in east room



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Fig 21:

Main house

West chimney

First floor; showing lost fireplace vent in west room



Fig 22:

Main house

West chimney

Mezzanine above ground; showing lost fireplace vent in east room



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Fig 23:

Main house

West chimney

Mezzanine above ground; showing lost fireplace vent in west room



Fig 24:

Main house

West chimney

Ground floor; showing fireplace in east room closed by cupboard lining



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Fig 25:

Main house

West chimney

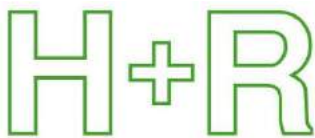
Ground floor; showing boiler flues ducted into flue riser



Fig 26:

Main house

Exterior; showing location of previously lost chimney stack



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Fig 27:

Main house

Interior; showing location blocked fireplace below previously lost chimneystack



Fig 28:

Stables

Exterior; showing derelict chimney (foreground) and location of previously lost chimneystack (background)



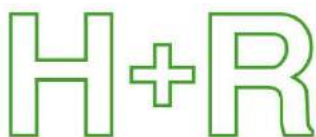
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Fig 29:

Stables

Interior; showing boarded-over
fireplace below previously lost
chimneystack



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