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**LEICESTER**

Archaeological Services

**An Historic Building Assessment at  
Sleath Farm,  
Ashby Road, Gilmorton,  
Leicestershire.**

**NGR: SP 570 882**

Andrew Hyam



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**An Historic Building Assessment at**

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**NGR: SP 570 882**

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**Summary**

*An historic building assessment was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Sleath Farm, Ashby Road, Gilmorton, Leicestershire on the 26th of January 2016. The survey studied a mid-19th century brick-built barn attached to a late 18th or early 19th century farmhouse. It is proposed that the barn will be converted to a domestic dwelling. Part of the proposed work also involves the removal of the southern end bay of the farmhouse.*

*The mid-19th century barn is of a later construction date than the farmhouse. The structure of the barn is in a relatively poor state and would benefit from such conversion work. The farmhouse will be more significantly affected and may require further recording work once the historic fabric of the building is exposed during demolition. The southern end bay may be an addition to the earlier core of a three-bay house.*

*The report will be deposited under Accession Number X.A17.2016*

**Introduction**

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 assessment at Sleath Farm, Ashby Road, Gilmorton, Leicestershire. The definition of an archaeological building investigation and recording is taken from The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standards and Guidance: Recording Standing Buildings or Structures* (2014) and is a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building or structure or complex and its setting. Historic building surveys are also defined in the English Heritage (now Historic England) guidance document – *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2006).

Planning permission is being sought for the conversion and extension of a barn to form a dwelling at Sleath Farm, Ashby Road, Gilmorton, Leicestershire, and an historic building assessment of the building has been requested by the Leicestershire County Council Senior Planning Archaeologist as advisor to the planning authority.

In addition to the barn conversion it is intended that the existing south end bay of the farmhouse will be demolished in order to allow safe access on and off the Ashby Road, following the Highway Authority's criteria.

## Background

Gilmorton, a parish in the Harborough district of Leicestershire, is located approximately 3 miles north-east of Lutterworth (Fig. 1). Sleath Farm is located on the western side of Ashby Road in the north-western side of Gilmorton village. Sleath Farm is built around the farmhouse which from an initial inspection appears to date to the late 18th or early 19th century. The brick-built farmhouse is aligned north to south alongside Ashby Road and has the affected barn attached to its northern end. To the south and west of the farm and barn are a range of other farm buildings, outhouses and a yard (Figs. 2 to 5).

The proposals for the conversion of the barn and removal of the south end bay have undergone a number of changes during the development of the project. The current proposals as of the 21st of January 2016, are shown in Figure 6 below.

A hand drawn Ordnance Survey map produced in 1813 shows that there are some buildings on the location of Sleath Farm but the detail is not clear enough to identify any individual or recognisable structures. The First Edition County Series Ordnance Survey map of 1886 shows the farmhouse and the barn along with the range of buildings along the northern boundary. A group of buildings are shown in the south-western corner of the site which are likely to be those still present today. A boundary appears to run westwards from the junction of the barn and the farmhouse creating two separate yards; one behind the farmhouse and one serving the barns and outbuildings. A large building appears to butt against the south end of the farmhouse. By the time of the publication of the 1904 Ordnance Survey map a small building has been added in the yard to the west of the barn. This building is the small brick-built pigsty which is still present. The next available map is the 1963 edition which shows a similar building layout although the northern range has been extended westwards to create a much longer building.

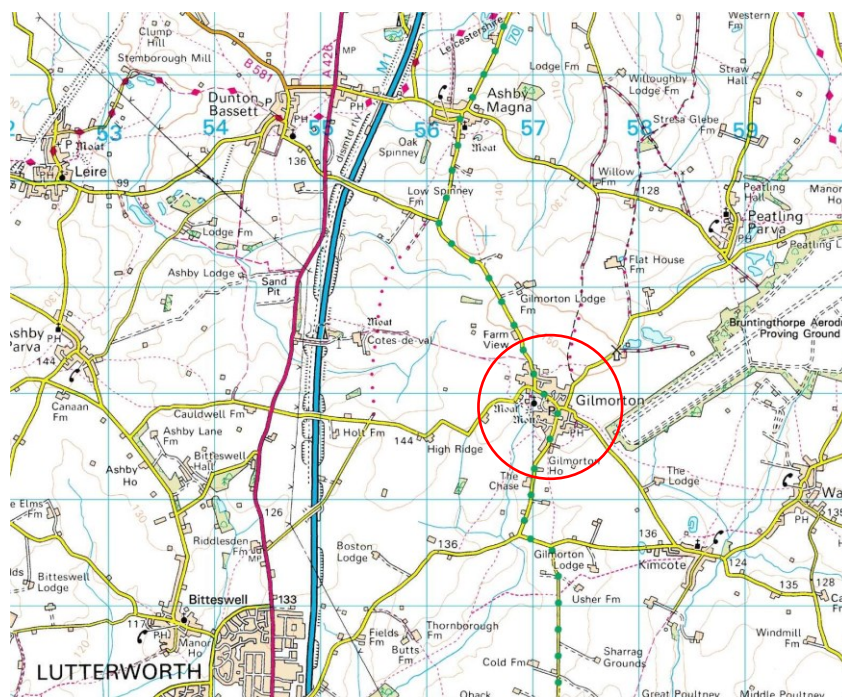


Figure 1 Gilmorton location

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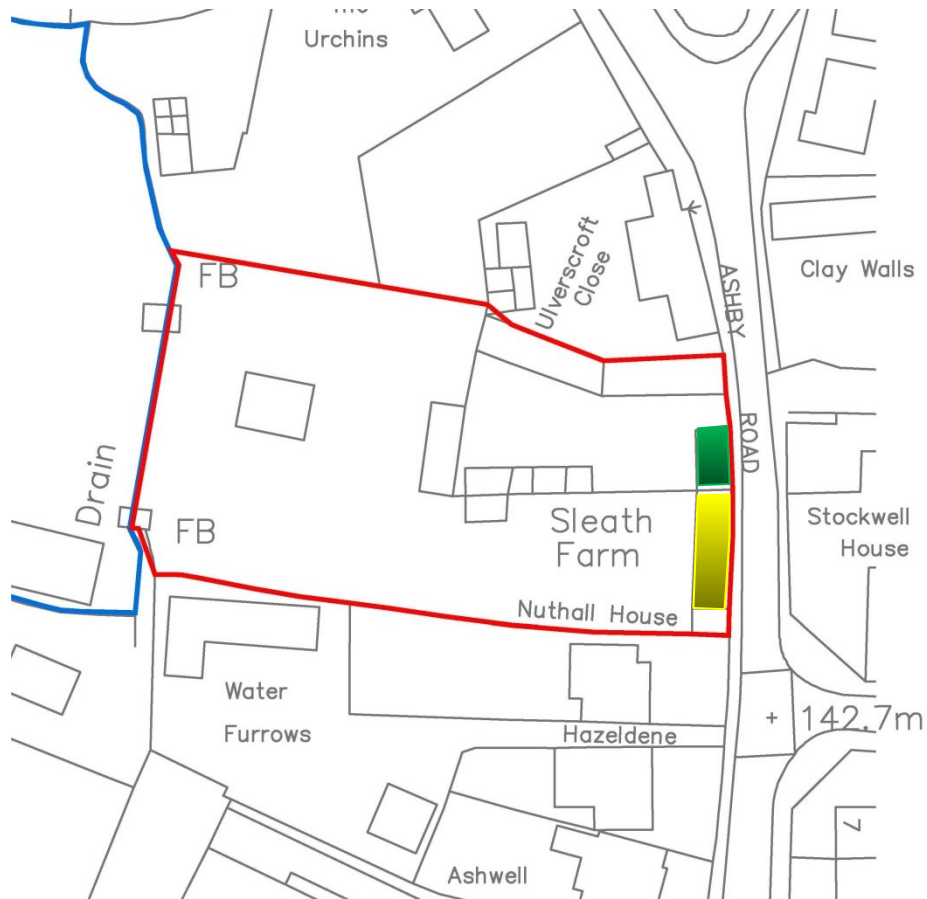


Figure 2 Sleath Farm  
Plan supplied by client. Barn highlighted in green, farmhouse in yellow



Figure 3 Sleath Farm from Ashby Road  
Looking north-west. Barn shown by arrow



Figure 4 Sleath Farm from Ashby Road  
Looking south. The Gable ended barn with window is also part of Sleath Farm



Figure 5 Sleath Farm, yard  
Looking west. Barn subject to this assessment is on left of photograph





Figure 6 Proposed (21.1.16) redevelopment of Sleath Farmhouse  
Supplied by client

## Objectives

The purpose of the historic building assessment was to record and advance understanding of the significance of the affected heritage asset. The objectives and research themes are laid out in the ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording: Sleath Farm, Ashby Road, Gilmorton* (hereafter the WSI).

The objectives of the Historic Building Assessment programme were:

- To provide a written, drawn and photographic record of the building on site prior to the commencement of works.
- 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 which was augmented to record any fixtures, fittings and evidence of any equipment surviving in the agricultural buildings.



## Results

As already noted, Sleath Farm is located on the western side of Ashby Road, Gilmorton. The farmhouse has its long axis following the alignment of the road. The barn, which is to be converted, is attached to the north gable end of the farmhouse. An entrance gateway on Ashby Road leads into the yard and a range of buildings runs down the slope of the yard from the road along the northern boundary of the site. The yard slopes down to the south-west and has the remains of a cobbled surface with a number of later concrete repairs and pathways.

The two-storey buildings along the site's north boundary were converted in the late 20th century to a print workshop by the insertion of larger windows and other internal modernisation work (Fig. 7). At the west end of the workshop are a range of single storey outbuildings currently used for storage. The pigsty and stable type buildings to the south-west and west are shown in Figure 5 above. A gap between the stable buildings and the north range leads westwards to another grassed area but would originally have led out to the fields associated with the farm.

The yard shown on the early Ordnance Survey maps to the west of the farmhouse is still separated from the cobbled yard but is now the house garden and is laid out with grass, trees and shrubs.



Figure 7 North boundary range of buildings and barn  
Looking north-east. Barn and farmhouse on right of picture

### *The Barn*

The barn is a brick-built structure with a slate roof. The walls are in a relatively poor state of repair and show signs of distortion. The bricks appear to be handmade and are laid in courses approximating to three stretchers and one header. The bricks measure approximately 230mm (9") long by 110mm (4¼") wide by 63mm (2½") high. Many of the bricks are suffering from damp and have been affected by frost and weathering. The slates on the west side of the roof have been removed to lessen the load on the walls.

The east facing elevation faces onto Ashby Road and has no window or door openings (Fig. 9). The elevation is stepped back by approximately 50mm from the corner of the farmhouse and the bricks do not appear to be bonded between the two buildings. There are three air vents with cast iron grilles set into the wall at eaves height. Three more vents have been created by knocking out bricks at first floor level. The roof butts against the north gable end of the house and has a narrow cement flashing sealing the joint of the house wall and the slates (Fig. 10). Such a joint is likely to cause significant damp problems for the joining wall.

The north facing elevation has a full height hayloft door but has no other openings on this gable end (Fig. 11). The door has strap hinges which appear to be late 19th century in design. An iron hoop is attached to the timber threshold of the doorway which may be a loop to protect the door or for holding a ladder or ramp. The brickwork within the apex of the gable appears to be slightly darker than the brickwork below which may indicate a rebuilding episode or simply that the brickwork below has been repointed.

The west facing elevation of the barn faces down into the cobbled yard (Fig. 12). As the two buildings follow the curve of Ashby Road the barn is on a slightly different angle to the house and the flush, but slightly angled, joint between the two buildings is particularly noticeable on this elevation. At ground floor level near to the north corner a stable style doorway leads into the northern room of the two-roomed ground floor. The doorway has a flat lintel with brick headers visible from the outside. The door and fittings are modern. The doorway near to the southern corner has a shallow arched lintel of brick headers over a slightly wider doorway. The wooden frame appears to be either original or from early in the building's development while the door and fittings are modern. To the south of this doorway is a rectangular window with a timber lintel (Fig. 13). The two glass panes are set directly into the surrounding masonry in a style sometimes seen in early to mid-19th century agricultural buildings. A small rectangular window opening close to the eaves at first floor level has been boarded up following a deterioration of the surrounding brickwork.

Inside the barn the north room, which is the smaller of the two rooms, has a concrete floor (Fig. 14). There are no fixtures or fittings to indicate what the former use of the room was. Joist holes in the walls show where a first floor used to be located but this has been removed and replaced by a narrow timber walkway leading from the hayloft door to the first floor southern room (Fig. 15). The walkway is suffering from rot and woodworm. A doorway leads through the brick dividing wall into the south room. The doorway does not have a door and there is no evidence of there having been one. The brickwork above the doorway is unstable and has been supported by temporary steel props.

The southern ground floor room has a concrete floor with drainage gullies set into it (Fig. 16). Two troughs separated by a wooden stall divider show where animals were tethered for milking. Part of the northern trough has been removed to allow the floor to be taken up to assess the depth of the wall foundations which appears to be around 0.4m below current ground level. A steel beam supporting the wall between the two rooms has been inserted at ground level. A concrete plinth is located to the south of the doorway with evidence of metal fixings (Fig. 17). This was probably for a hand-powered milling machine or kibbler for animal feed. The brickwork of the east and west walls clearly butts against the north end wall of the house as there is a blocked doorway into the house in the south-west corner (Figs. 17 and 18). A substantial timber beam running from north to south supports the floor joists of the first floor.

The first floor was only inspected from a ladder propped against the doorway from the north room. The room has no fittings and has a single window on the east wall. The brickwork above the window is collapsing and is supported by timber planks (Fig. 19). The roof structure consists of two purlins on which rest the common rafters.

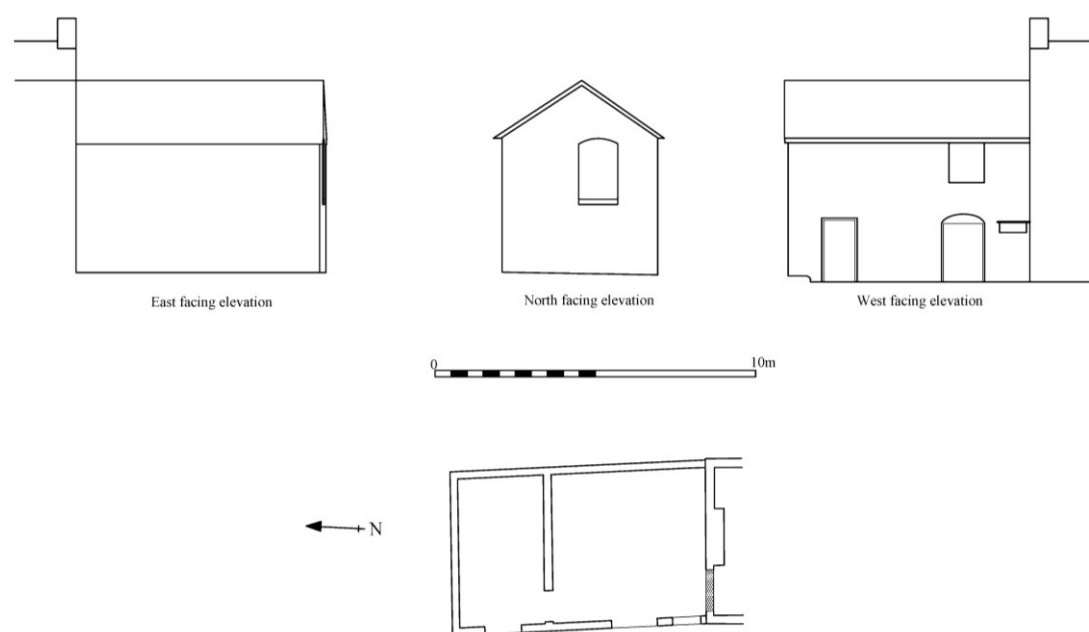


Figure 8 The barn



Figure 9 The barn, east facing elevation  
Looking west. 1m scale



Figure 10 East facing elevation joint between barn and house  
Looking south-west





Figure 11 Barn, north facing elevation  
Looking south-west. 1m scale



Figure 12 Barn, west facing elevation  
Looking east. 1m scale





Figure 13 Barn, east facing elevation ground floor window  
Looking south-east. Note joint with farmhouse to right of window



Figure 14 Barn, north room  
Looking south-east into southern room. 1m scale





Figure 15 Barn, north room hayloft door  
Looking north-east. The timber walkway from the hayloft door leads to the first floor of the south room



Figure 16 Barn, south room  
Looking south-east. Animal feed trough arrowed





Figure 17 Barn, south room  
Looking south-west. 1m scale. Note plinth for milling machine beneath pink bucket.  
Blocked doorway into farmhouse behind green bin and plastic sheeting



Figure 18 Barn, south room blocked doorway into house  
Looking south





Figure 19 Barn, first floor  
Looking south-west

### *The Farmhouse*

The most recent proposals entail the removal of the southernmost bay of the farmhouse in order to improve site access. The ground floor of the east facing elevation of the farmhouse has been coated with render which has the potential to mask a number of blocked windows or doors (Fig. 20). The east facing frontage consists of four bays with a single doorway in the centre. The ground and first floor windows of the three northernmost bays have shallow arched brick lintels. The southern bay which will be removed has modern looking rectangular windows suggesting some form of modification has taken place. The south facing gable end is completely covered in render to hide the marks left by a much taller building which butted against the farm until it was demolished in the late 1960s or 1970s (Fig. 21). It is not known which building was the earliest.

The west facing elevation has exposed brickwork which shows some evidence of modification around some of the windows (Fig. 22). The southern end bay has a similarly styled first floor window to the rest of the first floor windows but the brickwork of the whole bay is showing signs of significant settlement and distortion (Fig. 22). The ground floor window has been modified from an earlier doorway.

Inside the southern bay most of the walls have been thermally lined or at least covered in modern materials preventing the inspection of any potentially historic fabric. It is however clear that the dividing wall between the southern bay and the next bay is unusually thick for what is now a partition wall (see plan in Figure 6). It is therefore possible that the southern end bay is a later addition which has been carefully added

to the slightly earlier farmhouse. Care has been taken to use similar bricks and to key in the brickwork.



Figure 20 Farmhouse, east facing elevation  
Looking north-east. 1m scale. Yellow box indicates the portion of the building to be demolished



Figure 21 Farmhouse, south facing elevation  
Looking north. 1m scale





Figure 22 Farmhouse, west facing elevation  
Looking east. Barn on left of picture. Bay proposed for demolition on right



Figure 23 Farmhouse, west facing elevation  
Looking east towards southernmost bay

## **Discussion**

The barn at the northern end of the farm house is clearly a later addition to the farm layout and appears to have been built relatively economically hence the relatively shallow foundations and lack of a proper south end wall. The narrow hand-made bricks suggest a possible mid-19th century construction date although it is possible that the bricks were salvaged from elsewhere as the overall design and roof structure are more consistent with a mid to late 19th century style. The proposed conversion works should help to stabilise this building and prevent further deterioration. The impact on the Ashby Road street frontage will be minimal as there are no new doors or windows proposed on this elevation. The current proposals as of 21.01.2016 indicate that the existing openings on the west facing elevation will be retained and a new west projecting extension shown in the WSI will no longer be built. This will help retain the current character of the yard.

The latest proposals include the removal of the southernmost bay of the farmhouse in order to improve site access. At present it is unclear how the south end bay of the farmhouse fits with the rest of the house. The subsiding brickwork on the west facing elevation and the different windows on the east elevation suggest a possible rebuilding or extension phase. The thicker end wall of the third bay also supports this idea. The demolition of the south bay of the farmhouse gives the potential for exposing some of the historic fabric of the farm building. This may assist in the understanding of the development of this building.

## **Archive**

The archive consists of:

This report,

One A3 pro forma photographic record sheet,

51 digital photographs,

DVD of the digital photographs in tiff and jpeg format.

## **Publication**

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* 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.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks are due to the owners Mr and Mrs Myatt for their interest in the building recording work and for providing useful background information.

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03/02/2016

## Appendix 1 Digital Photographs



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XA17.2016 (3).JPG



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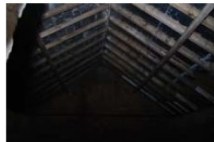
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