

# **MUDDIFORDS COURT HALBERTON, DEVON**

## **HISTORIC BUILDING EVALUATION**

**October 2010**

**Martin Watts**

1 Trinity Cottages  
Cullompton  
Devon  
EX15 1PE

**Project MFH 194/2010**

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### **Contents**

Introduction	1
Location	1
Historical background	1
General description	2
The threshing barn	2
The roundhouse	3
Discussion	4
Conclusion	5
Requirement for further recording	5
Acknowledgements	5
References	5
Figures	6
Photographs	9
Appendix: Brief	14

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## HISTORIC BUILDING EVALUATION

### **Introduction**

This assessment has been compiled to form an historic building evaluation of some of the former agricultural buildings at Muddifords Court, Halberton, at the request of David Randell of Randell Burton Architects, on behalf of the owners. It is based on the method statement submitted to Devon County Council Historic Environment Service on 3 September 2010.

A site visit to examine the buildings was made by Martin and Sue Watts on 12 September and a further visit by Martin Watts on 27 September 2010. Background and other relevant information have been compiled from a variety of sources, which are referenced and acknowledged.

Neither the house nor the farm buildings are listed buildings.

A digital copy of the evaluation will be uploaded onto the OASIS (Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS) database under the reference martinwa1-81718.

Accession number 169/2010 has been obtained from the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, for future deposit of the site archive.

### **Location**

The buildings that are the subject of this evaluation are situated to the south of the house now known as Muddifords Court, in the historic parish of Halberton, Mid Devon District, NGR ST 0276 1218. The property is sited on alluvium (river deposits) overlying Permian/Triassic lower marls (Geological Survey map, sheet 310, 1974).

### **Historical background**

No in-depth background research has been carried out for this evaluation. Muddifords Farm is likely to be of late-medieval origin, however, and a probable association of the location with Ambrose *Mudford* in 1589 is suggested in *The Place-Names of Devon* (Gover, Mawer & Stenton 1932, 550). The dwelling house and an L-shaped range of buildings are shown at this location on the Halberton tithe map of 1838 (Figure 1). The house and buildings then formed part of an un-named holding of just over 82 acres (33 hectares) owned by Robert Chichester and Nathaniel Cook and occupied by Nathaniel Cook (Halberton tithe apportionment, 1840, 15). The dwelling house and range of buildings, part of which is described and discussed here, are shown in their present configuration on both the first and second edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey maps (c.1880; c.1904-6, Figure 2), where they are marked as Muddifords Farm. The present building layout is shown and annotated on Figure 3. The appearance of the front elevation of the house suggests a possible late eighteenth-early nineteenth century date for its construction. The layout of the farm buildings indicates deliberate planning which, from map evidence, appears to have started before 1838, with the addition of the L-shaped linhay sometime between that date and c.1880.

It is apparent from the present appearance of the former agricultural buildings that a considerable amount of rebuilding has taken place and some additional features have been introduced. This development is understood to have taken place within the last 3-4 years, before the present owners acquired the property. The only parts of the farm building complex to remain relatively untouched are the threshing or machinery barn and the adjoining roundhouse, which are the subject of this evaluation.

### **General description of the farm buildings**

The farm buildings enclose four sides of a rectangular yard, the principal entrance being though a covered way on the north-west side (Figure 3). All of the buildings look inward to the yard, there being almost no fenestration in the outside walls. The entrance way has been formalised with a bell turret and weathervane projecting above the ridge of the roof over, which appear to be a recent introduction. The exterior walls of the north-west range are rendered and painted. The yard, which falls to the north-west, is paved with cobbles set in concrete. It is understood that this is a recent feature; an aerial photograph of 2006-7 shows the yard as completely overgrown with vegetation (Devon County Council Historic Environment Service). The walls of the buildings are of random rubble stone, generally local Permian/Triassic breccias and conglomerates, and the roof cladding is clay tiles.

Working clockwise around the yard, to the north side of the entrance way is a single-storey range with three timber doors and a small window facing the yard. The north-east end, nearest the house, was formerly a cider house. It has been converted into a single space and was latterly used as a bar and recreation area, with the cider press retained *in situ*. The roof structure has been completely renewed and the interior walls rendered and painted, except for an area of rubble stonework behind the cider press. The floor is concrete. There is a small mezzanine floor at the north-east end. The trough of the cider press has been built up in concrete and the feet of the two vertical press timbers, which are original and of good rustic character, concreted in at the bottom. The press is a fine example of a lever press, the press beam being lowered by double cast-iron spur gears, with a central screw of cast-iron. The only other feature to survive is a small timber-framed window with vertical iron bars at the north-east end, facing the yard, which allowed ventilation but not unauthorised access to the cider cellar (see photographs).

The north-east and south-east sides of the yard are enclosed by an L-shaped linhay, which has recently been almost completely rebuilt, except for the stone gable and rear walls, which have all been re-pointed. There are 7 stone-lined pigeon nest boxes in the upper part of the north-west gable. The former open front at both ground and loft floor level is infilled alternately with timber panelling and double timber doors. The north-east range of the linhay is 6 bays wide and the south-east side has 4 bays of similar width, a wider bay which is open on the yard front, with double doors in the rear wall to form a drive through, then a single wide and a narrow bay abutting the threshing/machinery barn. The posts which define the structural bays of the linhay are re-used timbers set on concrete bases. The roof structure of the linhay range has been substantially reconstructed. The roof slopes are clad with Poole patent clay tiles, similar in form to a double roman tile, with Poole decorative ridge tiles.

### **The threshing barn**

In the south-west corner is a former threshing barn, orientated north-west – south-east, with a roundhouse that formerly contained a horse gear projecting from its south-west side (Figure 4). The threshing barn is about 13m long x 3.5m wide internally, with rubble

stone walls about 0.47m thick. It has wide opposite centrally placed doorways. The doors and frames have gone, although the former positions of the frames can be seen. Internally the stonework of the walls has a rough mortar skim and was formerly whitewashed. The floor, which is compacted earth, has been partially excavated from between central doorways to the north-west gable end to a depth of about 38cm. The ends of the paired timbers that supported the drive from the horse gear project through the wall on the south-west side, with a roughly formed hole between them where the drive formerly entered the building. The north-west gable wall has a 1.19m high by 19cm wide slot with brick quoins, for a belt drive to be taken into or out of the building. There is a window opening in the gable end, with 3 re-used timber lintels, the bottom part of which has been infilled with rubble stonework. The central doorway on the north-east side has reused timbers as lintels. There are bearing holes for timbers at about 2.15m above ground floor level to the south-east of the central doorway, on both side walls, which suggests a likely location for the threshing machine. There is a high square window opening in the south-east gable, which now contains a reused timber-framed window with two leaded-light casements on its side.

The roof is of five bays, defined by four timber trusses. The trusses at the north-west and south-east ends are of similar construction, being A-frames with notched and lapped collars, with the feet of the principals built into the heads of the side walls. The two central trusses are of different construction, having tie beams to which the feet of the principals are bolted. The principals of all the trusses are crossed and lapped at their apexes, with a vertical board nailed on to support a vertical ridge board. There is a single row of purlins on each side, carried on cleats on the backs of the principals. While the trusses and purlins are original, and appear to be contemporary, the rafters and battens have been renewed. Both exterior slopes of the roof are clad with eight rows of clay tiles, with a tile ridge formed with inverted V-shaped tiles laid with a gap between each, the gaps being covered by shorter upstanding decorative tiles (Poole patent tiles).

Externally, there is some collapse in the stonework on the south-east side of the doorway on the roundhouse side of the barn. There are also holes for timbers in the wall above the door lintel level, where there was formerly a lean-to roofed extension. On the yard side there is some difference in the stonework below and above the doorway lintels. Because the stonework has been re-pointed, it is now difficult to read clear changes in the masonry, although the stonework of the walls of the machinery barn is generally more massive than that of the linhay walls.

Above the opposite central doorways of the threshing barn and spanning the full width of the building is a light iron layshaft, which was driven, presumably by belt, from a pulley on the end of the shaft driven by the horse gear. The overhead shaft carries several iron pulleys of diameters varying from 76cm to 13cm, with a pair of fast and loose pulleys to the yard side of centre. The north-east end of the shaft passes through the wall and carries an iron pulley on its outer end, above the entrance doorway.

### **The roundhouse**

The roundhouse which contained the horse gear projects from the south-west side of the machinery barn. It is now rather derelict. It is about 7.42m long by 7.17m wide, with a pair of rubble stone piers on opposite sides which support the principal cross beam and a smaller stone pier at the front (south-west end). This pier is of rubble stone, partially rebuilt in concrete block. The south-west end of the roundhouse is polygonal on plan. There is no visible evidence of a horse track. There are remains of brick flooring, laid on

earth, and the remains of brick walls enclosing and within the roundhouse. In the middle of the building are two brick walls running north-east – south-west, set 2.1m apart, with a brick gutter running along the south-west end. The brick walls represent a secondary structure inserted into roundhouse after the horse gear was removed. Spanning between the tops of the stone piers are timber wall plates which are supported on timber posts between the piers; that in south-west angle is a length of telegraph pole and that in south-east angle a roughly squared oak timber. The original timbers that supported the roundhouse roof and the top bearing of the vertical shaft of the horse gear are still in place. The main cross beam is a substantial elm timber, supporting an A-frame roof truss. There were originally two rows of purlins trenched into backs of principals. All of these timbers are roughly and sparingly converted and the carpentry is rustic. A small section of the original rafters survives on north-west side, between the barn wall and the stone pier. The roof is now clad with corrugated iron sheet. The roundhouse was clearly added to an existing barn, as a stub wall was built on to the north-west corner of the barn and there is a panel of horizontal timber boarding where the roundhouse roof meets the slope of the barn roof. The drive from the horse gear was formerly taken by a horizontal shaft through the barn wall, where a timber yoke carrying a half bearing remains in place.

To the north-west of the threshing barn is a roofed drive through, with a further single storey block beyond, with 4 doors and 3 windows facing the yard; the windows have cast-iron frames and are not original. They are understood to have been salvaged and reused from elsewhere. Although latterly used as stables, this range was apparently formerly used for calving (P. Easby, pers comm).

### **Discussion**

Because the amount of rebuilding, re-roofing and re-pointing that has been carried out in recent years has affected all of the former agricultural buildings to a lesser or greater extent, the chronology of their development is no longer straightforward to read. However, from map evidence it appears that the south-west and north-west ranges were in existence before about 1838 and that the L-shaped linhay range was built between then and about 1880. Some difference between the stonework of the walls of the threshing barn and the linhay is still visible.

The threshing barn appears to have been built for hand threshing, using the draught created by the central opposite doorways, before 1838. The roundhouse was added between *c.*1838 and *c.*1880, reflecting a requirement for motive power to drive a threshing machine and probably other barn machinery. Such roundhouses were relatively common on farms in those parts of Devon where arable was significant, although few now retain their horse-driven overhead gears (for a general discussion, see Child 1995, 66-8). The diameters of the horse gear and of the horse walk are not clearly apparent from the surviving remains. It appears that the horse gear was removed and the roundhouse used for other purposes, with the insertion of a brick-built structure or structures inside it, perhaps in the early 20th century. The belt way in the north-west gable of the threshing barn and the outside pulley over the central doorway on the yard side suggests that there were options for driving the overhead shafting, and possibly the threshing machine, using a tractor or portable engine after the horse gear was removed.

The cider house was another typical feature of Devon farmsteads and a significant area of orchard is indicated on the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey maps (Figure 2). Only the press, with its rustic timber supports, survives of the machinery used for processing apples to make cider, although the small iron-barred window facing the yard at the north-east end of the

former cider house is an interesting survival associated with such buildings, which otherwise do not have any particularly distinctive features (Child 1995, 70-1, and pers comm).

### **Conclusion**

The threshing barn and roundhouse are familiar features of farm building layouts in parts of Devon where arable cultivation played an important role in the mixed husbandry typical of the county. The surviving buildings at Muddifords Court are considered to reflect the organized planning of farmsteads of the mid to late 19th century and are typical rather than exceptional. The linhay range and the other buildings on the north-west and south-west sides of the yard have been substantially rebuilt and re-roofed, with the resultant loss of some of the original structure and features. The cider press is an interesting survival, although no other related machinery remains, the former cider house having been converted to leisure use and its roof structure renewed. The survival of the small, barred timber-framed window at the end of the former cider house is considered to be an interesting feature which should be retained.

### **Requirement for further recording**

The roof structures of the threshing barn and roundhouse and the overhead layshaft in the threshing barn are considered to be the most important surviving original features of these buildings. It is understood that these features are to be retained in any future development and, as they have been described and illustrated in this assessment, it is considered that no further recording of these elements is necessary.

Because of the extent of rebuilding and re-roofing that has already taken place with regard to the lincays, the former cider house and the other former agricultural buildings enclosing the yard, it is considered that no further recording of these structures is required.

Martin Watts

Draft: 28 September 2010

Revised: 11 October 2010

### **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to the site owners for providing access to and information about their property; to David Randell of Randell Burton Architects for copies of the survey drawings; to Brian Murless for identifying the roof tiles; and to Sue Watts for her help with the fieldwork and in the preparation of this evaluation.

### **References**

Child, Peter. 1995: Farm Buildings, in Peter Beacham, editor, *Devon Building*, 61-72; 89-94

Gover, J.E.B, Mawer, A, and Stenton, F.M. 1932: *The Place-Names of Devon* 2

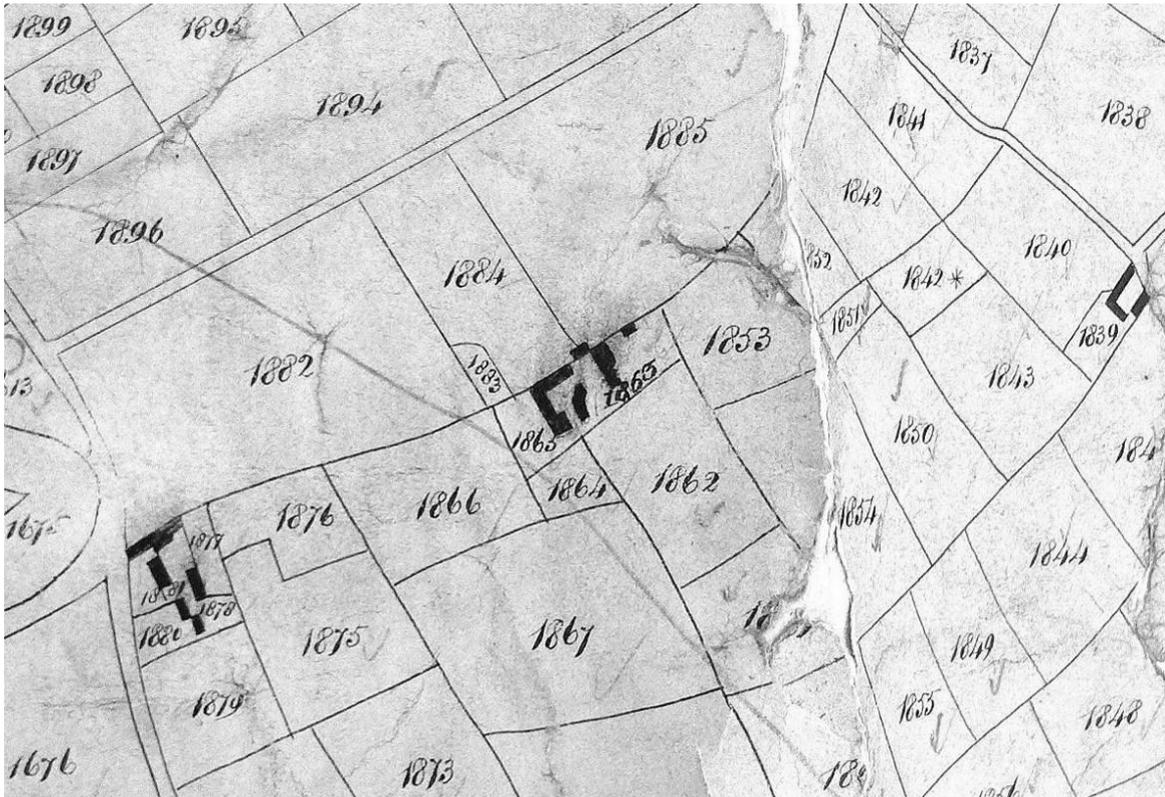


Figure 1: Muddifords Farm, Halberton tithe map, 1838

(Devon Record Office)

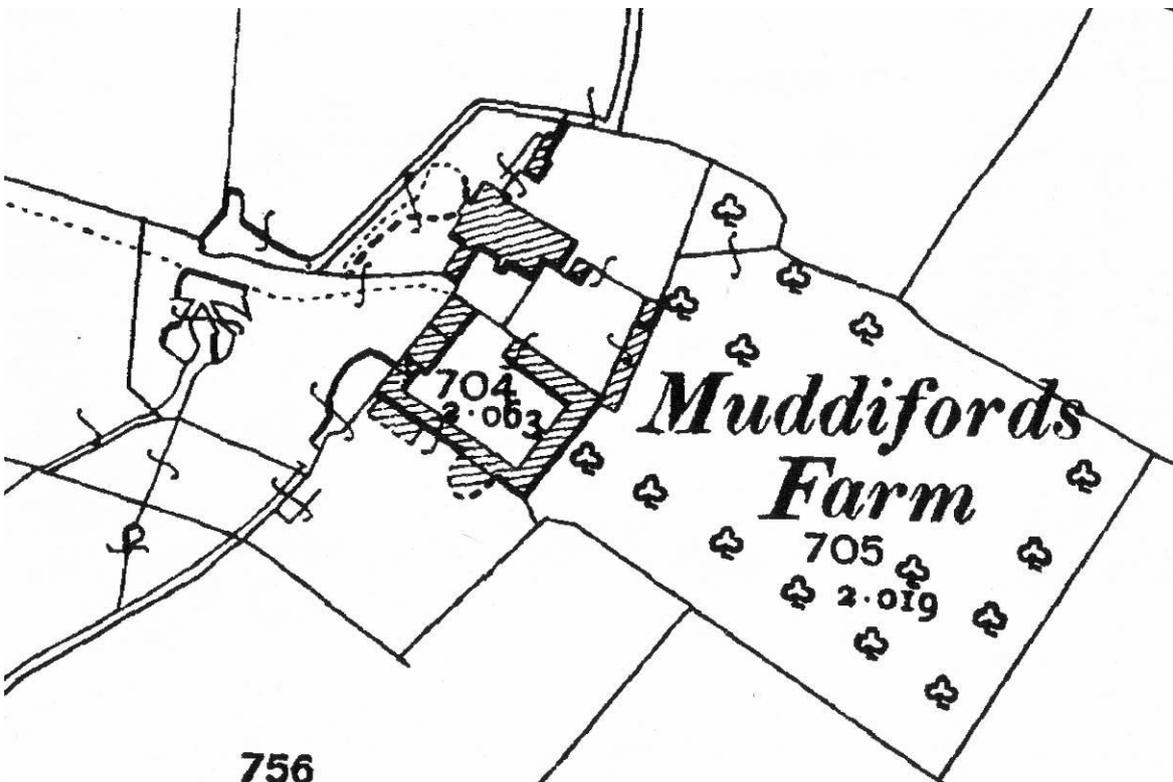


Figure 2: Muddifords Farm, Halberton. Ordnance Survey 1:2500 second edition 1904-6 (not reproduced to scale)

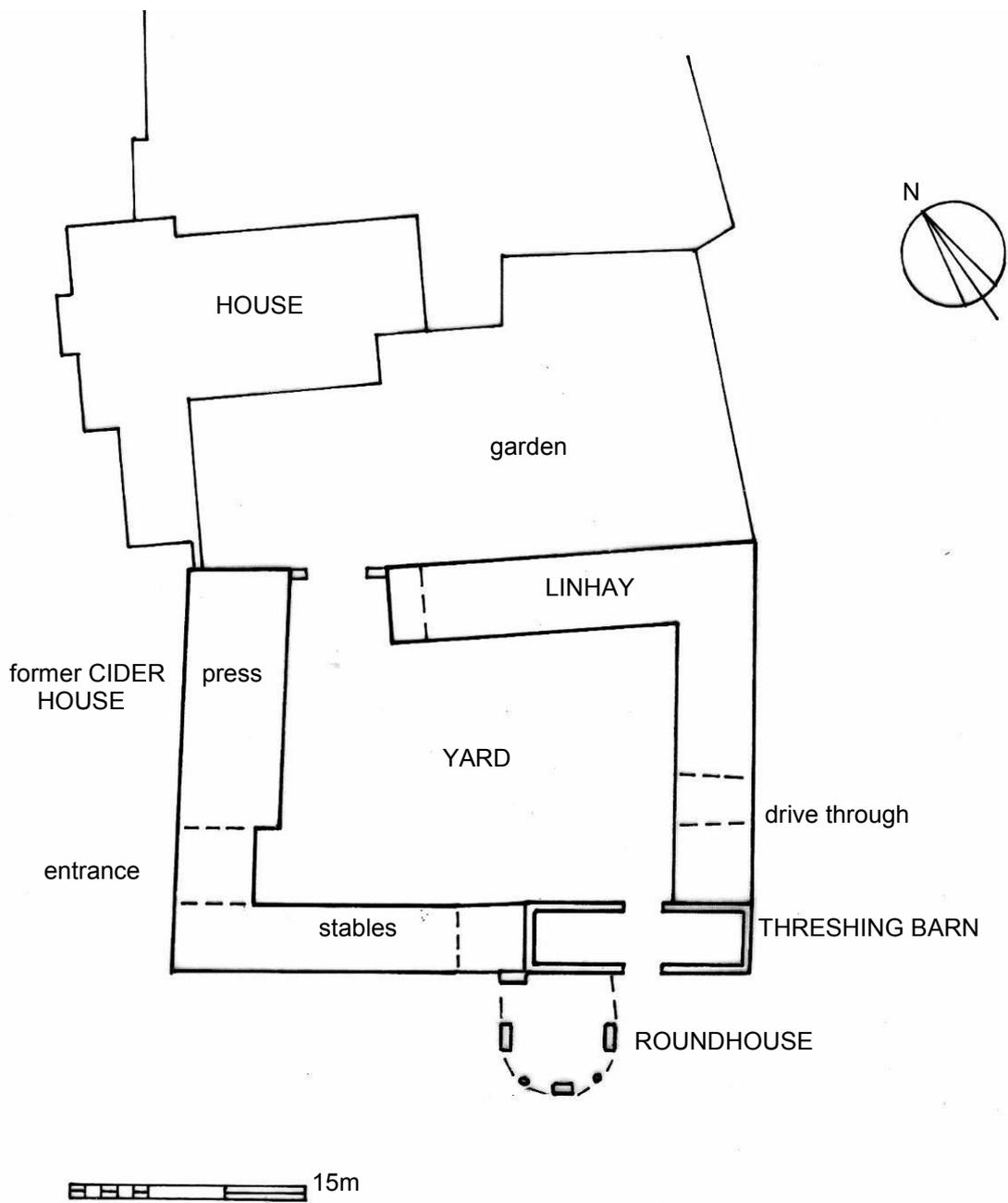


Figure 3: Muddifords Court, Halberton. Site plan, showing principal buildings

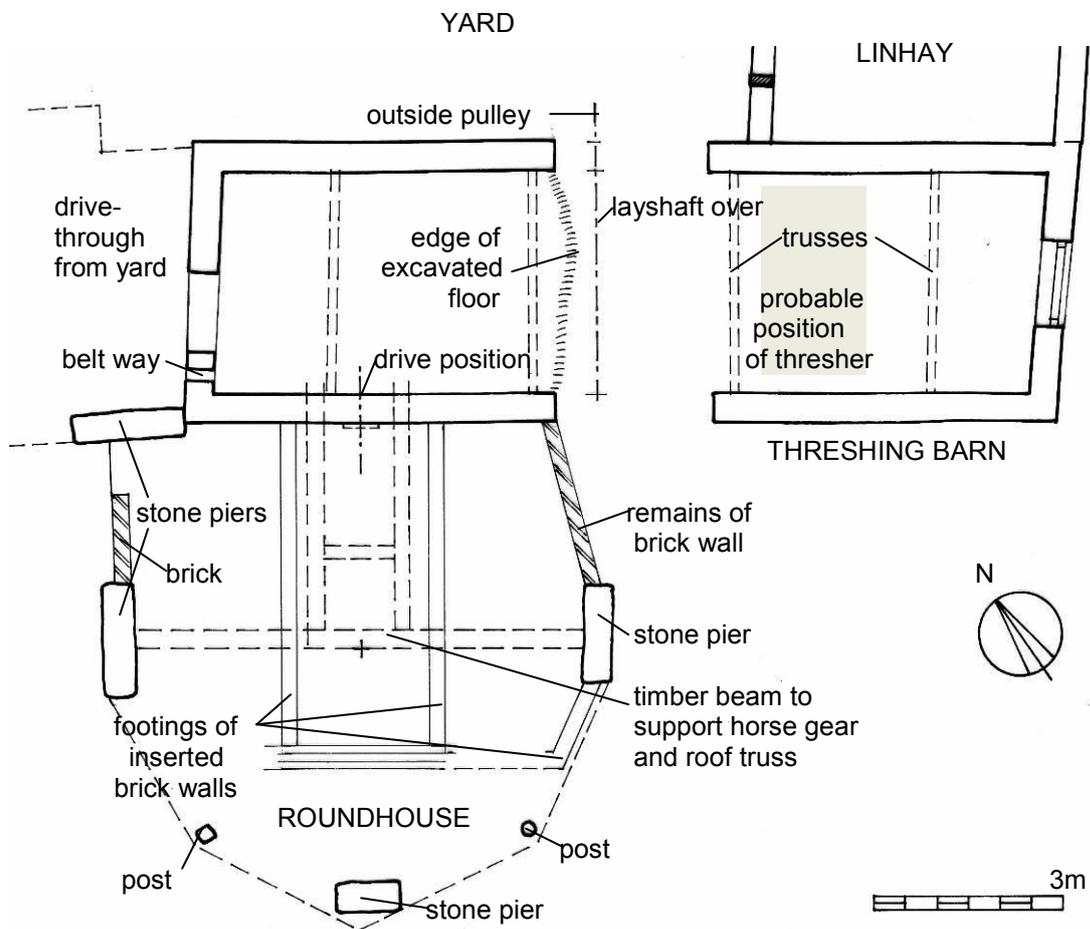


Figure 4: Muddifords Court, Halberton. Plan of threshing barn and roundhouse



North-west elevation and entrance way



Linhay range, looking to south-east



Yard elevation of north-west range, former cider house



South-east corner of yard, with threshing barn and drive-through



North-west gable of linhay



Drive-through and south-west gable of threshing barn



South-west elevation of linhay range



Yard elevation of stables



Exterior of farm buildings from west



Gable end of barn and rear wall of linhay



Roundhouse from west



Re-used window in gable end of barn



Roundhouse from south-west



Rear (south-east) wall of linhay



South-east end of threshing barn



Yard elevation of threshing barn



Roundhouse from west



Roundhouse roof truss



Roundhouse floor, looking to north



Surviving section of rafters and battens



Inside roundhouse, looking to north



Timber beams for horse gear drive support



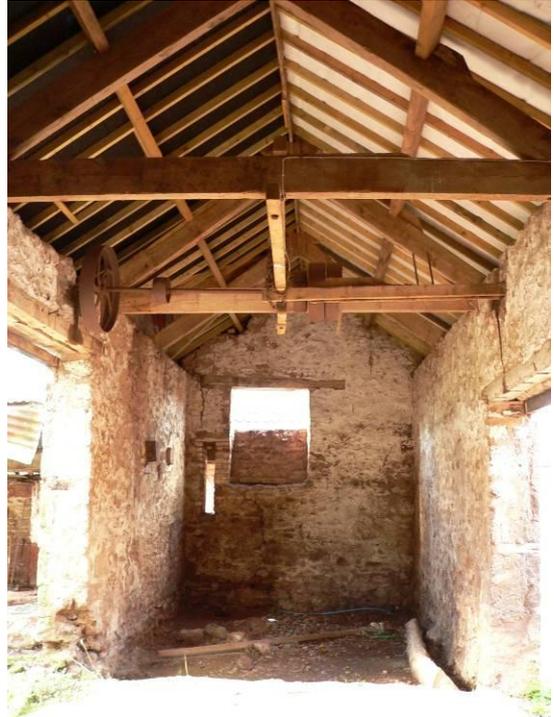
Roundhouse roof structure, looking NE



Timber yoke with bearing against barn



Threshing barn, looking to south-east. Note recesses for cross beams in side walls



Threshing barn, looking to north-west



Roof truss and overhead layshaft, looking to south-east



Ends of beams and former horse-gear drive shaft position in threshing barn wall



Roof trusses and layshaft, looking to north-west



External drive pulley, yard elevation



General interior of converted cider house, with cider press to left



Cider press from mezzanine floor



Cider press



Barred window at north-east end of former cider house, yard elevation



Detail of cider press gearing and press beam

## Appendix

### SCHEME OF WORKS FOR HISTORIC BUILDING EVALUATION

Location: Muddifords Court, Sampford Peverell, Cullompton  
Parish: Halberton  
District: Mid Devon  
County: Devon  
NGR: 302767,112186

Planning Application no: n/a

Proposal: Conversion of barn to holiday let

Historic Environment Service ref: Arch/dc/md/16527

#### 1. INTRODUCTION AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 This Scheme of Works has been prepared by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Service (HES), at the request of David Randell of Randell Burton Architects, with regard to the historic building fabric recording required at the above site. This brief has been produced specifically for the above planning application and may require alteration if this application is revised, amended or resubmitted. This document is not transferable to any other scheme or planning application.

1.2 This work is being undertaken in accordance with Policy HE6 of *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5) (2010) in support of a forthcoming planning application for works affecting the historic fabric of the extant building. Based upon the results of these investigations the impact of the proposed development can be determined. Should the forthcoming planning application subsequently be approved, this work will inform the appropriate mitigation, either by design to minimise the impact of the development upon the historic fabric or by further historic building fabric recording.

1.3 The proposed development involves the conversion of part of a range of buildings arranged around a farmyard and a roundhouse that would have housed a horse-engine - this structure would have once housed a horse-powered mechanism that would have provided power to machinery, sited in or near the barn, that would have been used for threshing, chaff-cutting, cider pressing etc. Roundhouses are mainly found in the West Country, the north-east of England and south-east of Scotland. Most horse-engine houses were built in the early-19th century and it has been suggested that the frequency of construction in the South West was a direct result of a manpower shortage brought about by the Napoleonic Wars. Pound-houses appear to have become replaced in the latter part of that century by steam powered machines and as a consequence these structures, once common on Devon farms, and as such have become increasingly rare. The layout of the farmyard buildings has the appearance of a model farm layout, dating from the late-18th to the early-19th century. The proposed conversion work will have an impact upon the appearance and historic fabric of these buildings.

1.4 The principal objectives of the programme of works shall be to evaluate the historic building in order to determine the impact of any subsequent development upon its historic fabric and the appropriate archaeological works required in mitigation for this impact.

## **2. METHOD STATEMENT**

2.1 This Brief sets out the scope of the works required to evaluate the nature of the historic fabric affected by the proposed development and will form the basis of the *Method Statement* to be prepared by the archaeological consultant and approved by the HES and the LPA's Conservation Officer *prior* to commencement of site work.

## **3. PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS**

3.1 An examination will be made of the building in order to produce an illustrated, scaled, phased plan and elevations of the extant buildings and identify the original and later elements of the building.

3.2 A detailed written description of the existing buildings will be made, including the roof structures.

3.3 The results of this work will be produced in a detailed and illustrated report, in a format agreed in advance with the HES.

3.4 Existing architect's plans may be utilised for the production of the phase plan provided they are of appropriate accuracy and scale.

3.5 While it is anticipated that the results of this work will be submitted in support of the forthcoming planning application, to enable the Local Planning Authority to reach an informed planning decision, it is recommended that a draft report is submitted to the HES and the Conservation Officer for comment prior to its formal submission to the Local Planning Authority.

## **4. REPORTING**

4.1 The report shall be prepared collating the written, graphic, visible and recorded information outlined above. It is recommended that a draft report is submitted to the HES for comment prior to its formal submission to the Local Planning Authority. The report will contain sufficient detail to allow the impact of alteration works to be identified and for appropriate further mitigation or design to be determined.

4.2 A copy of the report will also be submitted to Sue Warren, Mid Devon District Council's Conservation Officer - address below.

4.3 On completion of the report, in addition to copies required by the Client and the District Council Conservation Officer, hard copies of the report shall be supplied to the HES on the understanding that one of these copies will be deposited for public reference in the HER. In addition to the hard copies of the report, one copy shall be provided to the County Historic Environment Service in digital format - in a format to be agreed in advance with the HES - on the understanding that it may in future be made available to researchers via a web-based version of the Historic Environment Record.

4.4 The archaeological consultant shall complete an online OASIS (*Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS*) form in respect of the archaeological work. This will include a digital version of the report. The report to the Historic Environment Record will also include the OASIS ID number.

4.5 If further historic building fabric recording is required the results of these investigations will be included in the final report.

## **5. PERSONNEL**

5.1 The recording work shall be carried out by a professional historic building specialist to be agreed with the HES. Staff must be suitably qualified and experienced for their project roles. All work should be carried out under the control of a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC), or by a specified person of equivalent standing and expertise.

5.2 Health and Safety matters, including site security, are matters for the consultant. However, adherence to all relevant regulations will be required.

5.3 The work shall be carried out in accordance with IfA *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures (1996)*, as amended (2008).

## **6. CONFLICT WITH STATUTORILY PROTECTED SPECIES (BATS)**

It is the archaeological contractor's responsibility - in consultation with the applicant or agent - to ensure that the undertaking of the required archaeological works does not conflict with any biodiversity issues as covered by the NERC Act 2006. In particular, such conflicts may arise where archaeological investigations have the potential to have an impact upon protected species; in particular legislation associated with the protection of bats (see *The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007*).

## **7. DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVE AND FINDS**

7.1 The archaeological consultant shall contact the museum that will receive the site archive to obtain an accession number and agree conditions for deposition.

7.2 Any archaeological finds resulting from the investigation (which are the property of the landowner), should be deposited with the appropriate museum - in a format to be agreed with the museum, and within a timetable to be agreed with the HES. The museum's guidelines for the deposition of archives for long-term storage should be adhered to. If ownership of all or any of the finds is to remain with the landowner, provision and agreement must be made for the time-limited retention of the material and its full analysis and recording, by appropriate specialists.

## **8. MONITORING**

8.1 The archaeological consultant shall agree monitoring arrangements with the County Historic Environment Service and the District Conservation Officer and give two weeks' notice, unless a shorter period is agreed with the HES, of commencement of the fieldwork. Details will be agreed of any monitoring points where decisions on options within the programme are to be made.

## **9. CONTACT NAME AND ADDRESS**

Stephen Reed, Archaeological Officer, Devon County Council, Environment, Economy and Culture Directorate, Matford Offices, County Hall, Exeter EX2 4QW

Tel: 01392-383303 Fax: 01392-383011 E-mail: [stephen.reed@devon.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.reed@devon.gov.uk)

Susan Warren, Conservation Officer, Mid Devon District Council, Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6PP Tel: 01884 234391 Email: [swarren@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:swarren@middevon.gov.uk)

11th August 2010