



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

## Archaeological Buildings Recording at The Old Forge, Lower Green, Higham, Suffolk January 2012



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Report 12/17  
February 2012



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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	
Project title	Archaeological Buildings Recording at The Old Forge Lower Green Higham, Suffolk
Short description	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out a buildings recording action at The Old Forge, Lower Green, Higham, Suffolk to record the mid to late 19th-century forge building before its proposed conversion to a domestic property. The survey recorded the building as it stood and showed that most of the internal features of the building relating to its use as a forge had been removed with only one of the two hearths surviving in an incomplete state. The historical research has indicated that the forge was constructed at the same time as the inn across the road which was built to serve the village railway station.
Project type	Building assessment
Previous work	Unknown
Future work	unknown
Monument type and period	Mid 19th-century forge
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	
County	Suffolk
Site address	The Old Forge Lower Green Higham
Easting & Northing	TL 746 661
Area, sq m/ha	65sq m
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Project brief originator	Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Director/Supervisor	Tim Upson-Smith BA, PGDip
Project Manager	Joe Prentice
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>	
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End date	January 2012
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	
Title	Archaeological Buildings Recording at The Old Forge Lower Green Higham, Suffolk
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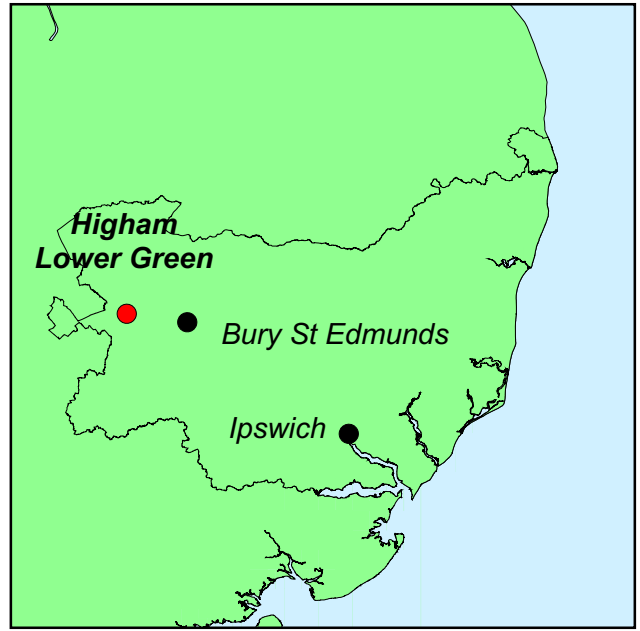
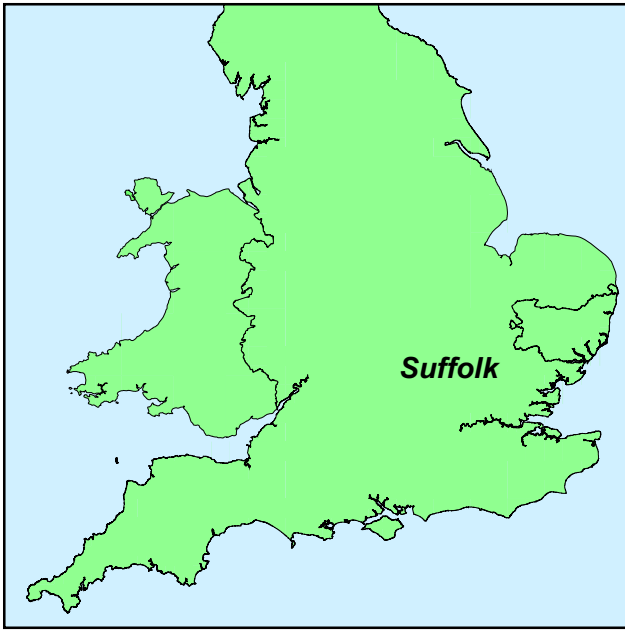
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Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDINGS RECORDING AT THE OLD FORGE**  
**LOWER GREEN, HIGHAM,**  
**SUFFOLK**

**Abstract**

*Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out a buildings recording action at The Old Forge, Lower Green, Higham, Suffolk to record the mid to late 19th-century forge building before its proposed conversion to a domestic property. The survey recorded the building as it stood and showed that most of the internal features of the building relating to its use as a forge had been removed with only one of the two hearths surviving in an incomplete state. The historical research has indicated that the forge was constructed at the same time as the inn across the road which was built to serve the village railway station.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) were commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake an archaeological buildings recording action at the Old Forge, Lower Green Higham, Suffolk, (NGR TL 746 661) prior to its proposed conversion to residential use (consent F/2009/0047/ful, condition 5).

The work was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2012) and the brief issued by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team (SCCAS/CT) Ref: SpecHBR(EM)\_OldForge\_Higham\_0047\_2009 dated 1st December 2011 (Martin 2011).

**2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

The objectives of the work were:

- to compile a descriptive record of the building at English Heritage's Level 2 before conversion of the building takes place;
- to provide a detailed understanding of the nature of the building, and to provide the historical context, development and significance of the building group.

The building was recorded in accordance of the standards, conventions and specifications defined in English Heritage, *Understanding Historic Buildings, A guide to good recording practice* (2006). The record conforms to that of Level Two (ibid, section 5.2).

All exterior elevations were photographed. The interior was photographically recorded as much as was possible due to the building's current use as a store and included significant structural features.

A plan of the building and cross section was drawn to record the locations of alterations and/or additions to the building which helped to understand the development of the structure. Fixtures and fittings, which related to the buildings

early use, were recorded and former uses of the individual areas postulated where sufficient evidence remained.

An historical document search (documentary, cartographic and pictorial) was undertaken to place the history of the building complex within its immediate local context. The cartographic assessment referred to the tithe assessment of the 1840s and Ordnance Survey mapping of the 1880s and early 1900s.

### 3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 Historical background

Historically, Higham was a hamlet that lay within Gazeley. At Domesday, the parish was known as Desilingham and was associated with the Earls of Gloucester. After being forfeited to the crown in the 16th century it was settled on Charles, Duke of Suffolk.

The Newmarket to Bury turnpike was set up following an act of 1770. A toll house was built at the junction with Gazeley Road to the north of the site (known as The Round House; Listed Building). Much of Higham was acquired by the Barclay family in the early 19th century. They appear to have been Victorian philanthropists eager to improve the welfare of the villagers and embarked on a number of projects to this end. In 1833 a small free school was built at Higham Green, followed by a British School in 1861. In the same year the ecclesiastical parish of Higham was formed and J G Barclay gave land and hired Sir George Gilbert Scott to erect a church. Higham Church is built in the Early English geometric style and is constructed from traditional flint with Ancaster stone dressings.

The Great Eastern Railway line from Newmarket to Bury St Edmunds opened in 1854, with the station at Higham opening at the same time. The entry for Higham (under Gazeley) in White's Directory of Suffolk in 1855 mentions the station and gives the name of the station master as Thomas Aldersley, but does not mention Station Inn or list a blacksmith in the hamlet.

However, by 1869 Station Inn is trading and a blacksmith, Henry Barrow, is listed for Higham. His premises are likely to be the smithy opposite the inn. It is likely therefore, that the inn and the smithy are contemporary and were constructed at some time between 1855 and 1869.

The station closed to freight from 1964 and to passengers from 1967. It is likely that both the inn and smithy ceased trading during this period. Certainly by 1981 (Ordnance Survey map not illustrated) neither were labelled.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted, but only a single monument lay within 200m of the former smithy, that of the site of Lower Green (HER no **HIG 013**).

Houses are shown on the north, south and south-west sides of the green on Hodkinson's 1783 map. Now, it is an area of extensive earthworks in long standing pasture with links to further earthworks to the south. There was also a listed building, that of the Round House to the north of the smithy (known as Toll House Cottage on the list; Listed building no 275778).



### 3.2 Cartographic evidence

#### **1823 Enclosure Map of the hamlet of Higham**

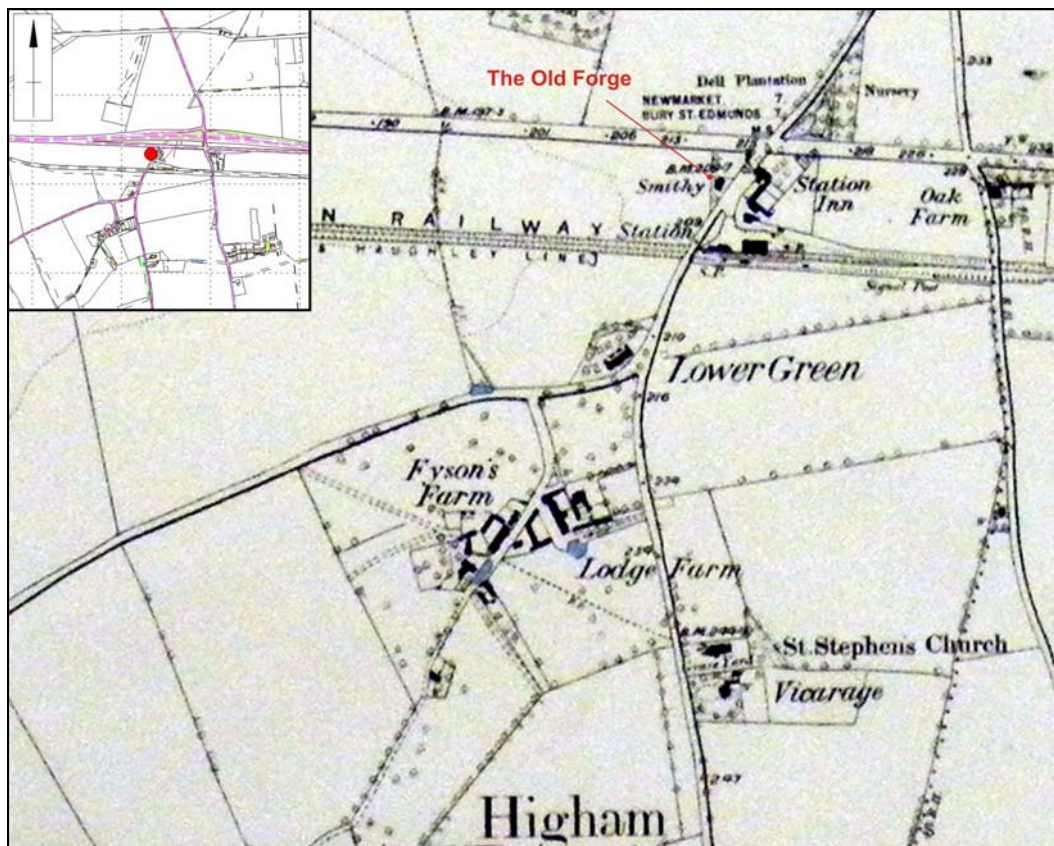
This is the earliest detailed map (not illustrated). However, it provides little detail regarding the nature of the buildings of that period; it does not depict the Round House. The land is held by Joseph Gurney.

#### **1845 Tithe Map for Gazeley**

This map (not illustrated) shows more detail and depicts both the Round House (shown on the map as the Round Lodge) and the small triangular piece of land within which the smithy will later sit. The parcel number is 133 and it is called Round House Lodge Plantation, owned by Robert Barclay. The larger arable field to the west (plot 130) is called Tare Close and is also owned by Robert Barclay. There is a row of estate cottages to the south. These were presumably built by the Barclay family.

#### **First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1882 (Fig 2)**

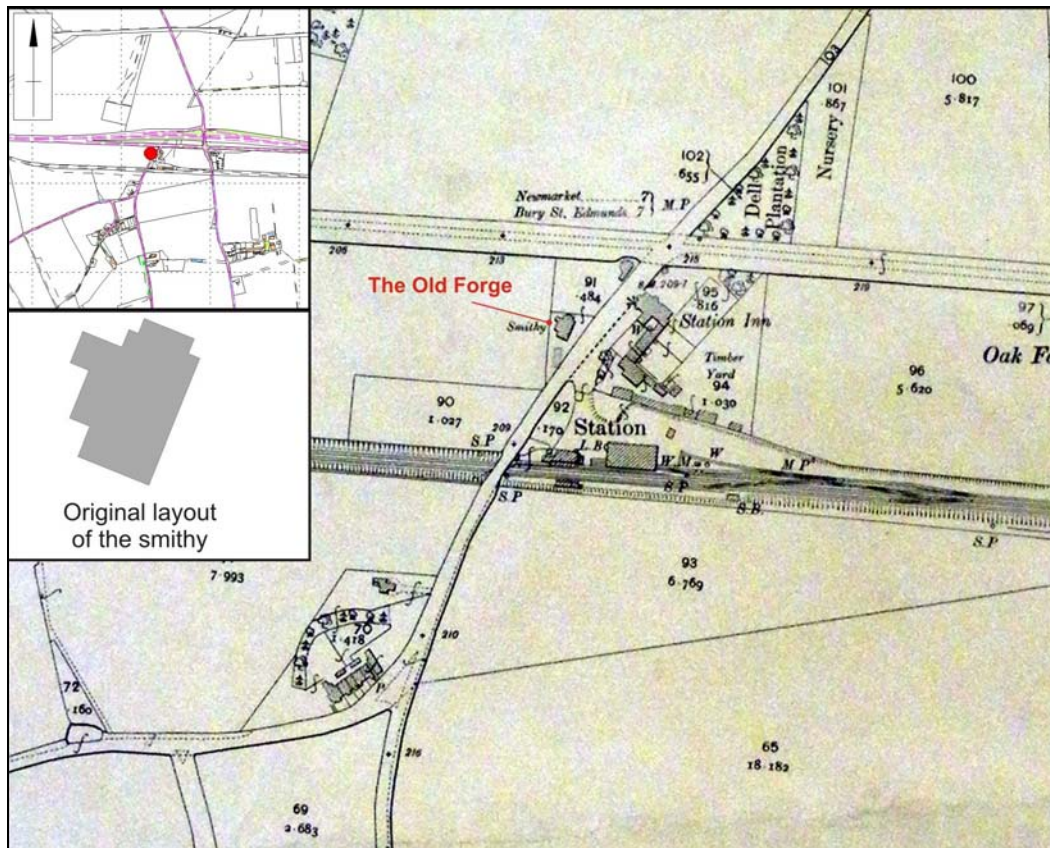
This map shows the railway and its associated complex of buildings, labelled as Station, Station Inn and Smithy for the first time. The smithy is essentially rectangular in plan with small extensions to the north and west.



First edition Ordnance Survey map, 1882, 6"

Fig 2

**Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1904** (Fig 3)  
The plan form is more clearly illustrated in this map.

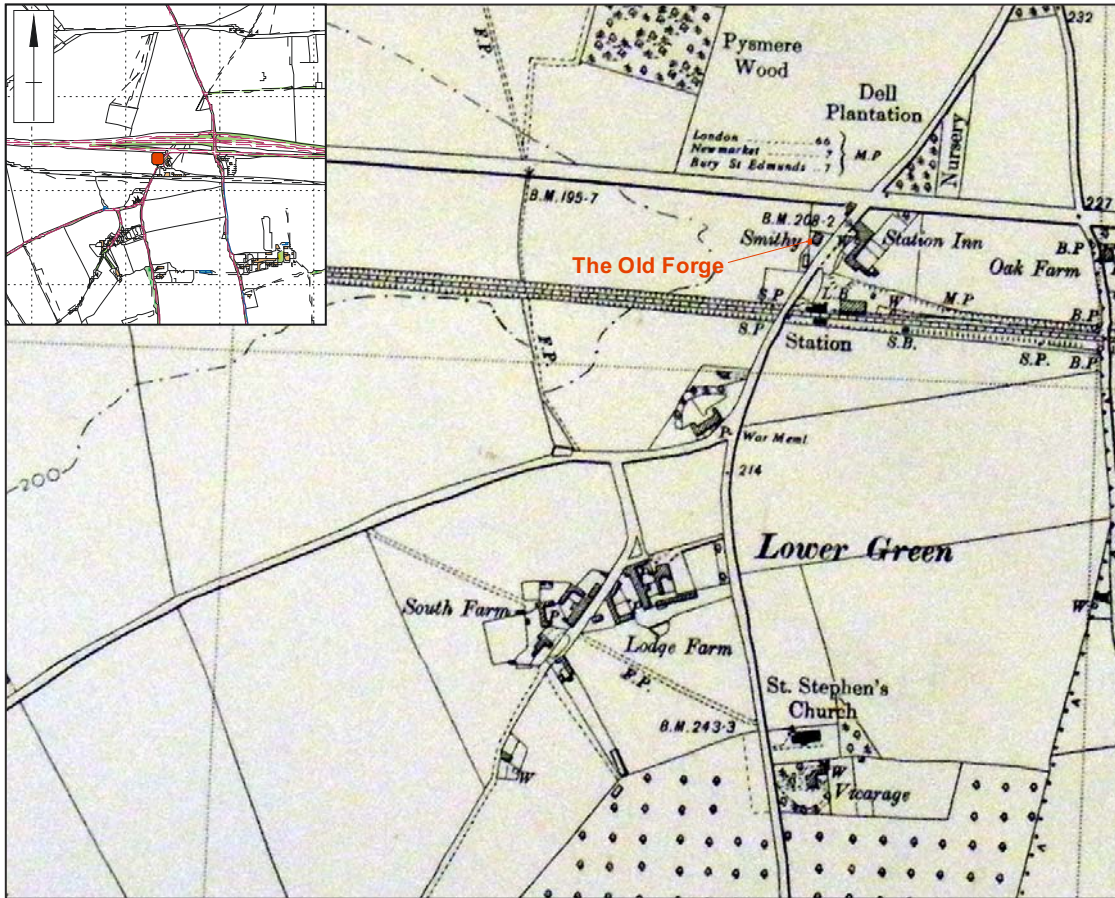


Second edition Ordnance Survey map, 1904

Fig 3

**Ordnance Survey map, 1952 (Fig 4)**

The building is still labelled as the smithy in 1952, but it appears to have been slightly modified, having the same plan as it does at present.



Ordnance Survey map, 1952

Fig 4

The postcard (Fig 5) shows a small lean-to at the north end of the building. By 1981 none of the buildings were being used for their original purpose.

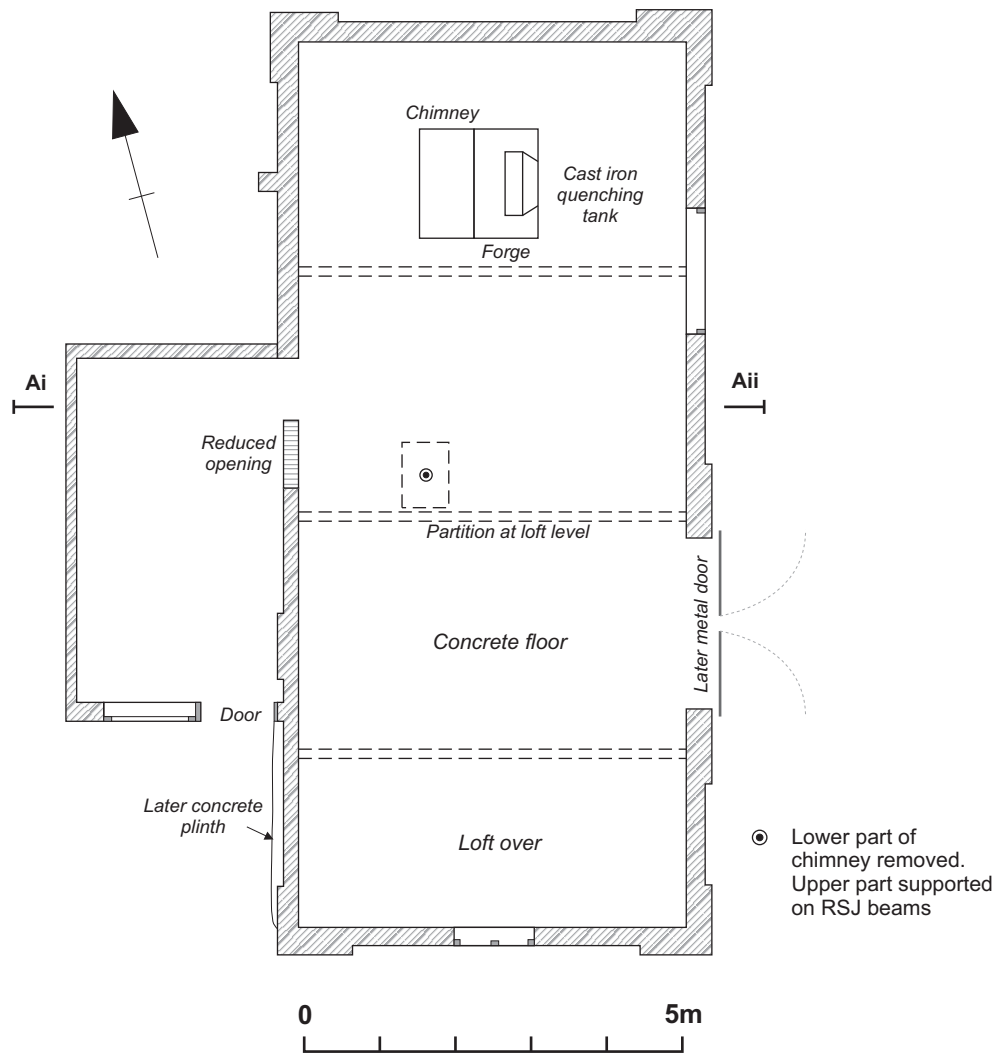
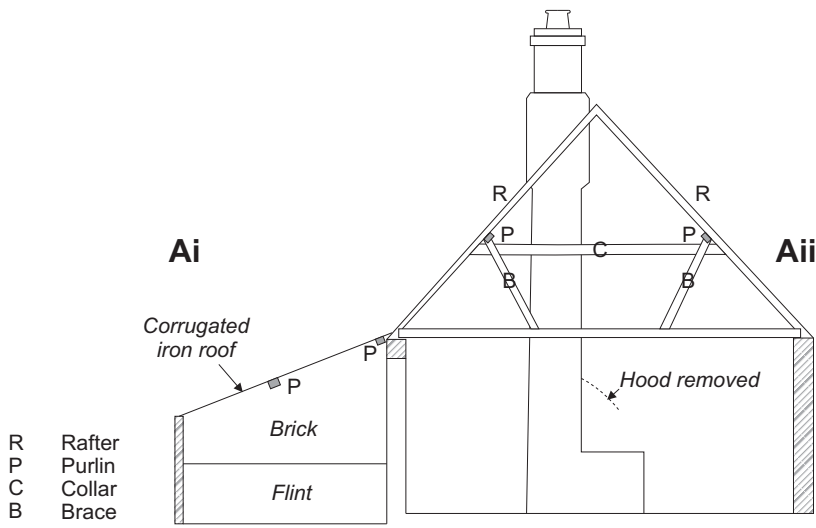


Postcard of The Old Forge, early 20th century Fig 5

There is a recollection of the smithy still being used during the Second World War by John Forster:

*Most villages had a blacksmith and Higham was no exception. The Blacksmith's Shop was situated close to the railway station and was owned by Mr Bill Talbot who was assisted by Mr William 'Conker' Talbot. Before and during the early part of the War, a great number of horses were being used on the farms and the Blacksmith's Shop was a hive of activity where horses were re-shod and repairs to various farm implements were carried out.*

(From [highamvillage.com/history/higham\\_history.pdf](http://highamvillage.com/history/higham_history.pdf))



## 4 BUILDING ASSESSMENT

### 4.1 Exterior

The building was visited on the 9 January 2012 to carry out a photographic and drawn survey.

The building is free standing and rectangular in plan with a lean-to extension on its western side (Fig 6). The building is constructed from un-knapped flint (roughwork), in a lime mortar matrix, with brick detailing around the doors and windows and on the corners of the building, which are further enhanced by clasped buttresses, as are the door openings (Figs 7, 8 and 13). The original wooden doors to the building had been replaced with sheet metal doors (Fig 20). The windows, whilst retaining their wooden frames had been boarded over, the one on the gable elevation with wood and that on the principal elevation with sheets of metal.

The roof covering is terracotta pantiles, some of which have a black glaze (Fig 7).



Principal elevation, looking west

Fig 7

The roof of the lean-to is corrugated iron. The over-hanging gables have decorative barge boards (Fig 8).



Gable elevation, looking north

Fig 8

The chimneys at the time of the survey were square in plan and quite plain, however the evidence from the early 20th century postcard (Fig 5) shows that they have been rebuilt as previously they were round in section and the northern one quite decorative with its apparent chequer pattern brickwork. The change in the colour of the brickwork and where they step in is likely to be where they were rebuilt from (Fig 9).



Chimney detail, looking east, showing the change in brickwork

Fig 9

The lean-to on the western side in its current form has undergone modification and has several phases of brickwork over flint walling on its northern side (Fig 11).

Historically there was a lean-to on this side of the building, but the existing one which, maybe on its footprint, only retains a small amount of the fabric associated with it, in the form of the previously mentioned length of flint walling. On the southern elevation of the lean-to there was a plain plank door and boarded-over window next to it (Fig 8).



Rear elevation, looking east

Fig 10



Northern elevation of the lean-to showing the more recent brickwork over the original flint walling, looking south-east

Fig 11

North of the lean-to on the western elevation of the forge there are areas of limestone and chalk blocks in the wall with flint above (Fig 12). The purpose for this is not known as it rather spoils the effect of the flint, however this elevation is to the rear of



the building so would not have been on public view.



Rear elevation, looking east, showing the panels of limestone and chalk blocks Fig 12

There is no evidence of the lean-to on the northern elevation shown on the historic postcard (Fig 5), which would suggest that this structure was a temporary one (Fig 13).



North gable end, looking south-east Fig 13

#### 4.2 Interior

The building is currently used for storage, the nature of which limited the opportunities for photography; also there was no natural or electric light. There was little evidence in the inside of the building for its former use as the forge (Fig 6).

The walls within the main part of the building were white-washed over the flint and brick, the floor was modern concrete (Fig 14).



Forge interior, looking north, showing the lath and plaster partition at loft level  
Fig 14

The central chimney had had its lower part removed and the upper part supported on RSJ girders (Fig 15).



The central chimney looking south-west, supported on RSJ girders,  
also visible is the lath and plaster partition  
Fig 15

The other chimney retained its hearth at the front of which was a cast iron tank, likely to have been used for quenching (Fig 16). The tank was made by *Alldays & Onions Ltd Makers Birmingham & London*.



The hearth with the *Alldays & Onions* quenching tank

Fig 16

This engineering firm made motor lorries, cars, vans, cycles and motorcycles, complete outfits for foundries and workshops, hammers, fans, hearths, forges, cranes and pulley blocks. The company was formed in 1885 through a merger so the tank whilst being a surviving forge feature does not date to when the forge was likely to have been built between 1855 and 1869, although it may have been installed shortly thereafter ([http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Alldays and Onions](http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Alldays_and_Onions)).

The hood for the hearth has been removed and the flues of both chimneys were full of small twigs evidence of generations of birds nesting at the top of the chimneys (Fig 17).



Chimney over the hearth where the smoke hood has been removed Fig 17

A lath and plaster partition survived at loft level across the middle of the building, this had been painted dark brown, no evidence survived at a lower level to suggest whether the partition split the room into two (Fig 14). At the southern end of the building there was an open loft space for storage which is likely to be an original feature of the building (Fig 18).



Open loft space at the southern end of the building Fig 18

The roof was a hybrid of a *double framed roof* with purlins supported by braces from the tie-beams and a *coupled rafter roof* where pairs of rafters are joined by a collar-beam (Figs 6 and 19).



Roof structure, looking north, showing tie-beam, brace supporting the purlin, and the collar-beam between the rafters Fig 19

Adjacent to the main door into the building and attached to the wall was a curved block of wood, which had also been white-washed (Figs 20 and 21). The purpose of this is not clear but it may relate in some way to the life of the forge.



Main door into the forge showing the low brick arch over, looking east Fig 20



Curved wooden block adjacent to the entrance Fig 21

### 4.3 The lean-to

The doorway through into the lean-to had been reduced in width with fibre board panelling, the door was a plain four panel door the top panels of which, had been replaced with a metal sheet (Fig 22). At the time of the survey the lean-to was being used for storage and the floor consisted of pallets with a partial covering of fibre board, to keep the contents off the concrete floor and prevent damp (Fig 23).



Interior of the lean-to showing the join, the door and the reduced opening Fig 22



Interior of the lean-to looking south

Fig 23

#### 4 DISCUSSION

The survey recorded the forge as it stood on the 9th January 2012. It demonstrated that the forge whilst having had almost all of its internal fixtures and fittings removed still retained the character of the building externally.

The building has undergone external changes since it was built, the evidence from the early 20th-century postcard (Fig 5), shows that one of the most prominent changes was the shape of the chimneys, from the original round flues to the current plain square ones.

The lean-to extension on the northern side of the building also shown on the postcard has been removed. No evidence of its existence was visible on the northern elevation suggesting that this lean-to may have been a temporary wooden structure with external access as there was no door from the main building.

The extension on the rear elevation, (western side), has also been altered over time, with areas of more modern brick work visible in its current form. The northern part of the rear wall differed from the rest of the building, in that amongst the flint walling, there were patches of limestone and chalk blocks, there appeared to be no reason for this change in the use of stone as neither section of wall was completely limestone or chalk. If this had been the case it may have indicated a blocked opening.

The doors and windows of the building were still in their original positions, although the windows had been blocked with either wooden or metal panels. The original wooden doors of the forge had been replaced with larger metal doors.

Internally the floor of the building had been replaced with concrete. One of the chimneys had its lower part removed, prior to the new concrete floor. The other chimney still retained elements of the forge hearth although the smoke hood had been removed. The doorway through into the lean-to extension on the western side of the building had been reduced in width with fibre board, suggesting that this was a more recent internal alteration.

At the southern end of the building, there was an open loft space for storage. Also surviving at loft level was a lath and plaster division across the central part of the building. No other original internal fittings appeared to have survived within the building.



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Northamptonshire County Council

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