

**An Historic Building Assessment at
Taylor's Farm,
Casterton Lane,
Pickworth, Rutland**

NGR: SK 99702 12489

Andrew Hyam



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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 Taylor's Farm, Casterton Lane, Pickworth, Rutland. The farm buildings were built in 1880 following the latest ideas of model farm construction which were common throughout the region. The farm has continued to be used for agricultural purposes until the present day when changes in modern farming practices have rendered much of the building redundant.

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 of agricultural buildings to form dwellings at Taylor's Farm, Pickworth, Rutland and an historic assessment and survey of the building has been requested by the senior planning archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council as advisor to the planning authority.

Background

Pickworth is a small hamlet approximately 4.5km to the north of Great Casterton and 7km to the north-east of Stamford. Taylor's Farm lies around 1km to the south of Pickworth on Casterton Lane (Fig. 1). The farm stands to the west of Casterton Lane on a slight south facing slope looking towards an area of woodland (Figs. 2 and 3). The present farm complex consists of the stone-built barns which form an E-shaped double courtyard structure. The farmhouse lies to the east and a range of modern barns and silos to the west (Figs. 4, 5 and 6). Until recently a metal barn was built into the eastern yard but this is no longer present. The agricultural buildings and the adjacent farmhouse at Taylor's Farm are not listed and are not part of a local conservation area. The farmhouse continues to be used as a domestic dwelling but the regular courtyard style buildings are now mostly empty. Despite this they remain in a very good state of repair and appear to have been relatively unmodified since their construction. The architectural style of the farmhouse suggests a much earlier construction date than the stone-built E-shaped barns. The farmhouse may be of late 18th century date although only a brief inspection from a distance was made.

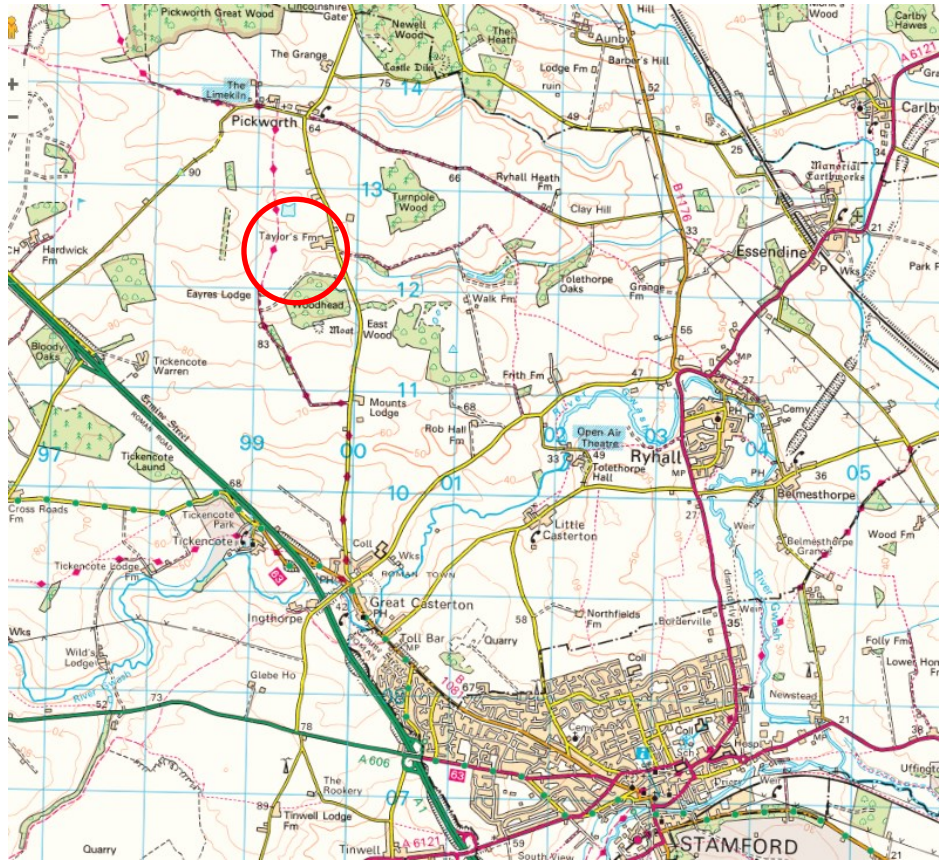


Figure 1 Taylor's Farm location

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Figure 2 Taylor's Farm from Casterton Lane
Looking north-west. Farmhouse in centre of picture, surveyed buildings to left



Figure 3 Taylor's Farm and farmhouse
Looking north-west

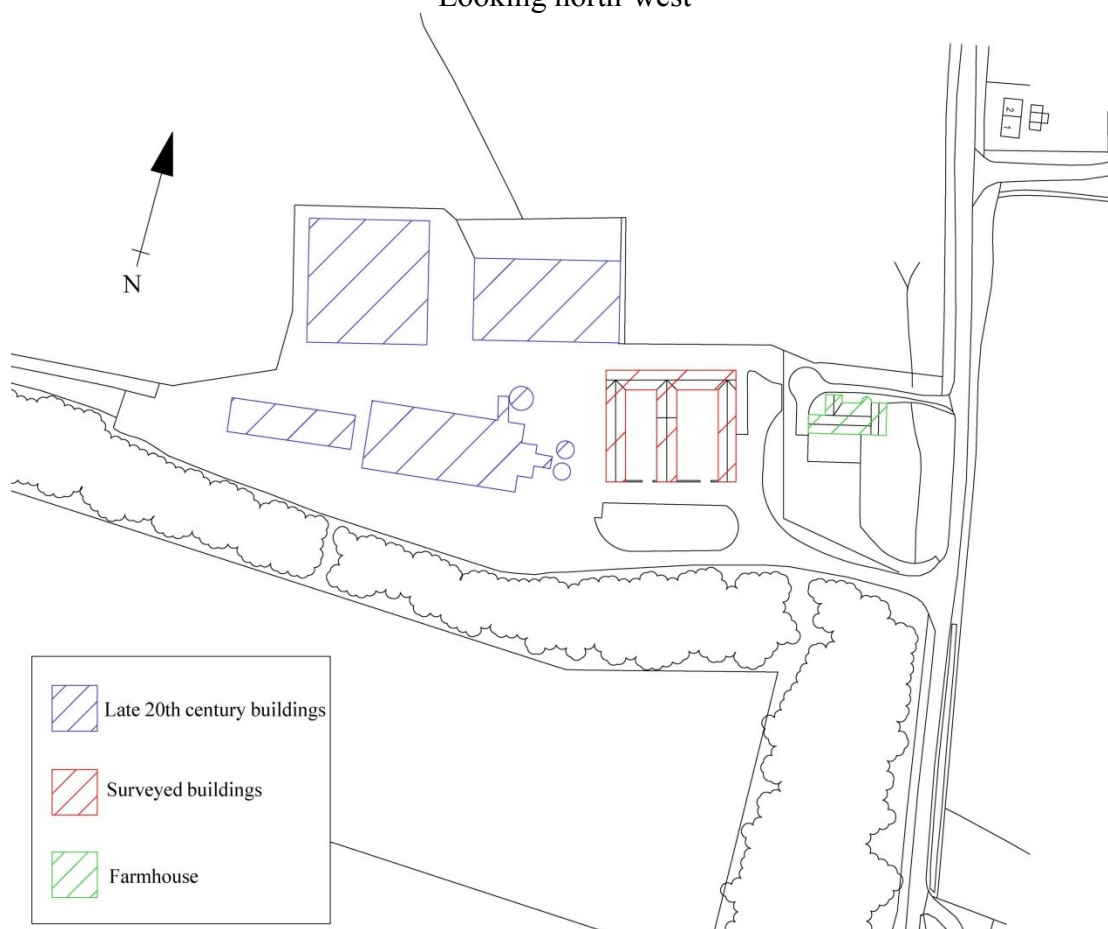


Figure 4 Taylor's Farm site layout
Modified from plan supplied by client. Casterton Lane on right

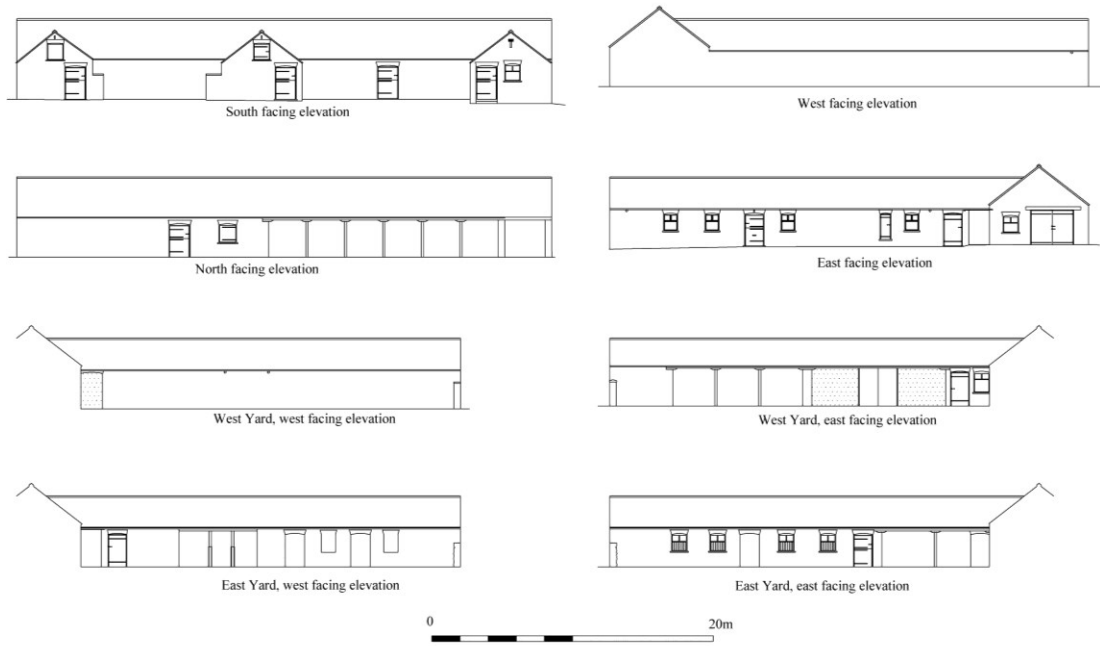


Figure 5 Barn elevations
Modified from client's drawings

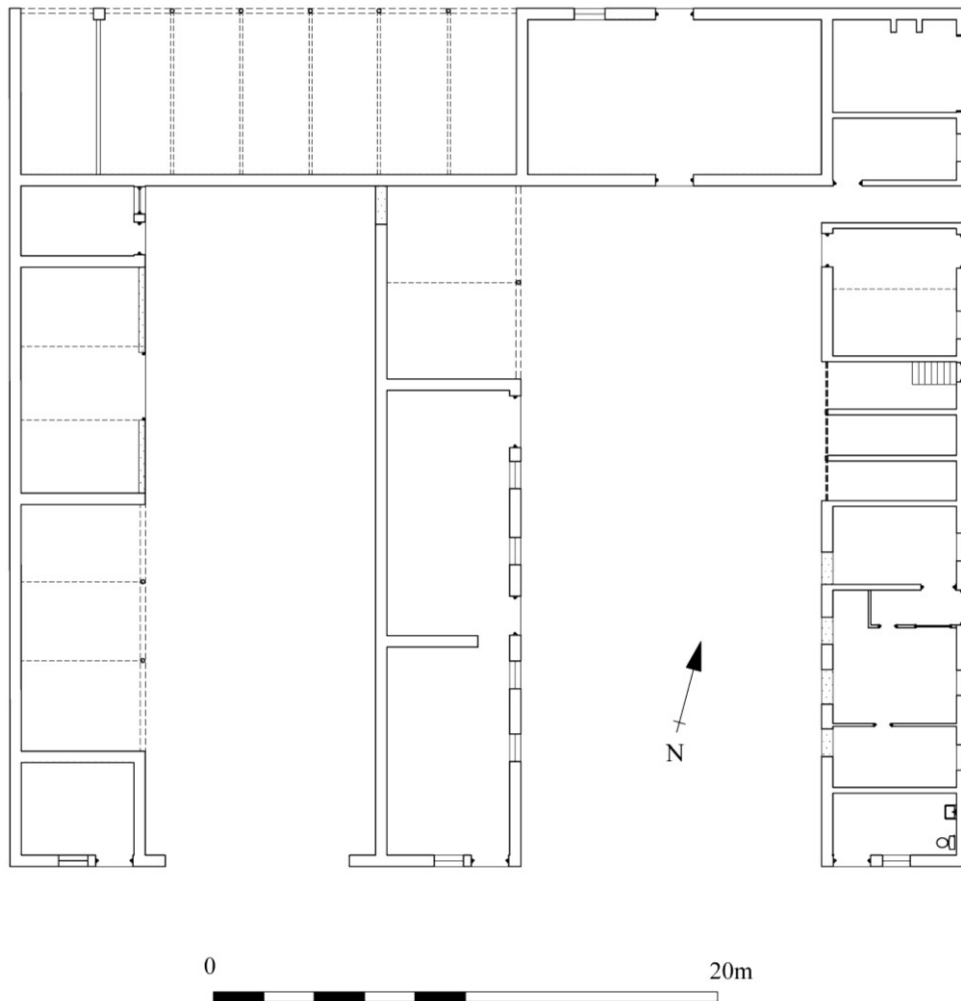


Figure 6 Barn plan
Modified from client's drawings

Objectives

The purpose of the work 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: Taylor's Farm, Casterton Lane, Pickworth* (hereafter the WSI).

The main aim of the Historic Building Assessment is to provide an outline chronology for the development of the site, to establish the significance of the site as a heritage asset and to assess the potential impact of the proposed development upon the heritage asset. This is to provide some base-line data from which appropriate and informed decisions can be made by the planning authority.

The work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Code of Conduct*, adhering to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (2014).

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

Historical Background

The Marquis of Exeter held Pickworth village and a proportion of the surrounding lands since the 16th century. Nearby Burghley House is the traditional seat of the Marquis of Exeter and the Cecil family. Without further research it is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that Taylor's Farm was built or at least owned by the Cecil family.

The years between the 1840s and the 1870s are commonly known as the High Farming Years and followed the rapid adoption of imported and artificial fertilisers. This allowed farmers to move away from the more traditional closed circuit style of farming which relied on locally produced and used manure and feeds. The changes in farming techniques also went hand in hand with the sharp rises in urban population which provided a willing market for the rapidly increasing agricultural output. Other changes in agricultural practices included the shift to larger and more nucleated tenanted farm units with an increasing interest and guiding hand from the estates who owned the farms. Often large estates would employ a professional land agent to assist and encourage the tenant to adopt new and improved husbandry techniques. At the same time huge investments were made in more efficient land drainage and infrastructure to help maximise output.

In addition to research and consequent improvements in livestock and crops, much work went into designing new farm buildings to move away from traditional regional styles towards much more standardised designs. Taylor's Farm appears to have been built around an E-shaped regular courtyard layout commonly seen in the Midlands from the 1820s onwards. Christian's Lodge which is approximately 500m to the north of Taylor's Farm appears to have been constructed to very similar, if slightly larger and grander, plans. Similarly, the nearby estate farms of Shacklewell Lodge Farm and Normanton Lodge Farm near Empingham which were part of the large Normanton Estate held by the Earls of Ancaster and, later, the Heathcote family are built along almost identical planforms to Taylor's Farm. Both farms are slightly more complicated than Taylor's Farm as may be expected from a larger estate. The E-shaped double courtyard layout was designed to minimise the waste of labour by placing the buildings around each other so that feed stores and cattle shelters etc. could be adjacent to each other. During the 19th century large estates, such as the Normanton Estate, became well-known for their carefully planned and well-built model farms as they often had the resources to build such places and often owned larger farms which would benefit from such changes. Taylor's Farm was built in 1880 and may have borrowed ideas from Shacklewell and Normanton Lodge farms which are thought to have been built at some time between 1861 and 1871.

A 1924 sales document describes Shacklewell Lodge Farm as "a capital mixed farm" with a superior farm residence and an excellent range of modern farm buildings. They are listed as being built from *stone with tiled roofs and comprise of; A three-bay implement shed, trap house, a stone and slate loose box, one-stall stable, four-stall stable, stick house for twelve, a range of pig-styes with feeding and mixing room, a ten-stall stable opening onto an open foldyard having a three-bay lean-to shelter, cow house with standing for nine, loose box, chaff house, granary, turnip house, foldyard having six-bay lean-to shed and loose box, a large barn and granary over.* It is interesting to note that even though the buildings were at least fifty years old by the time of the sale they were still seen as being modern. Although Taylor's Farm is built on a significantly smaller scale there are clear similarities between this farm and Taylor's Farm which may suggest a degree of idea sharing.

A general decline in farming began in the later 19th century when food from across the world could be imported more cheaply than home-grown produce. By the time of the Second World War farming techniques were gradually changing and mechanised farming equipment became more widespread. These changes often meant that by the mid-20th century the well-designed 19th century farm buildings were rapidly becoming redundant and this change has continued to the present day.

Historic Map Evidence

The first edition county series Ordnance Survey map of 1885 shows the location of Taylor's Farm and clearly shows the outline of the E-shaped barns and the farmhouse to the east. At this time the farm is identified as Fairchild's Farm. No other buildings are present on the site. The two yards appear to be divided from east to west creating four smaller yards. The similarly planned Christian's Lodge with its larger grounds can be seen to the north of the map. The 1904 Ordnance Survey map shows the same plan although this more detailed map suggests that the westernmost arm of the

buildings was completely open-fronted into the yard. The next available map is from 1952 which shows that the main E-shaped buildings remain unaltered but also that a new building has been built to the south of the farm approximately where the present access road runs. The farm is still shown as Fairchild's farm at this time. No more maps were available to study until the publication of the 1978 edition by which time all of the present modern buildings have appeared including a structure built within the eastern yard. This edition shows that the name has changed to Taylor's Farm.

Building Description

This section provides a Rapid Assessment of the existing building, as defined in the English Heritage guidance document *Informed Conservation*. Rapid Assessment provides an overview of what is important about a building and its landscape and why. It determines the significance of the building/landscape, highlights areas of risk or uncertainty, and establishes the need for further work if necessary. The site was visited on the 5th of February 2016. At the time, although the farm was in active use, most of the buildings subject to the survey were unused.

The farm complex sits on a gentle south-east sloping plot surrounded by open fields. Casterton Lane runs from north to south to the east of the site. The house is built between the barns and the lane and is approximately 30m from the barns. All of the modern buildings, many of which are used for grain storage, are built to the west of the barns and are surrounded by a number of concrete tracks and hard-standing areas (Figs. 7 and 8). At the time of the survey most of the modern barns were still in use, as was the farmhouse. The surveyed barns were all disused with the exception of two rooms at the southern end of the east wing which appear to have been modernised for use as storage.

All of the 19th century buildings are single storey and are built using local oolitic Lincolnshire limestone laid in coursed rubble with finer quality limestone quoins and detailing on the door and window lintels. The roofs are covered in terracotta pantiles which are commonly used throughout the area. Some of the roof tiles have been re-laid over modern roofing felt. Windows and doors have timber frames and most doors retain their original strap hinges and fittings. With the exception of a few loose and missing tiles most of the building is in a good state of repair and shows very little evidence of any later modifications.



Figure 7 Barns and modern buildings
Looking north-west



Figure 8 Barns and modern buildings
Looking south-east. Farmhouse behind yellow trailer

Outside

The principal elevation is the south facing elevation and has three gable ends of the three ranges which create two rectangular courtyards, or foldyards (Fig. 9). The ranges are not evenly set apart so that the east yard is slightly wider than the west yard. The western range has a flat gable end with a stable door and a window set in

the gable apex (Fig. 10). The window has a single pane of glass and is likely to be a modern replacement for a hayloft door as the pintles for strap hinges are still present. A stub of wall on the eastern side of the gable forms part of the wall and gateway into the western yard.

The central range gable end is virtually the same as the west range with the exception of the wooden hayloft door still being in place in the apex. This range is also slightly wider than the west range. Another stub of wall extends into the west yard. Both wall stubs into the west yard are bonded to the main gable walls indicating that they are part of the original plan. The wall on the east side of the gable has been removed leaving a scar in the stonework. This was probably done when the modern metal barn was inserted within the east yard.

The eastern gable end is slightly lower than the other two gables as the building follows the gentle downward slope to the east. There is a door and ground floor level window with a slit vent set into the gable apex (Fig. 11). Above the vent is a rectangular block of limestone with the date 1880 carved onto it.

The west facing elevation is a continuous wall running from north to south (Fig. 12). There is no evidence of any blocked doors or windows. The stonework of the gable end of the north range bonds with the wall of the west range showing that both were built at the same time.

The north facing elevation consists of a six-bay open shed with a separate bay at the west end and a large room accessed by a doorway at the east end (Fig. 13). The roof tiles at the western end have been replaced by modern pan tiles. The open shed, presumably a former cart shed is supported by a series of cast iron columns. At the top of each column is a shaped piece of timber with scroll work at each end (Fig. 14). This decoration is seen above all of the columns on all of the open sheds throughout the building.

The east facing elevation faces across to the farmhouse and contains a number of doors and windows (Fig. 15). The north range gable end has a double door opening with a substantial timber lintel above. A passageway leads through the range into the eastern yard to allow greater ease of movement from the farmhouse. This elevation has a number of doorways leading into the rooms of the building which can also be accessed from the yard. A narrow doorway leads into a small chicken coop. At the southern end of the elevation three windows have had their glass replaced by modern clear glass to allow more light into the modernised rooms. The wooden frames may also be later replacements.

The West Yard

The west yard is the smaller of the two yards and when first built was dominated by two three-bay open sheds running along the western range (Fig. 16). They have the same cast iron pillars as used on the north range cart shed. The northernmost of the two sheds has been blocked by modern breeze blocks to create a chemical store (Fig. 17). There is no access into the north range from this yard. A doorway into the central range has been blocked with modern breeze blocks. The yard has a concrete surface.

The East Yard

The east yard was until recently filled with a metal-skinned barn structure but this has been removed leaving only the cut-off steel I-beam bases (Fig. 18). The central range has two large barns or stables with vented windows using hit-and-miss boards rather than glazing. A two-bay open shed is at the north end of the central range and has the blocked doorway into the west yard as already noted. A single doorway which leads into the north range is the only access into this range from any of the yards or south ranges. The door and fittings are present but it is boarded over on the inside. As noted earlier the eastern range has a passageway leading out towards the farmhouse. A set of three open pig styes face into the yard (Fig. 19). The styes have sloping ceilings to accommodate the chicken coop above. The remaining rooms to the south have had their windows and frames removed and are blocked with modern breeze blocks.



Figure 9 South facing elevation
Looking north. 1m scale



Figure 10 South facing gable end of western range
Looking north. 1m scale



Figure 11 South facing gable end of eastern range
Looking north. 1m scale. Note date stone above vent and scar left by removal of yard wall to the left of the door



Figure 12 West facing elevation
Looking south-east. 1m scale



Figure 13 North facing elevation
Looking south-east. 1m scale



Figure 14 Column detail and woodwork on the open sheds



Figure 15 East facing elevation
Looking south-west. 1m scale



Figure 16 West yard
Looking north. Blocked doorway into central range in top right corner



Figure 17 West yard, east facing elevation of west range
Looking south-west. 1m scale



Figure 18 East yard
Looking north. Note cut off yard wall stubs either side of the yard



Figure 19 East yard, west facing elevation of east range
Looking north-east



Figure 20 East yard, sties west facing elevation of east range
Looking south-east. 1m scale

Inside the barns

North range

Half of the north range is occupied by the open cart shed which has a floor made from small rounded pebbles. A wooden partition made from wide boards separates the west bay from the main open shed (Fig. 21). This is likely to be original as it butts against a stone pillar rather than against a cast iron post. The partition has a drive shaft and electric motor attached to it (Fig. 22). The electric motor is clearly a later addition and the driveshaft covers an earlier painted-on bull's eye target. Close to the machinery is the carved name of A ROGER and a Chi-Rho symbol (Fig. 23). The style of the carving suggests a reasonably early date, possibly pre 1914.

The cart shed roof structure is relatively lightweight and consists of trusses over each post with narrow tie-beams held to the principals by thin iron strips or stirrups. The tie-beams also support the purlins in a birds-mouth joint (Fig. 24). The same roof structure can be seen throughout the barn buildings.

To the east of the cart shed is a large room which was locked at the time of the survey. The wide doorway and window suggest that this used to be a stable associated with

the cart shed. Partial inspection through a gap in the locked door showed this room to be mostly empty but with a row of ascending perches used as a chicken house. The eastern end room of the north range is entered through the wide double doors on the gable end. The room has the remains of a plastered ceiling and a fireplace on the north wall (Fig. 25). The chimney has been truncated and no longer passes through the roof tiles. On the north wall, to the east of the chimney is a row of metal coat hooks with the names W. TAYLOR, E TAYLOR, G. TAYLOR, N. TAYLOR (Fig. 26). Presumably these are the Taylors of Taylor's farm. To the west of the chimney are two racks for saddles. A small room accessed from the passageway from the west yard is located to the south of the room with the fireplace and appears to have been used most recently as an animal pen.

West range

The west range has a small rectangular room at the south end which has a concrete floor (Fig. 27). There is no evidence of any former uses and no clear evidence of a hayloft floor which would be served by the door in the gable apex. The arched lintels over the door and over the window are constructed from two courses of brick headers. This brick reinforcement is seen on all doors and windows throughout the building.

When first built the west range had two three-bay open sheds facing east into the yard but the northern shed has been blocked to create a chemical store as discussed above. The remaining open shed has traces on the west wall where wooden byres or troughs were attached (Fig. 28). The chemical store is a large empty room with a concrete floor. A small stable room is located at the northern end of the range.

Central range

Most of the central range is filled by two large enclosed animal sheds. The southern room has a mortar floor and has evidence of stalls and byres along the western wall. The walls have been lined with plaster or mortar up to window sill height to prevent animals from rubbing against the bare stonework (Fig. 29). There is no evidence of a floor or mezzanine which would be served by the hayloft door on the gable end. The adjacent room the north has stable paviments and has two doors to allow for easier movement of animals. The northern segment of the central range is occupied by a two bay open shed which has a blocked doorway into the west yard as discussed above.

East range

As noted a passageway runs from the east yard towards the farmhouse (Fig. 30). A room to the south of the passageway has doors both into the yard and out to the east. It appears to have been a room of some importance as it has a plaster and lath ceiling. A set of three cages, probably kennels has been built against the south wall (Fig. 31). A narrow doorway to the south of the kennels leads up a set of wooden steps into the chicken house (Fig. 32). The remaining rooms were locked although a cursory inspection through the clear glass windows indicates that they have been partially modernised so that no original fixtures or fittings appear to have survived.



Figure 21 North range cart shed
Looking west towards wooden partition wall. 1m scale. Machinery shown with yellow arrow. Location of graffiti shown with red arrow (see figs. 17 and 18)



Figure 22 Machinery on west partition wall of cart shed



Figure 23 Graffiti on west partition wall of cart shed



Figure 24 Barn roof structure
The style is common throughout the building



Figure 25 East room of north range
Looking north-east. 1m scale



Figure 26 Coat hooks with the Taylor family names
East room of north range



Figure 27 South room of west range
Looking south-east. 1m scale



Figure 28 Open shed of west range
Looking south. 1m scale. Yellow arrows point to locations of byres or stalls



Figure 29 South room of centre range
Looking south-east. 1m scale



Figure 30 East range passageway from east yard
Looking east towards farmhouse. 1m scale



Figure 31 East range kennels
Looking west. 1m scale



Figure 32 East range, steps up to chicken coop
Looking west

Discussion

Taylor's Farm is a good example of a well-designed late 19th century model farm which has seen very little alteration since its construction in 1880. All of the buildings appear to have been built in a single phase and, with a few minor details, have remained as originally built. The fact that they have seen so little alteration is a testament to their well-designed layout. The nearby farmhouse appears to be of a significantly earlier date which indicates that an older range of farm buildings are likely to have been located on or near to the site.

Despite becoming somewhat redundant the buildings have been very well maintained and, in general, show only wear and tear damage which may be expected from a century or more of use. This type of farm building has an important role in the social and agricultural history of the area but at present tends to have less importance to the changing requirements of modern agricultural practices.

Historic map evidence only shows that the major changes in the use and layout of the farm occurred between the publication of the 1952 and 1978 Ordnance Survey maps when the modern buildings appear to the west of the original buildings. Prior to that date the farm seems to have managed to use the buildings as they were first built for about 100 years. However, from the later 1950s a change in farming techniques and equipment was being seen across the country. These changes began to require new and larger structures with the subsequent decline in suitability of the older farm. The gradual increase in these buildings suggests a gradual shift in focus westwards away from the E-shaped buildings towards the new buildings.

The preliminary proposals are to convert the barns into dwellings which will retain the same roofline and overall plan. This could have the beneficial effect of preserving what are otherwise redundant structures albeit in a slightly different but still recognisable form. Original features where they survive should be incorporated into the new proposals. Worthy of retention are the cast iron pillars, door furniture and the coat hooks with the Taylor family names on.

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