

# ASPLEY HOUSE FARM BARN.

Level 2 Building Recording and Watching Brief

July 2017



CONSTRAINTS REPORTS  
DESK-BASED ASSESSMENTS  
HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS  
EIA  
HERITAGE STATEMENTS  
HERITAGE CONSENTS  
HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING  
QUALITY ASSURANCE  
PR & CSR  
PROCUREMENT  
PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
PROJECT PLANNING





# Commercial Archaeology

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**CLIENT:** The AJ & AK Warrington Discretionary Trust

**PROJECT:** Aspley House Farm Barn, Aspley Lane, Slindon, Staffordshire

**Level 2 Building Recording and Watching Brief Report - Final**

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## *Non-Technical Summary*

*In December 2016 Commercial Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by The AJ & AK Warrington Discretionary Trust to undertake a programme of historic building recording on a mid- 19<sup>th</sup> century barn which is within the curtilage of the grade II listed farmhouse at Aspley House Farm, Slindon in Staffordshire. The programme of historic building recording has been divided into stages comprising firstly desk-based/cartographic research and photographic survey and secondly a watching brief during the removal of floors within the building prior to its conversion for residential use. The historic building recording and watching brief are required as a condition of planning consent by Staffordshire County Council as the barn is considered of heritage interest and is ancillary to a listed building.*

*The original mid-19<sup>th</sup> century barn is constructed of red-brick on a roughly worked sandstone block foundation and has a pitched slate roof. The barn has undergone several phases of building activity and alteration which reflect its multi-purpose function over the centuries. A number of original features such as doors, windows and agricultural mechanisms are extant. The original components of the barn comprise a north to south aligned range adjoining an east to west aligned range. The ranges are at different levels with the north to south aligned range constructed at a higher level than the east to west. A later 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century cart shed adjoins the eastern side of the barn and two phases of later 19<sup>th</sup> and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century buildings adjoin the western side. The grade II listed farmhouse lies in close proximity to the barn to the southwest and immediately to the west is a long L-shaped brick cow house which is probably contemporary with the barn.*

*A report containing the results of the desk-based research, cartographic analysis and a photographic survey was prepared as an interim report (CA 2017) and the current document represents an update of the interim report with the results of a watching brief during internal works to the barn. The watching brief provided limited information on the construction of the barn but failed to demonstrate the presence of an earlier building on the site.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Commercial Archaeology Ltd (CAL) was commissioned by The AJ & AK Warrington Discretionary Trust to undertake a programme of historic building recording and a watching brief during internal works on a probable mid-19<sup>th</sup> century barn located within the curtilage of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century grade II listed farmhouse at Aspley House Farm, Slindon in Staffordshire (centred on NGR SJ81713 33153, Figure 1). The barn which is ancillary to the house and within its curtilage is considered of potential historic significance not only by virtue of its association with the farmhouse and wider farmstead development but in its own right as a typical example of a historic Staffordshire farm building.

Planning permission was granted by Stafford Borough Council (15/22736/FUL) for the conversion of the barn into two dwellings with the following condition (19):

*No development shall take place within the area of the proposed scheme until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work (to include post-excavation, reporting and appropriate publication) in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority.*

The conversion is also covered by Listed Building Consent (SBC 15/22737/LBC) with the following assessment:

*The site lies within the heart of a mid-18<sup>th</sup> century farm complex (Aspley House) which has been recorded on the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (PRN 53021). As such the farmstead is recorded on Yates's plan of the area dated 1775 and the 1836 OS" mapping of Slindon.*

*The barn which is the subject of this application is recorded on the First Edition mapping and may retain functional and phasing evidence relating to the development of the farmstead.*

*Therefore, it is advised that a building recording survey be carried out prior to works to the building. This work would record evidence of phasing, changing functions and the survival of historic fixtures and fittings and would equate to a Level 2 survey as identified in the English Heritage volume entitled 'Understanding Historic Buildings. A guide to good recording practice' (2006).*

This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework para 141 which requires that sufficient information is provided to the Local Planning Authority concerning the significance of the heritage asset. This policy also states that Local Planning Authorities may require developers to record and further understanding of the heritage assets to be impacted and for this information to be made publically accessible.

This report and all related fieldwork will adhere to the following documents:

- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2014 *Code of Conduct*.
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2014 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Building Recording*.
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2014 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.
- Staffordshire County Council Planning Archaeologist (SCCPA) 2016 *Specification for a Level 2 Archaeological Building Recording. Land at Aspley House Farm, Aspley Lane, Slindon, Staffordshire*.

The report will also make reference to the following documents produced by Staffordshire County Council on the historic farmsteads of Staffordshire:

- *Historic Farmsteads – A Manual for Mapping*  
<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/eLand/planners-developers/HistoricEnvironment/Projects/Historic-Farmsteads.aspx#FarmsteadSurvey>
- *Farmsteads Guidance – Staffordshire Assessment Framework*
- *Farmsteads Guidance – Staffordshire Farmsteads Character Statement*

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/eLand/planners-developers/HistoricEnvironment/Projects/Historic-Farmsteads.aspx>

It was agreed that the Specification prepared by the SCCPA would be used as the Written Scheme of Investigation for the programme of building recording and subsequent watching brief.

The completed archaeological archive comprising site notes, context records, drawings, photographs and artefactual material will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery (accession number: **2017.LH.4**) which has been identified as the final repository.

Printed and bound copies of the report will be distributed to the Client and the Staffordshire HER. In addition, a digital copy will be uploaded to the OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations) with the reference number: **commerci1-272205**. A summary of the results will be submitted to a relevant journal.

## 2. SITE LOCATION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Aspley House Farm house is recorded on the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (HER, PRN 07366) as a grade II listed mid-18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse of red brick construction which retains many of its original internal features including doors, paneling, floorboards and fireplaces. The farm itself is similarly recorded on the HER (PRN 53021) as a farmstead of loose courtyard form laid out around a single-courtyard with the farmhouse characteristically positioned gable-end on to the yard. The barn fronts onto a trackway which leads eastward towards the fields and immediately to its west is the location of a long, narrow brick-built cow-house of similar date to the barn.

To the west of Aspley House Farm, on the other side of a shared access track is another farmstead also recorded on the HER (PRN 53021) known as Aspley Farm. Unlike Aspley House Farm this farmstead is laid out around a regular U-plan courtyard with a detached farmhouse and number of original buildings still extant. The farmstead was established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century although there is a suggestion that it may have an earlier origin in that in 1904 an Elizabethan farmhouse was demolished to build the current house (pers. Comm. Owner of Aspley House Farm).

The close proximity of the two farmsteads suggests that in origin they made up a small farming hamlet or were part of a larger hamlet/village which shrunk in size at some point prior to the earliest cartographic evidence we have which is late 18<sup>th</sup> century (see below). The settlement at Aspley was recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086 and at that time was held by the Bishop of Chester. The settlement was recorded as having four villagers, four smallholders with two ploughs and an acre of meadow. The settlement was valued at 10 shillings. It is possible therefore that the sites of Aspley House Farm and Aspley Farm were subject to settlement and farming activity at least as far back as the early medieval period although any obvious visible traces of this have disappeared.

The Staffordshire Historic Landscape Character (HLC) characterizes the area surrounding the farms as post 1880's reorganized piecemeal enclosure. This enclosure has resulted in a



characteristic semi-regular pattern of fields with long sinuous boundaries which fossilize the layout of the open fields which surrounded the settlement of Aspley in the medieval period.

In terms of cartographic evidence, the Yates plan of 1775 depicts three buildings in the location of Aspley Farm but does not appear to show any buildings in the location of Aspley House Farm. This is difficult to reconcile with the HER information which dates the farmhouse to 1759 but may arise from an inaccuracy in the plan itself.

The farmstead is depicted on the Ordnance Survey 1" map of 1836 (Figure 2) which shows a building in the approximate location of the barn situated within a roughly L-shaped enclosure which most likely represents the curtilage of the farmyard and farmhouse. No other buildings, however, are depicted within the enclosure.

The Tithe Map of 1838 (Figure 3) depicts far more detail and shows that by this time the footprint of the barn comprised a north to south aligned range with a small annexe adjoining the southwestern wall and a second east to west aligned range extending from the middle of the first range also with a small annexe which adjoined its northwestern wall. Therefore, in plan both ranges were roughly L-shaped. A cow-house is depicted to the west and the farmhouse is shown to the south set within gardens. To the immediate north of the barn the Tithe Map records the location of a rick-yard indicating the storage of hay stacks or wheat sheaves. The majority of the surrounding fields are recorded as pasture with some meadow but very little arable.

By the time of the Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1880 (Figure 4) the farmstead had expanded slightly with three buildings now located between the house and the barn and another two located to the east of the house within the fields suggesting that they represented field barns. A trackway is shown leading from the fields to the east side of the farmyard and terminating at the northern elevation of the barn. This map does not appear to depict the rick-yard shown on the 1838 Tithe Map. By 1880 the house had been enlarged with the addition of a porch to the front and an extension to the rear. In addition, it appears a lean-to had been added to the eastern end of the southern elevation of the cow-house.

The Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1901 (Figure 5) again shows an expansion of the farm with a large rectangular building constructed to the north of the cow-house. With regard to the barn itself this too had undergone expansion by this time with a rectangular building, most likely a cart shed, now extending from the eastern wall of Range 1 and an extension with stalling to the front for livestock infilling the southwestern side of the barn. This appears to have involved the demolition or incorporation of the small annexe depicted on the Tithe map.

Additional development of the farmstead is evident on the Ordnance Survey 25" 1924 map (Figure 6) with a second building constructed to the north of the cow-house and one of the field barns located to the east of the yard being enlarged. In terms of the barn itself a building had been added to the eastern half of the northern elevation of the cart-shed.

By the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century modern agricultural buildings had been constructed around both the barn and the cow house including large storage sheds and sheds for livestock as shown on the Google image (Figure 7). The open fronted terrace along the rear elevation of the cart-shed was also constructed during this time and appears to have involved the removal of the building shown on the OS 1924 map. However, at the time of the site visit it was apparent that a number of the modern buildings have since been demolished. This may have resulted from a change in agricultural regime from dairying to chicken farming (pers. Comm. Owner of Aspley House Farm).

### **3. THE BARN – DATE, ARCHITECTURAL FORM AND DEVELOPMENT**

The barn at Aspley House Farm is a large red-brick structure with a pitched tiled roof with short verge parapets at the gable ends. The brick barn most likely dates to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The brick superstructure is constructed on foundation walling composed of roughly squared, sandstone blocks with tooling marks. This may indicate that the brick superstructure was superimposed on the footprint of an earlier stone building or simply that the sandstone blocks were re-used from a demolished stone building in the vicinity.

The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century elements of the barn comprise a roughly north to south orientated range (Range 1, Figure 8) which is joined on its western side by a roughly east to west orientated range (Range 2, Figure 9). The ranges are built at different levels with Range 1 located at a higher level than Range 2, access to the former from the latter being by way of an internal raised hatchway.

The fabric of the barn both internally and externally reveals various sequences of constructional activity as evidenced by a series of blocked doorways, blocked windows, scarring from the demolition of earlier buildings attached to the barn along with the insertion of later windows and doorways. The bricks on both ranges of the barn are of crude clamp-made type and there are irregularities in the brickwork on all the barn elevations with areas of walling showing a mix of Stretcher, Flemish Stretcher and English Garden Wall Bond. Original doorways and windows have segmental arches comprising headers.

Later 19<sup>th</sup> or very early 20<sup>th</sup> century elements of the barn comprise an east to west aligned, south facing open-fronted cart shed extending from the eastern elevation of Range 1 and infilling with two sequences of brick built extension abutting the southern elevation of Range 2 and the western elevation of Range 1. Adjoining the rear of the cart storage shed is a 20<sup>th</sup> century open-fronted, terraced extension constructed of breeze blocks, steel uprights and corrugated iron roofing over steel roof frames. This lean-to obscures the entire north facing elevation of the cart shed.

Internally the barn comprises a single ground floor room representing Range 2 with access to the ground floor of Range 1 via a small hatchway in the back wall of Range 2. The ground floor rooms of both ranges have ceilings of beam and plank construction and in all of the rooms both the walls and ceilings have been lime-washed. The floors throughout both ranges are concreted though it is likely that the original flooring was brick.

The first floor of Range 2 is divided into three bays by two sets of arcade posts with aisle ties whilst the roof is of queen strut construction with rafters supporting lath and plaster. The flooring is made of close set wooden planks and the walls have been lime-washed. There are ventilation holes in the brickwork of the southern wall. Access to the first floor of Range 1 is through a small hatch located in the top half of the eastern wall.

The first floor of Range 1 may originally have been a single open room but has been subdivided at some time by the insertion of a later brick wall. Support for the roof is provided by a single set of arcade posts supporting a roof truss carrying the purlins and additional support is provided by the brick wall which also serves to carry the purlins. Felting material has been used to infill between the rafters most likely for waterproofing. A suspended electric conveyor belt runs down the middle of the room and exits through a blocked up hatch into the covered loading bay.

#### 4. PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Paragraphs below in italics are comments from the current owner of Aspley House Farm who knows the 20<sup>th</sup> century uses of the barn.



1. North elevation of Range 2, the western end of the range showing phases of patching and blocking. The sandstone foundation is clearly visible. A blocked opening at the western end of the range along with a piece of truncated walling and the lighter coloured bricks on this end of the range suggest the presence of an earlier structure against the north elevation. This is most likely the remains of the small annexe depicted on the 1838 Tithe Map (Figure 3).



2. Detail of blocked opening, truncated wall and sandstone foundation blocks. The brickwork is patchy and irregular suggesting different phases of activity. Tooling marks are clearly visible on the sandstone blocks. The apertures in the brickwork may be slots for beams and indicate the presence of some kind of structure.

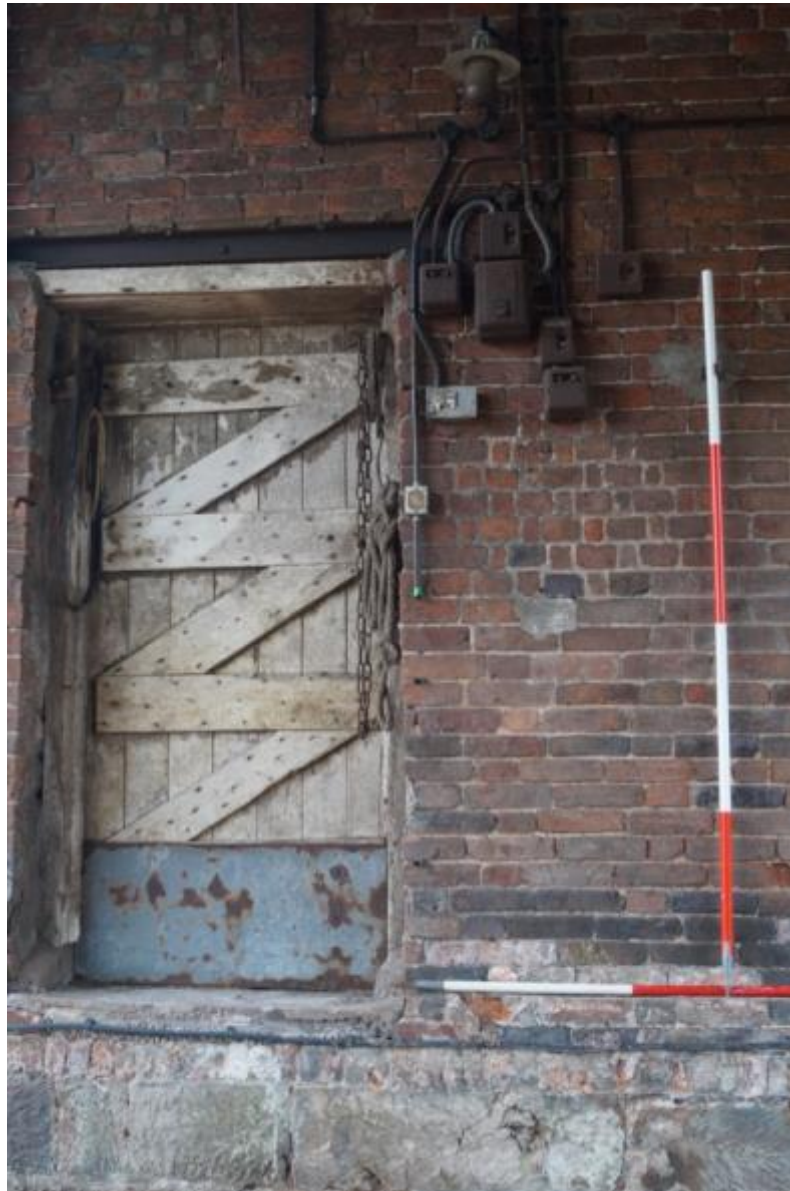
*From 1960 to 2000 there was a fuel tank here to supply the stationery Ford tractor engine that powered the grain dryer in the open sided 'Drift House'.*



3. North gable end of Range 1. A covered loading bay projects from main body of the barn. The hatch in the gable end is redundant, as loading would take place within the covered area. This indicates that originally the structure of Range 1 extended further north but was later partially demolished to create the covered area. Cartographic evidence supports the location of a solid building where the covered area now stands (Figures 2 to 6).

The raised 20<sup>th</sup> century lean to is visible against the eastern elevation of Range 1.

*Known as the 'Drift House' two perforated metal bins each with a central chimney were erected here in the early 1960s by the current owner's father, plus a grain reception pit and tunnel leading to a fan powered by the Ford tractor engine mentioned previously.*



4. Detail of the doorway into Range 1 from the covered loading bay showing irregularities in brickwork, sandstone base blocks and redundant electrical metres/switches, lamp and lifting equipment.

*In this area grain drying bins were located from the 1960s. The bins were filled and emptied by a switch gear controlled grain elevator and chain conveyor in the loft (see below).*





5. Batten and plank door, doorway and window with segmental arches in the eastern elevation of Range 1 now opening out into the 20<sup>th</sup> century lean to structure.

*The lean-to was built of reclaimed materials in the early 1970s.*



6. The south facing gable end of Range 1. At least three phases of building activity are visible as evidenced by areas of red brick patched with blackened brick along the lower part of the gable end and a later inserted window with a flat concrete lintel. Steel RSJ supports have been fixed vertically to the wall probably to strengthen the structure perhaps because of storage on the upper floor and to counteract outward thrust from the roof. A grain chute protrudes from beneath the doorway on the first floor.

*The steel supports and grain chute were added in the early 1960s when the barn was converted to bulk grain storage.*



7. Later 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century additions against the eastern wall of Range 1 as depicted on the OS 25"1901 map. They are represented by an open fronted brick built storage area adjoining another open fronted cart shed with steel pillars.

*This was always referred to as the 'cartshed'. Originally the brick built part of the cartshed had wooden doors and was where the current owner's grandparents kept a trap prior to the purchase of their first car in the 1930s.*

*During the 1970s and 1980s the cartshed was used to house weaned calves*



8. Detail of the open fronted brick storage area and of an original doorway into the eastern elevation of Range 1. The door is batten and plank with iron strap hinges attached to iron pintels. The opening to the north of the door now leads through into the 20<sup>th</sup> century lean-to which abuts the eastern side of the range.

*The batten and plank door gives access to what was once the old grain storage area. This part of Range 1 was also used as stables and had a blue brick floor which was removed when the existing concrete floor was laid. The opening adjacent to the door gave access to a tack room which later became a tool store. The stables and tack room were in use during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*



9. Remains of at least two building phases against the western wall of Range 1 and the southern wall of Range 2. The earlier appears to be an outshot delineated by the whitewashed brick. The OS 25" 1901 map depicts this building but also shows stalls fronting it. Truncated low brick walls in the back wall indicate subdivision of the outshot into four bays. The lower parts of the walls have been rendered and the floor is brick built. Note the pump which is located beneath a hatch in the back wall on the second photograph.

The current form of the building with projecting brick walls supporting sloping beams resulted from the conversion of the pigsty into garages in the mid-1960s.

*The earlier building was a purpose built pig sty with four pens and open yard at the front. It was converted into garages/machinery store in the mid-1960s*



10. Detail of the pump. This is a Blake's Hydrum a hydraulic rams with the trademark *Hydrum* invented in the mid-1800s by John Blake. The Hydrum is capable of pumping water using only the power of the flowing body of water.

*The pump was located in a brick chamber close to the Brockton Brook in the 'Townfield' and was the only water supply before the farm was connected to the mains in the 1950s.*



11. At some point the outshut was subdivided by a wall built parallel to the south facing wall of Range 2 to create a corridor which is now open but which was once probably covered. The doorway in the foreground gives access to the ground floor of Range 2. A drive wheel is fixed to the wall and a mounting for some form of associated engine is fixed to the brick floor.

*This area was covered until 2015 when the 1960s roof was removed. The engine mounting was for an electric motor which powered a belt driven bag mixer via the fly wheel and axle in the wall above. This was used continuously during from the 1960s until the early 1980s for rolled barley, beet pulp and fish meal.*



12. Detail of the fly wheel with aperture in the wall for the axle.





13. Two blocked doorways in the southern wall of Range 2. These may have become redundant when the outshut was subdivided to create the corridor. A third blocked doorway is located in the western wall of Range 1 and the later dividing wall truncates it suggesting again redundancy as a result of the corridor construction.



14. Western gable end of Range 2 with the covered loading bay of Range 1 in the background. The stub wall to the side of the entrance is likely to be a vestigial section of the annexe once located against the north elevation of Range 2 as depicted on the Tithe Map of 1838. It may have been left in situ to provide buttressing for the insertion of the larger square doorway. The straight joint is clearly visible where the later outshut was built against Range 2.

*The square metal door replaced the original door in the early 1970s when the bag mixer was installed (see above).*



15. Interior of the ground floor of Range 2. There is considerable evidence of phases of alteration and patching. RSJs have been used for additional ceiling support. The hatch into Range 1 is visible in the back wall. In front of the wooden supporting beam is the vertical mounting for the axle leading from the drive wheel outside.



16. Detail of ceiling construction which shows two phases of building activity with a later ceiling of oak planking and support beams superimposed onto the main structural cross beams



17. Internal face of the south wall of Range 2 showing one of the blocked doorways. The sandstone blocks at the base of the wall show signs of rendering and the entire ground floor room of Range 2 has been lime-washed. There is a wooden stall partition which suggests housing for livestock at some point.

*Pre-1953 this building was a milking shed and was then converted to house deep litter hens both here and in the floor above. In the 1960s the bag mixer was installed and a roller mill installed on the first floor.*



18. Detail of small doorway from the ground floor of Range 2 into the ground floor of Range 1.



19. Wooden plank housing for the staircase from the ground floor to the first floor of Range 2. Wedge shaped notches have been cut into the lower edge of the cross beam to the rear of the staircase which may indicate that the beam once supported upright partitioning.

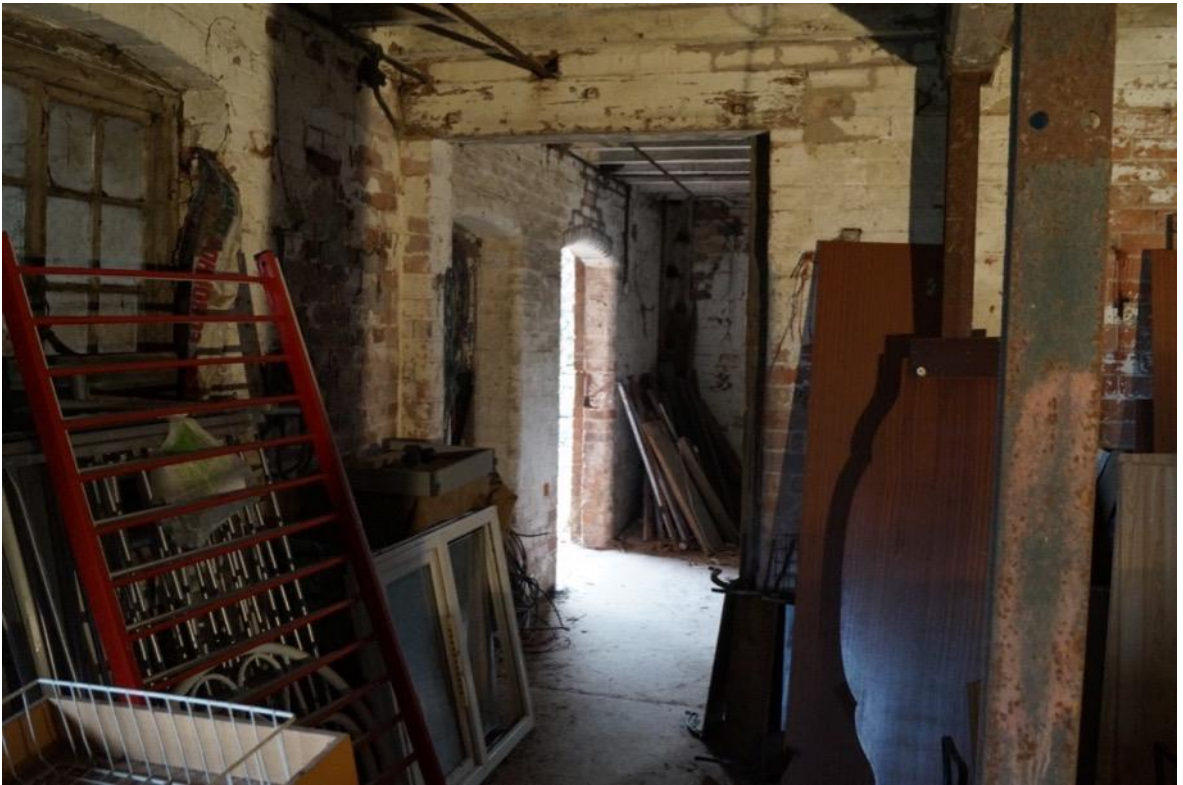


20. Detail of staircase to first floor. This appears to be a later insertion the original stairs having been removed.





21. Room 1 ground floor of Range 1 looking out into the 20<sup>th</sup> century terraced lean-to. Much of the detail of the interior of this room was obscured by storage. The doorway shown is directly opposite the blocked doorway in the western wall of the range and on stylistic grounds they are likely to be contemporary. The opposing doorways may suggest that threshing activities took place here, though only on a small-scale.



22. Room 1 of Range 1 looking south. Again RSJs have been used for additional support. A timber window-frame with casement windows is located in the eastern wall of the room.



23. Ground floor, Room 2 of Range 1. The main doorway opens out into the open fronted cart shed whilst the smaller doorway obscured by the RSJ opens into the 20<sup>th</sup> century lean-to. The flooring throughout the ground floor of Range 1 is concrete whilst all of the walls have been lime-washed.



24. A possible grain chute protrudes from the ceiling of Room 2 suggesting the presence of a hopper on the first floor.

*The grain chute was for filling bags/bins from the grain dryer in the 1960s and 1970s.*

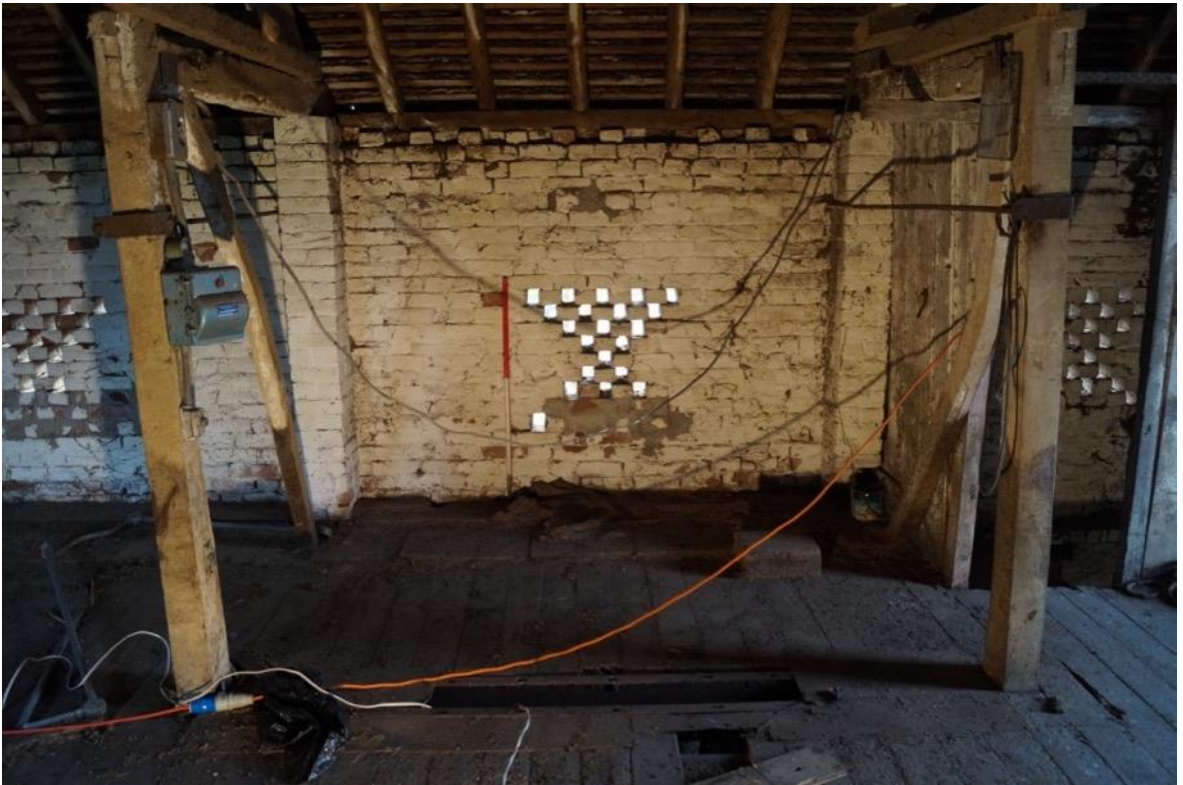


25. First floor of Range 2. The room is divided into three bays with two sets of arcade posts and aisle ties creating a rudimentary aisled type room. The wall plates are set on dentil brickwork. The roofing is lath and plaster. In the back wall is the hatch into the loft area which makes up the upper floor of Range 1.

*The room was used for grain storage, bagged beet pulp storage and also housed a roller mill for crushing popcorn (propionic acid) preserved winter barley.*



26. Detail of the roof trusses on the first floor of Range 2. The roof is of queen strut construction.



27. Ventilation holes in the eastern wall of the first floor of Range 2. Given the presence of ventilation holes, lime-washed walls and the strong load bearing floor with tight-fitting floor boards it is likely that this part of the barn was used as a granary at some point in the barn's history.



28. General view of the first floor to Range 1 showing a later wall and doorway constructed to subdivide the room. The flooring is again constructed of tight fitting floor boards and is load bearing. Above the doorway a cavity has been created in the walling for the insertion of a modern conveyer belt.

*The first floor of Range 1 was used for bulk grain storage during the 1960s and 1970s but was used for storage of fodder and hay for livestock and horses previous to that.*





29. Phases of blocking in the northern gable end of Range 1 where the conveyor belt exits into the covered loading bay.



30. Detail of the conveyor mechanism and electric motor.

## 5. RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

A watching brief was undertaken in June 2017 during internal works to the barn which involved removal of the concrete ground floor and excavation of underlying material to reach a construction depth of up to 0.7m in both Range 1 and Range 2.

### Range 1 (Figure 8)

In Rooms 1 and 2 the level of the concrete floor was lowered by approximately 0.7m below ground level which exposed a stratigraphy comprising red brick laid on to sandstone ashlar which in turn were laid on rough sandstone rubble which sealed a mixed levelling layer of grey silty clay (Plate A).



Plate A Construction layers and foundation sequence in Room 1 Range 1 looking northwest.

In the southern half of Room 1 was a linear arrangement of three parallel, roughly hewn sandstone foundations aligned east to west. They were laid into a deposit of mixed grey clay and sand which appeared to have formed a levelling layer throughout Range 1 and most likely dated to the construction phase of the barn (Plate B).



Plate B Linear sandstone wall pads in Room 1 looking northwest.

The sandstone foundations did not tie into the walls of Room 1 but butted up to them indicating that they were a similar date to the construction of the range. The sandstone foundations were approximately 0.7m apart which suggested that they formed the base for some form of superstructure. This was unlikely to have been animal stalls as the space between them was too narrow. It is possible that they formed some form of foundation padding for a raised floor perhaps for the storage of grain which would need to be kept dry and ventilated.

## Range 2

The concrete floor was lowered by approximately 0.7m and this revealed a construction sequence similar to that in Range 1 with large ashlar laid on to a stone and rubble foundation which in turn sat on a grey silt clay levelling layer. In Range 2, it was shown that this levelling layer, which was around 0.10m deep, was laid directly onto the natural sand substrate (Plate C).



Plate C Range 2 showing foundation layers looking southeast.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The farmsteads guidance issued by Staffordshire County Council (SCC 2015) states the following regarding traditional farmsteads in Staffordshire:

*At a basic level, and whether designated as heritage assets or not, significant farmsteads and buildings contribute to local character and distinctiveness. They can do this if they have retained their traditional farm buildings and some or all of their historic form, where the historic farm buildings, any houses and spaces relate to each other. The greater the survival of their historic form and detail, the greater will be its significance as a traditional farmstead.*

The farmstead at Aspley House Farm certainly fulfils these criteria and is a good example of well-preserved loose courtyard type farm with a number of original buildings still extant.

The barn at Aspley House Farm like many historic farm buildings reflects the history and development of the farm from the early 1800s through to the present day. Both internally and externally the barn fabric reveals its multi-functional character over time and preserves the visible signs of how the barn has been adapted and altered to respond to the requirements of different agricultural regimes.

The combined weight of the evidence from cartographic research and from the photographic survey suggests that the barn was a combination barn defined as a building used to house a variety of functions other than that of threshing alone, notably storing grain and carts, and housing animals and their fodder (*ibid*). The barn as it stands today attests to its varied uses in the past, in particular Range 2 reveals evidence on its ground floor for the housing of livestock and on its first floor for storage of grain and/or hay as evidenced by its division into bays and the presence of the ventilation holes.

Range 1 reveals evidence on both its ground floor and first floor for the storage, processing and movement of crop. Given the presence of the conveyor belt on the first floor this was the case until recent times. Interestingly Range 1 may also provide evidence of small-scale threshing activities where two opposing doors are present on the ground floor.

It is common in pastoral areas for the opposing threshing doors to be small but sufficient enough to enable the necessary cross-draught to separate the chaff from the grain (*ibid*). The depiction of a rick-yard to the immediate north of the barn on the 1838 Tithe Map could attest to the stacking of corn prior to threshing in the barn.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the cartographic evidence demonstrates that the barn had undergone fairly extensive enlargement with the addition of a cart-shed and of a building fronted by animal stalls and this was clearly corroborated by the results of the photographic survey.

Of particular interest is the evidence for mechanisation at the barn. The presence of the fly wheel with an axle on the southern wall of Range 2 in association with the mounting below it for an engine represent the mechanical mixing of feed from the 1960s. More significantly, the well-preserved pump, known as a Blake's Hydrum dating to the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century is of great interest and provides evidence of modernisation at the barn during this time.

The watching brief failed to demonstrate that the brick superstructure of the barn was located in the position of an earlier building. However, removal of the concrete flooring in both ranges and excavation to construction depth provided interesting evidence regarding the original construction of the barn. This appears to have entailed levelling activity preceding the laying out of sandstone rubble foundations which were used as a base for the sandstone ashlar onto which the brick superstructure was built.

The question still remains however, as to where such a large quantity of squared worked stone came from. In connection with this it was noted that the extensive garden walls around the farmhouse are constructed of high quality sandstone ashlar. It therefore seems likely that an earlier building provided construction material for various phases of building activity during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century development of the farmstead. Perhaps the Elizabethan house which preceded the farmhouse at Aspley Farm was a possible source of this material.

## 7. REFERENCES

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<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/eLand/planners-developers/HistoricEnvironment/Projects/Historic-Farmsteads.aspx#FarmsteadSurvey>

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*Farmsteads Guidance – Staffordshire Farmsteads Character Statement*

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Background research:

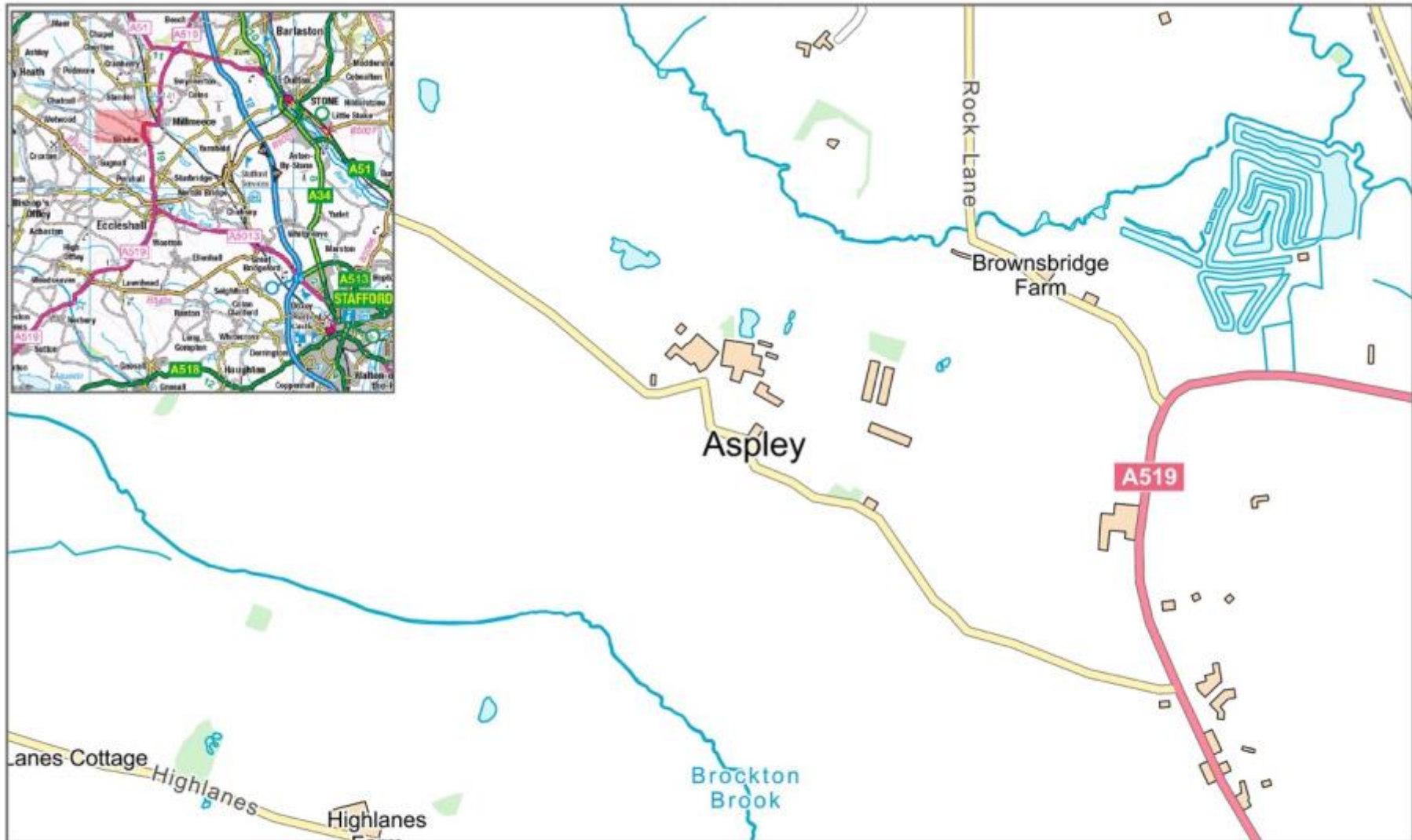
Brunskill R.W. *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain and Their Conservation*

Brunskill R.W. *Timber Building in Britain*

Historic England. *The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings. A guide to good practice*.



# FIGURES



Site name: Aspley House Farm, Slindon  
Approved by: H.M.B  
Client name: The AJ & AK Warrington Discretionary Trust  
Figure number: 1

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OS map dated 1836

Name of site: Apsley House Farm,  
Slindon

Drawn by: Photograph of original

Approved by: H.M.B

Client name: The AJ & AK  
Warrington Discretionary Trust

Figure number: 2

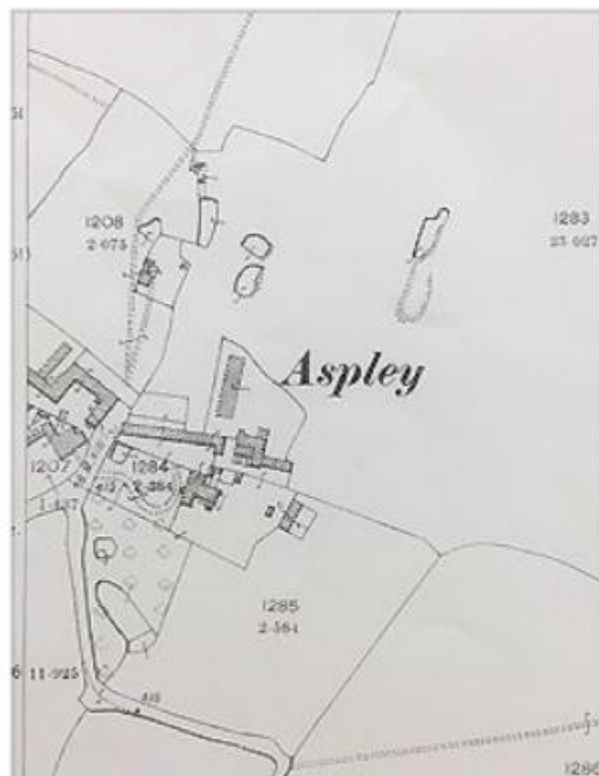


Tithe map dated 1838



1:2,500 OS 1st edition map dated 1880

Name of site: Apsley House Farm, Slindon
Drawn by: Photograph of original
Approved by: H.M.B
Client name: The AJ & AK Warrington Discretionary Trust
Figure number: 3 & 4



1:2,500 OS 2nd edition map dated 1901



1:2,500 OS 3rd edition map dated 1924

Name of site: Apsley House Farm,  
Stindon

Drawn by: Photograph of original

Approved by: H.M.B

Client name: The AJ & AK  
Warrington Discretionary Trust

Figure number: 5 & 6



Name of site: Apsley House Farm, Slindon
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