

# **Bank House, 142 Barnston Road Barnston, Heswall**

Level 2 Historic Building Record

Project Code: A0012

Report no. 0010





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Date: 12/04/2013

Client: Alison Cearn's (Owner)

Written by: Richard Cooke BA MA MIfA



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## ***Acknowledgements***

Recognition and thanks is given to Greg Dawson, a local historian and enthusiast, who helped provide valuable information and leads regarding the origins of the building. The staff of the Wirral Record Office are also acknowledged for their help in finding archival documents.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Aeon Archaeology was commissioned by Alison Cearn (owner) to undertake a historic building record at Bank House, 142 Barnston Road, Barnston, Heswall, Wirral, CH61 1BY in advance of demolition (figure 1). The building is located at NGR SJ 28046 83338 within the village of Barnston, located approximately 1.2km northeast of Heswall. The proposals are to demolish the rear part of the building extension and to rebuild upon approximately the same footprint.

The archaeological mitigation is being completed as a planning condition (Planning Reference: **APP/12/00989**).

## **2.0 SPECIFICATION AND PROJECT DESIGN**

A mitigation brief for this project was not prepared by the Conservation Officer (Matthew Crook) of the Wirral Borough Council, but he requested that a historic building record commensurate with English Heritage's '*Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice*' (2006) level 2 record be taken in advance of demolition.

In conforming to a level 2 record, both the exterior and the interior of the property (extension) was viewed, described and photographed. The report presents conclusions regarding the building's development and use, but does not discuss in detail the evidence on which these conclusions are based.

The detailed photographic record consisted of English Heritage's '*Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice*' (2006) elements:

written account 1-4;  
drawings 2, 7, 8;  
photographs 1-9.

## **3.0 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

The significance, origins and development of the site are discussed with reference to the available historical sources. A photographic record was made using a Canon DSLR 550D camera set to maximum resolution. The location and direction of photographs are shown on figure 6.

Existing architects' plans were utilised for the purpose of locating and orientating photographs, and all features, details, room spaces, and elevations were photographed and described to illustrate the setting, appearance, and structure of the building. Photographic images were labeled with the subject, orientation and the date taken, and cross-referenced to a digital file.

A limited desk-top study, involving a visit to the Wirral Record Office was required to access archival records of the building.



## **4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RECORD**

### **4.1 Historical background of the Wirral**

Some of the earliest settlement patterns in the Wirral landscape are visible as dispersed farmsteads, vernacular cottages and ribbon settlement development. These are present in rural areas, but have also become surrounded by later urban development. A number of small village settlements have origins in the medieval period - these include Upton, Bidston, West Kirby, Greasby, Woodchurch, Poulton, Moreton and Bromborough.

The commercial cores in the district were formed in the late post-medieval period (c.1700 to 1851). The distribution of surviving examples indicates that they developed as part of historic settlements along early transport routes and at river crossing points, such as at Birkenhead. Although a small settlement had been established here in the medieval period, it was not until the mid 19th century that a definite historic core was formed. Further later post-medieval villages include the ferry crossing sites at Rock Ferry and New Ferry. Further early modern settlements include the seaside towns of New Brighton and Hoylake.

The industrial revolution generated unprecedented urban growth – significant survival from this period remains in Birkenhead, Tranmere and New Brighton. The majority of housing in this band dates to pre-1900, with notable concentrations in New Brighton, Wallasey and central Birkenhead. Much of this in the form of relatively affluent suburbs comprising villa, detached and semi-detached housing located towards the north-western, central (around Birkenhead Park) and southern-most parts of the of the Peninsula. Victorian working class gridiron terraced housing is found in the central part of Birkenhead, and larger middle-class semi-detached and terraced housing is located towards the south. Further affluent Victorian detached, villa and large semi-detached housing is found along the northern coast of the Wirral, particularly in West Kirby and Hoylake. Early 20th century gridiron terraced housing, representing westwards growth and expansion of Birkenhead Town, can be found in the north-central (Wallasey and Liscard), central (Birkenhead) and south-central (Tranmere) parts of the Wirral Peninsula (Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project, 2011).

### **4.2 Historical background of Barnston village**

The earliest finds in the township of Barnston are a Neolithic axe found in Barnston Dale, a Bronze Age flint scraper found to the west of the village, and three Romano-British coins found at different locations in Barston Dale. There are several Post-Medieval farms and cottages extant in the township, including Manor Farm (1849), Border Farm (possibly 1860), Lower Farm (17<sup>th</sup> century), Laburnum Cottage (18<sup>th</sup> century), and Ivy Cottage (18<sup>th</sup> century).

In the Domesday book *Bernestone* appears as part of the possessions of William Fitz-Nigel, the second baron of Halton, by whom the manor was divided. One moiety was held by a local family who assumed the local name of Bernston. In the reign of Edward II the connection between the Bernston family and the village ceased, and their portion of the manor became the property of a junior branch of the Bennett family of Willaston, one of whom later sold their share of the manor to Gerard Macklin Esq who was the State Surgeon of Ireland at the time. The other moiety descended with Raby and other estates, through the Hulses and the Troutbeck families, to the Earl of Shrewsbury who is the current owner.

The '*Hundred of Wirral*' (1972) describes the surrounding land of the township as 'bleak and desolate and that no traces remain of the old hall, which was mentioned by Bishop Gastrell, as being in a ruinous state in 1724'. In 1801 the population of the village of Barnston is recorded as being 129 people, which decreased in 1831 to 112, but had risen again by 1841 to 206 people, all involved in agricultural processes (Williams Mortimer, 1972).

Bank House is first recorded in the ‘*Alehouses and alehouse-keepers of Cheshire 1628-1828*’ manuscript where it is registered as being an alehouse in 1754, and owned by John Harrison. Interestingly extracts from the Barnston Parish magazine, unfortunately undated, claims that Bank House became an alehouse upon its construction in 1754 and later functioned as the village Post Office. Indeed, the first edition 25” county series Ordnance Survey map of 1875 (figure 3) has ‘pillar letter box’ labelled to the immediate southwest of the property. The Parish magazine also claims that a second village pub stood opposite on the other side of Barnston Road but has since been demolished.

The Barnston Parish tithe map of 1849 (figure 2) depicts Bank House much like it exists today, being rectangular in shape and orientated northeast to southwest, with several ancillary buildings associated with the farm surrounding it. The building appears to have an attached structure to the northwest which is offset slightly to the southeast, and is most likely an outbuilding upon which the later extension was constructed.

**Table 1. The tithe apportionment of 1849**

Plot	Landowner	Tenant	Plot Name	A/R/P
39	Edward Spencer Harrison Esq	Robert Parry	House, buildings and garden	0/2/16

As can be seen from the 1849 tithe apportionment the house, outbuildings and garden was owned by Edward Spencer Harrison Esq, quite possible a descendent of John Harrison the licensee recorded in the alehouse list. He was born c.1809 and married Ann Dudley at Over Parish Church on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1830. He worked as a solicitor and is recorded as having lived in Barnston at Beech House in the electoral roll from 1837 to 1857. He died on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1888 aged 79 and is buried in Barnston cemetery.

The tenant of Bank House in 1849 was Robert Parry. He was born in St. Asaph, Flintshire and is recorded in the 1851 census as being 60 years old and the ‘head’ of the house, along with an agricultural labourer, a housekeeper, and house servant.

By the production of the first edition 25” county series Ordnance Survey map of 1875 (figure 3), Bank House appears very much like it exists today. The house had been extended to the northeast and the current extension which is to be demolished is depicted as having three separate ‘stalls’, which were almost certainly outbuildings or animal pens. When the second and third edition Ordnance Survey maps of 1912 and 1936 respectively (figures 4 and 5) were produced the animal pens had been amalgamated into the main house, and thus the date of conversion can be assumed to be between 1875 and 1912.

### **4.3 General description**

#### **4.3.1 External description**

Bank House (142 Barnston Road) is located at NGR SJ 28046 83338 in the village of Barnston, the Wirral and is set back from Barnston Road on the corner with Storeton Lane. The main house is a two storey building, square in plan with a later two storey extension to the northeast. Attached on to this extension is an additional single storey extension which is to be demolished as part of the planning application.

#### *Main house*

The main house building is square in plan and has a double pitched roof of grey slate with slate ridge-tiles. There is a single brick-built chimney with two ceramic pots straddling both roof pitches over the western gable. The walls of the house are of red brick, plastered and painted white. The principal elevation was traditionally to the southwest and fronting Barnston Road.

The southwest elevation (plate 1) has a modern black pvc gutter running along the length of the wall and lying above a stone corbel table. The elevation originally had five windows, three to the first floor and two the ground floor. These have been replaced with wooden framed casement windows over stone sills. The doorway and principal entrance into the property was originally located in the centre of the southwest elevation, but has since been blocked and turned into a window, also wooden framed. The walls sit upon skirted foundations of brick and mortar which most likely functioned as a bridge gap to prevent damp within a cellar level.

The south-eastern elevation has one single 9 pane wooden framed window at first floor height and situated towards the southwest of the elevation, and an additional 12 pane, wooden framed, double casement window towards the northeast, also at first floor level. A third window is situated at ground floor level and is also a 12 pane, wooden frame, double casement window. All three windows have red tile sills which have been painted black. The skirted cellar footings continue until halfway along the south-eastern elevation before presumably heading northwest beneath the house. This, in addition with a red brick dividing wall observed in the attic, suggests that the building was originally rectangular in shape and orientated northwest to southeast with the principal entrance fronting Barnston Road.

The north-eastern elevation (plate 2) is half obscured by a later two storey extension (see below). The northwest half of the elevation is however visible and has one first floor 12 pane wooden framed window, as well as a single 3 pane window and double casement, both of which have wooden frames. The skirted cellar footings are visible at ground level continuing 3.5m from the northern corner before presumably heading southwest under the house. The skirted footings are of a different, and seemingly later, construction than those seen towards the southwest of the house, and it is possible that these footings represent an early extension north-eastwards.

The northwest elevation (plate 3) has one double wooden framed casement window with a stone sill, as well as a single 2 pane wooden framed window at first floor level. The ground floor has a 30 pane cast-iron framed Coalbrookdale window with black painted stone sill. The window is believed to date to the late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century (pers comm. Alison Cearn).

#### *Two storey extension*

A two storey extension is located on the north-eastern elevation of the main farmhouse building. It has a double pitched grey slate roof with a modern pvc gutter and cast-iron rain hoppers on the southeast and northwest elevations. The walls are constructed from brick, plastered and painted white.

The north-western elevation (plate 2) has one 9 pane and one 6 pane wooden framed windows to the first floor, and a double 12 pane window with wooden frame on the ground floor level. A door of wood panel and painted black-brown is located to the southwest of the window. Above this is a green painted wooden porch with slate roof.

The south-eastern elevation has a double 4 pane wooden framed window at first floor height and a catslide of grey slate to the outer wall of the outbuildings extension (see below). There is a 4 pane wooden frame window at ground floor level as well as a brown painted wooden panel door, with iron letterbox, door knob and key latch, all painted black.

### *Outbuildings extension (to be demolished)*

A single-storey extension located on the north-eastern elevation of the two storey extension (see above). It has a double pitched roof of grey slate with slate ridge-tiles. A red brick chimney stack is situated in the centre of the north-western roof pitch with a single ceramic pot. The roof height steps up 0.5m approximately five metres northeast of the main farmhouse building, presumably corresponding with a rise in the bedrock level.

The south-eastern elevation (plate 4) has one 4 pane wooden framed window and two 18 pane wooden framed windows. The wall has lower courses of sandstone to approximately 1.0m in height, above which the walls are brick built.

The northeast gable (plates 5 and 6) of the extension is entirely brick built and painted white. A single door is located to the east of the centreline and is of black painted wooden board construction with iron fastenings.

The north-western elevation (plates 6 and 7) has a short catslide over a brick built wall, also painted white. There is one 15 pane wooden framed window to the south and a doorway to the north of brown painted wooden board. The ground level steps up approximately 0.5m some 8.0m northeast of the main farmhouse building after which there is a single 2 pane wooden framed window.

### **4.3.2 Internal description of outbuildings extension**

#### *Cloakroom*

A rectangular room (plate 8) orientated from northeast to southwest and measuring 2.5m in length by 1.6m in width. Access is gained via a brown painted wooden boarded door in the southwest elevation and there is a 0.3m high step up which corresponds with the roof height change on the exterior of the building. The southeast elevation is constructed from brick which has been painted white and the north east elevation is plastered and painted white. The northwest elevation is partly constructed from sandstone to a height of approximately 1.0m with the upper part of the wall being constructed from brick. The floor is of red ceramic tiles.

#### *Office 1*

A square room (plate 9 and 10) measuring 3.5m is located within the southern part of the extension. Access is gained via the south-eastern wall by a brown painted wooden boarded door. The walls are brick built on the south-eastern and north-western sides, although as a sandstone wall was observed in the cloakroom, the south-eastern elevation must be constructed from brick butting up against stone. A dominating fire surround is located at the north-eastern side of the room and is constructed from brick which has been painted white. Radiating vousoirs have been constructed over the fireplace and over a doorway located to the northwest of the fire, which permits access to the toilet hallway.

The south-western elevation is of mock post and panel construction and the room has been utilised as an office, with a desk to the northwest, an upright piano against the southwest elevation, and a hanging book case on the southeast elevation. The floor is covered in green carpet throughout.

#### *Office 2*

The second office room (plate 11) is roughly rectangular in shape and is orientated from northeast to southwest, measuring 5.5m by 3.0m. The room is on a higher level than office 1

and is accessed by two steps leading from the first office room. The south-eastern and south-western walls are papered and the floor is covered in green carpet. The north-western elevation is recessed approximately 1.0m and it can be seen that the walls are constructed from sandstone to a height of approximately 1.3m with brick above. The northwest, northeast and southwest walls (plate 12) of the recess are all of sandstone suggesting that it was originally part of an animal stall as depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875 (figure 3).

#### *Storage room*

A rectangular storage room (plate 13) is located at the north-eastern end of the outbuildings extension. It is orientated from northwest to southeast and measures 3.2m by 1.3m. The southwest elevation is of sandstone (plate 14) and clearly marks the north-eastern limit of the animal stall identified in office 2 (see above). The other elevations are all of brick construction and painted white. A boiler and washing machine is located against the northwest wall, and a ceramic rectangular sink is against the northeast gable. The floor is of red tiles.

#### *Toilet*

The toilet is accessed via office 1 and consists of a hallway (plate 15) measuring 2.2m by 1.2m and orientated from southeast to northwest, and a water closet (plate 16) measuring 1.2m square. All of the walls are plastered and painted white, with the addition of a dado rail and green paper on the lower part of the northeast water closet wall. There is a step up from the hallway into the water closet which corresponds with the rise in the ground level visible on the external northwest elevation.

### **5.0 CONCLUSION**

Bank House, 142 Barnston Road is a well preserved example of a mid 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse. The available historic sources claim that it was constructed in 1754 and was registered as an alehouse in the same year, later functioning as the village Post Office. The physical evidence of the cellar footings and the wall in the attic suggests that the building was originally rectangular, orientated from southeast to northwest with the principal elevation towards Barnston Road. The cartographic evidence however can only be traced as far back as the tithe map of 1849 where the house is depicted much as it exists today, as a rectangular structure orientated from southwest to northeast. The tithe map is not entirely reliable but does suggest that between 1754 and 1849 the main house had been extended to form a square building and that the two-storey extension had been constructed on the northeast elevation.

It is clear from the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875 (figure 3) that the single storey extension (that is to be demolished) was originally outbuildings, forming at least three animal stalls and possibly some storage sheds. The physical evidence of the sandstone footings within several of the walls (figure 6) as well as the probable animal stall within *office 2* supports this theory. The second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1912 (figure 4) shows that the outbuildings extension had been amalgamated into the property. This suggests that the current extension was constructed upon some of the footings of the outbuildings between 1875 and 1912.

The demolition of the outbuildings extension provides the opportunity to monitor the building for remains associated with the outbuildings, and potentially with any earlier structure which may have occupied the site. It is therefore recommended that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the demolition and groundwork phases.

## 6.0 SOURCES

### *Primary Sources*

1851 Census of England.

Barnston Parish tithe apportionment of 1849.

Barnston Parish tithe map of 1849.

Electoral Roll of England 1837-1857.

Find a Grave Index.

### *Ordnance Survey maps*

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25 inch map 1875.

Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25 inch map 1912.

Ordnance Survey 3rd edition 25 inch map 1936.

### *Secondary Sources*

Barnston Parish Magazine, undated.

Dawson, G. 2013. *Heswall Magazine*.

English Heritage, 2006. *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice*.

MacGregor, A.J. 1992. *The Alehouses Alehouse-keepers of Cheshire 1629-1828*.

Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project, 2011

Williams Mortimer, W. 1972. *The Hundred of Wirral*.





Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2013



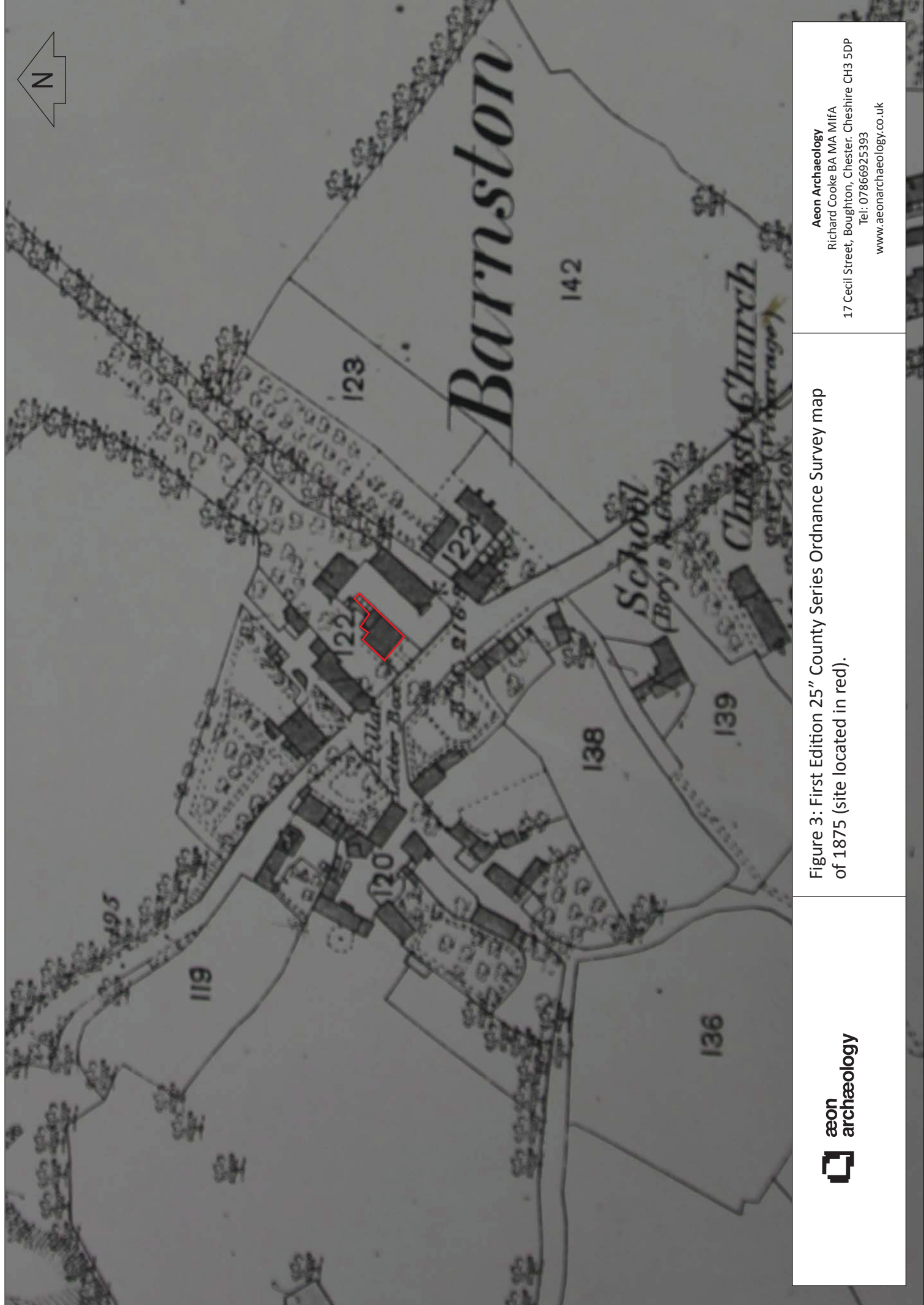
Figure 1: Location of Bank Farmhouse, 142 Barnston Road (site located in red). Scale 1:4,000 at A4.

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Figure 2: Barnston Parish tithe map of 1849 (site located in red).





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Figure 3: First Edition 25" County Series Ordnance Survey map of 1875 (site located in red).

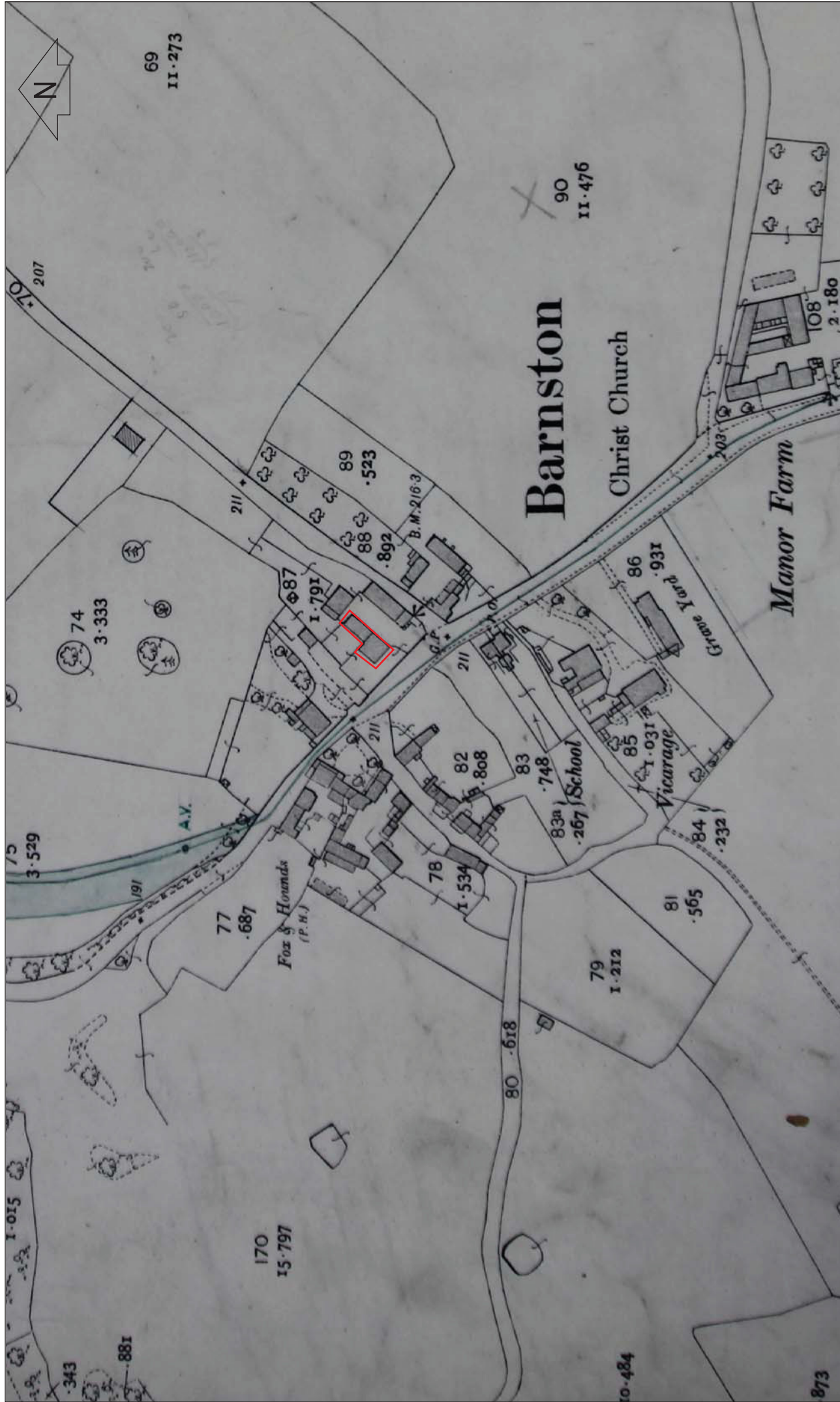


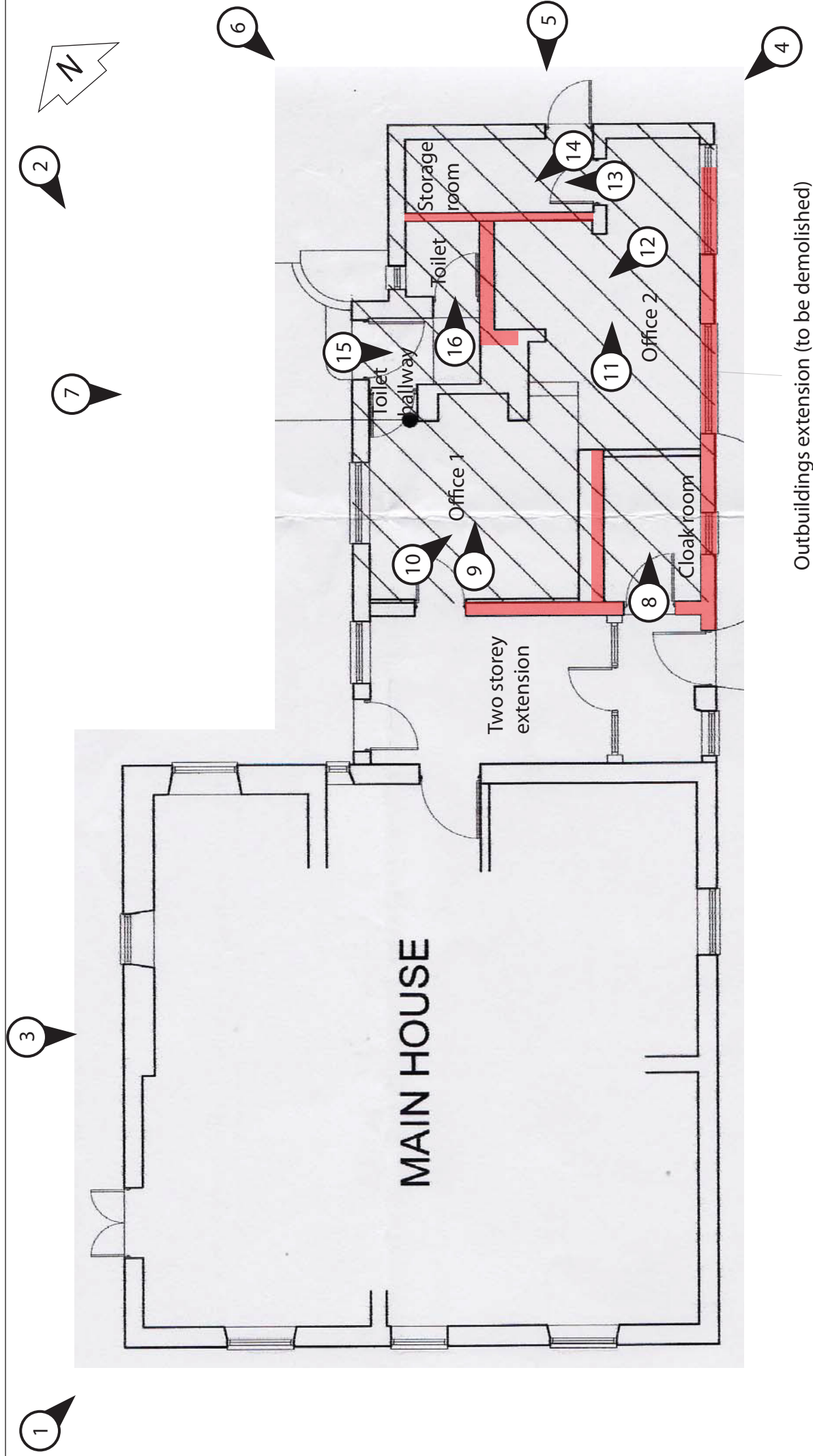
Figure 4: Second Edition 25" County Series Ordnance Survey map of 1912 (site located in red).





Figure 5: Third Edition 25" County Series Ordnance Survey map of 1936 (site located in red).

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Figure 6: Location and direction of photographs (numbered arrows refer to plate numbers) and location of sandstone foundations marking earlier outbuildings (shown in red).





**Plate 01:** Main house showing southwest principal elevation, from the west. Scale 1.0m.



**Plate 02:** Main house northeast elevation showing later extensions, from the north. Scale 1.0m





**Plate 03:** Main house northwest elevation, from the northwest. Scale 1.0m.



**Plate 04:** Outbuildings extension southeast elevation, from the east. Scale 1.0m



**Plate 05:** Outbuildings extension northeast elevation, from the northeast. Scale 1.0m.



**Plate 06:** Outbuildings extension northeast and northwest elevations, from the north. Scale 1.0m





**Plate 07:** Outbuildings extension northwest elevation, from the northwest. Scale 1.0m.



**Plate 08:** Outbuildings extension cloakroom, from the southwest. Scale 1.0m



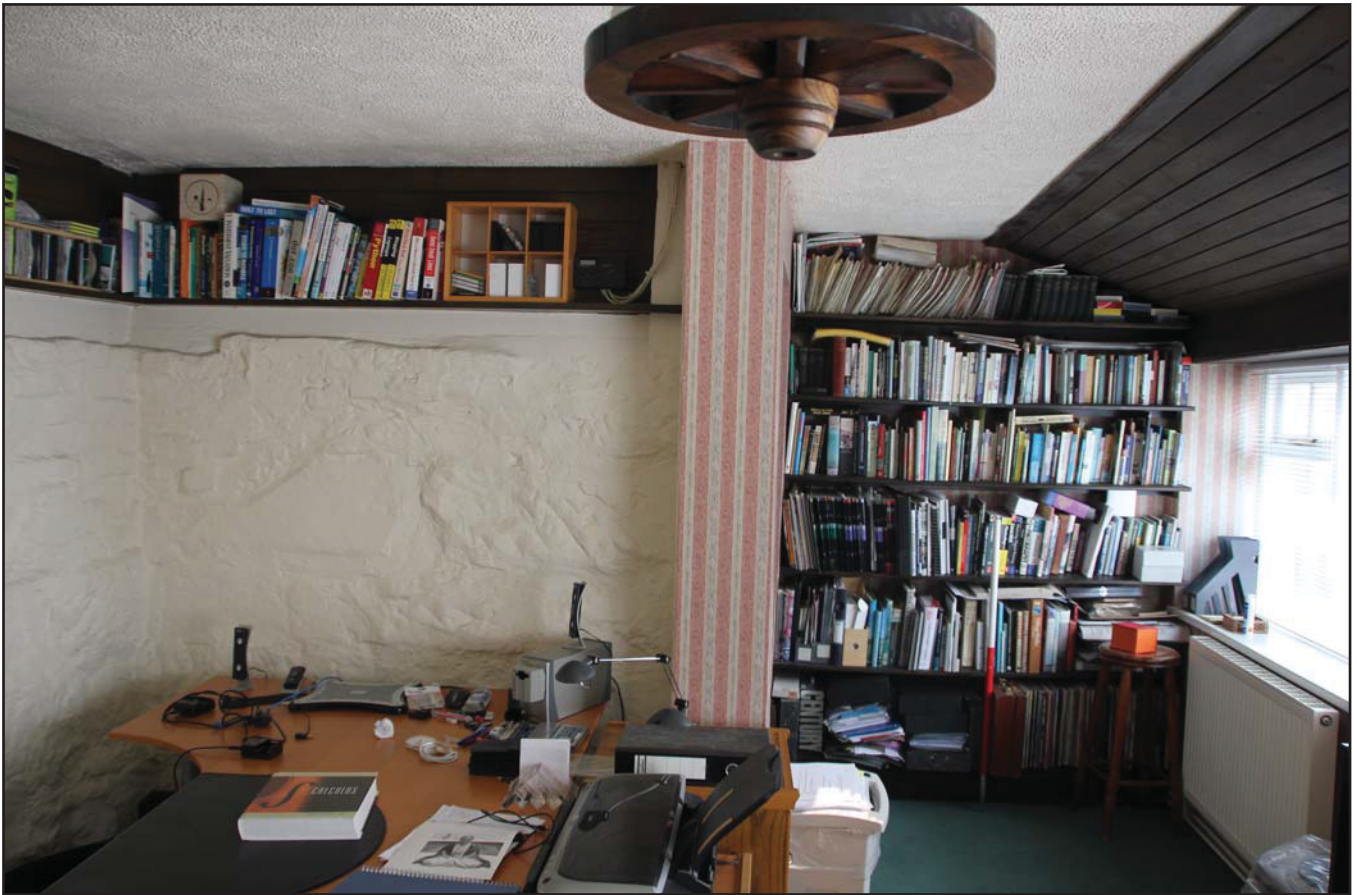


**Plate 09:** Outbuildings extension office 1 showing fireplace, from the southwest. Scale 1.0m.



**Plate 10:** Outbuildings extension office 1, from the west. Scale 1.0m





**Plate 11:** Outbuildings extension office 2 showing northeast stall wall, from the southwest. Scale 1.0m.



**Plate 12:** Outbuildings extension office 2 showing northwest stall wall, from the west. Scale 1.0m





**Plate 13:** Outbuildings extension storage room, from the southeast. Scale 1.0m.



**Plate 14:** Outbuildings extension storage room showing southwest wall construction, from the east. Scale 1.0m



**Plate 15:** Outbuildings extension toilet hallway, from the northwest. Scale 1.0m.



**Plate 16:** Outbuildings extension toilet, from the southwest.  
Scale 1.0m

