



***Historic Building Appraisal of a  
Barn Adjacent to Old Farm,  
Eastham, Worcestershire***


*A report for Mr & Mrs Inge*

June 2007

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**Project: PJ 188**

**WSM 37208**



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# 1. Project Background

## 1.1. Location of the Site

The scattered hamlet of Eastham is located around 5 kilometres to the east of Tenbury Wells, just off the A443 Worcester to Tenbury road. Old Farm lies on the brow of a ridge around 1 kilometre to the south of Eastham Court and the parish church (NGR SO 6575 6767; Figure 1).

## 1.2. Development Details

A planning application was made to Malvern Hills District Council, for the conversion of an existing farm buildings at Old Farm, to provide a live / work unit (reference MH/07/0639). The planning process determined that more information was required regarding the historic character of the structure, as little was known regarding its date and method of construction, historic function and development. The structure is listed on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (WSM 34991), but does not have a statutory listing.

A brief of work was written for the scope of the historic building appraisal (WHEAS 2007) and a written scheme of investigation (Mercian Archaeology 2007) for the work was subsequently approved.

# 2. Methods and Process

## 2.1. Project Specification

- The project conforms to the Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures (IFA 2001).
- The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council (WHEAS 2007) and for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Mercian Archaeology 2007).
- The project conforms to the service practice and health and safety policy as contained within the Mercian Archaeology Service Manual (Williams 2003)

## 2.2. Project Content

The aim of the project was to undertake a basic field survey and photographic record of the structure, the information from which would be used to comment on the archaeological, architectural and historic value of the upstanding fabric. The project focused on a single strand of evidence (field-survey), with no requirement under the brief for background documentary and cartographic research.

## 3. Brief Overview of the Historic Background

### 3.1. Brief Historic Background

Eastham lies on the slopes of the Upper Teme Valley; the hamlet perched above the River Teme at around 105 metres above sea level. The fertile loamy soils of the region are ideal for mixed agriculture and hop and fruit growing has been part of the local economy for over 400 years (Pitt 1813, 120).

The first hop fair was held in Tenbury on September 26<sup>th</sup> 1774, where weighing scales and trading facilities were set up for local hop growers and merchants. By this time the plantations of the area were at their zenith and were exporting to brewing centres such as Bewdley and Worcester (Gaut 1939, 157). Ten years later it is recorded that 16 holdings in Eastham were producing hops. By around 1830 hop production was in decline, in 1825 Eastham had 286 acres of hop production, by 1844 this was down to 207 acres (Gaut 1939, 271).

The immediate area around the site represents the remains of a generally medieval landscape overlain by some modern development. The Worcestershire County Sites and Monuments Record indicates that a medieval deer-park was located to the north, on the opposite side of the River Teme near Newnham Court (WSM 09921). The focal point of Eastham was just to the south of the village church, St Peter and St Paul's, where a deserted settlement is listed (WSM 06703). Further evidence of medieval activity in the area takes the form of a moated site near the current Eastham Park (WSM 08098). The importance of hop growing to the local economy is visible in the survival of hopkilns in the area, for example at Boat House Farm (Cook 2003), these are listed on the Worcestershire County Sites and Monuments Record as post-medieval hop kilns (WSM 29560).

There are several Grade II Listed agricultural buildings at Eastham: An 18<sup>th</sup> century seven bay, part brick and part timber-frame barn stands adjacent to the parish church, the framing is of two-rows of square panels (IOE 149239); The seven bay barn at Lower House Farm has 3 cart bays (IOE 149227); a barn at Walkers Farm has a lower row of large and upper row of smaller rectangular panels from sill to wall-plate, long straight lower corner braces and collar and tie-beam trusses. The south end truss has two collars, five struts to lower collar, three to upper collar and V-strut in apex (IOE 149237); the barn and stables at Hockerill's Farm utilise both stone and timber-framing in their construction (IOE 149224; WSM 36996). The 'V' strut above truss collars and long downward braces are a common feature of the timber-framing around Eastham, this is noted in Listed Buildings at the 17<sup>th</sup> century Mill House, which has twin queen struts and V struts (IOE 149230); Lower Bank Farmhouse also has the long downward braces that are typical of Worcestershire framing (IOE 149225), the V strut is also a feature of further barns, both circa 17<sup>th</sup> century, at Town Farm and Walker's House, which both have downward braces and V struts. It should be noted that none of the above buildings have been dated using dendrochronology.

### 3.2. Old Farmhouse

Old Farmhouse stands adjacent to the south of the subject barn. It is Listed Grade II and appears on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (WSM 09195).

The Images of England entry for Old farmhouse is as follows: -

EASTHAM CP - SO 66 NE 5/38 Old Farmhouse 6.10.52 - II Farmhouse. c1600 with mid-C19 and mid-C20 alterations. Timber-framed on sandstone rubble and brick base, roughcast infill and brick replacement walling, plain tiled roofs. Hall and cross-wing plan; hall part of two framed bays aligned east/west; large external rubble chimney with offsets and brick stack at east gable end, the base of which is encased by two partly timber-framed outshuts; cross-wing of two framed bays at west gable end with external chimney to west side elevation having three brick stacks enriched with angular projections and a joint cap. Two storeys and cellar; cross-wing has moulded bargeboards. Framing: hall has four rows of panels from sill to wall-plate, long straight braces across some first floor lower corners and a collar and tie-beam truss at the east gable end with some struts visible and a V-strut in the apex; cross-wing has six rows of small square panels, long straight braces across some lower corners on both floors and a collar and tie-beam truss with five struts to lower collar, two to upper collar and single strut to apex; the two central panels beneath the lower collar are decorated with concave lozenges. North front elevation: hall part has a ground floor 3-light and 2-light casement, two first floor 2-light casements and main entrance to left with a C20 door; outshut has a 3-light casement and C19 door; cross-wing gable end has a square light on the ground floor, a first floor 3-light casement and a central C20 door. Interior not inspected.

## 4. The Fieldwork

### 4.1. Comment on the Surviving Building Fabric

*NB. This is not a full analytical historic building recording.*

*For the purposes of this report the bays of the building are numbered 1-4 starting with the southernmost bay (see Figure 2).*

The barn stands adjacent to the western side of the road that follows the natural contours around the ridge on which, Old farm sits. The land slopes steeply away to the west, with shallower slopes to the north and south. The barn structure is knitted into this topographic setting, with the timber sill beam of the western elevation raised up on a mixed stone and brick plinth wall, designed to accommodate the slope (**Plates 1 and 2**). It is noticeable that the barn floor slopes down to the south-west and that the cart bay (bay 2) has been levelled up to provide a level floor (**Plate 3**).



**Plate 1: The barn viewed up the slope to the north**



**Plate 2: The barn viewed to the north-east, highlighting the slope of the bank**



**Plate 3: View to the south inside the barn, showing the levelled up bay 2 (centre of photo) and the floor slope to the south-west**

The barn was originally timber-framed with a weatherboard exterior, though it has recently been altered, with the roof-trusses above the collars removed and a lower pitched corrugated steel roof added. The southern gable framing has also been replaced with corrugated steel. The original configuration of the barn was of three bays (bays 1-3), with bay 4 added at a later date. The fabric of the structure appears to be almost entirely of re-used material, which has confused the development of the structure and distracted from its historic value. Agricultural buildings often contain a quantity of re-used material, but usually this can be attributed, at least in part, to later modification / repair / alteration. The earlier usage of the timbers was noticeable as it utilised larger pegs than those used in the present construction (**Plate 4**).



**Plate 4: Smaller pegs of the present structure and the larger empty peg-holes of the original build**

From the evidence, it cannot be determined where the timbers used in the barn construction came from, though certain observations can be made; the timbers display no evidence of elaboration that may suggest that they originated from a domestic building, and grooves and stave holes were observed, suggesting that the original building either had wattle and daub or cleft oak latticework panel infills. The re-use of material obviously causes problems with regard to dating a structure and it is clear from the evidence at Old Farm barn, that there is no possibility of dating the structure by dendrochronology. It also means that the development of the building cannot be accurately mapped.

There is clear evidence that bay 4 was added to the three-bay structure and is of a secondary phase; the timbers used in the bay 4 construction are also re-used, but are noticeably ‘waney edged’, less-well converted and generally ‘rougher’ in appearance than those of the original barn build. Also, truss frame 4 (between bays 3 and 4) was clearly originally an end frame and a remnant fragment of weatherboard is still attached to the outer face of the tie-beam (see **Plate 3**).



## 4.2. Brief Comment on the Architectural Merit of the Barn

As outlined above, the barn is the result of re-use of timbers from a demolished structure of unknown origin or date, though it is likely that it came from somewhere on the farm holding and from locally converted timber. The architectural merit of the structure is limited, as the extent to which the pattern of framing used reflects that of the original building can only be speculative. The posts of bays 1-3 are varied, with some having large gunstock jowelled heads, whilst others have no head at all. The roof trusses have been removed above the tiebeams and this strand of evidence is permanently lost, though we can propose from empty peg holes in frame 4, that the rectangular panelling of the gable continued upwards above the tiebeam, with 5 studs to the collar. The present barn was built with two tiers of rectangular panels between wallplate and sill, with the lower tier squatter than those above. The principal posts were down braced, but intermediate posts were unbraced.

## 4.2. Brief Comment on Condition

The below sill dwarf walls of the structure show evidence of long term deterioration, which is the principal reason for the failure of the sill beams and the rotting of the lower parts of the studs and posts above, though apart from the lower 30 centimetres of these timbers, the remainder is in fairly good condition.

There is a distinct structural lean to the east, which is especially noticeable in bays 1-3, with a lean to the north noted in bay 4. This has mainly been caused by the rotting away of the sills, though the removal of the roof trusses may have exacerbated the process.

# 5. Brief Comment on Function

## 5.1. What Type of Barn?

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record categorises the structure as a ‘large 7 bay threshing barn over a sloping stone and brick basement’ (WSM 34991), though this record is based on information contained in a planning application (MH/07/0639). As indicated in the brief for this project, this type of structure is often referred to as a ‘bank barn’ (WHEAS 2007). There is currently only one statutory listed (Grade II) bank barn in Worcestershire, which is a three bay barn at Martley, with a cowhouse in a basement below the southern bay (IOE 151624). A single ‘bank barn’ is listed in Herefordshire (IOE 153765) and none in neighbouring Shropshire. This can be compared with 72 listed bank barns in Cumbria. The noticeable difference can only be due to the topography, with Cumbria being a recognised ‘upland area’, whilst the local counties have only areas of upland. Bank barns are also common in Devon, Somerset and Cornwall.

A definition of a bank barn is that they usually have two stories and have utilised the natural slope of the land to provide a basement below the level area. The basement was frequently used for housing cattle, with the threshing barn and storage above; in brief, they may be described as combination barns.

The barn at Old Farm does not fit this model; though the barn is built into a bank, there does not appear to have ever been a basement area. The wall below the sill beam on the western side is 1.80 metres high, which would probably not have been quite high enough to provide a useable

space below. This brings into question the present levels of the slope and the ‘levelled’ area to the west of the barn. A range of ?1960’s breezeblock piggeries sit on a level platform, which abuts the western elevation of the barn (**Plate 6**).



**Plate 6: Former piggeries on the level platform to the west of the barn**

This may suggest that there has been a certain amount of levelling to the west of the barn, resulting in the requirement for under-building on this side, though equally, any levelling may have taken place much earlier. This possibility is supported by the profile of the natural slope against the adjacent wall of the farmhouse (**Plate 7 below**), which is fairly shallow.

This provides hypothesis, though not definitive evidence, but should this be the case then the barn represents a former three bay threshing barn, with a central threshing floor set in the cart bay and storage bays to either side. The cart entrance to the south would have become obsolete if the ground had been lowered, though loading onto a cart reversed up to the cart bay would be practical.

## 6. Dating

As outlined above, the structure is built from re-used materials, which confounds accurate dating, though the style adopted suggests a mid to late-17<sup>th</sup> century date, with the addition of bay 4 in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.



**Plate 7: Natural slope of the land against the adjacent farmhouse garden wall, viewed to the east**

## 7. The Historic, Architectural and Archaeological Value of the Structure

The building as it stands relates a story of early post-medieval recycling, but says little regarding the development and function of the barn, though this has been to a certain extent, hypothesised above. The fabric of the barn is of limited value in itself, and as it stands is of limited architectural merit. More information, regarding the development of the site could possibly be gained from archaeological investigation or background documentary research, however, the likelihood of positive results is unknown and the retrieved information would likely not further our overall knowledge of agriculture, or agricultural buildings of the Eastham area .

## 8. The Historic, Architectural and Archaeological Importance of the Structure and the Possible Impact of the proposed development

Unfortunately, the architectural integrity of the structure was removed along with its roof trusses and the barn is of little historic, archaeological or architectural importance. Had the subject building proven to have been a genuine bank barn, in good condition and generally in-tact, then undoubtedly the structure would have been of far greater importance.

## 6. Conclusion

The barn at Old farm has been proposed as a bank barn, however, there is no evidence for a basement having existed within the structure. It seems likely that there has been a certain amount of levelling around the barn, giving the impression that it was constructed into steeper terrain.

The fabric analysis indicated that the barn was constructed almost comprehensively of re-used timbers, thus a pattern of phasing, repair and alteration cannot be detected. All that can be said with any degree of certainty, is that the barn was originally a 3-bay structure, probably built in the late-17<sup>th</sup> century, with a further bay added to the north end during the 18<sup>th</sup> century; this was also of re-used timbers.

The building has little architectural, historic or architectural merit and is of limited value in its current configuration.

## 7. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mr and Mrs Inge for their interest and hospitality. Thanks are also due to Julian Barnett of Barnett Taylor Associates for his input and supply of the excellent plans. Thanks are also extended to Mike Glyde, Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council.

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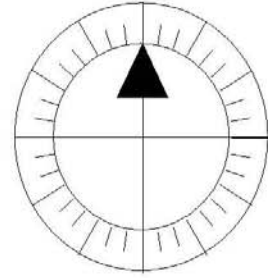
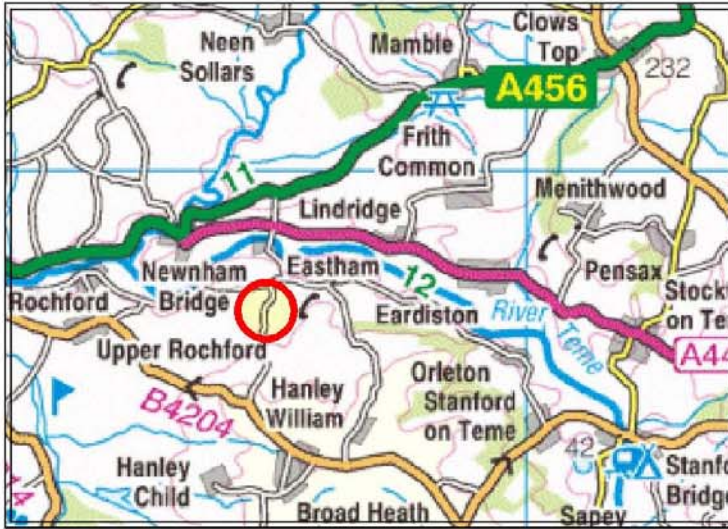
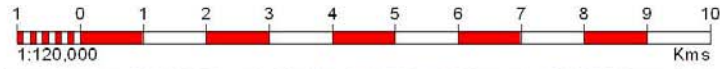
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# Figure 1: Location of the Site



Location of the development site at Eastham, near Tenbury Wells

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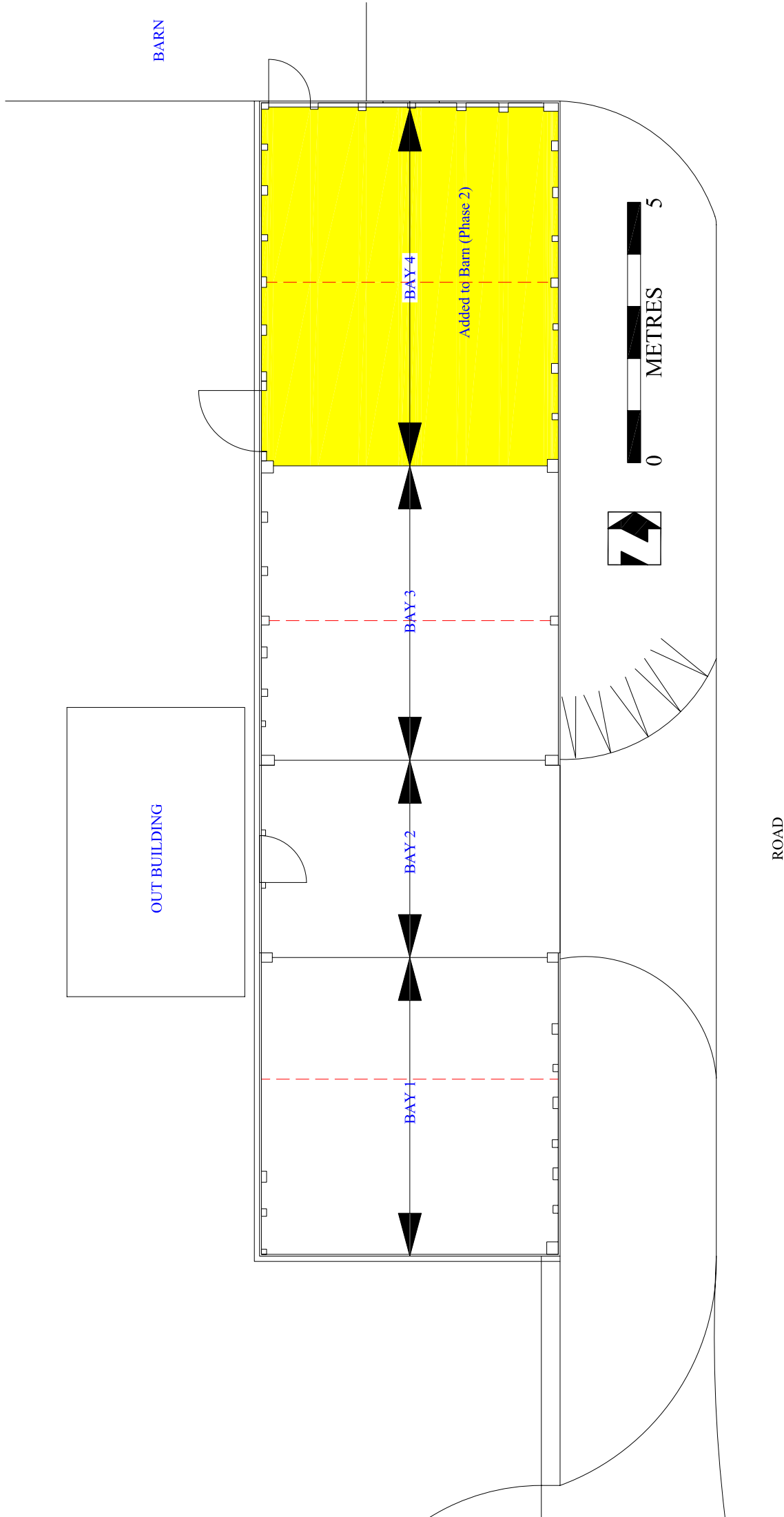


Figure 2: Site Identification Plan (Based on Original Drawing by Barnett Taylor Associates)