

# HERITAGE NETWORK



**Aisled Barn  
MANOR HOUSE  
105 Norton Road, Letchworth, Herts.**

HN583

*Historic Building Record*



*THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD*

*Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation*

*Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA*

MANOR HOUSE  
105 Norton Road, Letchworth, Herts.

HN583

*Historic Building Record*

Prepared on behalf of Mr and Mrs J.L. Kitson

by

David Hillelson, BA MIFA and Helen Ashworth, BA AIFA

Report no.354

*July 2006*

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*The cover photograph shows the western elevation of the barn*

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by David Hillelson and Sallianne Wilcox, photography was by Giles Sholl, and additional historical research was undertaken by Helen Ashworth. The report text was written by David Hillelson and Helen Ashworth, and the illustrations were prepared by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Mr and Mrs J.L. Kitson, and the staff of the County Archaeology Office, HCC, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Manor House, 105 Norton Road, Letchworth, Herts.		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	North Herts
<b>Village/town:</b>	Norton	<b>Parish:</b>	Letchworth
<b>Planning reference:</b>	05/01581/1HH	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 2290 3416
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Mr and Mrs J.L. Kitson, address as above		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	Conversion	<b>Former use:</b>	Storage
<b>Site Status:</b>	Listed building	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Direction of LPA (PPG16)
<b>Position in planning process:</b>	After full determination (as a condition)	<b>Project brief originator:</b>	Local Authority
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	80m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	80m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN583	<b>Other reference:</b>	n/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Project type, methods etc...</b>	Building recording, survey/recording of fabric/structure	<b>Archive Recipient:</b>	Hertfordshire Archives
<b>Start of work</b>	17 March 2006	<b>Finish of work</b>	27 April 2006
<b>Related SMR Nos:</b>	n/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Post-medieval/Modern
<b>Oasis UID</b>	heritage1-17255	<b>Significant finds:</b>	n/a
<b>Monument types:</b>	Farm Building: Barn		
<b>Physical archive:</b>	n/a		
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	n/a		

**Synopsis:** As the result of an archaeological condition on the planning permission for the renovation and conversion of a barn at Manor House, 105 Norton Road, Norton, Letchworth, Herts, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owners to provide a record of the building, and an overview of its development, prior to the start of the conversion works.

The majority of the basic structure of the barn appears to be mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> century in date, on the basis of the jowls to the principal posts and the joints in the wall plate, and it is likely that the barn is contemporary with the adjacent former farmhouse, and in its original location. In its original form it was of three bays and appears to have had a mezzanine floor or loft in the northern and southern bays. The barn shows signs of decay to the sole plates and the base of the principal posts and, in the course of a number of phases of repair and alteration, a brick plinth was inserted to support the structure. At an unspecified date, an aisle was added to the eastern elevation and the sole plates to the northern and southern elevations were replaced. A dated graffito indicates that one phase of alteration dates to 1844.

## 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared at the request of *Mr and Mrs J.L. Kitson*, as part of the recording of a timber framed barn located adjacent to Manor House, 105 Norton Road, Letchworth, Herts. Planning permission for the conversion of the building (ref. 05/01581/1HH) was granted by the North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), subject to a standard archaeological condition (Condition 6), issued in accordance with the provisions of the Department of the Environment's *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16). The scope of the required work was defined in a *Design Brief for Historic Building Recording* prepared by the *County Archaeology Office* (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as archaeological advisers to NHDC. A full specification for the work carried out is included in the Heritage Network's approved Project Design dated April 2006.

**1.2** The property lies on the south-east side of Norton Road, approximately 100m north-east of its junction with Green Lane, and the study area is centred on national grid reference TL 2291 3416 (Figure 1). The aisled barn which forms the focus of the present project, sits at right angles to the eastern corner of the main house which dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Both buildings fall within the Grade II listing for the property (ref.5/14). Such buildings have been identified in regional research agenda as being of particular interest and as facing a high rate of loss through redundancy, conversion and demolition (East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8, 2000). The planning authority has identified the building as having intrinsic archaeological interest.

**1.3** The aim of the project has been to make a high quality record of the structure before the start of conversion works. An appropriate level of documentary research has been undertaken to place the findings in their local and regional historical context.

**1.4** The full archive for the project will be deposited with Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) in order to preserve a record of the buildings in their present form. It includes original drawings as well as architect's plans, elevations and sections, original medium-format black and white photographic negatives and contact sheets, and digital images.

## 2. Building record

### *GENERAL*

**2.1** The site consists of a dwelling house (formerly a farmhouse) of at least 17<sup>th</sup> century date, which was modernised by Parker and Unwin in 1909, and a separate thatched barn to the east. The house, which is Grade II listed, lies outside the present planning application and is, therefore, excluded from the study. The barn, which falls within the listing for the house, has planning consent for conversion to residential use.

### *CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE*

**2.2** The earliest map consulted appears to be a rough sketch of the entire parish of Norton, probably dating to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (HALS 19336). This shows the study area as a house on the road frontage, labelled L. Squires (Figure 2). The barn is not marked, but as the map is inaccurate as to scale and perspective, and no details are shown for any of the marked properties, this does not indicate that it did not exist at this period.

**2.3** The enclosure map of 1796 shows the study area as comprising six buildings within a rectangular plot, marked as 18 on the plan (Figure 3). The present building may be marked as a rectangle, running north to south on the eastern side of the plot. At this period the plot was owned by George Freeman and occupied by Thomas Oliver (Giles 2003, 125).

**2.4** The 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map, dated 1880, shows the barn in its present form, forming the eastern side of a courtyard or farmyard (Figure 4). It has a small extension at the northern end of the western elevation which meets the southeastern corner of Manor House. Its southwestern corner meets the north-eastern corner of the southern range which consists of a larger rectangular building to the west and a smaller building to the east. A small yard or extension is marked on the southern side of the barn.

**2.5** The general layout of the site remained unchanged until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, although a small extension or outhouse is shown at the eastern end of the northern elevation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1898 (Figure 5). This had been removed by the time of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition OS map, dated 1922, and the western building in the southern range had been demolished, leaving only the smaller eastern building, a timber framed and thatched barn which still survives (Figure 6). The small extensions, located at the northern end of the western elevation and the eastern end of the southern elevation, have now been removed, the former being replaced by a modern conservatory and the latter visible as an irregularity in the weatherboarding.

### *BARN DESCRIPTION*

**2.6** The barn is an oak framed thatch roofed rectangular structure of three unequal bays and an aisle, aligned northeast to southwest (referred to in the text, for convenience, as aligned north - south) (Figure 8; Plates 1-4). The woodwork has been limewashed and the sole plate is set on a brick plinth, on average three courses high. The floor is formed of concrete.

**2.7** The barn measures 11.5m (37'9") x 7m (23') x 7m (23') overall. Excluding the aisle the dimensions are 11.5m (37'9") x 4.8m (15'9"), with the northern bay measuring 3.5m (11'6") north to south, and the middle and southern bays measuring 4.5m (14'9") and 3.25m (10'8") respectively.

**2.8** The barn has been subject to periodic repair and alteration using second-hand materials, and may originally have been constructed from elements taken from a variety of other structures.

**2.9** Five of the eight principal posts, the wall plates, mid-rails and roof trusses appear to be contemporary. The two northern pairs of principal posts and the south-western post have gently flared jowls which is generally indicative of a later 17<sup>th</sup> century date (Plate 5). The south-eastern post is unique but the remaining pair are chamfered and have a series of redundant notches and mortices indicating reuse. The tie-beam in this frame has mortices cut into its lower face, and the collar exhibits redundant dowel holes which also indicate reuse (Plate 6). The wall plates are jointed where they span the middle bay using edge-halved scarf joints which were in common use up until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 7).

**2.10** The roof structure is supported on arch-braced tie-beams which span the principal posts. From these spring raking queen struts which support a collar. The rafters support a ridge purlin. Carpenter's marks were noted on the northern side of the second frame from the north (Plate 8).

**2.11** Much of the studwork appears to have been replaced although those studs located above the mid-rails on the western elevation of the northern and southern bays appear, from their size, to be original. The curved braces in these two bays are a later addition and have been nailed into position. The remains of a window opening can be seen in the southern bay with one surviving wooden mullion and diamond-shaped mortices for two further ones on the lower face of the wall plate (Plate 9). Further diamond-shaped mortices can be seen in a similar position in the northern bay, and cut into the base of the arcade plate in the northern bay.

**2.12** A series of rectangular mortices cut into the lower face of the eastern arcade plate indicate that this elevation was originally closed (Plate 10). Mortices in the northern face of the second arcade post from the north suggest that it originally supported a mid-rail, and the integral bracket on its western face, and similar bracket on the opposing principal post, indicate the former existence of a cross-rail, probably supporting a mezzanine floor (Plate 11). No direct evidence for a similar arrangement in the southern bay survives, as all of the principal posts in this bay, with the exception of the south-western post, appear to be replacements. Nevertheless, the presence of the window may be indicative.

**2.13** The aisle is a later addition to the barn, possibly added at the time that the barn underwent major repairs. These repairs include the replacement of the sole plates to the northern and southern gables, which appear to have been lengthened to include the aisle, and were supported on brick plinths. The timber used in the construction of the aisle appears to be badly weathered, and because this weathering does not extend to the main structure, it is likely that it was installed in this condition.

**2.14** The barn has four entrances. Ledged and braced barn doors are offset to the north in the western elevation of the middle bay. A handcarved graffito on the inside of the southern door jamb reads *These planks was laid here 1844 by W.S.T.C.* (Plate 12). A ledged personnel door is located between the barn doors and the next principal post to the south. A ledged and braced personnel door is located in the northern corner of the same elevation, probably originally giving access to the small extension against the exterior elevation noted on the Ordnance Survey plan of 1880. A further ledged personnel door opens into the aisle from the north. Modern windows have been inserted above the collar in the southern gable end, and at the eastern end of the northern gable end, below the mid-rail.



### 3. Discussion

**3.1** The barn which adjoins Manor House, Norton Road, Letchworth, has undergone a number of alterations and repairs in the course of its life, including the addition of an aisle to its eastern elevation. The majority of the basic structure is likely to be mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> century in date on the basis of the jowls to the principal posts and the joints in the wall plate. Given that Manor House, originally a farmhouse, is also considered to be 17<sup>th</sup> century in date, it is likely that the barn is a contemporary construction and in its original location.

**3.2** In its original form, the barn appears to have had a mezzanine floor or loft at its northern end. This is suggested by the mid-rails, the joints for a cross-rail half-way down the principal posts, and the diamond-shaped mortices for mullions in both the eastern and western upper elevations, indicative of window openings. No evidence for joists was noted, however. The presence of the mid-rails and the window opening in the western upper elevation of the southern bay suggest that a similar arrangement may have existed here, but the evidence for a cross-rail has been lost with the replacement of the northern frame to this bay. The middle bay appears to have always been open to the roof.

**3.3** It is impossible to define the phases of repair and alteration accurately. It is clear that the base of the structure has suffered from severe rot and has been repaired on more than one occasion. The sole plate has been replaced in both the gable ends, probably at the time that the aisle was added. This was in place by at least 1880, the date of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map. The sole plate has been replaced, at least in places, in the side elevations also. The base of most of the principal posts show decay, and the whole of the perimeter of the structure is supported on a brick plinth of varying antiquity. The middle two arcade posts are supported on modern brick plinths. At the least, it is clear that the southern jamb of the barn doors was inserted in 1844, and this may be both when the doorway itself was inserted, and when the other major alterations were carried out.

## 4. Sources Consulted

### *CARTOGRAPHIC*

#### **Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies:**

19336	Plan of the Parish of Norton, 18 <sup>th</sup> century
OS, 1884	6" scale, Sheet VII, 1 <sup>st</sup> edition, 1884
OS, 1898	25" scale, Sheet VII.7, 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition, 1898
OS, 1922	25" scale, Sheet VII.7 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition, 1922
OS, 1937	25" scale, Sheet VII.7, 4 <sup>th</sup> edition, 1937

#### **North Hertfordshire District Council Archaeological Archives**

Copy of the Enclosure map and award, 1796

#### **First Garden City Heritage Museum, Letchworth**

OS, 1880            25" scale, Sheet VII.7, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1880

#### **National Monuments Record: Images of England**

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- Hewitt, C.A. 1980 *English Historic Carpentry*. Phillimore
- Hillelson, D. 2006 *Aisled Barn, Manor House, 105 Norton Road, Letchworth, Herts: Project Design*. Heritage Network

## 5. Illustrations

Figure 1 .....	Site location
Figure 2 .....	Norton in the early 18 <sup>th</sup> century
Figure 3 .....	Norton Enclosure map, 1796
Figure 4 .....	Ordnance Survey map, 1 <sup>st</sup> edition, 1880
Figure 5 .....	Ordnance Survey map, 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition, 1898
Figure 6 .....	Ordnance Survey map, 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition, 1922
Figure 7 .....	Ordnance Survey map, 4 <sup>th</sup> edition, 1937
Figure 8 .....	Plan, sections and internal elevations
Plate 1 .....	Western exterior elevation
Plate 2 .....	Southern exterior elevation
Plate 3 .....	Eastern exterior elevation
Plate 4 .....	Northern exterior elevation
Plate 5 .....	Framing, northern bay, looking N
Plate 6 .....	Tie-beam and collar, southern bay, northern frame
Plate 7 .....	Edge-halved scarf joint in western wall plate
Plate 8 .....	Carpenter's marks
Plate 9 .....	Window opening in southern bay
Plate 10 .....	Mortices cut into lower face of eastern arcade plate
Plate 11 .....	Integral bracket in second arcade post from N
Plate 12 .....	Graffito on inside of southern barn door jamb

# **Appendix 1**

## **Black & White Photographic Log**

## Appendix 2

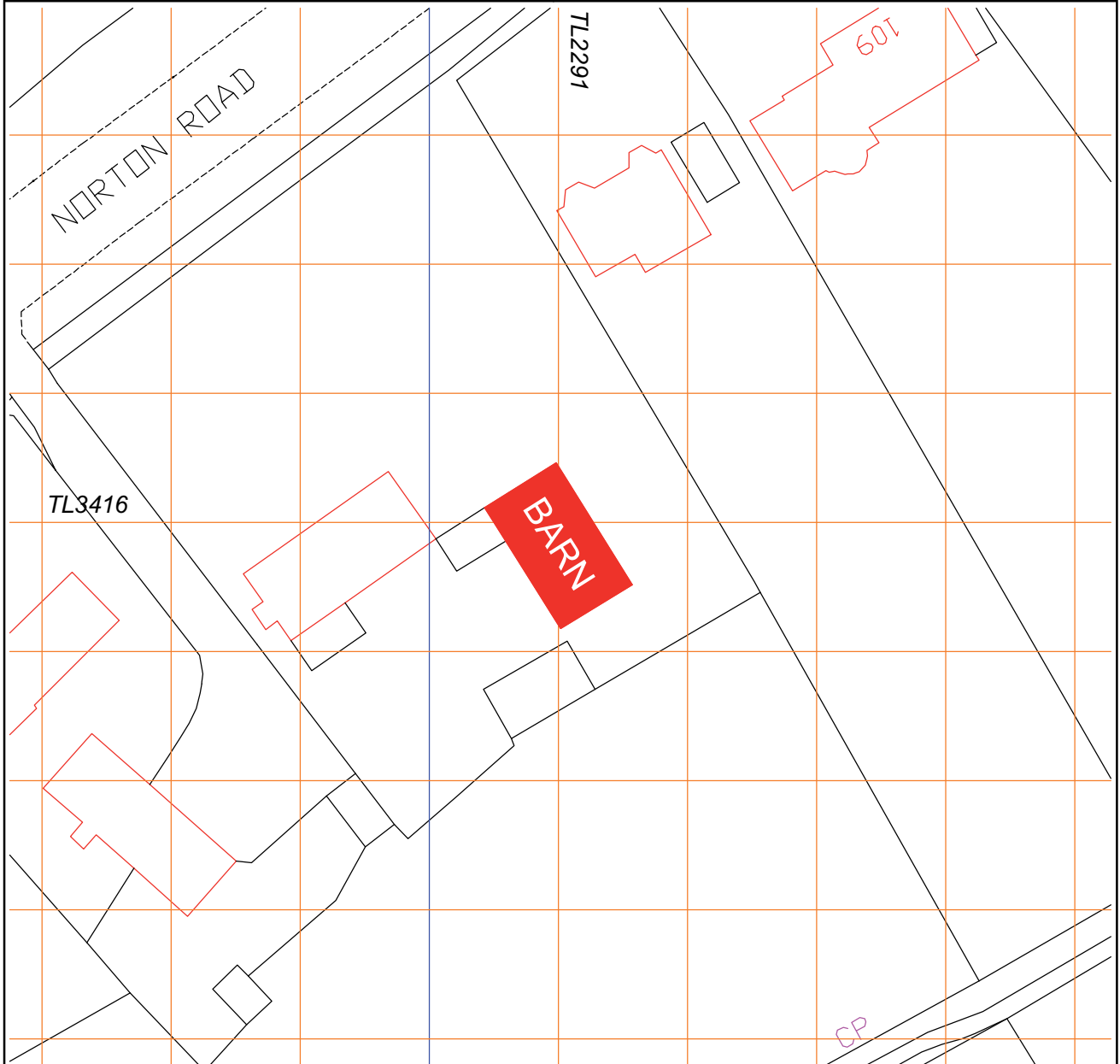
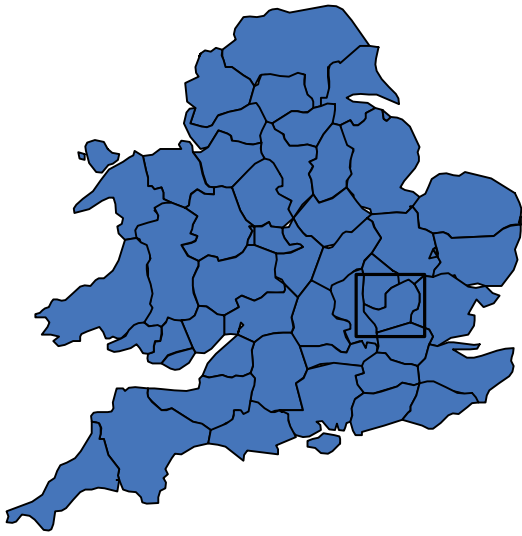
### Digital Photographic Log

Frame No.	Description	Facing
IMG_2048	Northern exterior elevation	S
IMG_2055	Western exterior elevation	E
IMG_2057	Southern exterior elevation	N
IMG_2060	Eastern exterior elevation	W
IMG_2063	Ditto	W
IMG_2071	Northern interior elevation (top)	N
IMG_2072	Northern interior elevation (bottom)	N
IMG_2077	Southern interior elevation (top)	S
IMG_2081	Southern interior elevation (bottom)	S
IMG_2086	Southern interior elevation (top)	S
IMG_2087	Northern bay, western roof structure	W
IMG_2093	Northern bay, western elevation (top)	W
IMG_2096	Northern bay, western elevation (bottom)	W
IMG_2099	Middle bay, western elevation (bottom)	W
IMG_2104	Middle bay, western elevation (top)	W
IMG_2105	Middle bay, western roof structure	W
IMG_2108	Southern bay, western roof structure	W
IMG_2111	Southern bay, western elevation (top)	W
IMG_2114	Southern bay, western elevation (bottom)	W
IMG_2119	Southern bay, eastern roof structure	E
IMG_2122	Southern bay, eastern elevation (top)	E
IMG_2123	Southern bay, eastern elevation (bottom)	E
IMG_2126	Southern bay, eastern elevation (top)	E
IMG_2131	Southern bay, eastern roof structure	E
IMG_2132	Middle bay, eastern roof structure	E
IMG_2135	Middle bay, eastern elevation (top)	E
IMG_2138	Middle bay, eastern elevation (bottom)	E
IMG_2143	Northern bay, eastern elevation (bottom)	E
IMG_2144	Northern bay, eastern elevation (top)	E
IMG_2147	Northern bay, eastern roof structure	E
IMG_2150	Mortice and dowel holes, second frame from S	S
IMG_2153	Window opening, S bay, upper elevation	W
IMG_2156	Graffito, southern barn door jamb	W
IMG_2161	Carpenter's marks, second frame from N	S
IMG_2162	Joint in western wall plate, middle bay	W

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Manor House Barn,  
105 Norton Road, Letchworth

HN583

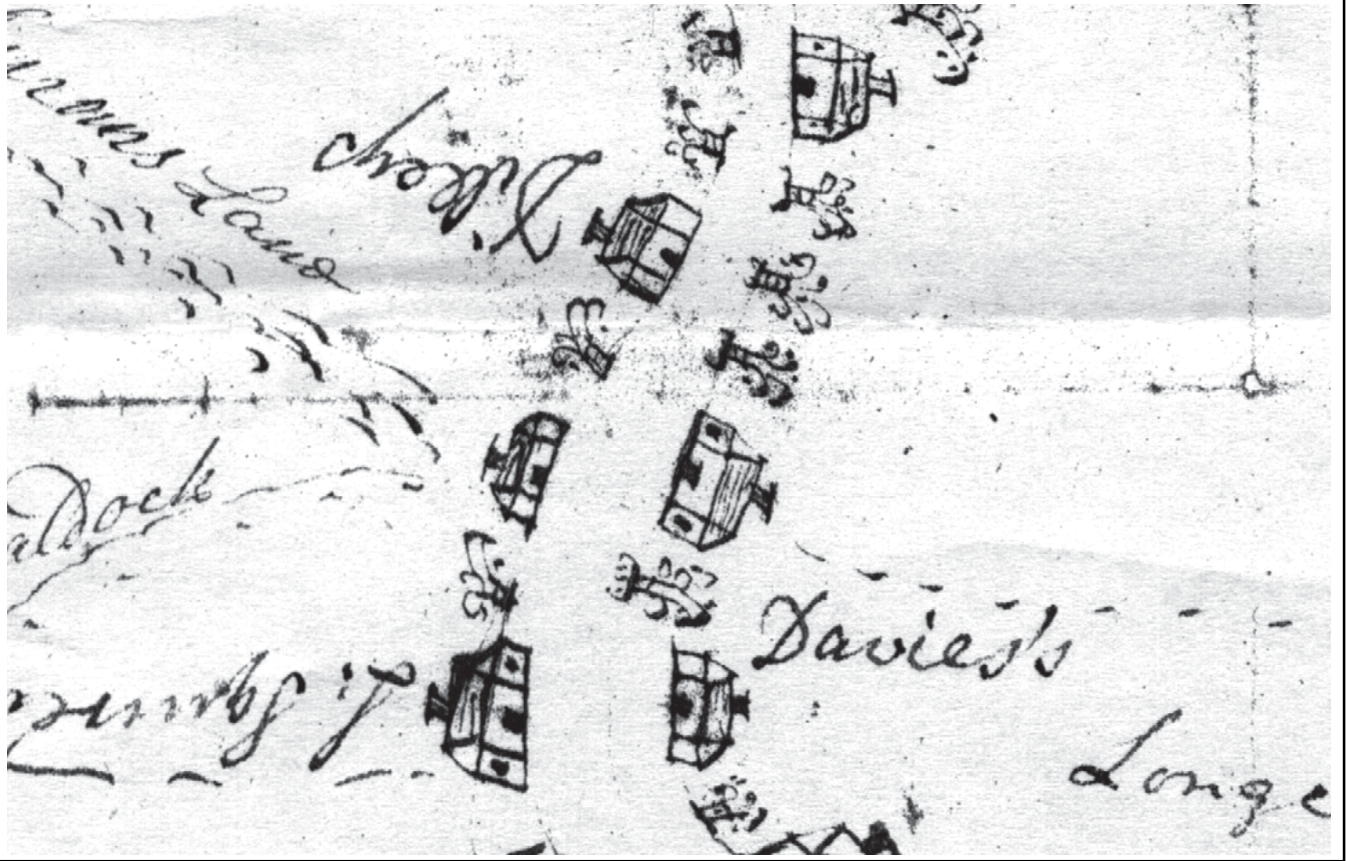


Site Location

Scale 1:500

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Licence no.AL10001486

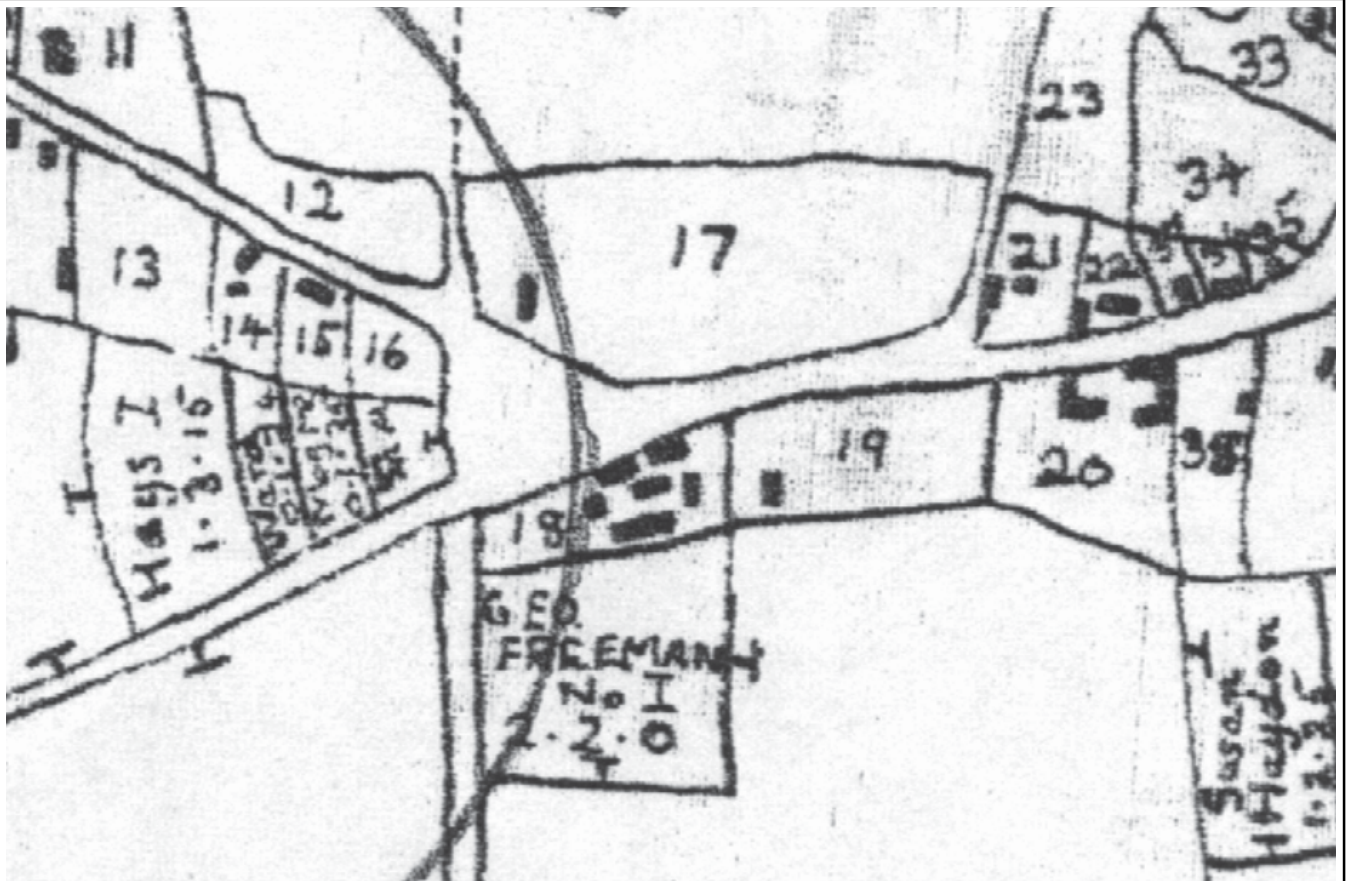
Figure 1



Norton in the early 18th century (HALS 19336)

NTS

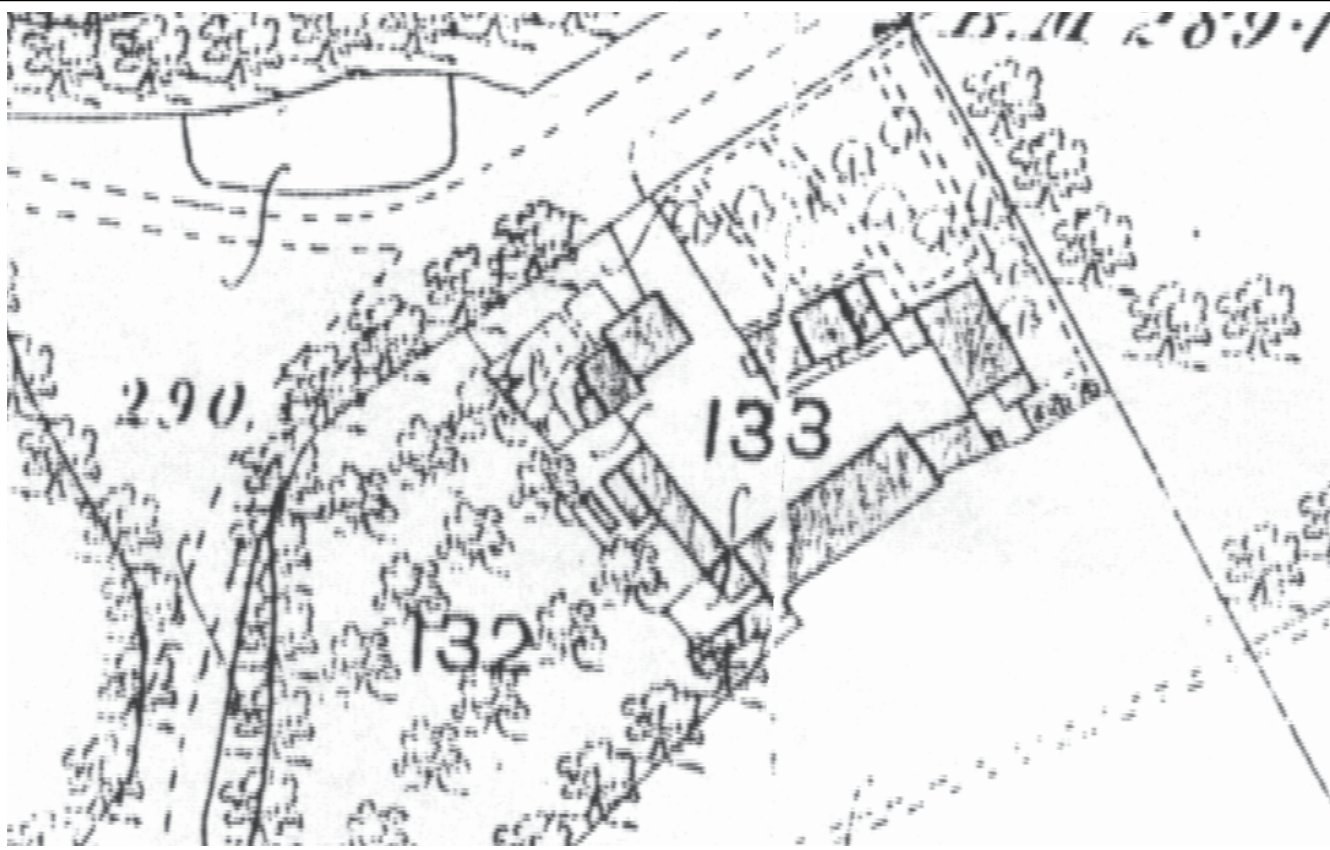
Figure 2



Enclosure Map, 1796 (North Herts Museums)

NTS

Figure 3

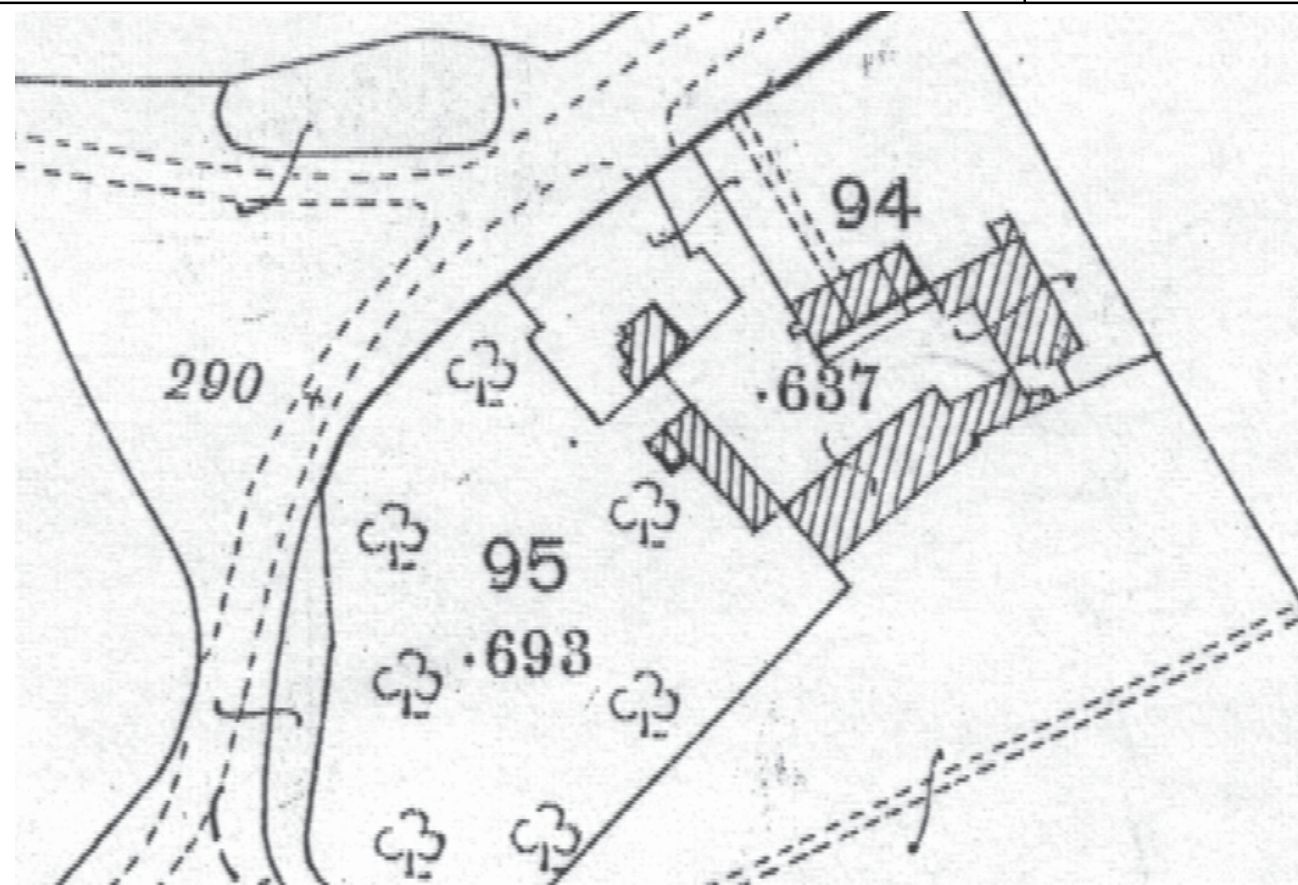


Ordnance Survey, 1st edition, 1880

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Figure 4



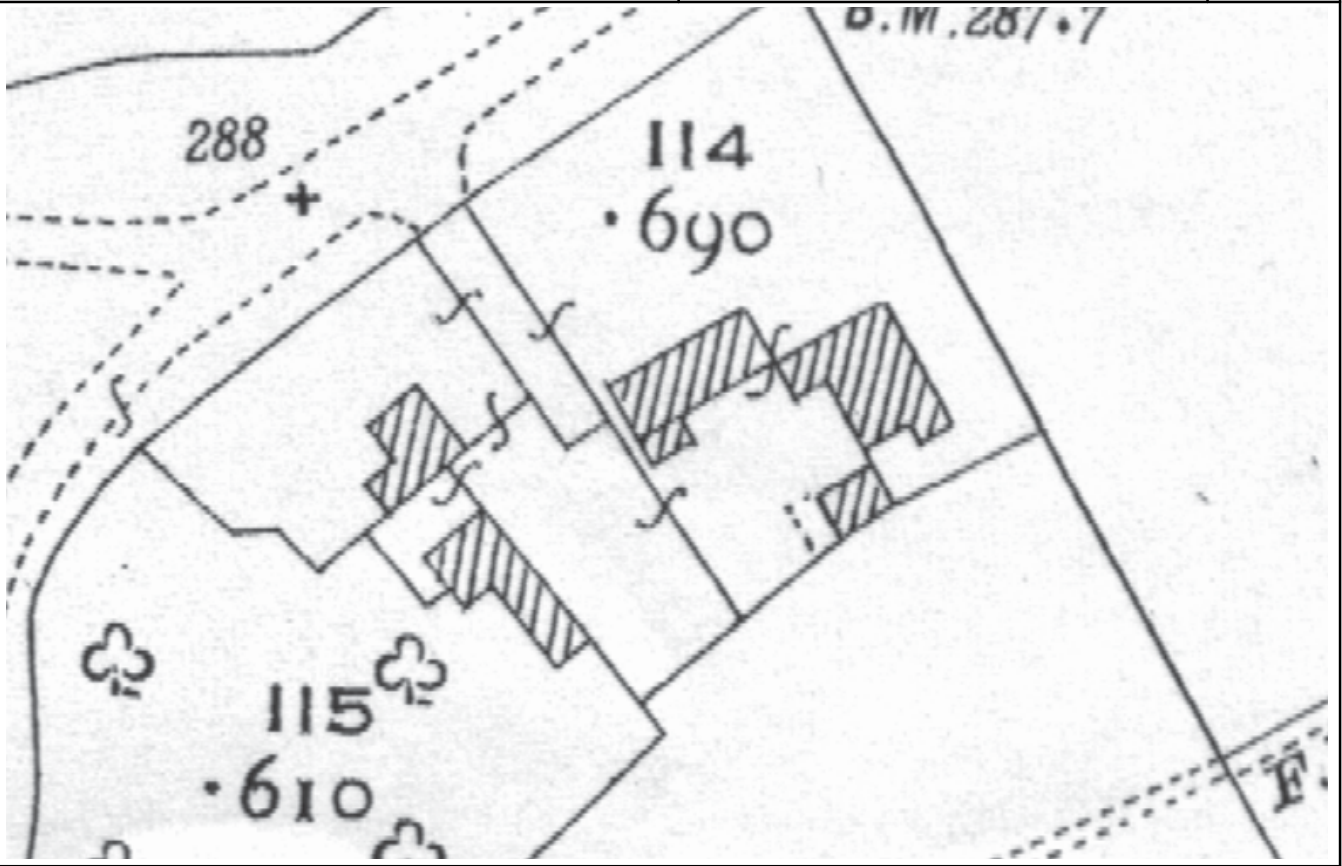
Ordnance Survey, 2nd edition, 1898

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Figure 5



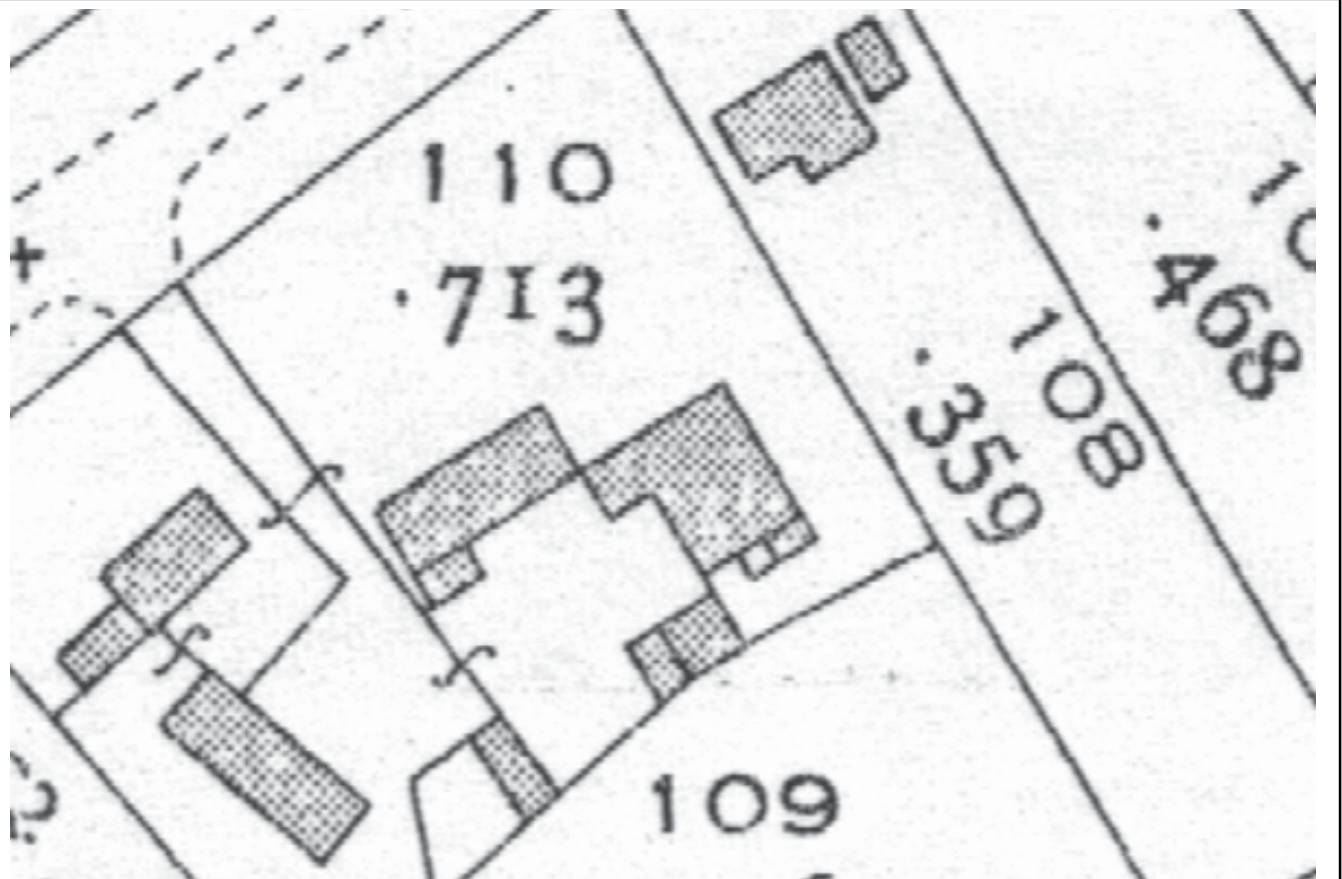


Ordnance Survey, 3rd edition, 1922

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Figure 6



Ordnance Survey, 4th edition, 1937

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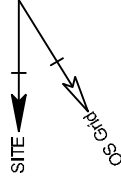
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Figure 7



Manor House Barn,  
105 Norton Road, Letchworth  
HN583

Plan, Sections &  
Internal Elevations



Scale 1: 100

Figure 8

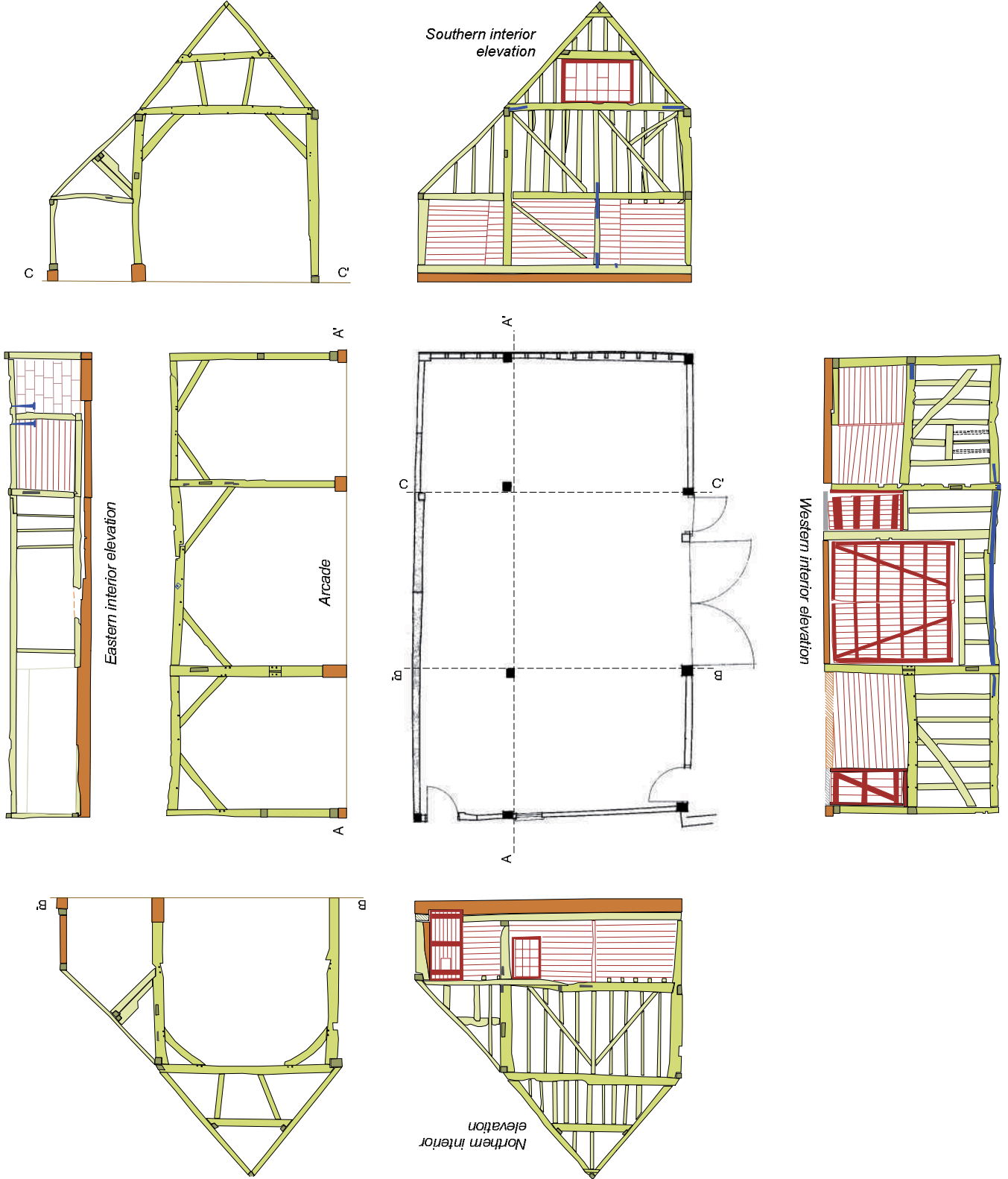




Plate 1: Western exterior elevation



Plate 2: Southern exterior elevation



Plate 3: Eastern exterior elevation



Plate 4: Northern exterior elevation



Plate 5: Framing, northern bay, looking N



Plate 6: Tie-beam and collar, southern bay, northern frame



Plate 7: Edge-halved scarf joint in western wall plate



Plate 8: Carpenter's marks on northern face of the second frame from the north



Plate 9: Window opening in southern bay



Plate 10: Mortices cut into lower face of eastern arcade plate



Plate 11: Integral bracket in second arcade post from the north

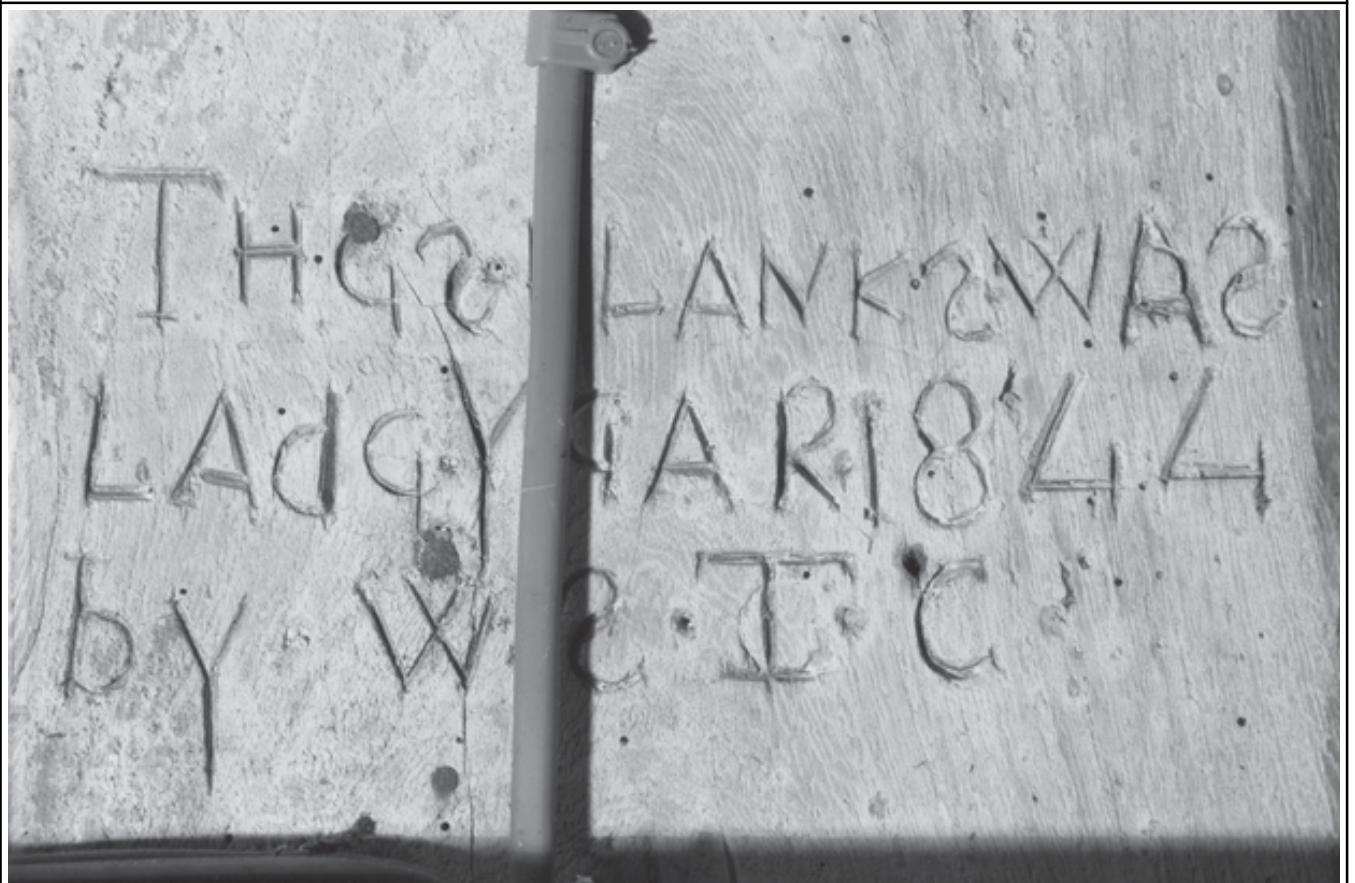


Plate 12: Graffito on the inside of the southern barn door jamb





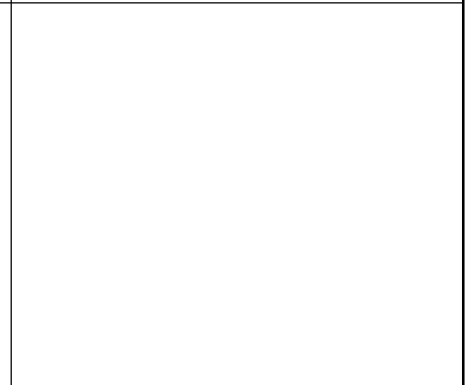
Frame 1/1: Northern exterior elevation



Frame 1/2: Western exterior elevation



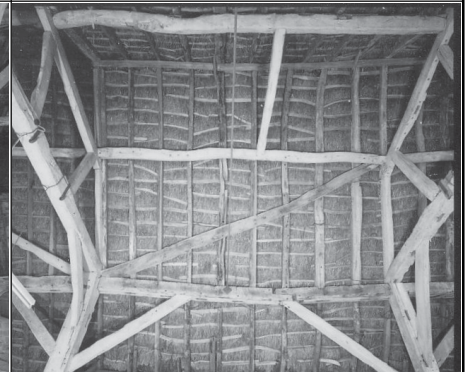
Frame 1/3: Southern exterior elevation



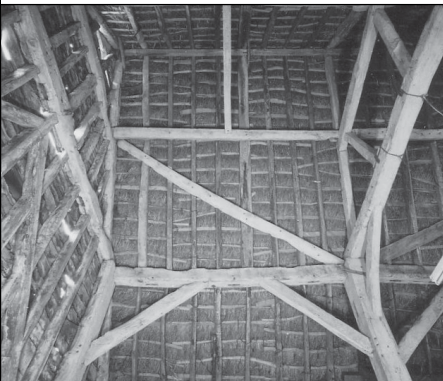
Frame 3/1: S bay, eastern roof structure



Frame 3/2: Mid bay, E interior elevation



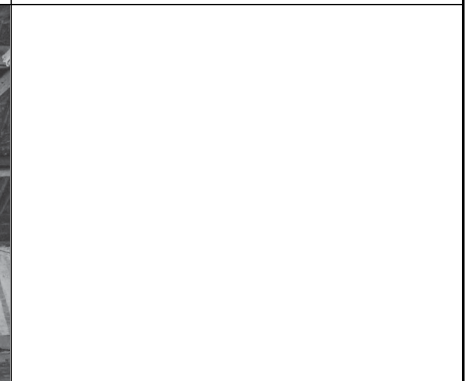
Frame 3/3: Mid bay, eastern roof structure



Frame 3/4: N bay, eastern roof structure



Frame 3/5: N bay, E interior elevation





Frame 1: Eastern exterior elevation



Frame 2: Interior looking north



Frame 3: Interior looking north



Frame 4: Interior looking south



Frame 5: Interior looking south



Frame 6: N bay, W interior elevation



Frame 7: N bay, western roof structure



Frame 8: Mid bay, western roof structure



Frame 9: Mid bay, W interior elevation



Frame 10: S bay, W interior elevation



Frame 11: S bay, western roof structure



Frame 12: S bay, E interior elevation



IMG\_2048.jpg



IMG\_2055.jpg



IMG\_2057.jpg



IMG\_2060.jpg



IMG\_2063.jpg



IMG\_2071.jpg



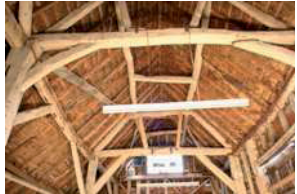
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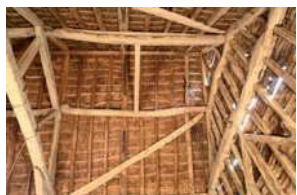
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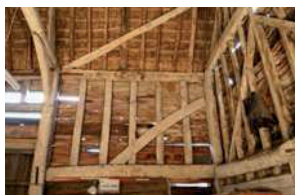
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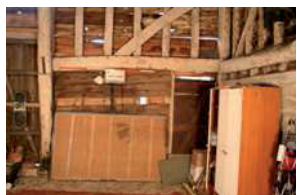
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IMG\_2087.jpg



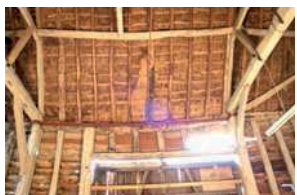
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IMG\_2096.jpg



IMG\_2099.jpg



IMG\_2104.jpg



IMG\_2105.jpg



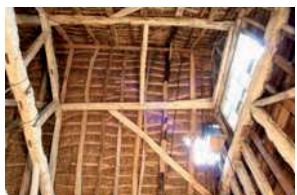
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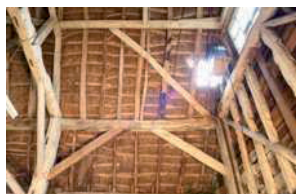
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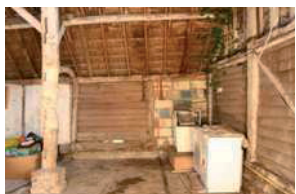
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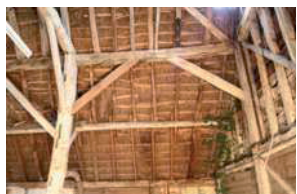
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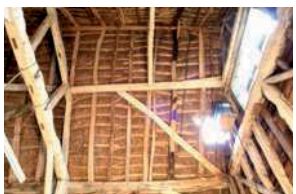
IMG\_2122.jpg



IMG\_2123.jpg



IMG\_2126.jpg



IMG\_2131.jpg



IMG\_2132.jpg



IMG\_2135.jpg



IMG\_2138.jpg



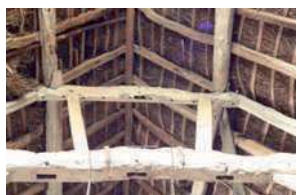
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IMG\_2144.jpg



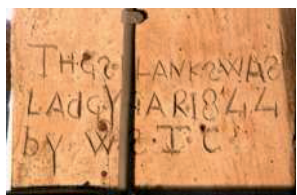
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IMG\_2150.jpg



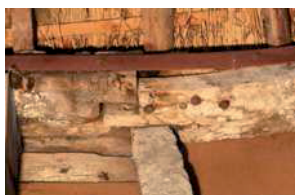
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IMG\_2156.jpg



IMG\_2161.jpg



IMG\_2162.jpg