

Historic Building Recording

Blakeshall Developments Ltd

Blakeshall Farm

Blakeshall

Wolverley

Kidderminster DY11 5XW

WSM 66636

May 2015



Report Specification:

Compilation:

Stephen Priestley MA

Artwork:

Kath Crooks BA & William Logan BA Dip

Editing:

George Children MA MCIfA

Final Edit & Approval:

Neil Shurety Dip.M G M Inst M

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Cover: View ENE showing southeast -facing elevation of threshing barn & granary (Building A)

General Enquiries: E: info@borderarchaeology.com | T: 01568 610101

Border Archaeology Regional Offices

Bristol

Park House, 10 Park Street,
Bristol, BS1 5HX
T: 0117 907 4735

Leeds

No 1 Leeds, 26 Whitehall Road,
Leeds, LS12 1BE
T: 0113 3570390

Leominster (Administration)

Chapel Walk, Burgess Street,
Leominster, HR6 8DE
T: 01568 610101

London

23 Hanover Square, London, W1S 1JB
T: 020 3714 9345

Milton Keynes

Luminous House, 300 South Row,
Milton Keynes, MK9 2FR
T: 01908 933765

Newport

Merlin House, No1 Langstone Business Park,
Newport, NP18 2HJ
T: 01633 415339

Winchester

Basepoint Business Centre, Winnal Valley Road,
Winchester, SO23 0LD
T: 01962 832777

Bristol | Leeds | Leominster | London | Milton Keynes | Newport | Winchester

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1 Executive Summary

The results of this programme of historic building recording, supplemented by documentary research, on the complex of outbuildings at Blakeshall Farm Wolverley revealed evidence of three broad phases of construction and rebuilding ranging in date from c.1840-50 up to the mid-20th century.

- The farmhouse and associated complex of outbuildings at Blakeshall Farm, comprising a threshing barn, granary and cartshed, stabling and cattle shed, represent a reasonably complete example of a mid-Victorian 'model farm', which appears largely to have been constructed in a single phase, probably at some time between 1838 and 1850 (when the earliest documented reference to the farm occurs).
- The building of the farm was almost certainly carried out under the auspices of William Hancocks, then owner of the Blakeshall Estate, and may well be contemporary with his rebuilding of Blakeshall Hall in 1845. The substantial nature of the threshing barn suggests that the farm, when originally established, was primarily focused on arable cultivation rather than livestock husbandry.
- A secondary phase of activity, datable to c.1850-83 is represented by the addition of the lean-to brick piggery and enclosed yard at the southwest end of the southeast -facing elevation of the large threshing barn (Building A). Evidence was noted for a vertical construction break between the threshing barn and the piggery, as well as a noticeable difference in the brick bonding used in the construction of the latter building.
- The addition of the lean-to brick structure indicates a diversification of farming activity towards the end of the 19th century, with a greater emphasis on livestock husbandry, and this appears to be confirmed by the evidence of a sale catalogue for implements and stock at Blakeshall Farm dated 1904, which mentions a large herd of sheep and smaller numbers of pigs and cattle.
- A tertiary phase of building activity is primarily represented by the construction of the substantial dairy/milking parlour (Building D) to the southwest of the main complex of outbuildings and may be dated to between 1947 and 1954. The construction of the dairy complex represents a distinct shift in farming activity in the years immediately following the Second World War, from a mixed-farming regime (both arable and livestock husbandry) to dairy farming. The northwest -facing wall and the northeast gable end of Building C also appear to have been substantially rebuilt in the mid-late 20th century

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Limited (BAL) has been instructed by Blakeshall Developments Ltd St John's Court Stourbridge to carry out a programme of Archaeological Building Investigation and Recording in connection with the proposed conversion of existing barns to form one 3-bed dwelling and four 4-bed dwellings with associated car parking at Blakeshall Farm Blakeshall Wolverley Kidderminster Worcestershire DY11 5XW (NGR: SO 83043 81047) (*fig. 1*) (Wyre Forest District Council Planning Ref. WF/14/0674/FULL). The proposed development may affect a site of archaeological significance that is registered on the County Historic Environment Record (HER Ref. WSM40558) and consequently Mike Glyde Esq Historic Environment Planning Officer Worcestershire County Council (WCC) advised that a programme of historic building recording to RCHME Level 3 was required comprising 1) Documentary Reference, 2) Building Recording and 3) Publication.



Fig. 1: Site location plan

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Copies of this report will be submitted to the Client and to the Historic Environment Planning Officer WCC; one bound paper and one digital .pdf copy will be deposited with the WCC Historic Environment Record. A digital

copy will also be deposited with Oasis (<http://www.oasis.ac.uk/>) the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations website.

3 Site Description

The specific site at Blakeshall Farm is located at approximately 85m OD within the hamlet of Blakeshall, some 1.5km N of Wolverley. The programme of building recording undertaken by Border Archaeology Limited at Blakeshall Farm has focused on the complex of four outbuildings situated to the E of the farmhouse (henceforth referred to as Buildings A-D) which are mostly of mid-19th-century date with some 20th-century additions.

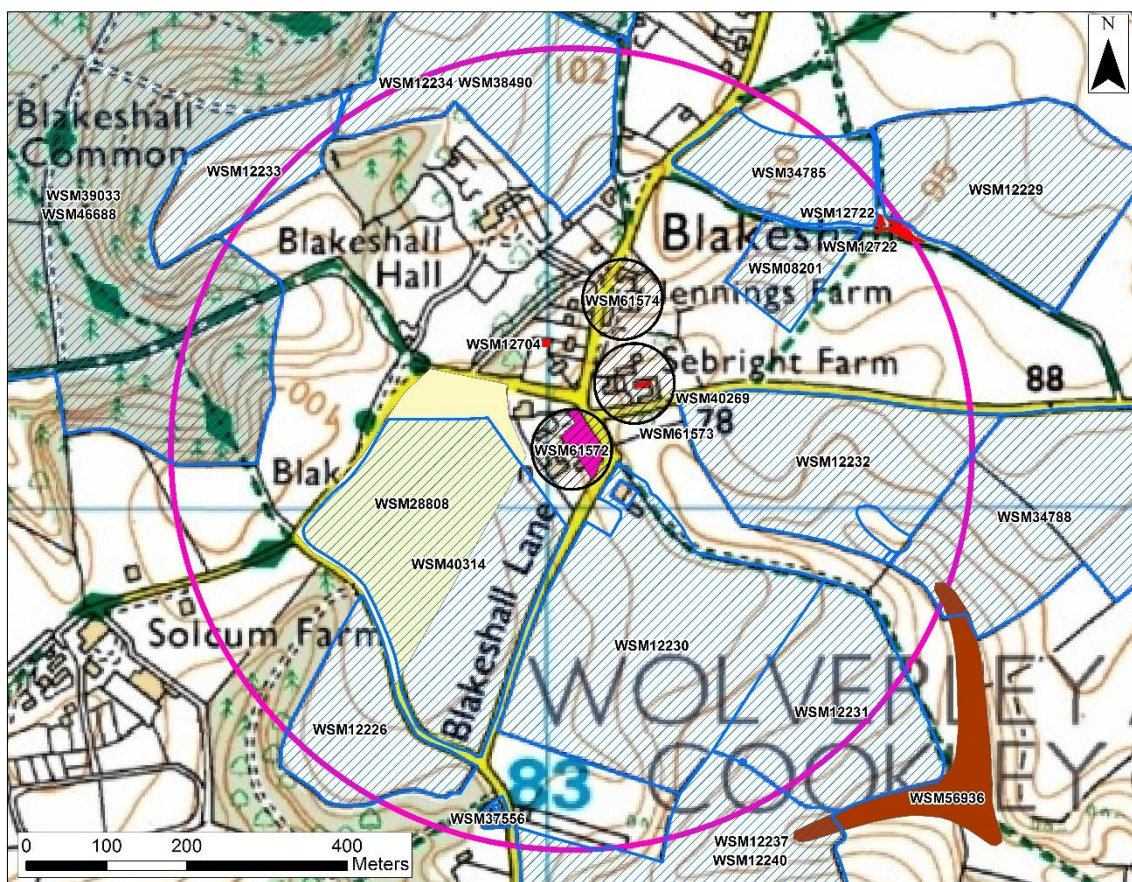


Fig. 2: Plan showing location of events and monuments recorded in the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record in the vicinity of the site at Blakeshall Farm (marked in pink)

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The farm and outbuildings are included in the Wyre Forest District Council Local Heritage List for Wolverley and Cookley on the basis of its Group Value. The listing describes the farm as comprising a *Red brick C19 farmhouse, with barn complex to side and rear. Main house has 3 bays, with stressed voussoirs to ground and first floor and 6/6 sash, and simple brick arches and 3/6 sash to second floor. Gabled roof covered in Welsh blue slate. Range of C19 and C20 brick barns to front, side and rear all identified as being of local interest with group value* (<http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/media/64863/Wolverley-and-Cookley-Local-Heritage-List.pdf>).

The site lies on the W side of Blakeshall Lane and the surrounding land is largely pasture and arable fields, with areas of woodland to the W. The soils largely comprise typical brown sands (non-calcareous sandy soils) of the BRIDGNORTH series (551a), consisting of well-drained sandy and coarse loamy soils over Permo-Triassic and Carboniferous reddish sandstone.

4 Historical and Archaeological Background

Evidence of prehistoric and Romano-British occupation has been recorded in the vicinity of Blakeshall Farm. Fieldwalking undertaken in the vicinity of the hamlet has identified an extensive scatter of lithic finds of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age date, including flint arrowheads, blades and scrapers, as well as finds of Romano-British pottery (e.g. WSM08201; WSM12226; WSM12229; WSM12230; WSM12231; WSM12232; WSM12233; WSM12234; WSM12237; WSM12240; WSM34785; WSM34788; WSM40314).

The hamlet of Blakeshall (WSM 12704) is a settlement of medieval origin first recorded as 'Blakesole' in a charter of c.1190 (Darlington, 1968, 21). From the late medieval period until the late 18th century, the manor of Blakeshall was held by the Sebright family (Willis-Bund, 1913, 569-70). By the early 1840s, the estate was in the possession of the Hancocks family of Wolverley Court. Blakeshall Hall (WSM08205; 250m to the NW of the site) is a two-storey country house constructed of stuccoed brick, which possibly dates from the 18th century, and was substantially remodelled and extended by William Hancocks in the mid-19th century. The Hall is surrounded by a landscape park, of which several features survive, including sandstone boundary walls (WSM36178; WSM36180), a rock house and obelisk (WSM36183) and an ice house and gazebo (WSM36181).

Blakeshall Farm (WSM61572) itself is of mid-19th -century date, comprising a large three-storey brick farmhouse (WSM40557) with a complex of outbuildings ranged around a courtyard (WSM40558). Two other post-medieval farmsteads are located in close proximity to Blakeshall Farm, including Sebright Farm (WSM61573; 28m to the NE of the site) and Jennings farm (WSM61574), situated approximately 100m NE of the site.

UID	Name	NGR	Date
WSM08201	Unstratified finds (Hawkers Nab)	SO 8330 8129	Prehistoric-Medieval
WSM08205	Blakeshall Hall	SO 8293 8136	Post-medieval
WSM12226	Unstratified finds of flints (Shrubbery Piece)	SO 8277 8071	Prehistoric
WSM12229	Unstratified finds (Brick Kiln Leasow)	SO 8357 8139	Prehistoric-Medieval
WSM12230	Unstratified finds (Churchfield)	SO 8312 8082	Prehistoric-Roman
WSM12231	Unstratified find of flints (Bluntington Extra)	SO 8336 8074	Prehistoric
WSM12232	Unstratified finds (Hall Field)	SO 8335 8105	Prehistoric-Medieval
WSM12233	Unstratified finds of flints (Hossill)	SO 8262 8141	Prehistoric
WSM12234	Unstratified finds of flints (News Piece & Broad Rudding)	SO 8294 8152	Prehistoric
WSM12237	Unstratified finds of flints (Slad by Cowland)	SO 8319 8053	Prehistoric
WSM12240	Unstratified finds of flints (Liddy)	SO 8319 8053	Prehistoric

UID	Name	NGR	Date
WSM12704	Blakeshall Village	SO 8299 8120	Medieval
WSM12722	Brick kiln	SO 8343 8134	Post-medieval
WSM28808	Park & garden buildings at Blakeshall Hall	SO 8284 8100	Post-medieval
WSM34785	Unstratified finds (Trows Piece)	SO 8330 8141	Prehistoric-Medieval
WSM34788	Unstratified Romano-British finds (The Lydiates)	SO 8363 8098	Roman
WSM35722	Oblique aerial photographs of the parish	SO 8320 8041	N/A
WSM36178	Boundary Wall, Blakeshall House	SO 8289 8122	Post-medieval
WSM36180	Boundary Wall, Gin Hill Wall	SO 8310 8143	Post-medieval
WSM36181	Ice House & Gazebo, Blakeshall Hall	SO 8288 8148	Post-medieval
WSM36183	Rock House & Obelisk, Blakeshall Hall	SO 8278 8136	Post-medieval
WSM37556	Evaluation (2007) – Solcum Lodge	SO 8293 8061	N/A
WSM38490	Field Walking (2006) - News Piece	SO 8293 8152	Prehistoric-Post-med.
WSM39033	DBA - Kingsford Forest Park	SO 8279 8178	N/A
WSM40269	Barn (site of), Sebright Farm	SO 8312 8114	Post-medieval
WSM40314	Unstratified flint finds, S of Blakeshall Farm	SO 8287 8092	Prehistoric
WSM40550	Farmhouse, Jennings Farm	SO 8311 8124	Post-medieval
WSM40551	L-shaped barn, Jennings Farm	SO 8309 8128	Post-medieval
WSM40552	Barn, Jennings Farm	SO 8307 8123	Post-medieval
WSM40553	Farmhouse, Sebright Farm	SO 8307 8114	Post-medieval
WSM40554	Courtyard Plan Farm Building, Sebright Farm	SO 8313 8113	Post-medieval
WSM40555	Farm Building, Sebright Farm	SO 8309 8116	Post-medieval
WSM40556	Outbuildings, Sebright Farm	SO 8308 8115	Post-medieval
WSM40557	Farmhouse, Blakeshall Farm	SO 8301 8104	Post-medieval
WSM40558	Courtyard Farm Buildings, Blakeshall Farm	SO 8303 8107	Post-medieval
WSM53922	Blakeshall Farm	SO 8303 8106	Post-medieval
WSM53923	Sebright Farm	SO 8311 8115	Post-medieval
WSM53924	Jennings Farm	SO 8309 8125	Post-medieval
WSM56936	Area of palaeolithic potential	SO 8352 8064	Prehistoric
WSM61572	Blakeshall Farm (landscape component)	SO 8303 8107	Post-medieval
WSM61573	Sebright Farm (landscape component)	SO 8311 8114	Post-medieval
WSM61574	Jennings Farm (landscape component)	SO 8309 8125	Post-medieval
WSM63767	PAS find: C15 copper alloy thimble	SO 8284 8100	Medieval/Post-med.
WSN46688	Landscape Survey, Kingsford Country Park	SO 8279 8178	N/A

Table 1: Gazetteer of archaeological events and monuments in the vicinity of Blakeshall Farm, based on consultation of the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record

4.1 Site Specific Information

The origins of Blakeshall Farm, in its present form, date no earlier than the mid-19th century. The Wolverley tithe map of 1838 shows no building activity within the area of the present farm complex, which is depicted as a trapezoidal -shaped pasture field called 'Hills Pleck' (fig. 4). To the N of this field, the tithe map shows a small L -shaped house called 'Hills Cottage', to the E of which was another L -shaped range within a square courtyard denoted as 'Barn, Shed and Fold'. Hills Cottage, the adjacent outbuildings and 'Hills Pleck' were then in the ownership of the Rev. Henry Evans and occupied by John Edmonds.

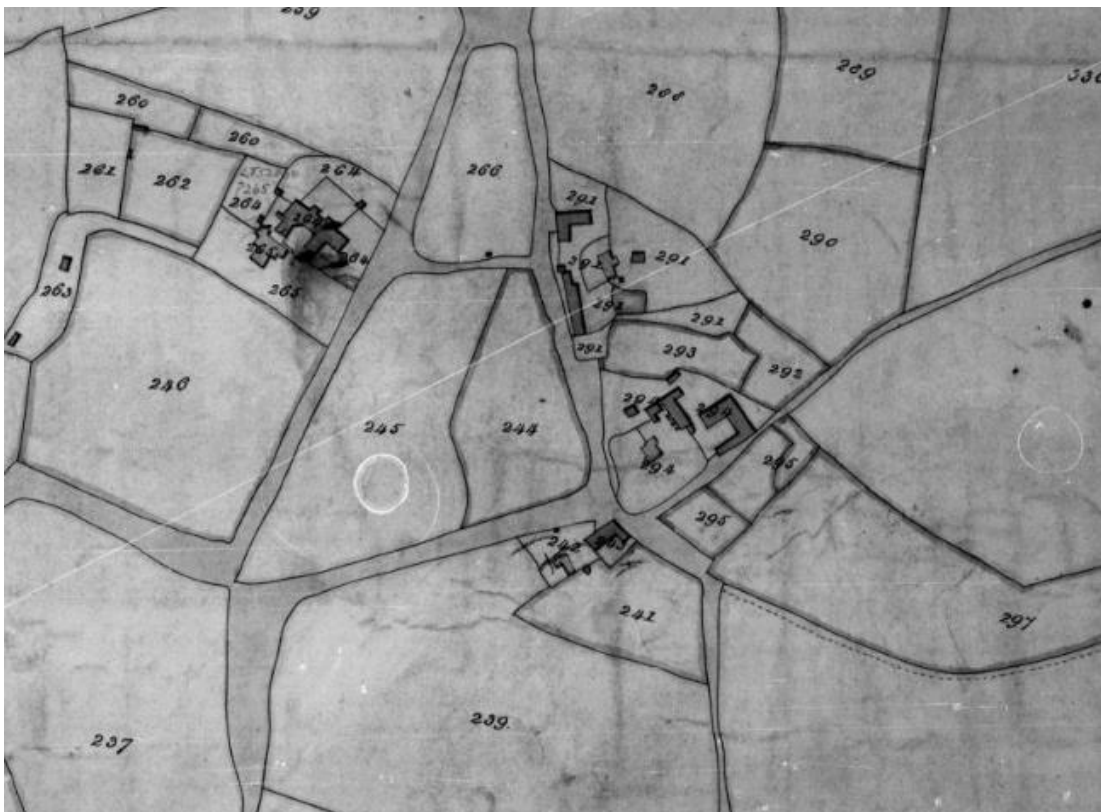


Fig. 3: Extract from the tithe map for Wolverley parish of 1838
(Reproduced by courtesy of Worcestershire Record Office)

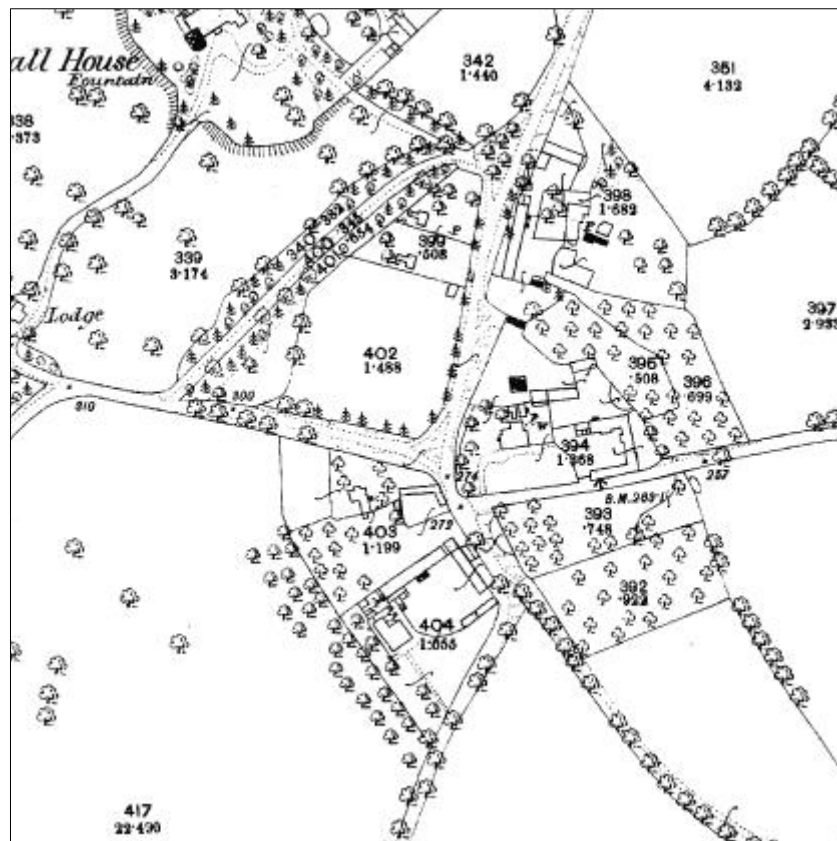
At some time between 1838 and 1850, the farmhouse and the majority of the present complex of outbuildings were erected at Blakeshall Farm, as shown on the OS 1st -edition map of 1883. It is likely that they were built by William Hancocks (whose family owned Wolverley Court), who acquired the Blakeshall estate in the early 1840s and rebuilt the manor house, Blakeshall Hall, in 1845 (Brooks & Pevsner 2007, 667). The construction of the new farm probably took place concurrently with, or shortly after the rebuilding of the Hall.

The earliest definite reference to Blakeshall Farm by name occurs in a newspaper advertisement in the *Worcestershire Chronicle* dated 4 Sep 1850 which refers to the sale of a 'capital team of cart horses, implements in husbandry, broad and narrow wheel wagons, carts, hurdles, turnips etc' on behalf of the tenant farmer, one Mr S. Fawcett, who is said to have been giving up the tenancy. It is significant that no reference is made to

livestock in the sale advertisement, suggesting that Blakeshall Farm was primarily an arable farm in its early years.

Between 1850 and 1884, Blakeshall Farm appears to have been occupied by a farmer named Benjamin Edmonds, whose cousin John Edmonds occupied another nearby farm in Blakeshall. William Hancocks died in 1883 and the Blakeshall Estate was put up for sale a year later. Blakeshall Farm, described as comprising 'an area of 266 acres, 1 road 4 perches...a farmhouse, outbuildings, first class homestead and six labourers cottages', was sold to Benjamin Edmonds, the sitting tenant, for £6250 (*Worcester Journal* 20 Sep 1884). It appears that Benjamin Edmonds ownership of the farm was short-lived, as it appears that the Hancocks family had recovered the freehold title by the late 1880s and leased the farm to Thomas Pitt and his family, who occupied the farm at the time of the 1891 census.

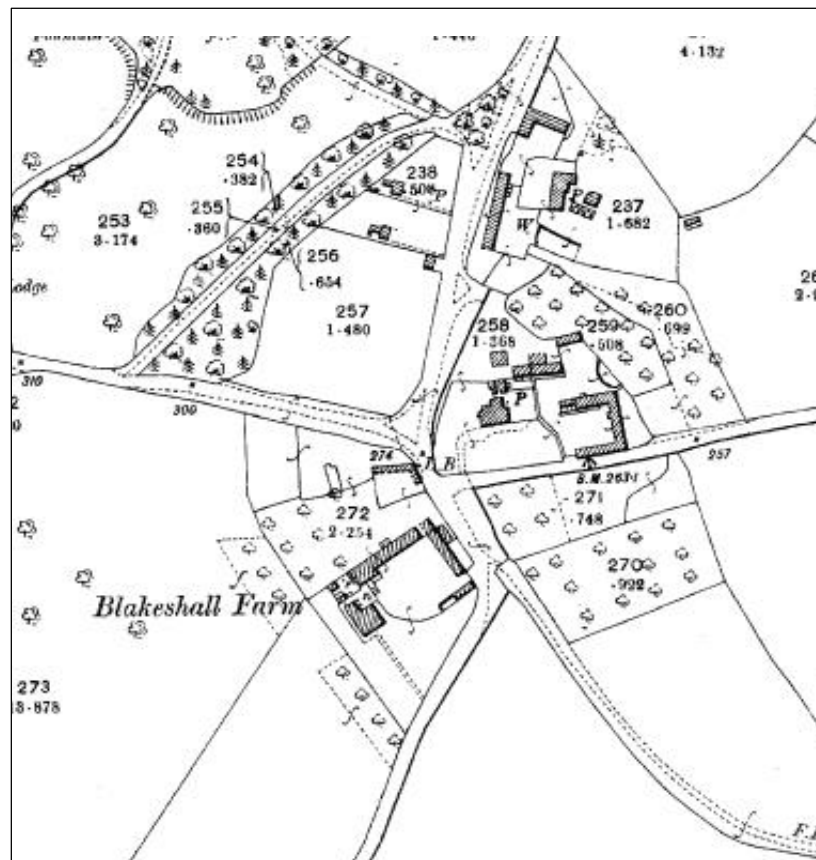
The OS 1st edition 25 -inch map of 1883 (*fig. 4*) shows the existing detached farmhouse (L-shaped in plan) in the SW corner of the site, to the NE of which a complex of outbuildings is depicted, loosely ranged around three sides of a large quadrangular yard. Hills Cottage and its adjacent outbuilding are shown to the NW; however, the cottage appears to have been demolished by no later than 1902, as indicated on the OS 2nd edition map of that date (*fig. 5*).



*Fig. 4: Extract from the OS 1st edition 25 -inch map of 1883
(Reproduced by courtesy of Worcestershire Record Office)*

The Pitt family continued to hold the tenancy of Blakeshall Farm until 1904, when they sold the furniture, agricultural equipment and livestock by auction. A detailed sale catalogue of Blakeshall Farm dated 5 Dec 1904 (WRO 705:1168 10564/2(i)) indicates that the farm had shifted focus from arable to livestock husbandry by the end of the 19th century. A total of 263 sheep, seven head of cattle and 10 bacon pigs are recorded on the farm in 1904.

The farm was again put up for sale in 1916, then being described as ‘comprising 127 acres of land, with good house, three reception rooms and five bedrooms, capital farm buildings including a large covered feeding yard divided into three sections’ (*Birmingham Daily Post* 27 May 1916). The covering yard mentioned in the sale advertisement may be identified with the large rectangular open-shed structure which projected SE from the large threshing barn (Building A) and remained intact until recently. The extent of the covered yard is indicated on the OS 3rd edition 25 -inch map of 1924 (*fig. 6*).



*Fig. 5: Extract from the OS 2nd edition 25 -inch map of 1902
(Reproduced by courtesy of Worcestershire Record Office)*

The freehold title to the Blakeshall Estate (including Blakeshall Farm) was put up for sale in 1920 by trustees acting under the will of Captain William Hancocks, who had died in 1917 while serving with the Worcestershire Regiment in France during the First World War. The 1920 sale catalogue provides a useful description of the farm house and outbuildings at that date (WRO Ref. 705:580/10457/8). The farmhouse is said to comprise ‘ five bedrooms, two sitting rooms, kitchen, back kitchen, dairy and cellar, outside closet; granary, cowhouse, chicken

house, orchard and garden, while the farm outbuildings are described as being 'built of brick, tile and slates, including cattle hovel, partly enclosing fold yard, three implement sheds, large yard, partially enclosing yard, with six cart-horse stable, loose box, cow stall for four, calf pen, root house, mixing house, cow stall for four, large barn with two bays and chaff house and three piggeries'.

An aerial photograph of Blakeshall Farm and the surrounding area dated 1947 shows that the complex of outbuildings had essentially remained unchanged since 1924; however, by 1954 it appears that a large rectangular structure oriented NE-SW with an annexe attached to the NE end had been constructed to the S of the original complex of outbuildings. This may be identified with the existing dairy/milking parlour (Building D).

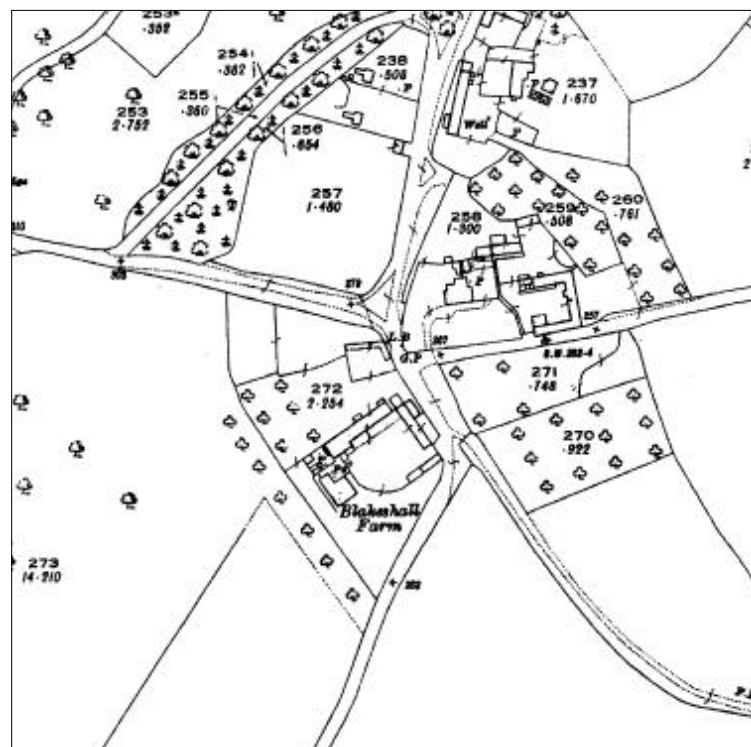


Fig. 6: Extract from the OS 3rd edition map of 1924
(Reproduced by courtesy of the Worcestershire Record Office)

5 Historic Building Recording Survey

5.1 Methodology

This historic building recording survey was carried out to RCHME Level 3, as defined within *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage, 2006). Level 3 is defined as ‘... An analytical record [comprising] an introductory description followed by a systematic account of the buildings origins, development and use, The record includes an account of the evidence on which the analyses has been based, allowing the validity of the record to be re-examined in detail. It also includes all drawn and photographic records that may be required to illustrate the buildings appearance and structure to support an historical analysis’ (EH 2006, 14).

The work also followed guidance contained within *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (CIfA 2014). Border Archaeology complied throughout with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists’ *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014). The aim of the programme of historic building recording was to allow for the preservation by record of all standing building fabric of historical interest that will be destroyed or substantially altered by the development. The survey thus comprised a detailed photographic and descriptive survey of the complex of four outbuildings.

A documentary assessment was carried out prior to fieldwork in order to assess the historic importance of the buildings. Copies of relevant information, including historic mapping and HER data, were obtained from the Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment Record and reference was made to the *Worcestershire Historic Farmstead Survey*. Historic mapping comprised successive editions of the Ordnance Survey; it should be noted that no tithe map evidence is available for this area. These have been reproduced in the final report where necessary to aid interpretation. Building phases were established prior to photographic recording, with each phase being discussed in detail.

The programme of Historic Building Recording consisted of the following elements:

1. High-resolution digital photography (20MPX capacity), all with suitable scales, of the following.
 - All external elevations
 - All internal room spaces and roof structures (where accessible)
 - Details of any architectural or functional fixtures, fittings and features relating to either the function or development of the building. Each feature was photographed and placed into a wider context (i.e. the surrounding elevation), individual features being photographed as separate items and in detail
 - Photographs illustrating the buildings relationship to surrounding buildings and setting
2. Collation and annotation of existing survey drawings

The report contains:

-
- A phased plan of the building, with photo locations clearly marked, and a location plan related to the national grid.
 - An annotated elevation drawing
 - Appropriate additional illustrations that help support findings and the interpretation of the buildings
 - Additional illustrations of dateable fixtures and fittings (mouldings, catches, hinges, latches etc.)
 - A summary description of the building in its current form in the format of a typical listed building description
 - The paper archive (including the report, photographs and annotated survey drawings) will be deposited.

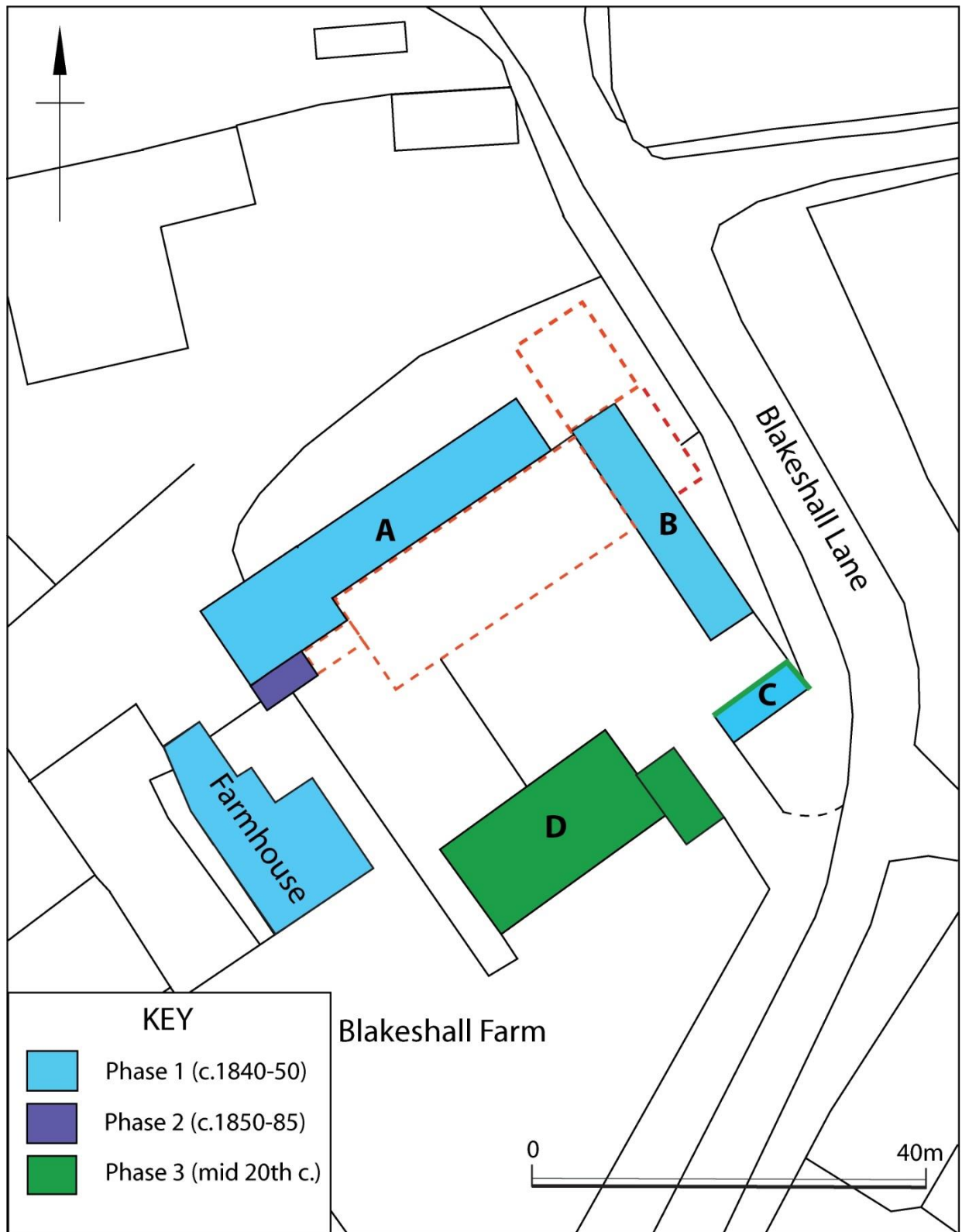


Fig. 7: Phased plan of farmhouse and outbuildings at Blakeshall Farm with extent of recently demolished outbuildings indicated by a red dotted line

6 Structural Description and Phasing

6.1 General Building Plan

The complex of outbuildings at Blakeshall Farm (*fig. 7*) forming the subject of this programme of historic building recording comprises four distinct structures (henceforth referred to as Buildings A-D) ranged around a roughly quadrangular farmyard, which may be described as follows:

Building A, situated on the N side of the yard, is a large rectangular gabled structure oriented NE-SW, 1½ storeys high and seven bays long of red-brick construction (laid in irregular English Garden Wall Bond) with a steeply pitched tiled roof (the roofing had been removed prior to recording). Attached to the SW gable end of the building, slightly raised above the level of the rest of the barn, is a gabled, two-storey structure of brick construction, two bays in length with a half-hipped roof (formerly tiled), with a lean-to brick structure with catslide roof attached to the principal SE -facing elevation.

Building B, situated on the E side of the yard at right-angles to Building A, comprises a four-bay gabled structure 1½ storeys high, oriented NW-SE and of brick construction (laid in irregular English Garden Wall Bond), with a steeply pitched, tiled roof (again removed prior to recording), with a three-bay, single-storey gabled brick structure attached to the SE gable end.

Building C, situated immediately SE of Building B, is a single-storey gabled barn oriented NE-SW, three bays long, and is partially of brick construction, although the SE -facing elevation is of roughly coursed rubble masonry and the NW -facing elevation has been wholly rebuilt in concrete.

Building D, situated immediately SW of Building C, comprises two conjoined structures: a broad single-storey range oriented NE-SW, six bays long and of brick construction (laid in a regular English Garden Wall Bond) with a single-storey gabled brick structure, three bays long and oriented NW-SE, attached to its NE end.

Situated immediately W of the complex of outbuildings is the farmhouse, an L-shaped brick building of mid-19th - century date comprising a three-storey range to the front with a double pile gabled block to the rear, contemporary with Buildings A-C. A general photographic record of the exterior was made but no detailed recording was undertaken.

6.2 Analytical Description

6.2.1 Building A

Building A, situated on the N side of the yard, is a large rectangular gabled barn oriented NE-SW, 1½ storeys high and seven bays long, predominantly of red-brick construction (laid in irregular English Garden Wall Bond), with a steeply pitched tiled roof and dentilled decoration at eaves cornice level and along the roofline of the NE gable (*figs. 8 & 9*). The lowest three courses at the SW gable end of the barn are of roughly-coursed sandstone masonry, the remainder in brick. The barn is first shown on the OS 1st edition map of 1883.

Building A was evidently used as a threshing barn (for the storing and processing of grain crops) as indicated by the nine rows of small rectangular ventilation slots extending up to eaves level across the NW- and SE -facing elevation (*Plates 1 & 2*); the NE gable elevation has a similar series of ventilation slots; however, in this case they extend up to the apex of the gable (*Plate 3*).

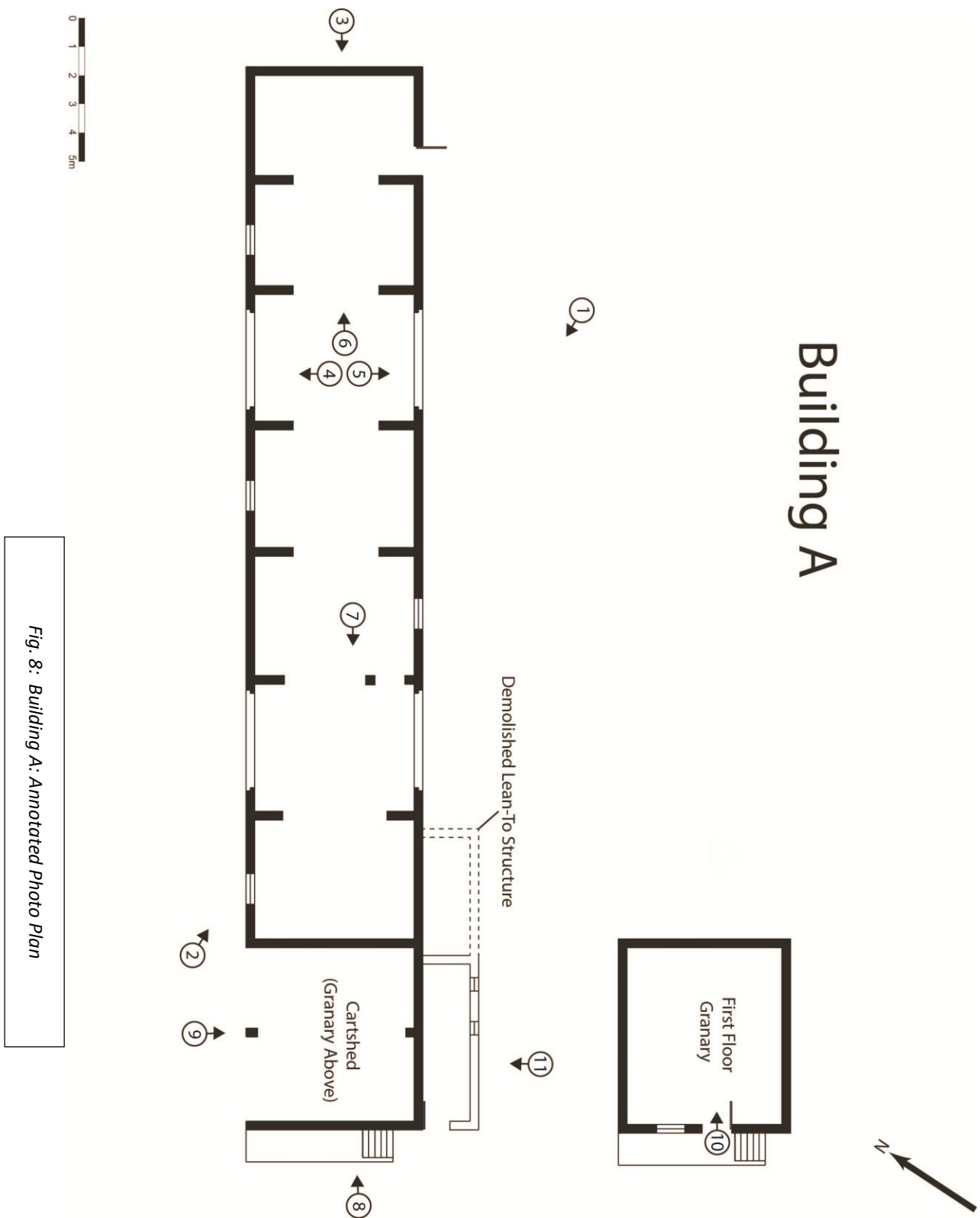


Fig. 8: Building A: Annotated Photo Plan

The NW- and SE -facing elevations are both pierced by two tall depressed archways extending up to eaves level (evidently intended for wagons) with gauged brick *voussoirs* and ashlar stone imposts. The barn doors have been removed, although the iron hinges are still visible. Within the north-easternmost bay of the SE -facing elevation, a plain flat-arched doorway with wooden lintel has been inserted at ground level, above which is a rectangular opening interpreted as a loading bay associated with a hayloft at first-floor level (*Plate 1*).

The archway at the SW end of the SE -facing elevation is flanked to the right by a square opening at ground-floor level (now boarded up) while to the left of the archway are the brick footings and projecting wall stubs of a lean-to brick structure (internally whitewashed), which has recently been demolished. In the NW -facing elevation, the archway towards the NE end is flanked by two flat-arched window openings at ground level, while another flat-arched opening with intact wooden lintel is located to the right of the archway, towards the SW end of the elevation (*Plate 2*).



Plate 1: View WNW showing the SE -facing elevation of the threshing barn overlooking the courtyard, with the granary and cartshed situated at the SW end of the barn

The interior of the threshing barn has been systematically removed of all fixtures and fittings. The most noteworthy survivals are the two stone-flagged threshing floors within the two entrance bays at the NE and SW ends of the barn, with flanking storage bays on either side for the storage of sheaves of un-threshed crops (whether corn, wheat or barley) and threshed straw (*Plates 4 & 5*). The threshing floor at the NE end of the barn has been partially truncated by a sloping concrete ramp. No clear evidence was identified for threshing

machinery, either within or outside the barn, which suggests that this was a hand-threshing barn. It is noteworthy that neither the 1850 sale advertisement for Blakeshall Farm nor the later sale catalogues dated 1904 and 1920 make reference to threshing machinery.

The roof structure is of simple open-truss construction with the common rafters carried on two sets of trenched purlins connected to the principal rafters, which, in turn, are carried on two sets of six brick internal buttresses (*Plates 6 & 7*). Within the two north-easternmost bays of the barn, evidence for a loft at upper-storey level is represented by a row of beam slots for ceiling joists (*Plate 6*). It is possible that this represents the chaff house (mentioned in the 1920 estate catalogue), where mixed grain and chaff were stored after threshing until enough had been collected to make winnowing worthwhile.



Plate 2: View looking ENE showing NW-facing elevation of Building A, with the granary and cartshed to right of picture

The two bays at the SW end of the barn (including one of the threshing floors) appear originally to have been partitioned off from the remaining five bays. Evidence for this partition is represented by a segmental-arched door opening inserted in one of the buttresses and the heavily truncated stub of a low brick wall, which presumably extended across the bay (*Plate 7*). Presumably the division reflected the use of the barn for processing two different types of crop (in connection with this, it is worth noting that the 1850 sale advertisement for the farm mentions that both wheat and barley were being cultivated at the time). No other internal fixtures or fittings of architectural interest appear to have survived.

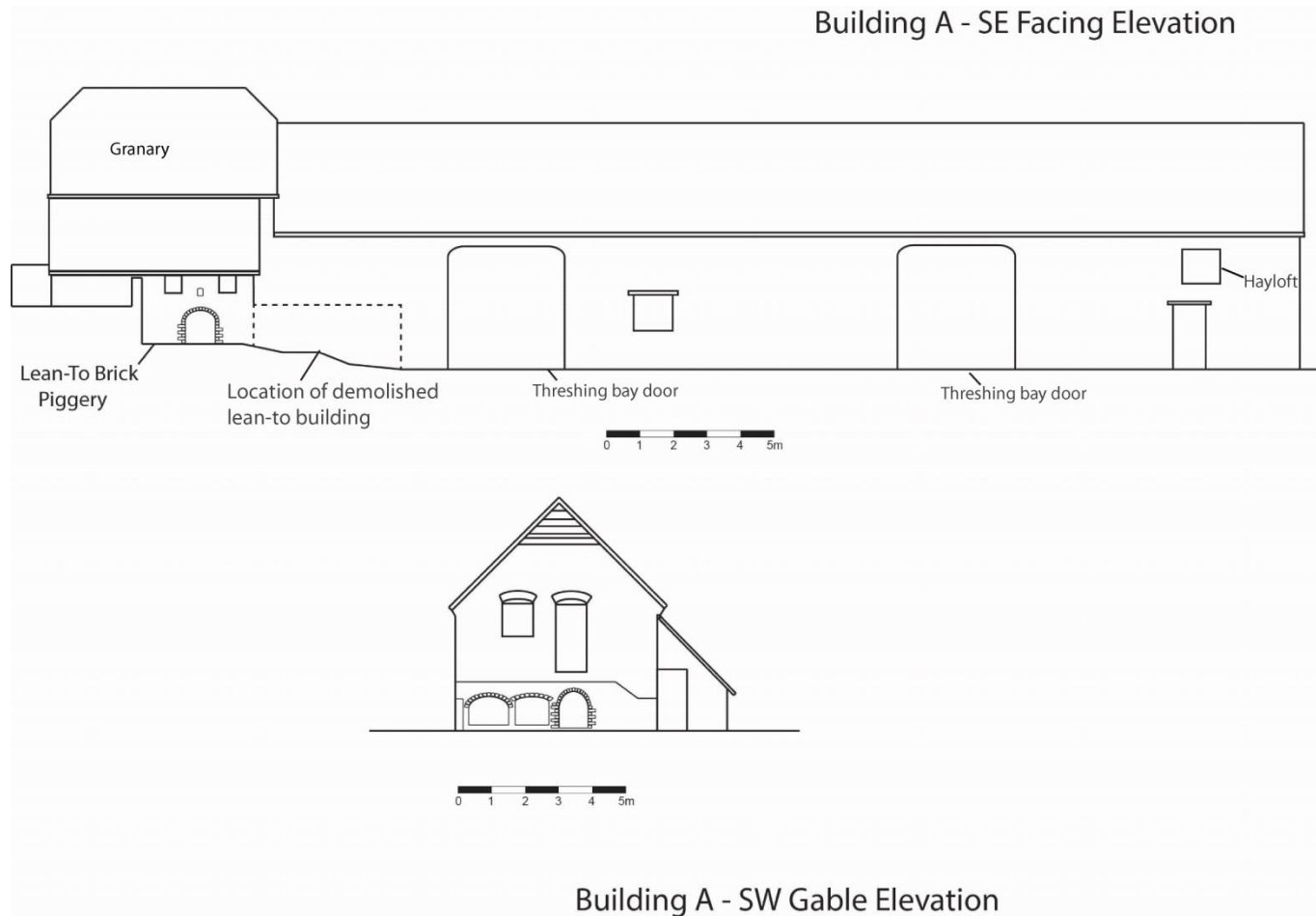


Fig. 9: Building A SE-facing and SW gable elevations



Plate 3: View showing the NE gable end of the threshing barn (Building A) with ventilation slots extending up to the apex of the gable, to the left of which is a section of wall with a round-headed door opening connecting Buildings A & B



Plate 4: Internal view looking NW showing the wagon arch towards the NE end of Building A, with the threshing floor in background, partially truncated by a modern concrete ramp



Plate 5: Internal view looking SE showing the partially intact stone flagged threshing floor at the NE end of Building A



Plate 6: Internal view looking NE showing NE part of Building A with open-truss roof structure, the stone-flagged threshing floor in the foreground and beam slots for loft in NE gable wall



Plate 7: View looking SW showing SW end of threshing barn (Building A) with segmental-arched doorway inserted in buttress to left of picture, with evidence for a low brick partition wall indicated by heavily truncated wall stubs.

Attached to the SW gable end of the threshing barn, on a bank slightly raised above the level of the rest of the building, is a gabled, two-storey structure of brick construction (laid in English Garden Wall Bond), two bays long with a half-hipped roof (formerly tiled), with dentilled decoration at eaves level and along the roofline of the SW gable (*Plate 8*). There is no evidence for a construction break between this structure and the threshing barn, indicating that they formed a single phase of construction.

The gabled two-storey structure appears to have functioned as a granary at first-floor level, with a cartshed below, as evidenced by the two large depressed arches with gauged brick *voussoirs* in the NW-facing elevation (*Plate 9*). Access to the first-floor granary is obtained via a centrally placed, segmental-arched doorway in the SW gable end of the building, reached by an external brick staircase. Located beneath the steps are three small arched recesses (each of a slightly different size and type) of uncertain function.

Within the interior of the granary, the most notable surviving features are the kingpost roof structure, with angled struts connecting the kingpost to the principal rafters, and the intact timber planked floor of the granary, with two hatches leading down to the cartshed at ground floor level (*Plate 10*).



Plate 8: View looking NE showing SW-facing elevation of granary with arched recesses in stairs and lean-to piggery building to right of picture

Attached to the SE -facing elevation of the granary is a brick lean-to structure, 1½ storeys high (with hayloft) with a catslide roof (formerly tiled), which appears to have functioned as a piggery (*Plate 11*). A clear construction break was noted between the granary and the lean-to structure; the brick bonding also differs slightly from that used in the granary and threshing barn, with three rows of stretchers separated by intervening rows of continuous headers.

The principal SE -facing elevation of the lean-to structure comprises a centrally placed, round-arched opening with brick *voussoirs*, with a small arched opening immediately above it and flanked by two rectangular windows at eaves level. A doorway inserted in the SW -facing end of the structure provides access to the hayloft at first-floor level. Within the hayloft is a round-arched doorway (infilled with brick at a later date) providing access to the loft of an adjacent lean-to structure, which has recently been demolished.

Extending in front of the piggery is an enclosed yard, surrounded on three sides by a low brick wall and on the SW side by a higher wall defining the curtilage of the farmhouse, the lower courses being of roughly coursed sandstone rubble masonry while the upper courses are of red brick laid in English Garden Wall Bond.



Plate 9: View looking SE showing NW-facing elevation of granary and cartshed, showing two depressed arched openings with brick voussoirs at ground level



Plate 10: Internal view looking NE showing interior of granary with kingpost roof structure



Plate 11: View looking NW showing SE -facing elevation of lean-to piggy structure with wall stub of demolished lean-to building visible to right of picture

6.2.2 Building B

Building B occupies a slightly sloping site (gently sloping from SW-NE) on the E side of the farmyard, at right-angles to Building A. It comprises a four-bay gabled structure 1½ storeys high, oriented NW-SE with a steeply pitched, tiled roof, with a three-bay, single-storey gabled brick structure attached to the SE gable end. Both structures are predominantly of brick construction (laid in English Garden Wall Bond); however, the NE-facing elevation and the NW gable end wall both rest upon a roughly coursed sandstone masonry plinth (*Plate 12*). The NE- and SW-facing elevations both have dentilled cornices at eaves level and the NW- and SE-facing gables are both dentilled (*Plate 13*).

The four-bay structure appears to have functioned as a stable with hayloft above while the attached single-storey structure appears to have functioned as a cartshed, judging by the extremely broad depressed archways inserted in the SW-facing elevation (*Plate 14*).



Plate 12: View looking S showing the NE walls and NW-facing gable end of stable block (Building B) resting on a roughly coursed masonry plinth, with evidence for demolished structures adjoining both elevations

The principal, SW-facing elevation of the four-bay structure is pierced by four segmental-arched doorways (the wooden doors have since been removed) with a segmental-arched window to the right of the south-easternmost bay. Above this window at the SE end of the elevation is a circular gauged brick pitch-hole for delivering hay to the loft above. Inserted at upper-storey level, above the doorway located to left of centre within the SW-facing elevation, is a flat-arched loading bay door leading to the hayloft (*Plate 13*)



Plate 13: View looking NE showing the principal SW -facing elevation of Building B, showing the four-bay stable block with adjoining three-bay annexe, probably used as a cartshed



Plate 14: View looking NE showing SW -facing elevation of single-storey, three-bay annexe at SE end of Building B

The NE -facing elevation is devoid of fenestration (*Plates 12 & 15*); however, a row of beam slots inserted in the wall below eaves level appear to relate to a four-bay lean-to range (most likely a cow stall), which is marked in this location on the OS 1st edition map of 1883. A gabled roofline and projecting brick wall stub is visible on the NW gable end of Building B; this appears to represent the remains of a single-storey rectangular structure oriented NW-SE (since demolished), which is marked on the OS 1st edition map and subsequent OS mapping until recently (*Plate 15*).



Plate 15: View looking SE showing NW gable end of stable block (Building B), with evidence of a gabled extension indicated by a pitched roofline and projecting brick wall stub

Attached to the SE end of the four-bay stable block is a single-storey gabled range oriented NW-SE, three bays long, largely of brick construction (with the exception of the NE elevation, which rests on a low roughly-coursed sandstone plinth) with dentilled decoration at eaves level. The principal SW -facing elevation consists of two broad depressed arched openings with brick *voussoirs*, probably for carts, with a slightly narrower arched opening in the south-easternmost bay (*Plate 14*). The doors have been removed, although the hinges are extant. Iron cross-ties are visible in the SW- and NE -facing elevations of the range. The SE -facing gable end also has a centrally placed, depressed arched doorway with brick *voussoirs* and imposts (*Plate 16*).

Internally, the four-bay stable block is divided into two separate compartments at ground level, separated by a brick wall. The larger of the two compartments was evidently intended as horse stalls while the smaller self-contained unit at the SE end of the building was used as a 'loose box' for mares about to foal or with foals. The planked ceiling separating the upper and lower storey, carried on substantial wooden beams, has survived intact.

There does not appear to have been any direct communication (via a hatch door) between the ground floor and the hayloft above (which was presumably accessed by an external ladder leading to the loading-bay door). Few

internal fittings appear to have survived, although evidence of a hayrack was noted within the far NE corner of the compartment, as well as horizontal wooden posts inserted in the NW wall, which were probably used for hanging harnesses (*Plate 17*).



Plate 16: View looking NW showing SE gable end of Building B with a centrally placed, depressed arched opening with brick voussoirs and imposts and dentilled decoration along the roofline of the gable

Horizontal wooden timbers and beam-slots inserted in the thickness of the wall were presumably associated with hayracks or mangers, which have since been removed (*Plate 18*). Slots inserted in the beams may be associated with partitions for stalls; however, little visible evidence for internal sub-divisions has survived. The flooring of the compartment, consisting of stone cobbles, has remained largely intact. Within the 'loose box' at the SE end of the four-bay structure, little evidence of internal fixtures or fittings has survived (although beam slots for a hayrack were visible in the NE wall) and no evidence for cobbling was noted. Due to access and safety considerations, it was not possible to investigate the upper storey of Building B more closely. The roofing, which

was originally of tile, has recently been removed, exposing the roof structure, which is of simple 'open-truss' construction with the common rafters carried on a single set of trenched purlins tied into the principal rafters.



Plate 17: Internal view looking NW showing interior of four-bay stable block (Building B) with cobbled flooring and intact hayrack in NE corner



Plate 18: Internal view looking S showing interior of four-bay stable block with segmental-arched doorways



Plate 19: Internal view looking NE showing interior of two-bay compartment (Building B) with later concrete flooring



Plate 20: Internal view looking NW showing partition wall in smaller compartment at SE end of Building B, with blocked doorway to right of picture and generator in centre of picture

The interior of the single-storey, three-bay structure is divided into two separate compartments, with the south-easternmost bay separated from the remaining two bays by a thin brick partition wall. It is possible that the two bays were originally used as a cartshed while the south-easternmost bay may have functioned as a harness room. The interior of the two-bay compartment is whitewashed, with dentilled decoration at eaves level (*Plate 19*).

There originally appears to have been a cobbled floor in this area but this appears to have been largely replaced by a concrete floor at a later date. Two wooden rails attached to the NE wall of the compartment may have been associated with stalls (possibly suggesting a later reuse as a stable), although, significantly, no evidence for hayracks was noted.



Plate 21: View looking SW showing cast iron overhead drive shaft and gear wheel above doorway in smaller compartment of Building B

The smaller compartment at the SE end of the building is devoid of whitewash and has similar dentilled decoration at eaves level. A segmental-arched doorway (since bricked-up) originally linked this room to the two-bay compartment (*Plate 20*). Attached to the upper part of the SW wall is a cast-iron overhead drive-shaft and gear-wheel carried on cast-iron supports attached to the wall, which appears to have extended into the larger compartment through a square opening inserted in top left-hand corner of the partition wall (*Plate 21*).

It is likely that this shaft and gearing mechanism was associated with a rolling mill for processing animal feed, which was probably housed in the larger two-bay compartment. In connection with this, it is worth noting that an oat-kibbling mill is mentioned in the 1904 sale catalogue for Blakeshall Farm. It appears that a generator was subsequently installed in this room to power the internal and external lighting within the complex of farm buildings. The heavily truncated remains of a generator and switch mechanism are attached to the partition wall and may predate the Second World War.

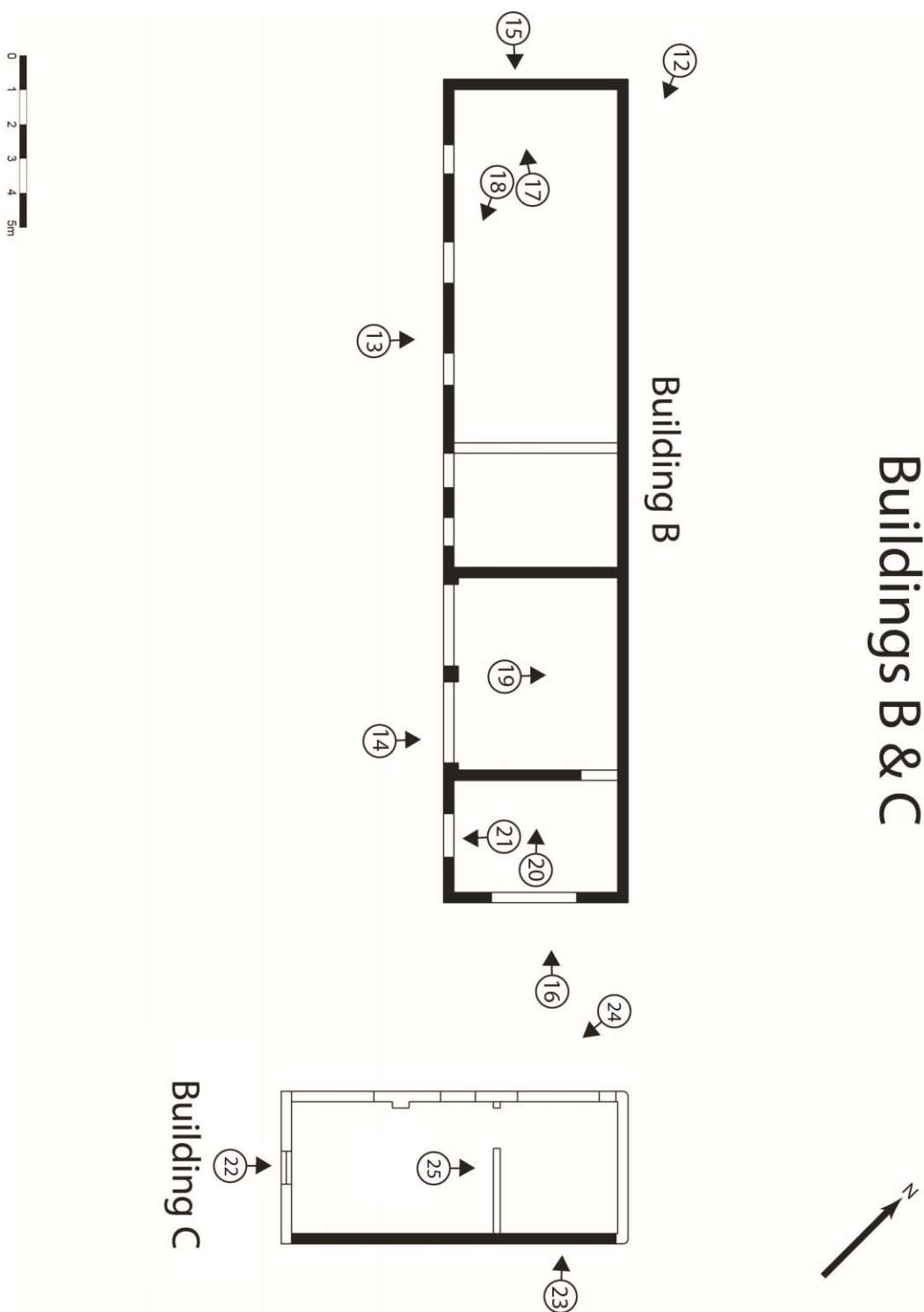


Fig. 10: Buildings B & C: Annotated Photo Plan

6.2.3 Building C

Building C located immediately SE of Building B is a single-storey, three-bay gabled structure oriented NE-SW, which probably functioned as a cowshed. It is first depicted in its present form on the OS 1st edition map of 1883.

The building is of brick-and-masonry construction and displays evidence of having been extensively rebuilt. The earliest fabric of the barn appears to be represented by the brickwork of the SW -facing gable end, the bonding of which (laid in an irregular English Garden Wall Bond) closely resembles the fabric of Buildings A and B; evidence of dentilling is visible along the roofline of the gable (*Plate 22*). A flat-arched window opening is inserted in the SW gable end, just below the apex of the gable.

The other walls of the barn appear to have been substantially reconstructed in two phases. The SE -facing elevation is of roughly-coursed rubble masonry construction bonded with greyish-white cement (with a single brick stringcourse at eaves level) and has been roughly keyed into the brickwork of the SW gable end (*Plate 23*). A later, modern phase of alteration is represented by the NE gable end, which has been reconstructed in dark reddish-brown brick laid in stretcher bond, and the NW -facing elevation which has been entirely rebuilt with concrete breeze blocks, with a broad rectangular door-opening inserted in the north-easternmost bay (*Plate 24*).



Plate 22: View looking NE showing SW gable end of Building C



Plate 23: View looking NW showing SE-facing elevation of Building C



Plate 24: View looking S showing NW-facing elevation of Building C, heavily rebuilt with concrete breezeblocks, and the NE-facing elevation rebuilt in brick



Plate 25: Internal view looking SE showing interior of compartment within Building C showing open-truss roof structure with angled struts connecting the tie-beam to the principal rafters

Internally, the barn is separated into two compartments, the NE bay being separated from the remaining two bays by a brick partition wall (Plate 25). The interior of the both compartments has been whitewashed; no fixtures or fittings of interest were noted. The roof structure is of open-truss construction, with the tie-beam connected by angled struts to the principal rafters and a single set of trenched purlins.

6.2.4 Building D

Building D, situated immediately SW of Building C, comprises two conjoined structures: a broad single-storey gabled range with a low-pitched roof oriented NE-SW, six bays long and of red-brick construction (laid in a regular English Garden Bond), with a single-storey gabled brick structure, three bays long and oriented NW-SE, attached to its NE end. A raised steel cylindrical tank carried on metal struts (presumably a milk storage or cooling tank) is located immediately adjacent to the two buildings. Both structures seem to have been built in a single phase of construction at some point between 1947 and 1954; they first appear on an OS provisional edition 6 -inch map of 1954.

The principal access to the six-bay gabled block, which functioned as a dairy/milking parlour, is via a broad flat-arched doorway (with sliding wooden door) in the NE gable elevation, surmounted by a rectangular 10-pane casement window with a concrete lintel. The fenestration of the NW -facing elevation comprises a centrally-placed flat-arched doorway with concrete lintel flanked to the left by three rectangular 16-pane casement

windows and to the right by a rectangular 10-pane casement window and two 16-pane casements, all with tiled sills. The SW gable window has a single 10-pane casement window with a concrete lintel. The fenestration of the SE -facing elevation comprises five rectangular 16-pane casement windows with a single 10-pane casement window at the NE end of the elevation, all with tiled sills.

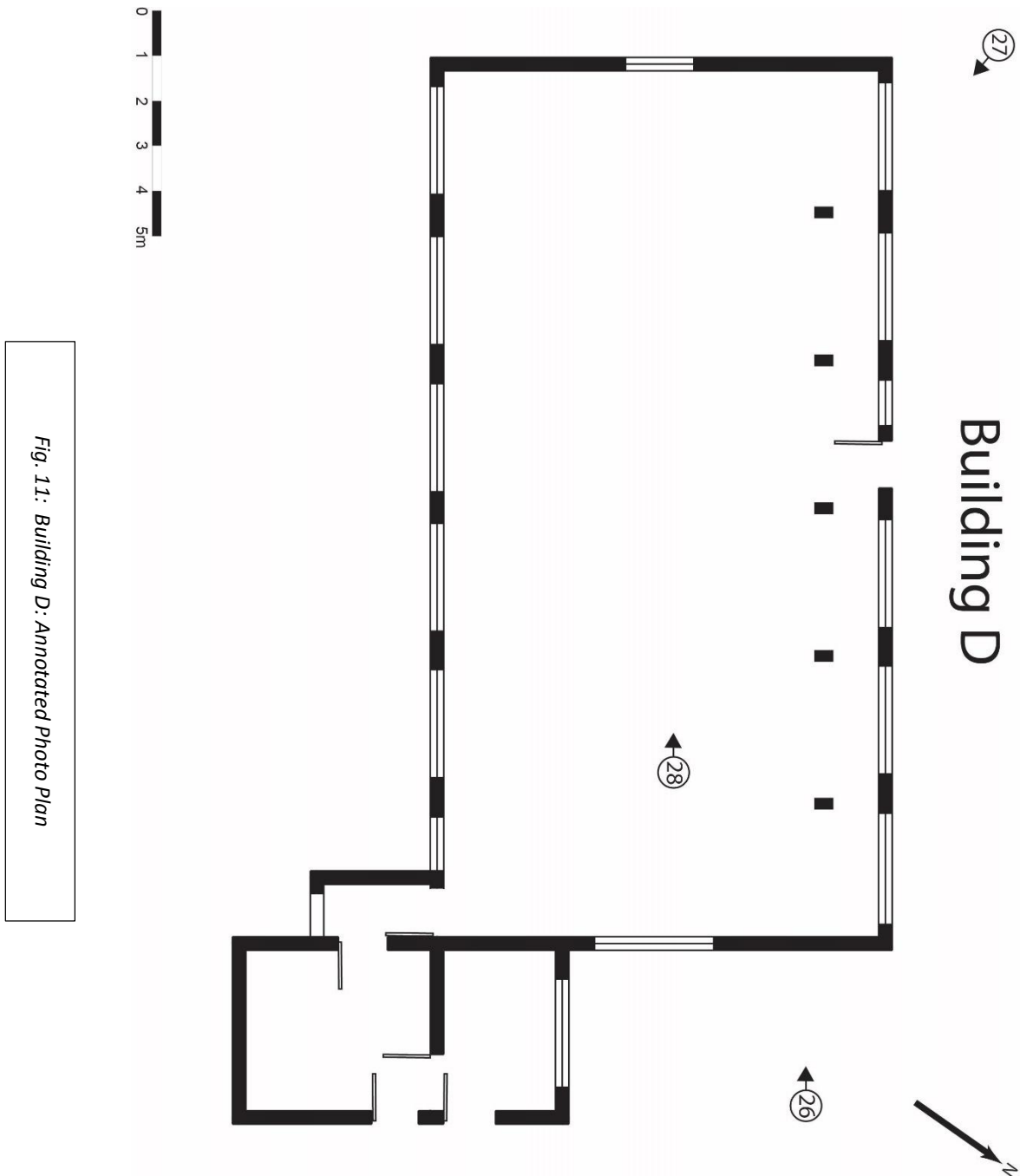


Fig. 11: Building D: Annotated Photo Plan



Plate 26: View looking SW showing NE -facing elevation of milking parlour (Building D), with adjoining block to left of picture



Plate 27: View looking ESE showing NW-facing elevation of milking parlour, with cylindrical tank to rear of building

The three-bay gabled brick building attached to the NE gable end of the milking parlour appears to have functioned as an office or storehouse. The principal NE-facing elevation comprises two centrally-placed, flat-arched doorways with concrete lintels, to the left of which is a rectangular 16-pane casement window with concrete lintel and tiled sill. Another 16-pane casement window is inserted in the NW-facing gable end.

The interior of the six-bay milking parlour, which has been entirely whitewashed, contains few features of interest. The roof structure, which is entirely of steel construction, is of common open-truss type with three sets of purlins carried on the principal rafters. The layout of the milking parlour consists of a central aisle with flanking metal stalls and concrete feeding troughs (*Plate 28*).

The interior of the adjoining three-bay structure is arranged into two rooms, both of which are coated in whitewash. No surviving fixtures or fittings of interest were noted.



Plate 28: View looking SW showing interior of milking parlour (Building D) with steel roof trusses

6.2.5 Farmhouse

A general photographic record was made of the adjacent farmhouse at Blakeshall Farm, a red-brick farmhouse of mid-19th -century date and contemporary with the majority of the adjacent complex of outbuildings. The bonding of the brickwork is similar to that used in the threshing barn, granary and stable block. The farmhouse comprises a three-storey block with a gabled roof (of Welsh blue slate) with chimneystacks at either end, to the rear of which is a double-pile gabled range, two storeys in height and also roofed in slate (*Plates 29 & 30*).

It should be noted that no photographs were taken of the interior, which is still in occupation at this time.



Plate 29: View looking NW showing the principal SE-facing elevation of the farmhouse at Blakeshall Farm



Plate 30: View looking SW showing the NE -facing elevation of the farmhouse with double-pile gabled block to rear

6.3 Summary Description of Phasing

Investigation of the complex of outbuildings at Blakeshall Farm, Wolverley revealed evidence of three distinct phases of construction extending from c.1850 up to the mid-20th century.

6.3.1 Phase 1

The original construction phase comprising the farmhouse and Buildings A, B and C may be assigned to the mid-19th century, based upon architectural and cartographic evidence.

The farmhouse and associated complex of outbuildings at Blakeshall Farm, comprising a threshing barn, granary and cartshed, stabling and cattle shed, represent a reasonably complete example of a mid-Victorian 'model farm', which appears largely to have been constructed in a single phase, probably at some time between 1838 and 1850 (when the earliest documented reference to the farm occurs).

The building of the farm was almost certainly carried out under the auspices of William Hancocks, then owner of the Blakeshall Estate, and may well be contemporary with his rebuilding of Blakeshall Hall in 1845. The substantial nature of the threshing barn suggests that the farm, when originally established, was primarily focused on arable cultivation rather than livestock husbandry, which appears to be confirmed by the particulars given in an advertisement for sale of implements and stock at Blakeshall Farm dated 1850, which focuses almost exclusively on crops, including wheat, barley and turnips.

6.3.2 Phase 2

This secondary phase of activity is represented by the addition of the lean-to brick piggery and enclosed yard at the SW end of the SE -facing elevation of the large threshing barn (Building A). Evidence was noted for a vertical construction break between the threshing barn and the piggery, as well as a noticeable difference in the brick bonding used in the construction of the latter building.

The piggery and yard appear to have been constructed at some point between c.1840-50 (when the farm was first built) and 1883, as it appears on the OS 1st edition map of that date.

The addition of the lean-to brick structure suggests a diversification of farming activity towards the end of the 19th century, with a greater emphasis on livestock husbandry, and this appears to be confirmed by the evidence of a sale catalogue for implements and stock at Blakeshall Farm dated 1904 which mentions a large herd of sheep and smaller numbers of pigs and cattle.

6.3.3 Phase 3

This modern phase of activity is primarily represented by the construction of the dairy (Building D) to the SW of the main complex of outbuildings and may be dated to between 1947 and 1954, based on the evidence of late 1940s RAF vertical photographs and an Ordnance Survey 6-inch map of 1954. The construction of the dairy complex represents a distinct shift in farming activity in the years immediately following the Second World War,

from a mixed-farming regime (both arable and livestock husbandry) to dairy farming. The NW -facing wall and the NE gable end of Building C also appear to have been substantially rebuilt in the mid-late 20th century.

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(Newspaper records dating back to c.1800 were consulted at the BL Newspaper Archives and the Worcestershire Record Office including copies of the Worcestershire Chronicle, Worcester Journal and the Birmingham Daily Post)

9 Cartography and Aerial Photography

(All maps were obtained from Worcestershire Record Office unless otherwise stated)

Plan of the Blakeshall Estate – 1778

OS surveyor's drawing of Wolverley and district – 1815

Tithe map of Wolverley parish – 1838

OS 1st edition 25 inch map – 1883

OS 2nd edition 25 inch map – 1902

OS 3rd edition 25 inch map – 1924

OS provisional edition 6 inch map - 1954

OS 1:2500 map - 1971

(Aerial photographs of the study area were consulted using collections held at the Worcestershire Record Office and the National Monuments Record)

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