

Farm Buildings at East Benridge, Fairmoor, Northumberland



General view looking east
(Ranges A/B on left, west end of Range C on right)



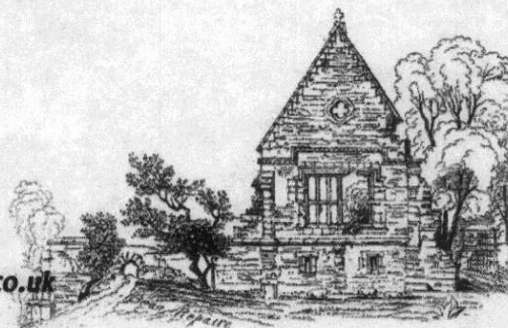
Standing Building Assessment January 2007
carried out on behalf of Mr David Taylor by Peter F Ryder

Planning Application Reference CM/20060871.
NCCT Ref CM7/1;6539
Oasis Reference No: peterfry1-22584

Peter F Ryder
Historic Buildings Consultant

1 Ford Terrace
Broomhaugh
RIDING MILL
Northumberland
NE44 6EJ

Tel (01434) 682644
E mail: PFRyder@broomlee.demon.co.uk



Farm Buildings at East Benridge, Fairmoor, Northumberland

1. Introduction

The farm buildings that are the subject of this report (NGR NZ 1760 8732) are at East Benridge, a farm on the south side of the road to Pigdon and Netherwitton, 2.5 km north-west of Morpeth and 0.5 km west of Fair Moor on the A1.

The buildings comprise three ranges enclosing a small courtyard to the south-east of the farmhouse. The farmhouse consists of a rectangular block, probably of later 18th century date, remodelled and given a parallel rear range in the late 19th century; the front has large windows in chamfered surrounds, and the added rear range has shaped Dutch gables. What is here termed the Stable Range (Range A) adjoins the east end of the farmhouse; the Granary (Range B) runs south from its east end, and the detached Cart Shed (Range C) is set on the south side of the yard. A more extensive group of farm buildings linked to the west end of the house (including a three-storey block that was once a flour mill) are outside the scope of this report.

2. The Stable Range (Range A)

This contains two distinct fabric types; the lower walls are of coursed roughly-squared stone, including some quite large blocks, whereas the upper (and the whole central section of the north wall) are of a more regularly-coursed and whiter stone that shows a distinctive 'hammer-dressed' finish, similar to that of the added north range of the farmhouse. The roof is of Welsh slates with a concrete ridge.

2.1. Exterior

The west end of the range adjoins the farmhouse; set hard up against its quoins is a 20th-century window with tooled-and-margined blocks in its east jamb and sill; a little to the east is a large opening with a timber lintel. This is probably of 20th-century date, and has been created by enlarging an earlier doorway, the east jamb of which survives¹. Further east is a boarded doorway between a pair of part-slatted windows, all with alternating block surrounds of tooled-and-margined blocks; internally the doorway has brickwork around its jambs, and all three openings may be insertions in older walling. Close to the east end of the wall is an 8-pane fixed window, without any cut dressings, which also looks like an insertion; internally its west jamb awkwardly avoids an earlier wall locker. At loft level there is a small boarded pitching door, again without cut dressings, above the large timber-lintelled opening.

The rear (north) wall of the range is partly obscured by climbing plants. The west part of the wall is concealed by the former boiler house, an added block (in the whitish hammer-dressed stone) set in the angle between the range and the east end of the north range of the farmhouse; it has a red pantile roof pent against the taller range behind. There is a boarded door at the west end of its north wall, and a disturbed area that might represent a blocked opening on the east. Internally there is an irregular patch of brickwork at this end of the wall, but no sign of any opening in the external face of the wall seen within the boiler room. Further east are traces of a blocked door - the west jamb clearer than the east - that seems to relate to the earlier phase of walling, as may a bricked-up window at the east end of the range, concealed

¹The footings of the west jamb and removed section of wall are exposed in the floor.

externally by re-facing in the later masonry. At loft level are two square openings with alternating-block jambs, the western blocked and the eastern holding a boarded pitching door.

2.2. Interior

The ground floor of the range has had a series of seven timber posts set a little south-of-centre, carrying an east-west beam. The first (westernmost) has been removed (although the socket stone for its base remains) and the second is lighter than the others; the third carries a boarded partition that seems to incorporate an older stall division; similar stall divisions (with horizontally-boarded lower sections and vertically-boarded upper, under a sloping top rail) are attached to the fourth and sixth posts. The longitudinal beam supports close-set transverse joists of upright section, which have two longitudinal series of herringbone struts between them.

The west wall of the western division of the range (originally the east end of the farmhouse) has a blocked doorway with an old timber lintel set north-of-centre.

The upper floor or loft is entered by a boarded door set north-of-centre in its east end, opening from the granary in range B; this wall is of stone up to eaves level and brick above. Both end walls show evidence of a lower roof line (possible two at the east end) springing from around the level of the current floor. The roof is of six bays, with collar-beam trusses that have collars bolted onto the west face of the principals, with carpenter's numbering starting at the west end; they carry a single level of purlins and a ridge board; the structure looks no older than the late 19th century.

3. The Granary (Range B)

This is largely constructed of coursed roughly-squared stone with hammer dressing, except for the lower part of the north end, which is older coursed and squared stone continuous with that of the north side of Range A. The angle quoins and dressings are tooled-and-margined, and the roof is of Welsh slates, with cut stone copings to the gables.

3.1. Exterior

The west elevation, towards the yard, has a pair of segmental arches with alternating-block jambs and raised keystones, with three granary windows above; these are each elongate rectangular openings with the long blocks that form the sills and lintels extending beyond the single uprights that form the jambs. They hold wooden frames with beaded edges in which a central mullion divides two sections with close-spaced vertical slabs; internally they are closed by pairs of hinged boarded shutters, with wooden sills forming horizontal shelves c 150mm below the external opening.

The south gable end of the range has no openings; a low contemporary wall extends c 3 m to the west²; the lower part of the south-east angle is cut to a curve, up to a neatly-carved stop at mid-height. The rear (east) elevation has a folding boarded door near its south end, in what looks to be an inserted opening, with a chamfered lintel that has been rendered over. Further north is a small boarded window in an alternating block surround, and at the north end a

²Old Ordnance Survey maps show it linking to a small building that stood within the yard, which was demolished some years ago.

large opening with a timber lintel and cemented jambs, apparently formed by enlarging an earlier doorway, part of the north jamb of which survives. Above are five granary windows of the same type as those on the west.

The north end of the range has the earlier stonework at ground floor level, behind an added stone external stair which rises eastwards to a boarded door in an alternating-block surround; the upper section of wall has quoins to east and west, showing that it pre-dates the heightening of the wall of the adjacent range A.

3.2. Interior

The ground floor of the range is divided into two parts by a transverse wall, the main shelter shed to the south and a smaller compartment at the north end. In the south wall of the main shed, at the east end and c 1.5 m above the floor, is a stone cut with a series of upright parallel lines, one with a fork³; this looks like an older stone re-used, but it is difficult to assess its significance. The upper floor of the range, entered through the doorway into its north end, was a granary, with its walls, as often, rendered up to c 0.3 m above the floor. The five-bay roof is very similar to that of range A.

4. The Cart Shed (Range C)

This is built of roughly coursed hammered stone with tooled-and-margined quoins and dressings, and has a red pantile roof with cut copings to its gables.

4.1. Exterior

On the north, towards the yard, is an attractive arcade of five segmental arches carried on plain square piers; the third pier from the east is a little wider than the others, and in fact marks the original west end of the building. The first four arches, which have rounded glinters⁴ at the base of each pier open into the main cart shed; the fifth, which is rebated and carries a pair of boarded double doors, opens into a separate compartment, and to the east of the arcade is a doorway into a second separate room at the west end of the range, lit by a 4-pane sash window set centrally in the west gable end, with an alternating-block surround and a slightly-projecting sill.

The south(rear) elevation of the range has a brick stack, now in poor condition, rising from the eaves near the west end, and then a large inserted opening that corresponds with the fifth arch of the arcade; east of this are the ruins of a projecting block; little survives of its gabled south end, which presumably held a doorway, but most of the west wall stands, and rather less of the east. In the wall of the main range behind this block is a ragged straight joint that marks the original south-west angle (its quoins removed) before extension to the west.

At the east end of the range have been a pair of attached pigsties; their side walls have a square-edged coping to a sloping section (the ends of the sties themselves) and an arched one to the attached yards. The east wall of the yards has a central pair of entrances; the medial wall is of brick; the front wall of the sties themselves has been removed.

³Bearing a superficial resemblance to runic script.

⁴Protective kerb-stones, also known as 'bumpers', to deflect cart wheels and avoid damage to the piers.

4.2. Interior

The main cartshed has a king-post roof of four bays; the two eastern trusses, part of the original structure, have king posts with jowelled bases (carrying raking struts to the principals) and tops; there is a single level of purlins and a ridge board. The later western truss is a rudimentary one with a simple upright post and no struts. At the west end is a wall that is of stone up to eaves level (with a splayed slit towards its north end), with a thinner brick gable above. The compartment beyond has brick wall (orange brick in English Garden Wall Bond 1 & 5), thinner above eaves level, dividing it from the room at the west end of the range. This room has a fireplace at the south-west corner, with single blocks forming the east jamb and lintel, infilled with 20th-century blockwork...

5. The Structural Development of the Buildings

The structural development of the group can be traced using a combination of map evidence and an interpretation of the visible fabric.

The character of the stonework in the end gables of the farmhouse suggests a date in the later 18th century, although the whole building was extensively remodelled c1900. The 1841 Tithe map⁵ shows two blocks of building in an L-plan, the present farmhouse and a block extending to the south of its west end. The representation may be somewhat schematic; the proportions of the east-west rectangle suggest that it indicates little more than the house (that range A was not yet built) but the character of the fabric of the lower walls of the range would tally with a late 18th/early 19th century date, so one cannot be sure.

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey 6":1 mile map (1866, surveyed 1860-63) give a more detailed representation of the farm, and suggests that a major remodelling and extension of the buildings took place in the second quarter of the 19th century. Range A is now present, and the eastern three bays of range C; there is also a continuing range to the west of the house (with what is apparently a horse-engine (gingang) on its north), and an L-shaped block extending to the south of that.

The buildings to the west of the house (outside the area covered by this report) were again remodelled and enlarged in 1865, to judge from the date on the head of the arch over the loose box. Range B may have been built at the same time, and Range C extended to its present length. The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 25":1 mile map of c 1890 shows the ranges in their present state (including the addition of the 'boiler room' on the north of range A. What the map cannot show is whether Range A had been heightened; this heightening clearly took place after the construction of Range B, but the 'boiler room' outshut seems to relate to Range A in its heightened form.

20th century changes have been relatively minor; doorways in ranges A and B have been enlarged into larger entrances; the addition on the south side of range C appears by the 3rd edition Ordnance Survey 25":1 mile map of c 1912.

⁵County Archives (Woodhorn Research Centre) Ref DT 35 S.

6. Assessment of the Buildings as a Group

The buildings in question are very typical of the area, in which the great majority of farms were remodelled at least once during the 19th century. The more significant buildings at East Benridge are those to the west of the farmhouse, and lie outside the scope of this report. The three ranges described here are of some local interest, but no more so than the contemporary buildings on other local farms, and cannot be said to be of any particular regional or national significance.

7. Assessment of Surviving Features

7.1. Range A

The range is much altered and has few features of specific interest; the ground floor doorway and flanking windows on the south have alternating-block surrounds of typical later-19th century character, as has the pitching door and blocked loft opening on the north. Internally the remaining stall divisions and series of posts are of some interest but of relatively minor significance.

7.2. Range B

The principal features of this range are the two segmental arches on the west, the granary windows and the external stone stair and doorway at the north end. These are all of later 19th-century date and contemporary with the building. The slatted openings and internal shutters of the granary windows are characteristic of the area but of relatively minor interest. The possible carved stone in the internal face of the south wall remains mysterious, but is a feature of some interest.

7.3. Range C

This is quite an attractive building, its principal feature being the arcade of segmental arches on the north; the survival of the glinters at the base of the piers is a feature of interest here, as is the fireplace in the western compartment of the range. The pigsties at the east end are an interesting but only partial survival.

8. The Physical Impact of the Proposed Development

8.1. Range A

The most significant change here is the demolition of a short section of the west end of the range, to provide an open space between it and the farmhouse. There is some evidence that there was a through passage in this position, but the structure has been heavily altered.

8.2. Range B

The proposed plan retains all the original openings here, although the two arches on the west and the upper doorway at the north end are being converted into window openings.

8.3. Range C

The plan shows the end openings of the arcade of segmental arches, and the doorway to the west of the arcade, as being blocked up. If the new walls blocking or partially blocking the openings are set back from the wall face then the glinters could be exposed. The plan also implies that the fireplace in the western compartment of the range is to be removed., which would remove an interesting and potentially attractive feature.



Range A South Side



Range A (and north end Range B) from north-west



Range B from west



Range B from south-east







Range C from north-east

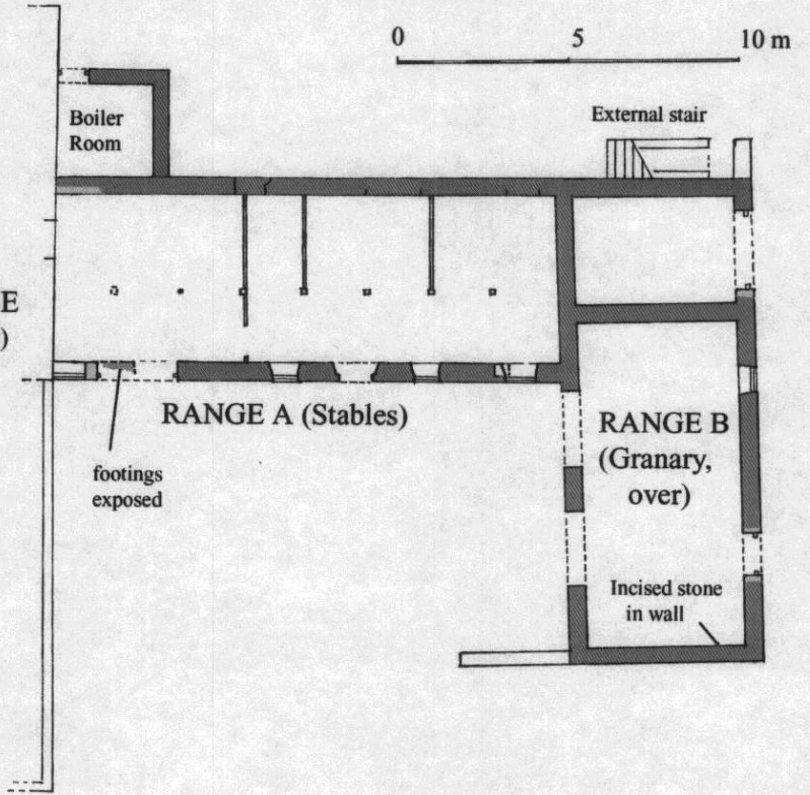


Range C from south-west

**FARM BUILDINGS
AT EAST BENRIDGE**
Far Moor, Northumberland
Provisional Phased Plan

-  Early 19th century
-  Later 19th century
-  Late 19th/early 20th century
-  Recent

FARMHOUSE
(18th century)



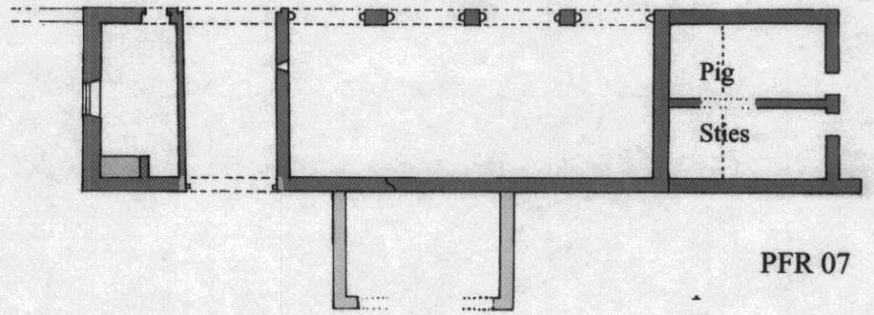
footings
exposed

RANGE A (Stables)

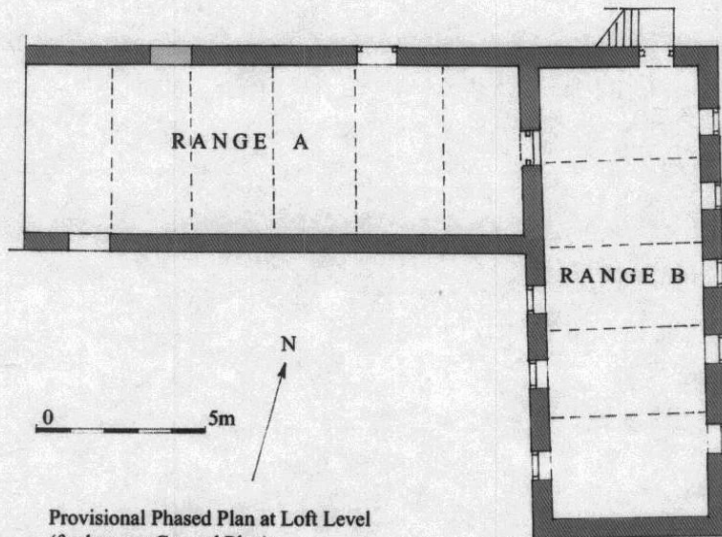
RANGE B
(Granary,
over)

Incised stone
in wall

RANGE C (Cartshed)



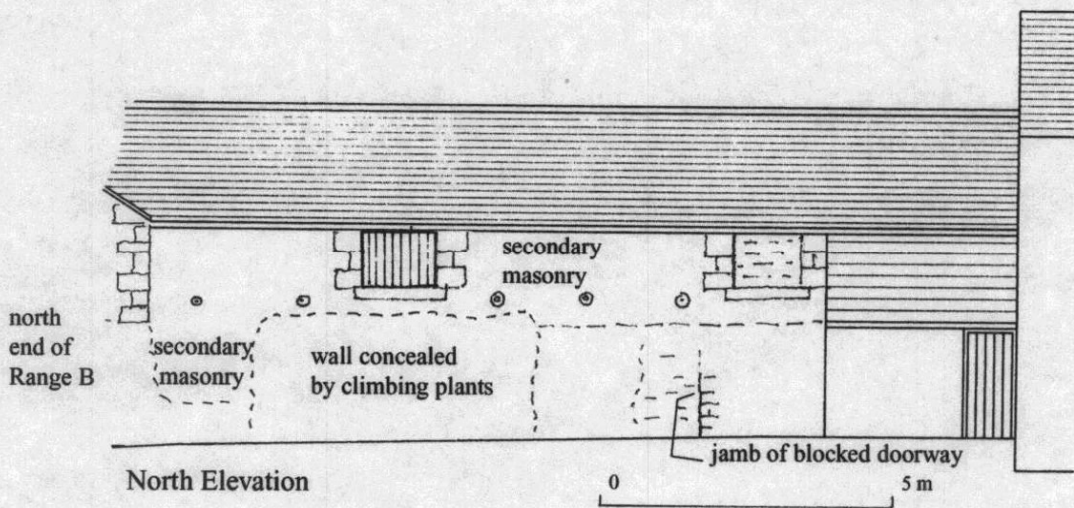
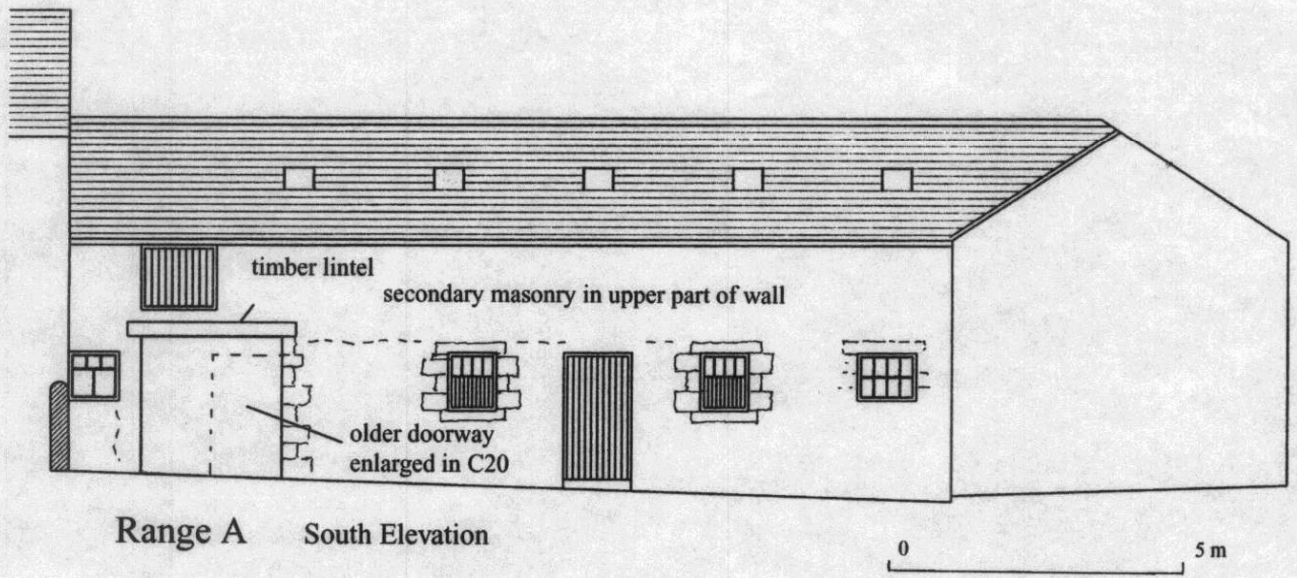
PFR 07



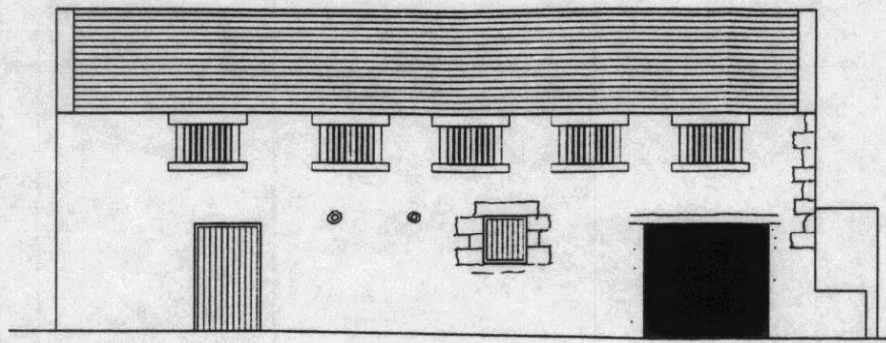
Provisional Phased Plan at Loft Level
(for key see Ground Plan)

PFR 07

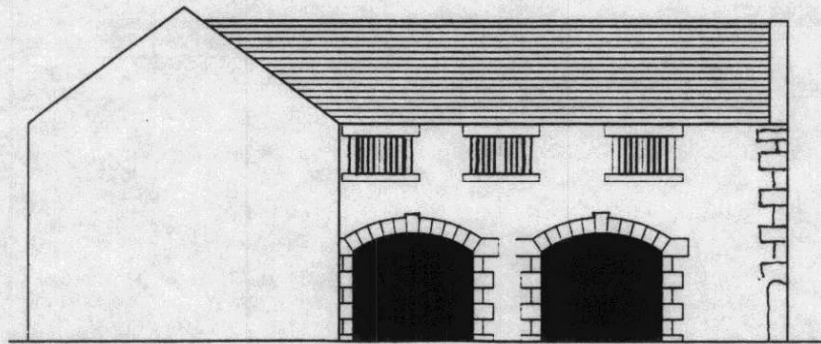
Range A. Elevations (drawings as supplied, altered and annotated PFR)



- Range B. Elevations (drawings as supplied, altered and annotated PFR)



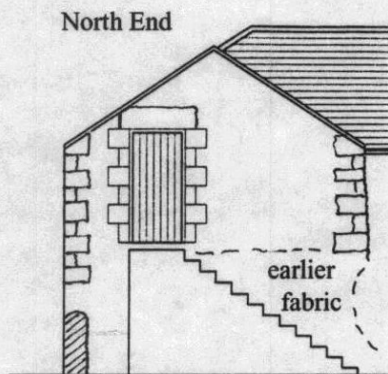
East Elevation



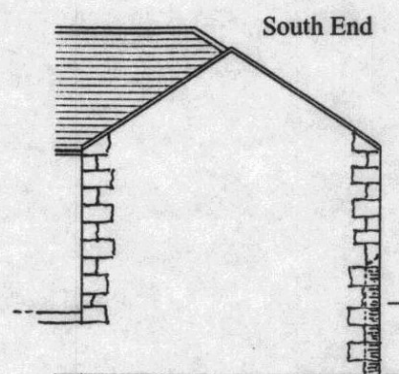
West Elevation

0 5m

Range B
Architect's drawings annotated PFR

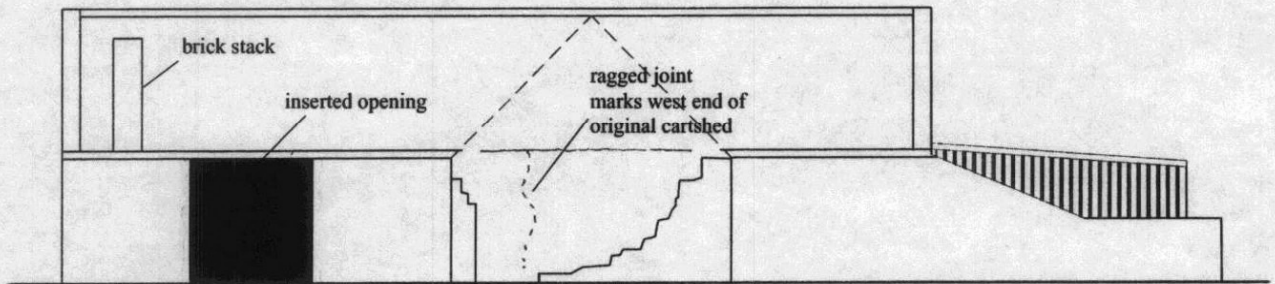


0 5m



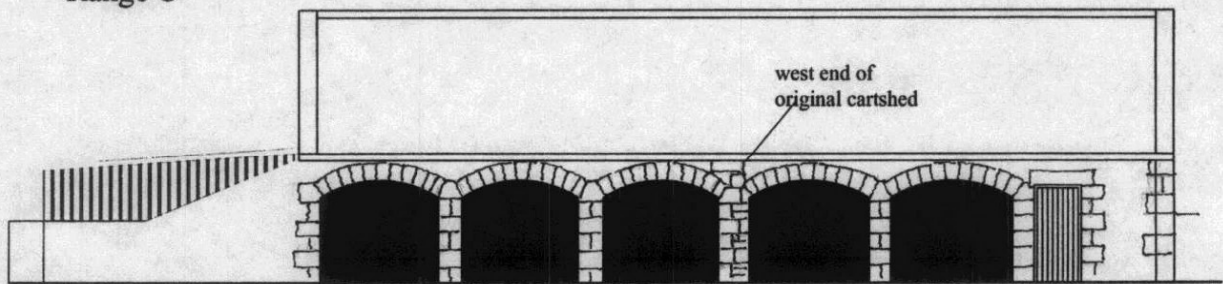
lower part of angle cut to curve

Range C. Elevations (drawings as supplied, altered and annotated PFR)



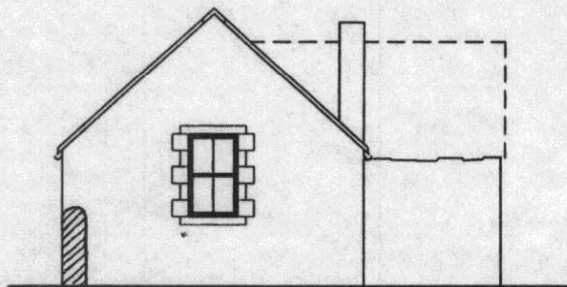
South Elevation

Range C



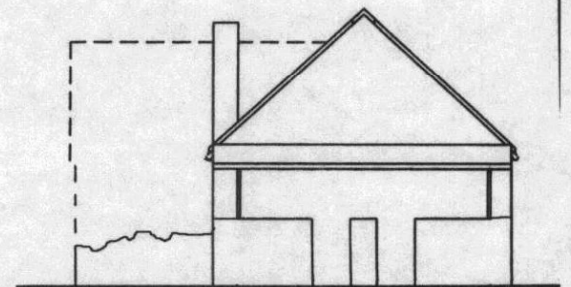
North Elevation

0 5 m



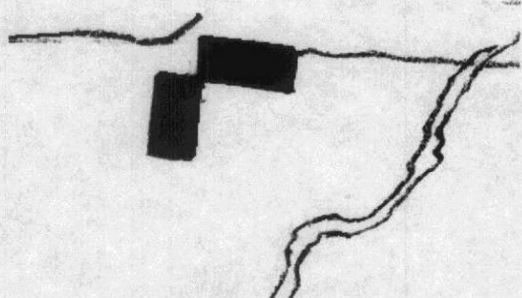
WEST ELEVATION

0 5 m

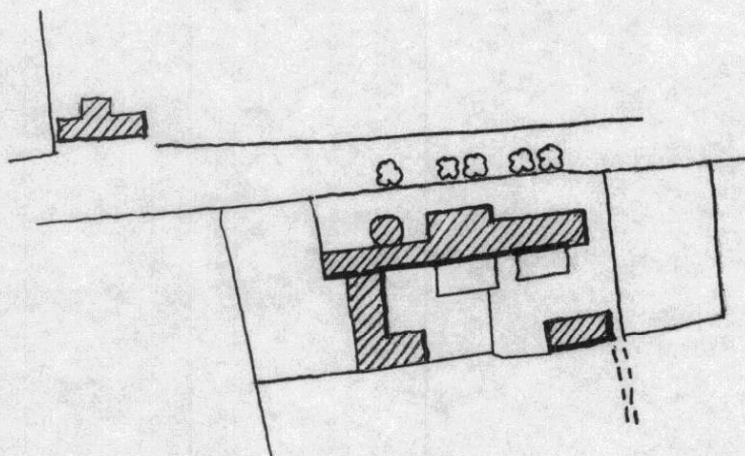


EAST ELEVATION

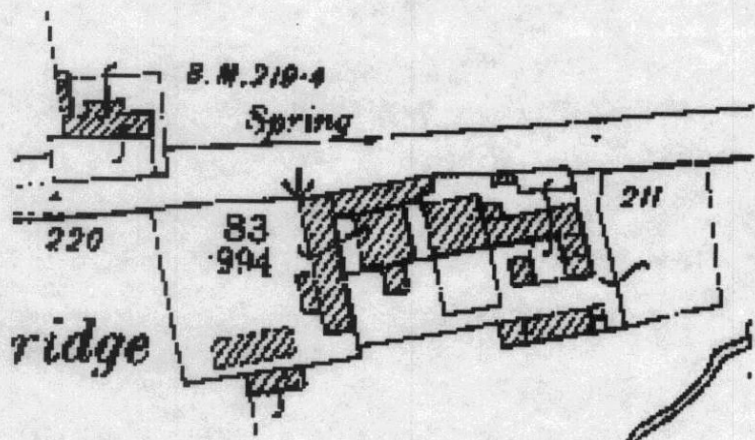
East Benridge from Old Maps



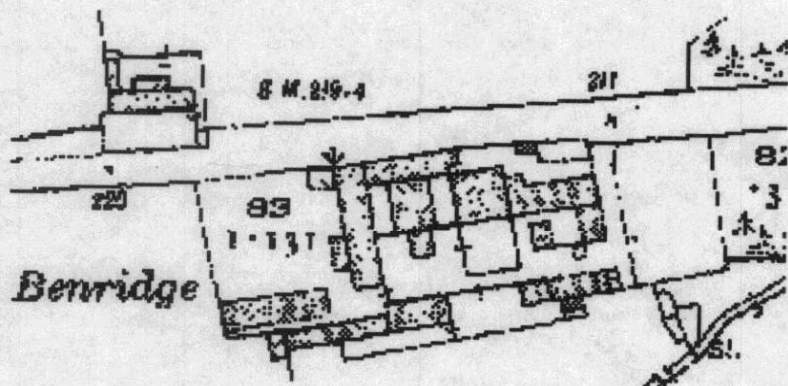
(Sketch from) 1841 Tithe Award
(as 'Low Benridge')



(Sketch from) 1866 1st edition
Ordnance Survey 6":1 mile
(surveyed 1860-1863)



2nd edition
Ordnance Survey 25":1 mile.
Circa 1890



3rd edition
Ordnance Survey 25":1 mile map
Circa 1912