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Modern living in an historic environment

**A Level II Building Record of former barns and
other farm buildings at Spring Hill Farm,
Bozeat, Northamptonshire**

Charlotte Walker and Joe Prentice

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Summary

Research and Level 2 Building Recording reveals Spring Hill farm to be a Loose Courtyard plan farm of the period c1750-1880. Most of its surviving buildings served a mixed arable and pastoral regime, with a more recent focus on pig rearing. The buildings retain little detail.

Introduction

Planning consent has been given to GAT Developments for the conversion to domestic use of a group of former farm buildings at Spring Hill Farm, Dychurch Lane, Bozeat, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 9091 5896; Fig 1).

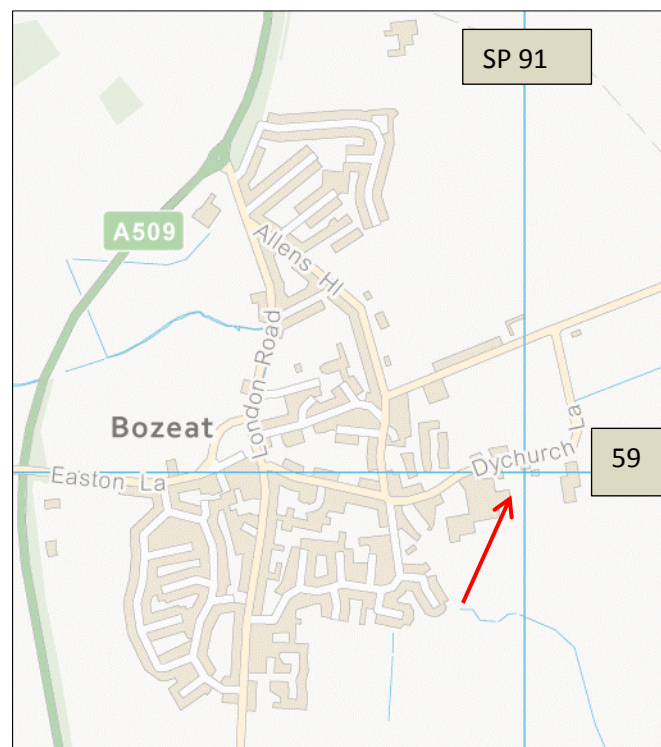


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data ©Crown Copyright and database right 2014

A programme of Level 2 building recording was required as a condition of planning consent by Wellingborough Council advised by Northamptonshire County Council. This was carried out by IS Heritage in pursuance of the relevant English Heritage procedural document (EH 2006) and in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation dated 7 October 2014.

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Historical Background

The ranges of farm buildings included in the current building survey were originally held by two different, but adjacent farms: Spring Farm (now Spring Hill Farm) and the adjacent East Farm. Both farms were, until the beginning of the 19th century, part of the extensive holding of the Bozeat Estate.

The origins of this estate can be traced from the 11th century, when two hides less one virgate in Bozeat were held by Waltheof, Earl of Huntingdon prior to the Norman Conquest and by his wife, the Countess Judith who was William the Conqueror's niece, by the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086. The manor had a fairly complex descent, but was essentially held by the Latimer family from the early 14th century until the mid-16th century. Both *Latimers* and *Bozeat Marshes* manors were sold by Sir Thomas Cecil and his wife Dorothy (daughter of John lord Latimer) to the Wisemans in 1598.

In 1737, the manors of Bozeat were conveyed by Elizabeth Wiseman to Sara Dowager Duchess of Marlborough and from her it passed to the Spencer family (Salzman 1937). The site of *Latimers* Manor is reputed to have been within the empty plot of land immediately to the west of Springhill Farm (RCHM 1979). A rectangular platform adjacent to Dychurch Lane may mark the position of former buildings, although unlikely to be the manor itself. There were no buildings on the site by the late 18th century (Fig 2).



Fig 2: 1798 Inclosure map of Bozeat. Spring Farm is arrowed.

At Inclosure in 1798, both Spring Farm and East Farm were held by Earl Spencer, plot 111 (Spring Farm) is marked as *Home Close* and plot 109 (East Farm) was *Homestead & Orchard*. At Spring Farm, the large threshing barns (Barn B and west annexe) to the rear of the farmhouse appear to be

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present, as well as buildings to the east of the farmhouse; these are different in plan to the current brick-built range (Barn C) and are likely to be predecessors. At East Farm, the large barn (Barn A) was present, along with a number of further buildings to the north. These appear to have been demolished by the late 19th century (Fig 3).

The Bozeat Estate was held by the Spencer family until 1831, when it was sold to Lord Archbishop Cashel for £27,000. The estate was sold again by Archdeacon Cotton in 1857 to Thomas Revis. Revis appears to have purchased the greater part of the estate by mortgage and in 1880 much of the mortgage was bought by The Royal Exchange Assurance Company. In an apparent effort to consolidate his debts, Revis put the estate up for sale in lots in 1886. Although a few of the lots were sold, many were not and the estate was again put up for sale in 1909. On this occasion all the lots were sold and most of the larger farms were purchased by Mr Hucklebury, who then let them out (Marlow nd). The family of the most recent owner, Mr Brown, had owned the current buildings since the 1940s, and continue to farm adjacent land.

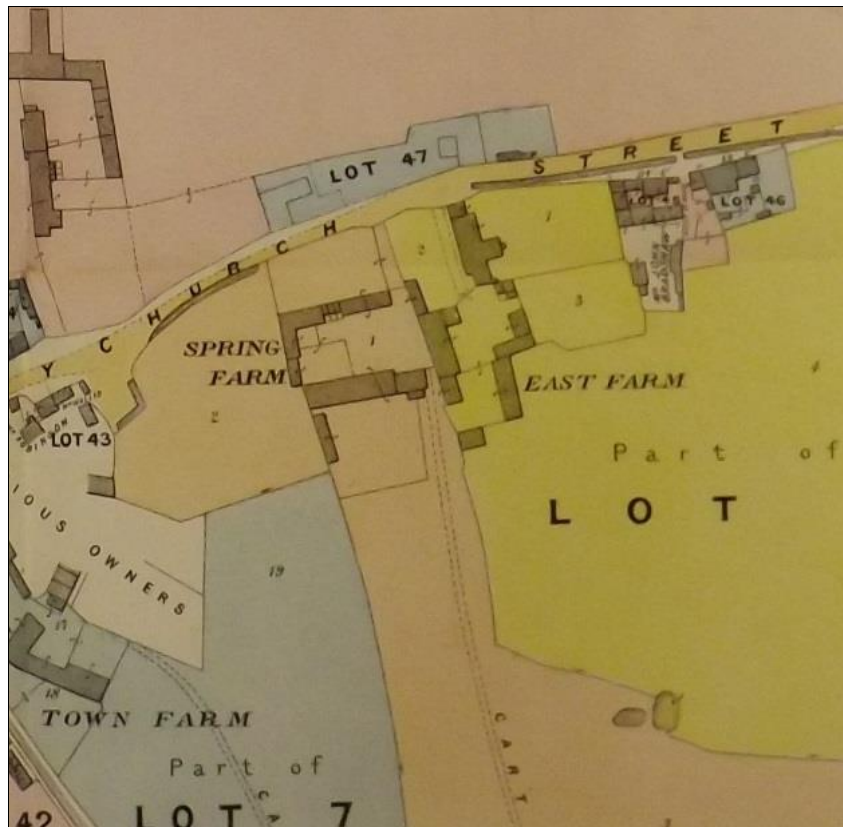


Fig 3: Estate sale map, 1886

The description of Spring Farm at this date includes *The farm premises [which] are conveniently arranged and include two large threshing barns, stable for eight horses, loose box, cowhouse, piggeries, hen-roost, cart shed, two open cattle sheds and two stock yards; also at the upper part of the farm a newly-erected set of premises, comprising a capital shelter hovel, corn and chaff place, and an excellent stone and brick-built corn shed, 73ft by 24ft 6in, and well-enclosed yards.*

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The farm buildings shown on the accompanying plan are much the same as those still present, although the three individual pens with outdoor runs which joined the farmhouse to the northernmost barn (Barn C, below) are no longer present. These may be the piggeries mentioned above.

In 1886, all the buildings on the eastern side of the track to the rear of Spring Farm were associated with East Farm. The sale catalogue describes the farm buildings as *stone-built and principally tiled and include stable for six horses, cow sheds for 20 cows, loose boxes, large barn and an excellent corn shed 45 ft by 25ft.*

Further buildings were present in the fields to the south (related above as 'the upper part of the farm').

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LOT 5.

THE EAST FARM,

A useful DAIRY FARM, comprising
129 a. 2 r. 9 p.

WITH
A COMFORTABLE DWELLING HOUSE,

Situate at the East end of the Village, containing 3 Bedrooms, 2 Parlours, Kitchen, large Dairy, Pantry, necessary Outbuildings, and large Garden.

THE FARM PREMISES

Are Stone-built and principally Tiled, and include Stable for 6 horses, Cow Sheds for 20 cows, Loose Boxes, large Barn, Chaff-house, Piggeries, Hen-roost, 2 open Sheds, and 2 Stock Yards.

IN THE FIELD

A well enclosed Yard with RANGE OF STONE-BUILT and Tiled BUILDINGS, comprising a Shelter Hovel, Corn and Chaff Place, and an excellent CORN SHED, 45ft. by 25ft.

SCHEDULE.

NO.	DESCRIPTION	CULTURE	QUANTITY.		
			A.	R.	P.
1	Farm House, and Garden		0	1	17
2	Farm Homestead		0	1	35
3	Rick-yard		0	0	34
4	Hens Close	Pasture	6	1	22
5	Dyther's Slade		24	1	30
6	Middle Dyther's Slade	Arable	14	3	26
7	Further Dyther's Slade	"	16	3	0
8	Thick Thorn	New Pasture	17	1	33
9	Further Thick Thorn	Pasture	15	2	20
9 a	Mook's Shed		0	0	32
10	Park Side Ground	New Pasture	32	3	0
			A. 129	2	9

SUMMARY.

	A.	R.	P.
Total Pasture, &c.	97	3	23
" Arable	31	2	26
A. 129	2	9	

LOT 6.

THE SPRING FARM,

A useful occupation, adjoining the East Farm, and comprises
185 a. 3 r. 25 p.,

A COMMODIOUS FARM HOUSE,

Containing 4 Bedrooms, Parlour, 2 Kitchens, Pantry, and Offices, productive Garden and Orchard.

THE FARM PREMISES

Are conveniently arranged and include 2 large Thrashing Barns, Stable for 8 horses, Loose Box, Cowhouse, Piggeries, Hen-roost, Cart Shed, 2 open Cattle Sheds and 2 Stock Yards; also at the upper part of the Farm a NEWLY-ERECTED SET OF PREMISES, comprising a capital Shelter Hovel, Corn and Chaff Place, and an excellent STONE and BRICK-BUILT CORN SHED, 78ft. by 24ft. 6in., and well enclosed Yards.

SCHEDULE.

NO.	DESCRIPTION	CULTURE	QUANTITY.		
			A.	R.	P.
1	Farm House, Garden, and Homestead		0	3	12
2	Orchard	Pasture	0	3	30
3	Little Close	"	5	3	16
4	Great Close	"	26	2	0
5	South Park	Arable	21	1	19
6	Cox's Hill	New Pasture	21	0	35
6 a	Spring Farm Shed		0	1	24
7	Lark Hill	New Pasture	32	0	31
8	Park Green	Arable	29	1	6
9	Park Piece	New Pasture	32	2	20
10	Stockin Ley Field	Arable	9	3	38
11	The Slupe		2	2	1
11 a	Spinney	Wood	2	0	33
			A. 185	3	25

SUMMARY.

	A.	R.	P.
Total Pasture, &c.	120	2	8
" Arable	63	0	24
" Wood	2	0	33
A. 185	3	25	

The Purchaser to make and maintain the Fence dividing No. 27 of Lot 7 from this Lot, as shown on Plan; also to build up with brick or stone the window and doorway of Cowhouse now opening to Lot 5.

[7]

Fig 4: Extract from 1886 sale catalogue

Fieldwork

The Barns

The barns are disposed in such a way as to form a compact group lying between two farm houses, one each to the east and west, neither of which are included in this survey but which were linked by ownership and therefore historically part of the same complex. Their disposition is of a fairly standard type in that the farmhouses are both positioned in such a way as to allow the farmer to

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have a view of the buildings and therefore the livestock. The western farmhouse (Spring Hill Farm) also forms the boundary on that side and both the building and its surrounding garden walls help to complete the circuit of structures which form a principal courtyard.

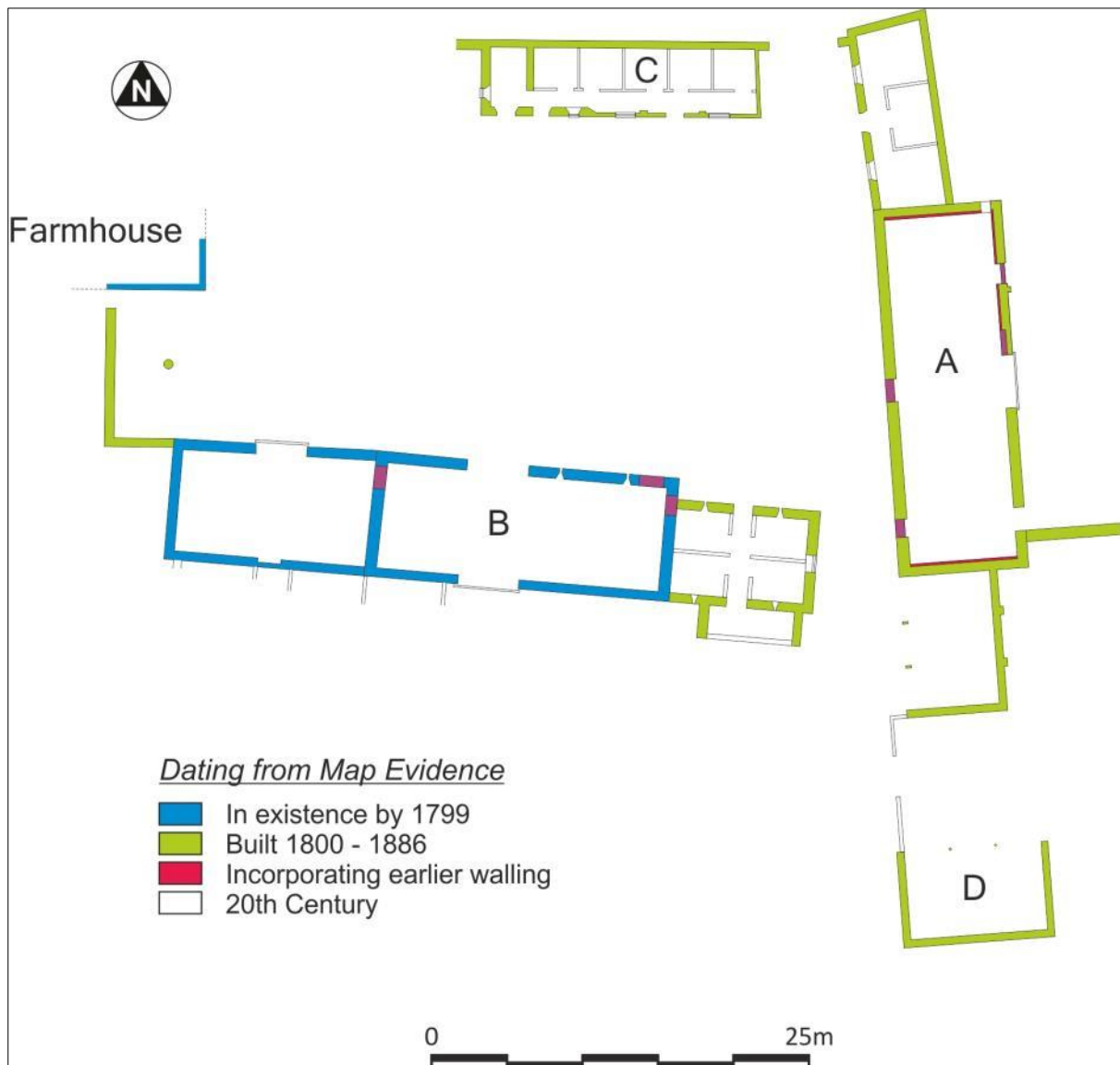


Fig 5: The barns, drawn with their dated phases where these are discernible. None of the blockings of doors or localised rebuilds are dateable.

Barn A

This is a rectangular building aligned roughly north-south and is constructed of coursed limestone bonded in lime mortar; it measures 20.5 m x 6.7m internally (Figs 5 and 6). The external face of the north gable end is now obscured partly by a later addition (see below, Barn A north annexe) and that part not built against was, at the time of survey, covered by a thick growth of ivy and adjacent trees which limited visual examination apart from the upper section above eaves level.

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Fig 6: Barn A, its west face and south gable, looking north. North annexe to left, south to right

Both gables had been truncated to form a shallow segmental profile which was created to allow the addition of a replacement roof structure comprising corrugated metal sheeting over a frame of iron trusses of the traditional 'Dutch barn' type roof. This type of roof is usually supported on thin vertical iron or occasionally timber posts to form a covering and was mostly used to form a shed to protect hay and straw but has presumably been used here due to its pre-formed nature and cheapness. That the original roof was not re-covered in similar corrugated sheeting or tile suggests that the timber structure had deteriorated to such an extent that replacement was necessary. The date of replacement is unknown as corrugated sheeting was used from the mid nineteenth-century until the present, but its condition would suggest a twentieth-century date.

The barn has been accessed only from the east side through a wide cart door placed centrally in the east wall and a single pedestrian doorway at the southern end of the same wall (Fig 7). Both appear to be original and there is evidence of a second pedestrian door on the north side of the cart door now filled with brick (Fig 8). On the opposite, west, wall two blocked doorways are evident but here both filled with stone and each is placed opposite the central cart doorway and southern pedestrian doorway. All the pedestrian doorways have oak lintels.

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Fig 7: Doorways; east to left, west to right



Fig 8: Blocked doorway north of cart doorway

The southern gable wall is unadorned apart from filled and truncated splayed openings above eaves level that would presumably have been simple air vents (Fig 9) and there are two similar blocked vents in the north gable wall though less obvious and similarly truncated.



Fig 9: The southern gable's upper portion, with blocked, roof-truncated vents

Internally the barn is a single open space with lime-washed and partly plastered walls. The floor was not visible due to the presence of many years build-up of animal dung. Both the north and south gable walls show signs of being plastered at the lower level and this plastering is covered by (and therefore earlier than) the construction of the west wall, suggesting that the barn is partly constructed from a better-quality precursor. A scar at approximately 2m above the present top of the dung level suggests that the barn (or perhaps the predecessor) may have been floored in part, but probably only at the northern end. A single beam socket in the north gable wall supports this theory.

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Fig 10: Former north-wall plastering layers, sandwiched at the north-west corner by the construction of the west wall

The only other alteration to the fabric was a narrow slot cut into the north gable wall (Fig 11). This was to allow the drive belt of a threshing machine on the inside to be passed through the wall from a steam engine standing on the outside. This alteration is likely to date to the latter part of the nineteenth or early twentieth-century.



Fig 11: Threshing belt opening in north gable wall; scale 1m

Barn A, north annexe.

A single storey building constructed of coursed limestone with red brick dressings to the door and windows, all set beneath oak lintels 10.9m x 3.8m internally (Figs 5 and 12). The barn has three free-standing walls, the fourth is the north gable end of the principal Barn A. The roof is currently covered with corrugated asbestos sheeting. Accessed only from the west side through a centrally placed doorway fitted with a single leaf door comprising vertical planks, ledged and braced internally

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hung on simple iron hinges a closed by a simple drop latch. The window openings are fitted with, to the north of the doorway, a Critall style cast metal glazing frame and to the south of the doorway a timber frame, now only retaining the frame, all of the glazing bars being broken and missing.



Fig 12: Barn A, north annexe, front (west) face; Barn A to right

Internally the annexe was probably built originally to serve as a cattle shelter since there is evidence for a manger against the east wall where stumps of timbers remain in the wall. The floor is of concrete (Fig 13). Latterly the building was used to house pigs and the internal space was divided into three separate pens with a small passage adjacent to the doorway formed by low walls of concrete blockwork fitted with wooden doors covered in metal sheeting (pigs being renowned for chewing wood). The two southern pens were fitted with farrowing bars, hollow section iron bars set in blockwork pillars which allowed the piglets to get away from the sow and probably to lie beneath a heat lamp. Farrowing bars are considered an essential part of modern pig-sties since sows and notorious for lying on and smothering small piglets. Each pen was furnished with a small trough made from a salt-glazed half-section drain pipe laid on its side and set in cement with a metal water trough positioned close by.

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Fig 13: Barn A north annexe, interior, looking north

The roof comprises two simple pine queen-post trusses with raking struts originally covered with tile or slate, the laths still remaining in a few places (Fig 13).

Barn A, south annexe

This comprised an earthen-floored cart hovel constructed of coursed limestone consisting of two walls laid in an L-shape with the third enclosed side formed by the southern end of Barn A and with a west-facing open side; it measured 7.9m x 5.0m internally (Figs 14, 15). The external face of the east side had been refaced in block-work. The open side comprises three bays divided by two posts made from reused railway sleepers supporting the wall plate. The roof is of pine queen post trusses with raking struts which support four thin purlins on either side.



Fig 14: Barn A south annexe, exterior



Fig 15: Barn A south annexe, interior

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Barn B

This was a large rectangular barn constructed of coursed limestone bonded in lime mortar aligned east-west and measuring 17m x 6.1m internally (Fig 16). It is entered through opposed cart doors on north and south; that on the north is un-altered and of almost the full height of the wall while the southern door has been widened as evidenced by a change in the coursing of the stonework to either side and vertical cracks where the new reveals have not been fully tied in to the original work. The northern doorway currently has a sliding door fixed on an iron rail set into the wall above the opening, the door supported on metal wheels currently covered with corrugated metal sheeting. The southern doorway is currently fitted with corrugated metal sheeting fitted to a fixed pair of horizontal timbers and does not open. It is uncertain what the original width or height of the southern opening was and it has subsequently been further altered by the insertion of brickwork at the base of the opening due to the higher level of the ground on the exterior of the south side.



Fig 16: Barn B, north side, looking east towards Barn A; west annexe (butt joint) on right

There were three other openings originally, all pedestrian doorways set beneath oak lintels; one each in the east, north and west walls and all located close to the angles of the walls (Fig 5). Those in the two gable walls have been blocked with coursed stone both inside and out. That in the north wall is filled with modern Fletton-type bricks internally and stone externally. That to the east of necessity when the later annexe was built against that side since the north wall lies across the former opening (see below Barn B, east annexe). It might be that the doorway in the west wall was originally left open since it would have allowed dry internal access between the buildings but it was subsequently blocked. In each of the gable ends are tall, narrow splayed air vents which are also large enough to have acted as owl holes and similar vertical vents are present on the north side of the barn to the east of the door which perhaps suggest that this barn was built for the storage of grain.

The floor of the barn is concrete and retains the scars of settings for what appear to be grain bins or silos set out either side of a recessed central channel of unknown depth. This is further supported

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by the presence of a high level walkway made of pine which is seated on the upper surface of the tie beams of the roof trusses and appears to be present to allow either physical or visual access into the upper level of the former silos or bins (Fig 17). Probably contemporary with this raised walkway is a louvred roof vent supplying further ventilation. The roof structure itself, which appears to be original, comprises king post trusses now covered by square-section corrugated metal sheeting.



Fig 17: Barn B interior, east half. Note original ventilator windows, the high walkway and the silo/bin slots in floor

Barn B, east annexe

A coursed stone single storey building constructed against the east end of the main barn B, 7.7m x 4.8m in size internally (Fig 18). It has two vertical splayed air vents in both the north and south walls as well as a larger glazed metal framed window in the east gable, though this appears to be a secondary insertion.



Fig 18: Barn B, east annexe; view of front (north) face

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The present floor is of concrete and the roof is a pine king post truss with raking struts currently covered with square section corrugated metal sheeting. The underside (internal surface) of the roof has been boarded with tongue and groove pine planks which suggest a higher level of finish and insulation which might indicate that this was originally the piggery mentioned in the 1886 sale particulars since pigs are rather more susceptible to cold and draughts than horses or cattle. At a later date the barn has been subdivided by the insertion of blockwork walls to create four equal sized pens, each fitted with elm board doors and equipped with concrete troughs.



Fig 18: Barn B, east annexe; interior

Built against the south side of this annexe is a further, later addition (Fig 19). The two gable walls (east and west ends) are constructed of coursed limestone with circular section red clay field drains set into the gables for ventilation and decoration while the south side is of modern blockwork. It is not clear if this was originally built with just the two gable ends and the south side was open-fronted or if the south blockwork wall is a modern replacement of a collapsed section. Internally the structure is plain.

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Fig 19: Out-shut on the rear of Barn B east annexe

Barn B, west annexe

Built of coursed limestone bonded in lime mortar this barn is identical in width to the first Barn B and 11.2m in length (Fig 20). It has two doorways opposite each other in the north and south walls, that on the north side is fitted with two timber sliding doors hung on an iron rail set above the timber lintel, the southern doorway has been blocked with modern, Fletton, brickwork. There are no ventilation slits or window openings suggesting that this was a storage rather than livestock barn, although even in storage barns some ventilation is usual to prevent the stored materials becoming stale. The floor is of blue engineering paviments and the only other feature is the blocked doorway which formerly led into the central barn. The walls have been covered in a cement render suggesting that in its recent past this barn was used for the storage of grain, the covering of the walls with this smooth, impenetrable covering, an attempt to prevent rodent ingress.



Fig 20: Barn B west annexe

A lost building seems to have been built as an out-shut against the south side of the combination of Barn B and its western annexe combined (Fig 5), but this has long since lost its single fall roof and the walls which supported it have themselves become ruinous.

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Barn C

This structure lies on the north side of the farmyard and comprises a single storey livestock building, partly stone and partly brick (Fig 21). The north, west and western end of the south wall are of coursed limestone and appear to be original, the remainder of the south wall and the east gable wall are of red brick and have been rebuilt. There are two doors in the south wall, one in the stone section and one in the brick. The surviving stone section at the west end was originally a single, separate room but has subsequently been joined to the remainder of the building by the insertion of a doorway against the south wall. This single room may be the loose box referred to in the 1886 sale particulars.



Fig 21: The so-called Barn C, looking north. The gable of Spring Hill farmhouse is to the left

At the far western end lies a separate room unlike the remainder of the interior. The walls are of limestone to the south and west where there is a small window fitted with a simple wooden frame. The north and east walls have a band of red brickwork laid on edge which appears to be either infilling of a shelved area or patching for a reason which is unclear. It is of a size and fabric which suggests a nineteenth-century date and may have been inserted when the eastern section was rebuilt in brick. The internal doorway which now links this room to the remainder of the range is a modern introduction, with poorly finished jambs and the stone re-set in hard, Portland type cement.



Fig 22: Barn C, west room, interior; note the brick-blocked band at 1m high



Fig 23: Barn C interior with pig pens

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The eastern portion of the range is a single space which in its latest phase was sub-divided by low blockwork walls providing individual pens set on the north side of a corridor which is located along the south side of the range, accessed via the doorways. This range was most likely for the housing of pigs (Figs 5 and 23). Each is provided with a small concrete trough and water. The floor is of concrete throughout. The door at the western end is a single leaf pine door of simple ledged and braced construction with standard iron strap hinges and drop latch, the eastern door is a two leaf stable door, each part similarly ledged and braced with similar ironwork. The windows are mid twentieth-century Critall-type metal windows. The roof is poorly made of quartered pine timber, some of which still retains its bark and which has had little attempt at finishing. There are three trusses and the roof is covered by Trafford tile.

Building D, cart hovel

This lies to the south-east of the main group of barns and comprises a simple structure built of coursed limestone and open to the north, typical of a cart hovel (Fig 24). This orientation militates against the expansion and shrinkage of timber joints.



Fig 24: Barn D, a cart-hovel, looking at its open north face

There is, unusually, a blocked owl or ventilation hole in the east gable, a seemingly unnecessary inclusion in a structure which has one entirely open side. The hovel is of three bays with two trusses which are of elm and comprise raking queen post construction. Each truss is supported on concrete pillars which clearly have been inserted beneath the trusses and replace original posts or possibly brick or stone pillars (see below, second cart hovel). Each has clearly chiselled carpenters marks cut with a flat chisel (Fig 25), the westernmost truss retains the sequence I, II, III, IIII and V whilst the easternmost the sequence I, II, III and V suggesting that they may have been reused or reconfigured. Both sets of carpenters' marks are on the eastern face of each truss. The roof has two purlins on each side, clasped at the apex with a ridge plank to just the rafters but not the trusses which do not reach the ridge, further supporting the view that this is a reused roof structure made to fit the current building. The whole is covered in red clay pan-tiles and the floor is of concrete. Connected to the north end of the west wall is a blockwork yard wall section which corresponds to that added

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to the south side of Barn A, south annexe, the two sections forming a gateway into a stockyard to the east.



Fig 25: Roof truss in Barn D, showing carpenters' marks

Second Cart hovel, west side of yard between west annexe of Barn B and the farmhouse

This cart hovel is located close to the farmhouse and as such might have housed domestic rather than agricultural vehicles. Construction of the building is purely functional, being constructed of coursed limestone on the south and west sides with simple butt joints where it abuts the adjoining buildings (Fig 26). There is a single lime mortar rendered stone and/or brick pillar centrally placed on the east side which divides the hovel into two broad bays. It is covered by a very simple single fall pine roof covered with corrugated metal sheeting and the floor is of rammed earth. A doorway in the west wall is currently blocked but as there is no frame this appears to have been simply an access way through to the space beyond.

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Fig 26: Cart hovel adjacent to the farmhouse

Conclusions

The barns at Spring Hill Farm are all of simple construction in typical local vernacular style, built of local materials and all altered over the years since first built. In this respect they are typical of many farm complexes throughout the country and display the form of organic growth dictated by changing farming needs, prosperity and response to natural wear and tear as well as the willingness of the current owners or tenants to either spend money on new and well-built additions or repairs on a 'make do and mend' approach which might indicate less willingness or ability to spend money. Farming is a profession which is at the mercy of many influences outside the control of the individual farmer and thus it is almost impossible to suggest a reliable proposition to support the addition or alteration of each phase of building other than the juxtaposition of the separate phases of structure. Where buildings sit alone and map evidence is equivocal, their exact date remains uncertain, especially if the builders are re-using materials.

Figure 5 shows the barns with their basic phasing and dates as indicated by the two well-drawn and surveyed extant maps. Only Barn B (along with the farmhouse) predates 1799, while the other buildings all date variously to the period 1799-1886. Barn A, mapped in 1886 and still present at least in plan, but not without alteration, appears to have supplanted an earlier building of unknown function and size. None of the small alterations can be securely dated.

The location and changing function of Barn A, lying between the two adjacent farms, suggests some shared use, but this gives no clear indication of its original focus, but this may have been East Farm, rather than Spring (Hill) Farm.

Spring Hill Farm belongs to the period of greatest agricultural expansion, 1750-1880, in line with the growth of England's population and the diversification of farming following widespread land Inclosures (HELM 2006, 26). It conforms to what is classified as a Loose Courtyard plan (ibid, 40).

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