Witham Archaeology

A Report to Dr E and Mrs F Craven

October 2017



BARN AT BROOKSIDE HOUSE, 9 BROOK LANE, GREAT EASTON, LEICESTERSHIRE

Historic Building Recording

R Trimble

BARN AT BROOKSIDE HOUSE, 9 BROOK LANE, GREAT EASTON, LEICESTERSHIRE

Site Code: GEBL17

Museum Accession No.: X.A101.2017

Planning Application No.: 16/01393/LBC and 16/01370/FUL

NGR: SP 84735 92948

OASIS ID: withamar1-298002

Historic Building Recording

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BARN AT BROOKSIDE HOUSE, 9 BROOK LANE, GREAT EASTON, LEICESTERSHIRE

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a programme of historic building recording carried out on a traditional threshing barn at Brookside House, 9 Brook Lane, Great Easton, Leicestershire. The project was commissioned by Dr and Mrs F Craven, to meet the requirements of a condition attached to planning permission granted by Harborough District Council, for conversion of the building to residential use.

Brookside House appears to have been constructed in the first half of the seventeenth century, probably after 1635 according to the results of dendrochronological analysis of probable original timbers in the roof. The barn, located to the rear of the house, correlates with a building shown on the Great Easton enclosure map of 1805 and probably dates from the late eighteenth century.

The recorded building is a traditional threshing barn - open to the roof, with large opposing doors in the long walls, a pitching door located at high level (to allow loading from a cart situated on the outside of the building) and slits in the walls to provide ventilation to the stored crop. Threshing would have been carried out by hand, on a threshing floor located between the opposing doors. Buildings of this type became obsolete in the first half of the nineteenth century, as threshing by portable, steam-powered threshing machines reduced the need for long-term storage of the unthreshed crop, and the requirement for a space in which to carry out hand threshing over a lengthy period of time. After the introduction of steam, existing barns of the type recorded at Great Easton were frequently converted to other uses, most often connected with the processing and storage of animal fodder.

A later washroom has been installed at one end of the building at Great Easton. The area, containing a brick copper and fireplace, was probably formed in the late nineteenth of early twentieth century.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a programme of historic building recording carried out on a traditional threshing barn at Brookside House, 9 Brook Lane, Great Easton, Leicestershire. The project was commissioned by Dr E and Mrs F Craven, in compliance with a condition attached to planning permission granted by Harborough District Council (16/01370/FUL and 16/01393/LBC) for the conversion and extension of the barn to residential use. The programme of recording was recommended in a Heritage Assessment compiled in May 2016 (Dawson 2016) and a Level II survey (as defined by the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments, England) was requested in the light of advice provided by the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist. The scope of the project was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation dated 14th July 2017 and subsequently approved by the local Planning Archaeologist. Fieldwork was carried out on 12th September 2017.

The information in this document is presented with the proviso that further data may yet emerge. Witham Archaeology cannot, therefore, be held responsible for any loss, delay or damage, material or otherwise, arising out of this report. The document has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists.

2.0 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY (see Figs. 1, 2 and 3)

The village of Great Easton in the civil parish of the same name lies in the administrative district of Harborough in southeast Leicestershire, at distances of around 6km northwest of Corby and 7km south of Uppingham. Brookside House is situated in the historic core of the village on the southwest side of

Brook Lane, approximately 300m southwest of the medieval parish church of St Andrew, at NGR SP 84735 92948. The site lies with the part of Great Easton designated as a Conservation Area.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Great Easton is one of three civil parishes derived from the ancient parish of Bringhurst. At the time of the Domesday Survey compiled in 1086, the manor of Easton formed the greater part of Bringhurst, belonging to the abbey of Peterborough. According to tradition the parish was transferred to the abbey by Ethelred of Mercia in around AD700, but Domesday ascribes the gift to Earl Ralf of Hereford who died in 1057. Manorial right in the parish were retained by the abbey until the Dissolution, when it was included in Henry VIII's endowment of Peterborough Cathedral on condition that it was leased to Edward Watson of Rockingham. In 1650, the manor was sold by commissioners appointed under the Act for abolishing deans and chapters and in 1654 the estate was sold to Edward Watson, the 2nd Lord Rockingham, Edward Watson (Lee and McKinley 2017).

It would appear from an account of 1220 that Bringhurst was the mother church of the parish, with dependent chapels at Drayton and Great Easton. A separate burial ground was established in Great Easton in 1349, at the time of the Black Death. The church of St Andrew stands on the slope of the hill above Great Easton. It is built of ironstone with limestone dressings. Herringbone masonry in the west wall of the nave has been posited as Norman and the north aisle is probably mid-13th century. The tower, constructed in the late 13th century, underwent substantial restoration in the 1860s. The south aisle appears to be later while the chancel has been ascribed to the late 14th century (*ibid*).

The whole of the ancient parish of Bringhurst was enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1804. Subsequent to enclosure there was a considerable reduction in the extent of arable land in the parish, and from around 1850, a large part of the district was devoted to beef fattening. However, a considerable area was already under pasture prior to enclosure. (*ibid*).

Brookside House is a Grade II Listed building (Heritage List No. 1242106), described under the entry as an eighteenth century house with a front remodelled in the earlier twentieth century, of coursed square stone with quoins and a plain tile roof with a moulded stone ridge and end stacks. The building is shown on the enclosure map of 1805, together with the recorded barn which is not listed. Other structures shown to the south of the house may correspond to the animal shed or stables (probably nineteenth century), located near the to the entrance to the property, against its southern boundary. More detailed research on the house (Hill 1988) has revealed probably 17th rather than 18th century origins as identified under the listing. The study identified a typically 17th century lobby-entrance plan, with an axial chimney stack located opposite the door in the front wall. At ground floor the building is divided into a kitchen and hall, each with a fireplace located to either side of the central chimney stack, and a parlour at one end with fireplace against the end wall. The arrangement is typical of the middle part of the 17th century, although the hood-mouldings to the front windows have been attributed to the earlier part of the century, prior to 1650. Hill's dating is supported by the results of dendrochronological dating of the roof, which indicates original construction from timbers felled in 1630-1635, and remodelling at later date using timbers felled in 1787.

At the time of enclosure it would appear that the property was owned by William Wignell, who farmed land to the west. The Ordnance Survey 1:2500 1st Edition County map of 1886 shows the barn and Brookside House, with buildings extending along the full length of the southern boundary of the property to complete a loose courtyard arrangement, fully open to the southwest. The area bounded by the buildings comprises an approximately square area to the rear of the house (probably the garden or a yard connected to the house) and a strip extending around its edge, passing the southern range and turning to align with the main door of the barn possible. The latter probably served as yard at the same time as providing access to the farm buildings. The area northwest of the barn is shown as open land traversed by paths, with occasional trees and a small structure at the westernmost corner. The layout persists on the 2nd Edition County map of 1900, but the central part of the southern range was demolished prior to 1962, leaving the extant shed or stable and an open sided structure at the northeastern and southwestern ends respectively.

A Heritage Assessment (Dawson 2016) included in the application for planning permission for the current scheme identifies the subject of the current study as a threshing barn dating from the eighteenth

century structure, with group value in terms of its relationship with the house, yards and other surviving farm buildings, architectural value in terms of its clearly identifiable vernacular form and fabric, historic value in terms of the original fabric and evidential value as an embodiment of economic change during the era of agricultural improvement.

4.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The principal objectives of the project were to:

- produce an archive record of the buildings prior to any alterations or demolition which might be required as part of its conversion to domestic use.
- gather sufficient documentary evidence to allow an interpretation of the relationship of the building to the local landscape and a consideration of its local, regional and national significance.
- produce a project archive and report for deposition with the Leicestershire Museums Service
- provide information for accession to the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER).

5.0 METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork was carried out in accordance with guidelines issued by English Heritage in the document *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (2006), and recommendations by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers.

The photographic record was compiled in monochrome 35mm film and colour digital in RAW format (to be converted to TIFF for archive storage) using an SLR film camera with 28-90mm zoom lens and a DSLR 16 megapixel camera with 16-85mm lens (24 – 135mm film equivalent). The record includes general views of the buildings and their settings, views of all of the elevations and interiors, and detail shots of specific architectural features (for example, doors, windows, roof structures etc.). An index to the images was compiled on Witham Archaeology *pro forma* registers.

The buildings were inspected for evidence of structural alteration and development over time.

A full set of plan and elevation drawings was provided by Ross Thain Architects for use in field recording and for illustration purposes in this report.

6.0 RESULTS

This section includes descriptive accounts of the exterior and interior of the building, together with photographs reproduced in approximate order of circulation.

6.1 General

The building is a traditional threshing barn, built in local ironstone, with limestone quoins at each of the its corners and a replacement Welsh slate roof. Open to the roof, it has large, opposing doors in the long walls, a pitching door (modified to a window) high in the southeast wall and opposing sets of ventilation slits in the long wall – all typical features of the traditional threshing barn prior to the widespread use of steam threshing in the later 19th century. The structure is aligned northeast-southwest, at right angles to the house and to the street.

A modern raised patio has been constructed against the southwestern end of the building and wooden dog cage abuts the northeastern end. The southeast side (*Plates 1 and 2*) was heavily obscured by mature trees and shrubs, in full leaf at the time of the survey. Views of the other elevations were relatively

unhindered ($Plate\ 3$). A washroom (probably late 19^{th} or early 20^{th} century) is built into the northeastern end of the building.



Plate 1: General view from the south



Plate 2: General view from the west with barn to left and rear of Brookside House to the right



Plate 3: General view from the north-northwest



Plate 4: Southeast facing elevation, looking c. southwest

6.2 Exterior

The southeast facing elevation (*Plates 4 and 5*) includes a single width door to the washroom (see above), located at the northeastern end of the building and flanked by the opening for a pitching door (now a window) at high level. The doorway to the washroom has a concrete lintel above and contains a plank stable-type door, and a transom window of eight lights in two rows. The opening for the pitching door, located immediately southwest of the door to the washroom, has a wooden lintel (probably the original)

above. Originally it would have contained wooden shutters, but now contains a modern window of nine lights over a (concrete?) sill.

The main door, which extends the full height of walls, has a substantial hand-worked wooden lintel above.



Plate 5: Southeast facing elevation, looking c. north



Plate 6: Southwestern end of the southeast facing elevation, looking west

Two ventilation slits are present in the southeast wall, located to each side of the main door. One of the slits (northeast of the door) is infilled with stone and is partially obscured by a plastic downpipe (*Plate 5*, centre of view). The other, located southwest of the door and still open (*Plate 6*), splays from 0.55m wide in the interior to 0.12m wide on the outside.



Plate 7: Door and former pitching door (top left) in the southeast facing elevation, looking west



Plate 8: Southwest facing elevation, looking north

The southwest facing gable end (*Plates 8 and 9*) is obscured at lower level by the modern raised patio and an associated lean-to cover. However, the elevation appears featureless except for a small opening at high level – probably an owl hole - and a metal weather vane (probably late) above.



Plate 9: Northwest and southwest facing elevations, looking c. east-northeast



Plate 10: Northwest facing elevation, looking c. southeast

The northwest facing elevation (*Plates 9, 10 and 14*) contains the second of the large opposing doors, located near to the southwestern end of the building. With a hand-worked wooden lintel above (probably original), the doorway is slightly narrower than the opening in the opposite elevation and significantly

lower. The wooden plank doors are modern replacements. It is flanked by ventilation slits, infilled with stone on the southwest side (Plate 11), but still open to the northeast (*Plate 13*). A brick chimney stack from the fireplace/copper in the washroom abuts the wall near the northwestern end of the elevation, extending to well above the level of the eaves in height.



Plate 11: Blocked in vent in the northwest wall, southwest of the door, looking southeast



Plate 12: Door in the northwest wall, looking southeast (change in build, top left of door)

The northwest wall is in two contrasting builds, meeting at a point immediately northeast of the door. The builds vary in terms of their coursing and the point of transition is defined by an irregular column of

large blocks of ironstone (see *Plate 12*) rising from the northeastern end of the lintel. The variation in the fabric northeast and southwest of the join might indicate construction of the wall in two campaigns. The blocks in the join appear to be more closely tied into the wall northeast of the door and might, therefore, have terminated an initial phase of construction extending to the visible disjunction on the northwest side and to the northeast side of the door on the southeast.



Plate 13: Vent in the northwest wall, northeast of the door, looking southeast



Plate 14: Northeast (left of view) and northwest (right of view) elevations, looking south

The second phase of construction would then have involved the completion of the south-western end of the building, extending from the join on the northwest side and from the southwestern side of the door on the southeast side.

The northeast facing gable end (*Plate 14*) is partly obscured by ivy and, at lower levels, by a dog kennel extending to almost the width of the building. Despite the obstructions, it appeared that the wall was featureless.



Plate 15: Interior of the barn, looking southwest

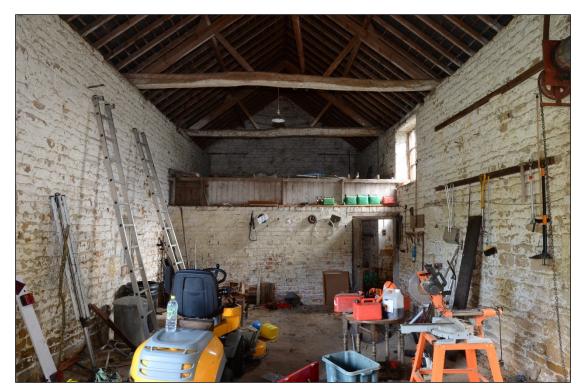


Plate 16: Interior of the barn, looking northeast

6.3 Interior

Internally, the barn is open to the roof and divided into five bays, with four trusses in the roof structure (*Plates 15 and 16*). The tie-beams are hand-worked and may be original, but the remainder of the structure, including the struts and principal rafters in the trusses, are clearly much later and probably contemporary with the reroofing of the building as a whole (*Plate 17*).



Plate 17: Roof of the barn, looking northeast from between the doors



Plate 18: Former pitching door in the southeast wall, looking c. southeast

The washroom at the north-eastern end of the building is defined by a later brick partition on the southwest side, extending to around mid-height in relation to the barn walls. The partition, raised by a wooden section above (*Plate 16*), lay just beyond the pitching door. The latter retained the original thin wooden lintel above, but there are no surviving remains of the original shutters (*Plate 18*).



Plate 19: Blocked in vent in the southeast wall, northeast of the main door, looking southeast



Plate 20: Vent in the southeast wall, southwest of the main door, looking southeast

The ventilation slits are splayed in the interior, with thin wooden lintels above. The splayed areas remain open in both slits in the southeast wall (Plates 19 and 20), although the actual aperture has been blocked

with stone in the one located northeast of the door (see *Plate 19*). In the northwest wall, the slit to the southwest of the door is completely infilled with stone (*Plate 21*), while the remaining feature northeast of the door is closed over by a modern window (*Plate 22*).



Plate 21: Blocked in vent in the northwest wall, southwest of the door, looking northwest



Plate 22: Window/ventilation slit in the northwest wall, northeast of the door, looking northwest

A recess situated midway along the underside the lintel over the northwest door (*Plate 23*) might originally have received a bolt attached to the original door, forming part of the retaining mechanism.



Plate 23: Recess midway along lintel over the northwest door, from directly below (northwest at bottom)



Plate 24: Northwestern side of the washroom, looking northwest

In the washroom, there is a fireplace situated against the northwest wall, with an adjoining late nineteenth or early twentieth century hot water copper located to the southwest, in the angle formed by the internal dividing wall. (*Plates 24* and *25*). The brick structure for the fireplace which would have heated the copper has two flat sides facing into the room, and includes a door at low level providing access to where the fire was lit, with an area below where the ashes would have collected. The fire for the copper and the adjacent fireplace would have shared the same chimney.



Plate 25: Detail of brick copper and fireplace in the washroom, looking northwest



Plate 26: Southeastern side of the washroom, looking southeast

A mangle (manufactured by Ewbank) standing against the internal wall would appear to confirm use as a washroom (*Plate 26*, right of view and *Plate 27*). The precise date of the mangle has not been determined but it probably originates from around the earlier or middle part of the twentieth century. The floor of the washroom is in brick and the ceiling is constructed from wooden boards (*Plates 26* and *27*) matching the upper extent of the internal wall. The door to the outside, which is irregular around the

edges and roughly finished, is clearly an alteration to the original structure, presumably inserted as part works to form the washroom.



Plate 27: Southwestern side of the washroom including Ewbank mangle (pre-war?), looking southwest

7.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The barn at Brookside House has all the main characteristics of the traditional threshing barn, including a high space open to the roof for storage of the unthreshed corn crop, large opposing doors in both of the long walls to provide access for vehicles carrying the crop, a pitching door high in one of the long walls for loading from a cart situated on the outside of the building, and slits in the long walls for ventilation of the stored crop (Brunskill 1999, 38-45). Threshing of the crop using hand flails would have been carried out during the winter months, on a threshing floor situated between the doors of the barn. Winnowing (separating the grain from the chaff) would have been carried out in the same area, through the tossing of the threshed corn into draughts of air flowing between the open doors (Harvey 1984, 22-23).

Threshing barns of the type recorded at Brookside House were made obsolete as steam powered threshing became widely available in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Portable threshing machines meant that threshing could be carried out in the field in a short space of time, removing the need for long term storage of the unthreshed crop, and existing barns were increasingly converted to use as fodder stores and processing areas (*ibid*, 138-143).

The barn at Brookside lies on a southwest-northeast alignment, in contrast to later farm layouts where the higher buildings were generally situated on the north side of south facing cattle yards (Barnwell and Giles 1997, 45-49). It appears to have been located on the northwest side of a loose arrangement of farm buildings focussed around yards to the rear of Brookside House.

8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author of this report would like to thank Dr and Mrs Craven for their assistance in providing access to the site and supplying relevant background information. Thanks are also due to Ross Thain Architects and Michael Scott Architect for providing copies of the plans and elevations reproduced in this report.

9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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University of Gloucestershire, English Heritage and the Countryside Agency 2006, *Historic Farmsteads*. *Preliminary Character Statement: East of England Region*. University of Gloucestershire in Association with English Heritage and the Countryside Agency

10.0 PROJECT/ ARCHIVE DETAILS

10.1 Project Information

SITE CODE: GEBL17

PLANNING APPLICATION No.: 16/01393/LBC and 16/01370/FUL

FIELD OFFICER: R. Trimble

NGR: SP 84735 92948

CIVIL PARISH: Great Easton

SITE CODE: GEBL17

OASIS ID: withamar1-298002

DATE OF INTERVENTION: 12th September 2017

TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Historic Building Recording

UNDERTAKEN FOR: Dr E Craven and Mrs F Craven

10.2 Archive Details

PRESENT LOCATION: Witham Archaeology, 2 High Street, Ruskington, Sleaford, NG34 9DT

FINAL LOCATION: Leicestershire Museums Service

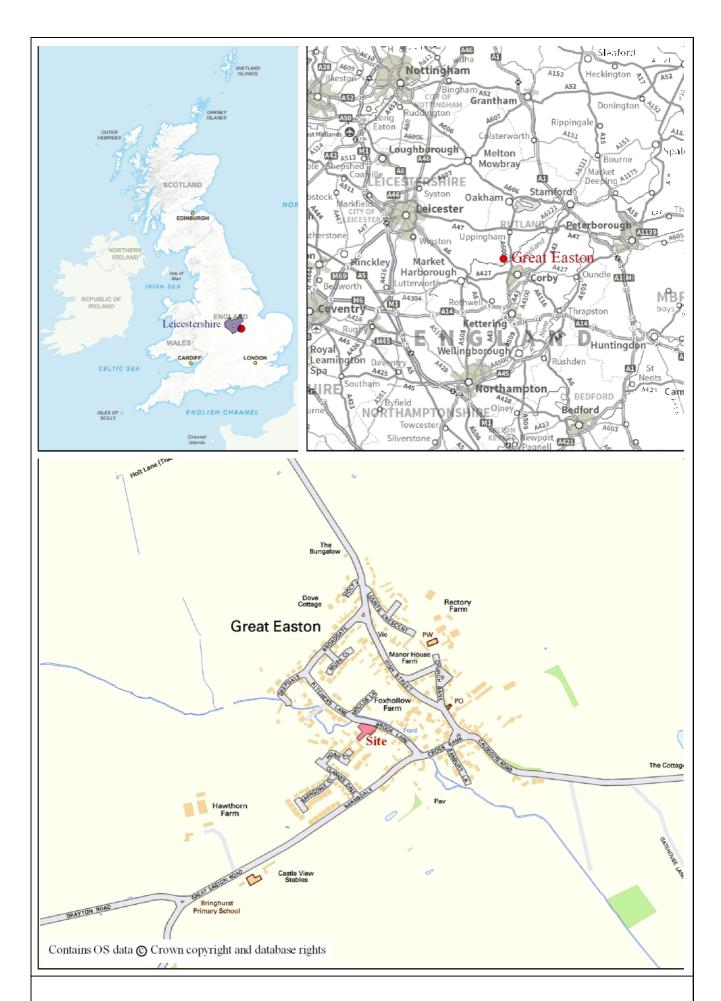
MUSEUM ACCESSION No.: X.A101.2017

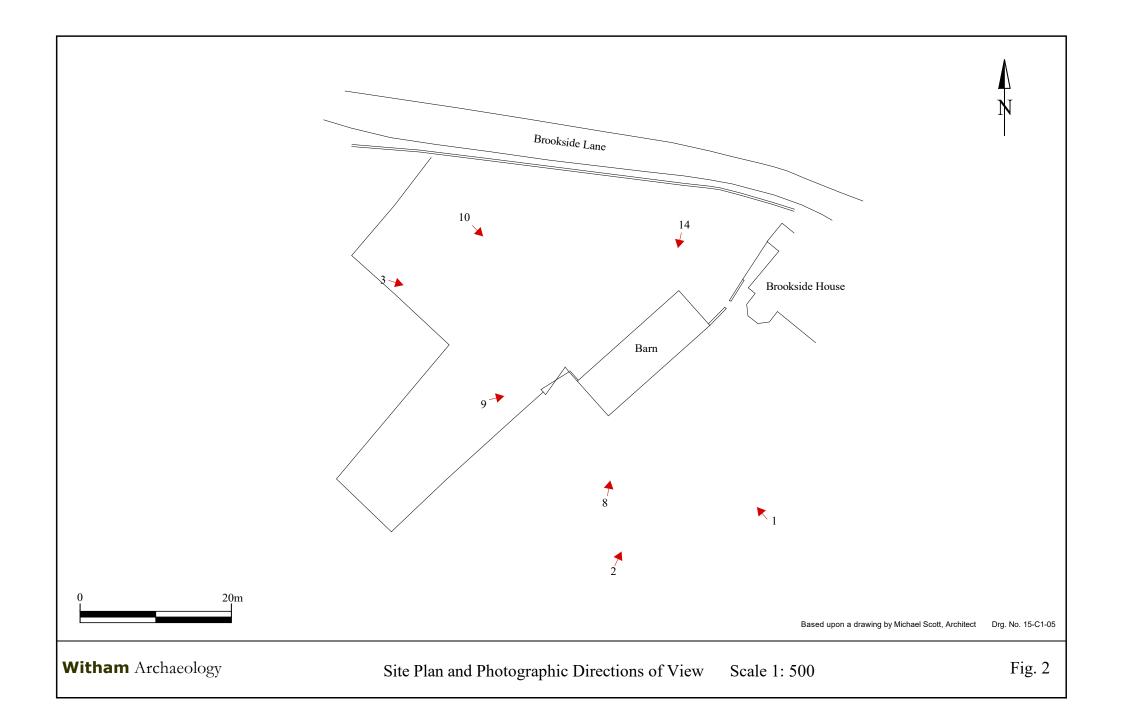
ACCESSION DATE: - March 2017

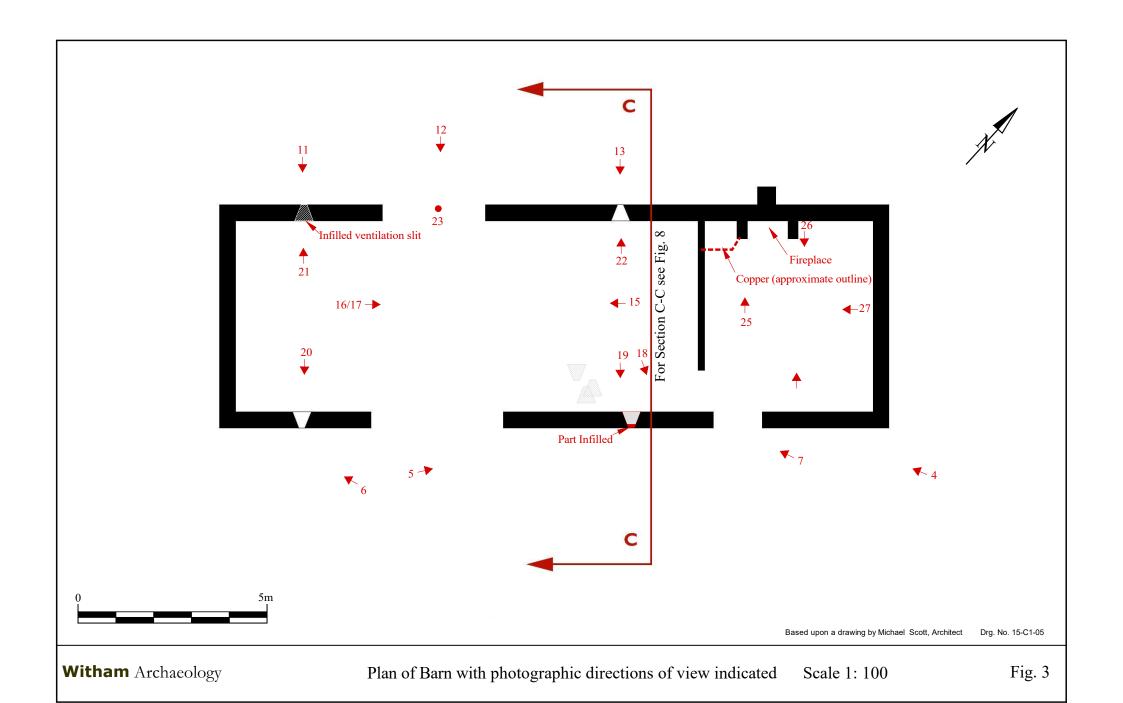
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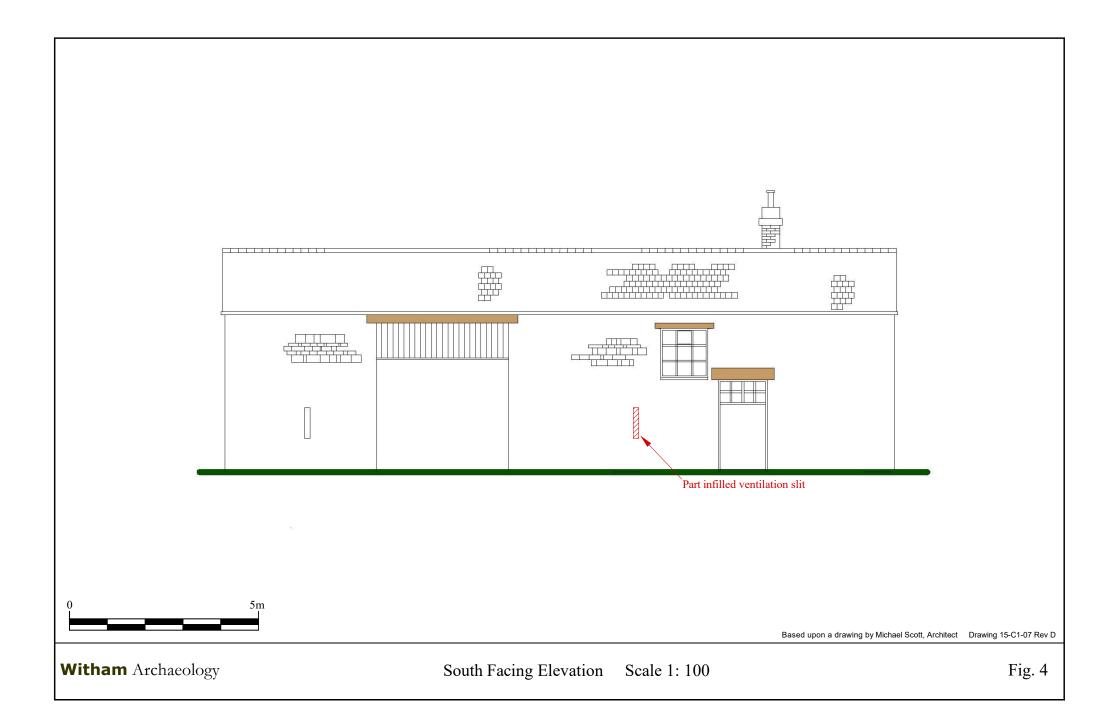
Monochrome film and Digital Photographs 32 shots Set of Site Notes 1

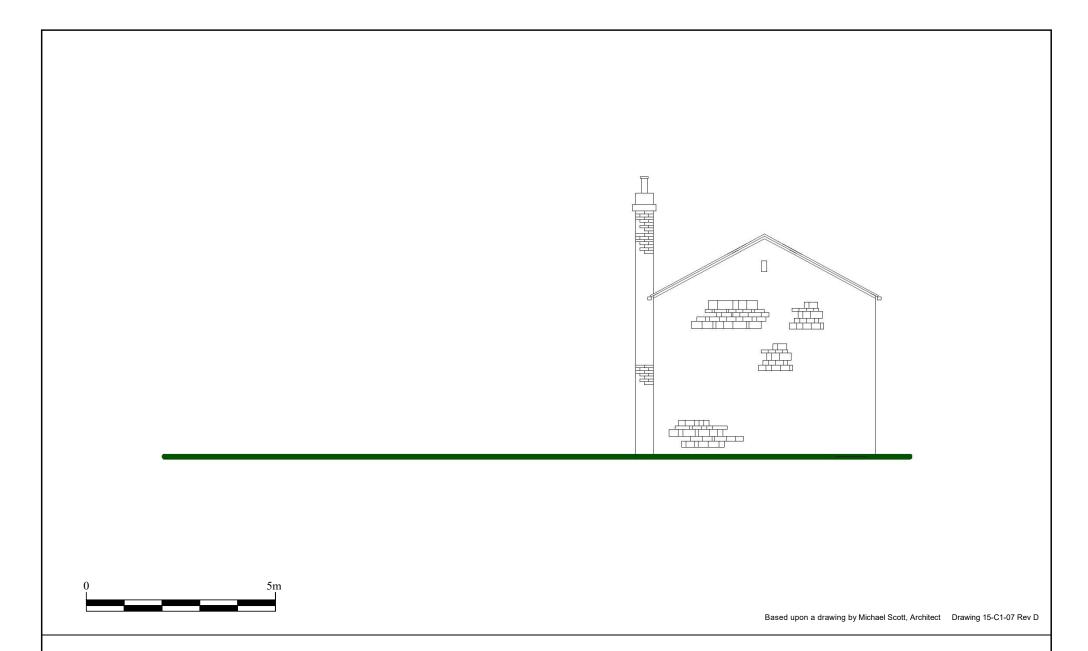
It is intended that transfer of the archive in accordance with current published requirements will be undertaken following completion of this project.

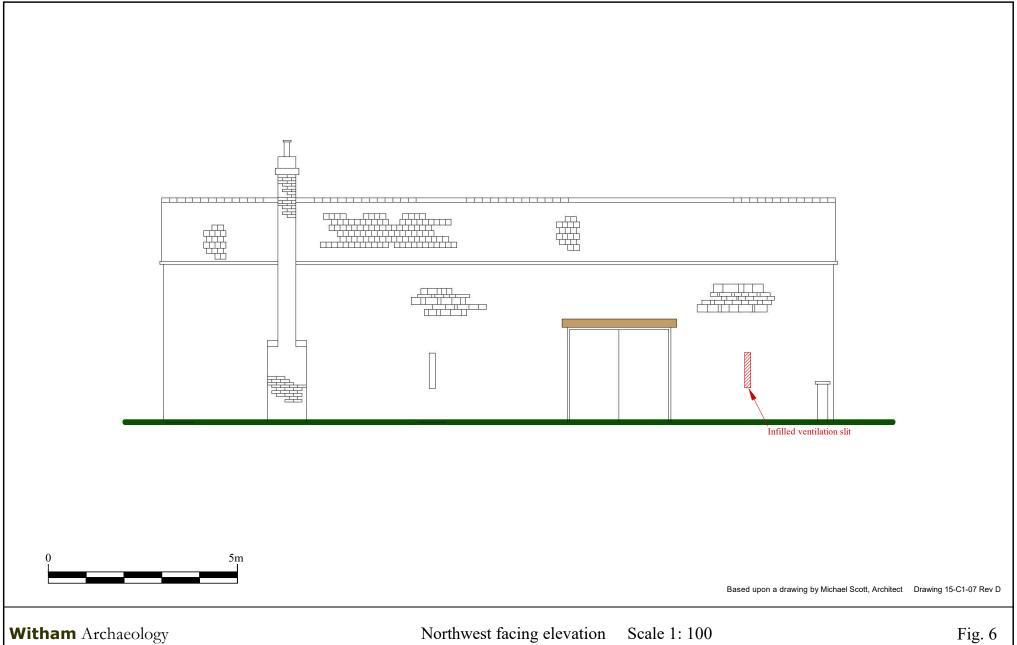






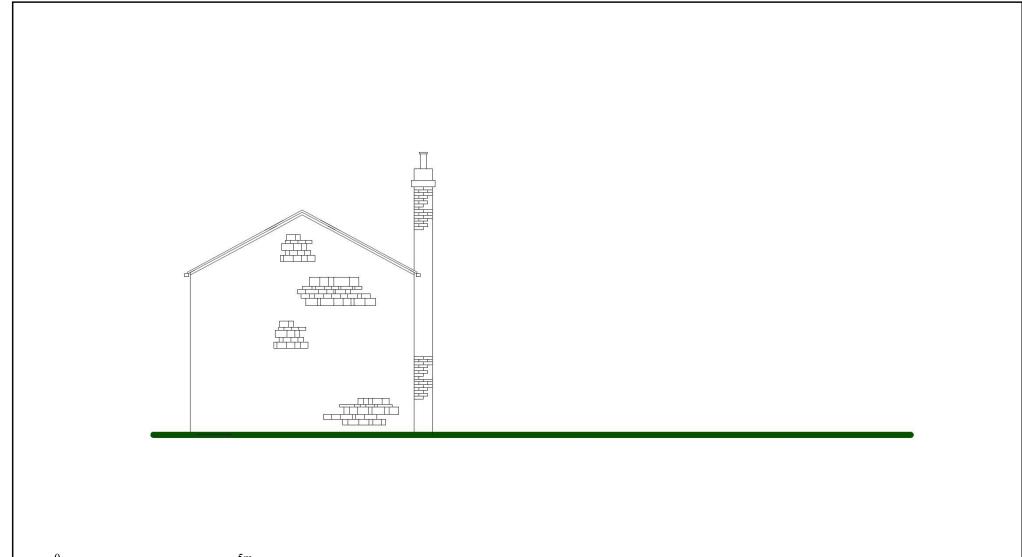






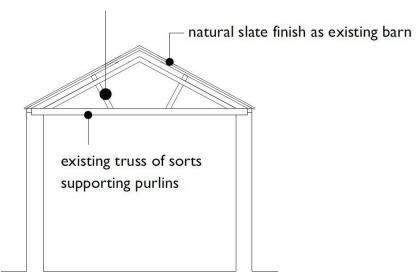
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Northwest facing elevation Scale 1: 100



Based upon a drawing by Michael Scott, Architect Drawing 15-C1-07 Rev D

timbers from existing truss to be integrated in proposed design as decorative historic fabric





Based upon a drawing by Michael Scott, Architect Drawing 15-C1-07 Rev D

Scale 1: 100

APPENDIX OASIS SUMMARY DETAILS FORM

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

List of Projects | Manage Projects | Search Projects | New project | Change your details | HER coverage | Change country | Log out

Printable version

OASIS ID: withamar1-298002

Project details

Project name Historic Building Recording on a barn at Brookside House, Great Easton, Leicestershire

Short description of the project

A programme of historic building recording was carried out on a barn at Brookside House, Brook Lane, Great Easton, Leicestershire to meet the requirements of a condition of planning permission. The proposed scheme entailed the conversion of the barn to residential use and the construction of an extension to one side. The barn lies to the rear of Brooside House, a Grade II listed house dated by survey and dendrochronological analysis to the first half of the 17th century. The barn appears to predate the Great Estate enclosure map of 1805 and probably dates from the second half of the 18th century. The building is a typical threshing barn of the period. Built in ironstone with a Welsh slate roof, it is open to the roof and has large opposing doors, a pitching door (now glazed), and ventilation slits in the long walls. The tie-beams are probably original but the remainder of the wooden roof structure including the struts and principal rafters in the trusses are much more recent. A washroom built into one end of the barn is probably late Victorian or early 20th century in date. The space contained a fireplace and adjoining copper on a brick base.

Project dates Start: 12-09-2017 End: 12-09-2017

Previous/future

us/future No / Yes

work

Any associated project reference

GEBL17 - Sitecode

project reference codes

Any associated project reference

X.A101.2017 - Museum accession ID

codes
Type of project E

Type of project Building Recording
Site status Conservation Area
Current Land use Other 5 - Garden

Monument type THRESHING BARN Post Medieval
Monument type WASH HOUSE Post Medieval

Significant Finds NONE None

Methods & techniques

"Photographic Survey"

Prompt National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country England

Site location LEICESTERSHIRE HARBOROUGH GREAT EASTON Brookside House, 9 Brook Lane, Great Easton, Leicestershire

Postcode LE16 8SJ

Study area 50 Square metres

Site coordinates SP 84735 92948 52.527439022447 -0.750826840302 52 31 38 N 000 45 02 W Point

Project creators

Name of Witham Archaeology

Organisation

Project brief originator

Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator Dale Trimble

Project

Dale Trimble

director/manager

Project supervisor Russell Trimble

Type of sponsor/funding

Landowner

body

Name of Dr and Mrs Craven

sponsor/funding

body

Project archives

Physical Archive Nο

Exists?

Digital Archive

recipient

Leicestershire Museums

Digital Archive ID

X.A101.2017 Digital Contents "Stratigraphic"

Digital Media available

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