

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES  
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of  
Ross Woodward

Buildings at Southside Farm  
Westerton  
County Durham

archaeological building recording

report 4434  
April 2017

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## **1. Summary**

### **The project**

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological recording project conducted in advance of proposed demolition of buildings at Southside Farm, Westerton, County Durham. A photographic survey has been carried out and existing architects' plans have been used as the basis for a drawn survey.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by Ross Woodward and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

### **The buildings**

- 1.3 The buildings described here are the remains of the 19th-century farmstead. Most of them have been significantly altered in the 20th century. There is evidence that an early stone-built threshing barn at the south-east side of the yard was replaced before 1897 by a larger building, now gone, that ran east-west across the south end of the site. For a time, the old building housed a motor to drive a thresher in the new barn. The west range was at one time an open fronted shed. In the north range, a building with paired doors was made into a cow byre in the 20th century.

## 2. Project background

### Location (Figures 1 and 2)

- 2.1 The study area is on the south side of the green at Westerton, Co Durham, at grid reference NZ 2401 3101.

### Development proposal

- 2.2 Planning permission has been given for construction of a house on the site of the existing disused farm buildings at Southside Farm, Westerton. The planning reference is DM/16/03252/FPA. The buildings are not listed but are considered to be a heritage asset of local importance. They are shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1860. Durham County Council Archaeology Section requested archaeological recording work should be completed before work begins.

### Objective

- 2.3 The objective of the project was to provide a record of the buildings in their present state. The regional research framework (Petts & Gerrard 2006) contains an agenda for archaeological research in the region, which is incorporated into regional planning policy implementation with respect to archaeology. In this instance, the scheme of works was designed to address agenda item PMviii: industrial intensification, 1790-1830.

### Specification summary

- 2.4 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation provided by Archaeological Services Durham University and approved by the County Durham Archaeology Section.

### Dates

- 2.5 The buildings were examined on 3rd April 2017. This report was prepared for April 2017.

### Personnel

- 2.6 Research, survey and report preparation work were carried out by Richard Annis, and the graphics were prepared by Janine Watson and David Graham.

### Archive/OASIS

- 2.7 The project archive is currently held by Archaeological Services Durham University and will be transferred to the Bowes Museum in due course. Archaeological Services Durham University is registered with the Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS project (OASIS). The OASIS ID number for this project is **archaeol3-282704**.

## 3. Landuse, topography and geology

### Landuse

- 3.1 The study area covers about 495 square metres and is occupied by a concrete yard with brick and stone buildings on its north, west and east sides. All but one of the buildings are disused. Those on the east side have lost their roofs since 2009.

### Site and situation

- 3.2 Westerton is near the crest of a narrow ridge of land to the west of Kirk Merrington. It is one of the highest points in the county, at 203m above sea level. The village green descends towards the west from a point about 40m north-east of the study area. The former farm yard is at about 198m, on ground that falls gently to the south. The land to the south and west, formerly part of Southside Farm, is now occupied by recently-built houses. South of this new development there is arable land. There are older houses to east and west of the former farmhouse, facing onto the village green.

### Geology and soils

- 3.3 The bedrock is Westphalian sandstone of the Pennine Middle Coal measures Formation, overlain by glacial boulder clay. There is late Permian dolostone a short distance to the east of the village; there were formerly stone quarries working these rocks at the east and west ends of the village.

## 4. Historical and archaeological development

- 4.1 There is some evidence of prehistoric occupation in the neighbourhood of Westerton; there are cropmarks, assumed to be traces of Iron Age farmsteads, at either end of the village (Co Durham Historic Environment Record entries 1441, 2675, 2670).
- 4.2 In the medieval period, Westerton was a small agricultural settlement. The Boldon Book, compiled in 1183, was a survey of the holdings of the Prince Bishop. It is similar to the Domesday Book, which covered the country as far north as the Tees. Westerton was too small to be described in its own right but Coundon, the parish that the village was part of, is mentioned. The relevant entry says the “The lordship farm of six ploughs in Great Coundon with pasture and sheep is in the hands of the Bishop” (Austin 1982, 39). Since the Prince Bishop was the landowner in the 12th century, it is not surprising that 19th-century directories record that rents were due to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (Kelly 1890).
- 4.3 At the highest point of the village green is an unusual 18th-century tower. This was built for a mathematician and astronomer called Thomas Wright, a native of Byers Green, as an observatory. Wright was the first person to recognise that the Milky Way is a flattened disk of stars, and in 1750 he published an influential *Theory of the Universe*. The observatory is a round tower with Gothick Revival details; it was completed in 1788, after Wright’s death (Pevsner & Williamson 1983, 499). In later years, the building was used as a reading room and an office for the local council. The tower is a prominent landmark, sometimes called Wright's (or Westerton) Folly.
- 4.4 In the 19th century the village was still a farming settlement. In 1838, Westerton Colliery opened at a site about 740m south-west of the study area; later there was a larger site to the north of the village. The colliery operated until the 1960s.
- 4.5 Southside Farm appears to have been known as Westerton Farm and South Row Farm at different times in the 19th century. The tithe map of 1841 lists its occupier as George Tweddell, a man from Brancepeth. Information from census returns and directory entries show that he was still at Westerton Farm in 1851, when he was 77 years old; his farm covered 300 acres, which he worked with his son Farrow

Tweddell and three men. Farrow took over at the farm when his father died; he was working the land with four men at the time of the 1871 census. Farrow Tweddell was unmarried and died without an heir, so the farm went back into the hands of the Church Commissioners later in the 1870s.

- 4.6 When the first edition Ordnance Survey map was made in 1857, the arrangement of farm buildings at the site was more or less as it is today (Figure 3). The yard then extended around the south side of the garden and its entrance was where Westerton Heights opens onto the green today. Three ranges of buildings are shown around the present yard. The south-east building has a circular structure attached to its west face; this is a house for a horse gin that provided power to machinery in the adjoining barn. Horse gins commonly drove threshing machines but were also used to power feed choppers, winnowers and feed mills. By the time of the second edition map of 1897, the horse gin had been replaced by a larger building running east-west at the south end of the yard.
- 4.7 The third edition Ordnance Survey map shows little change from the end of the 19th century; the only significant addition is a projecting bay or porch on the west face of the south-east building, which is shown for the first time on the 1920 map. In recent times the yard was much larger. Satellite photographs taken in 2001 show a group of large buildings and covered yards across the site now occupied by Westerton Heights.

## 5. The buildings

### Limitations on access

- 5.1 It was not possible to examine the outer face of the eastern boundary wall during this survey. Stored material in building 5 prevented full access, as did the unsafe condition of the floor in the loft of building 1.

### Site layout

- 5.2 The buildings in the study area are at the north end of the yard shown on the 1897 map (Figures 3 and 4). They adjoin the house and there is access through the west range to the garden. For convenience, the separate buildings or divisions have been assigned numbers from 1 to 13; these are shown on the plan, Figure 4, and are cited in the description below.
- 5.3 The steading is on the south side of the green, towards the east end of the village and close to the observatory tower (Photograph 1). The front door of the house formerly opened onto the green. The north face of the buildings on the study area runs east from the house (Photograph 2). New houses and garages cover the former working area at the south (Photograph 3).
- 5.4 The buildings are made of local sandstone and brick and the surviving roofs are covered with slate or modern corrugated sheets (Photograph 4). All are single-storeyed except for building 1 which has a low loft (Photograph 5). The west range is still partly in use as a garden store. It was formerly attached to the north range but only a couple of roof purlins now link the two buildings (Photograph 6). The largest part of the east range is a stone building at the south end (Photograph 7).

### **The north range**

- 5.5 Building 1, at the west end, is a shed with a later loft above it. The north wall, of coursed rubble, has a blocked opening low on its east side, beside the junction with the house (Photograph 8). The south face has been substantially altered and the large door has a lintel made from sections of old railway line (Photograph 9). A section of brickwork has been added to the east gable to give headroom for a loading door to the loft. The ground floor contains a low featureless room with a brick floor (Photograph 10). The lower part of the east wall has a pronounced outward batter, suggesting that building 2/3 was once free-standing, before building 1 filled the gap between it and the house. A brick-built extension to the house intrudes into building 1 at its north-west side; beside this is a dog-leg stair to the loft (Photograph 11). The loft is a bare store room and there are some projecting through stones in the gable wall. The roof has recent felt sarking (Photograph 12).
- 5.6 Building 2/3 is a byre divided into two equal parts by a later brick wall. Its north wall is plain rubble masonry with a row of ceramic ventilators low in the face (Photograph 13). The south face is much altered (Photograph 14). The present central door appears to be an insertion, replacing an older stone-framed door to the east (Photograph 15). There are three windows, all blocked up with brickwork; below the western one, straight joints mark the site of another old door. Inside, the walls have smooth cement render and concrete stalls with troughs and wooden hay racks (Photographs 16 & 17). At the east end there are a few projecting stones like those seen in the loft of building 1, and some blocked ventilation slits. The two-beast bays have separate troughs lined with ceramic (Photograph 19); broad channels behind the stalls lead to a drain beside the door (Photograph 20).

### **The east range**

- 5.7 Buildings 8, 9 and 10 (Photograph 21) were brick-walled loose boxes and stand on the site of an older stone building. The rear wall of this survives because it is part of the site boundary wall. Building 8 has a brick plinth for a ceramic trough (Photograph 22). In the stone wall at the east is a blocked window with a timber lintel. The south end of the timber emerges in building 9, which had a similar brick and ceramic trough at its north-east corner (Photograph 23). Building 10 has another trough of the same kind, and another blocked window in the older wall (Photograph 24). The internal walls that separate these buildings are the plainest 20th-century nine-inch brickwork in common bond. Nothing survives of the roofs.
- 5.8 Buildings 11-13 are parts of the most substantial building on the site (Photograph 25). This was originally a small stone barn; the map shown in Figure 3 suggests that it once housed a threshing machine. It has lost its roof and the height of the walls has been reduced. The north end has traces of a blocked door and a breather slit for ventilation (Photograph 26). A brick wall now divides the building into two unequal parts (Photograph 27). The north part (11) is now inaccessible except by ladder, since the west door has been blocked up. The dividing wall abuts a small brick shed (12) for electrical plant. Within 11, there are blocked breather slits and a door in the west and north walls (Photographs 28 & 29), and more breathers in the east side (Photograph 30). The smaller south part, 13, extends into the yard in the porch mentioned in paragraph 4.7, above (Photograph 31). Inside, there is a blocked window in the east wall, a breather, a door to the electrical shed 12 and part of a low floor (Photograph 32). Much of the south wall is filled by a large late door that would have linked this building with the larger east-west block shown on the 1897



map (Figure 3). There is a smaller late door east of this, near the corner of the old barn, and beside that is a vertical slot for a drive belt (Photograph 33). The slot is lined with brick and has wear marks from the belt on its sides; the timber lintel has been cut away to provide clearance (Photographs 34 & 35).

- 59 The brick wall that divides the floor continues into the external extension. This shows that the building was split before 1920, when the porch first appears on the map. The division incorporates the side of an old large barn door, as can be seen from the presence of dressed stone quoins (Photograph 36). The presence of the shed 12 and the belt drive slot suggests that the old horse-powered threshing machine in the stone barn was replaced by a mechanically powered thresher in the vanished south building. It is likely that the south end of the old barn (13) housed the motor that drove a belt running through the slot in the south wall. The upward slope of the wear marks seen in Photograph 34 are consistent with a thresher on the first floor. This was a common arrangement, allowing grain to be fed by chutes to sacks on the ground floor, and the threshed stalks to fall into the straw barn. Only a small section of the original masonry remains at the south-west corner of the old barn, suggesting that substantial alterations were made in this modernisation; the south side of the old door has been removed (Photograph 37). The outer face of the south wall also shows significant patching and alteration in brickwork (Photograph 38).

### **The west range**

- 5.10 Building 4, at the north end of this range, has lost its east wall and roof and now appears only as timber purlins and a door lintel (Photograph 40). The north and east faces of building 5 are brick but the whole of the west face is sandstone rubble, forming the east end of the garden (Photograph 41). The character of the stonework is different at either side of the passage, 6, that separates the two surviving sheds (Photograph 42). Left of the central door, the wall of 5 is coursed rubble with modest quoins beside the door to 6 (Photograph 43). There is a blocked window here, with a later vent made of a section of ceramic pipe, now also blocked. At the other side of the door, the wall of the large shed 7 is made of smaller rougher stone and there are no quoins beside the door (Photograph 44).
- 5.11 Building 5 was in use as a store room when the survey was made; no trace of blocked windows in the north and west faces was seen (Photograph 45), though the concrete blocks in the east window are obvious (Photograph 46).
- 5.12 Building 6 is a simple passage now used as a garden shed (Photograph 47). There is a hatch high in its south wall and a door to building 7.
- 5.13 The east face of building 7 is made of stone, with some brick showing where the roof line has been raised (Photograph 48). A broad vertical strip of mortar separates the main part of the wall from a round pier at the south end (Photograph 49). This shows that the present shed is part of what was once an open-fronted building of the kind often used to shelter implements or small carts. The south end has blocked windows at two levels, showing that there was once a floor inside (Photograph 50); there is also evidence that the roof line has been lifted. The inside walls are plastered and only one of the old south windows can be seen (Photograph 51). At the north end, both of the openings to the passage survive (Photograph 52).

## 6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The buildings described here are the remains of the 19th-century farmstead. Most of them have been significantly altered in the 20th century. There is evidence that an early stone-built threshing barn at the south-east side of the yard was replaced before 1897 by a larger building, now gone, that ran east-west across the south end of the site. For a time, the old building housed a motor to drive a thresher in the new barn. The west range was at one time an open fronted shed. In the north range, a building with paired doors was made into a cow byre in the 20th century..

## 7. Sources and references

### Cartographic sources

Ordnance Survey: first to contemporary editions

Tithe plan of Westerton, 1839. Plan made by Thomas Davison, Durham, 4 chains to 1 inch. Durham University Library Archives & Special Collections reference DDR/EA/TTH/1/247

### Other sources

Arthur, A, 2014 *Kirk Merrington, Middlestone and Westerton: a history 1800-1960*. Kirk Merrington: D R & A Arthur.

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Dodd, J J, 1897 *The history of the urban district of Spennymoor with occasional references to Kirk Merrington, Middlestone, Westerton, Byers Green, Page Bank, Croxdale, and Ferryhill*. Reprinted Spennymoor: ARB Publications, 1992.

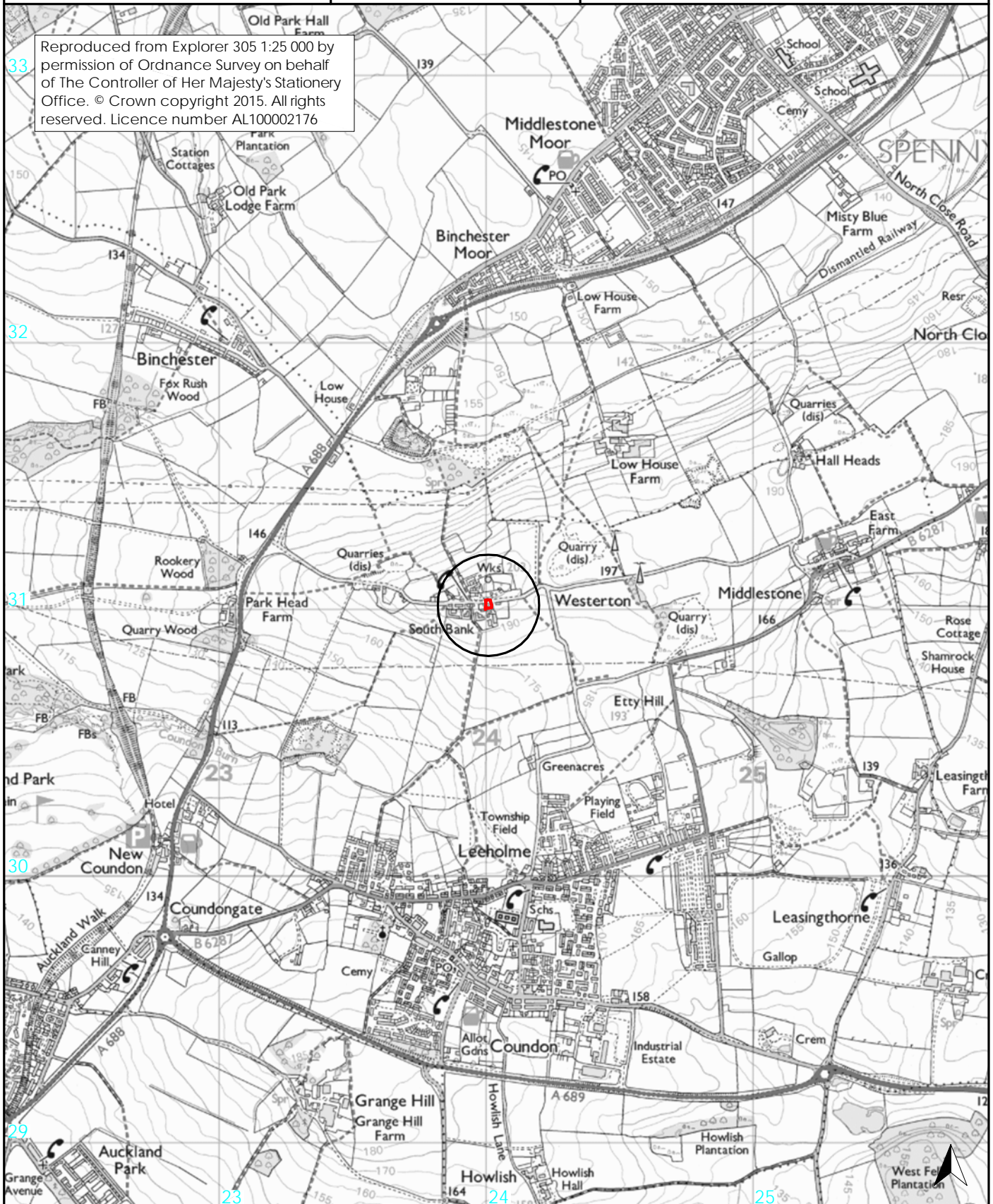
Kelly, 1890 *Kelly's Directory of Durham*. London: Kelly & Co.

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Pevsner, N, & Williamson, E, 1983 *The Buildings of England: County Durham*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

## Appendix: Catalogue of photographs

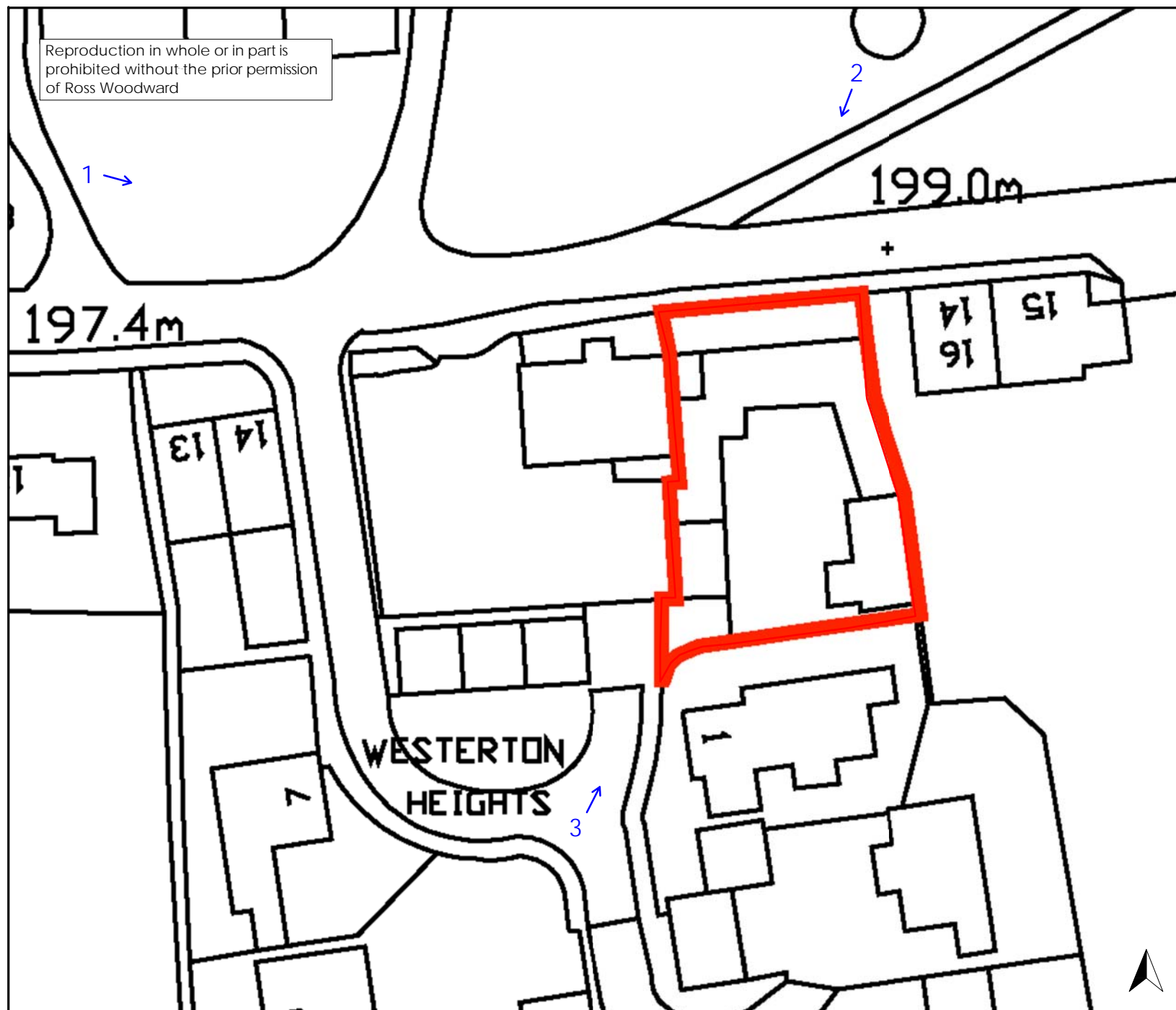
No.	Subject
1	Southside Farm and the observatory tower
2	The farm buildings seen from a point near the tower
3	The house and buildings seen from Westerton Heights
4	The yard seen from its south end
5	The north-west corner of the yard
6	The west range
7	The buildings of the east range
8	The north wall of building 1
9	The south face of building 1
10	Inside building 2
11	An inserted brick extension in building 1
12	The west end of building 2/3
13	The blank north wall of building 2/3
14	The south face of building 2/3
15	The eastern blocked door in building 2/3
16	The interior of building 2
17	The eastern half of the byre
18	The simple roof truss and the gable wall of building 3
19	Detail of a stall, troughs and hay rack in building 3
20	Floor drains and the brick wall in building 2/3
21	The west face of building 8/9/10
22	The stone wall at the back of building 8
23	Building 9
24	Another blocked window in the back wall of building 10
25	Building 11/12/13
26	The north end of building 11
27	The divided interior of the old barn
28	The inside of the west wall of the old barn
29	The north wall in building 11
30	The east wall of building 11
31	Building 13 seen from the yard
32	The back wall of building 13
33	The door and the belt slot in building 13
34	Detail of the slot in the south wall of 13
35	The timbers at the head of the belt slot
36	The brick wall that separates buildings 11 and 13
37	The south-west corner of building 13
38	The patched and altered south wall of building 13
39	Building 4/5/6/7
40	Building 4 and door lintel
41	The house and the west face of buildings 5/6/7
42	Different masonry in the west face of building 5/6/7
43	The west face of building 5
44	The west wall of building 7
45	The north-west corner of building 5
46	The large blocked window at the east end of building 5
47	The passage 6, seen from the garden at the west end
48	The east face of building 5/6/7
49	A cylindrical stone pier in the east face of building
50	The south end of building 7
51	The south end of building 7
52	The north wall of building 7



0 1km  
scale 1:20 000 for A4 plot



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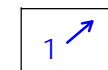
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Figure 2: The site

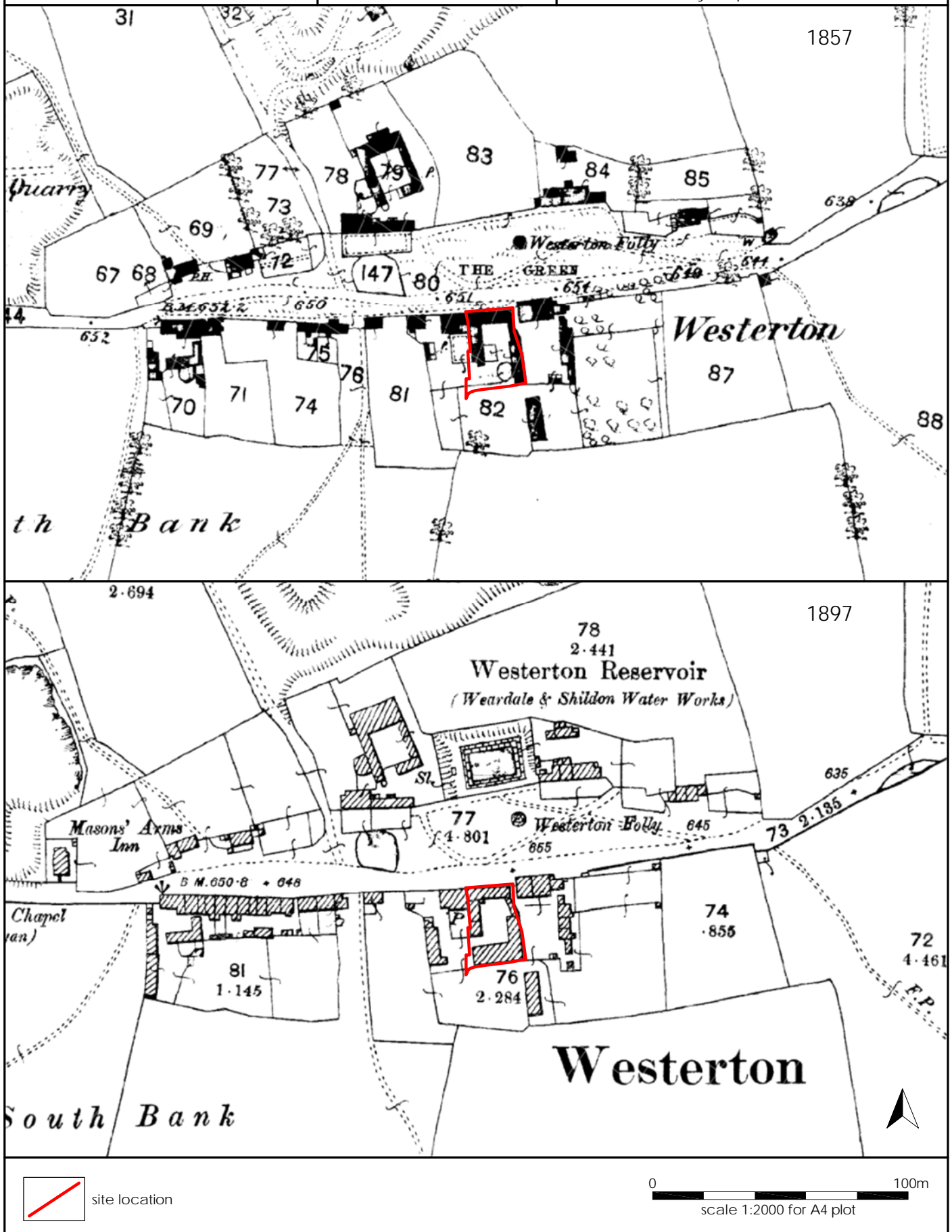
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scale 1:500 for A4 plot



site boundary



location of photographs



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Figure 4: Plan and location of  
photographs

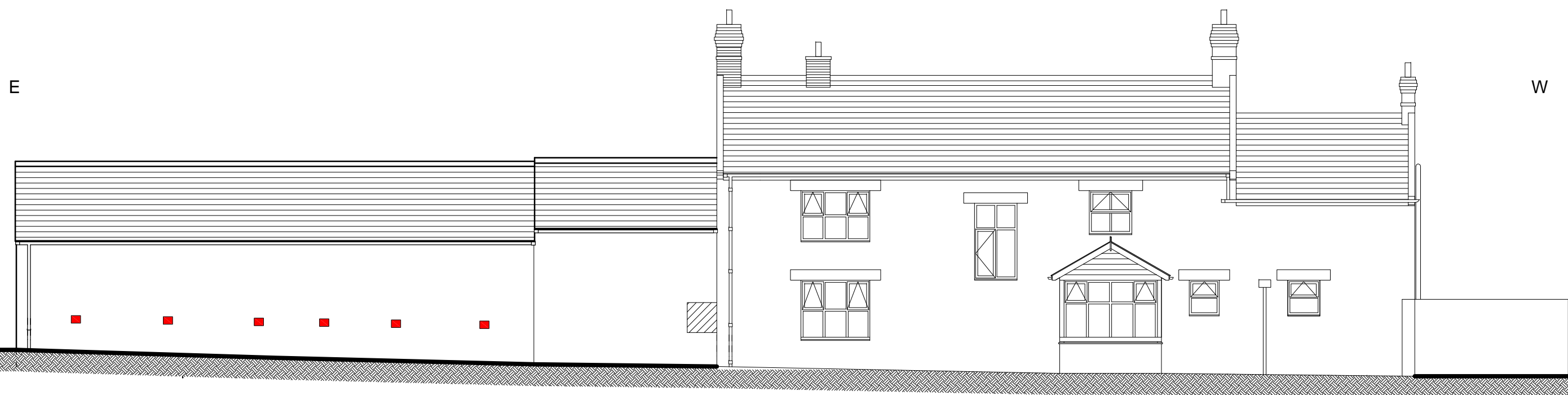
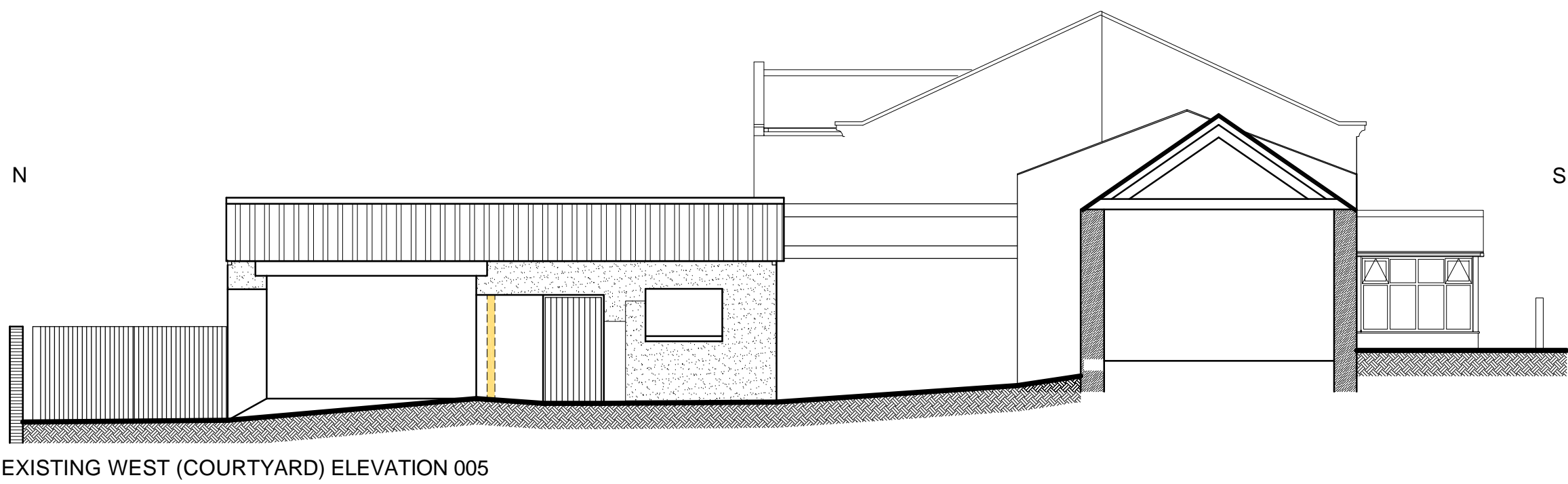
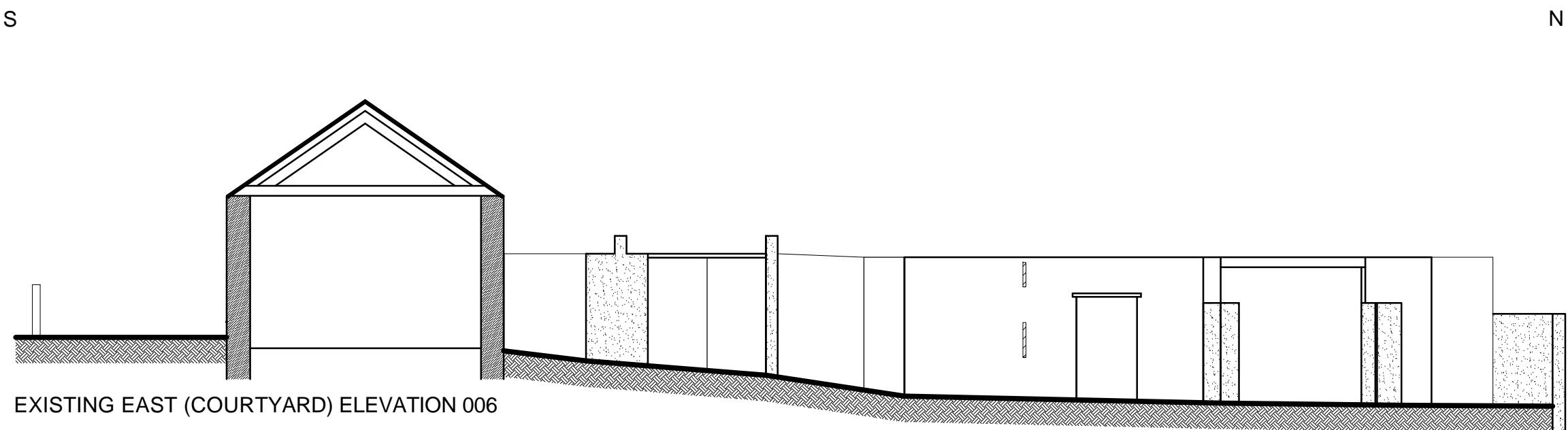
0 7.5m  
scale 1:150 for A3 plot

- site location
- location of photographs
- building number
- blocked opening
- brick walls





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- extent of excavation
- section
- blocked opening
- brick walls
- claypipe
- mortar
- ceramic ventilation blocks

0 5m  
scale 1:100 for A1 plot

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Figure 5: Elevations





Photograph 1: Southside Farm and the observatory tower, seen from the west end of the green. The farm is right of centre in this view



Photograph 2: The farm buildings seen from a point near the observatory tower. The blank walls at the centre are the north sides of buildings 1-3





Photograph 3: The house and buildings seen from Westerton Heights. These modern buildings are all within the former farm yard



Photograph 4: The yard seen from its south end





Photograph 5: The north-west corner of the yard, with the house beyond



Photograph 6: The west range; the gate from Westerton Heights is at the left





Photograph 7: The buildings of the east range. Note the blocked old window in the wall of the house beyond the yard



Photograph 8: The north wall of building 1. The masonry is slightly different from that in building 2/3 to the left





Photograph 9: The south face of building 1. Later brickwork, top right, accommodates the lower-pitched roof above an inserted loading door. The large horizontal timbers are the purlins of the vanished building 4



Photograph 10: Inside building 2; a view looking north-east. Note the batter in the lower part of the right-hand wall, which is the west end of building 2/3





Photograph 11: An inserted brick extension to the house cut into the west side of building 1



Photograph 12: The west end of building 2/3 seen in the loft of building 1





Photograph 13: The blank north wall of building 2/3



Photograph 14: The south face of building 2/3. Straight joints for a western door can be seen under the brick blocking of the left-hand window; its position mirrors that of a complete blocked door under the small gable at the right





Photograph 15: The eastern blocked door in building 2/3



Photograph 16: The interior of building 2. The 20th-century render rises to about 1.3m above the floor and above this the masonry is whitewashed. Part of the trough and hay rack can be seen near the scale





Photograph 17: The eastern half of the byre, building 3. Note the concrete stall division at the centre



Photograph 18: The simple roof truss and the gable wall of building 3



Photograph 19 (above): Detail of a stall, troughs and hay rack at the west end of building 3



Photograph 20 (left): Floor drains and the brick dividing wall in building 2/3





Photograph 21: The west face of building 8/9/10. Note the blocked two-light window in the building beyond, outside the study area



Photograph 22: The stone wall at the back of building 8 is part of an older shed. A blocked window can be seen above the brown ceramic trough





Photograph 23: Building 9, showing the middle of the old shed's back wall. A trough like that shown above stood in the left-hand corner. Above this, note the timber lintel seen in Photograph 22 emerging from behind the brick wall



Photograph 24: Another blocked window in the back wall of building 10





Photograph 25: Building 11/12/13, showing the brick porch added before 1920



Photograph 26: The north end of building 11 seen from building 10. A blocked opening can be seen beside the scale





Photograph 27: The divided interior of the old barn, 11/12/13. Building 12 is the small brick shed at the left-hand side



Photograph 28: The inside of the west wall of the old barn, building 11. Note the blocked breather below the open example, and the large quoins beside the door at the extreme left





Photograph 29: The north wall in building 11, showing blocked openings



Photograph 30: The east wall of building 11, with the electrical plant room 12.





Photograph 31: Building 13 seen from the yard



Photograph 32: The back wall of building 13, showing the door to the shed 12, a blocked window and a breather slit, and the remains of the low floor





Photograph 33 (above): The door and the belt slot at the south-east corner of building 13



Photograph 34 (left): Detail of the slot in the south wall of 13. Wear marks can be seen as oblique lines in the mortar, just right of the large dark brick. The scale is 10cm long





Photograph 35 (left): The timbers at the head of the belt slot have been cut away to increase clearance. A view looking north

Photograph 36 (below): The brick wall that separates buildings 11 and 13 inside the old barn. The dressed stone of the old door can be seen below the heavy timber lintel







Photograph 37 (above): The south-west corner of building 13, showing the ragged masonry that faces the dressed stone shown in the previous picture



Photograph 38 (left): The patched and altered south wall of building 13, with the east side of the large door into a vanished larger barn





Photograph 39: Building 4/5/6/7, seen from the south end of the yard



Photograph 40: Building 4, at the right side of this view, is now represented only by its roof purlins and door lintel. Building 5 is the brick structure at the centre and 6 is the passage entered by the white door





Photograph 41: The house and the west face of buildings 5/6/7, seen from the south-west corner of the garden



Photograph 42: Different masonry can be seen in the west face of building 5/6/7





Photograph 43: Coursed rubble, a blocked window and a pipe ventilator in the west face of building 5. Note the difference between the stonework on either side of the door to building 6



Photograph 44: Smaller, more roughly coursed rubblestone forms the west wall of building 7

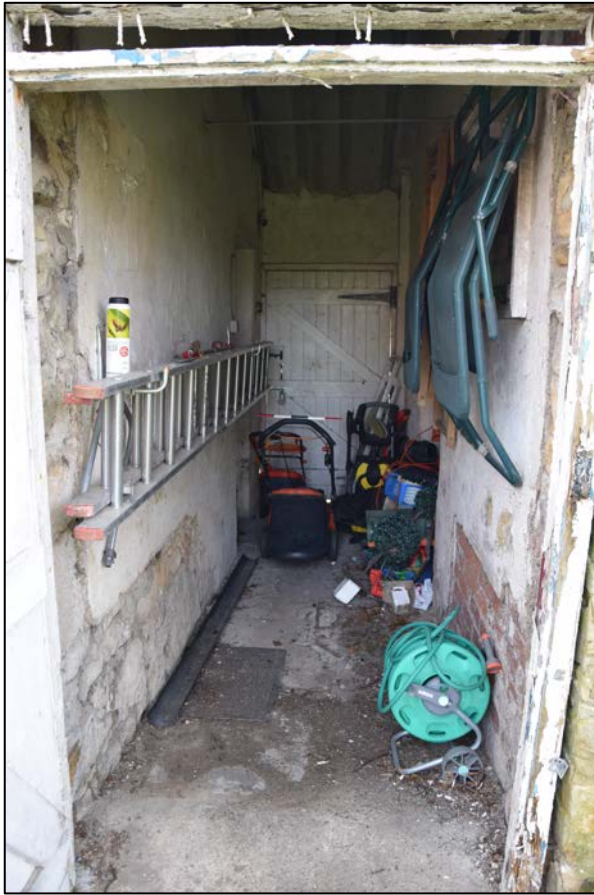




Photograph 45: The north-west corner of building 5; there is no sign of either of the blocked windows



Photograph 46: The large blocked window at the east end of building 5



Photograph 47 (left): The passage 6, seen from the garden at the west end

Photograph 48 (below): The brick east face of building 5 contrast with older stonework in buildings 6 and 7, around the door







Photograph 49 (left): A cylindrical stone pier incorporated into the stone wall in the east face of building 7

Photograph 50 (below): The south end of building 7 has blocked windows at two levels, left of centre. The roof line appears to have been raised at the east side, where brickwork has been added







Photograph 51: The south end of building 7, showing the lower of the two blocked windows seen in the previous picture



Photograph 52: The north wall of 7 has a hatch and a door into the passage, building 6