

# HERITAGE NETWORK



# NORMANS FARM Willian, Herts.

HN630

Historic Building Record & Archaeological Monitoring Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

# NORMANS FARM Willian, Herts.

HN630

## Historic Building Record and Archaeological Monitoring Report

Prepared on behalf of Carter Developments Ltd

by David Hillelson, BA MIFA and David Kaye, BA PIFA

Report no.403

July 2007

 $\ensuremath{\mathbb{C}}$  The Heritage Network Ltd

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#### Archaeological Monitoring Report

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The cover photograph shows Normans Farm barns prior to the start of the conversion works, viewed from the south

### **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by David Hillelson, Helen Ashworth and David Kaye. The report text and illustrations were prepared by David Hillelson and David Kaye. The report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Mark Carter, Carter Developments Ltd; the staff of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation; and the staff of the Historic Environment Unit, Hertfordshire County Council for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Site name and address:	Normans Farm, William	n, Hertfordshire			
County:	Hertfordshire	District:	North Hertfordshire		
Village/town:	Willian	Parish:	Non-civil		
Planning reference:	1/05/0032	NGR:	TL 22966 30841		
Client name and address:	Carter Developments Ltd, Oak Barn, Thriplow Heath, Royston, SG8 7RS				
Nature of work:	Barn conversions	Former site use:	Stables		
Site Status:	n/a	Reason for investigation:	Direction from LPA (PPG 16)		
Position in planning process:	After full determination (as a condition)	Project brief originator:	Local Authority		
Size of affected area:	c.500m <sup>2</sup>	Size of area investigated:	$c.500m^{2}$		
Site Code:	HN630	Other reference:	n/a		
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson		
Project type, methods etc	Historic Buildings Record & Monitoring	Archive Recipient:	HALS / North Herts Museums		
Start of work	24/10/2006	Finish of work	14/12/2006		
Related SMR Nos:	n/a	Periods represented:	Post-medieval		
Oasis UID:	heritage1-29428	Significant finds:	none		
Monument types:	Barns				
Physical archive:	None				
Previous summaries/reports:	n/a				

### Summary

#### Narrative:

In response to a condition placed on the planning permission for a development at Normans Farm, Willian, Herts, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the developer to undertake a programme of building recording and archaeological monitoring.

The three barns, which form the focus of the present study, were built on a green field site to the south of the farmhouse, and were constructed between 1890 and 1898. They are of contemporary build and style, forming a courtyard facing the fields to the south.

In its original form, Barn 1, to the north, was multi-purpose storage building with large double doors in the northern elevation and personnel doors giving access to other parts of the farm in the south-east and south-west corners. Barn 2, to the west, is likely to have housed stock, and the lean-to between them appears to have been a cart shed. Barn 3, to the east, was divided into three sections: an open fronted shed, possibly for stock, and two closed stores, one of brick. No access was available to the garage/store in the north-east corner between Barns 1 and 3, which falls outside the present development. In recent years the barns were converted into stables.

The monitoring of groundworks revealed a possible earlier floor surface in Barn 1, and an earlier yard surface to the north of Barn 1.

### 1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of *Carter Developments Ltd*, as part of a programme of archaeological investigation at Normans Farm, Willian, Letchworth, Herts. Planning permission for the refurbishment and conversion of farm buildings to residential use (ref. 1/05/0032) was granted by the North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), subject standard archaeological conditions, 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* and a *Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* prepared by the *Historic Environment Unit* (HEU) of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as adviser to NHDC (refs. AI 11/10/2006). A full specification for the work is contained in the Heritage network's approved Project Design dated October 2006.

1.2 Normans Farm lies on the eastern edge of the historic village of William. The site is located on the south side of Baldock Road, centred on NGR TL 22966 30841 (Figure 1). It lies just outside Archaeological Alert Area 99, as designated in the District Local Plan, which defines the medieval core of the village. The development has involved the conversion of three existing farm buildings to dwellings, together with associated services and landscaping.

1.3 There is evidence of prehistoric activity in Willian including Neolithic flints (SMR 0651), Bronze Age cremation urns (SMR 1802) and a chance find of a flint scraper and axe (SMR 1294). Roman coins (SMR 6055) and a human burial (SMR 1455) indicate that settlement continued through this period. Medieval earthworks (SMR 2224 & 4250) in fields around the present village core suggest that the settlement has contracted since the medieval period.

1.4 The farm buildings appear first on the  $2^{nd}$  edition OS map of 1898. Historic farm 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). On this basis, the aim of the building recording has been to make a record of the buildings in their present condition, in advance of their proposed conversion, and to undertake additional research, as necessary, to place the buildings in their local and regional archaeological and historical context.

1.5 It was also considered that evidence of earlier activity on the site may be revealed in the course of groundworks. All aspects of the development works were monitored, in order to ensure that any architectural features of historic interest, and any below ground archaeological features and deposits, were identified and recorded.

1.6 The present report is intended to set the site in its archaeological and historical context, and complete the requirements of the planning condition.

### 2. Fieldwork

#### TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site lies to the south of the Baldock Road at the northeast corner of Willian, on ground that gently rises to the west (Figure 1).

2.2 The natural geology of the area is recorded as a chalky till underlying slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils of the Hanslope association (SSEW 1983). This is characterised on the present site as very dark brown (10YR 2/2) topsoil overlying very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) subsoil and a mixed clay and chalk natural.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

2.3 The archaeological work was divided into two discrete elements: the recording of the works directly associated with the alteration of the existing structure, and the recording of the associated groundworks.

2.4 A programme of site visits was carried out to inspect and record the structure of the building, and the removal of, or substantial alterations to, any elements of it. Conversion works had already started at the time of the Heritage Network's commission and the record of the buildings therefore includes photographs taken by third parties.

2.5 The excavation of the service trenches across the site was undertaken using a tracked  $360^{\circ}$  mini-digger, fitted with a 500mm toothed bucket. Spoil from the various stages of the groundworks was inspected for archaeological artefacts.

2.6 The project was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Design Brief, and the Heritage Network's approved Project Design.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING

#### Introduction

2.7 The farmhouse at Normans Farm, and the group of barns which form the focus of the present study, are first shown on the  $2^{nd}$  edition Ordnance Survey map of 1898 (Figure 4), and records held by the First Garden City Heritage Museum suggest that they were built no earlier than 1890 (Bob Lancaster, *pers.com.*). The 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey shows that the barns were built on a greenfield site (Figure 3), although the farmhouse (which falls outside the present study) was built on the site of a group of buildings which are illustrated on the Willian Tithe Map of 1839 (Figure 2).

2.8 The barns are arranged in a U-shape around a courtyard, facing south (Figure 6). Barn 1 is aligned east-west and forms the base of the U, with Barn 2 running south from its south-west corner, and Barn 3 running south from its south-east corner (Plate 1). A lean-to occupies the inside of the corner between Barns 1 and 2, and a further unit, used as a garage and store and

lying outside the present development, occupies the outside of the corner between Barns 1 and 3. All internal partitions, associated with the use of the barns for stabling in recent years, had been removed by the time the present record was made. Details have been retained on the plans which were surveyed at an earlier date.

#### Barn 1

2.9 Barn 1 is a five bay, timber framed and weatherboarded structure, resting on a red brick plinth in English bond, rising nine courses above ground level (Figures 7, 10 - 12; Plates 2 - 5). The plinth has a chamfered top edge, and is constructed in an English bond. The principal posts are re-used adzed oak timbers with gunstock jowls, framing elevations of simple studwork with diagonal bracing formed mainly of pine with some re-used oak (Plates 28 & 29). There are narrow corner posts where the adjacent barns meet in the south-east and south-west corners. Additional framing for the adjacent garage/store to the east can be seen in this elevation.

2.10 The main entrance is in the centre of the northern elevation and consists of a pair of sliding ledged doors which probably replace earlier hinged doors. Windows in the bays on either side of the door opening have been blocked with modern pine framing and weatherboarding. There are two personnel openings in the southern elevation in Bays 1 and 5 (numbered from the west). Modern pine framing and weatherboarding has been used to block the opening in Bay 1.

2.11 The roof structure consists of softwood trusses with raking queen struts and a central tie rod which splits at the top to brace the principal rafters (Plate 6). The trusses have iron bracing. There are four purlins supporting both slopes of the diagonally boarded, battened and slated roof, which has ridge tiles topped with a saw-tooth crest.

2.12 At the west gable end there is a possible blocked opening above the wall plate. There is also a possible blocked opening in the east gable end above the roof line of the adjacent barn.

2.13 The remnants of a tongue and groove partition is nailed to the mid-post of Bay 2 on the southern elevation (Plate 30) and two separate carpenter's marks were observed on a re-used stud at the western end of the southern elevation of Bay 4 (Plates 31 & 32).

#### Barn 2

2.14 Barn 2 is a timber framed and weatherboarded structure of four bays, perpendicular to the south-west corner of Barn 1 (Figures 8, 10 - 12; Plates 3, 7 - 9). It rests on a brick plinth which rises eleven courses above the existing floor level. The plinth has a chamfered exterior top edge and is constructed in Monk bond.

2.15 At the north end of the east elevation there is personnel doorway inserted into a blocked double doorway which sits on a sill beam. There is a blocked personnel doorway at the north end of the east elevation, blocked with Fletton bricks, opening into the lean-to, and further blocked doorways in the eastern elevation of Bay 3 (numbered from the north), and at the east end of the south elevation. Later doorways have been inserted in the east elevations of Bays 2 and 4 (Plate 7). There is a blocked window in the west elevation of Bay 2, and an extant window in the gable

of the northern elevation. A pair of louvred openings have been inserted in the gable of the southern elevation (Plate 10).

2.16 The surviving principal posts are reclaimed adzed timbers. The studwork is a mixture of reclaimed oak and softwoods, though the south elevation has been repaired using pre-fabricated panels (Plates 10 & 11).

2.17 The roof trusses are oak with bark attached in places, and may also be reclaimed timber (Plate 12). There are raking softwood queen struts and curving braces in mixed woods. An additional truss doubles up the truss between Bays 1 and 2. The king post, which does not reach the apex of the roof, has raking struts in sawn softwood. The roof is slated with ridge tiles topped with a saw-tooth crest.

#### Barn 3

2.18 Barn 3 is an eight bay structure, seven bays being timber framed and weatherboarded, and the eighth bay (numbered from the north) being of brick (Figures 9, 10 - 11; Plates 13 - 16). Three separate spaces are apparent, comprising Bays 1 to 4, Bays 5 to 7 and Bay 8. Although there are constructional differences, they appear to be contemporary, and this is confirmed by the cartographic evidence. The roof of the whole structure was slated with ridge tiles topped with a saw-tooth crest.

**2.19** Bays 1 to 4 appear originally to have been open to the west (Plate 17). The north and east elevations sit on a brick plinth, eight courses above the existing ground level, laid in Monk bond. Framing on the east elevation is formed of sawn softwood with diagonal bracing (Plate 18). Windows have been inserted into Bays 1, 2 and 4. The north elevation is similar in construction, but with two personnel doors to the adjacent barn to the north. The horn of the roof to this barn projects above the wall plate (Plate 17).

**2.20** The plinth for the west elevation is constructed of modern fletton brick, supporting inserted softwood framing which replaces the principal posts between Bays 1 & 2, 2 & 3, and 3 & 4. The end posts survive and each retains a diagonal brace to the wall plate (Plate 33). There are doorways in Bays 1 and 4 and window openings in Bays 2 and 3 of this elevation.

2.21 Between Bays 4 and 5 (that is, at the southern end of the open fronted unit), mortice holes are visible in the lower face of the truss, and studwork survives at the top of the truss, with the same spacing as the studwork visible in the north elevation. Truncated weatherboarding is also visible attached to the south side of the principal post at the junction of Bays 4 and 5 (Plate 33), and possible evidence for a cross wall was noted, tied into the plinth on the eastern elevation.

2.22 The intermediate roof trusses are of the same form as those in Barn 1, with raking queen struts and a central tie rod bifurcating at the top to join the principal rafters. Diagonal wooden braces link the trusses to the principal posts, except on the western elevation where these posts have been removed, and iron struts have been bolted to later framing.

2.23 The modern concrete floor overlies an original chalk surface.

2.24 Bays 5 to 7 appear to have formed a closed store with weatherboarded timber framing on the east and west elevations resting on a brick plinth rising eight courses above the existing ground level, laid in Monk bond (Plate 18). There is no sign of a junction in the east plinth, or of a dividing cross wall between Bays 4 and 5, confirming the suggestion that the whole of Barn 3 is a contemporary construction, and indicating that there may originally have been a personnel door at the eastern end of the southern elevation, matching that seen in the northern elevation.

2.25 The eastern elevation has window openings in Bays 5 and 7, which, on the basis of the diagonal bracing, may be original (Plate 19). The western elevation has blocked window openings in Bays 5 and 7, the sill having been chamfered to accommodate them (Plate 20), and a doorway in Bay 6, all of which are likely to be original. The southern elevation of this unit would have been formed of a solid brick wall, which had been demolished by the time the present record was made.

2.26 The trusses to Bays 5 to 7 are formed with two pairs of raking queen struts supporting a pair of purlins in each slope, and a collar. Mortice holes are visible in the bottom face of the tiebeams. A later projecting roof-vent or dove-cot has been inserted through the ridge in Bay 6 (Plate 21).

2.27 Bay 8 is entirely brick-built, in red brick laid in Monk bond (Plate 22). A door and highlevel window are located in the southern elevation. A later projecting roof-vent or dove-cot has been inserted through the ridge.

#### Lean-to

**2.28** The lean-to between Barns 1 and 2 was originally built as an open cart shed (Plates 23 & 24). The principal posts sit on brick piers and have protective timber 'bumpers' on either side. Each is braced to the wall plate.

2.29 The eastern plinth is original, rising five courses from the exterior ground level, and has a chamfered exterior top edge. The framing above is formed of sawn softwood with diagonal bracing to the north of an original personnel doorway (Plate 25). The western elevation has a central doorway blocked in Fletton brick, and the northern elevation has a blocked doorway into Barn 1, as previously noted (Plate 26).

2.30 The remains of modern breeze-block cross-walls, and two late openings in the southern elevation opening onto concrete ramps, demonstrate the recent use of the building for stables. The original concrete floor has been removed down to chalk.

2.31 The roof structure is supported by half-trusses of sawn softwood with a pair of raking queen struts supporting purlins and a boarded and slated roof (Plate 27). The trusses are braced to the principal posts in the southern elevation, and are attached to the wall-plate of Barn 1 in the northern elevation.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

#### Service trenches

2.32 A total of seven trenches were excavated to accommodate services for the development. Trenches 1-6 were for drainage, and Trench 7 was for incoming mains (Figure 13).

2.33 The drainage trenches varied in depth from 0.6m to 0.9m and were cut through a mixture of modern surfacing, construction layers and made ground.

2.34 In the northeast corner of Barn 1 a mortar layer was observed in the section of Trench 2, 0.3m below the existing floor level. This deposit may represent an earlier floor although it is at a lower level than that of the chalk layer outside Barn 1 (Plate 34).

2.35 Two features were observed were in Trenches 6 and 7. In Trench 6 a layer of gravel 0.18m deep was recorded immediately below the existing tarmac. This overlay a chalk layer 0.14m in depth. The gravel layer is probably modern and the chalk probably represents a former yard surface (Plate 35). The northern extent of these features could be seen in Trench 7 which intersected Trench 6. The gravel extended 6.5m from the barn's frontage, and the underlying chalk extended 9.5m.

2.36 No other archaeological cut features or deposits were observed during the groundworks programme, and no artefacts were recovered from the spoil.

### 3. Discussion

#### **Building Record**

3.1 Normans Farm replaced an earlier group of buildings which are illustrated on the Willian Tithe Map of 1839, but had been demolished by 1880. It dates to the last decade of the  $19^{th}$  century. The barns, which form the focus of the present study, were built on a green field site to the south of the earlier buildings.

3.2 Access to all the barns was available, with the exception of the garage/store in the northeast corner of the block. They are of contemporary build and style, forming a courtyard facing the fields to the south. In recent years the barns were converted into stables.

3.3 In its original form, Barn 1 was multi-purpose storage building with large double doors in the northern elevation and personnel doors giving access to other parts of the farm in the southeast and south-west corners. Barn 2 is likely to have housed stock, and the lean-to between them appears to have been a cart shed. Barn 3 is divided into three sections: an open fronted shed, possibly for stock, and two closed stores, one of brick.

#### Monitoring of Groundworks

3.4 The monitoring of the groundworks revealed the presence of an earlier floor surface in Barn 1, and an earlier yard surfaces on its northern frontage. No artefacts were recovered from these contexts, or any other features or deposits on the site.

#### **Confidence** Rating

3.5 Work on conversion of the barns was well under way at the time that Heritage Network was commissioned to undertake the recording. Nevertheless, a survey was obtained, commissioned by the former owners of the site, the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, which illustrates the barns prior to the start of the conversion works. Photographs were also obtained from the clients and form part of the archive for the project.

3.6 Apart from this, in the course of the fieldwork programme, the conditions were generally good for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation.

3.7 On this basis, the confidence rating for the work may be considered to be High.

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments	
24/10/06	DJH	1	Inspect service trenches	
	GIS	1		
25/10/06	DJH	5	Record Barn 1 & record trenches	
	HMA	5		
28/10/06	DJH	3	Photograph exteriors	
31/10/06	DJH	5	Record Barn 2	
2/11/06	DJH	5	Record Barn 3	
14/12/06	DGK	1	Inspect cable trench	

### 4. Schedule of site visits

## 5. Bibliography

Turner, C. 2006, Normans Farm, Willian, Herts: Archaeological Project Design. Heritage Network

Instone, A. 2006, *Design Brief for Historic Building Recording*. Historic Environment Unit, Hertfordshire County Council

Instone, A. 2006, *Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*. Historic Environment Unit, Hertfordshire County Council

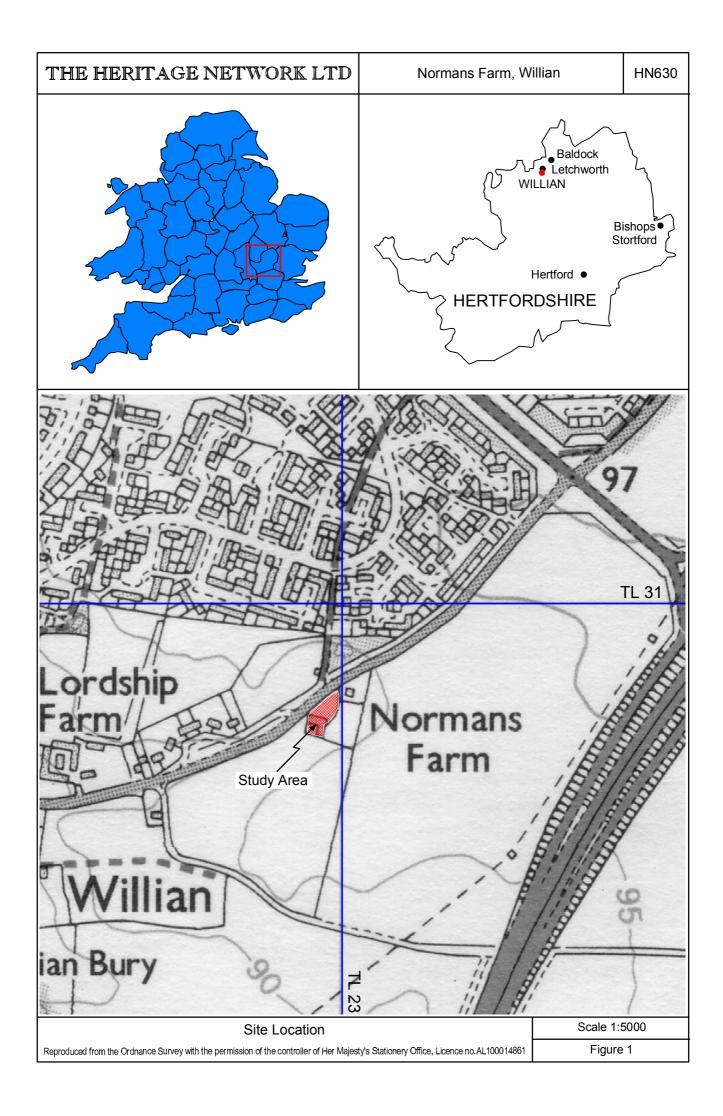
SSEW, 1983, Soil map sheet 4: Eastern England. Soil Survey for England and Wales

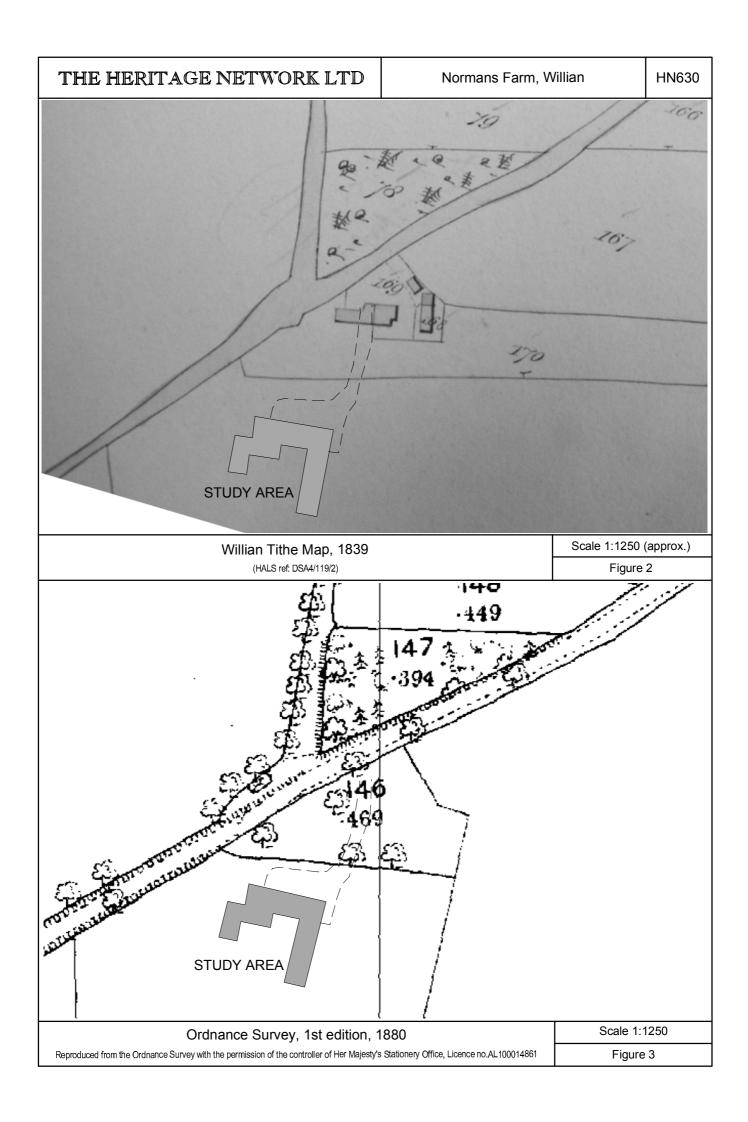
### 6. Illustrations

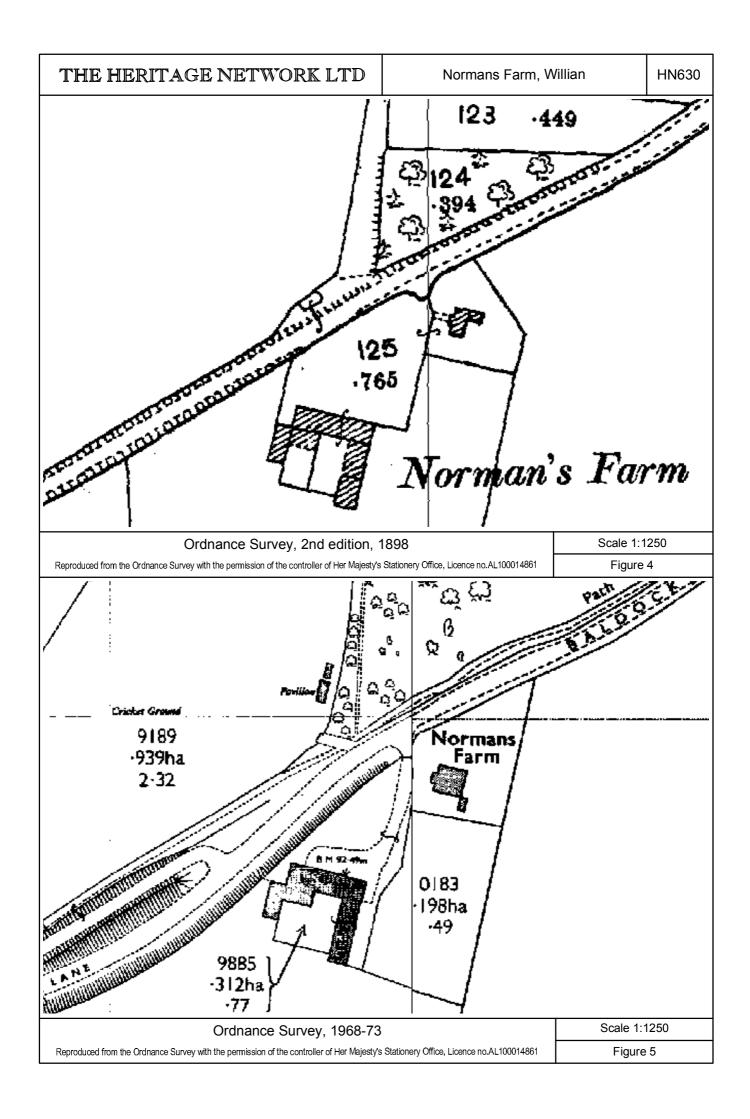
Figure 1	Site location
8	Willian Tithe Map, 1839
	Ordnance Survey, 1 <sup>st</sup> edition, 1880
	Ordnance Survey, 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition, 1898
	Ordnance Survey, 1968-73
e e	Site layout
e	Barn 1: Plan and section
	Barn 2 and lean-to: Plan and section
e e	Barn 3: Plan and section
e e	Normans Farm Barns: Elevations (1)
e	Normans Farm Barns: Elevations (2)
	Normans farm barns: Elevations (3)
-	
i iguio i s	
Plate 1	Barns 1, 2 and 3, south elevation
Plate 2	Barn 1 and garage, north elevation
Plate 3	Barns 1 and 2, west elevation
Plate 4	Barn 1 and garage, east elevation
Plate 5	Barn 1 and lean-to, south elevation
Plate 6	Barn 1 roof structure
Plate 7	Barn 2, east elevation
Plate 8	Barn 2, west elevation
Plate 9Barn 2	and lean-to, south and east elevations
Plate 10	Barn 2, interior facing south
Plate 11	Barn 2, interior facing north
Plate 12	Barn 2, roof truss (detail)
Plate 13	Barn 3, west elevation
Plate 14	Barn 3, south elevation
Plate 15	Barn 3 and garage, east elevation
Plate 16	Barn 3, east elevation
	Barn 3, interior looking north
Plate 18	Barn 3, interior looking north
Plate 19	Barn 3, bay 7, east elevation
	Barn 3, bay 5, west elevation
	Barn 3, roof of bay 6 (detail)

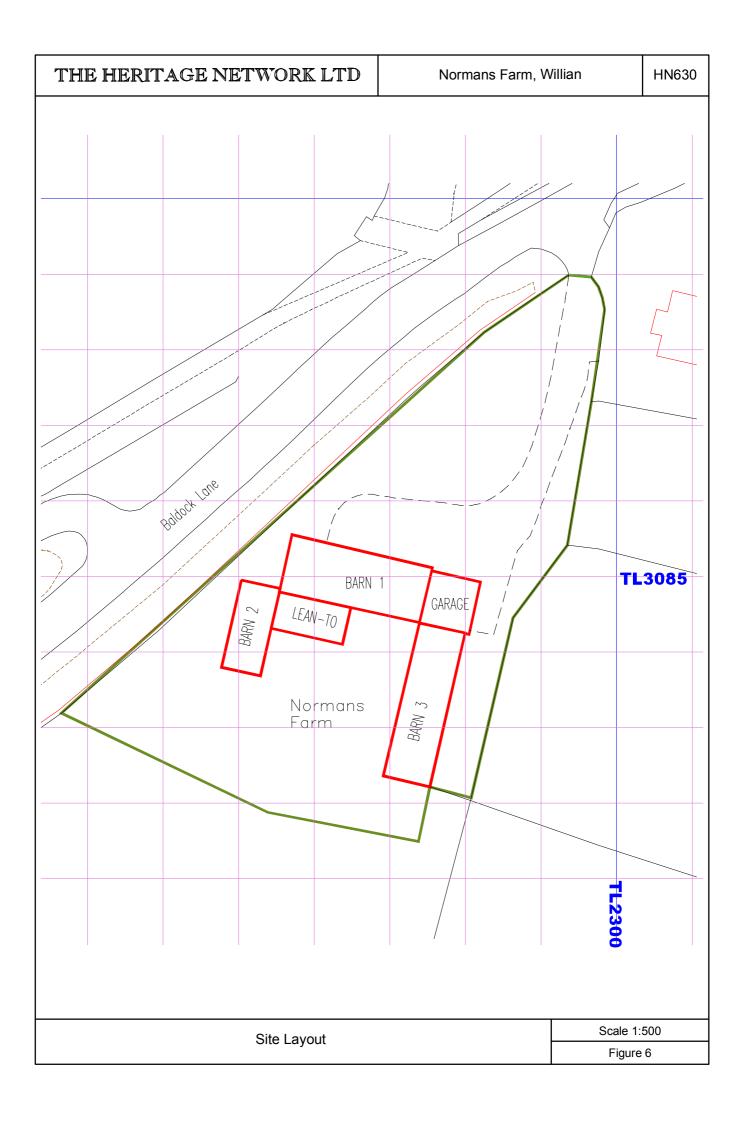
### Archaeological Monitoring Report

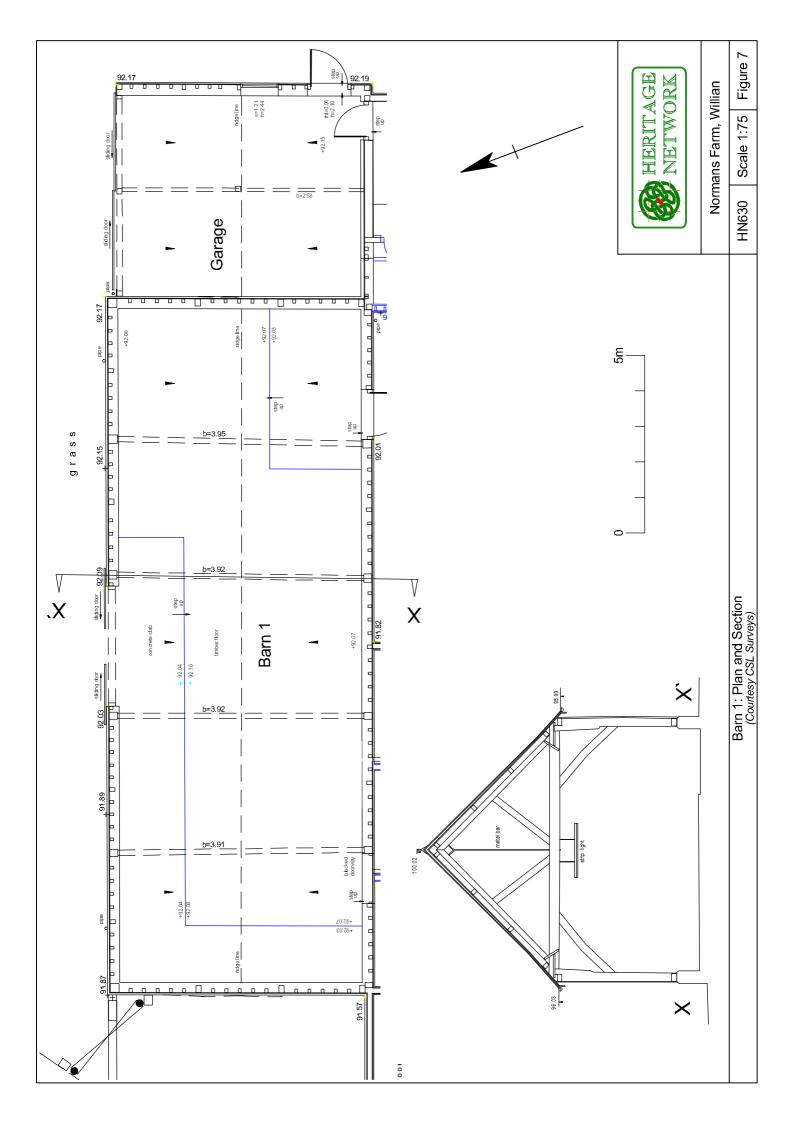
Plate 23	Lean-to, south and east elevations
Plate 24	Lean-to, south and east elevations
Plate 25	Lean-to, interior facing east
Plate 26	Lean-to, interior facing west
Plate 27	Lean-to, roof structure
Plate 28	Barn 1, eastern elevation
Plate 29	Barn 1, western elevation
Plate 30	Barn 1, bay 2, partitioning (detail)
Plate 31	Barn 1, carpenter's mark (detail)
Plate 32	Barn 1, carpenter's marks (detail)
Plate 33	Barn 3, bay 5/4 junction, facing west
Plate 34	Trench 2, looking north-east
Plate 35	Trench 6, looking east

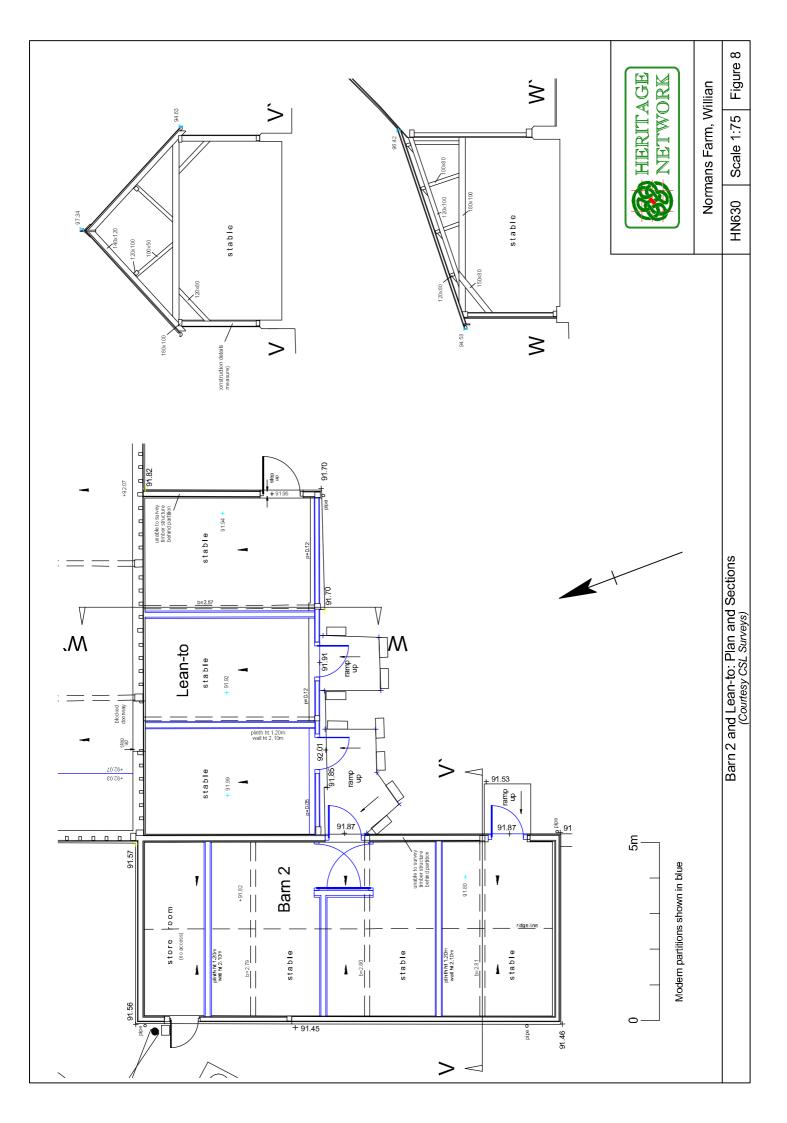


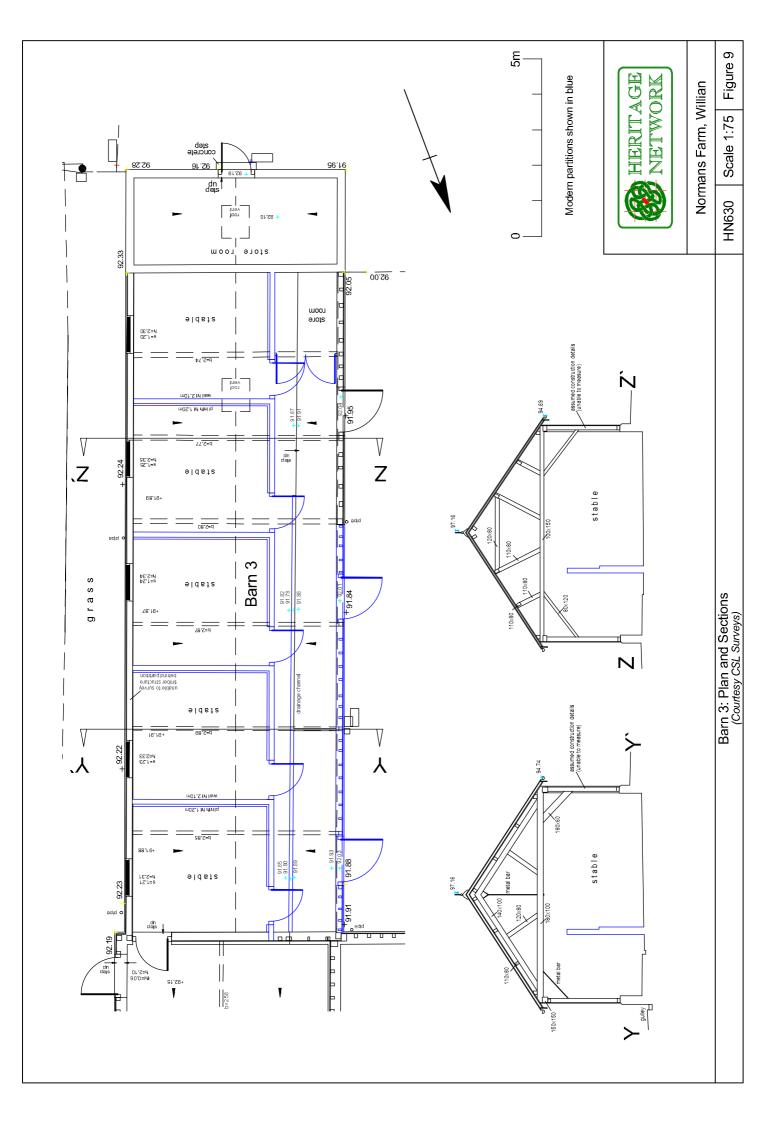


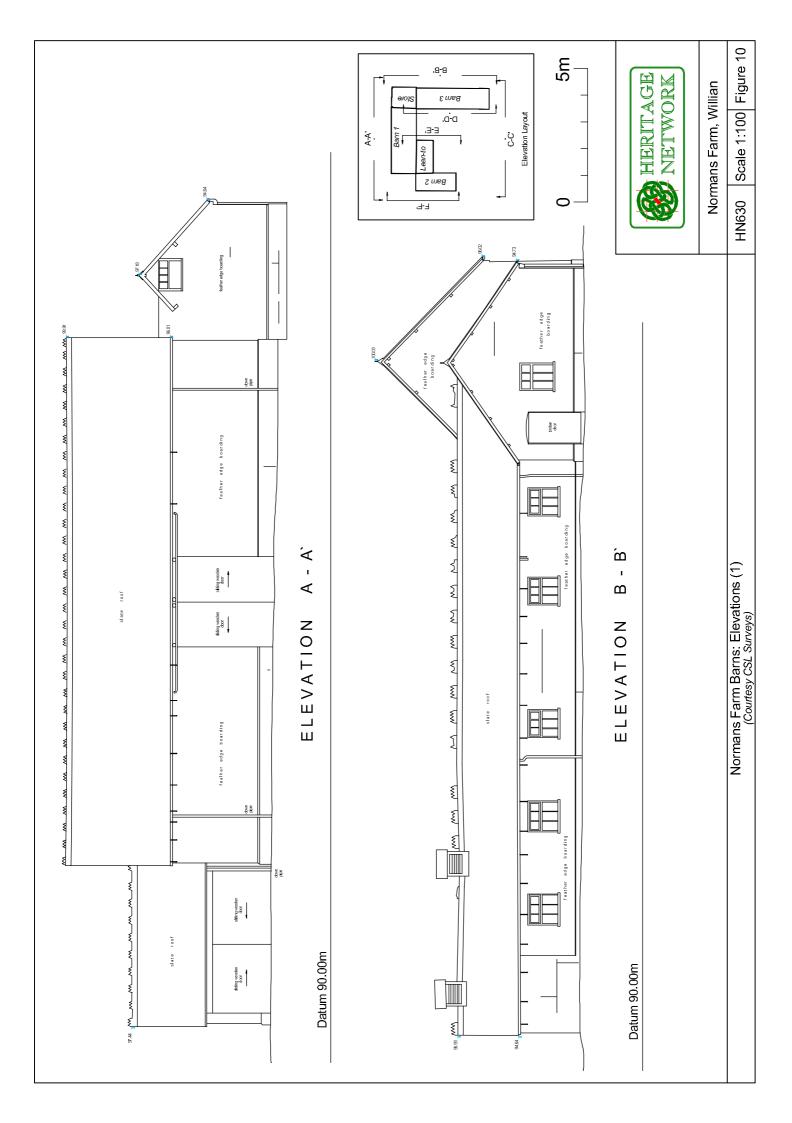


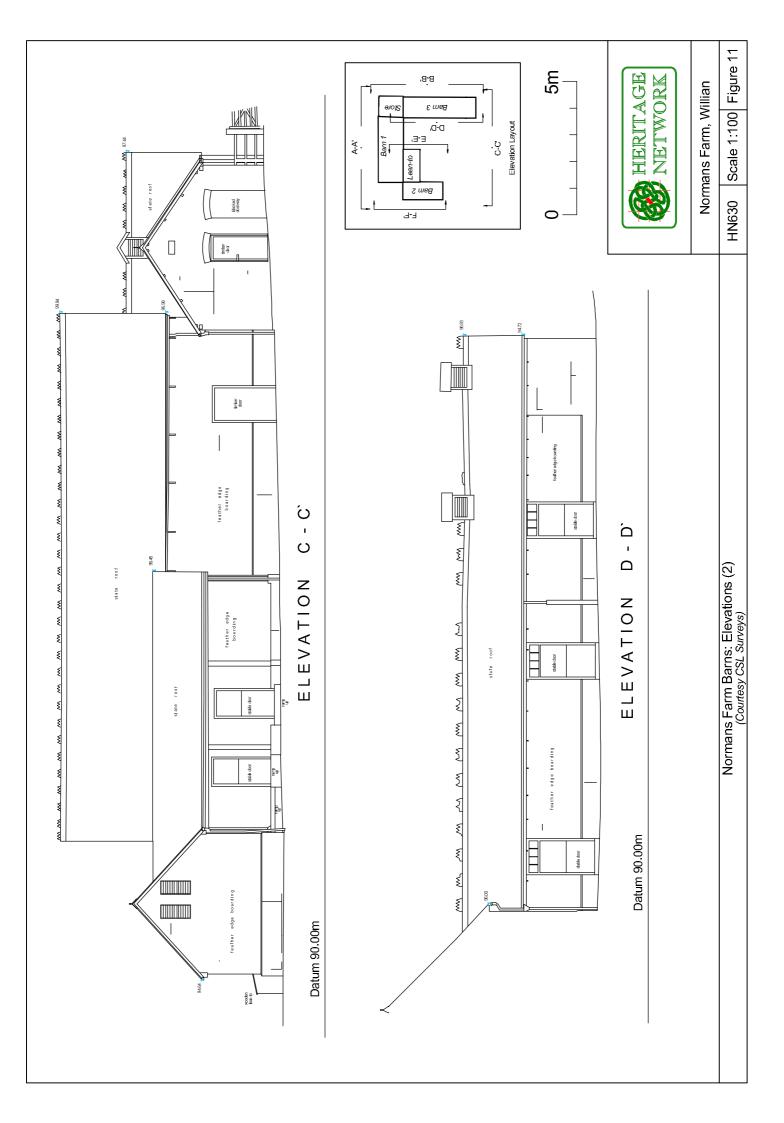


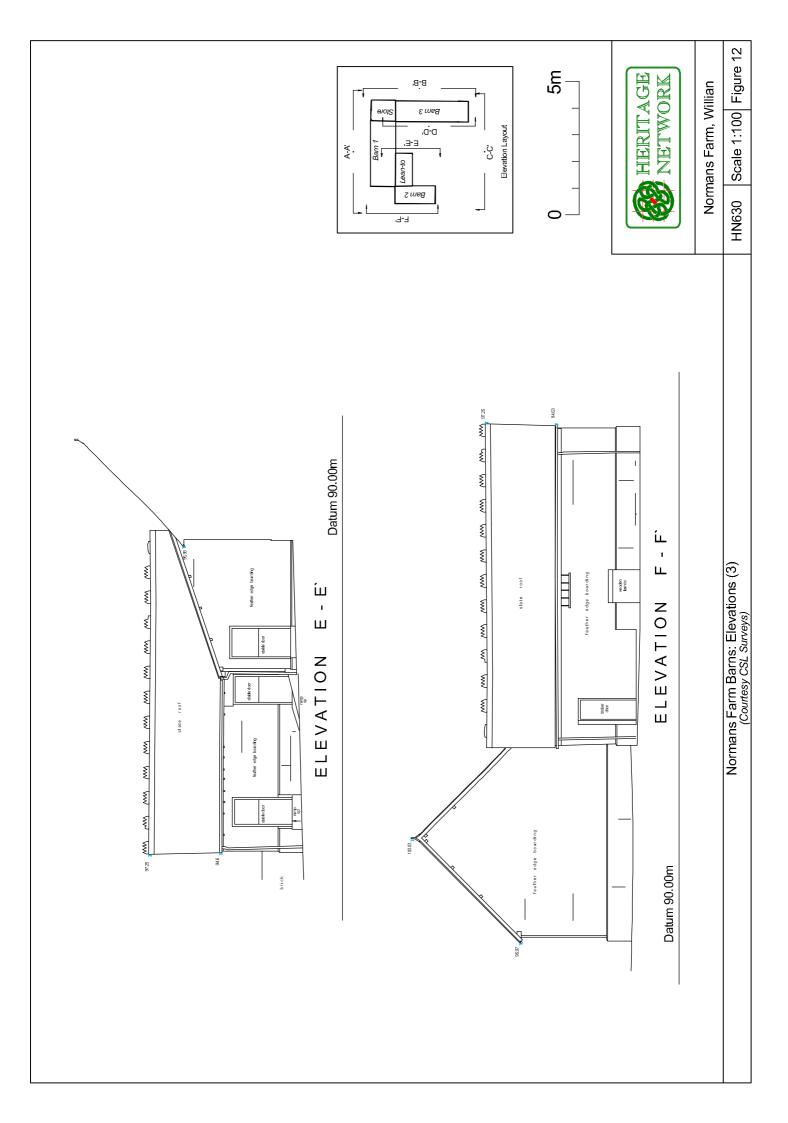


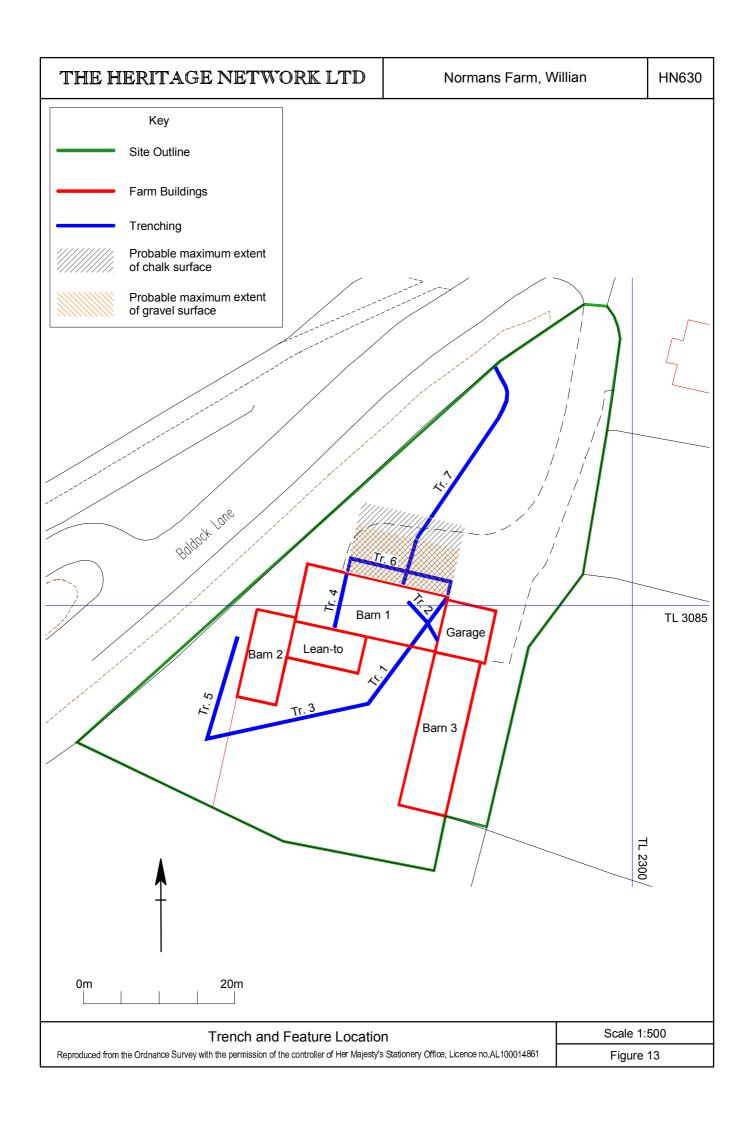




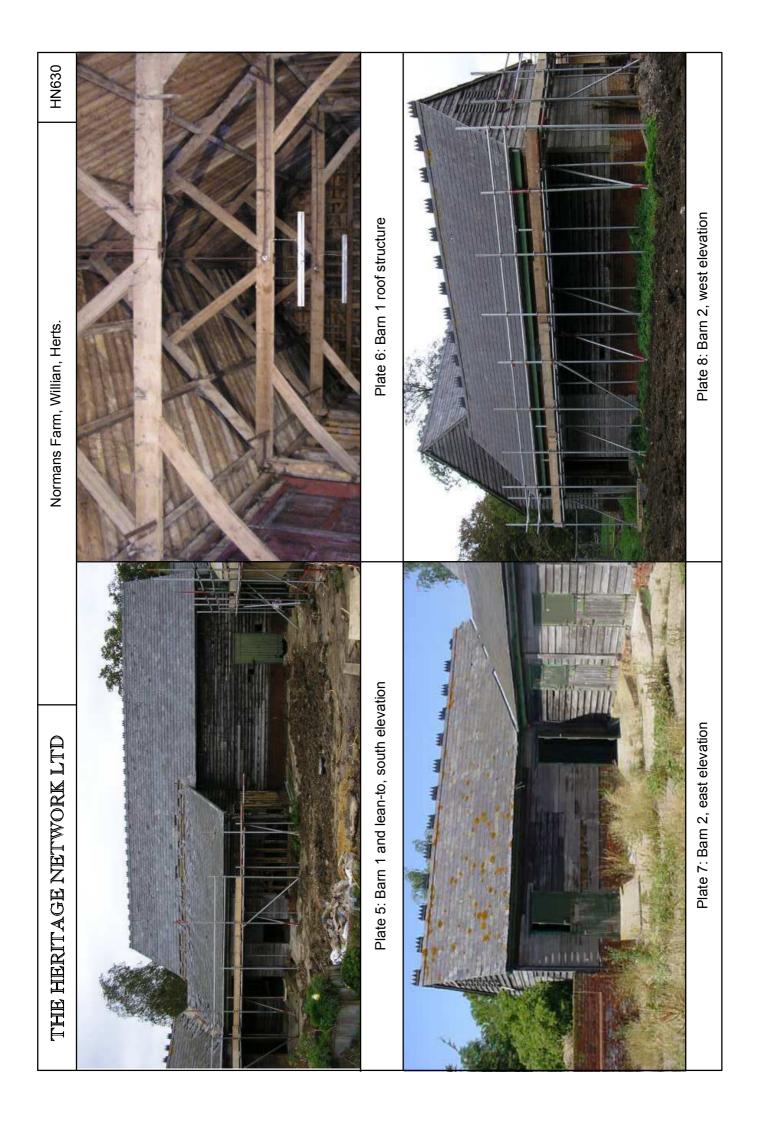










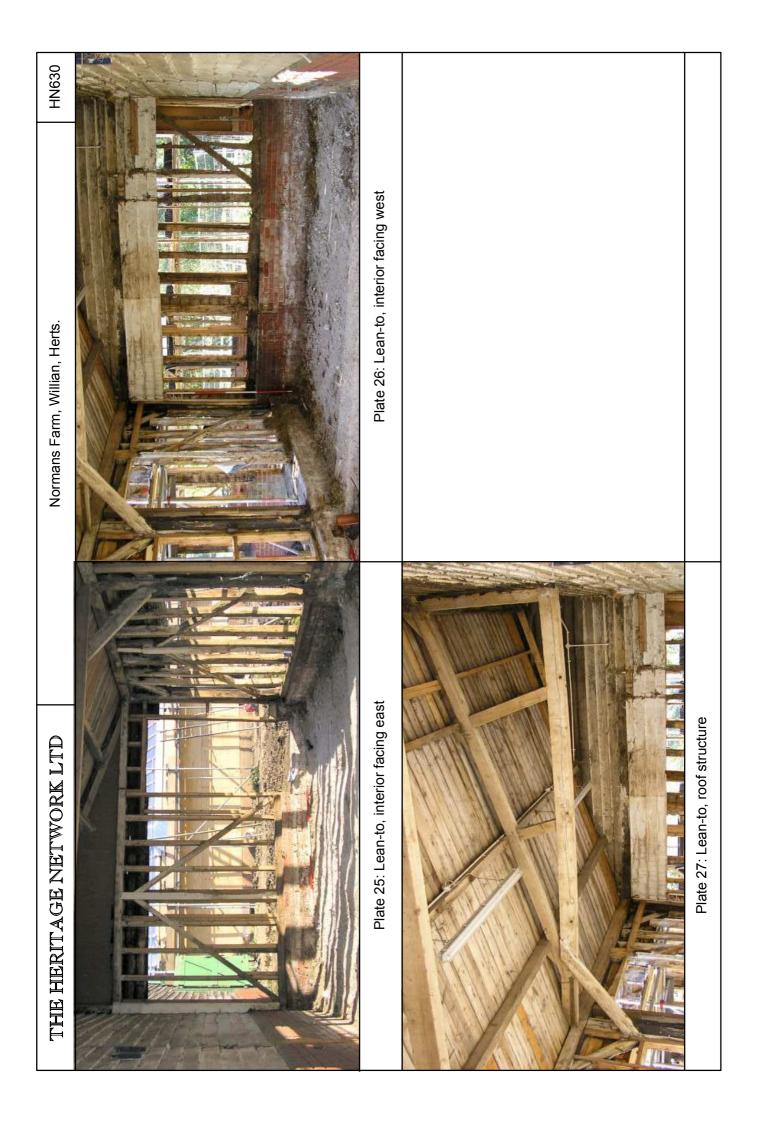


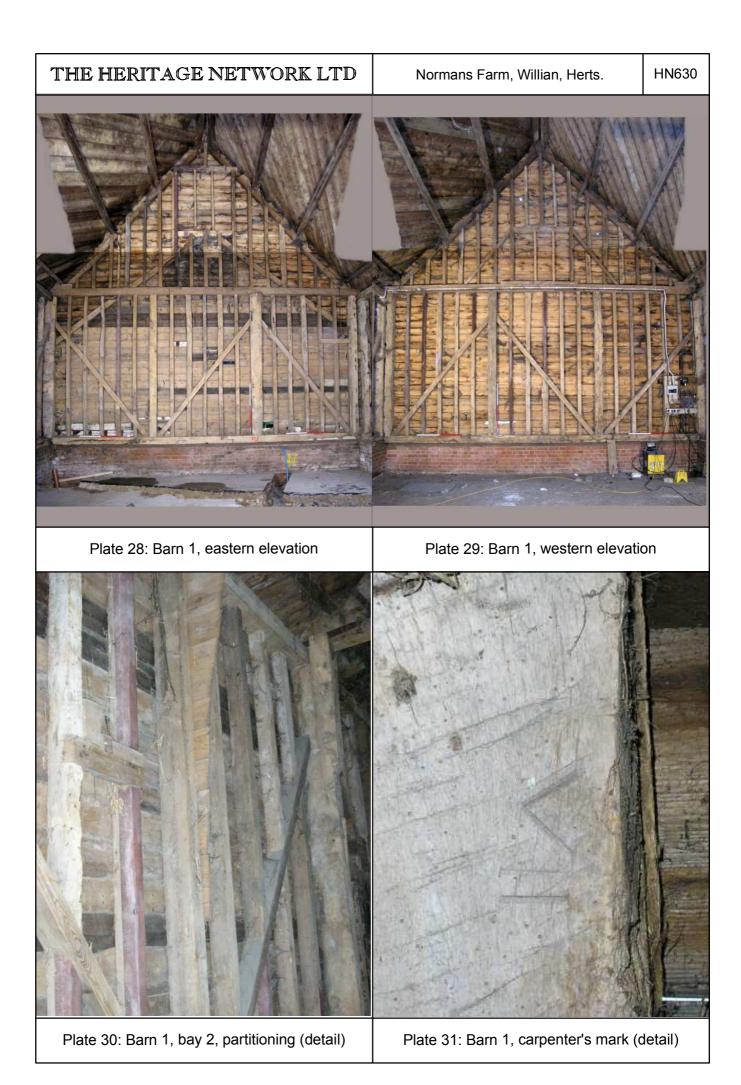












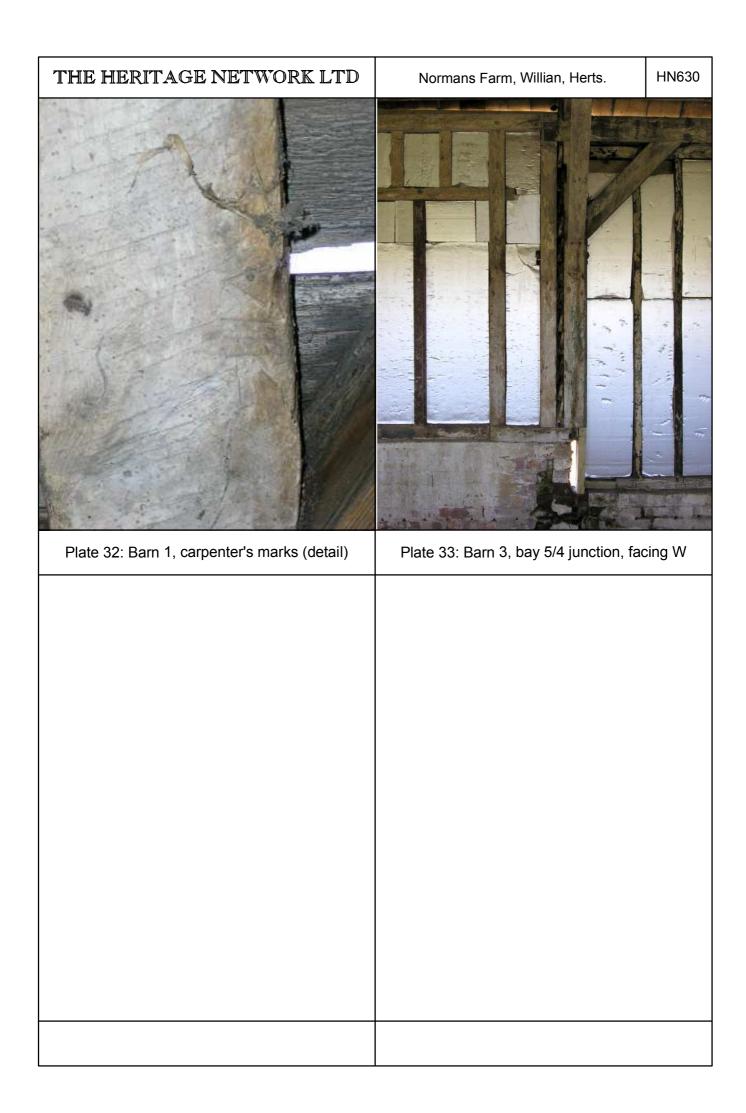




Plate 35:Trench 6 looking east

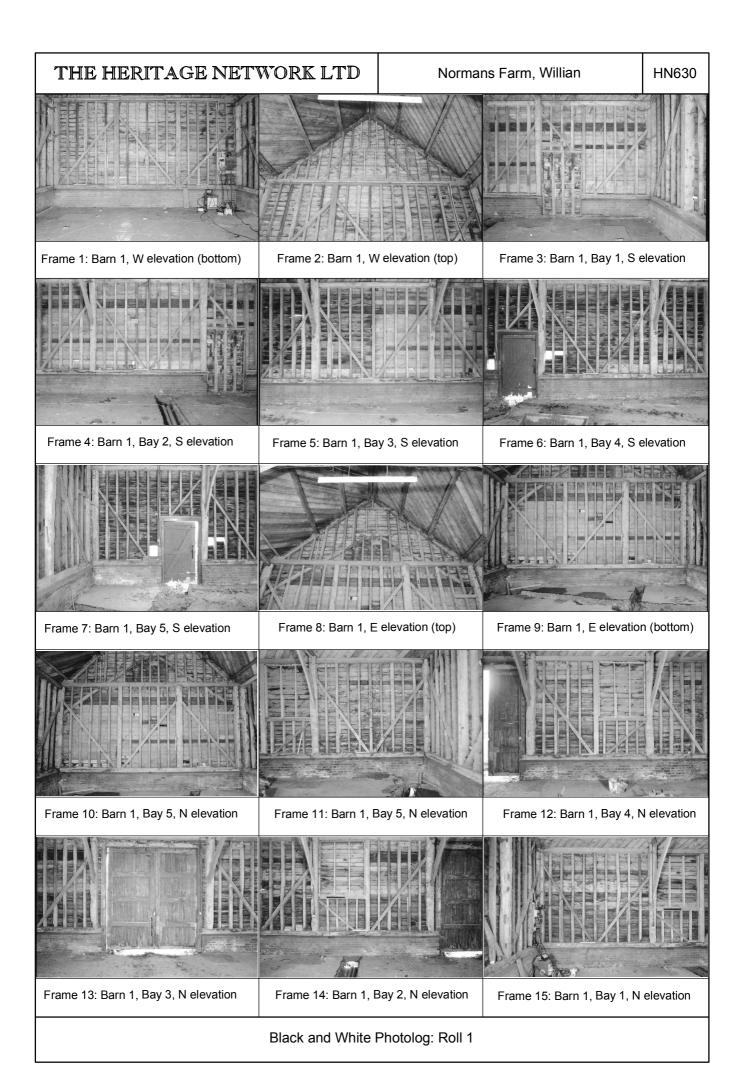
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# Appendix 1

### Medium Format Black & White Photographic Logs

HN630/report

Page 11



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD		Normar	ns Farm, Willian	HN630
Frame 1: Barn 1, roof structure, facing E	Frame 2: Barn 1	I, N exterior	Frame 3: Barn 1, N ex	erior
Frame 4: Barns 1 & 2, W exterior				
	Black and White F	Photolog: Roll 2		

# THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD Normans Farm, Willian HN630 Frame 2: Barns 1 & 3, E exterior Frame 3: Barn 1 & Garage, E exterior Frame 1: Barns 1 & 2, W exterior Frame 4: Barns 1, 2 & lean-to, facing NW Frame 5: Barn 1 & lean-to, S exterior Frame 6: Barn 3, W exterior Frame 8: Barns 2 & 3, facing NE Frame 9: Normans Farm, facing N Frame 7: Barns 1 & 2, S exterior Frame 11: Barn 2, S elevation Frame 12: Barn 2, S elevation Frame 10: Barn 2, S elevation Frame 13: Barn 2, Bay 1, W elevation Frame 14: Barn 2, Bay 1, W roof Frame 15: Barn 2, Bay 2, W elevation

Black and White Photolog: Roll 3