



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**Level 2 building recording of barns at Wood Farm,
Banbury Road, Moreton Pinkney, Northamptonshire**

Joe Prentice

Wood Farm barns, Moreton Pinkney

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Summary

Level 2 building recording shows that this agricultural range in three separate builds dates from the later 19th century but with some constructed as late as the 1930s. One portion was a cart hovel, with a privy and pigeon-loft added to one gable end, while the other may have been intended as a calf shed, but this is so clean inside that it may have been little-used for that purpose.

Introduction

Wood Farm, Moreton Pinkney, NN11 3SQ, is located on the west side of the Banbury Road to the south-west of the village of Moreton Pinkney in south Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 5683 4568; Fig 1).

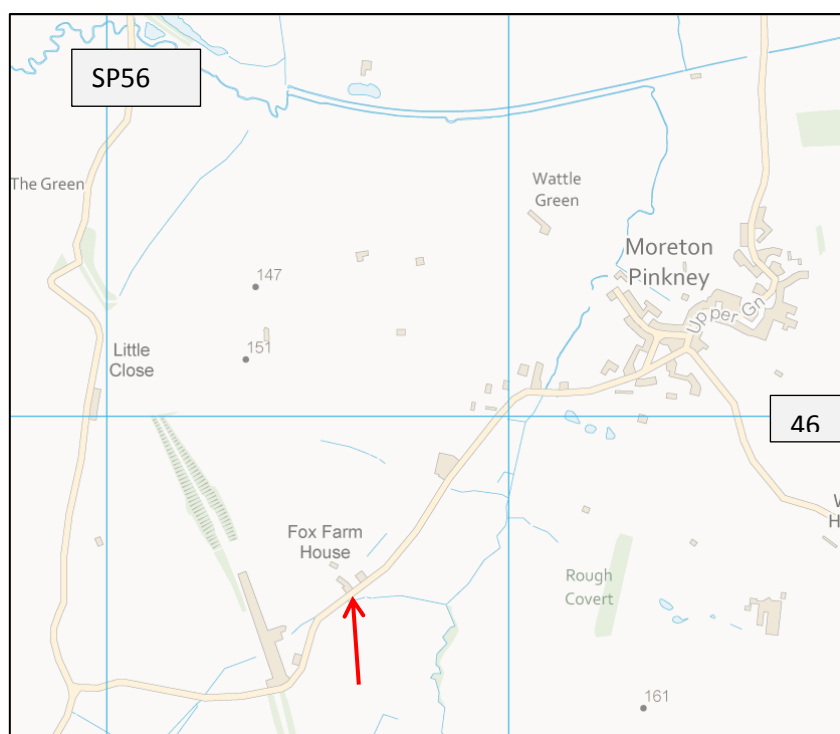


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2019

The present property is not statutorily listed although an adjacent property, situated to the immediate north-east, is grade II listed (Elm Cottage; NHL ID: 1190589). Since the present barns lie approximately within the setting of that listed cottage, they have been treated here as if they were a designated heritage asset.

Planning Permission was granted by South Northamptonshire Council for the demolition of a group of animal shelters and implement-barns at the former farm, the farmhouse of which was entirely

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rebuilt in 2002. The present house is set further away (west) from the Banbury Road but otherwise appears to occupy a similar footprint to its predecessor (see below, Fig 3).

A condition has been attached to the permission to require the barn group should be recorded in accordance with Historic England Level II guidelines prior to demolition (planning consent S/2018/2342/FUL, Condition 3). Level II requires a descriptive record to be made which should include a basic historic document search, a drawn survey, photographic records and written notes (Historic England 2016). The survey was carried out on 24 October 2019 under overcast but mostly dry conditions.

Historical background

Historic map regression suggests that a building was located at the property at the time of the c1810 Ordnance Survey preparatory map (Fig 2). However, the scale of that preparatory drawing is too small to reveal sufficient detail and to determine whether a predecessor to the current barns was present. Indeed, the precise location of the farm group is uncertain since there are four (red) coloured structures shown on the north-west side of the Banbury Road but insufficient locating features, such as field boundaries, with which to pinpoint Wood Farm with certainty. It is thought, though not certain, that the structure shown closest to the main village represents Wood Farm.



Fig 2: The c1810 Ordnance Survey preparatory map. Probable location of Wood Farm arrowed.

By the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map, the farmhouse and accompanying barn group are shown in greater detail (Fig 3).

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Fig 3: The Ordnance Survey First Edition, 1884, sheet LV.5. North to top.

The L-shaped farmhouse, along with adjoining enclosures and outbuildings, is situated almost exactly to the south of the east end of the eastern barn range whereas now it is set further to the west, to the south of the western range (see Fig 4). The east range of the barns is depicted in such a way as to show the extended south side towards the western end was present at this date (Fig 3). The west range, shown as two sub-divided structures, appears to be considerably shorter than the range which survives at present and suggests that it is an earlier configuration (compare Figs 3 and 4).

To the south and west of the barn group are depicted what are likely to be small enclosed areas, probably stockyards or livestock pens. The north-east boundary of the plot (to the right of the number 138 in figure 3) retains, to this day, a distinct dog-leg to the south-east.

The building record

As mentioned above, the barn group comprises two distinct ranges and are here referred to as the east and west ranges. Plans of the barns were supplied by the architect, Roger Coy Partnership, and are used as the base here with their kind permission. The eastern portion is the earlier of the two ranges, the configuration which exists today being depicted on the 1884 OS map; it is described first. The west range does not appear in the current form on that same mapping and appears to most likely date to the 1930's (see below).

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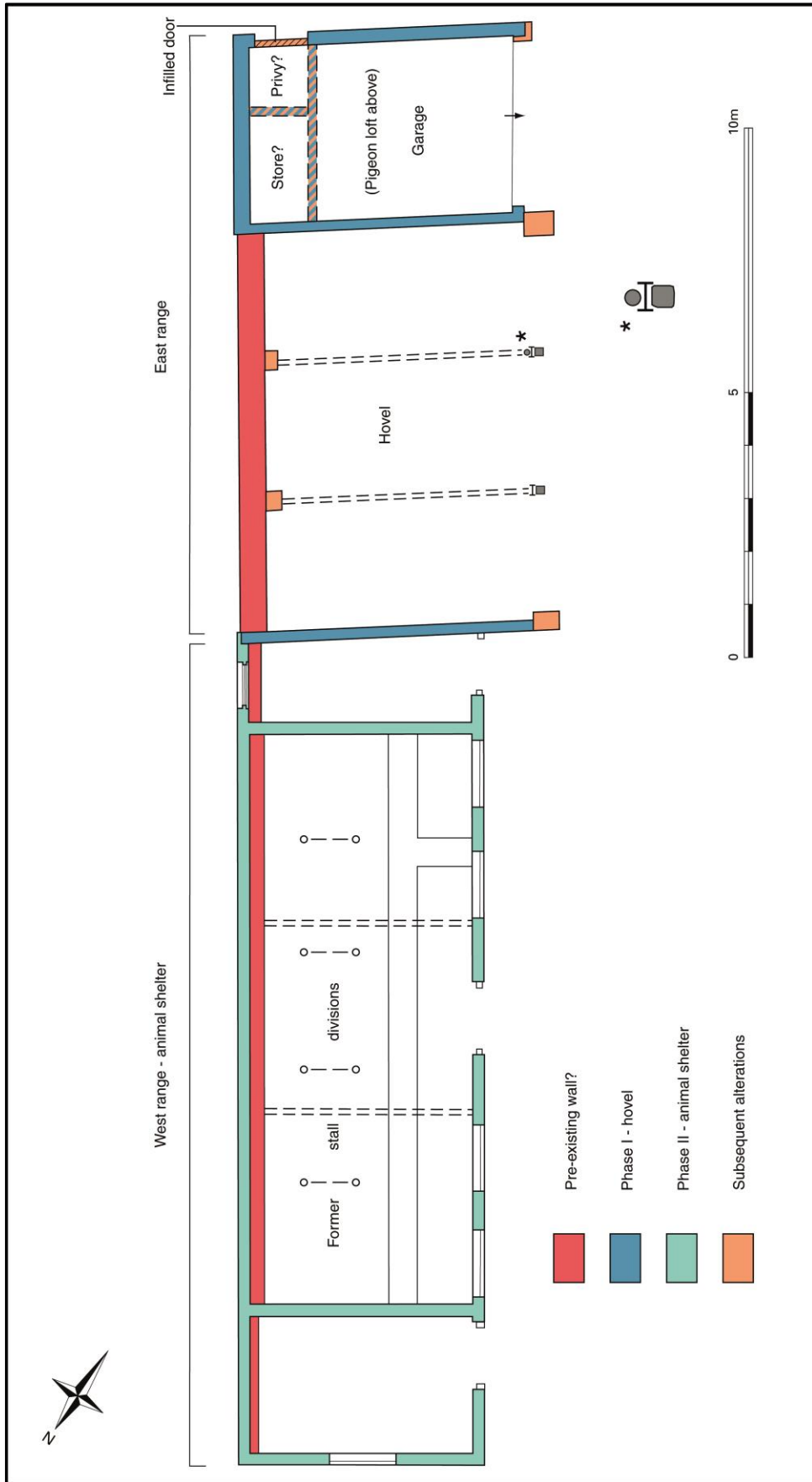


Fig 4: Plan of the current barn configuration (Andy Isham, after Roger Coy Partnership).

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The east range

A two-part structure comprising on the west side a three-bay, formerly open-sided hovel, subsequently extended and enclosed with timber screen walls and a central double door. At the eastern end is a separate room, also with secondary doors (Figs 4 and 5).

The formerly open three-bay hovel comprises a north wall which appears to have been originally a simple, largely stone-built, boundary wall. It is much patched with areas of brick repair and in addition, two brick piers have been added against the south elevation to support two oak trusses which support the roof (Fig 4). The west and east exterior gable walls are of brick, as is the dividing wall which separates the eastern room. The roof is covered with red clay pantiles (Fig 5).



Fig 5: The east range looking north. 2m scale rod.

The first-phase west and east brick gable walls have both been extended to the south, apparently when the current roof trusses were either re-set or added since they are seated not on the rear (north) wall, as is usual, but are supported by clearly secondary brick piers (Figs 4 and 6). The brickwork of the west and east gables is laid in Flemish stretcher bond, where alternate courses of headers and stretchers are laid between several courses of stretchers (Brunskill 1990). The extended southern ends of the two gables are also of red brick and the corners are finished using bull-nosed brick. These bricks were not generally made prior to c1850 and became widely used in farm buildings after their introduction in railway architecture during the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

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Fig 6: The east range three-bay hovel with western roof truss, looking west. 2m scale rod.

The southern extension was most likely simply a response to the need for a deeper and taller hovel to accommodate larger vehicles since the piers both allow the trusses to extend further to the south and above the stone north wall (see Fig 6). The most common configuration for such open-sided hovels, if used to store carts, was facing north or east whereby they would not be facing into the sun which had the effect of heating, and consequently shrinking, the timberwork of the vehicle, especially the wheels. However, given site restrictions, such preferred orientation was not always possible. It is also possible that the hovel was an animal shelter although there is no surviving evidence for such here; there is no indication of former hayracks or mangers.

The southern ends of both of the roof trusses are supported on a much-amended series of posts. The originals are two roughly trimmed oak, little more than roughly straight tree-trunks (Fig 7). It seems that when the piers were added, the front extended to the south and the trusses re-positioned, these were re-set but, given that the trusses were heightened at the same time, they were subsequently too short and so a series of crudely cut timber packing pieces have been added to provide the necessary height (Fig 7).



Fig 7: The re-set oak posts with timber packing to support the roof trusses.

These oak posts are rotten at the base and have had to be strengthened by the addition of both iron H-section steels and, in the eastern example, a second timber post (see Fig 4 inset and Fig 8).

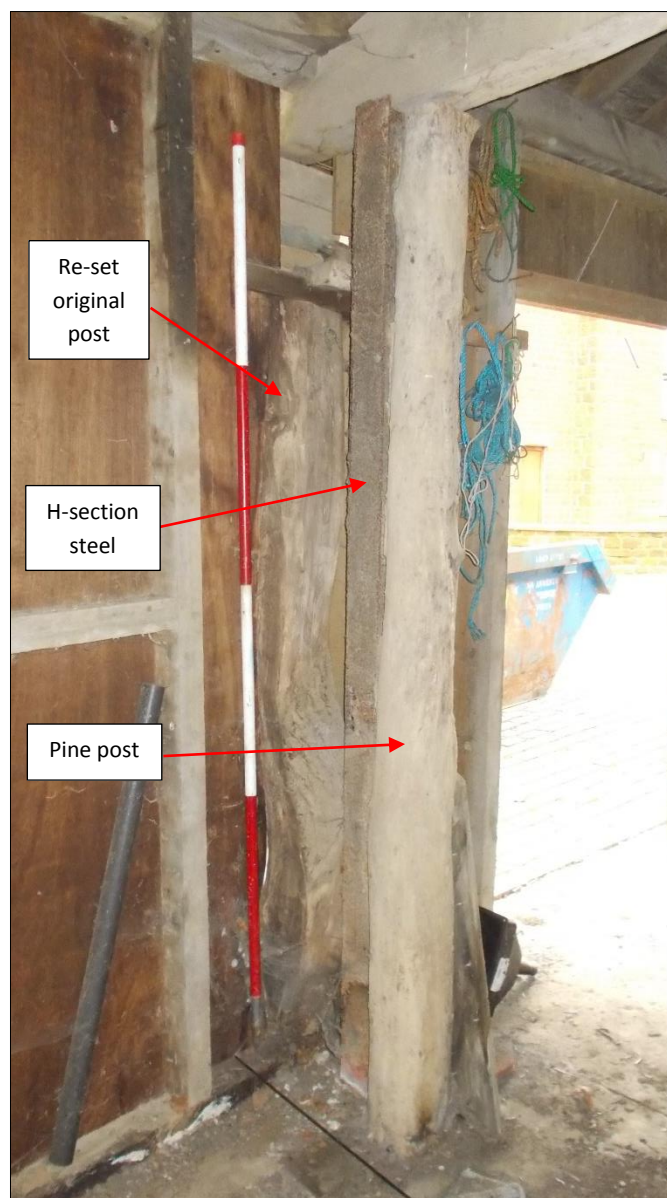


Fig 8: The southern truss supports showing original oak, and secondary H-section steel and pine posts, looking south-west. 2m scale rod.

The west truss has just a single secondary H-section steel but not the third timber post. The presence of these secondary and tertiary additions indicates that the oak posts continued to suffer from decay and there was a need to undertake ongoing repairs to support the roof.

The south sides of the west and east bays have been enclosed by crudely constructed timber screen walls, the western made from vertical planks on a simple frame, the eastern of modern plywood over a similarly flimsy timber frame (see Figs 5, 6 and 8 for details). The western bay appears to have included a door in that covering, though whether it actually functioned or was simply a convenient panel of timber is uncertain. The east bay and central fixed section coverings are of late twentieth-century plywood fitted with a vertically planked timber door hung on galvanised strap hinges and fastened with a simple clasp (Figs 5 and 7).

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Internally, as mentioned above, there are no indications of former animal food racks but there are a number of simple plank shelves supported on pressed metal brackets fitted to the west gable wall (Fig 6). The floor is of beaten earth.

The oak trusses which support the roof are of simple form and, as mentioned above, have either been re-set or introduced from elsewhere when the hovel was extended to the south. Each is of identical form and comprises a tie beam supporting a principal rafter which rises to the top of a shouldered or jowled king-post (Fig 6). The base of the king-post is bolted to the tie beam and there are two thinner raking struts, one on each side. There are simple flat-head chisel carpenters marks on the principal rafters and tie beam, numbering those pieces either with II or III cuts. This simply indicates that the trusses were initially fabricated flat on the ground before being raised and is not an indication of any great age; the presence of an iron bolt through the tie beam and base of the king-post suggests a date within the second half of the nineteenth-century.

Secondary struts have been added in various places, though quite why is uncertain, since the trusses appear to be mostly structurally sound although there is some evidence of rot due to leaks in the tiling. There are variously two or three purlins on each slope of the roof, most of which appear to be secondary and the common rafters appear to be entirely replaced. The underside of the pantile covering is felted indicating that the whole roof has been re-covered at some stage, most likely in the latter part of the twentieth century.

The eastern room is currently accessed from the south through a four-panel horizontally sliding door (Fig 9).



Fig 9: The eastern bay of the east range showing the sliding garage door, looking north. 2m scale rod.

Each leaf of the sliding door comprises an identical outer frame infilled with vertical planks, all painted. Curiously, one panel contains a letterbox, a curious addition in a garage. The lower ends of

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each door have suffered from rot and have been covered externally with galvanised sheeting, also painted.

The east gable wall shows that originally this portion of the range contained an integral pigeon loft with flight-holes and ledges for the birds (Fig 10).

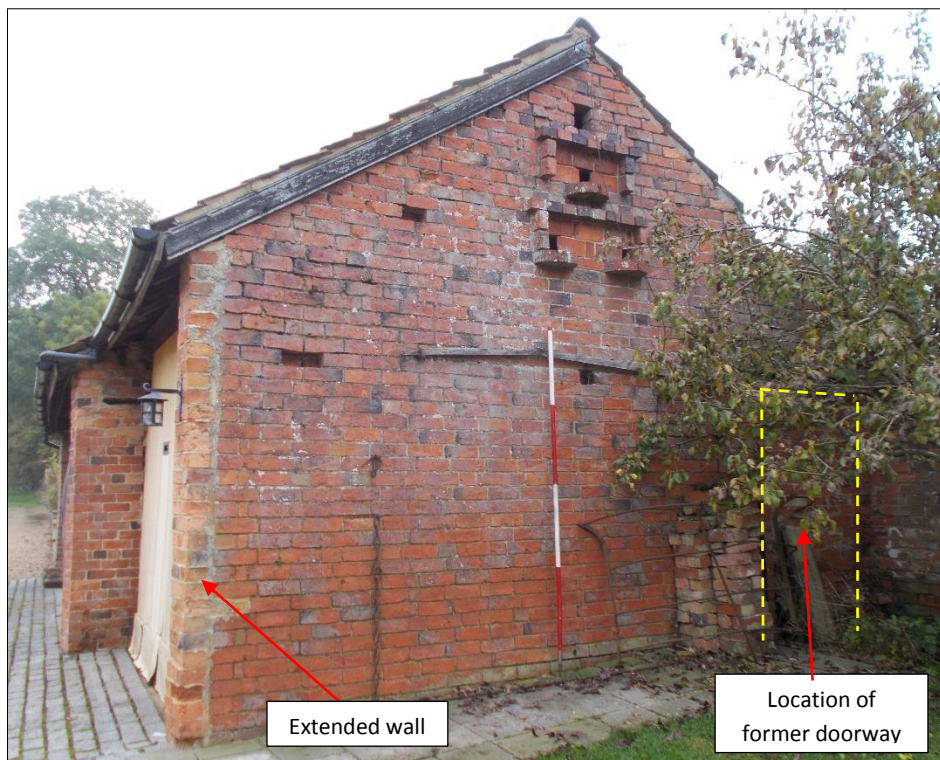


Fig 10: The east gable wall of the east range showing the former pigeon loft holes and flight ledges. Note also infilled door and extended south end. 2m scale rod.

The flight ledges serving the four holes into the loft are formed from standard bricks set proud of the wall surface but, to provide an additional decorative flourish, coping bricks which are set face-to-face to create semi-circular ledges. These coping bricks are of a similar date to the bullnose bricks, i.e. post-c1850.

A former doorway towards the north end of the gable has been infilled with a single thickness of brickwork and originally allowed access into that corner of the building (see Figs 4 and 10). It is most likely, but not now evident due to the total lack of surviving fittings, that this was a privy. Such facilities were common in outbuildings for use of both the family and farm workers in living memory.

The south end of the gable wall has been extended by a single brick thickness which wraps around the original southern end to form a pier; it appears that this was added when the current sliding garage doors were added (Figs 4 and 10).

Internally the room is now a single space though scars in the north, west and east walls indicate that it was formerly subdivided (Fig 4). That subdivision would have provided the privy-space at the north-east corner and an adjoining space, perhaps a store, presumably accessed from the room to the south although since none of the internal wall survives, the precise location of that doorway is

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no longer clear (Fig 4). The room retains some sections of brick floor surfacing, though it is discontinuous or in places has been covered in concrete.



Fig 11: The eastern room of the east range, showing the inner face of the sliding door and hanging rail. 2m scale rod.

Nothing now survives of a former floor to the pigeon loft which presumably occupied the section above eaves-level. Parts of empty joist sockets were just visible behind timber battens fixed to the east gable wall which support the iron rail from which hang the four panels of the sliding door. It is assumed there must have been a ceiling hatch through which the loft was accessed to collect either eggs or squabs since there is no visible entry from the exterior.

The only fixture in the room at present is a modern fuel tank in the north-east corner and electrical circuit boards.

The roof is supported on a single roughly trimmed timber purlin (probably oak), each end set into the adjoining gable walls. Over this are a series of modern machine-sawn pine rafters, felted on the outer surface over which the pantiles have been re-laid.

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The west range

A single-storey range constructed of red brick beneath a corrugated asbestos roof (Figs 4 and 12).



Fig 12: The west range, looking north. 2m scale rod.

This range does not appear in its current form on the OS map of 1884 and appears to be a later rebuild of a single phase. Stylistically it most likely dates from the 1930s.

The range contains three full-height timber doorways, almost, but not exactly, equally-spaced along this elevation (Figs 4 and 12). The hard, orange/red bricks are somewhat irregularly laid with most courses comprising three stretchers and one header, thus making them most closely akin to monk bond (Brunskill 1990). However, the coursing is inconsistent and suggests the builders were not particularly concerned with maintaining a regular pattern, a not uncommon feature of low status farm buildings where such irregularities were of little visual concern.

Set between the three doorways are two pairs of iron-framed window openings, each with edge-set bull-nosed brick sills. Both the doors and windows are set beneath pine timber lintels, the jambs within the doorways simply half-lapped into the lintels. Along the lower face of the elevation it can be seen that the wall is provided with a slate and pitch damp proof course. Such damp-proofing was not introduced before the Public Health Act of 1875 and rarely occurred in rural farm buildings until considerably later.

The roof covering, as mentioned above, is currently corrugated asbestos sheeting and is clearly a secondary replacement. Central to the ridge is a raised section, now entirely covered with corrugated metal sheeting but which originally may have comprised a louvered ventilation device. There is also evidence that much of the west gable wall has been rebuilt since the upper section is made from Fletton or common brick (Fig 13).



Fig 13: The west gable showing the upper re-built section (above yellow dashed line). 2m scale rod.

Similar evidence of rebuilding above eaves level can be seen within the internal dividing walling, suggesting that there was either a need through deterioration or some other unidentified desire to rebuild the upper part of the whole range. The current corrugated sheet covering is supported on flimsy pine trusses comprising a tie beam and two raking struts, each supporting a single principal rafter. The tops of the latter are fixed together with triangles of plywood which in turn support a ridge plank (Fig 14). On each side is a single purlin and there are no common rafters apart from where they are necessary to support the sides of the single roof light simply fitted with a sheet of clear corrugated plastic or polycarbonate (see Figs 12 and 14). The same roof structure and covering extends long the whole range.

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Fig 14: The interior of the central section of the east range, looking east. 2m scale rod.

The three external doors allow access into three internal spaces, a small room at both the west and east ends and a large central animal shelter (Fig 4). The north wall of the central and eastern sections could be partially built on top of an existing stone wall since the lower portion is considerably thicker than the upper portion, but since that lower section is cement rendered, the method of construction cannot be observed (see Fig 14). The upper section of the central and eastern rooms is of red brick, and in the western room the whole wall is entirely of brick.

The two smaller end rooms were most likely included for the accommodation of sick, injured or pregnant animals. All of the doors are of the same configuration and construction, being a single leaf made from vertical planks supported on two ledges, one top and bottom, connected and supported by a single diagonal internal brace (Fig 15). The doors are hinged on plain strap hinges fixed to the top and bottom ledges and each is fastened with a simple iron drop latch and a draw-bolt.

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Fig 15: An example of the door and window furniture of the east range, looking north. 2m scale rod.

The room at the west end of the range is currently almost devoid of fixtures and fittings apart from modern cupboards against the north wall (Fig 16).



Fig 16: The west room of the west range, looking north-west. 2m scale rod. Tethering bars arrowed.

The partially rebuilt west gable wall is evident, although on this internal elevation the re-build commences from a lower level, two courses below the window sill (Fig 16, yellow dashed line). The lintel above the window is of concrete. The iron window frame is a single-unit construction which appears to have originally been galvanised, though is now extremely rusty. It contains two rows of

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four panes, the upper four hinged inwards on the mid-rail and retained by quadrant stays, opening inwards for ventilation.

Low in the west and east walls are vertical tethering bars, both retaining their tethering chains (Figs 16 and 17). These indicate that the room could accommodate two beasts, though the low setting suggests they were most likely calves not full-grown cattle.



Fig 17: A tethering bar and chain in the west room of the west range. Scale in 50cm sections.

Such tethering bars and chains were used to restrict the animal's movements, whilst allowing it sufficient freedom to eat and lie down.

The central section of the west range is a single large space with an integral concrete manger extending the whole length of the north side of the room (Fig 18). The manger is formed to have a

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low lip on the south side and a gently swept profile which rises against the north wall, thus confining any fodder towards the head of the animals.



Fig 18: The interior of the central room in the west range, looking west. 2m scale rod.

That manger is unusually low for cattle and suggests, as do the tethering bars in the west room, that this space may more likely have been used to accommodate calves rather than full-grown cattle. Similarly, the location of the drainage gully at the foot of each former stall suggests a relatively short beast (the length is 2,10m, 7 feet). That gully falls gently towards a short spur on the south side of the room before passing through the south wall to the exterior (see Fig 14).

The room was originally sub-divided by galvanised iron bars into five stalls, each with room for two animals (see Fig 4). On the west and east walls are tethering bars, indicating that the animals were similarly restricted; the intervening stall divisions were almost certainly similarly fitted with further tethering bars.

The two pairs of windows are of the same galvanised iron frames with hinged upper halves as described in the west room. They are all identical in size, materials and configuration and were clearly added as a suite.

Apart from lime-washing to the walls and modern electrical fittings, there is nothing of note to comment upon. The floor is concrete throughout and the walls are cement rendered to the level of the window sills. The floor is surprisingly free of wear and tear as well as being un-stained perhaps suggesting that it was only used for livestock for a short period. If the range was constructed, as is thought, in the 1930's it may be that the ensuing war period changed the methods of farming and other priorities superseded livestock rearing.

The eastern room is entered via a timber planked door of the same configuration as those previously described. Apart from the rendering of the lower part of the walls and lime-washing, there is no surviving fixture or fitting within this space (Fig 19). No tethering bars are present.



Fig 19: The eastern room of the west range, looking north. 2m scale rod.

The floor is of concrete and the walls are rendered to the level of the window sill. The north wall may be of stone at lower level but is of brick above sill level.

The window frame is made from painted timber, most likely pine, and contains nine individual panes. The whole frame is hinged along the lower edge and retained in position by two curving quadrant stays so that it could be opened inwards from the top to provide ventilation. The lintel is painted timber.

There are two horizontal timbers set into the west and east gable walls of uncertain purpose (Fig 19). Apart from these and a cast-iron downpipe which must serve guttering along the north side and which falls towards the south, there are no fixture or fittings other than a modern water pipe and tap.

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Discussion

The range of barns at Wood Farm, Banbury Road, Moreton Pinkney can be separated into two distinct phases, the eastern portion being earlier than that on the west.

The earlier range is present on the OS map of 1884 but stylistically and from examination of the materials does not appear to be much earlier, perhaps dating from the beginning of the third quarter of the nineteenth-century c1870-75. It appears to have been originally constructed as a three-bay open-sided hovel, probably for farm vehicles but possibly also utilised for livestock, though there are now no indications for the latter. It has undergone significant alteration and has been extended southwards, which has necessitated the introduction of brick piers, the moving of the principal trusses and alterations to the method of supporting the south ends of those trusses. More recently, the former open sides have been enclosed with timber to provide storage.

The contemporary, but separate, eastern bay formerly accommodated a pigeon loft of which nothing now remains apart from the flight holes and ledges in the east gable wall. The currently single room was originally sub-divided, perhaps providing in the north-east corner a privy, most likely serving both the main house and farm staff. The current sliding garage doors are of mid-twentieth century date.

The west range is later, and most probably dates to the 1930's judging by the surviving interior arrangements, materials and the window fittings. This range was designed to accommodate livestock but appears, from the almost total lack of wear and tear, to have been little used. The roof has been entirely replaced and comprises a rather flimsy pine structure supporting a covering of corrugated asbestos sheets. This re-roofing most likely dates to the 1960's and may even fall into the 1970's.

Typical of low-status utilitarian agricultural architecture, there appears to have been relatively little time or money spent on the initial construction or subsequent maintenance, the only decorative detail being the pigeon loft flight holes and ledges which, not unsurprisingly, face the Banbury Road. Otherwise, the barns are unsophisticated examples of small late nineteenth and early/mid twentieth century farming practises and suggest they were constructed simply to fulfil basic roles with little consideration of visual effect.

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Bibliography

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Historic England, 2016 *Understanding Historic Buildings; A Guide to Good Recording Practice*

Glossary of architectural terms

Bullnose brick – A brick with one rounded edge. Used primarily in industrial, railway or agricultural buildings on corners, doorways and window jambs to prevent people or livestock damaging themselves on otherwise sharp corners. Can be used decoratively. First used c.1850.

Collar – In a roof, a horizontal member tying together a pair of inclined members, usually a principal rafter, common rafters or sides of a truss.

Coping – A (usually) shaped stone or brick which is positioned on top of a wall to throw off water.

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

Header – The narrow end of a brick.

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

Kingpost – A vertical post, centrally positioned within a roof truss.

Ledged and braced (door) – A ledge is a horizontal timber onto which are fixed vertical planks, a brace is a diagonal timber set between two or more ledges. Hinges are usually fixed through the vertical planks into the ledges since the latter strengthen the door.

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

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.

Raking strut – An angled timber added as a brace and support between one timber and another.

Shouldered or jowled – A thickening at the top of a vertical timber to afford a stronger junction with another timber.

Stretcher – The long side of a brick.

Squab – A young pigeon, harvested for eating before it was able to fly the nest. An invaluable source of meat during parts of the year when other livestock was unavailable.

Truss – A framework of timbers supporting a roof.

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Appendix

OASIS data

Project Name	Wood Farm barns, Moreton Pinkney
OASIS ID	374781
Project Type	Building Recording
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	No/No
Current land use	In use as a building
Development type	Redevelopment
Reason for investigation	Planning Condition
National grid reference	SP 5683 4568
Start/end dates of fieldwork	24 October 2019
Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archive
Study area	150 sq m



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