

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
AT CHURCHLEA BARN,  
BROADWOODWIDGER, DEVON**

**Prepared for Mrs Towers**

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**Exeter Archaeology**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

This report presents the results of historic building recording and an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Exeter Archaeology between June 2010 and June 2011 at Churchlea Barn, Church Town Farm, Broadwoodwidge, Devon (SX 4105 8915; Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Towers, and was required under condition 7 of the grant of planning permission (Torridge District Council, 1/0076/2010/FUL) for the conversion of the barn to a dwelling and the construction of a new garage.

## 2. AIMS

There were two aims for the project. Firstly, to investigate and record any historic building fabric or architectural detail that is to be obscured, removed or otherwise affected by the development, and secondly, to monitor groundworks associated with the development to allow any exposed archaeological deposits to be investigated and recorded.

## 3. METHOD

The work was undertaken in accordance with a brief that had been prepared for an earlier planning application for the site (Torridge District Council, 1/1153/2007/FUL).<sup>1</sup> Following discussions with the Devon County Council Archaeological Officer it was agreed that the contents of this brief remained valid for the present application, and this brief therefore formed the basis for the archaeological investigations and the *Written Scheme of Investigation*.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the start of the fieldwork a desk-based appraisal was carried out, which included consultation of historic mapping held at the Westcountry Studies Library and the Devon Record Office, and consultation of records and aerial photographs held at the Devon County Historic Environment Record.

The historic building recording was undertaken with reference to specifications applicable to level 2 in *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practices* (EH 2006). The building recording consisted of a written account of the barn including its location, plan, form, internal functions, surviving historic fixtures and fittings, and development sequence; annotation of existing architect's floor plans to include form and function of any structural features and fittings of architectural significance, and the development of the building; and the production of photographs of the exterior and interior of the building, showing the overall appearance and features of historic or architectural significance.

A watching brief was maintained during the groundworks. These were undertaken under the supervision of the site archaeologist using a machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket to expose the upper surface of archaeological deposits or *in situ* weathered subsoil, whichever was highest in the stratigraphic sequence. Observations were recorded on watching brief record sheets and plans, and these were accompanied by a photographic record composed of black and white prints and digital photographs.

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<sup>1</sup> Dick 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Passmore 2010.

#### 4. HISTORY OF THE SITE (Figs 2-4)

The site lies within the core of the historic hamlet of Broadwoodwidge, approximately 50 metres west of the Grade I Listed parish church and 15 metres from the Grade II Listed Town Farm. Broadwoodwidge is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. The manor was held by Frithelstock Priory from 1332 until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the early 16th century, when it was granted to Viscount Lisle.<sup>3</sup> The parish church of St Nicholas appears to be 12th/13th century in date with later additions in the 14th and 16th centuries.<sup>4</sup>

The Historic Environment Record refers to evidence of ridge and furrow visible as a crop mark in a field to the west of the vicarage.<sup>5</sup> To the north of the site, on the northwest corner of the green, a smithy was marked on the 1884, 1906 and 1955 Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:2500 maps, but this was not present on the 1963 map.<sup>6</sup>

The barn that is shown on the OS 1:2500 map published in 1884,<sup>7</sup> aligned roughly east-west, with a circular addition on its northern side representing an open-sided horse-engine-house (Fig. 3). The 1841 tithe map does not show the barn, but a large square building is depicted to the east of its position (Fig. 2).<sup>8</sup> By 1884 this structure appears to have been replaced by a new building of different size and alignment. The tithe apportionment of 1841 shows that most of the land immediately surrounding the area of the site was used as gardens or residential dwellings<sup>9</sup>. By 1906 the barn had been extended to both the northeast and the southwest, and the other building that had been represented in this field on earlier maps had now disappeared (Fig. 4).<sup>10</sup> By 1974 two new buildings had been erected to the north of the barn, along with a silo.<sup>11</sup>

#### 5. THE BARN (Fig. 5; Photos 1-4)

##### *General description*

The barn is a two-storey, rectangular building constructed of local stone with a slate roof (Photo. 1). The structure is a bank barn, built into the hillside, with the ground floor entered from a terrace on its south side and the first floor entered from the (rear) north side. The south elevation incorporates a row of pigeon nesting holes. On both levels the building comprises large open western rooms and smaller eastern rooms, reflecting the main two-phase development of the building. The north and south walls of the eastern extension continue to the east forming two sides of a small yard or pen. A late 20th-century open-sided shed had been erected against the north side of the barn (see Fig. 1). This is not discussed further.

##### *The mid-19th-century barn*

A bank barn is a variation of the traditional threshing barn, whereby the first floor is used for corn storage and threshing, and the ground floor for housing animals.<sup>12</sup> This arrangement can be seen in the layout and fenestration of Churchlea Barn.

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<sup>3</sup> HER Cin No. 15937.

<sup>4</sup> HER CIN No. 3906.

<sup>5</sup> HER CIN No. 3905.

<sup>6</sup> OS 1884; OS1906; OS 1955; HER CIN No. 39387.

<sup>7</sup> OS 1884.

<sup>8</sup> Tithe map 1841.

<sup>9</sup> Tithe Apportionment 1841.

<sup>10</sup> OS 1906.

<sup>11</sup> OS 1974.

<sup>12</sup> Child, 1990, 64, 66.

The ground floor is entered by four wide doorways in the south elevation, with wider doors incorporating slats to allow light and ventilation to the interior. The only other openings at this level are narrow slit vents in the east and west elevations. The original layout is not known, having been removed when the present later 20th-century cattle stalls were inserted. The doorways now lead into concrete and rammed chalk walkways, with the western doorway leading into a feeding passage (Photo. 2). The concrete cattle stalls are raised up from this floor and there are feeding troughs for 16 cows. Most steel stall dividers have been removed, although the water troughs and associated pipes survive.

The first floor is supported a series of north-south aligned joists that are set into the north and south elevations. They are also supported on a series of posts close to the central axis of the building. There are further wood and metal posts along the sides of the building that support horizontal beams. Brackets for removed ground-floor pipework are attached to this ceiling structure.

On the first floor is a pair of loading doorways; the doors themselves have been replaced. Over the north doorway is a scar of a removed pitched porch (Photo. 3). This doorway has a slate threshold. There is a further doorway in this elevation, again with a slate threshold, along with joist holes for a removed porch, and a raised loading (or more probably unloading) door in the east elevation. There is a single window opening in the south elevation and a small high-level vent in the west elevation. There are four other openings in the north elevation – a hole for the axle from the engine house, an internal recess, a narrow hole, and a later 20th-century opening for a pipe from the external silo. The latter would have fed into a hopper that is attached to the roof. The floor has a hatch to a feeding passage below. The western bay of the room has been divided with a timber post and plank partition (Photo. 4). This supports a mezzanine floor, which is accessed via a vertical ladder attached to the partition. The partition is a primary feature.

The roof structure is a typical 19th-century tie-beam roof, with king-post trusses which also incorporate diagonal struts. There are two rows of side purlins and a diagonal ridge purlin.

### ***The late 19th-century extensions***

The eastern extension has a single room on each floor (Photo. 1). The ground floor room is entered from the adjacent yard via two doorways; the presence of two openings implies the room was subdivided, but no evidence for a partition, or stall divider, survives. The room has a glazed window in the south elevation and a splayed slit window in the north elevation. The only features in this area are a wooden feeding trough attached to the walls in the northwest corner, and a brick-lined trough in the southwest corner.

The first floor sits on north-south aligned joists, again supported by posts. The first-floor room is entered via a door in the northwest corner, and is lit by a window in the south elevation; the window has been replaced. There is also a high-level splayed slit vent in the gable. This room has benches along the east elevation, and modern electrical services including lights.

The extension to the west of the barn has been demolished, but its position is defined by a flat terrace with a drystone wall on its north side. There is also, on the west elevation of the barn, a high-level scar representing the top of the roof line of the extension. Within the site of the extension, set into concrete, are the remains of a small motor with an attachment for a belt

drive. Brackets and pulley wheels associated with belt drives were also recorded as loose artefacts around the barn.

## 6. THE WATCHING BRIEF (Fig. 6; Photos 5-6)

Three areas were investigated during the watching brief. Firstly, the area to the northeast of the barn that had been cleared of vegetation, secondly, ground reduction for the extension to the north of the barn, and thirdly, the ground floor of the barn following the removal of the concrete stalls and floors.

The clearance to the northeast of the barn had exposed a terrace which formerly held a silo. This has a concrete surface and has been partially infilled, mainly along its eastern end. The north side of the terrace is formed by a rotten wooden post, and a row of three granite posts - staddle stones from a small granary (Photo. 5). The posts measure 0.20-0.25m long, have tapered tops and display feather and tare quarry drill marks. Two of the stone posts have slate rings on the top to prevent rats climbing up the posts. These were 0.55 and 0.65m in diameter, and 30mm thick. The posts are on a slightly different alignment to the barn and must therefore represent the building shown on the 1884 OS map. The east side of this area is represented by a stone wall which appears to predate the later 19th-century yard to the south.

On the north side of the barn an area of 11m by 7m was reduced by between 0.60-0.80m; the west of this area dropped away naturally. Removal of up to 0.20m of modern rubble and soil exposed natural clay and rock over the northern third of the excavation. A small pit (2) was partially exposed, and measured 1.10m long by 0.45m deep. It contained a yellowish brown firm clay fill with stone and rare charcoal inclusions (3). To the south a large terrace, 0.80m deep, had been cut into the natural. In the base of this terrace a construction trench for the rear wall of the barn, backfilled with stone rubble, was exposed.

In the base of the terrace the outline of the engine house was revealed. Two substantial postholes were exposed (11 and 4), the latter containing the remains of a wooden post. On the east side of the excavation a granite post, measuring 0.40 by 0.30m wide and 0.70m high, was also revealed. The central post within the horse-engine had been removed, leaving a disturbed hollow infilled with shale and a charcoal-rich brown soil (10). Adjacent to this disturbance was a layer of greyish brown firm silty clay (9). Outside this was a circular path on which the horse/s would have walked (Photo. 6). This comprised a 0.65m wide area of cobbles (7), defined by 0.2m wide raised edgings of yellow clay and stone cobbles (6 and 8). Outside the west door of the barn lay the remains of a stone surface bonded in cream mortar (5); elsewhere this has been truncated during demolition of the engine shed.

Following demolition of the engine house, the terrace had been filled with a deposit of rubble and brown silty clay soil (5). Finds from this material included parts of a gear, horse harness and a sandstone sharpening stone. To the north of the position of the engine house a terrace for the 20th-century shed had been cut into the natural to a depth of 0.30m.

Traces of an original cobbled floor were exposed in the ground floor of the barn although most of the cobbles were missing. It seems likely that cobbles were originally present throughout this area, but had been removed from some areas when the lower (eastern three) concrete walkways were inserted. The cobbles had been laid onto a 0.2-0.3m thick make-up of buff clay that directly overlaid natural clay.

## 7. DISCUSSION

Church Town Farm is one of a number of ancient farms that make up the core of Broadwoodwidge. The land encompassing Churchlea Barn formed part of this farm, although the building and other recorded structures were 19th-century additions.

Churchlea Barn is a typical bank barn, a type of 19th-century agricultural building found in South Devon, and less commonly, West Devon.<sup>13</sup> In these barns animals were housed on the ground floor and corn was threshed and stored on the upper floor. This activity continued on the site until the barn went out of use, although in the 20th century new technology and ideas were adopted, with the storage of corn (or grain/animal feed) making use of modern equipment, and the cattle stalls being replaced with concrete and steel fittings – a common improvement to Devon farms as recommended by the government (Ministry of Works 1945). The first-floor partition is contemporary with the construction of the barn and the western bay was probably not utilised for corn storage; use as a root house for the storage of cattle feed provides a probable explanation. The engine house appears to have been contemporary with the barn, which is unusual since they are usually attached to earlier threshing barns. However, this can be explained by the late construction date of the barn. The discovery of the cobbled floor for the horse to walk on is also unusual, although such surfaces were probably commonplace in many engine houses, but have been removed or replaced where these buildings have been retained and/or converted.

The extension to the east provided further animal accommodation, probably, given the continued use of the cowhouse, for calves or bulls.

The presence of staddle stones indicates the building to the northeast of the barn was a granary. These buildings are rare on Devon farms, and tend to be of 19th-century date, and often sited above stables. The building was probably demolished when the barn was extended to the east, which would have required the removal of its south wall (see Figs 3 and 4).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Towers, and managed for Exeter Archaeology by P. Stead. The fieldwork was undertaken by A.J. Passmore, the documentary research by P.T. Manning, and the report prepared by A.J. Passmore and F. Pink, with illustrations by M. Leverett.

## SOURCES CONSULTED

### **Devon Record Office**

Tithe map and apportionment 1841

### **Devon County Historic Environment Record**

Entries for Broadwoodwidge

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<sup>13</sup> Child, 1990, 64, 66 where a now-demolished example from Shop Farm, Broadwoodwidge is illustrated.

### **Westcountry Studies Library**

#### Ordnance Survey maps

- 1:2500 Sheet 87.1, surveyed 1883, published 1884
- 1:2500 Sheet 87.1, revised 1905, published 1906
- 1:2500 Plan SX 4189, revision of 1905, published 1955
- 1:2500 Plan SX 4089-4189, published 1974

#### ***Published Sources***

- Child, P. 1990 "Farm Buildings", in Beacham, P. (ed.) *Devon Building. An Introduction to Local Traditions*.
- Dick, A.M. 2009 *Brief for Historic Building Recording and Archaeological Monitoring of Groundworks, Church Town Farm, Broadwoodwidge* (DCC HES ref ARCH.DC.TO.12472).
- Ministry of Works 1945 *Post-War Building Studies No. 17 Farm Buildings*.
- Passmore, A.J. 2010 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording and Archaeological Watching brief at Churchlea Farm, Church Town Farm, Broadwoodwidge, Devon* (EA project number 7106).



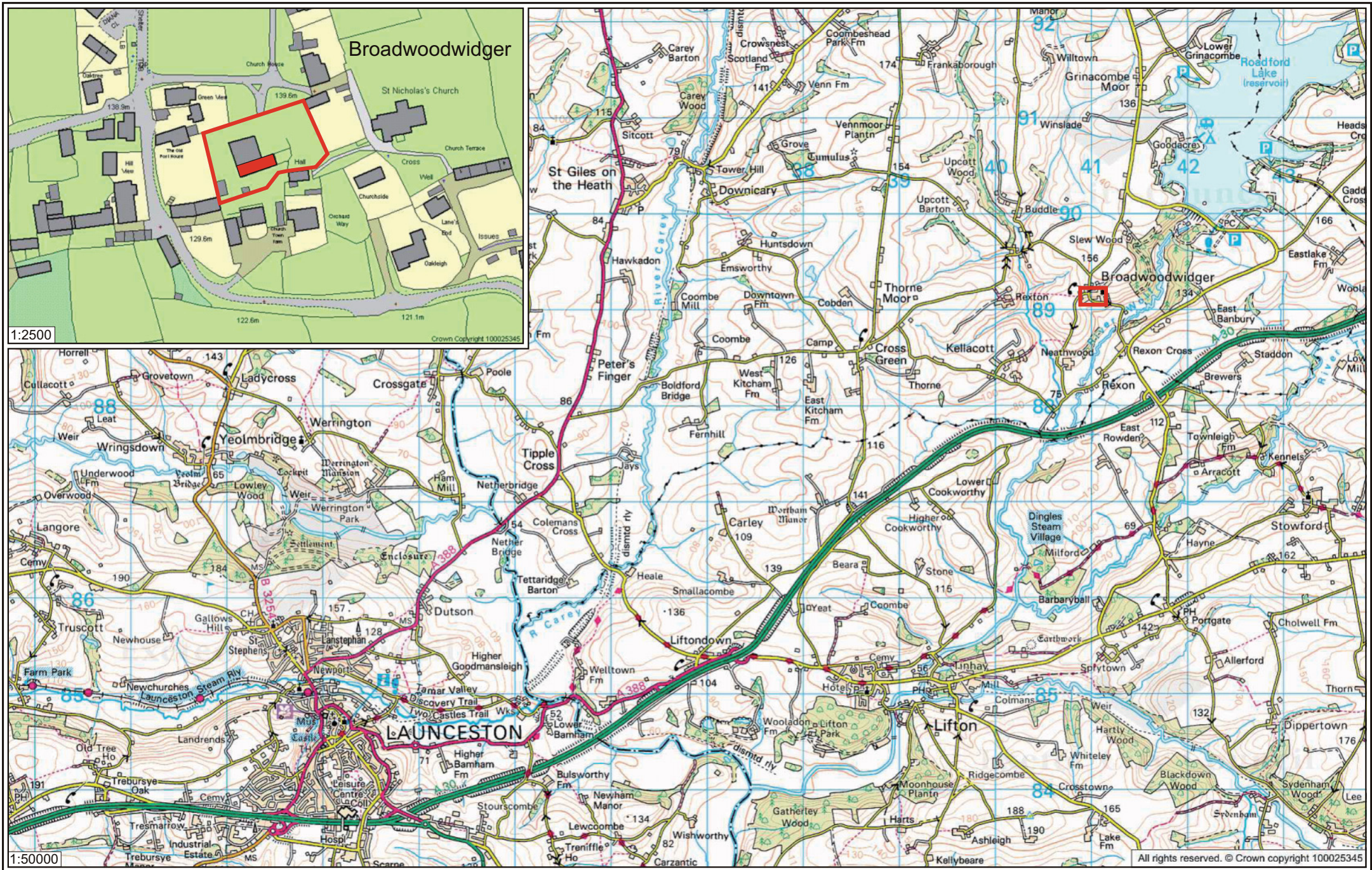


Fig. 1 Location of site.

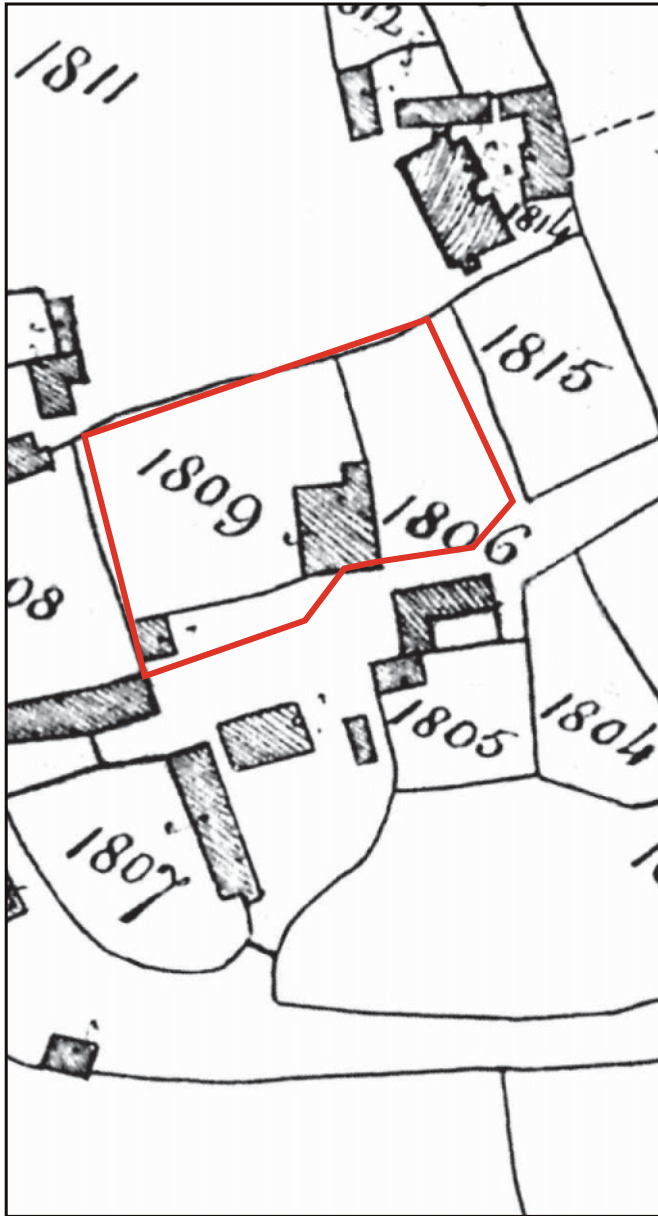


Fig. 2 The site in 1841 (Broadwoodwidge title map).

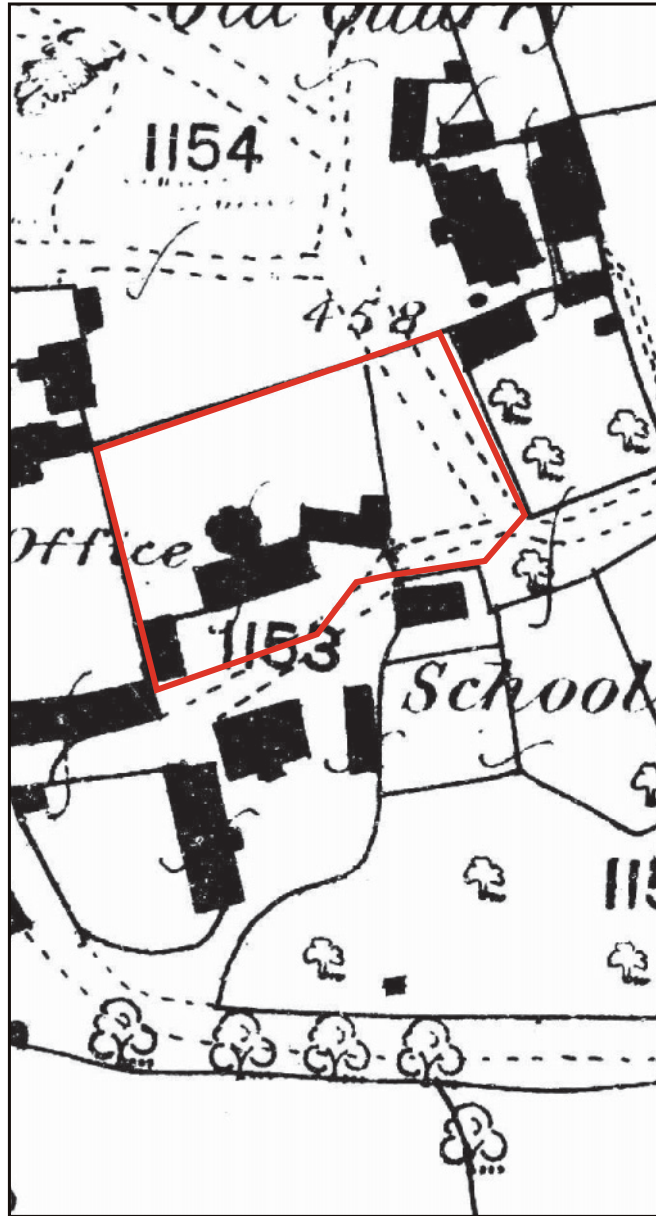


Fig. 3 The site in 1884 (OS 1:2500 map sheet 87.1, surveyed 1883).

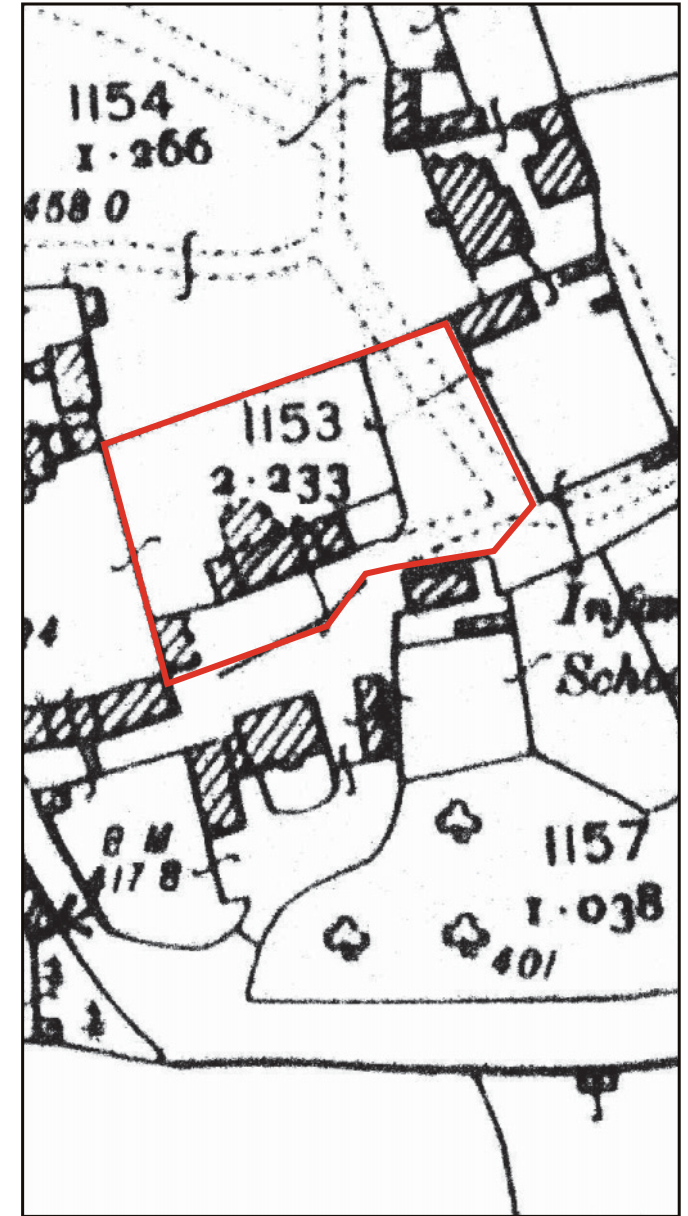
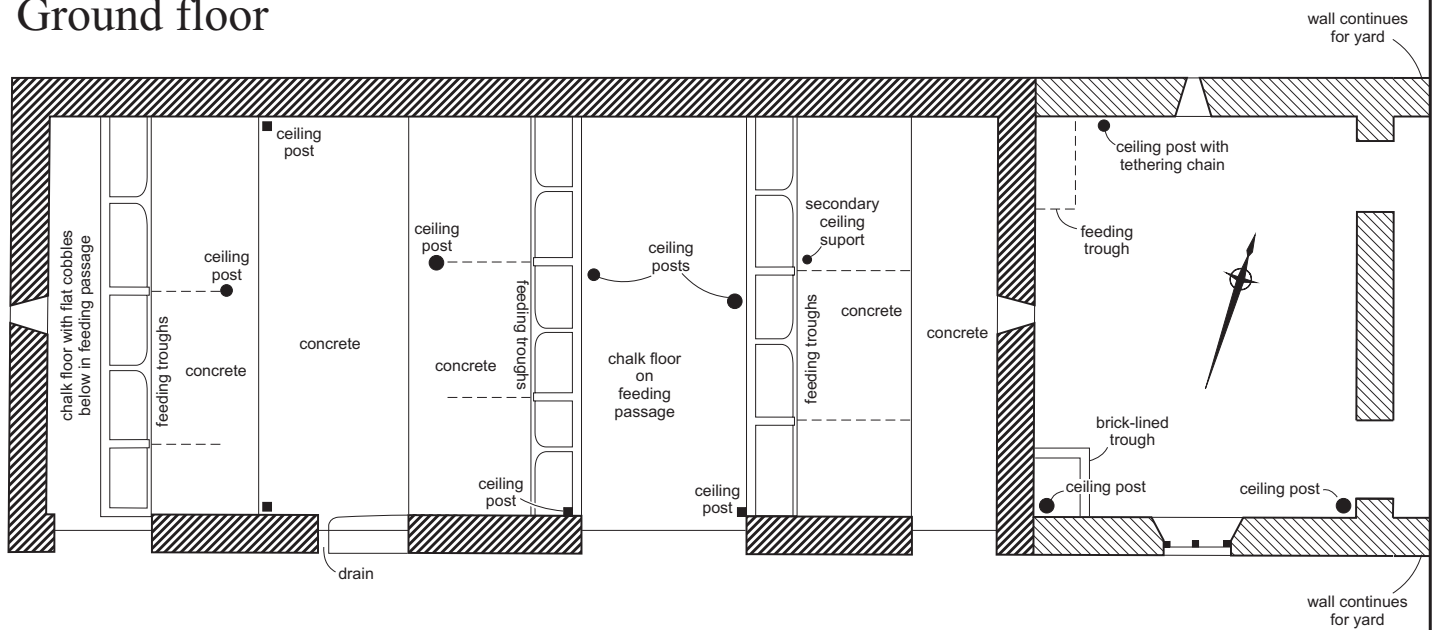


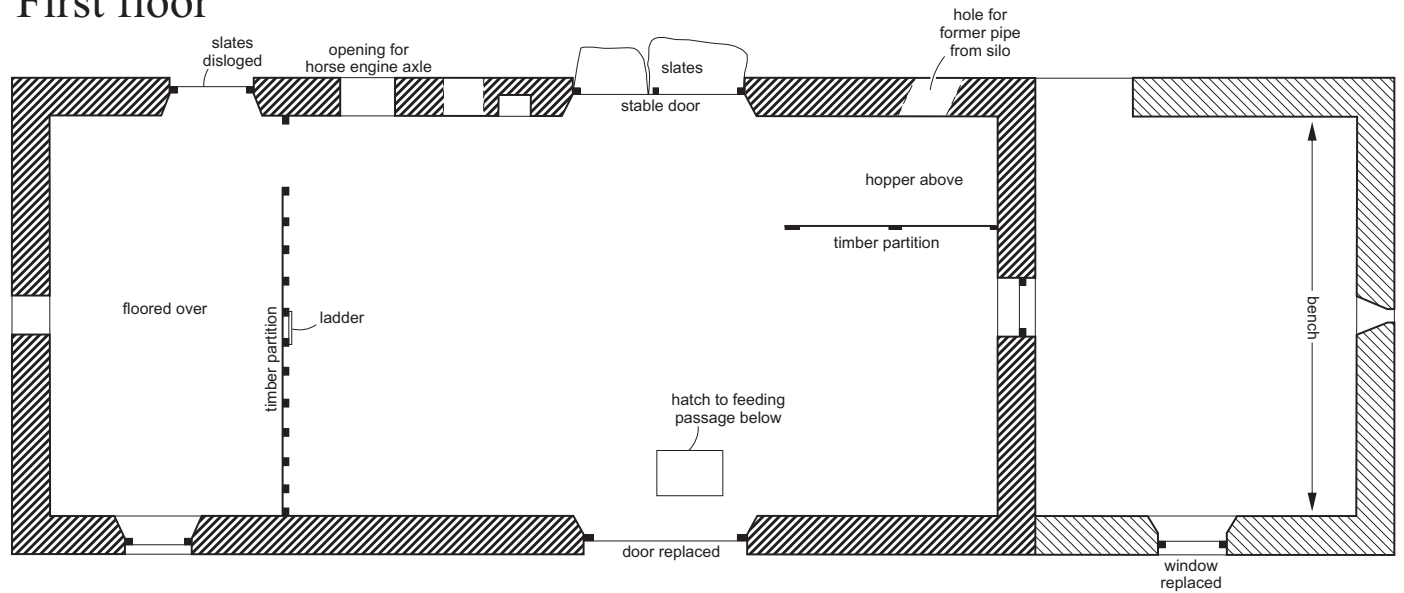
Fig. 4 The site in 1906 (OS 1:2500 map sheet 87.1, revised 1905).

# Barn

## Ground floor



## First floor



0 10 metres

Fig. 5 Floor plans of the barn.

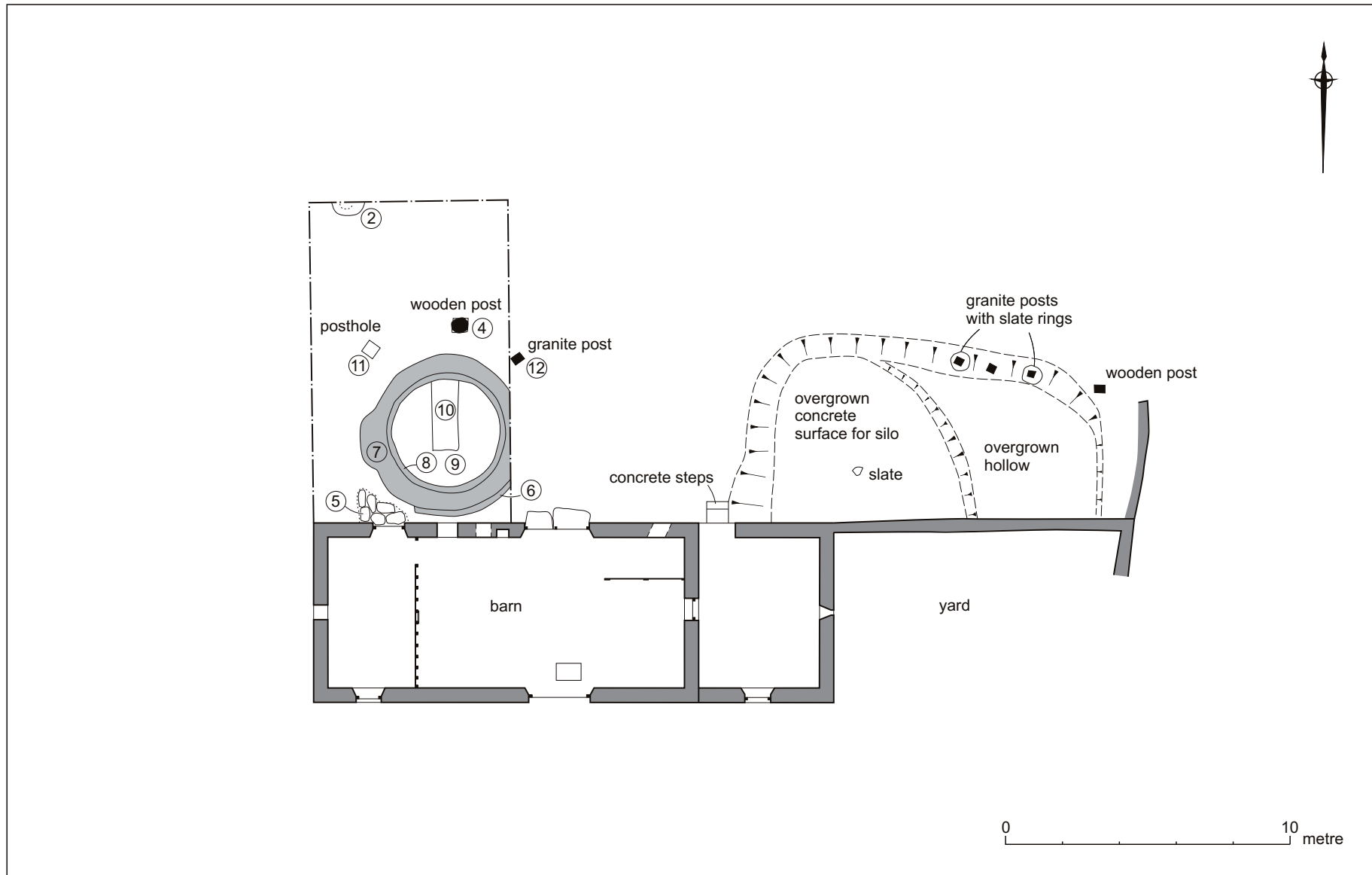


Fig. 6 Plan of the rear of the barn showing observations.



Photo. 1 South and east elevations of the barn showing yard wall in foreground, looking northwest. 2m scale.



Photo. 2 Ground floor showing the west stalls, looking east. 1m scale.

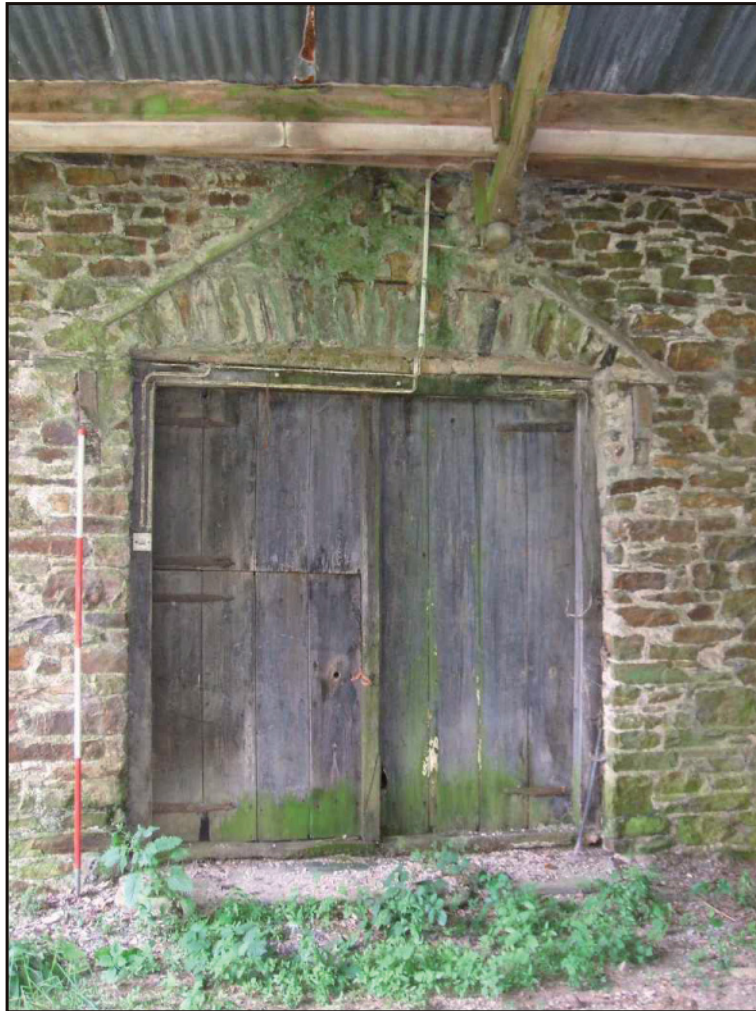


Photo. 3 Close up view of double door opening in the north elevation at first-floor level, showing scars of porch, looking south. 2m scale.



Photo. 4 First floor showing partition, looking west. 1m scale.



Photo. 5 Granite staddle stones to the northeast of the barn, looking east. 1m scale.



Photo. 6 Excavated remains of the horse engine, showing the hole for the axle in the adjacent wall of the barn, looking south. 1m scale.