



# Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**Archaeological building recording, investigation**

**and recording on a barn**

**at 71a Church Street, Burton Latimer, 2014**

**February 2014**

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## Archaeological building recording, investigation and recording on a barn at 71a Church Street, Burton Latimer, 2014

Iain Soden BA MIfA

### Summary

This simple field-barn was constructed in two phases from c1830 and subsequently added to by temporary buildings. In recent decades it was part of a garage business which also encompassed a nearby cart shed. To the barn was added a stable before 1886. There were no interior fittings surviving and reduction of the modern interior concrete floors revealed only drains related to the farming use of the structure.

### Introduction

Daren and Pauline Hughes received Planning Consent to convert the barn and a former cart shed at 71a Church Street, Burton Latimer, into a new home (Planning Application KET/2013/0701, NGR: SP 9041 7510; Fig 1). The barn lies with other buildings on a plot on the north side of Church Street, some 100m east of the Parish Church at a level of 71.3m above Ordnance Datum.

Although the barn is not a listed building, it lies in the Burton Latimer Conservation Area and in the historic core of the village; there are Listed Buildings in the immediate vicinity, including the Grade II-listed farmhouse (73 Church Street), to which the barn once belonged. However, the barn is not considered to be listed by curtilage, any link between the two having been broken many years ago and the barn has continued with its own planning history, very much distinct from the former farmhouse adjacent to the east.

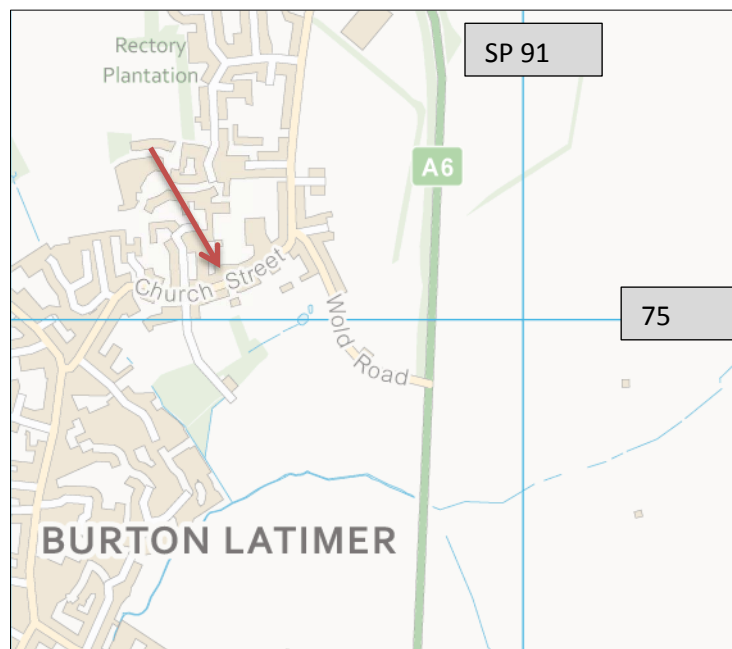


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed).

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Since the building lies in the historic core of the village, close to an historic building and near any potential medieval frontage of Church Street, it was a condition of consent that a programme of archaeological observation and recording take place during the reduction of the barn floors and that the structure be archaeologically recorded before alteration took place. The scope was set down in a County Council-approved 'Written Scheme of Investigation' dated 22 January 2014 (I S Heritage, 2014).



Fig 2: The barn and the courtyard in front, looking north, viewed across Church Street. Old photos show that the entrance was once flanked by substantial stone and brick gate-piers.

### Historical background and context

The barn is visible on all Ordnance Survey maps from the First Edition of 1886 onwards when it had already reached the size and proportions seen today. It must therefore have been constructed before 1886.

The barn is notably absent from the previous map of the village, the 1803 Inclosure Map of Burton Latimer (NRO: Map 2799). This is a very detailed and well-drawn map and in other respects is seen to be a faithful representation of historic buildings in the village. It is clear that the barn had not been built at the time of the survey. The farm, on the north side of Church Street, was in the ownership of George Robinson, whose family later passed it to the Wallis family in 1853. It remained known as Wallis's Farm until recent years, the family also owning a mill and a factory in the village. Many of their family documents and deeds survive in Northamptonshire Record Office (NRO: Box X929).

Wallis deeds suggest that the barn stands on what became (not unreasonably) known as Barn Close, covering 12a 1r 36p. A number of documents relate this name although the earliest seems to be of 1830, which first calls the plot Barn Close and mentions that it includes 'the barn now thereon', a formula not seen in earlier related documents. Later ones repeat the mention of the barn. It is reasonable to suggest that the barn was therefore new when introduced into documentation in 1830.

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No 1840s Tithe Map has been found for the village, leaving the Ordnance Survey to depict it for the first time in 1886, exactly as it stood at the time of the present archaeological recording in January-February 2014.

The barn lies in relatively close proximity to its former farmhouse, on what is now an adjacent plot to its south-east, but appears never to have been part of a planned layout. Rather it is part of an organic agglomeration of buildings added one at a time. As a group therefore they have never been seen as of historical value, nor has the layout conformed to any of the notable agricultural advances which characterised the progress of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the barn began life as a discrete field-barn and may be said to belong to the period of greatest farming expansion and activity after the Napoleonic Wars, when a government began to address the problems of feeding a growing population amidst the general disarray of old-fashioned farming methods and buildings. Their efforts were designed to produce higher crop yields, meat supply and more reliable animal welfare and husbandry.



Fig 3: The barn's front (south) side; scale 1m



Fig 4: The barn's rear (north) side. Note the prominent butt joint of the two phases; scale 1m

The barn has not enjoyed a farming function for many decades. In the post-war period it has been the base for a garage business and graffiti carved into a wet cement-repair adjacent to one of the doors read 'Raraspeed Engineering 1970'. An adjacent building on the plot, probably a former open-fronted cart shed for the same farm, formed the offices of the garage business. The cart-shed also predated 1886 but the only element of this of any age is merely the stone shell formed of the back wall and the gables, enclosing an interior c21.1m long x 4.6m wide.



Fig 5: The adjacent former cart-shed, later garage office and workshop; scale 1m

Other modern temporary offices, toilets and extra garaging space were provided on the plot from probably the 1950s onwards, all within the convenient enclosing walls of the former farmyard, but were demolished as part of the current development. None of them went any way towards complementing the old barn and the nearby cart-shed.

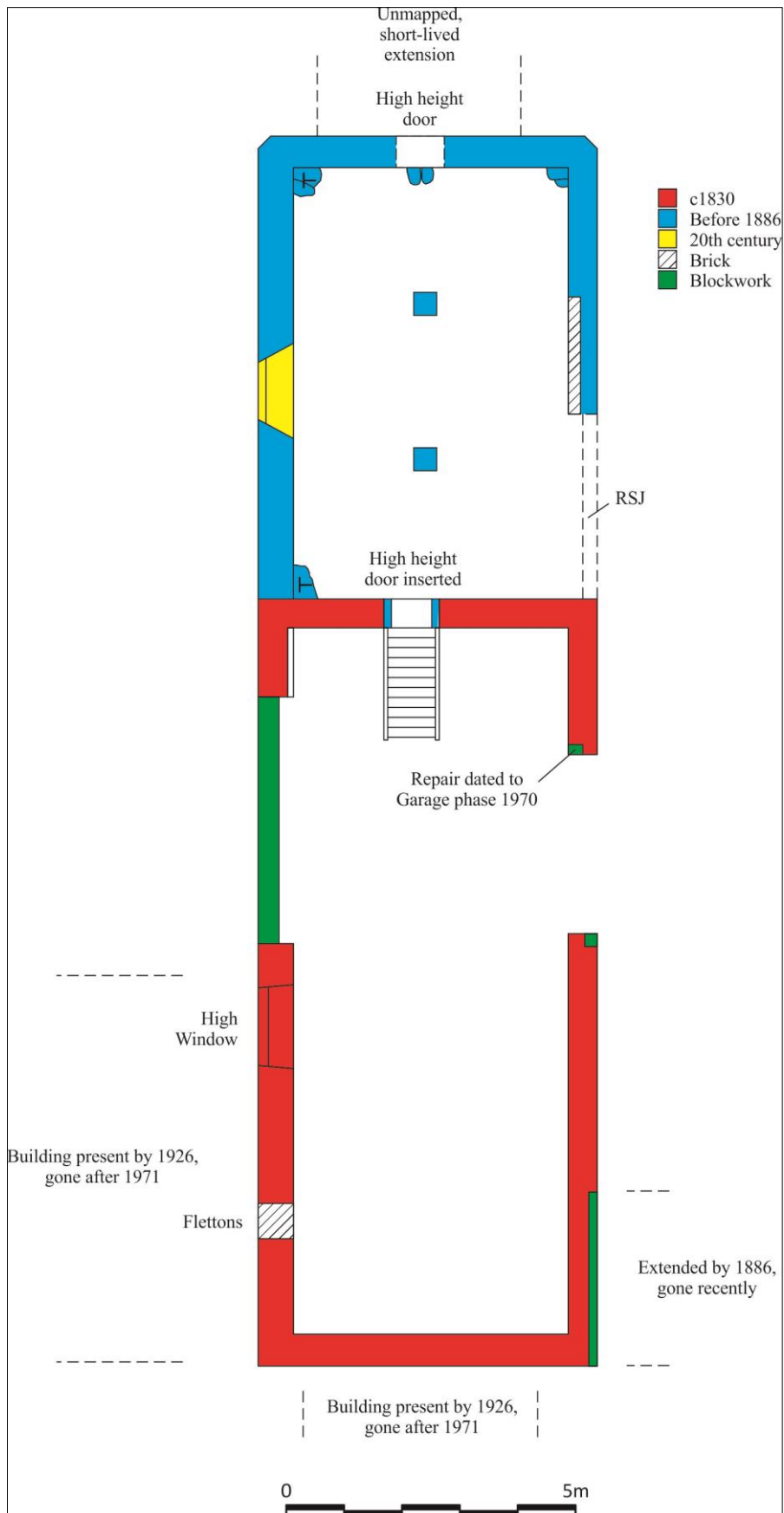


Fig 6: The barn ground plan, phased (north to left)

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The barn began life as part of what has been characterised as a Dispersed Plan, to which additions were made, although here those additions were organic and never regularised the layout before the farming function came to an end. The barn belongs to the period of greatest English agricultural expansion, 1750-1850 (HELM 2006, 26 and 41).

Aspects of the site and the farmhouse, but not the barn, appear in historic photos taken between c1905 and c1919 (Rotary Club 1991, Cover; 48, 131-2).

### **Barn-recording and investigation during ground-works**

The barn itself comprises walls constructed of ashlar stone in Northampton Sand with Ironstone. This exterior is of relatively high quality stonework, and in a village which makes at least as much use of rubble walling in local limestone. The barn interior is made of that same limestone rubble, with only (apparent) occasional ironstone, although this attribution is nowhere fully certain due to many layers of internal lime-wash.

The floors were of concrete, dating to the use of the building as a garage, while the roof, in common with the adjacent former cart-shed/garage offices was of Welsh Slate.

The surrounding farmyard wall was made from limestone, with occasional ironstone touches. It had been raised in brick on the east side, probably when the garage was set up, to screen it from the former farmhouse further east.



Fig 7: The farmyard eastern wall, distinctively of both limestone and ironstone, later raised in brick for the garage. The east end of the barn is glimpsed beyond. The row of overgrown Leylandii and two mature Sycamores behind had to be felled before the north side of the barn was photographed.

The barn was constructed in two distinct phases. The western half, measuring 11.9m x 4.8m internally and 5.4m high to the ridge-plank and 3.55m to the soffit of the two roof trusses, was built



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first, and was a self-contained shell with a 'hay-wain door' on both long sides. The northern doorway was later stopped up in block-work when the barn became part of the garage business.

In the north wall were also two windows, one of them high up, and the other, lower down, being very small, perhaps for security reasons, or to prevent animals from putting their noses through it. This latter example was blocked in modern Fletton bricks as part of the garage phase.

The second phase comprised an added eastern portion to the structure, measuring 7.2m x 4.6m and of two bays internally, of which the butt-joint in the stonework on the north side was very prominent (Fig 4). Again a window looked north. This window had been shortened and the shortening effected in brick, possibly when the garage conversion took place. It is the barn of these final combined two-phase proportions which was mapped in 1886. Therefore the addition took place before this date. The stonework of the extension was provided with high, chamfered carriage-corners on the east end, suggesting that the turning of wains and other wheeled vehicles could be very tight around both corners. The chamfer helped prevent waggon axles damaging the stone and the corners catching on recently-gathered and messily stacked crops as they were brought in for processing or empty carts sent back out for more.

The roof structure of the barn was identical to that used over the nearby former cart shed, but was also identical to both barn-phases. They were formed by the use of a series of industrial trusses (three in the barn, five identical in the cart shed) with truncated uprights of a type to accept a further, narrower, timber lift to incorporate a ventilation louvre along the ridge (clearly not designed for a barn, or a cart-shed for that matter). No such louvre would ever have been needed on a barn or a cart shed; it is more at home on a railway loco-shed for allowing the escape of smoke and noxious gases. It is possible that this roof is only as old as the garage-phase of the site, although the dilapidated state of the Welsh Slate covering suggests it is older. Old photographs which show part of the former cart shed suggest that the roof and its underlying trusses may be of c1900 (Rotary Club 1991). The fact that the Wallis farming family also owned a mill and a factory suggests they would have had easy access to industrial architectural elements to re-use or makers to employ. Suffice to say, its ubiquity on this site shows that the roof is not original to the barn.

Scars in the stonework, brick-patches and remnants of cement or mortar flaunching showed small unrelated temporary structures had at some point been built against all four faces of the barn, but no indication existed as to what functions these may have served at any point. There was no indication either of the modes of their construction. Not all had survived long enough to even appear on a single Ordnance Survey map. The sizes in plan and relative lengths of their existence are noted in Fig 6, above.

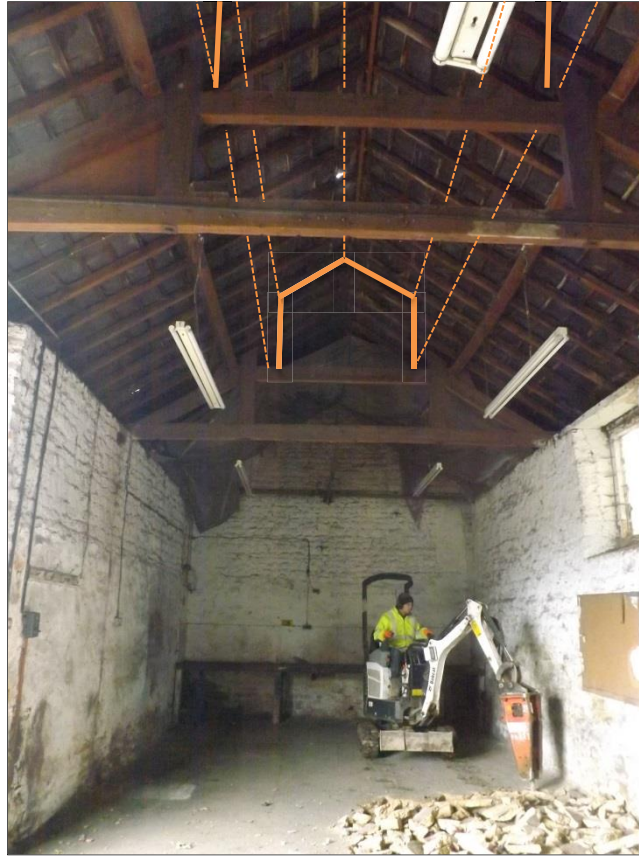


Fig 8: The barn interior and roof. The trusses are actually industrial and were designed to support a higher, central louvre (its position shown reconstructed here).

The barn contained no farm-related fixtures or fittings, although marks covered by the lime-wash in the eastward extension indicated that animal troughs formerly stood at the northern corners there (each marked with a T in Fig 6). This was the first indication that the eastern half was built specifically for livestock, rather than being a second barn. In addition the extension had been supplied with a first floor hay-loft (at a height of 2.73m from the ground floor inside), with direct access from both a hatch in the outer gable and a connecting doorway (and stair) put into the original barn interior. While a stair was taken out in the current conversion (shown above), this must date to the modern garage phase only, since it stood on the concrete floor and spanned awkwardly across what would have been the route between the main through-doorways of the original barn.



Fig 9: The scar (arrowed) of an animal trough in the eastern half of the barn; scale 1m

Following recording of the upstanding structure, the reduction of the floors in both sides of the barn was monitored archaeologically, the 5-ton, 360-degree tracked excavator being fitted with a toothless ditching blade.

In the original, western half of the barn, 150-200mm thick concrete was broken up and taken away. Beneath this lay a ubiquitous sandy loam of old, compacted topsoil, presumably belonging to the plot on which the barn was constructed. The barn's foundations extended down through this, entirely filling any possible original construction trench, which was thus not visible. There were no indications of a purpose-laid barn floor predating the concrete and it is therefore assumed that it was earthen-floored. Cut through the soils and built at the same time as the concrete had been laid, was a brick lined vehicle inspection pit, which had evidently served the garage. At its demise it was filled with stone rubble, fragments of red ceramic pan-tile and numerous car and engine parts, including an entire wheel. On this evidence alone it appears that the barn had been the vehicle workshop. There were no finds of any sort which derived from the original barn soils. The ground inside was reduced a total of 450mm.



Fig 10: Western half of the barn; the vehicle inspection pit to left of centre, ground levels reduced.

The same process was applied to the eastern half of the barn, with the breaking of a thinner floor, of perhaps an average 100-150mm of concrete. Again a total of 450mm was removed using a machine with a toothless ditching bucket. Here the soils had been imported and were not a former topsoil but comprised patches of clay and sand, with occasional water-worn pebbles in groups, perhaps suggestive of a former pebble-floor. Reduction exposed two brick-lined square drains along the mid-line of the barn, backfilled with soil. These were typical drains placed towards the back of a stall to drain waste from a stable. No drain grilles or certain floor surfaces survived and so these must have been removed to put down the concrete for the garage. Again there were no finds which predated the garage, and no finds had been imported with the material of which the stable sub-floor was composed. No features were present which pre-date the creation of the barn and its extension.



Fig 11: The two brick drains in the former stable half of the barn; scale 1m. In this depiction black and white is preferred as the yellow-brown soils and low, strong sunshine produced a (ghastly) yellow colour-cast over the view.

### Conclusions

The stone barn at 71a Church Street began life as a small crop barn in its own plot for the Robinson family just before c1830. It passed to the Wallis family in the middle of the century. Before 1886 it had been extended eastwards with the addition of a stable. A long cart shed was added nearby, while the two buildings at this extent were newly roofed with industrial-style trusses and a Welsh Slate covering. Once farming had ceased, in the post-war period the site became a garage and the barn was used for vehicle repairs. This re-use stripped the barn of its farm-related interiors.

No structural or finds-evidence was present of pre-barn occupation or use of the plot. In the western half of the barn the soils might suggest that if buried remains exist, they lie deeper than the ground reduction of the barn conversion, while in the eastern half the ground reduction suggests that levels have been reduced previously, removing previous traces. The absence of any pre 19<sup>th</sup>-century finds of any sort suggests the site has very little wider potential for evidence of earlier occupation.

## **Bibliography**

HELM 2006 *Historic Farmsteads Preliminary Character Statement: East Midlands Region*

I S Heritage, 2014 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Level 2 building recording and small-scale below-ground archaeological observation and recording at a barn at 71a Church Street, Burton Latimer*

Rotary Club Ise Valley, 1991 *Burton Latimer – Portrait of a certain place*



IS Heritage

17 February 2014

## 71a Church Street, Burton Latimer

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### Appendix 1: OASIS data

Project Name	71a Church Street, Burton Latimer
OASIS ID	Iainsode1-232082
Project Type	Building recording
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	None
Current land use	In use as a building
Development type	Conversion to residence
Reason for investigation	Planning condition
National grid reference	SP 9041 7510
Start/end dates of fieldwork	February 2014
Archive recipient	-
Study area	-