



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

## Archaeological building assessment of the barns at Rectory Farm, Islip, Northamptonshire



### Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park  
Northampton NN4 8BE  
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822  
e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)  
w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)



Northamptonshire  
County Council

Angela Warner

Report 10/105

August 2010



**STAFF**

Project Manager: Joe Prentice

Desk-based assessment: Charlotte Walker BSc AlFA

Angela Warner BSc

Fieldwork and text: Angela Warner

Illustrations: Amir Bassir BSc

**QUALITY CONTROL**

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	P. Chapman		
Verified by	J. Prentice		
Approved by	A. Chapman		

## OASIS REPORT FORM

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	Archaeological building recording at Rectory Farm Barns, Islip, Northamptonshire, June 2010	
Short description	In June 2010, archaeological building recording was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Rectory Farm Barns, Islip, Northamptonshire. The evaluation was carried out in response to the submission of a planning application for the proposed conversion to the existing buildings. The evaluation demonstrated the probable sequence of construction and former uses of the barns which are currently used as workshops and storage.	
Project type	Building recording and Desk-based assessment	
Previous work	None	
Current land use	Residential	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	Grade II Listed structures	
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Rectory Farm, School Lane, Islip, Northamptonshire, NN14 3LQ	
Easting Northing	SP 98581 78943	
Area (sq m/ha)	140 sq m	
Height aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	East Northamptonshire Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Angela Warner	
Project Manager	Joe Prentice	
Sponsor or funding body	Mr and Mrs S Arnold	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	23 June 2010	
End date	23 June 2010	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>
Physical		
Paper		Site records
Digital		Client report PDF
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING AT  
RECTORY FARM BARNs, ISLIP, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE,  
JUNE 2010**

**Abstract**

*In June 2010, archaeological building recording was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Rectory Farm Barns, Islip, Northamptonshire. The evaluation was carried out in response to the submission of a planning application for the proposed conversion to the existing buildings. The evaluation demonstrated the probable sequence of construction and former uses of the barns which are currently used as workshops and storage.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

In June 2010, archaeological building recording and desk-based assessment was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Rectory Farm Barns, Islip, Northamptonshire, a group of Grade II Listed Buildings (NGR: SP 98581 78943; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs S Arnold and was undertaken to inform an application for the Listed Building Consent regarding the proposed conversion of the existing buildings (ref: EN07/02395/LBC).

The scope of works was outlined in a brief (ENC 2008) issued by East Northamptonshire Council. The objectives of the evaluation were to provide an insight into the original use, sequence and significance of the buildings.

**2 METHODOLOGY**

A desk-based assessment was carried out in order to gather information on the features of historical significance in the surrounding area. The Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record was also consulted for documented sites and monuments in the vicinity of the property.

The buildings were surveyed and assessed for features of historical and architectural significance and comprehensively photographed digitally and with black and white film. A set of architect's plans were provided by the client; measurements were verified using a Leica Disto-Pro laser distance meter and the drawings annotated on site, a selection of which have been digitally reproduced in this report.

Due to the quantity and nature of items being stored in the barns, the survey was limited to the elements and features which were not obscured. Similarly, the photographs taken were also dictated by the available space and access to the buildings.

Only the two northernmost barns, labelled as Barns 1 and 2, in the range are included in the scope of the project. The third barn, Barn 3, was not accessed as it is not part of the proposed development.

The work was carried out in accordance with the standards of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008 & 2010) and of Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2006).

### 3 THE DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

#### 3.1 Location, topography and geology

The village of Islip is located in the north-east of the county of Northamptonshire, approximately 20 miles north-east of Northampton, seven miles east of Kettering and just to the west of Thrapston. The site is situated on School Lane on the south-west side of the village, within the historic core of Islip (Fig 1).

St. Nicholas Church, approximately 100m east of the site, lies at approximately 50.5m aOD. The underlying geology is Blisworth Limestone (BGS 2010) overlain by fertile, freely draining lime-rich loamy soils (NSRI 2010).

#### 3.2 Historic maps

***Ordnance Survey Preparatory Map, 1810*** (Fig 2)

A very small scale map, this does not show any of the area in fine detail, however, it does show the general layout of the barns in relation to the farmhouse.

***First Edition Ordnance Survey map 1:2,500, 1885*** (Fig 3)

This map shows the buildings of the farmhouse and associated outbuildings more or less as they are in the present day with the exception of the since-demolished cow byres on the western side.

#### 3.3 Historical and archaeological background

Islip was listed in the Domesday survey as being of 1 hide and 1 virgate of land, in the hundred of Huxloe, held by the Bishop of Coutances by Algar. In 1284 it was listed as having 5 virgates of land held by Reginald de Waterville. Ownership of the manor passed mainly along the family line and Ascan Norwich was holding a messuage or farm and 40 acres of land in Islip at his death there on 20 May 1630. An Inclosure Act for the parish was passed in 1800; the common or open fields were estimated at about 1,320 acres (VCH 1930).

A study of sites listed in the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) was undertaken for the area surrounding the barns (Fig 4). A number of known sites in the vicinity date from the medieval to modern periods, although sites dating to the post-medieval to modern period dominate. The group of three barns has been given a single group number (6121/5/2). The adjacent Rectory Farm, to which the barns belong, has the number 6121/5.

The following table shows a selection of the sites and monuments listed in the HER which are geographically closest to Rectory Farm with the addition of public buildings, ie the public house and the church. Washington House has also been included, being reputed to be the home of Mary Washington, the great-grandmother of George Washington (VCH 1930, 215). Those records directly associated with the site are highlighted in bold. The dates and terminology are reproduced as they are written in the HER report (Table 1).



HER No	NGR SP:	Details of results
6121/0/1	98696 78928	House. 2 The Green. Post-medieval – modern. 1540AD? – 1999AD?
6121/0/2	98740 79040	Washington House. Post-medieval. 1550AD to 1670AD
6121/0/3	98770 79100	Rose and Crown public house. Post-medieval – modern. 1650AD to 1999AD
6121/0/9	98770 78980	Manor House. Post-medieval – modern. 1630AD to 1870AD
6121/0/14	98613 78879	House. 9 & 11 School Lane. Post-medieval – modern. 1650 AD to 1999AD?
6121/1/1	98680 78899	Church of St. Nicholas. Medieval – modern. 1300AD? To 1999AD?
6121/4/1	98767 78915	Almshouses. 17 & 19 High Street. Post-medieval – modern. 1700AD? to 1999 AD?
<b>6121/5/1</b>	<b>98564 78926</b>	<b>Farmhouse. Rectory Farm, School Lane. Post-medieval – modern. 1700AD? To 1999AD?</b>
<b>6121/5/2</b>	<b>98581 78943</b>	<b>Barns. North of Rectory Farmhouse. Post-medieval – modern. 1730AD? to 1999AD?</b>
6121/6/1	98717 78833	Forge. 32 High Street. Including: Blacksmiths Workshop. Modern. 1750AD? To 1950AD?

Table 1: Historic Environment Record details.

### 3.4 Status

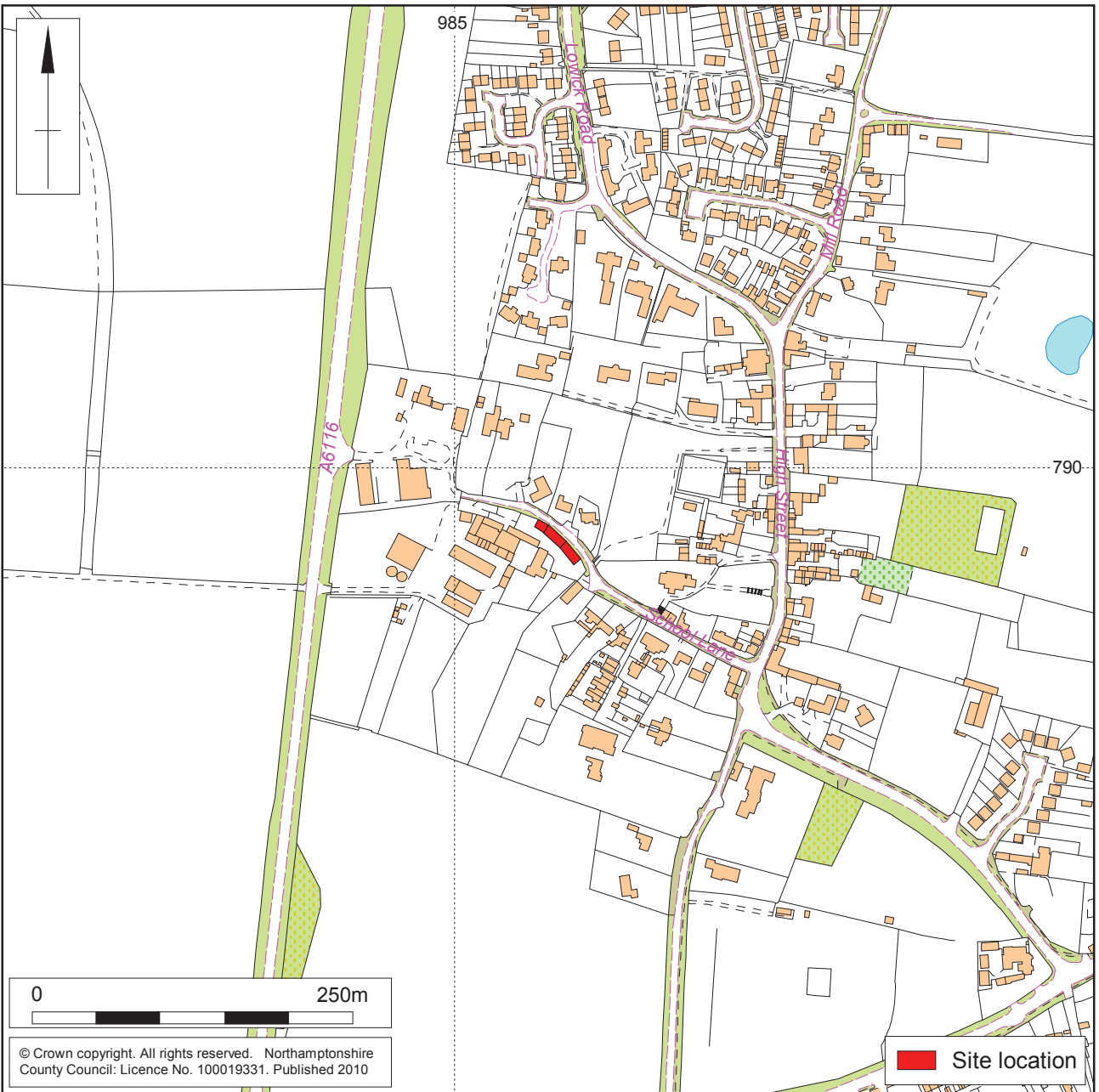
The barns were assigned a Grade II listing in 1987; the following comprises the wording of the official listing ([www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk)):

*3 barns. Mid C18. Squared coursed limestone with pantile roofs. Each single-unit barns; that to west of range may have been used for a time as a stable. Elevations to farmyard have central cart entrances; that to left is under wood lintel, others are full height. Hayloft door to far left has gablet over. Chamfered plinth. Rear elevation has 2 stable-type doors under wood lintels. Interior: barn to east of range has original collar truss and purlins. Other roof structures partly renewed C19. Included for group value.*

### 3.5 Results

The area surrounding the barns features several buildings of historical interest. However, there is no record of any archaeological finds or features within the property boundary in addition to the listed status of the buildings themselves.





Scale 1:5000

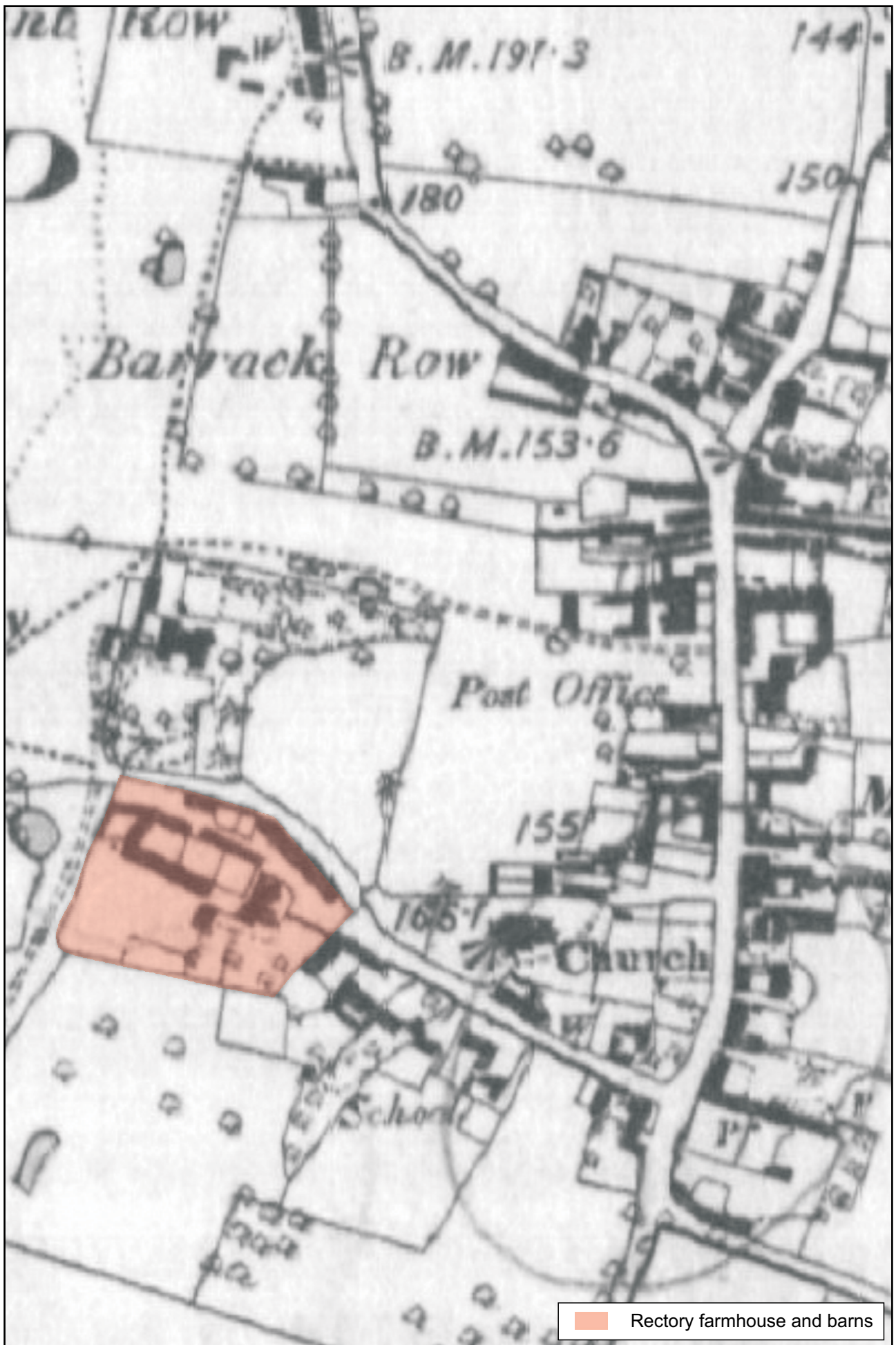
Site Location Fig 1



Not to scale

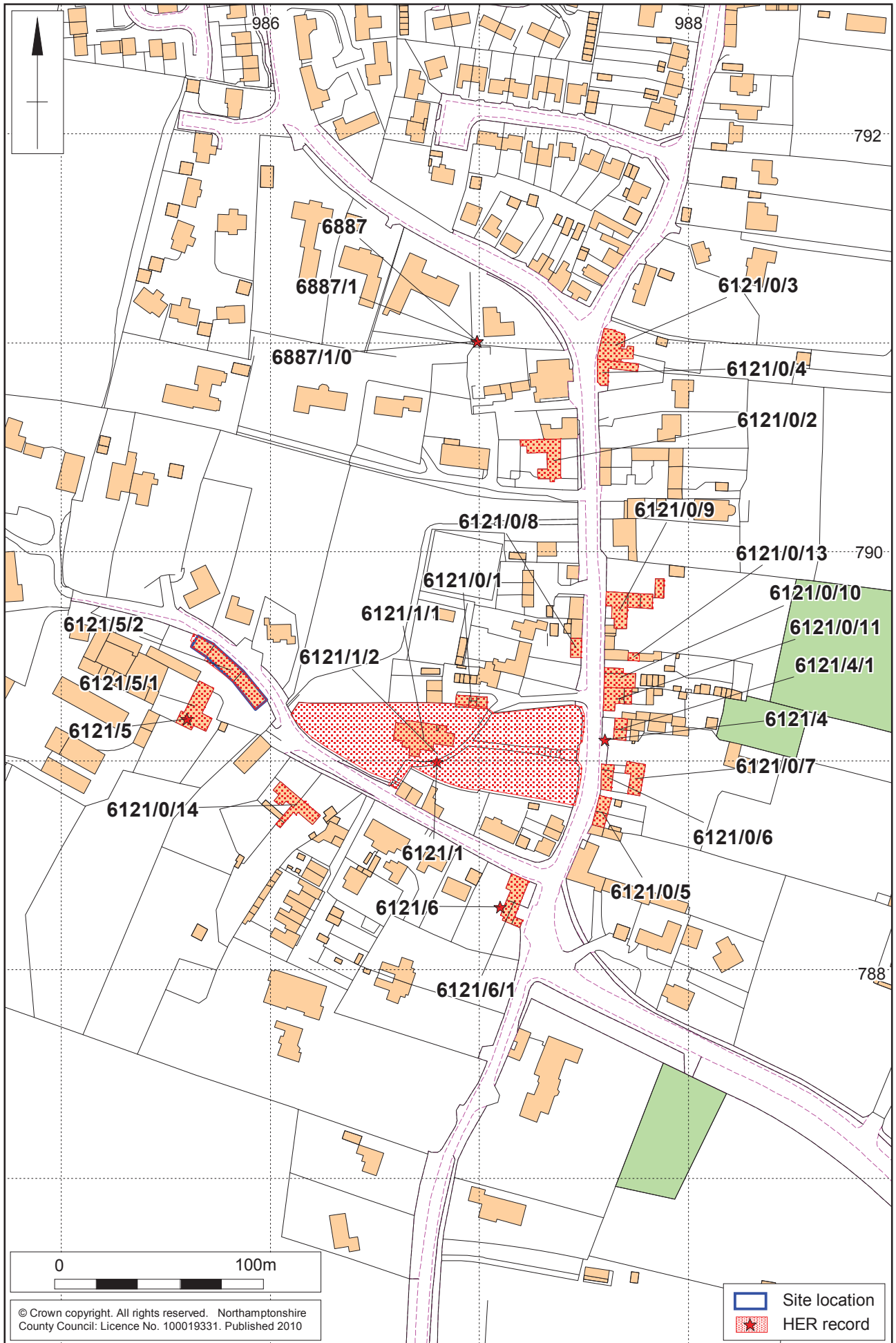
Extract from 1810 Surveyors map Fig 2





Not to scale

First Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1885 Fig 3



Scale 1:2,500

Historic Environment Record data Fig 4

## 4 THE BUILDINGS ASSESSMENT

### 4.1 General description

The range of agricultural buildings is currently used for domestic storage and workshops for the owners of the farmhouse. The southernmost building is not part of the proposed conversion and so was not included in the assessment.

There are three distinct buildings, bounded to the north-east by School Lane and to all other sides by the yard. The building line is fairly flush to School Lane, and stepped by less than a metre between Barns 1 and 2 at the front elevation; the roof line is slightly stepped between each building and of a fairly uniform pitch (Figs 5-7).

Although the buildings were constructed at different stages, the architectural styles are generally similar due to their use as agricultural buildings. However, many of the elements required for dating the buildings have been lost: most of the original roof timbers and external joinery have been replaced by modern timber during the life of the buildings.

The walls are of roughly squared, coursed limestone with areas of extensive repairs and repointing. The roofs are pantiled; the central building, Barn 1, in a buff-brown and the other buildings in a red-orange colour.

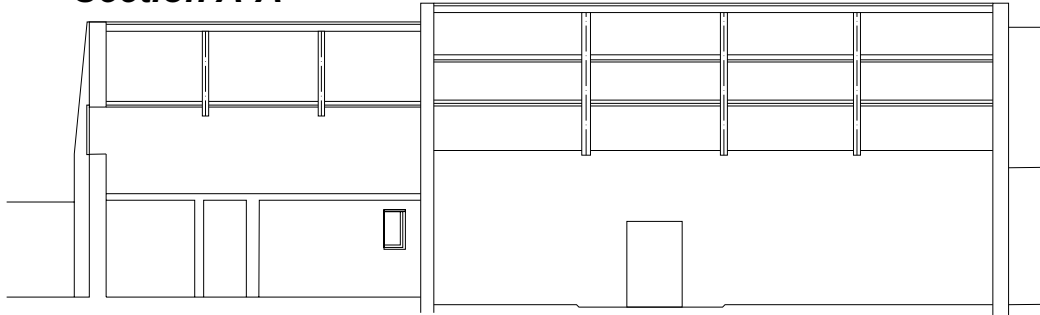


The range of barns, looking south-east

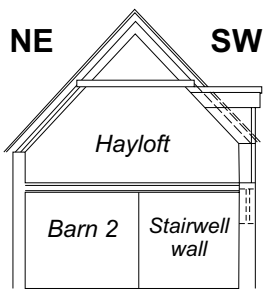
Fig 5



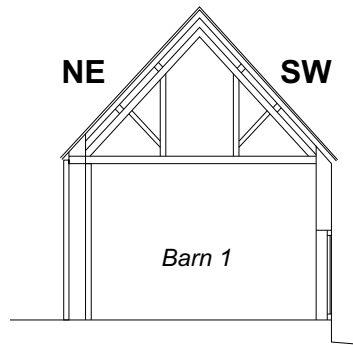
**Section A-A**



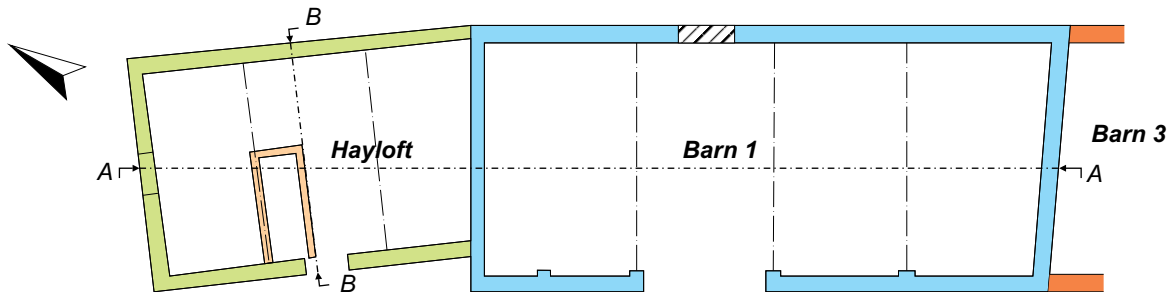
**Section B-B**



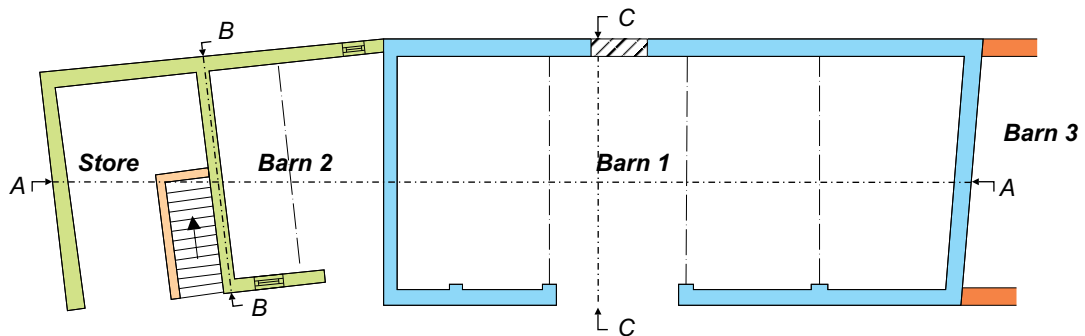
**Section C-C**







**First Floor Plan**



**Ground Floor Plan**



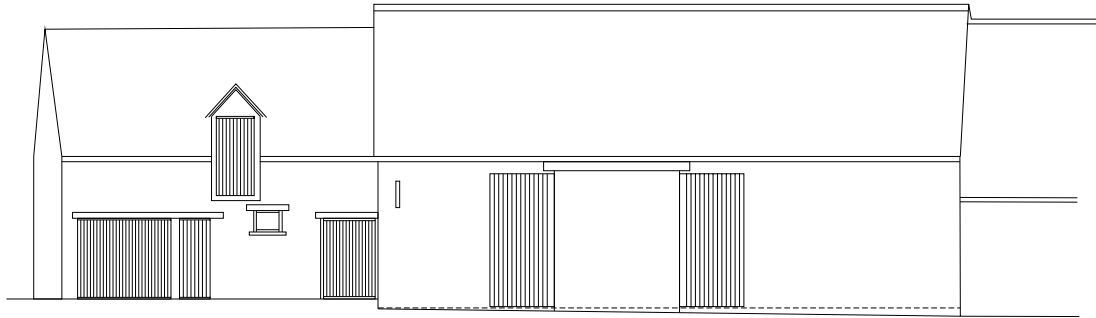
-  Blocked
-  Phase 1
-  Phase 2
-  Phase 3
-  Phase 4

Reproduced from drawings provided by Neville J.J. Wood, Architect

Scale 1:200

Barns 1 and 2, plans and sections Fig 6

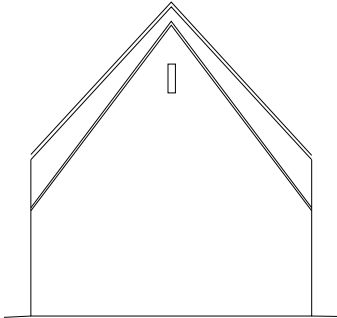
**South-West Elevation**



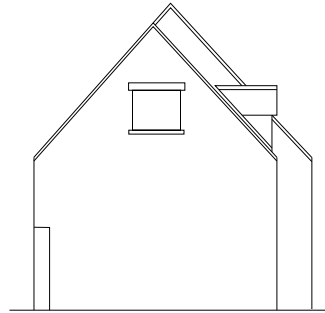
**Barn 2**

**Barn 1**

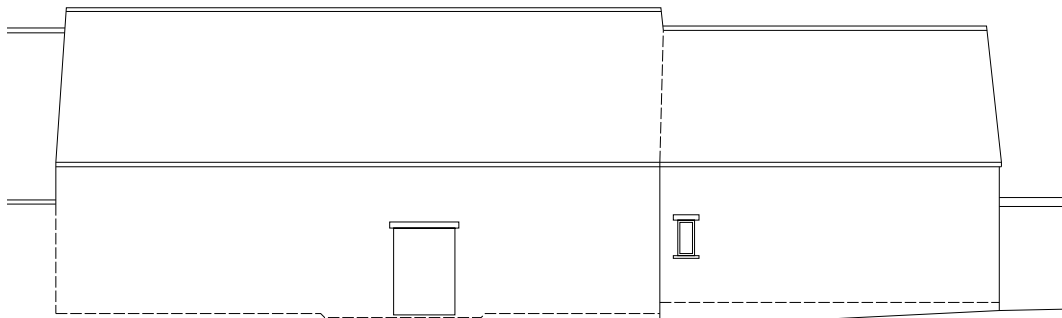
**South-East Elevation**



**North-West Elevation**



**North-East Elevation**



**Barn 1**

**Barn 2**



*Reproduced from drawings provided by Neville J.J. Wood, Architect*



## 4.2 Barn 1

The building has four bays open to the apex of the roof (Fig 6). A single-leaf blocked door is in the north-east wall, opposite to the existing cart door. A blocked ventilation slit is visible near the apex of the north-west wall, the only sign of any fenestration in this barn (Fig 9).

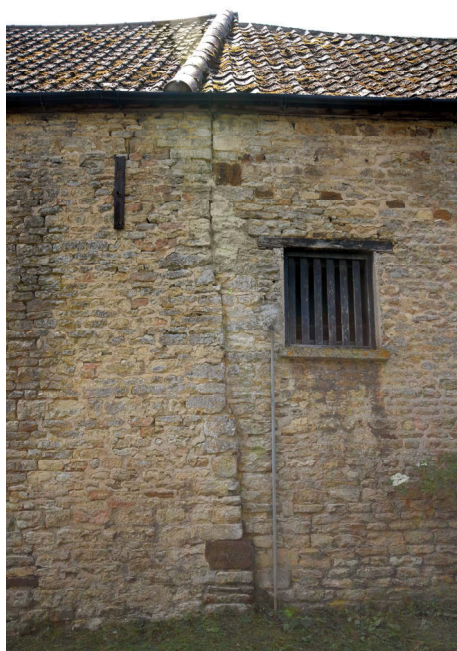
The floor of the barn consists of bricks laid with the stretchers running along the length of the room. There is a drop in the floor level surrounding the doorway to the entrance door in the south-west wall, but this was not reflected in the now-blocked door to School Lane.

The walls are of roughly squared, coursed limestone bonded with lime mortar (Fig 8). Quoins have been used intermittently in the north and west corners (Figs 8 and 9). Internally there are bricks to a height of 1.14m to the north-west and south-west walls and brick piers under each tie beam. An internal brick buttress to a height of 2.1m is present on the south-west wall, 1.8m from the north-west wall (Fig 10). The corners of the brick piers and buttress are all bull-nose profile bricks. The internal walls have been whitewashed. An iron tie rod has been fitted to the south-east wall of the barn; the anchor plate consists of a large S-shaped iron rod to both elevations.



Barn 1, south-west elevation

Fig 8



The join of Barns 1 and 2, north-east elevation

Fig 9



Barn 1, west corner Fig 10

Two original tie beams survive; the central tie beam and all other roof timbers are modern, the trusses are now of a simple Queen post construction with splayed struts. (Fig 11). However, the roof configuration probably replicates the original. The roof has been felted and covered with pantiles.



The roof timbers and felting to Barn 1 Fig 11

The cart door is a two-leaf 20th-century timber plank door, hung on a rail rather than hinged (Fig 8). The boarded doorway opposite in the north-east wall does not contain any earlier door or frame.

The barn is now used as a mechanic's workshop and car storage area, but was probably originally a threshing barn, indicated by the arrangement of the cart door with the smaller door opposite. Threshing barns became widely obsolete by the 1850s following the increasing popularity of portable threshing machines (HELM 2006, 47). The increasing importance of cattle meant that by the end of the 19th century, many barns were converted to fodder mixing houses. The introduction of steam powered machinery usually involved the cutting of a hatch in the barn wall to allow the belting to enter (HELM 2006, 47).

Some machinery survives in the south-east wall above two openings which would have originally led to Barn 3 (Fig 12). It appears that the engine for this machine would have been housed in Barn 3 to drive the chains contained in the surviving component.



The tie rod and surviving machinery and openings in the south-west wall of Barn 1

Fig 12

#### 4.3 Barn 2

Barn 2 is beneath the hayloft and is partitioned off from the store at the northernmost end of the building (Figs 6 and 13). Barn 2 and the Store were probably originally one space, but a wall was constructed at an unknown date to create two rooms below the hayloft.

The walls are of roughly squared, coursed limestone. Quoins are present in all corners of the building. Internally, areas of thick whitewash and rough plaster



survive. The south-east wall consists of the north-west external wall of Barn 1 (Fig 9). The ceiling consists of the floor to the Hayloft. One beam runs across the room with joists built into the north-east and south-west walls (Fig 14).

The floor is heavily obscured by stored items but areas of cobbles and concrete are apparent. The cobbles are concentrated towards the north-east wall where a simple trough type timber manger runs along the full length of the wall (Fig 14).

The door is in the south-west wall; the door and frame are of modern timber with a small glazed light above. The window in the north-west wall is slatted and the window in the south-west wall has been glazed using modern timber and glass (Figs 6, 7 and 13).

The room is currently used for storage, although an early 20th-century workbench and vice is located near to the door. The original use was probably for stabling or cattle housing for a small number of animals, although no evidence of stalls survives.



Barn 2 and Store with the Hayloft above Fig 13



Barn 2, north-west wall, including the manger Fig 14

#### 4.4 The Store

This area was created by dividing Barn 2 in half. The external walls are as Barn 2, with the remains of whitewash on the internal elevations. The wall enclosing the stairwell in the south corner of the area is of painted brickwork in stretcher bond (Figs 6, 7 and 15).

The ceiling consists of the floor to the Hayloft, as described for Barn 2.

The floor is brick with the stretchers running from the front to the back of the room.

The modern timber double leaf door in the south-west wall is of full height, from floor to ceiling, and below a timber lintel. There are no windows.



The Store with the brick dividing wall

Fig 15

The room is currently used for storage with no evidence of fixtures from former uses. The space under the stairs is obscured by a shelving unit and so any evidence of phasing is not visible.

#### 4.5 Hayloft

The hayloft is accessed by a staircase with the external door in the south-west wall of Barn 2. The door and frame are of modern timber. The square-nosed treads of the timber stairs are very well-worn; risers are used but the rest of the staircase construction is obscured by a stored shelving unit beneath the stairs.

The hayloft is the upper floor to both Barn 2 and the Store (Fig 6) and so the walls are as the lower rooms. Internally, most of the plaster is still surviving (Fig 18).

The pantiled roof is open to the apex and is of modern timber with no original timbers surviving.

The floor is boarded, with the boards running along the length of the room. There is no evidence of a hatch or former opening to the rooms or manger below in the current phase of flooring.



The pitching door and the associated frame are both of modern timber. A gablet is above the pitching door and the roof is pantiled. Exposed joist ends below the pitching door may indicate that a small jettied platform may have once been present (Figs 16 and 17).

The single slatted window is located in the gable wall and has had the lower half blocked, seemingly when the cattle byres were built as demonstrated in the scarring to the gable wall (Figs 18 and 19).

Timber partitions survive to either side of the stairwell, creating sectioned-off areas to approximately one metre height in the south and east corners.



The pitching door and gablet in the hayloft roof



Figs 16 and 17



The partially blocked window in the north-west wall of the hayloft Fig 18



Scarring from the cattle byres on the north-west wall of the Store and Hayloft above Fig 19

#### 4.6 Barn 3

Barn number three is not included in the scope of the works and it was not possible to access the interior of the building, however, for the sake of completion of the overall context it is worth mentioning its main elements.

The walls are of roughly squared, coursed limestone with extensive recent repointing in lime mortar (Fig 20). The wall to the north-west of the entrance door is of a similar sized stone and coursing to that of Barn 1; the wall to the south-east of the door features a chamfered plinth and occasional courses of larger, more finely dressed stones (Fig 21). This is reflected in the gable end and in the entire north-east wall of the barn. Quoins are used in the corners of the gable wall, but are not present in the join to Barn 2.

Apart from the extensive re-pointing and iron tie straps, the only external signs of alteration to the structure are the new roof and a doorway which has been boarded over in the north-east wall.



Barn 3, south-west elevation

Fig 20





The southern corner of Barn 3      Fig 21

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Few features survive which provide satisfactory evidence of the sequencing of the development of Barns 1 and 3; the replacement of the roofs and repair and repointing of the external walls in particular. This was hindered further by the lack of access to the interior of Barn 3. However, it can be proposed that Barn 3 is the earlier of the two buildings, indicated by the join between the two in the south-west wall (Fig 22). The south-east wall of Barn 1 extends beyond the roofline of Barn 3, indicating that the end wall of Barn 3 was taken down and replaced in order to provide the structural support necessary for the roof of Barn 1. The extensive repair to the stonework in the rear elevation has obscured this join. It is also noted that the area of the wall between the join and the door of Barn 3 does not contain the chamfered plinth present in the rest of Barn 3 (visible in Fig 20). This may be due to the aforementioned building works, or may be caused by demolition and rebuilding to enable the fitting or removal of the steam engine probably housed in this barn to run the fodder mixing machinery still visible in the south-east wall inside Barn 1.



The join between Barns 1 and 3, south-west elevation Fig 22

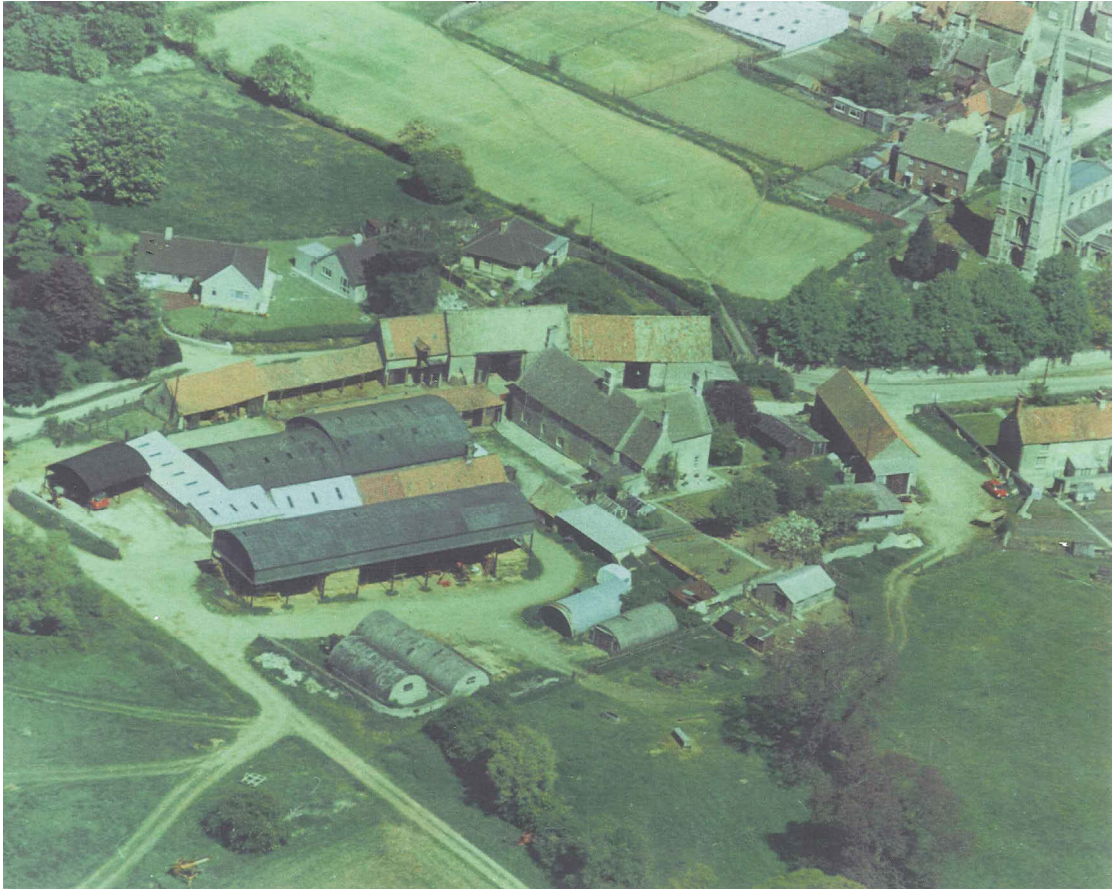
The building comprising Barn 2, the store and hayloft is clearly built up against the north-west wall of Barn 1 (Fig 9), and therefore later. It is also of note that the replacement of the roof did not respect the original, indicated by the ridge tiles on a different alignment to the join.

Although whitewash and the stored items hindered close inspection of the dividing wall between Barn 2 and the store, and the structure of the hayloft floor, it does appear to be contemporary with the construction of Barn 2. The exception to this is the brickwork to the stairwell. This structure post-dates the hayloft and the brickwork butts up to a joist; this, and the contemporary stairs, leads to the conclusion that this is simply a replacement for an earlier stairway as there is no evidence of access to the hayloft elsewhere.

Scarring on the north-west gable indicates the roof pitch of the later cattle byres now demolished, shown on the undated aerial photograph in Figure 23. The window in the same gable has clearly been blocked up in the lower half (Figs 18 and 19) to accommodate the byre roof.

None of the roofs have a pitch steep enough to suggest that it was once thatched and so it may be assumed that the buildings have always been tiled. The majority of the roof timbers have been replaced by sawn softwood timber with the reuse of only two original tie beams in Barn 1. The disregard for the roof line shown in Figure 9 also indicates that the roof has been replaced, in part at least. The wide availability of clay and the improved trade route in the later 18th century enabled the widespread

use of pantiles (HELM 2006, 20 and 24), and so the tiles may also be reused originals.



Undated aerial photograph showing the former cattle byres to the left of the barns.  
Photograph provided by Mr. Arnold Fig 23



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EH 2010 <http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk/> English Heritage Listed Buildings Online website



Northamptonshire County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park  
Northampton NN4 8BE

t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822

e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)



Northamptonshire  
County Council