

**BALQUHINDACHY STEADING**  
**METHLICK**  
**ABERDEENSHIRE**



**Standing Building Survey**

Carried out January 9<sup>th</sup> 2012

by

**Murray Archaeological Services Ltd**



**Report No: MAS 2012-1**

by

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**BALQUHINDACHY STEADING**  
**METHLICK**  
**ABERDEENSHIRE**

**- Standing Building Survey -**

1. **Background**
  - 1.1 A standing building survey was required for one of the steading buildings at Balquhindachy, Methlick Aberdeenshire, prior to their partial demolition for the construction of a new complex of cattle buildings.
  - 1.2 The archaeological condition was applied in the context of planning legislation (PAN 2/2011, SPP, SHEP), which states that it is necessary for developers to arrange for archaeological work to take place prior to development, in appropriate circumstances. Planning Application Number: APP/2011/3613.
  - 1.3 A Level 1 Standing Building Survey was required which includes measured floor plans, a written account of building's plan, form, function, age and development sequence in addition to a photographic survey.
  - 1.4 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned to undertake the work by John Wink Design on behalf of his clients S and G Mackie. The site element of the survey was completed on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2012.
2. **Desk-top survey**
  - 2.1 A search was carried out in the Sites and Monuments Record, Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council and in the Sites and Monuments Records of the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland (RCAHMS) through Canmore, Canmap and Pastmap.

- 2.2 The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey maps were consulted.
- 2.3 Site plans and elevations of the site were kindly supplied by John Wink Design and have been annotated and used as a basis for detailed plans of the observed areas.

### 3. The Site

The site lies at *c.* 125m on the SW flank of a low hill to the W of the Burn of Balquhindachy and W of the B9170, Methlick to New Deer road. The farm was originally part of the Haddo Estate. It has been owned and farmed by the Mackie family since *c.* 1960.

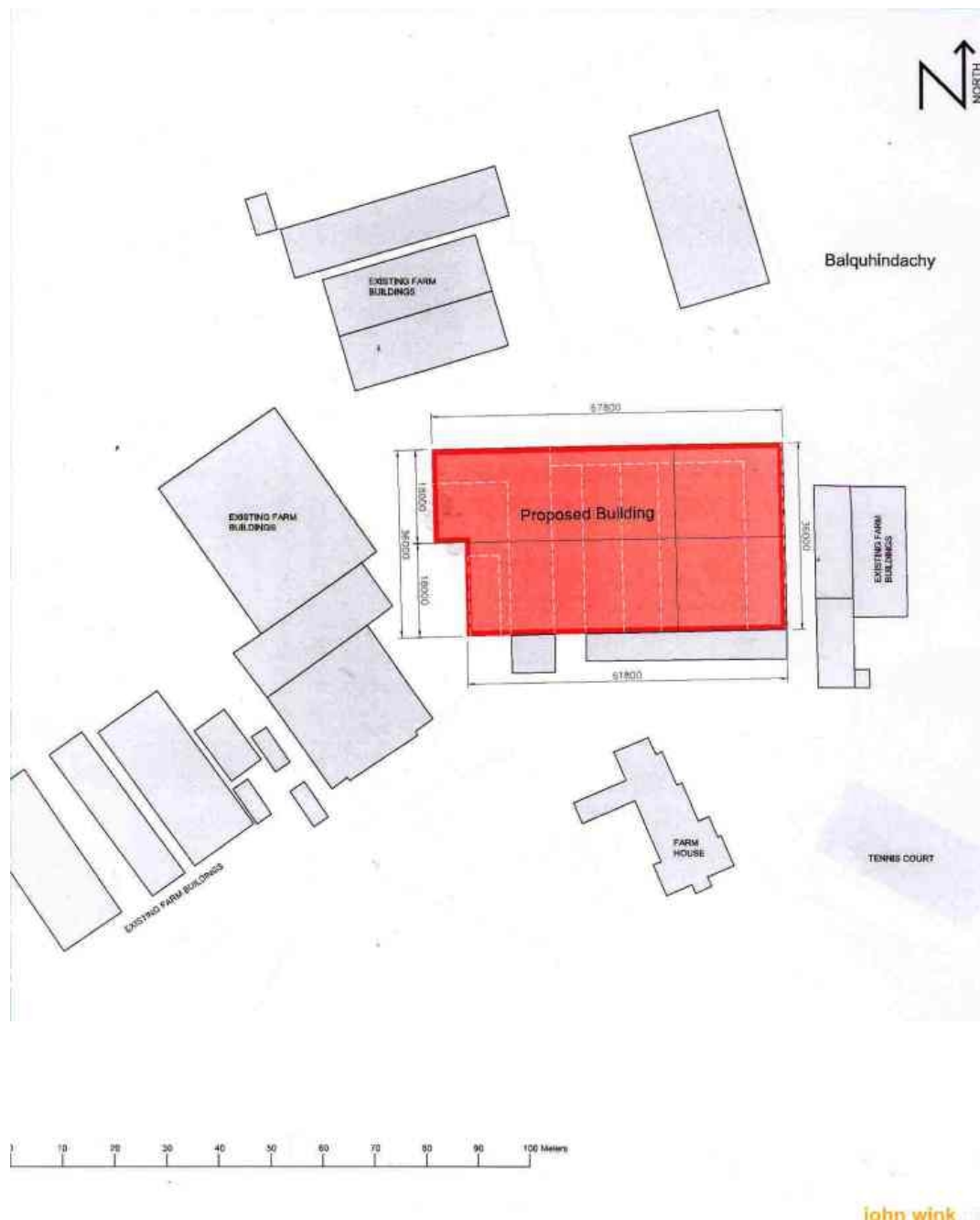
Parish: Methlick

GPS: 385450, 842257 (centre of S side)

RCAHMS No: NJ84SE 29 (NGR NJ 85343 42240 farmhouse)



**Illus 1** The site, general view looking N

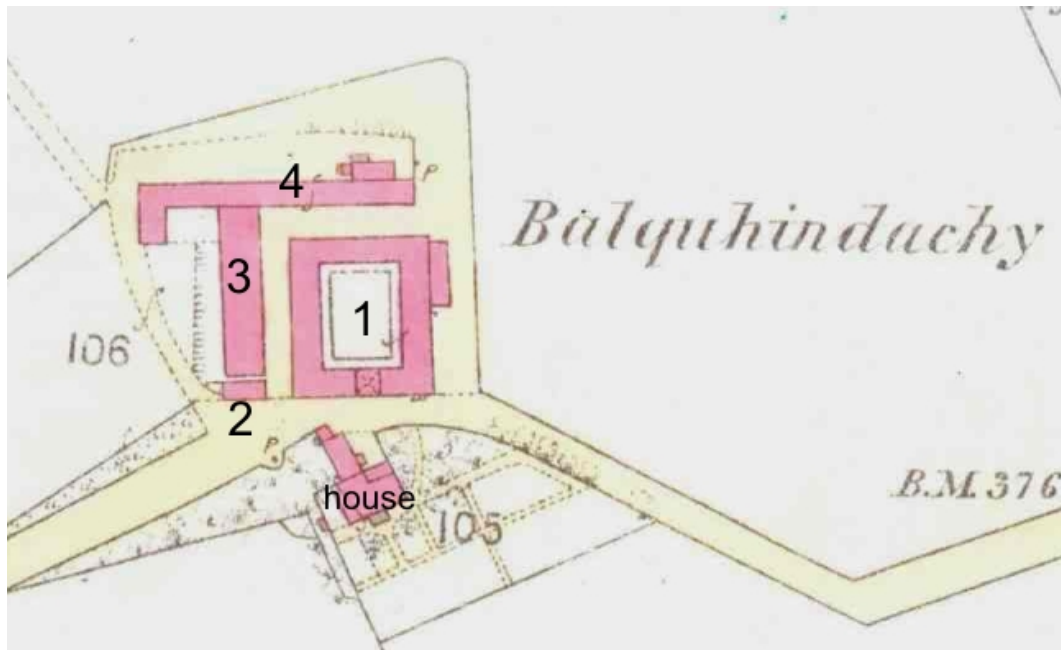


**Illus 2 Overall site plan (from plan by John Wink Design). The area of the standing building survey is the area of the proposed building marked in red.**

#### 4. Documentary evidence

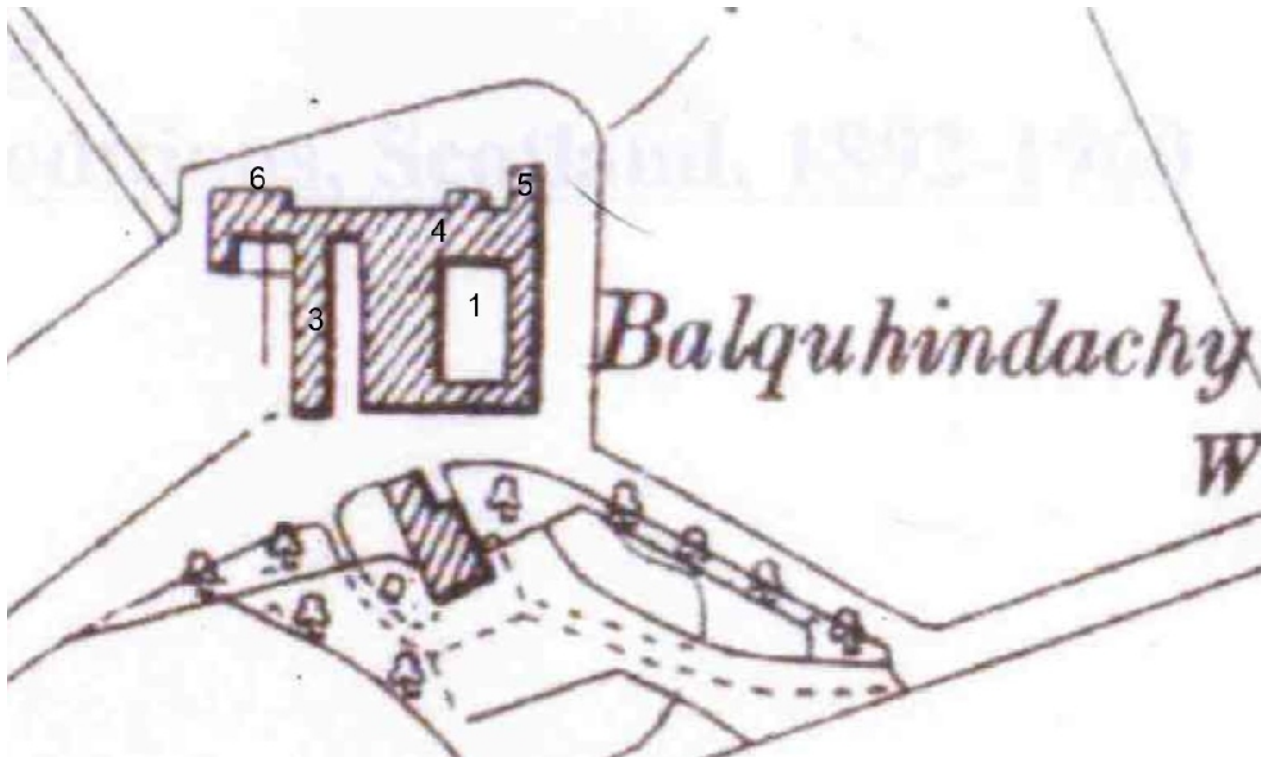
4.1 Roy's Military Map of 1747/55 shows two settlement clusters Fauldhill and Hillhead to the W of the Burn of Balquhindachy. It is possible that Hillhead is on the Balquhindachy site. What is significant is that this area is shown as cultivated ground by the mid- 18<sup>th</sup> century.

4.2 The 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 25"/mile map, surveyed in 1869 (published 1873. Aberdeen Sheet XXIX.3. (Methlick)), shows the Improved steading, much of which survives. The main and probably earliest structure, Building 1, is a quadrangular range around a central open dung court, with an entrance near the middle of the S range. A small secondary building abuts the N end of the E range. To the W of Building 1, a N/S range (3) with a small freestanding block at its S end (2) probably supplied additional livestock accommodation and may be secondary. An L-shaped range (4) abuts the N end of Building 3 and lies parallel to the N range of Building 1, with a passageway between. A mill wheel house is shown attached to the N side of this building at the E end. A pump (P) is shown to the E of this building, with another to the W of the house.



Illus 3 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (25"/mile) surveyed 1869, published 1873  
([www.nls.ac.uk](http://www.nls.ac.uk)) Overlay shows site numbers





Illus 4 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 6<sup>''</sup>/mile Ordnance Survey map of 1899 (pub 1901) ([www.nls.ac.uk](http://www.nls.ac.uk)). Overlay shows site numbers

4.3 By the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 6<sup>''</sup>/mile Ordnance Survey of 1899 (published 1901. Aberdeenshire Sheet XXIX. NE) the W range of Building 1 has been doubled in width, taking in part of the open court. The small structure abutting the E wall of Building 1 has been removed and the E range extended by the addition of Building 5 a two-storied block built across the E end of Building 4 and joining to the E range of Building 1. The N range of Building 1 appears to have been joined to Building 4 by roofing the passage between. An additional building (6) has been built abutting the W end of the N wall of Building 4 and Buildings 2 and 3 appear to have been joined.

4.4 In the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1<sup>''</sup>/mile Ordnance Survey map of 1907 (published 1910. Peterhead. Sheet 87), the main steading block appears to have been unchanged but the difference in scale allows less detail.

## 5 Methodology

5.1 The ground plans and elevations have been annotated to show details and to indicate differences in the building materials which may help in understanding the development and history of the building (Illus 6, 22, 23).

5.2 The areas recorded were photographed. The full set of photographs will be supplied on CD for the archive and an annotated plan in the present report indicate the position of each (Illus 21).

## 6 The Buildings

The steading is discussed as a series of separate buildings relating to the historical elements, although modern infilling of courts and passageways has linked them as a single block.

### 6.1 The House

The farmhouse was not part of the present survey. It is shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map with an elaborate fairly formal garden.

### 6.2 Building 1

Plan Illus 6, Elevations Illus 22, 23

Dimensions Original steading c. 39m square, the S range, which survives relatively unchanged and is being preserved, is 39m wide.

Original Use Rectangular steading around open dung court with entry from S. Cattle in the N and W ranges, cart bays and mens' accommodation in S range. Stables in E range.

Present/recent use Open court and passage between Buildings 1 and 2 roofed.

Interiors concrete rendered and pig stalls, feeding troughs and feeding passes built.

#### Description

*Walls* The walls are c.500- 540mm thick of horizontal coursed rubble stone, with small pinnings, some in vertical stacks. The S and E faces (towards the house and the approach from the road) are well finished. Rybats at corners and around doors and windows are of roughly dressed granite.

#### *Roofs*

The S range has a pitched slated roof with a square chimney with a ceramic pot for the bothy in the E gable. The W gable has been cut down to allow the roofing of the passage between Buildings 1 and 2. Both gables have plain horizontal skew putts, common in Aberdeenshire (Naismith, 1985, 114). The W range, widened between 1869 and 1899 has two parallel pitched roofs, both appearing still to be slated. The E

range is pitched and slated. Where visible all roofs appear to have had an A-frame or A-frame with braces and have been sarked. The more recent roofing of the remains of the open court is of asbestos on a metal framework.

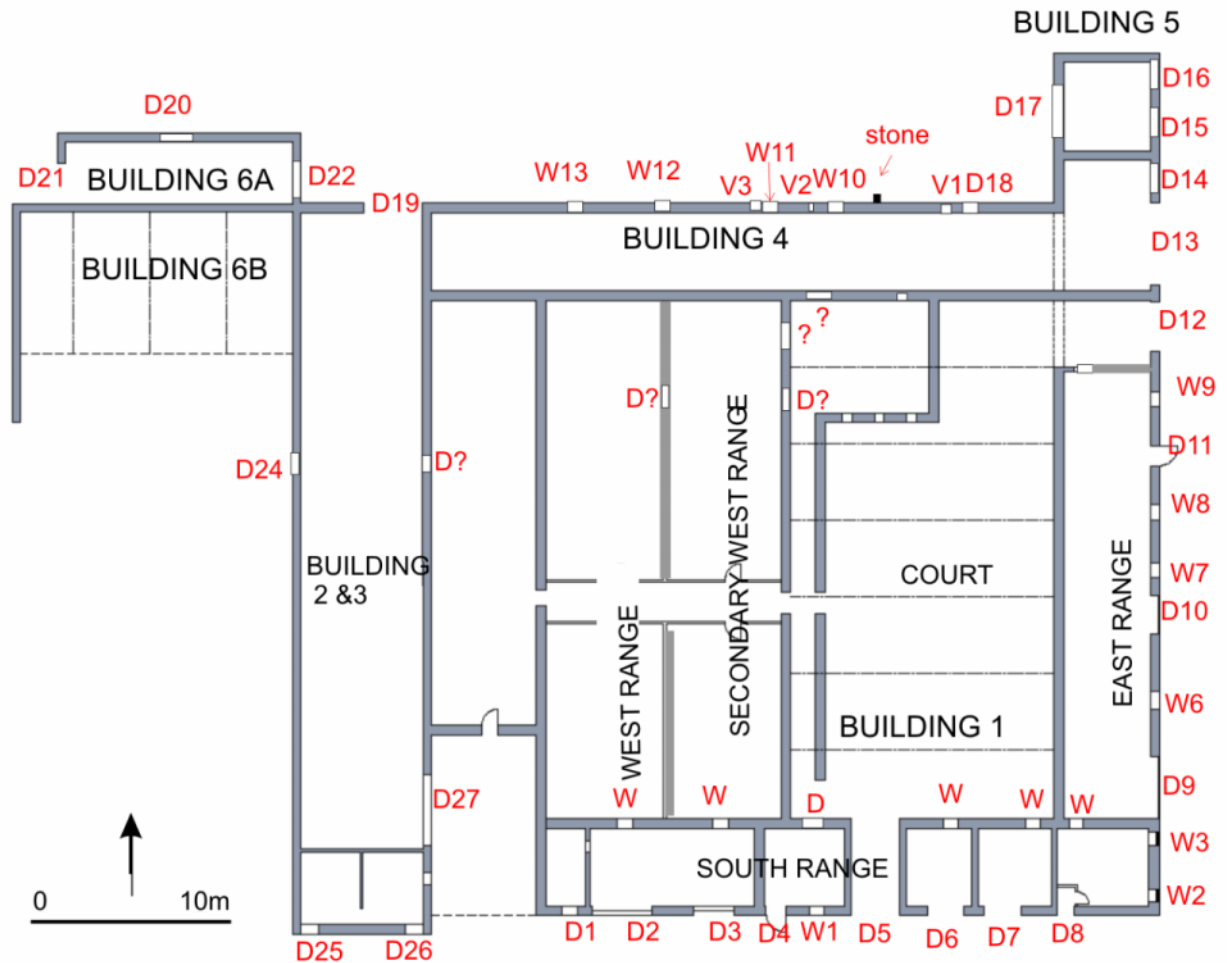
### **S RANGE**

The S range faced the house and has as a result been built with some elegance. There is a slightly off-centre entry to the open court within the original quadrangular court. To the W this is flanked by a small room with a tall door (D4) to the S and an additional N door into the court; possibly a bull pen. To the W of this were two cart bays (D2, D3), now opened into one space and with one of the openings blocked (D3) and the other raised and widened, these had windows into the W range. A small room, now a toilet formed the W end of the block. To the E, the court entry was flanked by another two cart bays (D6, D7). A loft with small wooden-slatted vents ran along above the court entry and cart bays D6 and D7. At the E end of the range there was a two-storied bothy, entered by D8.



**Illus 5 S wall of S range looking W**





Illus 6 Detailed plan (Annotated from plan by John Wink Design).

*Doors and windows*

S WALL

- D1** W: 1.05m H: 2m. Grey granite lintel, sill and rybats. Wooden door.
- D2** W: 3.7m H: 3.7m. Modern metal sliding door with roof raised to insert. Original rybats survive on RHS. Possible cart bay opening.
- D3** W: 2.6m H: 2.6m. Cart bay opening with grey granite lintel and rybats. Blocked with concrete and weatherboard.
- D4** W: 1.2m H: 2.9 m. Wooden door with timber above. Grey granite lintel and rybats.
- W1** W: 0.91m H: 1.54m. Wooden frame, originally 2 panes each with 3 astragals. Grey granite lintel and rybats.
- D5** W: 3m H: 2.6 m Original opening to open dung court with loft above. Grey granite lintel and rybats.

**D6** W: 2.29m H: 2.7m Cart bay with loft above. Grey granite lintel and rybats. Inset panel between D6 and D7 to accommodate sliding doors. Nail fixings for rail survive. Wooden partition between bays of D6 and D7, each has a splayed window into open court to N.

**D7** W: 2.29m H: 2.7m Cart bay with loft above. Grey granite lintel and rybats.

**D8** W: 1.05m H: 2.10m. Door into bothy.

**Bothy** D8 opens into a small square lobby with pine lining at the lower half of the wall. A door to RHS opens into the ground floor room with a fireplace to the E and three windows. The walls are pine-lined with plaster above. A pine stair leads from the NW corner to the upper floor which had two windows (W4, W5) to E, pine lining and lathe and plaster ceiling.



**Illus 7** View of bothy at SE corner of the main block

### **E RANGE**

The E range was the original stable block with possibly originally 6 stalls, each with a window and with a central sliding door between each pair (This assumes that D9 has removed a door and window). No internal details survive.



**Illus 8** Looking N along the E range stable block



**Illus 9** Detail of N end of stable block showing recessed sliding door D11 and window W9

E WALL

**W2** W: 0.76m H: 1.5m. Ground floor. Wooden frames. 2 panes, each with 2 astragals, with upper pane opening out, grey granite lintel, sill and rybats.

- W3** W: 0.76m H: 1.5m. Ground floor. Wooden frames. 2 panes, each with 2 astragals, with upper pane opening out, grey granite lintel, sill and rybats.
- W4** W: 0.76m H: not measured- estimated *c.*1m. First floor. 2 panes, each with 2 astragals, with upper pane opening out, grey granite lintel, sill and rybats.
- W5** W: 0.76m H: not measured- estimated *c.*1m. First floor. 2 panes, each with 2 astragals, with upper pane opening out, grey granite lintel, sill and rybats.
- D9** W: 3.3m H: *c.*2.8m. Sliding corrugated metal door is replacement but inset suggests original wooden door was also sliding.
- W6** W: 0.91m H: 1.54m. Wooden frame, originally 2 panes each with 3 astragals.
- D10** W: 1.2m H: 2.89m with 1.32m inset for sliding door. Wooden door on metal rail.
- W7** W: 0.90m H: 1.54m. Wooden frame, originally 2 panes each with 3 astragals
- W8** W: 0.90m H: 1.54m. Wooden frame, originally 2 panes each with 3 astragals
- D11** W: 1.2m H: 2.89m with 1.32m inset for sliding door. Wooden door on metal rail.
- W9** W: 0.90m H: 1.54m. Wooden frame, originally 2 panes each with 3 astragals

#### W WALL

Details are obscured by rendering. There appears to have been at least one window into the central open court.

#### W RANGE

The walls of the W range survive but all details are obscured by concrete rendering. The original W range, shown on the 1869 OS map is *c.* 7m wide internally, with the secondary W range, also *c.*7m wide internally built alongside the E wall of the original W range. A blocked possible door between the two ranges is visible.

#### N RANGE

The early 19<sup>th</sup> century N range appears to have been removed, possibly in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century when the E and W ranges appear to have been extended to Building 4.

#### CENTRAL COURT

The central court appears to have been narrowed between 1869 and 1899 by the addition of the secondary W range parallel to the original one. The remaining open court was later roofed with a steel framework and asbestos cladding.

#### Interior



The interior has been substantially adapted for pig production and the inside walls and floors generally cement rendered. As a result no original features survive.



Illus 10 View of the central court looking SE. The blocked windows to the bothy can be seen on the far wall.

### 6.3 Building 2 & 3

A N/S range, parallel to the W range of Building 1 and separated from it by an open passageway is shown on the 1869 OS map. In 1869, the double stable at the S end (Building 2) is shown as a freestanding structure; by 1899 the two buildings are shown joined. The passageway between Buildings 1 and 2/3 has subsequently been roofed and used as livestock accommodation.



Illus 11 S end of Building 2/3 and the covered passageway between it and the main block Building 1



Plan Illus 6, Elevations Illus 22, 23

Dimensions c 45m x 8m externally.

Original Use Building 2 was possibly the stable for riding horses as opposed to the farm stables in the E range. Building 3 may have been additional cattle housing but there is no internal detail; vents in the W wall suggest it was used for livestock.

Present/recent use Open court and passage between Buildings 1 and 2 roofed.

Interiors concrete rendered and pig stalls, feeding troughs and feeding passes built.

Building 2 remained as a stable, now a store.

### Description

#### *Walls*

The walls are of rubble stone construction with smaller and more mixed, including browner, stones than in Building 1. Rybats are of grey granite.

#### *Roofs*

The S end of the roof over the original Building 2 is hipped with grey slate cladding over A-frame couples with braces and sarking. The slate survives only at the S end of Building 2/3, the remainder being replaced by corrugated iron with plastic roof lights and ridge ventilators.

#### *Doors and windows*

##### S WALL

**D25** W: 1.0m H: 2m. Wooden half-door. Grey granite lintel, sill and rybats.

**D26** W: 1.0m H: 2m. Wooden half-door. Grey granite lintel, sill and rybats.

##### W WALL

**D24** W: 1m H: 2m. Sides substantially rebuilt.

**Windows** At least four small blocked windows at the top of the wall, each W: 0.50m H: 0.60m

##### E WALL

Cement blockwork and render have obscured much of the wall but there appears to be a door opposite D24 and blocked windows similar to those in the W wall.

#### *Interior*

The interior has been substantially adapted for pig production and the inside walls cement rendered. As a result no original features survive.

#### 6.4 Building 4

Part of the original steading shown on 1869 map. In both 1869 and 1899 a mill wheel is shown attached to the E end of the N wall of the building. The height of D18 above ground suggests that the building had an upper loft, lit by windows W10-W13. The position of the wheel pit and the lower part of the walls at the E end are obscured by a raising of the ground level to form a loading ramp.



**Illus 12 Buildings 5 (LHS) and 4 (RHS with lower wall hidden by loading ramp).**

Plan Illus 6, Elevations Illus 22

Dimensions 6m x 40m

Original Use The E end beside the mill wheel would have been the threshing mill.  
Part of the remainder may have been the straw barn.

Present/recent use Grain store.

Description

*Walls*

The walls are of horizontally coursed rubble stone with considerable use of brownish stone comparable to Building 2/3..

*Roof.* Pitched roof with grey slate over A-frames and sarking. Metal roof lights.

*Doors and windows*

N WALL

**D18** W: 1.3m H: 2m. Grey granite rybats and lintel. Gave entry at 1<sup>st</sup> floor level. Presumably had external stair. Height may have been for access carrying grain sacks.

**V1** W: 400mm H: 550mm. Timber visible, partly brick blocked. Possibly part of a stair attachment.

**stone** Dressed granite block 800mm wide and 210mm high projects c.100mm from the wall face at c. 500mm from the top of the wall.



**Illus 13** Detail of door D18



**Illus 14** Detail of projecting stone, window to 1<sup>st</sup> floor W10 and V2 below. Mill wheel is likely to have been in this area.

**W10** c.1m square. Not measured. Rybats grey granite, lintel dark/black slate/stone.  
Concrete blocked.

**W2** W: 400mm H: 1m. Irregular, blocked with cement blocks.

**W11** c.1m square. Not measured. Rybats grey granite, lintel dark/black slate/stone.  
Concrete blocked

**W3** W: c.1m H: c.1m. Grey granite rybats and lintel. Concrete blocked. Into ground floor of building, possible window.

**W12** c.1m square. Not measured. Rybats grey granite, lintel dark/black slate/stone.  
Concrete blocked

**W13** c.1m square. Not measured. Rybats grey granite, lintel dark/black slate/stone.  
Concrete blocked

#### *Interior*

The interior has been substantially adapted as a grain store and is cement lined, obscuring all internal details.



**Illus 15 Interior Building 4**

### **6.5 Building 5**

A two-storied building with six blocked or altered cart bays on the ground floor opening towards the E and a wooden stair mounting to a grain loft which extends the full length of the building and has small windows/vents in the E and N walls (W wall



obscured). The map evidence suggest that this was built between 1869 and 1899, linking Building 1 with Building 4.



**Illus 16 E wall of Building 5**

Plan Illus 6, Elevations Illus 22, 23

Dimensions c.7 x 19m with the upper floor extending over D12.

Original Use Cart bays with grain loft above.

Present/recent use Grain drying and processing.

Description

*Walls*

The walls are of rubble construction with grey granite for rybats at corners and openings.

*Roof*

Pitched and re-clad in corrugated steel with plastic lights. Original skews have plain horizontal skew putts.

*Doors and windows*

**E WALL**

There appear to have been six cart bays. D13 which has been widened and raised below a steel lintel shows original rybats on both sides- its width suggests it incorporated the width of two cart bays.

**D12** W: 3.1m H: 3.4m. Modern sliding steel door below original granite lintel.



**D13** W: 5.1m H: 3.4m. Wooden door below steel lintel. Widened.

**D14** W: 2.3m H: c.3.4m. Grey granite rybats and lintel. Cement blocked.

**D15** W: 2.3m H: c.3.4m. Grey granite rybats and lintel. Cement blocked.

**D16** W: 2.3m H: c.3.4m. Grey granite rybats and lintel. Cement blocked.

**Windows/vents in 1<sup>st</sup> floor** 5 blocked windows/vents to grain loft. Grey granite rybats and lintel Not measured.

N WALL

**Windows/vents in 1<sup>st</sup> floor** 1 blocked windows/vent to grain loft. Grey granite rybats and lintel. Not measured.

W WALL

**D17** Not measured as blocked by potato boxes.

*Interior*

The interior has been substantially adapted. Wooden stairs to 1<sup>st</sup> floor. No entry to 1<sup>st</sup> floor as advised unsafe.

## 6.6 Building 6

A lean-to building (6A) shown on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS map of 1899 against the N wall of what is shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map of 1869 as an L-shaped roofed extension (6B) of the steading. Only the N and part of the W walls of this survive and have been used to form a pole-barn for cattle accommodation.

Plan Illus 6, Elevations Illus 22, 23

Dimensions Building 6A : c. 4.5 x 10m externally, built against L- shaped wall 13m N/S and 18m E/W which has been re-used as Building 6B.

Original Use Unknown, the position suggests it may have been a turnip store.

Present/recent use Cattle housing.



Illus 17 Building 6A looking S



**Illus 18 Building 6B**

Description

*Walls*

The walls are of rubble construction with grey granite for rybats at corners and openings.

*Roof*

Building 6A has lean-to corrugated steel roof against N wall of Building 6B which has a pitched roof of corrugated steel.

*Doors and windows of Building 6A*

E WALL

**D22** W: 2.4m H: open to roof. Grey granite rybats.

N WALL

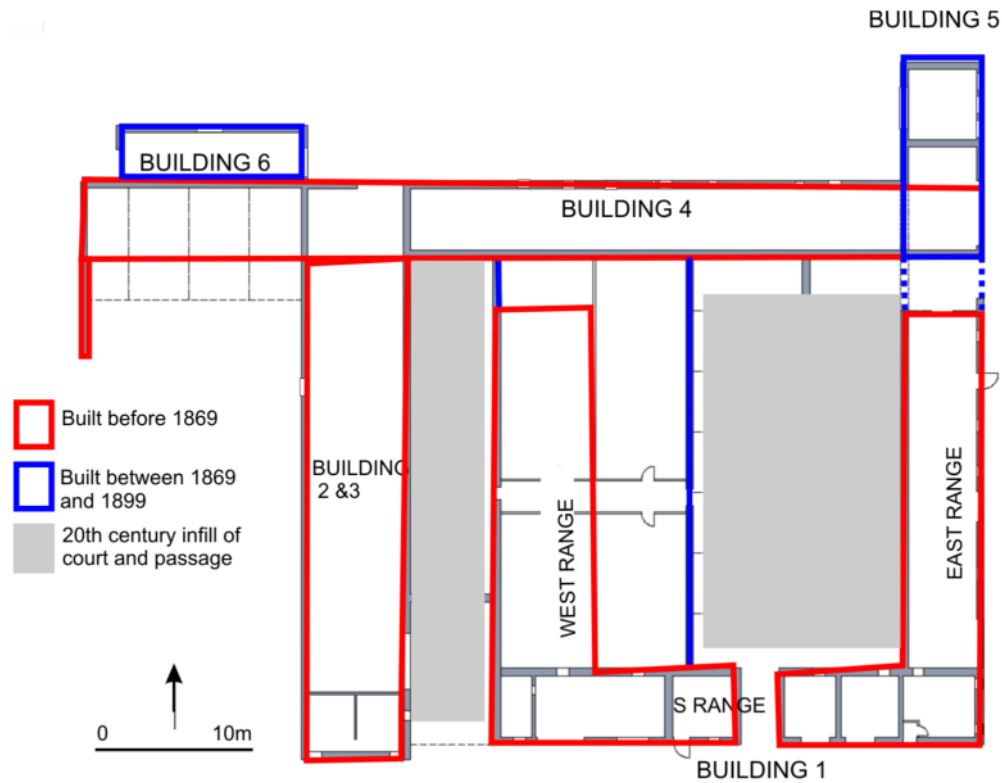
**D20** W: 1.2m H: 2.05m. Grey granite rybats and lintel, blocked with concrete blocks.

W WALL

**D21** W: 2.5m H: 2.4. Secondary sliding door with extension of wall for slide rail. Opening has grey granite rybats and lintel.

## 7 Discussion

This is a good example of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Improved steading in the Aberdeenshire area, probably dating from *c.* 1800 with development throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century (RCAHMS 2007, 208). As was common in the North-East, there was a strong emphasis on in-wintered beef cattle (Glendinning and Wade Martins 2008, 119-120).

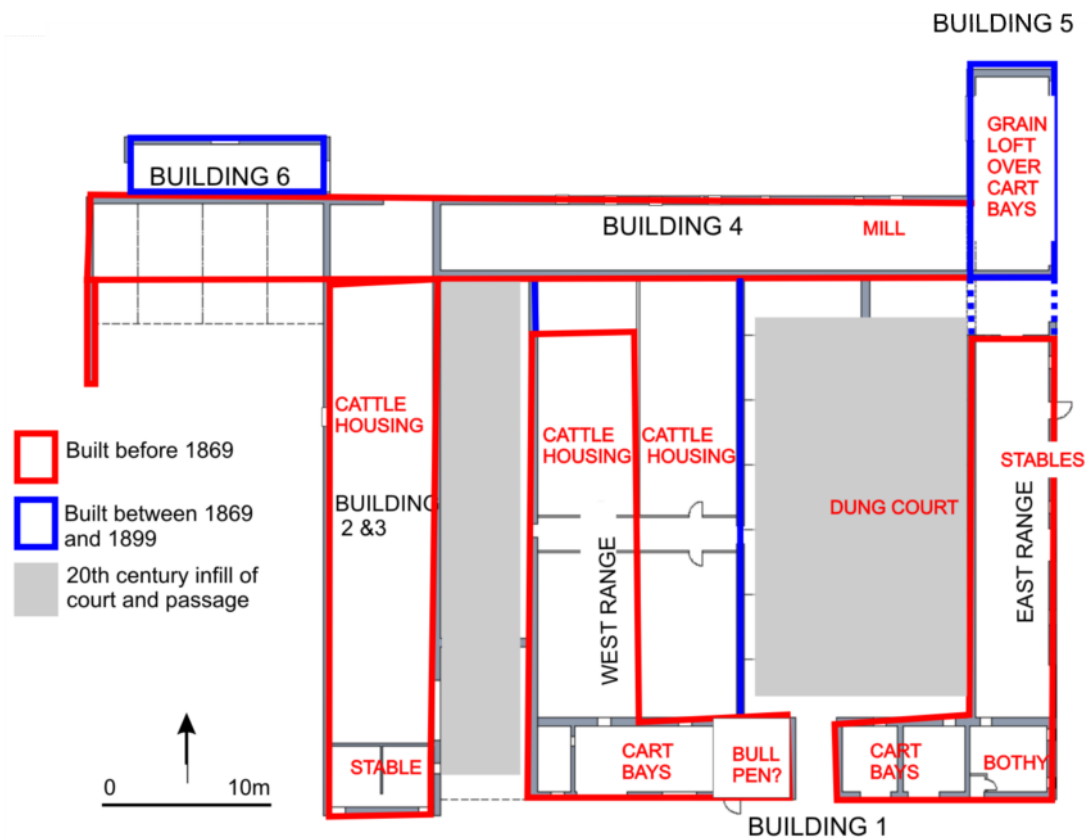


**Illus 19 Suggested sequence of construction**

In its early 19<sup>th</sup> century form there appears to have been a quadrangular range around a central dung court. This block may have been the earliest part of the steading and had cart bays flanking the entry to the central court. The bothy lay at the SE corner, with the working stables along the E side. The now missing N side and the extant W side were probable cattle housing. It is suggested that the bull pen may have been in the S side, with access both to the outside and into the central court.

A small freestanding stable to the W may have been for riding horses and formed the end of a freestanding building parallel to the W side of the main block. The main block substantially survives but with little detail, the high vents suggest it was for livestock and it is likely to have been for cattle. The stonework is different from the main block and it may have been secondary.

To the N of the main block, the threshing mill formed part of a long L-shaped building, part of which may have been the straw barn. At some point between 1869 and 1899 the N range of the main block appears to have been opened out to extend the main block to this N building, incorporating the passageway that had earlier remained between them. During the same period the accommodation for cattle in the W range of the N building was doubled by building a parallel additional W range within part of the open court. By 1899 a new two-storied building was built across the end of the mill building with six additional cart bays and a grain loft above. The continual increase in both cattle housing and cart bays and grain processing and storage areas indicates that the farm was thriving and expanding in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Illus 20 Suggested original functions of buildings

Later development throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen the infilling and roofing of the remaining passage between the main block and the W building and of the open court of the main block. The interior has largely been adapted for pig production with continued use of the N building for grain storage and processing. Additional expansion has been in the form of a number of large separate livestock buildings, mostly to the W and N of the original steading.

## 8. References

Glendinning, M and Wade Martins, S 2008 Buildings of the Land: Scotland's Farms 1750-2000 Edinburgh: RCAHMS.

Naismith, R J 1985 *Buildings of the Scottish Countryside*. London:Gollanz.

RCAHMS 2007 *In the shadow of Bennachie: A Field Archaeology of Donside, Aberdeenshire*. Edinburgh: RCAHMS.

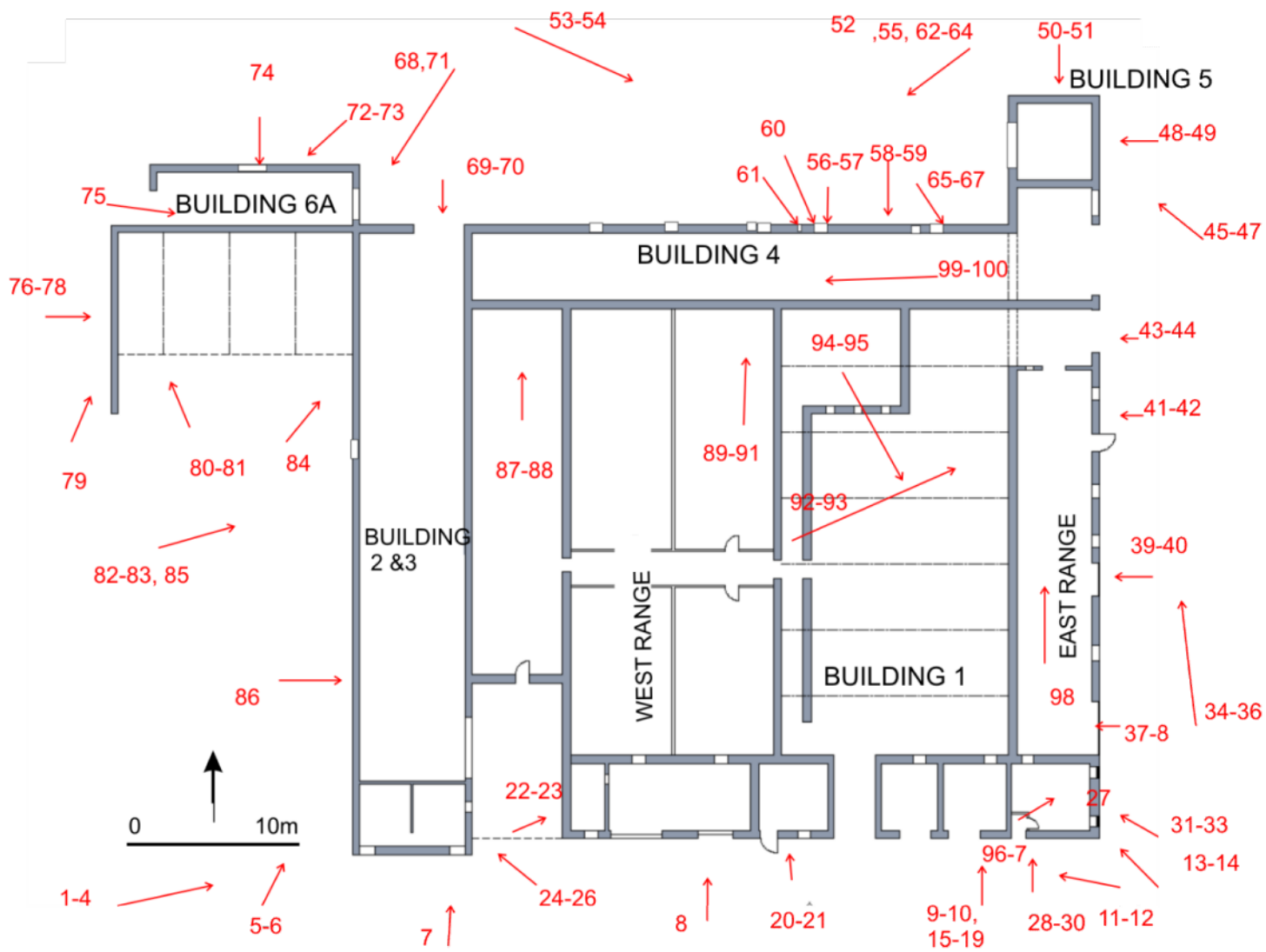
## 9 Archive

A full set of photographs with the photo location plan will be supplied on CD to the Aberdeenshire SMR in Aberdeen and to the NMRS.

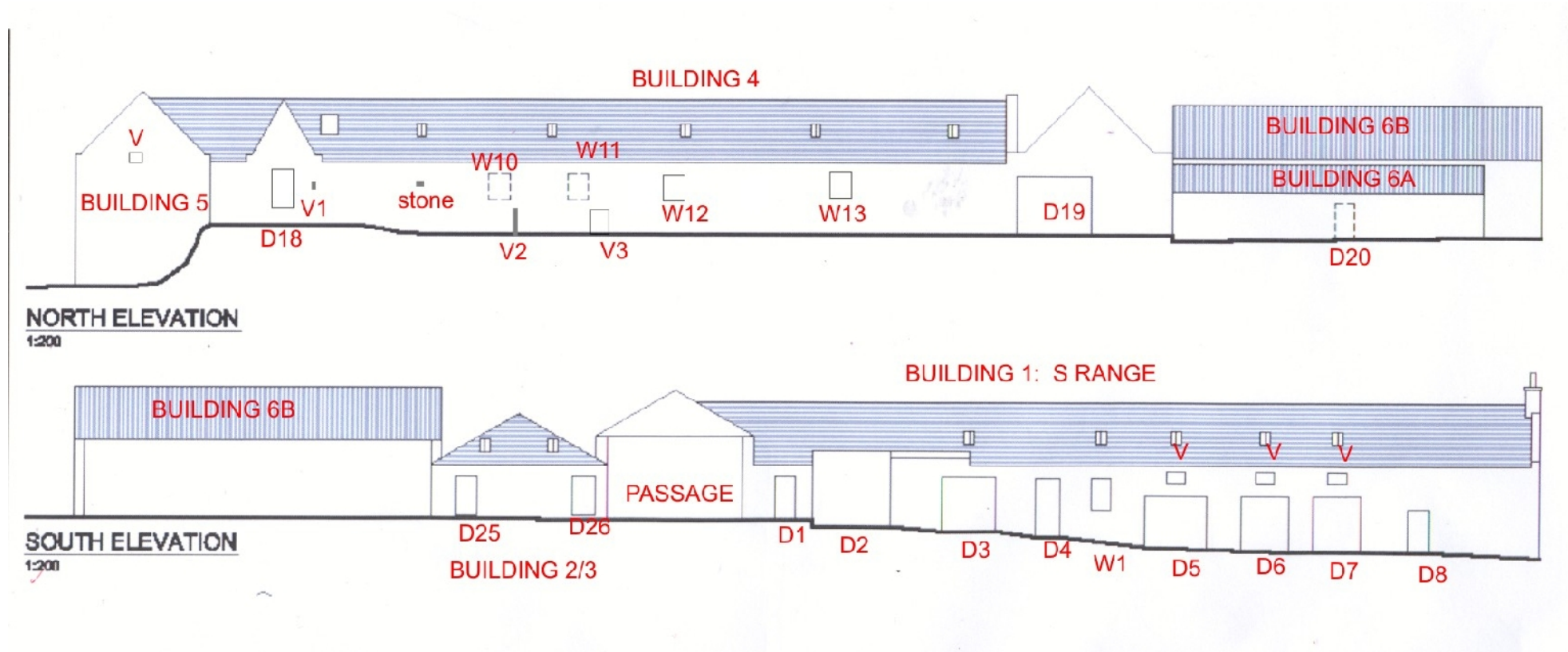
### **Appendix 1: Photographic archive**

The positions of all photographs are indicated on Illus 21.

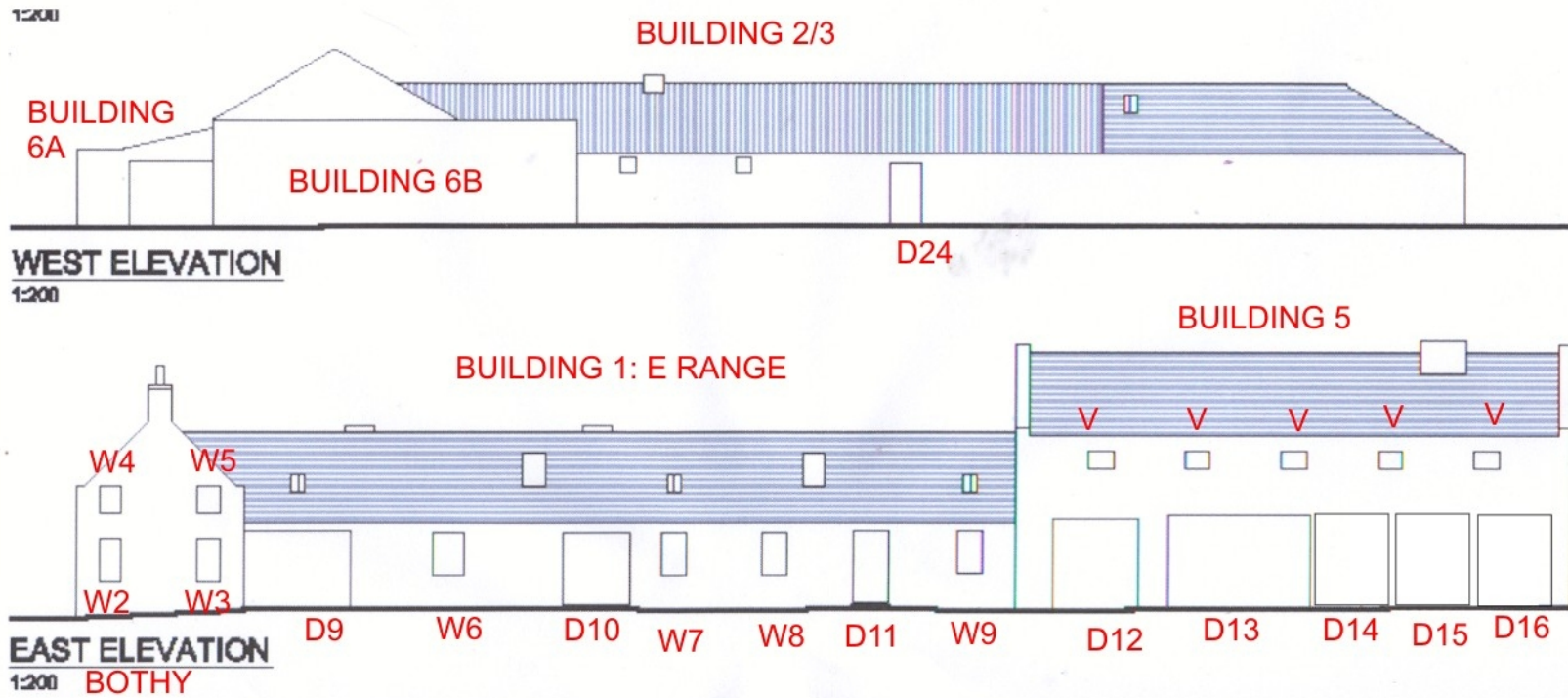




Illus 21 Key to photographs



Illus 22 N and S elevations (Annotated from drawing by John Wink Design).



Illus 23 E and W elevations (Annotated from drawing by John Wink Design).