

A report for WeatherArk Ltd

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Project: PJ 114

WSM: 33541

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1. Project Background

1.1. Location of the Site

Larford Farm is located at Larford in the parish of Astley, around 2 kilometres to the south of Stourport-on-Severn, just off the B4196 Astley to Stourport road (NGR SO 8164 6926). Larford is too small to be described as a hamlet and consists of the farm and agricultural buildings now converted to light industrial use. The farm is on the peripheries of Astley and Astley Cross (Figure 1). It is probably most famous as being the birthplace of Andrew Yarrington in 1616. Yarrington was an Iron founder with a forge on the Dick Brook near Astley. He became one of the leading figures of the Parliamentarian cause in Worcestershire during the first English Civil War.

1.2. Development Details

A planning application was made to Malvern Hills District Council by WeatherArk Ltd for conversion of existing farm buildings to provide domestic accommodation and associated infrastructure (reference MH/03/1704). The planning process determined that the proposed development was likely to affect a building listed on the County Sites and Monuments Record (WSM 32884). As a result, the Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council, placed a 'Programme of Building Recording' planning condition on the application, for which a brief of work was written (WHEAS 2003).

1.3. Reasons for the Historic Building Recording

The data contained within the Sites and Monuments Record suggested that the building conversion work would affect a building (WSM 32884) contained on the local list of historically important buildings. The brief of works states that:

'Buildings of this type form an important part of the counties agricultural heritage' (WHEAS 2003).

In such circumstances a programme of archaeological work is attached to planning conditions for any development. In this instance, an historic building recording was suggested to record the building prior to its conversion.

2. The Documentary Research

2.1. Background

Larford Farm lies above the flood plain on the western side of the River Severn. The farm buildings straddle the road, which turns sharply at this point, seemingly routed for the sole purpose of access to the farm, although there are likely to be other factors determining the route of the road, this is beyond the bounds of the project (Plate 1). Adjacent to the east of the farm, there is a large man made lake, which is now used for leisure purposes. The sandy-clay soils of the region have led to a traditional background of pastoral farming, with much land turned over to orchard.

2.2. Cartographic Evidence

The Tithe Apportionment Map of Astley Parish (1840) indicates that a farmhouse stood at the south-western end of the site at this time. This was owned by Maria Henrietta Crookes, who owned several other properties in the area. John Crane occupied the farm and farm buildings. The map (Figure 2) shows buildings arranged around a central yard, with a south-eastern range including the central timber-framed barn and attached brick buildings. Those to the south-west of the barn and the barn itself remain today, the buildings at the north-eastern end remain only as a footprint. The opposite north-eastern range appears to have remained basically the same since this time. The map depicts a small water leat running to the junction of the barn and the adjoining buildings from two small pools to the south-east. The function of this water source is not known, but it may have been used to supply a small portable steam engine, which may have been used in fodder processing (see below). The map also shows a wheel-house (horse-gin) on the western range of the farm buildings to the north at Little Larford Farm. The wheelhouse is circular to allow a horse to turn a horizontal wheel that would power machinery through a series of cogs, wheels, cams and pulleys. These buildings belonged to Little Larford Farm, but there may have been some co-operative use of infrastructure with the subject buildings at Larford Farm.

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1884) still makes a clear distinction between Larford Farm and Little Larford Farm (Figure 3). The horse gin has gone by this time, probably demolished when steam power became more cost effective than horsepower. The water leat to the Larford Farm complex had also gone by this time, its former route fossilised within a field boundary. There appears to be a piggery with stalls located between the two ranges and the farmhouse still stood at the south-western end of the site. There are large areas of orchard to the north and the west.

The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map (1903) depicts the pool again (Figure 4); this may be a survey anomaly, although it may indicate that the pond was seasonally wet. The buildings appear the same as on the 1st edition map except in the northern corner where a new range has replaced the earlier buildings. Gravel quarrying was now being undertaken in the fields

adjacent to the west. To the rear of the barn, on the eastern side, there appears to be a hayrick. It is depicted as a ring of dots. These would have been the positions of the staddle stones, mushroomed shaped stones designed to lift the hay off the ground and provide an obstacle to rats and mice.

The revised edition Ordnance Survey map of 1927 shows further extension in the northern corner of the farm building complex (Figure 5), the rest of the sire remaining unaltered. Little Larford Farm complex is now noticeably smaller than on the Tithe Map of some 70 years before.

3. Methods and Process

3.1. Project Specification

- □ The project conforms to the Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures (IFA 1999).
- □ The buildings were recorded to at least Level 1 as defined by the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments of England (RCHME 1996).
- □ The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Section, Worcestershire County Council (WHEAS 2003) and for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Mercian Archaeology 2003).
- □ The project conforms to the service practice and health and safety policy as contained within the Mercian Archaeology Service Manual (Williams 2003)

3.2. Aims of the Project

The aims of the historic building recording were to compile an archive of the building within its topographical setting. This was to consist of both written and photographic records. The results of the fieldwork were to be used to produce a report chronicling changes and development within the building and where possible, to attach relative dates to individual phases of building. The documentary survey was to be used to assist the chronological phasing of the complex and also, to ascribe function and use to the building(s).

3.3. Background Research

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork all the relevant available cartographic sources were consulted.

Documentary research was carried out at Worcestershire Record Office (WRO) and the following sources were specifically consulted and were of use:

Cartographic Sources

Source	Reference Number
Tithe Map and Apportionment of the Parish of Astley (1840)	WRO S760/22 (i) and (ii)
Ordnance Survey 1 st Edition 25". Worcestershire Sheet XXI.2 (1884)	
Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 25". Worcestershire Sheet XXI.2 (1903)	
Ordnance Survey revised Edition. Worcestershire Sheet XXI.2 (1927) 1:2500	

Other sources used are referenced within the report.

3.4. The Fieldwork Methodology

The building recording was undertaken on 17th and 18th February 2004 prior to any development work being carried out at the site.

The photographic survey was carried out using digital photography. A 1-metre scale was used where possible.

Proforma Building Record Forms were used to record the structure in tandem with site notes and reference to site photographs, to produce the final record contained within this report.

The methodology adopted and the favourable working conditions meant that the aims and objectives of the brief could be fully met and the fieldwork was successfully concluded.

4. The Results

The Fabric Survey

The Barn

The barn as it stands today is a five bay timber-frame post and truss construction below a corrugated iron roof covering. Externally, the barn is clad in weatherboard; the modern concrete dwarf wall that replaces most of the original sill beams and plinth is visible from the outside where the weatherboard is missing and across the whole of the interior. The central bay is the former threshing bay, with an opening for large cart doors to both side elevations; the former threshing floor is now hidden beneath modern concrete. The original roof covering

may have been of thatch, shingles or clay tiles. The building, which is in fair condition, is now redundant and awaits development (Plates 2 and 3).

For ease of recording the bays have been numbered 1-5 from north to south and the trusses (cross-frames) have been numbered T1 - T6 (Figure 6). Technical terms are explained in the glossary at the end of the report.

Trusses T1 and T6

The roof covering is supported on staggered trenched purlins and ridge purlin throughout the barn. Truss T1 comprises of a pair of principals supported on a tie beam with four vertical queen struts and collar. There is an intermediate collar above with a pair of thick staves between this member and the collar. The roof is stabilised at this end by a pair of arched windbraces (Plate 4). The framing is square panelling, typical of the Western Midlands region. It was noticeable that the pegs used in this crossframe (T1) were smaller than those across the rest of the barn. The corner-posts have shallow jowelled heads and are fairly slender. There are no visible carpenters marks on this truss/frame. Truss T6 is similar, but of lesser quality with waney edged slender timbers.

Truss T2

Truss T2 is comprised of twin vertical queen struts with tie beam and collar supported on jowl headed posts. This was once an end frame, this is indicated by the following: empty mortises and peg holes on the underside of the tie-beam; empty mortises on the inside of the posts that match the pattern of overall framing (Plate 5); the carpenters marks (IIII) on the tie-beams and principals are facing *away* from the threshing bay (it was usual, although not comprehensive, that the marks within a barn faced towards the threshing bay, thus suggesting this was once an outside face). This indicates that this was originally truss number 4 and the barn was originally a 3-bay barn with a central threshing bay.

Trusses T3-T5

Trusses T3, T4 and T5 are carpented from waney timbers and are of lower quality than the other trusses (Plate 6). The trusses are of principal and tie beam with long raking struts and no collars. There is also evidence to suggest that Truss T5 was an end truss. There are empty mortises suggesting that the truss was originally a cross-frame. One rail has been sawn off, the stub is still in-situ (Plate 7).

Side Frames and Bays

The framing of the barn indicates that earlier panel infill was of either wattle and daub, or more likely latticework cleft oak strips. There are stave holes visible on many of the unaltered timbers of the frame. These, and grooves on the upper face of the timber directly below, would have been used to hold staves, which would have then been woven with oak (or other suitable species) strips. This would allow a through draft to circulate in the barn. There are many such examples of this type of panel infill in barns across the region. It is, however, possible that the staves were woven with hazel withies and then daubed and lime washed.

The timber-frame is generally in good condition, although there is evidence of a localised fire, which has damaged timbers to the north-west elevation of Bay 1. Structural damage was noticed at Truss 2, where the tie beam has broke away from the north-western post, resulting in the truss being held up by the opposite post only.

Like most timber-framed agricultural buildings the barn framing shows considerable modification and alteration, with many redundant mortises, peg holes and timbers out of

sequence. Interestingly there were several reused timbers that appeared to be from an earlier cruck-framed building (Plates 8 and 9). Three sections of possible cruck tie beam ends were observed. The half lap joints where the tie beam sat on the cruck blades are clearly visible, as are the large peg holes.

The Barn in Context

The threshing, or corn barn was the most important farm building on arable farms until the 19th century when portable threshing machines allowed the process of separating the wheat from the chaff to be undertaken in the field. This made the threshing floors redundant and barns either reverted to purely storage facilities or were demolished.

The threshing floor in the central threshing bay would have been of sturdy planks, stone flags or beaten earth. In the barn at Larford Farm modern concrete has destroyed this evidence. This is where the threshing or 'thrashing' process would take place to separate the wheat from the chaff, or the grain from the stalks of the crop. This process involved thrashing the crop on the floor with hand flails. After the separation had taken place, it would be thrown into the air to separate the chaff. This was known as winnowing and a through breeze would aid the process as the heavier grain would fall to the floor and the waste would be blown away. It has been logically suggested, that for this reason the barn, which was the most important building on the early farmstead, would be aligned to take advantage of the locally prevalent wind (Wade-Martins 1991, 167). However, little research has been carried out with respect to this suggestion. Winnowing was a lengthy process and may have taken several weeks to complete.

The Fodder Processing Building

The brick built structure adjoining the southernmost gable of the barn is a former fodder processing, or mixing shop (Plates 10 and 11). The two-storied structure now has a corrugated-iron roof covering, but originally would have had a handmade clay tile roof. The lower floor brickwork is of random coursing to the south-east elevation and coursed in a type of Flemish garden Wall Bond on the lower north-west elevation. The upper level is later and it is likely that the building was originally single storey. The building has a window and door below segmental brick arches to the north-west elevation with a pitching eye to the upper floor. Fodder and root crop would have been loaded through this opening to be stored on the upper floor before processing.

Some of the processing machinery still remains within the building. On the upper floor a series of belt wheels run off a shaft that enters through the front wall (Plate 12). The belts would have been powered by a portable steam engine that was hooked up to the external flywheel. The machinery would have been used for processing raw materials to produce animal feed, such as a chaff cutter for slicing straw or a pulveriser for making cow cake from root crops. Hoppers from the top floor to the bottom would be used for channelling the produce into sacks or storage facilities (Plate 13).

The Workers Cottage

Adjoining the southern gable end of the mixing shop there is a two-storey brick and tile workers cottage with a hearth and chimney at the southern end (Plates 14 and 15). There are windows below brick segmental arches to the lower level of both side elevations and the upper level of the south-east elevation. There is an upper door to the opposite north-eastern elevation. This would not have provided access, as there are internal steps, but would have been used for offloading produce from the upper storage area of the building onto a cart below.

The building has been extensively altered over a long period. Mid-20th century lean-to extensions have been added to the south-west gable and north-west elevation; the height of the gable has been extended to allow first floor use and the rear elevation has had much alteration. There was once a lean-to extension on the south-eastern side. There were two rooms (at least), each entered via a door through the wall to the cottage (Plate 16). A dog door was added to the building in one of the bricked up door apertures into the demolished extension, this was also later bricked up (Plate 16). Dogs were often given the run of the farm as a security measure and to help keep down the problematic rat population.

Internally, the bridging beams show evidence of re-use, with empty mortises alongside the existing upper floor joists. The beams are all wedged up with posts above the well-laid brick floor (Plate 17).

The Stables and Adjoining Building

On the opposite side of the central farmyard there is a stable block with hayloft above and an adjoining stable and loosebox. The structures are brick below tiled roofs. The two storey building has a hipped roof, dentilated cornice and pierced brickwork at the upper level. The stable doors face into the central yard and there is a pitching door at the upper level (Plate 18). The single storey stable, which adjoins the south-west gable of the two-storey stable has a gabled roof, a single door and a cart door opening to the yard. It is possible that this building was used to accommodate a trap with a pony stable.

The stable was an important building on the early farmstead. Prior to the use of mechanical tractors and steam engines, horsepower would have provided the main means of traction and would be invaluable to the economy of the farm. There is evidence that horses were used to drive machinery at Little Larford Farm (see above), where a wheelhouse was noted on the Tithe Map. The hayloft above the stable was a great convenience as hay could be dropped straight into the feeding mangers at the rear of the stable.

After about 1800 stables began to change and become standard, as ideas of better equine husbandry spread. The question of ventilation became key to this modernisation, when claims were made that horses were healthier in stables without upper floor lofts (Wade-Martins 1991, 177). Many time saving ideas were also adopted, for example, the tack room was made almost redundant and harnesses were hung up on pegs in the stalls.

4. Phasing of the Buildings and Dating

Discussion of the Fabric and Dating Evidence

Accurate dating of farm buildings is often problematic as dateable architectural features are often changed, modified or re-used. This is usually more pronounced within commercial or agricultural buildings than in domestic architecture. It may also be that architectural fashion takes longer to manifest itself within the fabric of buildings reserved for animals or produce. Consequently, any evidence for phasing or close dating is very problematic. Accurate dating of the timber-framed structure may only be done satisfactorily by using scientific tree-ring dating (dendrochronology).

The timber-framed barn is the earliest standing building on the site, although the use of timbers from a cruck-framed building within its fabric suggests it is likely that there were other, perhaps earlier, timber-framed buildings on the site, although it is possible that timbers were brought to the site from further afield. The remaining original framing of the barn suggests a late 16th or 17th century date for its first build. The evidence outlined above suggests that the barn was originally a 3-bay barn, which was extended to form a 4 bay structure in the late 17th century when Bay 1 was added. Bay 5 must have been added later, probably around 1700, when it appears the original roof trusses, which would have been similar to trusses T1 and T2, were replaced with less well carpented trusses with no collars. These would have allowed the barn to be stacked higher, with produce crammed up and into the rafters. Roof trusses T3 to T6 date from this time. This expansion hypothesis is supported by the remaining carpenters marks on truss T2 indicating it was part of an external crossframe.

The workers cottage appears to date from the early 18^{th} century, although it has been extended upwards, probably at the end of the 18^{th} century or early 19^{th} century. The building once attached to the south-eastern elevation was demolished during the early 20^{th} century and the door apertures bricked up. The stores to the north-west and south appear to have been added in the mid 20^{th} century. This is based on the map evidence.

According to the map evidence the adjoining building between the barn and the workers cottage dates to at least the time of the Tithe Map in 1840. However, this must have been another building on the same footprint as the brickwork of the mixing house has been tied into the workers cottage and is therefore later. On the inner south-eastern elevation to the rear of the hopper there is a straight joint in the brickwork, suggesting that the inner skin is from the earlier build and there was a corner here. This building has also been extended upwards. The brick sizes (2 ¾") of the lower storey suggests the possible date of the build as between about 1725 and 1784, the upper floor bricks are 3" suggesting a later, perhaps early 19th century date.

The stables are of two phases; the two-storey stable with loft above probably dates from the early 18th century and is likely to be contemporary with the workers cottage, the single story stable block and loosebox was probably constructed in the early 19th century.

The agricultural depression from around 1880 to 1914 appears to be mirrored in the farm development, with limited alteration or modernisation apparent during this period.

The table below shows a likely development of the buildings covered in the brief, although as outlined above, the structures have been the focus of much alteration, modernisation and repair. It may be that in depth documentary research, which is beyond the scope of this project, would shed further light on the development of Larford Farm.

PHASE	FABRIC of BUILDING	DATE
I	The barn is built as a three bay threshing barn.	?Late 16 th to 17 th century
II	Bay 1 was added at the north-eastern end of the barn.	Early-mid 17 th century,
III	Bay 5 added and roof trusses T3, 4 and 5 replaced around this time.	?Late 17 th
IV	The brick-built two storey stable / hay loft and workers cottage built	Early 18 th century
V	The mixing house added on the foundations of an earlier building	Mid-late 18 th century
VI	Single storey stable block added to the two storey stable / hay loft (possibly replacing an earlier building). Mixing house raised to 2 storey from 1 ½ storey to allow better access upstairs. Workers cottage also raised around this time.	Early 19 th century
VII	Various small extensions and animal sheds added to the buildings complex.	Mid 20 th century

5. Condusion

The results of the historic building recording determined that the timber-framed barn at Larford Farm is likely to originally have been a three bay threshing barn dating from the late 16th or early 17th century, with further bays added at each end over the following century. The building has been subject to much repair and alteration reusing timbers from either other structures, or earlier phases of the barn, including modified collar(s) from a cruck-framed building, possible a predecessor of the barn. The brick built stables, workers cottage and animal feed processing house all dated from the 18th and 19th century. Theyfollow a period of development from the use of horsepower to turn machinery to the adoption of steam power as farm production improved. Like many British farms the agricultural depression of the late 19th and early 20th century took its toll and the latest evidence for development appears to be from the mid-20th century, before the current decline and abandonment of the buildings as part of a working farm.

6. Acknowledgements

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GLOSSARY

Carpenters Chiseled or scribed marks that match timbers that attach at a common mark

joint together. These are an aid to assembling the pre-fabricated

framework on site

Collar The transverse timber (above the tie-beam) that ties the principals

A diagonal timber brace that runs from a vertical to a lower horizontal Downward

brace

Frame One complete section of paneling, which is jointed together between

posts

Gable The part of an end wall above the level of the eaves and below the roof **Jowled Post** A main structural upright post that steps out on the inner face at the top

Lattice-work Inter-woven cleft oak (or similar material)

Mortise The female part of a mortise an tenon joint: a slot into which a tenon

(Mortice) slides

Plinth A stone or brick foundation wall or course on which the sill beams sit

Principals Timber that supports a purlin in a roof structure

Purlin A timber that runs longitudinally within the roof structure and supports

the rafters

A post that rises from tie beam to collar, these are found in pairs and Queen post

may also be called queen-struts. They may be vertical or raking

(angled outwards).

Rafters Inclined timbers of the poof structure that meet at the apex, their

function is to hold the laths that support the tiles

Any horizontal timber that runs between posts or rails Rail

Raking Struts Also 'V' Strut. Appears as a V above the collar. The timbers are

pegged to collar and splay out to join the principals.

Ridge Purlin A timber that runs longitudinally at the apex of the roof structure and

supports the rafters. It is clasped into a right angle in the join of the

principals.

Sill beam Timbers, either longitudinal or transverse, that sit on the foundation of

the building and the posts and studs are tenoned into

Square Timber-framing consisting of square panels between around 0.75m

panelling and 0.90m square

Stud Vertical timbers that tie into rails, sill or wall plates but do not support

principal rafters

Tenon The male part of a mortise an tenon joint

Tie beam The transverse timber that holds the bottoms of the principals in

position above a pair of posts

Truss A complete roof frame, usually comprising a pair of principals and all

the members between and including the tie-beam and the apex of the

roof

Waney Irregular timbers, with the wavy edges of the outside of the tree,

sometimes including bark.

Wind brace Braces from principal to wall plate or purlin on the same plane as the

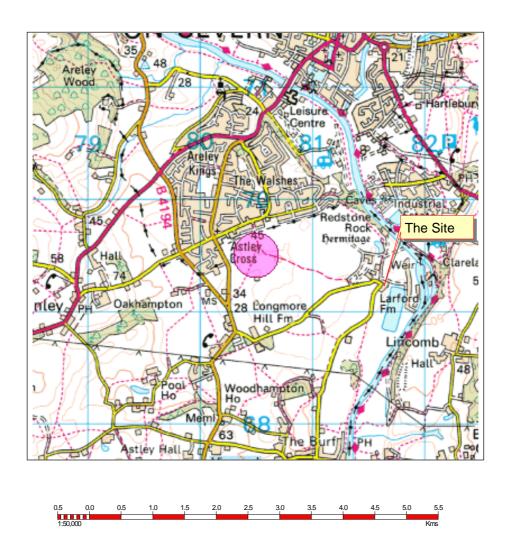
roof

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Figure 1: Location of Site





Location of the site at Larford Farm, Astley, Worcestershire

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Little Larford/Farm Wheelhouse Road to Astley Stables and Hayloft Piggery Barn Leat Farmhouse Workers Cottage Pond Larford Farm

Figure 2. Traced extract from Astley Tithe Apportionment Map (1840)

Scale is unknown



Little Larford For Larford Far €3 The 1st edition Ordnance Survey

Figure 3. The site at Larford Farm, Astley; 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (1884)

map shows a farmhouse at the southern end of the complex and buildings to the north





46 3 · 014 දා 42 <u>2.481</u> 4 డ్డు Hayrick Pond 4 225 Note the pool to the east of the farm, this does not appear on the 1st edition map, but is on the

Figure 4. The site at Larford Farm, Astley; 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey (1903)

earlier tithe map. This suggests a survey anomaly, or possibly that the pond was seasonally wet



33 ςŞ 3.810 34a Little Larford Q 4.2800 Farm ^{දා} 43 ථු ද 5.467¢ 3 Q 3 4 urford Farm රු డ్తు රු ථු

Figure 5. The site at Larford Farm, Astley; 2nd (revised) Edition Ordnance Survey (1927)

The revised 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map shows that the pond has gone along with the hayrick. There has been further development at the northern end of the site and the farmhouse is still standing to the south.





Figure 7. Timber-framed barn elevations

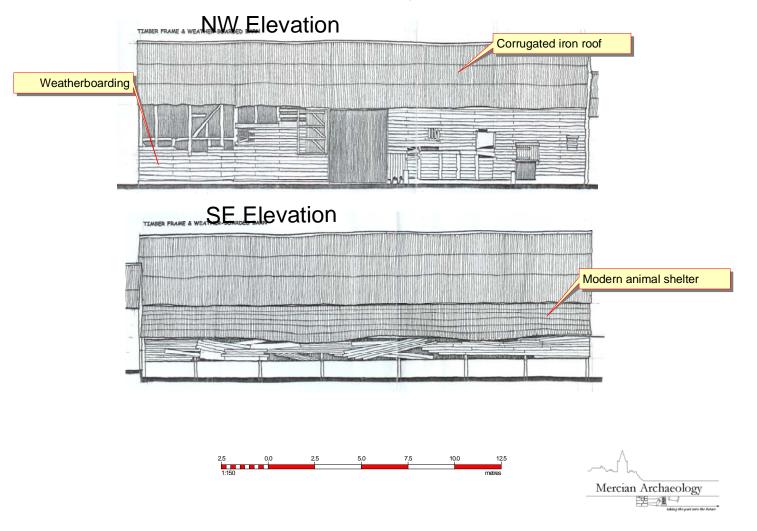


Figure 8. Workers cottage and mixing shop elevations

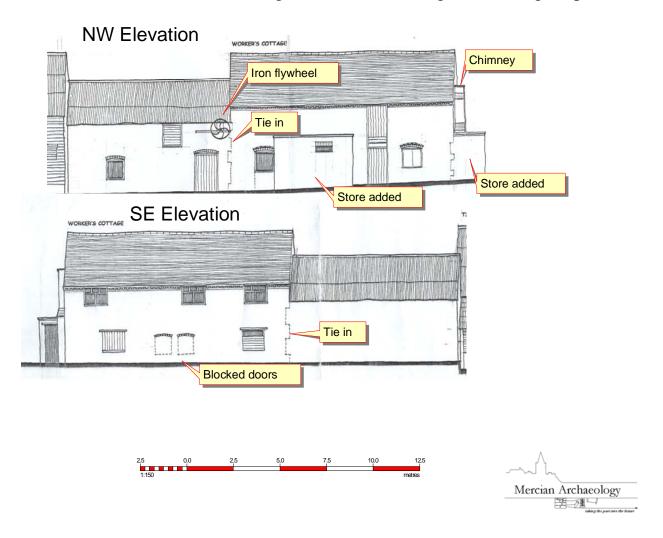
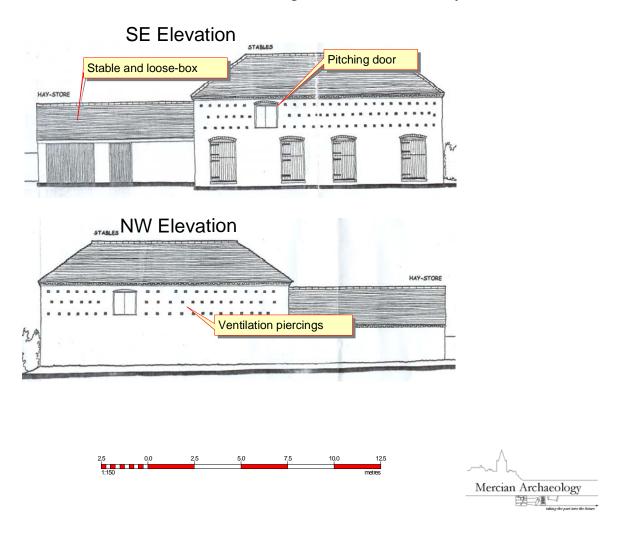
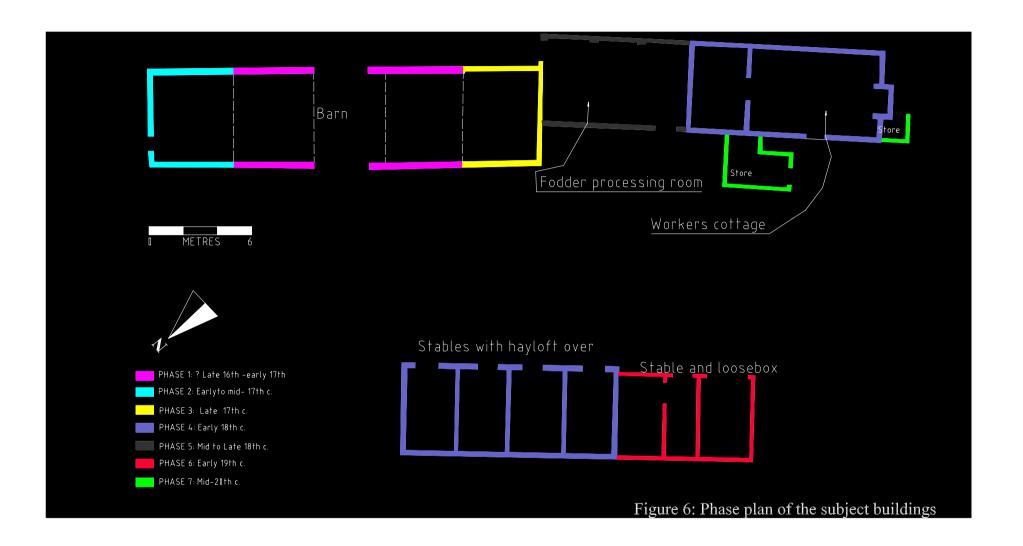


Figure 9. Stables and hayloft elevations





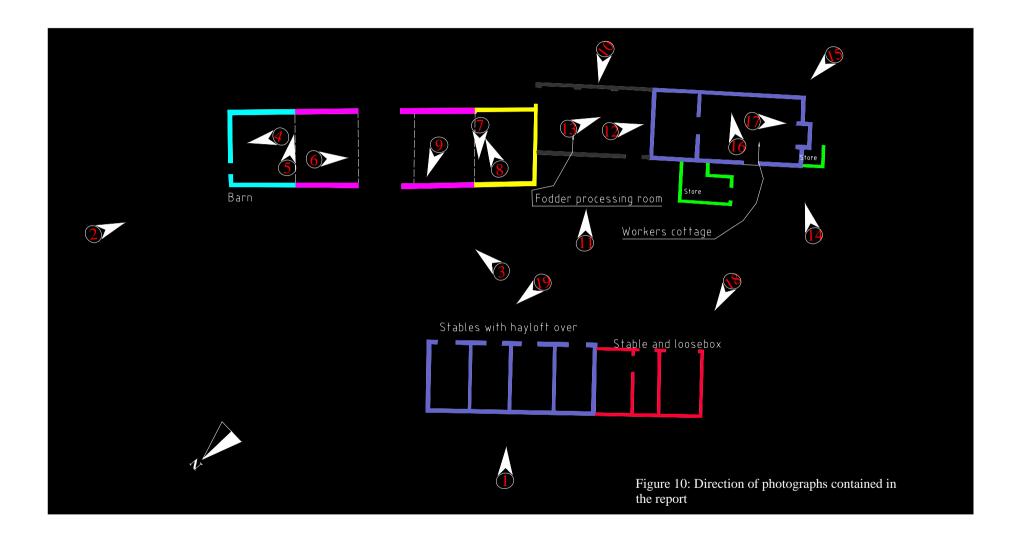


Plate 1



View of the farm complex looking south



The barn showing location of a former building to the north-east (scale 1 metre)

Plate 3



The barn viewed to the west (scale 1 metre)



Truss T1 at the south-western end of the barn (scale1 metre)



Jowelled post of Frame /Truss T: note the carpenters' marks (IIII) on the tie beam and principal; the empty mortises on the underside of the tie beam and inner post, indicating removed framing. Note also, the 'newer' framing of bay 1 to the left of the post.

Plate 6



Trusses T3, 4 & 5, note the waney timbers and compare with truss T1 and T2 (plates 4& 5)



Sawn off rail on the corner post of T5, indicating this was once an external frame

Plate 8



Re-used tie-beam section from a cruck-framed building within the fabric of the barn



Another re-used section of cruck framing in the barn

Plate 10



The fodder processing shop south-east elevation (scale 1 metre)



The fodder processing shop north-west elevation (scale 1 metre)

Plate 12



Belt wheels and shaft inside the fodder processing shop, note the former eaves height of the building as a mark on the wall



Hoppers on the ground floor of the fodder processing shop (scale 1 metre)

Plate 14



The workers cottage north-west elevation (scale 1 metre)



The workers cottage south-east elevation (scale 1 metre)

Plates 16



Bricked up doors and 'dog door' in the workers cottage (scale 1 metre)



Inside the workers cottage (scale 1 metre)

Plate 18



The stables with hayloft above (scale 1 metre)



The single storey stable and loosebox (scale 1 metre)