

An Archaeological Evaluation and Building Record of Wroxeter Farm, Shropshire

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Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit Project No. 893 March 2002

An Archaeological Evaluation and Building Record of Wroxeter Farm, Shropshire

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1.0 Summary

Between 11 & 15 February 2002, Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit carried out a programme of archaeological recording for English Heritage at Wroxeter Farm, Shropshire, a complex of buildings that stands within the central area of the Roman town of Viroconium Cornoviorum. The overall purpose of the work was to evaluate the archaeological significance of the site, in order to allow informed decisions to be made in formulating a strategy for its future.

The programme of work involved documentary research, an evaluation of the surviving levels of below ground archaeology, including a GPR survey, a measured survey of the ground surfaces, and structural analysis of the standing buildings.

Whilst not conclusive, the GPR survey located a number of possible Roman buildings, including, perhaps, a temple, and suggested that there was certainly potential for further work on the site. A number of re-used pieces of architectural stonework of Roman date, including a carved fragment, were discovered incorporated into the fabric of the farm buildings. The farm buildings themselves were built over the period c.1854-c.1901, and the fabric incorporated evidence for several construction phases, in addition to subsequent alterations associated with change of use.

2.0 Introduction

Between 11 & 15 February 2002, Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit carried out a programme of archaeological recording for English Heritage at Wroxeter Farm Shropshire, a complex of buildings that stands within the central area of the Roman town of *Viroconium Cornoviorum*. The overall purpose of the work was to evaluate the archaeological significance of the site, in order to allow informed decisions to be made in formulating a strategy for its future.

The programme of work involved documentary research, an evaluation of the surviving levels of below ground archaeology, a measured survey of the ground surfaces, and structural analysis of the standing buildings. This project adheres to an English Heritage brief (Fleming 2002), and to a methods statement prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (White 2002).

3.0 Site Location

Wroxeter Farm is situated in Shropshire approximately 5 miles east of Shrewsbury, and 1 mile north of the village of Wroxeter at NGR SJ565088. It occupies a central position within the Roman city of *Viroconium Cornoviorum* immediately south-west of the modern cross roads formed by the B4380 and B4394 (Figure 1).

The buildings of the farm comprise a pair of cottages facing the road (east) with auxiliary structures to the rear, and, to the north, a large conglomeration of

agricultural buildings. To the north-west of these is an isolated shelter shed and associated fold yard (Figure 2).

4.0 Objectives

- 1. To assess the above- and below-ground archaeology on the site through a desk-based assessment of the existing records relating to the specified area.
- 2. To determine the likely level of surviving archaeological deposits in relation to the existing ground level both inside and outside the buildings.
- 3. To assess the potential of investigating the site through geophysical techniques with an aim to determining the survival and extent of buried archaeology.
- 4. To determine the relationship between the site's topography, buildings, and archaeology and those of the adjacent displayed remains of Wroxeter.
- 5. To prepare diagrammatic sectional elevations showing these relationships.
- 6. To devise and execute a method and strategy for recording the fabric of the existing buildings, with a view to determining their phasing and the derivation of the materials used in their construction (and especially those materials which can be determined to have vernacular merit or to be of Roman date and source).
- 7. To place the farm within its social and historical context both within the time frame in which it was built and used, and in the temporal and social context of the Roman city.

5.0 Method

To meet the objectives, a number of strategies were adopted.

- Desk-based assessment of the records and map evidence took place through visits to Shropshire Records and Research in Shrewsbury, contact with the Raby Estate Office, and consultation of a wide range of published and archive material on Wroxeter held by Dr R. White that includes original photographs and maps of the site.
- Survival of archaeological remains beneath the site were examined through appropriate geophysical techniques (See section 6.2) and by localised cleaning of floor areas where archaeology might potentially be exposed (section 6.4).
- The relationship of the standing buildings to the exposed ruins on the site was determined through detailed digital survey of the sunken floors of covered yards 1D and Outbuilding 3, the output being both three-dimensionally modelled in ArcView and mapped in relation to Ordnance Survey plotted remains on the site (Figures 6 & 7).

- The buildings themselves were examined structurally to assess their relationship and sequence of construction, without actual below-ground intervention. A detailed photographic record was made of openings, structural details and stonework where this might potentially inform on the derivation and date of the material used (section 6.3).
- Once the detailed information had been gathered and processed, an assessment of the site was made to determine its historical value, its relationship to the site, and group value in heritage terms (section 7).

6.0 Results

The results of the work comprise the outcomes of the methods used to study the site and include Historical background, Geophysical and survey data, Building recording, and archaeological evaluation.

6.1 Historical Background

Even though there are at least three maps dating from the first half of the nineteenth century, Wroxeter Farm was not recorded on any of them. Both the 1808 and 1827 maps show the study area as blank. By 1842, when the tithe apportionment map was drawn up, the area was still devoid of buildings but now formed part of a large field known as 'Black Ground', part of the holding of Edward Stanier (Figure 3).

The earliest record of any buildings on the site is probably that published in 1860 by Thomas Wright, which consists of a plan made by Sir Henry Dryden (Wright 1860, pl.18 facing 205) (Figure 4). The occasion of Dryden's interest was that in digging foundations for some new farm buildings, the excavators had uncovered a row of moulded column bases. Wright gave the date of 1855 for the construction of the farm buildings by the tenant, Mr Stanier (Wright 1860, 205), though Dryden himself, writing in 1880, recalled that it was in August 1854 that he visited the site and drew up his plan (Dryden 1880). This earlier date is confirmed in Scarth's account (1859, 61). Dryden depicted a cruciform building with two yards to the south enclosed by walls, the colonnade extending from north to south within the area of the south-east yard.

A drawing published by Thomas Wright in 1859 (Wright 1859, 221), illustrating an account of the excavations at Wroxeter, shows, in the background, the front of what appear to be the existing cottages, as well as some of the farm buildings beyond. Wright's 1860 article, in which Dryden's plan appeared, also included a map of Wroxeter (Wright 1860, pl.19) (Figure 3) on which the cruciform farm buildings appear, together with what might be a representation of the cottages. The north-east tip of the 'Black Ground' had been fenced off, and the buildings raised within this smaller enclosure.

By 1881, when the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey (Figure 3) was published, most of the buildings currently extant had come into existence. Those recorded by Dryden had expanded into a large square mass from which two wings extended to the south, and one to the east. These wings partially enclosed two rectangular yards; within the south-east corner of the south-east yard was a small rectangular building.

Towards the south of this complex, separated by a long narrow rectangular yard was another rectangular enclosure containing two buildings. The one nearest the road to the east can be identified with the existing cottages and the smaller building to the west with the now rather altered pigsties. Another structure had been erected towards the north-west. This was aligned with the north-west boundary of the field and had a yard in front of it

The 2nd edition of the Ordnance Survey map of 1901 (Figure 3) depicts a number of additions. A rectangular building had appeared in the north-west corner of the cottage enclosure, and a large structure now occupied most of the south-east farmyard. In addition, a small extension had been built on the north side of the west wing, and another large building had been raised to the west of the farm buildings. This latter is known to have been a dutch barn, and survived until the 1990s.

The only difference that can be noted on the 3rd edition of the Ordnance Survey map of 1925 is the addition of another dutch barn, towards the north. Aerial photographs of Wroxeter, taken in 1929 (Morris 1929-30), show many of these buildings. The main point of interest is that the south-east farmyard is shown to be open to the elements, whereas it is now partially roofed.

By 1974 most of the land within the Roman city, including the present study area, had been acquired by the Department of the Environment. In 1975 a measured survey of the buildings was carried out and scaled plans, elevations and sections prepared. The following year the Department undertook a feasibility study into the future development of the site, as part of which the potential use of the farm buildings was considered. The ensuing report (DoE 1976, 13) mooted that they might be adapted as a museum to house the Wroxeter collection, and as a study and training centre in connection with the site. No action was taken at the time, and the buildings remained in agricultural use until 2001, when they became redundant.

6.2 Geophysical and Measured Survey

6.2.1 Archaeological interpretation of the GPR data

In general, the interpretation of the plots is made more difficult by the degree of interference generated by the buildings. Also the lack of general knowledge of the insula makes any interpretation somewhat speculative. Nonetheless, it is worth stating the current position since it has a direct bearing on the potential of the archaeology here to inform us of the buildings within the Roman City.

The current position may be summarised thus:

- This is the only insula in the city for which there is no modern excavated or geophysical data.
- Prior excavations (1854) found a substantial colonnade in situ in the south-east corner of the site. This shared the alignment of the forum colonnade excavated in 1923.

- At roughly the same time, sculptured stone relating to a Jupiter column were retrieved from the village: these may have derived from this current site since they do not seem to have been excavated within the village (Roach Smith 1857).
- The location of the insula in the centre of the town and, more tellingly, the lack of a large public temple elsewhere in the city suggests that this insula may have been the location for the principal religious building of the city.

None of this 'proves' the existence of a temple here, but it does seem inherently likely that there will have been a major temple somewhere in the city. Another possibility is that there was merely another cluster of town houses here, possibly grand in character given their location, or that the site was occupied by a theatre or amphitheatre. Both would be unusually located but there is nothing to prevent them being here.

Interpretation of the plots (Figure 5)

Area A

The clearest element that seems to be visible here is the anomaly noted at 0.25-0.5m (3). This seems to coincide will a clear set of low amplitude anomalies in three timeslices from 0.75m - 1.5m. These show as a long rectangular anomaly with square or rectangular anomalies at either end. There is a second anomaly to the east side of the main rectangle that runs out of the survey area. While it is impossible to be confident about an interpretation, this arrangement is not unlike what might be expected of a grander 'Romano-Celtic' temple, of the type seen in the later phases at Bath (Burnham and Wacher 1990, fig. 51) or, in a more modest example, at Frilford (ibid. fig. 54). In this plan, the smaller rooms flank the stairs approaching the *cella* of the building, and this may account for the open eastern side of the rectangular area. However, if this is the interpretation, one would expect the podium of the temple to be prominent in the radargrams (cf. Bushe-Fox 1914, pl. II); this may be what is causing anomaly 3 to appear.

Area B

Although there are apparently promising anomalies here, parallel with the Roman street edge, these may be explained by interference from surrounding buildings.

Area C

The responses here are difficult to interpret due to interference from the building and from the fact that the colonnade found here, and removed, in 1854 will inevitably have caused much ground disturbance (Dryden 1880). Furthermore, the necessarily restricted survey area makes interpretation even less certain. Having said that, some anomalies are present and it is possible that they relate to the colonnade from the site. If so, this relationship is not clear.

Area D

Although the dutch barn that once stood here has now been demolished, its floor has caused some interference with the readings. However, a possible linear anomaly

aligned north – south might represent the continuation of the colonnade to the south although this is by no means certain.

Area E

This survey produced the clearest results in an area that lies beyond the farm buildings but still in insula 1. Most obvious within the survey from 0.5m - 1.5m (more faintly at the latter end of that scale) is a linear anomaly aligned cast - west with prominent buttress-like features on the north side. Comparison with the extant colonnade for the forum demonstrates that this feature is most likely to be a colonnade for a public building. The apparent patchiness of the results is also to be expected due to localised subsidence, as seen in the Baths Basilica (Barker et al. 1997). The buttress-like positions would mark columns, which in this case, occur at roughly 2m intervals. The lack of building evidence north of the colonnade is unusual but, if this is the boundary of a temple, not unexpected, since a temple would sit as an isolated building within its temenos. In this context, the anomalies visible above the colonnade, at 0.25-0.5m level, may be significant. These appear to show linear arrangements suggestive of buildings aligned at right angles to the street frontage. If so, then this may be evidence for the destruction of a public space and its colonnade, and replacement by civilian buildings. Such a scenario is not out of place in the context of the Christianisation of the late Roman state, or equally in the context of the post-Roman rebuilding of Wroxeter evident on insula 5 (Barker et al. 1997).

Conclusion

While the results are not conclusive, there is clear scope for further work on the site, especially in those areas that do not contain buildings. A full resisitvity and gradiometry survey of the paddock and farmyard in particular would be valuable.

6.2.2 Measured Survey (by Glynn Barret)

The survey was carried out to the OS National Grid co-ordinate system using as control points the Wroxeter Hinterland Survey GPS survey stations. These stations were fixed by carrier wave differential GPS technique in 1995 and are fully 3-D, tied to OS Datum Newlyn. Accordingly all spot height values are recorded in relation to this origin. The time available to complete the ground survey was limited to 3 days only. To accommodate this relatively short time scale, observations were carried out by two separate survey teams. One team used a conventional infrared reflector based Total Station, to provide a control traverse between GPS points and to supply external spot heights around the exterior of the buildings. This survey was tied directly into the GPS points and used to fix the control stations utilised by the second survey team.

The second team concentrated on the detailed recording of the internal floor surfaces. Here a laser based reflectorless Total Station was used (Leica 700 series) capturing data digitally to create a spot height net covering the target floor surfaces. This technique was adopted to provide a dense coverage of spot heights more rapidly than by more conventional methods. In this type of surface modelling the greater the number of points recorded the higher resolution the final DEM (Digital Elevation Model), in this case the average spacing of spot heights being c. 1m. In all over 1500 values were recorded principally recording the more disturbed floor surfaces of

buildings 1D in the north of the range Outbuilding 3 in the south-east and the yard areas between buildings 1B and 1C. Overall sufficient data was collected to support contour modelling at a vertical interval of 0.05m.

On completion of the field survey the two sets of survey data were collated into a single survey scheme using a combination of PenMap and ArcView softwares. OS Landline data was then imported into the scheme to provide the survey with its local context. Figure 6 shows the contour plot incorporated with the OS map base and Figure 7 shows the 3-D surface of the barn interiors modelled within ArcView with a vertical exaggeration factor of times 4.

6.3 Building Recording

The standing buildings fall into three groups (Figure 2). Group 1 consists of a large collection of farm buildings grouped around a number of covered yards. Group 2 lies to the south of this complex; it comprises a pair of farm workers' cottages and two other buildings to the rear (west) of it. Group 3, which embraces a shelter shed and attached fold yard, lies to the north west of Group 1.

Building numbering has followed that of the 1975 survey, though the main block of buildings described as 'Outbuilding No.1' in 1975 has been divided into four units representing the different phases.

Building joints, and changes in brick size, in association with the map evidence, have contributed to the identification of a relative chronology, and have shown that Group 1 is the result of at least four, and probably five separate construction phases. Groups 2 and 3 have been related to this phasing.

In addition, a number of later alterations have been recorded that reflect changes of function, and provide evidence for the subsequent development of the farm complex. These are recorded in the descriptions of the main phases.

6.3.1 Group 1

Despite the existence of several structural phases, the architectural detail has a considerable degree of uniformity, a circumstance that supports the map evidence in suggesting a comparatively narrow dating range. This uniformity allows some general remarks to be made about the structures, which can be assumed, unless otherwise stated in the following description.

The Group 1 buildings were constructed of red brick on a darker (purple), harder brick (9½"x 4½"x 3") plinth, and plain tile roofs were the norm. Dark red sandstone was used for the window sills and for the blocks at the door hinge and latch positions. Some of the stones retain tooling marks comprising a series of parallel diagonal strokes edged on each side with borders of parallel horizontal lines, a pattern that was in use elsewhere in Shropshire during the nineteenth century.

¹ Similar marks were cut on the plinth stones surrounding the Royal Oak at Boscobel House, which dates from 1817 (Hislop, 2002).

Roof trusses were generally of machine cut timbers, and mostly of queen post construction, the queen posts being bolted to the tie beams. Door and window openings at ground storey level had segmental heads, and both the openings and the corners of the buildings were built with rounded bricks.

The patterns of the hinge and latch blocks change according to the type of door used, stable type doors were provided with an extra, central, hinge block to accommodate four hinges instead of two.

Phase 1: Outbuilding 1A

Outbuilding 1A is a cruciform building on the east side of the complex (Figures 8, 9 & 10). It is shown on Dryden's plan and was therefore in existence by 1854. It comprises a main range aligned north-south facing east, and a slightly asymmetrically disposed pair of wings towards the south end aligned east west, facing south.

The main range is a two-storey building constructed in Flemish stretcher bond. At ground level it is divided symmetrically into three units; a central room approximately 6m square, and units to the north and south each approximately 12m in length.

Cart sheds occupy the northern unit. Four bays of segmental arched openings spring from square columns with rounded corners. Inside are an earth floor and a second tier of columns. The west end of the south wall is pierced by a narrow loop or squint, which looks into the central room.

The function of the central room is not so obvious; it has double doors to the south and a window to the north in both the east and west walls. Although the threshold of the eastern doorway is at ground level, that of the western doorway is approximately 0.5m above ground level. The interior is unpartitioned; it has a floor of bricks (8½-8½"x 2¾") aligned north-south in rows of stretchers. This floor incorporates a block of stone approximately 0.5m x 0.35m situated centrally between the north and south walls, and approximately 2m from the west wall. It is directly beneath the main cross beam, but its purpose is obscure. At the west end of the south wall is a narrow, segmental arched doorway, which communicates with the southern unit but which is not hinged for a door.

Later alterations include the rebuilding of the eastern doorway's north jamb and the insertion of a wooden lintel, suggesting that this entrance has been widened. In addition, the eastern window has been partially blocked, and a doorway has been broken through the south wall.

The southern unit appears to have been the hub of communications. It is entered from the east by a double door, divided by a substantial timber post. The current form of this opening, however, is the result of widening towards the north. This is evident from the north jamb, which is brick reconstruction work, and the brick foundations that can be traced along the threshold and which show that the east wall formerly extended across the northern half of the doorway. There are original entrances at the north end of the west wall and at the south ends of both west and east walls. The former contains a stable type door, suggesting that there may have been animals beyond. Located south of this door and attached to the wall at above head height is an

electric motor whose function is not clear. A doorway in the centre of the south wall, with segmental arch and unmoulded jambs, communicates with Outbuilding 1B, though it is not certain that it is original. There are inserted doorways in the east and west walls giving access to the respective wings.

Differences in the character of the floors may suggest spatial divisions, and have a bearing upon function. These differences are related to a freestanding brick structure on the east side of the room. This is aligned north - south but has short arms extending from each end towards the west. Its function appears to have been to act as a support for the ceiling beams. There are two main areas of flooring. To the south of the brick support 9½" x 3" bricks are laid from east to west. To the north and west 11"x 6" quarry tiles are laid from east to west. These areas are separated by an east west orientated strip of flooring, approximately 1.35m wide, and consisting of 9½"x 4¾" bricks, laid east west, at the west end of which is an area of irregular subsided brickwork. Breaking into this area, and continuing the line of the southern arm of the ceiling beam support, for a distance of 1m, is a line of 9½"x 2¾" bricks aligned north south, and suggesting a threshold. Finally, the tiled floor and ceiling beam support are bounded to the east by a 1.10m wide strip of 9½"x 2¾" bricks aligned north south, which gives the impression of a passageway.

The upper floor frame is based around two main transverse beams carried on the brick support. In addition, there are lateral beams to the north and south. The northern ends of the two main lateral beams to the north are supported by stone corbels² (Plate 2). There are two trapdoors in the floor of the upper storey. One of these is immediately west of the ceiling beam support, while the other is over the quarry-tiled area. They both give access to the same first floor room.

The upper storey is divided into two unequal parts by a brick partition lying directly above the wall between the central and southern ground floor rooms. It is thinner than at ground level and is very poorly bonded into the west wall. A wide opening on the west side is provided with a sliding door fixed to the north side of the wall.

The larger, northern part of the upper storey appears to have been a granary. It has a series of lozenge and hourglass shaped patterns of air vents to the east and north, two doorways to the east, one to the west, and one in the north gable. All these have two leafed, hinged doors, except the northern opening which has a sliding door. Inside the central eastern doorway is a pivoted hoist, which could be drawn back against the wall when not in use (Plate 3); projecting over the northern door is a beam for another hoist (Plate 4). An owl hole in the north gable, and the survival of winnowing machine, both suggest that grain was stored here. The machine is labelled 'R.Chipchase/ Thomas Corbett/ Late Corbett & Peele/ Perseverence Iron Works/ Shrewsbury/ England' (Plate 5). Thomas Corbett specialized in the production of farm machinery. He acquired land in Castle Foregate, Shrewsbury, on which to build his Perseverence Iron Works in 1868, and subsequently created an enormously successful business, exhibiting in and exporting to most west European countries during the second half of the nineteenth century (VCH 1989, 193-4).

² Identical corbels have been noted at Honnington Grange, Shropshire, a complex dated to 1819.

There are six roof bays and five roof trusses (numbered 1 to 5 from the north to south). Trusses 1, 3 and 5 might be described as upper base cruck trusses (Section A-A, Figure 11). The cruck blades stand on wooden corbels set into the walls, and rise to a collar, which supports the purlins. The crucks are bolted to the tie beams and strapped to the wall plate. Truss 2 was originally of the same character but the crucks have been replaced by long, straight inclined posts which support the collar (Plate 6). The cruck corbels have been sawn off flush with the wall, but the ends remain embedded in the brickwork. In addition, the mortises for the tops of the crucks survive in the tie beam. Truss 4 is at the position of the wall at the south end of the cart sheds, and comprises two stub walls capped by stone corbels, similar to those on the ground storey, which support a tie beam and purlin supports. A collar towards the north end of the roof supports the end of the hoist beam (Plate 4).

The southern end of the upper storey was probably a hayloft. There are lozenge patterned arrangement of loops to the east and south, a doorway to the east, a single circular pitching hole in each of the south, east and west walls, and another owl hole in the south gable. In the floor are the two trap doors through which it would have been possible to drop hay. The roof trusses are quite different from those in the other part of the range. Principal rafters stand on wooden corbels and are strengthened by seissor bracing, the ends of the braces being bolted to the rafters and the intersection strapped to the apex (Section B-B, Figure 11).

The east wing (Figures 8, 9 & 10) was built as a completely self-contained stable block with a loose box at the east end. It is a one-storey, 6-bay building with a pair of stable type doors at each end flanking a pair of central windows, the left hand one louvred. Inside, the two end bays are separated from the central stabling by brick partition walls. The west end housed a feed room, the east end a loose box. The loose box, which retains a cobbled floor, was self-contained, but a door at the south end of the western partition wall allowed communication between the feed room and stables. The stables themselves appear to have accommodated four horses. The original fittings have gone but holes in the internal buttresses that mark the bay divisions probably indicate the positions of the stalls. An inserted doorway at the north end of the west wall gives access to a feed passage on the north side of the building which was formed to serve an inserted trough. The roof trusses are of queen post construction (Section C-C, Figure 11).

The two-storey west wing (Figures 8 & 10) originally comprised a shelter shed with loft. It has five bays of segmental arches with two tiers of brick voussoirs. Inside, hayracks were served by a feed passage along the north side. This passage has a concrete floor and was entered from inserted doorways to the east and west. It also provided access to a series of inserted feed hatches in the north wall, serving the covered yard (1D) beyond.

Although Outbuilding 1A has clearly been planned as an entity, two main structural phases can be discerned. The evidence for these phases can be seen in the junction of the west wing with the main range. Up to a height of 1.92m above ground level the brickwork of the two components is bonded together and the bricks are of similar size $(9\frac{3}{8}\text{" x }4\frac{5}{8}\text{" x }2\frac{3}{4}-3\text{"})$. Above this level, however, there is a straight joint between the two elements, and a change in the size of bricks used in the west range $(10\frac{1}{4}-10\frac{1}{2}\text{" x})$

51/8-51/4" x 31/8"). A corresponding change in brick size, at a similar height is also noticeable in the west wall of the range.

These larger bricks are associated with phases 2 and 3 (see below). The loft, then, probably belongs to either of these construction periods. It was entered from the main block, and was originally lit by three windows to the south and three to the north. There was also a doorway to the north, though this opening has been partially blocked and converted into another window. The roof trusses are similar to Truss 2 of Outbuilding 1A, which replaced an earlier truss. The main point to draw attention to is that these trusses, like those over the main range of Outbuilding 1A, obviated the need for a tie beam, and therefore made the space more convenient for the storage of hay or grain.

Phase 2: Outbuilding 1B

Outbuilding 1B (Figures 8, 9 & 10) built as a double cowhouse, also appears on the Dryden plan of 1854; thus it must have followed on almost immediately from Outbuilding 1A. It is made of 10½"x 5"x 3½" bricks in Flemish bond, and has a welsh slate roof. This single-storey building is attached to the south end of the main range of Outbuilding 1A, being aligned north south, with cattle entrances to the east and west, and a service doorway in the south gable that probably gave access to a former central feed passage. The gabled south elevation has an original central doorway and an inserted doorway with wooden lintel to the left. The east and west elevations are each of five bays articulated by brick buttresses. There are windows to the left, right, and centre, and stable-type doorways in the other two bays. The interior has been gutted, and has a concrete floor with drainage channel on the west side. The building retains four queen post roof trusses (Section D-D, Figure 12). There are straight joints between the central and end portions of the north wall, showing that the cowhouse was built onto the end of the existing main range.

Phase 2: Farmyard Wall

Also depicted on Dryden's plan of 1854 are two walls enclosing two yards, one on either side of the building. Parts of these walls survive: the south wall of the western yard, and the south and west walls of the eastern yard which were later incorporated into Outbuilding 3 (see below *Phase 5*) These are built of coursed sandstone rubble and incorporate some Roman worked stone.

Phase 3: Outbuilding 1C

Building 1C (Figures 8 & 10) forms the southern half of the west range. The 10¼"x 5"x 3¼" bricks match those of Outbuilding 1B, but the structure is treated as a different phase on the evidence of the 1854 plan. This document shows that there was a hiatus in the building works between the construction of Outbuilding 1B, which appears on the plan, and Outbuilding 1C which does not. The range is aligned north south facing east. At the south end is a series of five pig sties with a fowl loft over. Each of the five piggery units comprises a walled pen in front of a covered sty with segmental arched entrance. These are not equal in size, the three southernmost being approximately 1.65m wide, whereas the other two are approximately 2.25m wide. The smaller ones were probably for single animals, and the latter for sows with litters. In

general, the sty entrances appear to have been open, but that of the left hand unit incorporates a hinge for a door. Slightly above the level of this arch and directly over the dividing wall between the two left hand pens is a small triangular arched entrance to the fowl loft. The loft has three tiers of small rectangular ventilation holes, the lower course being partially obscured by a lean-to roof over the pens. This structure, and the brick piers that support it, are later additions and appear to have been accompanied by a rebuilding of the upper courses of the pen walls.

Human access to the fowl loft is via the next unit to the north. This room, which is entered from a doorway in the west wall, and lit by a window in the west wall, could not be investigated fully at the time of the survey, owing to it being in use, but it was possible to identify a flight of steps leading to a loft entrance.

Next towards the north is a larger room entered via a stable type doorway from the east. It was lit by a single window in the east wall, now blocked, and by two windows in the west wall, the southernmost of which has been converted into a doorway. There is a small fireplace on the south side, and a single queen post roof truss. The room currently acts as a store for a very large number of complete Harnage (i.e. medieval) roof slates which almost certainly do not derive from these buildings.

The Northernmost section of this phase of the west range differs in character from the rest of the buildings in that although the gable end was in brick, the front (west) elevation is constructed of timber. At the two bay divisions, a wall plate was supported by two posts which stood on pad stones. They corresponded with two queen post roof trusses (Section E-E, Figure 12). The three bays are not equal in size, being approximately 3m, 2.5m and 2m from north to south. The northern bay was large enough to accommodate a cart, the other two bays may have served as animal stalls or loose boxes.

Phase 4: Building 1D

The fourth building phase (Figures 8, 9 & 10) involved the construction of the northern half of the west range and a wall linking it to the north west corner of Building 1A. The erection of these structures enclosed a yard, which was then roofed. The structural evidence for this phase is a change in the size of the bricks to 81/8" x 41/4" x 3", and vertical joints in the brickwork at the junction of the yard wall and Building 1A (Plate 7).

The single-storey extension to the *west range* was divided into three sections; cartsheds to the south, loose box in the centre, both facing west, and tack room at the north end, facing north.

The four-bay cartshed has segmental arched openings springing from square columns. The floor is of earth. Queen post roof trusses support two pairs of purlins, and the ends of the tie beams are supported on pilaster buttresses. There is a straight joint between the east and south walls, the former butting against the latter. The south wall is built of Phase 3 bricks (103/8"x 5"x 3/8").

The *loose box* is entered from a doorway set above plinth level, so it was probably provided with a ramp or steps when in use. There is a drain in the centre of the brick

floor, and a wooden trough on legs in the south east corner with an iron ring attached to it. Two pairs of purlins are carried by the brick walls.

The tack room occupies the northern extremity of the west range and is entered from a door in the north gable end. The gable itself has a circular pitching hole. The floor is concreted. Wooden harness hooks occupy the north wall and north sides of the east and west walls. A single queen post roof truss supports the two pairs of purlins. There is no evidence for a loft, suggesting that the circular opening in the gable was for providing illumination, rather than for pitching hay into.

A high, segmental headed opening in the centre of the north wall, with angular rather than rounded corners, gave access to the *covered yard*. It was closed by means of a sliding door operated from the outside. As the opening has no provision for hinged doors, it may be assumed that this arrangement is original. An earth floor is patched with concrete and cobbles. Against the south wall is a series of feed troughs, which were filled via the inserted hatches in the north wall of Outbuilding 1A's west wing. The yard is roofed in three spans, the roofs being aligned east west, and is divided into four bays by a series of wooden posts, that support the roof plates. The posts themselves stand on high pyramidal blocks of stone set on square brick plinths (Plate 8)³. All the roof trusses are of queen post construction, the queen posts being strapped, rather than bolted, to the tie beams (Section F-F, Figure 12).

Phase 5: Outbuilding 3

Situated to the south east of the main complex, Outbuilding 3 (Figures 8 & 13) is a covered yard for the accommodation of livestock, and dates from between 1881 and 1901. The south and east walls incorporate the yard walls that were in existence by 1860, as a high stone plinth (Plate 9). The upper courses together with the north and west walls are built in two different sizes of red brick in an irregular variant of Flemish bond. Mostly, these are 9½"x 4½"x 3", but the internal elevation of the south wall is made of 8½"x 4"x 3" bricks. The segmental arched roof is made of corrugated iron.

Outbuilding 3 is aligned north - south, and faces south, where it is entered through a high opening with a concrete lintel, closed with a sliding door. In the centre of the gable is a segmental arched window with three-light wooden frame rebated for glass. The east elevation has five bays of air vents arranged in rectangular patterns, and the west wall has two wide window-like openings. Only the east end of the north wall is of full height; the rest being below 6 feet high. Much of this lower section has been rebuilt since 1975 but the west jamb of a doorway at the west end is original, and retains two sandstone hinge blocks. These, however, are buff coloured rather than red.

Inside there are five bay divisions, the outer ones being narrower than the others. These divisions are marked on the east elevation by a series of wooden posts. The floor is mainly concrete but there are earth patches. The roof is carried on four steel roof trusses.

³ Similar examples have been noted at Black Barn, Cross Houses, Shropshire.

Phase 6: The South West Yard

Some time after 1929 a corrugated iron roof was raised over the northern part of the south-west yard. It was carried on a number of Belfast trusses (Plate 10).

6.3.2 Group 2

Wroxeter Farm Cottages (1 and 2 The Ruins)

Wroxeter Farm Cottages (Figure 14), in existence by 1859, were originally a pair of semi-detached farm workers' cottages, but they were converted into a single unit in 1974. They are built of red brick (10¼"x 5"x 3½") in Flemish bond, to the front and Flemish stretcher bond to the rear, with buff coloured sandstone window sills, probably Grinshill, and similar in character to that used for the hinge blocks of Outbuilding 3. The building is roofed with plain tiles, and the central chimney stack is of brick.

The cottages are aligned north - south, with the principal elevation towards the east. The southern cottage was entered from the east and the northern cottage from the west. The interior has been altered so the original plan is uncertain, however, in each case, there appears to have been there one large room at ground level heated by a fireplace, and lit from the east, and a small room to the west containing the stairs.

The one and a half storey, two-bay east front has a central gabled porch with pointed arch, and casement windows under cambered heads. The attic windows are within gabled dormers; both the porch and dormer gables have fretted barge boards. To the rear is a porch with similar detailing.

Outbuilding 2 (The Education Centre)

Formerly a stable block, and dating from between 1881 and 1901, Outbuilding No.2 (Figure 15) was converted into an education centre for Wroxeter Roman site *circa* 1990. This six-bay range is aligned east - west facing north, and articulated on the south elevation by a series of brick buttresses. The lower part of the north wall is built of stone, incorporating re-used Roman material. It is possibly the earlier boundary wall that was in existence by 1881 (Figure 3). The wall is pierced by three doorways and one window, and the entrances give access to three separate rooms of unequal size, being respectively, from east to west, three, one and two bays in length. Although the interior has been completely altered, the 1975 survey shows arrangements of wooden posts in the two outer rooms suggesting stalls, approximately 1.8m wide; there were six compartments in the eastern room and four in the western room.

Outbuilding 4

Originally built as pig pens (the map of 1881 clearly shows the pens to the rear), and associated with Wroxeter cottages rather than the farm, Outbuilding 4 (Figure 16) was partially converted to washrooms some time after 1975. Built of red brick (9½"x 4½"x 3") in Flemish stretcher bond, with a brick chimney stack. The east elevation has a door slightly to the south of centre, and a small casement window to the north

with a cambered arch. This gives access to a large central room which is flanked by small rooms to the north and south entered separately from the side elevations. The former pig pens occupy the western half of the building and face west. Two pig pens flank a central hearth area, probably used for the preparation of feed. This western elevation is largely derelict.

6.3.3 Group 3

Shelter Shed and Fold Yard

Standing in an isolated position to the north-west of the main complex is a shelter shed (Plate 11) with fold yard in front of it. Both the shed and the yard wall are built of coursed rubble of various stone types. In addition, the shed incorporates some red brick. The constructional character is of a much lower quality than the other farm buildings, and both wall and shed give the impression of having been built by amateurs rather than by craftsmen.

The shed is aligned east - west facing south. It is a single-storey building, four-bay building, with square brick pillars supporting a re-used wall plate. To the rear (north), and corresponding with the bay divisions, is a scries of three low brick buttresses with courses inclined down towards the building (Plate 12). To the east of the eastern buttress is an apparent vertical joint in the north wall, but this makes no archaeological sense, and may represent no more than the inexpertise of the builder. In the east gable is a brick window opening with cambered arch (Plate 13).

The roof trusses have tie beams, and short principals supporting a collar, which in turn supports a single pair of purlins (Plate 14). Several of the timbers are re-used, and the trusses are not bolted together like those of the other buildings. Despite the gable window, there is no evidence for a loft.

Regarding date, there is very little diagnostic detail, other than to say that nothing is inconsistent with a mid-nineteenth century date. The cambered head of the gable window, however, provides a tentative link with Wroxeter Farm Cottages.

6.3.4 The Development of the Farm

In the initial phase accommodation was provided for horses, carts, cattle, as well as fodder for the animals, and grain. Right from the start, then, the farm mixed the production of cereal crops with the raising of cattle. The hayloft at the south end of the main range of Outbuilding 1A was filled by means of the three pitching holes, and was distributed via the two trapdoors in the floor to the room below. From here there were doorways leading to both the stables and the shelter shed. At the other end of the range, the granary was loaded using at least two hoists. The existence of the winnowing machine suggests that at least some grain preparation was done on the site, and the central ground floor room may have been an area in which this was carried out.

The second phase of construction (Outbuilding 1B) greatly expanded the accommodation for cattle. From the initial idea of basic and limited shelter for, there was a rapid progression to a well appointed and systematic provision. It may perhaps

be argued that this and subsequent phases were planned from the outset, but the structural evidence infers that this particular building was a modification of the original concept, for in constructing it against the south gable of Outbuilding 1A the southern pitching hole was blocked. The plan of 1854 shows that this phase included walled yards to each side of the cowhouse, from which it could be deduced that the west range, which included provision for pigs and chickens, had not been contemplated at the time.

The cowhouse of Phase 2 may reflect an expansion of the herd, though equally it could indicate a more enlightened approach to animal husbandry. Subsequent enclosure and yard coverings in phases 4 and 5 may be similarly interpreted, though the general chronological trend is for more and more cattle accommodation into the mid-twentieth century. This includes the conversion of the Phase 1 stables into cowhouses, the introduction of the feed passage into the Phase 1 shelter shed, and the associated breaking through of the feed hatches in its north wall to serve the covered yard of Phase 4.

The purchase of the farm by the Department of the Environment in the early 1970s and the consequent cossation of arable farming within Wroxeter, must have led to changes in land management on the farm but this is not obviously reflected in the buildings. From that period until c. 1992, sheep were the sole livestock kept on the farm, and from c. 1992-2001 sheep was still the larger proportion of livestock, although some cows were also kept on the farm. In this context, Outbuilding 3 and Yard 1D were used to overwinter livestock, with the covered yard 1C being periodically utilised for the same function. The only identifiable modification that this created within the farm buildings was the excavation in c. 1976, by the Central Archaeological Unit of English Heritage, of a sheep dip at the western end of the west range 1A.

6.3.5 Stonework at Wroxeter Farm

A notable feature of Wroxeter Farm, and of the village itself, is the quantity of stone that is incorporated into the buildings. Much of this has been assumed in the past to have been derived from the Roman City (e.g. Harvey 1984, pl.33), with good reason, but there has not yet been a systematic survey of the use and derivation of the stone in the modern buildings. The survey offered here is not comprehensive in scope or character but is merely an assessment of the evidence within the farm building complex and offers an attempt to assess the quantity and probable derivation of the stonework visible in the city.

The derivation of the stone used within the Roman town has been studied by Thomas Cantrill, a geologist formally working with the BGS (Cantrill 1931). His work has been re-assessed in recent years by Rob Ixer of the Dept. of Earth Sciences, University of Birmingham and is thought to still be correct in all major areas (Ixer 1997). Cantrill characterises five groups of building stone in the city:

• Keele Beds sandstone – an often poorly weathering red sandstone with calcareous inclusions that is the principal freestone used in the city. It is especially prominent when used for *petit appareil* work, as on the Old Work (Cantrill 1931, 91).

- Hoar Edge Grit a buff, non-calcareous sandstone with prominent milletsized rounded quartz grains. This is used invariably for the finely carved work in the town, such as the tombstones. A coarser variety is used for large blocks of freestone (*ibid.* 94).
- Big Flint Rock a grey or brownish grey sandstone that is used principally for large freestone blocks and never for intricate carving. Most of the forum colonnade is in this material (*ibid.* 93-4, 96).
- Tufa originally used exclusively for vaulting of the baths.
- Micaceous sandstone used exclusively for roofing slate.

All of these stone types are represented in the buildings within the farm complex with the exception of the last, and the tufa is represented only by a single block reused in the west wall of the fold yard attached to the shelter shed.

Location of stonework within the complex

Stone is used throughout the buildings for detail work, notably as blocks into which hinges are set, as stone window sills, as column supports in yard 1D, for corbels and occasionally to terminate walls, as for example in the large blocks found at the end of the pig sty divisions. The stone used in these contexts is either a dark red and poor quality Keele Beds sandstone, unlike the Roman Keele Beds found on the site, or more usually a pale buff and fine sandstone that probably derives from Grinshill. Both stone types were thus purchased for use new from a mason or direct from a quarry and are not reused. Such parallels that have been noted belong to buildings of the second decade of the 19th Century, suggesting that stone patterns continued in use for some time.

Stone is otherwise rarely used within the buildings and only one (the shelter shed) is substantially built of stone.

Robbed Roman stone is used as the foundation of the 1D phase of construction at the north-west corner of the complex in the form of large ashlar blocks in Big Flint Rock and Keele Beds sandstone. These latter apparently form a levelling course and are presumably derived from Roman buildings, although none are decorated or otherwise have architectural merit.

Stone-built walls up to 1m in height (externally) appear in Outbuilding 3, Outbuilding 2 and in the southern wall of the yard cast of Outbuilding 1C. It is clear that these walls are part of the general enclosing wall of the farmyard since they are contiguous with extant sections of walling of identical height that differ from the walls included in the buildings solely by the addition of a semi-circular capping stone in Keele Beds sandstone. These are at first glance apparently shaped from column drums and have in the past been so described (Scarth 1859, 68) but all surviving column drums are in Hoar Edge Grit or Big Flint Rock and thus these cannot be former Roman columns. The original farmyard wall may thus be reconstructed as forming the south-east corner and south side of the complex (including a parallel wall on the south side of the

farmyard lane) and the western wall of the complex up to and including the shelter shed.

Within this set of walls, Roman masonry occurs throughout with the most important group consisting of a large number of complete Big Flint Rock stylobates seen in the west face of Outbuilding 3. Also included here are at least three column drums, one a base and, on the east face of the same wall, a drain block. The stylobates are well preserved but have diagonal grooves cut across them that are clearly later in date than the original tooling. The presence of these probably relates to their extraction at the time of their discovery. It is probable that these stylobates are those shown in Dryden's account of the discovery of the colonnade within this building in 1854. The column bases themselves were removed to The Cottage, Wroxeter where they still survive, upended and hollowed out, as flower planters. Profiles drawn of them were published by Fox (Fox 1897, pl. IV, 1-6, between pp.168 & 169). The stylobates were, apparently, dragged from their wall using a rope cut into the surface to stop the blocks slipping. They were then manoeuvred into their new position in the farmyard wall. Their use, at ground level, mirrors the use of stone in Outbuilding 1D. It is worth noting that the same farmer assiduously looted stone from Wright's excavations in 1859 while they were still open and it may be that some of the stone used in these farm building derive from those excavations (Barker et al. 1997).

The remaining stones within this wall, and the other farmyard walls, are predominantly red Keele Beds, Hoar Edge Grit or Big Flint Rock. The walls have been substantially re-pointed in recent times, mostly by the Directly Employed Labour used on the site from c. 1950-1990 and thus do not present much archaeological information. The exception is the Shelter Shed and its adjacent yard and farmyard wall. This has a proportion of Roman stone within it but a large element of the stonework is an unusual horizontally bedded and extremely coarse sandstone that varies in colour from dark grey to buff. This stone can include gravel up to 10mm in size, apparently water-sorted in origin (Plate 15). David Pannett has examined this stone at the author's request and his report is appended:

Comment on stonework in Shelter Shed (by David Pannett)

The main characteristics of the building are:

Little or no 'robbed' Roman Stone

Large glacial erratics at base

Large amounts of local Keele Beds / Upper Coal Measures sandstone This points to a wall built by the estate in a period when 'digging up Wroxeter for stone' had gone out of fashion and since they could have used brick instead, but still chose stone, this further points to a source from the estate. Land ownership and the geological map then point to the isolated pocket of Coal Measures at Drayton 3km to the south-east where a quarry and coal pit is marked (SJ 587064). Inspection of the village confirms this – the barn walls have the same 'Keele Beds' while garden retaining walls have the finest collection of glacial erratics in the area.

The unusually poor nature of the stone used in this building is perhaps a comment on its lack of importance within the complex, and lack of visibility from the road in contrast to the fine Roman stonework used adjacent to the public highway where it

would be more prominent. Having said this, however, the only piece of carved stone found in the entire complex is within this building. Built into the west face of the east wall of the shelter shed is a single brick-sized piece of Hoar Edge Grit c. 180mm x 50mm in size (Plate 16). Its face is carved in a complex and apparently geometric pattern that is, however, too fragmentary to interpret easily. It does not appear to be part of a tombstone nor does it seem to be architectural in origin. It may, therefore, be part of a free-standing sculpture such as the elaborate figural door frames that exist in Rowley's House Museum (VCH 1, fig. 23).

6.4 Evaluative excavation

A small-scale evaluative excavation was undertaken within the covered yard 1C (Figure 6) where it was observed that the earth floor had been cut into during the removal of animal straw and waste by a mechanical digger. On cleaning up the area, no archaeology was observed and it was thus concluded that the archaeology is not under immediate threat here.

7.0 Assessment

Assessment of the building complex at Wroxeter Farm cannot be achieved merely through the examination of the buildings but must take into account their location within the historical framework of the Roman City, since the buildings are an integral part of the history of the reuse of the site. These factors must be taken into account in order both to understand the development of the site and its overall importance before decisions are made regarding the future of the complex (Clark 2001).

In themselves, the buildings are superficially a fairly standard example of a mid nineteenth century model farm complex. Large numbers of these exist within the county but increasingly they are becoming redundant and are being altered, converted to other uses, or simply demolished. Such trends are difficult to quantify easily but it is important to note that this complex at least has the merit of still being intact and capable of preservation in its original format, albeit perhaps converted to an alternative and sustainable reuse.

Some features highlighted by the survey are however worth noting in that they lift the overall standard of the complex. First, the cruciform arrangement of the main range is unusual since the typical pattern for a model farm of this date is for a square or rectangular arrangement with an internal courtyard (Harvey 1984). The advantage of the cruciform layout is presumably that it allows scope for further development and the flexible creation of stockyards around the central core. This is indeed what seems to have happened since Phases 1B-1D appear to have been added soon after the completion of the main range to form a more conventional layout consisting of a number of enclosed courtyards. Second is the unusual covered aisled yard (1D). This building is a unique type within Shropshire, as far as can be ascertained, although further research is necessary. Having said this, the elements of which it is composed, namely the supporting of the roof trusses on substantial timber posts set on pyramidal stone blocks, is a common feature of open-fronted animal shelters, of similar design to the shelter shed in this complex. An example of such an arrangement exists in the dilapidated complex at Black Barn, near Cross Houses (SJ 553062).

In conclusion, therefore, the authors would argue that the complex, while not being of the highest architectural merit or rarity, is nonetheless worthy of preservation on the grounds that it

- is substantially complete and can thus typify model farms of this period in this area, i.e. the complex has group value;
- has unusual arrangements and elements of design that merit further study and preservation in their own right;
- represents the last tangible evidence for the post-Roman use of the site, i.e. Wroxeter's existence as an agricultural community from the mid-seventh century to the present day;
- forms part of the continuum of human activity on the site, from at least the Late Bronze Age and, as part of a larger history, deserves to be retained.

This last point is important since it might be argued that it would be better to sweep the complex away in the expectation that substantial Roman remains lie beneath. Yet to do so would remove an important element in the site's history: its existence as a model farm in the High Victorian Period and as part of the larger Raby Estate. However, if the decision is taken to preserve the complex then this immediately raises the question of its conservation and, ultimately, reuse since to restore the buildings and not use them would be pointless. We would **recommend**, therefore, that a more comprehensive Conservation Plan be drawn up that will address both the work that needs to be done to conserve the buildings before they decay further and examine potential uses for the complex in the future that will be sustainable and consistent with maintaining the buildings in a format that enables their past use to be understood and contextualised.

8.0 Acknowledgements

The project was managed by Roger White. Steve Litherland and Malcolm Hislop supervised the building recording assisted by Mijke van den Berg, Damien Kimberley and Kate Warburton. Glynn Barratt carried out the surveying with assistance from Jerry Drake, Galen Caughron and Alen Davey. The drawings are by Nigel Dodds.

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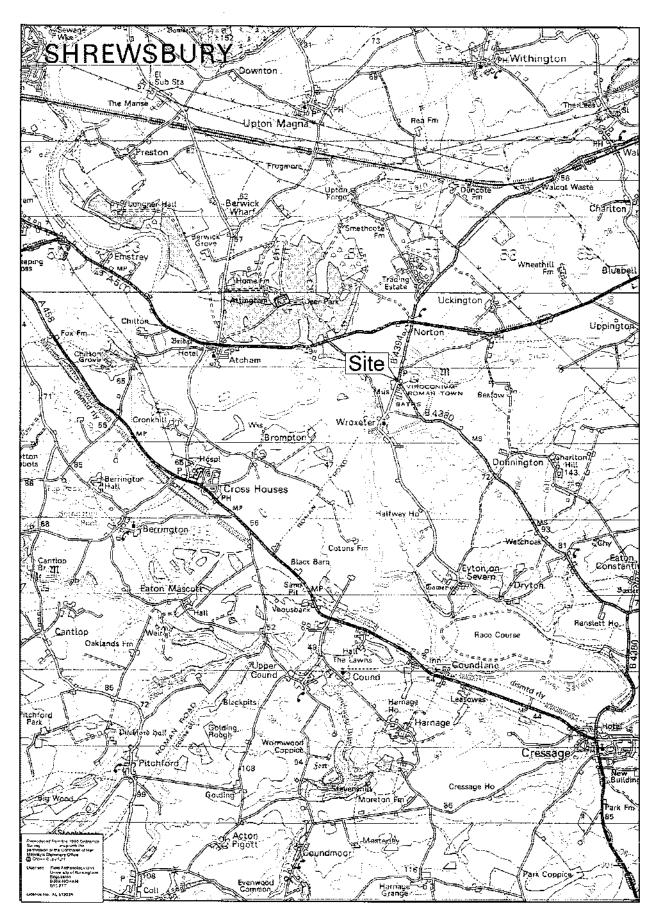


Fig.1

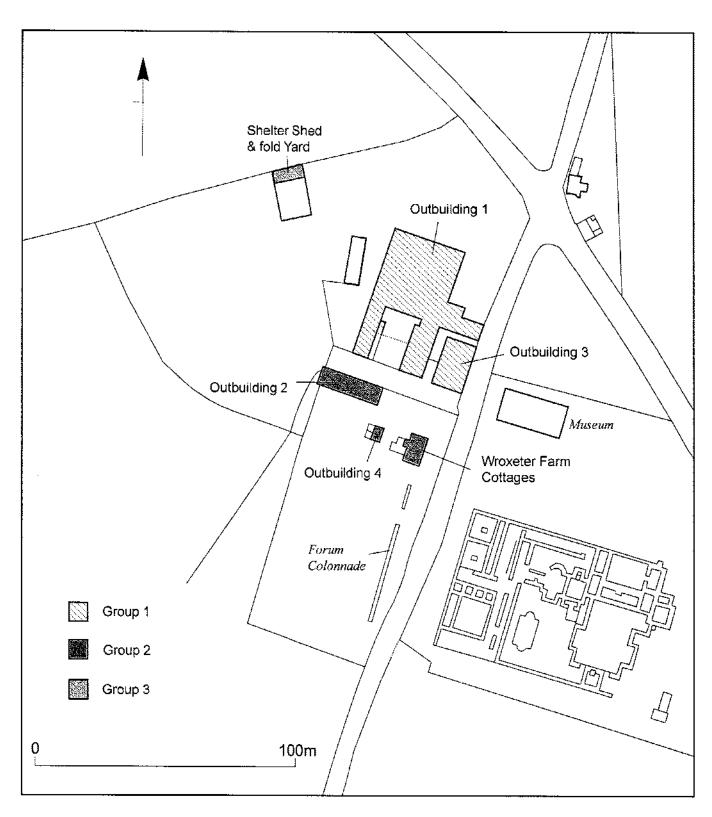


Fig.2

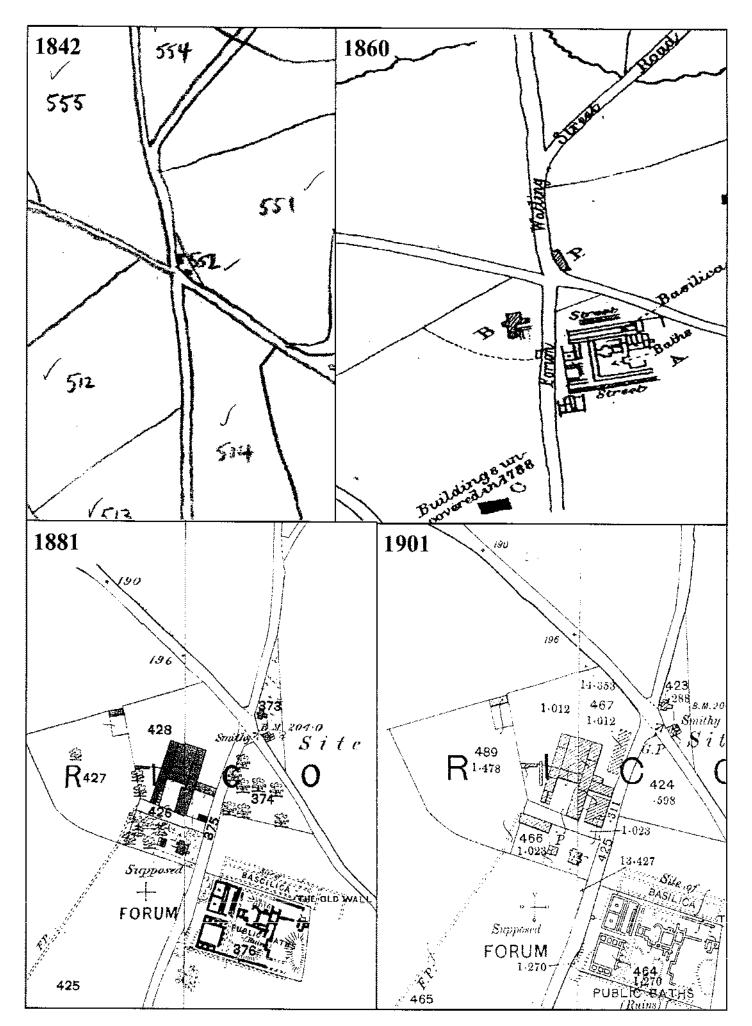


Fig.3

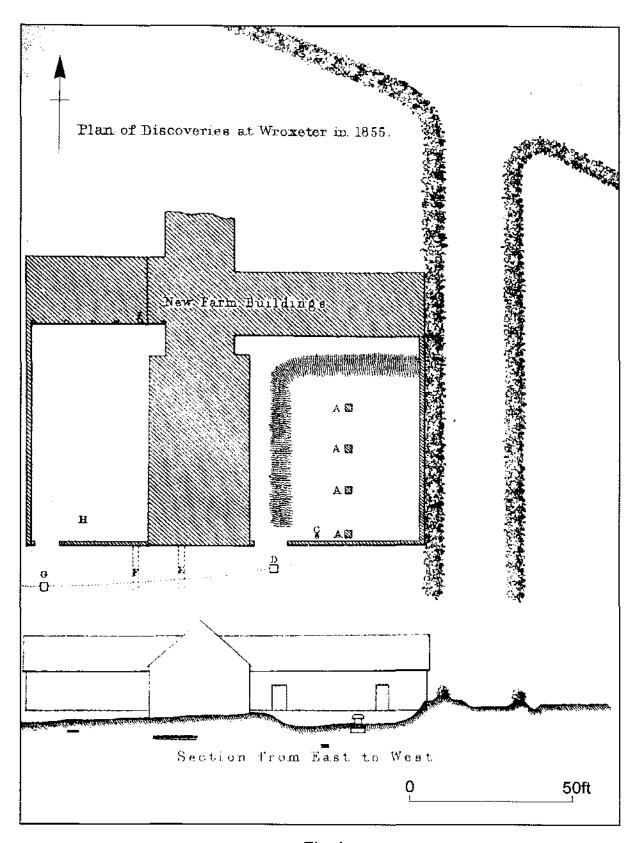


Fig.4

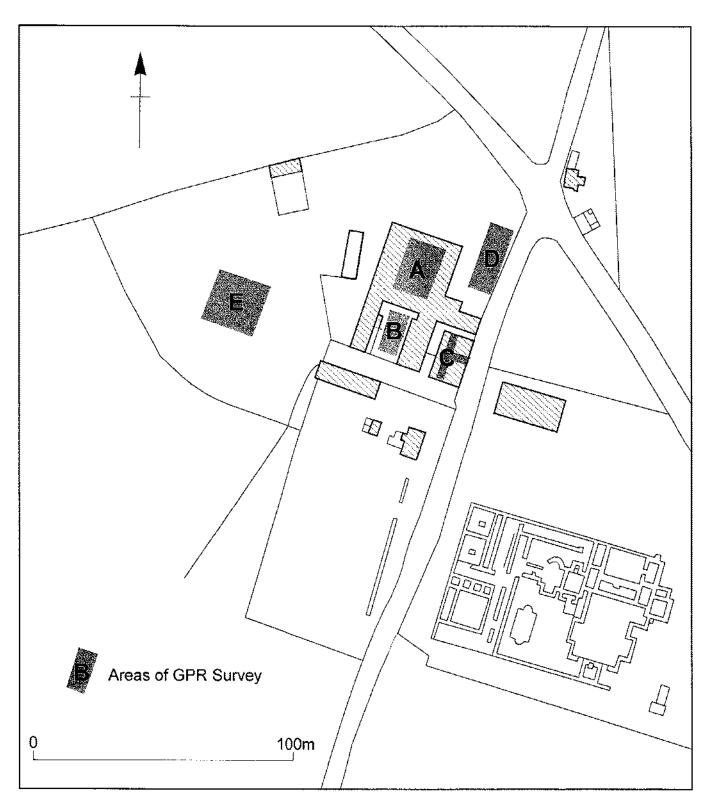


Fig.5

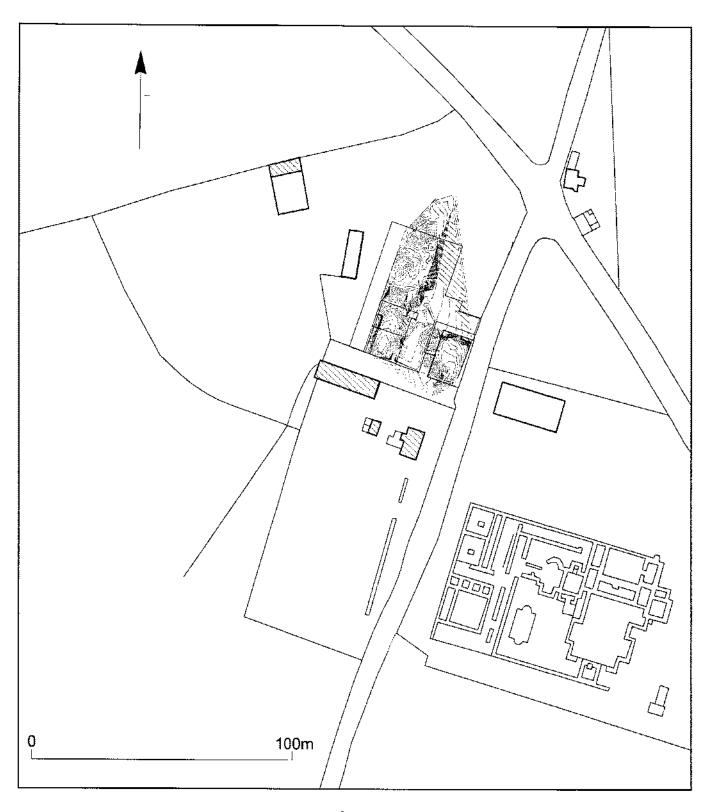
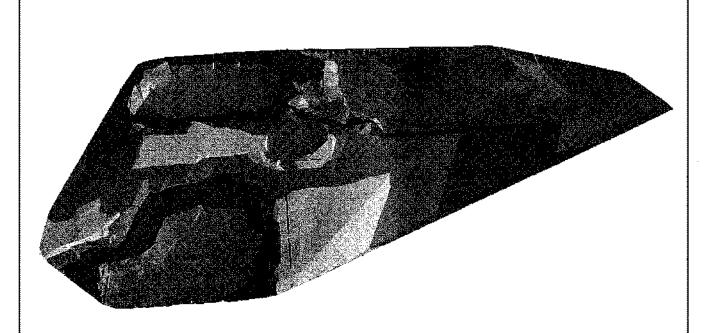
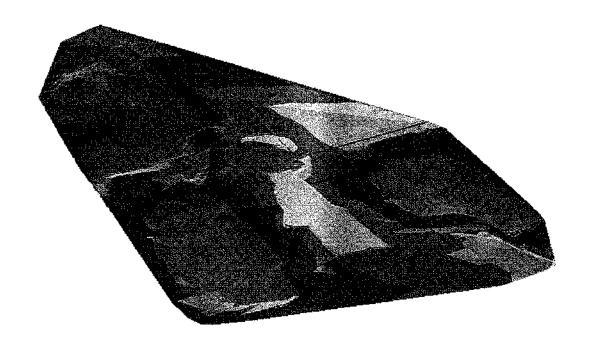


Fig.6



Internal surfaces viewed from the East



Internal surfaces viewed from the South-west

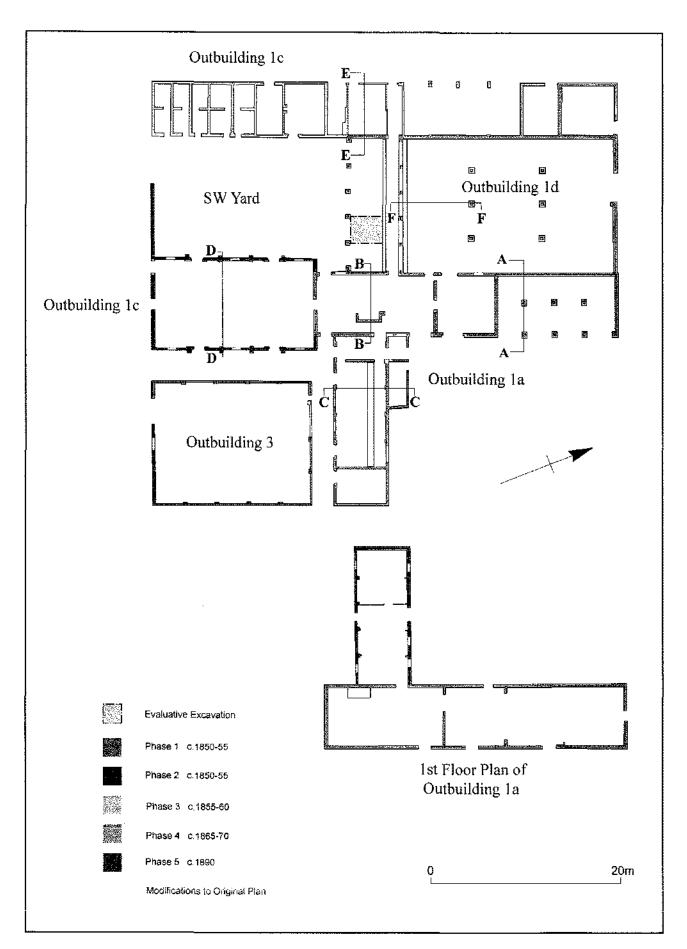


Fig.8

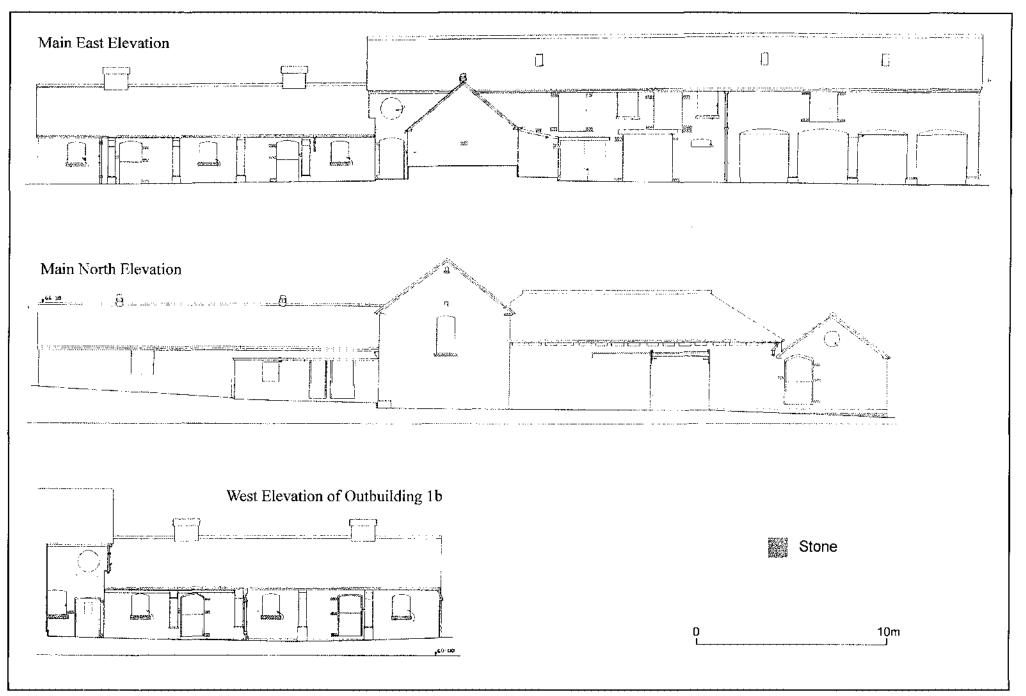


Fig.9

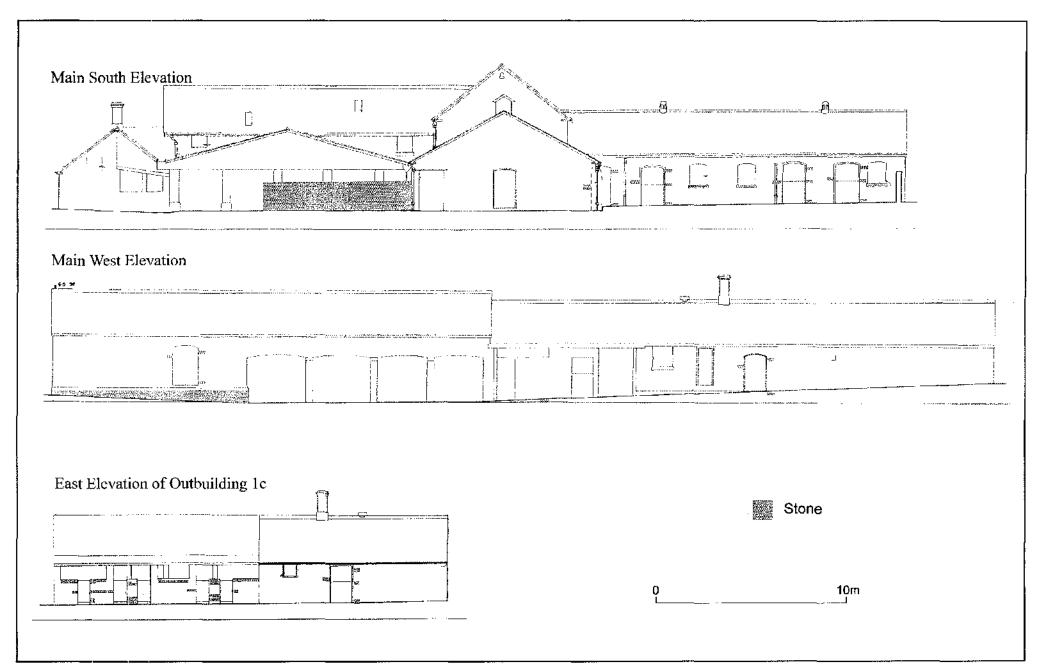


Fig.10

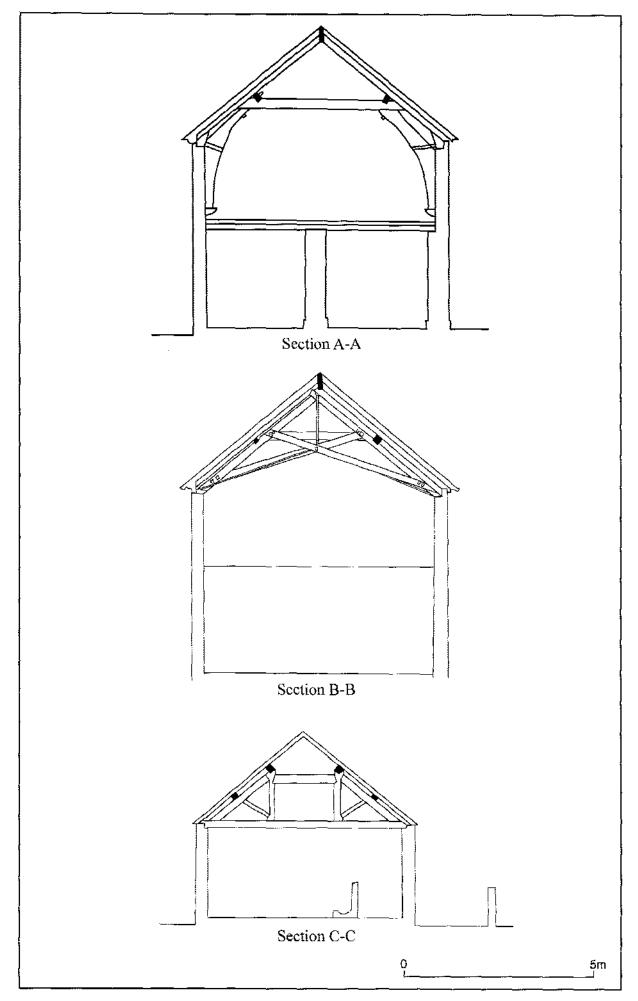


Fig.11

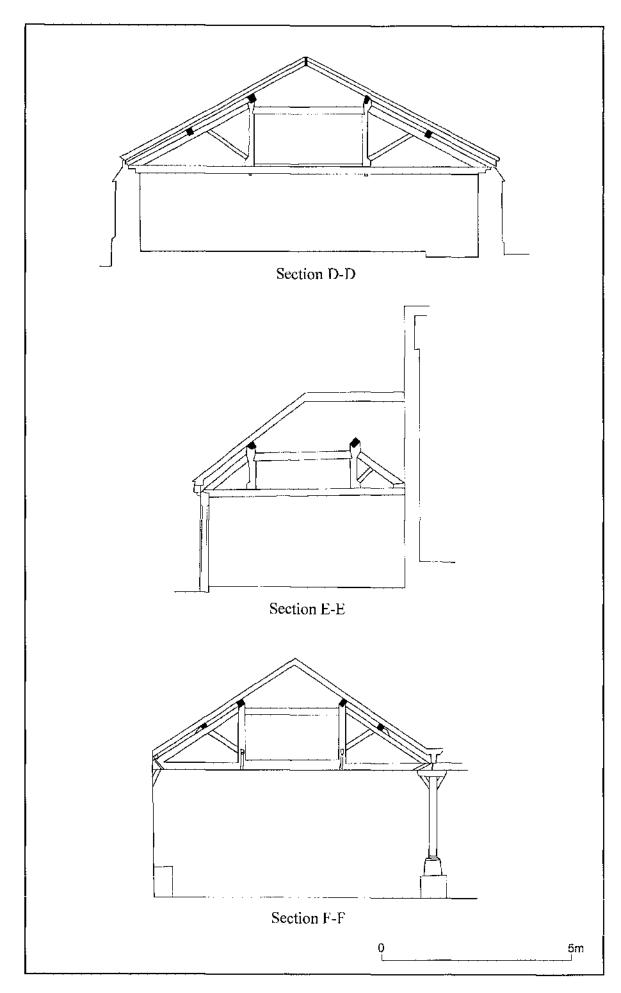


Fig.12

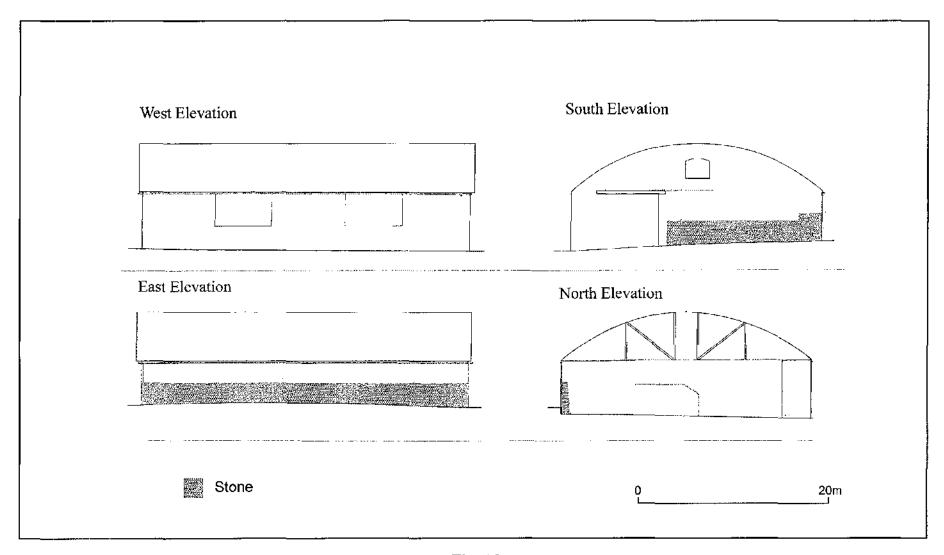


Fig.13

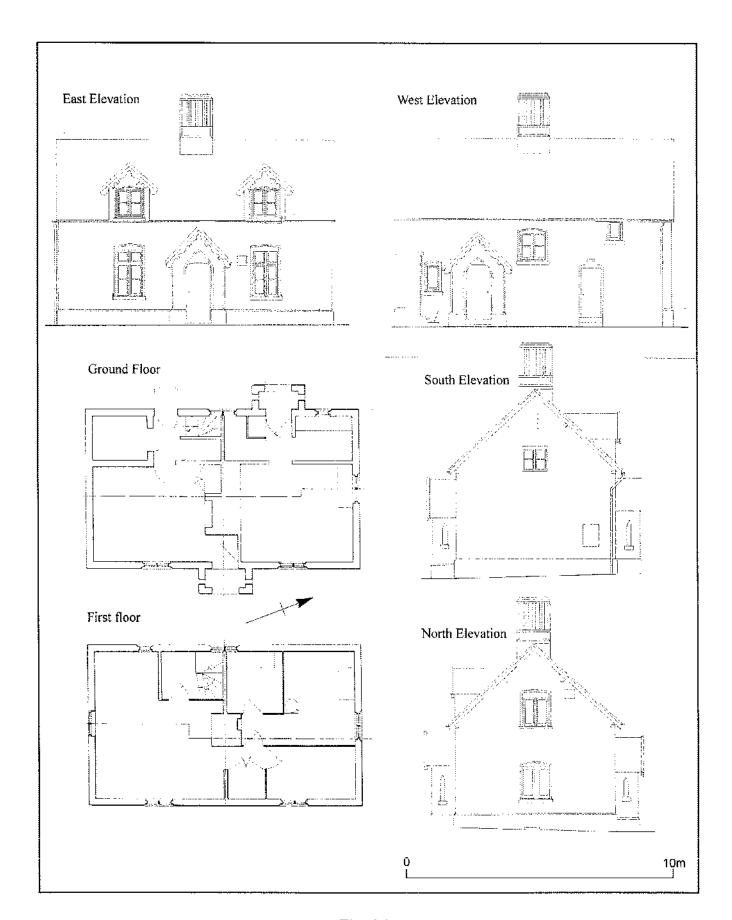


Fig.14

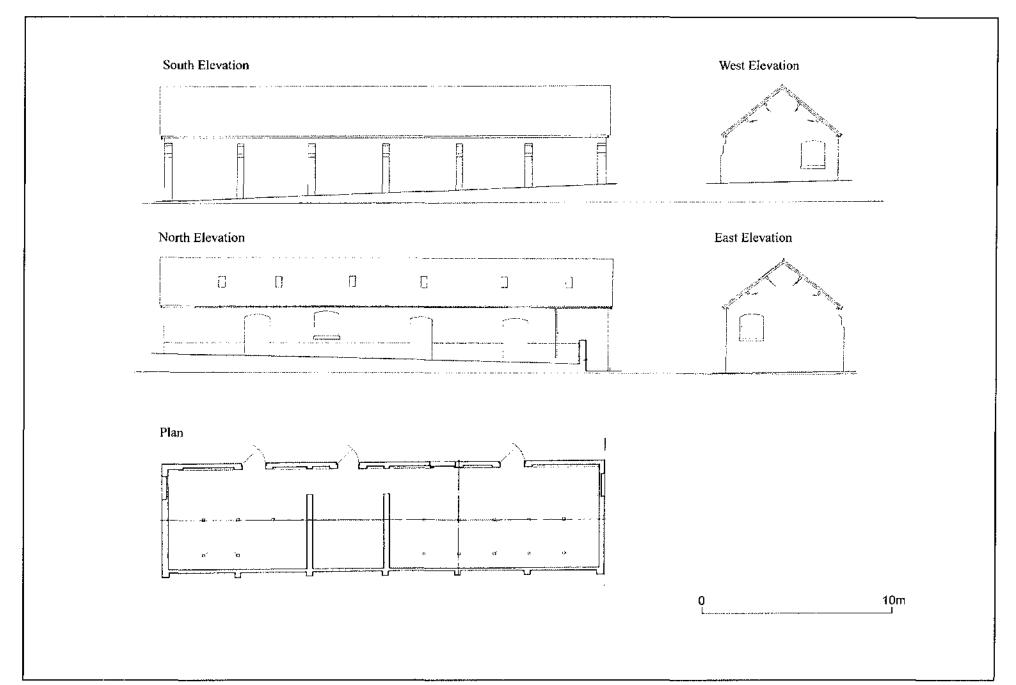


Fig.15

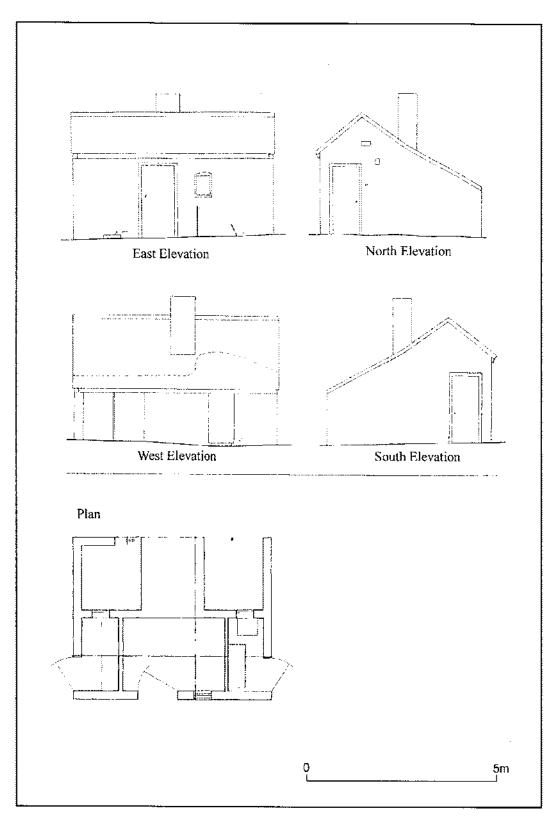


Fig.16

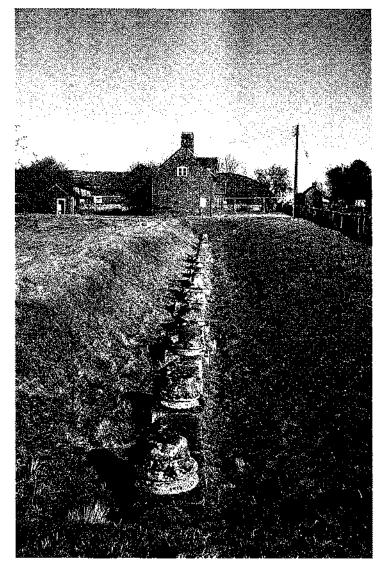


Plate 1



Plate 2





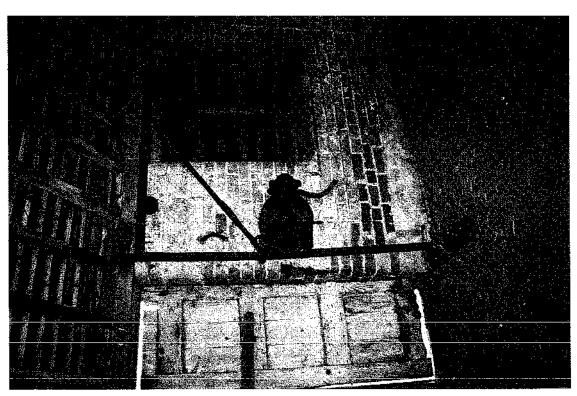




Plate 5



Plate 6

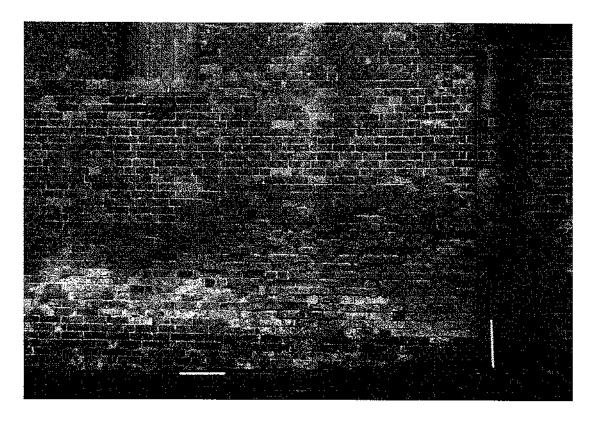


Plate 7

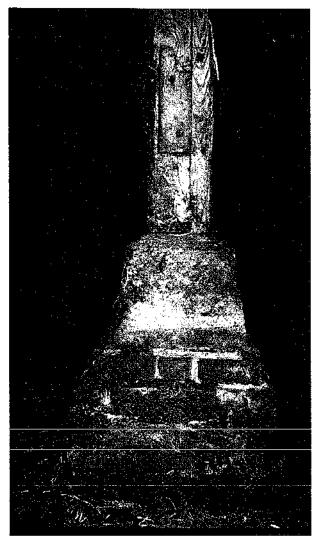


Plate 8

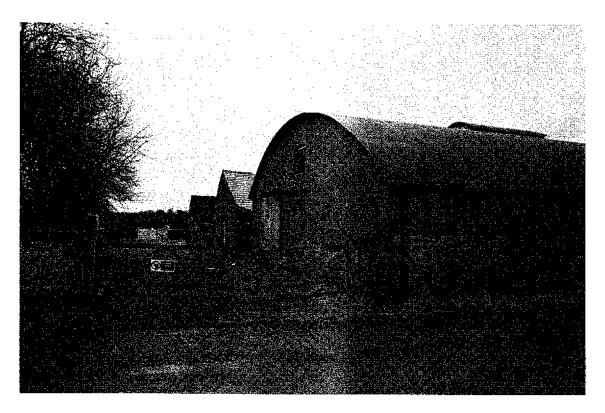


Plate 9

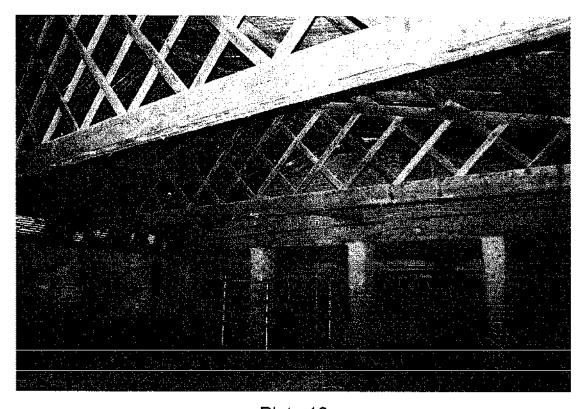


Plate 10

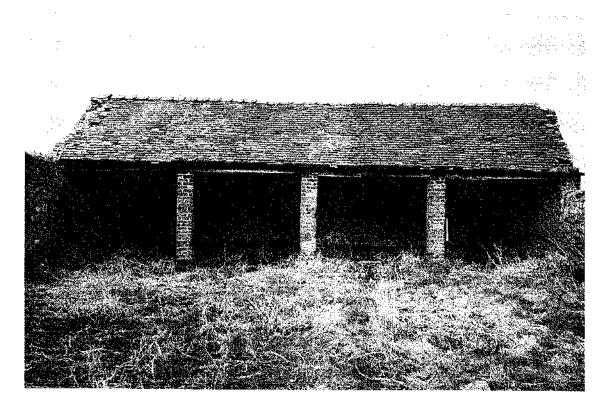


Plate 11



Plate 12

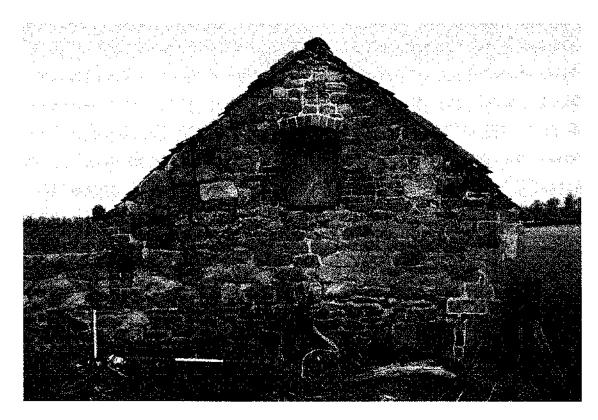


Plate 13

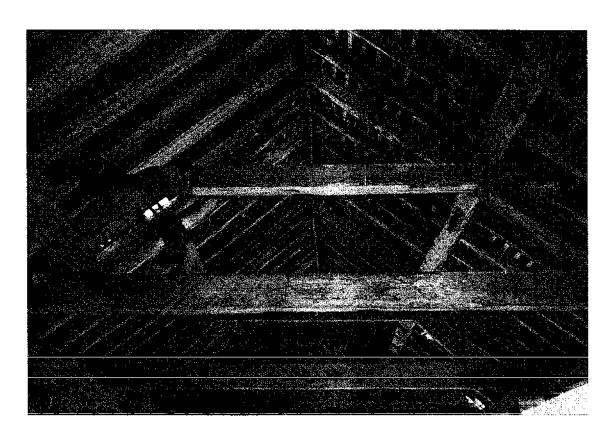


Plate 14



Plate 15



Plate 16

