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Outbuildings at Rainsford Farm Crookham Hill, Thatcham, West Berkshire

Historic Building Record



Ref: 89920.01
May 2013



**Outbuildings at Rainsford Farm
Crookham Hill
Thatcham
West Berkshire**

Historic Building Record

**Planning Appeal ref: APP/W0340/A/10/2134713
Original Planning Application ref: 09/02370/OUTMAJ**

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Report Date: May 2013

Report Ref 89920.01



Quality Assurance

Project Code	89920	Accession Code		Client Ref.	
Planning Application Ref.	original application: 09/02370/OUTMAJ appeal application: APP/W0340/A/10/2134713	Ordnance Survey (OS) national grid reference (NGR)	452880, 166318		

Version	Status*	Prepared by	Checked and Approved By	Approver's Signature	Date
v01	E	GRF	MJR		17/05/2013
File:	X:\PROJECTS\89920\REPORT\89920_RainsfordFarm_HBR.doc				
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Summary

Wessex Archaeology were commissioned by Bellway Wessex to carry out a programme of historic building recording on selected outbuildings at Rainsford Farm, Crookham Hill, Thatcham, West Berkshire (NGR 452880, 166318) in order to fulfil a condition of the planning appeal (ref: APP/W0340/A/10/2134713).

Rainsford Farm is located approximately 1.5km south-east of Thatcham village centre, and directly south of Thatcham railway station. It is bounded by the Kennet River to the south and the Kennet and Avon Canal to the north. The farm has existed since at least the 17th century, although its current structures all date from the 19th and 20th centuries. From 1937-8 until recently the farm has been owned by dairy farmers R. A. Grover and Sons.

The now redundant farm is to undergo redevelopment with most of the existing farm buildings on the site to be demolished and replaced by 13 new houses plus car ports and parking areas. As part of the scheme two outbuildings north-east of the farmhouse are to be demolished, although due to their age and historic interest they were selected for 'preservation by record'. Discussions with the Acting Archaeological Officer of West Berkshire Council indicated that an English Heritage Level 2-3 record of two remnant 19th century outbuildings was required to satisfy the condition. In addition, a very brief photographic record was required of the other farm buildings at the site due for demolition, which are of mid-late 20th century date, to provide evidence of context and setting.

The two outbuildings targeted for survey appear for the first time in the 1841 Tithe map and stylistically appear to date from the early 19th century. Both buildings had developed their current plan form by 1880 and have been subject to further modification in the early-mid 20th century which included the rebuilding or rendering of the majority of walls at low level and the installation of concrete floors. The buildings were used to feed and house livestock, both are fitted with troughs, mangers and water basins. When surveyed (in April 2013) the buildings were vacant and the exteriors partly obscured by vegetation.



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Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Bellway Wessex and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Paul Bathgate (Senior Technical Manager) in this regard. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful for the assistance of Sarah Orr, Acting Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire Council, and the staff at the Berkshire Record Office, Reading where the documentary research was undertaken.

The site survey was carried out by Grace Flood and Matt Rous. The historic background was researched and this report written by Grace Flood. Linda Coleman provided the illustrations. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Matt Rous.



Outbuildings at Rainsford Farm Crookham Hill Thatcham West Berkshire

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Bellway Wessex to carry out a programme of historic building recording of two redundant outbuildings at Rainsford Farm, Crookham Hill, Thatcham, West Berkshire, RG19 4NU centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference 452880, 166318.

1.1.2 Rainsford Farm contains several agricultural buildings which appear to date from the early 19th – late 20th centuries. The farmhouse and the two farm buildings targeted for survey are depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1880 and in an earlier plan form on the Tithe map of 1841, so are at least early to mid-19th century date.

1.1.3 The programme of recording was undertaken in connection with a planning appeal (ref: APP/W0340/A/10/2134713). Subject to certain conditions, outline planning approval has been granted by West Berkshire Council for the redevelopment of the existing redundant farm buildings on the site into 13 houses plus car ports and parking areas, the construction of a new access road and alterations to the existing junction. The scheme will involve the demolition of all the existing farm buildings on the site with the exception of the farmhouse, bungalow and a single open-sided barn which are to be retained.

1.1.4 Condition 8 of the planning application states that:

“No demolition, site works or development shall take place on the appeal site until the appellant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of building recording in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the appellant and approved in writing by the local planning authority”.

1.1.5 Discussions with the Acting Archaeological Officer of West Berkshire Council indicated that an English Heritage (EH) Level 2-3 record of the two remnant 19th century outbuildings was required to satisfy the condition. In addition, a very brief photographic record was required of the other farm buildings at the site due for demolition, which are of mid-late 20th century date. Levels are defined in the document *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006).

1.2 The Site

1.2.1 Rainsford Farm is located off Crookham Hill road, south of Thatcham station approximately 1.5km south-west of the centre of Thatcham, West Berkshire. It is bounded by the Kennet and Avon Canal to the north; the river Kennet and Chamberhouse Mill to

the south; Crookham Hill road to the east. A sluice channel between the canal and river divides the complex of farm buildings from fields to the east (**Figure 1**).

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The principal aim of the historic building recording was to provide a long-term record of these historically significant farm buildings which will be demolished so that they are 'preserved by record'.
- 2.1.2 This programme of work provides a drawn, photographic and written record of the outbuildings in their historical context and present setting.

2.2 Fieldwork methodology

- 2.2.1 The recording of the outbuildings was conducted to English Heritage Level 2-3 standard as defined in the document "*Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice*" (English Heritage 2006).
- 2.2.2 The photographic record was made using a Canon EOS 5D Mk II digital camera with 21 megapixel capability. A photographic scale was included in detailed views where possible. The number, location and orientation of each photograph was recorded on existing site plans. This marked site plan will serve as a photographic register for the project archive.
- 2.2.3 The two outbuildings were surveyed using a Laser distancemeter (Leica DISTO) and traditional hand-measuring techniques. Measurements were recorded on a motion tablet PC in AutoCAD 2004 to produce an on site digital metric survey. Following the site survey the digital record was enhanced in line with accepted EH drawing conventions for reproduction in this report.

3 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Thatcham has existed since at least the 10th century (Thaecham). It is recorded as Taceham in the Domesday book 1086 where it is described as King's land with a manor of 12 houses, a church and 2 mills. Henry I granted Thatcham to Reading Abbey on its foundation in 1121 and Henry II authorised a market to be held in the village. After the dissolution of the monasteries, the borough and manor were granted to John Winchcombe (Victoria County History 1923).

3.2 Rainsford Farm

- 3.2.1 Rainsford Farm has existed since at least the 17th century when it was in possession of the Tull family (VCH 1923). On John Rocque's 'Topographical survey of the county of Berkshire' 1761 (**Figure 2**) the farm is depicted as a curved triangular plot with two buildings, neither of which survive today. A building which spans the river Kennet is shown on the Chamberhouse Mill site to the south. Rocque's map records Thatcham as being 6 acres in length, 5½ in breadth, 23 in circumference and 11491 in acreage.
- 3.2.2 The landscape surrounding Rainsford Farm was significantly altered in the early 19th century by construction of the Kennet and Avon Canal between 1794 and 1810 and the development of the Great Western Railway in the 1830s-40s. Thatcham railway station opened on 21st December 1847.

- 3.2.3 The 1817 Enclosure map (not reproduced) does not delineate the Rainsford Farm property but does label the area as belonging to George White Esq. The 1841 Tithe map (**Figure 2**) and award confirm White's ownership of 'Ransford Farm', which is described as a house, gardens and buildings plot (number 1649). White also owned associated field, road and river plots 1650 – 1656, 1658 and 1659a, all of which (including the Ransford Farm house, gardens and buildings) were occupied by *Ellanor Botham*. The Tithe award indicates that the path leading from Crookham Hill road to the farm complex was common marshland (plot 1647) and that two land plots (1689 and 1690) between the Rainsford Farm complex and the river to the west were part of Chamberhouse Mill owned by Richard Tull Esq.. The Tithe map shows four buildings at Rainsford Farm: a farmhouse to the west, one subsidiary building to the east of the house and two to the north-east. The latter have their long axis aligned parallel to the canal and are probably the existing study buildings, however in 1841 the structures were not conjoined and the eastern one did not form an L-shape in plan, instead both had rectangular plans and were separate from each other.
- 3.2.4 By 1880 (OS map **Figure 3**) George White was still the landowner but Rainsford Farm was occupied by Alexander Davis. The farm building complex had increased in size and expanded to the south. The study buildings appear in their current form, the west rectangular plan form structure appears now joined to the eastern structure, which is L-shaped in plan. The eastern building is located further south than the western one, whereas on the Tithe map the buildings appeared to be on the same alignment. The farm house has either been replaced or modified as it forms an irregular square in plan as opposed to its 1841 T-shape plan (**Plate 1**). The fourth Tithe map building also survives, although it appears smaller than in 1841 so may be a replacement structure. There is a small square plan outbuilding immediately to the east of it. Further south is a rectangular plan structure of unknown function aligned approximately east-west on its long axis. In the south-east corner of the farm complex is a rectangular plan building with associated enclosures, possibly two pigsties as this location is currently occupied by a modern structure of this type.
- 3.2.5 Later Ordnance Survey maps indicate the farm complex remained relatively unchanged until the mid-20th century. By 1899, the rectangular building to the east of the farmhouse had been removed, although the rest of the complex remains unchanged. The farm belonged to farmer Henry Hawkins who held it until at least 1903. By 1911 (**Figure 3**) the farm was owned by farmer Joseph William Clark. An outlier building had been constructed east of the main farm complex, west of the sluice channel; however it was demolished before 1932 (**Figure 3**), by which time the farm was in the possession of William Blanchard and family.
- 3.2.6 Richard Alma Grover took over Rainsford Farm in 1937-8. R. A. Grover and Sons had been a live cattle haulage contractor but transferred to dairy farming and milk production with the purchase of Rainsford. The Grover family continued to own the farm until at least 1974 at which time it was in the possession of John R Grover. It is possible that the modified interior features including concrete floors, plinths, rendered walls, troughs and metal mangers date to the late 1930s and the farm's acquisition by Grover.
- 3.2.7 At some point between 1932 and 1967 (**Figure 3**) the existing outbuilding to the east of the farm house was extended west and the whole farm complex expanded with a number of new structures, all with rectangular plan forms. A building of comparable size to the existing outbuilding east of the farmhouse was added south of the L-plan building (**Plate 2**). A large barn aligned north-south on its long axis is located further south and lies adjacent to a dry store building raised on stilts (**Plates 3-5**). Another building is located immediately east of the large barn north end, aligned west-east on its long axis (**Plate 6**).

Also, a small corrugated iron lean-to was added to the north-east of the L-plan building (**Plate 7**). Finally, the garden plot to the south of the farmhouse that had existed since at least 1841 was truncated to form a boundary with the pigsties (**Plate 8**) and enlarge the meadow south of the house.

- 3.2.8 Later Ordnance Survey maps are produced at a less detailed scale, however the 1976 map (not reproduced) clearly shows the mid-20th century large north-south orientated barn and drying store as a single L-shape and also the east-west aligned barn further to the east. The farmhouse and study buildings are depicted as basic rectangles.
- 3.2.9 Prior to 2003 a large rectangular plan open-sided building constructed of concrete and steel beams was added east of the study buildings (**Plate 9**) (Google Earth imagery). It is used as a fertiliser and hay store. The outbuilding directly east of the farmhouse had been removed by this date.

4 BUILDING RECORD

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The study buildings have existed since at least 1841 and at this time were two separate structures rectangular in plan. The western building maintains its rectangular form, whereas the eastern building has been extended further east and forms an L-shape in plan. The space between the two buildings has been infilled.

4.2 Western Outbuilding

- 4.2.1 The western outbuilding measures 22.14m in length and 4.47m width and is aligned east-west on its long axis. At the time of survey (April 2013), the majority of the building exterior was obscured by vegetation. It is constructed of red brick laid in a Flemish bond. Walls are blind to the west and north and the east elevation has an off-centre ventilation fan installed within the gable (**Plates 10-12** respectively). Access is provided via two timber frame stable doors fitted with iron strap hinges and bolts. These are located off-centre in approximately mirror positions within the south elevation (**Plate 13**). Fenestration in the south elevation is interspersed by the doors; the six windows (**Plate 14**) form a pattern of 3-light, 3-light, 2-light, 3-light, 3-light, 2-light openings west to east (**Figure 4**). The 2-light window 3rd from the west is located centrally within the elevation. Only the 3-light windows have projecting sills. The roof is pitched with a half-hip to the west and gable end to the east. The roof ridge is surmounted by a series of curved ventilation tiles (see **Plate 11**) with rectangular ceramic tile cladding elsewhere.
- 4.2.2 Internally, the building forms a single volume (**Plate 15**). The roof structure comprises a 7-bay queen post timber frame of regular sawn timbers which have limewashed. The concrete floor has an off-centre step that runs the full west-east length of the structure; the ground level is lower to the south. The brick walls have been rendered in concrete at low level which conforms to farming health regulations implemented in the 1920s - 30s (Harvey 1970). Adjacent to the north wall is a concrete trough subdivided into 20 feeding bays - most likely for young cattle. A series of metal T-plan frames separate each feeding bay although in the majority of cases, only the head of the 'T' remains. The frames are inscribed with the maker's mark 'YOUNG'. Some are fitted with metal buckets made by 'GEO. W. KING LTD. STEVENAGE'. This company operated a factory in Stevenage between 1940-1990 and produced cranes, hoists, pulleys, mechanical handling gear and sliding door gear as well as agricultural equipment (Our Stevenage website).

4.3 Eastern Outbuilding

- 4.3.1 The eastern outbuilding essentially comprises two connected buildings with the western part being rectangular in plan and the eastern part, L-shaped in plan (**Figure 4**). It is positioned slightly to the south of the western study building and its north wall follows the approximate alignment of the former's central roof line.
- 4.3.2 The L-plan east end of the building measures 7.5m in length, east-west, and 10.15m in length, north-south, whilst its width is 4.7m. The structure is constructed of timber posts set into a concrete plinth with timber weatherboarding on the exterior and a slate tile roof. A steel I-profile post provides extra support at the south-west corner. The L-plan end is open to the south and west (**Plate 16**) however, metal and timber posts indicate the building was previously enclosed with gates on these sides. The north and east walls are blind (**Plates 17-18**). Internally, it has a concrete floor and is subdivided into four areas by concrete block walls built to head height (**Plates 19-20**). The slate roof tiles are supported on a raked queen-post timber frame. Each area is fitted with a metal manger at high level and a rounded metal drinking basin.
- 4.3.3 The west end of the eastern outbuilding, which measures 11.55m in length and 5.7m in width, has walls constructed of concrete blocks at low level, with timber studwork and weatherboarding above and is supported by a mixture of timber and steel I-profile posts. The west, north (**Plate 21**) and east walls are blind, whereas the south wall (**Plate 22**), constructed of timber framing, steel I-posts and reused railway sleepers, is partially open. Access to the structure is from the south at the south-west and south-east corners; the former is fitted with a small metal gate (**Plate 23**). The wall dividing the west (rectangular plan) and east (L-plan) ends of the building is constructed of timber studwork set in a concrete plinth with weatherboarding on its east face, suggesting that this was originally an external wall (see **Plate 19**).
- 4.3.4 The pitched roof has a King-post timber frame of regular sawn timbers that supports patented ceramic double-interlocking ribbed tiles marked 'BREVETE S.G.D.G' and 'GILARDONI FRÈRES BOIS DU ROI MARNE'. Gilardoni Frères is the name of a pair of French tile manufacturing companies based in Altkirch, Alsace that patented interlocking tile designs in 1841 and 1850. They operated from 1834-1974 and their Marne factory was opened in 1925 (Wikipedia France), therefore the Rainsford Farm tiles are likely to have been manufactured from early to mid-20th century onwards, although their presence in west Berkshire must be considered unusual.
- 4.3.5 Internally, the rectangular-plan end is divided into two rooms. The west measures 4.20m in length and 5.43m in width. It has a basin marked 'FISHER' on the east wall and curved brick mangers lined with concrete in the north-east and south-east corners. There is a metal manger fixed to the north wall at high level. A shallow drainage channel in the concrete floor runs north-south. The east wall has a central doorway that provides access between the two rooms; it is fitted with a metal door frame and gate. The floor level in the west room is higher than the east, there is a single step in the doorway between the two. The timber roof purlins continue through the wall into the east room (**Plate 24**).
- 4.3.6 The east room measures 7.04m in length and 5.54m in width. The roof cross frames form three bays and are aligned directly above the steel I-posts in the north wall but off-centre from those in the south wall. The room has two mangers in the south-west corner, one high level, one low, as well as a rectangular drinking basin in the north-east corner (**Plates 25-26**). The joinery in the upper wall plate indicates the building was initially closed on all sides by timber frame walls, but at an unknown point in time (probably the early 20th century) its lower walls were rebuilt and its structure reinforced with steel supports.

4.4 Infill structure

- 4.4.1 The structural infill between the two study buildings has a single pitch corrugated iron roof sloping down to the north. The north wall is constructed of red brick, the west wall is formed partly by the brick wall of the western outbuilding and partly by timber studwork. The east concrete block wall is the end of the eastern study building and the structure is open to the south. Inside, a chicken wire frame with a low opening encloses a wooden hutch, probably for poultry (**Plate 27**).

5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1.1 Although both structures are now redundant, the remaining fittings indicate they were used to feed and house livestock, presumably cattle. The western outbuilding has narrow doors approximately 0.90m wide as opposed to the gated or open access in the eastern outbuilding (1.20 - 3.20m wide). This implies it was used for younger, smaller animals. The long manger and row of stalls limits the internal space and suggests the western outbuilding was used only for feeding, not housing the livestock. Conversely, the eastern outbuilding was used as stables to both feed and shelter the animals. The L-plan end was previously fitted with gates on its south and west sides meaning the four areas could be enclosed and livestock penned inside.
- 5.1.2 New farming health standards implemented in the 1920s such as the Milk and Dairy order of 1926 required concrete floors and lower walls, larger stalls, dung channels and drainage for improved hygiene (Harvey 1970, 178). The partial rebuilding of the western and eastern buildings conform to and therefore postdate these regulations. The western outbuilding retains its brick walls but the interior face has been rendered in concrete and a concrete floor installed. A tap water source inside the building means it could be easily cleaned of animal waste. The eastern outbuilding also has a concrete floor throughout. At its east end the timber frame walls remain but have been reset in a concrete plinth whereas the modifications to the west end are more extensive with the lower walls completely rebuilt in concrete blocks and metal supports added. This more extensive development may coincide with the construction of other modern concrete outbuildings in the mid-late 20th century, post-1932.
- 5.1.3 Livestock and dairy farming rose to prominence in Britain in the early 20th century whereas arable farming had been in decline for several decades due to cheap imports from overseas markets. Dairy farming had no such competition and the industry developed rapidly (Harvey 1970, 166). Rainsford Farm was certainly a cattle farm post-1938, however the partial reconstruction of the surveyed buildings and the proliferation of modern outbuildings on site makes it difficult to ascertain whether the farm was always involved in livestock and dairy production or was converted from arable to the more economically viable farming system in the early-mid 20th century.

6 ARCHIVE

- 6.1.1 The complete archaeological project archive will be prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's Guidelines for Archive Preparation and in accordance with *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage* (UKIC 1990) in Appendix 3 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and with up-to-date guidance in English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Manager's Guide*, 2006. On completion of the project the archive will be deposited with West Berkshire Museum.



6.1.2 The historic building archive will include:

- hard copy of the full report
- pdf copy of the report on CD
- full photographic record with photographic registers
- hard copies of the floor plans at 1:100
- hard copies of the sections and elevations at 1:100
- hard copies of the phased floor plans at 1:100
- field notes and sketches

7 COPYRIGHT

7.1.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The Museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profit making, and conforms to the Copyright and Related Rights regulations 2003.



8 REFERENCES

Bibliographic references

Harvey, N., 1970: *A History of Farm Buildings in England and Wales*, David and Charles; Newton Abbot

Primary Sources (consulted at BRO)

Cartography

Post office directories for Berkshire and Newbury

Electoral registers

Cartographic Sources

1761 John Rocque's 'A Topographical Map of the County of Berkshire' (consulted at BRO and Wessex Archaeology library)

1817 Thatcham (Henwick and Calthorpe) Enclosure map Berkshire Record Office reference DP130_26_1A

http://www.berkshireenclosure.org.uk/find_via_parish_details.asp?parish=Thatcham

1841 Thatcham Parish Tithe map and award schedule (consulted at BRO)

1880 Ordnance Survey, First edition. 25" to 1 mile (consulted at BRO)

1911 Ordnance Survey. 25" to 1 mile (consulted at BRO)

1932 Ordnance Survey, 25" to 1 mile (consulted at BRO)

1967 Ordnance Survey. 1:2500 (www.old-maps.co.uk)

1976 Ordnance Survey 1:10000 (www.old-maps.co.uk)

Online Resources

Berkshire Record Office. *New Landscapes: Enclosure in Berkshire* <http://www.berkshireenclosure.org.uk> page accessed 29/04/2013

English Heritage 2006, *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-historic-buildings/>

Google Earth

Historical Directories <http://www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/>



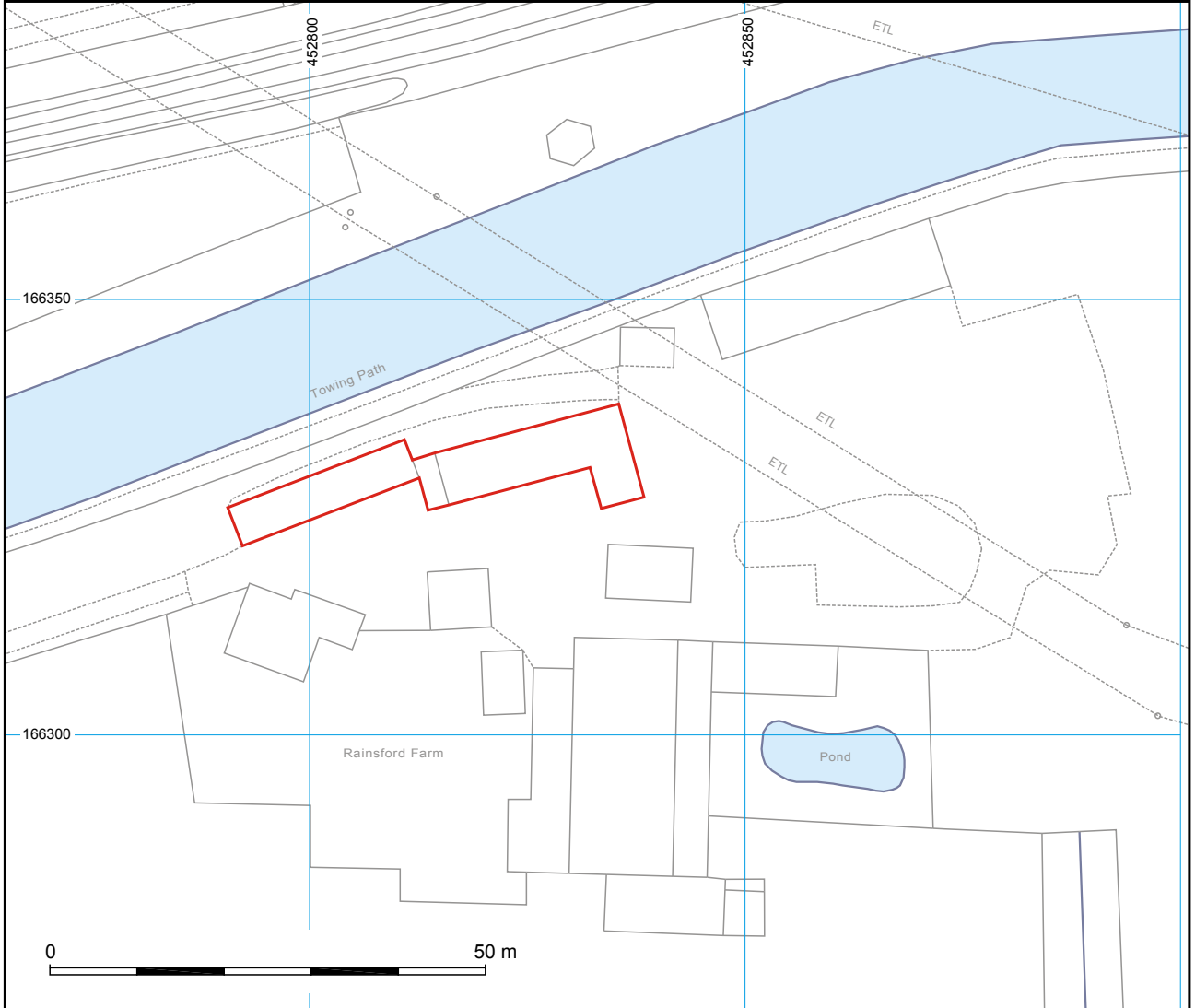
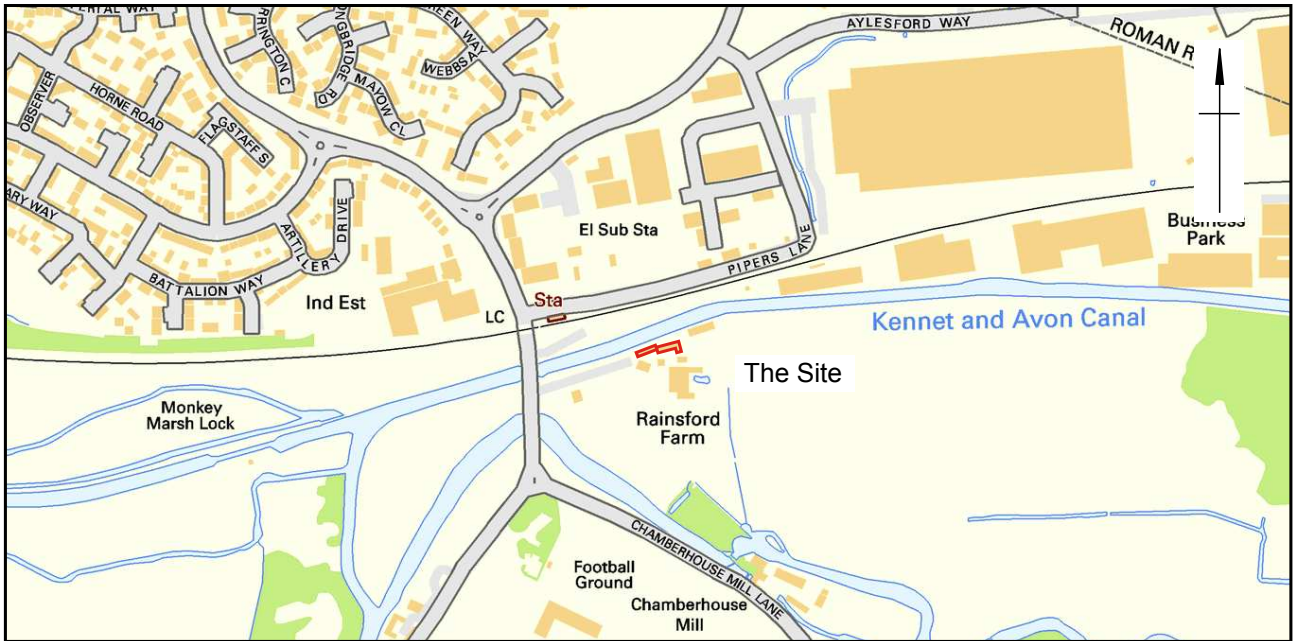
Old Maps www.old-maps.co.uk



Our Stevenage: Geo. W. King Ltd

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Victoria County History. Ditchfield, PH and Page, William (eds) 1923. *A History of the County of Berkshire. Volume 3.* p311-329 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=43223> page accessed 29/04/2013

Wikipedia France: *Gilardoni Freres* http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilardoni_Fr%C3%A8res
accessed 14/05/2013



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Location of building survey

Figure 1



1761 'A Topographical Survey of the County of Berkshire' by John Rocque



1841 Tithe map of Thatcham parish



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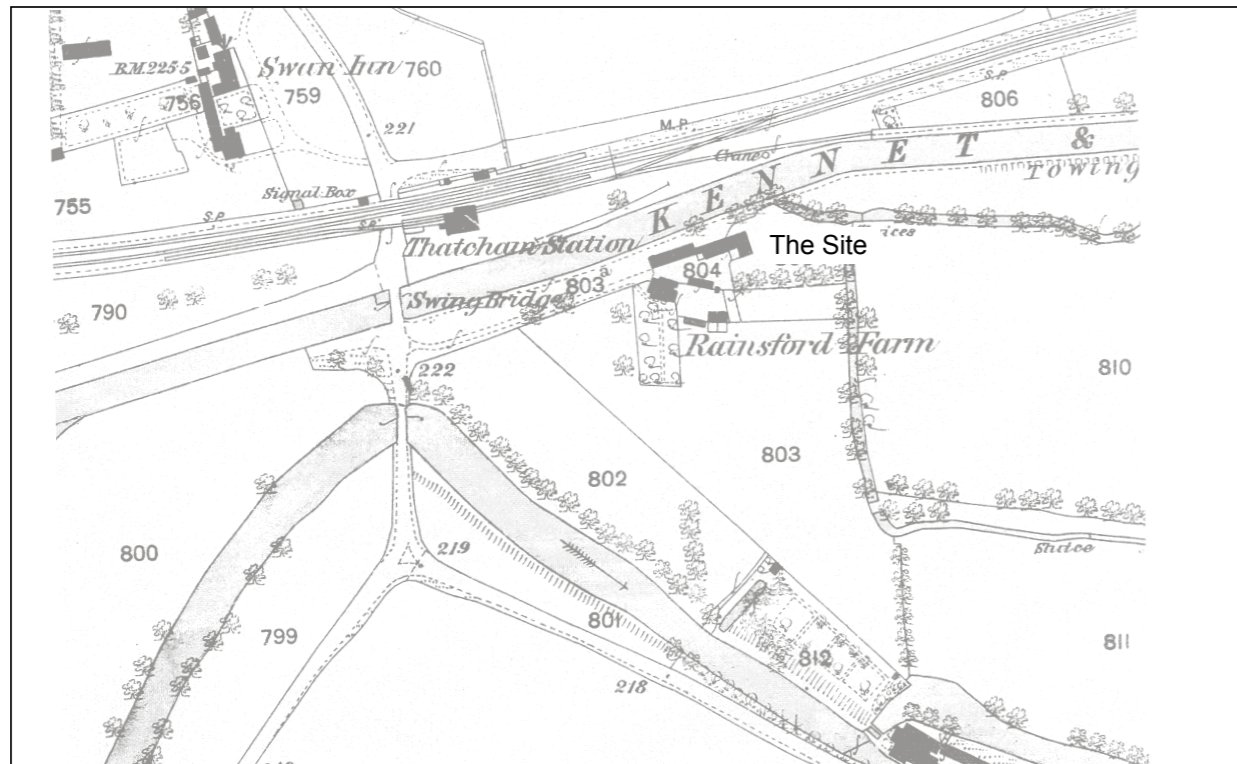
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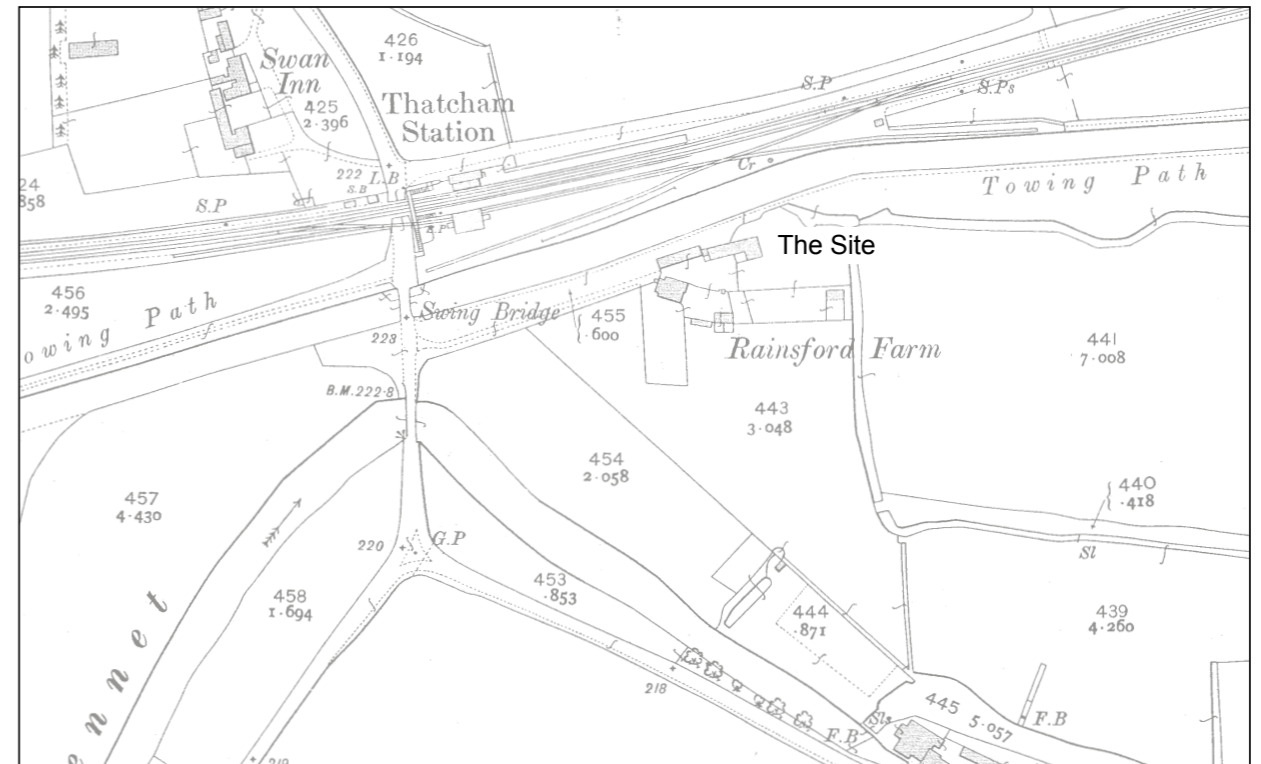
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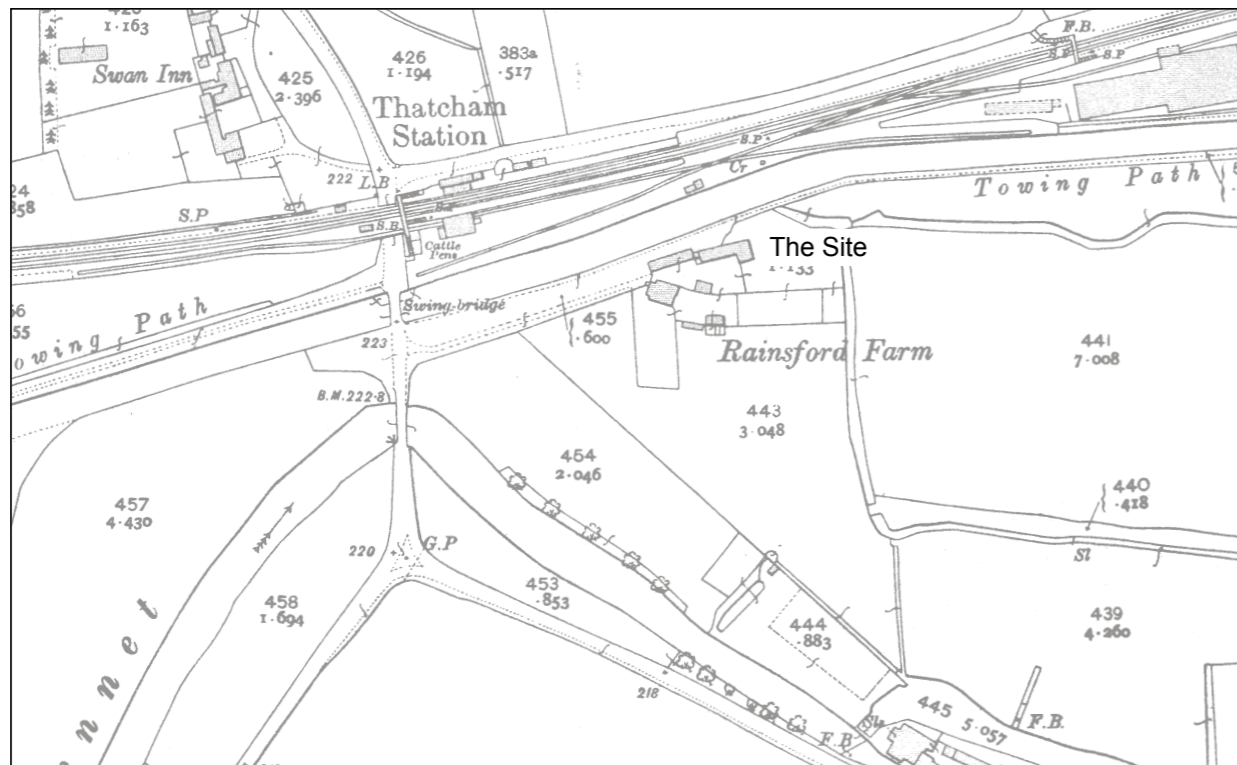
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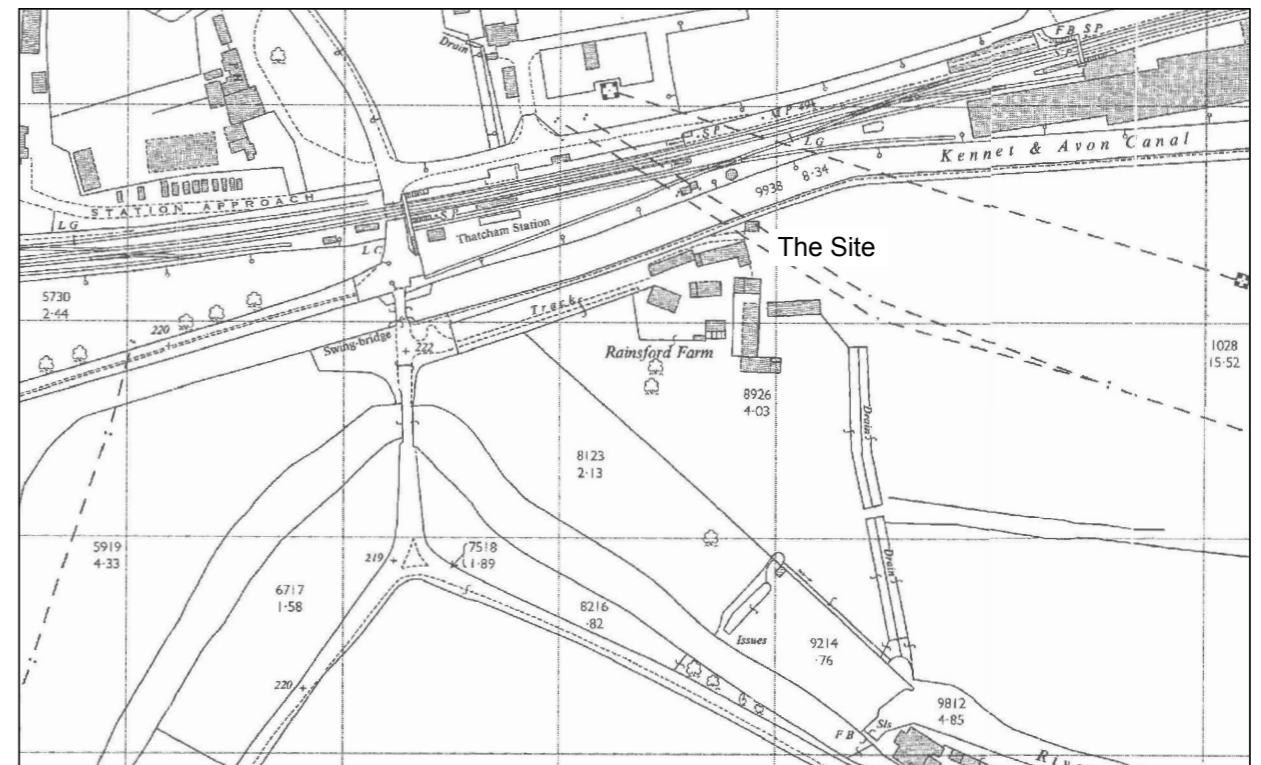
1880 Ordnance Survey



1911 Ordnance Survey



1932 Ordnance Survey



1967 Ordnance Survey



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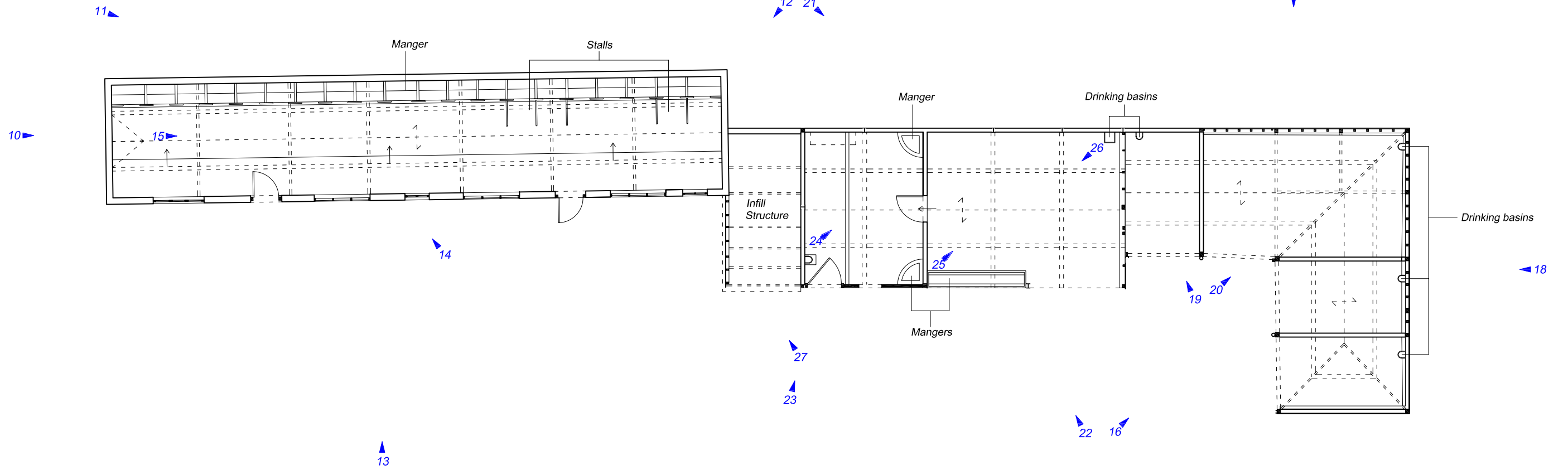
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Western Outbuilding

Eastern Outbuilding



▲ 13 Number and direction of plate

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Plan of Rainsford Farm outbuildings

Figure 4



Plate 1: Farmhouse



Plate 2: Outbuilding south of L-planform structure


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Plate 3: North-south orientated barn



Plate 4: North-south orientated barn interior


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Plate 5: North-south orientated barn and raised dry store



Plate 6: East-west orientated outbuilding interior


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Plate 7: Corrugated iron lean-to



Plate 8: Pigsties


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Plate 9: Late 20th century outbuilding



Plate 10: Western study building: obscured west elevation


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Plate 11: Western study building: north elevation



Plate 12: Western study building: north and east elevations


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Plate 13: Western study building: south elevation



Plate 14: Western study building: typical 2-light window


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Plate 15: Western study building: interior



Plate 16: Eastern study building, east end: south and west elevations


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Plate 17: Eastern study building, east end: north elevation



Plate 18: Eastern study building, east end: east elevation


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Plate 19: Eastern study building, east end: typical interior space



Plate 20: Eastern study building, east end: north-east corner


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Plate 21: Eastern study building, west end: north elevation



Plate 22: Eastern study building, west end: south elevation


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Plate 23: Eastern study building, west end: south-west corner entrance



Plate 24: Eastern study building, west end: west room

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Plate 25: Eastern study building, west end: east room



Plate 26: Eastern study building, west end: east room


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Plate 27: Eastern study building, west end: south-west corner entrance

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