



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**Level 2 Building recording on part of Stanwick
Hall Farm Barns, Northamptonshire**

September 2013

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Stanwick, Hall Farm Barns

Level 2 Building recording on part of Stanwick Hall Farm Barns, Northamptonshire

Iain Soden BA MIfA

Summary

This small portion of a former model farm is among the last conversions to domestic use in the complex. It comprises a so-called dovecote and stabling, which contain some original fabric but few original features.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Mr and Mrs Turner for their commission, via Stuart Long, their architect and to Mr Long for permission to use his survey base for illustration. Thanks to Zoe Turner for her hospitality on site. Thanks to Candy Stevens for her drawings.

Introduction

Conversion is consented for a small remaining portion of what was formerly a Model Farm of the second quarter of the 19th century and which used to belong to Stanwick Hall. Stanwick Hall Farm barns stand south-west of the village of Stanwick, set back from the Higham Road (NGR: SP 9763 7110; Fig 1). The majority of the former farmyard has already been converted to domestic use.

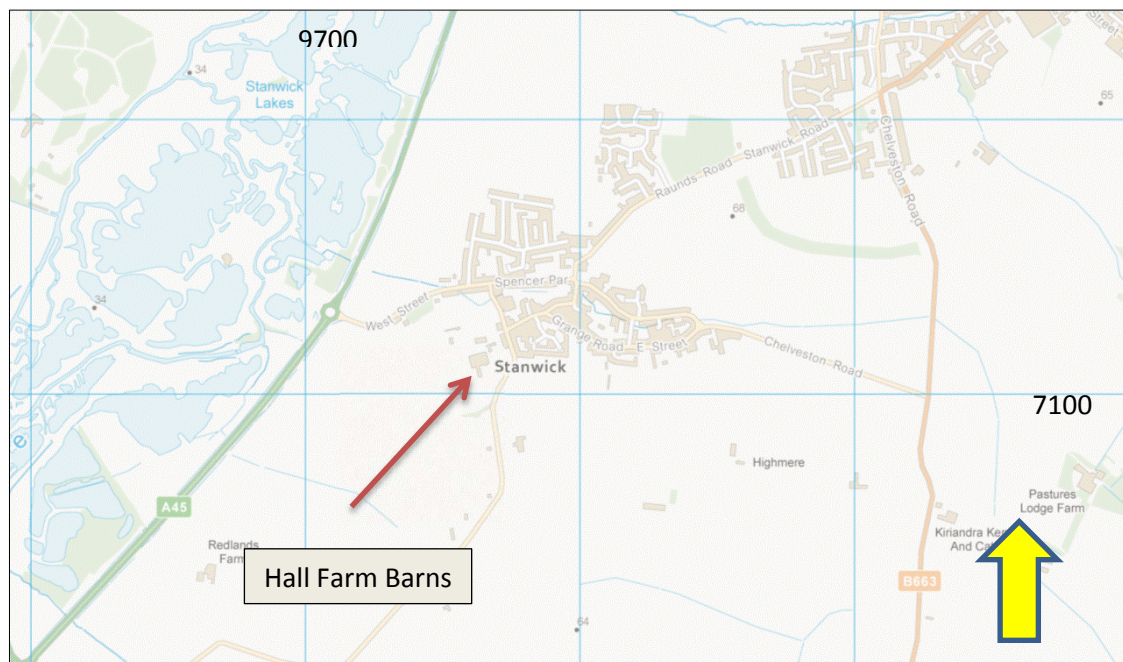


Fig 1: Site location.

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This report relates the results of fieldwork and research required as a response to a planning application to convert part of the complex to accommodation. In this case the buildings involved are the so-called dovecote and an adjacent stable, formerly the end-portion of the central wing of the farm buildings (Fig 2). Level 2 building recording (as defined by EH 2006) and related research was required by Northamptonshire County Council as a condition of planning consent given by East Northamptonshire Council (EN/13/00568/FUL). This was set out in a brief issued by Northamptonshire County Council, dated 25 June 2013.

The aims and scope of the work are mirrored in a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd and dated 30 August 2013.

Fieldwork took the form of:

- Separate colour (digital) and black and white (film/negative) 35mm photographic records. A tripod and electronic flash were used inside the buildings.
- Annotation and interpretation from verified architect's plans and sections at 1:50 scale. (Internal measurements on site were verified for archaeological purposes using a Leica Disto laser measurer. External measurements were verified by tapes and folding rule).
- Free-text notes.

To this has been added map-regression and simple research on the building-type, as appropriate.

These form the basis of a small archive for deposition with the county archaeological archive, as appropriate. In the meantime, as much as possible is included in the present report, in order to make it more readily accessible through the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record.

The character of the buildings

At the middle of the 19th century farming in Northamptonshire was reported to be in dire straits, with little care and attention paid to its farm buildings, even by most of the large estates. There were few notable exceptions, the Duke of Grafton's estates near Towcester being the only ones meriting praise (Bearn 1852, 85; Wade Martins 2002, 118).

The buildings of Stanwick Hall Farm barns are the remainder of a former 19th-century Model Farm which describes in simple terms a Regular Courtyard E-plan, of which the following is said authoritatively of the type, with specific reference to the East Midlands:

'[They] were recommended from the mid-18th century and many are documented from this period, though no surviving examples can be dated before the 1790s. The earlier examples are courtyard or U-plan with the barn forming the central block and shelter sheds, stables and enclosed cow houses the two side wings. The fourth side was no more than a wall with a gateway, or contained further sheds or smaller buildings such as pigsties, or was distinguished by a house (usually looking away from the yard). From the 1820s and 1830s, extra yards made E or even double-E plans.'

'The ultimate examples of courtyard farmsteads are the planned and model farms of the late 18th- and 19th-century estates, the ideas for which were widely disseminated in textbooks and journals (Wade Martins 2002) they are generally associated with holdings over 150 acres, and are far less

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likely than the other plan types to be associated with other loose scatters of buildings' (HELM 2006, 42 [section 5.1.5]).

The age of the farm from historic maps

The farm is not depicted on the 1817 Ordnance Survey Surveyors Drawing (Wellingborough sheet; British Library), which is otherwise of sufficient scale to show such a complex. Nor does it appear on Bryant's map of Northamptonshire of 1827.

The first larger-scale survey of the parish of Stanwick is the Inclosure Map of 1838, formalising its 1834 parliamentary Inclosure. The village is well depicted but there are clearly no farm buildings of any sort at the appropriate location, which is the corner of a large 26-acre field in 'Nether Field' (the pre-Inclosure name) noted as an allotment to George Gascoyen Senior, Esq, at its junction with a plot attached to Stanwick Hall, called *Cherry Orchard* (NRO: Map 3020). Therefore the construction of the farm buildings may be safely dated after 1838.

No map depiction shows the farm before 1885. The farm is first depicted on the 1885 First edition Ordnance Survey map at 1:2500 scale, sufficient to show all the buildings, and the depiction is repeated again in 1900 (OS XXXIII.14; detail in Fig 2) and 1926. By the 1970s the two stockyards had become in-filled with a variety of lean-tos and free-standing farm sheds, since lost.

Most of the original farm ranges have now been converted to domestic accommodation and are divided up into different ownerships, and include new-build houses.

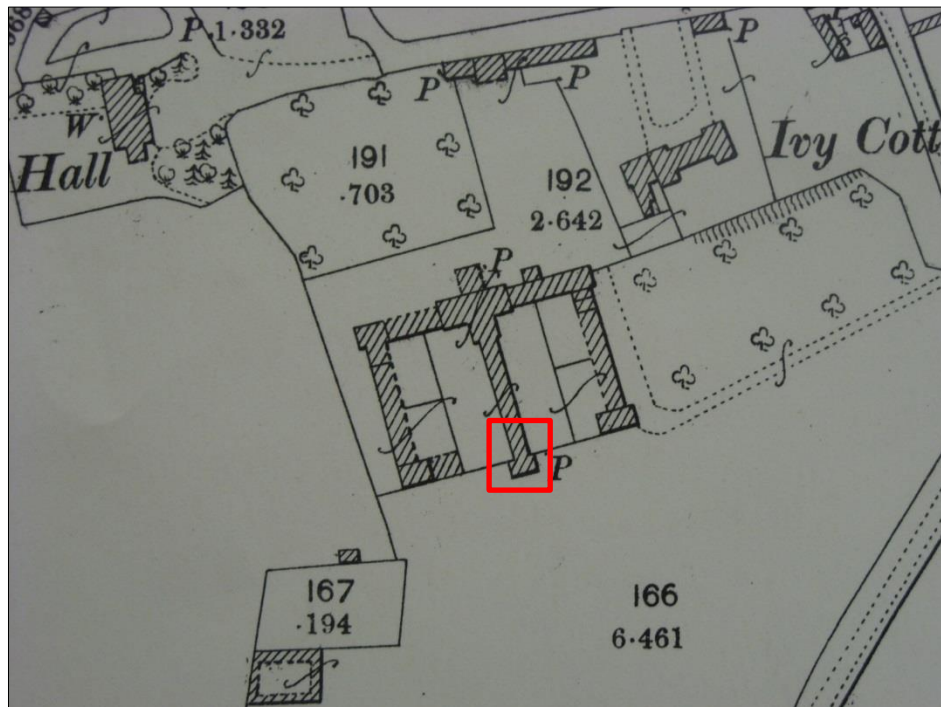


Fig 2: The farm buildings as depicted in 1885 and 1900. OS 2nd edition 1900. The portion which is the subject of the current application is boxed in red.

The Buildings

The buildings are constructed of walls c500mm thick in coursed local limestone under Welsh slate roofs. The walls rest on offset foundations, the junction finished in red-firing plinth-bricks, a hallmark of the third quarter of the 19th century.

Red-firing brick is also used to stress the more prominent quoins, together with the reveals and lintels of doors and windows in a purely decorative manner (in that it could have been done equally in stone).

There is very little alteration to the basic structure and the majority of the building is as originally built (Fig 3).

The front building is of two storeys under a hipped roof with a lead-sheathed timber cupola supporting a weather-vane (Fig 4). It is known as 'The dovecote'. To the north lies a single-storey range of stables, coterminous with other such buildings beyond (Figs 4 and 5). These adjacent buildings beyond the current site were not accessed.

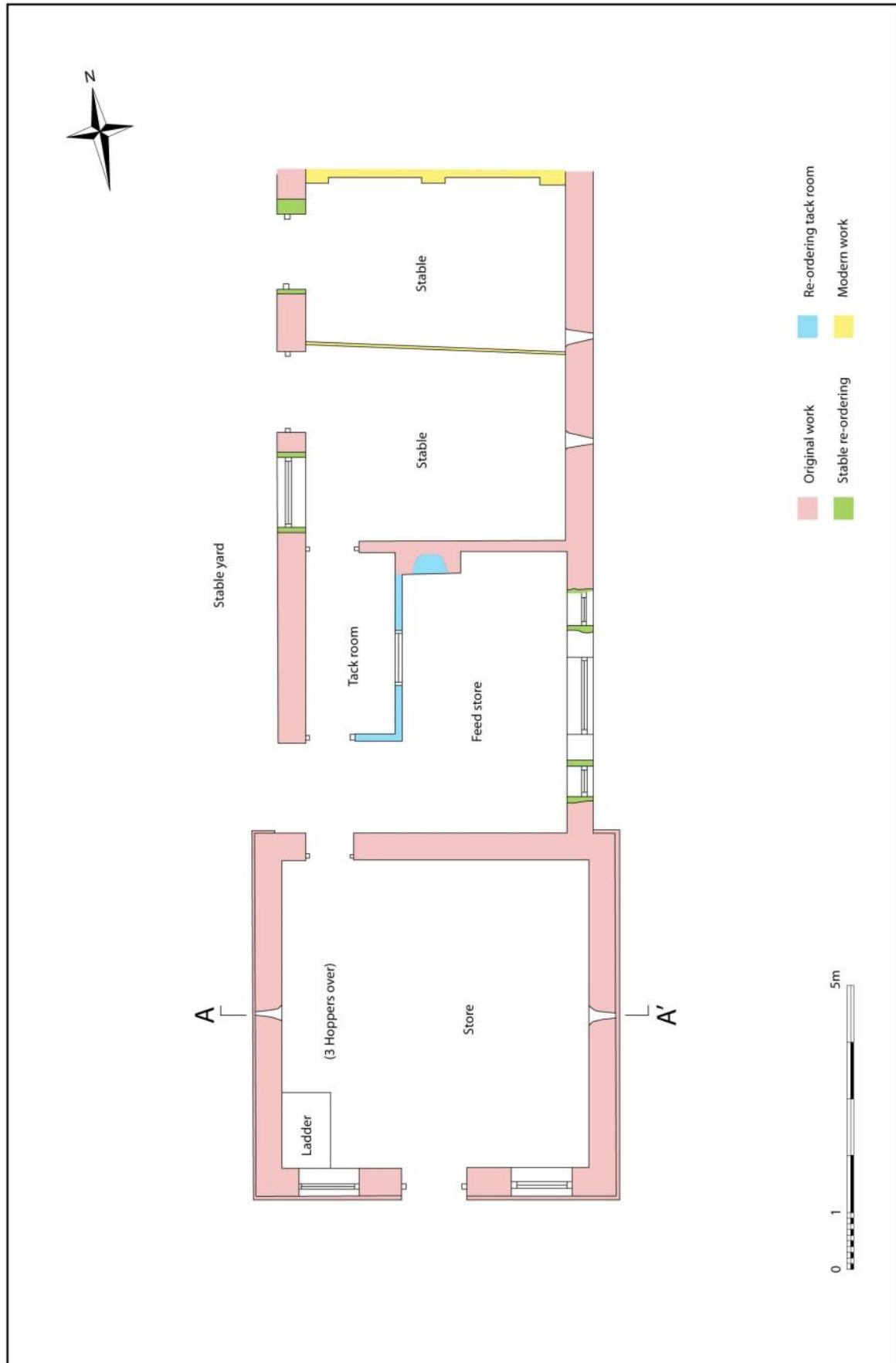


Fig 3: Phased building plan, ground floor, with location of section A-A'



Fig 4: The buildings, from the south-west



Fig 5: The buildings from the north-west (formerly the western stock yard, now stable yard)



Fig 6: the almost inaccessible east side (formerly the eastern stock yard)

The so-called dovecote

This two-storey building is today used as a garden store on the ground floor, with the first floor currently unused. The roof covering has recently been replaced and re-leaded.

Despite its name, there remains scant evidence that the building ever served as a purpose-built dovecote. Triangular flight-holes formed in lead around timber in the roof-slopes are very large for doves/pigeons, and may also have been created as owl-holes, for those birds of prey to keep down vermin. Certainly such big flight holes might militate against doves/pigeons as they are big enough for an owl to pursue a smaller bird into. However, no nesting boxes or related timberwork survives to confirm the attribution either way.

The main structure of this building is of one phase, the original work of between 1838 and 1885, and in all probability 1852-85 (Fig 3). It is furnished with a central, south-facing door on both storeys, each flanked by a pair of matching windows, slightly smaller on the upper storey. Woodwork is painted in a maroon livery. The windows are barred for security on both storeys. The east and west faces of the ground floor room are each provided with a ventilation slit high up in the wall (Figs 4 and 6).



Fig 7: The so-called dovecote, front (south) face; scale 1m

The ground floor room, measuring 5.44m x 5.39m internally and 2.44m to the underside of the ceiling joists, contains no original features. The walls are bare stonework, while the floor is of worn bricks, patched with concrete. There is a connecting doorway in the north wall to the stable behind. A ladder at the south-west corner gives access through a hole in the ceiling to the room above. Empty hinge-positions indicate this once held a trap-door over it.

Headroom on the west side is interrupted by three downward-pointing timber chutes, each braced with iron straps (Fig 8). These have been put through the ceiling from the room above where later feed hoppers make for a huge loading on the floor, braced by a single iron strut from floor to ceiling (Fig 8).



Fig 8: Ground floor interior, looking south-west towards the ladder access; note the three chutes, strapping and the iron ceiling strut

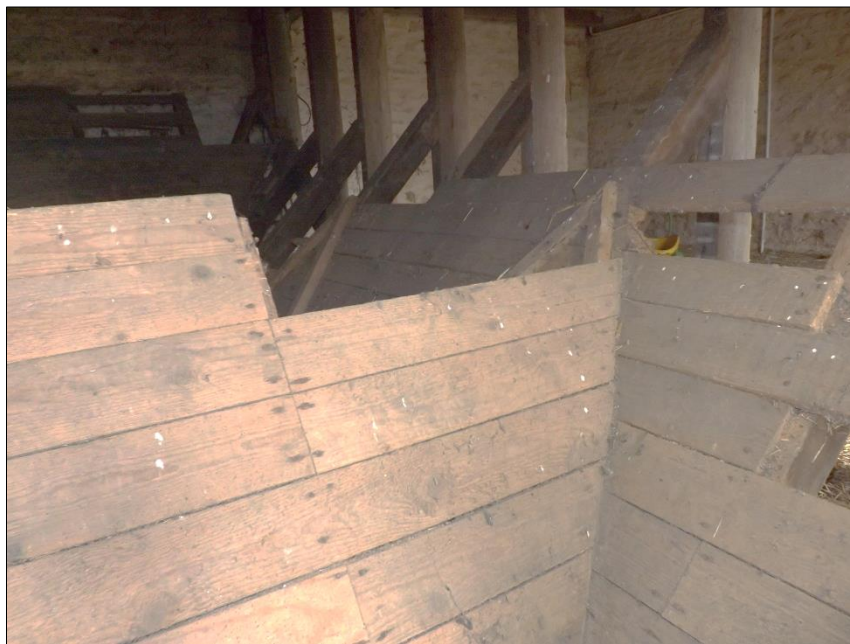


Fig 9: The first floor: view across the feed-hoppers to the empty space beyond (brightness enhanced, contrast reduced)

The room on the first floor is of the same plan-dimensions as the ground floor, but with slightly less-head-room (1.91m). Unlike the ground floor it has no side-facing ventilation slits. The room appears to have had no interior fittings but half of its floor-space has since been taken up with the insertion or a row of three timber feed-hoppers (Fig 9). Their location, (for which see Fig 10) did not interfere with the upper-floor door, through which sacks could be unloaded directly from the back of a wagon or wain, or using a block and tackle on a hoist (of which nothing remains). The hoppers rest within a

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simple timber frame inserted into the room and their additional weight, when in use, was taken by the iron support for the joists below (Fig 8). The roof above was not accessible, as it was provided with only partial boarding. A view up to the cupola underside was possible for photographic purposes (Fig 11).

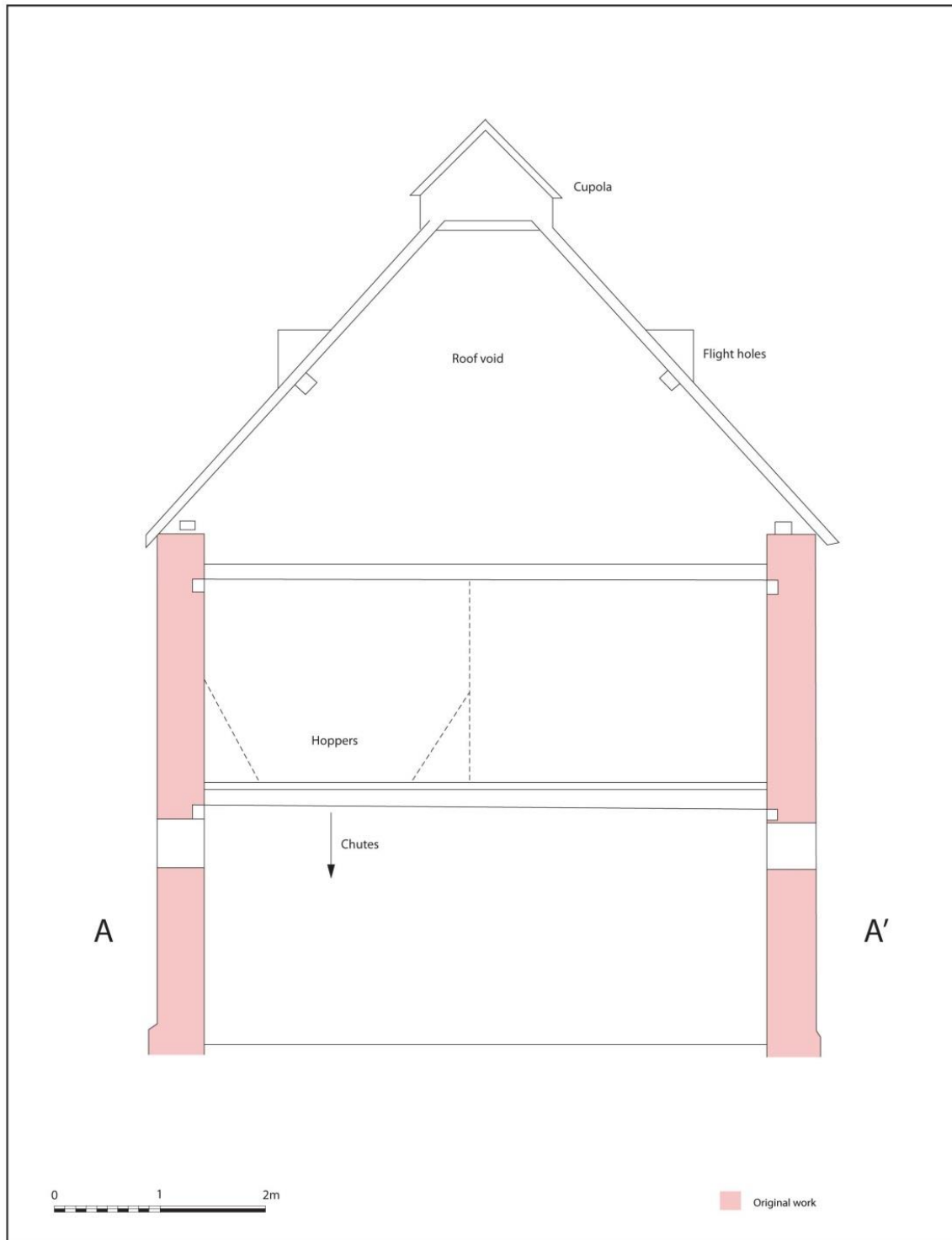


Fig 10: The so-called dovecote, section A-A', across the ventilation slits



Fig 11: View through the second storey ceiling joists to the underside of the cupola
(brightness enhanced, contrast reduced)

The stables

The adjacent stables remain currently in the use for which they were designed. Their north end is blanked off in block-work (orange in Fig 3), separating the stable from those beyond.

There are currently two stalls, to which only the more southerly has an original doorway. The brick jambs of its northern counterpart's doorway have been partly rebuilt using Fletton bricks. They are separated by a steel partition (Fig 11). No early travis or hay-racks, troughs etc survive. Their east-facing lighting is by a ventilation-slit only. A larger window in the west wall is a more recent insertion.

The southerly portion of the block, adjacent to the stable, is a tack-room (Fig 12). It was originally served by a fireplace in the dividing wall, backing onto the stable, but this has been blocked. Of three windows in its east face, only one is original, flanked by two later insertions, deploying Fletton bricks. The room is today used for storage. Its doorway to the stable yard has been modified to take a sliding door (Fig 5, right hand side). Within this room is a smaller space subdivided off in single-skin brick stretchers, some of it textured brick of the 1970s, and lit only by borrowed light through a window from the feed room (Fig 12). This tiny space is used for storing tack.



Fig 11: The stable interior



Fig 12: The former tack room, subdivided again on the left to make a smaller tack-store.

Conclusions

This, one of the last surviving portions of the former farm buildings of an E-plan Model Farm, was built between 1838 and 1885 and probably after 1852, when it would have undoubtedly drawn favourable comment in contemporary literature had it existed.

Three phases are apparent in the use of the buildings up to this date (Fig 3):

1. Original build (1838/52-1885)
2. Reordering of the windows and doors, after the 1940s
3. Insertion of a small tack store, potentially from the 1970s
4. Division off from neighbouring property in block-work

At some point the feed hoppers were inserted into the front building on the first floor, but these cannot be firmly dated.

The attribution of the front building as a dovecote seems shaky and none of the relevant internal features for a dovecote exist, such as nesting boxes or potence/ladder-frames for reaching the squabs. Since the building as constructed contains two floors, each with a pedestrian door and large windows, with bars, it is suggested that it was built as an office and store in a focal location for the farmyards, potentially for use by a pivotal person, such as the farm bailiff or manager. The potential for doves or pigeons to use the roof is merely incidental and partly decorative rather than utilitarian.

The stables are a tiny remaining proportion of such stock-accommodation which would have been provided to the farmyard. How typical it is within the complex cannot now be ascertained.

It was hoped that the buildings might contribute to the Research Agenda put out in Knight et al (2012), and in particular Objective 9F (131). However the previous conversion of the majority of the farmyard means that the context of the current buildings cannot now be fully appreciated, with the result that potential to contribute to the on-going characterisation of the rural environment is much diminished. Model Farms, however forward-thinking and innovative they may have been in their day are, by their nature and size, difficult to convert, subdivide and retain in meaningful detail, once they have outlived their farming use.

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IS Heritage, 19 September 2013

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Appendix 1: OASIS data

Project Name	Stanwick Hall Farm Barns
OASIS ID	Iainsode1-232088
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 9763 7110
Start/end dates of fieldwork	September 2013
Archive recipient	-
Study area	-