

# HERITAGE NETWORK



# ASHDON HALL, Ashdon, Essex

HN679

Historic Building Record & Archaeological Monitoring Report



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

# ASHDON HALL, Church Hill, Ashdon, Essex

HN679

# Historic Building Record and Archaeological Monitoring Report

Prepared on behalf of Dr and Mrs J. Padfield

by Helen Ashworth, BA AIFA and

David Hillelson, BAMIFA

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### Archaeological Monitoring Report

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The cover photograph shows Ashdon Hall and the barns, looking south

# Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by David Hillelson, Geoff Saunders and David Kaye. The report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Dr & Mrs J. Padfield; Michael Snow & Jack White, Snow Walker Associates; and the staff of the Historic Environment Management Team (HEMT), Essex County Council for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Site name and address:	Ashdon Hall, Church H	lill, Ashdon, Essex	
County:	Essex	District:	Uttlesford
Village/town:	Ashdon	Parish:	Ashdon
Planning reference:	UTT/1682/06/FUL;	NGR:	TL 5182 4158
	UTT/1683/06/LB		
Client name and address:	Dr & Mrs J. Padfield, A	Ashdon Hall, Church Hill, A	shdon, Essex
Nature of work:	New garage	Former site use:	Barn
Site Status:	n/a	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Direction from LPA (PPG
			16)
Position in planning process:	After full	Project brief originator:	Local Authority
	determination (as a		
	condition)		
Site Code:	HN679	Other reference:	n/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Project type, methods etc	Historic Buildings	Archive Recipient:	Saffron Walden Museum
	Record & Monitoring		
Start of work	12/07/2007	Finish of work	13/08/2008
Related SMR Nos:	n/a	Periods represented:	Post-medieval
Oasis UID:	heritage1-40264	Significant finds:	none
Monument types:	Building		
Physical archive:	None		
Previous summaries/reports:	n/a		

# Summary

### Narrative:

In response to a condition placed on the planning permission for a development at Ashdon Hall, Ashdon, Essex, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owners to undertake a programme of building recording and archaeological monitoring.

Cartographic evidence demonstrates that the layout of the group of barns has changed very little since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Examination of the structures has demonstrated that Barn 2, the eastern range, is likely to be the earliest structure and has been tentatively dated to the mid-late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Barns 1 and 3 are likely to have been erected in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Monitoring of the ground reduction to the south of Barn 1 revealed the remains of a brick path along the southern edge of the building and a gravelled farmyard surface. No other features, deposits or artefacts were observed.

# 1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of *Dr & Mrs J. Padfield*, as part of a programme of archaeological works at Ashdon Hall, Church Hill, Ashdon, Essex. Planning permission for the investigation was a requirement of the planning consents granted by Uttlesford District Council (UDC) (ref. UTT/1682/06/FUL; UTT/1683/06/LB), under the provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990). The extent of the work was been defined in a *Brief for the Archaeological Monitoring of Groundworks and Building Recording* prepared by the Heritage Environment Management Team (HEMT) of Essex County Council acting as archaeological advisers to UDC. A full specification for the work is contained in the Heritage Network's approved Project Design, dated June 2007.

1.2 Ashdon Hall forms part of the hamlet of Church End, to the south-west of Ashdon. Church End appears to be the site of the original settlement, which moved down into the valley at some point in the later medieval period. The remains of a deserted medieval village are known to lie in the field to the east of the church (Essex County Council, Historic Environment Record (EHER) no. 4776). Large quantities of medieval pottery were recovered during topsoil stripping in the 1970s. The field is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 29395). A large number of north – south aligned graves, containing human burials accompanied by 'rude weapons' and pottery, were found in this field in c.1830 (EHER 7313). The burials are undated, but may be Anglo-Saxon in date. It has been suggested that Ashdon was the site of the battle of 'Assandun' in 1016 (EHER 7312).

1.3 The parish church of All Saints is located immediately to the south-west of the study area (EHER 7314 / 7315 / 7316). The earliest part of the present building is the chancel, which is thought to be  $13^{th}$  century in date. The south aisle was rebuilt in the early  $14^{th}$  century, and the north-east and south chapels were built around the same time. Restoration works on the church in 1886 revealed evidence for a smaller, earlier structure, possibly of Norman date. Part of a Norman font was found incorporated in the doorstep.

1.4 The present site is located to the south-west of Ashdon Hall, centred on NGR TL 5182 4158. The development proposes the demolition of part of an existing range of farm buildings and the construction of two larger garages within the range.

*1.5* The farm buildings appear on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map. Historic farm buildings have been identified in the 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).

1.6 It was considered that evidence of earlier activity on the site may also 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.

1.7 The present report is intended to document the data collected and set the site in its archaeological and historical context. The approval of the report by the UDC and the deposition

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of the project archive with Saffron Walden Museum will complete the requirements of the planning condition and permit it to be discharged.

# 2. Fieldwork

### TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site lies towards the top of an east facing slope in the valley of the River Bourn at approximately 80m AOD (Figure 1). The land falls steeply down to the river to the east and rises more gently to the west.

2.2 The study area lies on, or close to, a junction between the soils of the Moulton Association (571k) and the Hanslope Association (411d). Those belonging to the Moulton Association are located in the floor and are described as *Well drained coarse and fine loamy soils with similar shallow calcareous coarse loamy soils over chalk or chalk rubble in places. Patterned ground of stripes and polygons gives very variable soil depth. Slight risk of water erosion.* (SSEW 1985). Those belonging to the Hanslope Association extend to the south and west and are described as *Slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils. Some slowly permeable non-calcareous clayey soils. Slight risk of water erosion.* (ibid).

2.3 The underlying natural geology is boulder clay over chalk.

### **METHODOLOGY**

2.4 The development involves the demolition of the southern wing of the existing range of farm buildings and the construction of two larger garages in the same location (Figure 8).

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

### Historic Building Recording

2.6 A programme of site visits was carried out to inspect and record the structure of the building before demolition.

2.7 The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of a Level 2 record as defined in *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006).

2.8 A drawn record of the structure of the buildings was prepared, based on the architect's plans and elevations, corrected and annotated as necessary.

2.9 A photographic record was made in order to show the appearance of the buildings and evidence of their historical development. The record includes general views of the buildings, both internal and external, and specific detail, as appropriate.

2.10 The written account has been based on observation carried out on site in the course of the fieldwork, and additional research using readily accessible primary and secondary sources. It includes the location of the buildings and an account of their overall form and developmental sequence.

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### Archaeological Monitoring

2.11 A programme of site visits was undertaken to monitor all intrusive groundworks associated with the development, including ground reduction and the excavation of drainage trenches, to ensure that all archaeological features and deposits encountered were recorded, and, wherever possible, protected and preserved in situ.

2.12 All open area ground reduction associated with the new development was carried out under direct archaeological supervision, using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket.

2.13 All exposed archaeological features and deposits were cleaned sufficiently to allow their extent to be identified, and recorded.

2.14 A programme of site visits was undertaken to inspect all associated service works, such as drainage or soakaways, in order to identify and recover unstratified artefacts or ecofacts, and to record potential archaeological features or deposits.

2.15 The spoil was scanned visually and using a metal detector and all finds not of modern origin were collected and recorded as unstratified.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING

### Introduction

2.16 Ashdon Hall lies in the hamlet of Church End, to the south-west of Ashdon village. The house is located to the west of a supposed homestead moat of medieval date (EHER 4774). It has been suggested that the eastern arm of the moat is a later ornamental feature, on the basis that the slope of the ground is such that it is unlikely that it could have extended further to the east or west.

2.17 The present house is a Grade II listed building (IoE no.121433). It is a brick house, built in the early  $19^{th}$  century and incorporating a 17th century timber-framed core. The house was extended in the later  $19^{th}$  century.

2.18 There is a stable block to the south of the house and a restored barn, of unknown date, to the south of the study area. A further barn, also of unknown date and currently used as a garage, is located to the north-east of the house

2.19 The study area is located to the south-west of the house and comprises a U-shaped group of barns around a central yard, open to the north. The middle range, Barn 1, was to be demolished and replaced with a deeper building, divided into a three-car garage and a one-car garage. The southern end of Barn 2, the western range, was to be incorporated in the new structure, Barn 3, the eastern range, was to remain unaltered.

2.20 Cartographic evidence demonstrates that these structures were in existence in the late  $19^{\text{th}}$  century. They are shown on the  $1^{\text{st}}$  edition OS map of 1880 (Figure 2). At that period the northern side of the yard was enclosed by a wall extending west from the northern end of Barn 3. A second enclosed yard lay to the north, butting the northern end of Barn 2. A small enclosed yard was located on the southern side of Barn 1.

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2.21 Little change to this layout occurred between 1880 and 1980 (Figures 2 - 5). The northern yard and the boundary across the farmyard had disappeared by 1903 (Figure 3).

### Barn 1

2.22 Barn 1 forms the southern range to the farmyard and is a timber framed building of five bays, linking the southern ends of Barns 2 and 3 (Figure 6). It is partially open to the south (Plate 1) and closed with vertical elm boarding to the north (Plate 2). The northern elevation rests on a brick plinth, formed of Cambridge white bricks rising eight courses above the existing ground level (Figure 7). The boarding is nailed to horizontal battens which are tenoned into the softwood principal posts. These are formed of poorly finished branches and support a wall plate, also possibly in elm.

2.23 Bays 1 and 2 (numbering from the left) are enclosed, with a modern stable door at the eastern end and horizontal softwood weatherboarding (Plates 3 and 4). Bay 3 was open to the south at the time of recording and Bay 4 had  $\frac{2}{3}$  height doors, open at the top. Bay 5 had been divided into two, with the eastern half partitioned off, apparently to form a chicken coop and run.

2.24 The southern (front) elevation is supported on heavy hardwood posts, reused from elsewhere and resting on short brick piers (Plate 5). The partitioning between the bays is haphazard and formed of various scraps of timber. The slate roof is supported on waney edged and poorly finished softwood rafters which clasp the ridge, some of which have been braced with collars. The beams in line with the principal posts are poorly finished softwood branches, with nailed diagonal boarding. The floors are of concrete.

2.25 The western elevation has diagonal bracing in addition to battens supporting vertical boarding in hardwood, possibly elm (see Plate 3).

2.26 The eastern elevation is formed from a brick and flint wall, extending 1.30m above the existing ground level, and forming part of the existing boundary between the stable yard and the orchard (Plate 11). The lower part is in flint, with a whitewashed brick wall, laid in Flemish bond, above. A modern brick pen has been appended to Bay 1.

2.27 Barn 1 comprises an open fronted barn, facing the orchard and making extensive use of simple unfinished timbers, which was latterly used for stock. The use of elm boarding suggests an early 19th century date, but the ad-hoc vernacular style, and the extensive remodelling, prevents close dating.

### Barn 2

2.28 Barn 2 is a timber framed building of six bays, with an earth floor and a slate roof, which forms the western range of the U-shaped group. It has been built around Barn 1 at the southern end, and Barn 1 occupies much of the first bay (Plate 6). Bays 2 to 4 are open to the east, with the oak wall plate being supported on modern oak posts resting on modern brick piers (Plate 7). Bays 5 and 6 are enclosed with diagonally braced studwork, the sill beam resting on a dwarf all of Cambridge white bricks. An original principal post in the eastern elevation between Bays 4 and 5 has a protective 'bumper' at the base suggesting that this was originally an open cart shed.

2.29 The west (rear) elevation is formed of diagonally braced studwork, with no apparent principal posts, covered with largely modern weatherboarding (Plate 8). The five beams are HN679/report

formed of waney edged hardwood beams. These support modern queen posts supporting a single purlin in each slope, relieving an original line of collars.

2.30 No detailed inspection of the northern end was possible due to its current use as a firewood store. This barn post-dates Barn 1, but its original date of construction is difficult to determine.

### Barn 3

2.31 Barn 3 is a timber framed barn of 5 bays which forms the eastern range of the U-shaped group. It is likely to predate Barn 1 and its western elevation is formed of red bricks, laid in a rough English bond (Plate 9). Its eastern elevation is weatherboarded, with a line of stable doors (Plate 10).

2.32 This structure was not recorded in detail as it falls outside the present planning consent. However, the first (southern) bay forms an apple store and rests on piers, allowing ventilation beneath. The remainder of the building is divided into separately accessible compartments. Bay 2 has three-light casement windows in the west elevation, the middle light being hinged to the south. This barn is the earliest in the group and has been provisionally dated to the mid – late  $18^{\text{th}}$  century.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

### Ground reduction to the south of Barn 1

2.33 An area to the south of the site of Barn 1, measuring  $8.5m \ge 19m$ , was reduced by approximately 0.30m (Figure 8). The topsoil in this area consisted of a dark brown silty clay, 0.30m in depth.

2.34 A brick path was noted running along the southern edge of Barn 1. This measured 1.4m in width.

2.35 A gravel surface, possibly a former yard surface, was revealed below the topsoil (Plate 12). Large quantities of post-medieval brick, tile and pottery were present, but not collected. A piece of moulded cement or cast stone, post-1920 in date, and possibly used as a decorative string course, was recovered from the topsoil. This may have been imported on to the site as no evidence for such decoration was visible on any of the buildings in the study area.

2.36 The natural geology was not reached, and no cut features or archaeological deposits were observed.

### Ground reduction in the footprint of the new garage

2.37 The area of the new garage replacing Barn 1, and the former pig sty immediately to the south, was reduced by 0.30m (Figure 8). The stratigraphy in this area consisted of a layer of topsoil, with a maximum depth of 0.30m and which contained frequent post-medieval brick and tile fragments.

2.38 The topsoil at the western end of the new garage consisted of a friable dark greyish brown sandy clay. Below this was a thin layer of cinders, 0.05m in depth, which lay directly over the

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natural clay and extended eastwards for 2.90m. The nature of the topsoil changed on the eastern side of the cinder layer, becoming a very dark greyish brown silty clay, which directly overlay the natural (Plate 13).

2.39 The natural geology sloped upwards from east to west. It was reached at a depth of 0.15m at the western end of the building, and at 0.30m at the eastern end.

2.40 No cut features or archaeological deposits were observed in this area.

### Footings

2.41 Four footings pads were excavated along the southern side of the new garage (Figure 8). These have been numbered 1 to 4 for ease of reference.

### Pad 1

2.42 This lay at the eastern edge of the new structure, adjacent to Barn 3. It measure 0.70m x 1.50m and was excavated to a depth of 0.80m. The stratigraphy revealed in the sections consisted of a layer of redeposited natural dark yellowish brown clayey sand and gravel, 0.60m in depth, which contained  $19^{th}$  and  $20^{th}$  century brick, tile and pottery fragments (Plate 14). This overlay the natural clay and has been interpreted as late post-medieval levelling of the natural east – west slope.

### Pad 2

2.43 This lay 1.60m to the west of Pad 1. It measured 0.90m x 1.50m and was excavated to a depth of 1.10m. The stratigraphy revealed in the sections was the same as that recorded in Pad 1.

### Pad 3

2.44 This lay 2.15m to the west of Pad 2. It measured 0.90m x 1.50m and was excavated to a depth of 1.10m. The stratigraphy revealed in the sections was the same as that recorded in Pad 1.

### Pad 4

2.45 This lay 2.20m to the west of Pad 3. It measured 0.90m x 1.50m and was excavated to a depth of 0.90m. The stratigraphy revealed in the sections consisted of a layer of yellowish brown clayey sand and gravel natural, 0.40m in depth. Below this was olive brown clay containing chalk and limestone fragments.

2.46 No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were observed in any of the footings pads.

### Drainage trench

2.47 A drainage trench was excavated across the yard to the east of Barn 3 (Figure 8). It ran on an east – west alignment to the south of Barn 3, then turned to run north-east, to meet an existing manhole on the corner of the stable block to the south of the house.

2.48 The trench was 0.40m in width and excavated to a maximum depth of 0.70m. The stratigraphy was uniform along its length, consisting of a layer of dark greyish brown firm sandy

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clay, with frequent flints and stones, brick, tile and breeze block fragments and late  $19^{th}/20^{th}$  century pottery (Plate 15). This lay directly over the natural sand and gravel.

2.49 No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were observed.

# 3. Discussion

### **Building Record**

3.1 Ashdon Hall is a Grade II listed building with  $17^{th}$  century, or earlier, origins. The present study concentrated on the group of barns to the south-west of the house, where a new garage was to replace one of the barns.

3.2 Cartographic evidence has demonstrated that the layout of the barns has remained essentially unchanged since the late  $19^{th}$  century.

3.3 The historic building record has demonstrated that the earliest structure in the group is likely to have been Barn 3, the eastern range. This has been tentatively dated to the mid-late  $18^{th}$  century. Barn 2, which forms the western range, may be the latest in the group. This has been tentatively dated to the early  $19^{th}$  century, and post-dates Barn 1, the southern range.

### Monitoring of Groundworks

3.4 The monitoring of the ground reduction following the demolition of Barn 1 revealed that the ground level had been deliberately built up to level the ground. The pottery, brick and tile fragments indicate that this was done in the later  $19^{th}$  century. This work may have removed evidence for earlier features.

3.5 The remains of a gravelled farmyard surface and brick path were recorded to the south of Barn 1.

3.6 No other archaeological features or deposits were observed. The bulk of the artefacts observed during the monitoring of the groundworks were  $19^{th}$  century in date.

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
12/07/07	DJH	9	Record barns
	GAS	9	
19/07/07	GIS	8	Monitor ground reduction
23/07/07	DGK	8	Monitor ground reduction
24/07/07	DGK	2	Monitor ground reduction
25/07/07	DGK	2	Inspect footings trench
26/07/07	GIS	6	Monitor footings pads
13/08/07	GIS	7	Monitor drainage trench

# 4. Schedule of site visits

# **5. Sources Consulted**

Historic Ordnance Survey maps from Promap: www.promap.co.uk

1<sup>st</sup> edition 6" scale OS map, 1880 6" scale OS map, 1903 6" scale OS map, 1951 1:2500 scale OS map, 1980

Listing details: Images of England (IoE), www.imagesofengland.org.uk

Essex County Council Historic Environment Record: www.unlockingessex.essexcc.gov.uk

Scheduled Monument information: www.magic.gov.uk

**Bibliography** 

Saunders, G. 2007, Ashdon Hall, Church Hill, Ashdon, Essex. Project Design: Historic Building Record & Archaeological Monitoring. Heritage Network

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

# 6. Illustrations

Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2	OS map, 1880
Figure 3	OS map, 1903
Figure 4	OS map, 1951
Figure 5	OS map, 1980
Figure 6	Plan of barns, as existing
Figure 7	Barn elevations
Figure 8	Groundworks

Plate 1	Barn 1, south elevation
Plate 2	Barn 1, north elevation
Plate 3	Barn 1, bays 1 and 2 looking west
Plate 4	Barn 1, bays 1 and 2 looking east
Plate 5	Re-used timbers in Barn 1, detail
Plate 6	Junction between Barns 1 and 2, looking south
Plate 7	Barn 2, east elevation
Plate 8	Barn 2, west elevation
Plate 9	Barn 3, west elevation
Plate 10	Barn 3, east elevation
Plate 11 Barn 1	, east elevation, wall between barn and orchard
Plate 12	Area of ground reduction to south of Barn 1
Plate 13	Area of ground reduction in footprint of Barn 1
Plate 14	Pad 1, looking north
Plate 15	Sample stratigraphy, drainage trench

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# Appendix 1

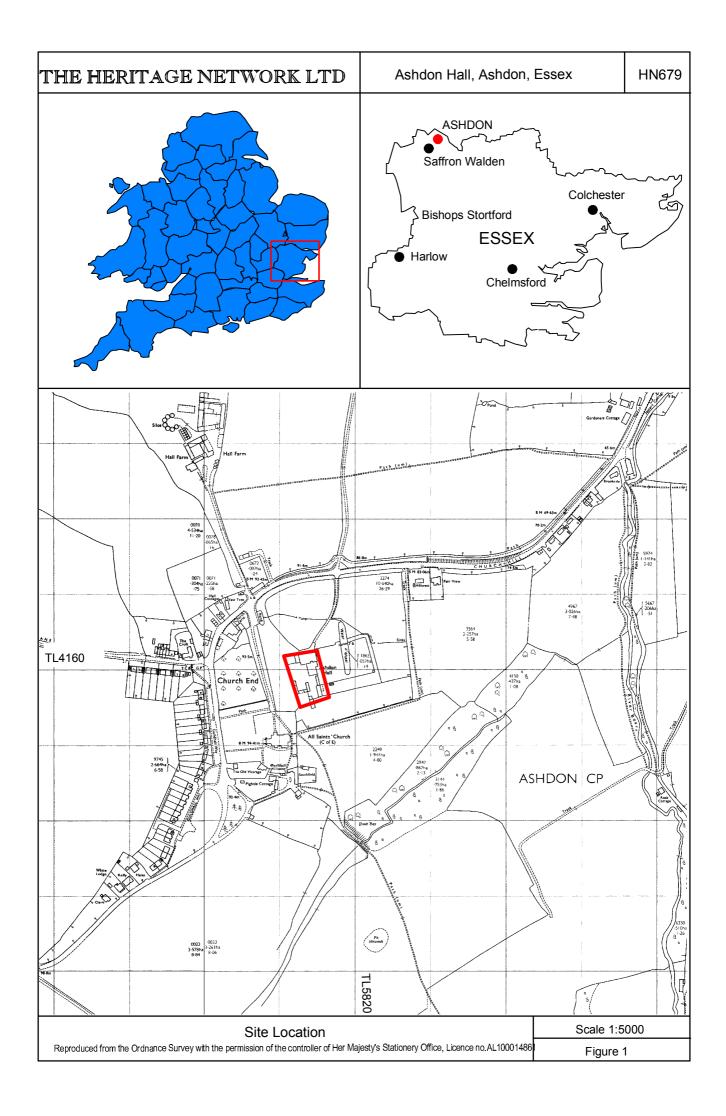
Medium Format Black & White Photographic Logs

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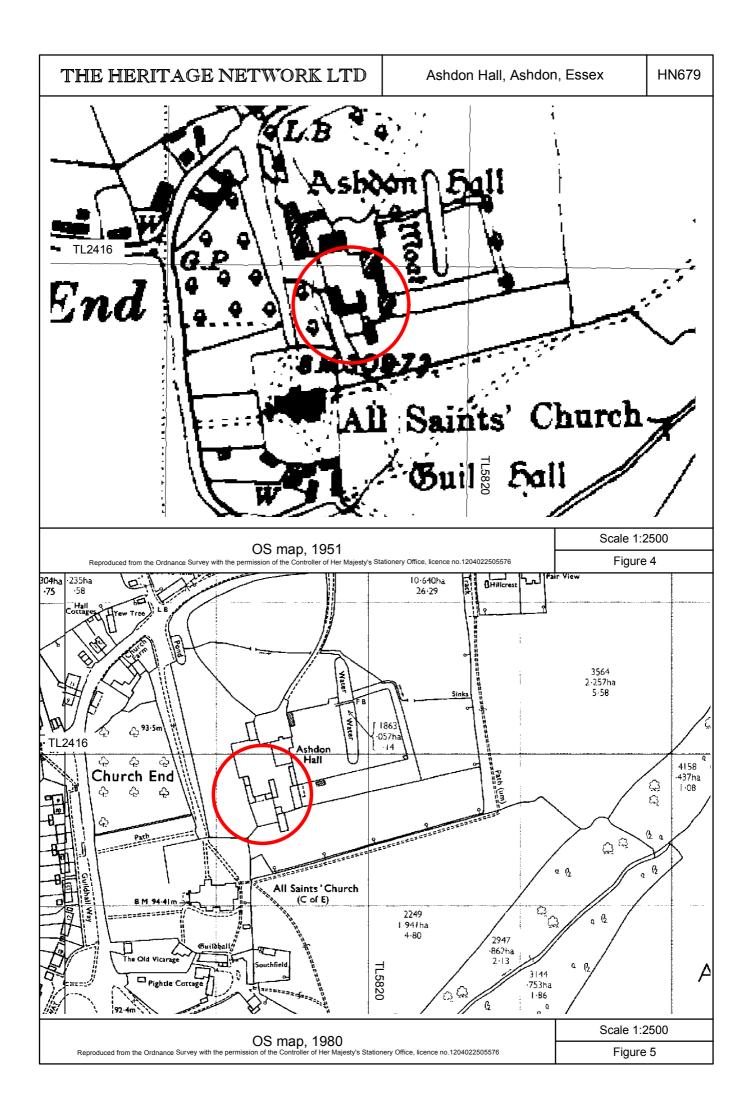
# Appendix 2

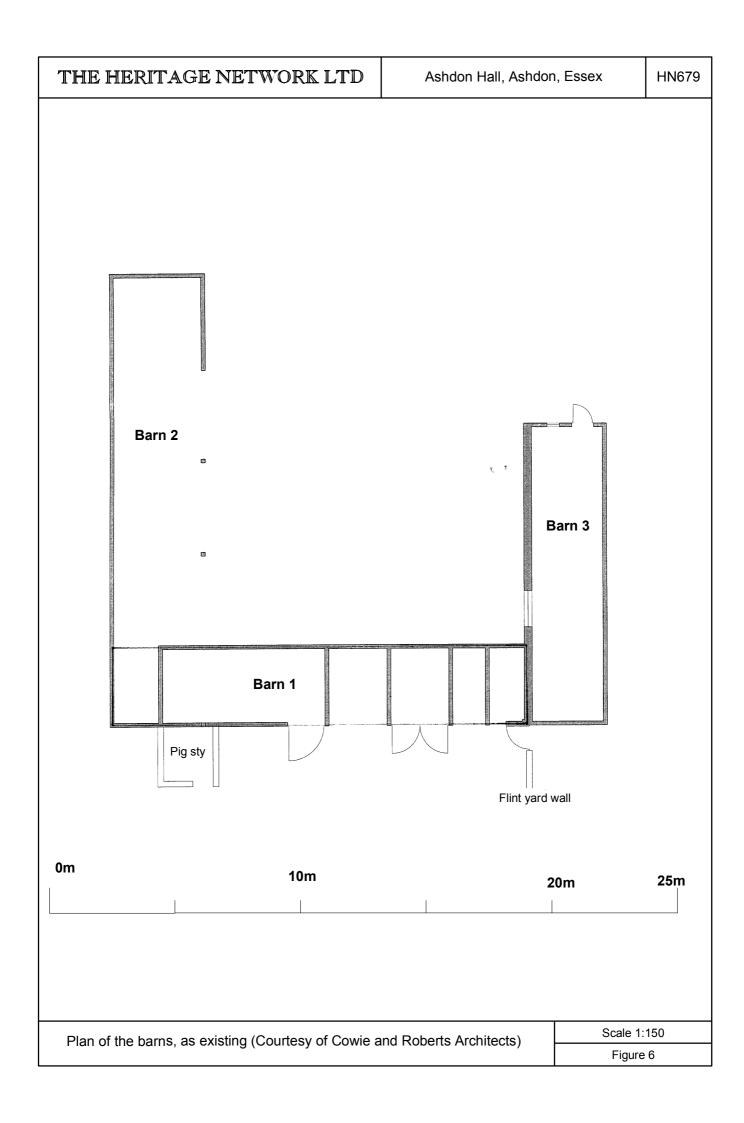
# **Digital Photographic Log**

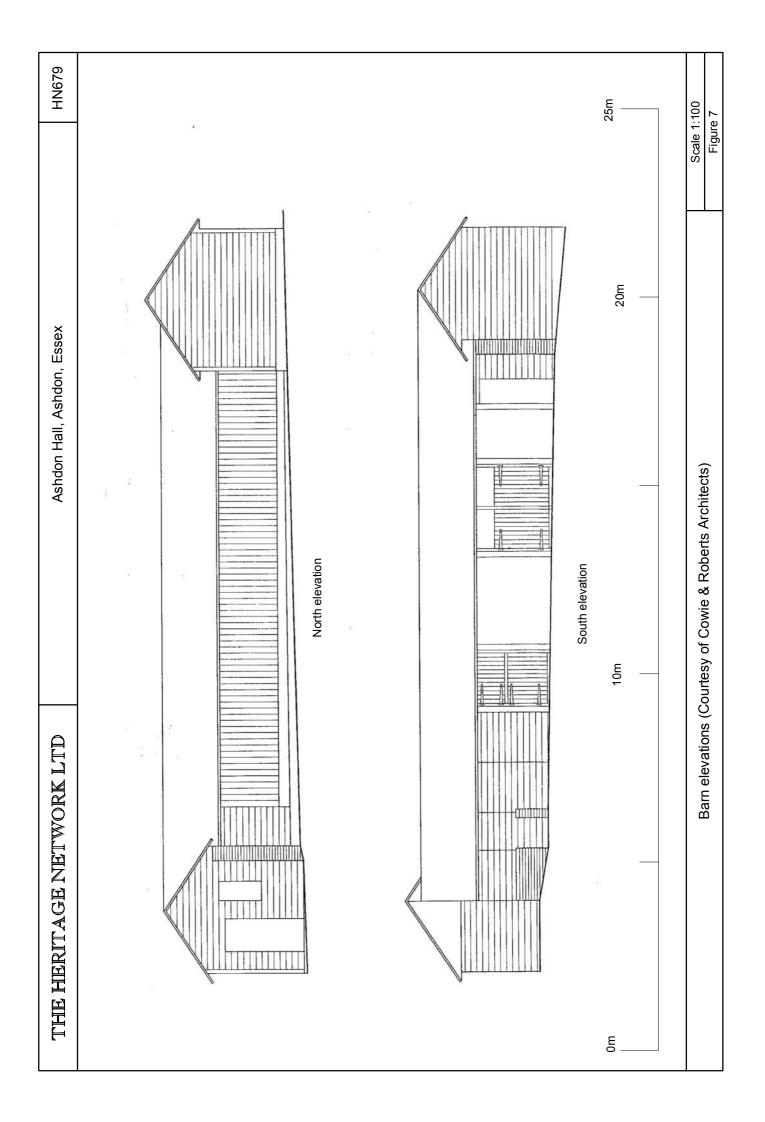
Frame No.	Description	Facing
01	Barn 1, north elevation	S
02	Barn 3, north and west elevations	SE
03	Barn 2, north and east elevations	SW
04	Barn 2, east elevation	W
05	Barn 3, west elevation	E
06	Barn group	S
07	Barn 3, east elevation	W
08	Barn 3, south and east elevations	NW
09	Barn 1, south elevation	N
10	Barns 1 and 2, south elevation	NW
11	Barn 2, west elevation	N
12	Barn 1, Bays 1 and 2	W
13	Barn 1, Bays 1 and 2	W
14	Barn 1, Bays 1 and 2	Е
15	Barn 1, Bays 1 and 2	SE
16	Barn 1, Bays 1 and 2	SW
17	Barn 1, Bay 3	N
18	Barn 1, detail of re-used timbers	-
19	Barn 1, Bay 4	N
20	Ban 1, Bay 5, west elevation	N
21	Barn 1, Bay 5, east elevation	N
22	Junction Barns 1 and 2	S
23	Barn 2, roof truss	SW
24	General shot of house and barns	SE
25	Detail of scarf joints at the front of Barn 2	-
26	Detail of scarf joints at the front of Barn 2	-
27	Ground reduction to south of Barn 1	Е
28	Ground reduction to south of Barn 1	Е
29	Pad 1	N
30	Pad 1	N
31	Drainage trench	S
32	Drainage trench	S
33	Ground reduction, Barn 1 footprint	N
34	Ground reduction, Barn 1 footprint	N
35	Ground reduction, Barn 1 footprint	N
36	New garage under construction	NE
37	Ashdon Hall	

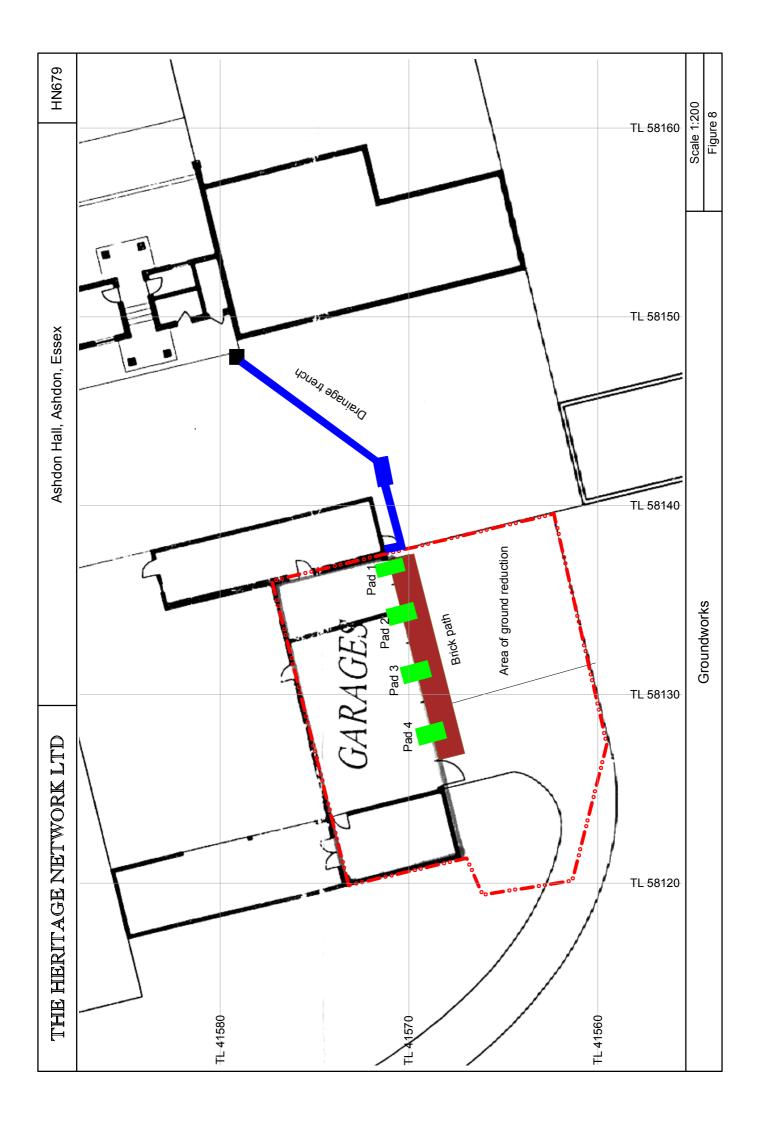












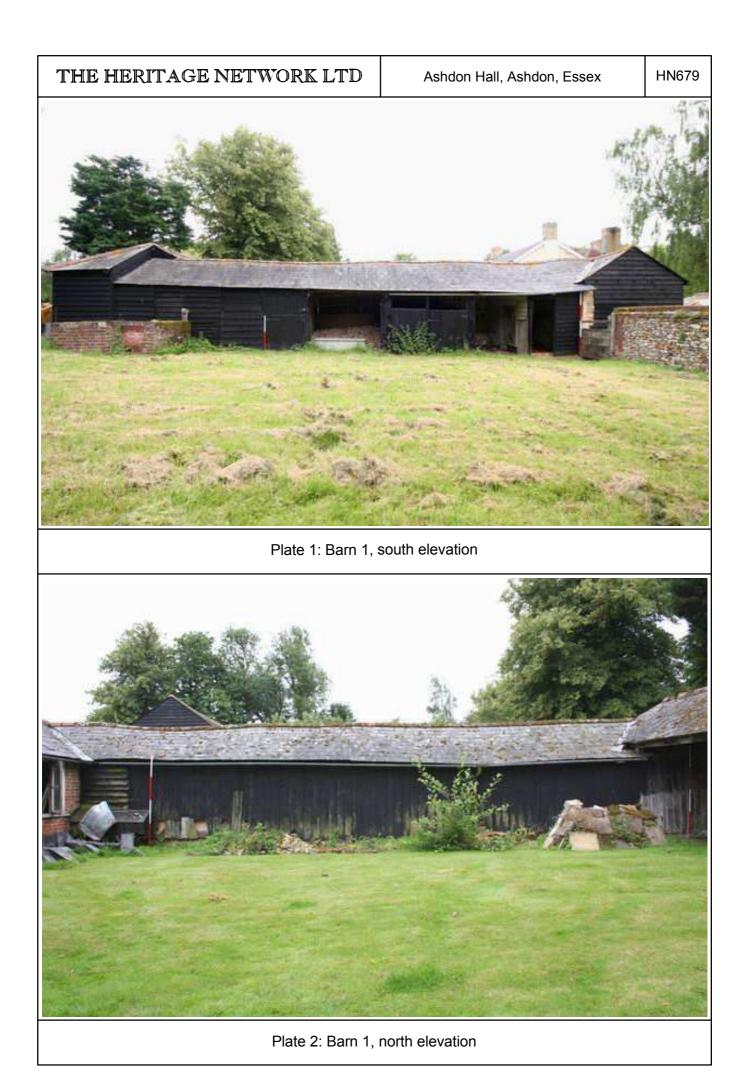




Plate 4: Barn 1, Bays 1 and 2, looking east

# THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD HN679 Ashdon Hall, Ashdon, Essex Plate 5: Re-used timbers in Barn 1, detail

Plate 6: Junction between Barns 1 and 2, looking S

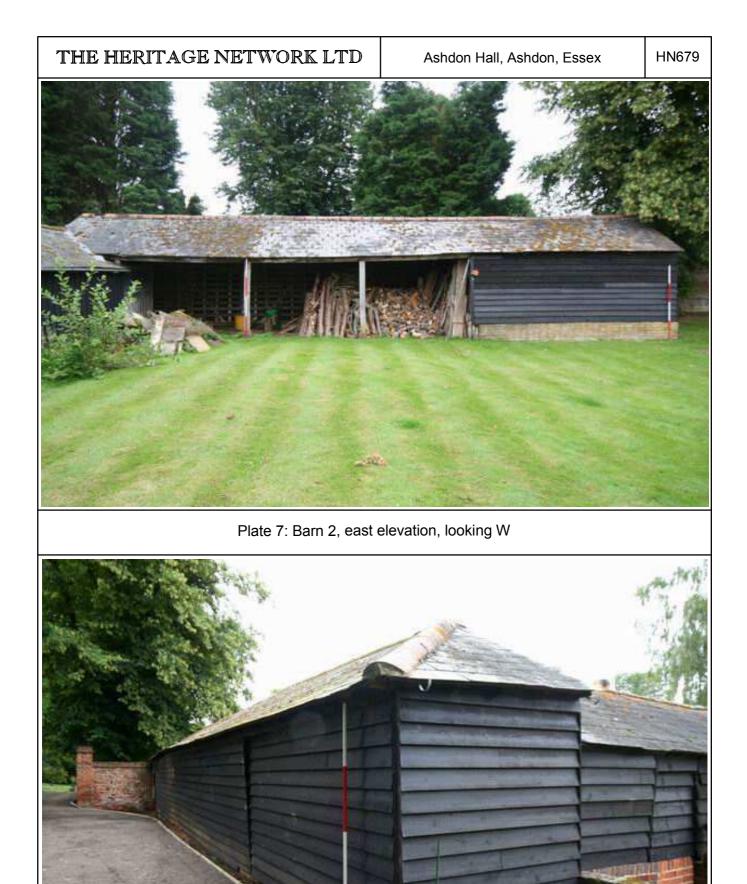


Plate 8: Barn 2, south and west elevations looking NE



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Plate 11: Barn 1, east elevation, showing wall between barn and orchard	Plate 11: Barn 1, east elevation, showing wall between barn and orchard		

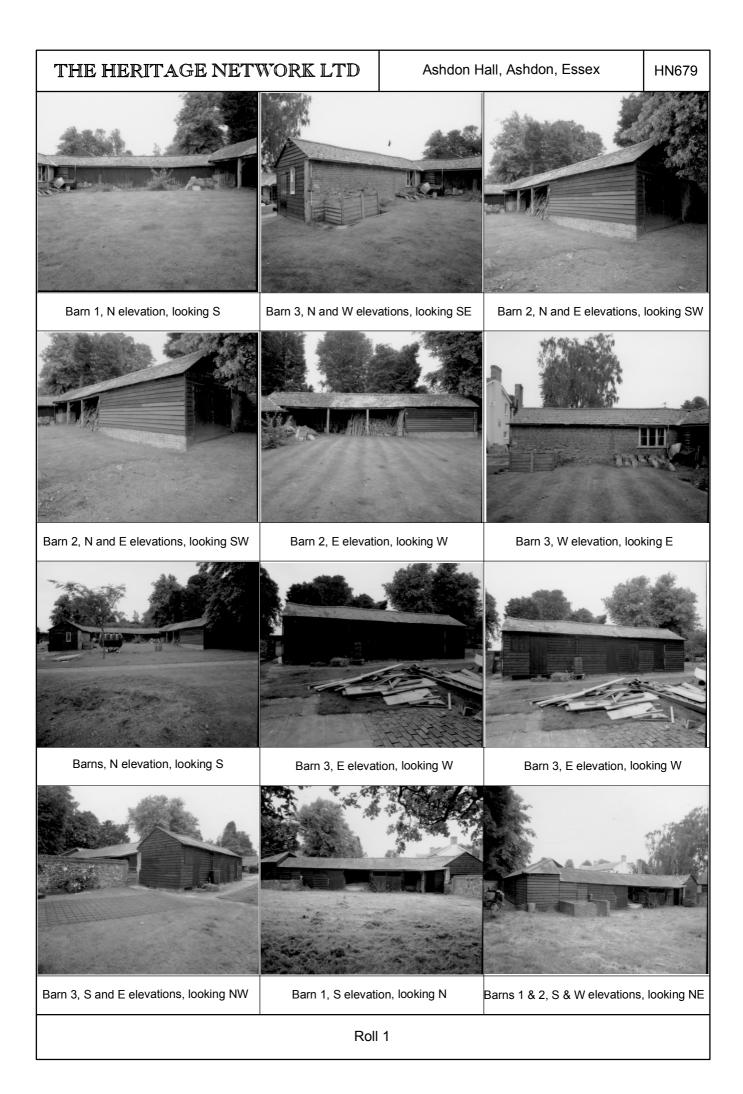
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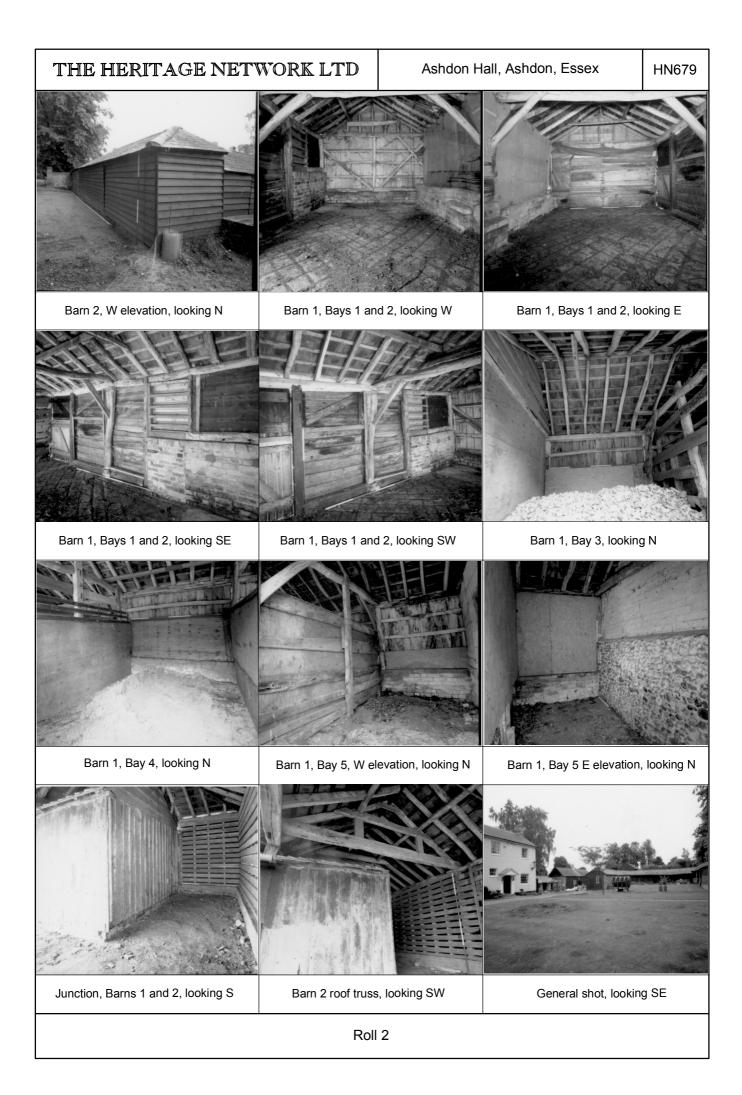
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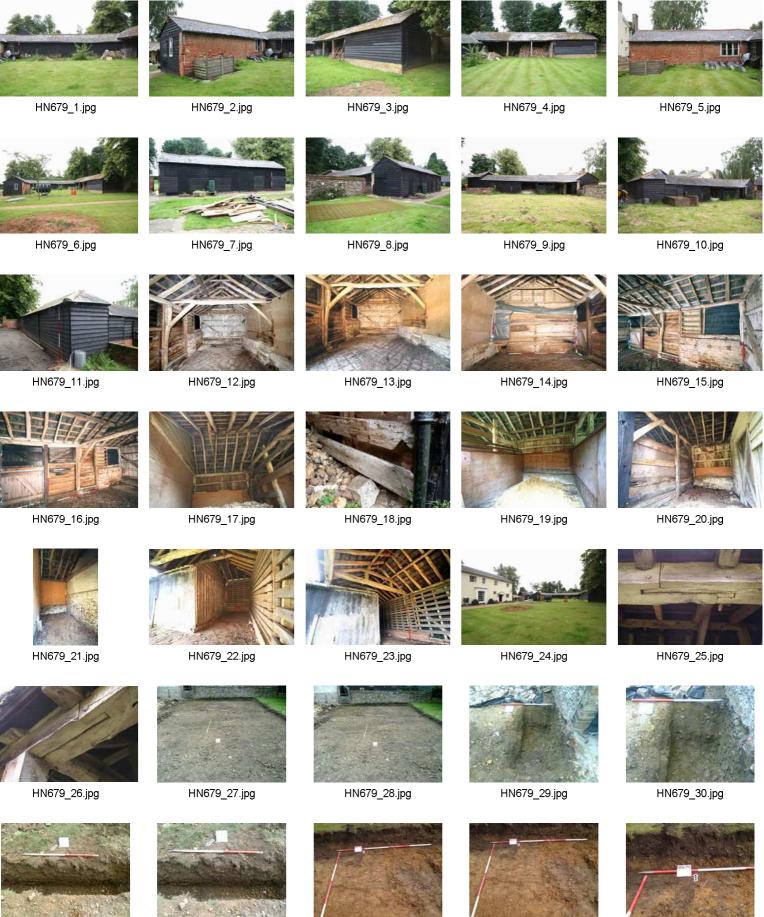
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