



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

Archaeological Building Recording on a former farm barn at Twywell, Northamptonshire

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Introduction

A former farm barn on the south side of the High Street, Twywell, Northamptonshire, is to be converted into a home. Planning Permission (17/00565/FUL) was given by East Northamptonshire Council (NGR: SP 9485 7855; Fig 1).

Iain Soden Heritage Services was commissioned, prior to conversion works, to carry out Level 2 Building Recording on the barn to record the building in its un-altered state on behalf of the purchasers, Mr and Mrs Owens in order to discharge planning conditions. The work was carried out in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (dated 7 February 2018) on 15 February 2018. It was fully accessible and the weather conditions were sunny and dry.

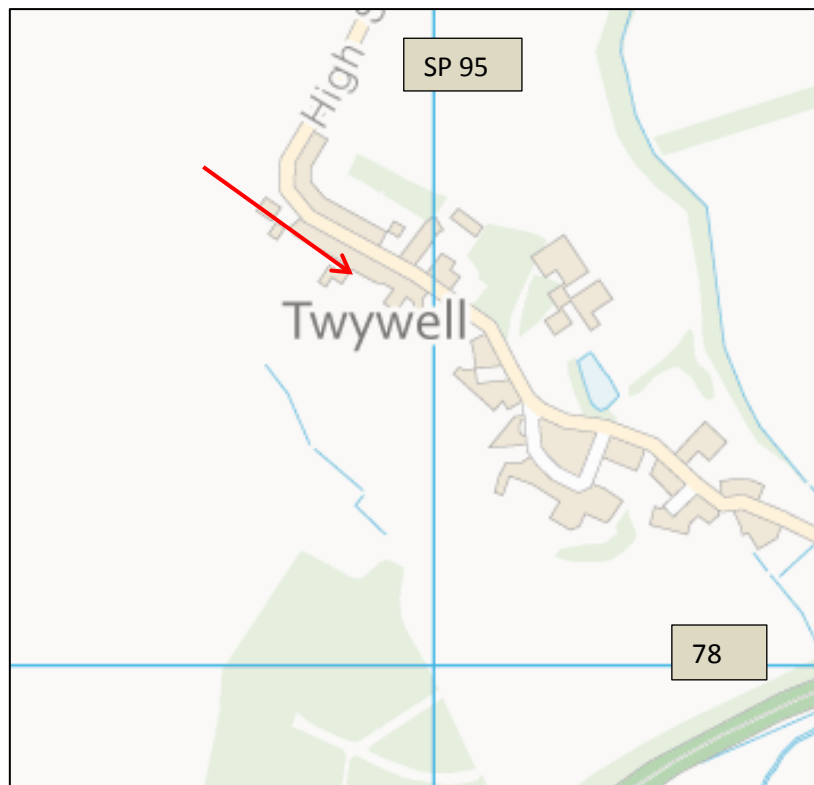


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2018

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The barn is not statutorily listed but is considered to be an Undesignated Heritage Asset. The level of the record deployed equates to that of Level 2 as defined by Historic England (Historic England 2016).

Historic background

Documents were consulted at the Northamptonshire Record Office (NRO).

The remote history of the village is of little relevance to this single building, however, finds from the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Saxon periods have been recorded within the parish, although mostly from nineteenth-century ironstone quarrying (RCHM 1975).

The documentary records for the village are long and typically complicated. In the Domesday Book the village is called variously Teowelle and Turwella and is recorded as containing thirty families. The manor appears to have been held by the Morin family of Harrold (Bedfordshire) in the 13th century but which by the eighteenth-century was held by Mary, Countess of Cardigan (VCH 1930). By the nineteenth-century the manor was held by the Duke of Buccleuch.

Map evidence is patchy, the first known depiction is that made prior to Inclosure in 1736 (NRO map 1409, Fig 2).

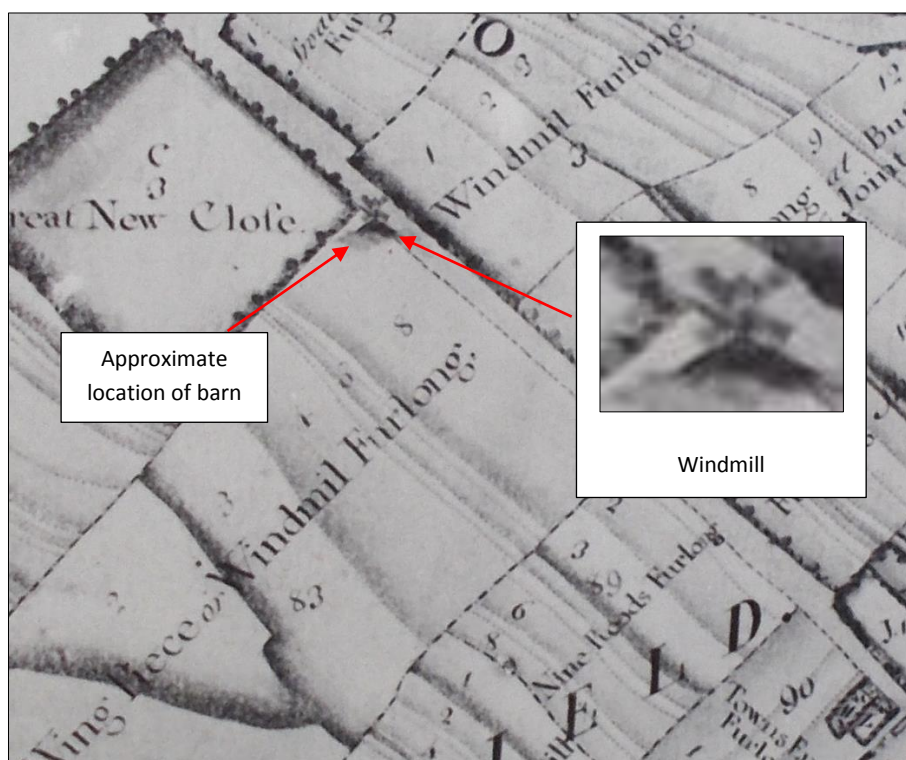


Fig 2: The Inclosure map of 1736 (NRO map 1409). North to top.

There are no buildings along the road on either the north or south sides close to the present site, the main centre of the village lying to the south-east. Within the north-west corner of the field and clearly indicated as a drawn image is situated a windmill on a small mound (Fig 2). The field in which

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it stands is called '*Wing Piece or Windmill Furlong*' and the field on the north side of the road is also called '*Windmill Furlong*'. Therefore, whilst the present barn is not shown, the corner of the field in which it is located was previously occupied by a windmill at this period. The accompanying apportionment does not record who owned that field or the windmill, the number allocated to the field (83) is not recorded.

It is pertinent to note that no mound now exists at this point. In contrast the corner of the plot actually slopes down from the field to facilitate access to the roadside. It is highly unlikely that any windmill remains survive.

The next known map is the Ordnance Survey preparatory map of c1810 which survives and shows the village and parish of Twywell. Unfortunately, there is a water stain directly over almost the entire village on the original paper copy meaning that the whole village layout is effectively blotted out and cannot now be utilised to identify any of its buildings.

There is no tithe map held at NRO and it is not known if a copy survives.

The barn is clearly depicted on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1899 (Fig 3).

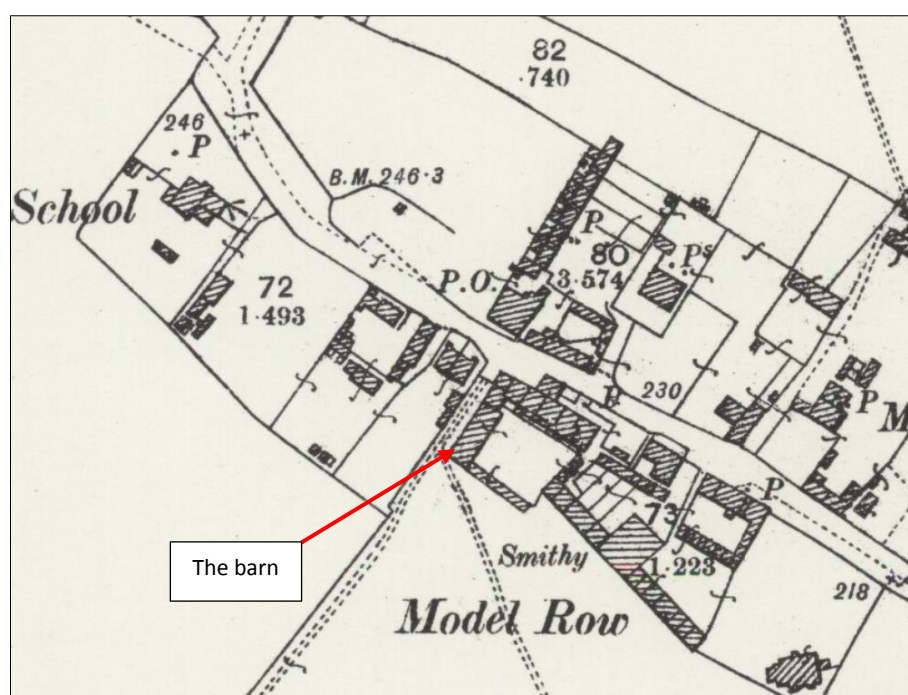


Fig 3: The barn depicted on the Second Edition, 1899, 25-inch series, sheet XXVI.13. North to top.

By this date the windmill has clearly been demolished, although it is not known when that may have been. At this date, and also on the First Edition (1884), the barn is depicted as having two joined and apparently separate units attached to the north gable end which extend as far as the south side of the High Street. These both lie in the position of the present entrance drive into the plot. A track is shown parallel to the west of the building where one remains today; there is a large cart-door on this side (see below).

From the south-eastern corner of the barn a long narrow range of buildings is shown, apparently a single row since no subdivisions are indicated. The row of cottages flanking the roadside, along with

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the further row, set-back at an angle (named as Model Row) create an enclosed space reminiscent of a stockyard. However, there is no farm indicated nor is there any name allotted to the group, the only other named building close-by on this side of the road being the smithy. Interestingly, the only break in the almost completely-enclosed central yard area is at the south-east corner which suggests that this was indeed a stockyard with the access directly into the fields on the south side of the village. As such it would most likely have been part of a farm unit, but not necessarily set within a principal farm complex or adjacent to a farmhouse.

Only one later edition of the series has been located (1924 6-inch edition, NRO map 1762). The complex remains the same in layout at that date and it is therefore not clear when the additional buildings were demolished. They were gone by 1973. For decades during the mid-20th century there stood multiple silos close to the south end of the barn.

The building survey

The barn is an unusually plain structure representative of a purely utilitarian building measuring approximately 19m x 7m externally (Fig 4). For ease of reference the long sides of the building will be described as east and west, with the two gable ends as being north and south.

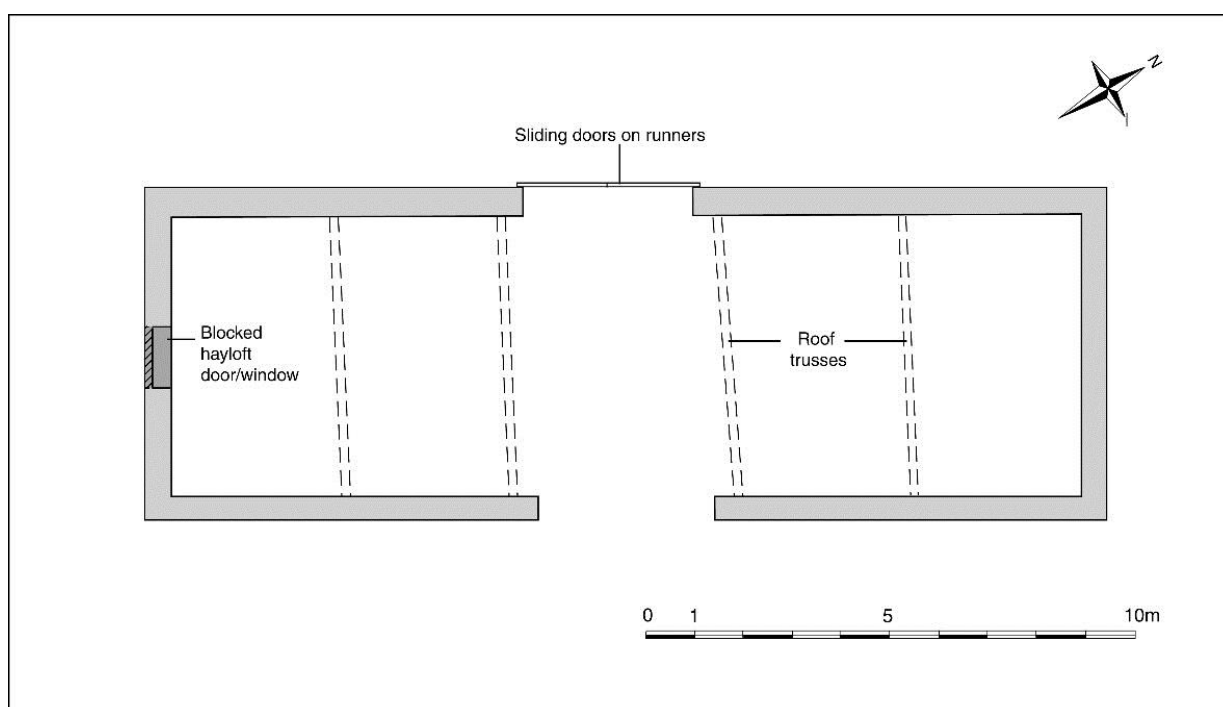


Fig 4: The ground plan of the barn (Andy Isham).

It is primarily built of coursed rubble limestone with occasional dressed quoins on each of the external corners and very occasional rounded field stones of glacial erratics; these are more evident in the north gable. The whole building is bonded with lime mortar.

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The north gable wall

This elevation lies parallel to the High Street and it was against this end of the building that other structures are shown on the nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey maps (see Fig 3). No indications can be observed of those former structures in the current ground surface, but a faint flaunching scar indicates that the building attached to the gable was of a single storey with a pitched roof (Fig 5).



Fig 5: The north gable showing the flaunching scar (dashed yellow line). Looking south. 2m scale.

Recent ivy growth obscures much of the west side of the elevation so the remainder of the former roof line cannot be observed on that side. On the east side the lower limit of the former roof line is weathered away and can similarly not be seen. There is no indication that the former building was bonded into the present barn since there are no scars of stones being keyed into the gable wall. This suggests that the single-storey structure was a secondary addition.

In the apex of the present gable a narrow slit is present. It appears that this was intended just for air circulation and not as an owl-hole since the latter are usually larger, often triangular or square.

The only other structural elements visible in the elevation are two horizontal timbers, apparently bonding timbers, both of oak. Each is present approximately 1.1m above the present ground level; similar timbers are visible within the barn (see below).

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The east elevation

One of the two long sides of the barn, this elevation is constructed of the same materials as the remainder of the building (Fig 6).



Fig 6: The east elevation, looking west. 2m scale.

Comprising two plain walls with a central full-height cart door the elevation is remarkably plain. There is no obvious indication of the narrow range of buildings extending from the south-east corner which is depicted on the 1899 Ordnance Survey map.

Apart from variable cement patching to the mortar courses, a small modern (twentieth-century) opening close to the ground level near the south-east corner and an iron sheet-metal vent beneath the eaves, the two wall surfaces are plain. It is presumed that originally the full-height door would have been fitted with hinged doors though nothing of the framework remains. There is evidence that the opening was subsequently fitted with a sliding door system since a metal channel remains within the door sill although nothing of the top rail survives.

The present roof is covered with blue slate and the rainwater goods are of modern plastic.

The south gable wall

The south gable wall is constructed in the same way and of the same materials as the remainder of the building but originally had a high-level opening, currently now mostly obscured by ivy on the exterior (Fig 7).

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Fig 7: The south gable and west wall, looking north-east. Infilled opening highlighted with yellow dashed lines. Level of iron sheet indicated by red dotted line. 2m scale.

The former opening, now infilled with modern blockwork, appears to have been most likely a hayloft door or window, allowing fodder to be deposited into the barn from the outside from the level of the cart, drawn alongside the gable, during the summer months. The opening retains its external timber lintel, visible from the interior and identifiable as a re-used railway sleeper. This re-use probably indicates a later replacement. Above, in the apex of the gable is a narrow ventilation slit.

Visible along that part of the gable not covered with ivy (and also seen on the east and west walls) is a curious horizontal sheet of thin iron sheet which extends around the whole building (see Figs 7 and 8). Where it is present the mortar has often eroded slightly more than elsewhere. At first thought to represent a line of flashing, perhaps for lean-to extensions, this sheet can be seen in the jambs of the cart doors and also in places within the barn interior. Thus, it is clear that this sheet extends through the whole thickness of the wall around its whole circuit. Its purpose is unknown; the author has not seen its like before, either on other farm buildings or domestic properties. It is too high, and too early in date, to have been inserted as a form of damp-proof course and if used as a temporary covering during building (perhaps reflecting a seasonal break in construction) there seems no reason why it was not removed when building re-commenced.

The west wall

This wall is essentially the same as the previous external walls in both construction and materials. The side elevation contains another full-height cart door set slightly off-centre from that on the east side (see Fig 4).

The present sliding doors are of modern metal sheeting and are apparently replacements of an earlier (but probably not original) wooden example, which lies against the wall (see Figs 7 and 8).

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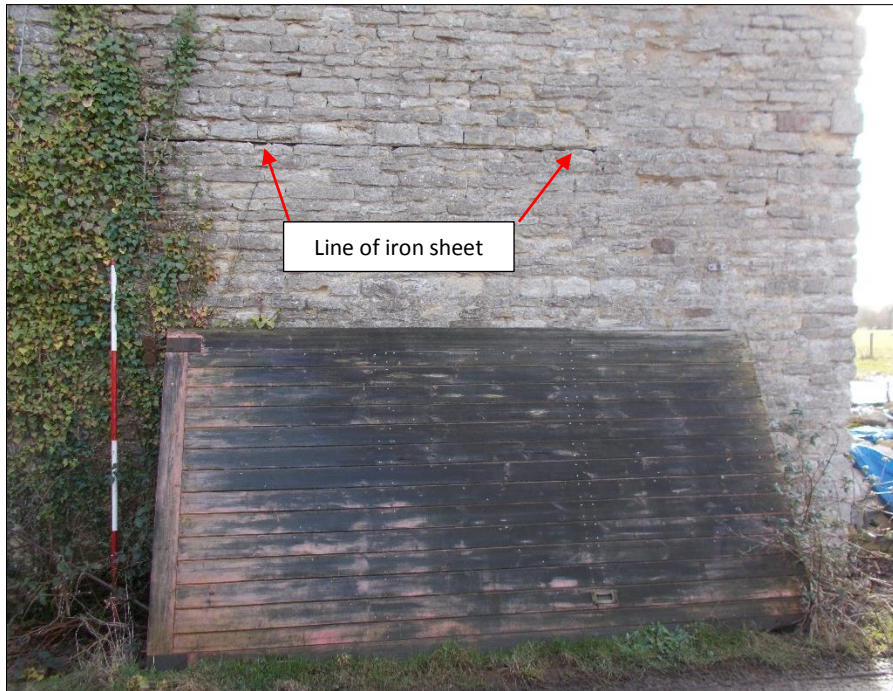


Fig 8: The detached sliding door against the west wall, looking east. 2m scale.

The hanging, or sliding, door is of typical construction formed of vertical timber boards and a top and bottom rail. The top rail has two sets of attached iron wheels on a bracket which would have run along rails attached to the barn wall. Though the external surface only was visible, the pattern of nails within the surface indicate that the door was ledged and braced. The surface retains faint areas of a pale pink paint, perhaps the 'farm colours'; often each farm used a single paint colour for all its painted surfaces as a form of identification.

The interior

Internally the barn is a single undivided space (Fig 4). There are no indications that it originally had any fixed stalls or pens nor is there any indication that there was a first floor, although the now blocked hay-loft opening suggests there was one.

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Fig 9: The interior, looking north. 2m scale.

The present floor appears to be a form of bitumen or pitch and there was no visible indication of any earlier surface. It may be that the floor was originally simply packed earth, although other materials could have been used depending on intended use.

The walls are composed of coursed limestone rubble with buttered joints, and there is no evidence that the surfaces were lime-washed. This is usually present when livestock was housed within such buildings as it has a mildly antiseptic property as well as increasing reflected light at a time when the only form of illumination was daylight or lamplight. There is also no lamp niche present inside either of the door openings. Occasional timbers are set within the wall planes adjacent to internal corners as ties; all appear to be of oak.

The roof is supported on four king-post tie-beam trusses of identical form (Figs 4 and 9, Cordingley 1961, fig 11 Vb, 3a). The bottom of an iron bolt can be observed beneath the king-post on the underside of the tie beam indicating that it is secured with that fixing, though it may also be pegged, as may other joints. Each tie beam is set into the east and west side walls as are the bases of the principal rafters. These support a single purlin on each side, set above a cleat. Whilst the principal trusses do not lie exactly perpendicular to the side walls (see Fig 4), the secondary rafters do and are covered either with sarking boards or modern roofing felt where the former has been removed, presumably following deterioration. There is a simple ridge plank at approximately 6.80m above

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present floor level. All timberwork appears to be of pine, some retain striations from circular (mechanical) saw blades.

In the north gable wall the thin ventilation slit is slightly splayed internally; it is spanned by a flat stone slab lintel.

In the south gable the interior dimensions and location of the hayloft door or window can be seen (Fig 10). Its sill is located approximately 3.3m above present floor level and the opening is approximately 1.4m high.



Fig 10: The south gable with hayloft door or window. 2m scale.

As previously noted, that opening is currently infilled with modern blockwork. The internal lintel remains and appears to be of oak. There are no side jambs of timber which might indicate the former presence of a door or window frame, though this may have been removed when infilled.

The ventilation slit is splayed and here the opening is spanned by a timber lintel.

Apart from modern fixtures for electricity and the internal end of the metal duct (see Fig 10, left side at eaves level) there are no other internal features or fixtures apart from occasional bonding timbers within the walls.

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Conclusion

There is no indication that the position of the barn reflects in any way the windmill depicted in almost the same position in 1736. The date of demolition for that structure is not known, but there seems not to be any possibility that the current barn relates in any way to that earlier building.

The present barn is a typically plain building of purely utilitarian form, materials and function. Such structures were multi-purpose and could be used for different farming activities throughout the year as necessary. Without upper flooring or other internal divisions it could be, and almost certainly was, used to store fodder (grain, hay, roots, beans), animal bedding, vehicles, tools or livestock. The presence of opposing full-height doors could also indicate that it was used for threshing where a through-draught was necessary.

Temporary division in the form of hurdles could accommodate animals in one part whilst the remainder accommodated other items. As such, the large single-space barn was an essential building on most farms before the modern period where specialization was less common than it is today.

The construction of such a simple building, using local materials, makes it difficult to date closely. In this instance the lack of documentary evidence offers no solutions but the few datable elements, principally the roof trusses suggest a date of c1850-1875. It was certainly present by 1884 when the First Edition Ordnance Survey map was surveyed.

Externally the barn has no distinguishing or datable features and there is no surviving indication of the adjoining buildings depicted on the late nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey maps apart from a faint scar of the roof line on the north gable wall. This indicates that those buildings must have been butted against and not keyed-into the main structure and were therefore later. Map evidence has not been found to indicate when they were demolished though they were still present in 1924. They had all gone by 1973, by which time a group of silos stood close to the barn's south end.

Internally there is similarly nothing apart from structural detail to determine specific function suggesting that the building was a multi-purpose structure.

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Glossary of architectural terms (taken mostly from Curl, Brunskill, Maclean and Scott, Friar)

Buttered - When referring to mortar joints indicates mortar smeared across the joint and onto the stonework on all sides to provide an almost flat surface.

Cleat – A block fixed on to one piece of timber in order to prevent another sliding along its surface.

Eaves – Lowest part of a pitched roof projecting beyond the wall plane below.

Flaunching – A cement or mortar fillet placed between a wall and adjoining roof to cover and waterproof the join between the two surfaces.

Gable – The triangular upper part of a wall supporting the end of a ridged roof.

Jamb – The side of a doorway, window or fireplace.

King-post - A vertical timber set centrally within the triangular frame of a roof truss.

Lamp niche – A recess within the thickness of the wall positioned close to the interior of a doorway in which to place a lamp.

Ledged and braced – When regarding a door the ledges are horizontal timbers to which vertical planks are fixed, the braces are diagonal timbers set between the ledges for stability.

Lintel – A horizontal stone or timber beam spanning an opening and supporting the wall above.

Purlin – A horizontal beam running parallel to the ridge of a roof and carrying the common rafters.

Quoin – At the external angle of a wall or building, quoins or quoin stones are the dressed stones forming the angle.

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Rafter - A sloping timber beam within the framework of a roof rising from the eaves to the ridge. Principal rafters are those which carry the purlins. Common rafters rest on the purlins and carry the laths supporting slates or tiles.

Ridge plank – A thin plank of wood situated along the line of the ridge of the roof where the upper ends of the rafters meet.

Sarking boards – Timber boards, not unlike floorboards, which are laid on top of rafters parallel to the eaves and ridge which take the place of roofing laths onto which slates or tiles are fixed.

Tie-beam - A horizontal timber stretching from one wall to another across a building. Can form the base of a truss.

Truss – A group of timbers arranged as a frame within the triangle of a pitched roof, the frame spanning transversely across the building to give support to longitudinal purlins.

Appendix

OASIS data

Project Name	Barn at High Street, Twywell
OASIS ID	iainsode1-311157
Project Type	Building Recording
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	No
Current land use	In use as a building
Development type	Residential conversion
Reason for investigation	Planning Condition
National grid reference	SP 9485 7855
Start/end dates of fieldwork	15/02/2018
Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archive
Study area	c133 sq m



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

7 March 2018