

FOLDYARD RANGE AT CHURCH FARM,
CHURCH LENCH,
WORCESTERSHIRE

WSM 70870



Mike Napthan Archaeology
3 Hamilton Road, Worcester, WR5 1AG mike@mikenapthanarchaeology.co.uk

Foldyard range at Church Farm, Church Lench, Worcestershire WSM 70870

Mike Napthan MCIFA
(with additional research by Alison Derrick)

14th October, 2018

Summary

Historic building recording was undertaken in October 2018 prior to conversion of the fold-yard buildings range at Church Farm, Church Lench. It is intended that the range be restored and converted to domestic use.

The earliest elements of the present fold yard buildings appear to have been constructed in the very late 18th or more probably early 19th Century. Whilst the timber framed barn contains some re-used elm and oak timber, the present framing is extensively nailed and the roof trusses and portal framing are of imported Baltic softwood. The barn is of traditional three bay form with central threshing bay and hayloft to the southern bay. The likely date of construction is circa 1810-30, and there is no direct evidence of any earlier building on the site. The building is in a very poor structural state, supported currently by an internal scaffold and strapping. There are no remaining internal features of interest. The southern gable end was re-built in brick and concrete block in the 1960s-70s.

Between the farmhouse and barn there is a range of brick-built stables, including a tack room – the brick includes mechanically extruded hollow brick introduced in this area circa 1810-1820, and there are later 19th C inserted brick partitions. The roof trusses and purlins are of early 19th C date, but there has been extensive rebuilding in concrete blockwork to the rear wall and some re-roofing.

The northern side of the fold-yard is occupied by a timber building originally an open fronted cattle shelter. The walls are not traditionally “framed” but primarily of post and rail construction clad in weatherboarding. One bay has a brick frontage of early-mid 19th C date, and this seems to have been extended by two bays to the east prior to the Tithe Awards mapping of 1838.

Post 1838 and prior to 1883 a further single bay timber building of 1½ storeys was added to the north-east of the barn. This appears to have been an apple store/donkey stable arrangement, the gable end of which was rebuilt in brick in the mid 20th Century. To the south of this addition there are the remains of a circular paved donkey path, probably representing a removed rotary cider mill.

Overall the original construction and fabric of the buildings was fairly poor, and probably undertaken by only semi-skilled workers. There are no unusual features and little remains internally to point to original function. The lay-out is however conventional and this makes identification of the buildings relatively straightforward. The buildings have suffered serious neglect in the latter half of the 20th Century, and the limited repairs undertaken have been in modern materials.

1 Introduction

1.1 Historic building recording (Worcs HER ref WSM70870) was undertaken on the farmstead

range of Church Farm, Church Lench (NGR SP 02452 51280) by Mike Napthan Archaeology prior to proposed conversion to residential use (WA 18/01919/LB). The site is located in the centre of Church Lench immediately to the east of the churchyard. Church Farm (house) is Listed Grade II and the farmstead buildings appear to be curtilage Listed.

- 1.2 The Listing description is as follows:

CHURCH LENCH CP MAIN STREET (north side) Church Farm

(Formerly listed as Church Farmhouse) GV II

Farmhouse. C17 with mid-C19 alterations. Timber-frame with painted brick and rendered infill, tile roof, integral gable-end stacks. Three framed bays aligned east/west. One storey with attic lit by three dormers, outer two gabled, central one in gablet; ground floor: three windows: a canted bay to left and right with hipped tile roof, and 2-light casement to left of central entrance, (all windows have decorative diamond quarries), gabled porch with ledged door. Framing: three square panels high with straight tension braces to gables; east gable: three struts to collar, V-struts in apex. Listing NGR: SP0245251260

- 1.2 The project was designed to provide a record of the historical and architectural significance of the farmstead buildings within the curtilage of the Listed Building. Planning permission has been approved HER17/02581/FUL . 17/02582/LB and 18/01919/LB. The project design was prepared in accordance with the Standard and Guidance for Historic Building Recording issued by the Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994). Codes of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists were followed and Guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire December 2010.

2 Aims

- 2.1 The aims of the archaeological project were to provide an analytical record of the buildings prior to conversion.to provide sufficient information to establish the nature of the resource within the site (including presence or absence, character, extent, date, state of preservation and quality)

3 Methodology

- 3.1 Cartographic and published historical sources were searched for information relating to the site and its environs.. A search of the County Councils' HER database revealed several records of archaeological interventions in the vicinity but none directly pertinent to the present site.
- 3.2 The building survey was conducted in September 2018. All buildings affected by the development proposals were examined and photographed externally and internally. In the absence of any particular features of significance the detailed architects plans were used as a record of the building range with only minor corrections and additions of detail. A full photographic record was made of interior spaces and datable features, and the building is fully described in the present report.

4 Background

4.1 *Archaeological background*

- 4.1.1 Only limited archaeological work has occurred in the immediate vicinity – the nearest archaeological observation was an evaluation to the east (WSM 34258 Sworn et al 2005). The site produced only a very small assemblage of medieval and post-medieval pottery (seven abraded sherds in all) and undated features which were interpreted as a ditch terminal and later boundary. A further evaluation at Bramley Bank, Low Lane (WSM55830; Napthan 2014) 100m to the north-east of Church Farm (and just on the periphery of the village) found no evidence of any pre-19th C activity.
- 4.1.2 A Roman site (WSM32811) has been identified as a finds scatter near Rough Hill, approximately 1km to the north of the present property, though the exact location of the 1953 observation (Smith, 1953) has been lost. A scatter of metal artefacts of Roman date has been recorded in the parish, probably in the same area but regrettably PAS records omit any locational information. A skeleton, interpreted as possibly Iron Age was found by chance at Yew Wood in the same general area in 1999 (WSM 27864), and it appears probable that the focus of prehistoric and Roman activity lay well to the north of the medieval settlement, which shows some indications of being a planned settlement.
- 4.1.3 There is little direct archaeological evidence for the medieval settlement other than the neighbouring 12th Century church WSM 30089 which may well have had Saxon origins as the settlement was known as Church Lench at Domesday, the present buildings of the village are presently listed as being of post-medieval and later date, mostly being of 17th Century and later origins. The present site possibly originated as glebe lands, but was included in the private ownership of the rector by the early 19th Century.

4.2 *Historical background*

- 4.2.1 Church Lench formed part of the gift made by Kenred of Mercia in 708 to Evesham Abbey. Church Lench seems to have been afterwards alienated, as Abbot Mannig (1044–54) is stated to have recovered this township for his church. In 1086 it was held by the abbot and convent in demesne, but it was shortly afterwards granted by Abbot Walter (1077–86) to Urse d'Abitot the Sheriff of Worcestershire. His heirs, the Beauchamps, apparently retained it, however, as a survey of the lands of the abbey of Evesham, the probable date of which is about 1150, states that William de Beauchamp, grandson of Urse, held 4 hides at Church Lench of the abbey. The rights of the Abbot of Evesham in the overlordship were recognized until the 13th century at least, when William de Beauchamp was said to be holding Church Lench by gift of Robert the Abbot. After that time the rights of the abbot in the manor appear to have lapsed (VCH III). The Beauchamps continued as overlords, and occasional owners in demesne, of the manor until the 14th century. During the early part of the reign of Henry III it appears to have been held by Roger Roculf or Rotulf, who in 1229–30 conveyed certain land to Ellis son of Giffard. About the same time the recently founded abbey of Halesowen received from him several grants in which he is designated 'lord of Church Lench.' The present manor seems to have originated in land at Church Lench granted in the reign of Henry III by Roger Roculf, lord of Church Lench, to the abbey of Halesowen. The land and tenements granted by Roger Roculf appear to have been retained until 1538, when it was surrendered to the king by William Taylor, the last abbot. It was granted in the same year to Sir John Dudley. It was

probably sold by him to William Scudamore, who died seised of it in 1560, when it passed to his son John. It remained in the family until 1741, when it was sold to Sir Dudley Ryder, whose son Nathaniel, created Lord Harrowby in 1776, was the owner of it in 1779. In 1793 John Callow and Ellen his wife conveyed 'the manor of Church Lench' to John Clarke. The manor was broken up into several parts in the 19th Century.

- 4.2.2 The Inclosure Act for Church Lench was passed in 1783, but no Inclosure map appears to survive. The earliest dated mapping available for the area is the 1813 Draft Ordnance Survey mapping (British Library online map collection). Small scale published "Old Series" Ordnance Survey mapping of 1831 shows the site as open ground. The earliest detailed plan is the 1841 Tithe Awards Plan (Fig 4), this and subsequent Ordnance Survey mapping from the 1884 1st Edition to the mid 20th Century all show Church Farm farmhouse with a range of farmstead buildings. The cartographic evidence shows no clear boundaries between the various farm buildings and houses held by different elements of the Tovey family.

5 Occupants

- 5.1 The 1840 Tithe Apportionment lists the occupier of Church Farm as Thomas Tovey, and the landowner Sir W E Boughton. The census return for the following year reveals him to be Thomas Yardington Tovey, sharing a house with his younger brother William and young servants. Thomas Yardington (to distinguish him from other Toveys) was born in 1809 to Joseph and Susannah Tovey (nee Yardington) of Church Lench. He was the eldest son, and the second of four children and was given his mother's maiden name as a second Christian name. In 1843 Thomas married Mary Archer, the eighteen year old daughter of near neighbour Joseph Archer, tailor, and his wife Mary. Probably as a result of his marriage, an announcement in the Worcester Journal¹ of that year shows him dissolving his partnership with William and the sale by auction of much shared farm stock and household goods. Four years later in 1847 a freehold messuage in Thomas' possession was auctioned for sale by the mortgagee with powers of sale².
- 5.2 The 1850 Kelly's Directory³ lists both Thomas Yardington and his younger brother as farmers revealing how despite the division of goods seven years before, both had stayed on to live and farm in Church Lench. It is likely that Thomas as the elder brother kept the Church Farm property for himself and his new wife, while William moved to a neighbouring farm. Later records mention the proximity of Thomas' land to the church. The 1851 census return shows Thomas as farming 126 acres and employing 7 labourers. It records no mention of any children of the couple (although interestingly it lists Ann Meryman as a visitor, the former servant listed in the 1841 census ten years earlier). There is some suggestion in an online geneological website⁴ that another Thomas Tovey born in 1828 and also living in Church Lench was the biological son of Thomas Yardington. If this is the case then this occurred prior to Thomas Yardington's marriage to Mary Archer and may have been illegitimate as no record of a prior marriage could be found. A brief search for this younger Thomas Tovey suggests that his father may have been a John Tovey, and although almost certainly a relative I have not been able to establish exactly what the relationship was.
- 5.3 Billing's Directory⁵ for 1855 lists both Thomas Yardington and his brother William as farmers in the village. In 1856 the landowner, Sir W E R Boughton sold some of the land occupied by

¹Worcester Journal 28 September 1843

²Worcester Journal 04 February 1847

³Birmingham, Staffordshire & Worcestershire, Kelly's Directory, 1850

⁴<http://www.ancestry.com/boards/thread.aspx?mv=flat&m=111&p=surnames.tovey>

⁵Worcestershire, Billing's Directory & Gazetteer, 1855

Thomas next to the road to Rous Lench⁶. Thomas was mentioned in the Worcestershire Chronicle of 1858⁷ after two men were caught by a policeman stealing hay from a rick in one of his fields. The same newspaper in May the following year records the first of many occasions in which Thomas would be mentioned as being on the wrong side of legal action. In this case it was a servant claiming he had been underpaid by Thomas who had paid him by the week instead of by the day. Acting on a suggestion made by the bench, the servant received his wages from Thomas, but was forced to pay court expenses of 4 shillings⁸.

- 5.4 The 1861 census return reveals that Thomas Yardington had acquired some extra land since 1851 and is now farming a total of 155 acres and employing 5 labourers. Also listed in the property are his wife Mary, and her unmarried younger sister Catherine Archer who was employed by the couple as a house maid. Thomas was once again summoned before the local county petty sessions in this year, and once again a servant of his was the complainant⁹. Charles Huband claimed that Thomas had accused him of stealing his XXX ale and upon denying it and calling Thomas a liar had been struck by him across the face. Thomas was also pressing charges in return for the theft of the beer. The court dismissed the assault and decided the charge of stealing was not satisfactorily proved, but decided to caution the servant anyway. In February of the following year Thomas was the unfortunate victim of a probable arson attack when a large rick of wheat straw was discovered on fire by one of his labourers. The Worcestershire Chronicle¹⁰ reports that soon the 'whole neighbourhood was astir and several hundred people were on the spot to render assistance'. The rick was mostly destroyed but nearby livestock and buildings were saved as well as the village church which was threatened by its proximity to the flames. The report goes on to state that Thomas was happily insured and much respected by all his fellow-parishioners and workmen for his "uniform kindness", seemingly forgetting its own recent reports of Thomas' court appearances.
- 5.5 In September of the same year, Thomas was once again the victim of crime, this time the perpetrator being a tramp named John Jones, rather than an employee. Jones was charged with breaking into his brewhouse late one night and stealing three metal spoons. Unfortunately for Jones, Thomas happened to be returning home at the same time and met him coming out of the property. He handed him over to the parish constable who later observed Jones attempting to dispose of a spoon which was subsequently identified by Thomas as belonging to him¹¹.
- 5.6 In 1865 Thomas Yardington was back before the bench of the Petty Sessions, this time summoned by his namesake and probable relative Thomas Tovey acting in his role as parish churchwarden, for the non-payment of a church rate of two pence in the pound. Mr H New acting for Thomas Yardington stated that his client did not object to the rate on conscientious principles, but his desire was to bring about a better mode of levying and assessing the rates than was currently adopted in the parish. To "save trouble" he would at once give notice to the Bench that he had a *bona fide* objection to the rate and would thus take the jurisdiction out of the hands of the Bench. Under examination, Thomas Tovey, admitted that no estimates had ever been made for the expenditure and that the rate was made to cover more than the year's expenses. Mr New submitting that his client therefore had a good objection, the case was dismissed¹². This wouldn't be the last time that Thomas Yardington would be involved in court cases with his neighbours the parish church and Thomas Tovey, the churchwarden.

⁶Worcestershire Chronicle 12 March 1856

⁷Worcestershire Chronicle 17 February 1858

⁸Worcestershire Chronicle 18 May 1859

⁹Worcestershire Chronicle 09 January 1861

¹⁰Worcestershire Chronicle 19 February 1862

¹¹Worcester Journal 20 September 1862

¹²Worcestershire Chronicle 09 August 1865

- 5.7 The autumn of 1866 saw Thomas summoned twice more before the Bench. The first in August for driving two cows along a road without a licence, an offence he had apparently committed previously. He had been spotted and questioned by his neighbour and Bench member, the Reverend M Amphlett. Thomas argued that he was taking the animals to a bull at his brother William's farm, but was fined 1 shilling and 13 shillings costs¹³. In September he was once again summoned for the non-payment of a church-rate amounting to 7 shillings 9 pence by Thomas Tovey, the churchwarden. The case was dismissed when Mr New, acting again for Thomas Yardington, argued that the other churchwarden had refused to sign the rate. The second churchwarden interestingly being his brother William Tovey¹⁴.
- 5.8 The bad blood that seems to have existed between Thomas Yardington and his ecclesiastical neighbours came to a head in April of the following year when Amos Brooks, a servant of the Reverend Amphlett was summoned before the Bench to answer charges of assaulting both Thomas' wife and a female servant of his in the church. Amphlett himself was also charged with having aided in the assault on Mrs Tovey. In return, Mrs Tovey was also summonsed for assaulting the same servant that was charged with assaulting her. The Worcestershire Chronicle¹⁵ reports that the courtroom was packed with spectators, and undoubtedly local opinion was split between the two parties based on personal experience of either side. The ever faithful Mr New acting for Thomas Yardington's wife and servant detailed the case against Brooks as follows. Ten years previously Thomas had donated the sum of ten pounds to the restoration of the church and in return for his generosity had been allocated a pew for his family to use by the churchwarden at the time. Despite his act of charity, and possibly because of his antipathy towards the Reverend Amphlett, Thomas Yardington was not a regular church-goer and instead sent his servant Sarah Masters to sit in his wife's seat in the pew every Sunday, a situation that probably displeased the rector as indicated by the mention of a note from him to Masters sometime before the assault. Mr New alleged that on the 7th April Brooks had approached Sarah Masters as she sat in the pew, put his hand on her shoulder and used his knee to push her along the seat so that he could sit down. There were other pews that were unoccupied at the time. Under questioning from Mr Bentley acting for the defence, Masters claimed that Amphlett's housekeeper had sat in the pew three times before, and Brooks had sat there once. She said her master Thomas Yardington had told her not to let him do it again. Next to be questioned was Catherine Archer, Mrs Tovey's sister. She said she had lived with the Yardington Tovey's nine years, and was a regular attendee at the church. She corroborated Masters' evidence and said she had no previous quarrel with the defendant. A further witness, Joseph Sherwood also claimed to have seen the assault. The churchwarden who had originally allotted the pews was then called to confirm that the Tovey family had indeed been allotted the pew in question and had occupied it ever since, although not always taking up the whole of the sitting. He claimed to have witnessed the assault and confirmed Masters' account.
- 5.9 Mr Bentley then spoke for the defence arguing that this was a minor event that would usually never have reached the Bench if it hadn't been for "gratifying private spleen" and that Masters had been pressed to make the complaint by "other parties", meaning Thomas Yardington. The pew held four sittings, the one in question was not used by the Toveys and there had not been an issue in the past when others had used it. Furthermore, Brooks had the sanction of both his master Amphlett, and the churchwarden Thomas Tovey. He suggested that there had been no assault, and that Masters had only offered resistance to Brooks on the orders of Thomas

¹³Worcestershire Chronicle 08 August 1866

¹⁴Worcester Journal 08 September 1866

¹⁵Worcestershire Chronicle 08 May-1867

Yardington. Bentley concluded his address by saying that he hoped that this would be the last of the unhappy state of things that appeared to exist at Church Lench.

- 5.10 His first witness was yet another Tovey, Miss Mary Tovey, a maiden aunt of Thomas Tovey, the churchwarden who had himself summonsed Thomas Yardington on several occasions. She claimed that there was ample room for Brooks to share the pew and she did not notice him put his hand on Masters in any way. Masters wouldn't move to let him sit down so he perched on the end until she finally slid along the seat. The next witness James Ludlow also claimed that he saw nothing despite sitting directly behind Masters. Thomas Ainge also said that Brooks had only sat on the edge of the seat until Masters finally moved along to give him room. He went on to claim that he had spoken to Masters while he had been working at a gravel pit belonging to Thomas Tovey. She claimed that her Master would “stand all the blame” for the event after Ainge had challenged her on her story.
- 5.11 The Reverend Amphlett himself was next called to give evidence. He acknowledged that the pew had been allotted to the Toveys but that he himself was against the allotment of seats and had chosen for himself one that “no one else would like”. A letter from the Archdeacon was read out confirming that seats were to be attached to persons and not houses and that no one could be excluded from a seat that was not in use. Mr Amphlett then continued, saying that the Tovey's had occupied only three sittings in the pew for several years, the fourth being used by the mother of his school mistress until she left the parish. He said he had never interfered with the Tovey's right of sitting and had instructed his servants not to sit there when there were three grown persons occupying the pew. He said he had discussed the matter with Thomas Tovey, the churchwarden, as to whether it was right that his servants should be able to sit in the vacant sitting as they had no seats of their own. When asked if he had informed Thomas Yardington about this arrangement, Amphlett said he didn't know if Thomas Tovey had communicated this to him or not, but at a vestry meeting at Easter, Thomas Yardington had asked a question which “intimated a complaint”. He then said, “Amos Brooks had my sanction to go into Mr Tovey's seat, as it had been made unpleasant for my housekeeper. Knowing with whom I had to deal, I told him to do nothing that could be squeezed into an assault, and not to incommode any in the seat”. A rather odd request for a rector to make of his servant if the situation was as innocent as he claimed. He then went on to point out that he hadn't consulted Mrs Tovey as she had only attended church one time in twelve months, and he was forced to remonstrate with her because of this. Mr Yardington Tovey, he claimed, hadn't been to church in eighteen or twenty years and there was most decidedly the most room in Mr Yardington Tovey's seat than in any in the church. Mr Bentley then attempted to close his case but Amphlett further ventured that “The churchwarden said for a man who had not paid church-rates for a considerable time, and did not contribute one single farthing towards the expenses of the church it was most – (word removed).” After twenty minutes deliberation the court said that opinion amongst them was divided and they could not adjudicate the case. A disappointing result for both sides.
- 5.12 Mr New then opened the second case. A week after the first assault Mrs Tovey took her place in the pew alongside Masters, when Brooks came up to her and twice attacked, assaulted and beat her by pushing her with his hands and knees and “most indecently” putting his legs under Mrs Tovey's to remove her from her place. The contra-assault charge against Mrs Tovey was based on the fact that she had put her hands against Brooks' legs to push him away. Brooks then went into the vestry and returned with Amphlett who claimed there was no room for his servants to sit in the church and ordered Brooks to sit in the Tovey's pew. Brooks initially hesitated but was re-ordered by Amphlett and so stepped over Mrs Tovey to sit in the seat beside her. Mr New claimed that the seat in front of the Tovey's had been unoccupied this time and that Brooks could have sat there instead. Mrs Tovey was then called to give her evidence.

She claimed that Brooks had stood over her without speaking until she had pointed out the empty seats in front. He had then made an angry gesture and began to push her along the seat with his knees. She held firm to her spot while he tried a second time and she put her hands on his knees to push him away then turned her back to him. When Brooks was finally ordered by Amphlett to step over her she claimed it was a “very long stride”. Mrs Tovey said she had decided to keep Brooks out of the pew after the previous assault on her servant and that she had been unable to attend Church recently because of illness. Mr Benjamin Smithin gave evidence next and corroborated what Mrs Tovey had said before, as well as confirming that there were other empty seats in the church.

- 5.13 After a request from Mr Bentley for the defence, the case against Amphlett was dropped as it was proved that he was in the vestry at the time of the incident. Bentley then brought his own witness, Henry Greening who claimed that he had witnessed Brooks attempt twice to get into the seat but was pushed back both times by Mrs Tovey. He didn't see Brooks push against her indecently, and he was sure that Mrs Tovey got up and left the church before Brooks finally took his seat. Bentley then called five more witnesses who all stated that there had been no assault against Mrs Tovey, three of whom Miss Mary Tovey, James Ludlow, and Thomas Ainge, had already given evidence for the defence in the first trial. The magistrates then consulted for a short time before announcing that the allotment of the pews was a decision for the bishop and churchwardens to decide and Amphlett could not interfere with it. Mr Workman for the Bench said it was a “very disgraceful proceeding during Divine service”. The Chairman then announced that the decision of the Bench was that the charge of assault could not be proved and the case was dismissed with each side paying their own costs. The Worcestershire Chronicle notes that this decision was received with some marks of dissent.
- 5.14 In May the following year, the Worcester Journal¹⁶ records another court action, this time by Thomas Yardington against Thomas Tovey, churchwarden, and Nathaniel Tovey (almost certainly the latter's brother) for breaking a chain fastening one of his gates that led to a footpath. There was much discussion over whether the gate was normally locked and Mr Curtler for the defence said “that for some reason (known to them) the gate had been chained for the first time in July last” and thus deliberately blocking their access. This almost certainly referred to the church fight of 1867. The summons was dismissed with costs. Things seem to have settled down temporarily after this last case, and the next record of Thomas is in the 1871 census return where he is listed as farming 155 acres, employing five labourers and one boy. Mary's sister Catherine was still living with them. The year was not to end without more legal action however, and in December the Worcestershire Chronicle¹⁷ reported that Thomas was charged in court with having a ferocious dog not kept under proper restraint. Unsurprisingly the initial complainant was his neighbour the Reverend Amphlett, who had asked Superintendant Stanton of Pershore to “civilly” enquire if the defendant was aware of the provisions of the new Dog Act after several people claimed they had been attacked by the animal. In reply, Thomas said the dog only went out with the shepherd for the purpose of sheep-minding, and Mr Amphlett “might do his best and worse”. In court the Reverend claimed that he too had been attacked by the dog who ran across the road forcing him to leap out of the way. Although the dog didn't bite him, a portion of his cloak was afterwards found to be wet. Also complaining was the churchwarden Thomas Tovey who said the dog had snarled at him. He admitted he had not heard of anyone ever being bit by it. The case was dismissed with the newspaper reporting that the story had “more bark than bite”.

¹⁶Worcester Journal 23 May 1868

¹⁷Worcestershire Chronicle 06 December 1871

- 5.15 In Kelly's Trade Directory of 1876¹⁸ Thomas Tovey is listed as a farmer, next to his namesake and nemesis, churchwarden. In the census return for 1881, Thomas was now aged 70 and still farming 156 acres employing five men and one boy. The couple had one servant, Ellen Roberts. After a quiet decade the animosity between Thomas and Amphlett had a last brief resurgence this year when a Thomas Turner was charged with trespass and poaching on Amphlett's lands. Amos Brooks, the rector's ever faithful servant, gave evidence that he had found the accused with dogs and a recently killed hare which he was giving to a man named Curnock. Curnock stated he had permission from Thomas Yardington to course over his farm, which Thomas confirmed. The Chairman said an offence had been committed in error as a written permit was required and fined him five shillings, with costs of ten shillings¹⁹. Once again, neither side really winning a decisive case in this long battle of feuding neighbours.
- 5.16 Thomas' last known appearance in court occurred six years later in 1887 when he summonsed six young labourers for damaging his grass by playing ball on it, an event that had been repeatedly happening for some time in defiance of Thomas' wishes. All the defendants were fined and forced to pay costs²⁰. The 1891 census return noted Thomas at the age of 82, still farming his land and being supported by his wife. Catherine Archer, Mary's sister is once again recorded as living with them. The Kelly's Directory²¹ of the following year lists him only by name, not occupation, and it is probable that at his point he had retired. Thomas Yardington Tovey died in 1893 aged 84. He was buried in the churchyard next door.
- 5.17 It appears that the next occupier of Church Farm was Enoch James Aston, listed on the 1901 census as a 41 year old baker and farmer living with his wife, three daughters and four sons. Aston was from Chipping Camden in Gloucestershire, and in 1881 was an unmarried servant baker working in a shop near the rectory in Church Lench. By 1891 he was working as a baker in his own right and had married his wife, Marion Ada. Unlike the litigious former occupier of the farm, Aston only appeared in court twice, and this as a conscientious objector against vaccines, refusing to inoculate his children against disease. He was summonsed in 1894²², and again in 1898 where he was granted an exception for his beliefs²³. Both Kelly's 1900 Directory²⁴ and the 1911 census returns list him as both a baker and farmer. The census showing that he lived with his large family including a daughter who was a teacher in the local school.

6 Description

6.1 *Layout*

- 6.1.1 The farm buildings represent a fairly conventional two sided foldyard, with the house on the roadside to the west. The churchyard is immediately to the north. As is often the case the stables are closest to the house, probably originally separated from the house by a buttery/brewhouse now incorporated into the dwelling. The southernmost bay of the single storey brick built stable block is occupied by a former tack-room- the chimney for the tackroom is however an addition; this bay possibly was formerly just another stable bay the present property. To the north of the stables there is a primarily timber framed three bay barn on a stone dwarf wall. The southern bay has a hayloft above, and there are large wagon doors

¹⁸Worcestershire, Kelly's Directory, 1876

¹⁹Worcester Journal 03 December 1881

²⁰Worcester Journal 28 May 1887

²¹Worcestershire, Kelly's Directory, 1892

²²Worcester Journal 24 March 1894

²³Evesham Journal 10 December 1898

²⁴Worcestershire, Kelly's Directory, 1900

either side of a central threshing bay. At the northern end of the barn there is a lean-to structure of timber construction. East of this there is a former cattle shelter range of three bays. The bay nearest the barn has brick infill to the southern elevation, possibly original. The two remaining bays have formerly open fronts to the foldyard elevation, the northern elevation being of post and weatherboard infill the length of the range. The eastern end of the roof is hipped and has a high level loading hatch, possibly representing a former hayloft.

6.1.2 To the west of the north end of the barn there is a small (originally 1½ storey) single bay structure with external doorways on all three elevations. It faces south into a small stock-yard enclosed on two sides by the churchyard. The stockyard has the remains of a circular stone path almost certainly representing the donkey path for a removed rotary cider mill. No other yard surfacing survives.

6.2 *Stable block*

6.2.1 The primary building material of the single storey stable block is early-mid 19th Century red brick, though large sections (particularly west wall and eastern end) have been re-built in concrete block (1970s-80s). The roof is framed on simple truncated softwood queenpost trusses with trenched purlins. The use of mill sawn timber for trusses, purlins and common rafters suggests that the roof structure is broadly contemporary with the walls. The roof is clad in common tiles to the eastern elevation, and a mixture of corrugated fibrous cement sheeting and re-laid common tile to the western pitch. The stables retain their diagnostic split doors, but internally there is little left to indicate former function. The former tackroom is identifiable by the presence of a chimney and small fire-place (used to keep the leather pliable and mould free). There has been some mid 19th sub division of the stables (identifiable by deeper machine made brick), and this includes a small compartment immediately next to the tack room. This compartment has apparently original shelf supports, so served for some type of storage. Within the adjacent stable there is a brick lined subterranean tank of late 19th or early 20th C brick – the function is uncertain. The windows of this block retain slatted shutters, but no sign of glazing. A small west facing window in the northern bay is a mid 20th C insertion. There are no surviving stalls or forage racks in the stables, floors are a mixture of cement screed and soil.

6.3 *Barn*

6.3.1 The barn is partly of traditional framed construction on dwarf walls which are predominantly rubble stone construction with some patching and detailing in brick. Whilst there are elements of a fully framed barn present up to eaves level these all appear to be re-used in their current context. The side framing is very ad-hoc and structurally relies on portal frames with curving heads – these are mill sawn and typical of the early-mid 19th Century. Only one gable end survives in timber framing, and this appears to have been re-constructed without any intermediate rails being present. The apex of the frame has nail or spiked joints in mill sawn Baltic softwood members and the lower parts of the frame are held together by raking struts spiked and nailed to the principal uprights. Only the tie-beam and posts appear to be from an earlier frame, which is crudely assembled in predominantly elm timbers with small diameter pegs typical of the 18th Century. The intermediate roof trusses, and trusses over the portals, are all of Baltic sourced milled softwood assembled using a mixture of pegging and iron fore-lock bolts characteristic of very late 18th to mid 19th C construction. The southern gable end has been rebuilt in a mixture of concrete block, re-used 19th C brick and some circa 1960s-70s brick. A mid 19th C internal dividing wall supports a hay-loft floor in the southern bay. There are fragmentary remains of a slab floor in the central (through) bay. There are pedestrian doors to either side of the southern bay, and a re-used early mid 18th C domestic type wrought window casement on the western elevation. Weather board cladding is in poor condition throughout, only fragments remain of the eastern wagon doors, and the western doors are modern plywood. The east facing tiled roof pitch is in very poor condition and partially collapsed. The western pitch is in better condition and has been re-roofed within the last 50

years. An informal doorway opening has been cut through the sill plate of the northern gable end.

6.3.2 Whilst of no particular architectural merit the barn is a good example of the informal evolution of farm buildings constructed where-ever possible from salvaged materials and with framing assemble to suit the material available rather than designed for structural efficiency. In this case the softwood intermediate trusses, purlins, portal frames and doors seem to have been obtained from professional joiners (who were mass producing such items by the 1820s) and used as a basis for an otherwise farmer-built structure. It is quite possible that the roof was constructed by professionals on walls raised by the farmer with available local labour. It is possible that certain items were provided by the landowner in return for the raising of the walls by the tenant farmer.

6.4 *Dairy/Cattle shelter range*

6.4.1 This range consists of two elements – the bay nearest the barn is brick fronted and timber built at the rear. The remainder of the range is of all timber construction with the northern and eastern elevations more substantially built than the elevation facing south into the foldyard. The foldyard elevation appears to have been open-fronted to the foldyard (prior to mid 20th C infilling), and in this position was almost certainly originally a cattle shelter. Framing throughout is crude and rather adhoc, being a mixture of available timber with much later patching. The structural strength now relies on internal plywood panels and the external weather-boarding.

6.4.2 The presence of a concrete floor with off-centre drainage gully suggests that the building was used (probably early-mid 20th C) for milking. There are few other diagnostic features remaining. The provision of a small high level loading door in the gable end indicates the former presence of a hayloft in the end bay, but no evidence for an upper floor structure survives.

6.4.3 The dating of the building must rely on the roof trusses (both of early 19th C character but not matching in precise size or workmanship – Fig 12) and the presence of the brick infill to the western bay. Whilst the infill is possibly secondary, the brickwork is of extruded hollow brick and therefore probably of early-mid 19th C date. The “framing” of the walls is largely spiked and nailed, with only limited (possibly reused) pegged joints, and this points to a date in the 1820s or later. Given the flimsy nature of the walls they have been much patched and weatherboarding periodically replaced.

6.4.4 The building is in generally neglected condition, and the roof of the eastern bay has collapsed. The northern pitch of the roof is entirely clad in corrugated fibrous cement sheeting, whilst the southern pitch has a tiled roof in generally very poor condition (excepting the western bay which has been relaid over felt which renders it relatively weathertight).

6.5 (Probable) *Apple Store*

6.5.1 This 1½ storey, two bay addition does not appear on the 1840 Tithe Awards Plan, but does appear on the 1883 Ordnance Survey. The timber framed side walls and queen post softwood truss roof structure may therefore be confidently assigned to the mid-late 19th Century, quite possibly circa 1870s. The gable end wall has, however been rebuilt in brick with cast concrete lintels typical of the 1950s-early 1960s.

6.5.2 The plan form is a simple rectangle, but there are double doors to the northern elevation and gable end, with high level loading door above (suggesting former apple store or hayloft). There is a stable door to the southern elevation. It is of note that there is evidence of a removed rotary cider-mill donkey path in the yard to the south, and this would be a typical arrangement for late 19th/early 20th C fruit processing, the donkey being frequently housed under the apple-loft.

7 Discussion and conclusions

- 7.1 The Church Farm fold-yard buildings are fairly typical of the smaller village centre based landholdings created in the Vale of Evesham as a result of enclosure and tithe awards in the late 18th and early 19th Century. In the present case the tracing of the farmed holding is particularly difficult due to the fact that the individual Toveys held intermixed and neighbouring holdings, undoubtedly changing tenure informally as convenience dictated. Despite its central location the present holding seems to have had relatively recent origins, the house being older than the farmstead. The farm was held by the Toveys on long tenancy in 1840 and they may be assumed to have constructed the farm buildings perhaps 20-30 years earlier. The build quality and economy of materials used clearly reflects the typical situation where a tenant was unwilling to construct buildings more durable than the expected length of tenure. In some cases landowners contributed materials to the buildings, but generally buildings constructed or improved by the tenant would be paid for by the tenant, offset against rent, and became the landlord's property at the end of the agreed tenancy.
- 7.2 The buildings are of generic form, with no distinctive features, and showing few of the major improvements in agricultural building design that were occurring between the 1780s and 1840s. Functionally they are very little different from farm ranges of the 1750s, though the presence of a cattle shelter demonstrates that they were over-wintering more cattle, a practice more prevalent in the 1800s.
- 7.3 The buildings are in poor condition structurally and extensive rebuilding will be needed to bring them back into economic use. They do however contribute greatly to the setting of the neighbouring church and cluster of surrounding Listed buildings. The present proposals largely retain the exterior character whilst providing accommodation to modern comfort expectations.
- 7.4 Research for the present project (intended only to clarify the tenure of the farm) has raised some interesting social history relating to the former occupants; whilst not directly relevant to the farm buildings it hopefully is of interest to the present occupants.

8 Bibliography

Smith, C N S, (1953) TWAS 30

Napthan, M, 2014, *Archaeological evaluation at Bramley Bank, Low Lane, Church Lench, Worcestershire*, WSM 55830 Mike Napthan Archaeology Report

Sworn, S, Jenkins, A and Hunt, C, 2005 Archaeological excavation at Main Street Church Lench Worcestershire WHEAS Project 2709 WSM 34258

VCH III – Willis-Bund JW and Page W (eds) 1913 *The Victoria History of the County of Worcester*

9 Acknowledgements

Mike Napthan Archaeology would like to thank the following for their assistance with this project; the Clients Mr and Mrs Marcus Laight, Christian Montez and Alan Simcox of Nick Joyce Architects. Alison Derrick undertook the background research.

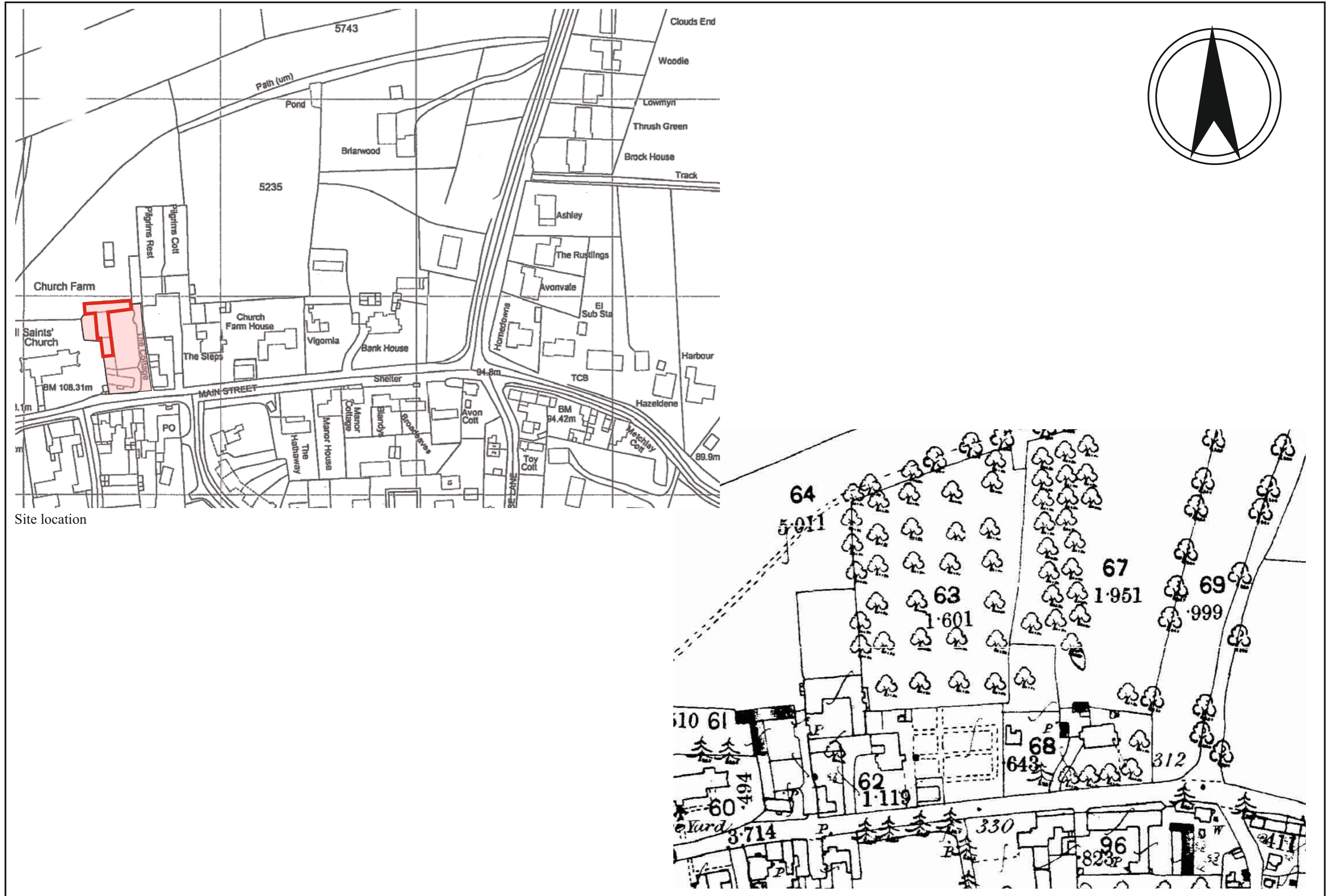
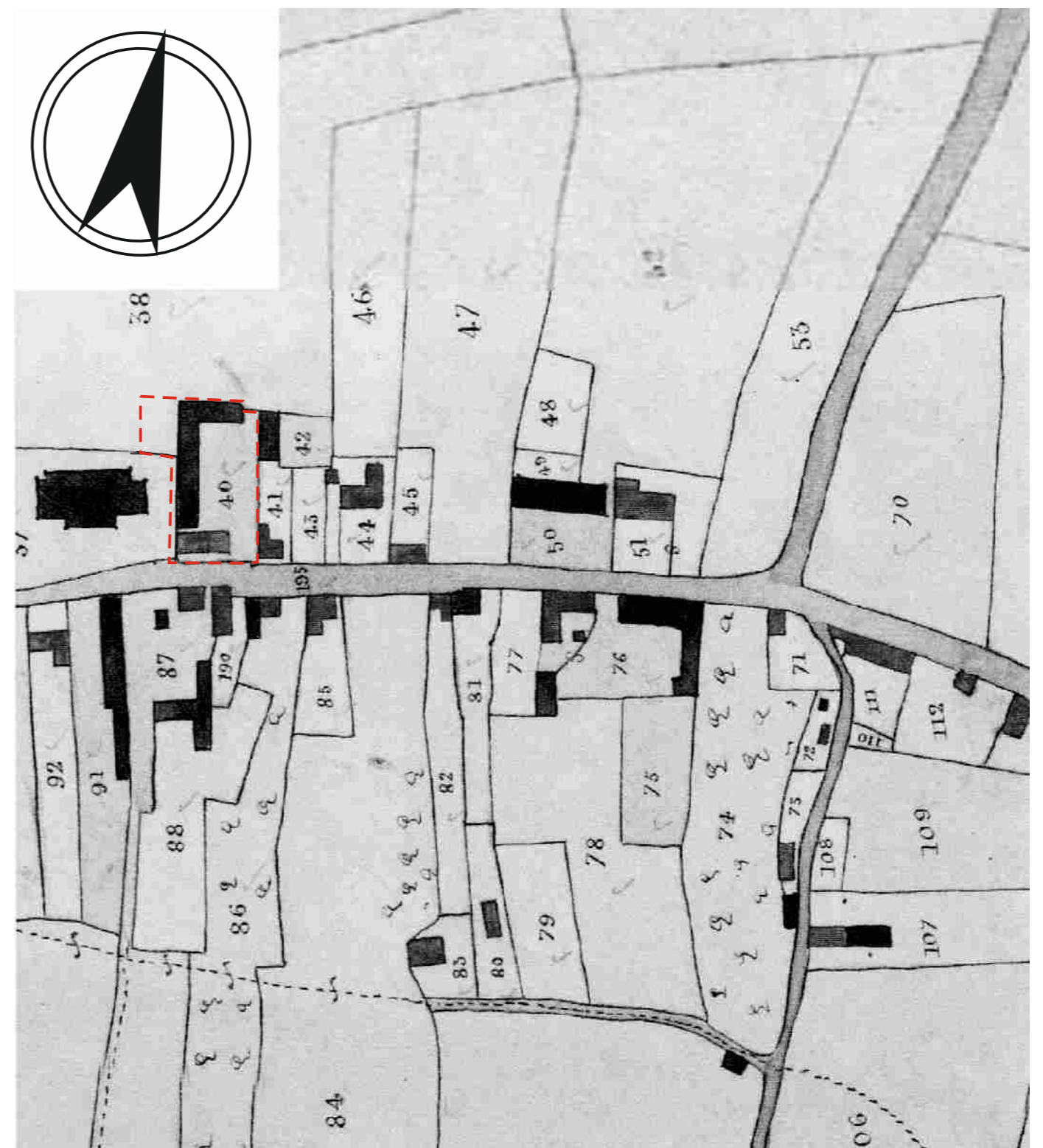


Figure 1: Site location and 1884 Ordnance Survey



Old Series Ordnance Survey (surveyed c1819)



Tithe Awards plan 1838

Figure 2: Historic plans - note that Old Series OS mapping was very small scale and does not necessarily show all buildings present at the time of survey



Farmhouse (not part of survey)



Former open-fronted cattle shelter, later dairy



Former stables / tack room



Northern elevation of farmyard range

East front of barn

Apple store and west front of barn



Figure 3: General views



Tack room



Stable converted to small store



Northern stable



Facing south

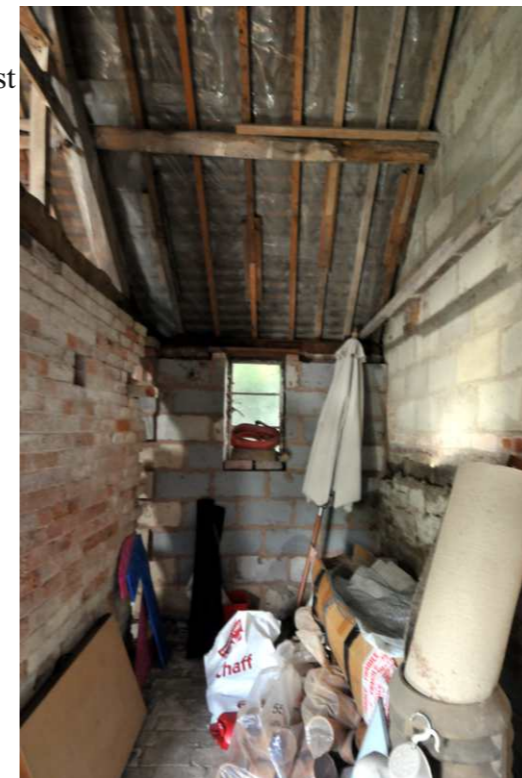


Facing north-
note brick lined sump



Facing east (north stable)

North bay facing west



Rebuilt north wall/
south end of barn

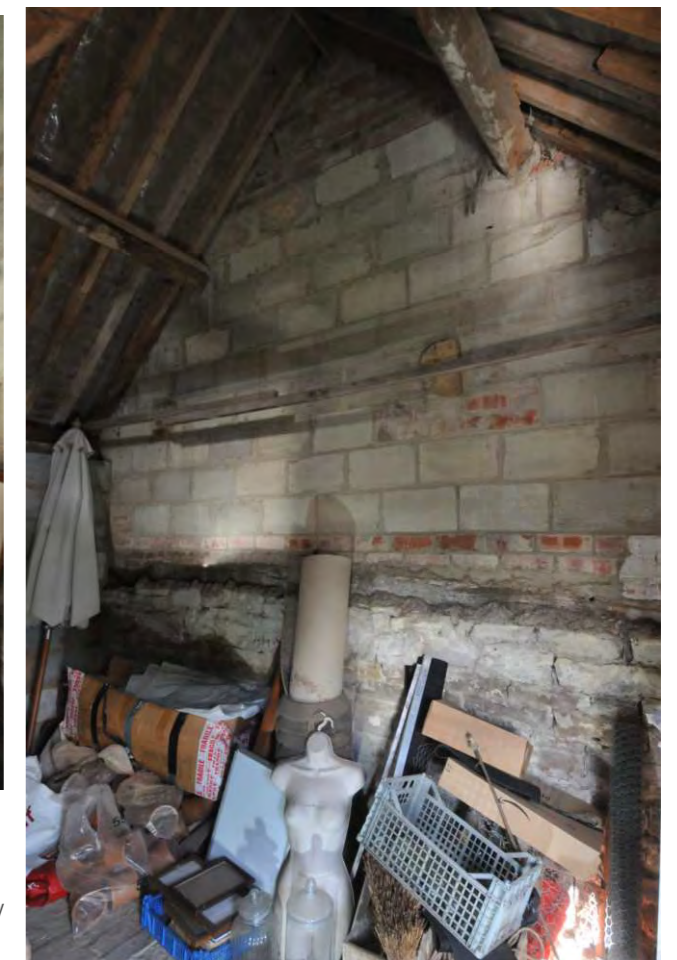


Figure 4: Stable block



Western elevation



Eastern elevation



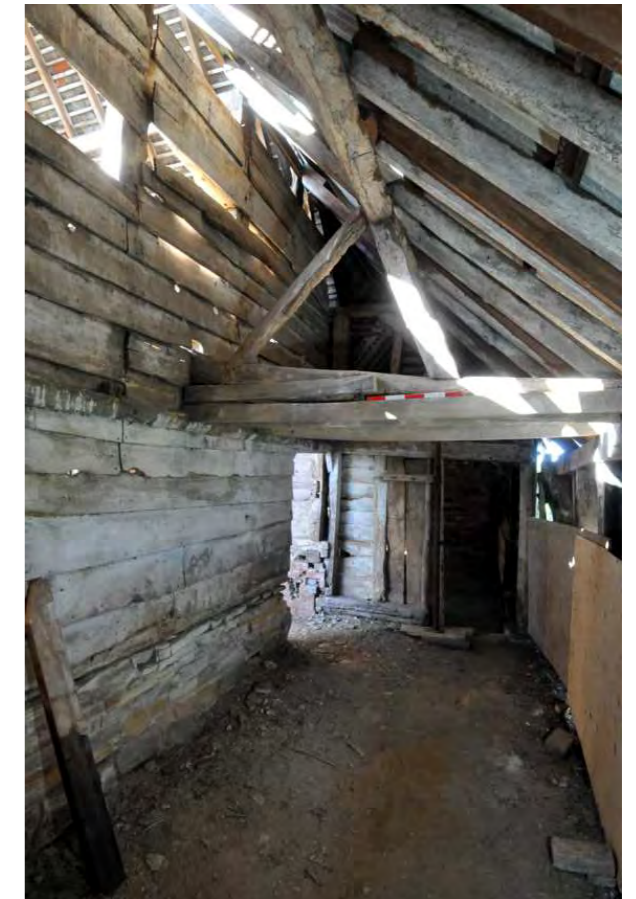
Southern rebuilt gable end



Re-used early 18th C casement (west elevation)



NE corner of barn



Northern elevation within lean-to

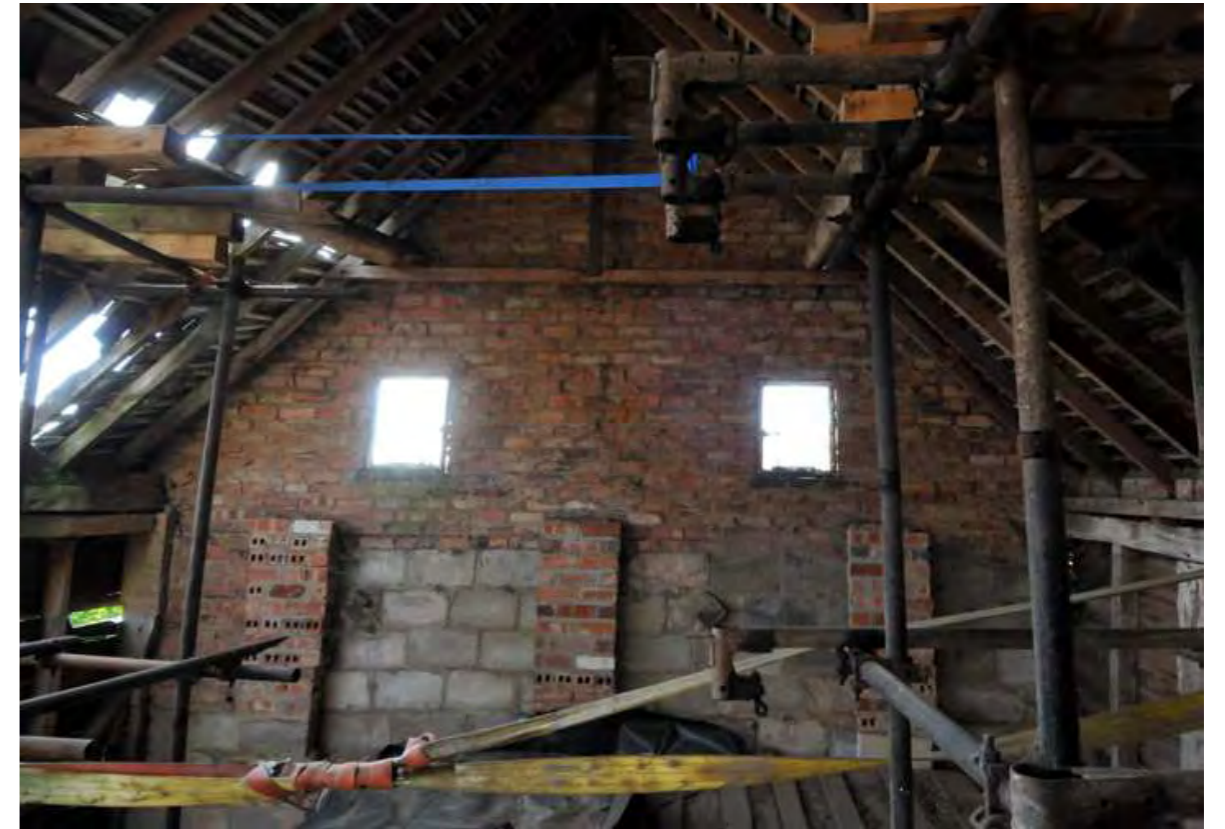
Figure 5: Barn exteriors



Northern end of barn



Truss over western door



20th C rebuilt southern gable end



Eastern doorway



Northern gable frame



Facing south

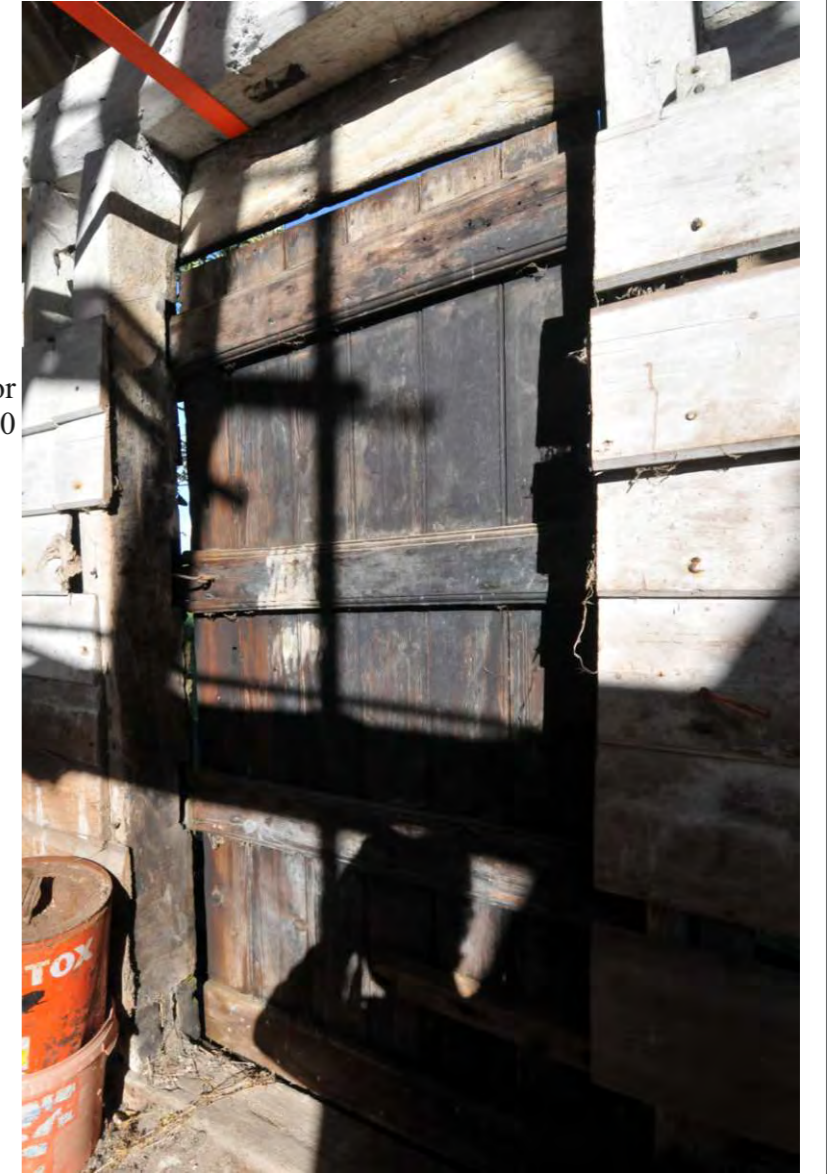


Under-side of hayloft at southern end

Figure 5: Barn interior - framing includes some re-used elements of a late 17th-early 18th C framed barn but represents a total rebuild with new roof and doorways of circa 1810-30 (Baltic softwood trusses)



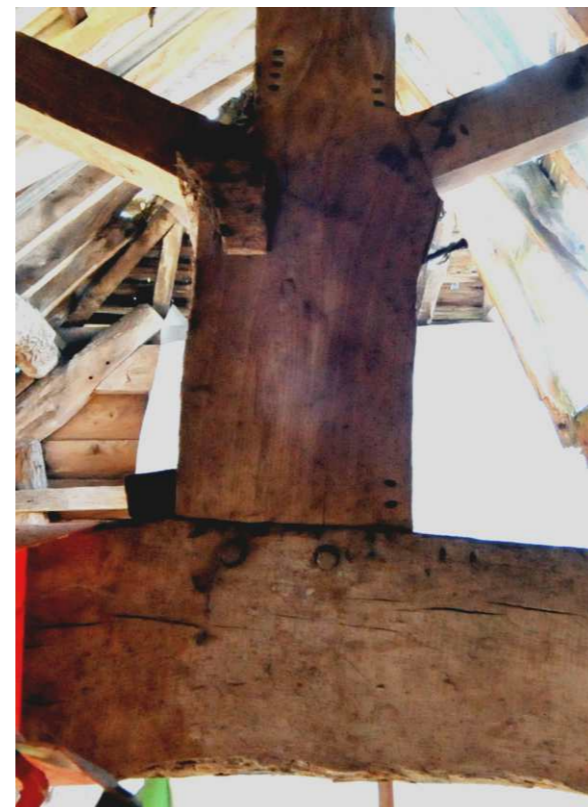
Facing east



Re-used domestic door
of circa 1690



Infill of former
open south front



Eastern truss detail



Figure 7: Cattle shelter/dairy interior



Northern elevation



Southern elevation



Eastern elevation

Figure 8: Cattle shelter/dairy exterior



Western gable



Southern gable end



Eastern end

Southern wall

Western end

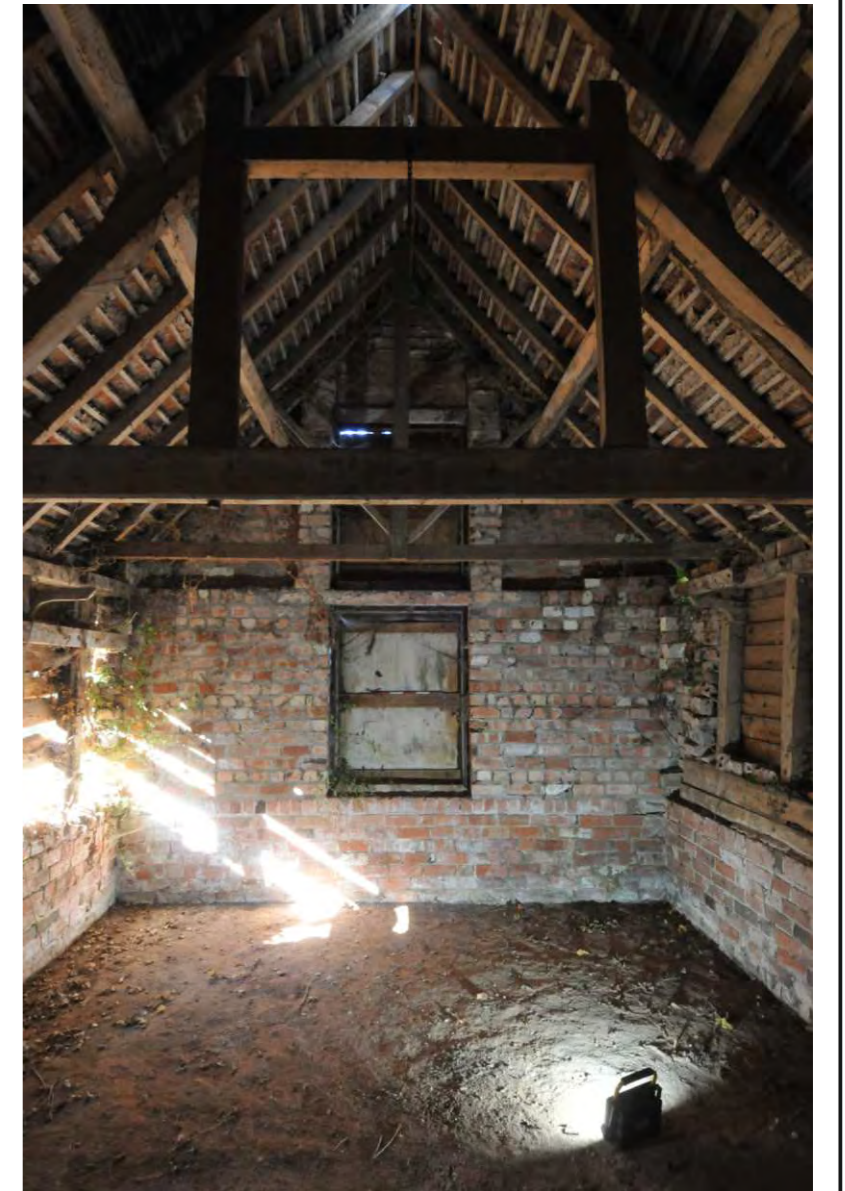


Figure 9: Apple store - late 19th Century with mid 20th C rebuilt gable end

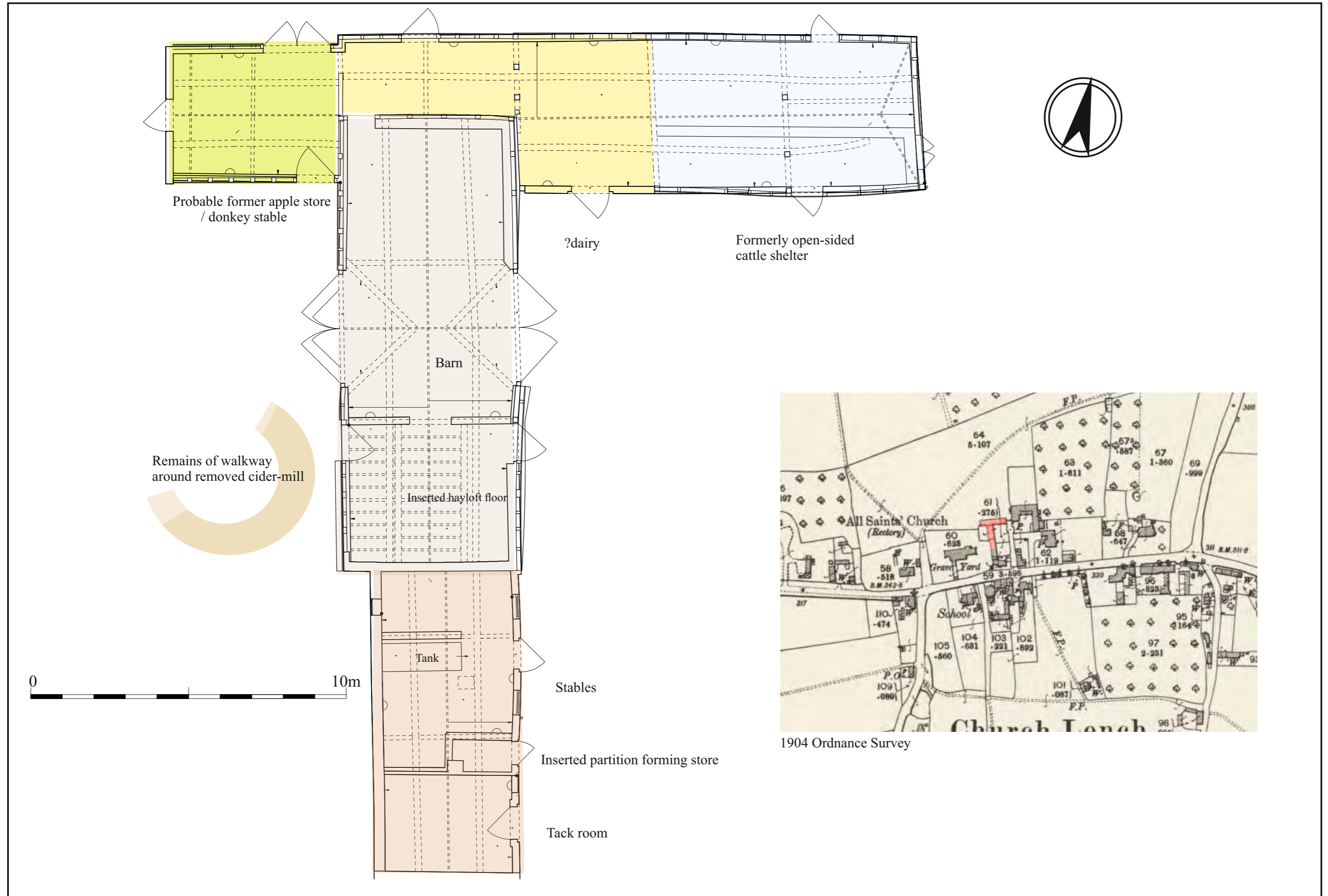


Figure 10: Building plan indicating phasing

(Based on survey by Nick Joyce Associates)

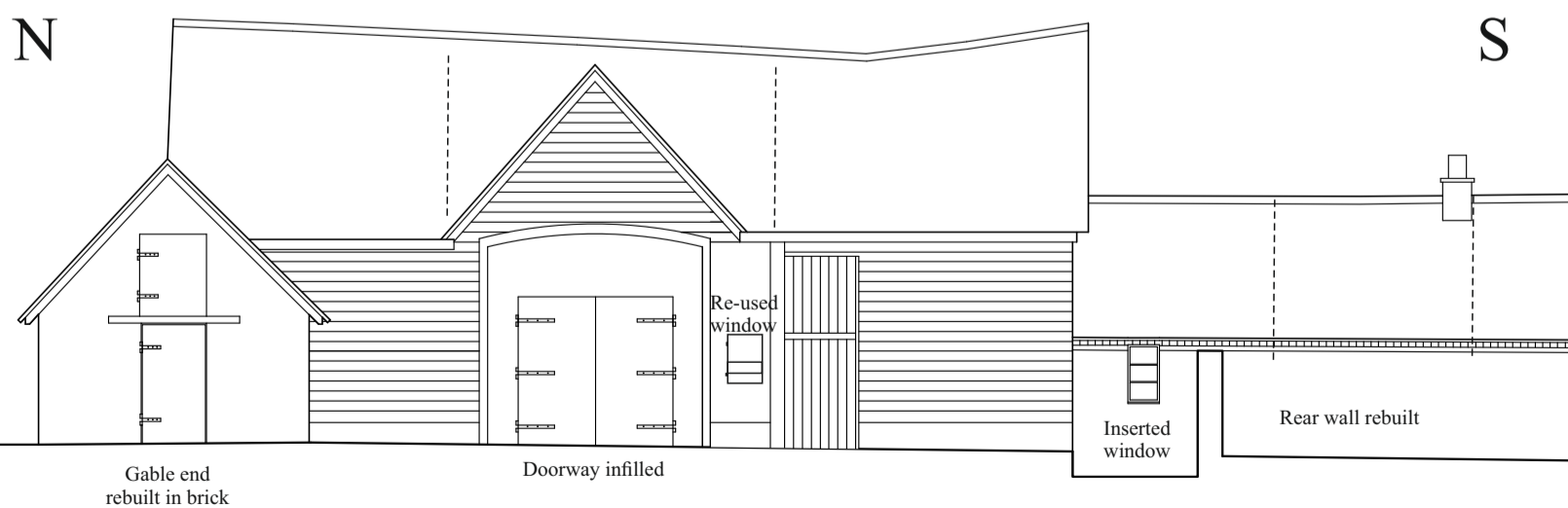
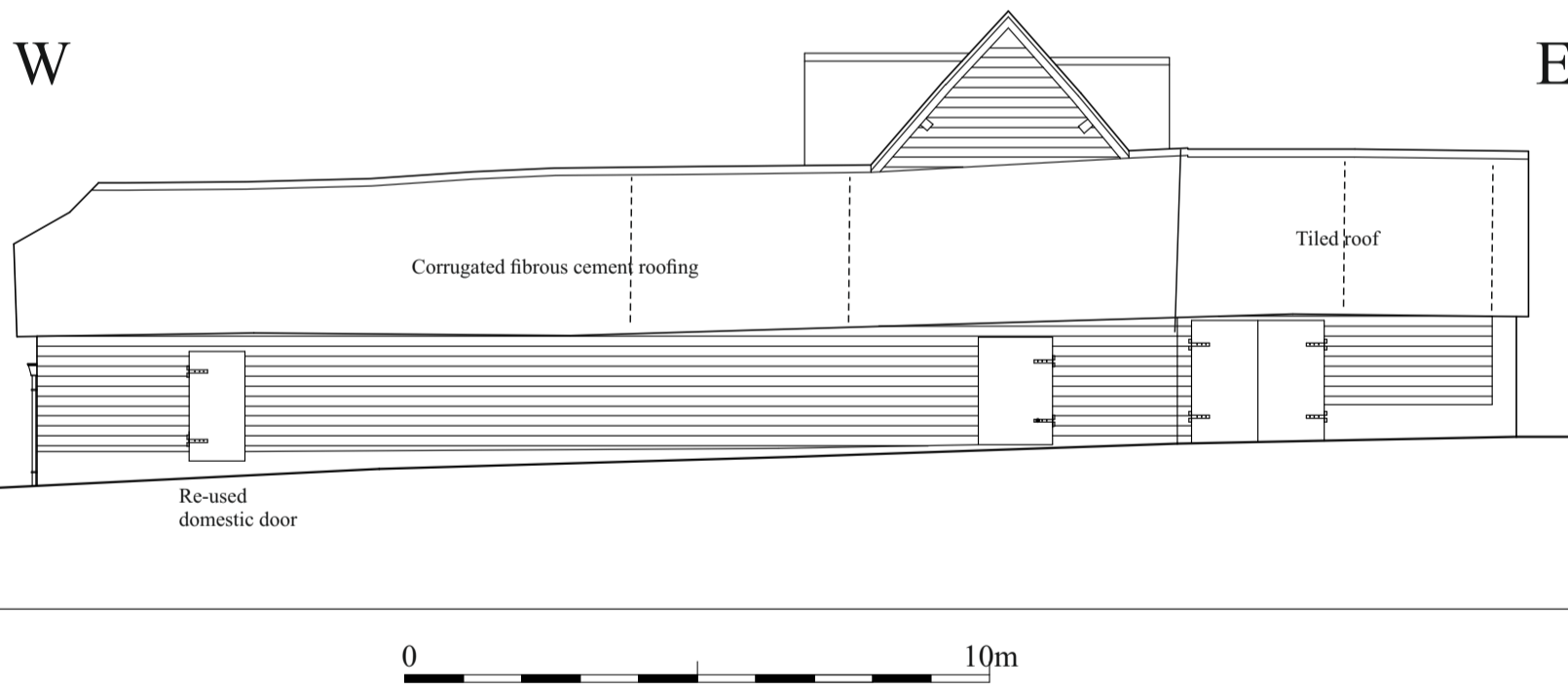
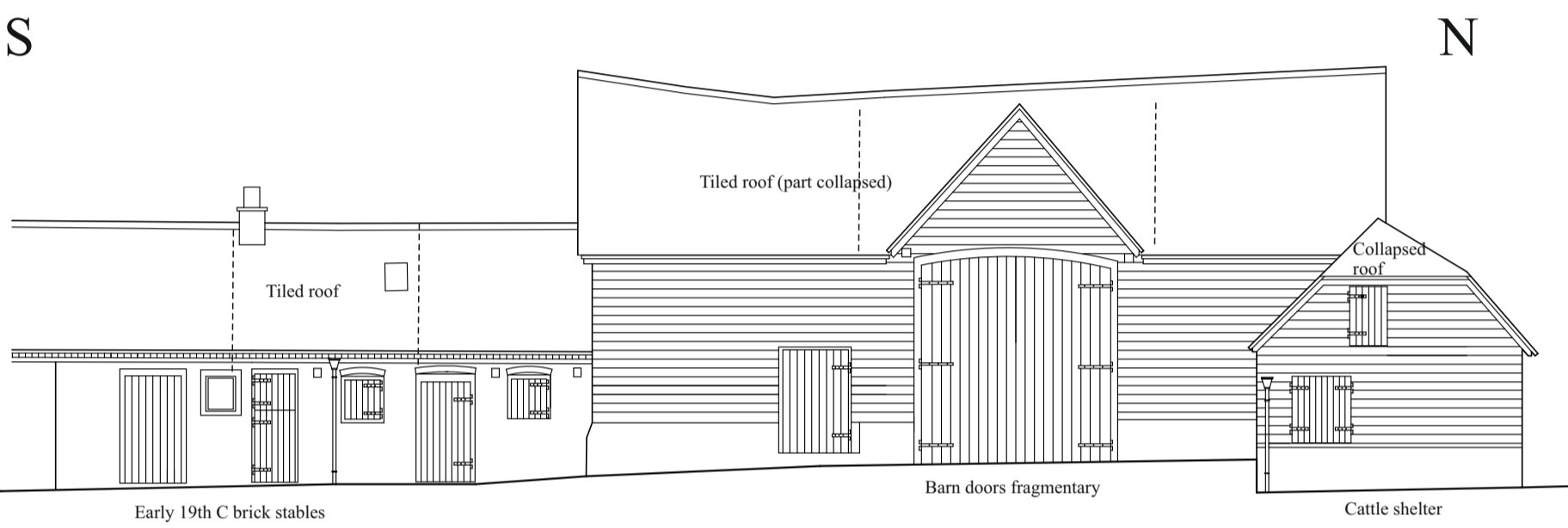
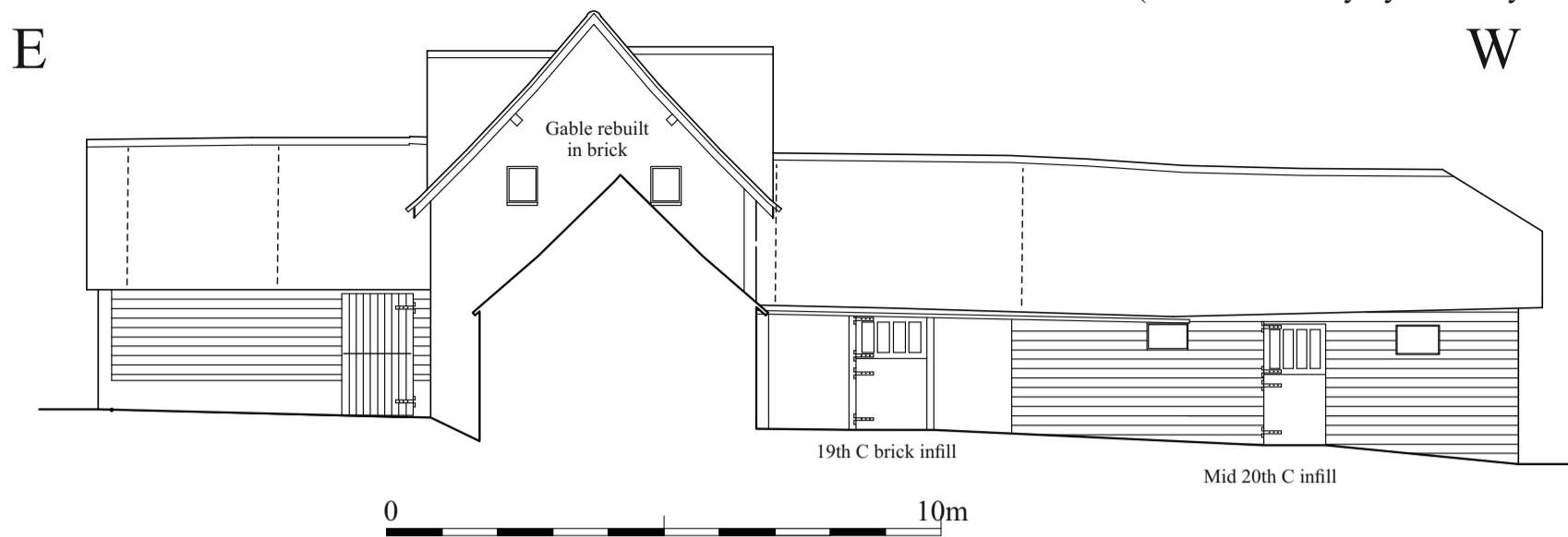
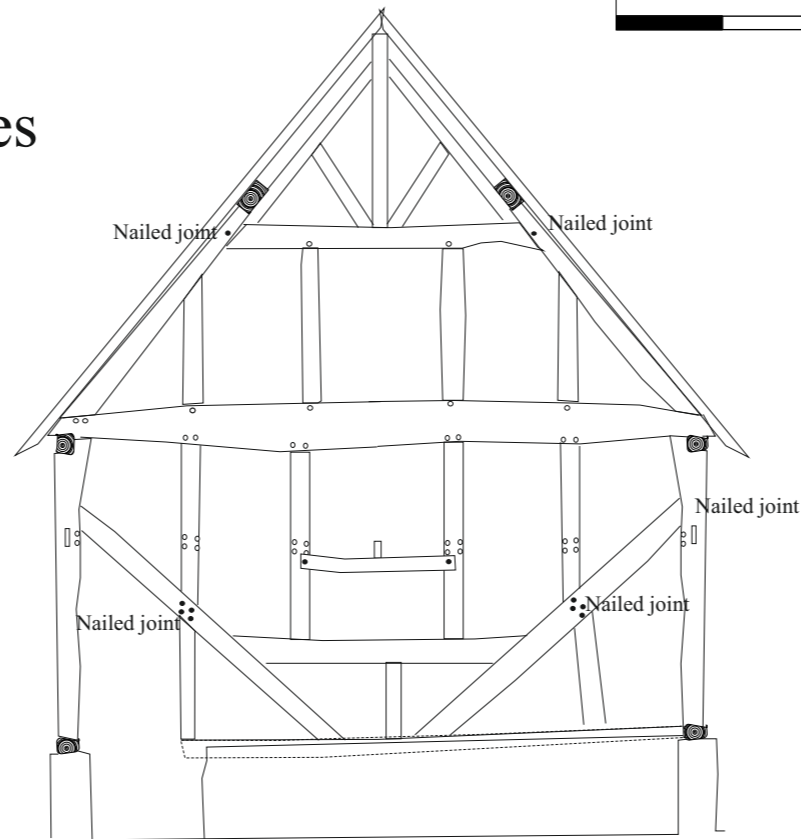
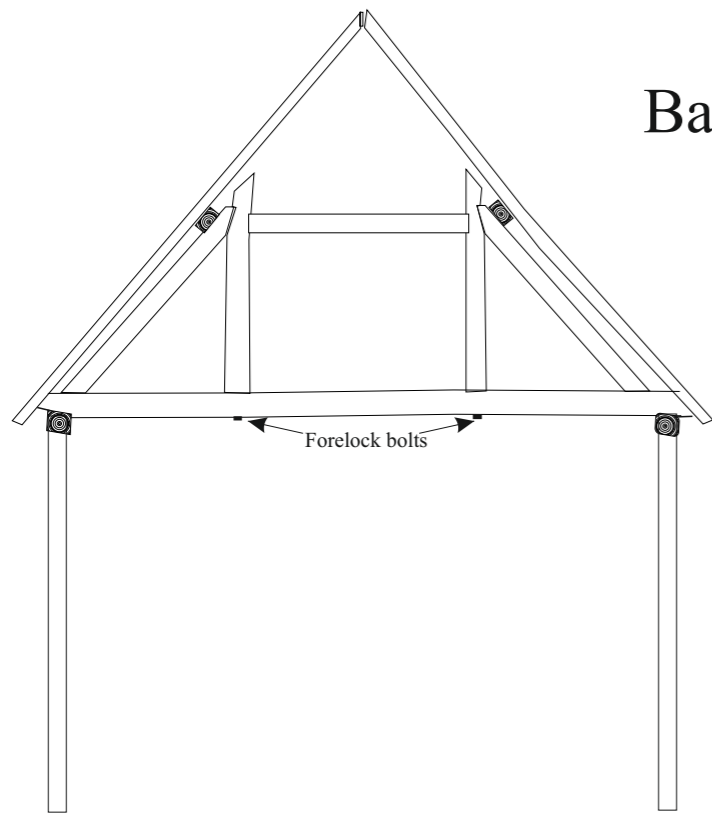


Figure 11: Elevations

Barn trusses



Early 19th C truss in "dairy" against NE corner of barn

Figure 12: Representative truss details - all are of early 19th C character - gable end truss built from elements of an 18th C truss with additional elements and no framed rails