



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological building recording at land adjacent
to Grafton House, Blisworth, Northamptonshire
April 2013



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Northamptonshire
County Council

Amir Bassir

Report 13/77

May 2013



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
MAY 2013**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
BUILDING RECORDING
AT LAND ADJACENT TO
GRAFTON HOUSE, BLISWORTH
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
APRIL 2013**

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: 150271
Project title	Archaeological Building Recording at land adjacent to Grafton House, Blisworth, Northamptonshire	
Short description	<p><i>Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to undertake an assessment of barns and stables on land adjacent to Grafton House, Blisworth, Northamptonshire. These structures are associated with the former Duke's Arms inn which was constructed in 1793 to serve the adjacent Grand Union Canal. The inn closed in the 1870s and was converted into a private residence. The surveyed structures lie within the Blisworth Conservation Area.</i></p> <p><i>This assessment included a photographic survey as well as field notes and annotations and amendments to existing architects drawings. Evidence for structural alterations and changes in fabric were recorded in order to determine a sequence of historic development.</i></p> <p><i>The barns and stables were determined to be of a late 18th-early 19th-century date with mid 19th century and modern alterations and additions.</i></p>	
Project type	Building assessment	
Previous work	Archaeological desk-based assessment (Walker 2011)	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	Curtilage of listed building 18th-20th centuries.	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Grafton House, Gayton Road, Blisworth	
NGR	SP 723 533	
Area	980 sq m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Consultant	
Project design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Steve Parry	
Project Manager	Amir Bassir	
Sponsor or funding body	Neil Tanner Associates	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	April 2013	
End date	May 2013	
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title	Archaeological Building Recording at land adjacent to Grafton House, Blisworth, Northamptonshire, April 2013	
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology Report 13/77	
Author(s)	Amir Bassir	
Page numbers	32	
Date	May 2013	

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING
AT LAND ADJACENT TO
GRAFTON HOUSE, BLISWORTH
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to undertake an assessment of barns and stables on land adjacent to Grafton House, Blisworth, Northamptonshire. These structures are associated with the former Duke's Arms inn which was constructed in 1793 to serve the adjacent Grand Union Canal. The inn closed in the 1870s and was converted into a private residence. The surveyed structures lie within the Blisworth Conservation Area.

This assessment included a photographic survey as well as field notes and annotations and amendments to existing architects drawings. Evidence for structural alterations and changes in fabric were recorded in order to determine a sequence of historic development.

The barns and stables were determined to be of a late 18th - early 19th-century date with mid 19th century and modern alterations and additions.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) were commissioned by Neil Tanner Associates on behalf of Seima Construction Ltd, to undertake an archaeological building recording of barns and stables on land adjacent to Grafton House, Blisworth, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 723 533, Fig 1). The work was carried out in April 2013, in response to a proposed scheme of conversion, construction, alteration and demolition.

An archaeological desk-based survey (Walker 2011) had previously been commissioned, assessing the known or potential archaeological and historic resource present within the development area.

Grafton House, immediately to the south of the surveyed buildings is a grade II listed building and the barns and stables are considered curtilage. The site lies within the Blisworth Conservation Area. The listed building description for Grafton House is as follows:

House. Circa early 19th century, altered in late 19th century. Dressed limestone. Hipped plain tile roof, the lower 2 courses slate, and partly slate at rear. Red brick axial stacks.

PLAN: the original house is L-shaped on plan with principal room on either side of front entrance and wing to rear left; the single storey and attic flanking wing may be additions but the 2-storey block in the angle at the back is a later C19 addition.

EXTERIOR: 2 storeys and attic. Symmetrical 1:3:1 bay north east front. Ground floor 2 later C19 canted bays and stone pilastered and pedimented doorway at centre with fielded panel door and rectangular overlight with margin panes. First floor 2 tripartite 4:12:4 pane C19 sashes and central 4 pane sash, 2 late C19 gabled half-dormers with 9-pane sashes. Low flanking wings, set back slightly, with 4-pane sashes. Rear (SW): hipped wing on right with 12-pane sash; main roof carried down over late C19 addition in angle on left, with casement windows, and glazed doors with overlights. Flanking wing on right with hipped dormer.

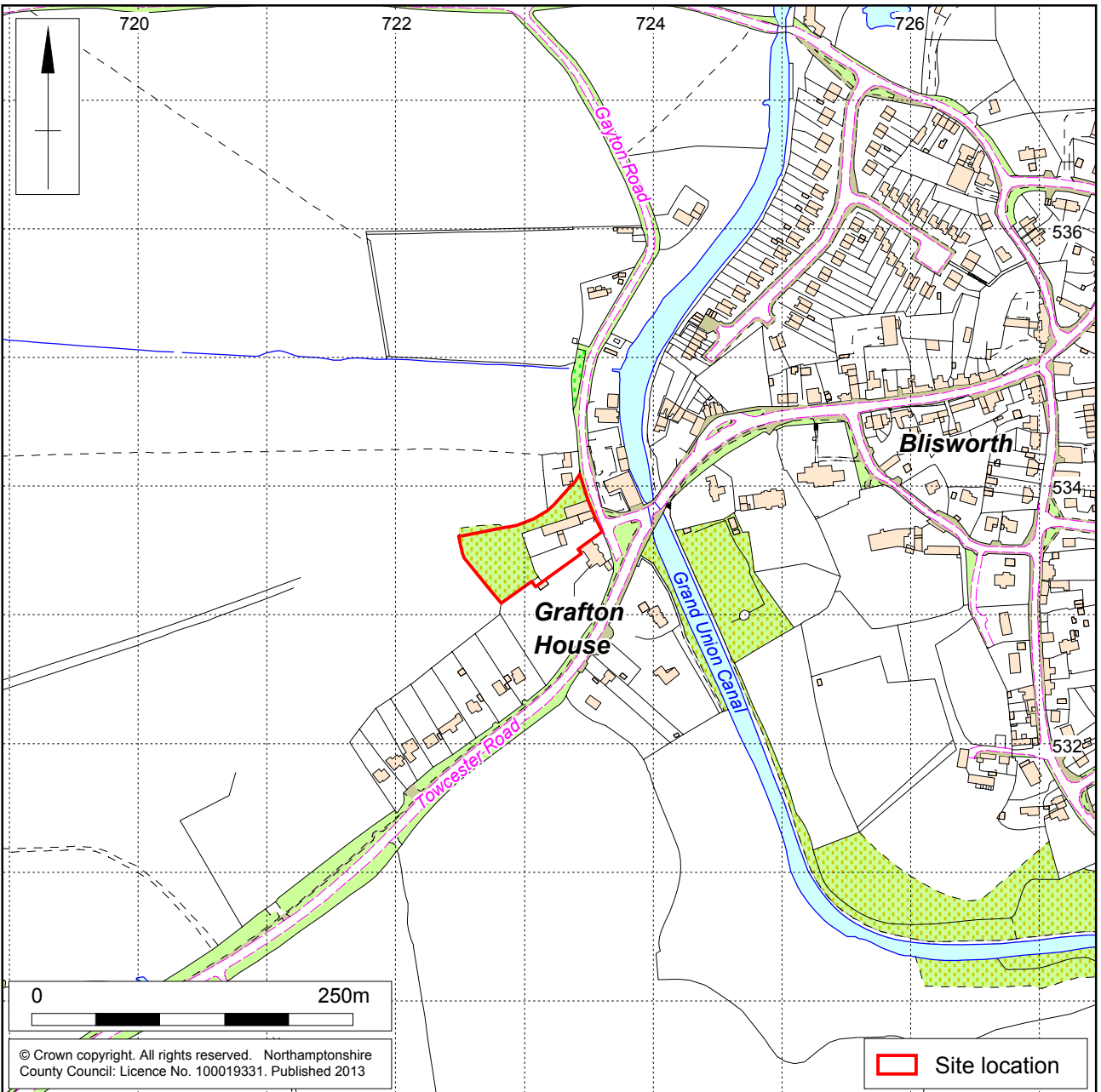
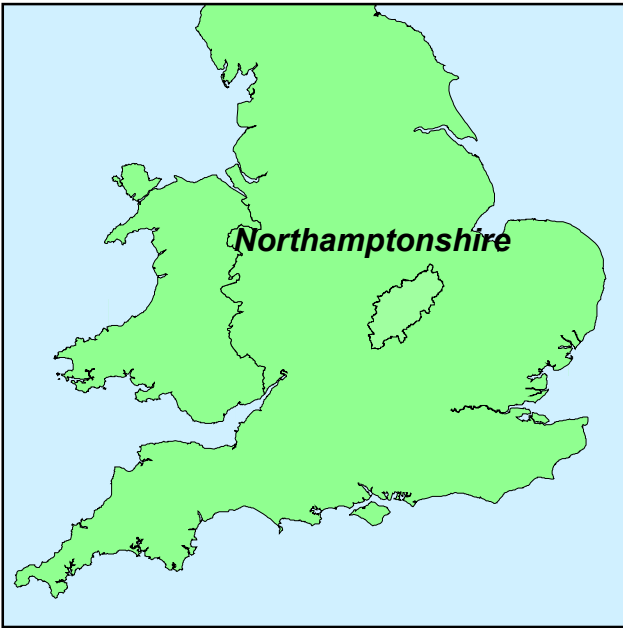
INTERIOR: only ground floor seen, some Georgian doors but mostly Victorian joinery and chimneypieces.

NOTE: Said to have been a farmhouse on the Grafton Estate. It then became Blisworth Mill (qv) owner's house and John Westley is listed in Kelly's Directory 1898, as living at Grafton House.

The development area containing the surveyed structures lies within the parish of Blisworth, approximately 8km south of Northampton. The site lies on the western limit of the village in close proximity to the Grand Union Canal (Fig 2). Access to the site is via Gayton Road to the east. Open fields are present to the north and west of the development area.

The underlying geology of the area is of Upper Lias Clay, (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html>). The site is fairly level and lies at c93m above Ordnance Datum.

At the time of this survey, the site was extremely overgrown and the buildings were derelict and in severe disrepair. Vegetation had caused large scale damage to the structures and their roofs making access to parts of the buildings difficult and unsafe as well as masking large areas of the structures from view. The amount of vegetation, particularly around the west and north of the structures meant that good camera angles and positions were limited in these areas.



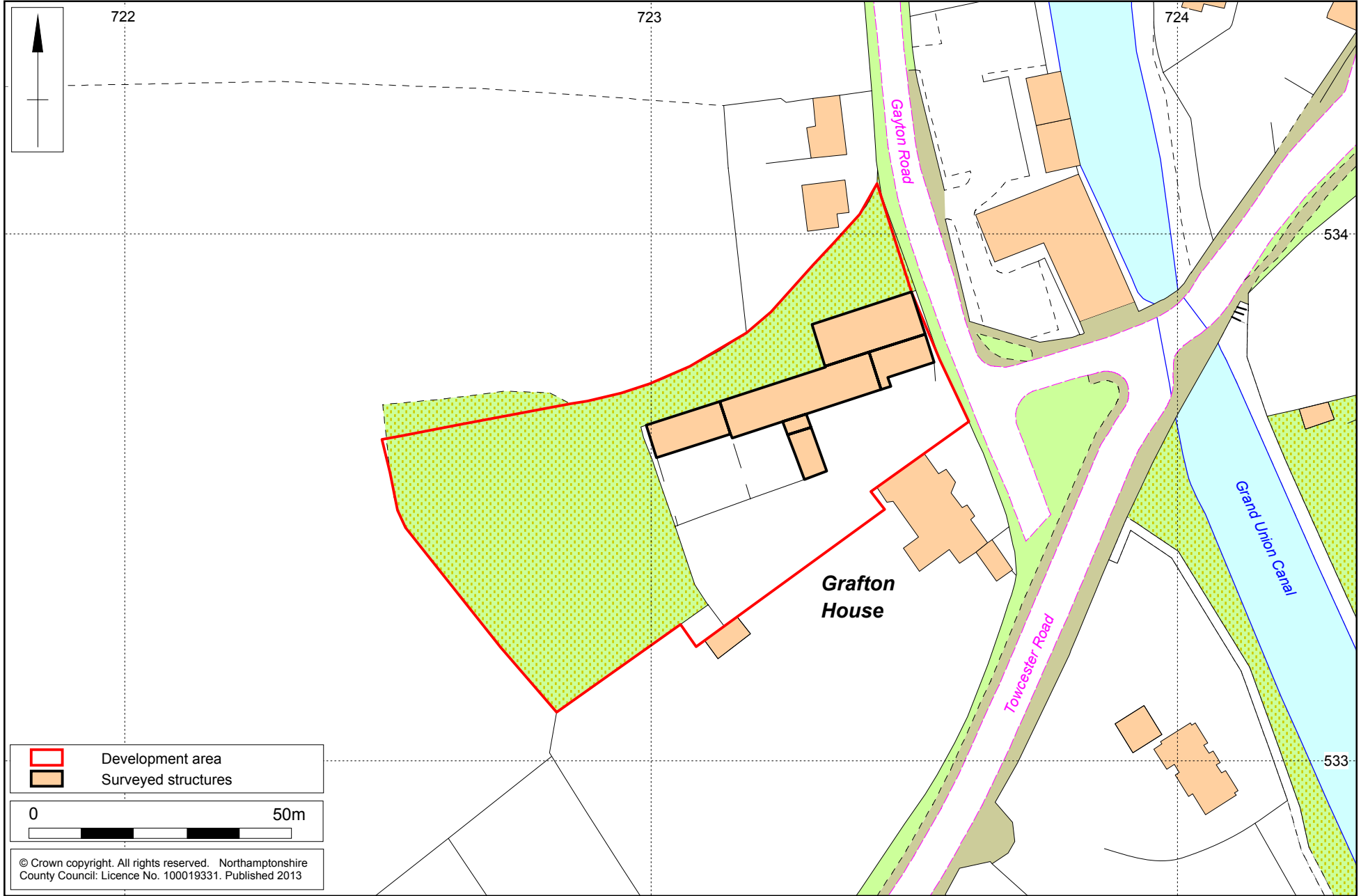
Scale 1:5000 (A4)

Site location Fig 1

Scale 1:1000 (A4)

Plan of the development area showing thr surveyed structures

Fig 2



- Development area
- Surveyed structures



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2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The level of recording was specified as Level 2 – a descriptive and analytical record (English Heritage 2006, 14).

This is defined by English Heritage as consisting of:

- A written account of the building's origins, development and use
- An account of the evidence on which the analysis is based
- A drawn and photographic record to illustrate the building's appearance and structure.

A site visit was made in April 2013, when the principal exterior elevations were photographed. The interiors were photographically recorded to include structural details that might be lost during the development and notes were made of any features and alterations. Measured plans and elevations were annotated to include any relevant features and alterations.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

For a more detailed historical background, see Walker 2011.

Grafton House, to which the surveyed structures are curtilage was constructed in 1793-95 in response to the construction of the Grand Union Canal and the creation of the Towcester to Cotton End Turnpike. Originally known as the Duke's Arms, it was later called the Grafton Arms and closed in the 1870s after the closure of the turnpike. It was then converted to private residence.

A lease of 1798 mentions the construction of the inn, stables and outbuildings. A further barn was built in 1800. It is uncertain whether the existing structures are contemporary with the inn or the slightly later construction date. The Blisworth Inclosure map of 1808 and the Grafton Estate map of 1838 (Fig 3) show a further range of outbuildings to the south-west of the existing structures. These are not shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884 (Fig 3) indicating their demolition by this time. The remains of these structures were visible on site, partly obscured by vegetation. The ranges of barns shown on the map of 1884 (Fig 3) have been extended to the west and south resulting in their present layout. The northern lean-to is not shown on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1900 (Fig 3) but has a probable construction date of early – mid 20th century.

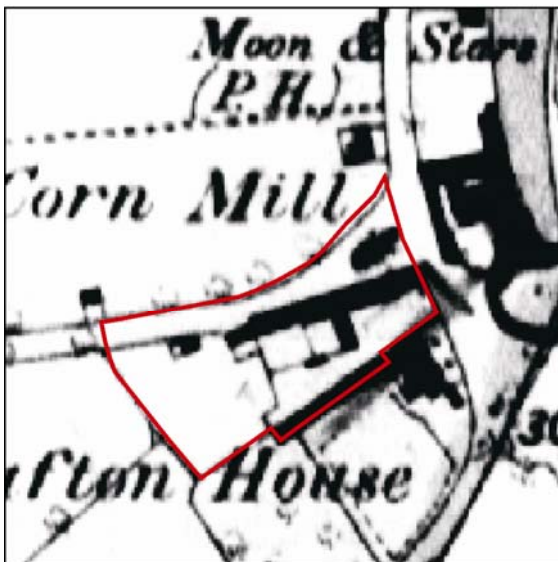
A sale catalogue of 1919 provides a list of outbuildings relating to Grafton House including pigstyes, cow house, hen roost, boiling house, nag and cart horse stabling, harness room with loft, barn and coach house. Some of these will be part of the demolished range to the rear of the house.



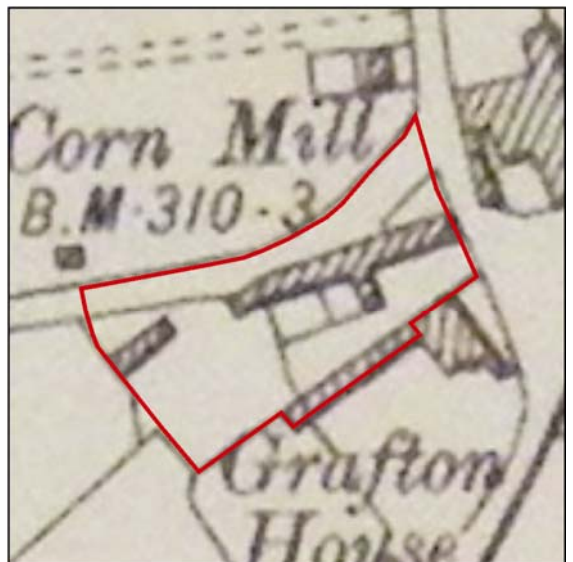
Blisworth draft Inclosure map - 1808



Grafton Estate Map - 1838



First Edition Ordnance Survey map - 1884



Second Edition Ordnance Survey map - 1900

Historic maps showing the development of the site Fig 3

4 BUILDING RECORDING

4.1 Introduction

The structures surveyed as part of this assessment comprise a range of stables and barns which are historically associated with Grafton House (formerly the Grafton Arms inn). They consist of a larger, central structure with smaller ancillary buildings and extensions to the east, west and south (Figs 2 & 9). The earlier structures are built with coursed limestone rubble and dressed blocks with brick repairs while the later west and south extensions are a mix of brick and coursed limestone. The south elevation of the west extension was later re-built in modern breeze block. The remains of earlier, coursed limestone structures can be seen to the south-west of the surveyed buildings (Figs 2, 5 & 8). A 20th-century lean-to with corrugated iron roof supported on square section posts is present at the north of the site, built against the main range. The construction of the lean-to was accompanied by a blocking of a window in this part of the north elevation.

It is probable that the main barn and stables were re-roofed in the mid 19th-century, contemporary with the construction of the later stables. The timbers making up the trusses and roof structures in these buildings were rather too clean cut for a building constructed around 1800. Machine sawn timbers of this date would have a rougher finish than those present. The corrugated iron sheeting on the roof is of a mid 19th-century date. The corrugated asbestos roofing over the Loft is of a mid 20th-century date.



General view of the buildings, looking west Fig 4



General view of the site, showing the remains of demolished structures, looking west

Fig 5



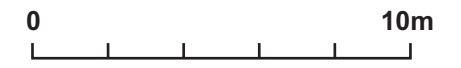
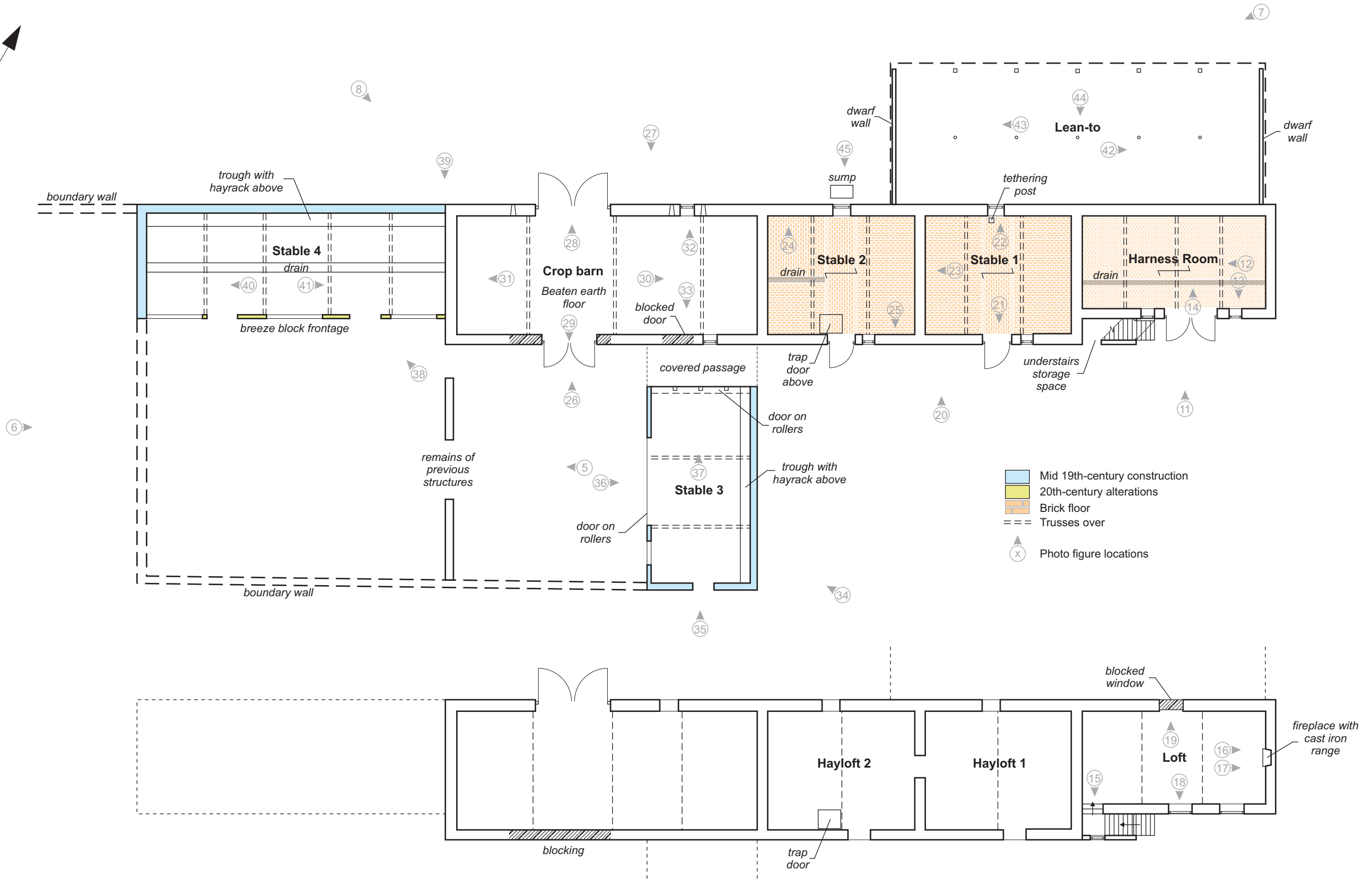
General view of the site, looking north-east Fig 6

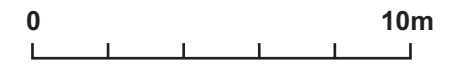
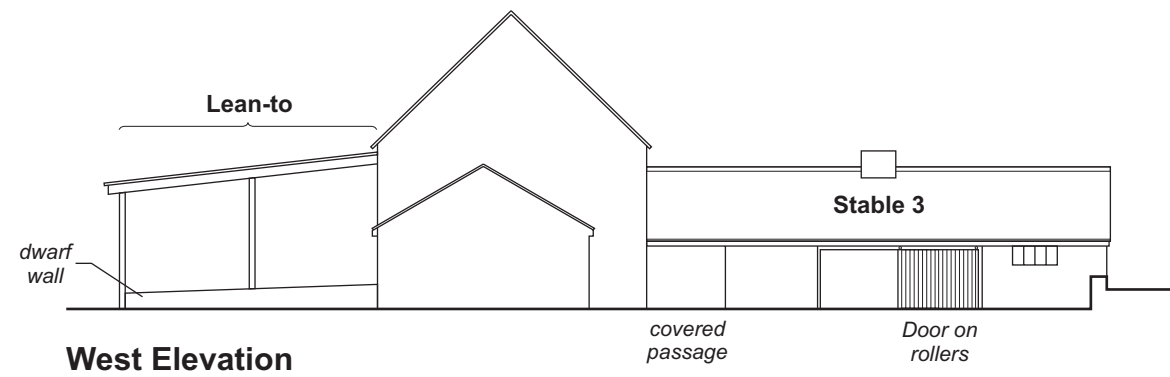
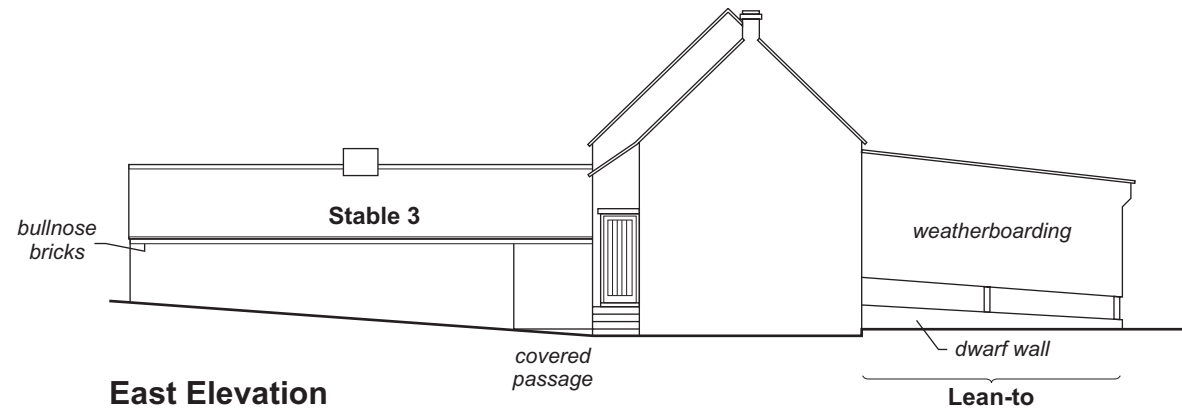
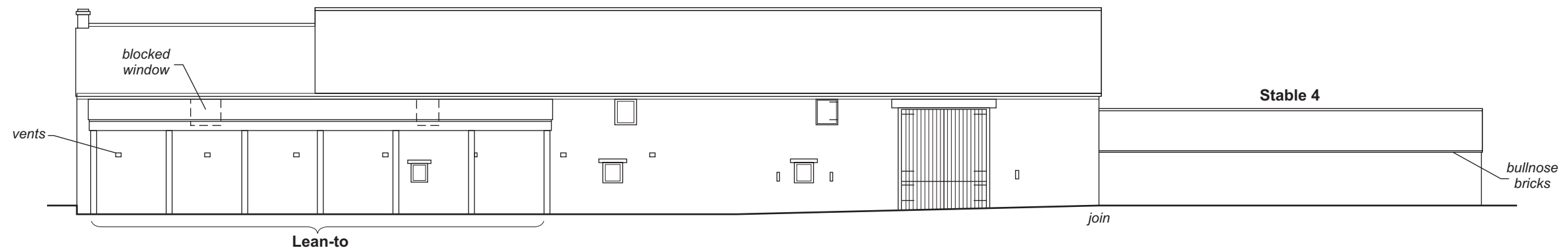
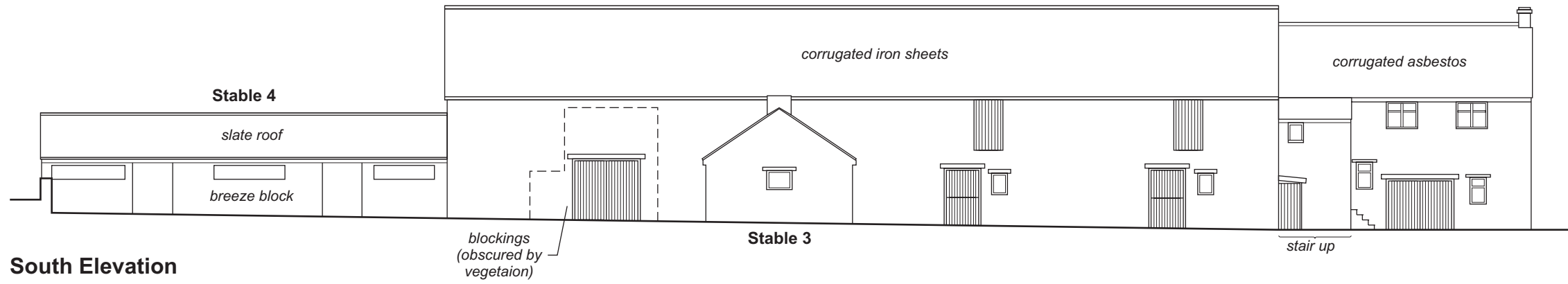


General view of the site, showing the Lean-to, looking south Fig 7



General view of the site, showing Stable 4, looking south-east Fig 8





4.2 Harness Room

This occupies the ground floor of the most easterly extent of the buildings with an internal measurement of c9.2 x 4.6m (Fig 9). It is constructed of coursed limestone blocks with dressed quoins. The north wall is a continuous elevation shared with the central building with no join between the storage barn and stables (Figs 9 & 44).

Access is via outward opening, double stable doors with timber lintel in the southern elevation (Fig 11). This door is flanked by a pair of fixed, two light windows with internal mesh. Internally, these windows have deep, splayed embrasures, rounded to meet the wall (Fig 13).

It has a brick floor with a shallow brick drainage channel running the length of the room (Fig 9 & 14). Vents were built into the north wall of the room below joist level. One of the joists shows fire damage and blackening indicating its reuse from a different structure. At the time of this survey, the room was used for storage.

4.3 Loft

A stair adjacent to the door to the storage barn leads up to this room (Figs 9, 10 & 11). This stair is enclosed within a simple brick structure which abuts the main buildings. A small, fixed, four light window provides light to the top of the stair (Fig 15). The space below the stair forms a small storage area. The Loft, measuring c9.2 x 4.6m is plain, spacious and well lit by windows in the south wall and sky lights. A window in the north elevation is blocked, presumably when the lean-to was constructed (Fig 19). The west wall of the room is dominated by a recessed fireplace and a small cast iron range with flue leading up to the chimney (Figs 16 & 17). The internal walls, both upstairs and downstairs are plastered.



Harness Room and Loft, south elevation, looking north Fig 11



Harness Room interior, looking west Fig 12



Detail of window in the Harness Room Fig 13



Detail of the Harness Room floor showing brick drain Fig 14



Interior of the stair, showing the join with the main structure Fig 15



The Loft, looking east Fig 16



Detail of the fireplace and range Fig 17



South wall of the Loft, looking south Fig 18



Detail of the Loft blocked window, looking north Fig 19

4.4 Stable 1 & Stable 2

These occupy the eastern half of the main central structure which measures c32 x 7m (Fig 9). The building is divided centrally forming the large, full height Crop Barn at the west and subdivided at the east to create two, equal sized rooms. The whole structure is covered in a corrugated iron roof supported on a timber frame.

Stable 1 and Stable 2 were historically used as stables, each measuring c7.2 x 6.8m. The rooms show no evidence for fixed troughs or hay racks. A tethering post is present in Stable 1 (Fig 22). Both rooms have brick floors though this is obscured in Stable 1 by a thick layer of straw and hay (Figs 21 & 23). The floors in both rooms are uneven, with the sides of the rooms being slightly higher than the centre (Fig 24). This is particularly evident in the north-west corner of Stable 2. Each room has two small, louvered windows with timber lintels and are accessed through the south elevation. Evidence for a raised storage shelf or platform can be seen in the western corner of Stable 2 (Fig 23). The walls of both rooms bore traces of whitewash. A drainage channel is present in Stable 2 (Fig 9).

4.5 Hayloft 1 & Hayloft 2

These occupy the space above Stable 1 and Stable 2 (Fig 9). Access to these rooms would have been via ladder through raised doors in the south elevation (Fig 20). A trapdoor is also present in Stable 2 (Fig 9). A limited view through gaps in the stable ceilings revealed a roof structure identical to that seen over the Crop Barn.

4.6 Crop Barn

The largest single barn space in the complex, measuring c15 x 5.8m, this space historically functioned as a crop barn (Fig 9). It is dominated by large, opposing, double doors in the north and south elevations (Figs 26-29). Evidence for the reduction of the original, full height door to the current, smaller door in the south elevation could be seen internally to the room (Figs 10 & 29). Vegetation prevented this alteration from being examined externally. As well as the reduction of the original door, evidence for the blocking of a smaller door could also be seen in this area, indicating two phases of alteration here (Figs 10 & 29). Interestingly, the smaller alteration appears to pre-date the existing door, indicating a complete blocking of the original full height door and subsequent reopening. The timber lintel for this smaller door could be seen *in situ*, cut to accommodate the existing door. An equal-sized blocking with timber lintel could also be seen on the same wall, further east (Figs 9 & 33).

The roof is supported on a king post truss with braces and flat-topped queen posts with additional braces and iron ties. The king post tie-beam is a reused beam bearing defunct joints along the upper edge. The building was likely re-roofed in the mid 19th-century.

A louvered window with slightly splayed embrasures, flanked by splayed ventilation slots is present in the north wall (Fig 32). A similar window, without flanking ventilation is built into the south wall adjacent to a blocked door (Fig 33). A narrow, splayed ventilation slot is also present in the north wall, west of the door (Fig 9).

The crop barn has a floor of compact, beaten earth in comparison to the brick floors of the stables.



South elevation, Stable 1 and Stable 2, looking north Fig 20



Stable 1, interior, looking south Fig 21



Stable 1, interior, showing tethering post Fig 22



Stable 2, interior, showing remains of storage platform to the left, looking west Fig 23



Detail of the floor in Stable 2 Fig 24



Detail of louvered window in Stable 2 Fig 25



South elevation of the Crop Barn, looking north Fig 26



North elevation of the Crop Barn, looking south Fig 27



The north opening Crop Barn door, looking north Fig 28



The reduced door, showing blockings, looking south Fig 29



Crop Barn, interior, looking east (note reused timber in truss) Fig 30



Crop Barn, interior, looking west Fig 31



Detail of window in Crop Barn Fig 32



Detail of blocked door Fig 33

4.7 Stable 3

This structure, measuring c10 x 5.6m is one of the more overgrown of the buildings surveyed. It is constructed largely of coursed limestone rubble and red brick. The west wall was entirely of red brick with a large central opening for a vertically-boarded door with top rollers which would have moved on an iron runner (missing at the time of this survey) (Fig 10). An identical door with rollers is also present *in situ* in the north wall. This wall is constructed of vertical boards with posts between (Fig 10). A three light window is built into the west wall. A timber beam spans the full width of the west wall acting as a lintel over the door opening and a wall plate for the roof trusses (Fig 10). The wall plate is supported over the east wall by Bullnose bricks (Fig 34). The south elevation is coursed limestone rubble with tiles supporting the roof structure. A square window is set into this wall (Fig 35).

A simple machine sawn roof structure supports a covering of welsh slate (Fig 37). A trough with hay rack above spans the length of the eastern wall of the stable (Fig 37). The trough was supported on low posts with tethering rings.

A square wooden vent or chimney was set centrally to the roof (Fig 34).

4.8 Stable 4

The most westerly of the buildings, this stable comprises two walls of coursed limestone rubble and blocks to the north and west, and a modern wall of breeze block with door and window openings to the south (Fig 9). At the east, the stable is bound by the west wall of the crop barn which it abuts. Vegetation has caused widespread damage to the roof structure and north wall (Fig 41).

The floor is of concrete on two levels, higher on the north side and divided by a central drain. A concrete trough with hay rack above runs the full length of the stable along the north wall (Figs 9 & 40).

The breeze block wall is of a later date than the original construction of the stable and is probably contemporary with the concrete floor and trough.

A roof of machine sawn timbers on simple trusses with iron supporting rods, carries a covering of Welsh slate (Figs 40 & 41). Bullnose bricks at the top of the north wall supports the timber wallplate (Fig 39). This arrangement is stylistically very similar to the east wall of Stable 3 and indicates a contemporary date of construction for the two structures.

4.9 Lean-to

A simple lean-to, measuring c18.8 x 7m, was built against the north of the range. The north side is open and the south is bound by the north wall of the main buildings. Red brick dwarf walls c0.6m in height were built at the west and east extents of the lean-to (Figs 10 & 43). The lean-to is enclosed at the east by weatherboarding (Figs 10 & 42). The frontage of the lean-to is supported by square section timber posts which carry the main roof beams (Figs 9, 42 & 43). These beams are provided further support centrally by waney edged timbers. The lean-to is roofed with modern corrugated sheets and has an earth floor.

The lean-to may have functioned as a cart shed when in use.

A rectangular, brick-lined sump measuring c1.2 x 0.8m, with the remains of drain pipes was dug to the west of the lean-to (Fig 45).



Stable 3, looking north-west Fig 34



Stable 3, south elevation, looking north Fig 35



Stable 3, west elevation, looking east Fig 36



Stable 3, interior, looking north with hay rack and trough to the right Fig 37



Stable 4, south elevation, looking north-west Fig 38



Stable 4, north elevation, showing join with Crop Barn, looking south Fig 39



Stable 4, interior, looking west, showing trough and hayrack to the right Fig 40



Stable 4, interior, looking east Fig 41



Lean-to, interior, looking east Fig 42



Lean-to, interior, looking west Fig 43



North elevation of the stables and barns as seen from within the Lean-to
(Photocomposite) Fig 44



The sump to the west of the Lean-to, looking south Fig 45

5 DISCUSSION

The surveyed buildings were originally part of a larger complex of buildings which included pigstyes, cow house, hen roost, boiling house and foddering yards. The construction of these began in the very late 18th - early 19th-centuries with the opening of the Grafton Arms inn in 1793. The inn closed in 1873 and was converted to a private residence.

There is evidence for a mid 19th-century phase of re-roofing of the main structures probably contemporary with the construction of the smaller stables. It is possible that this phase of works relates to the conversion of the inn to private residence. The Harness Room and Loft were re-roofed at a later date with corrugated asbestos sheets.

Financial difficulties led to the sale of Grafton House in 1919. It is unclear when the surveyed buildings were separated from the house and left derelict.

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