LAND AT 52 LONDON ROAD
SANDY
BEDFORDSHIRE

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

Albion archaeology

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Preface

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The building recording was undertaken by Mark Phillips BA, who is the author of this report. The project was managed on behalf of Albion Archaeology by Drew Shotliff MA BA (Hons), MCIfA.

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Structure of this report

Section 1 is an introductory chapter giving the background to the report. Historical background information derived from historical documents and secondary sources is presented in Section 2. A description of the buildings forms Section 3 with building analysis presented in Section 4. The bibliography forms Section 5.

Figures and images are included at the end of the report.

Version History

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Project

Planning permission (CB/14/04671/FULL) was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the conversion and extension of two barns to create two dwellings and construct one new dwelling on land to the rear of 52 London Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire. The planning permission contains a condition (12) requiring a staged programme of archaeological investigation and a further condition (13) requiring a programme of building recording for historic agricultural buildings in Plots 1 and 2. Condition 13 states:

> *No demolition of any buildings shall take place until a written scheme of building recording for historic agricultural buildings (identified as Plots 1 and 2) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said development shall only be implemented in full accordance with the approved building recording scheme.*
>
> *Reason: To record and advance understanding of the archaeological and historic resource which will be unavoidably destroyed as a consequence of the development (CSDMP Policy CS15).*

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Explorer Properties Ltd to prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) and to undertake the building recording. The WSI (Albion 2015) was produced after consulting the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) for advice on requirements for building recording and archaeological investigation.

This report presents the results of the historic building recording. The results of the archaeological investigations form the subject of a separate report.

1.2 Site Location and Description

Sandy is a small town in the east of Bedfordshire. It is situated on the eastern bank of the River Ivel in a gap in the hills of the Greensand Ridge. The A1 Great North Road runs alongside the western edge of Sandy.

The development area (DA) lies close to the eastern side of London Road at its junction with West Road (Figure 1). London Road is a section of the original Great North Road that has been bypassed by the modern A1 dual carriageway.

The DA is on land to the rear of 52 London Road, a Grade II listed 17th-century house. The land has recently been subdivided, separating the house from the DA. In the past the DA was part of a larger market garden plot and the two agricultural buildings that currently occupy the site and form the subject of this report were situated in a yard with other buildings to the rear of the house on the London Road frontage.

To the south of the DA along London Road lie a number of 18th- and 19th-century listed and unlisted buildings, including the King's Arms public house. To the

north, east and west the site is surrounded by modern, 20th-century housing. The DA is centred on NGR TL 16550 49430 and lies on level ground at *c.* 25m OD.

1.3 Project Objectives

The purpose of the building recording is to record structures related to 19th- and early 20th-century market gardening, which played a major role in shaping the landscape of the Ivel Valley. Onion drying sheds are not commonly found outside Bedfordshire and the example at London Road is in the heartland of their distribution. The study of post-medieval agriculture in Bedfordshire has been identified as a regional research objective (Oake 2007, 16). Onion sheds have themselves been identified as an important class of structure within rural Bedfordshire (Edgeworth 2007, 135).

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 General Historical Background

52 London Road is a Grade II listed building (HER 7536, NHLE 1113709). In the list description it is dated to the 17th century. It is in roughcast on timber-frame with an old clay tile roof and consists of one storey with attics. The building is aligned with its gable end to the road. A small 19th-century ground floor extension lies on the southern side of the building. The building is first shown on the 1799 map of Sandy.

2.2 Historical Maps

Historical maps held by the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives Service chart the development of this part of Sandy from 1799 onwards.

2.2.1 1799 map of Girtford (Figure 2)

The 1799 map shows the DA as part of one long elongated plot of land owned by Francis Pym Esq., who also owns several neighbouring plots. A number of buildings occupy the area near the street frontage. One of these must be the current timber-framed building as it is said to date to the 17th century; however, it is difficult to identify. The other buildings on the plot could either be further residential dwellings or agricultural buildings; they lie adjacent to and set back from the road.

The majority of neighbouring buildings lie along London Road to the south of the DA. Amongst others the map shows the King's Arms public house and the Post Office building. A plot adjacent to the PDA in the north was also built upon.

2.2.2 1833 map of the estate of Francis Pym Esq. (Figure 3)

This map shows the DA more clearly. Some of the buildings surrounding the Grade II listed building in 1799 have disappeared and the house is now adjacent to two parallel buildings to its north. Whether one of them is the current barn alongside the roadside is unclear. The buildings on the neighbouring plot to the south also seem to have changed from the earlier map and may represent re-builds. The large elongated plot, belonging to Francis Pym, is unchanged from the earlier map.

2.2.3 First and second edition 25-inch OS maps, 1884–1901 (Figures 4 and 5)

The first edition 25-inch OS map, published in 1884, shows the buildings and plot in considerable detail. The buildings are coloured in red to indicate brick or stone construction or grey indicating timber or iron. Open-fronted buildings are indicated by the use of a dashed line for the open part. The map also indicates the presence of trees and other details such as wells, etc.

On the street frontage the plan shows the house and a building to its north which corresponds to the weatherboarded barn that still occupies the site. Within the DA the northern part is filled by trees and the southern half contains buildings. The northernmost building occupies the same footprint as the large weatherboarded barn that currently occupies the site. The building on the plan is coloured red to indicate

stone or brick construction. The southernmost part of the DA contains buildings shaded in grey, indicating timber or iron construction. One of these is an open-fronted building in the same position and alignment as the cart shed that currently occupies the site. Other buildings which have since gone are shown to the west and south-east of the open-fronted building.

The second edition 25-inch OS map of 1901 shows the site largely unchanged. A small outside toilet was added in between the cottage and the agricultural buildings to the south and a similarly small building lies near the northern site boundary. The latter is no longer in existence, unless it is the same as the small shed currently in the north-western corner of the site.

No third edition 25-inch map exists for this part of Sandy.

2.3 Historical Records

Sandy developed as a town due to the market garden industry and good transport lines north and south, in particular after the construction of the railway in the mid-19th century. Many of the properties along London Road had a smallholding of around an acre attached, in which the inhabitants worked as market gardeners.

In 1927 the property at 52 London Road was assessed as a result of the Rating and Valuation Act 1925 and was recorded as being occupied by Seth Martin, a market gardener. Seth Martin occupied *c.* 2 acres of market gardening land adjoining the premises and the land valuation recorded: a timber shed; a large brick, timber and slated barn with a loft; a timber and tiled three-bay cart shed and onion loft; a timber and tiled stables; pig sty; fowl house; and hay loft (BLARS 2010).

Of these buildings the large barn and the cart shed with onion loft still survive and form the subject of this report.

3. BUILDING RECORDING: DESCRIPTION

3.1 Methodology

Throughout the project the standards set in the CI*f*A's *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings and structures* (2014) and English Heritage's *Understanding Historic Buildings* (2006a) have been adhered to. All work has been done in accordance with the CI*f*A's *Code of conduct*. Terminology for describing timber structures follows the CBA glossary (Alcock et al. 1996).

In line with English Heritage (now Historic England) historic building survey definitions (English Heritage 2006a), this survey has been undertaken to English Heritage Level 3 and in accordance with the agreed WSI.

The survey comprised an examination of the buildings and a photographic record. Where necessary annotations and measurements were added to drawings provided by the architect with additional notes and sketches. New drawings based on the architect's survey were prepared for the report. These comprised plans, sections and key elevations. The photographic record consists of high-resolution digital images and medium-format monochrome images. The selected digital images which accompany the text have been reproduced at a lower resolution in order to ensure digital versions of the report are of a manageable size.

The building survey was undertaken on 4th September 2015.

The text below, in conjunction with figures and images bound at the end of the report, forms the description of the buildings. Figure 6 is a drawing of the cart shed and extensions with a cross-section and north elevation. Figure 7 is a drawing of the barn with a cross-section and south elevation. The location of the internal ground floor images is given in Figures 8 and 9. Any dimensions given for individual sections of the buildings are internal measurements.

3.2 The Buildings / General Site Layout

Buildings covered by the present survey comprise a barn and a cart shed with later extensions (Figure 1). The barn is located in the centre of the plot and is aligned east-west. The cart shed is situated approximately 6.5m to the south of the barn and is also aligned east-west. Evidence from historical maps indicates that the buildings stood on either side of a small yard area which extended eastwards from the London Road frontage.

3.3 Cart Shed and Extensions

The cart shed comprises an open-fronted ground floor with a loft above. Extensions have been added on the east, south and west sides; however, the western extension has been demolished and is not considered separately below. See Figure 6 for detailed drawings of the cart shed.

3.3.1 Cart shed

The cart shed is 7.93m long by 3.86m wide internally with approximately 2.2m of headroom to the underside of the joists (Images 1–17).

3.3.1.1 Primary structure: ground floor

The primary structure is a three-bay cart shed with an open-front on the north side (Image 4). As first built, it would have been a fully timber-framed structure standing on a brick sill wall. During later alterations the walls were infilled with brick; parts of the frame were removed during this process.

The sill wall extends around the east, west and south sides of the cart shed. It is 450mm high and 220mm thick, constructed in monk bond with a row of plain headers forming the top course. The bricks are hand-made red bricks measuring *c*. 220mm x 110mm x 67mm. Those on the external faces of the wall have a black, tarred finish.

The principal elements of the frame consist of four trusses which form the end walls and the two internal bay divisions (Images 9–12). Parts of the trusses in the end walls and any intermediate wall-framing have been lost when the walls were later replaced in brick. The trusses forming the bay divisions survive intact with the posts in the rear wall embedded in the later brickwork.

The trusses consist of full height wall posts (190mm x 190mm) in the front and rear walls, joined by a transverse beam (230mm deep x 180mm) with straight braces below the beam. The braces are tenoned and pegged into the beams. The junction between the beams and wall posts consists of a tenon and diminished haunch with a through-bolt (Image 11). The bolt has a flattened section which is nailed in a recess in the underside of the beam. The remaining section passes through the post and is fixed on the external face with a square nut. The openings in the front of the cart shed consist of a beam supported by curved braces on either side of the opening. The braces have pegged fixings.

The presence of the sill wall indicates that the ground floor would have been enclosed on its east, west and south sides; however, nothing remains of the intermediate wall-framing between the principal posts at ground floor level. It would have been clad in weatherboard. A truncated remnant of weatherboard cladding remained at the time of the survey on the west face of the north-west corner post.

Assembly marks are incised on the inner faces of the beams and the straight braces to either side of the central bay — II on the eastern bay division and III on the western one.

3.3.1.1 Primary structure: loft

The loft over the cart shed is an attic storey with low side walls (Images 14–17). It forms an open space in three bays, defined by open frames on the bay divisions. At the time of the survey it was accessed by a ladder in the south extension via a small opening immediately east of the eastern bay division.

The open frames on the bay divisions consist of a pair of queen struts to which the collar beam is nailed (Image 15). Interrupted tie-beams are joined to the queen struts with a shallow dovetail join and nails; the frame is reinforced with diagonal bracing.

The roof is supported on equal-sized rafters on purlins set into notches in the collar beams. Diagonal braces are nailed to the underside of the rafters in the end bays.

The floor consists of narrow timber slats over longitudinal joists with an opening for a trap door in the central bay.

The wall structure remains unaltered in the north wall (Images 16 and 17). It consists of lightweight studs and primary bracing with a pair of diagonal braces in each bay. The braces in the end bays extend up to the wall plate and those in the centre bay end at a stud.

In the east gable end the tie-beam is interrupted by a door opening flanked by windows (Image 14). The ledged and braced door has ventilation gaps between the planks. The windows have been made by fitting glass into the existing wall studs. The west gable contains a two-light metal-framed window, the upper part of which has been cut into the collar beam, suggesting it may be a later addition (Image 15).

3.3.2 Cart shed: later alterations

The east and west walls and the central bay of the south wall have been infilled in Fletton brick. The two end walls each contain a window with the remains of roughly constructed wooden frames and the infill in the south wall has a central door opening.

A line of four concrete bases constructed against the rear wall supported line shafting in the ground floor of the cart shed (Image 12). Power for the line shaft would have been via a belt drive from the south extension running through a narrow opening in the wall. A patch of cement above the opening carries the date 1943, which was scratched into the concrete when it was wet (Image 13).

The power from the line shafting was taken into the loft over the cart shed. A narrow wooden frame against the rear wall in the central bay carries bearings for a shaft.

3.3.3 Cart shed: south extension

This brick extension was constructed against the rear (south) wall of the cart shed (Images 5, 7 and 18–20). As initially constructed it was 6m long, stopping short of the east end of the cart shed. At a later date a small extension was added to fill in this gap.

The south extension is in Fletton brick with a corrugated roof. When it was built the south wall of the cart shed was replaced in brick, leaving only the two posts on the bay divisions embedded within the brick wall.

The floor is concrete with a lower eastern section with steps down from the east and west sides.

A door located towards the west end of the north wall links the cart shed and extension. The lower part of the door opening has been cut through the original sill wall of the cart shed.

Windows comprise a single window in the west end and a row of three in the south wall, all with concrete lintels. The east window at the time of the survey was roughly framed in wood with plastic sheeting. The south windows are metal-framed casements. Each of the south windows is flanked by single-thickness panels of plain red brick (not Fletton), suggesting that the initial design was modified to take narrower windows (Images 18 and 20).

A short section added to the east end of the south extension is marked by a straight join in the brickwork and the use of mixed re-used bricks.

3.3.3.1 Fittings

A single piece of machinery remains in the western part of the extension. It consists of a vertical metal pillar with pulley wheels and a small horizontal table, possibly a belt driven band saw. In the lower part of the floor four heavy bolts embedded in the concrete floor form a square pattern for a machine base, possibly a motor to drive the machinery in this compartment and the line shafting in the cart shed. Steel RSJs in the roof of this compartment provide no support for the lightweight corrugated roof and were probably for a hoist to lift machinery.

3.3.4 Cart shed: east extension

An approximately square extension was attached to the east side of the cart shed and north extension (Images 3, 5 and 8). It measures 6.2m north-south by 6m east-west.

It is open-sided along the north and south sides. The east end is enclosed by a vertical plank wall made from re-used scaffold boards. It has a mono pitch roof sloping down to the south. The structure consists of lightweight steel trusses with their north ends ledged on a RSJ beam, supported at either end by brick pillars made from a mixture of Fletton and older re-used bricks. The roof is covered with corrugated sheets and the steep north end of the roof trusses are covered with vertical planks. At the time of the survey, the extension served as a storage shelter for a variety of materials, including some architectural salvage.

3.4 Barn

The barn is a timber-framed structure of three bays stood on a brick sill wall (Figure 7 and Images 21–33). It is aligned east-west with internal measurements of 10.24m long by 5.18m wide. Access is via double doors in the south wall. Other openings consist of high-level doors in the east and west gables, a glazed window in the south side of the west bay and two small access hatches above the level of the sill wall (one in the centre of the north wall and the other in the northern part of the east wall).

3.4.1.1 Exterior

The brick sill wall is broken only by the double doors in the centre of the south wall. Externally it has a black tarred finish and the inside face appears to have been whitewashed at some time. The wall is in monk bond using a mixture of red and light yellow (Gault) brick. The Gault bricks were used for the headers in the main part of the wall giving a semi-chequerboard effect, but this has been obscured by the tarred finish. A course of chamfered Gault bricks laid edgewise forms an exterior chamfer at the top of the sill wall.

The barn is clad mainly in weatherboard with some areas of narrower shiplap (Images 21–24). Most of the cladding has dark tarred/creosote finish apart from the weatherboard in the upper part of the north side which has a white finish. The shiplap has been used to clad the lower part of the south wall in the west bay and also for the west end up to eaves level. At the top of the north and south walls, above the level of the wall plate, the wall is clad with narrow horizontal slats to provide some ventilation to the building. The roof is in slate with grey ridge tiles.

3.4.1.2 Internal structure

The timber frame rests on a sill beam on the sill wall. Principal wall posts measuring 150mm square are located at the corners, at the bay divisions and centrally in the end walls.

Evidence for the intermediate wall framing is obscured by a modern inserted lining that covers most of walls. In areas that have not been obscured, in the gable ends and above the door opening in the south wall, the framing consists of primary bracing with closely set studs (Images 28 and 29). Examination through a small hole where a section of the lining had been removed showed that the studs are 110mm deep from the inside of the weatherboard to the modern lining. Where the studs are visible in the upper part of the wall they appear to be approximately 70mm wide and 110mm deep.

The roof is supported by king-post trusses on the bay divisions (Images 29 and 30). The trusses have single raking braces. The lower ends of the rafters are through-bolted to the tie-beam. The base of the king-post is fixed to the tie-beam with a stirrup strap. Straight braces extend below the tie-beams to the wall posts. These are reinforced with metal rods on the underside of the brace, extending through the post and tie-beam at either end.

The roof is boarded with battens and slates above. Narrow gaps visible between the boards might be intentional ventilation slots rather than a result of shrinkage. The boards are supported by a ridge plank, double purlins and a pole plate at the eaves. The pole plate is halved into the back of the tie-beams and supported by a series of short studs rising from the wall plate.

3.4.1.3 Doors and windows

The only ground level access is provided by double doors in the centre of the south wall (Images 31 and 32). The doors are of ledged and braced construction. All parts of the framework on the rear of the doors have a plain chamfer, which is run out where the ledges and braces meet. Strap hinges with parallel sides and square

ends are fixed to the doors with a bolt through each plank. In a reverse to the usual arrangement, the domed heads of the bolts are on the inside face and the square nuts on the exterior. A wicket gate is visible on the inside of the eastern door, but was obscured by plywood sheeting on the exterior. On the inner face of the east door post the number 1871 is painted in red and underlined (Image 33).

Taking-in doors are located high up in the east and west gable ends (Images 23, 24 and 28). These are ledged and braced plank doors with strap hinges matching those on the double doors in the south wall.

Small loading hatches are located immediately above the sill wall in the middle of the north wall and the northern half of the east wall (Images 22, 23 and 26). The hatch in the north wall is ledged and braced and hung with strap hinges similar to those used on the doors described above. Internally this hatch lines-up with a saw table which extends almost halfway into the central bay. The hatch in the east wall is hung with modern T-shaped hinges. Internally it was obscured by modern lining.

A single window is located in the south wall of the west bay. At the time of the survey this was obscured by plywood panels. The architect's drawings of the building in its existing condition have been used as the basis of the window indicated on the figure. This part of the wall is clad in shiplap and probably represents a later repair associated with the insertion of this window.

3.4.1.4 Fittings

A mezzanine floor has been inserted in north half to the western bay (Images 25 and 26). At the east end this is supported by a cross-beam in line with a bay division. The beam is supported on posts inserted next to the principal wall posts. The joists are supported on pressed-metal joist hangers and the floor is in plywood, indicating that it is a modern addition.

Line shafting runs along the back wall in the western half of the barn (Images 25 and 26). The bearings for the shaft are fixed to a short wooden post set in the floor. The shaft has a wheel for a belt drive at its west end, indicating the probable location of the motive power. The east end of the shaft runs under a wooden saw table, indicating the probable main use of the line shafting. The saw table extends southwards from the hatch in the north wall, suggesting that long baulks of timber could be fed into the bay from outside.

4. BUILDING ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The house on the street frontage of 52 London Road is a timber-framed building which is believed to date from the 17th century. Historical maps dating from 1799 and 1833 (Figures 2 and 3) indicate that the house and an extended plot to the rear were owned by Francis Pym Esquire. It is possible that the plot was being cultivated as a tenanted small holding at this time.

4.2 Late Nineteenth Century

The first edition 25-inch OS map (published in 1884) is the first map that shows the present barn and cart shed. It shows the barn as the only building on the north side of an east-west aligned yard. The cart shed is shown as part of a group of other buildings, partly surrounding a small yard at the rear of the cart shed. On the map the barn is shaded red to indicate stone or brick construction, which is presumably a mapping error.

The barn is of three bays with double doors in the south side. It is made with regular, machine-sawn timber with iron rods used to reinforce the braces below the tie-beams. The materials and structural design are consistent with a construction date during the late 19th century. Map evidence shows that the barn was present by 1884. The number or date of 1871 is painted in red paint on the inner side of the eastern door frame. This could record the construction date but is more open to interpretation than the more regularly encountered form of dates, such as date stones or inscribed dates. It is not clear if the high level doors in the gables were part of the initial construction.

The cart shed, as built, was a timber-framed building of three bays with an open-fronted ground floor and an onion drying loft above. The ground floor walls would have been clad in weatherboard. The loft was accessed via a first floor door in the north end of the building. The loft floor and part of its north wall are made from narrow timber slats. Irregular weatherboard on the rest of the north wall appears to be a later addition and any cladding on the south wall has been replaced with modern brick infill. It is likely that both walls would have been clad with timber slats. This type of slatted construction is typical of a class of specialised agricultural building found in Bedfordshire that was used to dry onions. The evidence from the first edition OS map indicates that this building was in existence by 1884. The materials used in the cart shed are similar to those of the barn, suggesting a similar construction date.

4.3 Twentieth Century

An assessment made in 1927 shows that 52 London Road had an attached small holding of *c*. 2 acres and was used for market gardening (BLARS 2010). The assessment records mention the barn and the cart shed. The barn is described as a large brick, timber and slated barn with a loft. This loft should not be confused with the late 20th-century mezzanine floor in the west bay of the barn. It is possible that a floor could have been laid over the tie-beams and would have been accessed from the high-level doors in the gable ends. However, it was not possible

to inspect the upper part of the barn for possible evidence of a former floor. The slatted section of wall cladding at the top of the side walls could have provided ventilation for a loft.

The 1927 assessment describes the cart shed as a timber and tiled three-bay cart shed and onion loft suggesting that it remained largely unaltered at this time.

In the mid-20th century extensions were added on the west, south and east sides of the cart shed. The weatherboard cladding and parts of the frame were removed. The walls were replaced up to eaves level in Fletton brickwork, built on top of the original sill wall. The southern extension is the most substantial, forming a workshop with metal-framed windows in its south side and a sunken concrete floor with fixings for machinery. An opening for a drive belt in the wall between the cart shed and south extension carries the date 1943, scratched into the cement whilst still wet. Machinery installed in the buildings includes what appears to be a band-saw in the south extension, line shafting in the cart shed with a frame for a pulley taking power into the loft above, possibly to power a winch. The remains of line shafting also remain in the barn, possibly installed around the same time. This would have powered a table saw located against the north wall. A small hatch installed in the north wall is presumably for feeding timber through the saw and a similar hatch in the east end wall of the barn may have served the same purpose. The evidence suggests that the buildings were extended and converted for a light industrial use which involved processing timber. The date scratched into the concrete suggests the south extension was added during World War II. All of the construction details of the building are consistent with this date.

4.4 Historical Context and Significance

The origins of commercial market gardening in Bedfordshire have been traced to the mid-17th century, beginning around Sandy (Beavington 1965). The stimulus for the industry is likely to have been the combination of suitable soils and the expanding London market, which was accessed by the Great North Road. The main crop appears to have carrots during the 17th century but these were overtaken by onions and cucumbers by the late 18th century.

The industry expanded during the 19th century with the construction of the Great Northern Railway in 1851 which linked Sandy and Biggleswade to London (Beavington 1963, 89). This provided a source of cheap stable manure from the capital and gave access to the market created by the capital's rapidly expanding population. The focus of activity at this time remained within the Ivel valley.

Changes during the early 1900s included the expansion of market gardening to the Great Ouse terraces around Willington and Cople and also along the Greensand ridge to the west of the Ivel in the Maulden area. Expansion into the Maulden area was made possible by the advent of the lorry which provided transport for areas further from the rail network (Beavington1963, 89). Production of onions declined dramatically from the 1900s onwards due to an increase of cheaper foreign imports and Brussels sprouts and other brassica crops became increasingly important in Bedfordshire. During the 20th century production shifted away from small-scale market gardening towards more extensive farming methods.

Onion drying sheds and lofts represent a specialised agricultural building type associated with market gardening in Bedfordshire. The buildings take various forms. Defining characteristic are the slatted floors, and in most cases slatted or louvered walls, which were designed to allow the free flow of air to dry the crop.

A few have been subject to detailed recording. Three buildings summarised below represent the most commonly encountered types.

A barn off Church Street in Langford contained an onion loft. The building was a 3-bay timber barn built between 1900 and 1921 (Albion Archaeology 2010). A loft in the west bay was of planked construction and the slightly longer eastern bay contained an onion loft with slatted floors on two levels and an internal slatted wall dividing it from the central bay. The exterior showed no signs of its specialised function.

An onion drying shed at Valley Farm, Steppingley Road, Flitwick was recorded before demolition (Albion Archaeology 2011). The farm dates from the early 20th century. The onion shed was 8m long and 2.7m wide, standing on brick piers with slatted floor, walls and doors with weatherboard in the upper part of the gables and a pan tile roof.

The Old Onion Drying Shed at Hill Lane in Old Warden was probably built shortly after 1901 (Clark 2000). This was an L-shaped building that was erected by the Shuttleworth Estate to serve a pair of estate cottages with small holdings. The two matching wings each contained an open-fronted cart shed and stable with an onion loft above the cart shed and hay loft over the stable. The arrangement seen here and at London Road, Sandy utilises the open-fronted ground floor space to ventilate the slatted floor above.

The onion sheds and lofts in Bedfordshire represent a specialised agricultural building type which was built during the 19th and earlier 20th century. Modern production methods have rendered these buildings redundant. The open, lightweight construction is prone to decay if not adequately maintained and these buildings represent a diminishing historical resource.

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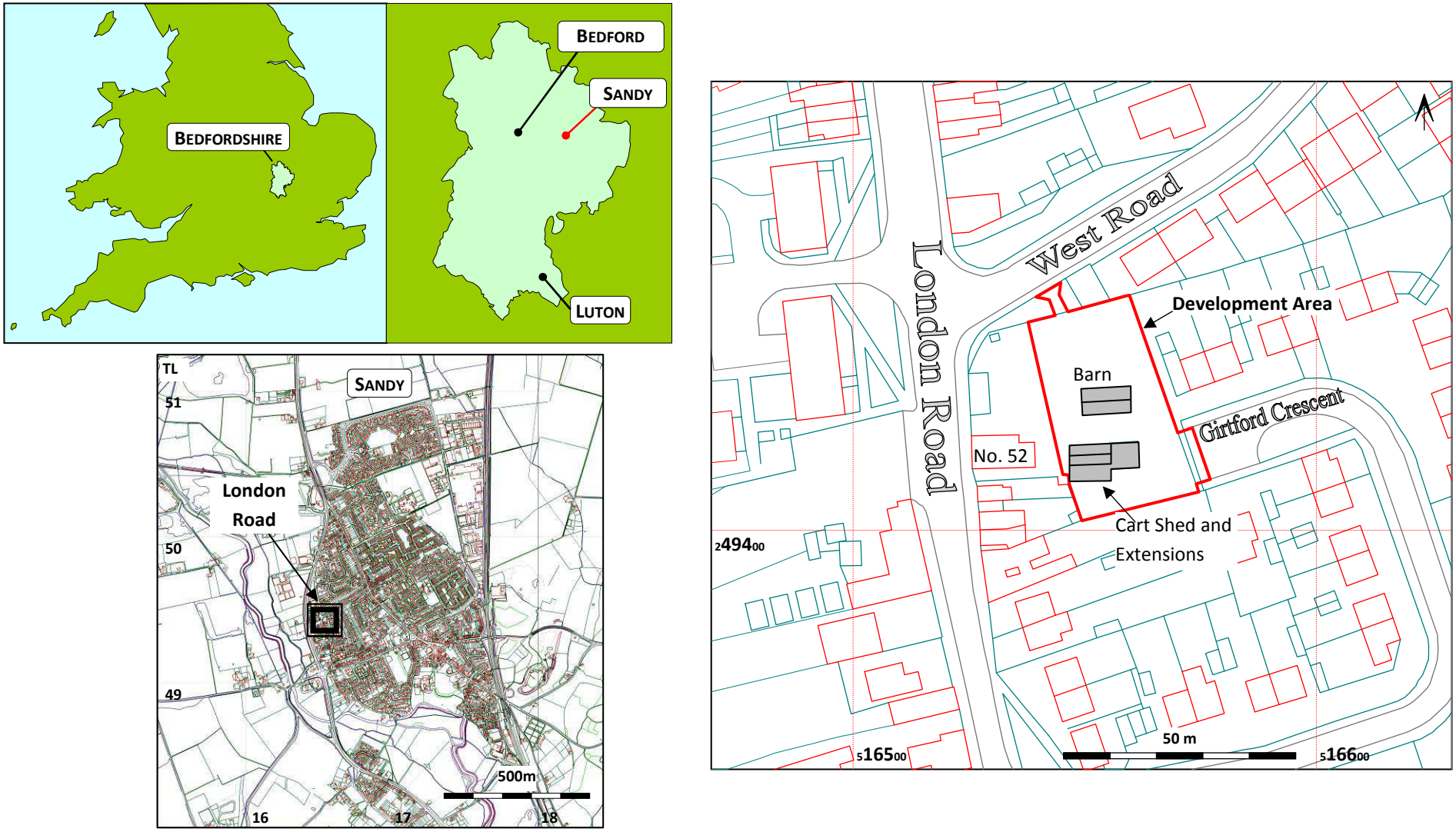


Figure 1: Site location plan

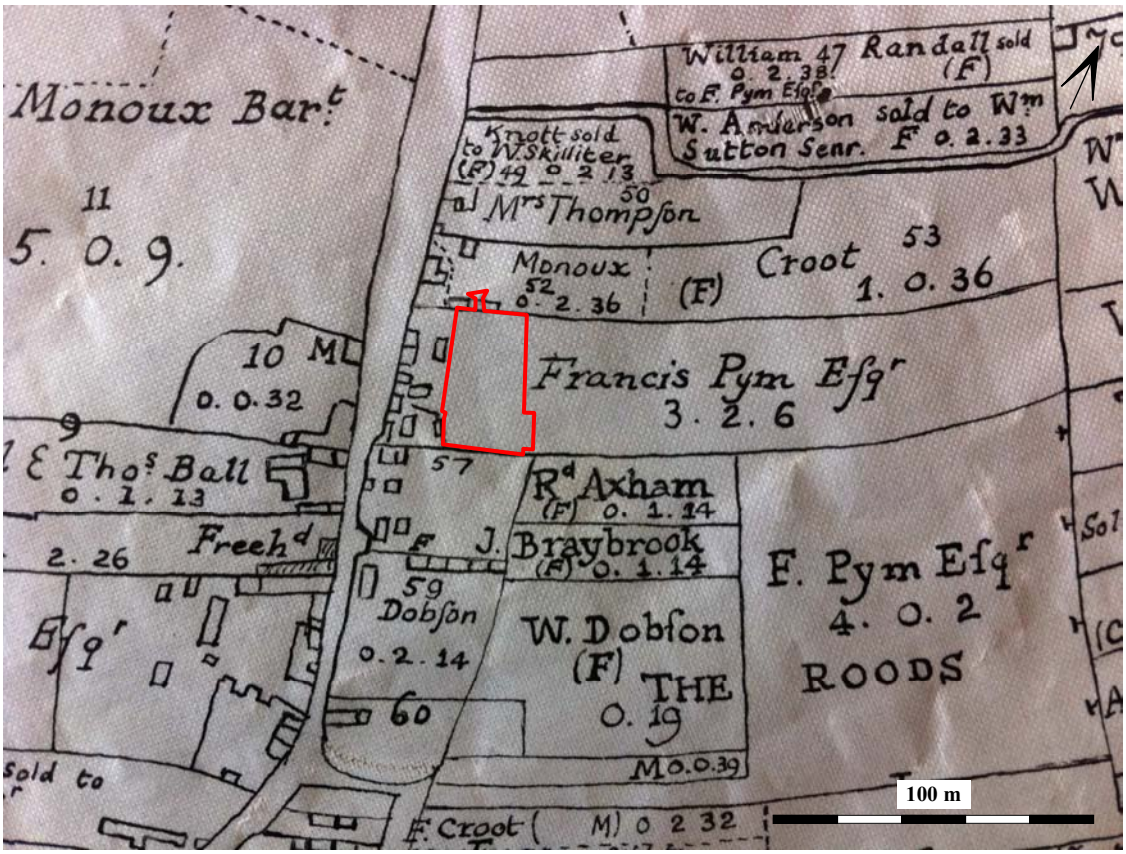


Figure 2: 1799 map of Girtford
(Scale and position of PDA are approximate)

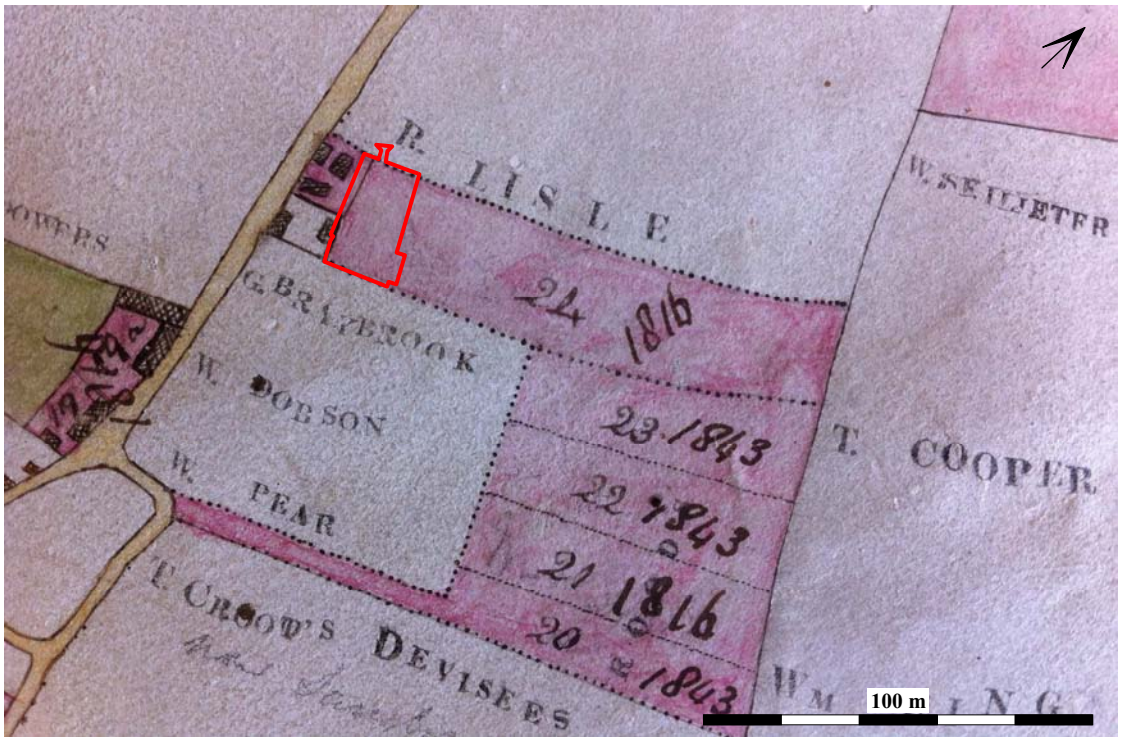


Figure 3: 1833 Map of the Estate of Francis Pym Esq.
(Scale and position of PDA are approximate)

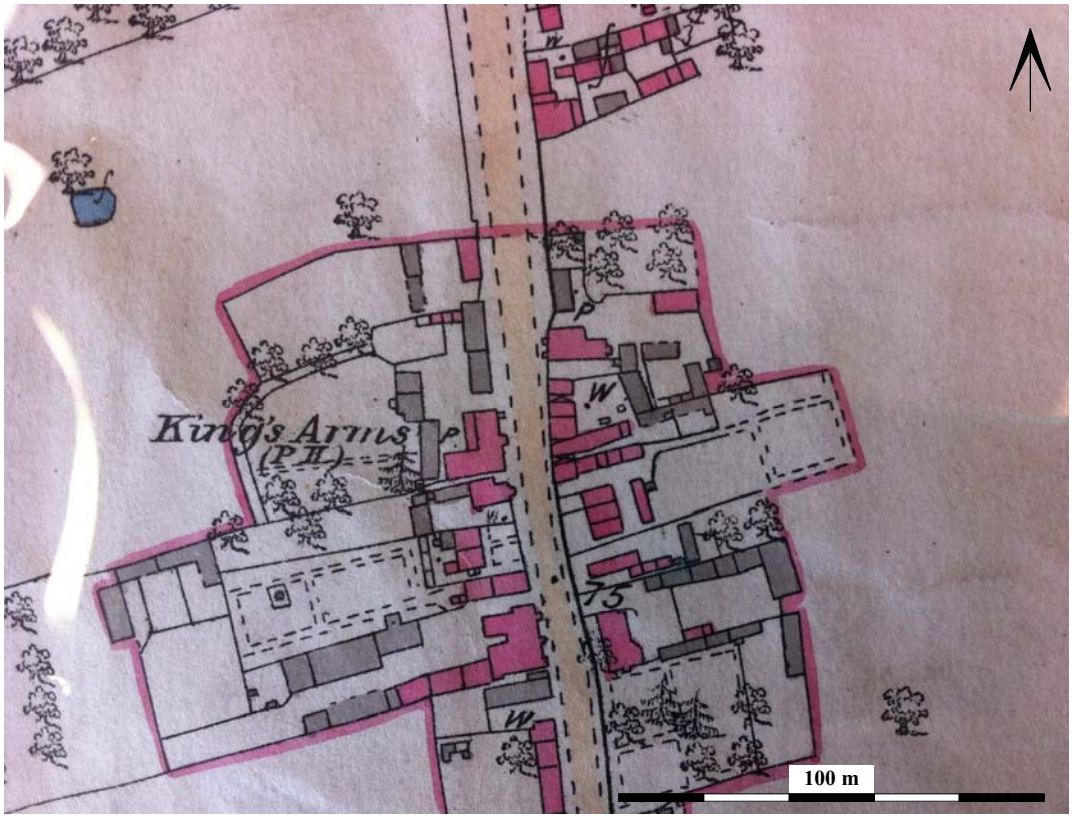


Figure 4: 1884 first edition 25-inch OS map
(Scale and position of PDA are approximate)

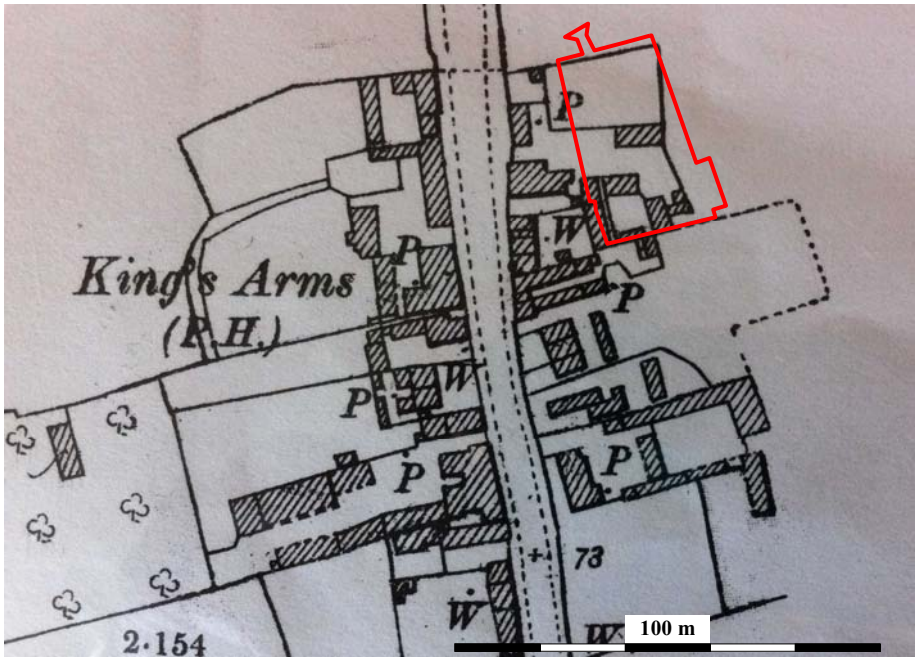
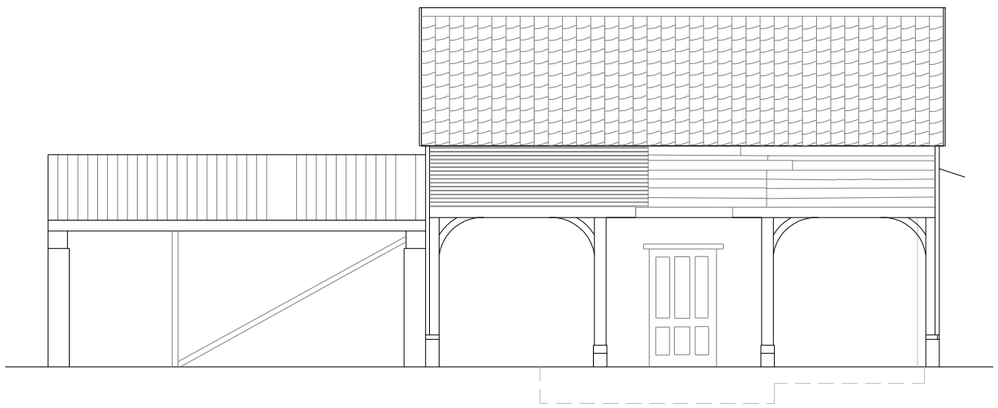
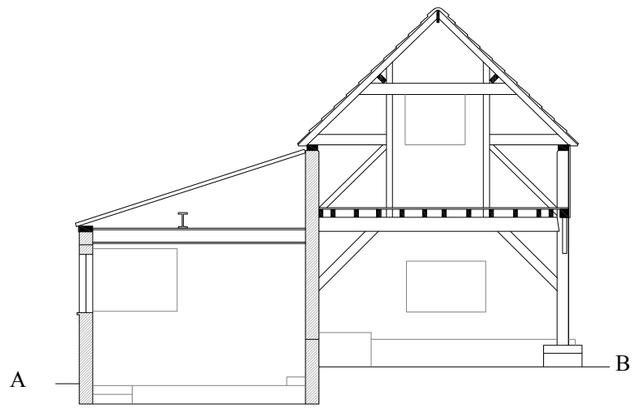


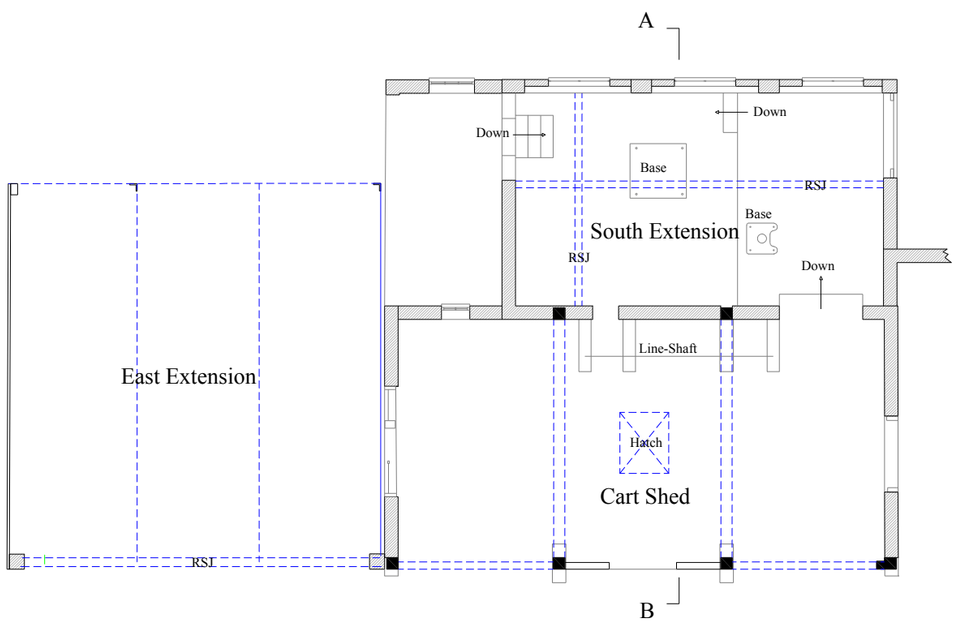
Figure 5: 1901 second edition 25-inch OS map
(Scale and position of PDA are approximate)



NORTH ELEVATION



CROSS-SECTION



PLAN OF CART SHED AND EXTENSIONS

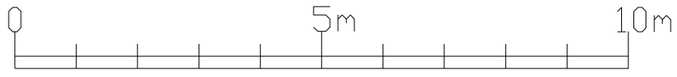
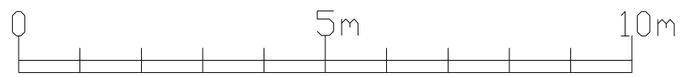
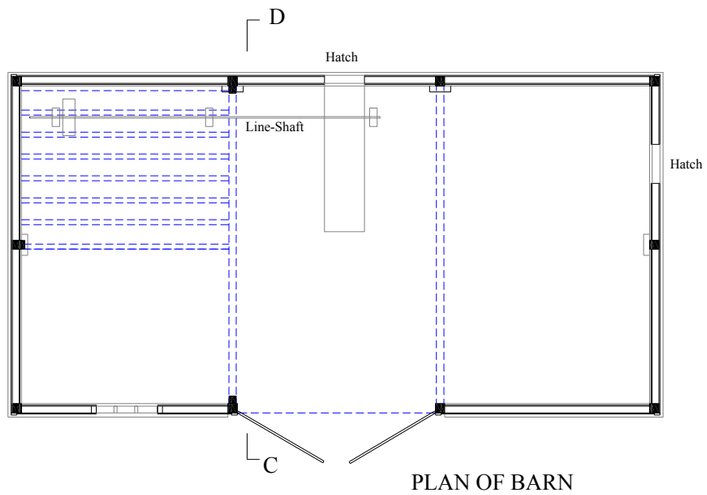
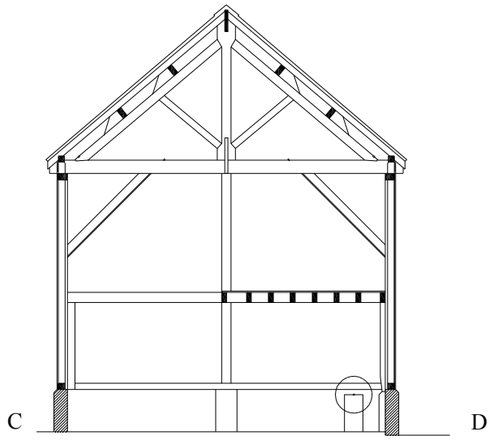


Figure 6: Drawing of cart shed and extensions





PLAN OF BARN



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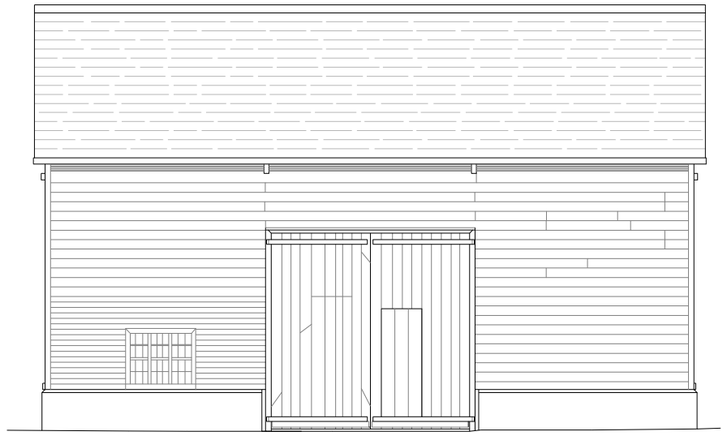
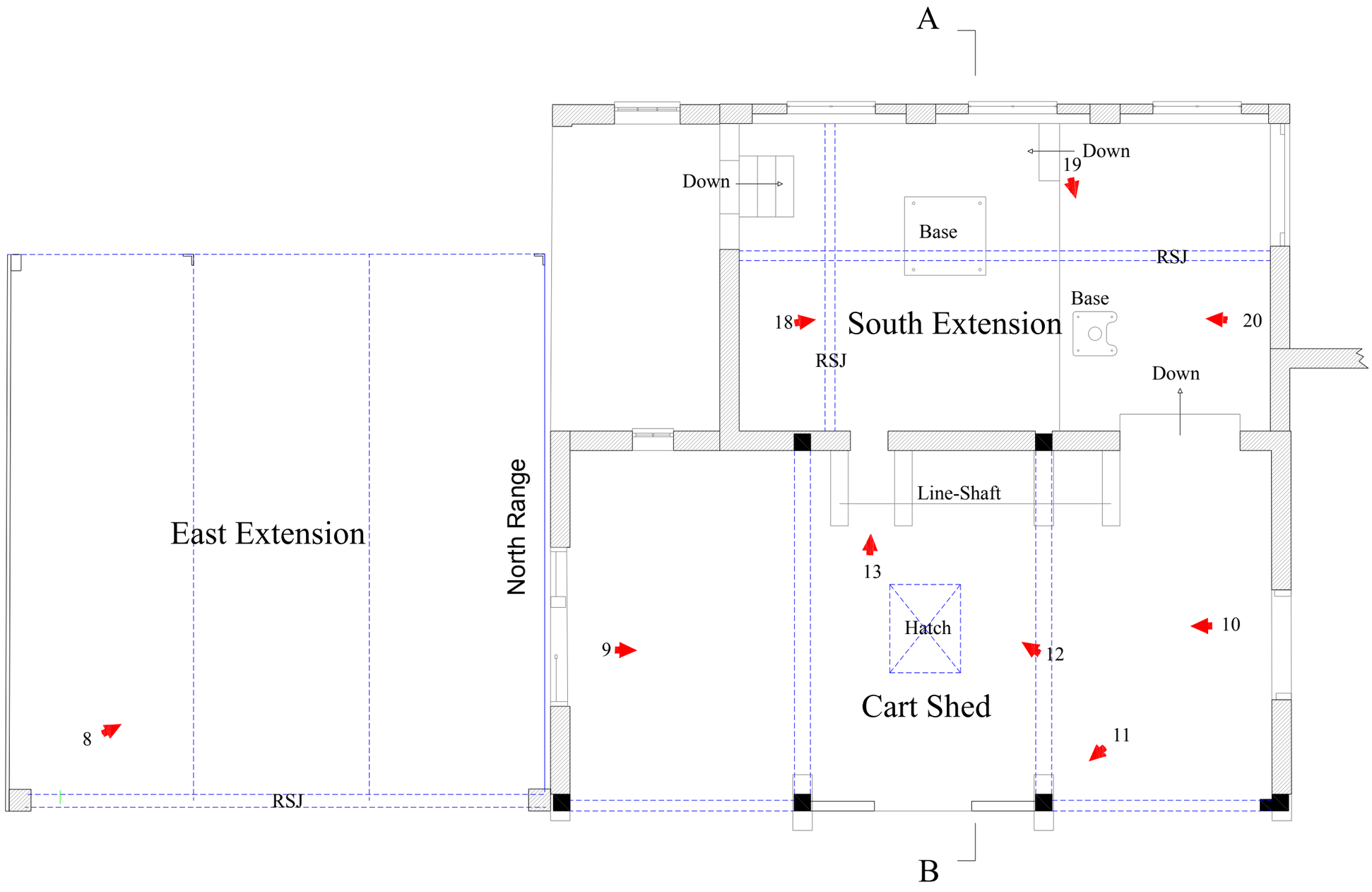


SOUTH ELEVATION OF BARN

Figure 7: Drawing of barn



PLAN OF CART SHED AND EXTENSIONS

Figure 8: Location of images inside cart shed

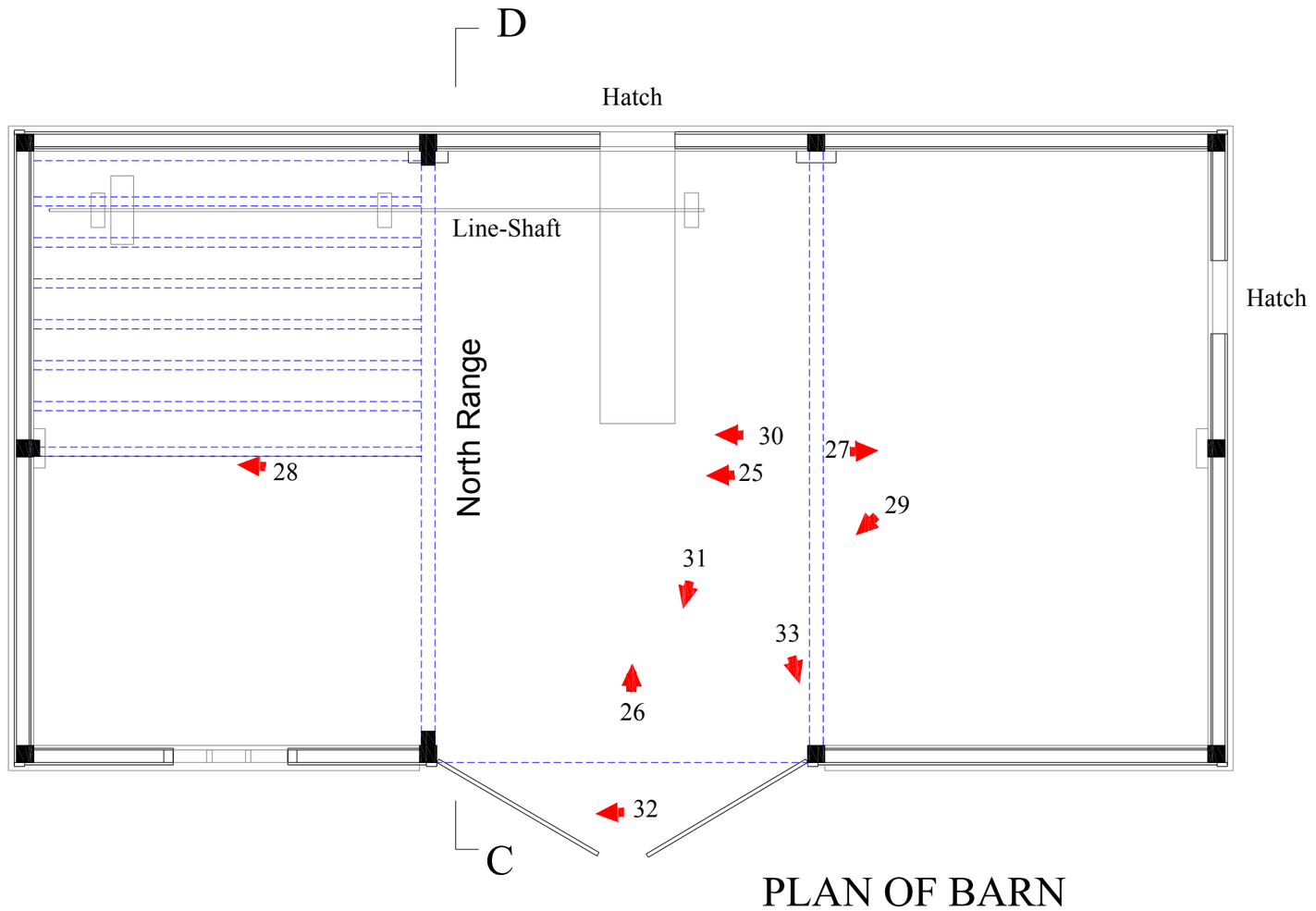


Figure 9: Location of images inside barn

Image 1: Barn and cart shed viewed looking north-west

Overview of site taken with a camera pole (2m scale)

Image 2: Barn and cart shed viewed looking south-east

Showing west end of barn at left and cart shed at right

Image 3: Cart shed and eastern extension; front (north) elevation

(2m scale)

Image 4: Cart shed; front (north) elevation

Image shows open-fronted east and west bays with modern brick infill in central bay. The loft above has a slatted ventilation wall above the east bay. (2m scale)

Image 5: Cart shed and extensions viewed looking north-west

Shows open east extension to right and brick south extension to left

Image 6: Cart shed viewed looking south-east

Brick infill of a former west extension is visible at the right of the image. Above that is the window in west end of the onion loft over the cart shed. (2m scale)

Image 7: South extension to cart shed, viewed looking north

Shows concrete lintel and metal-framed windows in main section with smaller, later addition to the right

Image 8: Interior of east extension and east end of cart shed

The dark brick at the base of the wall is the original sill wall of the cart shed. The lighter coloured brick above is later infill using Fletton brick. (2m scale)

Image 9: Interior of cart shed, view looking west

Shows inserted Fletton brickwork in west end, rear wall and central front bay.

Image 10: Interior of cart shed, view looking east

Shows inserted Fletton brickwork in walls. Concrete bases visible next to the rear wall (right hand of image) are supports for line-shafting to power machinery. (2m scale)

Image 11: Interior of cart shed, showing construction details

Shows beam mortised into post with diminished haunch. The two are fixed with a bolt, the flattened inner end of the bolt being visible on the underside of the beam.

Image 12: Interior of cart shed, view looking south-east

Shows the rear wall infilled with Fletton brick with concrete supports for line-shafting and an opening in the central part of the wall for a drive belt. (2m scale)

Image 13: Interior of cart shed, showing date

1943 scratched into wet concrete above the drive-belt opening in the rear wall of the cart shed. Its location is shown in the previous image.

Image 14: Interior of cart shed loft, view looking east

Shows door and windows in east end, slatted floor and north wall. Stored equipment comprises a winch (right hand side), wooden hopper (centre) and Archimedes screw drive at left. (1m scale)

Image 15: Interior of cart shed loft, view looking west

Shows window in the west wall and framing on bay division. Just outside of the image to the left was a small frame for a belt drive coming up from the ground floor to power equipment in the loft. (1m scale)

Image 16: Interior of cart shed loft, view looking north

Shows north wall in central bay with weatherboards and slatted wall. (1m scale)

Image 17: Interior of cart shed loft, north-east corner

Shows framing of the north wall with primary bracing; also shows slatted floor and wall cladding and Fletton brick infill in east gable end wall. (1m scale)

Image 18: Interior of south extension, view looking west

Shows pit with bolts for fixing a machine base in the middle foreground. Shows concrete lintel and metal-framed windows in south wall. (2m scale)

Image 19: Interior of south extension, view looking north

Shows the back wall of the cart shed with dark bricks forming the sill wall supporting a post which is now embedded in later Fletton brick infill. The small opening at the right is for a belt drive. Remains of dismantled line-shafting can be seen next to the left wall.

Image 20: Interior of south extension, view looking south-east

Shows machinery in foreground and machine pit beyond and details of the roof construction with RSJ supports.

Image 21: South elevation of barn

Shows the weatherboard cladding with narrower shiplap boards at the lower left-hand side. The plywood panel to the left of the door is covering a window. (2m scale)

Image 22: North elevation of barn

Shows small access hatch in the centre of the wall, above the sill wall. (2m scale)

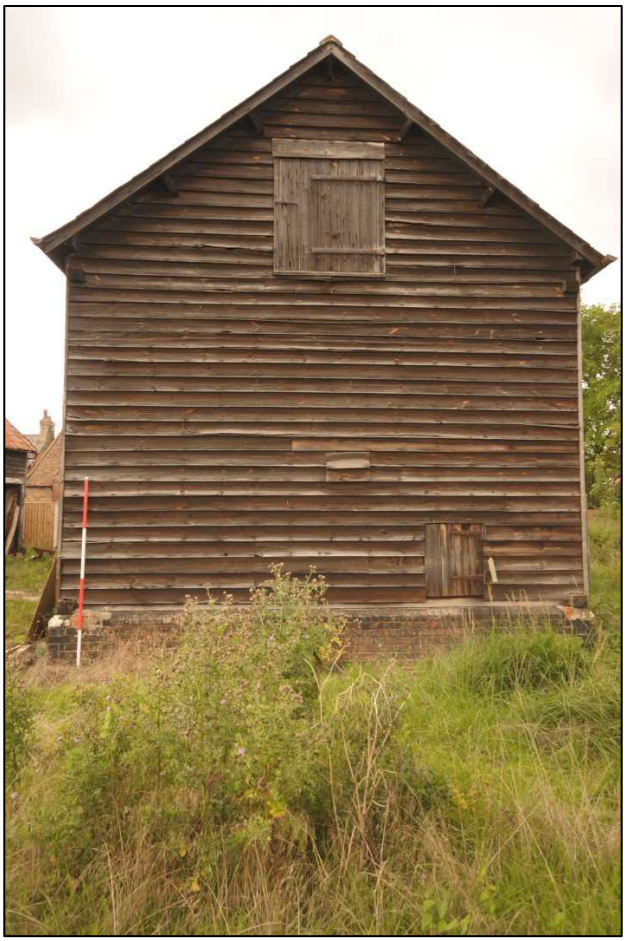


Image 23: East end of barn

Shows small access hatch at lower right and high-level door in gable. (2m scale)

Image 24: West end of barn

Shows shiplap cladding on lower part of wall with high-level door in gable (2m scale)

Image 25: Interior of barn, view looking west

Shows inserted floor in north-west corner. The remains of line-shafting are visible in the corner below the inserted floor. (2m scale)

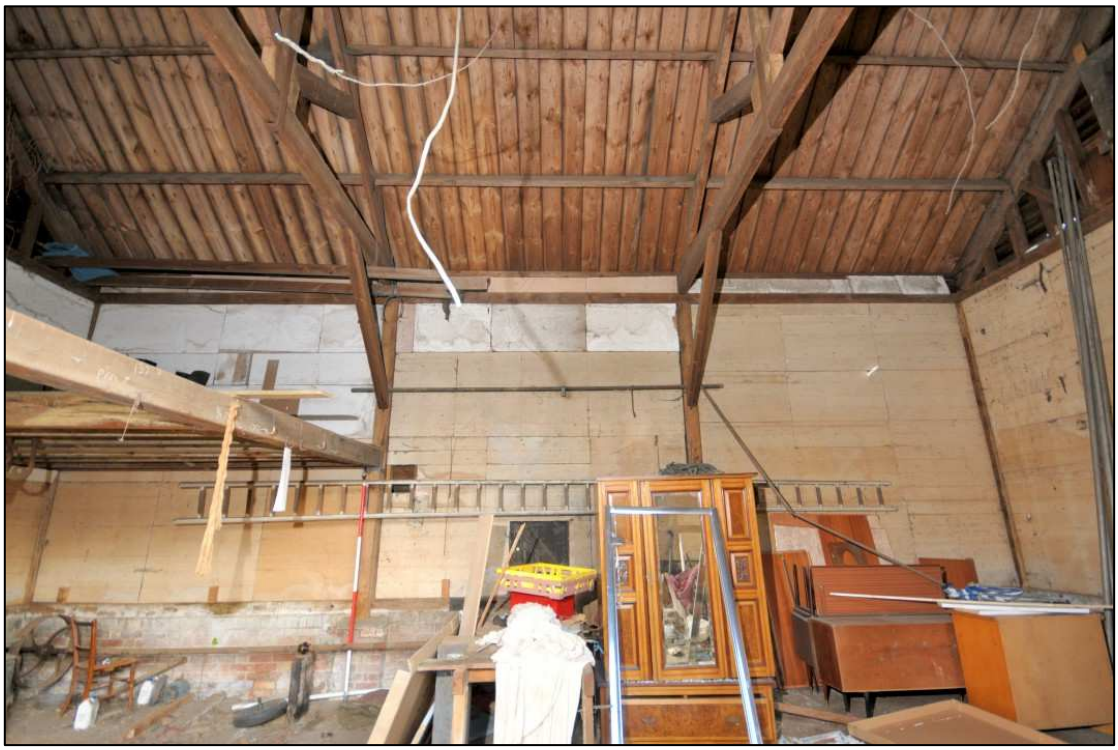


Image 26: Interior of barn, view looking north

Shows modern internal wall cladding. The structure obscured by a white cloth in the centre is a fixed saw table that runs up to a small hatch in the middle of the rear wall. Line shafting is visible to the left, against the rear wall. (2m scale)

Image 27: Interior of barn, view looking east

Detail mostly obscured by modern cladding. Wall studs and primary bracing are visible in the gable. (2m scale)

Image 28: Interior of barn showing west gable end

Shows framing of gable end with studs and primary bracing. Also shows high-level door.

Image 29: Interior of barn, showing detail above double doors

The closely set studs and primary bracing above the door indicate the type of wall structure which is obscured by modern lining elsewhere. Note the iron tie-rod which is visible below the brace to the left of the door.

Image 30: Interior of barn, showing roof truss

Shows king-post truss with long straight braces below the tie-beam.

Image 31: Interior of barn, showing construction of double doors

Note different framing in left door for possible wicket gate. (2m scale)

Image 32: Detail showing construction of barn doors

Shows ledged and braced construction with chamfered edges. (2m scale)

Image 33: Interior detail of barn, possible date

Shows painted number or date of 1871 on inside face of left-hand (east) door post.

Image 34: Black and white contact print

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