

THE STABLE BLOCK (EAST RANGE)

Attingham Park, Atcham, Shropshire

[NGR: SJ 54814 10037]

Planning Refs. 15/05382/FUL; 15/05383/LBC

Historic Building Record, 2016

FINAL REPORT



National Trust

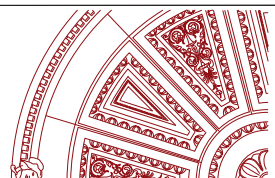
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STABLE BLOCK (East Range)

Attingham Park, Atcham, Shropshire

Historic Building Record, 2016

Planning Ref. 15/05382/FUL (Planning); 15/05383/LBC (Listed Building Consent)

Summary

The current report summarises the results of a limited programme of historic building recording undertaken in November 2016 in respect of an historical floor surface exposed within the east range of the stable block at Attingham Park, Atcham, Shropshire (NGR SJ 54814 10037) during construction work related to the enhancement of visitor facilities at the property. The record was commissioned by the National Trust and was required as a condition of planning and listed building consent (refs. 15/05382/FUL and 15/05383/LBC).

The stable block at Attingham was erected in c.1785 to the designs of Scottish architect George Steuart, contemporary with his new building of Attingham Hall constructed for Noel Hill, the first Lord Berwick (1745-89). Located to the north-west of the mansion house, the stable block is built on a rectangular, courtyard plan enclosing a central yard with angle pavilions and principal entrances to the centre of the southern and eastern façades. It is of red brick construction with ashlar of local Grinshill sandstone to principal areas and main elevations, including the full extent of the southern aspect. The stables, among the finest of the late 18th century, were singled out for their excellence in George Richardson's 'New Vitruvius Britannicus' of 1808; as-built they provided stalling for forty six (or forty eight) horses, a common stable, eight coach houses, three separate saddle rooms, three harness rooms and four grooms rooms.

The east range originally accommodated two four-bay coach houses to either side of axial archway, flanked by a common stable to the south and three discrete rooms and transverse passage to the north; the current project related to the area of the former common stable only. Here, the removal of a 5in. concrete slab floor exposed a well-preserved floor of Staffordshire blue-brick construction, the arrangements of which clearly relate to a former range of three loose-boxes and associated access passage to the west side of the range, with documentary sources indicating a probable early 20th century date.

Subsequent, successive phases of modification from the mid-20th century have resulted in the loss of all evidence for the details of the former loose-box partitions, and for any related fittings and fixtures such as feed racks, water troughs and tethering rings etc. The floor nonetheless represents an interesting and unexpected survival, representative of a significant phase of development of the stable block, and it is hoped it may be possible to incorporate the remains within the refurbished café facilities.

STABLE BLOCK (East Range)

Attingham Park, Atcham, Shropshire

Historic Building Record, 2016

Planning Ref. 15/05382/FUL (Planning); 15/05383/LBC (Listed Building Consent)

1 INTRODUCTION

The current report presents a summary of the results of a limited programme of historic building recording undertaken in November 2016 in respect of the east range of the stable block at Attingham Park, Atcham, Shropshire. The record was made as a condition of Planning and Listed Building Consent for modifications to the range to form enhanced visitor facilities.

1.1 Site Location

- 1.1.1 Attingham Park is a landscaped park of c.670 acres at the centre of a more extensive agricultural estate in the ownership of the National Trust, lying immediately north-east of the village of Atcham and c.6.3km south-east of the county town of Shrewsbury in central Shropshire (Figure 1). The stable block currently under consideration is located c.200m north-west of Attingham Hall (Figure 2), built on a rectangular, courtyard plan enclosing a central yard with angle pavilions and principal entrances to the centre of the southern and eastern façades. The current report relates to observations made within the southern-most section of the east range only, an area that originally formed a 'common stable', though having subsequently undergone successive phases of modification, functioning most recently as the Coach House Café.
- 1.1.2 The Attingham estate, park and hall, together with its associated ancillary buildings and outlying farmsteads, have been in the ownership of the National Trust since being bequeathed by the 8th Lord Berwick in 1947.

1.2 Designations

Statutory Designations

- 1.2.1 Attingham Hall is a Grade I listed building,¹ set within the Grade II* Registered Attingham Park,² with landscaped grounds by Humphry Repton, forming part of the wider Attingham estate. The stable block, which is contemporary with the main hall, is itself included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historical Interest in its own right as a Grade II* Listed Building (EH Building ID: 1176848);³ the statutory listing describes the stables as follows:

Stables, now offices and stores. Circa 1785, by George Steuart for the first Lord Berwick. Red brick with grey Grinshill sandstone ashlar dressings, and facing to south. Square courtyard plan with projecting pyramidal-roofed corner pavilions. One storey and loft and 2 storeys. Glazing bar sashes with gauged brick heads, some replaced by late C20 imitations. South front: 9 bays; 1:3:1:3:1 rhythm. Plinth; impost band to blind-arched arcading, frieze, moulded cornice, and blocking course. Glazing bar sashes with blind lunettes above. Each end pavilion with plinth, corner piers, first-floor cill string, frieze, moulded cornice, and blocking course. Projecting central pavilion with plinth, moulded

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1055094>.

² <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001114>.

³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1176848>. List entry dated January 1952, amended February 1985.

impost band to central blocked round carriage-arch, and flanking paired Tuscan pilasters supporting frieze, moulded cornice, and interrupted balustraded parapet. Courtyard elevation of 9 bays, 3:3:3 rhythm; central pavilion with blocked carriage arch and inserted 6 flush-panelled door with radial fanlight. East front: end pavilions with recessed blind round arches and glazing bar sashes with radial lunettes above impost band. Central 7-bay entrance and coach house block, 2:1:1:1:2 rhythm; frieze, moulded cornice, blocking course, and hipped roof with 2 ridge stacks and 2 end stacks, central 3-bay projection with blind round arches flanking central break which has round carriage arch with blind tympanum and pair of gates, and triangular pediment above. Courtyard elevation of 17 bays, 4:4:1:4:4 rhythm; central 9-bay block has round-arched arcaded ground floor with pairs of panelled coach-house doors and recessed blind tympana; central break has round carriage-arch with blind tympanum, and triangular pediment above. West front: 15 bays, 1:6:1:6:1; plinth, impost band and moulded eaves cornice; blind round-arched arcading. Central pavilion with plinth, stepped end-piers, moulded string course, frieze, moulded cornice, and coped parapet with balustraded centre; boarded door. Courtyard elevation of 9:1:9 bays; central projection has pair of 3 flush-panelled doors with radial fanlight, flanking wide pilaster strips, and triangular pediment. North range; courtyard front: 5:1:5 bays; centrepiece with plinth, moulded impost band, and paired Tuscan pilasters supporting frieze and triangular pediment; central pair of 3 flush-panelled doors with radial fanlight. Interior: north and west ranges still retain C18 stalls and have flush-panelled dividers with ogee-curved tops and end posts with banded urn-finials, boarded back wall with arcaded mangers and name panels, brick floors and plaster ceilings with dentil cornices. Some former blind windows including those in the south front have been opened in the late C20. The stables were designed for 60 horses. H. Avary Tipping, Attingham, CL, Vol.XLIX (Feb. 5th 1921), p.163.

Attingham Stables: Statutory List Entry

Non-Statutory Designations

- 1.2.2 The stable block is included on the Shropshire County Council Historic Environment Record, reference number **13205**,⁴ and upon the National Trust's internal Historic Buildings Sites and Monuments Record (NT HBSMR), reference number **[50,101]**.

1.3 Planning Background

- 1.3.1 Applications for planning permission (15/05382/FUL)⁵ and listed building consent (15/05383/LBC)⁶ were submitted to Shropshire County Council on 8th December 2015 in respect of a wide ranging scheme involving the 'erection of new visitor reception, biomass boiler house and service yard; alteration and extension of cafe; installation of heat main; extension and alterations to Stable Block; internal alterations to Gardener's Cottage; internal alterations to oil tank room and boiler room; alterations to landscaping and parking affecting a Grade I listed building'. Consent was granted in respect of both applications on 1st February 2016, with a conditional requirement for ongoing archaeological monitoring and recording of any features of historical interest exposed during work.

Requirement for Work

- 1.3.2 The archaeological monitoring of the works outlined above were required by SCC as a condition of consent in accordance with Policy CS17 of the SCC Core Strategy,⁷ adopted March 2011, and Policy MD13 of the Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan (SAMDev),⁸ adopted December 2015. The exact wording of Condition 12 of Planning Consent is as follows:⁹

'If hitherto unknown architectural evidence of historic character that would be affected by the works hereby permitted is discovered, an appropriate record, together with recommendations for dealing

⁴ http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=MSA7603&resourceID=1015.

⁵ <https://pa.shropshire.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=NZ1Z17TDJMG00>.

⁶ <https://pa.shropshire.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=NZ1Z1ETD1JMH00>.

⁷ <http://shropshire.gov.uk/media/830904/shropshire-core-strategy-2011-reduced.pdf>.

⁸ <http://shropshire.gov.uk/media/1900363/SAMDev-Adopted-Plan.pdf>

⁹ Condition 11 of LBC presents duplicate wording.

with it in the context of the scheme, shall be submitted for written approval by the Local Planning Authority.'

Reason: To ensure architectural features are recorded during development.

- 1.3.3 The project was undertaken in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF),¹⁰ para. 141 which states that:

'Local planning authorities should make information about the significance of the historic environment gathered as part of plan-making or development management publicly accessible. They should also require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible'.
(NPPF; DCLG, 2012, 30)

1.4 Scope of Project and Current Report

- 1.4.1 An area of formerly obscured, early stable flooring was exposed at the south end of the east range of the stable block (the former Coach House Café) during preparatory works related to the refitting of the range, at which point (15.11.16) the current author was alerted by Ms. Janine Young, archaeological consultant for the National Trust (West Midlands), and arrangements for the current programme of recording put in place.
- 1.4.2 No official brief was issued in respect of the recording work, the parameters of which were established through a verbal discussion and e-mail exchange between the current author and Ms. Janine Young.
- 1.4.3 The current report has been prepared in accordance with Historic England guidelines as published in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (HE, 2016), the National Trust's *Guidance Note on the Recording and Analysis of Historic Buildings* (NT, 1998), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (CIfA, 2014) and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers' *Analysis and Recording for the Conservation of Works to Historic Buildings* (ALGAO, 1997).

1.5 Previous Work

- 1.5.1 The stable block has been the subject of two previous, broadly-based studies, one in 1999 (Marian Goodwin, September 1999), undertaken in the lead up to the initial opening up of the buildings to public access, and a second in 2008 ('Attingham Park Stable Block: *'an architectural statement in its own right'* by Shabeena Anait, November 2008), completed at the early stages of discussion regarding the wider representation of the block.
- 1.5.2 A Feasibility Study was undertaken in May 2011 by the architects Berman Guedes Stretton on behalf of the National Trust (BGS 2011).
- 1.5.3 A detailed record and assessment of the southern range of the stables was undertaken in early 2014 (Tyler, 2014),¹¹ which referred in passing to the development of the southern end of the east range, while a 'Heritage Impact Assessment', prepared by the National Trust in December 2015,¹² has been submitted to SCC at an earlier stage of the planning process related to the current project.

¹⁰ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

¹¹ https://pa.shropshire.gov.uk/online-applications/files/146CA129F0905FA64D86B584DCDAF5F7/pdf/15_05382_FUL-HISTORIC_BUILDINGS_RECORD-2643305.pdf.

¹² https://pa.shropshire.gov.uk/online-applications/files/2099FBE177B48851D943EE0E55E58A2E/pdf/15_05382_FUL-HERITAGE_IMPACT_ASSESSMENT-2642710.pdf.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The aim of the project was to generate a drawn, photographic and written, interpretive account of the historic floor surface exposed at the south end of the east range of the stable block, to a level commensurate with a hybrid Level 2/3 (descriptive/interpretive) record as defined by Historic England in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (HE, 2016).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Documentary Research

- 3.1.1 Given the considerable extent of previous archival research undertaken in respect of the stable block (see §.1.5 above), no additional programme of documentary study was commissioned or undertaken at this stage. Earlier reports and previously collected archival materials were, however, revisited in the preparation of the current report.

3.2 Historic Building Record

- 3.2.1 The building record comprised an examination of the exposed floor surface and the preparation of drawn, photographic and written records of the same, all carried out to a level commensurate with a Historic England 'Level 2/3' survey record (HE, 2016).

Drawn Record

- 3.2.3 The drawn record comprised the preparation of a single floor plan, measurements being obtained by a combination of taped measurement and hand-held laser. The resultant site drawing has served as the basis for Figure 13 within the current document.

Photographic Record

- 3.2.4 To complement the drawn survey, a photographic record was made comprising high resolution digital photography using a Nikon D3000 DSLR camera. The survey extended to include general and detailed shots, contextual views of the building and accessible external elevations, together with general and detail views of the exposed floor structure. Where practically feasible, photographs included graded photographic scales. Selected site record photographs are reproduced as plates within the current document. A register of project photographs is included below at **Appendix B**.

Written Record

- 3.2.5 A written record was maintained in the form both of annotations to site drawings and as free text to accompany the drawn and photographic records, which together form the basis for the following description (§.5).

4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND¹³

4.1 General Historical Context

- 4.1.1 The parish of Atcham, formerly Attingham, comprises four Domesday manors, viz. Atcham, Berwick Maviston (from where the Lords Berwick were to take their name), Uckington and Emstrey. The name Atcham derives from the medieval form 'Attingham' or 'Ettingham' (after which the first Lord Berwick's house would later be named), meaning '*the home of the children of Eata*'.¹⁴ In pre-Conquest times, Atcham was an estate of St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury; Domesday (Morris ed. 1986, [3g,6]) records Atcham, under the holdings of St Alkmund's, as follows:

'The Church itself held it and holds ATCHAM ('ATINGEHA'), and Godbold from it. 1 hide... in Lordship 1½ ploughs; 2 villagers and 3 smallholders with 3 ploughs. The value was 10s; now it pays 6s 8d.'

- 4.1.2 From the 12th century down to the Dissolution, the estates of St Alkmund's were held by the Augustinian Abbey of Lilleshall. At the Dissolution, the manor of Attingham was granted by the crown to Sir Thomas Palmer, although the estates were forfeited after only six years when Palmer was treasonably involved in the rising in support of Lady Jane Grey. The estate was subsequently granted to Sir John Gage, then by Elizabeth I to John Biste of Atcham, passing to the family of Dawes and, by marriage, to the family of Gower. On 25th July 1700, the manor was conveyed by William Gower and his wife Helen to Rowland Hill of Hawkestone, during their lives for £3,413, the sale confirmed by an Act of Parliament in 1701 to the Rt. Hon. Richard Hill, son of Rowland who had died late the previous year.¹⁵

- 4.1.3 The estates of the Noel-Hills at Attingham originated with Shropshire lands acquired in the late 1530s and early 1540s by Sir Rowland Hill (?1492-1561), merchant adventurer and one-time Lord Mayor of London (1489), under the auspices of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, in particular the lands of the former houses of Shrewsbury, Lilleshall and Haughmond. Hill also purchased the property of Hawkstone north of Shrewsbury, in 1556, which was to remain the principal family seat until 1906. Hill's descendant Richard Hill inherited Hawkstone in 1700 and set about developing the family estates including the commissioning of a new home, Tern Hall, erected on the Attingham (Atcham) estates of which he had taken possession in 1701. Hill died without issue in 1727 and the family inheritance passed to his three nephews – Tern Hall passed to his sister Margaret and, in 1734, to her eldest son, Thomas Harwood who took the name of Hill. Thomas Hill lived to the age of 89, dying in 1782, though Tern Hall had passed to his thirteenth child and only surviving son, Noel, some years earlier in 1768.

4.2 Attingham Hall

- 4.2.1 Upon the death of his father, Noel Hill (created Lord Berwick in 1784) inherited a substantial fortune and embarked upon a major new building project at Atcham, namely the construction of the present Attingham Hall, perhaps the grandest house of its era in Shropshire, built from 1783 on to the designs of the Scottish architect George Steuart (c.1730-1806), and largely complete by the time of Hill's premature death in 1789 at the age of just 43 years. The original house, Tern Hall, was initially incorporated into the new work and was only finally demolished in the 1850s by the 5th Lord (see Newman and Pevsner 2006, 126-130). The stable block currently under consideration is also by Steuart, dating to c.1785, and belongs to the same phase of development.

¹³ The following section is based largely on the 'Historical Background' included within the previous report on the south range of the stable block (Tyler, 2014), though it is included here, in edited form, for reasons of completeness.

¹⁴ Eata was one of twelve missionaries trained by St Aidan, later (664 AD) becoming Abbot of Lindisfarne and Bishop of the Bernicians. The church of St. Eata at Atcham is the only such dedication in England.

¹⁵ A full account of the descent of the manor from the Dissolution to the purchase by Richard Hill in 1701 is given in the Shropshire Parish Registers: http://www.archive.org/stream/shropshireparish14lichshro/shropshireparish14lichshro_djvu.txt.

- 4.2.2 Noel Hill was succeeded by his eldest son, Thomas, the 2nd Lord Berwick who effected a number of improvements at Attingham to accommodate substantial collections of art and sculpture acquired during travels in Italy, principally the introduction of the great Picture Gallery at the centre of the house in 1805 to the designs of the noted Regency architect John Nash. Under the 2nd Lord, however, the family fortunes deteriorated and Hill was eventually declared bankrupt resulting in auctions of the contents of Attingham in 1827 and 1829 in an attempt to clear his debts (Cousens 2000, 51); Berwick retired to Italy where he died in 1832. Thomas's brothers, William and Richard, each subsequently succeeded to the title (1832-42 and 1842-48 respectively), William for the first time taking 'Noel' as an additional surname. When Richard Noel-Hill, the 5th Lord Berwick, inherited in 1848 he did not take up residence at Attingham, preferring to live at the nearby Cronkhill (a picturesque, Italianate villa of c.1802-5 by Nash) where, by careful stewardship of his finances, he managed to pay off the estate's debts (Cousens 2000, 54).¹⁶ The hall itself, however, was left largely empty for periods during the latter half of the 19th century (*ibid.*, 4).
- 4.2.3 Attingham underwent something of a renaissance in the early 20th century under Thomas, the 8th Lord Berwick, and his wife Lady Teresa Berwick, née Hulton. Lord and Lady Berwick had initially intended to live at Cronkhill but, unable to find a tenant for the main house after the First World War, took up residence there themselves, gradually reinvigorating the interiors of the house through programmes of acquisition and repair. With the onset of World War II, the house was used first as a refuge for school children from Birmingham and later as the headquarters of Pearl Assurance, finally being requisitioned by the WAAF. The Attingham estate, house and collections came into the ownership of the Trust in 1947 following the death of the 8th Lord Berwick.

4.3 The Stable Block

- 4.3.1 The stable block at Attingham, 'among the finest built in the second half of the eighteenth century' (Worsley 2004, 150), is located approximately 200m north-west of the main house (Figure 2), with which it is broadly contemporary, completed in c.1785 to the designs of George Steuart. It is built on a rectangular, courtyard plan with overall dimensions of 225ft. N/S x 152ft. E/W, enclosing a central yard 180ft x 108ft. The building is of red brick construction, laid to Flemish bond, with ashlar of local Grinshill sandstone to principal areas and main façades, including the full extent of the southern elevation.¹⁷ It is of 1½ and 2 storeys with 2-storey, pyramidal-roofed corner pavilions. Entrances are located to the centre of the southern and eastern ranges, while the central blocks of the northern and western ranges were originally occupied by saddle rooms (see §.4.3.3; Figure 6). The central yard area has recently been re-surfaced in brick (following a period during which it was partly grassed over) and includes a central well.
- 4.3.2 The earliest available cartographic depictions of the stable block are presented by Humphry Repton's 'before' and 'after' plans from the Attingham 'Red Book' of 1798 (Figure 3).¹⁸ These maps, produced shortly after the completion of Steuart's work at Attingham, show the newly erected mansion house and stable block within their parkland setting though, being primarily concerned with the wider landscape, show little in the way of detail in respect of individual buildings. More detail is afforded by the 1807 '*Map of the Estates of the Right Honourable Thomas Noel Lord Berwick*' (Figure 4a),¹⁹ showing the stable block occupying its distinctive quadrangular courtyard plan surrounded to east and west by extensive planting, the former effectively screening the building from the main house, and with a curving driveway extending westwards from the main house and serving the stable block via the main carriageway entrance at the centre of the south range. The latter driveway is no longer evident on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1902 (surveyed 1889;

¹⁶ By 1857, Berwick was in a position to be able to put in place a major programme of repairs at Attingham including the removal of the remains of the original Tern Hall.

¹⁷ Finlay (2001) notes that the brickwork of the lesser exterior elevations, together with the courtyard elevations, would appear to have originally been lime-washed to match the Grinshill dressings, with surviving traces suggesting an original ochre colouration, becoming progressively paler over successive applications, to a creamy off-white.

¹⁸ Copies at Attingham Park Photographic Archive Vol.I ref. ATT/9 and 10.

¹⁹ SCRO X122/8/1/3.

Figure 4b) with the stables, on an essentially unaltered plan, being accessed via the east range only at that date; the current arrangement of hoggin path serving the south carriageway is a relatively recent reinstatement, introduced in the early years of the 21st century.²⁰

4.3.3 A number of early depictions survive, specifically a series of three early drawings of the principal southern façade,²¹ two of the 1780s by Steuart himself (1782 and 1785) and one of the early-19th century, published in Volume II of George Richardson's *New Vitruvius Britannicus* of 1808.²² Richardson's elevation was accompanied by a ground plan of the range (Figure 5),²³ this being of particular interest in providing a detailed record of the interior arrangements, essentially 'as-built', which can be summarised as follows:

- *South Range*: opposing sets of seven stalls for hunters (though see §.4.3.4, fn. 28 below), arranged to either side of the main axial entrance carriage archway.
- *West Range*: stabling for 24 (matching sets of eight and four stall groupings), combined with two saddle rooms (south and centre) and a single harness room (north).
- *North Range*: contained two, five-stall stables with two harness rooms and a single, central saddle room.
- *East Range*: two four-bay coach houses to either side of axial archway, flanked by a common (open) stable²⁴ to the south and three discrete rooms (of unknown function) and transverse passage to the north.²⁵
- *Corner Pavilions*: variously servants' (SW) and grooms' (SE, NE, NW) accommodation, arranged over two storeys.²⁶

4.3.4 A plan illustrating a new drainage layout at the stables dated 1898-1900 (Figure 7)²⁷ depicts the arrangements of the buildings in some detail and, by comparison with the earlier *New Vitruvius Britannicus* plan, succinctly illustrates the changing use of the buildings over the intervening 90 years reflecting in part the gradually declining status of the horse in the functioning of a sizeable country estate. Stabling continued to occupy the northern and southern ranges²⁸ and the northern half of the west range, though 12 stalls had been removed from the southern part of the latter, which had been sub-divided and converted to form a carpenter's shop and ferret house (with dog kennels appended to the external wall) while the former central saddle room was used as a blacksmith's shop. The southern corner pavilions, formerly housing grooms' accommodation, had been converted to use as a further dog kennel (SW) and game larder (SE) while, of particular interest in the context of the current recording action, the former 'common stable' at the southern end of the east range is shown as having been occupied by 'cattle stalls' with a single transverse partition shown. The northern part of the east range comprised loose boxes and the NE pavilion, a harness room – only to the NW corner did the corner pavilion continue in use as accommodation.

²⁰ Compare Google Earth historical imaging from 1999 and 2008.

²¹ The southern elevation drawings are of interest, and are discussed at some length in the report on the south range (Tyler 2014, 7-8), submitted at an earlier stage of the current planning application (see §.5.1.3, fn.11)

²² https://archive.org/details/gri_33125012906109

²³ The ground plan is inverted around its north-south axis in its published form; a corrected version is reproduced here at Figure 6.

²⁴ A lease advertisement of 1827 details stabling for 56 horses implying that the common stable accommodated either eight or ten horses (depending on the original capacity of the southern ranges – see fn.28). **NB.** Statutory List entry states original provision for 60 horses, based upon H Avery Tipping's 1921 *Country Life* article as a source.

²⁵ Finlay (2012, 4) notes 'one of the unannotated spaces in the east range... is likely to have been for feed, and there may have been a hayloft in the attic spaces above. The other two spaces were probably workshops: a carpenter's shop is mentioned in the 1827 sale; the sale also featured 'a steel anvil [and] iron vice' – classic parts of a blacksmith's kit'.

²⁶ Finlay (ibid.) notes that each pavilion most probably had a separate 'sphere of influence'. The north-west pavilion, for example, is shown as having internal through-access via a lobby to the entire west range, for which it was probably responsible, while the north-east pavilion is likewise linked with the north range. The southern range is, however, not shown to have had direct access from either of the southern corner pavilions.

²⁷ SCRO; Attingham papers, ref.112/8/20.

²⁸ Interestingly, only six stalls per range are indicated to the south (and are labelled as such, '6 stall stable', suggesting it is not simply a graphic error), as opposed to the seven indicated in the *Vitruvius Britannicus* plan of 1808; the discrepancy may stem from an historical modification to the stabling arrangements or to an inaccuracy in one of the surveys. If the dimensions of the surviving stalls within the north-west range (6ft wide x 8ft 8in. deep) are indicative and are taken as a model, then six stalls per range would appear more likely, thus implying an error in the earlier.

- 4.3.5 The details of arrangements during World War II requisition (see §.4.2.3) are illustrated in a block plan, reproduced here as Figure 8.²⁹ A series of Nissen huts and timber sheds were erected to the south of the stables and within the yard accommodating, variously, living accommodation for both 'warrant officers and sergeants' and 'other ranks', a sergeants' mess, ablutions and shower facilities, a store and latrines. To the north-east of the stable block, a Regimental Institute and NAAFI staff quarters were erected.
- 4.3.6 The post-war period saw a number of different proposals (unrealised) for the stables including as a National Hunt training establishment (see below), and as a part of the extra-mural Department of the University of Birmingham providing accommodation for archaeological summer school students. Parts of the complex were let to the Shropshire Adult Education College³⁰ from 1948-59 while parts of the northern and eastern ranges were let to Messrs Hartley Electromotives of Monkmoor, Shrewsbury for storage in the late 1950s and 1960s.³¹ Nature Conservancy (later to become English Nature) leased areas of the stables from 1959,³² though the full extent of the range is now in the occupancy of the National Trust, used variously as display, retail, catering, offices and storage.
- 4.3.7 Proposal drawings for the conversion of the stable block were prepared in 1956 by Laurie Bland, of Bland Brothers (Tractors) Ltd. of Shrewsbury, as part of an unsuccessful proposal to secure the stables for use as a National Hunt and Jockey Club training establishment.³³ Proposals included four of the five stables being converted to loose boxes, the use of Bradley's cottage (NW pavilion) for the 'head man', lofts for hay and straw and 'lads accommodation' over the east range between the game larder (SE pavilion) towards garages (former coach houses). Drawings are especially useful in that they seem to present proposals as simple annotations over a plan illustrating 'as existing' arrangements. Of particular significance, the former 'common stable' currently under consideration is illustrated as comprising 3 loose boxes (Figure 10), the clear implication being that the internal arrangements represented by the recently exposed floor (see §.5 below) survived as late as the mid-1950s.³⁴
- 4.3.8 The south-east corner of the stables (east end of south range and south-east pavilion) was radically altered, most probably in the late 1950s,³⁵ to form accommodation for the National Trust property manager/land agent John Cripwell.³⁶ This seems to be the most likely context for the removal of internal stall partitioning of the south range (known to have been still extant in 1956; see Figure 10), of which no record appears to have been made or to have survived, and of the loose-boxes within the east range currently under consideration. Certainly, this work predates the early 1970s as drawings prepared by ST Walker and Partners of Birmingham in 1972/3 detail a series of 'proposed alterations' to a pre-existing suite of rooms (Figure 11);³⁷ the latter included the formation of a kitchen and breakfast/playroom in the south range, a sitting room within the SE pavilion (with bedroom over) and a dining room and store within the south end of the east range.

²⁹ Photocopy inspected at Attingham Archives.

³⁰ The College also leased the whole of Attingham House, with the exception of a few private rooms (Cousens 2000, 57). Plans were prepared in 1944 for the conversion of the stable block for use as accommodation for the College (Figure 9); proposals including the introduction of lavatories, bathrooms and showers within the area of the former common stable. Additional accommodation was ultimately identified elsewhere and the plans were not realised.

³¹ See associated correspondence at SCRO: Attingham Papers ref. 112/7B/5/5/1/1

³² SCRO: Attingham Papers ref. 112/7B/5/5/2/1-3.

³³ See associated correspondence at SCRO: ref. 112/7B/5/5/1/1. The proposals, though attractive from a financial perspective, were unsupported by Lady Berwick amongst others and were ultimately rejected by the Trust as unsuitable.

³⁴ The plan also brings into question the veracity of the arrangements depicted in the drainage layout drawing of 1898-1900 (Figure 7), which shows only a single transverse partition to the 'cattle stalls'. The implication is either that drainage plan presents an inaccurate record of the arrangements at that date, or that the range of three loose boxes post-dated the plan and were therefore of early-20th century date.

³⁵ The architects ST Walker and Duckham, responsible for work at Attingham from the early 1970s at least, retain no records related to the original conversion of the range to non-stables use.

³⁶ Memorandum of 15th August 2001 from Julian Gibbs to NT Director of Historic Buildings (Attingham Archives).

³⁷ Copies at Attingham Archives; annotations to the plan, eg. 'take down existing wall and make good', make it clear that the range was previously sub-divided prior to this date.

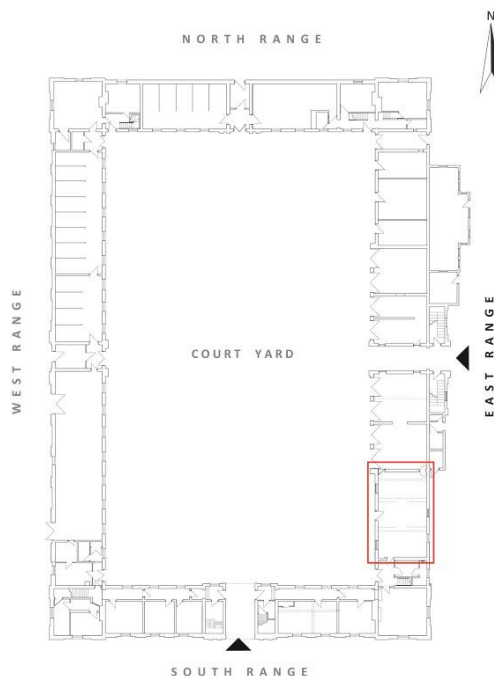
- 4.3.9 A further plan of 1976, also by Walker and entitled 'ground floor as existing' (see Figure 12a)³⁸ suggests that the alterations in respect of the east range of the stables may not have been effected as proposed, as the area of the 'dining room' is annotated simply as a 'store' with a straight-flight stair introduced against the north wall of the room, serving office accommodation at first floor level. By 1986 (Figure 12b) the ground floor of the range was in the occupation of English Nature and had also been subdivided to form office accommodation. It was subsequently taken back into direct Trust management and has most recently functioned as the 'Coach House Café'.

5 DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION

NB. The current recording action has been undertaken in respect of an historical floor surface exposed within the southernmost room of the east range of the stable block (the former 'common stable'). It is beyond the scope of the current report to present a description and analysis of the stable block as a whole.

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 The east range of the stable block is of brick construction, in pale orange/red brick laid to a regular Flemish bond, with Grinshill dressings (plinth, plat-band, moulded eaves), generally of 1½ storeys beneath a pitched, slate-clad roof. A central entrance archway is flanked to north and south by opposing blocks of four coach houses, standing somewhat taller than the main body of the range and ashlar-faced to ground floor level. The former 'common stable' occupies the range to the southern side of the central block, extending between the southernmost coach house and the stairwell flanking the north side of the south-east pavilion (see inset below; Plate 1). The room is accessed from the yard via a central doorway (Plate 2), flanked to north and south by flat-headed window openings (Plate 3);³⁹ all openings are spanned by flat-arches of gauged brick. The blue-brick yard surface is raised around the doorway, presumably a recent modification to aid level entry to the café area.



Attingham Stables: Former common stable highlighted in red

³⁸ Copy at Attingham Archives; the apartment was by this time in the occupation of Gerald Noel Esq.

³⁹ The southern opening houses a 3/6 timber un-horned sash; the window to the north has been modified and comprises a lower, 6-pane fixed light with 3-pane hopper over.

- 5.1.2 Internally, the former common stable measures 34ft. (N/S) x 19½ft. (E/W) and stands c.9½ft. high from the level of the exposed floor to the soffit of the underdrawn ceiling (Plates 4/5).⁴⁰ The room is of three structural bays (here numbered 1 to 3 from north to south) defined by two primary transverse ceiling beams, 11in. square, which have been strengthened by the introduction of C-section steel beams (Plate 6). A secondary, transverse RSJ to the north side of the room is probably associated with the insertion of a straight-flight stair in the 1970s (§4.39; Figure 12a). Opposing doorways to the east and west ends of the north wall open onto the adjacent coach house bay, both representing insertions of the later 20th century, while a doorway to the west end of the south wall is earlier, though not apparently an original feature (see Figure 6). The east wall, originally blind, has had two opening inserted in the later 20th century, a doorway to the south (Bay 3, 1956-73; see inset below left), later modified to form a window, and a further window to the Bay 2 (1976-86; inset below right, blocked during current works; Plate 7).



East elevation, c.1960 with secondary door.



East elevation with additional inserted window (right).

5.2 The Exposed Floor (Figure 13)

- 5.2.1 The removal of a 5 inch deep concrete slab overlying a thin layer of bedding sand (Plate 8) exposed a well-preserved floor of brick construction, extending to the full area of the room (Figure 13, Plates 4/5). To the west side of the room, flanking the exterior wall, a 6ft-wide circulation 'passage' (A, Figure 13) is characterised by regular, face-laid blue-brick flooring with bricks aligned longitudinally to the range (north-south; Plate 9); the eastern side of this feature being demarcated by a north-south alignment of transversely set, face-laid stretchers (Plate 10). The eastern side of the room is divided on a tri-partite pattern, reasonably representing the flooring of three former discrete loose-boxes, each measuring 13ft. 4in. (E/W) x 11ft. 3in. (N/S).⁴¹ Each implied loose box is again floored in Staffordshire blue-brick (those to Bays 1 and 2 being edge-laid and that to Bay 3, face-laid),⁴² floors sloping inwards over a 4in. drop to a central drain (iron grille survives to loose-box 2 only; Plate 12). The line of the former partitions between loose-boxes is clearly defined (Plates 14/15), with stone pads to the west presumably representing footings for original cast-iron posts. Any evidence for contemporary fixtures and fittings (wall treatments, feed racks, water troughs, tethering rings etc.) has been lost to subsequent phases of remodelling/refitting; a painted scheme of green and cream wash divided by a horizontal red line survives in part to the north wall (Plate 17), though it is unclear to what phase this belongs.

5.3 Interpretation

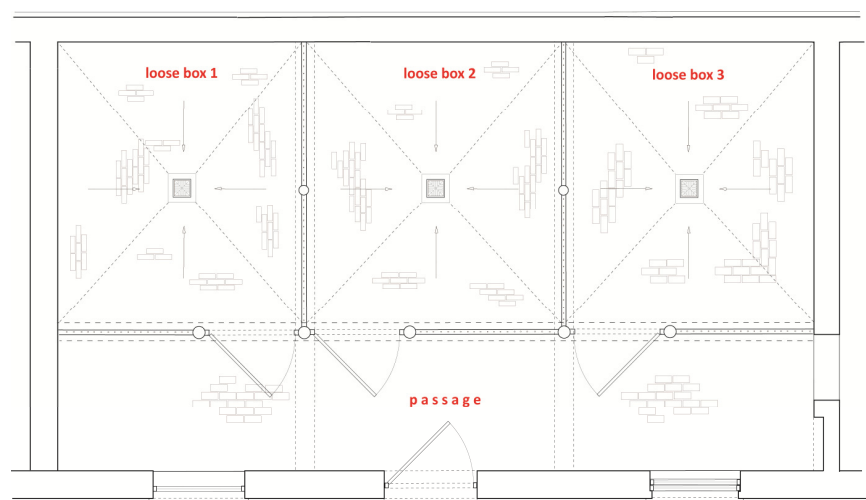
- 5.3.1 The interpretation of the exposed floor is straightforward as it clearly relates to a group of three former loose-boxes with flanking passageway to the west. The date of these features, however, is a little more difficult to ascertain with certainty. The loose-box - a pen, 10ft or more square, enclosed on all sides within which limits

⁴⁰ Dimensions will be given here in imperial units, reflecting the system in use when the stables were built.

⁴¹ Transverse loose-box partitions align with the primary ceiling beams over.

⁴² The reason for the discrepancy in the flooring of loose-boxes 1/2 and loose-box 3 is not clear.

the horse has freedom of movement, as opposed to the enforced idleness of the more conventional stall - was an innovation of the late-18th century, driven by growing concerns regarding the health and well-being of horses, though at the beginning of the 19th century it remained to be commonly accepted (Worsley 2004, 187). Its subsequent spread was rapid however, and by 1829, it was recorded as a feature 'in considerable use' (Lawrence 1829, quoted in Worsley 2004).



Conjectural reconstructed plan of loose-boxes

5.3.2 Clearly the loose-boxes at Attingham were not an original feature of Steuart's 1785 stable block and, given the demonstrable reliability of Richardson's 1808 plan in other respects, there seems no reason to doubt that the depiction of a 'common stable', with a feed trough to the east but with no internal partitioning, reflects the early arrangements of the block. Thus it would initially seem reasonable to assume that the loose-boxes represent an introduction of the 19th century, most probably pre-dating the effective abandonment and 'mothballing' of the house by the 5th Lord Berwick in 1848. Indeed, it is evident that loose-boxes had been introduced elsewhere within the eastern range, as illustrated on the drainage layout plan of 1898-1900 (Figure 7). If this were the case, the evidence of the latter plan would suggest that the southern loose-boxes were fairly short-lived and had been removed by that date, and the space converted for use as cattle stalling. However, plans accompanying Laurie Bland's 1956 proposals for conversion of the stables (§.4.3.7; Figure 10) clearly indicate the survival in the mid-20th century of a range of three loose-boxes correlating exactly to the plan implied by the exposed flooring. Thus it would appear that, if the 1898-1900 plan is accepted to be an accurate depiction of arrangements at the turn of the 20th century, the loose-boxes must actually represent a relatively late introduction of the early 1900s. Although an exact date for their removal has not been established, the remodelling of the south range to form domestic accommodation in the late 1950s or early 1960s seems the most likely context.

5.3.3 Later phases of modification, from the mid-20th century on, means that no evidence survives for the character and construction of the former loose-box partitioning. These may have been of cast-iron or of wooden construction,⁴³ or most probably a combination of the two with a framework of cast-iron posts and rails with heavy infill panels of timber and upper iron grilles allowing visibility between boxes. Likewise, any evidence for contemporary fixtures and fittings, viz. feed racks, water troughs, tethering rings etc. has been lost.

⁴³ Early-20th century loose-boxes at Cronkhill Farm on the estate combined blue brick paving and partitioning principally in timber (Tyler 2012, 36-7; figure 29, plates 172/3).

- 5.3.4 The exposed floor nonetheless represents an interesting and unexpected survival, representative of a significant phase of development of the stable block, and it is hoped it may be possible to incorporate the remains within the refurbished café facilities.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The project was instigated by Ms. Janine Young (NT archaeology consultant, West Midlands) and commissioned by Ms. Rachel Freemantle (NT project manager), to whom thanks are given for help and co-operation throughout. Thanks also to Ms Sarah Kay (NT) for discussion of the recorded remains to Mr Steve Cooper (Croft) for arranging access to the site for the purposes of recording.
- 6.2 Site recording and report preparation has been undertaken by Mr Ric Tyler MCI(A).

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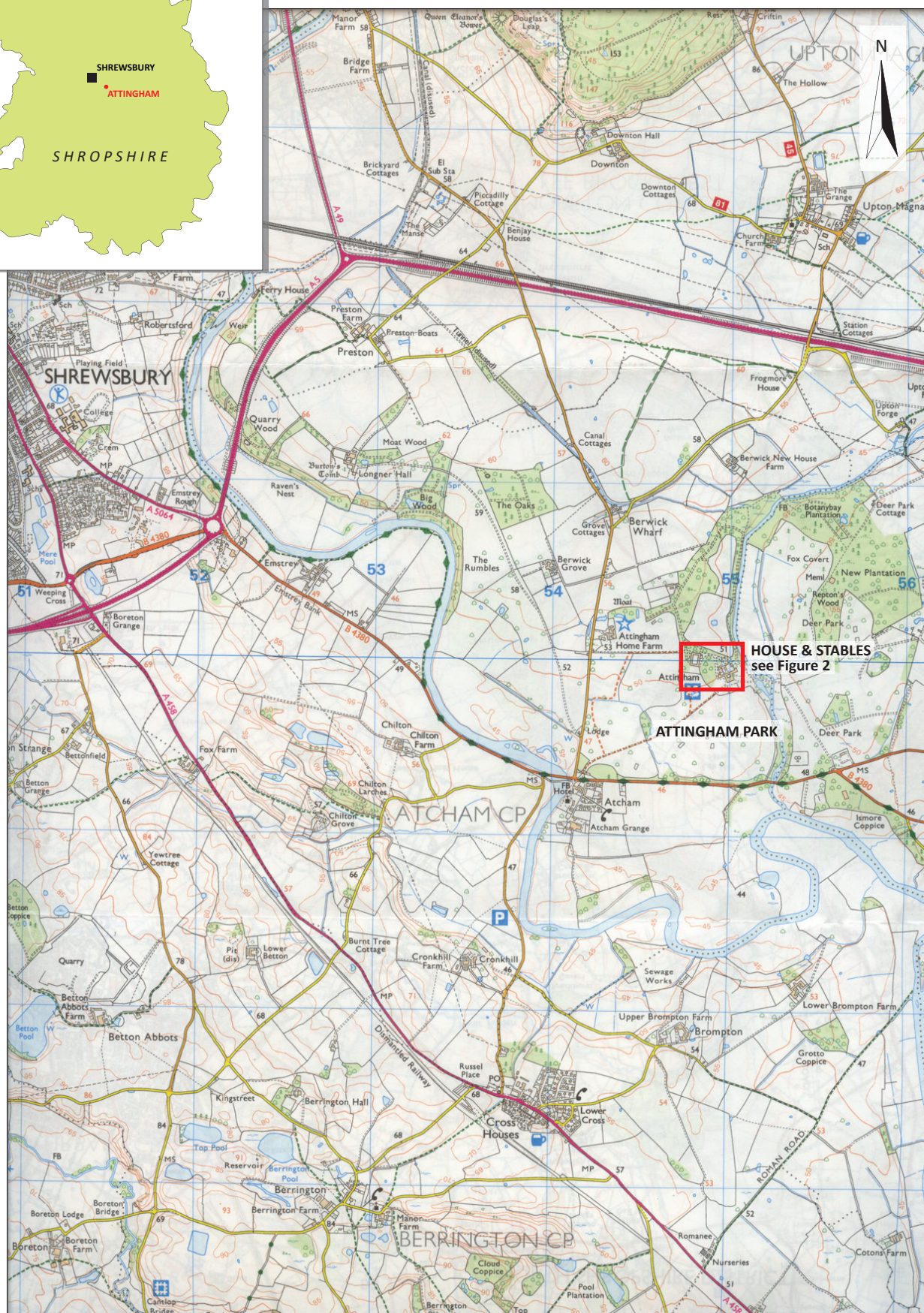
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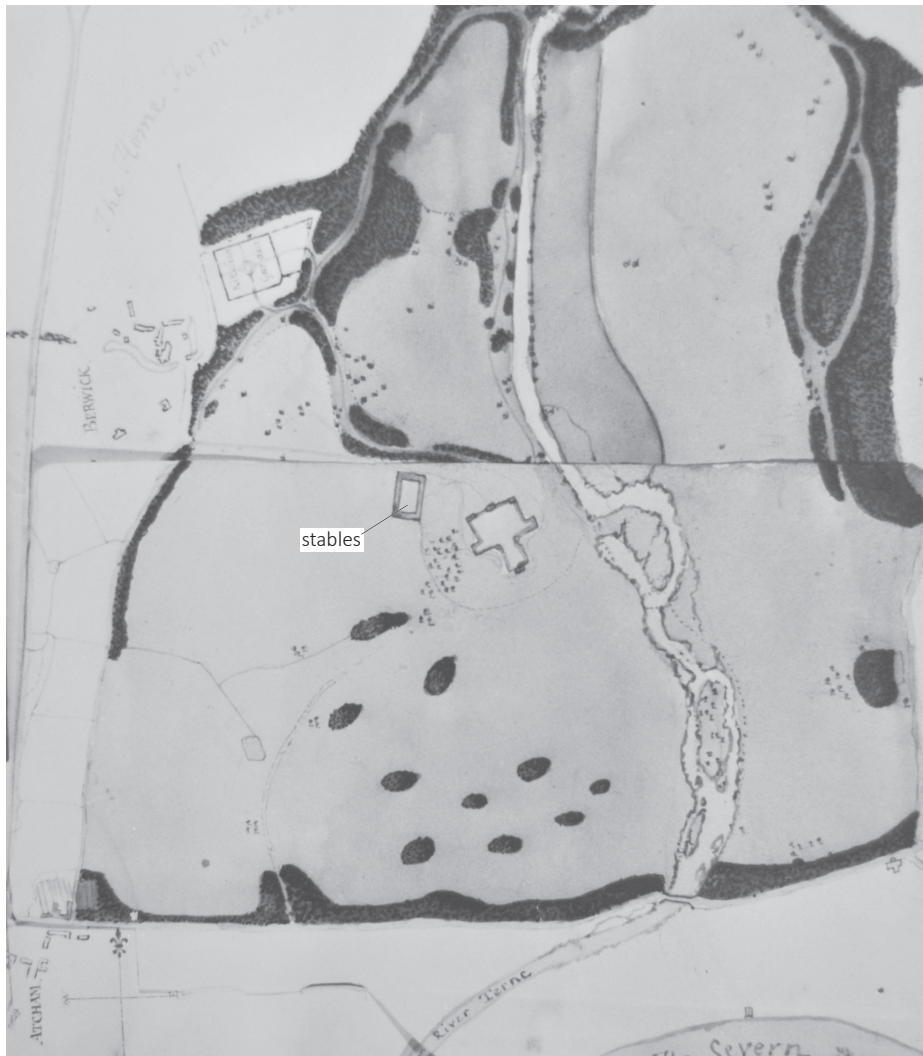
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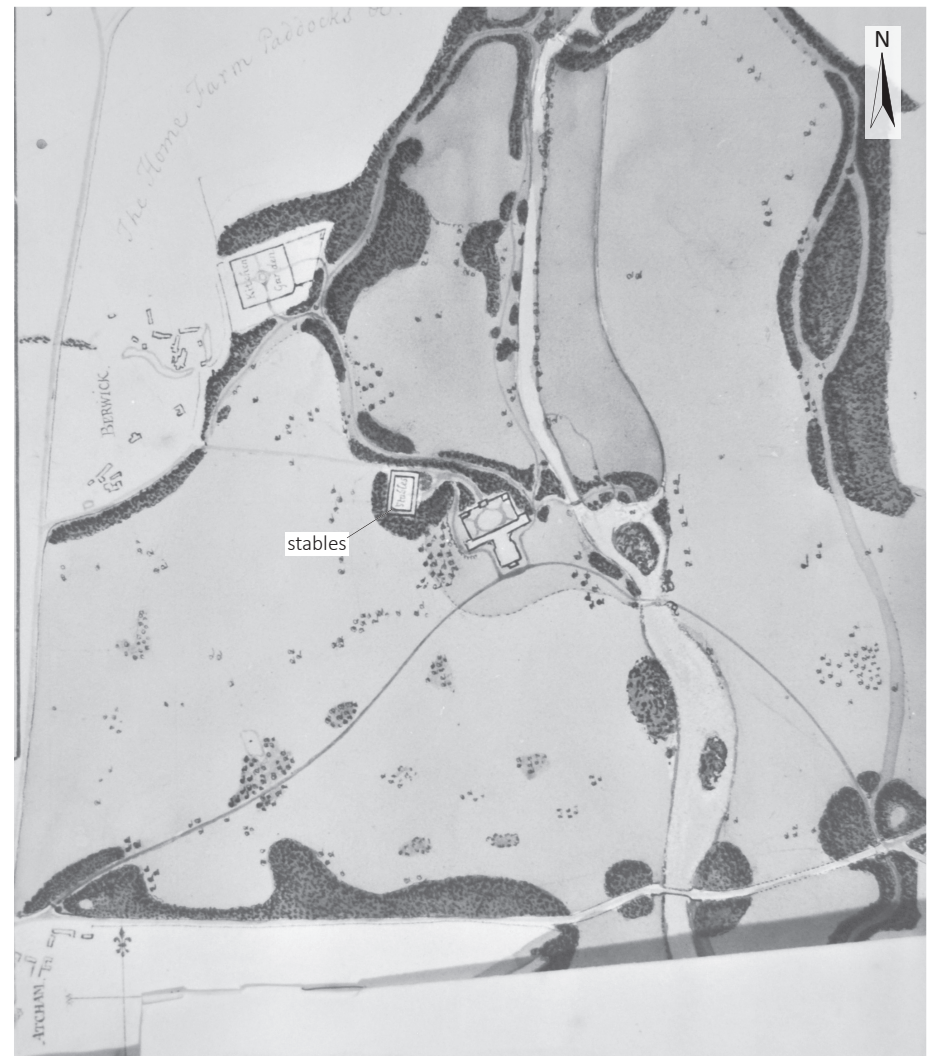
Based upon Explorer 1:25,000 map (Sheet 241)
Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright 2005.
All rights reserved. Licence No. 100050391.

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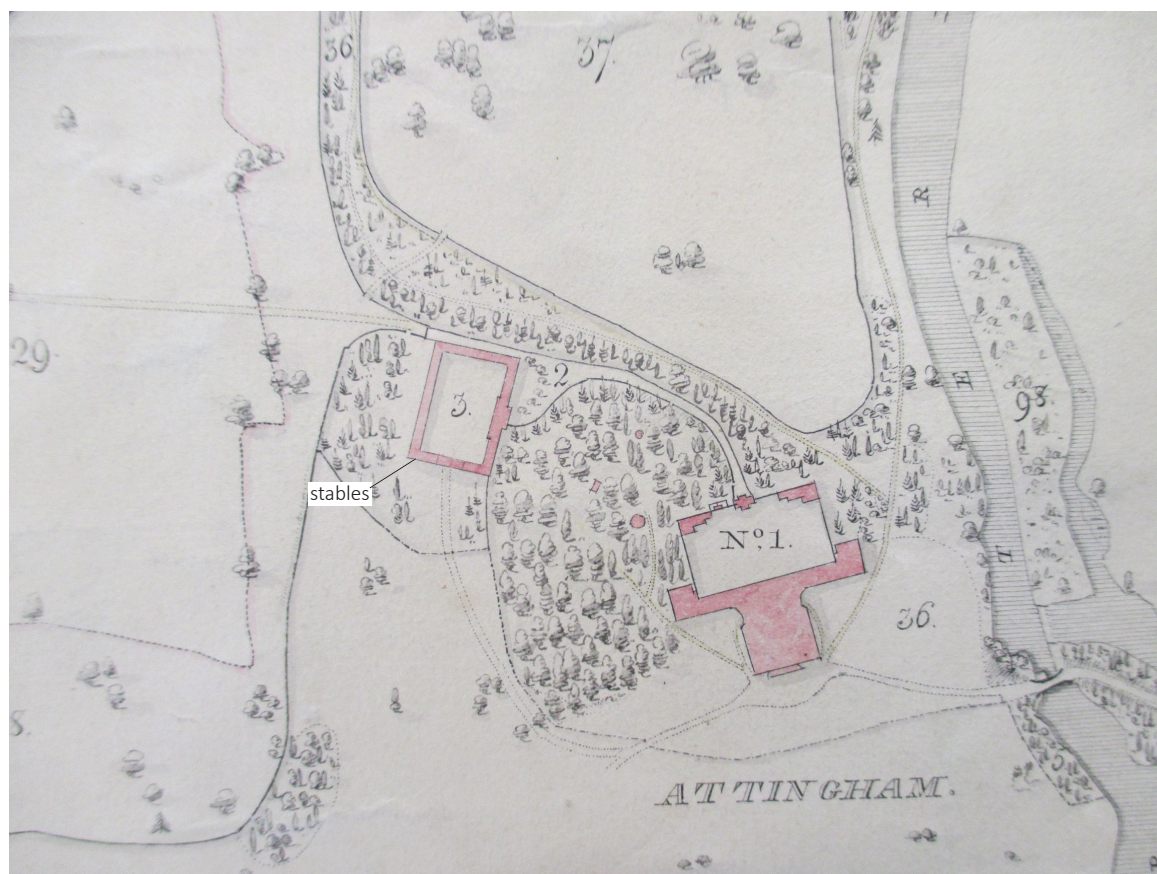




(a) 'Before'



(b) 'After'



(a) Map of the Estates of the Right Honourable Thomas Noel Lord Berwick, 1807



(b) Second Edition Ordnance Survey County Series 1:2500 map (surveyed 1889, revised 1900; published 1902)

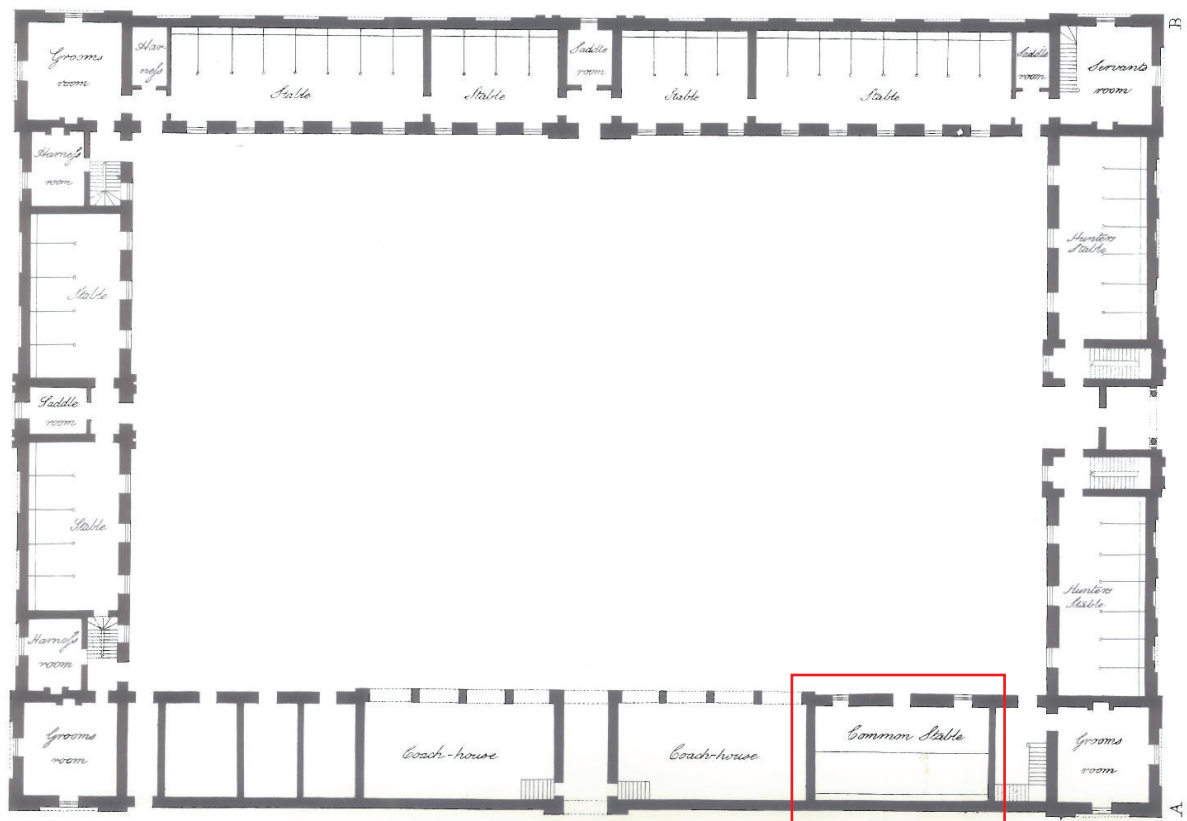
Elevation of the Stable Offices at Attingham in Shropshire, on the line A.B. marked on the Plan.

George Stuart, Architect.



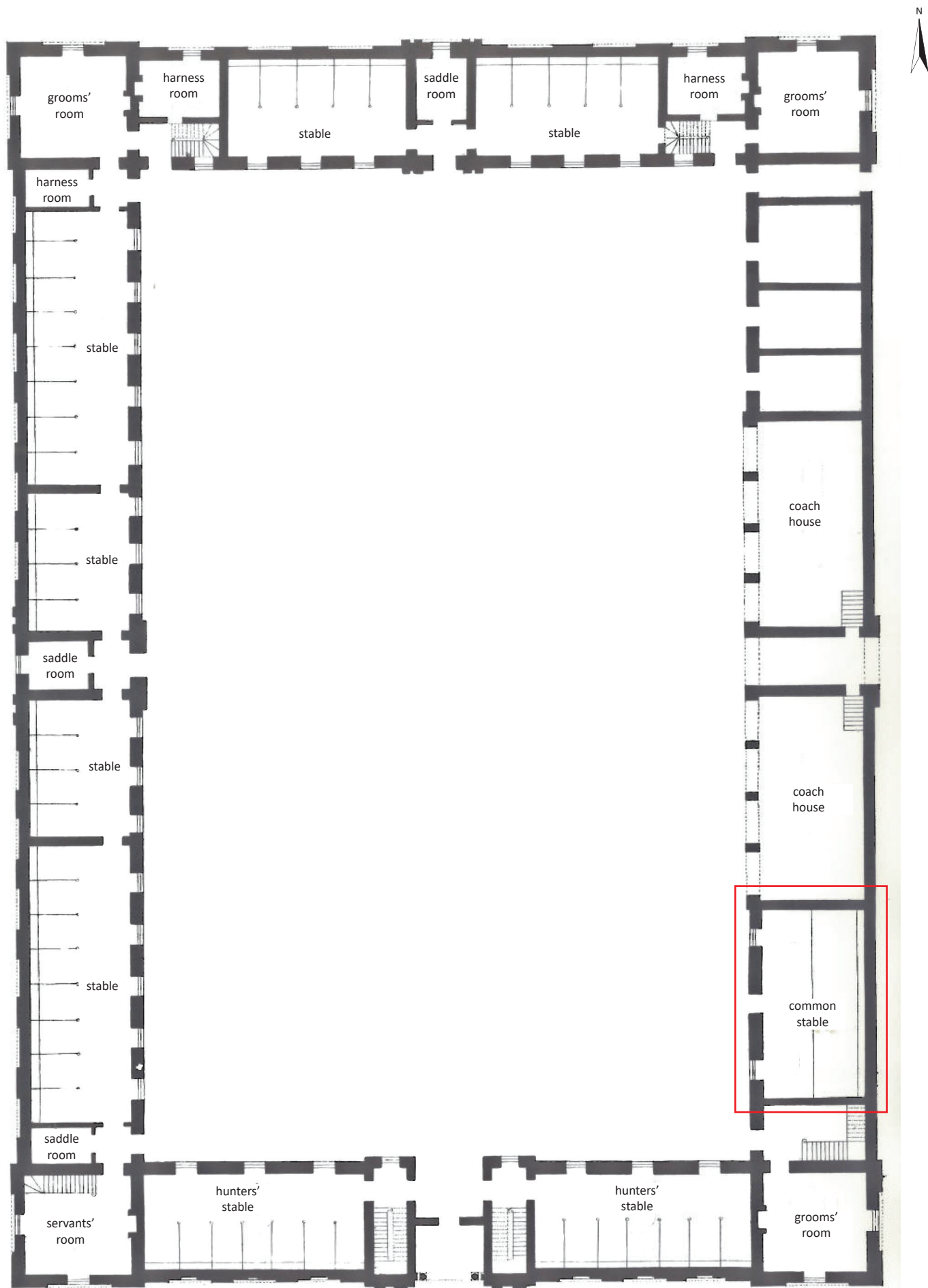
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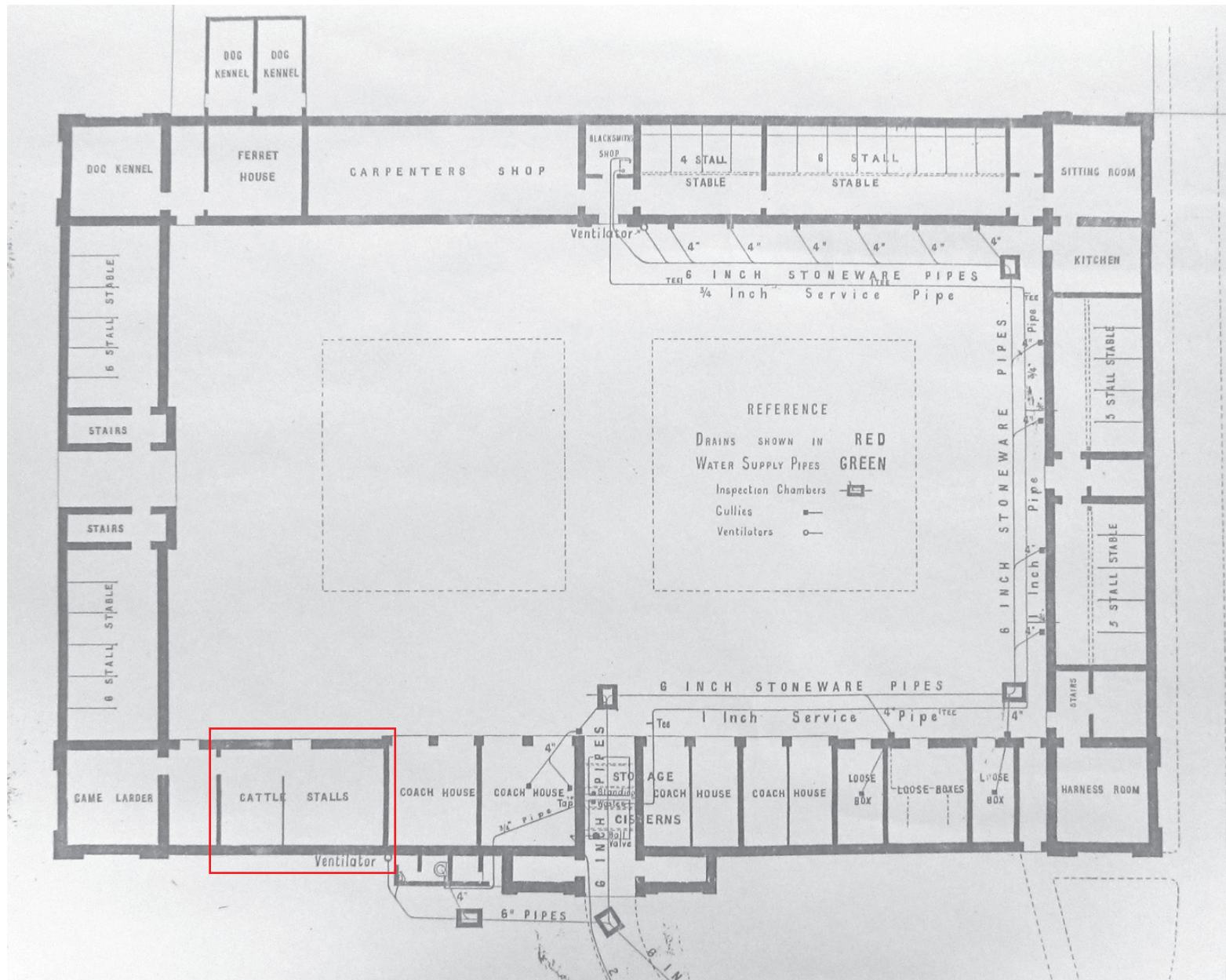
Plan of the Stable Offices at Attingham, in Shropshire.

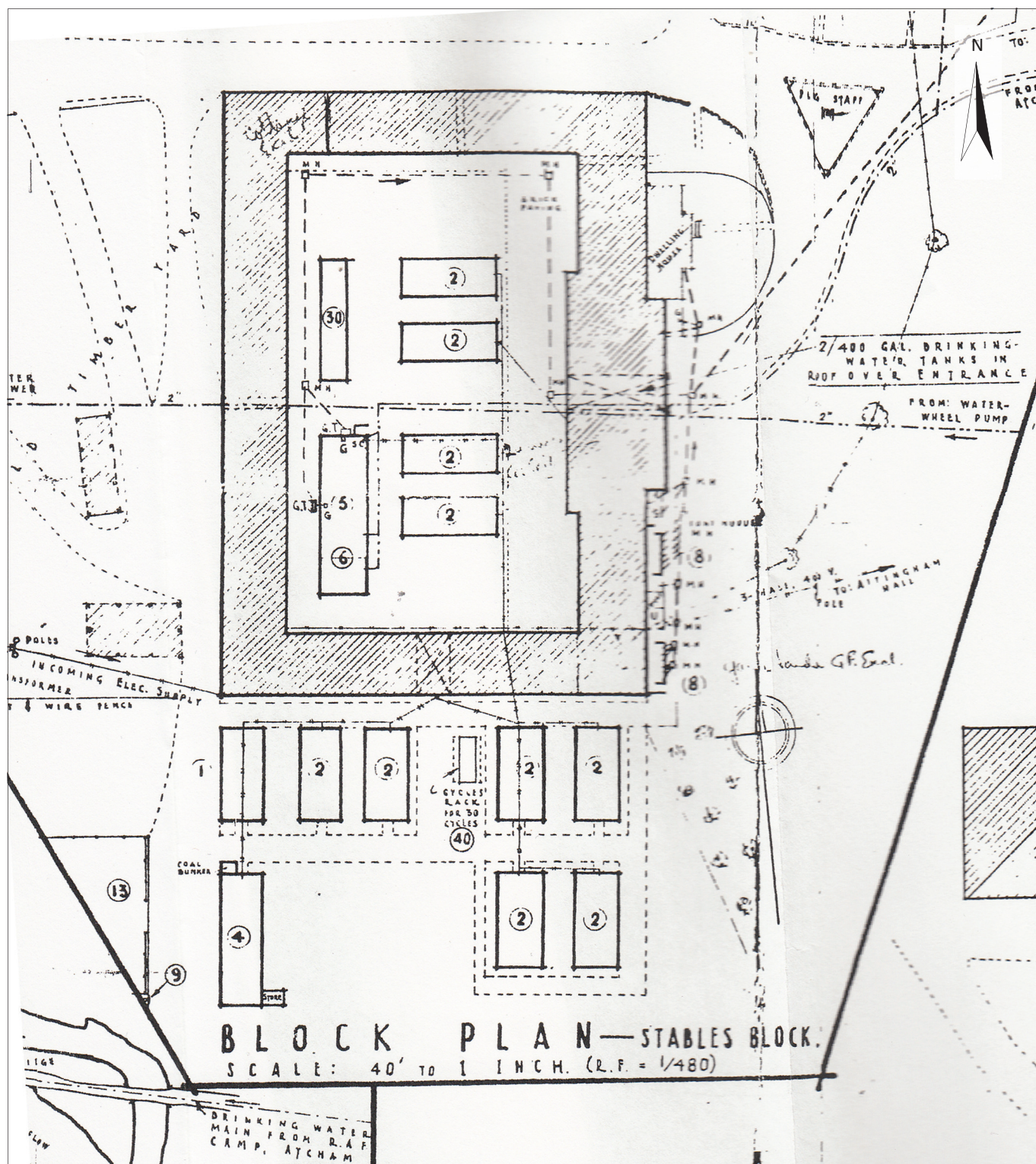


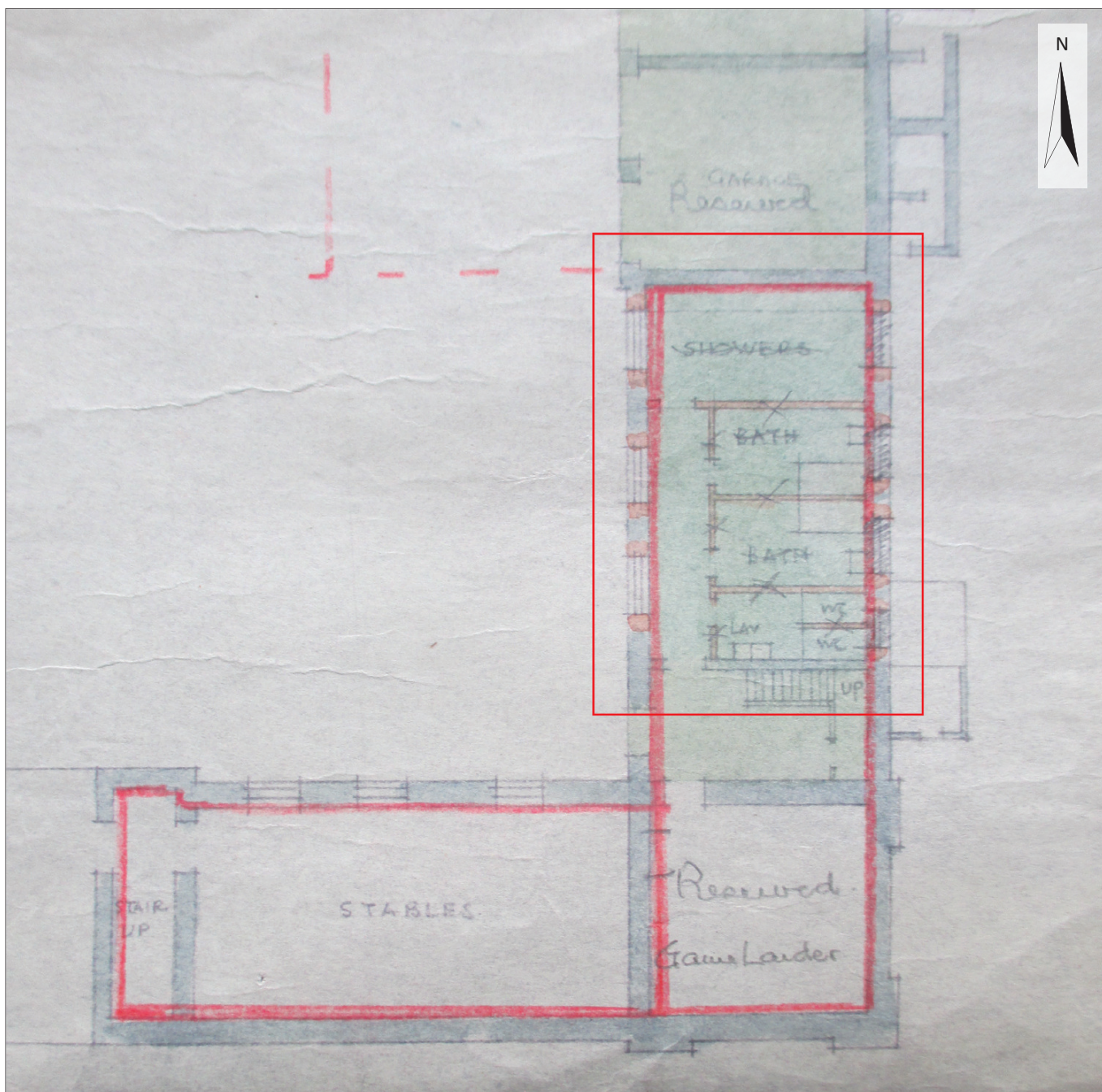
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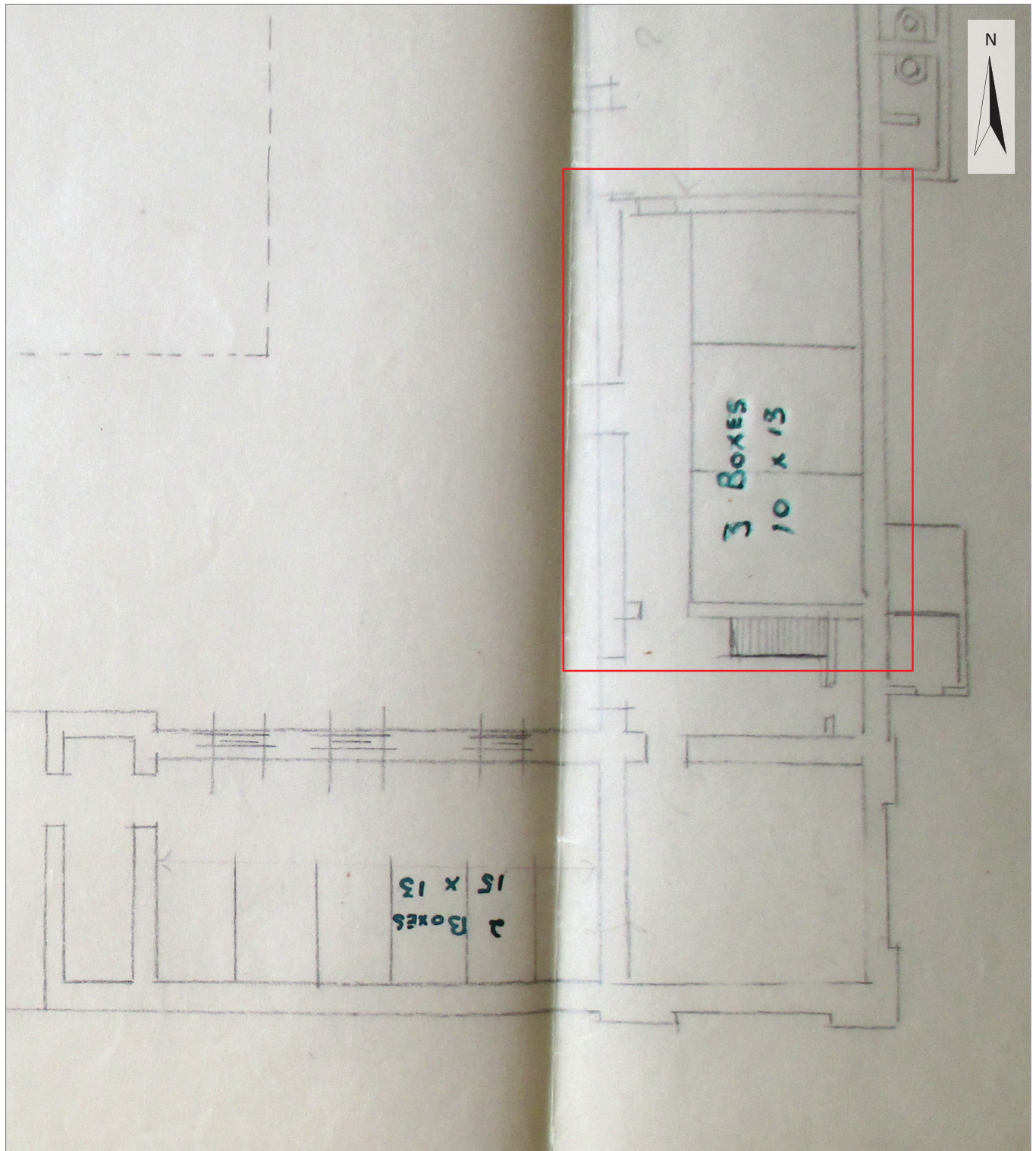
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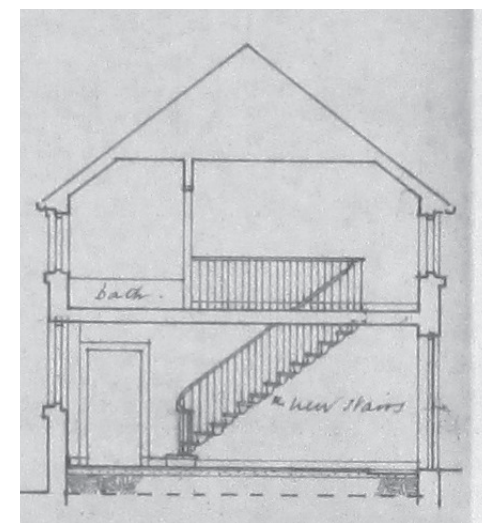
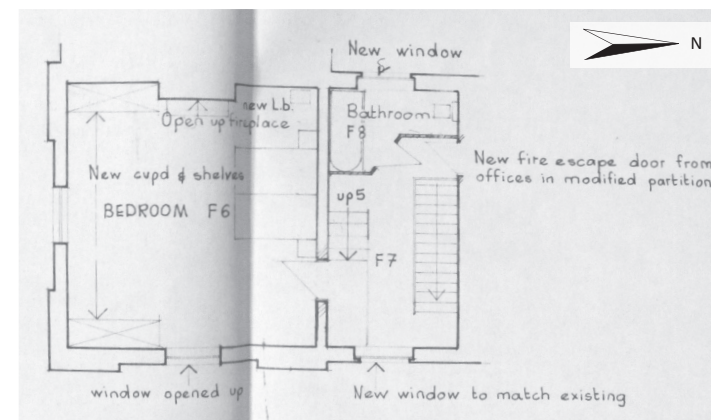
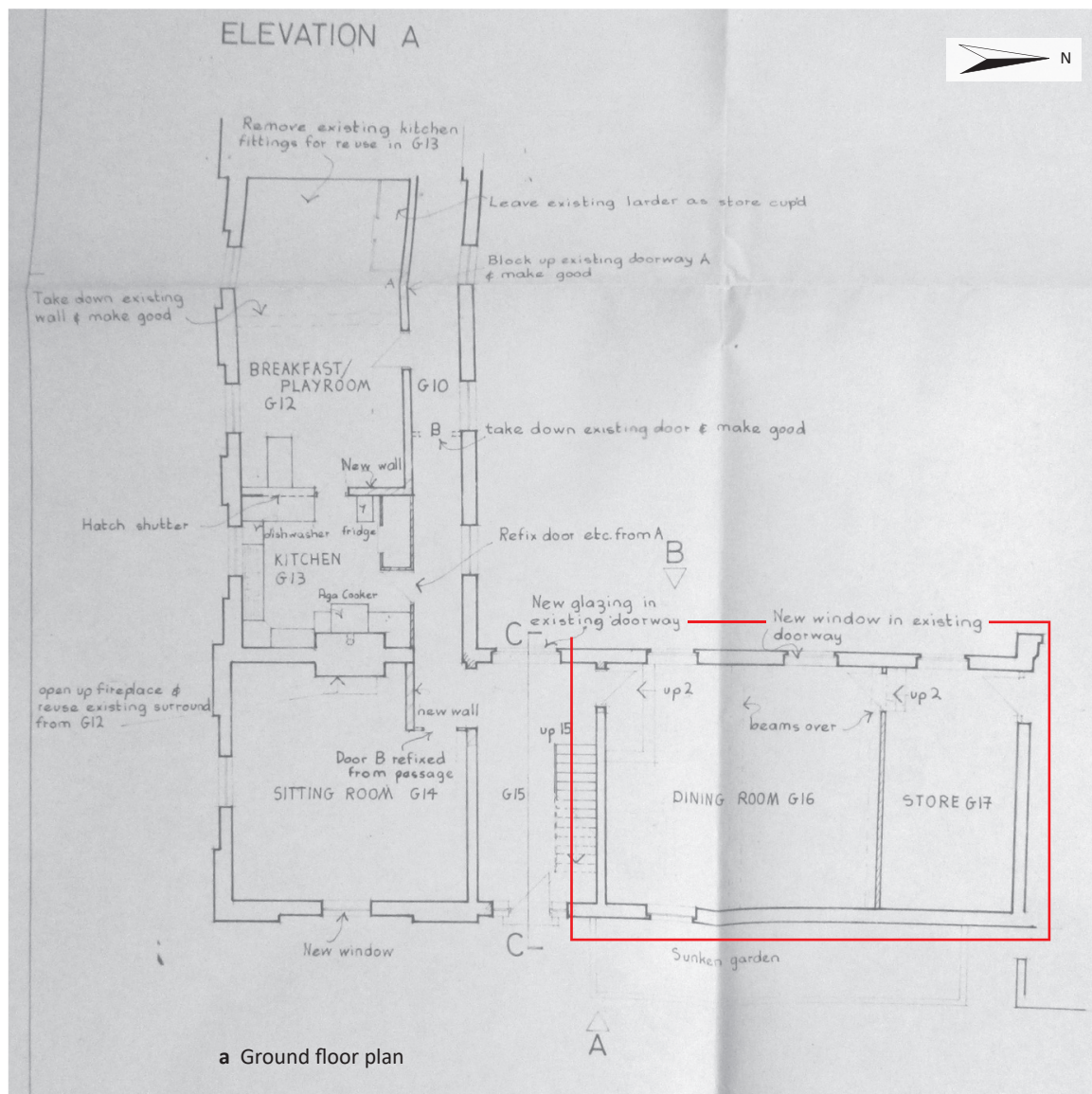


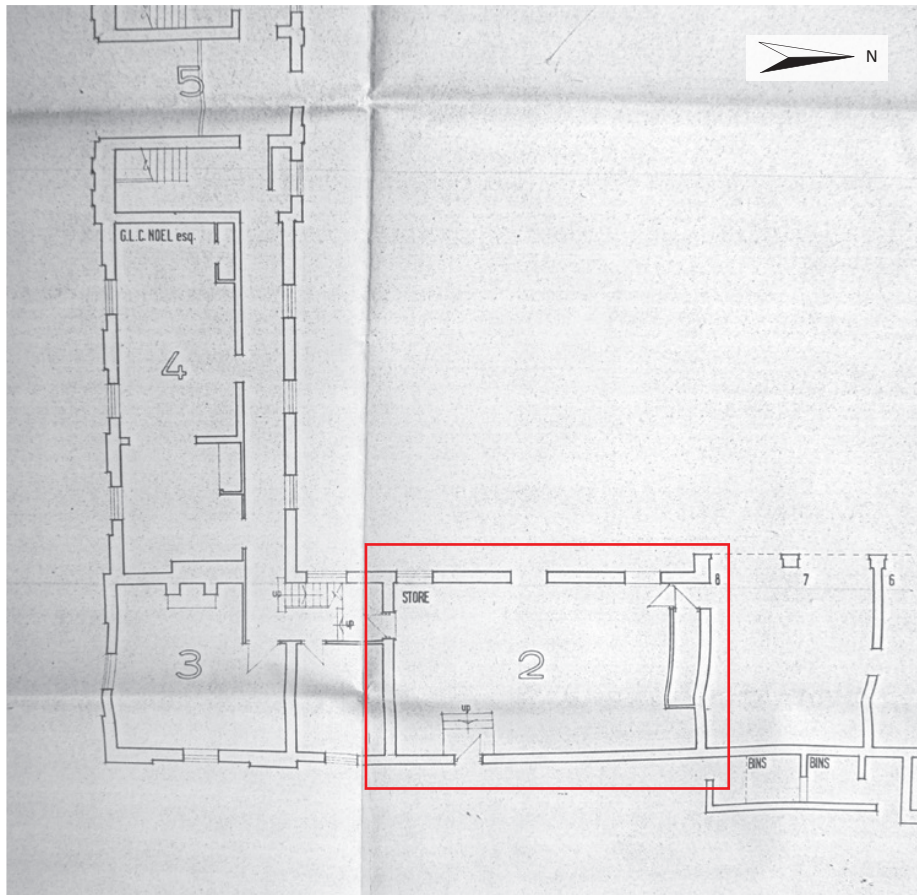




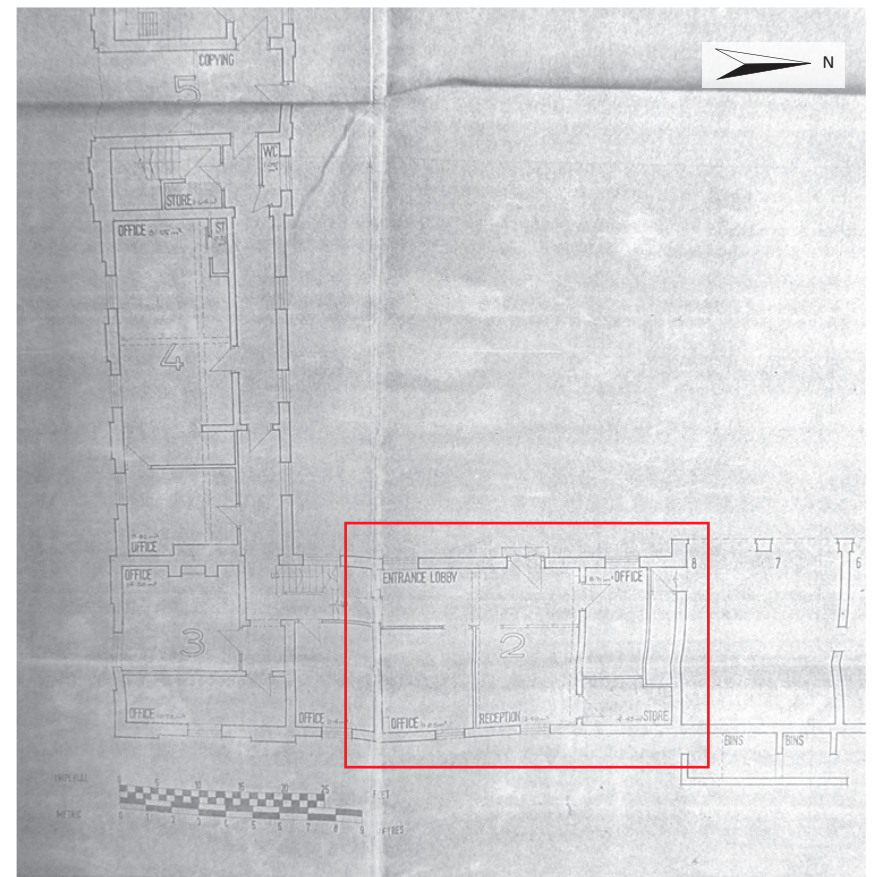


The Stable Block, Attingham Park, Atcham, Shropshire
Figure 10: 1956 plan (unrealised) for conversion to
 National Hunt and Jockey Club Training centre
 (Attingham Archives)





(a) 1976 plan 'as-existing'



(b) 1986 plan 'as-existing'

NB: For illustrative purposes; **do not scale** from this drawing

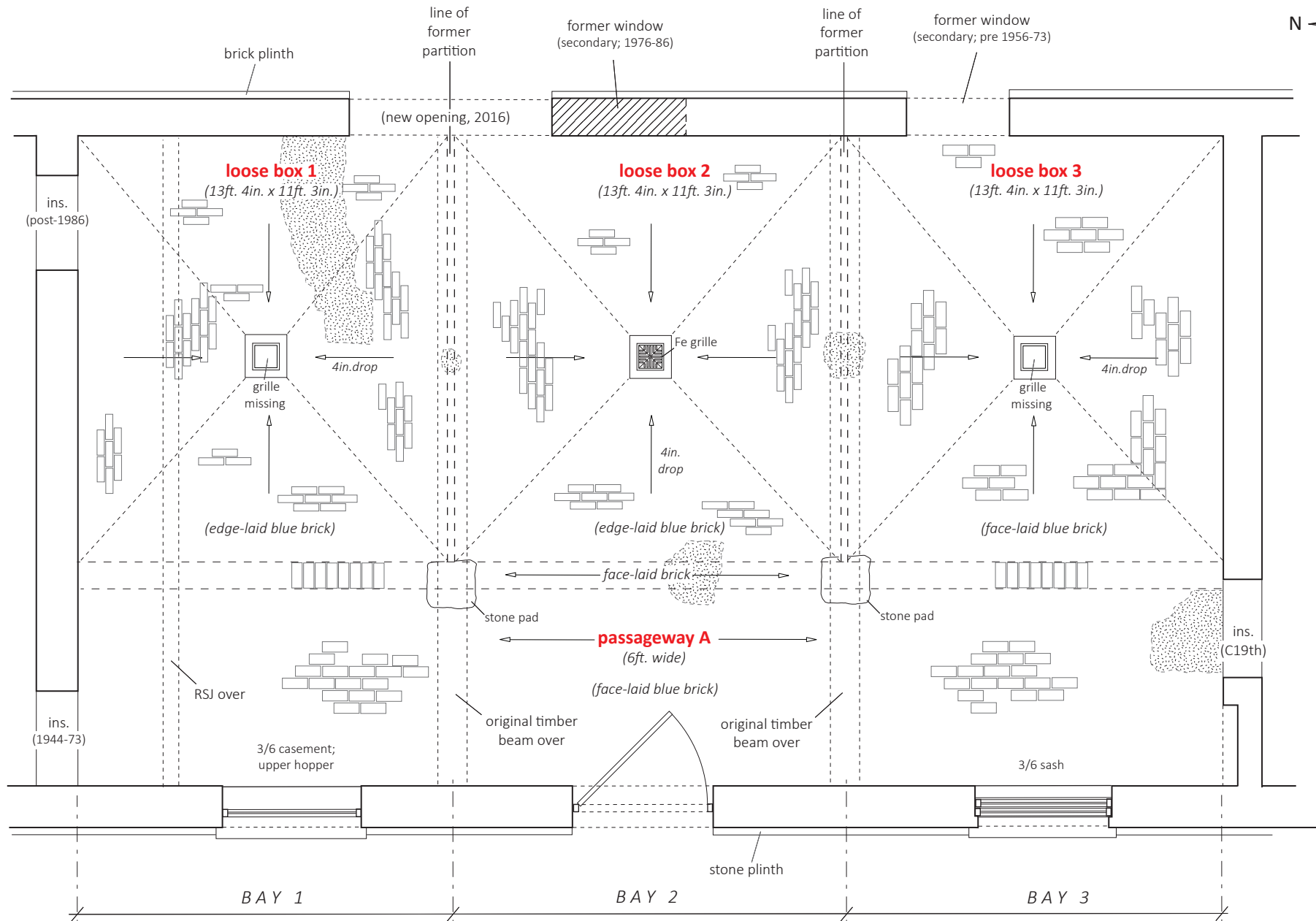




Plate 1: East range, south end; west (yard) elevation.



Plate 2: Door to interior (NB. raised brick yard in front of door).



Plate 3: Northern window opening (window renewed).



Plate 4: Interior looking north-east.



Plate 5: Interior looking north-west.



Plate 6: Primary transverse ceiling beam clasped by C-section steels.



Plate 7: Newly formed opening to east all with blocked secondary window to right; note timber lacing in brickwork to left of new opening.



Plate 8: Remnants of concrete flooring recently removed.



Plate 9: Passageway A to west side of room.



Plate 10: Alignment of face-laid stretchers defining east side of passage A.



Plate 11: Footprint of central loose box (2) looking south-east.



Plate 12: Surviving iron drainage grille at centre of **loose-box 2** (note edge-laid brick floor).



Plate 13: Missing iron drainage grille at centre of **loose-box 3** (note face-laid brick floor).



Plate 14: Alignment of former partition between loose-box 2 (left) and 3 (right); looking east.



Plate 15: Alignment of former partition between loose-box 2 (left) and 1 (right); looking west.



Plate 16: Stone pad to west end of former partition between loose-boxes 1 and 2.



Plate 17: Painted scheme surviving to north wall.

APPENDIX A: Register of Project Drawings

Drawing No.	Subject	Format	Date	Recorder
2016_013/01	Floor plan	A3, pencil on film	17.11.16	R Tyler

APPENDIX B: Register of Project Photographs

NB: All photographs taken with Nikon D3000 digital SLR camera, 10 mega-pixels. Photos highlighted in **BOLD** are reproduced as plates within the current document.

Photo No.	Plate No.	Subject	Orientation	Date	Photographer
DSC_0002*	1	General view of east range, south end	→ SE	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0003		General view of east range, south end	→ SE	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0004*	2	West elevation; main access door	→ E	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0007*	3	West elevation; window detail	→ E	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0008*	4	Interior looking north-east	→ NE	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0009*	5	Interior looking north-west	→ NW	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0010		Interior looking south-east	→ SE	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0011		Interior looking south-west	→ SW	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0012		Doorway to west end of south wall	→ S	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0013		Inserted doorway at Bay 3 of west wall	→ E	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0014*	7	Inserted opening/blocked window at Bay 2 of west wall	→ E	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0015		Central drain to loose-box 2	↓	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0016*	9	6ft wide passageway to west side of room	→ N	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0017*	10	Detail of stretcher bricks defining east side of passage	↓	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0018*	16	Detail of stone pad (base for iron column of partition)	↓	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0019		Floor of loose-box 2 (oblique) looking north-east	→ NE	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0020*	8	Detail of surviving section of concrete slab (at east wall)	→ E	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0021		Brickwork of east wall (exterior)	→ W	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0022*	15	Detail of partition line between loose-box 1/2	→ W	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0023		Exterior east wall from within new extension (north)	→ W	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0024		Exterior east wall from within new extension (south)	→ W	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0025		Blocked secondary window in east wall	→ W	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0026		Detail of west wall window	→ W	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0027		Detail of face-laid brickwork	↓	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0028		Detail of edge-laid brickwork	↓	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0029*	12	Central drain to loose-box 2	↓	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0030*	13	Central drain to loose-box 3 (iron grille missing)	↓	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0031*	14	Detail of partition line between loose-box 2/3	→ E	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0032		General view of floor	→ SE	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0033*	11	General view of loose-box 2 floor	→ SE	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0034		6ft wide passageway to west side of room	→ S	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0035*	6	Strengthened ceiling beam	↑	17.11.16	R Tyler
DSC_0036		Partition line between loose-box ½ (aligns with ceiling beam)	→ E	17.11.16	R Tyler
IMG_3378*	17	Painted scheme to north wall	→ N	17.11.16	R Tyler