

HILLHEAD FARM STEADING
BIELDSIDE
ABERDEEN



Standing Building Survey

Carried out February 6th-7th 2014

by

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2014-15

by

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- Standing Building Survey -

1. Background

1.1 A standing building survey was required for the steading buildings at Hillhead Farm, Bielside, Aberdeen, prior to their demolition for development of the site.

1.2 The archaeological condition (Condition No 4) 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: P131301

1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was required to outline an approved programme of archaeological work.

Following discussion with Judith Stones, Lead Curator, Local History and Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council, it was decided that a Level 2 Standing Building Survey would be appropriate. A Level 2 survey requires: 'a fully analytical record which will include detailed photographs of decorative and structural elements with a detailed written description and account of the building's origins, development and use with the evidence on which this has been based. Readily available historic documents will be examined and measured drawings will be made of relevant sections, elevations and key architectural features'.

1.4 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned to undertake the work by William Cowie, Chartered Architect on behalf of his clients Mr and Mrs Welo. The site element of the survey was completed on the 6th and 7th February 2014.

2. Desk-top survey

2.1 A search was carried out in the Sites and Monuments Record, Archaeology Service, Aberdeen City Council and in the Sites and Monuments Records of the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland (RCAHMS) through Canmore and Pastmap.

2.2 The 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey maps were consulted.

2.3 Site plans of the site were based on the OS outline map and all details of the plans and elevations surveyed on site by MAS Ltd.

3. The Site

3.1 The site lies on the E side of a private road which runs N from the A93 North Deeside Road just to the W of Bielside.

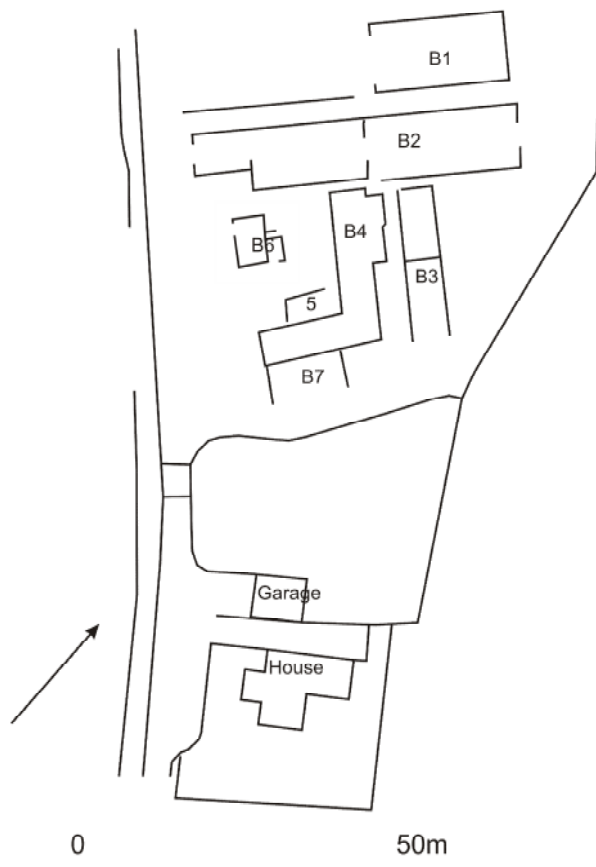
Parish: Peterculter

GPS: 386900, 802900 (centre of steading complex)

RCAHMS No: NJ80SE185



Illus 1 The site, general view looking N from the road



Illus 2 Overall site plan (Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital map data, © Crown Copyright, All rights reserved. 2014. License No 100041040)

4. Documentary evidence

4.1 The 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25” map, surveyed in 1865 (published 1869. Aberdeen Sheet lxxxv.4) shows the Improved steading, part of which survives. The N range with the mill at the E end forms the N side of a roughly square yard. An unroofed enclosure or building forms the E side and a rectangular range forms the W side, with unroofed areas appended to its N and S ends. The mill pond and sluice are shown to the NE of the buildings.

4.2 By the 2nd edition 25”/mile Ordnance Survey of 1899 (published 1901. Aberdeenshire Sheet 085.04) the mill and N range survive, although an extension to the W gable extends to the W range. An outshot has been added to the N wall of the N range. The W range has been extended to the N, removing the unroofed structure

shown in 1865 at this point. A new E range has been built, with an E outshot at its S end. Two small freestanding buildings lie at some distance to the N of the steading.

4.3 The freestanding farmhouse to the E of the steading, which is not shown on the 1899 map appears to date to the 1st half of the 20th century as it is shown on 1:25000 1957 map (NJ80).

5 Methodology

- 5.1 The ground plans 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.
- 5.2 The areas recorded were photographed. The full set of photographs will be supplied on CD for the archive and annotated plans in the present report (Illus 36, 37) indicate the position of each.

6 The Buildings

6.1 *The House*

The farmhouse was photographed externally but was not part of the present survey. It appears to date to the 1st half of the 20th century but has clearly had more recent additions.



Illus 3 Freestanding farmhouse to E of stading.

6.2 *The Steading*

The steading comprises 10 structures ranging in date from mid 19th century to very recent. A number of areas were in hazardous condition, limiting access; in these areas laser measurements were taken and only limited photography was possible.

BUILDING 1



Illus 4 Steading detail showing position of Building 1



Illus 5 Building 1 from S

Dimensions Width ext: 9.25m Length ext: 18m

Walls Very recently re-clad with box-section tin sheeting onto existing steel framework.

Roof Corrugated asbestos on steel frame, roof not replaced when walls re-clad.

Doors and windows

S wall

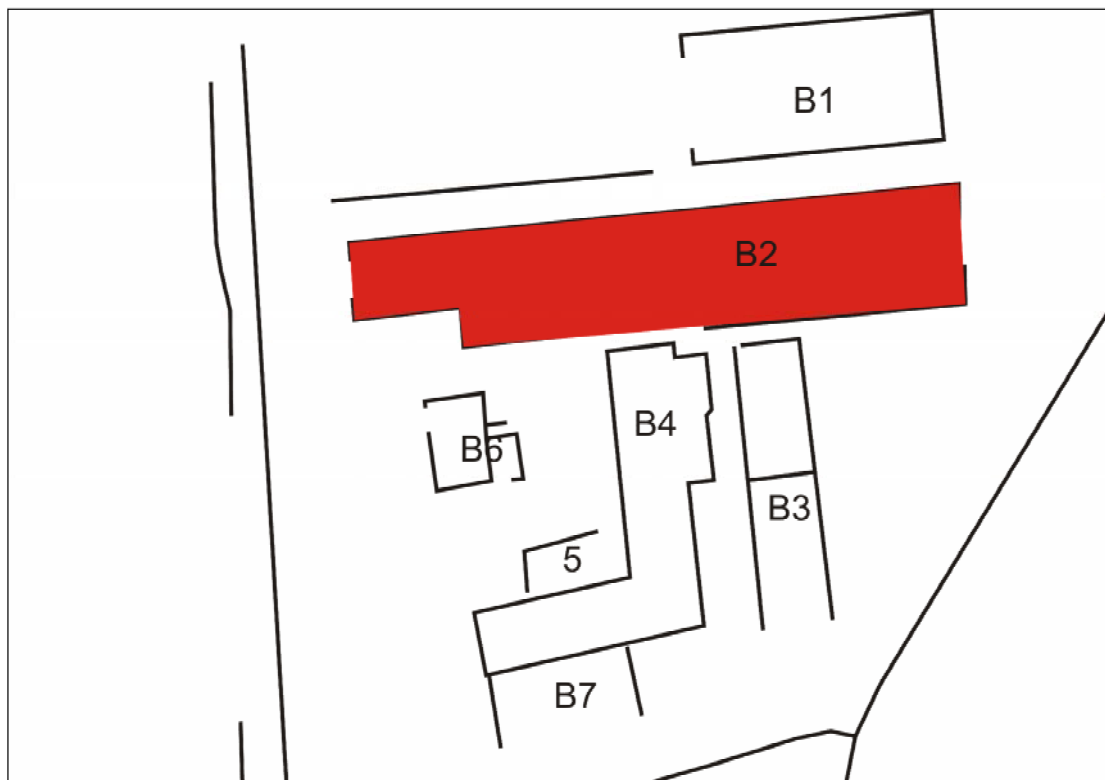
D1 W: 4m .

D2 W: 1m

Function Machinery shed.

BUILDING 2 (ILLUS 11)

Building 2 was a composite structure, incorporating part of the 19th century W range for the external walls at S end and part of the W external wall. The E wall had been rebuilt in concrete blockwork, widening and lengthening the original plan. Internally, apart from the S end (2A), the building had been concrete rendered and no internal early details remained. The building is discussed in 3 parts (2A-2C).



Illus 6 Steading detail showing position of Building 2

2A

Dimensions Width: 5.4m ext Length : 7.5m ext

Walls S, E and W walls of rubble stone construction, 500mm thick. The N wall has been removed when building re-structured.

Roof Slate over A-frame timber roof.

Interior F4 marks position of a former partition with a projecting stone in the W wall. N of this line 2A has sawn off timber joists of a loft floor.

2B

Dimensions Width: 8m ext L: 15.7m ext.

Walls W wall of rubble stone construction, 500mm thick. Remaining walls of concrete block construction with external harling.

Roof Corrugated iron over metal frame.

Interior Feed trough with feed pass beside E wall, access from D7.

2C

Dimensions Width: 8m ext. L: 20.4m ext.

Walls Part of W wall probably of rubble stone construction as it was 500mm thick; harling obscured wall face but examination by a pipe ventilator appeared to

show stone. Remainder of W wall (from F4) was only 350mm thick and appeared to be concrete block construction. Remaining walls of concrete block construction with external harling.

Roof Corrugated asbestos over metal frame. External buttresses along walls supported roof couples.

Interior Feed trough with feed pass beside E wall, access from D4.

Doors and windows

S wall

D1 W: 2.62m H: 2.64m. Steel lintel. Roughly dressed granite rybats suggest an original cart entry.



Illus 7 B2 S wall of 2A – part of 19th century W range.

W wall

D2 W: 1.17m H: 1.94m. May be original but brick and cement obscure rybats.

F1 Vertical line showing two different rubble wall constructions; this seemed to be an original phase of extension as there was no indication of a blocked doorway.



Illus 8 Building 2 W wall, feature F1

F2 This marks the end of 2B with a difference in ridge height and roofing material.

F3 Hatch with sliding metal cover. W: 1.20m H: 1.05m. Base 0.95m above ground level. Possibly ventilation.

F4 Point at which wall thickness changes from 500mm (stone) to 350mm (concrete blocks).

N wall

D3 W: 3.13m H: 2.32m. Double metal sliding doors.

E wall

D4 W: 1.08m H: 2.00m. Wooden door giving access to feed pass.

D7 W: 1.2m H: 1.89m. Sliding metal door.

D8 W: 0.80m

F5 Blocked door, converted into window W: 1.05m int, 0.60m ext. H: 0.91m with wooden shutter on inside. As a door this originally appears to have opened into a small concrete walled pen 1.65 x 3m, H: 1.2m abutting the building (with no other access). Possibly a pig pen/ dog run or similar.

D5 W: 3.10m H: 2.30m

D6 W: 2.78m. H: to roof.

Function

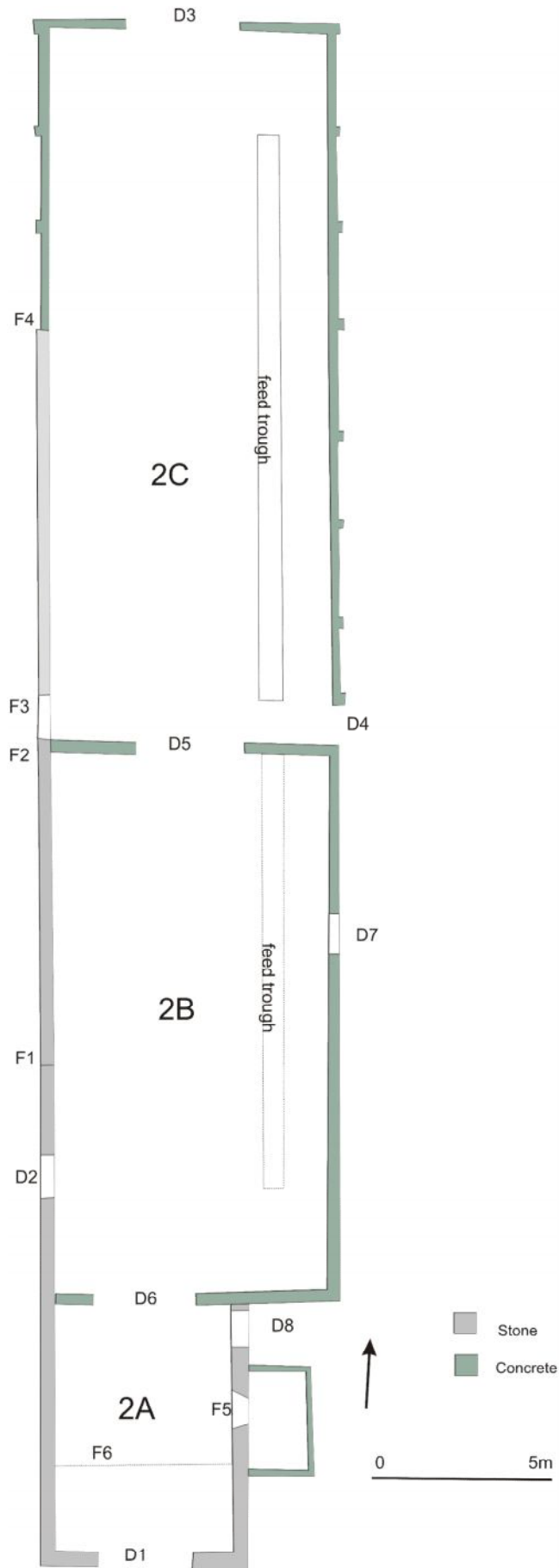
2B and 2C have most recently been used as cattle accommodation. The lack of original internal details makes interpretation of the original W range impossible.



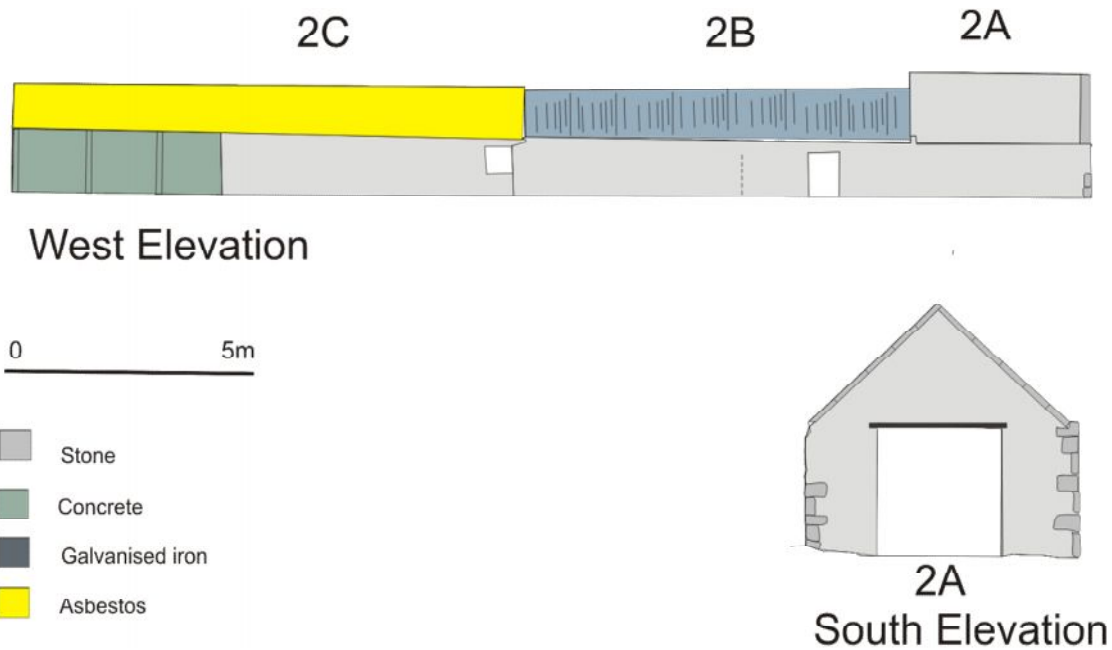
Illus 9 B2 Looking S along W wall. Ranging rod marks point where wall changes thickness (F4)
The differences in roof height and material are visible.



Illus 10 Interior of 2B looking S to 2A



Illus 11 Building 2. Detailed plan



Illus 12 Building 2. S and W elevations

BUILDING 3

Building 3 was almost completely collapsed. Only the concrete floor and parts of low concrete block walls remained in situ. The roof of the E end had gone and the roof of the W end was a tangle of corrugated iron.

Dimensions Width ext: 4.9m Length ext: 20.2m

Walls Concrete blocks

Roof Curved corrugated iron arc.



Illus 13 Steading detail showing position of Building 3



Illus 14 Building 3 looking W

BUILDING 4 (ILLUS 21)

Building 4 is the original N range which comprised the original farmhouse (4A) and the attached mill building (4B), and the original E range (4C). A number of other structures had been built abutting it and are discussed separately (5, B7, B8, B9, B10). When the freestanding farmhouse was built to the E of the steading, it is clear that the original farmhouse was gutted and turned into livestock accommodation. The building is discussed in three parts (4A, 4B, 4C).



Illus 15 S facade of 4A- the original farmhouse



Illus 16 Steading detail showing position of Building 4

4A – The original farmhouse

Dimensions Width 3.74m int. at E end narrowing to 3.85m int. at W end Length int.: 11.2m

Walls Rubble stone construction 500-600mm thick. External surfaces harled in part. Granite rybats are visible at W end.

Roof Slated roof over A-framed couples. The skews are of dressed granite. Squared chimney of dressed granite at E end. Chimney at W end has been reduced and blocked. Two dormer windows in S facing slope of roof.

Doors and windows

S wall

D1 W:3.7m, splaying internally to 3.88m H: 2.65m. Concrete knock-through with concrete lintel and metal sliding double doors.

D5 W:1.10m H: 1.75m. Only visible internally. Rubble stone rybats and wooden internal lintel. Stone blocked.

D6 W: 0.77m H: Only 1.10m visible because of plaster on internal wall face. Not visible externally because of harling. Stone blocked.

W1 W:1.60m H: 1.29m Knock through enlargement of original window. Concrete and brick surround.

Dormers Two dormers in S facing angle of roof. Wood framed and slated. Metal roof light between them. Not measured.

E wall

F1 Fireplace at ground level. W:1.2m. H: 1.1m. Stone blocked.

Fireplace at attic level, Secondary inset with brick arched fireplace and brick lining. Int. width :0.70m. Int H: 0.90m



Illus 17 4A. Interior view of E wall with blocked ground level fireplace and brick fireplace at attic level

W wall

D3 W: 1.22m H: 2.02m. Sides of brick and concrete blocks. This was either a break-through when house converted for livestock or widened at that time, possibly from an internal door leading to extension to W end of the building shown on 1899 OS map.

Traces of blocked arched brick fireplace at attic level. No obvious fireplace at ground level.



Illus 18 4A internal view of W wall showing blocked fireplace at attic level. Note at RHS the original, lower roof pitch.

N wall

D4 W: 0.92m H:1.80m. Rubble rybats, some brick repairs. Wooden plank door.

Blocked with wood. Gave internal access to Buildings B9 and B10.

W3 W: 0.80m with internal splay. H: 0.82m. Rubble stone blocked.

W4 W: 0.78m int. splaying from 0.45m ext. H: 0.95m. Internal; wooden lintel and frame. Rubble rybats. Wood blocking.

W5 W: 1.07m int. H: 1.19m. Blocked externally with brick. A cattle drinker had been built into the window sill after conversion of the building for livestock.



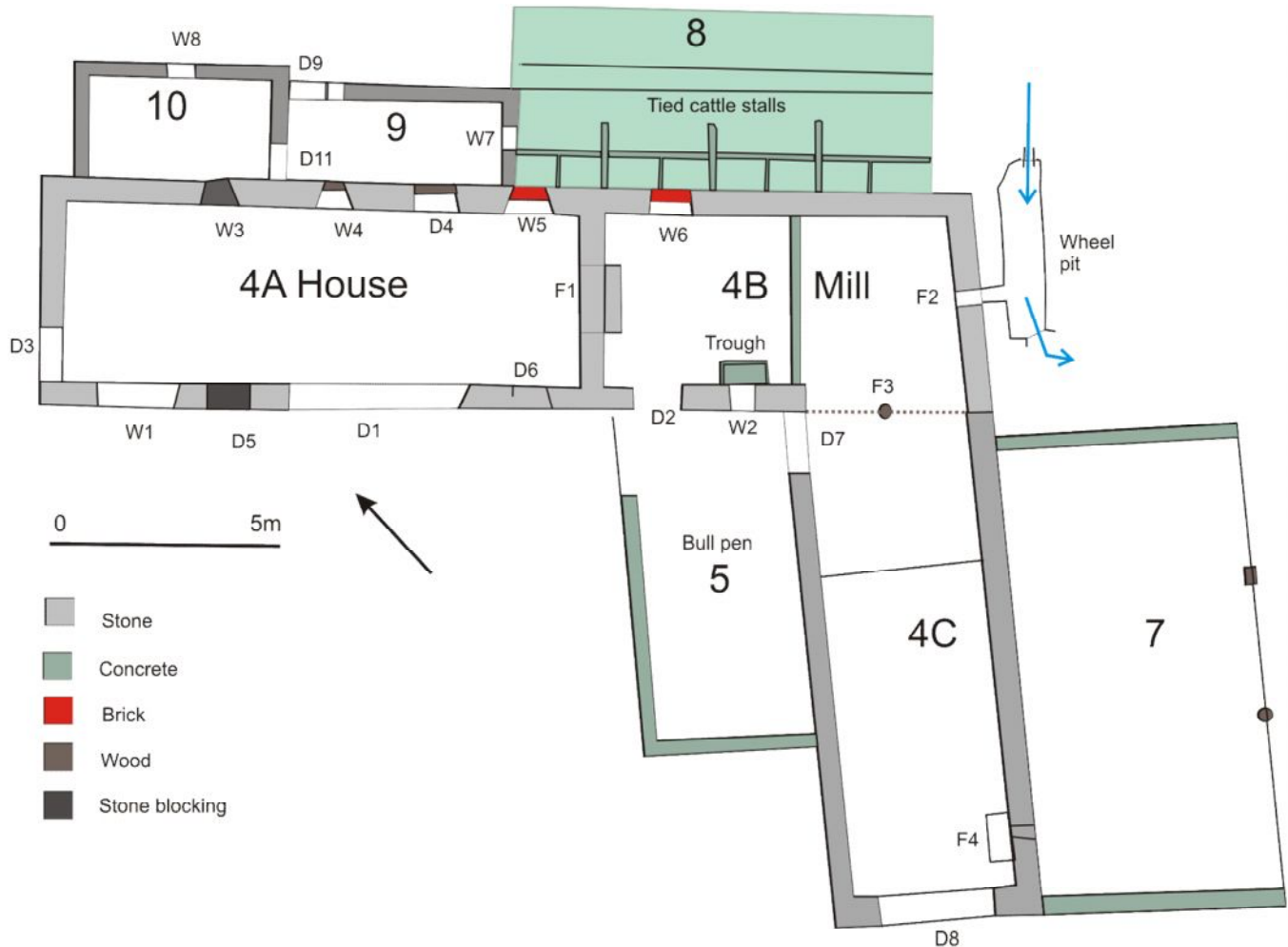
Illus 19 4A: window W5 with cattle drinker inserted into sill.

Interior

The interior had been stripped out when the house was converted for livestock but a raggle and the level of surviving plaster showed the position of the former attic floor. A building line in the W gable (Illus 18) shows that the roof was originally lower. It would appear that it was raised, probably at the same time as the dormers were inserted and the secondary brick fireplaces built.



Illus 20 4A: Interior view looking E, showing back (N) wall).



Illus 21 Plan of B4 and attached structures

4B – The Mill

The original mill was in very unsafe condition so internal details of E end were not available. The interior had been divided into two roughly equal parts with a concrete block wall. The S wall of the E end had been removed leaving a timber post propping up the loft floor and wooden loft partition between the mill and building 4C.

Dimensions Width 3.7m int. Length int.: 7.5-7.7m, with slight splay of SE corner.

Walls Rubble stone construction 500-600mm thick. Granite rybats are visible at E end. Appears possibly to abutt the house (4A).

Roof Slated roof over A-framed couples. The skews are of dressed granite.



Illus 22 E end of mill (4B), looking N from 4C

Doors and windows

S wall

D2 W:1.0m H: 1.85m. Granite lintel also forms sill of grain loft door above.

Loft door. W: 1.1m. H: top dormered into roof. Dressed granite rybats.

W2 W: 0.52m H: 580m slopes down to concrete trough internally.



Illus 23 S wall of mill. Door D2 and loft door above

N wall

W6 W: 0.95m. H: 1.05m. Wooden internal lintel. Externally brick blocked.

E wall

F2 Hole for wheel shaft visible on external face. (Illus 24, 25)

Window above wheel W: 0.90m. H: 1m. Granite sill, lintel and rybats.

No trace of wheel but there was a partly infilled wheel pit with stone lining. Water ingress from N (where mill pond was- now filled in) and outlet to S/SE.

Interior

No details possible of E end. The W end had been converted to a bull shed with external yard (B5) and handling gates.



Illus 24 E gable of mill (4B) with wheel shaft hole (F2) in centre of base of wall.



Illus 25 Detail of mill wheel pit and wheel shaft hole (F2)

4C- E range

Dimensions Width: 3.4 – 3.47m int. Length int.: c 11.5m to partition between 4B and 4C.

Walls Rubble stone construction 500-600mm thick. Granite rybats and skewes are visible at S end. Abutts the mill (4B)

Roof Corrugated tin over A-frame with sarking.

Doors and windows

S wall

D8 W: 2.17m H: 2.30m. Granite lintel and rybats. Metal sliding door.

W wall

D7 W:1.19m H: 1.90m

E wall

F4 Brick-lined hole 0.55 x 0.70m and 0.48m deep in floor by E wall for hopper or auger through wall to building B7 where there was a grain dryer (?).

Interior

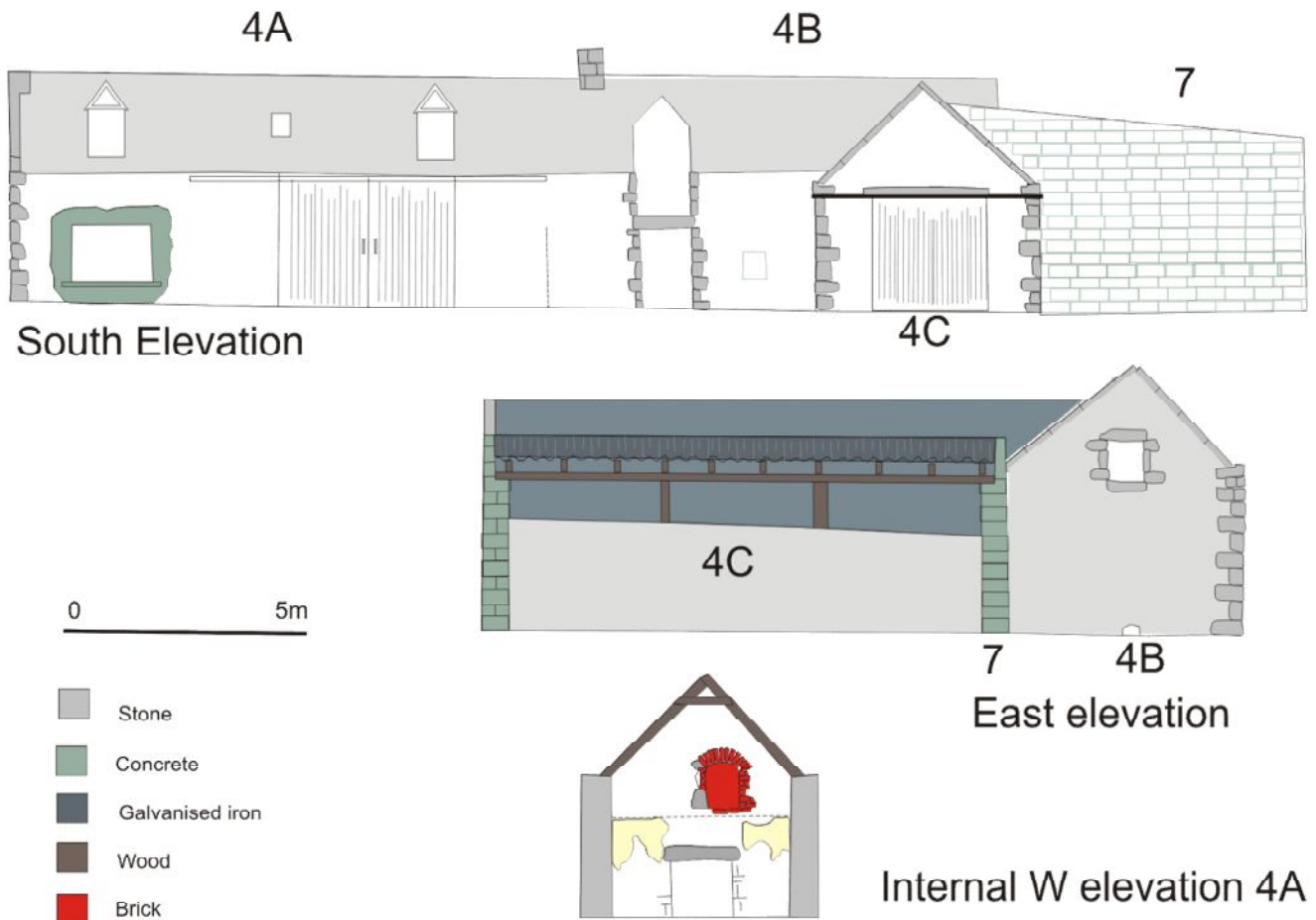
Traces of a partition. Stubs of joists at S end suggest there was a loft here.



Illus 26 4C: S gable, with S wall of B7 abutting it.



Illus 27 4C: Interior looking S.

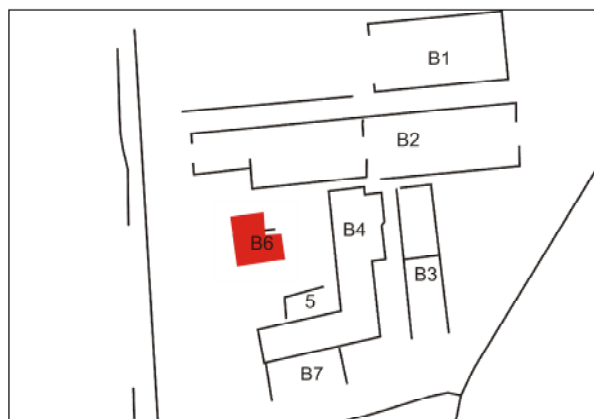


Illus 28 Elevations of B4

BUILDING 5 (ILLUS 21)

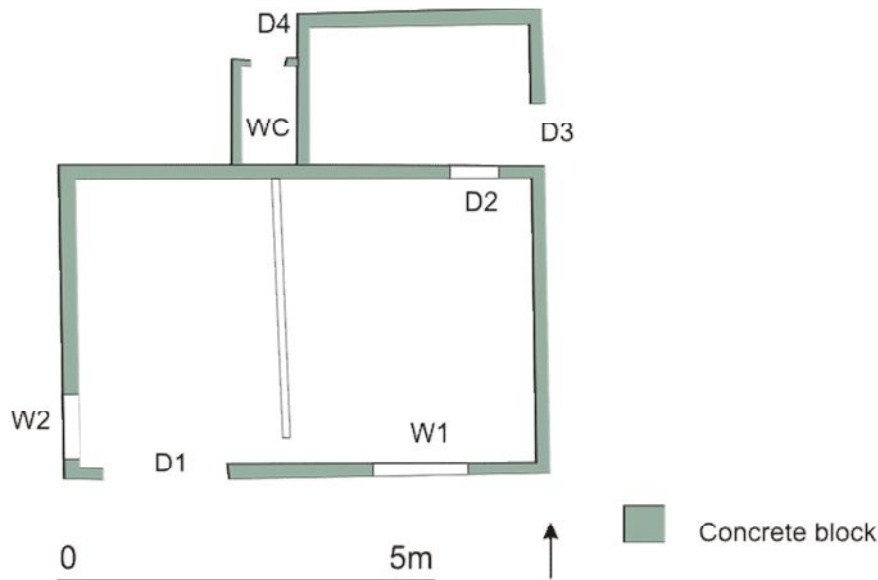
Building 5 was in fact only an unroofed yard for the bull, with access into the converted W end of the mill building 4B.

BUILDING 6 (ILLUS 30)



Illus 29 Steading detail showing position of Building 6

Building 6 was a small fairly modern building freestanding in the centre of the yard. At the time of the survey it was being used as a workshop. An outshot attached to the N wall was locked. Adjacent to it and also abutting the N wall was a lean-to toilet,



Illus 30 Plan of B6

Dimensions Main area : Width ext: 4.3m Length ext: 6.75m

Main outshot: 2.08 x 3.08m

Toilet: 1.4 x 1.05m

Walls Concrete block construction with external harling.

Roof Corrugated asbestos

Doors and windows

S wall

D1 W: 1.55m. H:1.98m with sliding metal door.

W1 W: 1.22m H: 1.08m

W wall

W2 W: 0.95m H: 1.07m

N wall

D2 W: 0.80m H: 1.9m

Outshot

D3 W:0.9m



Illus 31 B6 N wall with outshots

BUILDING 7 (ILLUS 21)

Building 7 was a modern lean-to attached to the E wall of building 4C. For plan see Illus 21 & 28.

Dimensions Width: 5.8m Length: 10.6m

Walls The W side was formed by the E wall of 4C, the N and S walls were of concrete block construction. The E side was open with the roof supported by a wooden pole and a squared timber.

Roof Lean-to roof of corrugated iron on timber framework.



Illus 32 Building 7 looking W

BUILDING 8 (ILLUS 21)

Building 8 was the footprint of a building which had been a lean-to attached to the N wall of building 4B. For plan see Illus 21 & 28.

Dimensions Width ext: 3.8m Length ext: 8.95m

Walls N wall of concrete blocks – only foundation survives. S wall formed by wall of mill (4B).

Roof Not remaining

Interior Four double tied cow stalls with concrete trevices and concrete troughs stood along N side. Cow tie bars remained. Dung channel in concrete floor.



Illus 33 Building 8 showing cow stalls.

BUILDING 9 (ILLUS 21)

Building 9 was a building which had been a lean-to attached to the N wall of building 4A. It is not shown on 1865 OS map but is shown on the 1899 map. For plan see Illus 21 & 28. It was unsafe to enter.

Dimensions Width ext: 2m Length ext: 5.05m.

Walls Stone wall 300mm thick.

Roof Lean-to with slate roof. 1 glass roof light.

Doors and windows

E wall

W7 W: 0.72m H: 0.94m. Stone rybats

N wall

D9 W: 0.92m H: 1.75m. with window directly to E: W:0.73m H: 0.87m

Interior

D11 gave access to building B10 but could not be measured.

BUILDING 10 (ILLUS 21)

Building 10 was a building which had been a lean-to attached to the N wall of building 4A. It is not shown on 1865 OS map but is shown on the 1899 map. For plan see Illus 21 & 28. It was unsafe to enter.

Dimensions Width ext: 2.4m Length ext: 4.6m

Walls Stone

Roof Corrugated asbestos

Doors and windows

N wall

W8 W: 0.62 H: 0.76m



Illus 34 Buildings B9 and B 10 looking SW

6 Discussion

Hillhead is a fairly typical Aberdeenshire improvement steading, probably dating from c. 1800- 1850 with development throughout the 19th century (RCAHMS 2007, 208. Glendinning and Wade Martins 2008, 119-120).



Illus 35 Interpretation of original features built by 1865 (red) and secondary features built by 1899 (green)

By 1865 the mill (4B) and house (4C) were built and although much altered these remain. The N range (2), also built by 1865, only partially remains, having been widened and much extended in the 20th century. Changes in the E wall structure

suggest it may have been built in stages. No traces of its original function remain but it is likely to have been for cattle.

The E range (4C) was built between 1865 and 1899 and remains but without any internal detail. The lack of blocked windows or ventilation suggests this may have been for storage, and possibly a cart at S end, rather than livestock.

Outshots B9 and B10 were also built between 1865 and 1899; both were lean-tos against the back wall of the house (4A) and presumably gave extra accommodation, possibly a pantry/milk room as they were on the cool N side of the building.

At some point the house was further enlarged by raising the roof and adding dormer windows and upstairs fireplaces. This must have preceded the building of the freestanding farmhouse in the S by the mid 20th century,

Latterly the house and mill had been used as livestock accommodation.

8. References

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

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

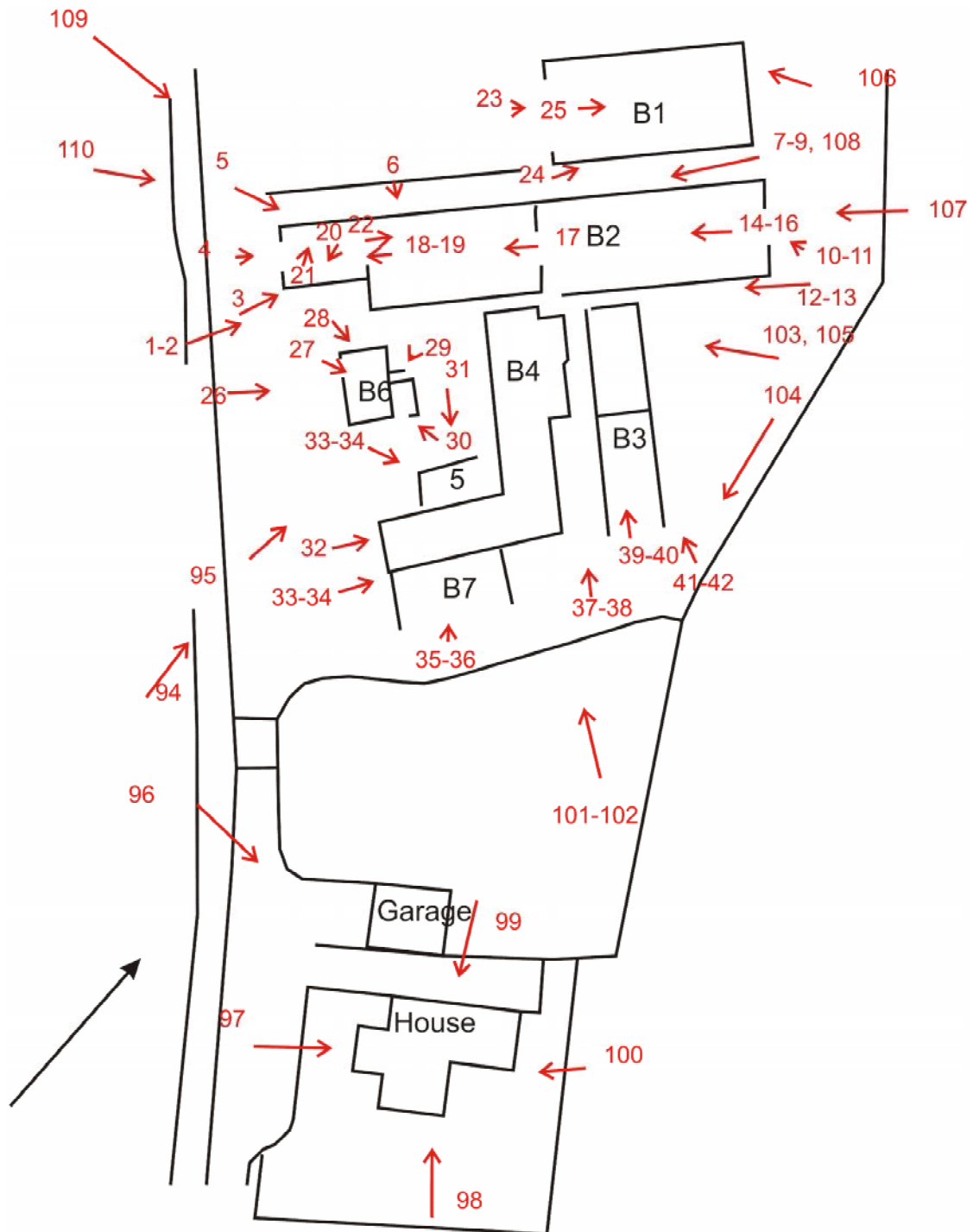
9 Archive

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

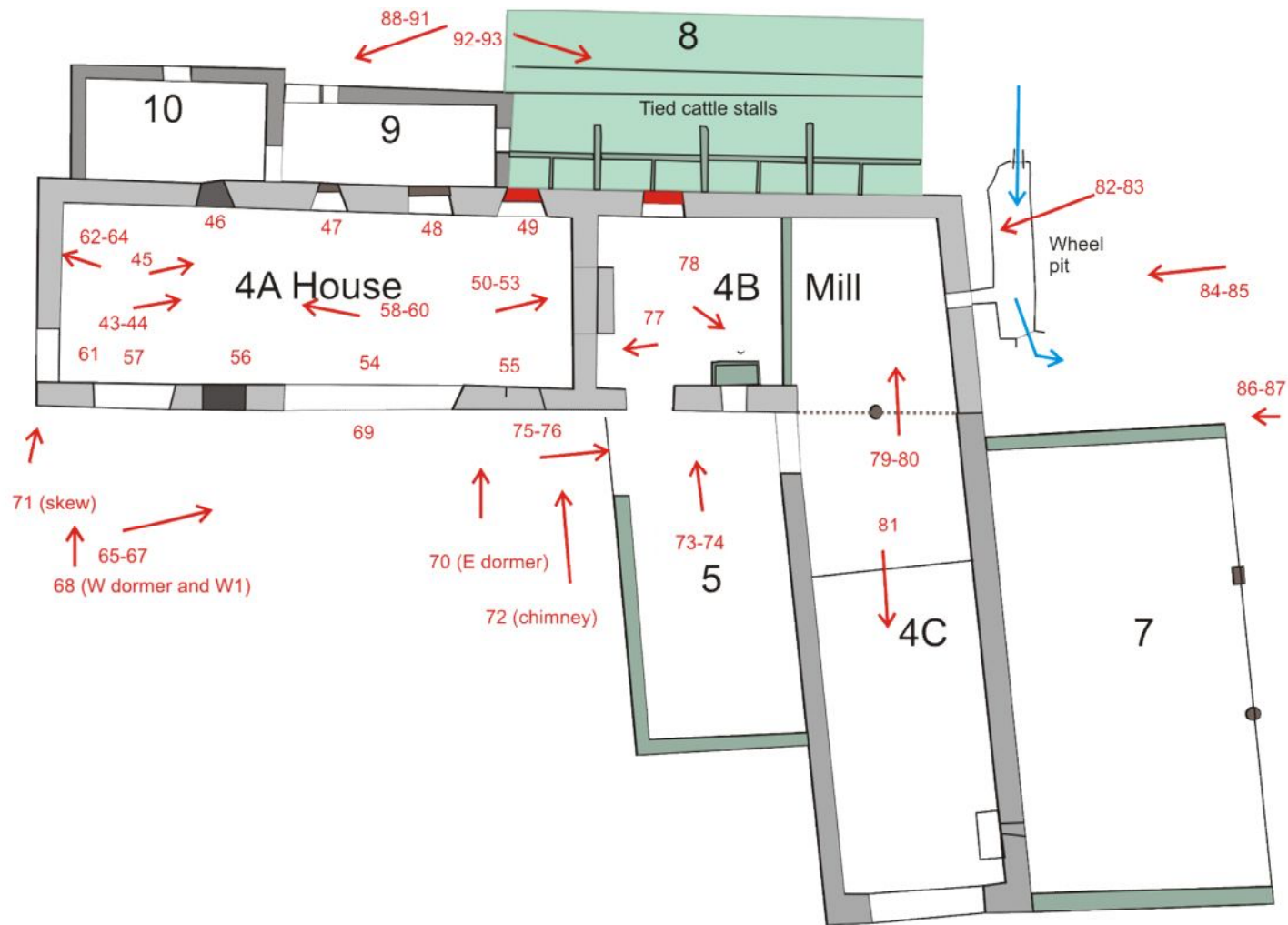
Appendix 1: Photographic archive

Digital photographs 1-42 and 94-110. External and general: See Illus36

Digital photographs 43-93 Internal and details B4 and related buildings. See Illus37



Illus 36 Digital photographs 1-42 and 94-110



Illus 37 Digital photographs 43-93