



**University of  
Leicester**

**Archaeological Services**

**Poplars Farm,  
Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire:  
Historic Building Study  
NGR: SK 730 159**

Neil Finn and Sophie Clarke



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**Poplars Farm**  
**Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire:**  
**Historic Building Study**

**NGR: SK 730 159**

**Neil Finn and Sophie Clarke**

**For: Mr and Mrs Bowley**

Checked by

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## Addendum

In April 2010, University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Mr and Mrs Bowley to carry out a historic building study of Poplars Farm, Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire, for submission to the Local Planning Authority in support of a planning application (10/00474/FUL) to restore the derelict buildings on the site.

Following submission of the report, planning consent for the restoration was granted with a condition for a further programme of historic building inspection and recording, on the advice of the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team.

In order to meet the requirements set out in the *Brief for Historic Building Inspection and Recording* (LCC 28/09/2011), a second site visit was made on the 16th of November 2011, by Sophie Clarke of ULAS. At this time scaffolding had been erected around the building, which had been cleared of loose brickwork and building rubble, enabling the completion of the building survey. A hand-drawn plan of the cellar was made at 1:50 scale and the extrapolated house floor plans made during the previous visit were verified for accuracy, the position of internal doorway openings relocated and historic detail added. As an addition to the digital colour photographs previously taken, a black and white photographic record was made of the house and farm buildings using a 35mm format SLR camera, to create a complete site archive which will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums Service, under Accession Number X.A174.2011.

The report presented below was originally created in May 2010 by Neil Finn and Sophie Clarke of ULAS. Following the second site visit, changes have been made to the floor plans of the farmhouse and a scale plan of the cellar has been added to Figure 3. In addition, a set of plans showing the location of the photographs taken to illustrate the report has been included as Figure 13.

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## Poplars Farm, Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire: Historic Building Study

### Summary

*A programme of historic building inspection and recording was undertaken at Poplars Farm, Kirby Bellars, Leicestershire on behalf of the owners, Mr and Mrs Bowley, who are proposing the restoration of the derelict and largely ruinous buildings. The imposing three-storey brick farmhouse is likely to have been constructed between 1790 and 1816 as part of a post-enclosure, mixed farmstead, although there is evidence to indicate that the house was built to replace an earlier building on the site. The ancillary farm buildings are arranged around a central fold-yard and largely post-date the farmhouse; these include a barn, cow-sheds, loose-boxes, stables and pig-sties which appear to have been constructed on model farm lines, between 1850 and 1870, the boom years of British agriculture.*

*The site has stood empty since c. 1960 and although this abandonment has resulted in the largely ruinous present state of the buildings, it has also preserved them to some extent in their original form; the layout of the farmstead does not appear to have changed significantly since the mid 19th century and as such it represents a near-complete example of its type, retaining elements such as earth closets, the bakehouse and various interior fittings.*

### 1. Introduction

Poplars Farm is located to the west of the road between Kirby Bellars and Great Dalby, Leicestershire, at National Grid reference SK 730 159 (Figure 1). The owners, Mr and Mrs Bowley, have commissioned an Historic Building Study of the farm complex in support of an application for planning permission to restore the buildings. The aim of this study has been to understand the history and development of the house and associated farm buildings from an examination of the structures and available historical source materials. The study has been prepared by University of Leicester Archaeological Services' Historic Buildings Team.

An outline survey has been produced, including ground plans of all buildings (Figure 2). Upper floors were inaccessible, however the first and second floor plans of the farmhouse have been extrapolated, although some internal details, such as the position of doorways, are estimated (Figure 3). Nor has it been possible to accurately survey the cellar beneath the north-west corner of the farmhouse. The field drawings are annotated with details of the materials, construction and function of the various buildings and are supplemented with a digital photographic record.

Historical sources consulted have included a collection of deeds held at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR) ref. DE696/6; sale particulars from 1959 (ROLLR ref. DE4674/1442); census returns; published and unpublished local histories; and historic maps. In addition general publications on the character and layout of traditional farmsteads, in the East Midlands region and nationally, have been consulted.

Although referred to throughout the report as Poplars Farm, it should be noted that this name seems to be a comparatively late attribution, which is not documented before the early 20th century, its first occurrence being in an Abstract of Title in 1918.

## **2. General Description (Figure 2)**

Poplars Farm is a holding of approximately 100 acres. The farmhouse is a detached building of double-pile plan with front and rear ranges under parallel roofs. A series of ancillary domestic structures are ranged around a small yard on its west side. The principal elevation of the farmhouse faces south and there is a garden on this side enclosed by a hedge. On the north side of the farmhouse a series of agricultural buildings are ranged around three sides of a fold yard. The fourth side of the yard, closest to the house, is defined by a brick wall. Access to the fold yard is by way of a covered entrance close to the north-east corner. A narrow gate in the wall opposite this provides pedestrian access from the farmhouse. To the north-east of the farm buildings, adjacent to the trackway from the road, is a pond.

The 1967 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map shows further agricultural buildings to the north and south (Figure 12), none of which were illustrated on the previous OS map edition of 1959 and have not survived to the present day. These short-lived 20th century buildings have left no visible trace on the ground.

The farm buildings have not been occupied since *c.* 1960 and are now in a poor state of repair.

## **3. Description and Interpretation of the Buildings**

### ***3.1 The Farmhouse (Figures 3 & 4; Photos 1-6)***

The principal, southern range of the farmhouse is a tall and narrow 3-storey Georgian structure, probably built towards the end of the 18th or early in the 19th century (see below). This is constructed in brick and was formerly rendered, with traces of render remaining in places. The roof was slated although little of the roof structure now remains. The south elevation has a regular pattern of fenestration arranged around a central doorway (Photo 1). Door and window openings have brick cambered arch heads and the windows have stone sills; there is a dentilated brick eaves course. Timber sash windows have exposed sash boxes. The timber door surround has a simple glazed over-door light of a type common from the late 18th century onwards, with an identical example being illustrated in the *Practical House Carpenter* of 1830 (Hall, 2005, 29). The doorway opens onto a central hall with the remains of the principal staircase on the east side. Rooms on either side of the entrance hall were described in sale particulars of 1959 as the ‘sitting room’ and the ‘front room’. Gable chimneystacks serve fireplaces in each of the ground and first floor rooms with built in cupboards and shelving in arch-headed alcoves on either side of the stack. The remains of a semi-circular cast iron fire grate were noted in one of the ground floor rooms (Photo 2). Access to the rear range is through a door at the back of the hall;

blocked door opening in both the 'sitting room' and 'front room' indicate different circulation routes in the past. On the upper floors there are two bedrooms per floor, one either side of the central staircase and landing area. Upper floors are of plaster on reed construction.

The rear (north) range of the farmhouse is lower (two storeys), wider and shorter than the frontage range, but is constructed in similar brickwork and appears to be contemporary with it (Photo 3). Although the brickwork of the west elevation of the house is very varied (Photo 4), the only suggestion of a structural break between the two ranges is in the uppermost section of the wall, seemingly reflecting an area of localised repair or rebuilding, rather than separate phases of construction. Similarly the brickwork of the east gable wall of the rear range appears to be tied in to the north wall of the frontage range. The roof is slated. The rear range is in a plainer style than the frontage range. Door and window openings have segmental arched heads and windows, where these survive, are horizontal (Yorkshire) sliding sashes. The larger of the two ground floor rooms is a kitchen, heated by a fireplace in the north wall. The second, unheated, room is a dairy, with large, shallow sinks ranged along the west wall and wooden shelving lining the other walls. Between the two rooms a dogleg staircase rises to a first floor landing and two bedrooms; the first floor structure is of plaster on reed. Below this a flight of stairs descends to a cellar beneath the dairy (Photo 5). The north, west and much of the south wall of the cellar are constructed in ironstone, as is part of the east wall. It has a brick vault and is lit by a window in the west wall; there is a brick thrall on all sides.

Outbuildings on the west side of the house, now largely ruinous, include a bakehouse with oven and fireplace (Photo 6). Two cast iron 'coppers' for heating water suggest that this doubled as a washhouse. There are two earth closets, one accessed from the yard and the other from the garden to the south. A well is located by the north-east corner of the house.

The earliest available map of the area, made by John Prior in 1777, does not show any buildings in this locality, though it does show the nearby Kirby Lodge and Cream Lodge (later Cream Gorse) farms (Welding 1984, 26). The earliest Ordnance Survey map, of 1816, shows two buildings in the area of the farm, one of which is almost certainly the present farmhouse (Figure 7). The 1824 Old Series OS map (Figure 8) shows four buildings, two in the same position as those illustrated on the 1816 map and two more buildings to the north-west of this. Map regression analysis demonstrates that it is the buildings shown on the 1816 map rather than the pair of buildings mapped for the first time in 1824, that occupy the site of the present farm. The small scale of these maps means that very little detail is discernible.

From the collection of deeds in the ROLLR it can be seen that the value of the property almost doubled between 1790 and 1824, from £1950 to £3700. The scale of this increase may reflect the construction on the site of the farmhouse between these years. If this interpretation is correct then it may be suggested, in conjunction with the map evidence, that the farmhouse and the early range of farm buildings (see below) were constructed in the quarter century between 1790 and 1816.

The imposing 3-storey brick farmhouse is characteristic of the period. Smith (1992, 64) describes:

‘an impressive series of brick farmhouses that span the entire C18, amply illustrating the advancing prosperity of farming on the Midland plains. There are too many for individual mention in the gazetteer, but their size and their inappropriateness for modern husbandry have made them vulnerable to speculative development and their survival can no longer be assumed.’

### **3.2 The Farm Buildings (Figure 5; Photos 7-13)**

#### *Early farm buildings*

The lower storey of the east range, excluding the barn at the north end, is constructed in similar brickwork to the house and is broadly contemporary with it, dating from the later 18th or early 19th century (Photo 7); the upper storey and the barn were added later, after the middle of the 19th century (see below). This range of building includes stabling for horses and a trap house as well as other accommodation.

Other early farm buildings are indicated in the documentary sources. A valuation of the farm in 1848 for the then owner, Mr. Lancashire, states that:

‘The farmhouse requires sundry repairs and additions and all the outbuildings except the Barn will require being taken down and rebuilt on a larger scale, a less outlay than £300 upon the buildings cannot be dispensed with but £400 ought to be laid out to make them comfortable and convenient.’ The value of the farm at that date was £4565.1.3, with an annual value of £149.13.6.

It seems unlikely that the barn referred to in this document is the present barn at the north-east corner of the farmyard (Photo 8), for the reasons set out below, which suggests there was an earlier barn that is no longer extant; presumably this was one of the buildings illustrated on the 1824 OS map, located to the north-west of the farmhouse.

#### *Developments of the 1850s-1860s*

In 1851 Mr George Lancashire sold the farm to Miss Jane Moss for the sum of £4000. Given the sale price it would appear that the improvements recommended three years earlier had not been made in the intervening period.

The farm buildings were significantly extended and remodelled after the middle of the 19th century, creating a regular courtyard plan, with barn, stables, feed stores and cattle shelters ranged around a cattle yard or ‘crew yard’ (English Heritage 2006a, 41). As noted above these alterations had not occurred by 1851, but had certainly been completed by 1889 when the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map sheet XIX.16 was published (Figure 9).

These developments followed the recommendations of agricultural improvers, set out in various publications of the period. The two decades between 1850 and 1870 are often referred to as the ‘Golden Age of British farming’, when improved transport links provided by canals, railways and better roads, coupled with continuing

developments in farming practice and technological innovation, saw a significant increase in production to meet the demands of an expanding population.

After about 1870 there was a period of agricultural depression brought about by a combination of factors. A series of wet summers resulted in poor grain crops, cattle herds were hit by foot and mouth and sheep flocks by sheep liver rot. Around the same time improved international transport and the development of refrigeration led to the large-scale importation of grain from the USA and corned beef from Argentina, while the Suez Canal opened up the British market to cheap lamb and wool from Australia and New Zealand.

Seen in this context the development at Poplars Farm is most likely to have occurred in the 1850s or 1860s, although Barnwell and Giles (1997, 149-50) note that, despite the depression, construction of model farmsteads continued into the early 1880s. It is worth noting at this point that when the farm next changed hands, in 1866, this was in order to secure the repayments on debts accrued by the late John Moss. *If* Moss was borrowing to finance the development of the farm, then this would suggest a date range between 1851 and 1866 for these improvements.

The development appears to have occurred in stages, though whether this was over a period of months or years is not known. Construction of the barn and addition of the upper storey over the earlier stable range, forming the east side of the courtyard, seem to have occurred in a single event, judging by the brickwork of the eastern elevation (Photo 8).

The ranges on the north and west side of the courtyard appear to have been constructed as one build, using the same orange-red coloured brick and with identical detailing such as bull-nosed bricks to door reveals, piers and corners (Photos 10-13). Roof trusses are all of similar suspended king post type.

The wall enclosing the fold yard on its south side is constructed from poor quality bricks that have not weathered well, although detailing is comparable with the adjacent west range. Plinth bricks from this south wall are stamped 'WAKERLEY MELTON'.

The layout is conventional, with the fold yard facing south to benefit from the sun (eg. Brunskill 1987, 70). The west range consists of a cow shed with integral feeding passage (Photo 10), with at one end a pair of pig sties (Photo 12) and at the other a two-bay implement shed (Photo 13). The north range has a 5-bay shelter shed (Photo 10) facing the fold yard (subsequently divided into separate loose boxes). Backing onto this is a 4-bay implement shed and a loose box opening off the entrance to the yard at the east end of this range (Photo 11). In one corner of the implement shed is an earth closet. The east range includes stabling, a trap house and probably a tack room at the south end; to the north is a barn and mixing place. On the upper floor, accessed via an external flight of stairs, there is heated groom's accommodation at the south end (Photo 9), with a granary over the stables beyond this.

A series of pig feeding troughs are built into the wall defining the south side of the fold yard. There is no indication on early maps of a roofed structure on this side of the fold yard and these may have been intended for feeding pigs that had the run of the

yard. An arch-headed recess in the south side of this wall, adjacent to the west range, may have accommodated beehives (Photo 12).

### *Later developments*

Few significant changes have subsequently been made to the farm complex. Ordnance Survey map editions of 1903 (Figure 10) and 1959 (Figure 11) show no changes to the layout of the farm buildings. As noted above, a series of additional structures are shown on the 1967 OS edition, the largest of which was an open-fronted shelter adjacent to the north-east corner of the farmyard (Figure 12). All of these additional buildings have since been removed and the layout today corresponds with that shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map published in 1889.

On the north side of the crew yard timber partitions have been installed into what appears originally to have been an open-fronted shelter shed (Photo 10). Other than this, none of the farmyard buildings appear to have been altered significantly since the mid 19th century making this a very complete example of its type, notwithstanding that some of the structures are in a poor state of repair.

The 1959 sale particulars indicate that stables and cow sheds were used to house pigs at that date, however this does not appear to have necessitated any significant alterations to the buildings.

## **4. Poplars Farm in Context**

### ***4.1 Type of Farming***

A document of 1790 identifies the then owner Robert Sharp as a ‘grazier’ and it is likely that throughout the 18th and 19th centuries this was a mixed farm primarily engaged in the rearing or fattening of cattle for market. In *A General View of Agriculture of the County of Leicester*, published in 1809, William Pitt notes that ‘Near Melton Mowbray there is very little arable, not more than one acre in thirty’ (Pitt 1809, 29).

It is apparent from the 1959 sale particulars that by the middle of the 20th century the rearing of pigs was a principal concern.

### ***4.2 Size***

William Pitt also makes some interesting observations on the size of farms in Leicestershire:

‘In the neighbourhood of Market Towns are many farms much under 100 acres, occupied by tradesmen or manufacturers. A more general size of farm is from 100 to 200 acres and from 200 to 500 acres are in the hands of many of the principal breeders and graziers and in some instances occupied by the owners’ (Pitt 1809, 28).

Where the size of the holding is recorded in documents relating to Poplars Farm, this has remained fairly constant at between *c.* 80 and 100 acres. For example, in 1790 the farm comprised three parcels of land: Nether Sanham (67a 2r), Long Meadow (10a 3r 22p) and Ox Meadow (11a 2r), together totalling over 88 acres. The 1881 census provides a figure of 100 acres. In 1919 the size of the holding is given as 81.177 acres, plus an additional 8.3 acre close. Poplars Farm therefore is at the lower end of the range for the ‘general size of farm’ quoted by Pitt.

### **4.3 Enclosure**

In the medieval period and later farms were located within villages and typically it was not until the open fields were enclosed that farms were established away from the villages, within the newly-consolidated holdings. Pitt notes of Leicestershire that:

‘In general, the modern enclosed parishes have the worst farm houses, they being almost always cooped up in the villages; in the more ancient enclosures, farm houses have been erected in the midst of the occupations, and built with better materials’ (Pitt 1809, 22).

Kirby Bellars was one of the ‘ancient enclosures’ referred to by Pitt; the late Alan Fox in his history of the parish gives the date as around 1634, predating by more than a century the main period of Parliamentary enclosures between *c.* 1760 and 1830 (Fox 1997, 38). Despite this, none of the outlying farms are demonstrably earlier than the eighteenth century and Fox notes that:

‘it was not till the end of the eighteenth century that farmers started building new farm buildings in their farm land instead of in the villages. Hillcrest Farm was built in 1776, Cream Gorse Farm in 1782 and Brockleys in 1784’ (Fox 1997, 27; see also Fox’s Fig. 3, reproduced here as Figure 6).

Fox explains that:

‘This development [of new farms in the late 18th century] seems to have coincided with the acquisition of the lordship of the manor by Sir Charles Sedley in 1756 and particularly by Edward Manners after 1778. Land Tax assessments indicate considerable increase in the number of proprietors of land from eight in 1773 to forty-two in 1813, suggesting owners of large estates were selling off pieces of land’ (Fox, 1997, 27).

A contemporary account of the process by which new farms were established in the post-enclosure landscape is given by Pitt in relation to the then recently-enclosed Belvoir estate, which belonged to the Duke of Rutland:

‘The Farmhouses are at present very generally in the villages; but as these decay, (and they are fast verging to it) it will be natural to form the new erections in the midst of the occupations, where some barns are already built, and the farms will be consolidated on principles of economy, and let to the more active and diligent farmer; for the tendency of the country is to pasture and feeding, the rejected occupier and his family must emigrate to towns, or elsewhere, for employ’ (Pitt 1809, 16).

#### **4.4 Development of the Farm**

The documentary and cartographic evidence suggests that the present farmhouse and the earliest section of the east range of farm buildings were constructed in the late 18th or early 19th century, possibly between 1790 and 1816. Two further buildings were erected between 1816 and 1824; located a short distance to the north-west of the farmhouse, one of these may have been the barn referred to in the valuation of 1848.

The relatively modest scale of the agricultural buildings in the late 18th - early 19th century is fairly typical for the region; at this stage it is unlikely that any accommodation for livestock was provided. English Heritage's *Historic Farmsteads, Preliminary Character Statement: East Midlands* notes that there are very few surviving separate buildings for livestock accommodation dating from before 1840 in this region, concluding that accommodation for livestock was either temporary in form or simply not provided (English Heritage 2006a, 57).

Around this time the literature on farming starts to place a great emphasis on the importance of well-built farmsteads, planned on efficient lines to minimise labour and to facilitate the collection of manure, which was used to condition the soil to improve crop yields. Barnwell and Giles (1997, 5) note that:

‘The modern farmstead of this period was based on the grouping of buildings around a yard or series of yards, and these buildings included not only barns but also shelters for livestock.’

In the East Midlands provision was made for housing cattle in shelter sheds or loose boxes from about 1840:

‘In the south and east of the Region particularly, cattle housing often consisted of single-storey open-fronted brick and pantile shelter sheds frequently associated with cattle yards or ‘crew yards’ divided up so that groups of cattle could be managed individually. The addition of shelter sheds around yards became increasingly common in the early to mid-19th century; for example on many of the Lincolnshire farms surveyed as part of the RCHME survey shelter sheds were added after 1850 (Barnwell & Giles 1997, p.46).

‘Loose boxes mostly date from the 1850s, these served as accommodation for sick or calving beasts, bulls or most commonly fatstock. They comprised individual boxes or more usually a row of boxes with a central or rear feeding passage’ (English Heritage 2006a, 57).

Based on the available evidence, the development of Poplars Farm along ‘model farm’ lines seems to have occurred in the 1850s - 1860s, during the boom years of British agriculture. The relative size and configuration of buildings demonstrates an emphasis on the rearing or fattening of livestock, with only modest provision for the processing and storage of cereal crops (Figure 5; Photo 8).

The subsequent agricultural depression meant that no further significant development of the complex occurred in the later 19th and first half of the 20th century. Later

additions to the building stock have been peripheral and short-lived and in its present form the layout corresponds closely with that of the 1850s - 1860s 'model' farmstead.

Whilst the buildings have inevitably suffered through standing empty for the last half century, this hiatus has resulted in the preservation of various elements that would almost certainly have been lost had the farm been occupied during this period. For example, the earth closets, the bakehouse and the interior fittings of the various agricultural buildings.

#### ***4.5 An Earlier Farmhouse?***

There is evidence to suggest the existence of earlier building(s) on the site, prior to the construction of the present farmhouse.

The earliest document in the collection of deeds at the ROLLR is an Indenture of 1737, relating to the sale of the property by Sir John Tyrwhitt to William Gylby for the sum of £2000, which refers to 'Messuages, lands, tenements and hereditaments'.

A lease of 1790 deals initially with the land: 'that close or ground now divided into three parts...' Nether Sanham, Long Meadow and Ox Meadow, then 'all and singular buildings, barns, stables, hedges...'

Messuage is a standard term for a property including a dwelling house, which would appear to indicate that there was a house on the farm in the early 18th century. Caution needs to be exercised in the interpretation of such evidence, however, as the wording is often formulaic, citing a range of inclusive clauses to cover all eventualities; not all of these elements necessarily existed on the property at that date (eg. Alcock 1986, 37).

The use of ironstone to construct the cellar beneath the rear range of the farmhouse may simply reflect the relative importance placed on these two building materials in the late 18th - early 19th century, the local stone with its vernacular connotations being relegated to the subterranean element of the house where it would not be seen by anyone whose opinion mattered. Alternatively the cellar may be the remnant of an earlier building on this site that was retained and incorporated into the present house. The awkward combination of stone and brick, for example in the east wall, and in the south wall where there is a vertical joint between the two materials (Photo 14), would seem to support the suggestion that an earlier stone-built cellar has been adapted and reused, with alterations and additions made in brick.

The establishment of new farms on enclosed land was often a piecemeal process, as hinted at by Pitt in his comments on the Belvoir estate (Pitt 1809, 16; cited above). Barns were usually the first buildings to be erected and evidence exists elsewhere in the county for barns having been dismantled and moved from farmyards within villages out into the new enclosures. Additional buildings were erected as finances allowed. It is probable that one or more buildings were constructed at Poplars Farm before the present farmhouse was built, especially given the early date of enclosure; it is not clear whether these included an earlier farmhouse.

## 5. Conclusion

The development of Poplars Farm is characteristic of the history of farming in the Melton Mowbray area in the 18th and 19th centuries. This pattern of agriculture, encompassing the architecture and arrangement of traditional farm buildings, embodies the distinctive rural landscape character of this region. Farmsteads of this type have come under increasing pressure as a result of changing agricultural practices and speculative development to the point where, as noted by David Smith as long ago as 1992, their survival can no longer be assumed (Smith 1992, 64).

As stated in the Introduction to English Heritage's Guide to the Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings ('traditional' is defined as farm buildings pre-dating 1940):

'Historic farmsteads and their buildings make a fundamental contribution to the richly varied character of the English countryside. They illustrate the long history of farming and settlement in the landscape and exemplify the crafts and skills associated with local building materials and techniques' (English Heritage 2006b, 2).

The proposed restoration of Poplars Farm and its return to agricultural use represents the best possible option in terms of preserving the historic character of the buildings and landscape:

'The best option for retaining the overall historic and landscape integrity of traditional farming landscapes is, wherever possible, to keep the buildings in active agricultural use or related low-key usage' (English Heritage 2006b, 2).

Whilst Poplars Farm has not been in active agricultural use over the last half century, inevitably resulting in some deterioration of the built fabric, the buildings are sufficiently well preserved that they could be returned to use. A notable aspect of the findings of this study is that the period of disuse since *c.* 1960 has resulted in the preservation of various minor architectural details that would otherwise almost certainly have been lost in the course of general improvement, had the farm been continuously occupied.

The development of the farm around the middle of the 19th century is typical of the response to improvements in agricultural practices nationally. Comparative studies have shown that within the broader national framework, strong regional characteristics exist, reflecting the particular farming practises of different areas (Barnwell and Giles 1997). At Poplars Farm this regional diversity is illustrated by the emphasis on pastoral farming. This is reflected in the building stock by the ample provision of cow housing but only very modest provision for the processing and storage of cereal crops.

The evidence for earlier agricultural activities on the site extends the period of interest back to the enclosure of the parish in the early 17th century. This is likely to have included buildings predating the construction of the present farmhouse, some elements of which may be preserved within the existing complex. The collection of early deeds is an unusual survival, permitting a fuller understanding of the history and development of the farm from the early 18th century onwards.

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## 7. Archive and Publication

The archive consists of:

A copy of this report

Survey drawings

Digital colour photographs in tif and jpg format

Black and White negatives in 35mm format

Contact sheets for colour digital and black and white photographs

Location plans for the archived photographs

The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museums Service under the Accession Number X. A174.2011.

A version of the summary will appear in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. The report will be added to the Archaeology Data Service's (ADS) Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database.

## 8. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by Neil Finn and Sophie Clarke, with project management undertaken by Neil Finn and Patrick Clay of ULAS. ULAS would like to thank Mr and Mrs Bowley for their assistance during the fieldwork.

## **Appendix 1: Historical Sources**

### **Ordnance Survey Maps**

1816 - preliminary OS series of Leicestershire 265 sw.

1816 - preliminary OS series, negative view, 265 se.

1816 maps show two buildings located to the east of the track from the main road.

1824 - Old Series Ordnance Survey tithe map sheet 64 shows two buildings to east of track, presumably those seen in 1816, plus two new buildings on the northwest side of the track.

1889 - First edition OS 1:2500 sheet XIX.16 shows courtyard arrangement, as present in 2010.

1903 – Second edition OS 1:2500 sheet XIX.16, layout as on 1889 map.

1959 – OS 1:10,560 sheet SK 71 NW, layout as on 1889 and 1903 maps.

1967 – OS 1:2500 sheets SK7216-7316 and SK 7215-7315, shows various additional buildings and structures, none of which were standing at the time of the 2010 survey.

### **Ownership of Poplars Farm**

Before 1737: Sir John Tyrwhitt

1737: Conveyance from Sir John Tyrwhitt to Mr William Gylby

Before 1790: Mr Thomas Belsey

1790: Conveyance from Mr Thomas Belsey to Mr Robert Sharpe

1824: Mr Robert Sharp conveys to Messrs. Briggs and Lancashire

1829: Conveyance from Mr Briggs to Mr John Curzon

1837: Conveyance from Mr John Curzon & others to Mrs Ann Lancashire and Mr James Osbourne

1848: Valuation Mr George Lancashire (Mrs Ann Lancashire died 1842)

1851: Conveyance from Mr George Lancashire to Miss Jane Moss

1866: Conveyance from Miss Ann Moss and Mrs Frances Alice Moss (widow of Mr John Moss) to Mrs Frances Goodale

1890s: James Sadler Smith (d.25/9/1894)

1895: Arthur Francis Smith (brother of late James Sadler Smith)

1918: Conveyance from Mrs Clarissa Mary Smith (widow of William Arthur Smith) to Mr Joseph Hewerdine (sold at auction)

1959: ?Hewerdine to Bowley (sold at auction)

1959 to present Bowley family

### **Tenants**

1790: Robert Sharpe

1837: William Somes

1861: John Somes

1881: John Staten

1959: W.H. Musson

### **Value**

1737: £2000 (conveyance price)

1790: £1950 (conveyance price)

1824: £3700 (conveyance price)

1848: £4565.1.3 (valuation)

1851: £4000 (conveyance price)

1866: £5000 (conveyance price)

**Summary of Deeds and other historical sources in chronological order**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
c. 1634	Enclosure
6/7/1737	Indenture of demise. Messuages, lands, tenements and hereditaments situate in Kirby Bellars, sold by Sir John Tyrwhitt, baronet, to William Gylby, for £2000.
30/8/1790	Lease of property between Thomas Belsey, gentleman, of Kent, Robert Sharpe, grazier, of Great Dalby and William Blower, grazier, of Rotherby. For the period of one year, for 5 shillings, that close or ground now divided into three parts, Nether Sanham (67a 2r), Long Meadow (10a 3r 22p), the Ox meadow (11a 2 r) all of which are in the tenure of Robert Sharpe and John Warner, lately purchased by the said Thos Belsey from Thomas Samuel Joliffe esq and his trustees together with all and singular buildings, barns, stables etc.
31/8/1790	Conveyance of estate at Kirby Bellars, from Mr. Thomas Belsey to Mr Robert Sharpe and his trustees, for the consideration of £1950.
6/4/1824	Conveyance of messuage and lands at Kirby Bellars, for the payment of £3700, from Mr Robert Sharpe and others to Messrs. Briggs and Lancashire.
25/8/1824	Assignment of a term of 1000 years in an estate at Kirby Bellars in the county of Leicester in trust for mortgages and to attend the inheritance. Mr. Hughes to Mr. N. Curzon.
5/4/1828	Deed of further charge on an estate at Kirby Bellars in the county of Leicester for £313, making in the whole £4013. Mr Robert Sharpe to Messrs Briggs and Lancashire.
6/4/1829	Assignment of the principal sum of £1850 served by mortgage on an estate at Kirby Bellars in the county of Leicester, belonging to Mr. Robert Sharpe. Mr Briggs to Mr John Curzon.
6-7/7/1837	Conveyance of a messuage farm and lands of Kirby Bellars in trust to be settled pursuant to the will of the late Mr. John Lancashire. John Curzon esq. and others to Mrs Ann Lancashire and Mr. James Osbourne. Messuage, dwellinghouse or tenement with barn, outbuildings, yards, garden and appurtenances, Nether Sanham, Top Sanham, Gorsey Close, Croft Wheat Close- formerly in the occupation of Robert Sharpe his tenants or assigns, but now in the occupation of William Somes, his tenants or assigns- also refers to indenture of 1824, between Robert Sharpe, William Sharpe, his wife Mary, Edward Sharpe, William Somes, Mary Ann Somes, Robert Briggs, William Lancashire, John Curzon.
7/7/1837	Assignment of a term of 1000 years in an estate of Kirby Bellars, in trust to attend the inheritance. Mr. Nathaniel Curzon to Mr. Charles Severne. Nathaniel Curzon of Breedon on the Hill, John Curzon of Derby, Ann Lancashire of Alvaston, James Osbourne farmer, Robert Sharpe, yeoman and Charles Severne of Alvaston, farmer.
15/11/1842	Settlement of estate of Mrs Ann Lancashire
19/4/1848	Valuation document: Valuation of Land at Kirby Bellars in the county of Leicester the property of Mr. Lancashire in the

	<p>occupation of Mr. William Somes.</p> <p>‘The farmhouse requires sundry repairs and additions and all the outbuildings except the Barn will require being taken down and rebuilt on a larger scale, a less outlay than £300 upon the buildings cannot be dispensed with but £400 ought to be laid out to make them comfortable and convenient.’ John Bromley. Total Valuation £4565.1.3, with annual value of £149. 13.6.</p>
8/12/1848	Merger of Rent Charge. Mr George Lancashire.
24/6/1851	Conveyance of a messuage or tenement land and premises situate at Kirby Bellars, Mr George Lancashire to Miss Jane Moss, for £4000
1851 census	<p>William Somes head 68 farmer</p> <p>Mary Ann Somes wife 54</p> <p>John Somes son, 26, farmer</p> <p>Maria Somes, dau, 23</p> <p>Ann Somes dau. 21</p> <p>Thomas, son, 14</p> <p>Mary Ann Staten, dau. Butchers wife</p> <p>William staten, 2</p> <p>John Thomas Staten, 5mths</p> <p>Walter Scott, servant, 16</p>
1861 census	<p>John Somes, head, 36</p> <p>Ann Somes, wife, 26</p> <p>Elizabeth Ann Somes, dau. 1.</p> <p>Mary Ellen Fox, Servant, 14</p> <p>Dinah Gibson, Servant 13</p> <p>Joseph Pailing servant 16</p>
15/12/1866	Conveyance of property from Miss Ann Moss and Mrs Alice Moss to Mrs Frances Goodale, as repayment of £5000 owed.
1881 census	Head of house, John Staten (64), 100 acres, 1 servant, 7 in family
1890s	Property owned by James Sadler Smith (d 25/9/1894), passed to brother Arthur Francis Smith 8/1/1895
21/4/1896	Property forms part of the hereditaments comprised in a certain indenture of mortgage, between AF Smith, AF Smith and Mary Ann Smith, Charles Greaves and Arthur Cox (d. Nov 1896)
1918	Abstract of Title to Mrs Clarissa Smith, widow of William Arthur Smith, to <b>The Poplars</b> .
23-31/12/1918	Smith to Hewerdine. Requisitions of title - a reference to yearly tenancy agreement, commencing in April 1896, notice given to tenant to quit by April 1919.
9/4/1919	Farm and lands known as the Poplars (81.177 acres, plus 8.3 acre close (210 on OS map), occupied by Mr Joseph Wild Chandler, sold by auction 3/12/1918 by Clarissa Mary Smith of Alvaston to Mr Joseph Hewerdine of Wyfordby.
6/4/1927	Mortgage Hewerdine to Garner
28/7/1959	Sales Particulars DE4674/1442 - Sales Particulars The Poplars

Farm, Kirby Bellars, Nr. Melton Mowbray

Shaftko H. Sikes and Smith at the Bell Hotel, Melton Mowbray, on Tuesday 28th July 1959 at 4pm

Lot 1. A freehold, Stock and Arable Farm, 81. 027 Acres

The Poplars Fam is a useful farm which is within convenient distance from Melton Mowbray. The land which I mainly pasture lies around the homestead and is served by a drive leading from the road between Great Dalby and the main Leicester to Melton Mowbray road

The farmhouse and buildings

The farmhouse is constructed in red brick with a slate roof and contains:

Ground Floor: Hall, Sitting Room, Front Room, Kitchen  
First Floor: Four bedrooms  
Second Floor: Two Attics

The farm buildings include:

Brick built and slate range with workshop, garage, stabling for four and two used as a piggery. Granary over the whole.

Brick built and Asbestos barn with mixing place.

Brick built and slate building with two pig sties, cow shed for twelve, used as piggery, six various loose boxes.

Brick built and tile 4-bay open implement shed  
2-bay open implement shed

Land

The land lies around the homestead within a ring fence as described below:

Schedule

No. on OS (1903 edition)	Description	Area- Acres
242	House and buildings	.353
241	Stackyard	.582
243	Yard, etc.	.362
244	Garden and Orchard	.415
239	Paddock	.2.807
240	Part 7 Acre sown oats, 2 acres seeds	

	9.390		
254	Pasture	10.185	
217	Arable	18.359	
214	Arable	7.606	
Pt.213	Pasture	10.054	
215	Spinney and Pond	.114	
245	Arable	8.488	
246	Pasture	6.500	
247	Pasture	5.812	
General Notes			
Tenure: The property is freehold and is sold subject to the tenancy detailed below.			
Outgoings: The property is free of tithe. Land Tax- being ascertained.			
Wayleave: A payment of 18s. per annum is received in respect of the electricity poles and cables which cross the farm.			
Timber: All growing timber is included in the sale.			
The farm is sold subject to the Lady Day tenancy of Mr. W. H. Musson, who pays a rent of £135 15s 0d. per annum which was fixed in 1951.			

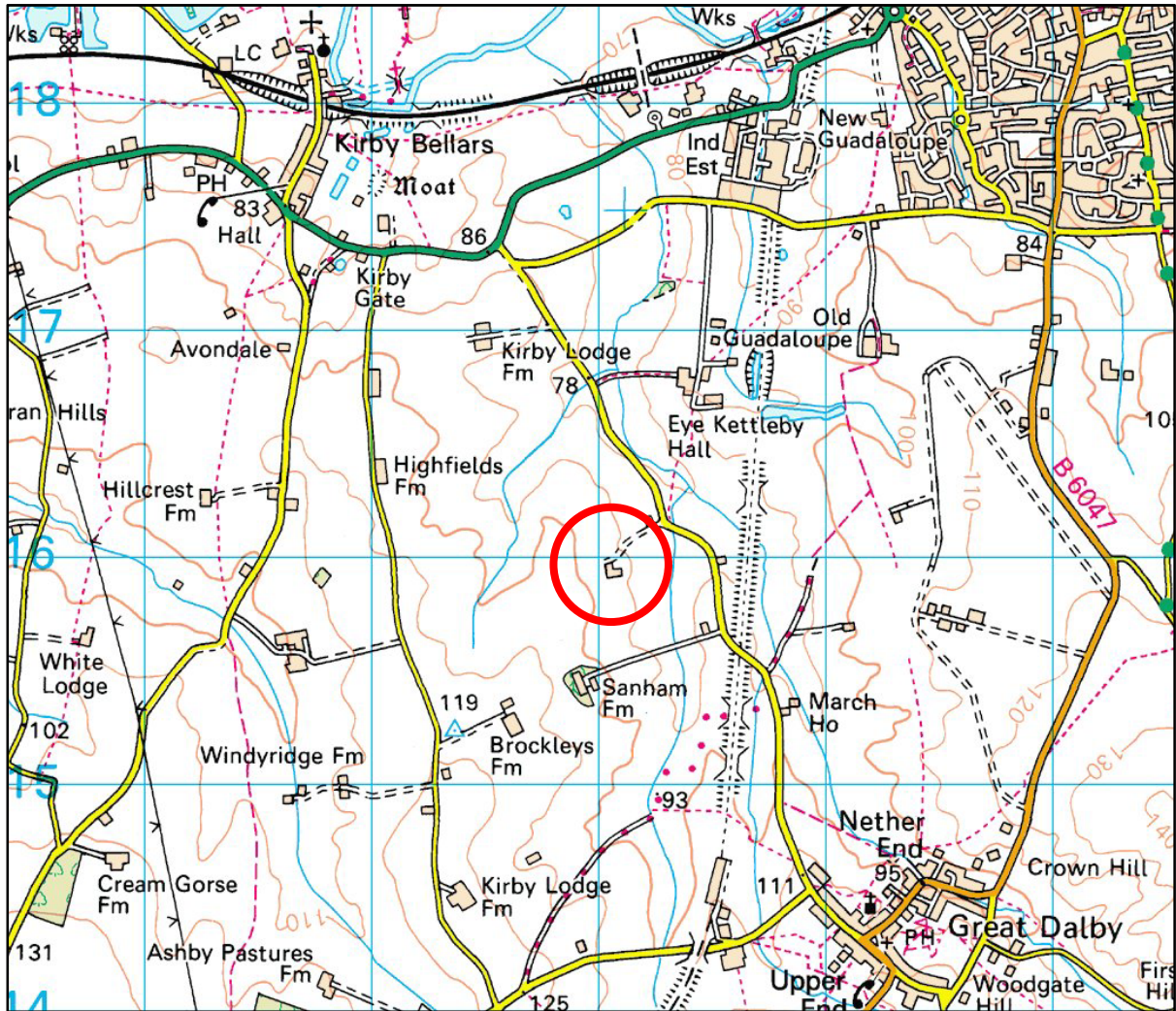
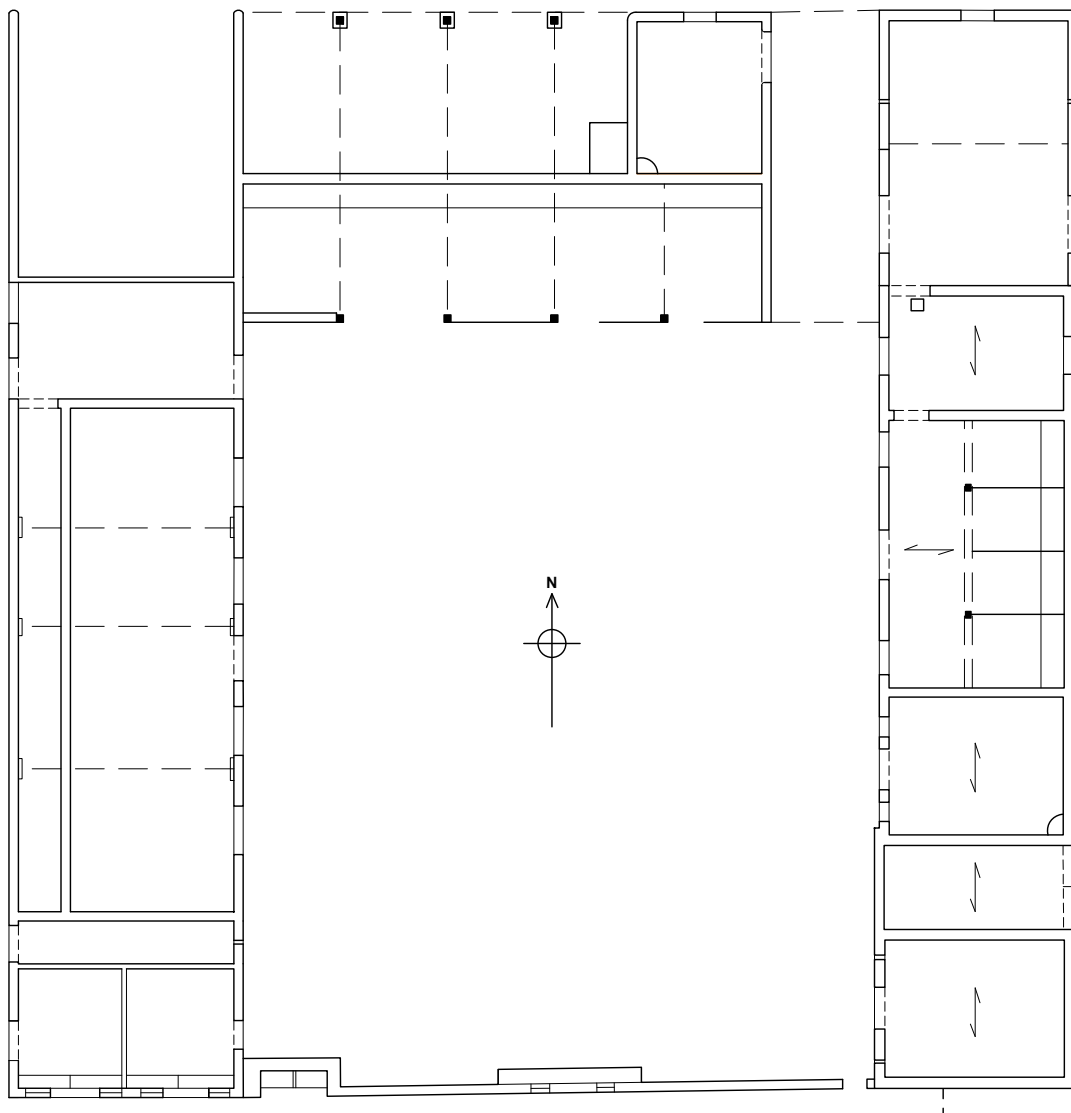


Figure 1. Location Plan Poplars Farm circled (unspecified scale).

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Poplars Farm, Kirby Bellars  
SK 730 159

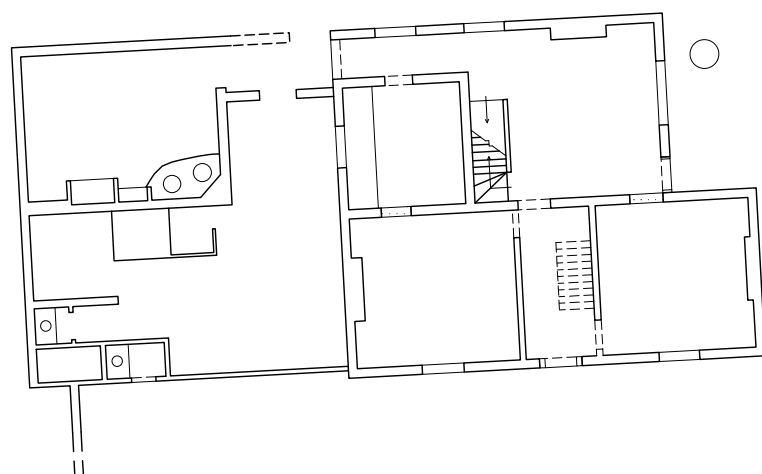


Figure 2. Plan of the farm buildings

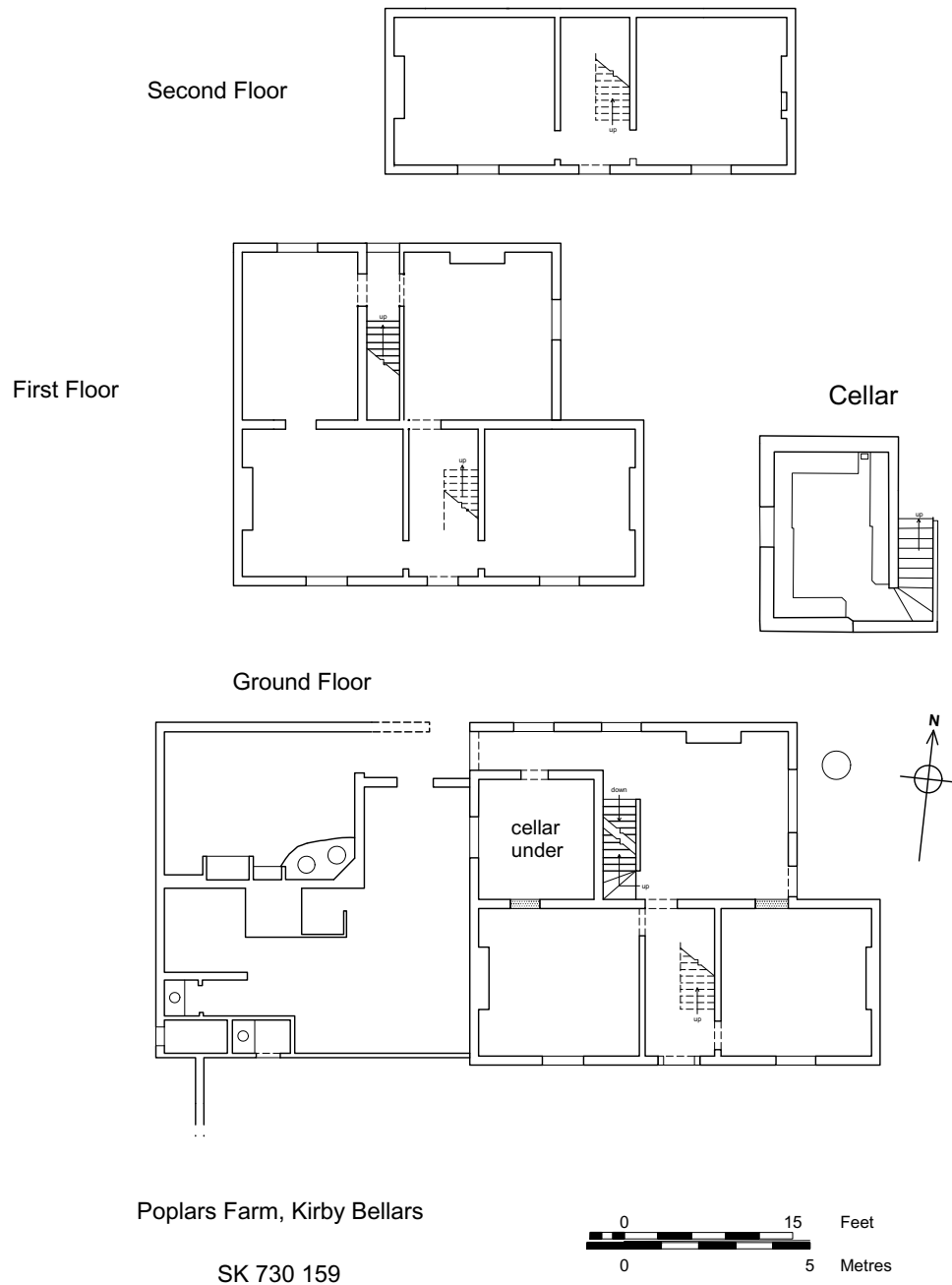
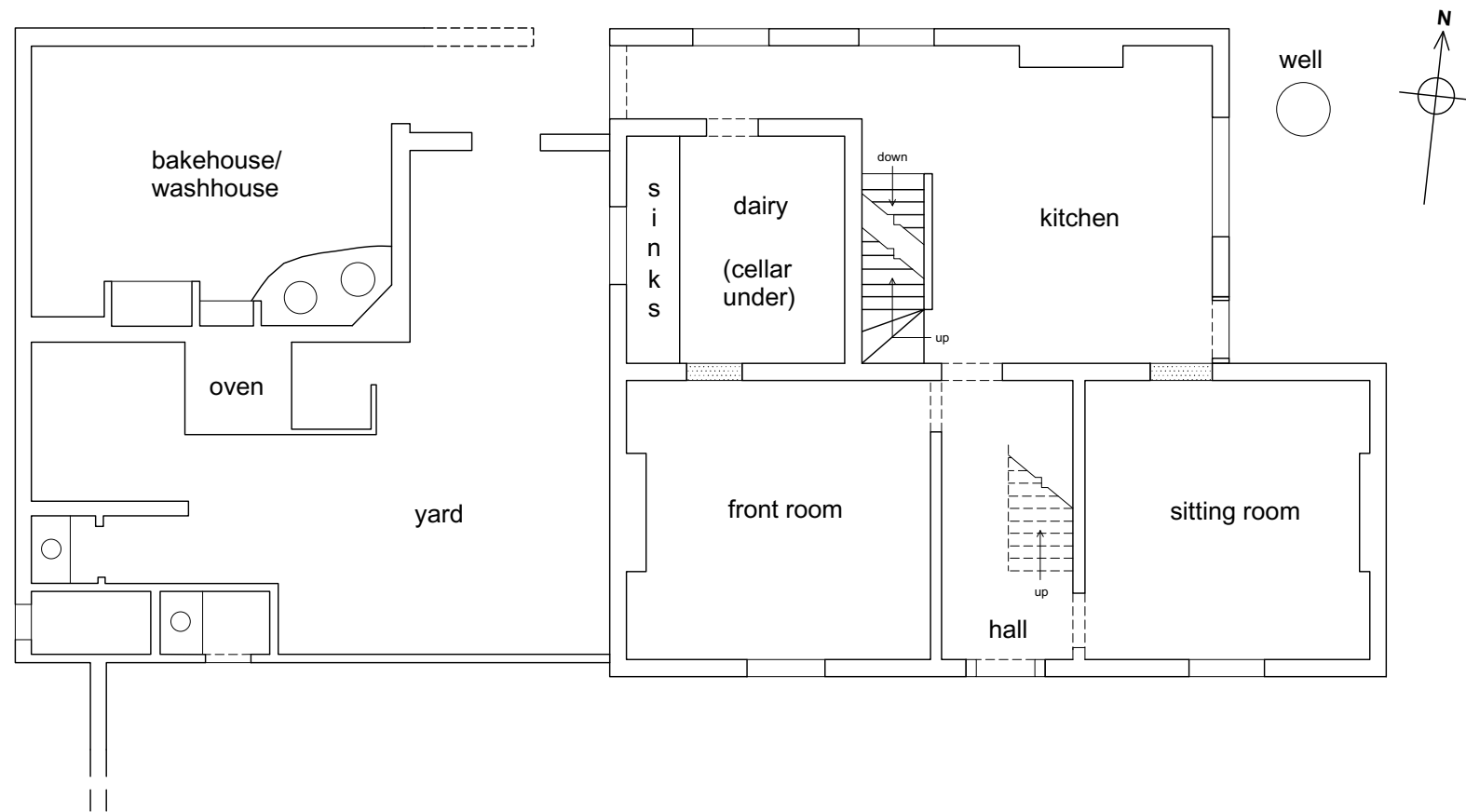


Figure 3. The farmhouse: floor plans (upper floors approx. only)



Poplars Farm, Kirby Bellars

SK 730 159

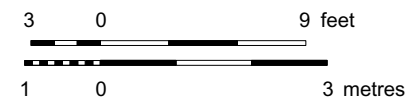
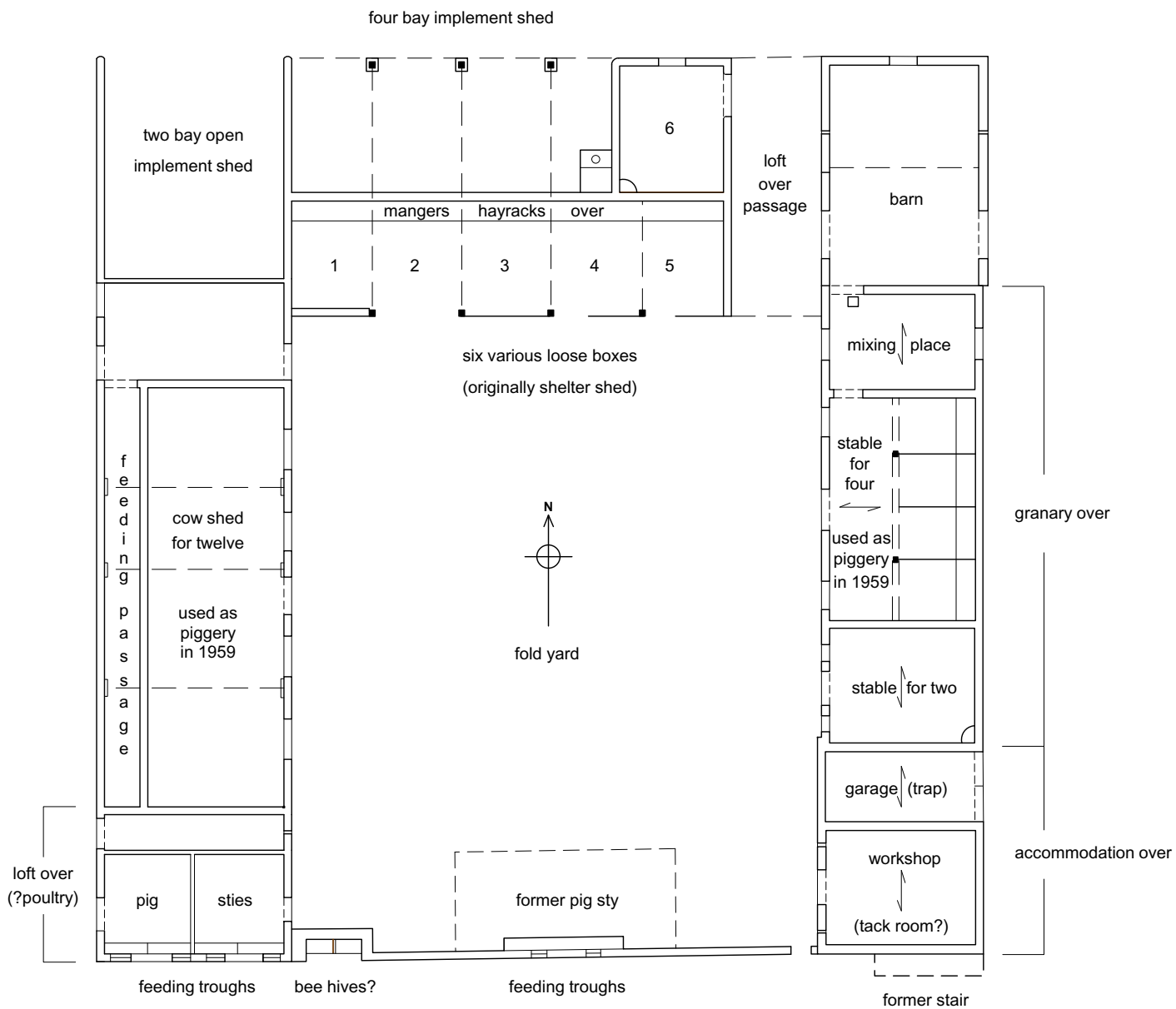


Figure 4. The farmhouse: ground floor plan showing room usage in 1959



Poplars Farm, Kirby Bellars

SK 730 159

Figure 5. The farmyard buildings

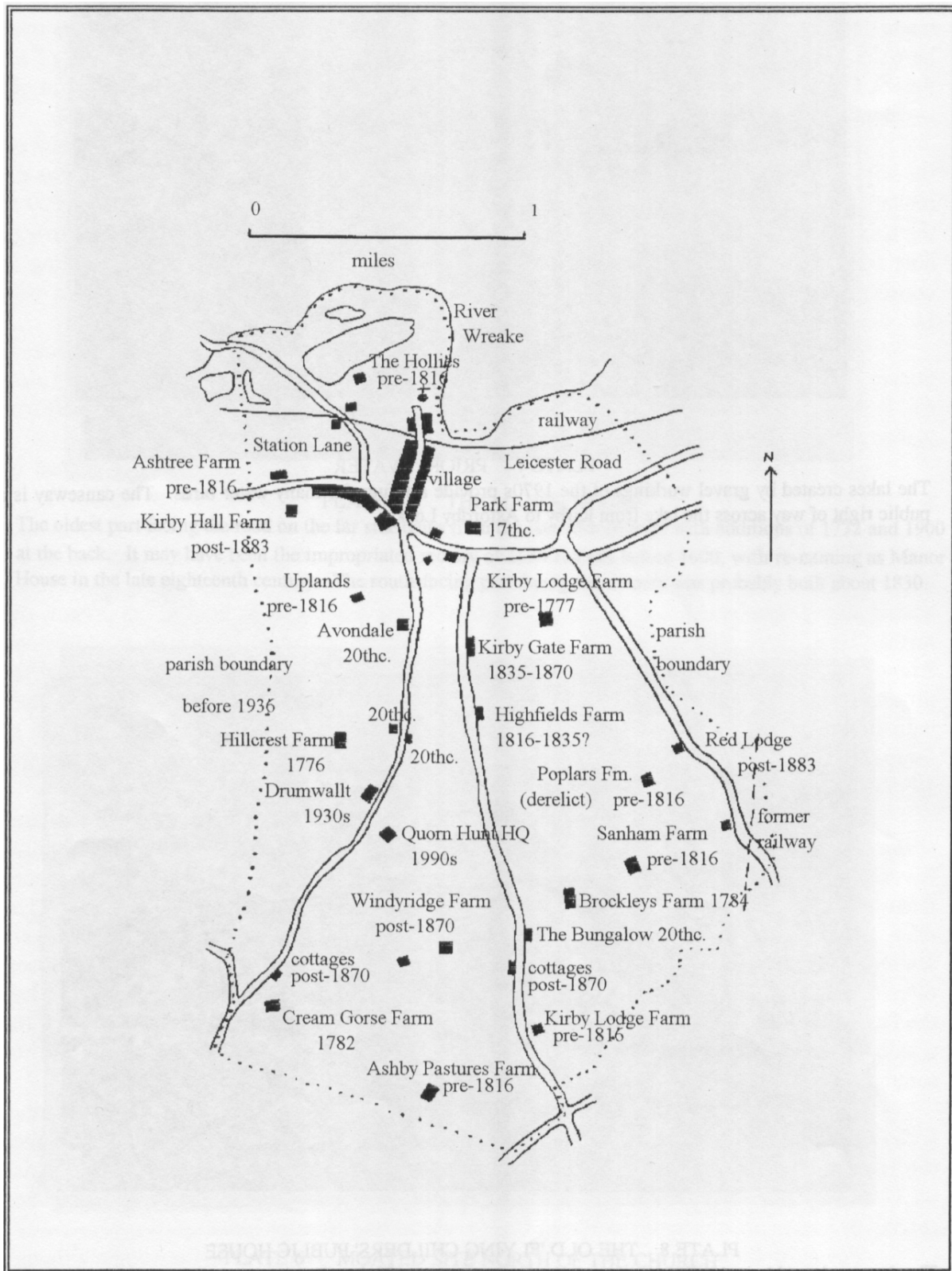


Figure 6. Parish of Kirby Bellars Settlement Map (1994) reproduced from Fox 1997, Fig. 3



Figure 7. Extract from 1816 Ordnance Survey map, Poplars Farm circled (unspecified scale)

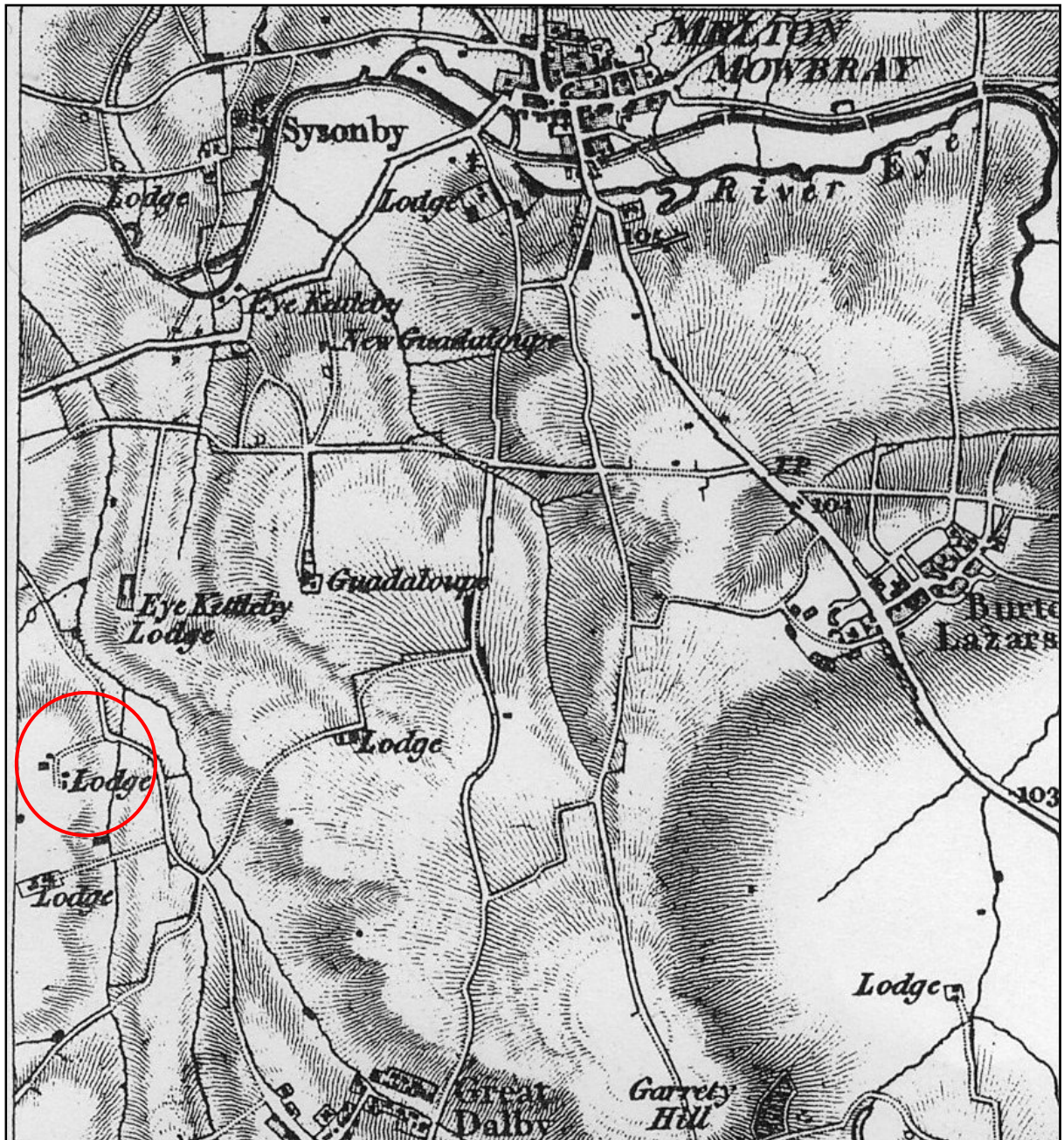
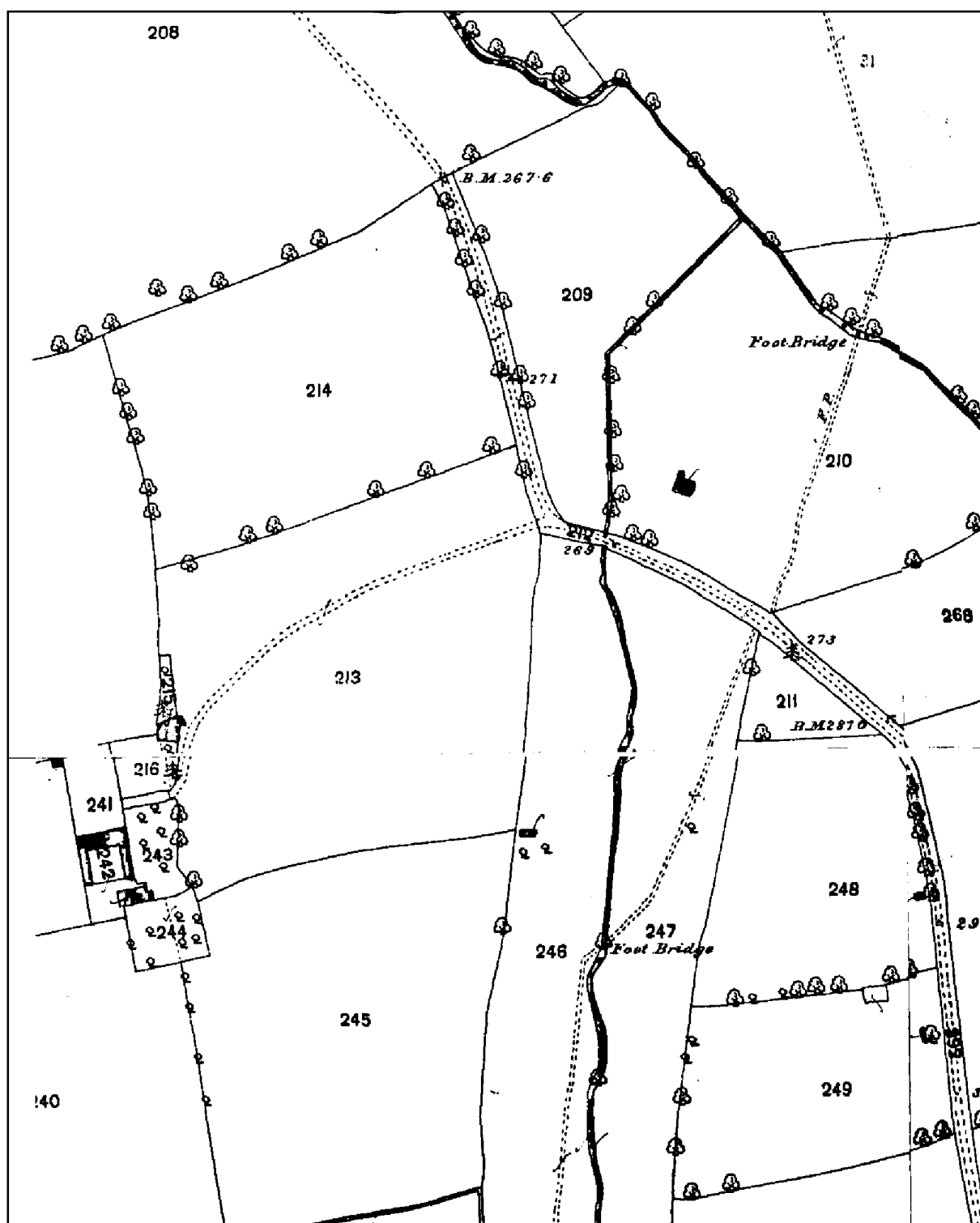


Figure 8. extract from 1824 Ordnance Survey map, Poplars Farm circled (unspecified scale)



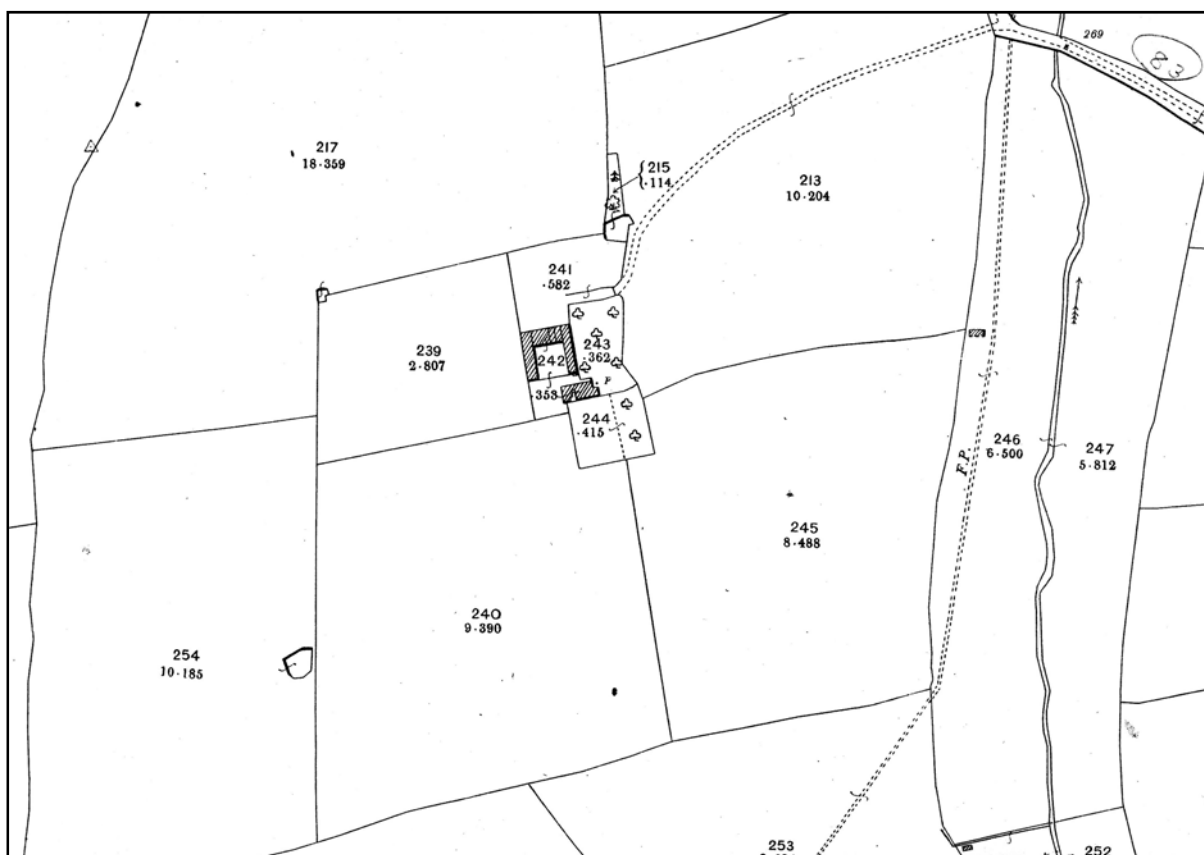


Figure 10. Extract from 1903 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (unspecified scale)

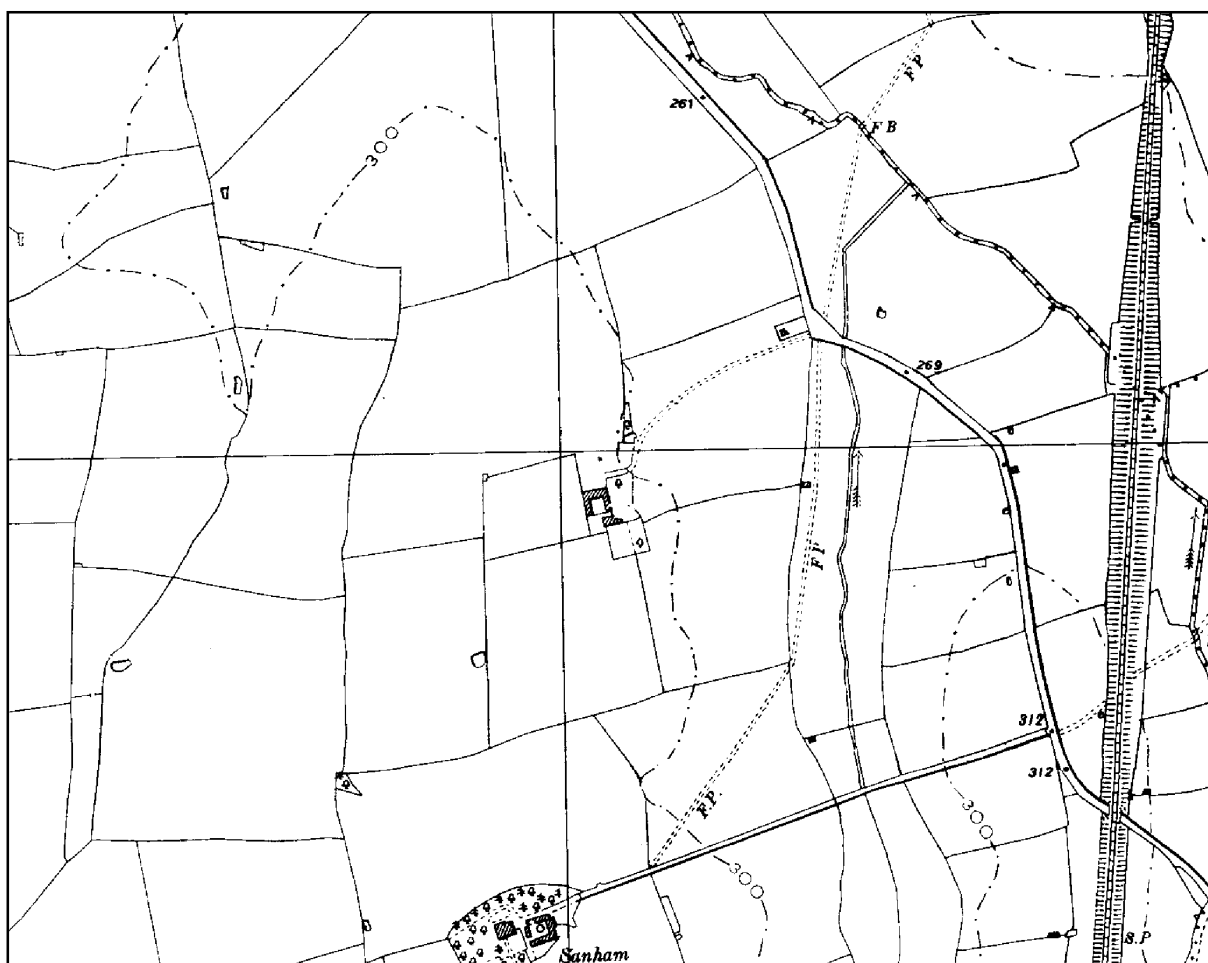


Figure 11. Extract from 1959 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map (unspecified scale)

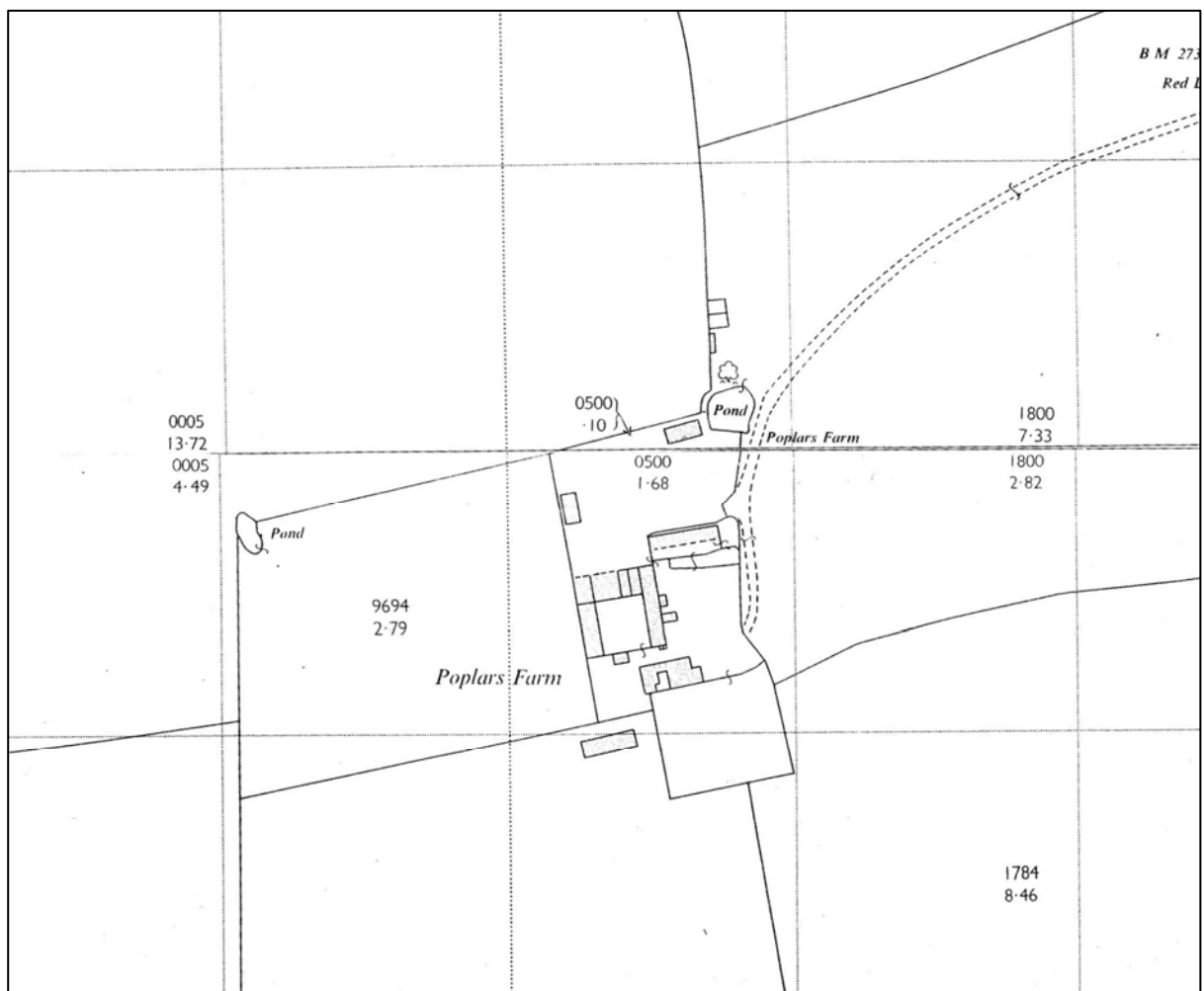


Figure 12. Extract from 1967 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (unspecified scale)

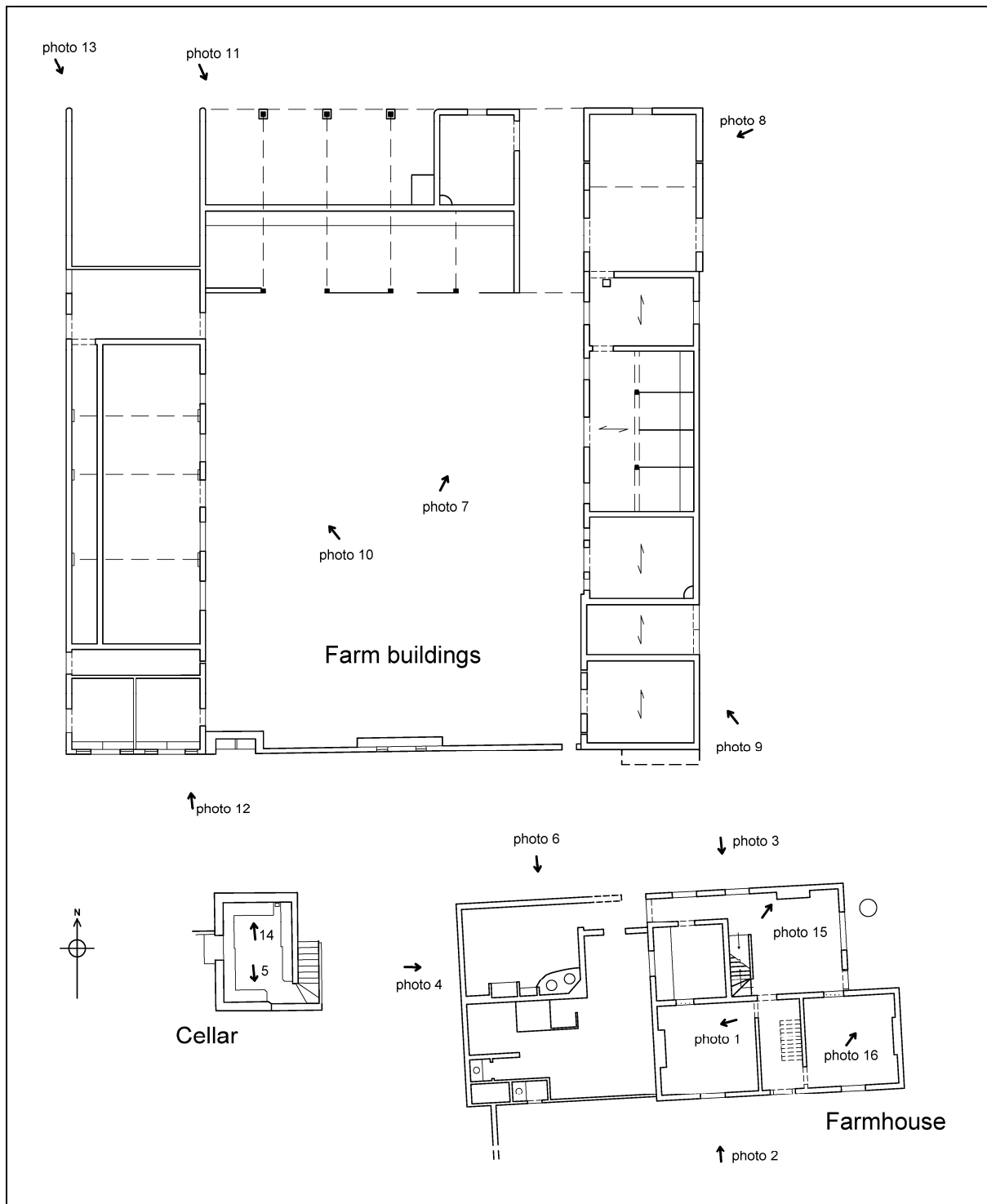


Figure 13. Location of Photographs 1-16 (see below)



Photo 1. Poplars Farm, south (frontage) range, looking north



Photo 2. Interior of south (frontage) range of farmhouse



Photo 3. North (rear) range of farmhouse, looking south



Photo 4. West elevation of the farmhouse, looking east



Photo 5. Cellar beneath the dairy, looking north-west



Photo 6. The Bakehouse, looking south



Photo 7. East range of farmyard buildings, looking north-east



Photo 8. The barn at the north end of the east range, looking west



Photo 9. First floor groom's accommodation at south end of east range, looking north-west



Photo 10. North and west ranges of farmyard buildings, looking north-west



Photo 11. North range of farmyard, implement shed and loose box, looking south-east



Photo 12. Pig sties at south end of west range and recess for ?beehives, looking north-west



Photo 13. Two-bay implement shed at north end of west range, looking south-east



Photo 14. Brick and stonework in cellar beneath the dairy, looking north



Photo 15. Cast Iron range in former kitchen, looking north-east



Photo 16. Decorative shelves in first floor room, looking north.

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