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*Historic Building Recording at Lower Bank Farm,  
Eastham, Worcestershire*



*Historic Building Recording of a  
Barn at Lower Bank Farm,  
Eastham, Worcestershire*


*A report for Mr & Mrs Bowens*

July 2007

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**Project: PJ 190**

**WSM 37309**



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Telephone / Fax: 01905 420087

Email: [paulwilliams@mercianarchaeology.co.uk](mailto:paulwilliams@mercianarchaeology.co.uk)

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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. Lower Bank Farm lies at the foot of a ridge around 1 kilometre to the south of Eastham Court and the parish church (NGR SO 65767 67838; Figure 1).

## 1.2. Development Details

The planning background to this project is not known, but it is understood that a planning application will be made to Malvern Hills District Council, for the conversion of an existing farm building(s) at Lower Bank Farm, to provide domestic accommodation. It was determined by the project architect Barnett Taylor Associates, that in view of local planning policy (Policy CTC16-18 in the County Structure Plan – June 2001 and QL10 & 14 in the Malvern Hills District Local Plan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Deposit Draft Local Plan, January 2004) and English planning policy guidelines (Planning Policy Guidance Note 15), a historic building recording should be carried out and presented as part of the application.

A written scheme of investigation was written for the scope of the historic building recording (Mercian Archaeology 2007) and was subsequently approved by the Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council.

# 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 project proposal and detailed specification (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. Aims of the Project

The aims of the historic building recording were to compile an archive of the building(s) within their 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(s) 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).

## 2.3. Background Research

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork all known relevant and available documentary and 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

Map Title	Reference
Tithe Map and Apportionment of the Parish of Eastham (1843)	WRO BA1572 x760/274
Ordnance Survey 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition 6".	Worcestershire Sheet XIX N.E (1888)
Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 25".	Worcestershire Sheet XIX.4 (1903)
Ordnance Survey (1971) 1:2500	Plan SO 6468 and 6568

### Other Primary Sources of Use

Source	Reference Number
Land Tax Assessments	WRO BA 823/35(ii), b152 WRO BA 823/9, 152 WRO BA 823/1, 152
Notes on Local History of Eastham	WRO 11,803, b899:1196

## Other Primary Sources Consulted (of little use)

Source	Reference Number
Eastham Estate Plans (mainly related to Kyre)	WRO BA 1545, 702:255 Parcel 51
Sale Particulars	WRO BA 9526 / 34-81

Secondary sources used are referenced within the report.

## 2.4. The Fieldwork Methodology

The building recording was undertaken on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2007 prior to any development work being carried out at the site.

A full photographic survey was carried out using digital photography. Either a 2-metre or 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 working conditions meant that the aims and objectives of the brief could be fully met and the fieldwork was successfully concluded.

## 3. Brief Overview of the Historic Background

### 3.1. 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 the nearby market town of 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. Specific Background

No specific records relating to the farm buildings at Lower Bank were located during the background documentary work, but Lower Bank Farm appears briefly in the records.

The farm does not appear in the majority of the Trade Directories for Worcestershire, which were available for the period 1841 to 1940. The latest entry was for William Cave, who farmed at Lower Bank in 1924 (Kelly's Directory 1924).

In 1836 the Tithe Commutation Act was passed by Parliament, resulting in an extensive survey of land across England in order to produce a series of Tithe Apportionment Maps that relayed information about land ownership and use, aimed at converting the commutation of tithe in kind to land taxation (Hoskins 1972, 37). The Tithe Apportionment of Eastham for 1843 shows that Lower Bank Farm (listed as Lower Bank House) was then owned by William and Peter Davies and occupied by John Nott. The Davies' owned much property at Eastham, including Old Farm (listed as Upper Bank House), which is located adjacent to the south (WRO BA 1572, x760/274).

The Land Tax assessment for 1831 identifies the owner of Lower Bank as Samuel Davies and the occupier as James Nott (WRO BA 823/35(ii), b152); the property was rated at £3 – 8 shillings. This figure is important, as it provides the only link to the earlier occupancy of the farm. It was usual that the land-tax payable did not change over the period for which the assessments provide a record (from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century). Thus we may assume that in 1802, the property was owned by E. Winnington (Bart) and occupied by William Taylor (WRO BA 823/9, 152). On the same basis, we can assume with a certain degree of confidence that in 1781, which provides the earliest land tax assessment for Eastham, the farm was occupied or owned by Ann Griffin (WRO BA 823/1, 152).

A list of inhabitants of Eastham agreeing to erect a seat at the church at their own expense in 1815, lists a Mr Bishop of Lower Bank (WRO 11,803, b899:1196).

Unfortunately, the earlier history is sketchy and a certain degree of hypothesis has been used to suggest a pattern of occupancy. This is based on the proposition that the Bury family were

incumbent at the adjacent Old Farm (then Upper Bank) during much of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (VCH IV, 266). It is recorded that in 1664 Thomas Bury was paying tax on four hearths; the hearth tax roll suggests that surveyors compiled the list starting at the manor and rectory to the north and along the lane towards Lower and Upper Bank. This would indicate that in 1662, the occupier of Lower Bank was John Archard; the roll for 1664 lists him as John Orchard. Archard (Archer) is referred to in documents relating to support of the Royalist cause during the first English Civil War and in 1639 he is recorded as having a *messuage, half a yard and one noke at Eastham*. However, a John Archer is listed at 'The Boathouse' in 1678. A tentative link to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century is contained in a Lay Subsidy Roll of 1603, which lists a Johanna Archard at Eastham (WRO 11,803, b899:1196).

### 3.2. Lower Bank Farmhouse

Lower Bank Farmhouse stands adjacent to the north of the subject farm buildings. It is Listed Grade II and appears on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (WSM 36994).

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

EASTHAM CP - SO 66 NE 5/32 Lower Bank Farmhouse - II Farmhouse. c1600 with mid-C20 alterations and additions. Timber-framed, painted brick and rendered infill, brick replacement walling and refacing, plain tiled roofs. Two framed bays aligned east/west with single-bay hipped-roofed timber-framed addition at east gable end. Single storey and attic with dormers. Framing: main part of two, three and four panels from sill to wall-plate, collar and tie-beam truss at west gable end with two collars, three struts to lower and two to upper collar; tie-beam and part of collar survive at east gable end; timber-framed addition has two rows of panels from sill to wall-plate and long straight braces across lower corners. South front elevation: main part has a ground floor 2-light and single-light casement, a C20 raking-top dormer with 3-light casement and entrance at right end with lean-to porch on shaped brackets and C19 ledged and battened door; brick stack at east end of ridge; timber-framed addition has a 2-light casement. Interior not inspected. A single-storey C20 wing adjoins the west gable end. It is probable that the timber-framed addition was the original service outshut.



## 4. The Fieldwork

The present configuration at Lower Bank Farm is the farmhouse on elevated land to the south, with a three bay timber-framed barn opposite to the north, which is sandwiched between a Dutch barn on the west and a former shelter shed, possibly latterly used as a stable on the east. There are further small farm buildings adjacent, none of which are of historic interest. The barn and the shelter shed provide the subject buildings for this report; these are identified in Figure 4.

### *The Fabric Survey*

#### **The Barn**

The barn is built on level land at the brow of a hill (glacial drumlin) with a slope to the south and west. There is a noticeable *holloway* running parallel with, and adjacent to the road on the east of the site. As it stands, the barn is a three bay timber-framed post and truss construction below a corrugated iron roof covering, with storage bays either side of a central cart bay, with full height cart doors to the field side to the north. The structure is clad externally in weatherboard. Generally, the barn is in good condition (Plates 1 -3).

For ease of recording the bays of the barn have been numbered 1-3 from west to east and the trusses (post and truss frames) have been numbered T1 – T4 (Figure 4).

The barn framing employs three sill to wall-plate intermediate posts between each bay post, with rails between forming three rows of rectangular panels (Plate 5). The evidence suggests that this is the original pattern of framing. The majority of the timbers are original, which is unusual for an agricultural structure of such antiquity. However, there are inserted timbers (Plate 6) and evidence for alteration, which is further discussed below.

The end frames (T1 and T4) have original trusses of tiebeam, twin queen-struts, collar and principal rafters, with each post braced to the tiebeam by short knee-brace (Plate 7). Empty mortises in the inner faces of the posts indicate that they were originally also braced to the wall plates. Long diagonal braces used to strengthen T1 are not original and probably date to Phase 2 alterations (see below). Trusses T2 and T3 both utilise a pair of raking queen-posts instead of the queen-struts as used in T1 and T4 (Plate 8). Though this combination is not unusual, there are indications to suggest that T2 and T3 maybe later modifications (see below). The timber-frame sits on a local stone rubble plinth wall. Cross frames at the cart bay (T2 and T3) are supported on plinth walls of 9” x 3” mass-produced brick and the sills and braces are not original to the build.

The frame is now clad in (?elm) weatherboarding, though holes on the undersides of rails and grooves in the upper face of opposite rails indicate that the panels infills were originally of cleft oak latticework or wattles left un-daubed, which would have allowed good ventilation within the barn.

The roof structure was carried through the trusses on a single row of trenched purlins to each side, with rafters supporting the corrugated roof cover. None of the rafters were original and it was not

possible to say for definite if any of the purlins were original. The northern frame purlin of Bay 3 was clearly re-used, with an empty mortise and a groove to take the bottoms of staves for a wattle and daub panel (Plate 9), three other purlins had rafter peg holes and were possibly original (Plate 10).

The barn doors were clearly not original. The southern doors were set on posts fastened to the inner faces of the central frame posts and were fabricated from modern softwood. One of the northern doors was more interesting; its hardwood frame peg jointed, with chamfered and stopped braces in a similar style to the main timber members of the adjoining shelter shed (see below and Plate 11).

There were no carpenters' marks noted on the frame, though the external cladding may well be concealing some. Many carpenters setting out marks were noted, though this is not unusual where timber remains in good condition.

The floors within the barn were not visible at the time of the survey.

### **The Shelter Shed**

The shelter shed abuts the eastern gable end of the barn, with a doorway between the two entering into a feeding passage along the rear of the shelter shed. The structure is wider than the barn, but has a lower pitched clay tile roof, which is supported above a series of mass-produced / machine-cut queen post roof trusses (Plate 12). These each comprised a pair of queen posts tenoned into the tie beam and tied with iron stirrup straps; the tops of the posts are angle cut around the purlins, which rest on cleats on the principals; the trusses are tied with straining beams at the top (collars).

The trusses are supported on a series of posts, which are braced to the tie beams and wallplates with short knee braces. These have all been chamfered and stopped (Plate 13), as have the posts. Nails are used to fix the braces in position, whilst the posts are pegged to the wall plates. The structure sits on a low brick plinth, with the front posts of the open side, set onto stone post pads. Close studding nailed between the posts and weatherboard cladding completes the structure (Plate 14).

The front (southern side) of the shelter shed was originally open and has subsequently been covered across with a combination of breezeblock and timber cladding. There is a central split stable door and vented iron windows affording light and circulation of air. The frame of the building is of slender machine cut timbers

The shed is divided, with a separate area at the southern end, which may have been a calving pen / loose-box.

### *Phasing*

Though the barn structure utilises less re-used, or replacement timber than most agricultural structures from a similar period, it is clear that there has been alteration. The evidence for this is apparent both in the cartographic sources and within the fabric itself. The 1843 Tithe Apportionment Map, which pre-dates the addition of the shelter shed that was later butted against the eastern side of the barn, shows the barn as approximately twice the size as it stands today (Figure 2). This would logically suggest that the eastern end of the barn was demolished to make way for the shelter shed, probably sometime around 1850-60. However, there are anomalies within the fabric of the barn that suggest this may not be the case and that, though much of the barn has been removed, a proportion was rebuilt on the eastern end of the barn, i.e. Bay 3 is second phase. This is not conclusive but the evidence is outlined below.

- ❑ Empty mortises and peg-holes in the posts of T2 indicate that originally the side framing extended across what is now the cart bay (Plate 15). There are, however, no corresponding mortises on the posts of T3, indicating that these are not in their original position.
- ❑ The southern wall plate has empty mortise rebates suggestive of there having been posts across bay 2, in common with the original framing pattern, though it cannot be guaranteed that the wall plate is original, as much of the remainder has been replaced.
- ❑ The cross bracing for the cart bay is clearly later than the original, having less degraded, more slender and machine cut timbers.
- ❑ Jowelled heads were used in the original main posts, but gunstock jowels (Plate 16) are used in those that appear to be of second phase, though some heads may have been altered / damaged.
- ❑ The southern post of T2 has a slip-tenon to the tiebeam and has later been reinforced with an iron strap.

The main counter-argument against this would be, why demolish something only to rebuild it again? The obvious response would be that the eastern end of the barn may have collapsed and the remnants used to repair the barn, making it smaller and necessitating the re-location of the original cart bay.

The shelter shed was of one main phase, though its enclosure and modification was carried out at a later date.

## 4. Dating

Accurate dating of agricultural and industrial buildings is often problematic as dateable architectural features that are present within domestic architecture are often missing. 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 close dating is problematic without substantiating documentary evidence or resort to scientific dating techniques. In such instance, the dating and phasing of the buildings has to be subjective. Generally, timber framing utilising square panelling was used widely in the Western Midlands between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, following on from larger rectangular panelling. The earlier panels were framed (generally) in thicker, more substantial scantling, with narrower and flimsy timbers used later as the timber resource became depleted.

Listing details suggest a date of around 1600 for Lower Bank farmhouse and there is no reason to dispute this. This suggests that the associated barn dates from no earlier, and the construction evidence suggests an early 17<sup>th</sup> century date for the larger Phase 1 barn.

The 1843 tithe map indicates that the shelter-shed was added after this date, probably around 1850-60, inferring a change in farming practice at Lower Bank, with animal husbandry increasing in importance. At this time, the barn was reduced in size, to form the three-bay structure that remains today. Essentially, timber-framed buildings were the original ‘pre-fabs’ and could be fairly simply dismantled and re-assembled as required, though it cannot be ruled out that there was a collapse of the barn sometime around 1850, resulting in the changes.

## 5. Comment

There is little evidence to suggest the function of the barn during its lifespan. The term ‘threshing barn’ is often used in preference to the simplified term ‘barn’. However, this may be misleading; the threshing barn is where the threshing process would take place to separate the wheat from the chaff, or the grain from the stalks of the crop, but with the introduction of mechanical threshing during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the and acceptance of the ‘improvements’ by farm workers, threshing floors became redundant by the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century and barns reverted to a versatile space for storage and ‘portable’ farm processes.

The pre mechanical threshing process involved thrashing the crop with hand flails on the cart bay ‘threshing floor’, which was usually of flagstones or planked. After the separation had taken place, the threshed crop would be thrown into the air to separate out the chaff. This was known as winnowing and the cart bay doors would be opened to allow a through draught, which would aid the process as the heavier grain would fall to the floor and the waste would be blown away. Winnowing was a lengthy process and may have taken several weeks a year to complete. It has been logically suggested that early threshing barns were aligned to take advantage of the locally prevalent wind to provide a through draft for the winnowing process (Wade-Martins 1991, 167). However, at Lower Bank, the barn is aligned east-west, whilst at the adjacent Old Farm (Upper Bank), the barn is aligned north-south.

The Tithe Apportionment names the adjacent field to the west as ‘Porter’s Hopyard’ and the field on the slope to the north as ‘Barn Hopyard’, indicating the historic association with hop growing in the immediate vicinity of Lower Bank. The overall evidence from the survey, historic background and the known local history, is that the barn was probably utilised as a combination barn, with storage for crops (especially hops), implement storage, animal shelter, threshing when required and possibly cider making. It may also be that there was an association between upper and Lower Bank, and perhaps farming processes were split between the two holdings but with common aim.

What is clear, is that the reduction in the size of the barn coincides with a period when hop growing in the area was in decline; in 1825 Eastham had 286 acres of hop production, by 1844 this was down to 207 acres (Gaut 1939, 271). This suggests that the evident downsize in the barn was planned rather than due to, for example, part of it collapsing as suggested above.

## 6. Conclusion

*The results of the historic building recording determined that the existing 3-bay timber-framed barn at Lower Bank, Eastham is likely to be the remnant western end of a larger, five or six bay threshing/ combination barn dating from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Around 1850 and coinciding with a period of decline in hop production in the area, the barn was 'downsized' and reduced to 3 bays. It appears that at this time animal husbandry became more important to the economy of the farm, as a shelter shed was erected in place of the barn floor space.*

## 7. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mr and Mrs Bowens for their interest and hospitality. Thanks are also due to Robert Taylor of Barnett Taylor Associates for his input and supply of the excellent plans, which are used for the basis of Figures 4-6 in this report. Thanks are also extended to Mike Glyde, Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council.

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**Plate 1:** *Barn (centre) and shelter shed (right) looking north-west*



**Plate 2:** *View to the south-west*



**Plate 3:** *The barn looking north-west (scale 2-metres)*



**Plate 4:** *The shelter shed looking north-east (scale 2-metres)*





**Plate 5:** *General pattern of framing as viewed in bay 1 northern side. Timbers arrowed are later insertions, see Plate 6 (scale 2-metres)*



**Plate 6:** *Scarfed in sill section and inserted post; reverse side of Plate 5 (scale 1-metre)*



**Plate 7:** *Truss and frame T1 looking west*



**Plate 8:** *Truss T2 looking west*



**Plate 9:** *North purlin in bay 3 showing evidence of reuse*



**Plate 10:** *Purlin in bay 1 south roof frame with empty rafter peg holes*



**Plate 11:** Northern cart door framing; style is similar to that used in shelter shed framing (see Plate 13)



**Plate 12:** Truss style in shelter shed



**Plate 13:** *Chamfered and stopped braces and post of the shelter shed*



**Plate 14:** *Inside the shelter shed looking north-west (scale 2-metres)*

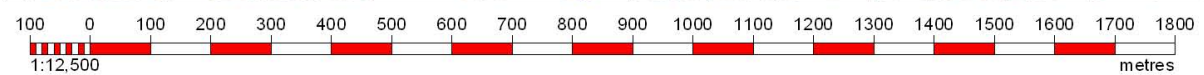
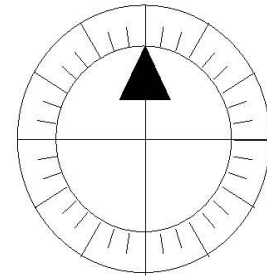
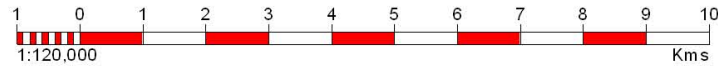


**Plate 15:** *Empty mortises and peg holes in T2 south side and wall plate (arrowed) indicating framing extended across the present cart bay.*



**Plate 16:** *South-east corner post showing 'modified' head and empty mortises for bracing*

# Figure 1: Location of the Site



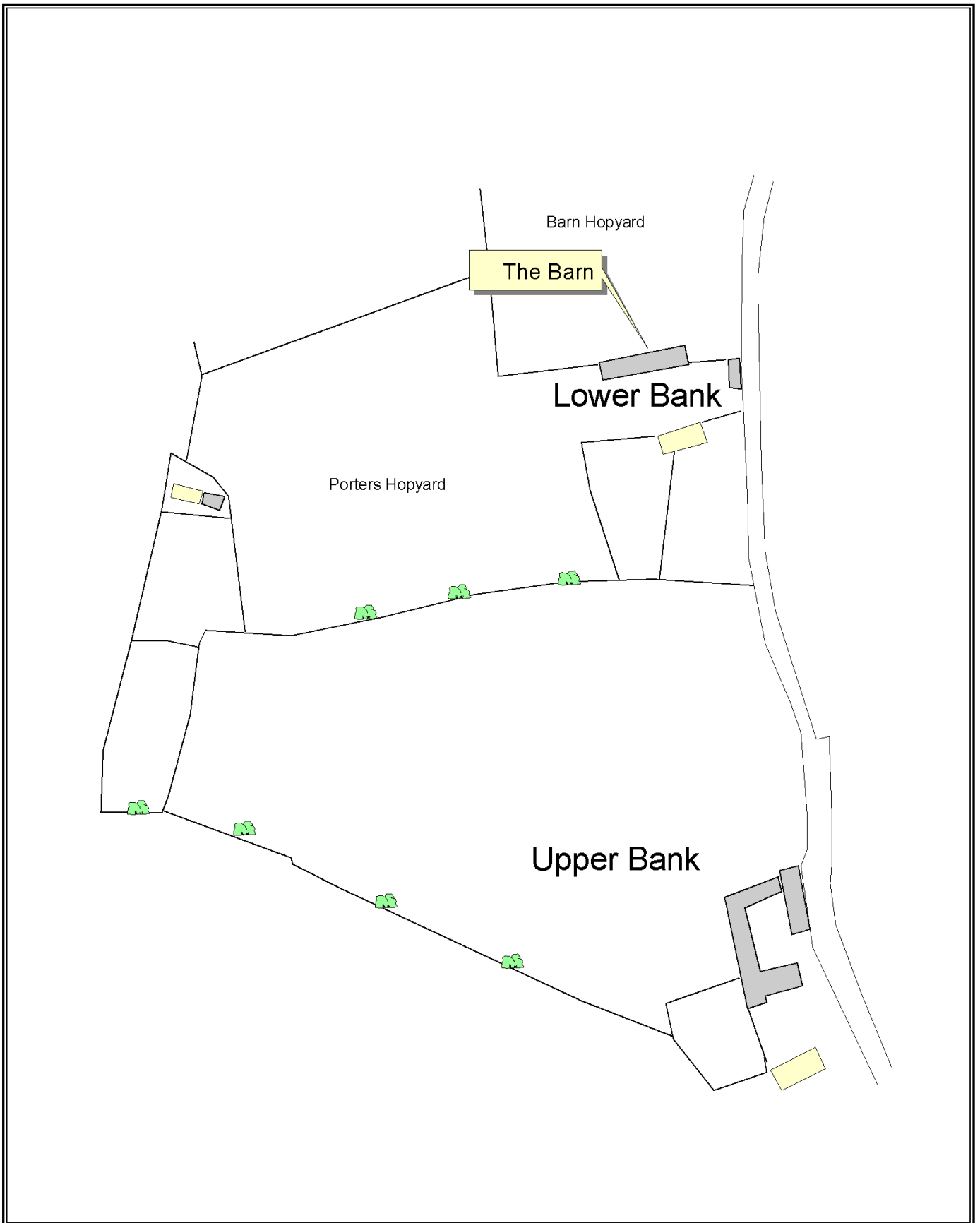
Location of the development site at Eastham, near Tenbury Wells

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Figure 2: Tithe Apportionment Map of Eastham (1843)



Scaled sketch based on an extract of the tithe map of Eastham, shows the barn to be around twice the size that it appears on the later Ordnance Survey map (Figure 3)

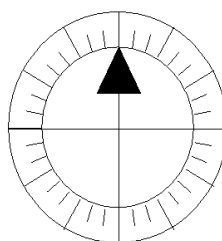
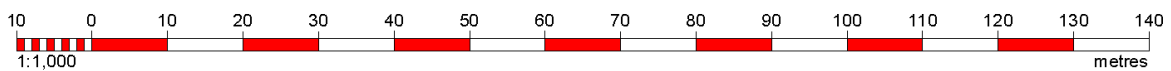
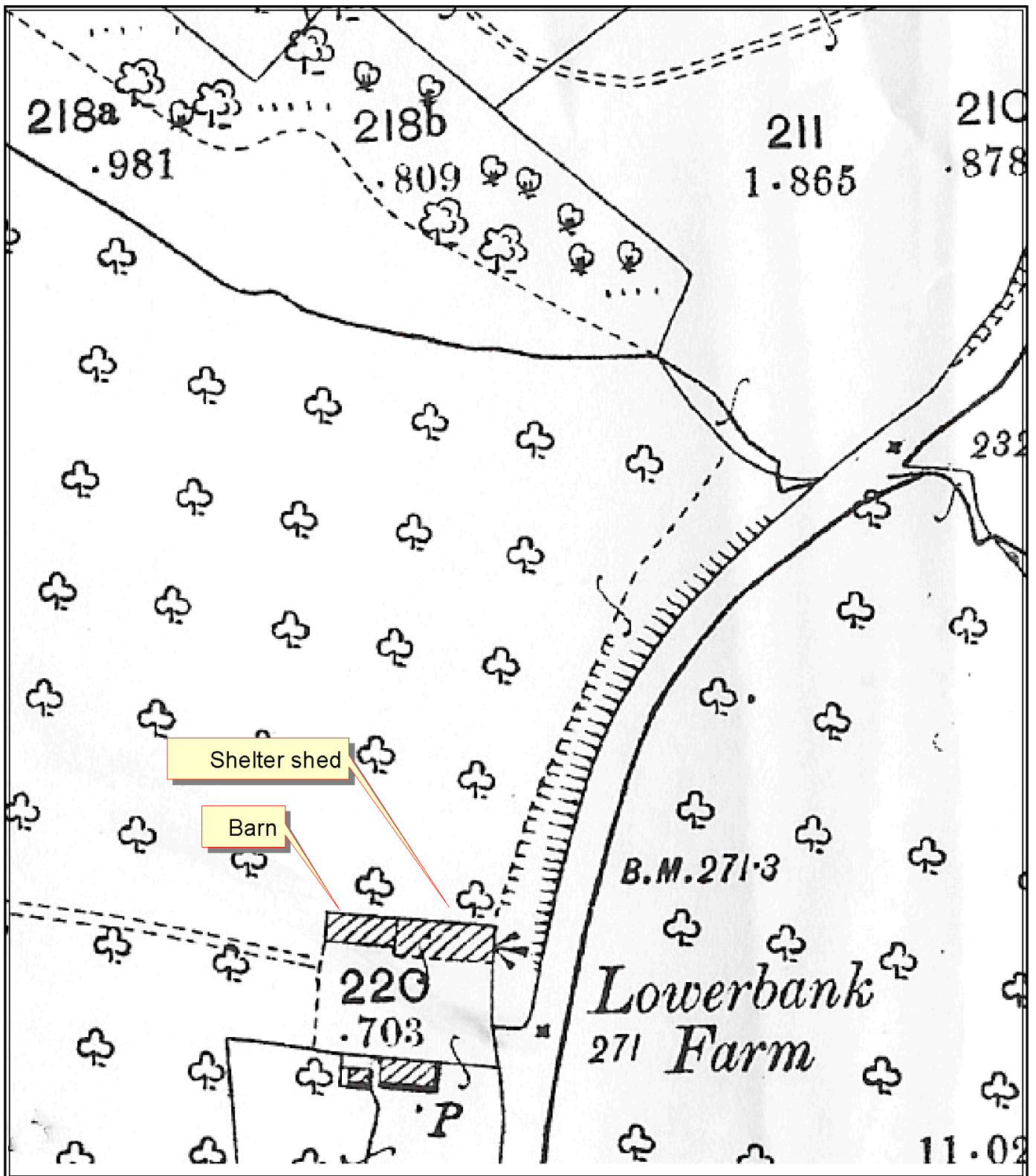
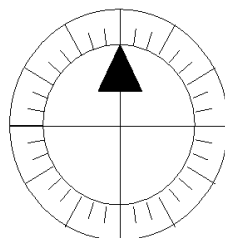


Figure 3: 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey (1903)



The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map showing the site



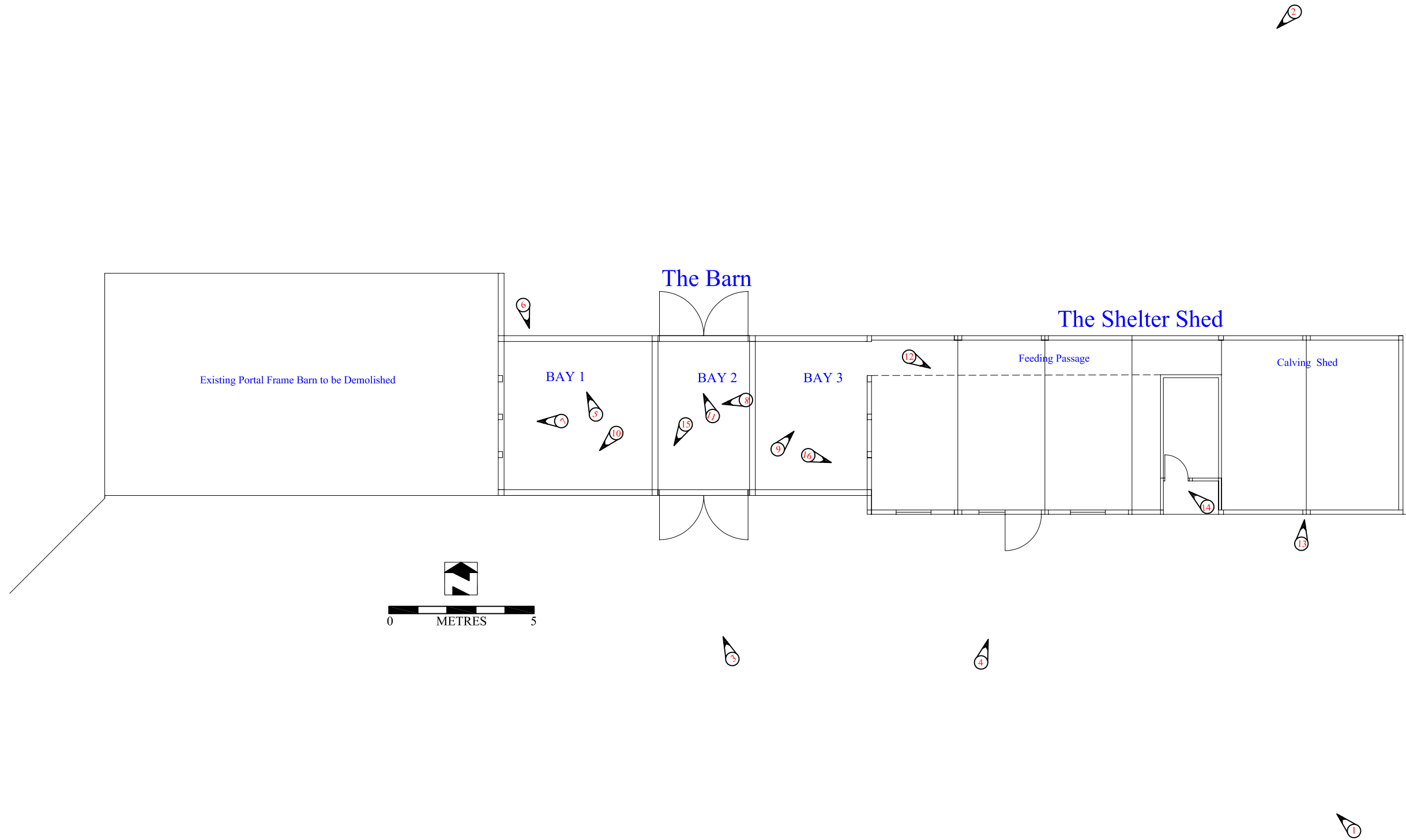


Figure 4: Site Identification Plan and Photo Directions (Based on Original Drawing by Barnett Taylor Associates)

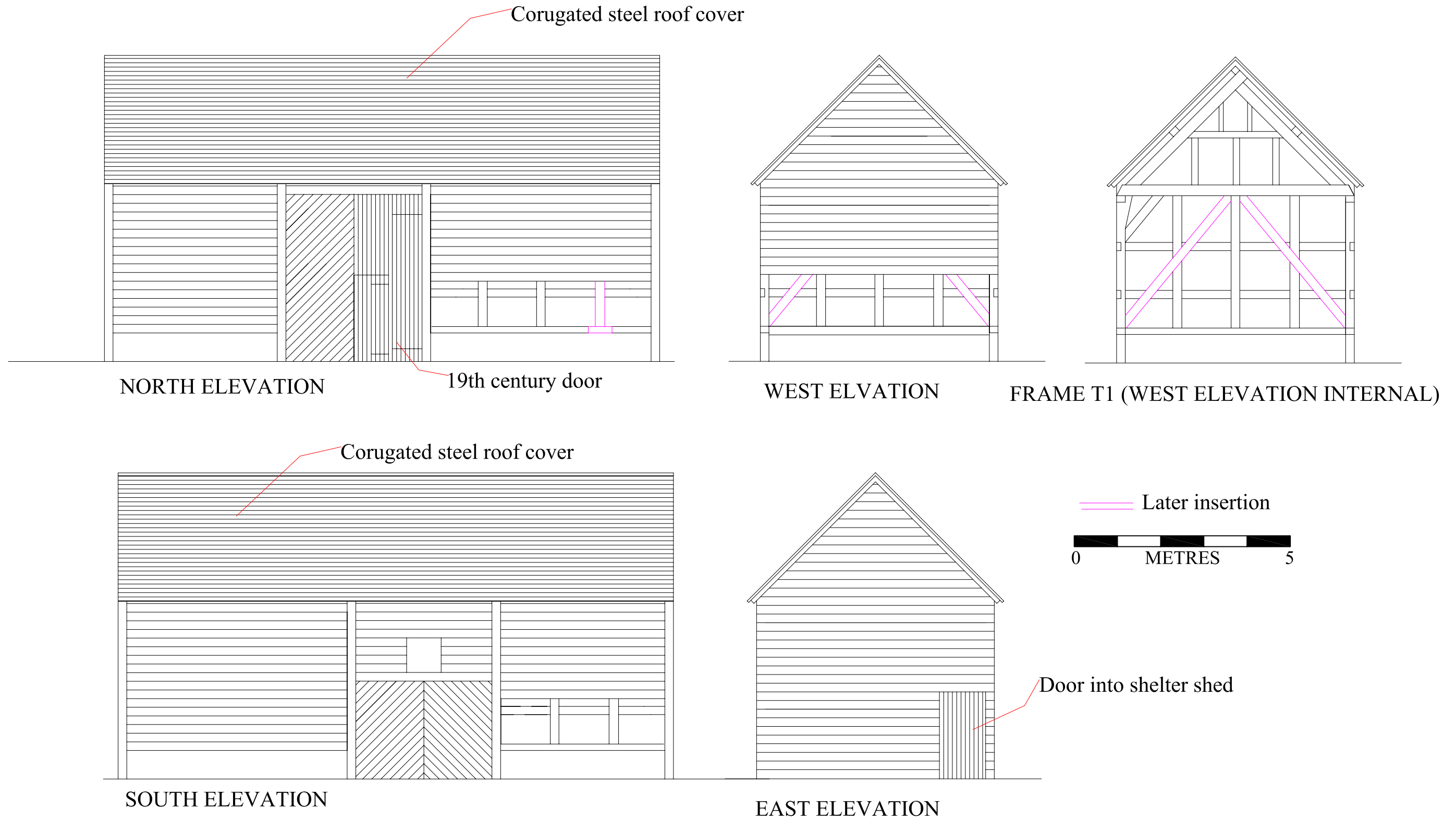


Figure 5: The Barn, Elevations (Based on Original Drawing by Barnett Taylor Associates)

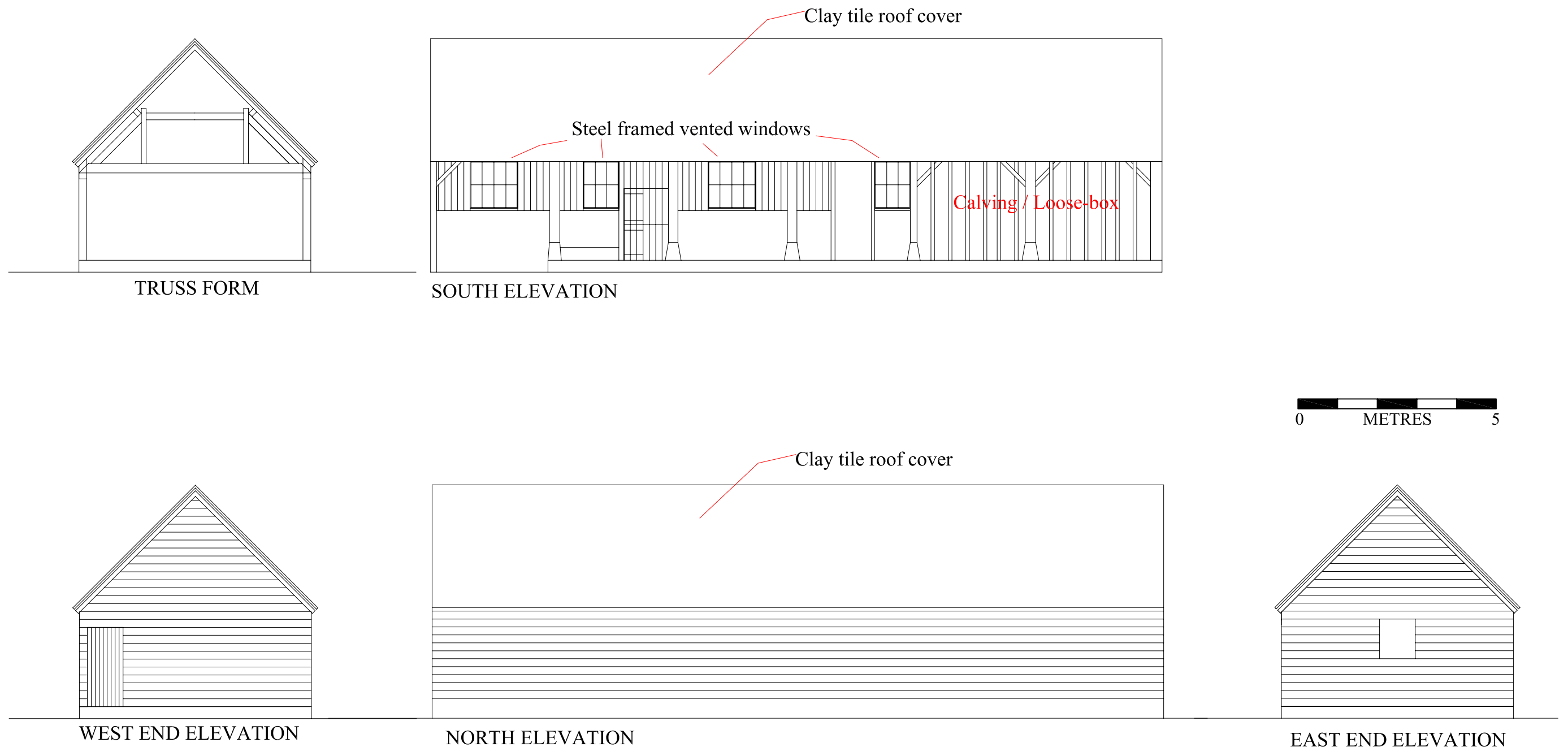


Figure 6: The Shelter Shed, Elevations (Based on Original Drawing by Barnett Taylor Associates)