

**A Level 2 Historic Building Survey at  
The Old Barn,  
Merry Tom Lane, Brixworth,  
Northamptonshire.**

**NGR: SP 744 694**

Andrew Hyam



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**A R Hyam**

**For: Mr R. Wright**

Approved by:

Signed: ...



Date: ...30/01/2016

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### **Summary**

*An historic building survey (level 2) was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at The Old Barn, Merry Tom Lane, Brixworth, Northamptonshire on the 15th of January 2016. The survey studied an isolated field barn located to the south of Brixworth. The barn appears to have been constructed in the mid to late 19th century and is likely to be part of a satellite set of buildings associated with a nearby farm complex. There is some evidence of other now-demolished farm buildings which were attached to the barn in the late 19th and early 20th century.*

*The report and archive will be deposited under Event Number ENN 108218*

### **Introduction and background**

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for an historic building recording (Level 2) on the Old Barn, Merry Tom Lane, Brixworth, Northamptonshire. Level 2 historic building surveys are defined in the English Heritage (now Historic England) guidance document – *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2006). Under planning application number DA/2013/0993 permission has been approved for the conversion of the existing stone-built barn, demolition of an attached modern barn and the construction of a new house.

The Old Barn stands in an isolated position approximately 500m to the south of Brixworth and to the west of the A508 Market Harborough to Northampton road (Fig. 1). Modern Brixworth is gradually expanding outwards with new housing estates surrounding the original town centre resulting in the barn being only a few fields away from Brixworth. The Old Barn is located at the end of a small trackway which leads westwards from an unmetalled trackway known as Merry Tom Lane. The nearest farm is Hill Farm which is approximately 500m to the south-east and is presently used as an office park. No research has been carried out to ascertain the previous ownership of the barn. At present the single storey Old Barn has a modern single storey barn built against its southern end. Both buildings on site are currently unused and show evidence of petty vandalism. The buildings face uphill to the east towards Merry Tom Lane and westwards across a shallow valley towards the village of Spratton. The buildings sit on a small terrace with a bank running along the west and northern sides (Fig. 2). To the west of the modern barn are two concrete bases with traces of modern concrete breeze-block walls indicating the location of two now-demolished but relatively modern buildings.

The British Geological Survey (BGS) identifies the bedrock beneath the buildings and up the slope towards Merry Tom Lane as Northampton Sand Formation of ooidal ironstone. On the western side of the buildings the bedrock changes to Whitby Mudstone Formation as the land slopes downhill.

On the advice of the Assistant Archaeological Advisor, the consent has been granted by Daventry District Council with a condition for an archaeological programme of works for archaeological building recording at English Heritage Level 2. When conversion and building work commences a separate programme of archaeological investigation will also take place in the form of trial trenching and a report will be prepared for the observation, investigation and recording of the ground works.

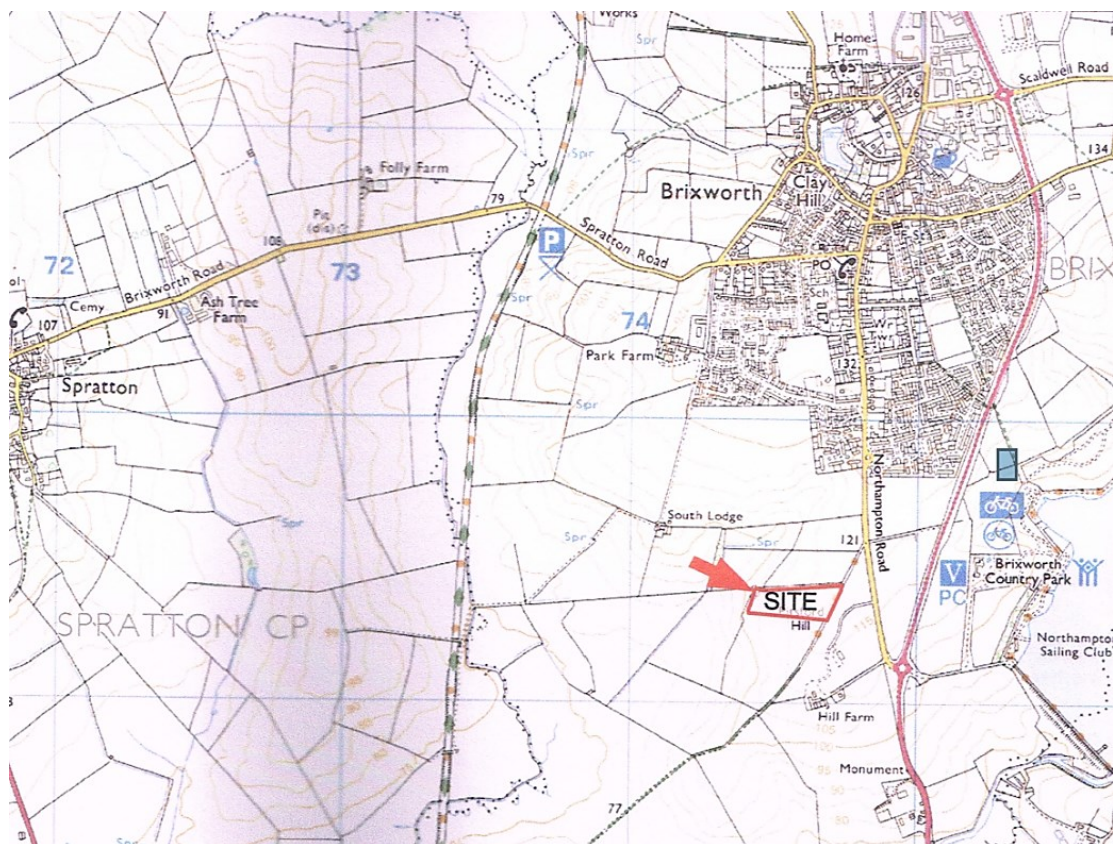


Figure 1 Site location

The barn is located in the north-west corner of the outlined site. Contains OS data

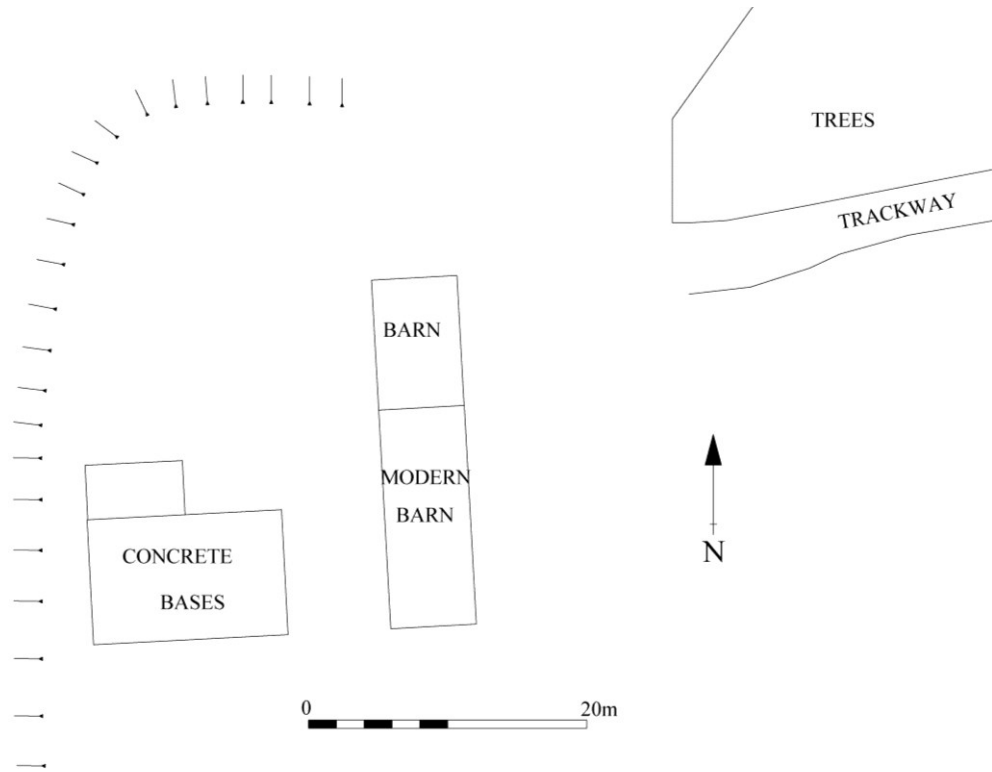


Figure 2 Site plan

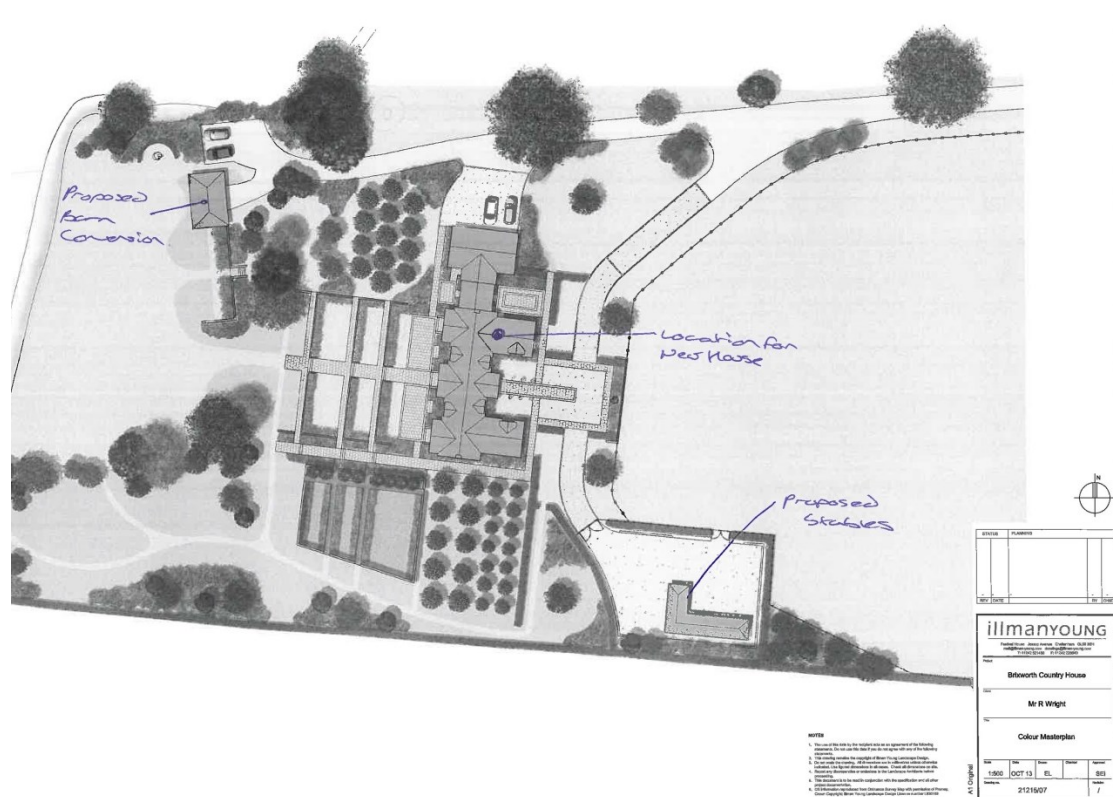


Figure 3 Proposed development plan  
The Old Barn is shown in the top left of the plan. Plan supplied by client

## Objectives

The overall objectives and research agenda are detailed in the ULAS Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording: *Land at the Old Barn, Merry Tom, Lane, Brixworth, Northamptonshire* (hereafter the WSI).

The specific objectives of the historic building survey were:

- To provide a written, drawn and photographic record of the buildings on site prior to the commencement of works with specific attention given to those elements proposed for demolition, conversion and/or alteration. This work to be undertaken to a standard that will allow the future interpretation of the building within the context for which it was originally designed and which subsequently evolved.
- To ensure the long-term preservation of the information through deposition of the record and a summary written report with an appropriate depository.

## Methodology

The methodology used throughout the survey is discussed in detail in the ULAS WSI and also followed English Heritage's (now Historic England) 2006 guidelines *Understanding Historic Buildings*. The Historic Building Recording for this project was undertaken to Level 2.

## Results

### *Historic Environment Record*

As noted, the Old Barn lies to the south of Brixworth in an area of open fields well away from any conservation areas. There are no listed buildings within a 1km radius of the site. The Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) lists a number of known archaeological sites surrounding the barn but none appear to be closer than approximately 300m. This apparently empty area may be due to a lack of investigative and recorded archaeological work rather than a lack of archaeological potential. The results of the HER search therefore indicate that there is a reasonable potential for prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and medieval archaeological deposits within the proposed development site boundaries.

The known archaeological sites around the barn are:

**MNN1706**, SMR4443. Possible prehistoric occupation. 300m to west of the barn.

**MNN1194**, SMR2959. Neolithic and Bronze Age occupation site. 500m to the north-west of the barn.

**MNN5990**, SMR4414. Possible Neolithic and Bronze Age occupation site. 400m to the south-south-east of the barn.

**MNN1687**, SMR4413. Possible Romano-British occupation site. 300m east of barn.

**MNN6831**, SMR5815. Possible Romano-British settlement. 500m to south-east of the barn.

**MNN5054**, SMR2958. Romano-British and Saxon settlement. 500m north of barn.

**MNN16085**, SMR4411/1. Post medieval windmill. 500m north-east of the barn.

**MNN135327**, SMR9342/1. Northampton to Market Harborough Toll road runs from north to south 500m to east of the barn.

### ***Historic Map Evidence***

The earliest available map for this site is the 1813 first edition hand drawn Ordnance Survey map which clearly shows Merry Tom Lane but with no buildings present at all. Some of the field boundaries are the same but a number of boundaries have since been removed. This map cannot be reproduced here due to copyright issues but is available to view on the British Library website at:

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/ordsurvdraw/n/zoomify82345.html>

The next available map is the Ordnance Survey First Edition County Series map of 1884. This map shows the barn which is the subject of this survey along with another structure joined to its northern end forming an inverted L-shape (Fig. 4). There is the suggestion of a small yard to the west of the barn and a pump or well. The subsequent Ordnance Survey edition, published in 1900 is slightly clearer and appears to indicate that the barn has a small building of similar width, but only half the length which has a small open-fronted building to the west and which forms the arm of the L-shape. The same layout is shown in the 1927 edition but a small rectangular building has appeared to the north-east of the barns. The position of this new building is approximately where the corner of the area of trees starts as shown in Figure 2 above. No other maps were available until the 1964 edition by which time a new rectangular building has been added to the southern end of the barn. The footprint of this new building is shorter than the existing modern barn so may be a completely different building to that which exists today. Another building has been added to the rear (north) of the possible open-fronted building and the building to the north-east seems to be larger. In addition to these new structures there is a rectangular detached structure to the south-west of the new building which coincides with the concrete base discussed above.





Figure 4 First Edition Ordnance Survey map 1884  
Sheet XXXVIII NW. Old Barn is arrowed

### ***Historical Background***

Whilst the exact use of the Old Barn is unclear it does appear from the map evidence at least to have been constructed in the mid to late 19th century. This period coincides with a significant change in farming ideas and techniques when the years between the 1840s and the 1870s are commonly known as the High Farming Years. New technologies and advances in chemical fertilisers allowed the farming community to move away from the traditional closed-circuit farms with its limits on productivity to more efficient and higher yielding businesses. In many places the changes tended to manifest themselves in the form of organised and planned farms with specifically designed yards and buildings. The Old Barn does not seem to fit into the farmyard scheme but may have been part of a satellite development for a nearby farm complex.

### ***Building Survey***

As noted, the Old Barn is located at the end of a trackway leading westwards downhill from Merry Tom Lane (Figs. 5 and 6). It is built from local ironstone or ferruginous limestone and has a hipped slate roof. The eaves are built from red brick with an attempt at a basic decoration formed from a course of bricks laid at an angle to create a zig-zag effect. It has a modern metal-skinned low barn built against its southern side but is otherwise isolated in the landscape. Both barns sit on a narrow platform or terrace which has a low bank running around their western and northern sides (Figs. 2 and 7). The Old Barn is a two storey structure and the modern attached barn is a single storey building (Fig. 8).

Both buildings are disused and show evidence of low-level vandalism and graffiti. A visual structural statement by David Smith Associates produced in 2013 indicates that there had been a fire which necessitated the partial repair and replacement of some of the Old Barn roof structure.

The surrounding fields are predominantly arable although a small area of relatively young trees has been planted along the northern side of the track leading up to Merry Tom Lane. A number of young trees are growing on the eastern side of the modern barn. The immediate area around the barns is mostly grass and low scrub allowing good access to the buildings during the survey work.



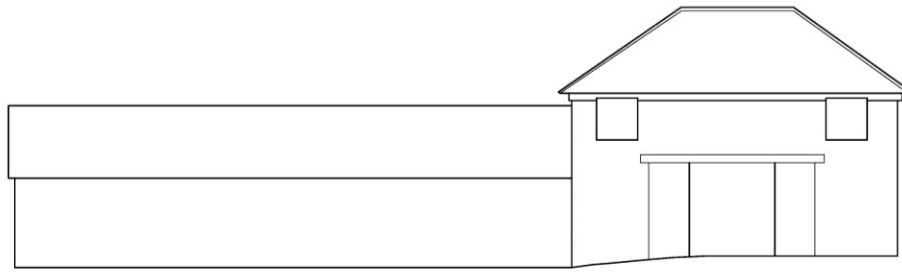
Figure 5 The Old Barn seen from Merry Tom Lane  
Looking west



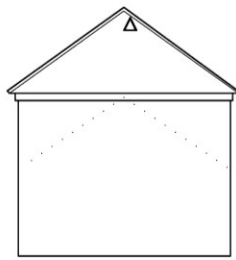
Figure 6 General view of both barns  
Looking south-west



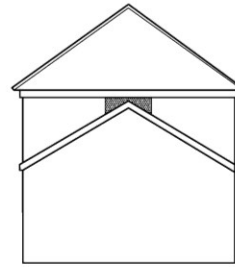
Figure 7 General view of both barns  
Looking north-east. Note earthwork embankment for building terrace. Outskirts of  
Brixworth on the horizon



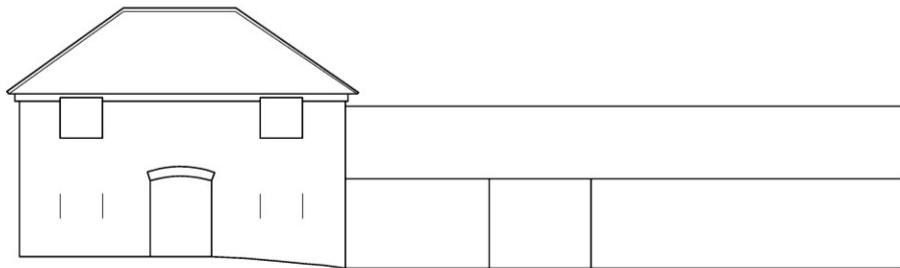
East facing elevation



North facing



South facing



West facing elevation

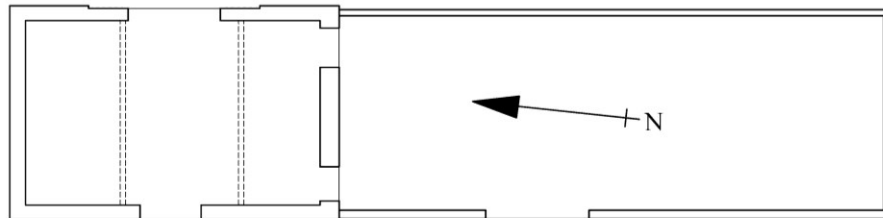


Figure 8 Elevations and plan  
Modified from drawings supplied by client

*The Old Barn, east facing elevation*

The east facing elevation looks up the track towards Merry Tom Lane (Fig. 9). At ground floor level there is a wide recessed section with a timber lintel. Within the recess is a doorway which has no evidence of a surviving doorframe or fittings. The timber lintel, which is made from three separate re-used lengths of wood, sits on top of the recessed stonework and is not embedded in the thicker part of the wall (Fig. 10). This suggests that the entire doorway has either been rebuilt or that the original design incorporated this recess perhaps to accommodate sliding doors which would not catch the wind in such an exposed spot. There is no other evidence of a rebuild so it is concluded that the doorway was originally built in this fashion. The internal parts of the door jambs are brick lined and are discussed in more detail below. There are no ground floor windows, blocked or otherwise. Close to the southern corner the initials AEF have been carved, quite crudely, into one of the stones. It is not clear if these are very old.

At first floor level are two rectangular openings housing modern window frames. These are not the original openings as the sides appear to cut through the stonework and the insertion of the lintels has removed part of the brick courses at the eaves (Fig. 11). Rather than being knocked through the stonework has been cut with a power tool creating a very smooth surface and sharp edges suggesting that this has happened in the last few years. The internal sides of both windows have been re-laid with red brick and modern mortar. The modern window frames that have been fitted are in a poor condition and are suffering from both vandalism and the effects of weather. The window openings may or may not replace earlier and smaller openings.

The slated roof is in a reasonable state of repair although there are two patches where the slates are beginning to slip.



Figure 9 Old Barn, east facing elevation  
Looking west. 1m scale



Figure 10 Old Barn, east facing elevation door detail  
Looking north-west



Figure 11 Old Barn, east facing elevation window detail  
Looking north-west. Note the sawn stonework at either side of the window and how  
the window cuts the brick eaves

### *The Old Barn, north facing elevation*

The north facing elevation of the Old Barn is a plain elevation with no evidence of any openings. There is however the trace of the roofline of a gable ended building which butted against the barn (Fig. 12). The stonework of the barn is not as weathered within the confines of the scar and there is a slight trace of render or plaster. This is probably the building shown on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map. It also shows that the now-demolished building was constructed at a later date than the Old Barn. A cursory inspection of the ground to the north of this elevation failed to pick up any traces of the floor plan of the building.

The north side of the hipped roof has a small dormer or vent set slightly off-centre near to the ridge. From the outside the woodwork of this feature appears to be relatively modern.

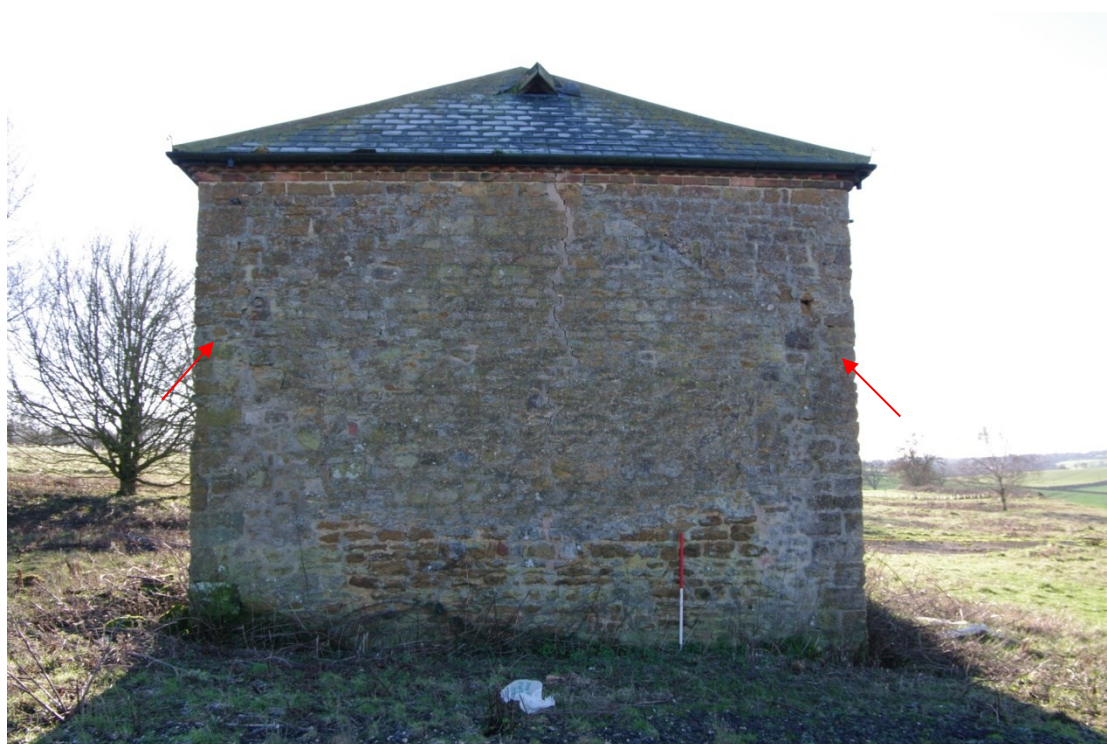


Figure 12 Old Barn, north facing elevation  
Looking south. 1m scale. Note highlighted scar of former building roofline

### *The Old Barn, west facing elevation*

The west facing elevation faces down into the shallow valley which runs from north to south. The doorway on this elevation is not as wide as on the east facing elevation and this side does not have a recessed section (Fig. 13). The doorway has a curved brick lintel made from two courses of red brick headers and a timber beam inside (Fig. 14). The timber beam has joist holes indicating that it has been re-used from elsewhere. The door jambs are lined with brick and have a slight inward splay. A rectangular area of clean stonework can be seen around the doorway suggesting that something was built against this elevation although what it was is not clear. There are

no cuts or flashing marks on the stone simply a division between cleaner stone and more weathered stone.

At first floor level are two windows which match those on the east facing elevation. These windows have also been cut with a modern saw and have modern frames. At ground floor level immediately below both windows are two pairs of cut slots showing where an attempt was begun to cut two more window openings (Fig. 15). The slots do not reach all the way through the wall and there are no horizontal cuts.



Figure 13 Old Barn, west facing elevation  
Looking east. 1m scale





Figure 14 Old Barn, west facing elevation doorway detail  
Looking north-east

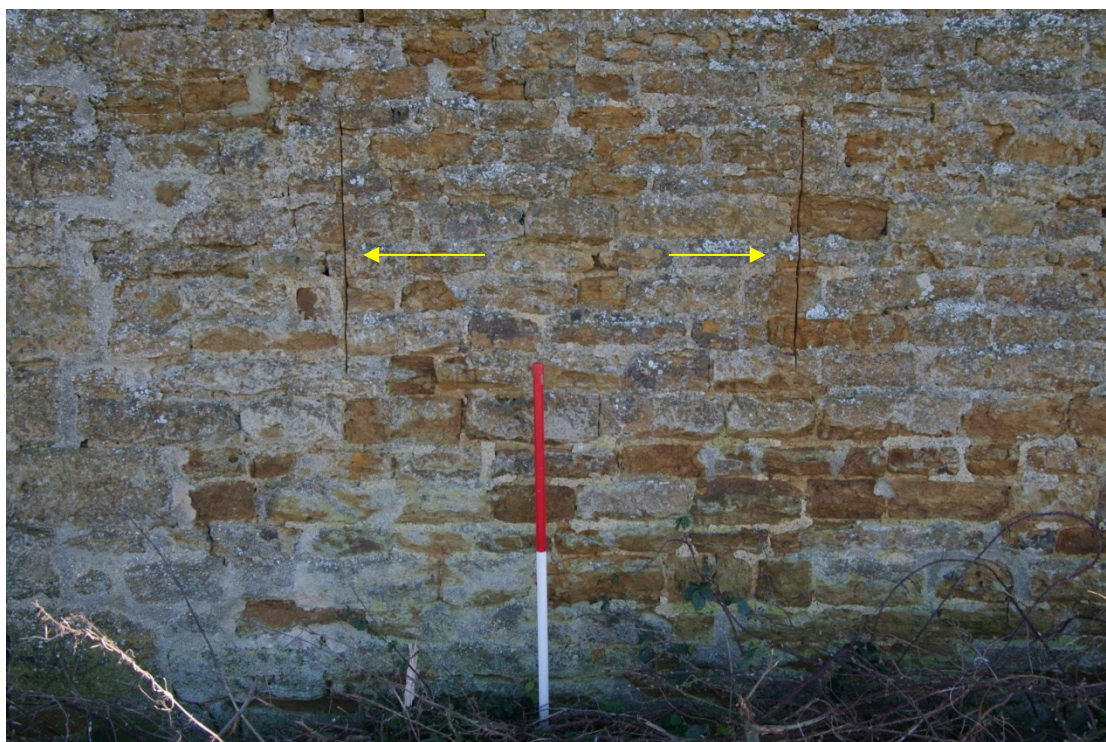


Figure 15 Old Barn, west facing elevation cuts for new ground floor windows  
Looking east. 1m scale. Arrows point at the two cuts

### *The Old Barn south facing elevation*

Much of the south facing elevation is obscured by the modern barn which reaches almost to the eaves of the Old Barn (Fig. 16). From the outside it can be seen that there is a doorway, possibly a hayloft door, blocked with red bricks. From the inside of the modern barn the ground floor of the south facing elevation has two single width doorways (Fig. 17). The doorways have brick thresholds and the rough stonework on each internal jamb suggests that they have been knocked through rather than being part of the original design. The presence of two doors indicates that either the Old Barn had two rooms or that a building which pre-dates the modern barn had two rooms.

### *The Old Barn, inside*

The inside of the Old Barn is a single open space up to the roof (Figs. 18 and 19). The floor is made from beaten earth but this has been disturbed in places which suggests that a paved surface may have been removed. The walls are lined with bricks laid sideways on to a height of approximately 1.3m above ground level. The lining indicates that the walls may have been intended to house animals which would otherwise rub against the soft ironstone walls. The doorway on the eastern side has a brick relieving arch directly above the opening which again indicates that this is the size of the original opening (Fig. 20). The timber lintel on the inside has numerous joist slots from an earlier use. The bricks on either side of the doorway are slightly splayed. The doorway on the western side also has splayed brickwork and another re-used timber lintel. There is no relieving arch above this doorway.

The two doorways on the south wall lead through into the modern barn. There is no evidence in the Old Barn of any internal divisions which suggests that the predecessor of the modern barn had at least two rooms. The eastern doorway has a roller shutter cover. The blocked first floor opening or hayloft door has a sloping sill and rounded bricks forming the jambs. Although this appears to be a hayloft door there is no evidence of any joist holes for a first floor or partial mezzanine floor so this south facing opening may simply be a window to let in light into an otherwise windowless space.

Modern looking joists have been inserted at eaves level to create a frame for a ceiling which is still open to the roof (Fig. 21). There is no evidence of burning which suggests that this has been added since the fire reported in the David Smith 2013 report. Two trusses run from east to west across the barn and appear to be original. There is no sign of burning on these beams. The roof structure is supported by truncated principal rafters joined by a short tie-beam or intermediate truss. Cleated purlins sit on the back of the principals. The principals and tie-beams are attached to the truss by bolted rods. Most of the common rafters appear to be quite modern. The slates sit on modern felt showing that they have been laid relatively recently. The small dormer vent on the north hip appears to be constructed from relatively new wood but may replace an earlier similar feature (Fig. 22).



Figure 16 Old Barn, south facing elevation  
Looking north-west



Figure 17 Old Barn, south facing elevation inside modern barn  
Looking north. 1m scale



Figure 18 Old Barn, inside  
Looking north. 1m scale



Figure 19 Old Barn, inside  
Looking south. 1m scale



Figure 20 Old Barn, inside of east wall  
Looking north-east. 1m scale



Figure 21 Old Barn, roof structure  
Looking south



Figure 22 Old Barn, vent in roof  
Looking north

### *The modern barn*

The modern barn has been cut into the slope of the ground so that the ground level to the east and south is approximately 0.5m higher than the barn floor level. The north end of the barn butts against the southern end of the Old Barn (Fig. 23). It is constructed from modern breeze block with a skin of corrugated sheet metal. Internally it can be seen that the floor is made of concrete (Fig. 24). A wide doorway is located on the west facing wall. The metal skin is a later addition as it covers a number of window openings on both the east and west walls. The roof is covered in ceramic pan tiles. The building has no historic value.



Figure 23 Modern barn  
Looking north-west



Figure 24 Modern barn, inside  
Looking south-west

## Discussion

The Old Barn at Merry Tom Lane appears to have undergone relatively few physical changes in its lifetime. The barn seems to have been built as a separate unit before having other buildings added to its north and north-west corner prior to the publication of the 1884 Ordnance Survey map. The style of the roof structure with its bolted components points towards a mid to later 19th century construction date with the 1860s or 1870s being likely. Other buildings were added to the complex during the early 20th century before being swept away at some time after 1964. Modern buildings in the form of the present barn on the south side of the Old Barn and the two structures to the south-west seem likely to be from the later 20th century.

It is not entirely clear if the building was constructed as a single storey structure or if it had a first floor. There is no evidence of any joist holes and the splayed sill and jambs of the first floor opening suggests a large window. However, without a first floor this would make an unnecessarily tall cattle shed. It is possible therefore that there was a free-standing timber mezzanine floor built within the south end of the building that has left no trace. The four first floor windows are modern openings but may replace earlier slit vents of smaller windows. The modern slate roof covering is probably a replacement for an earlier pan-tile roof which is commonly seen in the region.

Overall the Old Barn represents an interesting example of the later 19th and early 20th century farming techniques in this part of the region. Modernisation and changes in farming practices have now rendered this, and many similar buildings, redundant for its original purpose.

## Archive

The archive consists of:  
This report,  
Pro-forma photographic record sheet,  
43 digital photographs,  
Contact sheet of digital photographs,  
DVD of digital images.

## Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the appropriate local historical and archaeological journal in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

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29.01.2016

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## Appendix 1 Digital photographs



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ENNN108218 (2).JPG



ENNN108218 (3).JPG



ENNN108218 (4).JPG



ENNN108218 (5).JPG



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## Appendix 2 OASIS Information

Project Name	Level 2 Building Survey at the Old Barn, Merry Tom Lane, Brixworth, Northamptonshire
Project Type	Historic Building Survey
Project Manager	P Clay
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	Evaluation trenching on site of proposed new house
Current Land Use	Agricultural barn
Development Type	Domestic residential conversion
Reason for Investigation	As a condition
Position in the Planning Process	Ongoing
Site Co ordinates	SP 744 694
Start/end dates of field work	15.01.2016
Archive Recipient	Northamptonshire County Council
Study Area	100m <sup>2</sup>

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