



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological building and desk-based
assessment of an animal shelter at Culworth
County Heritage Site, Northamptonshire



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Northamptonshire
County Council

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**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
DECEMBER 2010**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING AND DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT OF
AN ANIMAL SHELTER AT CULWORTH COUNTY HERITAGE SITE,
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
OCTOBER 2010**

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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological building and desk-based assessment of an animal shelter at Culworth County Heritage Site, Northamptonshire	
Short description	Desk-based and building assessment revealed that the red brick and stone animal shelter, of nineteenth-century date, has undergone alterations over the years. It comprises a simple open-sided shelter with an enclosed room at the southern end and was probably associated with the adjacent Culworth Hall when originally built.	
Project type	Building and desk-based assessment	
Site status	Structure unlisted, sits within site of Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 13664) and Conservation Area, owned by NCC	
Previous work	No	
Current Land use	Redundant animal shelter	
Future work	Possible renovation or repair.	
Monument type/ period	Post-medieval	
Significant finds	No	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Culworth County Heritage Site Berry Hill Close Culworth Northamptonshire	
Study area	Animal shelter	
OS Easting & Northing	SP 5454 4702	
Height OD	c 160m above Ordnance Datum	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation		
Project brief originator	Brief from Graham Cadman, NCC	
Project Design originator	Joe Prentice	
Director/Supervisor	Joe Prentice	
Project Manager	Steve Parry	
Sponsor or funding body	NCC	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	October 2010	
End date	October 2010	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Culworth County Heritage Site	
Serial title & volume	10/195	
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Date	22 November 2010	

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING AND DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT OF
AN ANIMAL SHELTER AT CULWORTH COUNTY HERITAGE SITE
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Abstract

Desk-based and building assessment revealed that the red brick and stone animal shelter, of nineteenth-century date, has undergone alterations over the years. It comprises a simple open-sided shelter with an enclosed room at the southern end and was probably associated with the adjacent Culworth Hall when originally built.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The village of Culworth lies approximately twenty-five miles (forty-one kilometres) south-west of Northampton (NGR SP 5454 4702, Fig 1). Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) owns and maintains the site of Culworth Castle as a County Heritage Site (CHS) which is located immediately to the north of the church of St Mary in the centre of the village. As part of the ongoing care of the site and its assets, regular visits are made to record any changes/requirements regarding maintenance of the site as a whole, and during recent visits it has been noted that a series of cracks in certain of the walls of the building appear to be increasing in size. In order that the future of the building can be assessed, a record of it as it currently stands was requested by the Heritage Assets Officer (Graham Cadman), NCC.
- 1.2 The geology of the surrounding area is of Northampton Sand with Ironstone, of which much of the surrounding property is built
- 1.3 A single site visit was made to assess and record the structure of the building as it now stands and to determine, if possible, the date of the walls and other elements of the building.

2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The general objectives of the recording were:
 - To provide a basic measured drawn record of the agricultural building sufficient to help inform a specialist assessment, condition recording and a follow-up repair programme.
 - To provide a basic written record to accompany and complement the drawn record
- 2.2 More specifically, the work:

Broadly equated with English Heritage recording levels II and III but adapted to meet the objectives and a restricted budget (EH 2006). Recording included a measured plan and, as required, elevation and section drawings. Brick-by-brick level of recording was not required, and detail was included only as required to depict overall form and location of significant structural details and features of historical significance. Measured elevations

were included where necessary for an understanding of the building's nature and function and where essential for future condition recording. Measured cross sections were required only where this illustrates nature or features relationships not otherwise recorded.

Scale and north sign on plan. Reconstruction and phased drawing not required

Written account restricted to a description of the building including its form and any main phases of development and if possible an indication of date.

A very basic desk-based assessment has been undertaken using maps held by Northamptonshire Archaeology.

3 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 No particularly early maps have been located for the village, and the earliest examined shows little detail, and it does not appear that there is a building present on the site of the one which is the object of the current assessment (1810 Ordnance Survey Preparatory map, Fig 2). The Ordnance Survey map of 1880 shows the site in more detail, and a building or buildings on the site of the present animal shelter appears, however, there is not sufficient detail to determine more than this (Fig 3). It sits at the northern end of an area separated from the remainder of the field in what might be an orchard.
- 3.2 The animal shelter is located on the very eastern boundary of the site and shares a wall with the adjacent property, Culworth Hall (Fig 4). The building is not listed, the field in which it is positioned is referred to as The Glebe Field and Berry Hill Close in the CHS notes. The site of the castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM ref: 13664), whilst the remainder of the site is un-designated apart from lying within a Conservation Area. No other records appear to have detailed the building other than the CHS site records which list the site visits and detail repairs and maintenance since its purchase by NCC in 1993 (not reproduced here).

4 BUILDING ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The building is a simple rectangular structure comprising two separate sections; the northern part (stock hovel) is open on the west side with brick and stone walls on the north, east and south whilst the southern part is an enclosed room bounded on all sides by brick and stone walls entered through a doorway in the north wall from the open-sided section (Fig 5, Plate 1). The whole is roofed with timber covered in blue/grey slate, probably of Welsh origin.
- 4.2 **The stock hovel.**

This is an almost square space, 4.3m x 4.4m internally (Fig 5). The north and south walls are built entirely of red brick bonded in lime mortar, whilst the east wall comprises a pre-existing ironstone boundary wall to the adjoining property on top of which has been added a low brick wall to increase its height and thus create the east side of the building (Plate 2). The bricks are approximately 230mm x 120mm x 80mm in size though they vary slightly being hand, rather than factory, made. They are laid in English garden wall bond generally, though not exclusively. The western end of the north wall is thickened slightly and has bullnose brick corners on the external and internal arrisses, a standard mid nineteenth-century feature of farm buildings where such bricks were utilised to help

avoid livestock harming itself on sharp corners. At the west end of the south wall only the external corner has bullnose bricks. At the tops of both walls, just below the timber wall plate (see below) the uppermost brick on each side has had the corner chopped off to form a stop rather than a pre-moulded brick being used.

Both the north and south walls are gabled and support the roof which comprises a wall plate on each side along with roughly trimmed logs which form the purlins. On the west side the wall plate also acts as the support for the lower edge of the roof and is a re-used oak beam which retains a number of empty sockets, perhaps suggesting it had previously been used to support a floor. Both this beam and the narrower, eastern, wall plate rest on oak pieces set into the north wall (Fig 6, elevation 1). The purlins are both of soft wood (pine) and are set into the north and south gable walls. The rafters are also of pine and are squared. There are no sarking boards, the slates (12 courses) are nailed onto laths over the rafters, and in places there are two parallel lines of old and new laths showing where they have been replaced, though clearly in a haphazard fashion with the old, perished, laths not even being removed (CHS notes record 65 new slates added in September 1996). There is no ridge beam as such, simply a thin plank. The ridge is covered externally with Staffordshire blue ridge tiles. The north wall has a ventilation hole high in the wall, placed slightly off-centre towards the west side (Plate 3). It is lined with oak boards but there is no indication that it was ever glazed or fitted with louvers. Below it is a blocked hole though since the brick infill fits closely within the former opening no indication of former fittings can be seen. The eaves are fitted with modern cast-iron rain water goods in the form of gutters and down pipes; it is uncertain if these replace original rainwater goods or are entirely modern additions as many farm structures did not have these fitted originally (CHS notes record guttering in September 1996).

The original east boundary wall is constructed of roughly dressed and un-dressed ironstone blocks laid in lime mortar; it is approximately twice the thickness of the brick wall which is built on top of it (Plate 2). This section of wall has headers missing from each course to provide a through draught for ventilation, though given that the entire west side is open, this seems superfluous. Neither the north or south walls are bonded into the stone boundary wall, but are simply butted up against it. The north brick gable wall is severely cracked, due largely to the fact that the wall was not bonded into the earlier stone wall (Plates 3 and 4). The crack extends from the floor up the side of the stone wall and then spreads westwards and vertically before bifurcating, one branch petering out, the other stopping only when it reaches the oak beam set into the wall (Fig 6, elevation 1). Two further, but narrower, cracks are present above the oak tie beam. There has clearly been re-pointing or attempted repairs to cracking in the past using Portland cement which is of very poor quality being smeared not only into the joints but over the surface of the bricks.

The floor of the hovel is a mixture of red brick, flagstones and the occasional Staffordshire blue engineering brick. The outer line of brick on the open side is laid edge-wise at right angles to the walls line, within the hovel they are laid flat. The stone flags and blue bricks suggest periodic patching and are generally poorly laid (Plates 2 and 10).

In the south-east corner is a brick trough constructed of curved red brick laid in lime mortar with an oak sill fitted with an iron staple and tethering ring attached (Plate 5). The trough is also lined with brick which retains sections of lime mortar render, although much of this is missing. The bricks of the trough are of the same overall size as those in the side walls of the building.

The south wall of the hovel (the central east-west wall) forms the north wall of the room at the southern end of the building (Fig 6, elevation 2, Plate 6). It is constructed entirely of red brick in the same way, and contemporary with, the north gable wall. It contains a two-part stable door hung on an oak frame. The upper leaf is a modern replacement, the lower leaf is earlier, though potentially not original; both are made of vertical planks, ledged, but not braced (CHS notes record a new stable door in September 1996). The lower leaf has had an additional horizontal plank added to the outer (north) side below which only stubs of the planks remains, presumably where they have rotted off. Both doors are hung on spearhead strap hinges which are probably original, and on the upper leaf, clearly re-used. They hang on simple pintle hinges set in the door frame. The upper leaf has a staple and loop of iron, re-set and on the door frame is the catch for a drop latch, though the latch is no longer present on the upper door leaf. The lower leaf has a similar staple and loop but also two modern draw bolts of thin, modern pressed steel; their catch plates have been fixed to blocks of wood on the door frame in order for them to engage.

The brickwork of this central gable does not fill the entire wall-plane but rather it stops at the same level as the purlins (Fig 6, elevation 2, Plate 6). Above this remains of vertical wooden slats are present; this would have provided additional ventilation to the southern stalls. Two cracks are present above the timber tie-beam set into the wall on which the western wall plate/beam sits; one is angled by way of the edges of bricks both vertically and horizontally until it reaches the underside of the western purlin, the other peters out when it reaches the top of the wall below the line of the ridge under the slotted section. There is another crack between the east wall above the stone boundary wall, and the central cross wall, whilst here the two sections of wall are bonded above the boundary wall level there has clearly been movement. Another crack runs down from the eastern purlin for a short length before petering out.

None of the walls retain any evidence of lime-or whitewashing.

4.3 The southern room.

This room is smaller than the hovel section at 4.0m x 3.1m internally (Fig 5). Accessed via the stable doorway in the north wall (described above) it has a stone sill across the doorway and is floored with red brick laid on edge. These are aligned east-west apart from a single gully, aligned north-south where the bricks are aligned along the length of the gully (Plate 11). This falls slightly to the north which would have allowed effluent to exit the room through a hole in the base of the central dividing wall into the hovel area. The entire room originally had its walls limewashed (whitewashed), no doubt partly to increase light but perhaps also because limewash is known to have antiseptic qualities.

There is a window opening in the west wall fitted with (modern) timber louvres (Plate 7). It is assumed that these replace an earlier version of the same as no evidence survives for another configuration, and it seems unlikely that it would ever have been glazed, particularly at this height where it would be liable to breakage by livestock. The window opening has no sill and its lintel, of timber, is formed by the underside of the western wall plate, a modern softwood replacement.

The west side of this section of the roof is almost entirely a modern replacement with both the wall plate and rafters being made of machine-sawn pine (only one rafter appears to be original), although the purlin does appear to be original being white-washed squared pine (Plates 7 and 9). The eastern half of the roof appears to be largely original; it sits on a wall plate which is contiguous with that of the hovel section. The purlin here is of squared timber and is joined to the rounded timber of the purlin over the hovel section by a simple lapped scarf joint. The rafters and laths are the same as the northern part, though, as previously noted, modern on the west side. The ridge

plank and ridge covering is the same as over the hovel. The east wall is constructed in the same way as in the northern section, of brick upon the earlier stone boundary wall, but only features three ventilation holes in this room (Plate 8).

The south gable wall is constructed of red brick in the same way as the other brick walls, and contains two openings; one just below the ridge which is un-lined, another below it fitted with louvres (Fig 6, elevation 3, Plate 9). These are set in a simple frame beneath a timber lintel which extends into the brickwork on either side. Two tie beams extend into the southern gable wall internally on which the wall plates are set; they are not visible externally.

In the south-east corner of the room is a trough made in exactly the same way as the one in the hovel, and of the same materials and dimensions (see Plate 8). The only difference is that the tethering ring is fitted to an oak post set in the floor against the south wall and not in the oak sill of the trough. Another tethering post, with ring, is positioned against the north dividing wall; these indicate that the room provided space for two beasts (perhaps to be tethered for milking?). Though it no longer exists, there is evidence for a hay rack along the length of the east wall, an angled timber remains against the south wall and the slight scar of its former partner can be seen against the south side of the central dividing wall. No structure remains in between, but it can be reasonably assumed that the rack comprised an upper and lower timber rail with slats fitted between which formed a triangular receptacle against the wall to hold hay. A modern, galvanised iron, ring fixed to a square plate has been screwed onto a block of wood set in the south wall. It is assumed that this is a modern replacement of an earlier, higher, tethering hook.

On the south side of the north wall is a flimsy shelf made by resting (it is not fixed) a short plank of wood on two iron pins driven into the mortar between two courses of brickwork.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The animal shelter at Culworth County Heritage Site is a typical, very simple small vernacular farm building of mid-late nineteenth-century date. Constructed of red brick against, and partly on top of, an existing ironstone boundary wall, it was probably part of the adjacent Culworth Hall site.
- 5.2 However, though in itself of low status and of modest architectural character this type of building, although once very common, is becoming increasingly scarce due to the fact that modern farming methods have little or no use for this type of structure which is too small to be of use for the large modern machinery and higher numbers of livestock necessary for economic farming in the twenty-first century. Thus by virtue of its survival in an almost complete state, it has a value as many similar buildings have been lost, most markedly since the end of the Second World War when farming methods have become increasingly mechanised.
- 5.3 Whilst it cannot be closely dated, it was clearly present pre-1880 when the First Edition Ordnance Survey map was drawn, and it appears to have been part of a small group of buildings with another on both the north and south side within an area of trees (perhaps an orchard?), though the trees and other buildings are now gone. Stylistically there is nothing to aid closer dating, the building materials such as bullnose bricks and slates suggest a post-1840 date, but after this they become ubiquitous, and the style of the building does not change from this date up to the end of the nineteenth-century, or even into the first quarter of the twentieth in many areas.

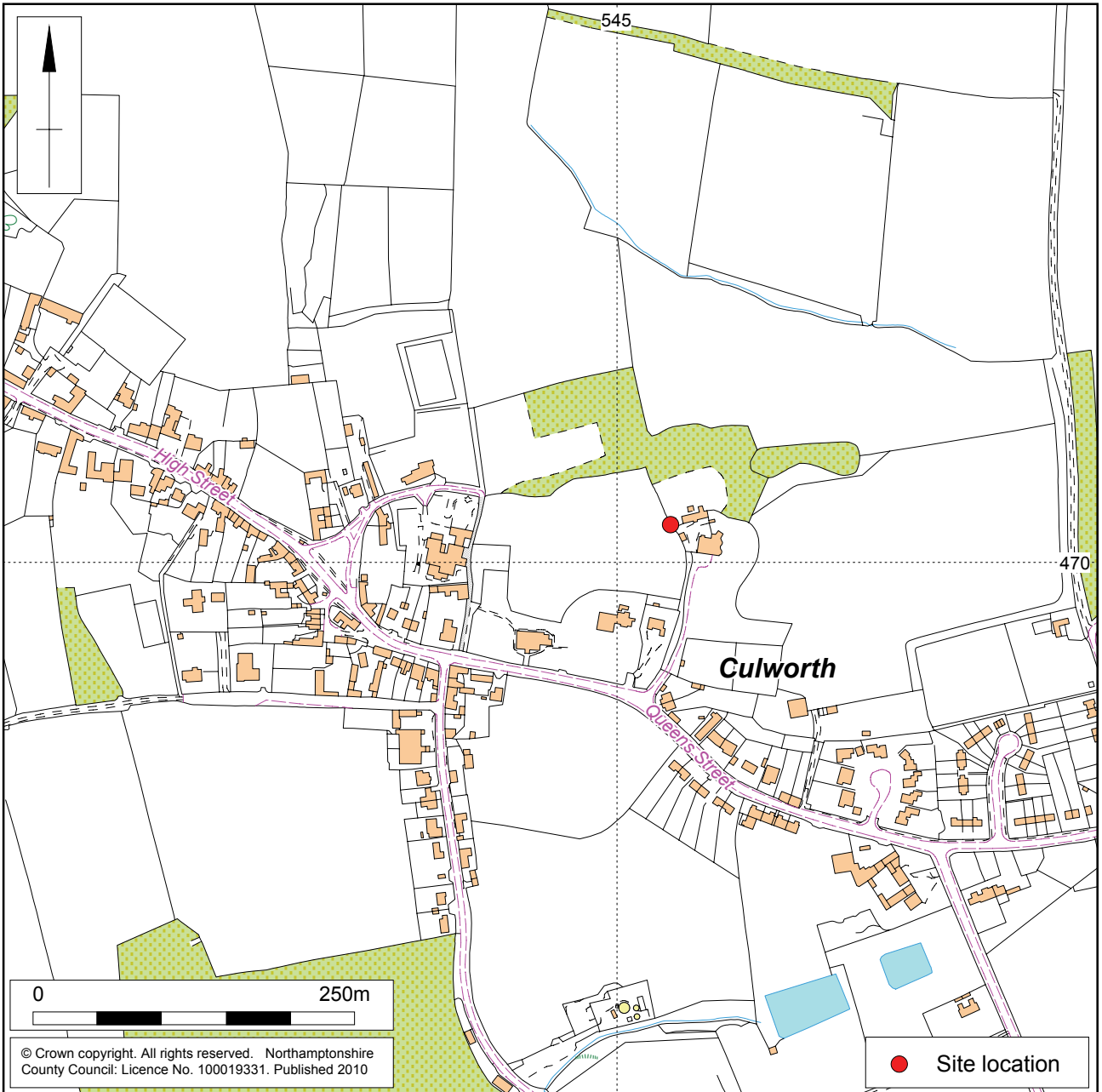
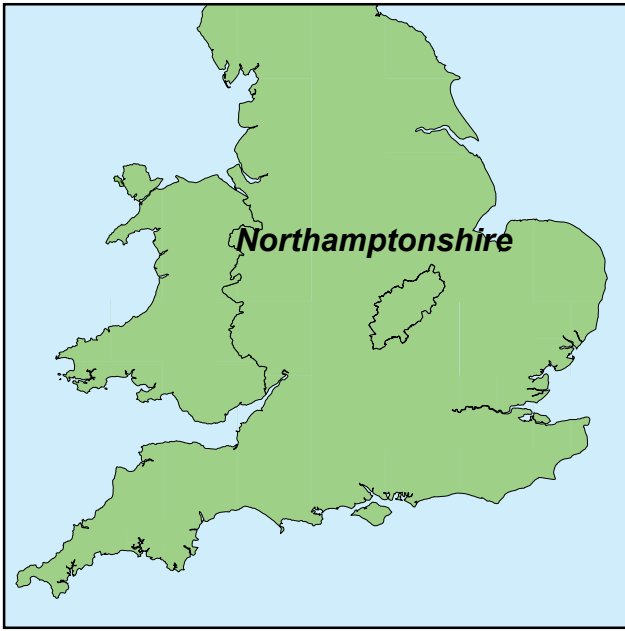
- 5.4 Though it has clearly been repaired over time, the basic structure appears to remain largely as-built and therefore the two separate areas still retain their distinct character which relates to their former functions. The open-sided hovel would have provided shelter for livestock moving either freely from the adjacent field or through management at certain times of the day or year as required. The enclosed room on the south side would have provided more sheltered accommodation for beasts, perhaps also for daily tasks such as milking or for less frequent incidents such as giving birth or during periods of illness; all would be desirable to separate them from the remainder of the flock or herd. The shelter could have been used for horses, cattle, sheep or pigs since such basic shelters are versatile by their nature, and if for smaller beasts (sheep or pigs) moveable feeding troughs could have been added as necessary. However, the most likely animal usage seems to be by cattle given the height of the surviving troughs and evidence for hay racks. The brick feed troughs, though placed against the brick and stone walls, appear to be contemporary and therefore original features.
- 5.5 The cracking present in the walls is most likely simply a result of relatively poor foundations, though these have not been investigated so their depth/width/condition is unknown. Movement is also probably partly a result of being poorly, or not-at-all, tied into the earlier stone boundary wall with the result that any settling shows most readily at the junction between the two different materials. The majority of the repairs have been undertaken using un-sympathetic materials such as Portland cement which is visually unattractive and does not (unlike lime mortar) allow for minor movement within the walls; this may not in itself exacerbate further cracking but it should not be used in the future.
- 5.6 It is known from the CHS records that repairs have been carried out to the roof though it is likely that the materials used reflect those originally utilised. The repairs appear to be restricted to timber repairs and re-slating, most significantly in the western half of the southern section where the entire side of the roof has been rebuilt. Rainwater goods are of cast-iron and appear to be all modern fittings; it is not certain if they replace like-for-like earlier fittings or are entirely newly added. It seems likely that the original building would have had none.
- 5.7 The stable door has also undergone repair with the upper leaf timberwork being entirely modern though the earlier, and possibly original, ironwork has been re-used.
- 5.8 The floor within the southern enclosed room is original and un-repaired, the hovel section has undergone extensive repair using alternative materials and in places is entirely missing.
- 5.9 Whilst of very modest functional character this building, although undesignated, should nonetheless be considered as having significance as a heritage asset of local built and historic interest. In addition to being one of a declining number of utilitarian farm field buildings once widespread in the county, it represents part of the former agricultural land-use in the historic core of the village. As such it contributes to the context of the pasture Glebe Field which it once served and in so doing also contributes to the character of the village Conservation Area and to the strong local sense of place. It might also be taken to contribute to the wider setting of the listed buildings hereabouts, including the adjacent Culworth Hall, the Old Rectory and the nearby parish church. Occupying land freely open to the public it also enjoys some local communal value.
- 5.10 Whilst not within the remit of this survey it was noted that what appeared to be bat droppings were present beneath the ridge line in both the stock hovel and southern room.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are extended to Tim Sharman for his help with the recording of the building and his background knowledge of the site and its history during the ownership of NCC.

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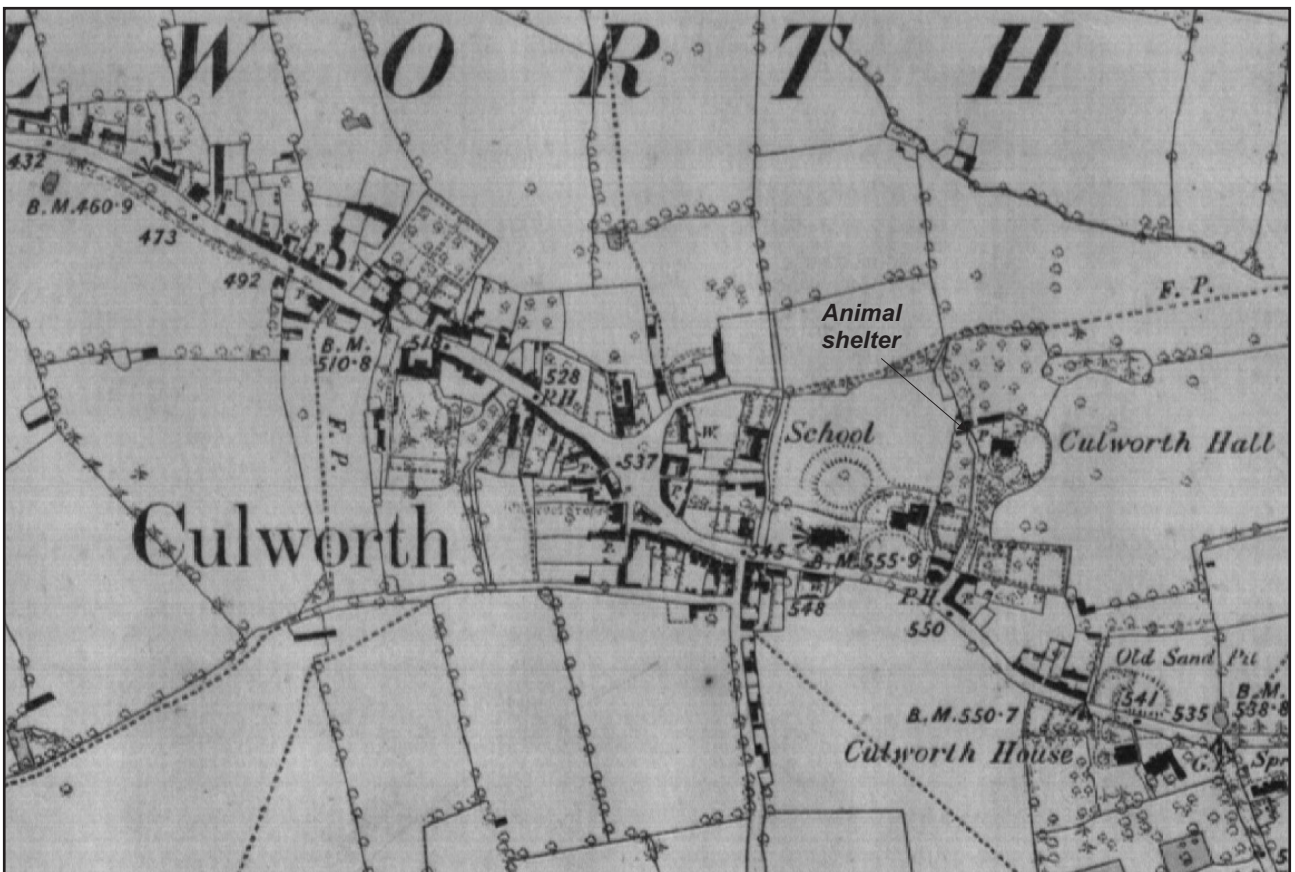


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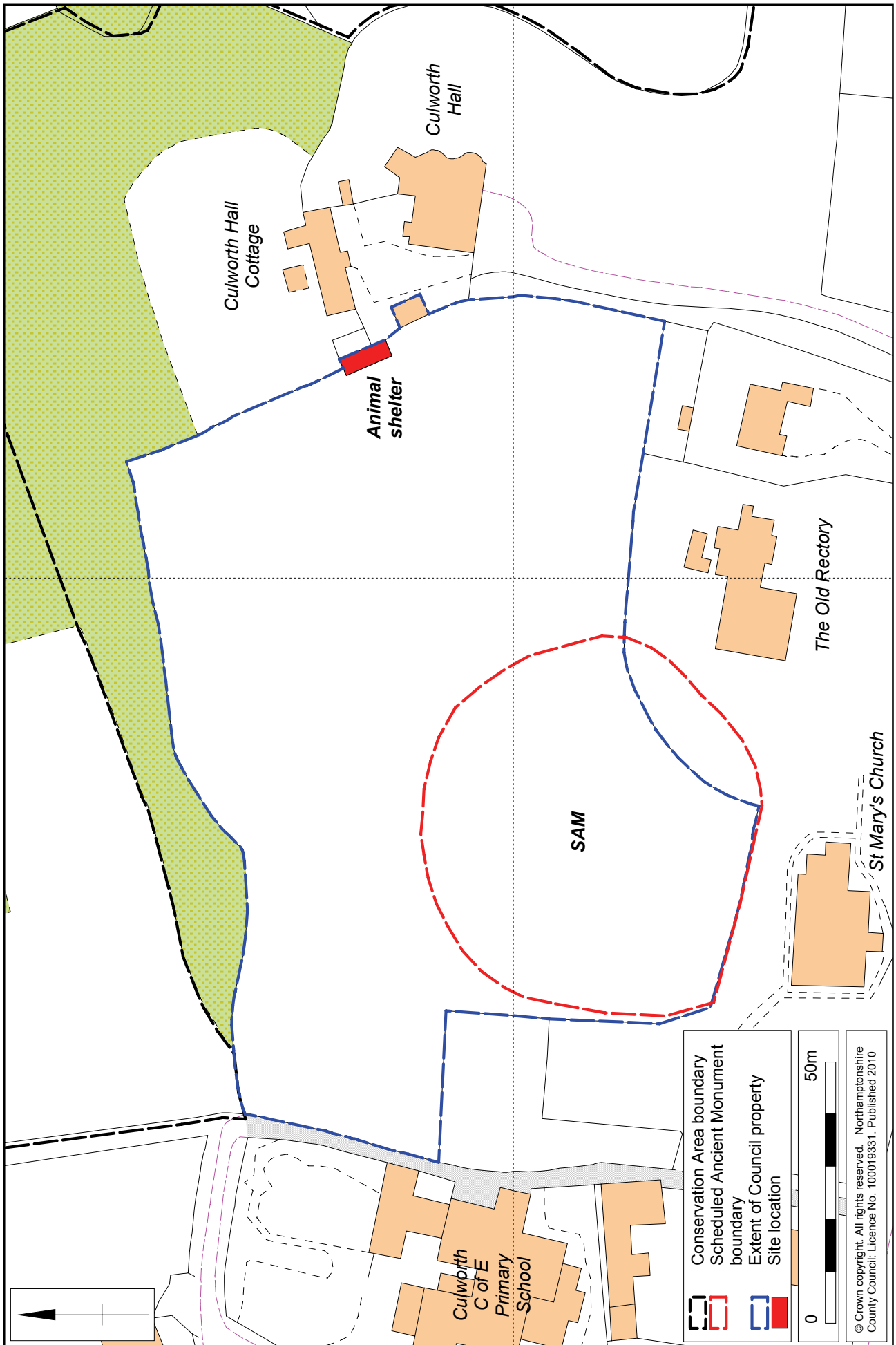
Site location Fig 1



1810 Ordnance Survey Preparatory Map Fig 2



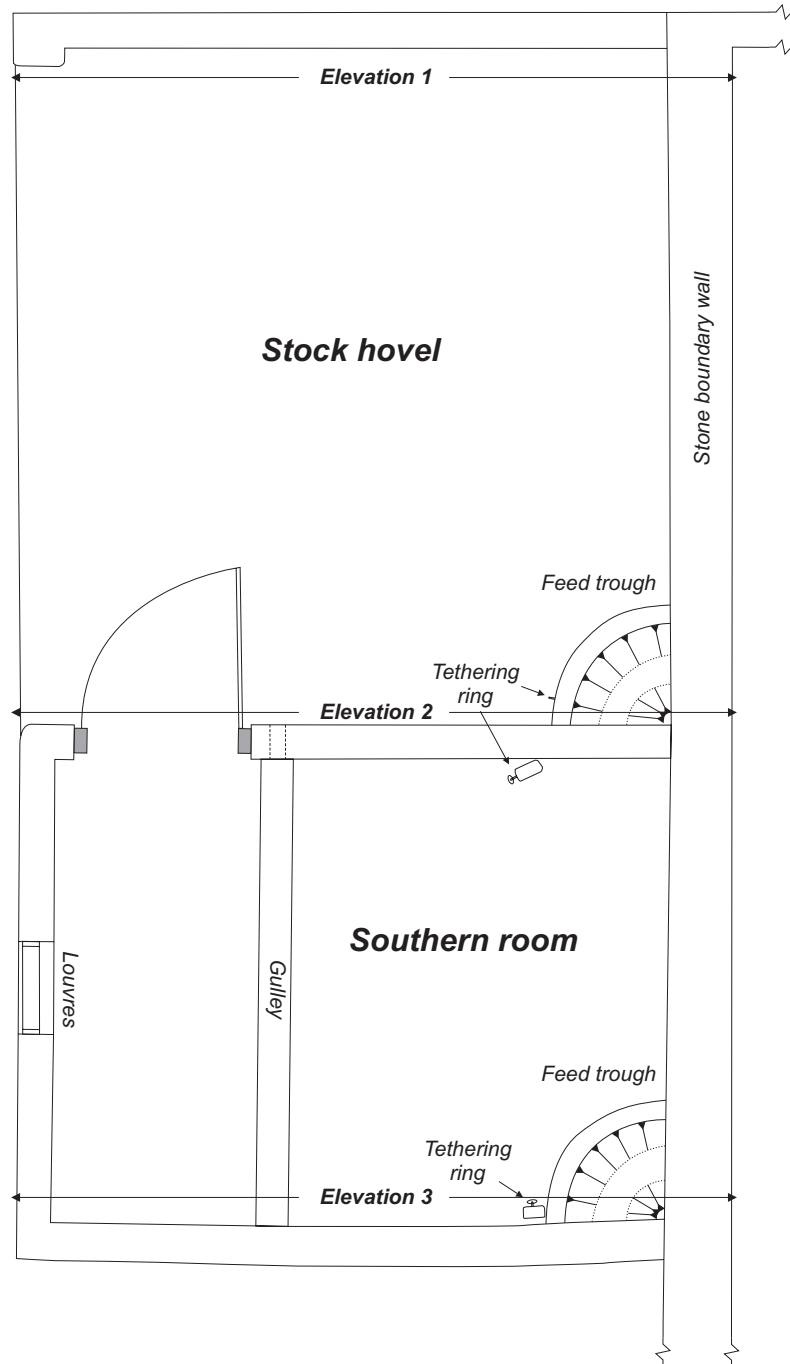
1880 First Edition Ordnance Survey map Fig 3



Scale 1:1000

Site plan showing the location of the building, Scheduled Ancient Monument and limit of Conservation Area

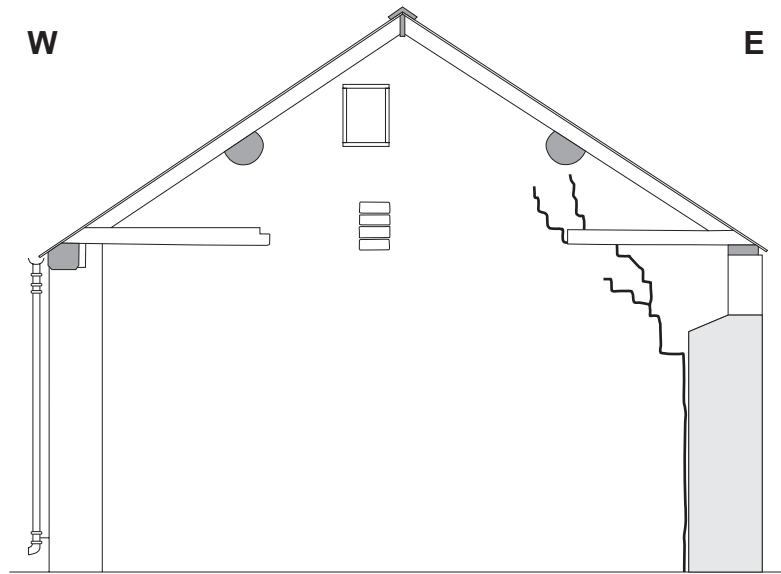
Fig 4



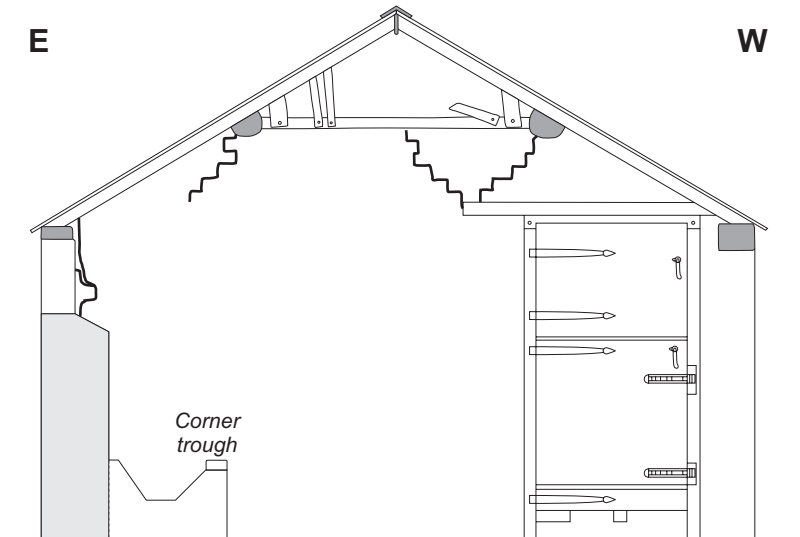
Scale 1:50

Plan of animal shelter Fig 5

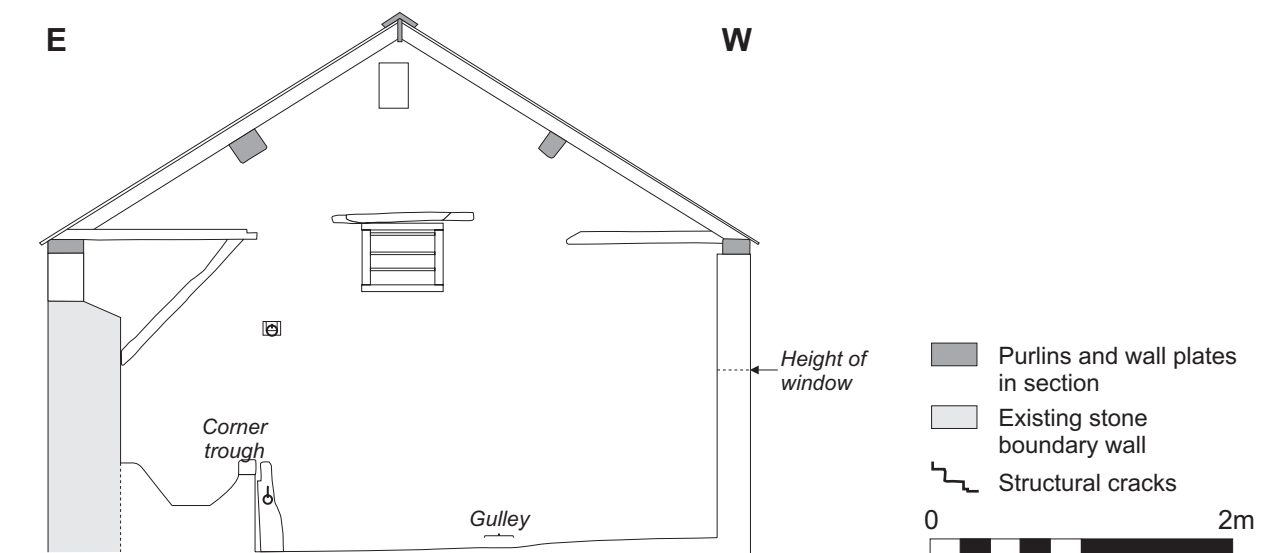
Elevation 1- north gable, interior



Elevation 2- central dividing wall, north side



Elevation 3- south gable, interior





The animal shelter, looking east Plate 1



The east internal wall of the hovel, looking east Plate 2



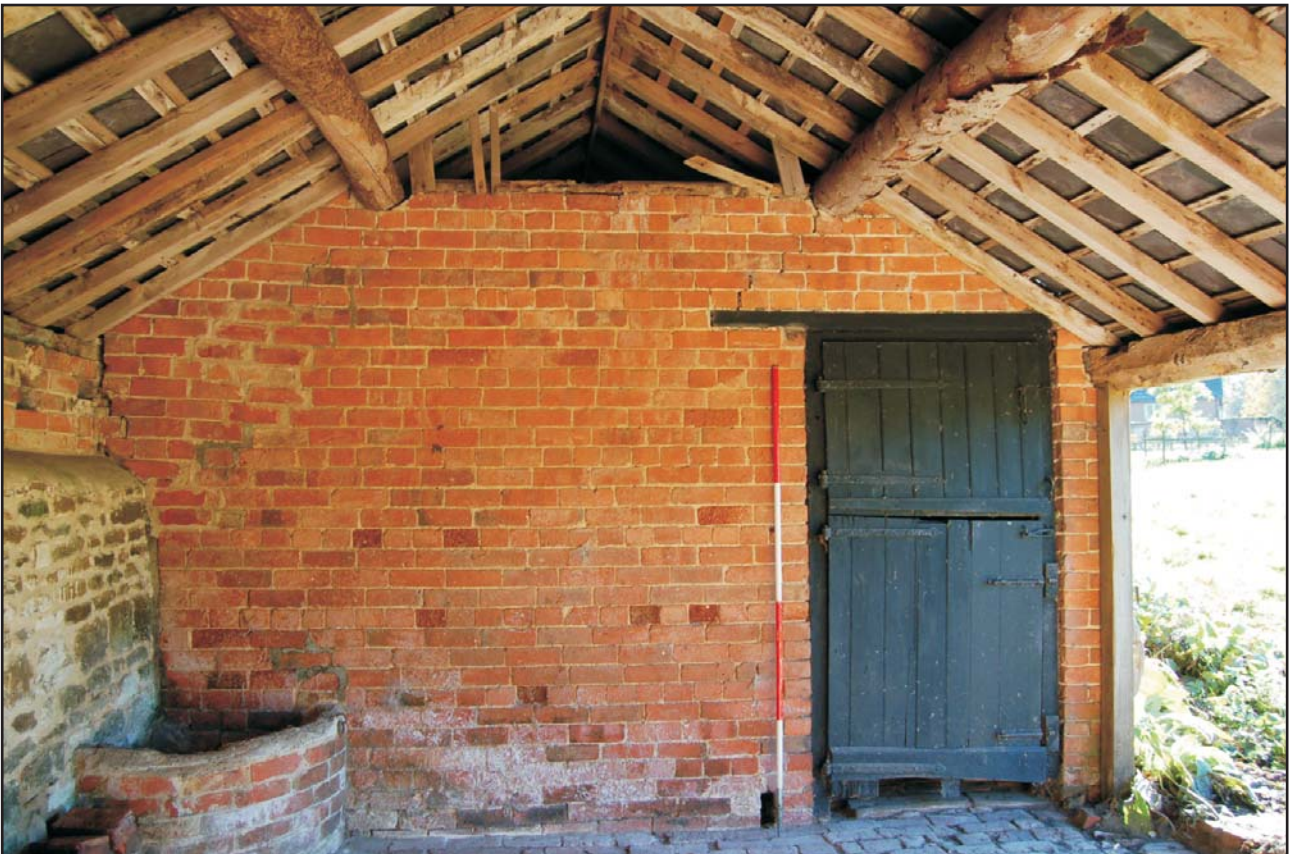
The north internal wall of the hovel, looking north Plate 3



The north wall of the hovel, looking south, showing structural failure Plate 4



The trough in the south-east corner Plate 5
of the hovel, looking east



The south internal wall of the hovel and stable door to the southern room, looking south Plate 6



The west internal wall of the southern room with louvred window, looking west Plate 7



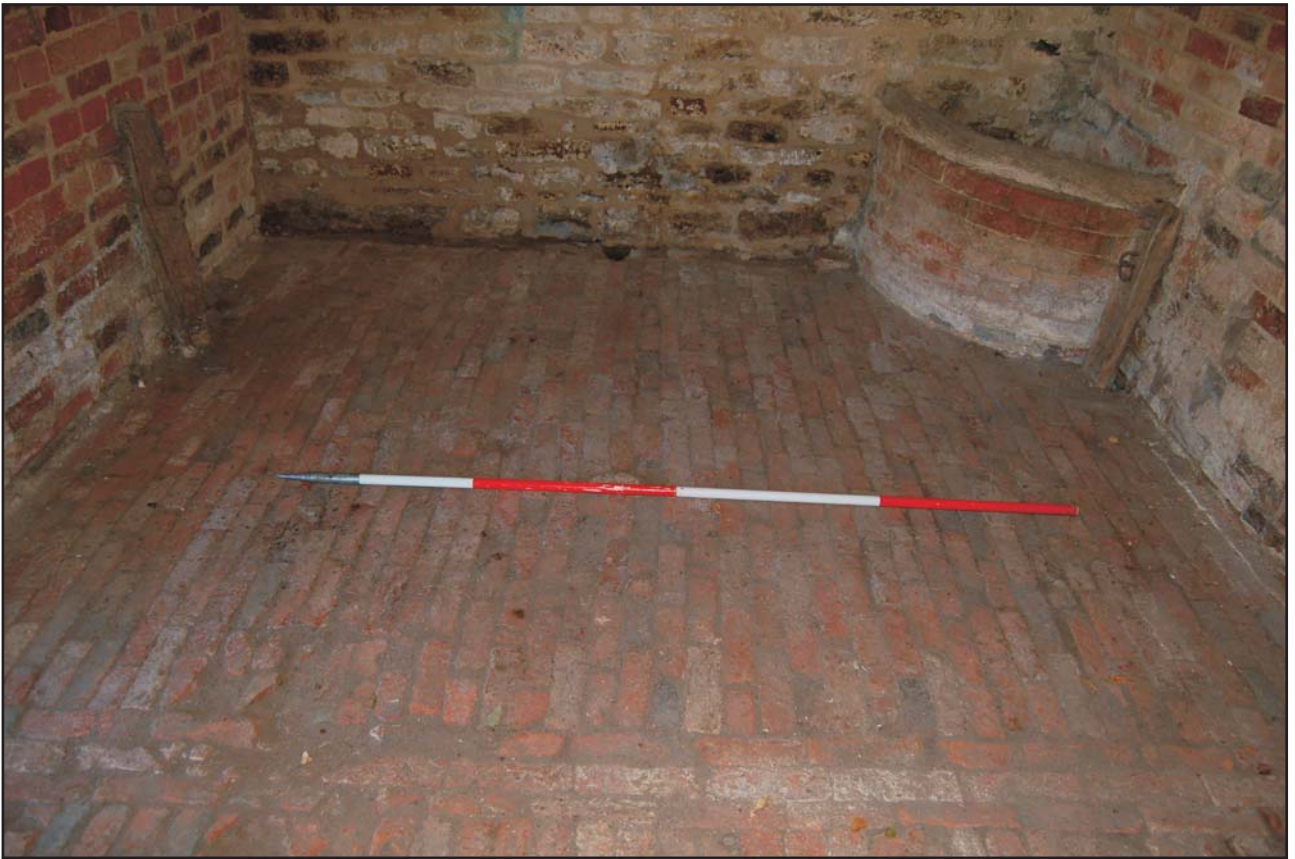
The east internal wall of the southern room, looking east Plate 8



The south internal wall of the southern room, looking south Plate 9



Detail of the floor of the hovel, looking north Plate 10



Detail of the floor of the southern room, looking east Plate 11



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