

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING
OF A BARN AT STEVENSTONE,
ST GILES IN THE WOOD, DEVON**

Prepared for Gale and Snowden Architects Ltd

by

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. The site	1
3. Aim	1
4. Method	1
5. The barn	1
5.1 The ground floor	1
5.2 The loft	2
5.3 The roof	2
6. Discussion	3
Acknowledgements	4
Sources consulted	4

Illustrations

Fig. 1 Location of site.

Fig. 2 The site showing its position within the deer park.

Fig. 3 Plan of the barn.

Fig. 4 Sections 1 and 2 showing ground floor features.

Fig. 5 Roof truss on the line of section 2.

Pl. 1 The barn, looking north-west.

Pl. 2 Bay 1 showing the construction of the piers, looking north-west.

Pl. 3 The interior of the barn, looking north-east.

Pl. 4 The roof, looking south-west.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been commissioned by Gale and Snowden Architects Ltd and presents the results of historic building recording undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) on 29 August 2008 of a barn at Stevenstone, St Giles in the Wood, Devon. The work was required under condition 3 attached to the grant of planning permission (Nos 1/0270/2008/FUL and 1/0289/2008/LBC, Torridge District Council) for the conversion of the barn into holiday accommodation.

2. THE SITE (Figs 1 and 2)

The barn (SS 5252 1863) is a Grade II listed building (no. 91900) located at the southern end of the former deer park associated with Stevenstone House, and situated halfway down the east slope of a steep-sided valley. The building is interpreted in the listing description as a deer shelter, based on its position within the parkland and comparison with similar buildings elsewhere in England. The building is the only such deer barn recorded on the Devon County Historic Environment Record, and this class of building is rare nationally. The field in which the barn is located is currently under pasture.

The listing building description suggests a construction date of *c.* 1700 for the barn. The estate and deer park are thought to have earlier origins. The date of the house is not known, but it was apparently rebuilt in *c.* 1720 (Listed building description no. 33565).

3. AIM

The aim of the work, as set out in a brief provided by the Devon County Historic Environment Service (Dick 2008), was to produce a record of any historic building fabric or architectural detail that was to be affected by the development.

4. METHOD

Recording of the barn was undertaken in accordance with specifications applicable to Level 1 in *English Heritage 2006 Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practices*, as set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by EA (Gent 2008). The building recording consisted of:

- a brief written description of the barn;
- the production of a photographic record of the building, placing it in its wider setting, produced on black and white film and in digital media; and
- annotation of existing architect's drawings showing features of architectural significance, and produced of a drawn record of one of the roof trusses.

In addition to this report an OASIS entry (number 50244) has been prepared.

5. THE BARN (Figs 3-5; Plates 1-4)

5.1 The ground floor

The barn is a rectangular, single-storey building, measuring 14.7m long by 5.5m wide, and is completely open fronted, but with an enclosed loft within the roof space. The roof trusses are supported on six pairs of piers along the long axis of the building, with a further pair of

central piers on the short axis. The piers are constructed of a coursed local stone on slightly projecting footings, with the upper sections utilising orange-red bricks (that have weathered to a dark red colour) containing coarse red sandstone inclusions (Plates 1-2). Both the stone masonry and the bricks are bonded in a hard white lime mortar with gravel, quartz and coal inclusions, possibly indicating that both builds are contemporary rather than the brick being a rebuild. The piers support wooden ties that divide the building into five bays.

There is little evidence for original or early ground floor partitions. Between bays 1 and 2 are the remains of a brick wall, at the same level as the footings of the piers. This brick wall has been truncated by later features and may be original or an early alteration. On all the internal tie beams there are sockets with nail holes for tenons of removed posts. These are located along the central axis of the building with further sockets also located to the west of this central row. None of the posts survived, having been superseded by later partitions.

In bays 1 and 2 are remains of wooden partitions of vertical and horizontal planks hung from a wooden frame. Some of the timbers have been reused from an earlier partition or building. These partitions may be of 19th-century date and were retained into the 20th century when several of the bays were converted into cattle stalls. In bay 2 are the remains of a wooden manger, also retained when the barn was later upgraded.

In the 20th century the barn underwent extensive alterations to create cattle stalls. In the mid 20th century bays 2 and 3 were converted into stalls provided with a new concrete floor and a concrete feeding trough. In the later 20th century bays 3-5 were converted with a new raised concrete floor supporting wooden plank partitions that sit on a concrete block footing. The stalls were provided with concrete block feeding troughs and both wood and steel tethering posts (Plate 3). These stalls ‘face’ east and are served by a corridor allowing access to the feeding troughs along the west side of the barn.

5.2 The loft

Within the roof space above the tie beams is a store or loft. It is unclear whether such a use was intended from the outset, however, a single peg hole is visible in one of the tie beams, which may be evidence for an original floor. There are two phases of floor covering. The earliest comprises nailed sawn and axe-cut poles, some of which display carpenter’s marks. These have partially been replaced, particularly at the south end of the loft, with sawn planks.

5.3 The roof (Plate 4)

Each pair of piers supports a roof truss. The trusses have been reused. Whether they derive from the barn or an earlier structure is unclear (see also *discussion* below). The trusses are formed by pairs of oak principal rafters lap-jointed and pegged at the apex. The feet of each principal rafter are tenoned into the top surface of the tie beams, but are not secured with pegs or nails.

When the roof was installed in the barn the original collars were replaced with new collars set lower down the rafters. The original collar was lap-jointed and secured to the trusses with pegs – three on each side. The shape of the notch in the rafters indicates the collar was cambered. The rafters display three trenches for side purlins, although only one is currently used. All three appear to be original features. Part of a slim diagonally-set ridge purlin survives, set between the apexes of the rafters.

No carpenter's marks were recorded during the survey. However, the roof was carefully constructed, and only truss 1 had been set back to front. The collars are slightly cambered and attached with lap joints and pairs of pegs. There is a pair of side purlins trenched within earlier sockets, scarf-jointed where necessary, and pegged to the rafters. The purlins support closely-spaced common rafters, that survive almost intact on the east side of the building, but only remain above the side purlin on the west side of the building. Between the trusses are diagonal braces. These are straight cut rather than the more wavy common rafters, and are almost certainly an addition to the roof structure.

There are no intermediate trusses, however, intermediate slightly cambered 'collars' have been added between the principal rafters, sitting on the side purlins. The removed 'collar' from the central bay is cambered with tenoned ends and a chamfer on its lower side, clearly indicating it has been reused from another building – probably a dwelling – with a completely different style of roof. In the east elevation a 'dormer'-style opening has been inserted into the central bay, clearly truncating the timbers and scantling of the original roof, to allow access into a loft. The roof covering is modern corrugated galvanised iron sheets on a wooden frame.

6. DISCUSSION

The deer barn is a highly unusual structure, which is unique in Devon and rare nationally. Information on such buildings is not therefore readily available. There appears to be no standard design, although many do incorporate a first-floor loft. Surviving buildings are either enclosed, fully open (as at Stevenstone), enclosed with wide openings on several elevations, or comprise two ranges with one enclosed and the other open. There is also no standard size or shape although earlier examples tend to be larger than later barns, and built in architectural styles in keeping with designed parklands. These barns seem to have been used for feeding, although the enclosed examples may also have been used as shelters.

The roof of the building has been reused. The position of the original collars are too close to the current apex to have functioned properly as a 'brace'. It is likely therefore that the rafters were originally taller and prior to installation within the deer barn the apexes were removed, necessitating the use of new collars. These alterations probably indicate that the original roof was damaged, perhaps movement causing racking and damage to the ridge purlin and apexes of the trusses.

If the above scenario is accepted, then this roof cannot have originated on the barn since it would have been wider at the base of the trusses than the width between the present piers. Whilst it is possible that the whole building was replaced, and the piers rebuilt, there is no evidence or known reason for this to have occurred. It is therefore almost certain that the roof originated from another building, probably on the Stevenstone estate. It is known that the intermediate 'collars' were reused from an earlier domestic structure, although these could have been added after the barn was constructed.

There is no clear dating evidence for the deer barn at Stevenstone, the main dating feature being the roof, which has been reused. Despite this, the carpentry evident in the resetting of the roof is of good quality, utilising cambered rather than straight collars, and likely to be of 17th-century date. The presence of brick at the top of the piers is puzzling, and may indicate the piers have been partially rebuilt. However, if they are original then they are unlikely to date to before the mid-late 17th century.

In 19th century the building was converted into cattle stalls, and this use continued into (at least) the mid 20th century. The first floor was probably originally used as a loft, again a function that continued during the later life of the building.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The recording was commissioned by Mr. L. Millyard (Gale and Snowden Architects Ltd) and was managed by T.H. Gent for EA. The fieldwork was carried out by A.J. Passmore and the report illustrations prepared by S.E. Blackmore.

SOURCES CONSULTED

- Dick, A.M. 2008 *Brief for Historic Building Recording: Stevenstone Deer Barn, St Giles in the Wood, Devon* (HES ref: ARCH.DC.TO.13368).
- Gent, T.H. 2008. *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Building Recording at Stevenstone Deer Barn, St Giles in the Wood, Devon* (Exeter Archaeology document for proj. no. 6571).

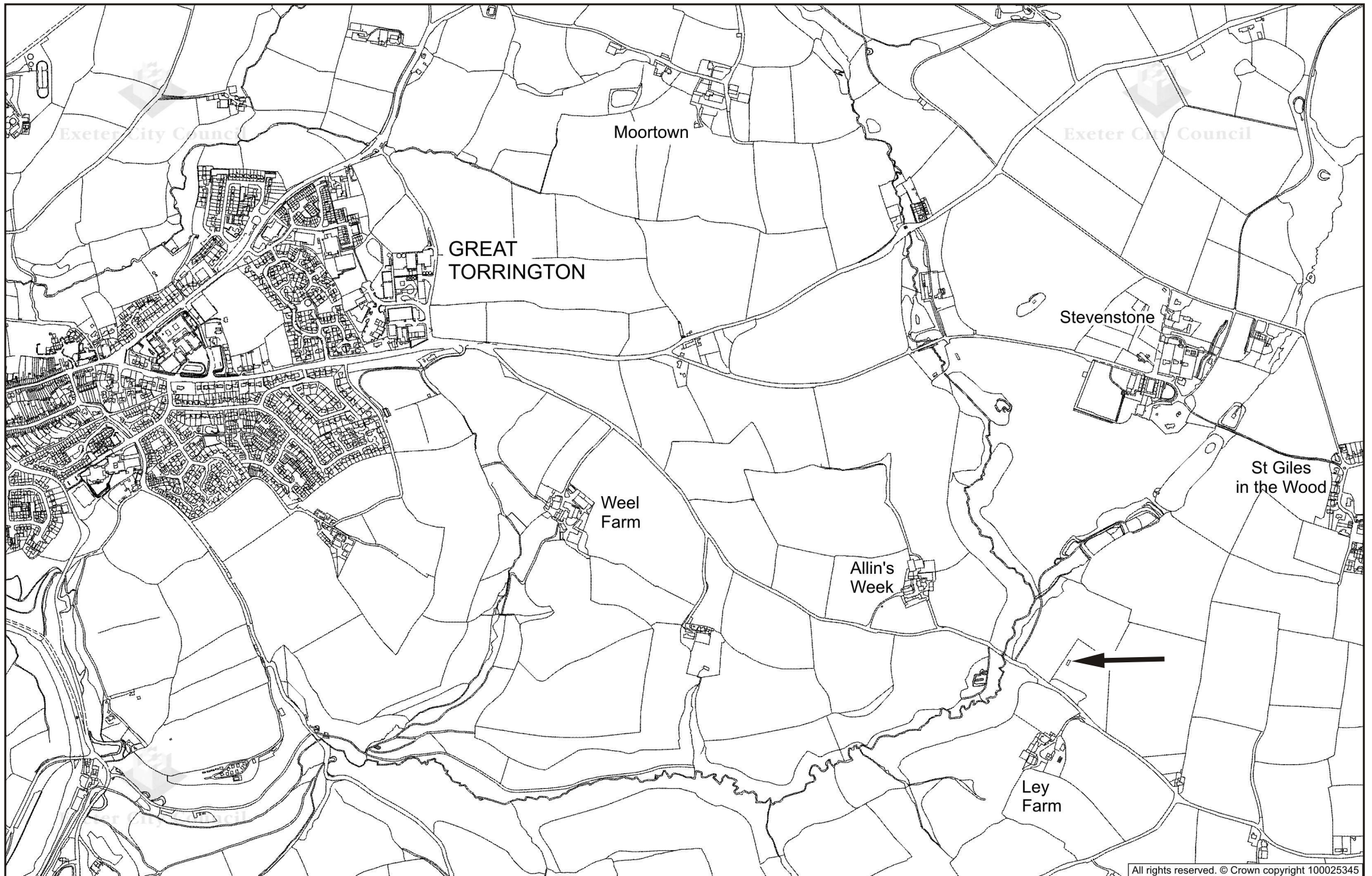


Fig. 1 Location of site. Scale 1:12,500.

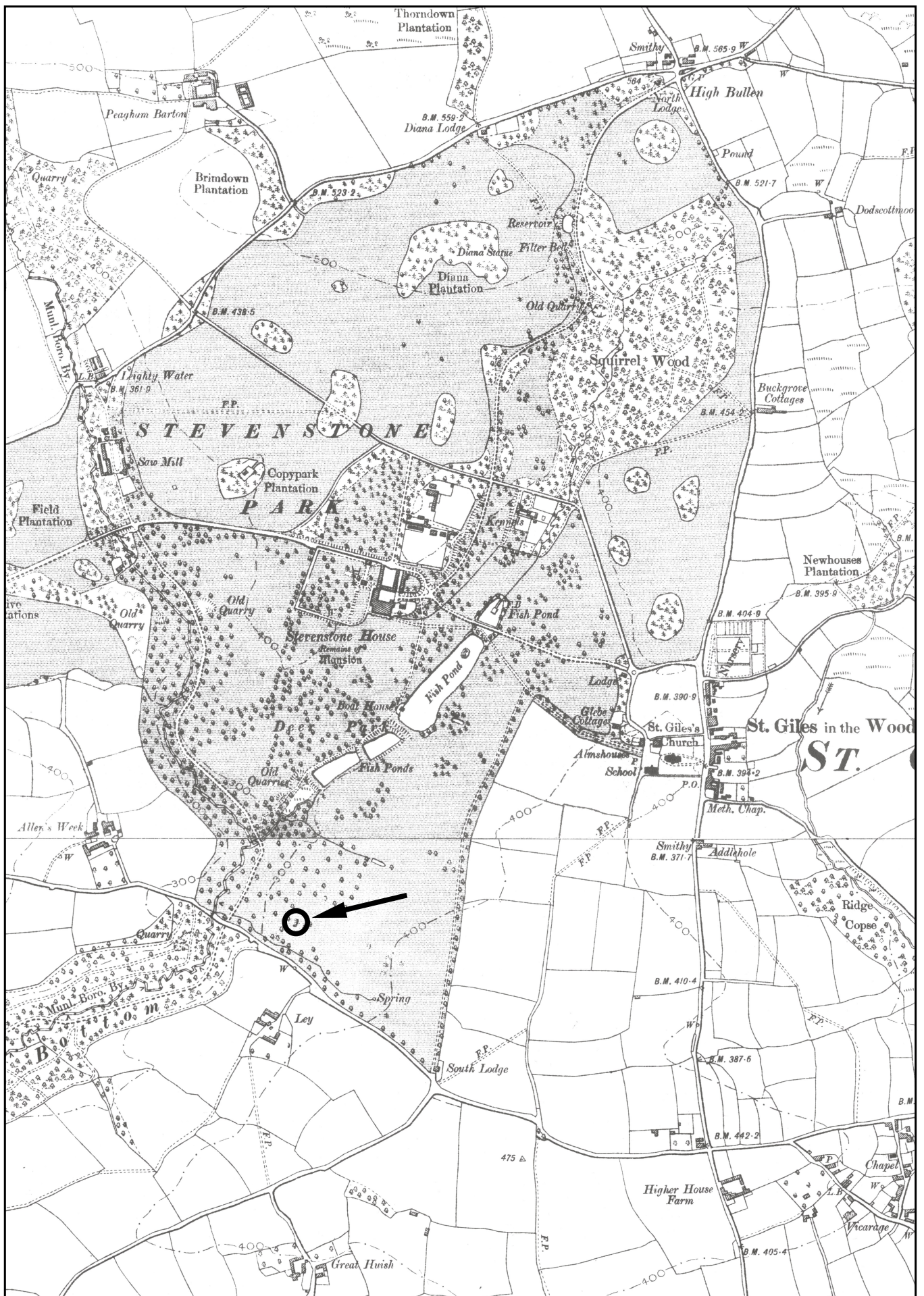


Fig. 2 The site showing its position within the deer park (based on OS 6" second edition map sheets 30SW, 1906, and 30NW, 1905.)

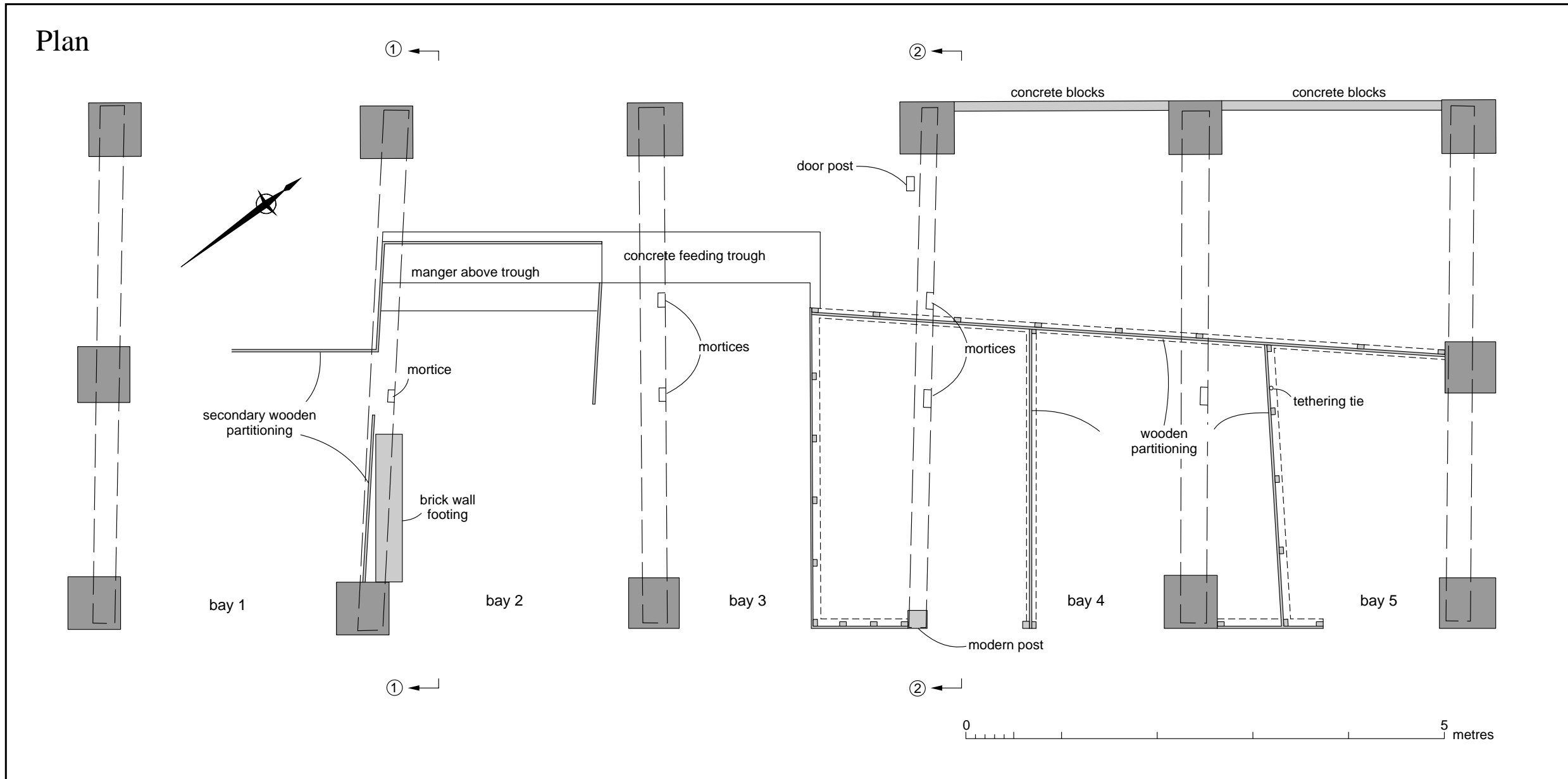
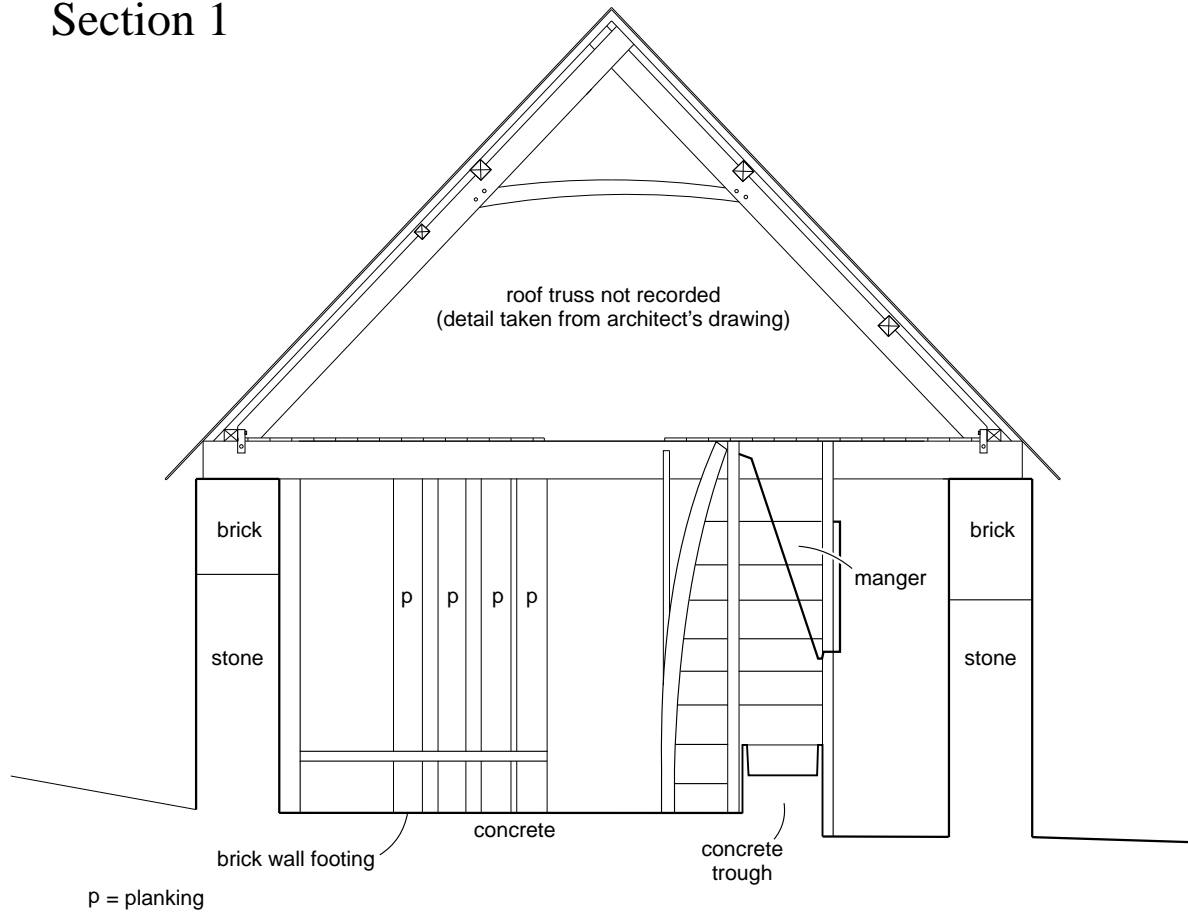


Fig. 3 Plan of the barn (based on Gale & Snowden Architects' drawing no. D-AL(0)004).

Section 1



Section 2

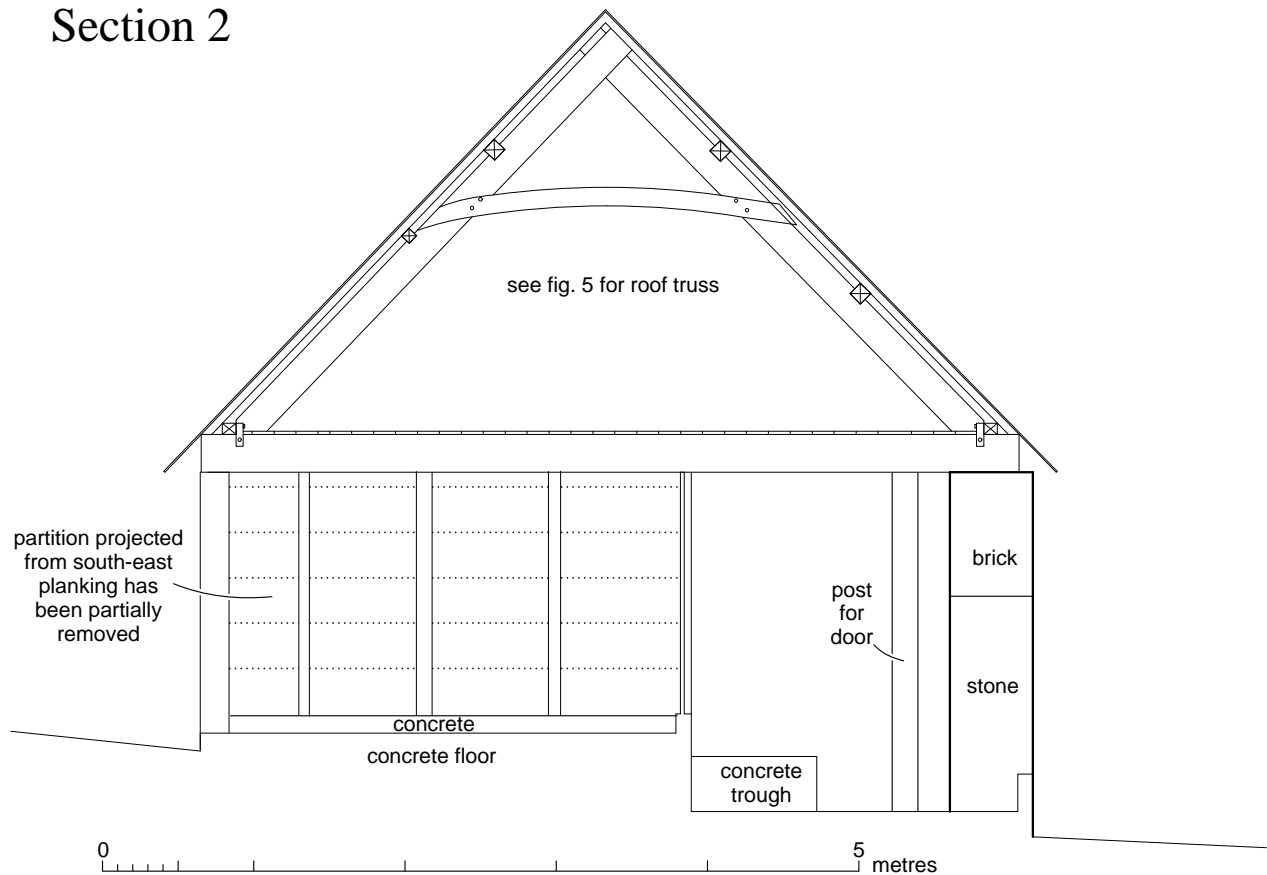


Fig. 4 Sections 1 and 2 showing ground floor features (based on Gale & Snowden Architects' drawing no. D-AL(0)004).

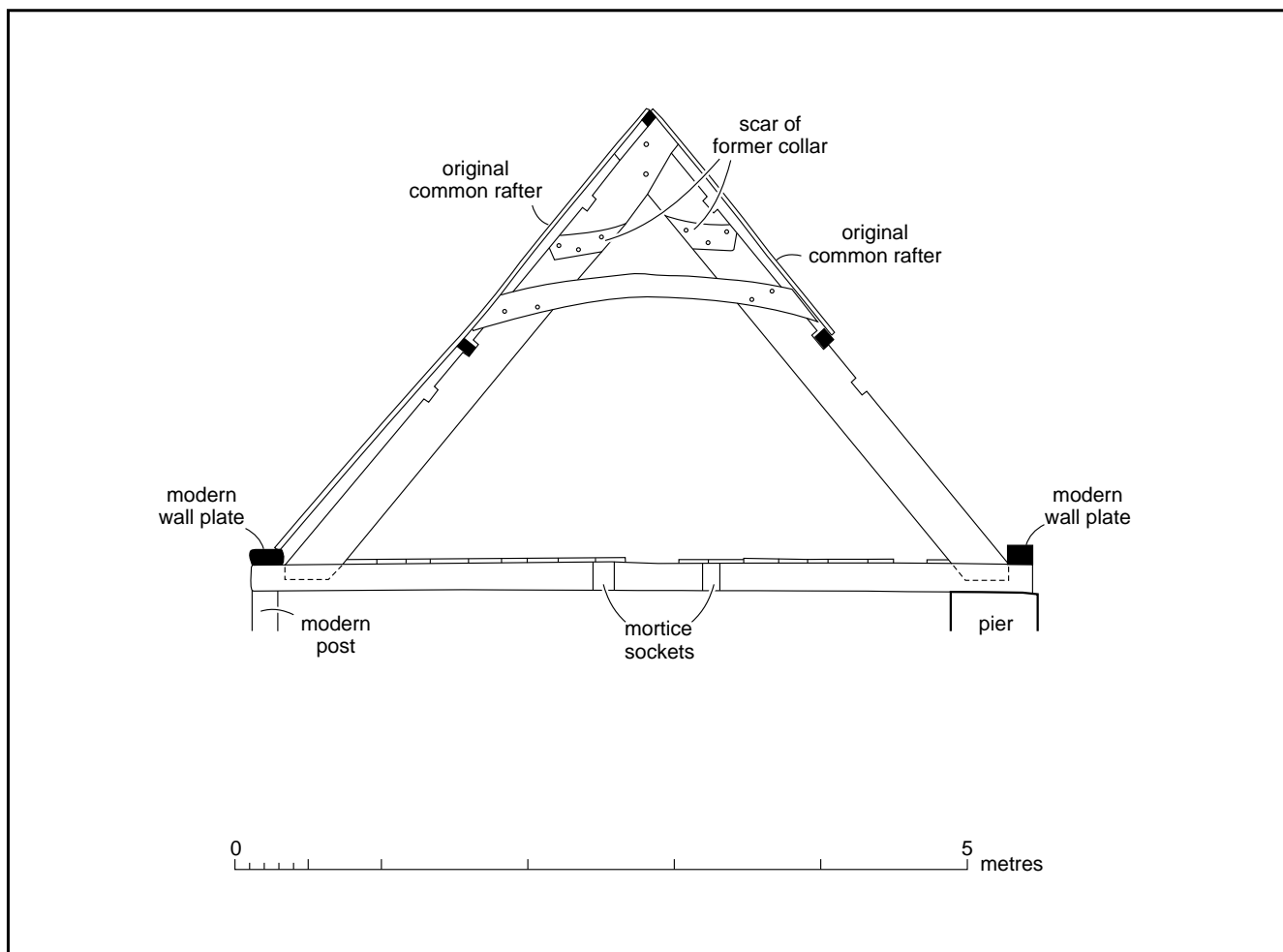


Fig. 5 Roof truss on line of section 2 (based on Gale & Snowden Architects' drawing no. D-AL(0)004).



Plate 1 The barn, looking north-west. 1m scale.



Plate 2 Bay 1 showing the construction of the piers, looking north-west. 1m scale.



Plate 3 The interior of the barn, looking north-east. 1m scale.



Plate 4 The roof, looking south-west.