

Report 2418



nau archaeology

**A Level 2 Historic Building Recording Survey at
Creake Abbey Farm, North Creake, Norfolk.**

Prepared for
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<i>Issue 1</i>		

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Location: Creake Abbey Farm, North Creake, Norfolk
District: King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Grid Ref: TF 856 395
OASIS Ref.: 79418
Client: Mr Anthony Scott
Dates of Fieldwork: 24 June 2010

Summary

In June 2010 a Level 2 historic building survey was undertaken by NAU Archaeology of three agricultural buildings at Creake Abbey Farm just to the north of the village of North Creake, West Norfolk. The survey identified that all three structures were built between 1839 and the 1880s for the purposes of housing and maintaining cattle but have since undergone alterations consistent with changing agricultural practices during the following century and a half.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In June 2010 a Level 2 historic building survey was undertaken of three agricultural buildings at Creake Abbey Farm, North Creake, West Norfolk. The survey commissioned by Ian H Bix & Associates on behalf of Mr Anthony Scott forms part of a wider management plan designed to inform the repair of the structures under the Higher Level Stewardship scheme.

The survey was designed to record details relating to the form, function, date, extent, phasing, character, status and significance of the building through a drawn, photographic and written record, the results of which are presented below.

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and will be retained pending consultation with the client regarding its deposition.

2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The earliest cartographic evidence of the buildings together is their appearance on the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey mapping where all three structures are visible in largely their current form. Although the surviving threshing barn immediately to the west is visible upon the earlier tithe map of 1839 indicating the presence of the farm, none of the surveyed structures had been constructed at this date. It is therefore likely that all three buildings were constructed in the 40 years between 1839 and the compilation of the Ordnance Survey 1st edition maps in the 1880s. The buildings fall within the curtilage of Creake Abbey Farmhouse a Grade I Listed structure of the 19th century which incorporates portions of Creake Abbey, an Augustinian foundation of the 13th century protected as a Scheduled Monument (SM: 21419). As such the farm buildings are subject to both legislation regarding scheduling consent and listed building consent.

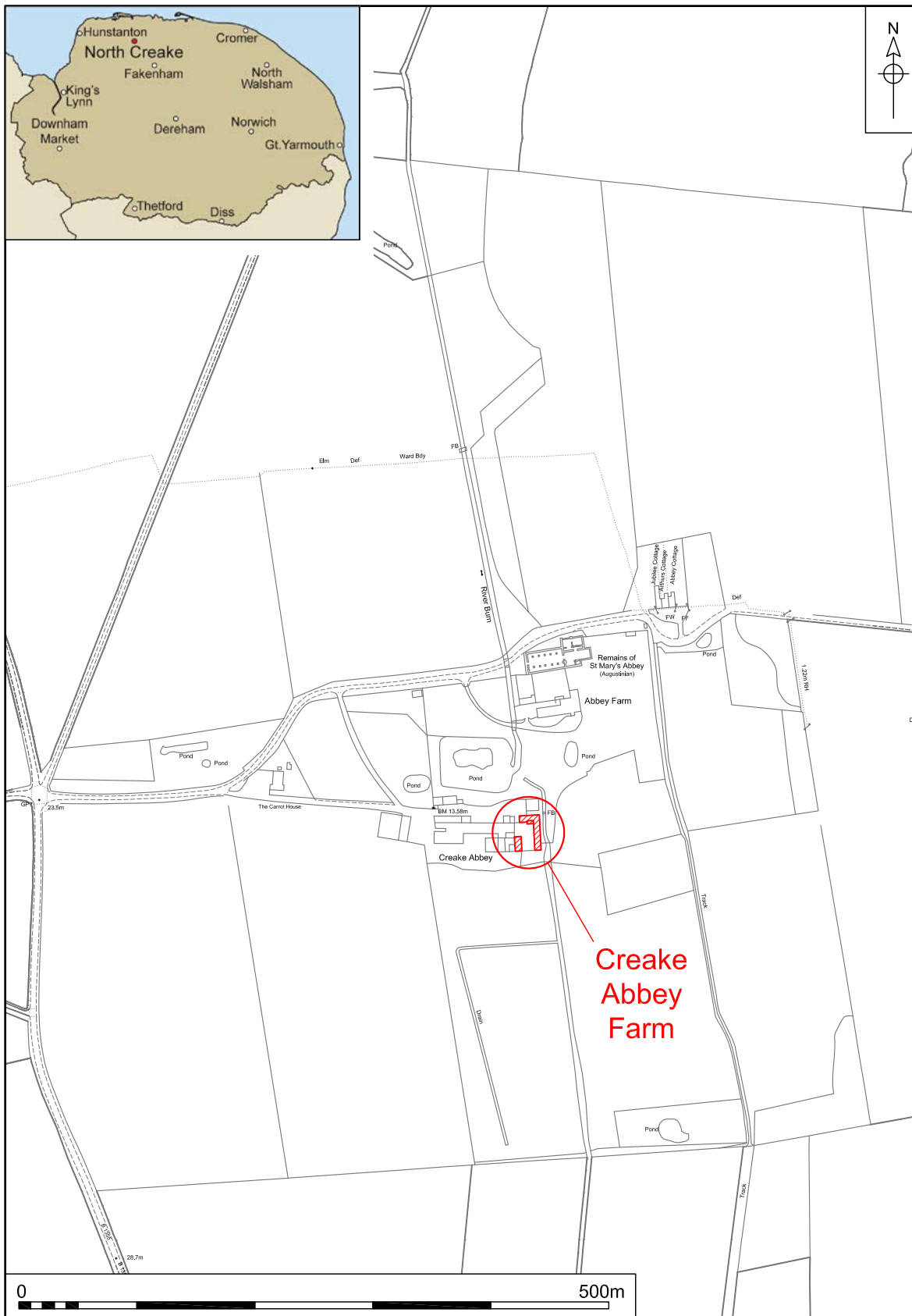


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this survey was to create a record that included the following three elements:

A black and white photographic record using 35mm film

A drawn record, highlighting structurally significant features, fixtures and fittings

A written record

The work undertaken conforms to guidelines set out within *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good practice* (English Heritage 2006) Level 2 survey.

Three buildings were surveyed and are referred to in the text as Buildings B1, B2 and B3 in line with their given designations within the Management Plan preparation brief.

In general access was good however the northern end of the interior of building B2 was partly obscured by its use as a wood store and detailed inspection of its eastern exterior wall was limited by its proximity to the river. Additionally areas within the western cell of Building B1 were partially hidden by the storage of equipment.

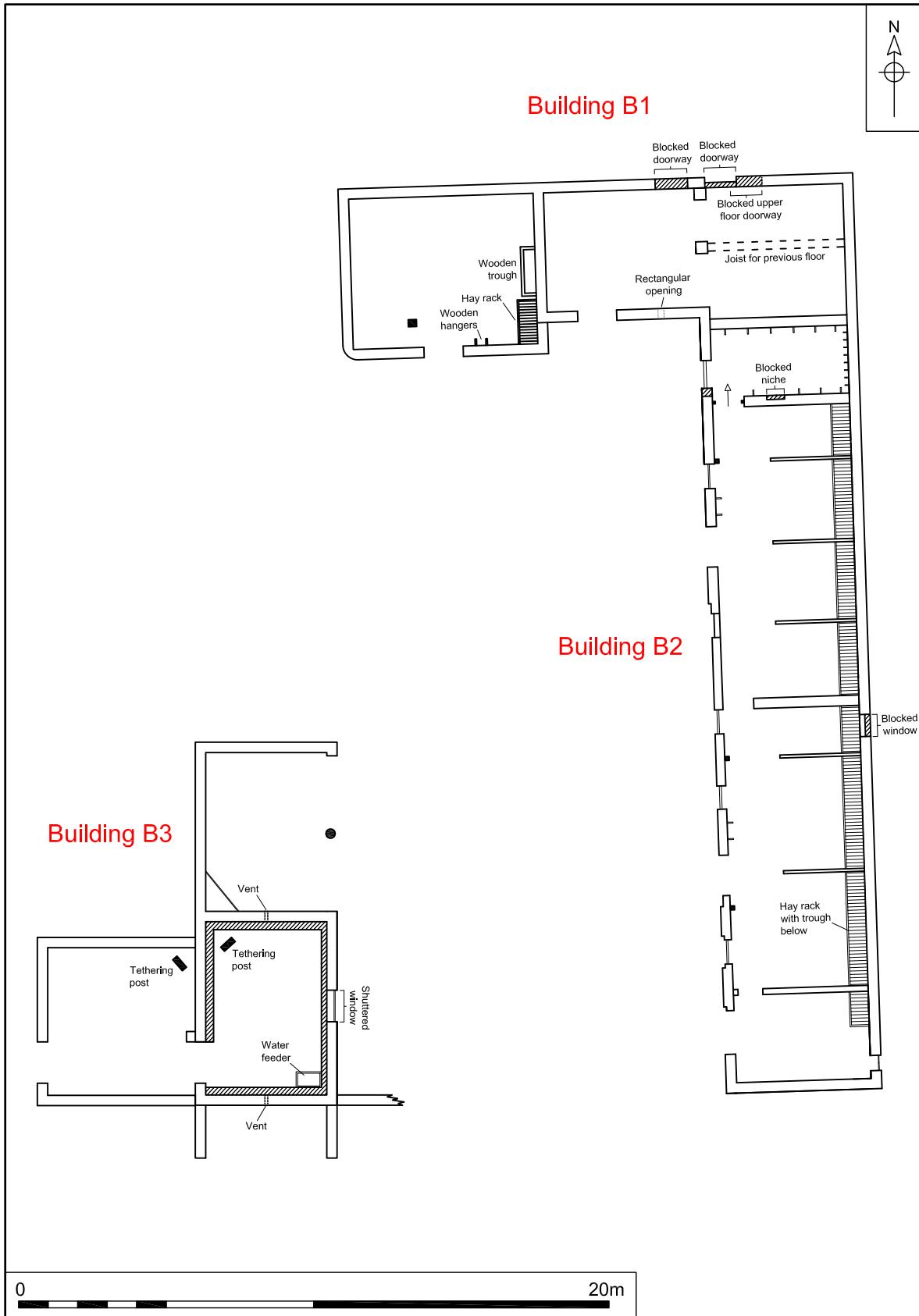


Figure 2. Plan. Scale 1:200

4.0 BUILDING SURVEY

4.1 Building B1

(Figure 3)

Building B1, a rectangular structure, formed the northern limit of the yard projecting west away from the north-western corner of Building B2 at a right angle on a roughly east - west alignment (Plate 1). It had a length of 12.1m and width of 4.74m and was constructed of un-coursed flints in a lime mortar with soft red brick dressings. Numerous brick headers were also dispersed throughout the walling as well as fragments of shelly, yellowish white limestone some of which obviously had been moulded and presumably came from Creake Abbey to the north. The western elevation was gabled while its rounded south western corner appeared to have been adapted to allow the entry of farm machinery and equipment into the yard without damage to the structure (Plate 2). Internally there were two independent cells separated by a flint and brick cross wall near the centre of the building. The eastern cell was the slightly smaller of the two and was accessed from the southern wall via a door just to the east of the internal cross wall. A second door had clearly been provided in the eastern end of the northern wall but had subsequently been in-filled using modern brick (Plate 3). The eastern wall probably belonged to Building B2 but had in any case been taken down to allow entry to the northern cell of Building B2 to the east with modern brick pillars providing the necessary structural support to the roof (Plate 4). The remaining walls had been whitewashed and a concrete floor installed but little else remained to indicate its function. One slightly unusual feature was a small square opening towards the centre of the southern elevation just beneath the eaves into which a small section of a log had been inserted presumably to block it up. The remnants of a small pen constructed of concrete and wire fencing were visible just outside the eastern cells entrance (Plate 1).

The western cell had been extended to the south by approximately 1m and the roof carried on over this extension as a cat slide above a dentil cornice (Plate 1). At the centre of the southern wall of this extension a wide doorway provided entry to the interior from where a wooden hay rack was observed to be attached to the southern corner of the eastern wall (Plate 5). A little further to the north it was accompanied by a wooden trough that rose upon posts from the concrete floor. Immediately to the east of the entrance two wooden pegs were set into the southern wall upon which equipment might be hung (Plate 6). As with the eastern cell all the walls had been internally whitewashed.

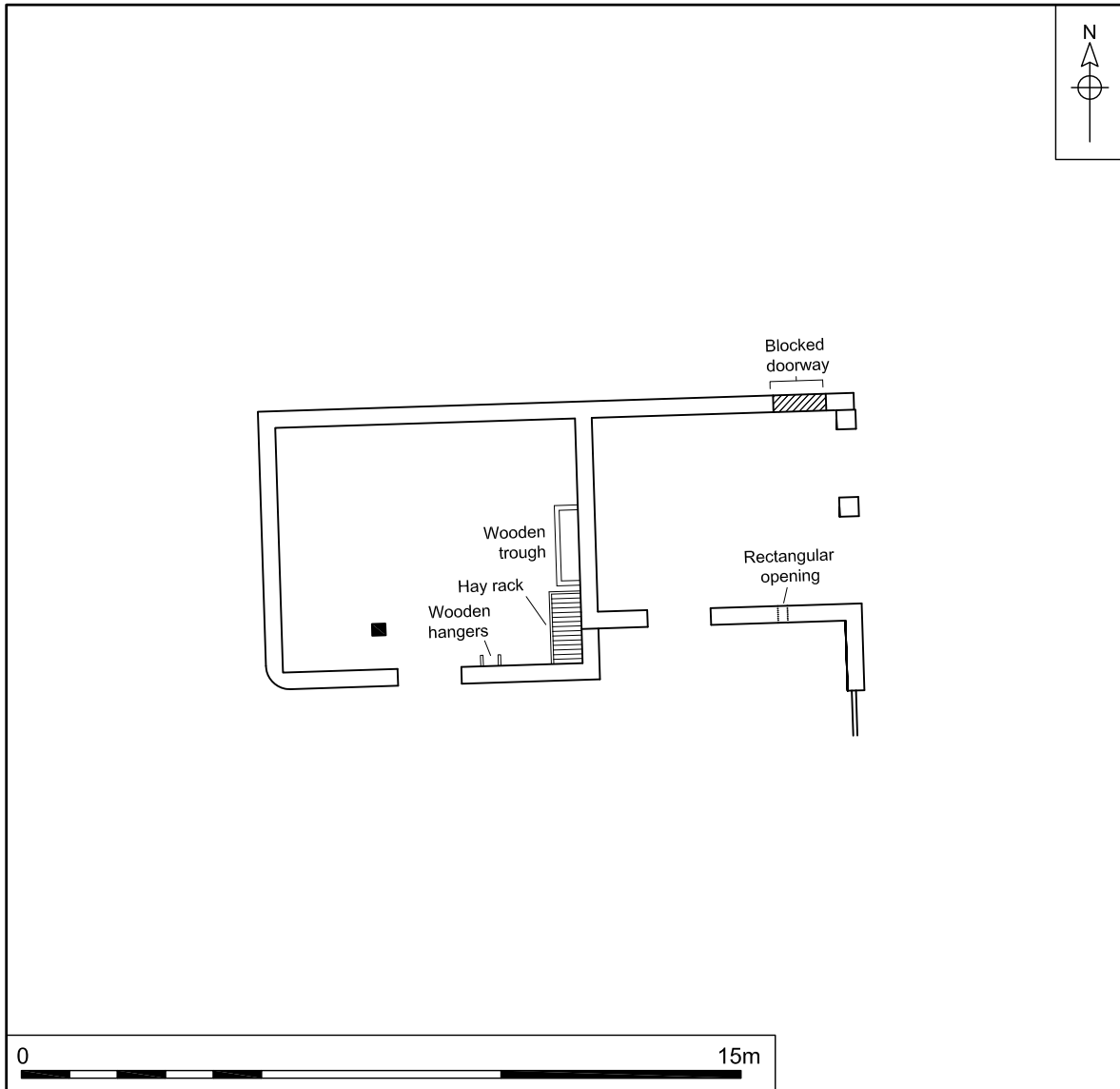


Figure 3. Plan of Building B1. Scale 1:150



Plate 1. South elevation of Building B1



Plate 2. West gable and northern elevation of Building B1



Plate 3. Blocked northern door way in eastern cell of Building B1



Plate 4. Modern brick piers dividing eastern cell of Building B1 from building B2



Plate 5. Eastern wall of western cell Building B1 showing hay rack and trough



Plate 6. Interior of Building B1 western cell facing south

4.2 Building B2

(Figure 4)

Building B2 was the largest of the structures surveyed and measured some 31m long and 5.3m wide with a north-east alignment that demarcated the eastern extent of the yard (Plate 7). Its construction was similar to that of the previously discussed building but, excluding the dressings, there were very few bricks used in the external walling. Internally the walls were constructed quite differently however with flint and brick headers set in courses on the diagonal in almost equal proportions using a lime mortar which was then finished with a coat of whitewash (Plate 8). The roof, hipped to the south and gabled to the north had a covering of red pan-tiles with a ridge ventilator at the southern end. Numerous repairs and alterations had clearly been made to the building in particular to the southern wall where the quoins had been rebuilt in modern brick (Plate 9). Three doorways were arranged along the western elevation, two within the southern third and the other towards the centre although the evidence suggests this may not always have been the case. Six rectangular windows were located at regular intervals across the same elevation but it is likely that at least three of these began life as a doorway. The eastern elevation contained just two small, high windows, one at the southern end and a second towards the centre however the latter had been blocked up while the former looked at least from the interior as if it was a later addition (Plate 10). Proximity to the river and vegetation prevented closer external examination. The northern elevation was gabled with two doorways in the western half, one on ground floor and a second at first floor height (Plate 11). Both had been bricked up at some point in the 20th century. The portion of walling to the west of the upper doorway was the only external area of Building B2 to contain any significant quantity of brick and was almost certainly rebuilt, perhaps upon the insertion of the first floor doorway which did not fit comfortably into its space.

Internally Building B2 was divided into five distinct spaces by four cross walls with access between each via a doorway at the western end of each cross wall. The only exception was the most northerly cross wall that provided no entry into the final cell, which could only be accessed from the eastern cell of Building B1. This most northerly cell was a rectangular room with little surviving of fixtures and fittings however the cross joist which must have taken the load of the upper floor remained, although undoubtedly repositioned upon the modern brick pier to the west already discussed in Building B1 (Plate 12). The floor in common with the majority of floor surfaces in Building B2 was concrete while a render of the same had been applied to the walls to a height of approximately 2m. Above this height a whitewash coating had been used. The cell immediately to the south was narrow in width and the walls lined with wooden pegs as might be the case in a tack room or other equipment store (Plate 13). A single small window in the western wall admitted the only light, making the room very dark but it was nevertheless possible to make out a brick floor lain bedding face up. Against the southern wall could also just be seen what appeared to be a blocked square niche and an allowance had been made for this in the arrangement of the pegs (Plate 14). Interestingly examination of the northern-cross wall indicated it was not bonded into the side walls and therefore quite probably a later insertion. The central cell was just under 10m in length but was sub divided into four stalls by low wooden partitions that

projected west away from the eastern wall approximately two thirds of the width of the building.



Plate 7. Western elevation of Building B2



Plate 8. Eastern internal elevation of Building B2

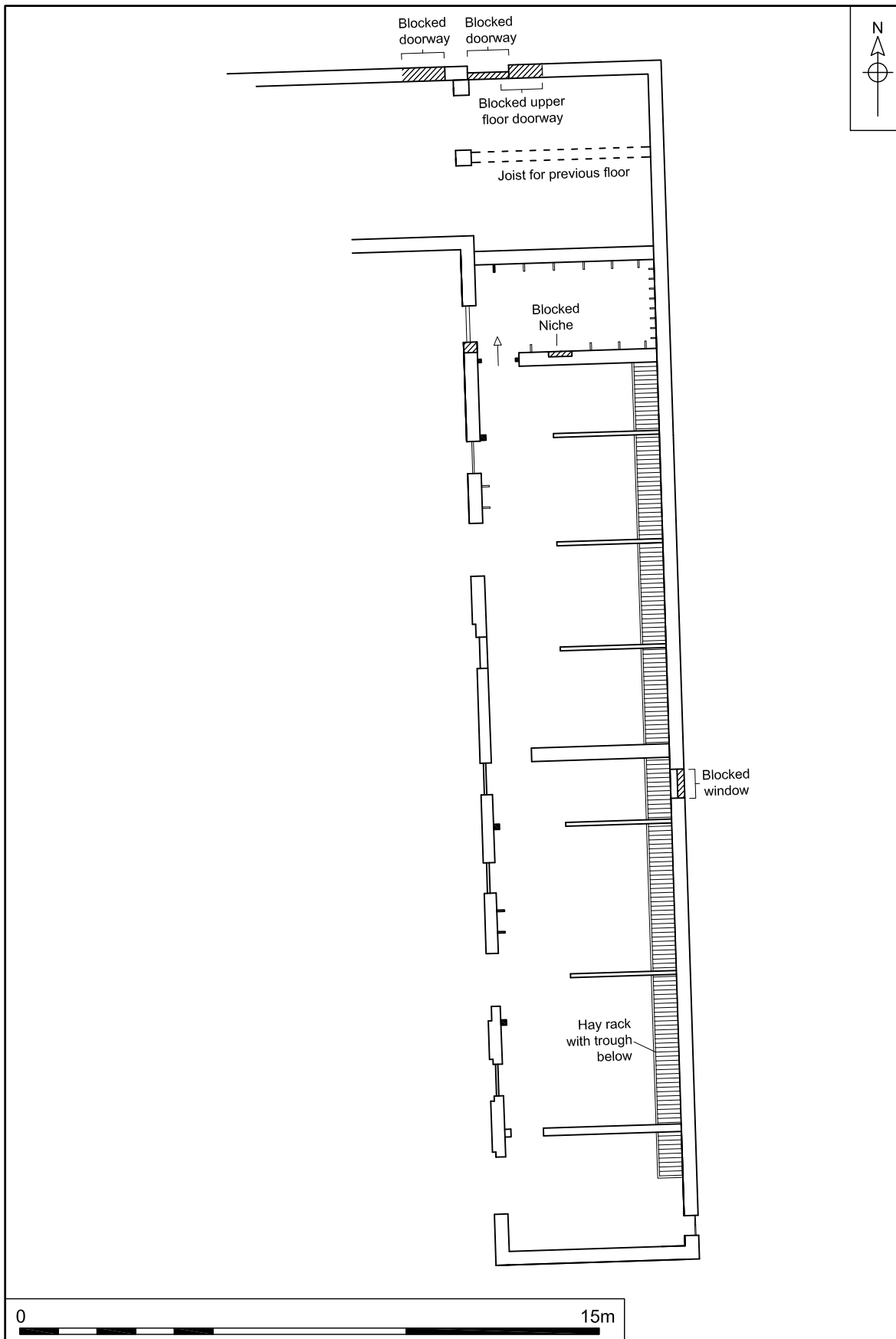


Figure 4. Plan of Building B2. Scale 1:150



Plate 9. Southern elevation Building B2



Plate 10. Blocked window behind hay rack on eastern wall of Building B2

A continuous wooden hay rack ran along the eastern wall and beneath this sat a wooden trough supported by low posts many of which retained their iron tethering ring (Plate 15). To the north of the western external doorway two wooden pegs projected away from the wall with a small window directly to the north. A second window to the south of the door may well have replaced an earlier blocked doorway (Plate 16). The second-most southerly cell was very similar to the last with similar dimensions and the same arrangement of hay rack and trough along the eastern wall separated by low wooden partitions, however here the two southern partitions were over a metre wider than those in the central cell which left only enough room for one smaller stall to the north (Plate 17). The external doorway was positioned a little to the south of centre with two windows to the north and a third to the south. Two wooden hooks projected from the east wall just to the north of the door (Plate 18). The southern cell was a little under 3m wide but the partition wall was constructed entirely of concrete blocks and the external doorway of modern brick. It seems likely therefore that this cell was divided off from the cell to the north in the more recent past. A portion of hay rack with trough below nevertheless seems to have survived the division as did the three wooden pegs arranged in the centre of the southern wall (Plate 19) Again the walls were whitewashed and the floor had been concreted.



Plate 11. Northern gable of Building B2



Plate 12. Cross joist for upper floor, northern cell of Building B2



Plate 13. Tack room in Building B2



Plate 14. Rectangular niche in tack room



Plate 15. Central cell of Building B2 facing north



Plate 16. Blocked doorway, central cell Building B2 1 x 0.5m scale



Plate 17. Second-most southerly cell, Building B2 facing north



Plate 18. Western internal elevation, second cell from the south, Building B2



Plate 19. Southern cell Building B2 facing east

4.3 Building B3

(Figure 5)

Building B3 was of rectangular design 12.3m long and 4.8m wide on a north - south alignment forming the south-western boundary of the farm's eastern yard (Plate 20). It was constructed of the same materials as Building B1 excepting the upper gable to the north which was of corrugated iron (Plate 21). Two modern triangular concrete buttresses projected from the southern wall no doubt providing additional support where necessary (Plate 20). A central flint cross wall divided the structure into two distinct and roughly equal spaces between which there was no direct access. Entry to the southern cell was provided by a wide doorway located at the southern end of the western elevation with a second doorway in the centre of the eastern elevation having been converted into a shuttered window (Plates 22 and 23). Ventilation slots were visible in both the apexes of the southern gable and the cross wall while a sturdy tethering post stood in the north-western corner (Plates 24 and 25). Concrete blocks had been used internally to reinforce each of the four walls up to the wall plates and a steel water feeder sat in the south eastern corner upon a concrete floor into which drainage channels had been formed. A modern concrete pen approximately 5m square had been constructed externally projecting from the western elevation with a second tethering post positioned in its north eastern corner (Plate 22). The northern cell was open to the east with a single wooden post supporting the wall plate at the centre point. A diagonal low partition had been erected in the south-western corner as a hay feeder while the floor appeared to be of dirt, although a significant quantity of manure lay upon it (Plate 26). As with the other structures the roof was covered in red pan-tiles.



Plate 20. Building B3 facing north-west

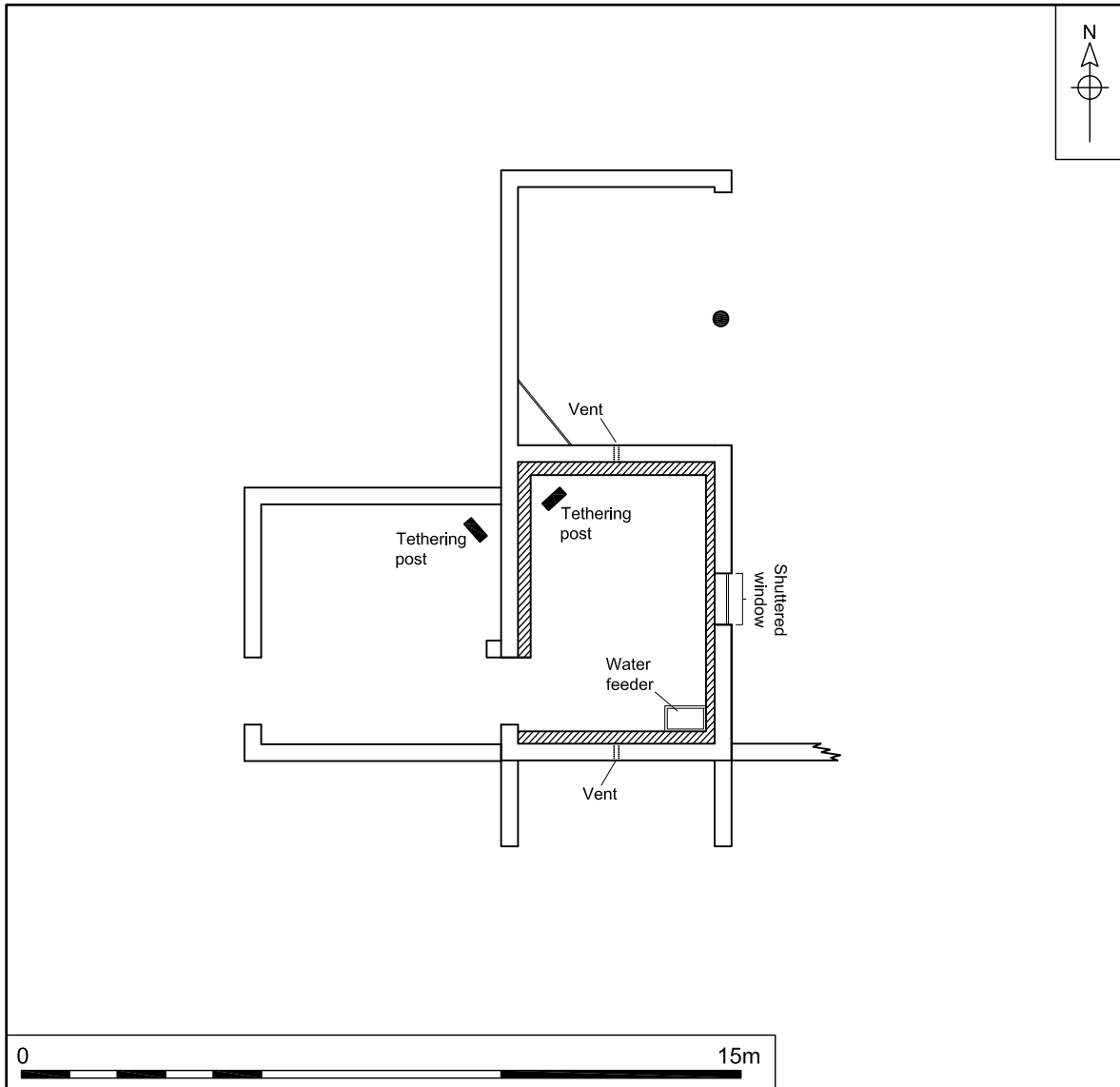


Figure 5. Plan of Building B3. Scale 1:150



Plate 21. Building B3 facing south west



Plate 22. Western elevation of building B3, doorway to right



Plate 23. Doorway converted into window on eastern elevation of building B3



Plate 24. Ventilation hole south elevation building B3



Plate 25. Tethering post in building B3



Plate 26. Interior of building B3, northern cell facing south

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Structure B2, the largest of the three buildings surveyed, is a fairly typical example of a cattle shed in which livestock could be housed in stalls tethered along one wall with a feeding trough and hay rack above. The cow shed as a building type was constructed in increasing numbers in Norfolk from the 18th century as the benefits of maintaining your livestock under cover through the winter were recognised. In this way the cattle could be fattened more efficiently in a warmer, controlled environment and manure better managed without the loss of vital nutrients through rain-leaching. With the cows heads tethered away from the yard, manure could be shovelled out through the wide doorways into the cattle yard behind where it could be carted away and spread upon the fields as fertilizer. Although the concrete floor is a modern replacement, the wooden trough and hay racks may be original although the racks may have been raised in height at a later date. The remnants of wooden stubs upon the eastern interior wall of the second-most northerly cell suggest that the hay rack continued further north at one time perhaps even along the full length of the building.

Building B2 has evidently undergone numerous alterations since its construction; two probable plan layouts based upon the surviving evidence can be surmised. The first is of three cells divided by the two current central walls leaving two larger southern cells and a third slightly smaller room at the northern end into which the doorway in the northern gable opened (Figure 6). Such a design would have maximised the efficiency of feeding and mucking out the livestock. The second plan form is suggested by the original location of the doors with each doorway serving its own area separated by a subsequently-removed cross-wall (Figure 7). If the second-most southerly cross-wall is interpreted as a slightly later addition this would divide the building into five equal spaces each served by its own door and window. Such a design is often seen in 19th-century cattle sheds in Norfolk and it would explain the numerous original doorways which have been blocked up after the removal of these partitions, perhaps to improve efficiency.

The northern end of the building shows perhaps the most evidence of adaptation within Building B2 and was probably built as a rectangular room 7.1m long with a doorway for cattle at the southern end of the west wall perhaps flanked by a window to the north (as in Figure 4). In the northern elevation a second door for human access was located to the west with the western wall being almost certainly continuous at this time. The insertion of the northern cross-wall reduced the length of the room by 2.3m and also took away its cattle entrance. It is possible that at this time the western wall was taken down to retain access to the yard via Building B1. At some point an additional floor was installed in the roof space which required punching out a new doorway in the upper gable and the installation of a cross-joint to take the floor boards. Such a floor would probably be used to store feed to keep it clear of the damp ground and reduce spoilage. The subsequent removal of the first floor led to the blocking up of the upper doorway. The blocking of the lower doorway must have taken place after the removal of the western wall, thereby re-establishing access to the cattle yard. The small room to the south created by the insertion of the northern cross-wall looks very much like a tack room and this in combination with the height of the hay racks and width of the stall divisions suggests that the buildings function changed from cattle shed to stable.

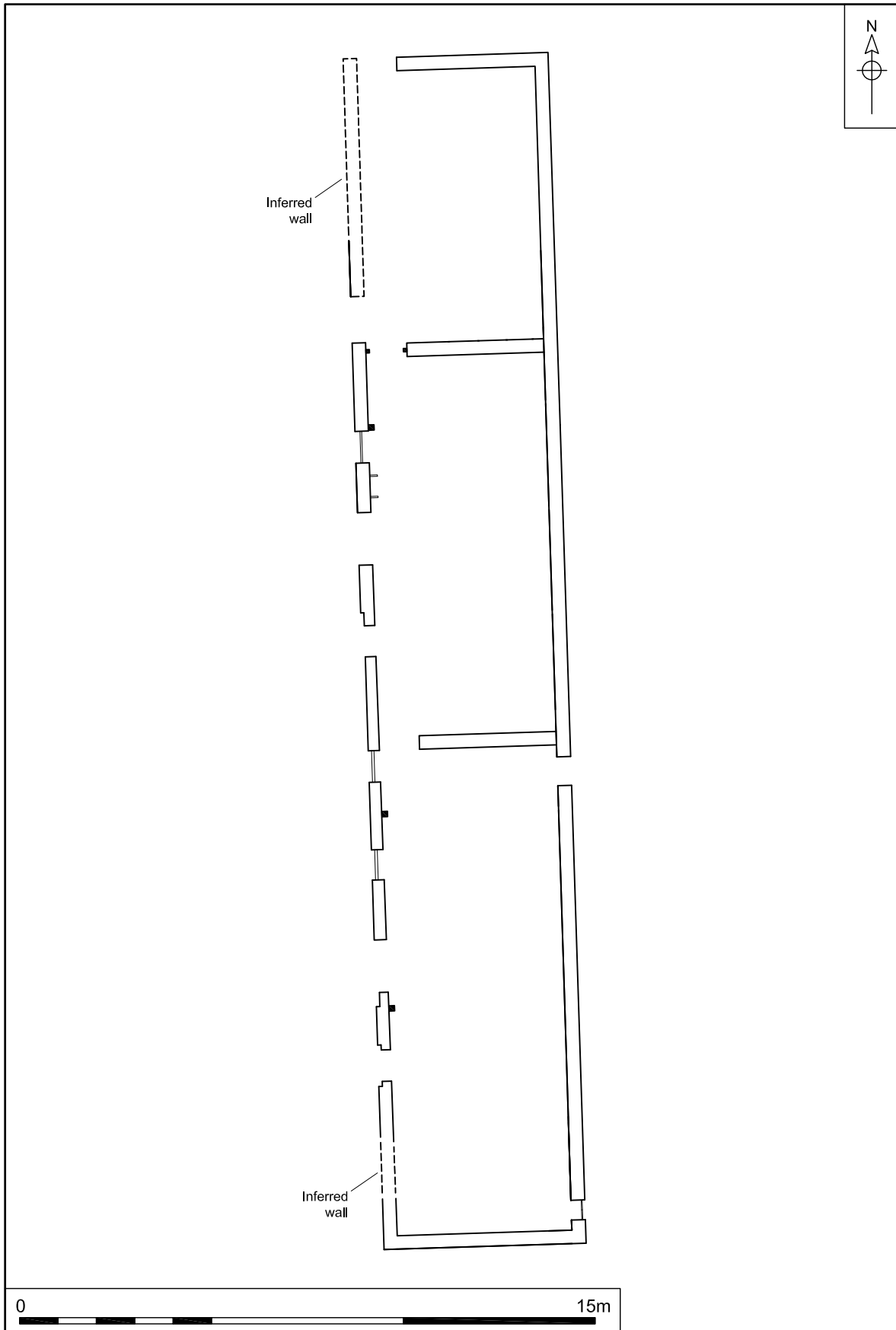


Figure 6. Building B2, original plan form 1. Scale 1:150

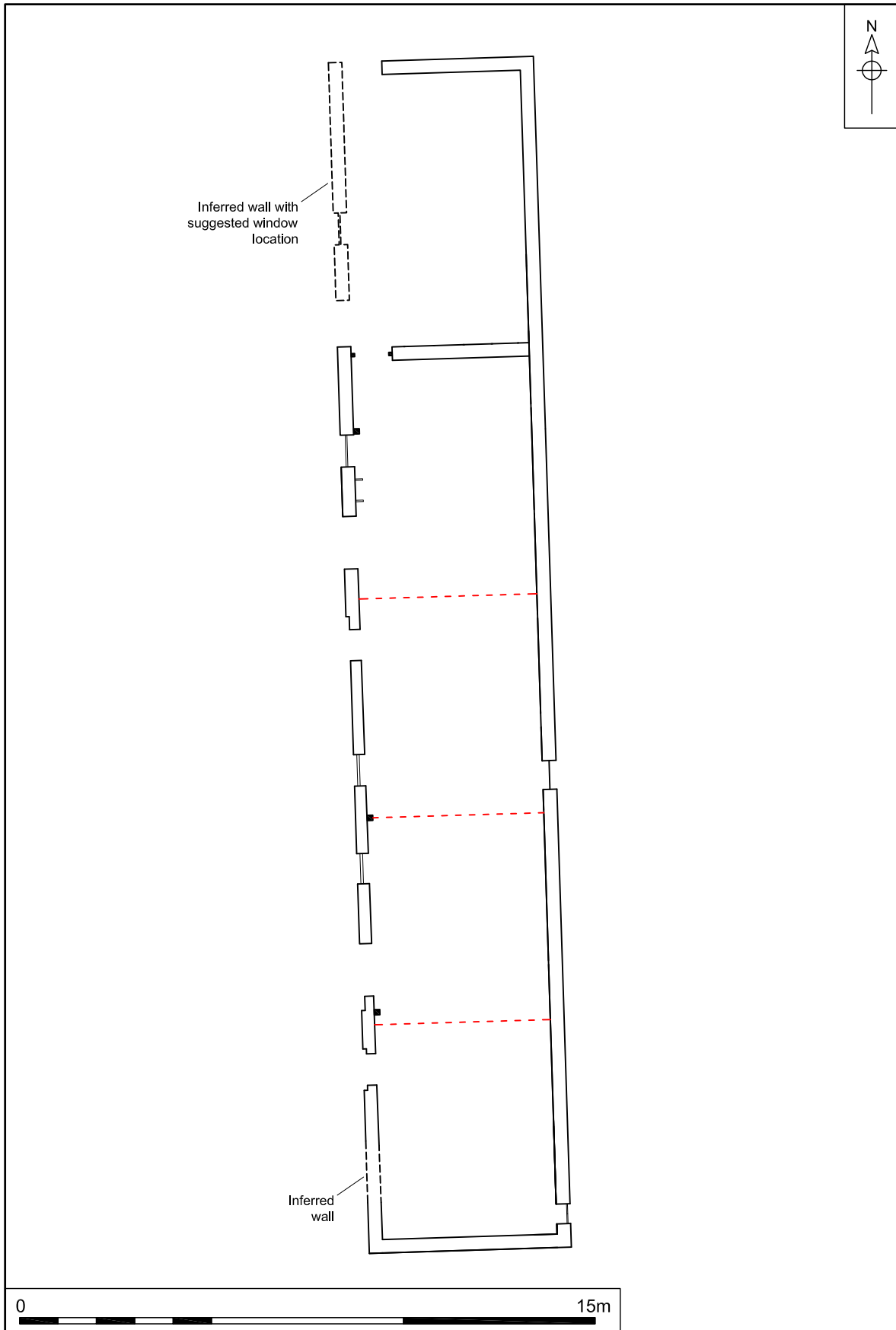


Figure 7. Building B2, Original plan form 2. Scale 1:150

At the opposing end of the building the construction of the southern partition wall in concrete blocks is a very much more modern alteration that created a small space separated from the remaining livestock where the sick or young might be better looked after.



Plate 27. Southern doorway, eastern cell Building B1

The alterations carried out to Building B1 have led to the removal of most of its original fixtures and fittings however certain conclusions can be drawn based upon what does survive. Most significantly its location along one edge of a cattle yard makes it likely that it performed some function relating to either the maintenance or housing of livestock. For reasons discussed below we can be fairly certain that it post-dates the construction of Building B2 and that given the proximity of its northern doorway to the doorway in the northern gable of Building B2 originally there was probably a solid wall between the two structures. The width of the eastern cell's southern door indicates that at some point it was used to house cattle or maybe horses however the lower jambs of this opening in contrast to the earlier upper jambs have been completed in 20th-century brick suggesting it may have begun life as a window (Plate 27). The northern doorway is of narrower width and more suited to human traffic indicating its original purpose was not for cattle or horses. As such it may have been used for some storage function or alternatively for poultry if we interpret the small rectangular hole in the southern elevation as an entrance and the small concrete and wire fenced pen as a run. Of the western cell

even less can be said as the demolition of its southern wall to make way for the extension has removed all evidence of its original use. The present doorway is certainly wide enough for housing livestock though and the hay rack and wooden trough against the eastern wall confirm this to be its most recent agricultural purpose.

Building B3 has had its walls reinforced with concrete blocks and this in addition to the construction of the pen made it suitable for the housing of bulls. Little evidence is available to indicate an earlier alternative use and it is entirely possible that the southern cell always functioned as housing for livestock, although probably the primary entrance was likely to be that to the east prior to its conversion to a window at some point in the last century. The northern cell has the appearance of a cart shed and equipment store although clearly its most recent use was as a cattle shelter and these buildings can be very similar in form. No evidence could be found of the structures that appear from the OS 1st edition mapping to be attached to the western elevation or south eastern corner of the building but this in itself might be an indication of the impermanent nature of such structures.

The phasing of the buildings is in large part based upon their alignment in relation to the river to the east and threshing barn to the west. The river forms a natural limit to the farm yard and Building B2 can be seen to follow this alignment which is just off of north - south. Building B1 has been erected at a right angle to Building B2 and as such shares this alignment thereby indicating its later date. The alignment of Building B3 however seems to vary depending upon the data used with the OS mapping indicating an alignment based upon that of Building B2. However aerial photographs seem to indicate an alternative location - at right angles to the threshing barn - making conclusions as to its phase more difficult to draw.

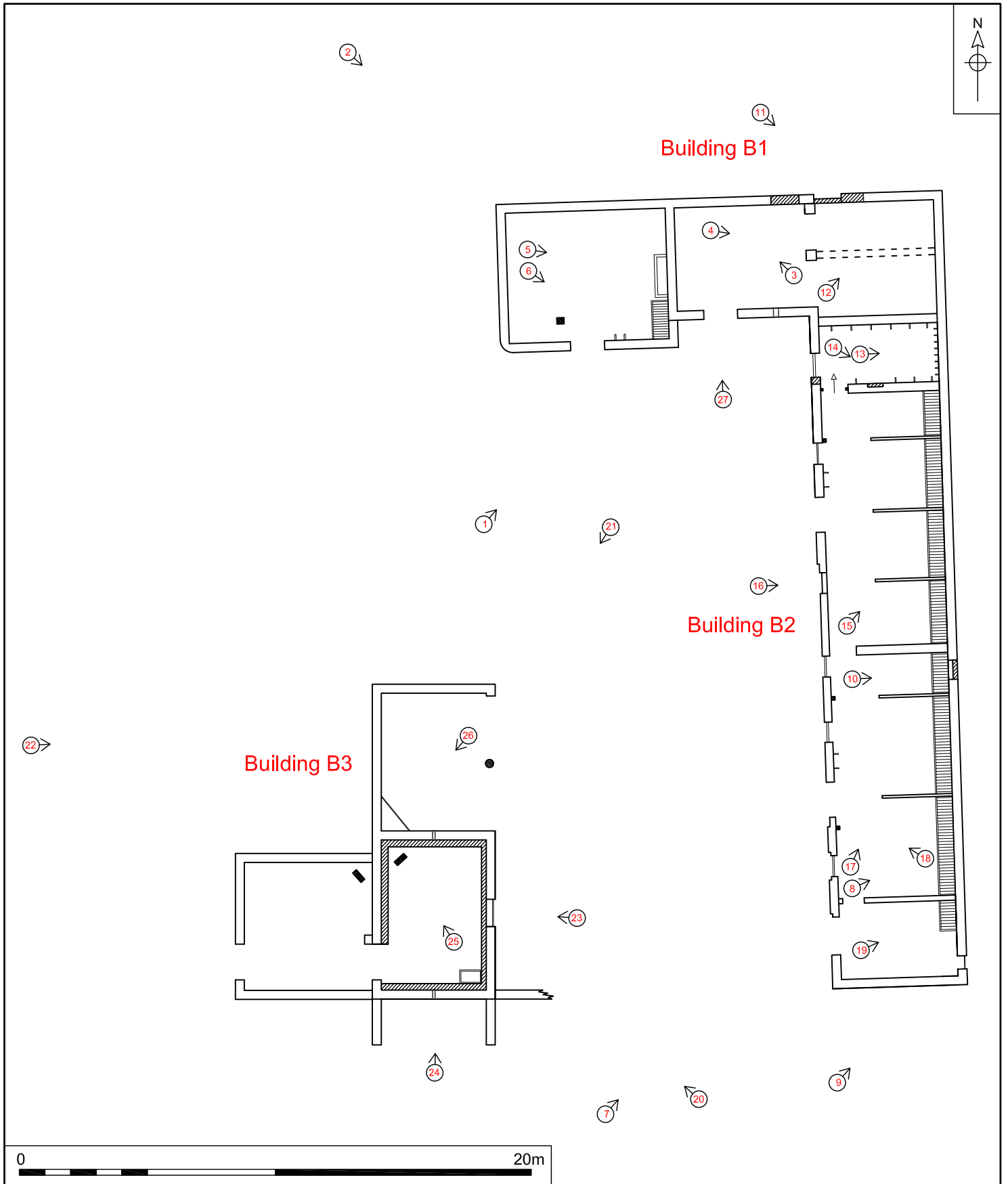
What cartographic sources do tell us however is that all three structures must have been built between 1839 and the 1880s representing examples of modest agricultural buildings erected during a period in which farming was experiencing an economic boom. With the steady decline of economic prosperity in farming since this time few modern replacements have been built resulting in the adaptation of existing structures to changing agricultural practices. All three of the buildings surveyed clearly demonstrate these adaptations throughout the century and a half since their construction.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by the author with illustrations by David Dobson and the author. The project was overseen by Nigel Page with editing undertaken by Jayne Bown.

Bibliography

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Appendix 1. Photographic plan of buildings. Scale 1:200