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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING  
ASSESSMENT OF A PROPOSED  
DEVELOPMENT AT SMITH'S FARM,  
DONINGTON LE HEATH,  
LEICESTERSHIRE, 2007**

A report for  
Mr P. Elliott



The University of  
Nottingham

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

This report was commissioned by Fisher German on behalf of Mr P. Elliott, who is proposing to return to use a complex of mainly redundant farm buildings at Smith's Farm, Donington le Heath, near Coalville in Leicestershire. It is proposed to convert them into three distinct domestic units and to build on open land immediately to the north. Although most of the farm complex is believed to date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a study of the buildings is required to ascertain their age and original uses. This requires that they be recorded to a Level 2 standard as specified in RCHME (now English Heritage) guidelines. This is a mainly descriptive and partly analytical survey of the buildings concerned, together with a record in mainly drawn and photographic forms.

Planning permission is primarily conditional on the study including an initial rapid **assessment** of what impact the proposed works would have on the historic fabric. This is to inform the Senior Planning Archaeologist and the District Council Planning Officer about the buildings where a degree of urgency was involved. This assessment was written and disseminated prior to this fuller report being compiled. The present report concentrates on the **Level 2 recording**.

The overall study employs the methodology developed by Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) for use on similar projects in the region. This methodology conforms to the standard requirements of planning authorities where consent applications are made for development, re-development or building conversion. These follow guidelines to be found in the conservation planning documents *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16, Department of the Environment 1990) and *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas* (PPG 15, Department of the Environment 1993). The methodology also accords with *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* and the *Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Codes of Conduct and Standards*.

### **Level 2 Record.**

This full Level 2 record contains an archive of digital photographs, provided here on an accompanying CD (attached to back cover). Plans showing viewpoints are included on the CD and as figures within the report. Several of the views are included here to illustrate pertinent points. An archive of a similar number of black and white film negatives and prints (along with plans showing viewpoints) will be deposited along with the site records with the Museums section of Leicestershire County Council Environment and Heritage Services. The archive number is X.A221.2007.

The site is Planning Application No: 07/01338/FUL.

The TPA site code is SFD.

## **B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

As this is only a Level 2 record no detailed background historical research into Smith's Farm has been undertaken; this would have been more appropriate at Level 3. Donington le Heath is perhaps best described as a hamlet, a smaller settlement to the larger neighbouring village of Hugglescote. It was centred on two rectilinear areas enclosed by lanes, situated immediately to the west of a fortified manorial complex and a manorial farm. The fine 13<sup>th</sup> century stone-built upper-hall house, built by William le May, remains as a modern attraction and study centre. Smith's Farm lies immediately to the west of the rectilinear areas.

The First Edition 1 inch scale Ordnance Survey map for the area, dating to c.1835, shows several buildings in the area of Smith's Farm, mainly set back from Farm Lane. However, the small scale of the map makes their precise nature unclear. The Tithe Map (c. 1838) provides significantly greater detail showing a reversed 'L'-shaped range with fronting onto Farm Lane, with detached structures immediately to the north-west (pers. comm. R. Clark).

Wright's Directory of Leicestershire for 1887-88 listed James Smith & Sons (William and John) at the farm. They were described as farmers, bakers, grocers and landowners.

### **3. BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

The farm plan consists of two back-to-back courtyards, the south one open to the south, facing a separate piggery / wash-house alongside the main but now former site entrance; the former farmhouse is to one side. The north courtyard is only partial, the west side occupied by a set a modern open metal-framed barn, set back from a modern trackway down to the former farmhouse. For the purpose of this report 10 distinct structures are identified (not counting the former farmhouse, its outside toilet and the modern barn). They are numbered 1-10, roughly from south to north (Fig. 2). Of these, three are two-storey in height. Below are basic descriptions.

**BUILDING 1:** a single-storey brick-built range with former piggery, store and possible laundry-cum-wash-house at the west end; that part was not accessible during site-visit. The internal walls are half-brick thick and there is a slate roof. The brickwork, under 3 inch (76mm) width and over 9 inch (228mm) length, is a mix of English garden wall bond and Sussex bond. The piggery, at the east end has two blocked feed-entries and a number of reused timbers are evident as purlins – including one with chamfering and peg holes.

**BUILDING 2:** a former small 5-bay barn, fully brick-built with tiled roof. Most of the brickwork has been replaced with modern bricks and the roof relaid. Older brick is evident to either side of the central passageway, a feature retained as an entry to the courtyard off Farm Lane. The east side retains double-doors but the west side is now open and the passageway is cobbled where a threshing floor may have originally existed. Whilst 2½ inch (64mm) brick walling on the south side of this entry looks original, the north side wall may be later, using a mixture of early and later brick. The south end of the building is open to the roof, with no remaining evidence of former flooring, although there are internal entries at two levels. The north end of the building was probably open but later floored and sub-divided. The lower north wall may have been partly rebuilt as it has projecting bricks to support the floor joists.

**BUILDING 3:** a 5-bay long single-storey animal shelter, now with 8 modern milking stalls, East back wall built with 3 inch (76mm) thick, 9½ inch (240mm) long bricks, but west side rebuilt. Former entry into Building 8 blocked off.

**BUILDING 4:** a 3-bay long single-storey animal shelter or, more likely, a stable, butting up to Building 8 with half-trusses. This is a late infill structure between earlier ranges. Built with brick under 3 inch (76mm) thick and under 9 inch (228mm) in length, in an irregular Flemish garden bond,

and with blue-brick detailing. It currently has four modern milking stalls and a low dividing wall for a back passage that continues round to the back of Building 5.

**BUILDING 5:** a 5-bay long single-storey low structure consisting of stone and brick, with a tiled roof. The east brickwork is mainly c.2¾ inch (70mm) thick and about 9 inches long. The west side is principally of stone. A probable combined cart-shed and equipment store, with openings to west and east. Largely open inside but with a modern partition for a separate car standing, and a stone wall separates bays 1 and 2 at the north end (Plate 5). This bay is further divided by an additional brick wall with an angled corner that continues the back passage in Building 4 through to Building 8. The internal stone wall is high and is angled at the top, perhaps reflecting the original roof-line of the earlier building it was evidently part of.

**BUILDING 6:** a 2-bay long 2-storey building consisting of stone and brick, with a tiled roof. The west side has stonework which terminates short of the south end, suggesting the end-point of an earlier wall. The east side has stone showing only at footings level, with 2¾ inch (70mm) thick brick above it; the east join with Building 5 indicates a contemporary build. However, the internal ground-floor dividing wall is of earlier brick construction, with bricks averaging 2¼ins. (57mm) in thickness, and a length of up to 9½ ins. (240mm). There is an original (though shortened) plank door with a pegged and chamfered door-frame in the north end wall (Plate 6).

The north bay now has a raised concrete floor, whilst the south bay has a brick floor. A wooden stair gives access to an upper floor but the planking here suggests it was not designed to take much weight. The upper level was lit by a window in the south gable end and one on the west side, now blocked off. The west side reveals the evidence of a series of interventions - see Plate 3. What the building was used for is unclear.

**BUILDING 7:** a 2-bay single-storey brick-built machinery shed, the south end probably a modern addition or a complete rebuild (as is the whole east side). The north end at least is probably contemporary with the rest of the range, but with an added narrow store (or ?chicken-coop) tacked onto the west side.

**BUILDING 8:** a 6-bay long two-storey structure, with a tall upper floor (Plate 7). It is built mainly of brick but with wider stonework walling about 1-1.5m high at its east gable end and along most of its south side (Plate 4). The brickwork, at just under 3ins. (76mm) in thickness and an average of 9ins. (228mm) in length, is laid in Sussex (Flemish garden bond). The building is divided into three largish spaces and a narrower west bay on the ground floor, and a possibly similar arrangement on the upper floor (this was inaccessible). The ground-floor has a large open bay for storing a wagon (or machinery) and two possible stables, one to either side; the narrow west bay was for harness storage. The two stables were each accessed by a single doorway in the north and south sides. An additional north side doorway in the west stable is where a staircase rose to the upper floor.

The upper level has two delivery doorways and window openings and was probably mainly used as a large hayloft; there is no chimney to suggest accommodation. As on the ground floor, the west end bay was separated off from the rest of the floor and may have had a specialist function. Large markings on a roof timber of 'MADE P.O.W.' indicate a partial re-roofing or repair using the labour of prisoners of war in the 1940s (Plate 7).

**BUILDING 9:** a small two-bay single-storey loose-box with manger at north end. Mainly modern brickwork.

**BUILDING 10:** Two single-storey loose-boxes (one possibly originally for a cart entrance has been reduced), largely rebuilt with modern brick.

Other buildings on the site include the former farmhouse and an outside toilet. The farmhouse is heavily rendered and a thorough examination of the interior would be needed to help ascertain its age. This building was not included in the brief.

#### **4. COMMENT**

The farm complex, when in use, had a mixture of stabling and milking facilities for animals, storage of carts and equipment and a barn for hay or straw. The latter may later have been partly used as a granary store. The north end of the farm appears to have been used mainly for horses, working and later riding horses, and for storing related equipment and feed.

The buildings at Smith's Farm suggests a development and a series of alterations over a period of two centuries. Most have had 20<sup>th</sup> century interventions in the form of re-roofing and the replacement of brickwork; the east gable end of Building 8 displays many pitted bricks which may partly explain the latter. The brickwork includes differing examples of earlier phases. Building 2, for instance, retains an internal wall with 2½ inch brick, suggestive of a late 18<sup>th</sup> century origin, a particularly popular period for barn construction. The use of 2¾ inch brick along the west range suggests an early 19<sup>th</sup> century date here, whilst the other buildings clearly fall within the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century periods.

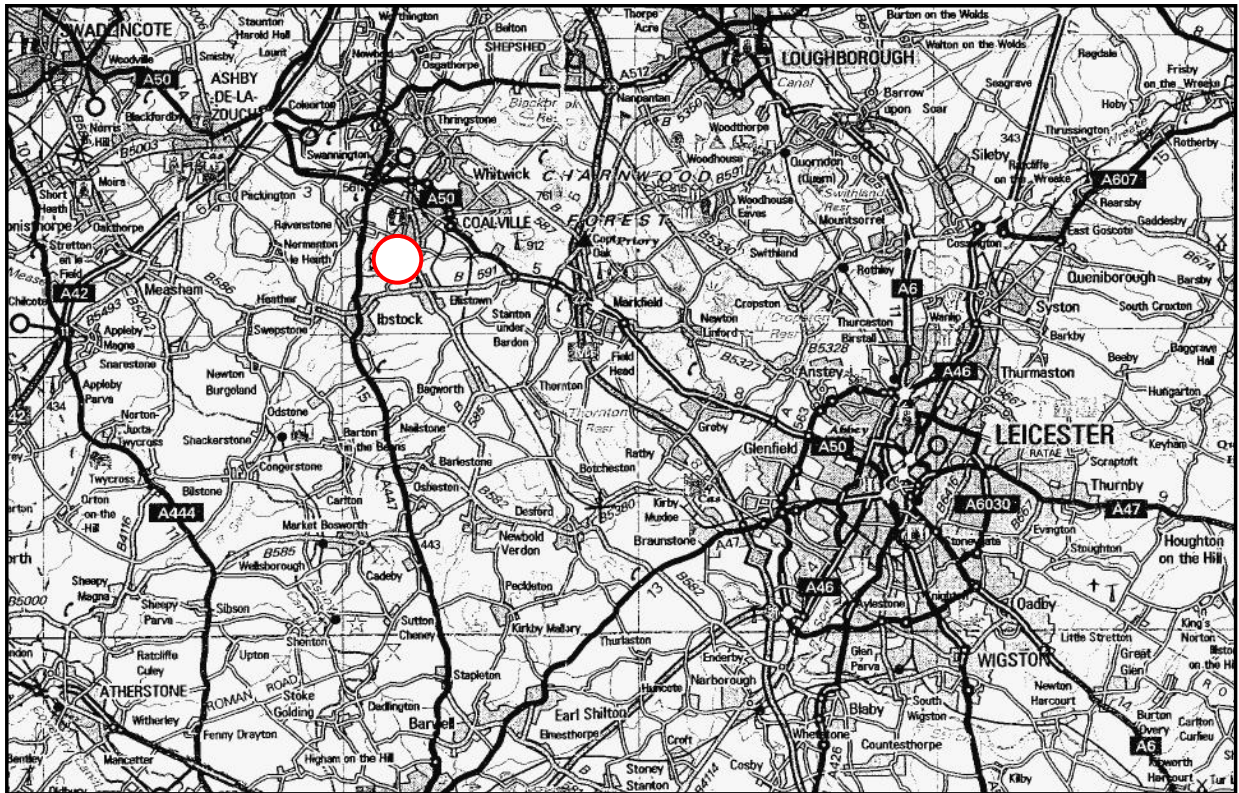
The occurrence of stone is also significant as it probably indicates the existence of two yet earlier buildings on the site, one of which was replaced by Building 8. Here, low stonework might point to a low building or a timber-framed structure. The stonework on the west side suggests an earlier range at least 20m long and 5.5m wide. It appears to have an associated brick dividing wall in Building 6, which may date to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. At the north end (Area B) there is a still largely intact stone wall with an angled top which probably reflects the associated low roofline.

#### **Acknowledgement**

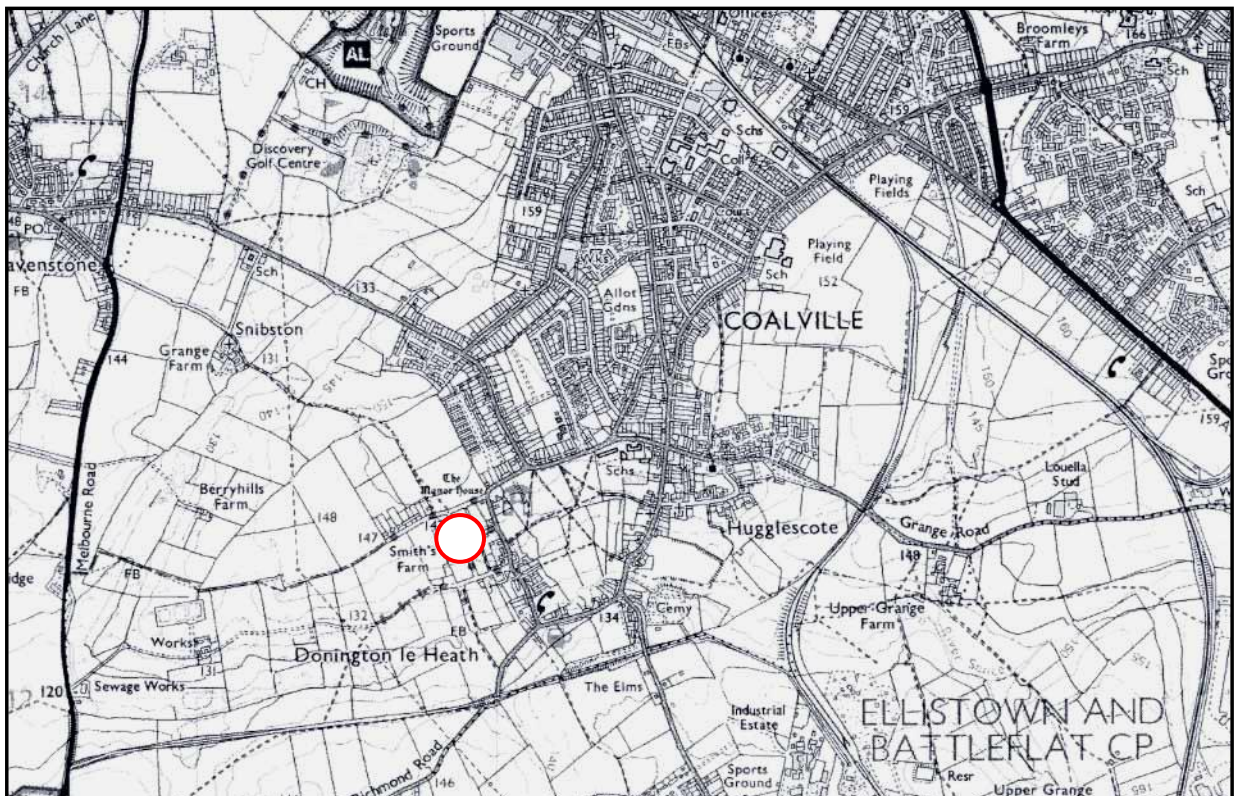
The author would like to thank colleague Laurence Platt for his on-site help and for providing the plans.

# ILLUSTRATIONS



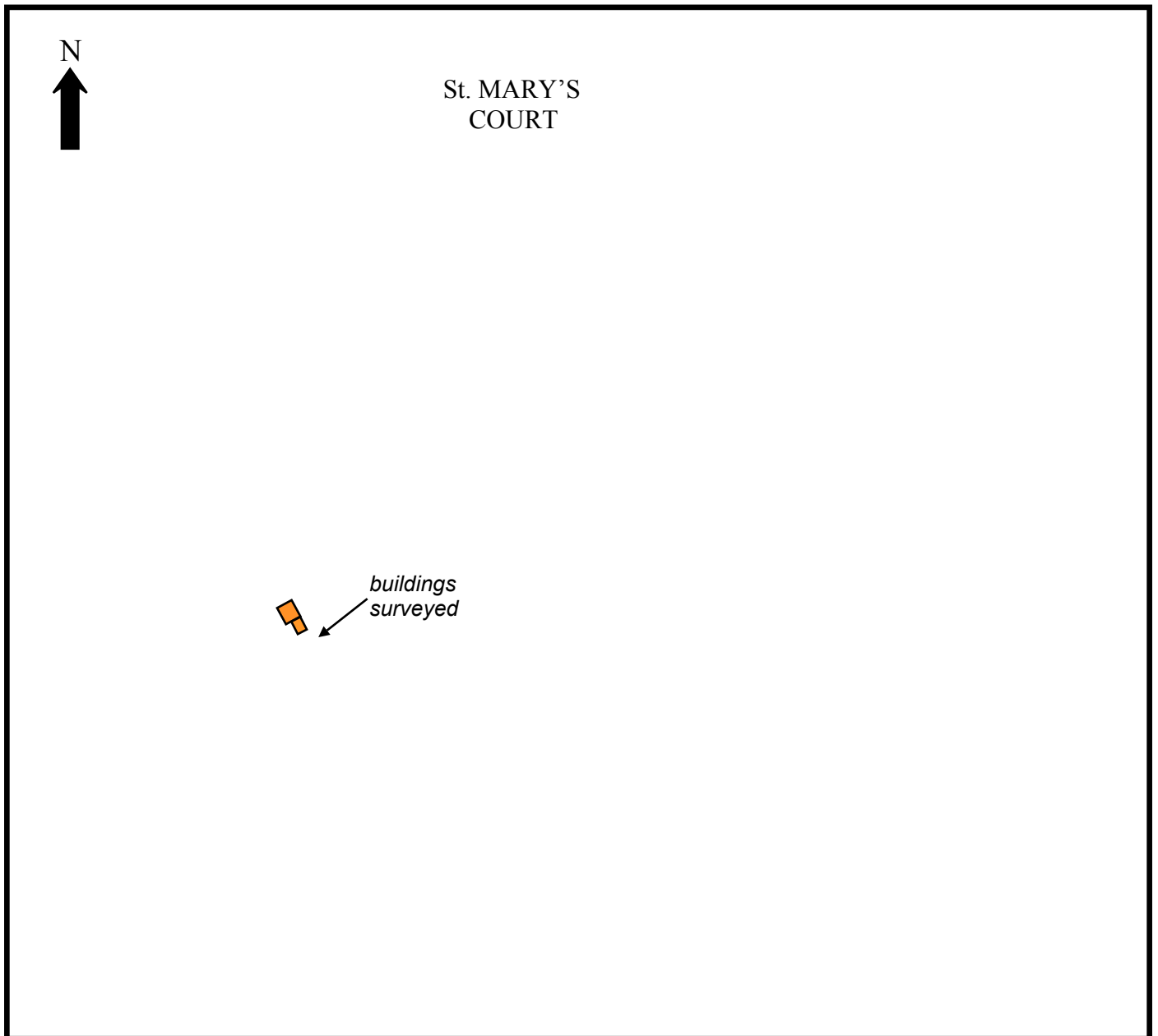


**A**



**B**

**Fig. 1** **A:** the location of Donington le Heath (indicated by circle) in relation to Coalville, Loughborough and Leicester. Scale 1:250,000; **B:** the location of Smith's Farm in Donington le Heath, south of Coalville (indicated by circle). Scale 1:25,000. (*Ordnance Survey maps reproduced with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright Licence No. AL 100020618*).



**Fig 1A** Location of Smith's Farm at Donington le Heath, Leicestershire, near the centre of the village and the position of the medieval manor house. Not to scale.

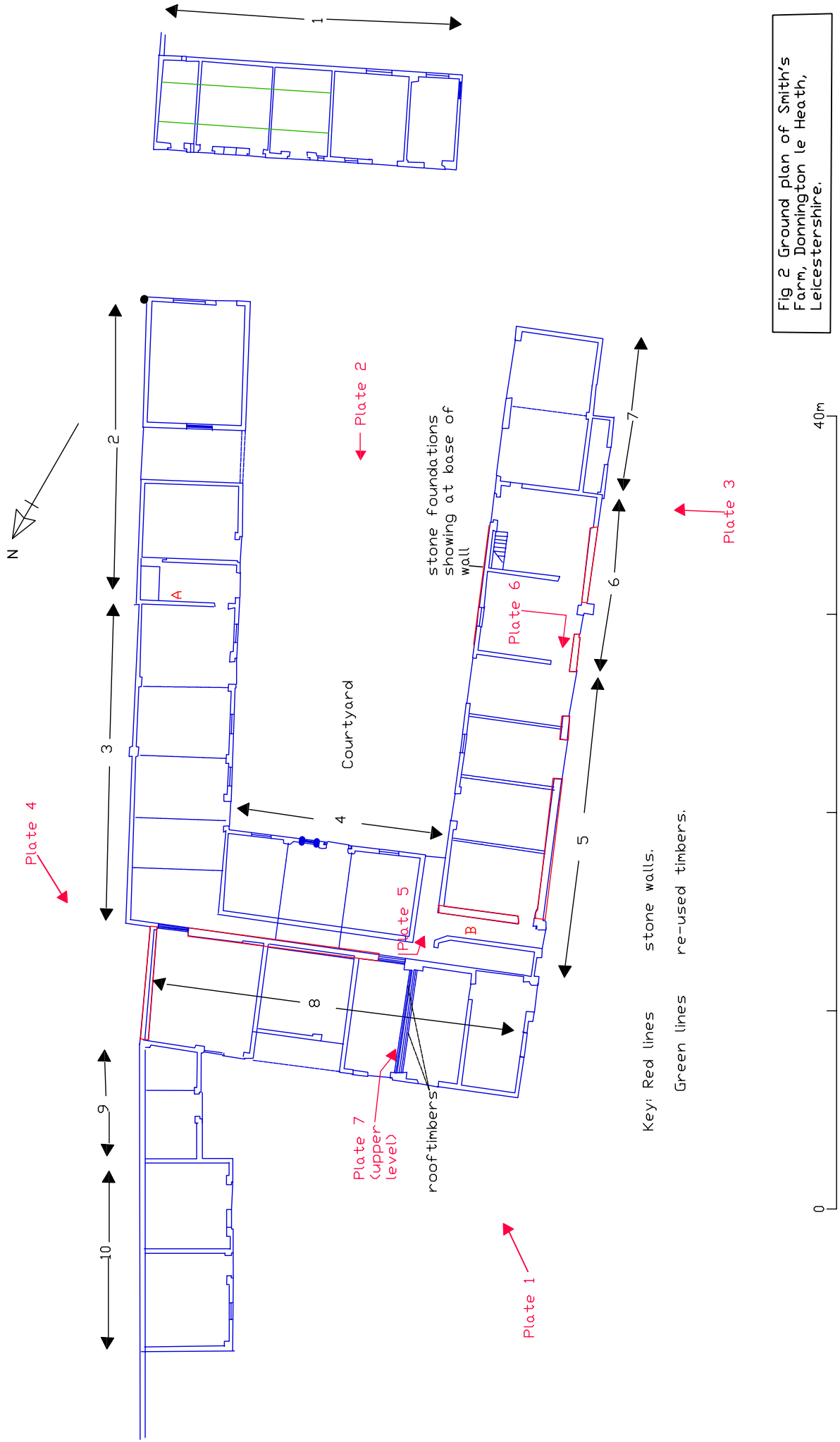


Fig 2 Ground plan of Smith's Farm, Donnington le Heath, Leicestershire.



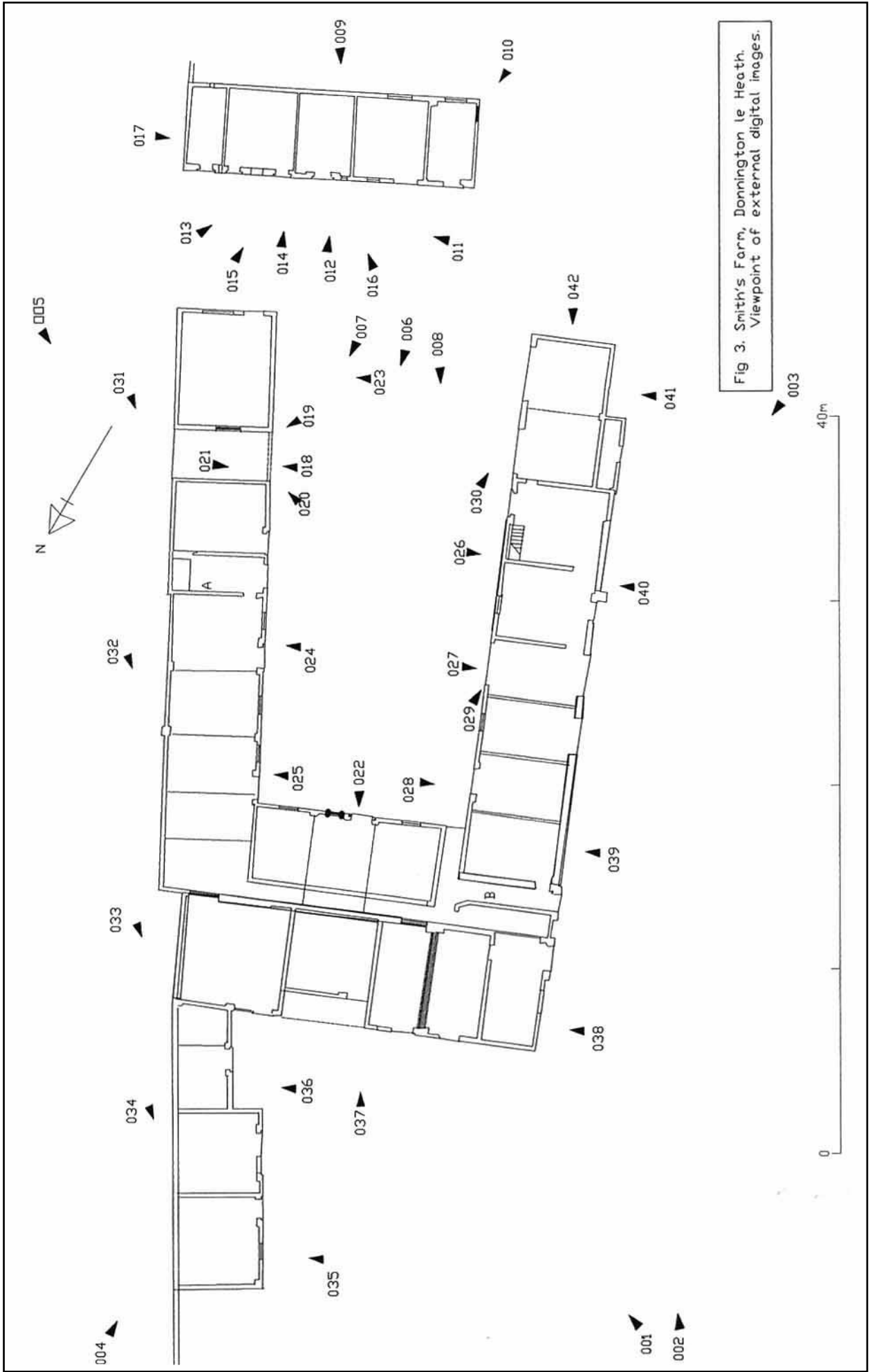


Fig 3. Smith's Farm, Donnington le Heath.  
Viewpoint of external digital images.

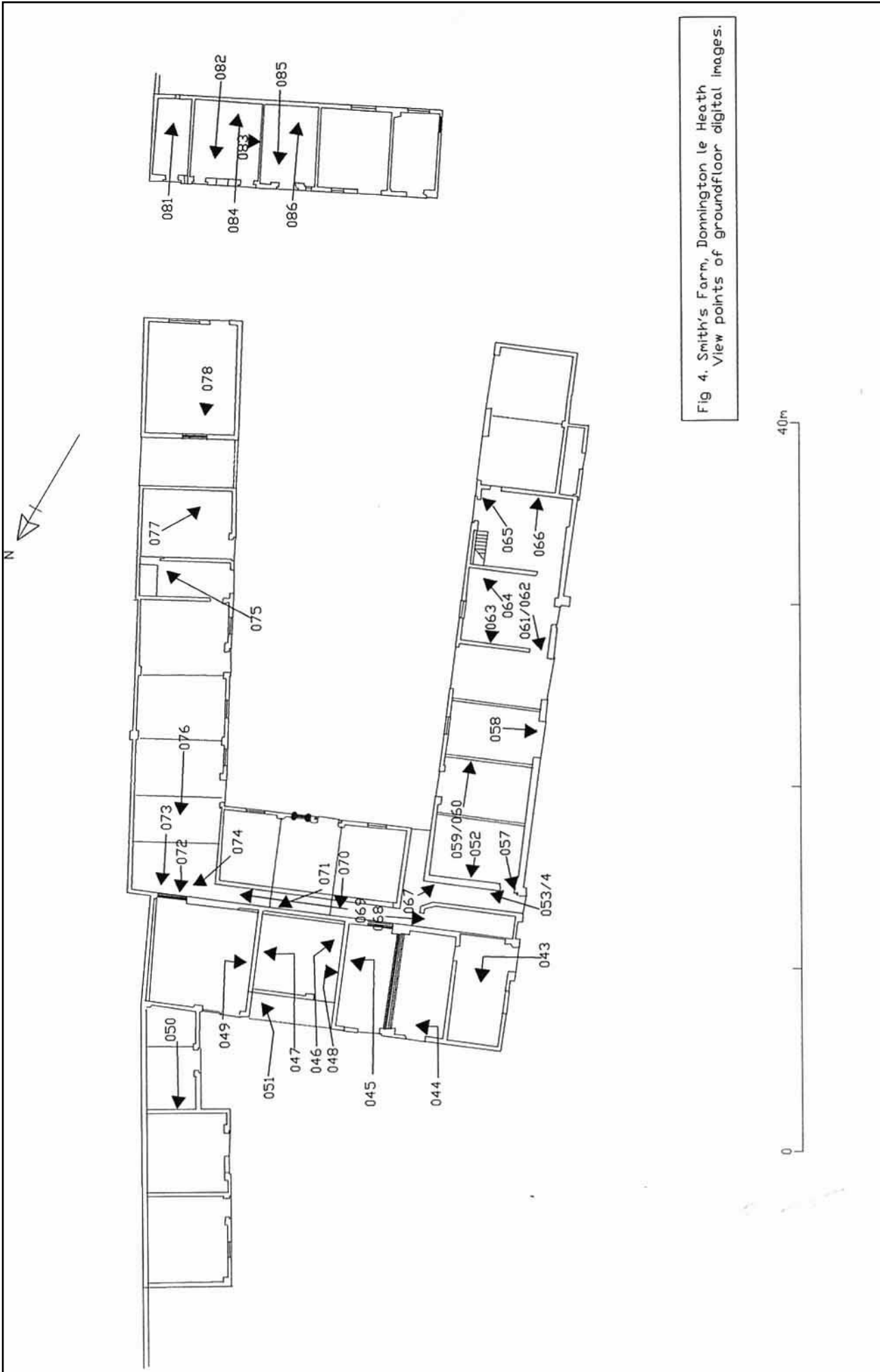


Fig 4. Smith's Farm, Donnington le Heath  
View points of groundfloor digital images.

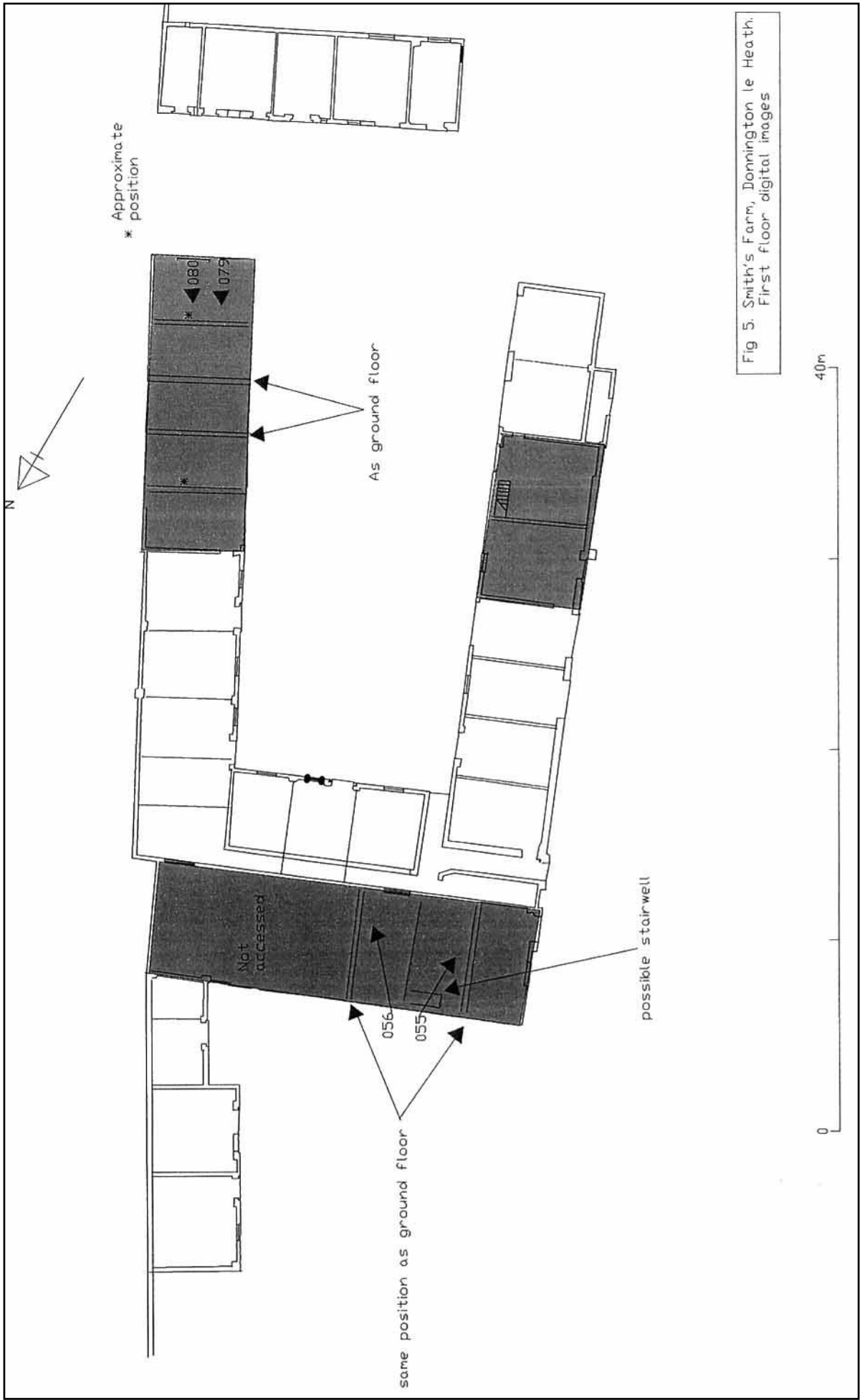


Fig 5. Smith's Farm, Donnington le Heath.  
First floor digital images



**PLATE 1 (DA 2)**



**PLATE 2 (DA 6)**

**Plates 1, 2 of Smith's Farm, Donington le Heath, Leicestershire. 1:** view looking south, with farmhouse bottom right; **2:** view looking north into south courtyard.  
*DA:* Digital archive number.





**PLATE 3**  
**DA 40**



**PLATE 4**  
**DA 33**

**Plates 3, 4 of Smith's Farm, Donington le Heath, Leicestershire. 3:** one of the buildings (6) on the west side of the courtyard with stonework in the external wall; **4:** stone plinth showing on east gable end of Building 8. *DA:* Digital archive number.





**PLATE 5 (DA 67)**



**PLATE 6 (DA 61)**



**PLATE 7 (DA 55)**

Plates 5-7 of Smith's Farm, Donington le Heath, Leicestershire. Plate 5: internal stone wall in Building 5, angled at the top  
Plate 6: plank door with pegged and chamfered frame, set in wall between Buildings 5 and 6; Plate 7: upper level and roof structure of Building 8, with timber displaying 'MADE P.O.W.' (arrowed). DA: Digital archive number.