

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No.1066

**Historic Building Survey at Primrose Farm Barn
Shelton Green, Shelton, Norfolk**

39829 SHL

Simon Underdown

May 2005

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Location: Primrose Farm Barn, Shelton Green, Shelton
District: South Norfolk
Grid Ref: TM 2316 9061
HER No: 39829 SHL
Date of work: 31st March 2005

Summary

Building Recording was undertaken on the barn at Primrose Farm, Shelton Green, prior to proposed conversion to a dwelling. The timber-framed barn was originally constructed as a three bay threshing barn probably in the later 17th to early 18th century, incorporating some re-used timbers from a late medieval house. A porch was later added to the south side. The barn sits on a low brick plinth which appears to have been largely rebuilt in the 19th century, with 20th-century repairs especially in the cart porch. A clay lump extension to the west end is probably of 19th-century date as is the later lean-to cowshed on the south-west side. In the 20th century lean-to additions were made to the south-west and north-west corners, and to the east end. Parts of the barn and associated buildings are now in a poor state of repair or collapse. The north-east corner post is missing. The cart porch has no roof and a collapsed east wall. The wall plate over the cart porch is sagging and the sill plate and plinth east of the porch is missing and consequently the studs and post have sagged and been displaced northwards at the base.

1.0 Introduction

(Fig. 1)

An historic building survey was undertaken by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) in advance of proposed redevelopment of the barn at Primrose Farm, Shelton Green. It was proposed to convert the barn into a dwelling. The barn is not listed but lies immediately north-east, and within the curtilage, of Primrose Farm (Norfolk Heritage Environment Record (NHER) 36048) which is listed and thought to be of 17th-century date.

The original barn structure and various extensions measure 18.3m in length by up to 11.75m wide, encompassing a total of c. 200 sq. m.

This work was commissioned by Mr Laurence Bartrum in response to a brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: ER/05/01/05). It was undertaken in accordance with a project design prepared by NAU (Ref 1936/KJP/02/05).

The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Historical Background

(Fig. 1)

Primrose Farm is situated at Shelton Green within the parish of Shelton in South Norfolk, just north of the village centre. The site is about 150m east of Shelton Hall which is a moated site that formerly contained a fortified courtyard house and of which a 16th-century drawing survives (Yaxley 1977). To the north-west (1km) is

Shelton Church which, apart from an earlier flint tower, was splendidly rebuilt in brick by Sir Ralph Shelton of the Hall in the late 15th century. It has been described by Pevsner (1962) as a Perpendicular church of the first order.

The surrounding countryside is a flat boulder clay plateau, used mostly for arable farming which is made possible by drainage (Corbett and Dent 1994).

Primrose Farm and the Hall and farms called Lodge, Manor and Grange lie within a distinct field system of fairly small fields bounded by the parish boundary to the north and by tracks, dykes or roads to the east, west and south. The shape and position of this system around the Hall and the names of the other farms suggest this area including Primrose Farm defines the former deer park.

The Shelton family lived here until 1600, when the Hall and park were sold to Sir Robert Houghton, a justice of the Queen's Bench (Yaxley 1977, 148). It seems possible that the park was probably enclosed under Houghton and that Primrose farm in its present form with 17th-century house and associated barn was established at this time.

The barn was visited in November 2003 and described in general, although its date was difficult to establish (report E. Rose NHER 39829).

3.0 Methodology

(Fig. 2; Appendix 1)

The objective of this survey was to create a written, drawn and photographic record to RCHM level 2 (RCHM 1996).

The written record includes notes of the building's plan, form, function, age, and developmental sequence, also some observations on its relationship to its setting and the historic landscape.

The drawn record consists of a scale floor plan including the form and location of structural features of historic significance such as blocked openings.

The photographic survey consists of a full exterior record and significant details of the interior. The photographic record was created using black and white 35mm film (Appendix 1). Digital photography was used to record images for reference and for the purposes of illustrating the report.

4.0 Building Survey

(Fig. 2; Plates 1 to 8)

Introduction

The barn (Plates 1 and 2) is situated north-east of the farmhouse and is aligned east-to-west. It is of timber-framed construction consisting of three bays (or steads) sitting on a low brick plinth, weatherboarded externally with pantiles cladding the roof.

Original barn

The original barn structure is 12.5m long by 6m wide externally, the end bays are 4.5m x 5.4m internally and the smaller central bay measures 3.2m x 5.4m. The structure is in poor condition; the north-east corner post is just a stump and the

east wall is propped to prevent further collapse, part of the plinth of the south-east wall is missing and the south post of the east truss has dropped and is displaced to the north.

There is a low partially collapsed and roofless porch attached to the central bay on the south side opposite a cart door in the north wall. There is a later clay lump extension 5.5m long at the west end, and a lean-to cowshed and modern brick shed abutting on the south west side. At the east end is a collapsed lean-to; a modern tin-clad building abuts the north-east corner.

The frame (Plate 3) consists of jowled posts, at the corners and at the ends of the two central trusses, sillbeams and wallplates with studs between and straight tension braces. In places the studs are offset above and below the tension braces. The trusses have tiebeams and straight braces from beams to posts. Many of the studs have been replaced.

The original roof has been removed at some point, and replaced with a roof of pairs of regular common rafters meeting at a ridgeplate, with occasional pairs of rafters of slightly heavier scantling with collars clasping one order of purlins. The roof rafters are not correlated to the frame trusses. The roof is clad in clay pantiles with areas of glass pantiles in places for lighting the interior.

The tiebeam of the west truss is re-used. It is cambered and has mortice holes for braces closer to the ends of the beam than the present straight braces, these were probably for arched braces (Plate 3). Other notable re-used timbers occur in the north wall. A stud in the centre of the north wall of the east stead has a row of mortices on its southern face and is a reused plate (Plate 4). The wall plate above has some empty mortices and may be reused. The post at the north end of the east truss has four diamond mullion sockets and four mortices on its east face and more mortices on the west face and the south face (Plate 5). The east face has been reduced at some time because there are exposed open peg holes in the surface; an additional piece of timber has been added to create the jowl at the top of the post. This post is a plate or rail from a house probably dating to before c. 1600, which is about the latest date for the use of plain diamond mullions in Norfolk (pers. comm. Bill Wilson).

The wall plate over the cart doors exhibits three diamond mullion sockets with mortices either side and a later central mortice on its underside (Plate 6). This plate is probably similarly from a 16th-century (or earlier) house. The central mortice with no peg-hole is for a movable post for fastening the cart doors. This post would have slotted into the mortice at the top and a movable board or 'lift' (Peters 1991, 14) at the base. The lift was held in place by battens fixed to the posts either side of the doors (these are still in place at Shelton). The lift kept the doors clear of manure or other material in the yard, and kept animals out of the barn when the doors were open for threshing etc. The doors themselves are missing but the three iron hinge pins driven into the exterior face of either post survive.

The wall plate of the north wall of the west stead has some empty mortices but some of the studs appear to have been replaced in the 19th or 20th centuries and some have been nailed in place. Therefore the wallplate is probably not reused but some studs are in new positions. The wall plate or tiebeam of the west end wall has empty mortices but as the studs here look original this plate may well be

reused. There is an opening in this wall below the tiebeam (see Plate 3) which gave access to the now missing upper storey of the west extension which was used as a hayloft (pers. comm. Laurence Bartrum).

Carpenters marks in the form of scribed Roman numerals were seen across joints between tension braces and studs in the north-east wall (II) and west wall (III).

There is a face halved and bridled scarf joint at the west end of the wall plate in the south wall of the east stead (Plate 7). This type of joint was first used in the 16th century, and became the dominant form of scarf in the 17th and 18th centuries. The studs in this section of wall have mostly been replaced, the west end of the wallplate and plinth here are missing and the main post and studs have dropped and been displaced slightly to the north.

The wall plate in the south wall of the central bay above the opening into the porch has regular stud mortices in its lower face; this is probably not a reused timber but the original wallplate, showing that prior to the addition of the porch the south side of the middlestead was walled, with no cart door. This is quite a common arrangement as carts did not necessarily need to pass right through a barn, and there would probably have been a smaller door in this wall for human access and to create a through draft for winnowing when necessary. Further evidence that there have never been cart doors here is that there are no hinges or holes left by the removal of hinges on the main posts.

Porch

The porch itself is 3.2m square in plan and extends south from the central bay it is timber framed and weatherboarded in a similar fashion to the barn (Plate 8). The roof is missing and the east wall has collapsed outwards. The porch walls are a metre or so lower than the barn walls. The wallplates of the east and west walls are mortised into the outer faces of the southern main posts of the barn trusses below the barn wallplates and supported by shorter jowled posts at the south corners of the porch. The jowled posts and the wallplates and studs of the east and west walls appear original. The studs are of larger scantling than those of the main barn and there is no bracing. The sillbeams and brick plinth walls, which are now at several levels, have been replaced in the 19th or 20th centuries.

The south wall of the porch is of stud and weatherboard with a small central door and is all of 20th-century date, apart from the wallplate which has empty mortices with peg holes, showing that this wall was probably originally similarly a stud wall with small door rather than having low cart doors (like the porch at Holly Farm Reedham (Underdown 2005)).

The porch had a pitched roof. The north end of the ridgeplate and the short end rafters are still attached to the barn roof just above wallplate level, and two angled plates indicate the join of the porch and barn roofs (Plate 8).

The porch is to be demolished as part of the proposed development.

Clay lump extension

The western extension (Plate 1) is constructed of clay lump on a low brick plinth; it is of the same height and width as the original barn and essentially extended the barn by an extra bay 5.5m long. It was probably constructed during the 19th

century. The clay lump walls butt up to the north-west and south-west corner posts of the barn. Access to and from the barn is through a door at the south end of the (barn) west wall which acts as the east wall of the extension; outside access is *via* a door in the north end of the extension west wall. The west extension was originally storied but the upper floor has since been removed: the cut ends of the joists can be seen in the west wall. The upper storey was the hay loft for storing hay for fodder and has a loading door in the west gable wall and an opening into the barn in the barn west wall (Plate 3.). There is a blocked window in the ground floor north wall and a boarded up window in the ground floor west wall which has had shelves fitted within the thickness of the wall. A door opening in the south wall gives access to the later lean-to cowshed.

The extension will be retained as part of the proposed development.

Cowshed and later additions

A 19th-century lean-to structure was built on the south-west corner of the barn, using the porch west wall as its east wall and the south-west wall of the barn and part of the south wall of the west extension as its north wall. There is an external door in the south wall and an access door in the south wall of the clay-lump west extension. The south wall of the lean-to east of the door is timber-framed with wallplate, post and studwork, the plinth and sill are hidden behind later metal sheeting. The south wall west of the door is of modern concrete blocks and the west wall has a brick plinth and is rendered above. There are two animal stall divisions in the lean-to which was at one time used as a cowshed (pers. comm. Laurence Bartrum).

In the 20th century a small brick structure and a wooden lean-to were added to the south-west and north-west corners of the barn respectively, and a larger modern tin-clad machinery shed was built abutting the north-east wall (unfigured). The lean-to cowshed and brick shed are being retained as part of the proposed development.

5.0 Conclusions

The barn, probably built in the later 17th to early 18th century, was originally a three bay threshing barn of common type, with central bay for unloading carts and threshing corn and sidebays for the storage of unthreshed corn and threshed straw. In East Anglia the central bay with cart doors was called the *middlestead* or *middlestree* and the sidebays were known as the *govesteads* or *goafsteads*. The *gof*, *gove* or *goaf* referred to the corn in the ear before threshing (Ewart Evans 1969, 82-3).

The barn incorporates earlier reused timbers some of which, with sockets for diamond mullions, are probably from a 16th-century house, a cambered tiebeam has also been reused. There is a face-halved and bridled scarf joint in the south-east wallplate, this type was introduced in the late 16th century and became the commonest form of scarf in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The middlestead had cart doors on the north side and probably a stud wall with perhaps a smaller door on the south side. This wall was removed at some time and a low square timber-framed porch added (probably also in the later 17th to 18th century), the present south wall of the porch with a small door is modern but

probably replaces a similar original. The porch was useful as an extension of the area of the threshing floor and could house an unladen cart.

An extension of clay-lump on a brick plinth was built onto the west end of the barn, probably in the 19th century, this had a first floor which has since been removed and which was used as a Hay Loft. Later, probably also in the 19th century, a lean-to structure was built on the south-west corner of the barn - against the porch, barn and western extension - this has later animal stall divisions and was used a cowshed at one time.

The original barn roof was removed at some point, probably after the western extension was built and a new roof constructed consisting of pairs of common rafters with occasional pairs of slightly heavier scantling with collars. This replacement of the roof probably happened around the same time as repair and replacement of several of the wall studs and much of the repair to the brick plinth of the barn which has been rebuilt in many places. A collapsing lean-to at the east end of the barn was probably of 19th-century date but was too dangerous and inaccessible to investigate closely.

During the 20th century a brick shed and a wooden lean-to were added to the south-west and north-west corners of the barn respectively, and a larger modern tin clad machinery shed was built abutting the north-east wall.

Although different in detail, scale and materials the development of the barn shows a similar pattern to the barn at Holly Farm, Reedham (Underdown 2005) where a cart porch was added to a large 18th-century threshing barn, and later a full height extension with upper floor was added to one end, the floor being later removed, and finally various animal sheds and outbuildings were added in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Although conversion to a dwelling will involve considerable rebuilding and replacement of timbers the alternative would be complete collapse and loss. If development goes ahead it may be possible to re-use some of the more interesting timbers, such as the late medieval timbers from an earlier structure. Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was conducted by the author who gives grateful thanks to the owner Laurence Bartrum for his co-operation and especially for being a willing tape holder and providing refreshment.

The report was illustrated and produced by David Dobson, edited by Alice Lyons.

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Appendix 1: Index to Black & White Photographic Archives

Norfolk Archaeological Unit – Black and White Photographic Archive					
Site: Barn at Primrose Farm Shelton Green, South Norfolk.					
B& W Film No.1 REF KXL			HER Number: 39829		
Frame	Description	Facing	Scale	Photograph taken by	Date
01	Identification Shot			S. Underdown	31-3-05
02	Interior; north wall of west stead	North-west	_____	S. Underdown	31-3-05
03	Interior; north wall of west stead	North-west	_____	S. Underdown	31-3-05
04	Interior; north cart door	North	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
05	Interior; north cart door	North	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
06	Interior; north cart door	North	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
07	Interior; north wall of east stead	North-east	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
08	Interior; north wall of east stead	North-east	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
09	Interior; north wall of east stead	North-east	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
10	Interior; north wall of west stead	North-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
11	Interior; north wall of west stead	North-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
12	Interior; west end of barn	West	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
13	Interior; west end of barn	West	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
14	Interior; west end of barn	West	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
15	Interior; west end of barn	West	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
16	Interior; west end of barn	West	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
17	Interior; south wall of east stead	South	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
18	Interior; south wall of east stead	South	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
19	Interior; cart porch	South	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
20	Interior; cart porch	South	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
21	Interior; south wall of west stead	South-west	_____	S. Underdown	31-3-05
22	Interior; south wall of west stead	South-west	_____	S. Underdown	31-3-05
23	Interior; south wall of west stead	South-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
24	Interior; cart porch	South	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
25	Interior; cart porch	South	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
26	Interior; east end of barn	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
27	Interior; east end of barn	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
28	Interior; south-east corner of barn and collapsed east wall of cart porch	South-east	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
29	Interior; south-east corner of barn and collapsed east wall of cart porch	South-east	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
30	Interior; west wall of cart porch	South-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
31	Interior; west wall of cart porch	South-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
32	Interior; Oblique view of north wall showing re-used timbers east of door	North-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
33	Interior; Oblique view of north wall showing re-used timbers east of door	North-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
34	Interior; Oblique view of north wall showing re-used timbers east of door	North-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
35	Interior; Oblique view of north wall showing re-used timbers east of door	North-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
36	Interior; Oblique view of north wall showing re-used timbers east of door	North-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05

Norfolk Archaeological Unit – Black and White Photographic Archive

Site: Barn at Primrose Farm Shelton Green, South Norfolk.

B & W Film No. 2 REF KXJ

HER Number: 39829

Frame	Description	Facing	Scale	Photograph taken by	Date
01-06	Blank				
07	Upper interior east gable of west extension (former exterior west gable of barn)	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
08	Upper interior east gable of west extension (former exterior west gable of barn)	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
09	Lower east wall of west extension (former exterior west wall of barn)	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
10	Lower east wall of west extension (former exterior west wall of barn)	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
11	Lower interior west wall of west extension	West	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
12-14	underexposed				
15	Exterior west wall of western extension	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
16	Exterior west wall of western extension	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
17	General exterior shot from north-west	South-east		S. Underdown	31-3-05
18	General exterior shot from north-west	South-east		S. Underdown	31-3-05
19	Exterior north wall of barn	South	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
20	Exterior north wall of barn	South	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
21	Exterior east gable	South-west		S. Underdown	31-3-05
22	Exterior east gable	South-west		S. Underdown	31-3-05
23	General exterior shot from South-west	North-east		S. Underdown	31-3-05
24	General exterior shot from South-west	North-east		S. Underdown	31-3-05

Norfolk Archaeological Unit – Black and White Photographic Archive

Site: Barn at Primrose Farm Shelton Green, South Norfolk.

B & W Film No. 3 REF KXX

HER Number: 39829

Frame	Description	Facing	Scale	Photograph taken by	Date
01	Interior; north wall of extension	North	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
02	Interior; east end of barn	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
03	Interior; east end of barn	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
04	Interior; south east corner	South-east	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
05	Interior; cart porch	North	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
06	Interior; south wall of west stead	South-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
07	Interior; west end of barn	West	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
08	Interior; north wall of west stead	North	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
09	Interior; north wall with cart door	North	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
10	Interior; north wall of east stead	North-east	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
11	Interior; re-used timber on east side of door opening	North-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
12	Interior; re-used plate above cart door	North		S. Underdown	31-3-05
13	Interior; west wall of cart porch	South-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
14	Interior; collapsed east wall of cart porch	South-east	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
15	Interior; north wall of east stead showing stud of re-used timber	North	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
16	Interior; north end of tie of re-used timber in west gable	West		S. Underdown	31-3-05
17	Interior; south end of tie of re-used timber in west gable	West		S. Underdown	31-3-05
18	Interior; wall plate with mortices above opening from cart porch	North		S. Underdown	31-3-05
19	Interior; wall plate with mortices above opening from cart porch	North		S. Underdown	31-3-05
20	Interior; junction of west wall of cart porch and main post in south wall of barn	North-west	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
21	Interior; wall plate with mortices above opening from cart porch	North		S. Underdown	31-3-05
22	Mis-shot				
23	Interior; scarf joint in wall plate east of opening to cart porch in south wall	South		S. Underdown	31-3-05
24	Interior; scarf joint in wall plate east of opening to cart porch in south wall	South		S. Underdown	31-3-05
25	interior showing ties of central trusses	West		S. Underdown	31-3-05
26	North end of re-used tie of west truss	West		S. Underdown	31-3-05
27	Joints in north main post of east truss showing re-use (opposite side to plate 11)	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
28	Exterior; general shot from South-west	North-east		S. Underdown	31-3-05
29	Exterior of north wall of cart porch	North-east	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
30	Exterior; west gable wall of extension	East	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
31	Exterior; general shot from North-west	South-east		S. Underdown	31-3-05
32	Exterior; north wall and cart door	South-east	1.0m	S. Underdown	31-3-05
33	Exterior; east gable of barn and adjoining lean-to's	West		S. Underdown	31-3-05
34	Exterior; east gable of barn and adjoining lean-to's	West		S. Underdown	31-3-05



Plate 1. Exterior looking south-east



Plate 2. Exterior looking north-east



Plate 3. Interior looking west, 1m scale



Plate 4. North wall with reused stud, 1m scale



Plate 5. Post with mullion sockets east of cart door, looking north-west. 1m scale



Plate 6. Wallplate with diamond mullion sockets over cart door, looking north-east



Plate 7. Face-halved and bridled scarf joint in south-east wallplate



Plate 8. Porch looking south, 1m scale

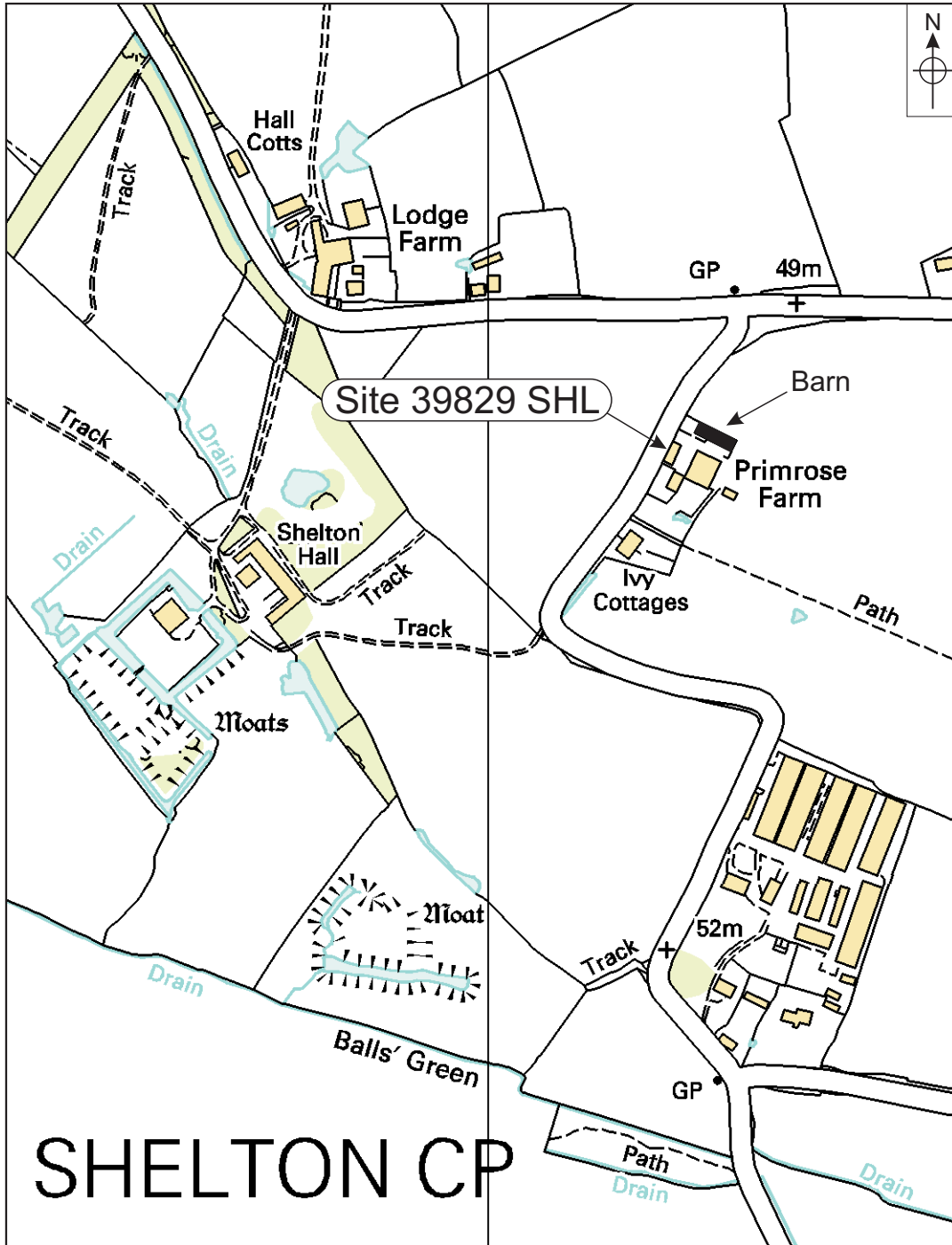


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

Local Authority No.100019340

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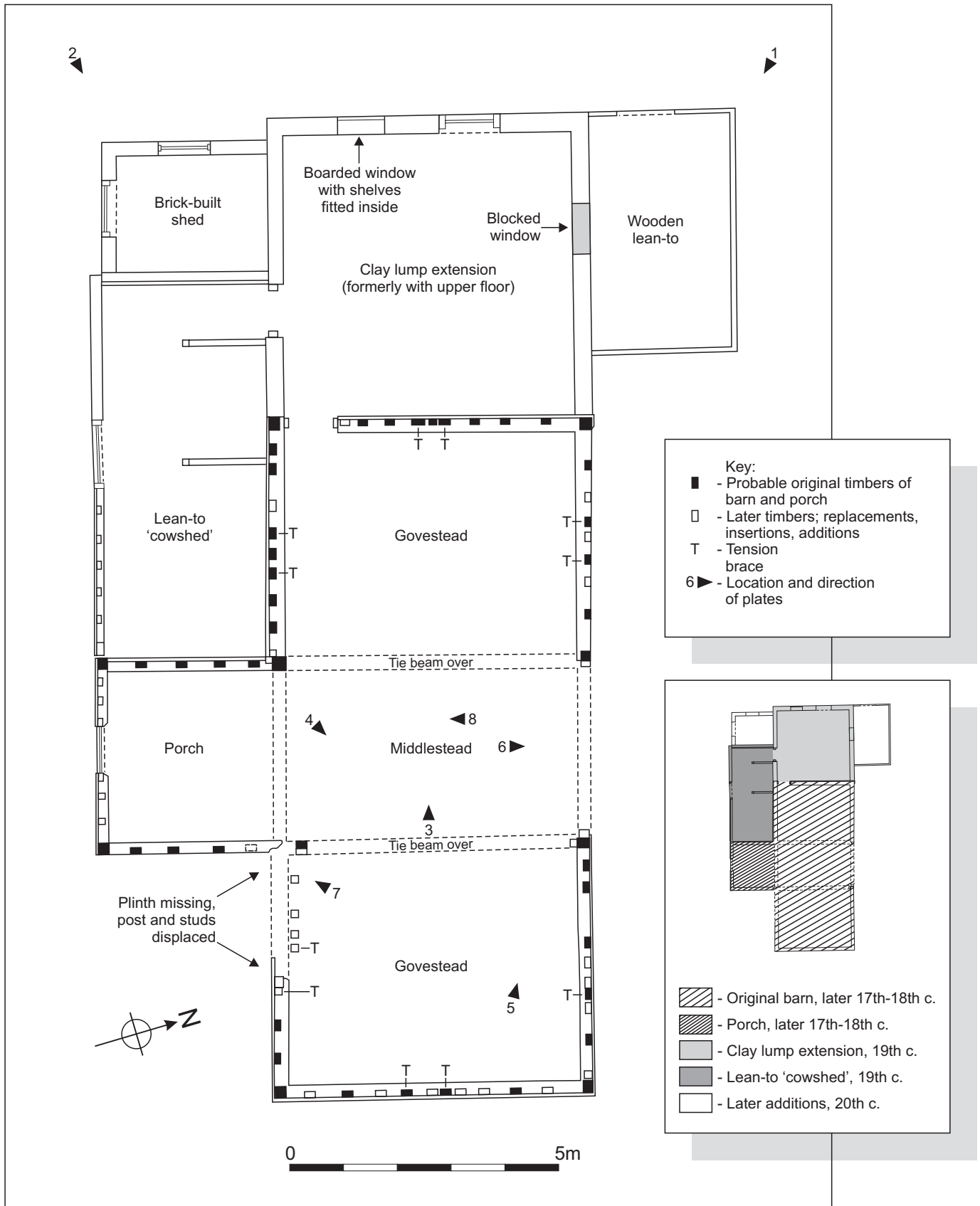


Figure 2. Plan of barn and a keyed drawing of how it has developed through time. Scale 1:100















