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County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological building assessment at
Blatherwycke Hall stables

Northamptonshire

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological building assessment at Blatherwycke Hall Stables, Blatherwycke, Northamptonshire	
Short description	The stables at Blatherwycke Hall, Northamptonshire were built in 1770 by Donatus O'Brien to replace those which were formerly located in one of the two pavilions attached to the now demolished hall. The existing stables comprise a large C-shaped range which present two distinctly different façades; those facing the former gardens to the south of the house are finely finished and furnished with doors and windows, that facing the entrance drive is less well finished and is entirely plain with no openings apart from the central carriage arch. The stables have suffered from unsympathetic modern alterations and some collapse, but retain some elements of high quality fixtures and fittings.	
Project type	Building recording and desk-based assessment	
Site status	Listed building-Grade II	
Previous work	No	
Current Land use	Derelict buildings	
Future work	Renovation/conversion	
Monument type/ period	Post-medieval	
Significant finds	No	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Blatherwycke Hall Stables, Blatherwycke, Northamptonshire	
Study area	Stable building and site of former Hall, c1300sq m	
OS Easting & Northing	SP 81655 44925	
Height OD		
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	East Northants District Council	
Project brief originator	Lloyd Mills, Building Conservation Officer	
Project Design originator	Joe Prentice	
Director/Supervisor	Joe Prentice	
Project Manager	Steve Parry	
Sponsor or funding body	Mr and Mrs M George	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	30 January 2008	
End date		
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	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	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		
Serial title & volume	09/18	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING ASSESSMENT AT
BLATHERWYCKE HALL STABLES,
BLATHERWYCKE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

Abstract

The stables at Blatherwycke Hall, Northamptonshire were built in 1770 by Donatus O'Brien to replace those which were formerly located in one of the two pavilions attached to the now demolished hall. The existing stables comprise a large C-shaped range which presents two distinctly different façades; those facing the former gardens to the south of the house are finely finished and furnished with doors and windows, those facing the entrance drive are less well finished and entirely plain with no openings apart from the central carriage arch. The stables have suffered from unsympathetic modern alterations and some collapse, but retain some elements of high quality fixtures and fittings.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Mr and Mrs M George are the current owners of the Blatherwycke Estate and have applied for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent to convert the former stables, now derelict, to domestic usage (NGR SP 81655 44925, Fig 1). East Northamptonshire District Council has requested that archaeological building recording and desk-based assessment should be undertaken on the stables. As a consequence of the importance of the Grade II listed structure and its setting, a Level III response was considered appropriate (English Heritage 2006) and the scope agreed with the Conservation Officer to East Northamptonshire District Council (Lloyd Mills).
- 1.2 Whilst only the stables have been recorded, the immediate surroundings including the site of the former hall are included in this report due to their original integral role. Previous archaeological investigation has located the position of the former hall (Dawson 2005).

2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The general objectives of the recording were:
- To set the building into a local historical context using basic map regression to trace the development of the site
 - To provide a general written, drawn (plans, elevations and vertical sections) and photographic appraisal of the historic resource which constitutes the building
 - To provide information about the historic development of the building, in order to constitute an archive record before renovation.

- 2.2 More specifically, the work:

Provides a comprehensive appreciation of the building in relation to other structures which constitute the wider hall complex. The report includes a phased development plan of the building and an analysis of the function of the individual rooms and their working where such evidence exists.

Desk-based assessment has been undertaken in the Northamptonshire Record Office (NRO), information provided by the National Monuments Record (NMR) and archive material held by the current owners to identify maps and other documents relevant to the property.

Extracts from relevant maps have been reproduced to illustrate changes in layout of the farm.

- 2.3 The scope of the building recording was limited to the stable building although this was placed in the wider context of the estate. This appraisal of the setting primarily took the form of a photographic record to set out the relationship to other buildings and by the use of historic maps. The buildings were recorded in accordance with the standards, conventions and specifications defined in the English Heritage procedural guidance (2006) to level III, and in particular the records made as part of the work conformed to the following:

Written Account on a complete building and room-by-room basis. This took the form of pre-printed record forms, filled in with free-text and cross-referenced to other record types.

Drawn Record comprising the production of a scaled plan at ground and first floor level including the two-storey extension to the south of the stables. This shows the developmental sequence, including alterations to openings and the materials of the original structure and any subsequent alterations.

Photographic Record employing both general and specific photographs to show exteriors, all general interiors and specific items and fixtures/fittings, if significant.

3 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 A manor house was in existence in 1319 in the parish of Holy Trinity at Blatherwycke (RCHME 1984). Humphrey Stafford acquired the Blatherwycke estate in the fifteenth century through marriage (Heward and Taylor 1996). In 1720 the eldest daughter of William Stafford, who was married to Henry, the youngest son of Sir Donough O'Brien, inherited Blatherwycke. They rebuilt the house almost immediately. In his history of the county written in the 1720s, but not published until 1791, John Bridges records that "The manor house is old and large but seemeth unfinished. Over the gatehouse is a balustrade with statues". This is clearly not the hall demolished in 1948 but must be the Elizabethan house that Humphrey Stafford had built which is shown on a map of c1700 (The National Archives MPZ 1/6).

The new house was built in 1720 for which a contract dated 26 July of that year survives (NRO OBB/12). The contract was between "Robert Wright of Castor in the county of Northampton timber merchant and Henry O'Bryen [sic] of Blatherwycke in the said county of Northampton". The design for the house was by Thomas Ripley of London. The cost was to be £3,000.00 (£415,018.35 today calculated by the Retail Price Index) exclusive of certain fittings and the contract includes sources of materials, finishes, heights of rooms and the roof. Wright agreed to "build up the said house and to cover the roof thereof on or before 29 September 1721" which seems astonishingly rapid. Sadly this was not achieved, and in May 1723, twenty months behind schedule, and at least £350.00 over budget, another £422 was paid (Clare 2004).

The house was eventually completed (Henry visited it in January 1724) and was a large imposing building with a central block and two pavilions linked to the main house by quadrants. The last payment was not made until 1727. One of the pavilions, probably the

western one (the eastern one was probably the laundry since it is located next to the drying yard) was used as stables but these were replaced in 1770 by a new, purpose-built structure to the south-west of the house.

- 3.2 The new stables comprise a C-shaped building with the open side enclosing the stable yard facing east over the former gardens to the Hall. They are situated immediately to the north-east of the church of The Holy Trinity (Fig 1). A small roughly rectangular building, originally of two storeys, has been added to the south side between the south wall of the stables and the boundary wall of the adjacent churchyard. As they survive, the stables, whilst retaining their original basic form have been subject to later alterations both externally and internally as well as some collapse and decay. The building is dated 1770 with the initials DOB which stand for Donatus (sometimes wrongly transcribed as Doriatius, and perhaps a latinisation of Donough, his great grandfather?) O'Brien beneath an armorial device of a raised arm holding a sword. This same device was present within the pediment on the south front of the now demolished house.
- 3.3 The *1810 Ordnance Survey preparatory map* shows the house with its two pavilions, and curiously the stables are depicted in the right position, but with the open side of the C-shaped plan to the north not the east (Fig 2). This is simply an error on the part of the cartographer. The lakes to the west do not exist at this period, there is simply the natural water course (the Willow Brook) and a single square pond with a central island. The access to the Hall is from the west over a bridge across the river at the north-east corner of the square pond, off the Kingscliffe Road.
- 3.4 An *estate map (NRO map 6408)* drawn in 1826 and amended in 1846 depicts the stables correctly and the remainder of the estate in great detail (Fig 3). To the immediate west of the stables appears to be an enclosed yard area with a single gateway into it from the driveway to the house which, now that the lakes have been dug, crosses via a second bridge south of where that shown on the 1810 map was sited. That the lakes are present at this date suggests the local legend that they were dug by Irish estate workers brought from Ireland during the potato famine is untrue; the famine did not occur until the mid 1840s. However, it is not known what the amendments made to the map in 1846 were, so it is possible that the creation of the lake was one of them, although there is no indication of any earlier layout being visible on the map which is likely, as the detail is inked. The present village road bridge to the south is also shown, but the gate lodge is not present; this was built in the late nineteenth century (1878). The "chapel" is not present indicating that it was built after this date, but before 1880 when it appears on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map.
- 3.5 The *1880 First Edition Ordnance Survey map* shows much the same layout with regard to the lakes, but access to the house, and therefore the stables, has again changed with the addition of the gate lodge next to the village bridge (Fig 4). The drive off the Kingscliffe road has disappeared along with its bridge across the lake. To the south side of the stables has been added the small extension known as the 'chapel'.
- 3.6 There are a number of family photograph albums and scrap-books at the NRO, and whilst they include a large number of photographs of the house and grounds, they do not show the stables, apart from two. These principally show horses, but in the background of the images is one of two tall doorways of either the south or north facing inner courtyard walls but nothing else (see report cover photograph which shows the north doorway, identifiable by an inscribed circle in the stonework to the east of the door and still visible today). It is frustrating, but not surprising, that the stables are not recorded in photographic albums as essentially they are the domain of the servant and as such were not generally a subject for a family album. A number of photographs are held by the NMR at Swindon, and these again concentrate on the hall both externally and internally, taken when a campaign was

underway to halt demolition. There is one photograph of the stables which shows the east facing courtyard, and although undated, it most likely dates from c1948 shortly before the demolition of the house (Plate 1). Apart from an element of decay, this view is similar to that seen today with one exception; there is a turret on the roof which held the clock and supported a weathervane. The clock is not present in the photograph, though it is not clear if this is because it was on the opposite face, although this is unlikely, as the courtyard side was not only the side which faced the house but would have been most used. It is perhaps more likely that the clock had already been removed (see section 3.7), and this might explain what appears to be an opening on the courtyard side through which part of the frame can be seen. It is not known if the clock was double-faced and also had a dial on the west side (since the clock survives in the present church it would be possible by investigation of the movement to establish if this was the case). The north and south sides of the turret are fitted with louvres which would have helped to ventilate the first floor, and atop an ogee-shaped roof is a weathervane in the shape of a running fox, appropriate for a family for whom hunting appears to have been a passion.

3.7 The final days of the hall and estate are not entirely certain though the house was requisitioned during the Second World War. It was occupied by the Royal Engineers, a Yorkshire Regiment and finally German Prisoners of War (Pipe 1988). There were still two members of the O'Brien family during this time living at Blatherwycke, Miss Lucy and Miss Matilda who had moved out of the hall and lived in a small bungalow in the grounds. Their brother, Major Egerton O'Brien, was the owner of the hall. Apparently left in a poor condition at the end of the war it was decided to sell the house which was bought by a speculator who demolished the building for its materials in 1948. The house was sold for £1,600.00 (£41,851.87 today calculated by the Retail Price Index) by the Major who by then lived at Cratloe Woods, County Clare, Ireland. It is thought his descendants still live there today (there is a Cratloe Woods website). Miss Matilda and Miss Lucy remained at Blatherwycke and paid for the stable clock to be removed when it was thought that the stables, sold with the hall, were to be demolished. The clock was installed, at their expense, in the church tower where it remains today.

3.8 The stables are currently registered as a Listed Building. The description (made in 1988) is as follows:

Stables approx. 20m NE of Church of the Holy Trinity

GV II

Stables now workshop. Datestone D. OB 1770, for Doriatus [sic] O'Brien of Blatherwycke Hall. Limestone ashlar with Collyweston slate roof. U-shape plan around a courtyard. 2 storeys. Courtyard-elevation of 5 bays has central carriage arch and similar opening to right, now blocked. Doorway and window with semi-circular heads, to far right. 2-window range at first floor, of square-head sash openings under gauged stone heads, right hand window retains sash. Centre 3 bays of this elevation break forward slightly. 3 window ranges, flanking at right angles, are similar to main range. Central arch-head doorways. End elevation of right range has similar window openings. Moulded stone cornice and hipped roof. Datestone above central carriage arch has armorial device, with arm and sword, below. Rear elevation of main range is blank with central carriage arch. One inner return wall of carriage arch has timber framing with brick infill. C20 windows inserted into rear and side elevation, to left of main front. Various single storey extensions to side elevations. Interior not inspected. Formerly stables to Blatherwycke Hall which was demolished in 1948. (RCHM: An Inventory of Architectural Monuments in Northamptonshire: p22)

Listing NGR: SP 9745395797

3.9 In February 2005 Northamptonshire Archaeology were commissioned to undertake a geophysical survey over the footprint of the former hall, followed by selective trial

excavation. This revealed that the foundations of the hall survive along with some *in situ* floor surfaces (Butler and Maull 2005).

4 BUILDING RECORDING

4.1 EXTERIOR

Built of a combination of dressed coursed limestone and fine ashlar, both bonded in a creamy white lime mortar, the stables are situated immediately to the north-east of the church of The Holy Trinity and to the south-west of the former hall (Figs 1 and 5). The building is aligned almost exactly north-south along its main axis. To the immediate east the land which formed the main south garden of the hall is enclosed to the south and east by a Ha-Ha, to the west the land falls away down to the lake and the main driveway which runs from an entrance onto the estate by Blatherwycke bridge. The east facing, and internal courtyard walls are all finished with a fine ashlar masonry set beneath a boldly carved cornice which in turn supports a hipped roof covered by Collyweston stone slates (Plate 2). The windows are all square with plain surrounds and sills, the door openings are all arched. Three external walls (north, west and south) are finished in dressed coursed rubble with a simple cornice comprising corbels out of three courses of roughly dressed limestone to form a similar-sized profile to that of the finely dressed stone of the eastern facades. Apart from the single large carriage arch in the centre of the west façade there were originally no windows or doors on this side, giving the building a solid and austere appearance (Plate 3). This would be slightly odd if the main drive to the house lay close by to the west as it does now, but originally it passed further to the north (see section 3.4, Fig 3). By the time that the present route was made, this side of the building was screened by trees and shrubs. The garden front has therefore always been the principal façade and on the east facing courtyard façade is an inscription DOB 1770 which represents the initials of Donatus O'Brien the builder of the stables and the date of their construction (Plate 4).

4.2 *South façade.* The walls of the south side of the building are built of roughly dressed coursed limestone with fine ashlar quoins and a simple square plinth, also finished in ashlar. It had no doors and only one window on each of the ground and first floors at the western end of the façade (Figs 5 and 6). Each window is square and has flush ashlar jambs and a flat stone lintel (Plate 5). The sill, which projects slightly from the wall plane, is also limestone. Neither window on this façade retains its original frame. A modern window has been inserted towards the western end of the ground floor during the twentieth century. The opening is at a slightly lower level than the original and is wider and fitted with a Crittall style iron frame with both side windows opening casement fashion, and the small central upper section also opening. The lintel is of concrete and there is no sill, the jambs have been well repaired but do not have the ashlar blocks present on the original openings. The roof above this section of the building has collapsed, causing some loss to the stonework of the walls towards eaves level.

4.3 *“Chapel”.* Approximately halfway along this side of the stables a small two storey building has been added at a curiously oblique angle (Fig 5). This building is not depicted on the map of 1826 (amended 1846) and stylistically it has the appearance of a mid-nineteenth century building, most particularly the southern gable end which has two pointed arched windows fitted with timber tracery (Plate 6). It is clearly built against the stables, the walls are butt jointed, not bonded and it has no plinth. At the south-west corner is an integral buttress though there is not a corresponding one on the south-east corner. The roof and floor have collapsed into the interior and there is no visible floor; it is not clear if a stone or ceramic tile floor has been removed or whether it was of timber, now rotted, although there are no empty wall sockets for joists. There is a doorway on the east side fitted with an oak frame and a simple pine plank door *in situ* beneath an oak lintel

(Plate 7). Another doorway in the west wall appears once to have been open, but is now blocked with stone externally and brick internally. The window in the east end is of a 'Gothic' pointed arch on the exterior but on the interior sits beneath an oak lintel (Plate 8). The opening is divided by timber glazing bars into three vertically with further divisions of simple Y-tracery above and was glazed, traces of clear glass and putty remain. The window appears to be set rather high in the wall when viewed from the interior; this is due to the higher ground level within the churchyard. The window at first floor level appears to have been a smaller version of that on the ground floor, but divided into two rather than three sections, again with Y-tracery; the upper portion of the stone arch and gable apex has been lost through collapse. The upper floor was not accessed from the stables on the ground floor but only from the first floor where a doorway has been knocked through the south wall. Collapsed joists, as well as empty sockets in the walls inside this extension indicate that they were aligned east-west across the short axis.

The original purpose of this building is not clear, though local oral history tells that two of the last occupants of the hall, the Misses Lucy and Matilda, lived in a railway carriage (although they in fact lived in a bungalow built within the walled kitchen garden) and used it as a chapel. Oral history clearly has its limitations. Though this is possible it seems unlikely given that the church is less than ten metres away. It may be that this chapel story is perhaps more fiction than fact, with the ecclesiastical windows in the east end giving spurious support to the story. It is perhaps more likely that the building was simply a store, particularly as the upper floor was accessed from the stables, and had been given an ecclesiastical style due to its close proximity to the church. This would also explain the presence of the buttress at the south-west corner only, since this was the corner seen from the churchyard. The name 'Chapel' has been used here not to perpetuate a possibly incorrect story, but as a convenient descriptive term, given the architectural style.

- 4.4 **West façade.** The long, western façade was originally punctuated by a single, central carriage arch (Fig 5, Plate 3). The archway is constructed of large ashlar blocks and voussoirs, the outer surface and soffits of which have been pock-marked to create a rusticated effect within a plain border (Plate 9). The present timber doors are modern and fitted to unsightly iron straps fitted over the stonework of the western external face. Originally there is no evidence that there were doors here as there is no trace of hinges or any rebate into which doors would have fitted. Though this initially appears unlikely it would have allowed carriages and coaches to drive straight under cover without having to wait for the stable block doors to be opened. The area into which they entered was not originally connected to the remainder of the building and the opposite archway was fitted with doors, so it did not compromise the security of the building.

The remainder of the western façade, originally plain, is now pierced by three windows, one in the northern half, the other two in the southern (Fig 5, Plate 3). That in the northern half appears to be nineteenth century in date and is fitted high in the wall of the ground floor, close to the ceiling (see below, section 4.11). It is a simple rectangular opening with an oak lintel and sill painted with maroon paint, and while it retains the outer part of the frame the fenestration is now missing. The two windows in the southern half are identical to that on the south façade (see Plate 5), both Crittall-style iron frames, and all three of the same size, though on the western side they are set low, with their sills being formed by the upper surface of the plinth. They sit beneath concrete lintels and it must be reasonably assumed that all three were fitted at the same time. A small opening placed high in the wall above the central arch is also secondary but appears never to have had a frame or glazing. Its use is uncertain but it does seem most closely to resemble an owl hole, a deliberate opening created to allow owls access for the purpose of vermin control, useful if the first floor was used for the storage of hay, oats and straw.

There are also a number of iron tie plates on this elevation, all circular cast iron discs of either late nineteenth or early twentieth century date. There are also some crudely inserted vents which may be associated with the building's use as a potato store in the mid/late twentieth century (after 1948).

- 4.5 **North façade.** Constructed in the same way as the south and west facades, this elevation appears to have originally had a single window on each floor, just as on the south façade towards the west end, though here both have been altered. That to the ground floor has been reduced in size and is now similar to the inserted one on the west façade with an oak lintel and sill, but set between the original ashlar jambs (Fig 5, Plate 10). Traces of maroon paint remain. The window directly above has been converted into a hayloft door; the upper four ashlar jambs on each side are clearly original, the four below them are inserted, perhaps taken from the altered window below. The doorway sill is formed of a piece of oak set above a single row of blue engineering bricks beneath which three timber joists project from the wall. It is not clear if they supported a platform or formed the top landing for a set of external stairs. It is not certain at what date these alterations were made, but the most likely period is the nineteenth century. Towards the eastern end of this elevation a doorway has been inserted on the ground floor (Fig 5). The jambs have been repaired with dressed limestone and the lintel is formed of a segmental arch of three rows of edge set brick. The door is of vertical pine planks and is ledged and braced, painted maroon. The wall contains a number of cast iron tie plates, again circular as on the south elevation. At some stage, possibly the late nineteenth century, a lean-to building was erected against this wall, but has been demolished. Its outline can be seen in elevation on the wall face where whitewash reveals its height and width, and in the ground where the upper surface of the truncated walls can be seen, within which the floor level has been removed. Sections of a timber wall plate bolted to the wall indicate the upper level of the roof line. An area of blue engineering brick paviors still remains outside the former footprint of the building indicating an area of hard standing, though the full extent is unclear due to partial removal.
- 4.6 **The eastern façade.** This comprises the two eastern ends of the north and south wings of the building and the inner courtyard façade of the stable yard (Fig 5, Plate 2). All of the elevations are finished in fine ashlar blocks with a very narrow mortar joint. There is a continuation of the plinth and all of the windows, apart from one in the west wall of the courtyard which has an arched top, are square. All of the doorways, whether for pedestrians or carriages, are arched (apart from the one inserted into the northernmost of the original four coach arches), although all of the doors are square-headed. The east ends of the north and south wings are identical: each has a single, central window at ground and first floor level with flat stone lintels and a plain sill. The first floor window of the south wing has been altered at some stage by the removal of the sill and the crude removal of the section of wall beneath to make a doorway (Plate 11). On the east wall of the north wing above the plinth is graffiti scratched into the ashlar "H O'B 1794", this must be the third Henry O'Brien who died in 1810, though his date of birth is not certain (Plate 12). The courtyard façades of the north and south wings have a single, central arched doorway with a window on either side, and at first floor level there are three windows (Plate 13). A deep cornice at eaves level terminates the upper edge of the wall beneath the roof. It returns on the north and south facades for a short distance only (one block of stone)

The eastern façade of the west range overlooks the central stable yard and comprises, on the ground floor, four carriage arches (the northern one now blocked but with a doorway and window), and at the northern end an original pedestrian doorway and adjacent window (Fig 5, Plate 14). The central three bays project forward very slightly. At first floor level there are only two windows, between which over the main carriage arch, are the finely carved date, initials and armorial device. The simple plinth continues along this façade and there is a plain, slightly raised square profile impost between the arches. There is no other decoration and the voussoirs of all of the arches are absolutely plain with no surface detail.

The two southern arches retain what are almost certainly the original doors, each of two leaves.

- 4.7 The roof is of hipped construction and is covered with Collyweston stone slates with a ridge of modern tiles of various types. It was fitted with an iron gutter, most likely added in the latter part of the nineteenth century, none of which now remains, though the iron brackets survive in places. There is no external sign of the clock turret centrally placed in the west range above the carriage arches (see above section 3.6 for description).

4.8 INTERIOR

Ground floor; Stable 1. Situated in the southern wing this room was formerly a stable with stalls for six horses (Fig 5). The walls are primarily of undressed limestone with occasional use of red brick, and are bonded in lime mortar. Originally accessed from the stable courtyard to the north via a tall doorway with an arched top the room (at the first visit) was filled with debris due to the collapse of both the roof and the first floor, though subsequent clearance has enabled a full examination of the floor and lower parts of the walls to be made (Plate 15). The collapsed timbers were examined during removal, and though many were seen to retain carpenters marks (all Roman numerals formed by flat chisels) the majority of the timber was so badly rotted that no meaningful sense could be made of their former use. Since the roof and floors of the west and north ranges remain *in situ* comment will be made of their constructional detail and layout. The internal jambs of the door are finished in plaster within which is set the doorframe, probably of oak. Above the door is a semi-circular overdoor light, now empty but originally probably fitted with glass; originally it was divided into segments, as can be faintly seen on the sepia photograph showing a horse (see front cover). There are three windows, one in the east end wall and two in the north wall to either side of the central door. The windows are all square and are set high in the wall, a typical arrangement for stables to prevent horses from being able to reach the opening and potentially breaking the window glass. All openings are currently boarded from the outside and only one, in the eastern end wall, retains any glazing bars which indicate a nine pane sash arrangement, the upper portion containing three panes, the lower six. The windows are constructed below oak lintels set beneath a brick relieving arch and the internal jambs were lined with wood. The sills at ground floor level were sloping and either lined with wood (the east elevation) or plastered (north elevation). At first floor level there do not appear to have been any sills, the wall here was thinned to the thickness of the window frames below sill level (Plate 16).

The walls of the stable are plastered and painted white (with lime wash) though there is evidence that there was a decorative scheme which comprised blue borders to panels with each corner finished with an inset quarter circle cut-back (quadrant), most evident now in this wing at first floor level (Plate 17). The stalls faced the south wall and all stall divisions are now missing, however, at the west end the profile of the sloping top edge can be seen against the west wall of the room (Plate 18). It is constructed of oak with vertical boards capped by a broader top rail. At the west end a post set into the wall was originally topped by an acorn shaped finial, now missing, but the outline of which can be seen in the wall plaster. This finial was found during the clearance of the room and has been retained. It appears to be of oak and is lathe turned, cut in half and covered in many layers of paint including yellow ochre, black, white and maroon. The lower surface has the remains of a tenon by which it was fixed into the top of the upright of the stall end against the wall. Though the remainder of the stall divisions are now removed there is enough evidence in the south wall to determine that the divisions comprised timber on the lower part with vertical iron bars on the upper portion, and probably iron posts at the north end of each stall (Fig 5). It is assumed that each stall division followed the same pattern. In the south wall at the centre of each stall are the remains of distinctive hay racks which comprise a large circular dished recess set into the wall, 3 feet in diameter, which were originally fronted by an iron grille over the lower half which would have held the hay (Plate 19). Each circle is

formed by timber (pine) frame set into the wall to form the outline of the dish which has a moulded beading around the upper half. The same beading then continues horizontally to the next circle and so on along the length of the wall. Almost identical hay rack roundels are present in the stables at Laxton Hall close by. Laxton was connected to Blatherwycke by marriage, and the stables there were re-built in 1805 to designs partly by Humphrey Repton (Heward and Taylor 1996). Below the moulded beading the south wall is covered by vertical match-board pine nailed to horizontal studs and painted a variety of colours down to the top of the now missing manger.

The floor of the room is roughly half limestone slabs (north of the centre-line) and half blue engineering brick pavers with an embossed grid pattern (rather like a bar of chocolate, Plate 20). These blue pavers run to a central drain aligned east-west along the long axis of the room. The floor of the easternmost bay of the stalls has been replaced with concrete. A narrow strip, the width of the doorway, lies north-south from the entrance across the room until it joins with the blue pavers.

There was originally an opening in the west wall leading into the next room (see below) though this has been widened in modern times, since the demolition of the hall. Only the northern jamb of the original doorway survives which is simply plastered and painted. The lintel and southern jamb have been removed and the former replaced by steel beams, though the original dimensions of this doorway can be seen in the floor.

- 4.9 ***Ground floor; Carriage House.*** Situated in the southern end of the west range this room appears to have been designed for the storage of carriages, and possibly also served as a tack room though it was very poorly lit (Fig 5). It was accessed from the stable courtyard via full height double doors set within the southernmost of the four courtyard arches, though the door leaves are rectangular and not arched (Fig 5, Plate 21). The upper part of the arch is infilled with horizontally boarded timber. The doors, probably pine, hang on substantial iron pin hinges set into the stonework of the jambs which each have a rebate to allow for a close joint. Each door leaf is constructed with two layers of timber, the outer with vertically placed pine boards closely set with iron square headed nails, the whole (latterly) painted maroon. On the inner surface the doors have diagonal cross braces between which are fitted horizontal boards which create a flush surface (Plate 22). Each of the horizontal boards has a half-round moulding on one edge and this surface is painted a slightly pink/grey colour whilst the exterior is maroon. The iron hinges are curiously shaped, each curves downwards in a quadrant profile before crossing the inner surface of the door horizontally. It is not clear why they are made in this way, it may simply be a mark of high craftsmanship which evident is throughout this building.

The north and west walls of this room are constructed of stone and were originally blank, a doorway has been inserted in the north wall and two windows in the west wall. The doorway is crudely chopped through and the jambs repaired with cement render. A re-used four panel door has been crudely fixed to fill the opening, but has been fitted upside down. The south wall has had two metal framed, Crittall-style windows fitted, the exact date of their installation is unclear but must almost certainly post-date the sale and demolition of the house in 1948. Each has three opening panels, one on either side, the other a central top light above a fixed lower central light. The remainder of the wall is plain and is plastered, painted white. The south wall has two windows, one an original square window set high in the wall, the other a Crittall-style window identical to the two in the west wall. The original square window retains no original frame and is set above a recess which extends to floor level. The floor is covered with pale yellow moulded ceramic pavers which are ridged to help drainage and there is a single drain-run along the long axis of the room. They are not original, but are nineteenth-century in both design and fabric (the pavers are ridged on both sides indicating that they could be lifted and re-set when one side became worn). A square section iron box post is set vertically towards the southern

end of the room, this extends upwards through the ceiling and through the first floor above; it was introduced to support the decaying dragon beam of the roof and is modern. The ceiling is plastered, predominantly over reed laths, but also in a patch towards the north-west corner, over split timber laths.

- 4.10 **Ground floor; carriage arch and adjacent north and south rooms.** The carriage arch extends through the west range and has at either side (east and west) a wide arched opening to allow carriages, coaches and horses access from the main drive through the building into the stable courtyard (Fig 5). The western arch on the outer face has been described (see above, section 4.4). The stable courtyard arch exterior has also been described (section 4.6). This archway, now doorless, was originally fitted with double doors presumably constructed in the same way as those which remain on the carriage house, the hinge pins remain *in situ*. The floor of the archway is a mixture of tarmac and cement; it is not clear if any original surface remains beneath.

The space to the south of the archway is now a separate room created by the insertion of a breeze block wall of modern date, though originally this side was probably enclosed, and on the undated, but probably late 1940s photograph held by the Royal Commission there appears to be a wall in this location. The listing record has a reference which states that

“One inner return wall of carriage arch has timber framing with brick infill”

and it may be that since the listing (in 1988) was made this timber and brick wall (or the one opposite, see below) has been replaced by the present block wall. Its size is such that if this is the case that it obscures any earlier evidence and it has two large buttresses within the south room and a Crittal style window set between them. The floor is cement.

The space to the north of the carriage arch is open to the central archway and originally had a carriage archway on the east side. This has subsequently been infilled and set within it is a window and door (Fig 5, Plate 23). The doorway is fitted with a four panelled door of late nineteenth or early twentieth century date painted maroon on the outside, ledged but not braced. To the south is a square window beneath a gauged stone lintel, set with a twelve light horizontal sash arrangement, painted red. Originally there appears to have been no access to the stable to the immediate north though during the modern period (post 1948) a wide opening has been created and finished crudely. The south wall was plain with no openings but has had a fireplace built against it in red brick and then plastered. The chimney breast narrows in steps above the fire opening which is currently covered by a metal sheet; it is not known at present if a fire grate remains. The floor is laid with red and yellow six inch ceramic tiles of late nineteenth or early twentieth century date. It appears that this bay was originally separated from the carriage arch by a screen wall, almost certainly of timber frame with brick infill as per the listing description. A scar from what may be the frame can be seen in the west wall close to the jamb of the external arch, though this suggests that the timber and brick wall was a secondary addition as the scar can be seen on a plaster wall surface. If the screen wall was original it is not likely to have been added after the walls were plastered, but before.

- 4.11 **Ground floor; Stable 2.** Situated at the north end of the west range this room was formerly another suite of stables, now connected to the room north of the coach arch via a wide modern opening knocked through the dividing wall (Fig 5). The room was originally accessed via a square headed door set in an arched opening in the east wall, flanked by a square window also set beneath an arched top opening (Plate 24). The door is vertically planked and is ledged but not braced; it is almost certainly a later replacement. The window contains no original frame and the semi-circular section above is boarded in. In the north wall is another window, almost certainly original as it mirrors the window position in the south wall. Here, however, it has been altered; the lintel is a simple oak

beam rather than gauged stone and the sill has been lifted, though externally the dressed stone jambs can still be seen (see section 4.5, Plate 10). There is a third window in the west wall; this too is a later addition set high in the wall and asymmetrically placed in relation to the hayrack roundels. The hayrack roundels are identical in size and construction to those in Stable 1 but are placed higher in the wall; here the base of each roundel is at 1.95m (6 feet 5 inches) whereas in Stable 1 they are at 1.7m (5 feet 7 inches). The reason for the difference in height is thought to reflect the type of horse stabled, the taller hayracks for the hunters, the lower ones for the carriage horses. In the north wall was a doorway, now blocked with red brick internally and coursed, dressed limestone rubble externally which is so well matched that the original outline cannot easily be detected. This doorway was blocked before the stalls (and therefore probably the hayrack roundels) were installed as the swept-top profile seen only as a scar in the plasterwork crosses the position of the doorway (Plate 25). This arrangement also implies that the blue brick paviors are a later addition, also added when the stalls were. The room is now linked to both the room to the east (Stable 3) by the creation of a wide opening in the second half of the twentieth century (Plate 26). This opening has breeze block repairs to the jambs and above a (sagging) timber lintel.

- 4.12 **Ground Floor; Stable 3.** Located in the north wing the room was originally entered via a doorway centrally placed in the south wall. On either side of this doorway is a single window, now boarded up. The room provided stabling for four horses with two hay rack roundels in each of the east and west walls, although now only two complete examples survive in the east wall, one being totally and the other partially removed when the wide opening was created in the west wall (Fig 5). These two roundels also have iron tethering rings fixed to turned wooden mounts fitted to the wall to the side of, and slightly below, the roundel (Plate 27). The size and location of each stall can be seen in the scars in the floor paviors which indicate that the stalls were larger than the others in the building. The central area, entered via the south doorway, gave access to the stalls on either side which appear to have had their doors placed to the north and south of the stall divisions. Each external wall of the stalls were lined with vertical tongue and groove boards and provided with a central drain. The divisions between the stalls were probably of timber lower halves set in an iron frame with vertical iron bars above. A second doorway is positioned opposite the original southern opening in the north wall; it is not original and has a segmental arch externally comprising three courses of edge set red brick. It is boarded internally and the plastered jambs cannot be clearly seen. It probably relates to the former lean-to building located against the north wall; the door itself is of vertical boards, which is ledged and braced on the external face (see section 4.5). This indicates that it must relate to the former lean-to building positioned against the north wall as bracing and ledging is never exposed on an external face since its flat upper surfaces would collect water and be prone to rot.

4.13 **INTERIOR**

First Floor. No clear room uses can now be ascribed to the first floor rooms and they have simply been numbered 1-5 starting at the south (Fig 6). What would have been Room 1 no longer exists as both the roof and first floor have completely collapsed. The window openings are present; three in the north wall and one in the east. The latter has been altered by the removal of the crude sill, probably indicating a twentieth century date, but possibly earlier to allow this to serve as a hay-loft door above what were clearly stalls for horses on the ground floor. In the south wall a doorway has been created to allow access to the former first floor room of the "chapel". Some plaster remains on the internal wall surfaces and there are remains of a decorative paint scheme with narrow blue borders defining rectangular panels with quadrant corners (Plate 17). This decoration suggests that this room had a higher status than the other first floor rooms, though what is unclear. Since the floor has been lost due to collapse, there are no indications as to whether or not it had access from the ground floor. The rubble walls rise only to the height of the eaves within the building, the cheek space of the roof was filled with vertical studs and reed laths

covered in lime plaster (Plate 28). The floor appears to have been the same as in the remaining first floor i.e. pine beams supporting pine joists and floorboards (see sections on Fig 6 for dimensions). The walls are mainly of coursed limestone with red brick forming segmental relieving arches above the window openings. Access to Room 2 was via a doorway in the west wall.

- 4.14 **First Floor; Room 2.** Also partially collapsed, this room retains much of its floor, albeit in poor condition, but almost none of the roof (Fig 6). This did survive in very poor condition when the site was first visited in early 2008 but was largely removed for Health and Safety reasons during July of the same year to allow the safe removal of the remaining Collyweston roof slates and safe access to the remainder of the ground and first floors (Plate 29). The room retains a window opening in the south wall and a doorway into Room 3. This doorway retains the only surviving door on the first floor, of simple vertically boarded and ledged (but not braced) pine construction; it may be original. It has two iron strap hinges and a wooden lock box (not original and positioned upside down) but the former drop-latch has been removed at some stage. The door is hung on a pine frame with simple quarter mouldings beneath an oak lintel. The walls of Room 2 are plastered and retain traces of a white or pale cream coloured limewash. There are very faint traces of graffiti which were too faint to decipher since these walls have been exposed to the elements for a number of years. The floor is of pine boards over joists and principal beams of the same material, the roof timbers too are all of pine. This use of pine is unusual in a building of this period, normally such structural timberwork is oak. Why it should have been used is uncertain, but there is no doubt that it is original since to have replaced the entire structure of the roof and all the timbers of the floors would have meant significant intervention to the walls and there is no indication that this happened. All around the perimeter of the floor, at the junction with the wall, is a red brick fillet. It is present in all of the rooms and is clearly a later addition as it is placed over the wall plaster. Although its purpose is not absolutely certain it was probably added at a stage when there had been some movement in the building and a small gap had appeared between the edge of the floor boards and the walls. It might then have been added to try to make the upper floor rodent-proof by filling the gap where they could climb the internal walls, although in reality it probably proved worthless as the exterior of the walls was far rougher and would allow any rodent easy access.
- 4.15 **First Floor; Room 3.** Occupying the central section of the west range, this room lies above the coach arch and the two adjacent north and south rooms (Fig 6). It is lit by two windows on the east side which are integral to the original design, and a tiny unglazed secondary opening directly above the arch in the west wall below the eaves. The northernmost of the two east wall windows retains its glazing bars which indicate that it was a nine pane sash window of two sections, the upper part three panes, the lower part six panes. There is a doorway through to the room to the north minus its door. The walls are plastered with traces of a white limewash and the floor is of pine. On the west side of the room a secondary wooden (oak) feature has been added though its purpose is uncertain. It comprises two oak and elm plank walls (north and south ends) roughly nailed on to a frame, itself nailed to the wall. It has a boarded top covered with what appears to be linoleum (Plate 30). It is not clear why or when this box was added and what it was used for. The secondary un-glazed hole in the west wall is positioned centrally to it and it is possible (though it seems highly improbable) that this hole was not an owl hole but was created to allow someone (a tedious, dreary job surely?) to watch for approaching coaches and horses which was not possible otherwise since there were originally no windows on this side of the building. If there is any chance that this theory has any foundation, it may be that the box was added to afford some protection from draughts, though this is unlikely has the feature is open to the room. This boarded box sits above a former trapdoor which is now infilled, but the box does not relate to the trapdoor as it sits on top of it rather than to one side of it indicating that it is later. It is not clear if this trapdoor is original; until the

plaster ceiling beneath is removed it is not possible to see if it is integral or has been cut through the floor joists. If original it can have been used only for unloading fodder given its position. There is another opening to the north of the one previously described, this is certainly a later insertion and its purpose is unclear as it is narrow and has been made by simply cutting through the floor boards and joist nearest the wall. There is no indication that it was covered by a hinged or drop-in cover. It lies adjacent to the plastered brick chimney stack rising through the floor from the room beneath, and may be related to it, though how is not clear. This stack, and the fireplace it serves, is clearly later and at present does not rise above the roof line having been reduced and covered with slates. There was no fireplace on the first floor. In the centre of the room is a third opening, also a later insertion and also un-covered, most likely this was added after 1948. This opening sits beneath a pine tie beam crossing the room east-west.

Resting awkwardly on this tie beam is an oak frame which supported the clock mechanism and superstructure for the turret, now removed above ridge level (Plate 31). The frame is fundamentally different from the remainder of the timberwork in the building since it is made entirely of oak, suggesting that it is of a different phase. Its positioning is also irregular since it straddles the tie beam and is fitted crudely to the purlins and secondary rafters of the roof. It comprises four vertical posts (the lower ends of which project below the tie beam) with horizontal stretchers on the east and west sides, both with two diagonal braces. Near the apex of the roof iron tie rods further brace these sides, the north and south sides have simple cross bars near the top and bottom of the frame. The frame is crudely fixed to the roof timbers at secondary rafter level by secondary purlins which are fixed to the four vertical posts. How it projected above the ridge line can be seen in a photograph held by the Royal Commission (Plate 1). This indicates that there was a turret, probably covered in lead, which held a clock on its east face and louvres on the north and south sides, all surmounted by a weathervane in the form of a running fox. On the east wall, directly beneath the tie beam and written in white chalk is the following graffiti: "*This clocke [sic] was put up on the 6 May 1820*". This confirms that the clock and frame for the turret were not original features, but were inserted at this date, though it may be that the frame and mechanism are earlier and were bought here from another building. On the west wall of the same room, to the south of the boarded box above the trapdoor, is another graffiti "*The fox was put up on the 4 Dec 1820*" which must refer to the running fox weathervane (both sets of graffiti have been photographed, but due to their faintness have not been reproduced here). The location of the weathervane is not known, although a similar one is in the possession of the author of this report (Plate 32). This was formerly on the livestock buildings of Manor Farm, Stevington, Bedfordshire built by the Duke of Bedford in 1876.

The structure of the roof is a simple construction of trusses, each with a collar, and in between principal and secondary rafters. On each side of the roof there is a single purlin but no ridge beam or wall plate; the timberwork is pegged. The lower ends of both the principal and secondary rafters are set into the top of the wall and have been built into the stonework and the inner surface plastered over (Plate 33). The upper surface of each of the rafters has a spocket so that the lower edge of the roof forms a swept profile. The collapsed roof timbers seen in the south wing indicate that the principal and secondary rafters have simple half-lapped joints. The Collyweston slates were torched with a white lime mortar.

As well as the two written statements recording the erection of the clock and weathervane, there is a wealth of other graffiti around all the walls of this room. Some are partially readable, others can be recognised but are illegible, some are complete and fully legible. They have not been fully transcribed or recorded at this stage, though those that were thought to have most relevance or intrinsic interest have been included. The earliest appears to be one written by Henry O'Brien dated March 24 1794; the same Henry who

inscribed his name on the ashlar block at ground level on the east end of the north range, also in 1794. On the east wall a splendid and florid hand has written in red chalk 'Henry Jeffs' with a sadly illegible date beneath; it is not known who he was, but the quality of the writing suggests he was probably not a member of staff, or if so was of a high rank (Plate 34). On the south wall behind the door is a two line ditty in red chalk, rather rubbed and faint which seems to say

*“he is a fool and for ever small [i.e. stupid]
who wrights [sic] a name upon a wall”*

There are many tally marks and sums, presumably accounts of materials or fodder, occasional faces, names and dates though no obviously modern or obscene ones, presumably an indication of the difficulty of getting access to this level during the present era.

- 4.16 **First Floor; Room 4.** Located at the north-west corner of the building, the room currently has no windows but a single door in the north wall which leads to a former external platform, possibly leading to an external staircase. This doorway was originally a window but the sill has been removed and the wall taken out flush with the interior floor level to make the door opening (Plate 35). The door (now missing) opened inwards and was hinged on the west side. The lintel is of oak and is original to the former window opening, the jambs have been partially re-built, particularly the eastern one which appears to have been faced with nineteenth-century brick before plastering.

The remainder of the room is plain, the walls are plastered and the floor constructed as in the other rooms with the same brick fillet around the edges. There was at some stage a trapdoor at the north end, partly in front of the doorway and presumably only used when this opening was a window, which may be original (Fig 6). Now boarded over, the trapdoor is the largest identified so far and if fitted with a ladder may have provided the only access to the first floor. Its position suggests that the ladder or stairs would have risen from the west side of the room below so that the user would emerge in the first floor room facing east into the corner of the room beneath the window. The west and south side of the opening are likely to have been protected by a rail, although no sign of that remains. However, if this was the arrangement it indicates that the present ground floor layout is not original as not only are there the *in situ* remains of a stall in this location, but there is also a blocked doorway in the north wall which would have been usefully located at the base of the stairs. It must therefore be assumed that when the stalls were inserted the trapdoor was no longer used, and an alternative access to the first floor was created, perhaps through the hayloft door.

The roof is constructed in the same way as in Room 3, but to accommodate the hipped roof a long dragon beam runs from the internal angle of the stable yard corner to the north-west outer corner of the building (Fig 6). The truss which this beam supports is of King Post configuration, the central vertical post having integral shoulders which support the angled braces. There is a wrought iron strap connecting the tie beam and vertical post; it is not clear if this is an original feature or later addition (Plate 36).

- 4.17 **First Floor; Room 5.** Entered through a doorway (minus its door) in the east wall of Room 4, the room was well lit by four windows; three in the south wall and one in the east. All are square and remain un-altered but do not retain their glazing bars which appear to have been horizontally pivoted so that the top edge swung inwards. The room is un-plastered, the only room with this finish in the building, which suggests it was of a lesser status than the others (Plate 37). If it was used for the storage of hay, straw or grain the pivoting window openings may have been felt to have provided better ventilation. The central window on the south façade retains one leaf of a two-leaf shutter though it does not appear

to have been an original feature, being rather crudely made and fitted (Plate 38). The floor is as in the remainder of the building, as is the roof which is hipped at the eastern end.

There are few features in the room, one of which is a boarded-over trapdoor against the north wall which was formerly fitted with a hinged door; two hinge pins remain *in situ* on the north side of the opening (Plate 39). This trapdoor is not an original feature but has been cut though, saw marks in line with the north and south edges continue into the floorboards on either end where the board-saw has slightly bitten into them. Further west along the north wall the rusted iron pipe flue from what might have been a stove (although no hearth slab remains) has been fitted through the wall. This is a secondary feature. The red brick fillet seen in other rooms continues around the walls at floor level.

5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1 The stable block at Blatherwycke was built in 1770 by Donatus O'Brien to supercede those previously located in one of the two pavilions linked to the main house. Whilst externally the stables have not been greatly altered, apart from the insertion of window openings and the addition of the "chapel" on the south side, internally there has been a much higher level of intervention. From the east the most obvious visual loss has been the removal of the clock turret (though this was not an original feature), the blocking of the northernmost carriage arch and the removal of the central arch doors.
- 5.2 The addition of the two storey building on the south side of the building can be dated to between the years 1826 and 1880 and although its original purpose is unknown, it was probably for storage as there is no surviving indication it was fitted out for accommodation. Its ecclesiastical external appearance seems to be purely a consideration of the proximity of the extension to the church rather than being related to its function. Tales of the Misses O'Brien using it daily for worship after the hall was demolished appear to be more myth than fact.
- 5.3 The courtyard and eastern elevations have undergone relatively little change; the northernmost of the original four larger arched openings has been infilled and fitted with a doorway and window. The date of this alteration is not known, but the matching of the stonework is good and the degree of weathering suggests it was almost certainly during the nineteenth century, as do the door and window fittings within it (see section 5.6; if the proposition about the date of the hay rack roundels is correct, this infilling may have been undertaken at the same time). Little else has changed on this side apart from the crude lowering of the window in the east end of the south range at first floor level to make a door, perhaps to act as a hay-loft door. Window frames have been lost in some cases although those that remain indicate a mixture of opening methods; all appear to have given the same appearance of nine pane windows externally.
- 5.4 The south and west elevations have had windows inserted during the mid twentieth century, almost certainly after the house was sold in 1948, but the use of Critall-style frames makes close dating difficult as the basic style did not change much between the 1930s and 1960s. It is also possible that the window frames were re-used, further making dating of their insertion problematic. A small window with a timber frame on the ground floor, and possible owl hole above the coach arch are probably nineteenth century but have a minor visual impact on this façade due to their size. The north elevation has had a lean-to building erected against the eastern end at some stage, since removed. It is not shown on either the 1810 or 1880 maps so most likely post dates the latter. A secondary doorway linking it to the stables remains. Another doorway, at the west end of this elevation, has been blocked and is not visible externally. However, the internal brick infilling clearly indicates its location; it appears to have been filled in during the nineteenth century.

- 5.5 The clock turret identified from the surviving internal frame is a later addition which can be precisely dated to May 6th 1820, perhaps the date when the clock was finally installed and set in motion. The clock itself is now in the church, and has not been examined, it is probably earlier than the installation date but unless it is inspected by a specialist its date remains unknown. The running fox weathervane which surmounted the turret was added shortly after in December of the same year and may have been purpose made, perhaps even on the estate. Its present location is not known. The turret appears, from the one surviving photograph and the evidence inside the roof, to have been of an oak frame, probably covered above the roof line with lead. It appears to have had louvres on the north and south sides for ventilation.
- 5.6 Internally there have been significant changes, both historically and during the post-sale period. Historically the stables seem to have been either re-furbished or completely re-fitted. The number of horses provided with stabling, at least during the stage still extant, was for a maximum of fifteen. The hay-rack roundels might be original but interestingly are almost identical to surviving examples built in 1805 at Laxton Hall nearby, which was linked to Blatherwycke from an early period by marriage. The stalls which serve them have certainly been refurbished, a not uncommon occurrence for features which are subject to intense wear and tear. If originally of timber they have clearly been replaced, wood in such locations is prone to rot from horse manure and other effluent, as well as the water used for washing out the stalls. The cast iron racks which were fitted to the roundels are almost certainly not original. Cast iron only became widespread after the stables had been built; the famous Iron Bridge at Telford was not made until 1779 and the first use of cast iron in factory buildings only became widespread during the 1790s. Given the balance of evidence it seems most likely that the hay-rack roundels, their fittings and the stalls are not original, and might date to c1805 or later.
- 5.7 The floors to all of the stalls are of nineteenth-century date, being laid with blue engineering (Staffordshire) brick paviors, and such bricks were not made until the second quarter of the nineteenth century. In Stable 1 there is a section of floor along the north side of the room which appears to be original and comprises limestone slabs. Elsewhere yellow brick paviors with ridges on both sides have been used, they form the floor of the carriage house and are used outside in areas of the stable yard. In the room to the north of the coach arch the floor has been re-laid with nineteenth century quarry tiles of red and pale yellow in chequerboard fashion.
- 5.8 The double doors to the coach bays appear to be original and like almost all of the timberwork in the building are of pine. The reason for the use of pine for almost all structural elements within the building is slightly odd, especially on an estate where oak appears to have been well established, and which was normally used not least to save cost (by direction of Major Egerton Stafford O'Brien on 21 January 1930 at a sale by Richardsons of Stamford 4,111 forest oaks were sold by the Blatherwycke estate in 28 lots). Pine at the end of the eighteenth century, and particularly of the size of some of the principal floor beams, would almost certainly have had to have been imported, most likely from the Baltic. As such it would have been much more expensive and it is difficult to understand why it was used. Were the stables built thirty or so years later the answer may well have been that at the time there was concern from the Admiralty that there was insufficient oak for the preparation for a fleet needed to oppose the threat from Napoleon, but during the 1770s no such threat was envisaged. However, neither Hentie Louw (University of Newcastle) and John Steane (Vernacular Architecture Group) consider that the use of pine is particularly unusual and so the reason remains unknown.
- 5.9 The original method of access to the first floor remains at present un-resolved. There was clearly a trapdoor in Room 4 against the north wall but this has been boarded over for a

considerable time. It is possible that during opening-up works it can be determined if this is an original feature. Another trapdoor in Room 5 is not original, as has been seen by the board-saw cuts. The trapdoor over the central coach arch is possibly original (as a loading hatch only, not access) since it would have offered dry cover for a wagon loaded with fodder during unloading, though again further examination is required. There is no indication in Room 2 (first floor) of any access point and the floor of Room 1 (first floor) no longer exists. It is slightly odd that there was no proper staircase in such a building as it is likely that stable lads and grooms lived on the first floor, and whilst they would not have been provided with what is now considered to be good accommodation, a staircase does not seem an overly extravagant addition. There is no indication which room was used for their living quarters though the room above the coach arch does bear the most graffiti. Further examination may produce further evidence. There was clearly no provision for heating, the fireplace on the ground floor is a later addition, so the accommodation must have been bitterly cold in winter. A certain amount of heat would have been produced by the horses, but otherwise there was nothing. Male outside servants were at the bottom of the staff hierarchy so were not provided with much in the way of comforts, however, it does seem to be rather bleaker than usual for such a well-built stable block. It is possible, but perhaps unlikely, that they retained accommodation in the former stable, one of the pavilions, but this too seems unlikely as stable boys would need to be on hand in case one of the horses was needed. The other anomaly is that there does not appear to have been a clearly defined tack room, another essential. These are normally easily identified as they (by the nineteenth century at least) are almost always lined with matchboard on the walls and are fitted with a fireplace so that the leather can be cleaned and treated with oils and waxes in a dry, warm environment. The only fireplace is that in the room to the north of the coach arch, but there is no sign of wall coverings or fittings on which to hang harnesses and saddles etc. The tiled floor does, however, suggest that this may have been used for this purpose as it perhaps indicates a slightly higher status.

- 5.10 The “chapel” added against the south side of the stable block appears to have been simply used for storage; it was added between 1846 and 1880. There is no hard evidence that it was ever used as a chapel, and the ecclesiastical style of its southern façade appears to have been simply a thoughtful piece of decoration given its location. This is further supported by the fact that it was connected at first floor level to the main building; it is unlikely that if it was a chapel downstairs it would have been used as a store upstairs, and is anyway unlikely to have been floored at all.
- 5.11 The courtyard exhibits a number of different yard surfaces, though all are much depleted and it is hard now to determine whether the whole area was paved with limestone at one stage, and then replaced with blue engineering brick and yellow ridged paviers, or whether it was just patched as needed. There is no mounting block (or none survives) and no indication of a pump (or the well which provided water to it), essential in a stable block, and none is indicated on the Ordnance Survey map. Also there is no forge; the fireplace added to the room to the north of the central arch was too small and is a later addition, it is possible that one was located nearer to, or within, the walled garden to the south. A forge probably posed too much of a fire risk in a building stocked with straw, hay and grain.
- 5.12 A small piece of thirteenth/fourteenth-century shell tempered pottery was found lying on the surface of the ground to the east of the stables. Such a piece does not in itself indicate the presence of medieval settlement, though it is known that there was a house on or near the site from that period, and there may, during groundworks, be further evidence of occupation from this and subsequent periods. Some nineteenth-century china and glass was seen across the site. It is unlikely that this is domestic rubbish from the time during which the house was occupied since it would be taken further afield, it is more likely the result of clearance during the demolition of the house.

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GLOSSARY

Ashlar:	Masonry of large blocks wrought to even faces and square edges
Braced:	When referred to in relation to doors this represents a piece of timber fixed at an angle between the ledged timbers to prevent distortion
Casement:	Window frame hinged on one side
Collar:	Transverse timber connecting a rafter at a point above the base but below the ridge
Corbel:	Block (or blocks) of stone projecting from a wall, supporting some feature on its horizontal top surface
Cornice:	In classical architecture the top section of the entablature, also the term of a projecting decorative feature along the top of a wall
Crittal:	Trade name of company manufacturing iron-framed windows, first established in 1884, often used generically to describe metal framed windows
Dragon beam:	Beam running diagonally across the ceiling of a room to support the foot of the hip rafter (also used in floors)
Ha-Ha:	A sunken wall with its vertical face on the garden side, and an earth slope on the parkland side, used to keep livestock out of the garden area. It was

	first used in the early eighteenth century and is used so as to prevent a view from being broken by a fence.
Hip/Hipped:	Roof with sloped rather than vertical ends
Impost:	A flat horizontal projecting stone placed at the springing of an arch
Ledged:	When referred to in relation to a door this represents a horizontal piece of timber to which vertical planks are fixed for stability. The hinges are usually fixed to the ledge
Louvre:	Horizontally slotted openings (either fixed or movable) to allow ventilation; sloped to prevent rain water entering the building
Plinth:	Projecting course at the base of a wall
Purlin:	Longitudinal members laid parallel with wall and ridge of the roof between (or on top of) the rafters
Quoin:	Dressed stones at the angles of a building, sometimes of the same size, more often alternately large and small
Rafter:	Roof timber sloping up from the top of the wall to the ridge
Rusticated:	The artificial roughing of a stone block to imitate a natural rock surface
Soffit:	Underside of an arch, lintel, cornice, staircase etc.
Spocket:	A piece of wood nailed on to the foot of a rafter and overhanging the wall, so as to form a projecting or swept eaves to a roof
Torched:	Mortar applied to the underside of slates
Tracery:	The open pattern most often used in Gothic windows
Truss:	Rigid framework constructed across a roof at regular intervals to prevent the roof from spreading laterally
Voussoir:	Each of the wedge-shaped stone blocks forming an arch
Wall plate:	Timber laid longitudinally along the top of a wall

Family genealogy

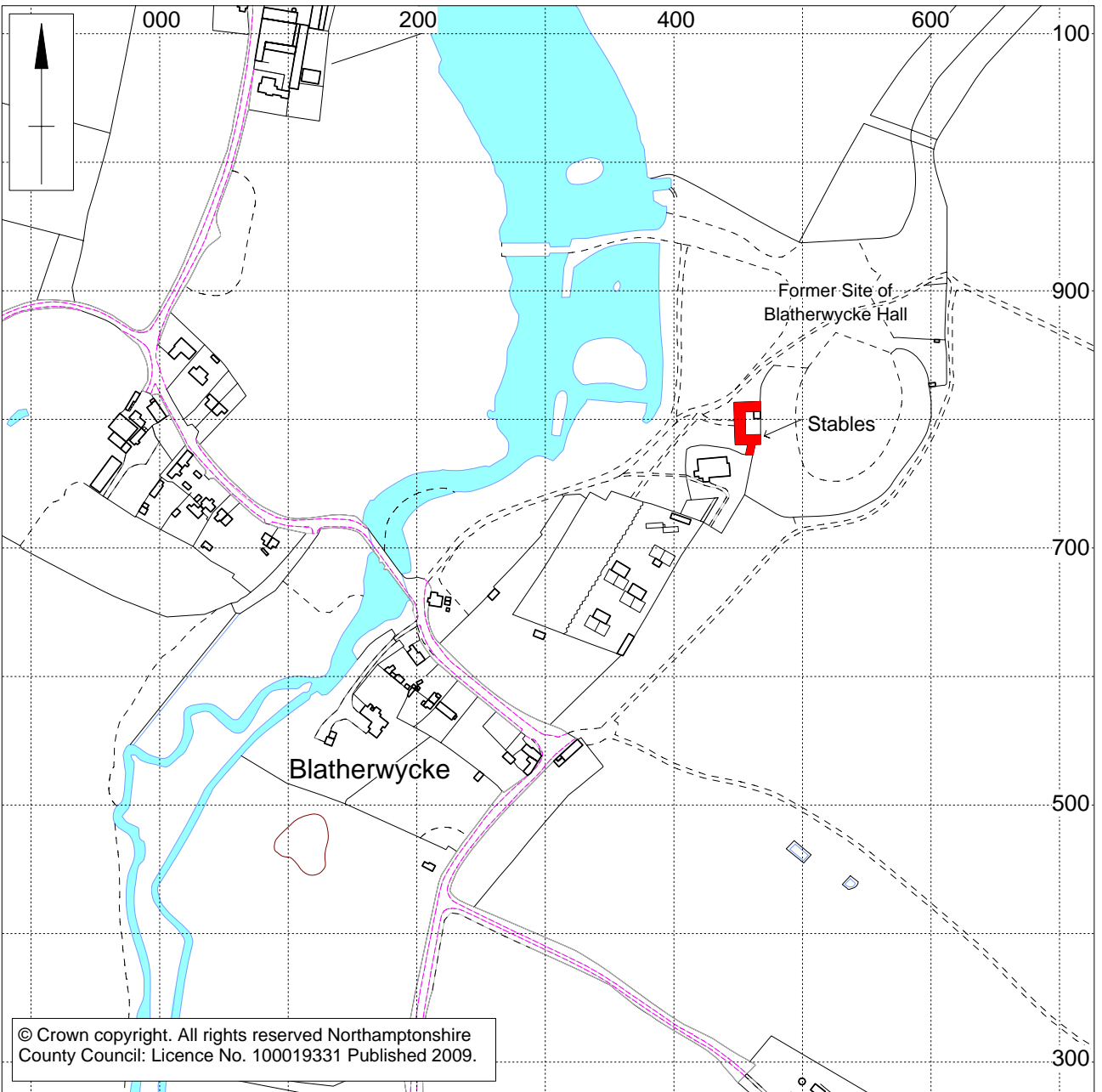
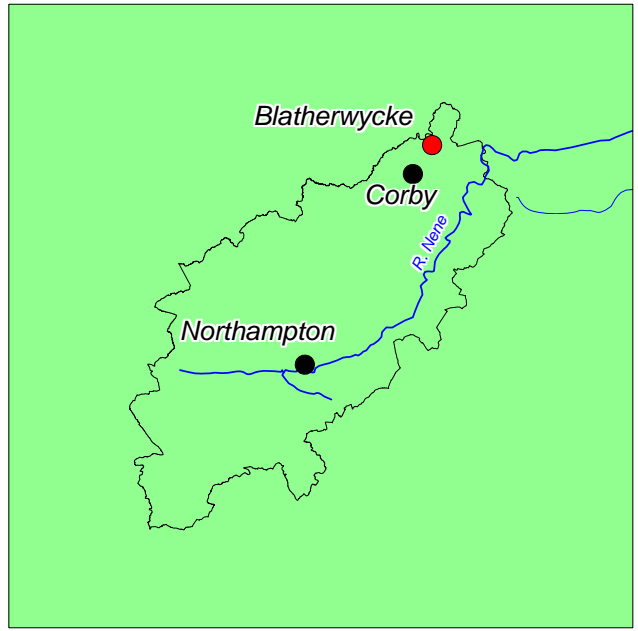
Sir Donagh O'Brien b.?, d.1717

Henry O'Brien I b. 16**, d.1724

Henry O'Brien II b. 1708, d. 17**

Henry O'Brien III b. 17**, d. 1810

Stafford O'Brien b.****, d.18**

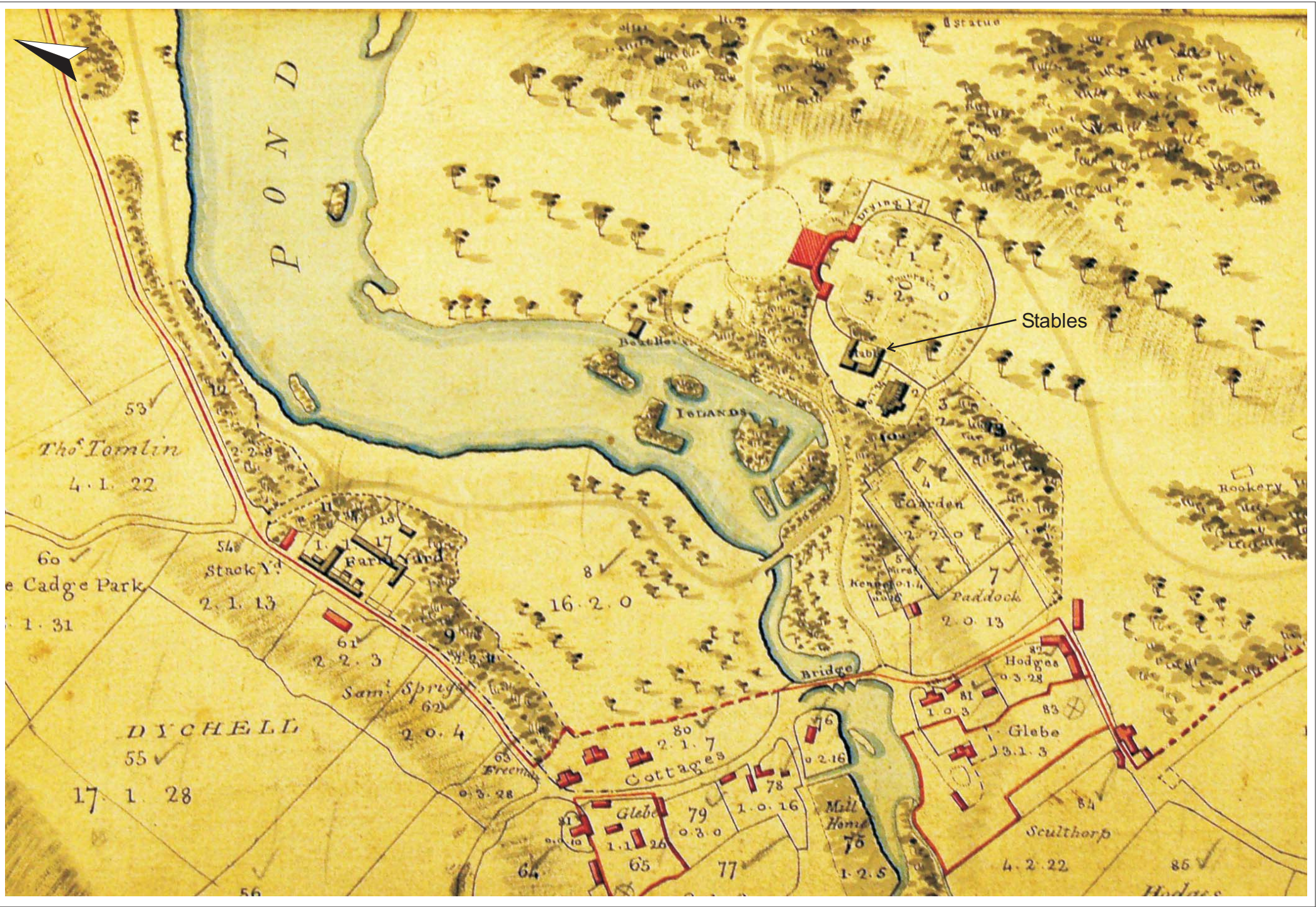


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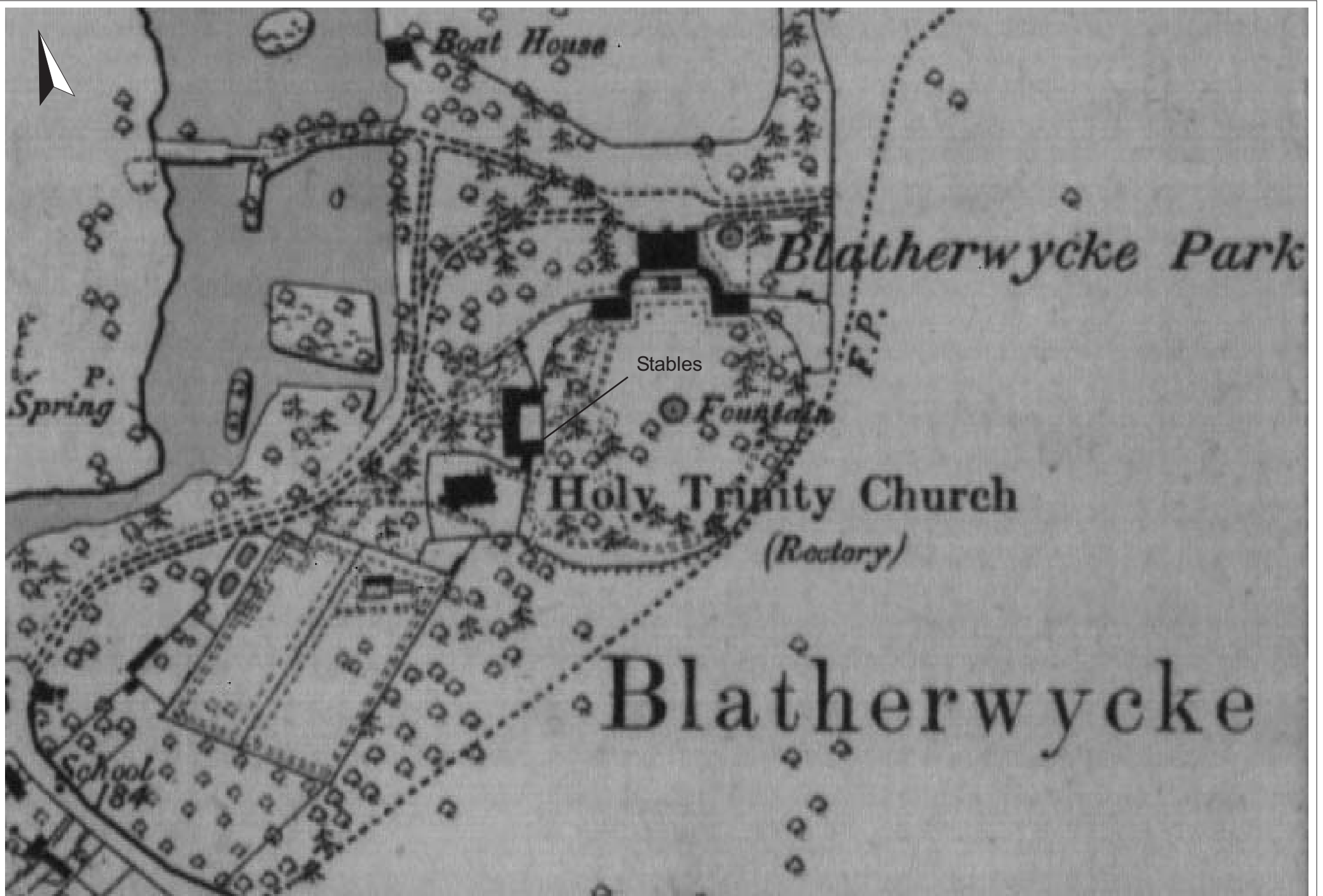
Site Location Fig 1



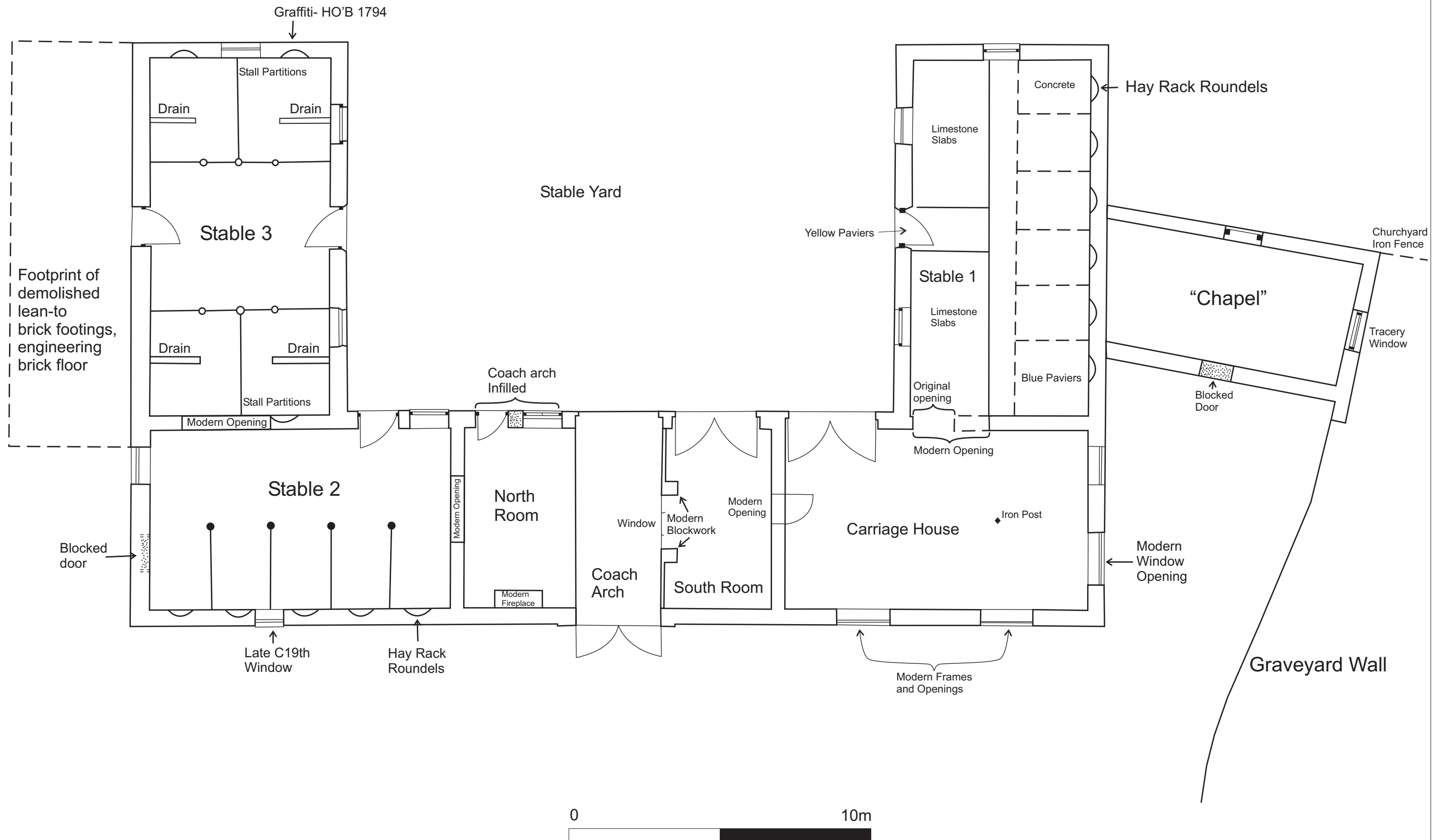
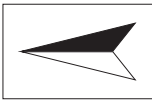
1810 Ordnance Survey Preparatory map Fig 2



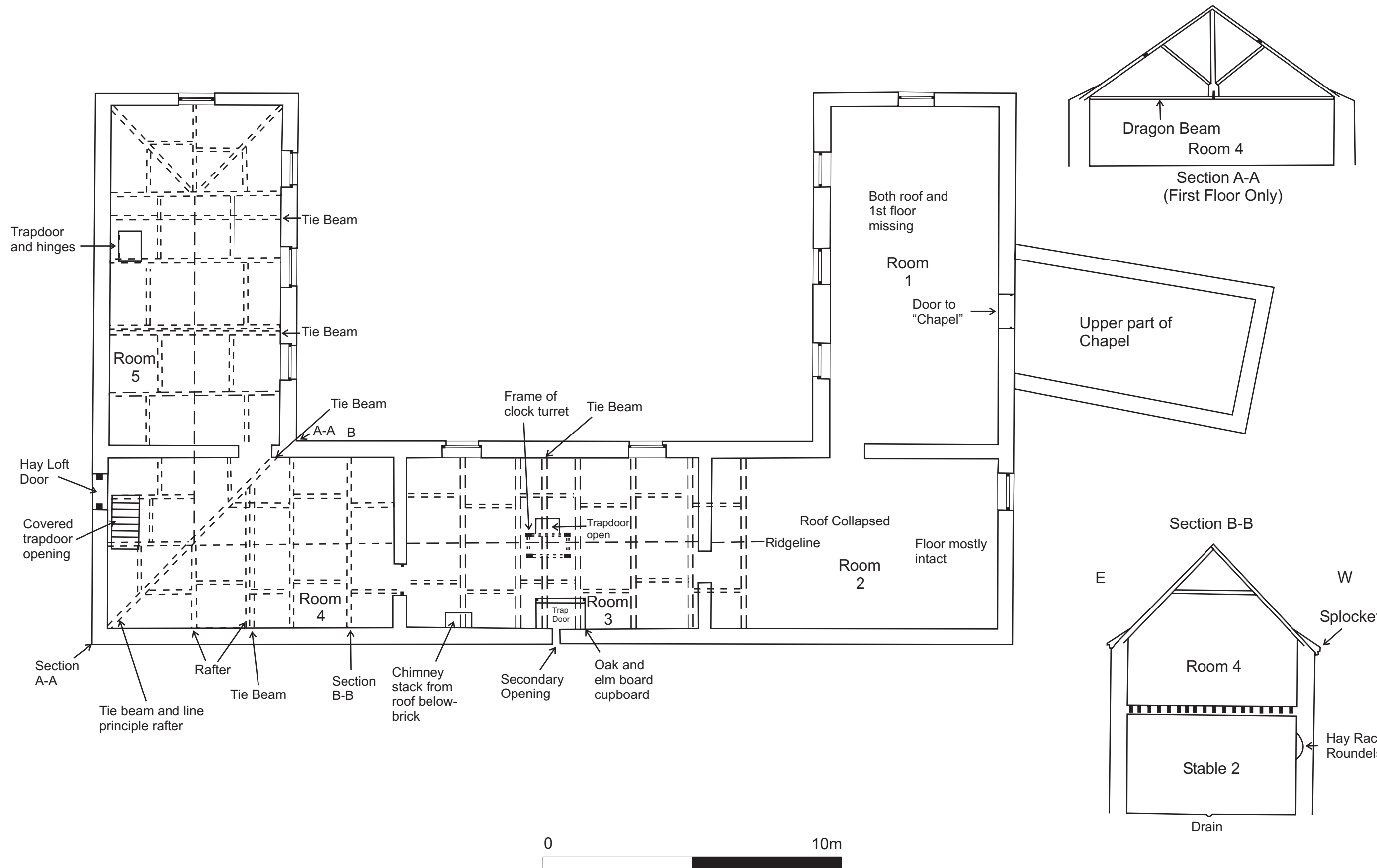
1826 Estate Map (copyright NRO) Fig 3



First Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1880 Fig 4



Blatherwycke Hall Stables - Ground Floor Fig 5



Blatherwycke Hall Stables - First Floor Fig 6



Plate 1: Undated photograph (possibly c1948) of stables looking south-west (copyright NMR)



Plate 2: The stables from the north-east



Plate 3: The west side of the stables



Plate 4: Coat of arms, date and initials of Donatus O'Brien



Plate 5: South facade showing original and later window openings

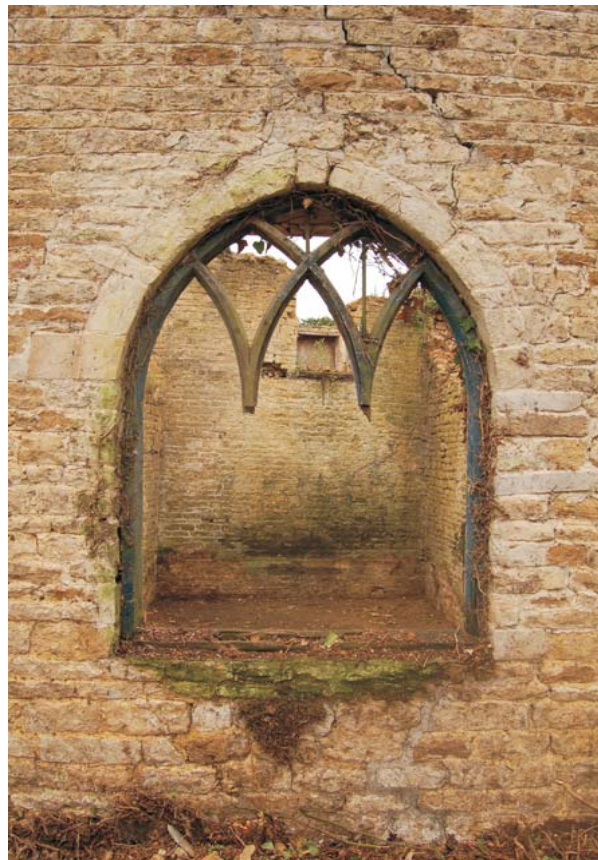


Plate 6: Tracery window in the "Chapel" looking north, exterior ground floor



Plate 7: Door in the east facade of the "Chapel" looking west



Plate 8: Tracery window in the "Chapel" looking south- interior



Plate 9: Coach arch in the west facade showing rustication, looking east



Plate 10: North facade looking south



Plate 11: East facade of the south wing looking west, altered window at first floor



Plate 12: Graffiti; H O'B 1794 on east facade of north wing



Plate 13: North facade of south wing looking south



Plate 14: East facade of west range, looking west



Plate 15: Stable 1, looking east, before clearance



Plate 16: Window details at ground and first floor- south wing, looking north



Plate 17: Decorative paint scheme, first floor- south wing, looking south



Plate 18: Stall profile, west end of south wing



Plate 19: Hay rack roundels in the south wall of stable 1, looking south



Plate 20: Paviers in stable 1, looking north



Plate 21: Carriage house doors from the stable yard



Plate 22: Internal surface of carriage house door

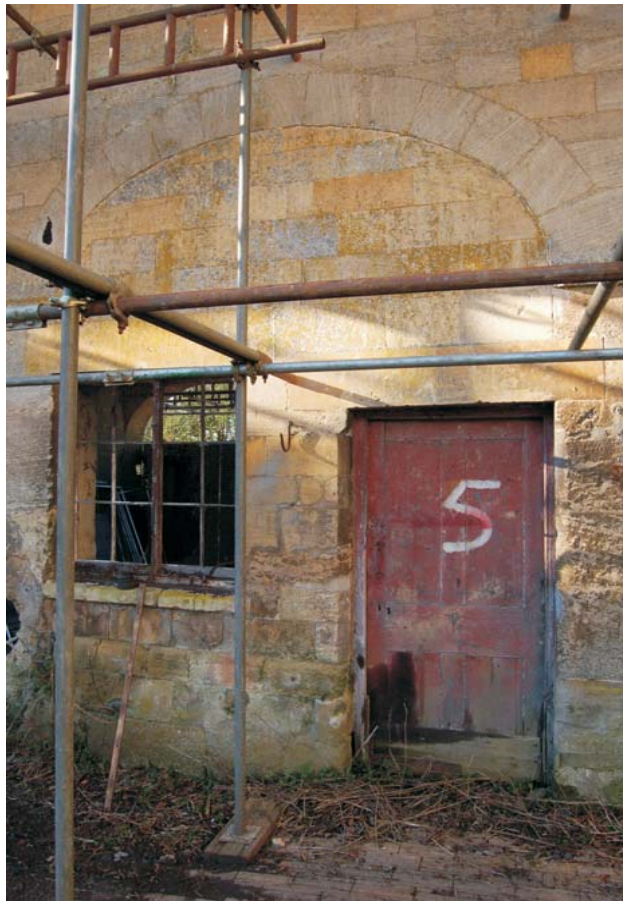


Plate 23: Infilled coach arch in east facade of west range, looking west



Plate 24: Interior view of original door and window to Stable 2, looking east



Plate 25: Blocked doorway and scar of stall, north wall of stable 2, looking north



Plate 26: Modern opening between stable 2 and stable 3, looking east



Plate 27: Hay rack roundel in east wall of Stable 4 with tethering hook, looking east



Plate 28: Internal cheek above eaves level infilled with stud and laths covered in plaster



Plate 29: Room 2, first floor, looking south



Plate 30: Oak cupboard against west wall in Room 3, looking north-west



Plate 31: Oak frame for the clock, centre of Room 3, looking north-east



Plate 32: Fox weathervane from Stevington manor farm, 1876



Plate 33: Configuration of rafters and splockets, north side of Room 4, looking south



Plate 34: Red chalk graffiti on east wall of Room 3; Henry Jeffs



Plate 35: Former window converted to hay-loft door in north wall of Room 4



Plate 36: Dragon beam at junction of beam and post showing iron strap, Room 4



Plate 37 Room 5 looking east showing un-plastered walls and roof structure



Plate 38: Shutter on central window in south wall of Room 5



Plate 39: Trapdoor against north wall of Room 4 with hinges on north side