

Moss House Farm, Cockerham, Lancashire

Archaeological Building Investigation



September 2009

William Pye Ltd

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SUMMARY

William Pye Ltd made a planning application to Lancaster City Council for the development of a pair of barns at Moss House, Gulf Lane, Cockerham, Lancashire (SD 42760 48623). As part of the planning procedure, the council consulted Lancashire County Archaeological Service, which recommended a building recording programme of English Heritage (2006) Level II/III standard. This was to include a rapid desk-based assessment, which would provide an historical background and detail any changes in the development of the farmstead. In addition, a detailed site investigation was to be undertaken, comprising written descriptions, as well a detailed photographic record, and site drawings of the floor plans and sections. Following these recommendations, the client requested that Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) undertake the building investigation, which was duly completed in June 2009.

The background research revealed little textual evidence, but the cartographic sources provided a sequence of building from the mid-nineteenth century through to the early decades of the twentieth century. The research demonstrated that from 1847, the appearance of the barns seems to have changed very little. Indeed, the extension on the west elevation of Barn B had been constructed by this date. Only the outshut to the rear of Barn B, is clearly of a much later date.

The investigation confirmed the conclusions drawn from the cartographic sources, in regards to Barn B, as the building appears to date from the late nineteenth century. However, Barn A appears to be earlier, potentially mid-nineteenth century in origin. The roof of Barn A was clearly original, before it was removed due to its bad state of repair, whilst the roof of Barn B is very modern, although it appears to have retained its general shape and form.

The functions of the buildings would appear to have changed somewhat, having originally been conceived as threshing barns with limited space for livestock and hay storage. During the early part of the twentieth century, both buildings were probably converted to cow sheds, and since the mid-twentieth century have been used for the housing of cattle and for the storage of farm machinery.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Mr Pye for commissioning and supporting the project and for supplying the plans and sections. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Lancashire County Archaeology Service.

Chris Ridings and Ric Buckle undertook the building investigation and Chris Ridings wrote the report. Mark Tidmarsh produced the drawings. Alison Plummer managed the project, and also edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

1.1.1 William Pye Ltd made a planning application for the development of a pair of barns at Moss House, Cockerham, Lancashire (SD 42760 48623). Subsequently, an archaeological building recording programme of English Heritage 2006 Level II standard was recommended by Lancashire County Archaeological Services (LCAS), in order to assess the significance of the buildings and provide a permanent record prior to their development. Historical research aimed at providing a better understanding of the development of the building was also recommended. In response to this, William Pye requested that Oxford Archaeology (OA North) undertake this programme of archaeological investigation.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 Following a verbal brief by the Lancashire County Archaeology Services, OA North was commissioned by William Pye Ltd to undertake both the building investigation, which was carried out in June 2009.
- 2.1.2 The project comprised a Level II-type survey, (English Heritage 2006), which includes a descriptive internal and external record combined with drawings and a detailed photographic record. A rapid assessment of cartographic sources was also carried out.

2.2 HISTORICAL RESEARCH

2.2.1 A rapid desk-based assessment of the barns was carried out in order to provide a general historical background for the buildings and identify any evidence that might date phases of building and rebuilding within the farm. This is not intended to be a comprehensive history, but is meant to provide a general context for the results of the building investigation and detailed information, where available, about the farmstead itself. Cartographic sources were consulted (where available) in order to trace the development of the buildings.

2.3 BUILDING INVESTIGATION

- 2.3.1 **Descriptive Record**: written records using OA North *pro forma* record sheets were made of all principal building elements, both internal and external, as well as any features of historical or architectural significance. Particular attention was also paid to the relationship between parts of the building, especially those that would show its development and any alterations. These records are essentially descriptive, although interpretation is carried out on site as required.
- 2.3.2 **Site drawings:** architects 'as existing' drawings were annotated to produce a plan and section of each barn. These were produced in order to show the form and location of structural features and/or features of historical interest. Where necessary these drawings were manually enhanced using hand survey techniques. The hand-annotated field drawings were digitised using an industry standard CAD package to produce the final drawings.
- 2.3.3 **Photographs:** photographs were taken in both black and white, and colour print 35mm formats. The photographic archive consists of both general shots of the buildings and shots of specific architectural details.

2.4 ARCHIVE

2.4.1 The results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). OA

- North practice is to deposit the original record archive of projects with the appropriate County Record Office.
- 2.4.2 The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) online database *Online Access* to index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) will be completed as part of the archiving phase of the project.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 In order to place the results of the investigation into context, what follows is a brief outline of the geology, topography of the area. Additionally, a rapid examination was made of cartographic sources, in order to place the results of the building investigation into an historical context. These sources, which provide evidence of the development of the farmstead from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century, are summarised below.

3.2 LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.2.1 Moss House Farm (NGR SD 42760 48623) is situated approximately 5km south-west of the village of Cockerham and 2km to the east of Pilling, both in Lancashire (Fig 1). The farm, like most of the general area, is less than 10m above sea level, and in an area of flat to gently rolling plain (Countryside Commission 2006, 86, Fig 2).
- 3.2.2 The underlying geology is characterised by Permo-Triassic red mudstones, siltstones and sandstones (New Red Sandstone), which are overlain by a thick covering of glacial and post-glacial deposits. Up until the last two centuries or so, the area was predominantly marshland due to post-glacial rising sea levels, whilst the present day lush green pasture and rich arable land owe much to the draining of the marshes in the nineteenth century (Countryside Commission 2006, 87-88).

3.3 MAP REGRESSION

- 3.3.1 *Yates' Map 1786*: this is the earliest available map of the area and there appears to be a single structure or enclosure just to the north of the location of the buildings forming the focus of this investigation. It is impossible to determine if this relates to any of the extant structures. There is a collection of buildings to the south-west labelled 'Moss Houses'.
- 3.3.2 *Hennet's Map 1830*: there appear to be no structures situated on the site of the current buildings. The kink in the road close to the current Moss House (Fig 2) is present on Hennet's map but no buildings are located in this area. 'Moss Houses' are again labelled to the south-west.
- 3.3.3 *Ordnance Survey, 6 inch to 1 Mile, 1847 (Fig 3)*: this is the earliest available detailed map of the area and clearly illustrates the road and field boundary pattern, which is very similar to the current appearance. To the right of the kink in the road first identified on Hennet's 1830 map, a collection of buildings is illustrated. One of these is a rectangular structure, which is of a similar footprint to the current Barn A (see *Section 4.1.1*). To the right of this, where the current barn B is situated, is a square wooded area. In common with both Yates' 1786 and Hennet's 1830 maps, there are other buildings labelled Moss House or Moss Houses located away to the south west.

- 3.3.4 *Ordnance Survey, 25 inch to 1 Mile, 1892 (Fig 4)*: this map is more detailed, and illustrates the nature of the layout of the buildings labelled Moss House. There are two ranges of buildings shown: one to the north and another to the west. The southern most of the buildings to the west is Barn A. On the opposite side of the farmyard are two detached buildings, the longer of these is (hard to see) Barn B. The remainder of the layout of the farmstead is clearly visible and paths are a dividing boundary are visible. The farmstead appears to be surrounded by a drainage ditch.
- 3.3.5 *Ordnance Survey, 25 inch to 1 Mile, 1912 (Fig 5)*: this map shows similar detail to the 1892 Ordnance Survey map, the most obvious difference being the addition of a large extension to the south end of the west building (Barn A). There are changes to the arrangement of the internal divisions within the layout of the farmstead and an additional structure located to the south of the current Barn B.
- 3.3.6 *Ordnance Survey, 6 inch to 1 Mile, 1914 (Fig 6)*: this map is not as detailed as the 1912 map but illustrates essentially the same layout. The north part western building has apparently been extended to the east.

4. BUILDING INVESTIGATION RESULTS

4.1 Moss House Farm

4.1.1 The pair of barns comprises the east and west extents of the farmyard, which is broadly aligned north/south. For the purposes of this report, the older barn to the west will be referred to as Barn A, and its more modern counterpart to the east as Barn B. To the north of these barns, there are three small sheds, which are built of a mixture of sandstone rubble and brick, similar to that employed in the build of Barn B. To the south, there are the concrete footings of a modern barn or shed, which has recently been demolished, as well as a dilapidated Dutch barn. The farmhouse itself has been demolished, and a modern house has been built approximately 0.1km to the north-west.

4.2 BARN A: EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS

- 4.2.1 The barn is constructed from squared red sandstone, which is roughly coursed, and which is bonded with lime mortar, and dressed with roughly fashioned quoins (Plate 1). The stone is, for the most part, bare, but the north end of the east elevation shows substantial evidence of an earlier lime wash, whilst the corner itself has been heavily repaired with cement (Plate 2). The reason for this becomes apparent on the adjacent north elevation, where the corner is similarly rendered with the same cement. In addition, the upper section of the corner is rendered with a second patch of cement, but brick repairs are partially visible below the eaves. Similarly, on the corner to the right of this elevation, there is a crude rebuild of brick at ground floor height, with a cement render beneath the eaves.
- 4.2.2 With the exception of these corners and the apex of the gable, the entire north elevation is rendered, with traces of blue paint, whilst joists slots, which have been infilled with cement, are evident at first floor height. In addition, at ground floor level there is a projecting section of wall, which would appear to be a blocked fireplace and chimney breast, and this is made all the more obvious by the presence of an angled projecting flue within the bare stonework above (Fig 7). Thus, it would appear evident that the barn has been truncated, and originally had an attached cottage or farmhouse.
- 4.2.3 In contrast, the south elevation is plain and featureless, although a series of holes beneath the existing roof purlins suggests that there could well have been a different arrangement for the roof construction. Certainly, there is no suggestion that the roof has been raised, but the pitch of these purlin slots, if indeed that is what they are, appears to be at a slightly steeper angle than the existing roofline.
- 4.2.4 The surround of the wagon doors on the front east-facing elevation has been repaired with red brick, but would appear to have originally comprised yellow sandstone, which is confirmed by the foundation stones at the base of each jamb (Plate 2). Unlike most doors of this type, there is no arch above the doorway, merely three timber lintels secured with iron brackets, which also

contain the pin sockets of the former harr-hung doors. Moreover, there is little evidence of the head of the doorway having been remodelled, and as such, it is likely that this represents the original design of the doorway. To the left of the wagon doors, is a probable heck-door, though it is now an empty aperture dressed with a rock-faced lintel and quoins of sandstone. On the rear (west) of the building, there is a former wagon doorway featuring a substantial segmental arch with pronounced keystone and quoins (Plate 1). The more elaborate nature of this surround suggests that this may have been the original front elevation of the barn, bearing in mind that the farmhouse originally stood to the immediate south-west. To the right of the doorway, there is a further probable heck door, which is again now an empty aperture dressed with a rock-faced lintel and quoins. To the immediate left of this is a bearing box, which is now covered by a rusted steel plate. This bearing box overlies an overgrown stone plinth, which could conceivably have been the machine base of an engine. In addition, at the north end of the building, there is a probable blocked door, which appears now as a recess within the rendered stonework and brick repairs (Plate 4).

4.2.5 The window on the east elevation is a plain open aperture, which has a roughly fashioned stone lintel, projecting sill and timber frame (Plate 2). No quoins are present, but several of the stones in the jambs have evidently come loose and have been crudely replaced with inserted red brick (Plate 5). On the rear of the barn, the inserted window within the former wagon door has been blocked with brick, and judging by the similarity in brick, it would appear that this window was blocked at a similar time to the repairs on the north elevation.

4.3 BARN A: THE INTERIOR

- 4.3.1 The barn is now an empty shell, and any existing stalls, as well as the haylofts have been removed. No evidence of stalls could be found on the floor surface either, as this has been recently laid with concrete. The walls are plain stone, with the remnants of a lime wash, whilst the north end of the barn is rendered to approximately 1.4m in height (Plate 13). There is evidence of neither the joist slots, nor the possible blocked door observed on the obverse of the north elevation, whilst the render is not sufficiently high enough to mask these features. This would suggest that the 'blocked door' is more likely to be an alcove only. At the south end of the barn, there is a series of joist slots above projecting cobels. These represent the floor of the hayloft, whilst a pair of small recesses, one of which is partially blocked, lie beneath this.
- 4.3.2 The roof is supported by a series of three roof trusses, each comprising a tiebeam and collar brace (Plate 3). The tie-beams are housed within sockets set in the walls. A pair of trenched purlins is present on each slope of the roof. The rafters and slates above are visible, and there are also a number of skylights.
- 4.3.3 Of particular interest is the lineshaft, complete with two pulley wheels, on the upper reaches of the south wall (Fig 7). This is secured by means of a bearing box within the west wall, and a pair of brackets on the south wall. Apart from the bearing box to the right of the door on the west elevation, there is no other

evidence for the original arrangement of the threshing machinery, which this obviously relates to.

4.4 BARN B: EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS

- 4.4.1 The barn is built with cinnabar red handmade brick and lime mortar, which is laid in English Garden Wall (5 to 1). However, the south end of the west elevation and the majority of the south elevation itself, are built with a more visibly pinkish-red brick (Plate 11), which suggests that there has been some rebuild of the gable at this end of the building. Although no quoins are present as such, some blocks of sandstone have randomly been added to the brick surrounds of the doors and windows.
- 4.4.2 The roof is again constructed from corrugated asbestos sheeting (Plate 12), which is supported by a pair of machine-cut King-post trusses and seven trenched purlins, within the main section of the barn (Fig 10). The pitched roof to the east of the barn, is supported by a tie beam, principal rafter and pairs of angled braces. At the south end of the barn, the roof is supported by a composite truss, which is essentially a King-post, with an additional collar, queen struts, and paired truss rods (Plate 6). The seven purlins are not trenched and are affixed to the principal rafters with a series of cleats. At both the north and south ends of the building, there are a series of steel brackets, which secure the purlins to the gables, whilst a series of timber battens beneath the eaves of the west and east elevations provide additional anchorage.
- 4.4.3 The main entrance to the barn, which lies on the west elevation, is a large squared wagon door, devoid of any ornamentation and featuring a large sliding door constructed from hardboard over an iron frame (Plate 9). Three other doors are present on the west elevation: to the far left and right of the elevation, and one to the right of the wagon doors (Fig 9), which all have well-cut lintels and occasional sandstone quoins of similar quality. On the south elevation, there is a further pair of doorways allowing access to the passage within the cows stalls and the stalls themselves. In addition, on the north elevation, there is a pair of double doors offering access into the small space in the north-east corner of the barn.
- 4.4.4 The casement window on the west elevation appears to be inserted, since the lintel and the projecting sloping sill are made of concrete, whilst the jambs of the window have been sealed with cement (Plate 9). Similarly, the casement to the right of the double doors on the north elevation would also appear to be a later insertion, as the lintel and sill are again of concrete, whilst the jambs have also be rendered with cement (Plate 10). Moreover, the pair of casements to the right of the north elevation again have concrete lintels, whilst the repairs to the surround are of the same pinkish brick used in the rebuild of the south gable. Although the casement on the south gable is within this apparent rebuild of pinkish-red brick, its lintel and sill are made of stone (Plate 11), which would suggest that the stonework of a comparable casement was retained and reused when the gable was rebuilt. The five light casements on the east elevation have narrow timber lintels and small projecting sills (Plate 12), and would appear to be original features of the barn.

4.5 BARN B: THE INTERIOR

- 4.5.1 The floor of the principal space (*Area 1*) and the adjacent room to the south (*Area 2*) have both recently been laid with concrete, in a similar fashion to the interior of Barn A, whilst *Areas 3* and *4* have earlier concrete floors. The latter has a raised concrete plinth for the concrete cow stalls, with a drainage channel that runs to the door on the south elevation (Fig 9). The walls throughout the barn are plain brick with a cement render to approximately 1.6m, whilst a lime wash to approximately two metres, has been applied above this (Plate 6). Only *Area 3* differs in that there is no cement render at the base of the walls (Plate 8). At first floor height on the north wall of *Area 4* and the south wall of *Area 1*, there are a series of joist slots, which suggests that at least *Area 4* had a hayloft above. Although there is no real evidence on the east and west walls for a hayloft at the south end of *Area 1*, the presence of the hatch on the east wall would tend to confirm its original existence.
- 4.5.2 At first floor height within *Area 1*, there are pair of hayloft doors (Plate 6). The door on the east elevation is a small ledged matchboard door (Plate 8), which overlies the cattle stalls in Area 3, whilst the door on the south elevation is a full-sized doorway with timber lintel, which would have originally provided access to the hayloft in Area 2 (Plate 7).

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The investigation of the two barns, in conjunction with the map regression, reveals that Barn A appears to be of an earlier construction and is illustrated on the first available map of 1847 (Fig 3), but that both barns were probably in place by 1892 (Fig 4). Since the original phase of construction, both barns have been subject to at least two broad phases of alterations, which are summarised below.

5.2 CONCLUSION

- 5.2.1 The cartographic sources (*Section 3.3*) demonstrate that a farm may not have been present until at least the mid-nineteenth century (Fig 3). Cockerham Moss, in which the farm lies, was not conducive to farming at this time. Indeed, in 1813, it was stated by an anonymous commentator of the time that 'The surface of Pilling Moss as it affords no pasturage, has heretofore been totally unproductive to the community' (Middleton *et al* 1995: 75). The farm at Moss House lies on the edge of the moss, which is still fairly large on the 1847 map (Fig 3). There are at least four phases of construction and alteration for Barn A and perhaps a single phase for Barn B.
- 5.2.1 Barn A Phase One: this appears to have been constructed during the early to mid nineteenth century, appearing as it does on the Ordnance Survey map of 1847 (Fig 3). In its original form, the front of the barn lay on the west elevation, as demonstrated by the presence of the decorative round arch above the now blocked wagon doors. The cartographic sources also depict a building to the front of the barn, which is likely to have been the original farmhouse. Notwithstanding this, the elongated nature of the barn on the 1847 map might also suggest that a cottage or the main farmhouse was attached at the north end of the barn. Certainly the scarring and presence of a flue and chimney breast at the north end of the barn are obviously indicative of a former dwelling, rather than an additional animal shelter. Whether this was an original feature or not, however, is difficult to ascertain, since the repairs and render have obscured any evidence of any butt joint.
- 5.2.2 The use of the barn was typically mixed with a hayloft to the south end, under which, would have been some form of animal stalls. Stalls are also likely to have been situated at the north end, though the lack of residual evidence makes this conjecture only. In addition, the barn would have been used for threshing as the presence of the 'winnowing' door to the centre of the east elevation confirms. This would have originally been a labour-intensive, manual procedure, as the steam-powered threshing device would not have been installed till later in the nineteenth century.
- 5.2.3 **Barn A Phase Two:** by the time of the 1892 map, the farm appears to have undergone development. On the west elevation, a building has been added, which undoubtedly prompted the blocking of the wagon doors on the west

elevation and the creation of the small window within the stone infill. A new wagon door was fashioned on the east elevation to provide continued access to the barn, and the insertion of this aperture accounts for the brick rebuild to the jambs of the doorway. Further additions were made at the northern end of the range and the building became L-shaped with further small outshuts and extensions.

- 5.2.4 **Barn A Phase Three:** this phase occurred before 1912 when the map of this date (Fig 5) shows further addition to the south of the range. This comprises a large rectangular building, which appears to be divided. This is also apparently illustrated on the 1914 map (Fig 6).
- 5.2.5 **Barn A Phase Four:** between 1914 and the present day nearly all of the most extensive phase has been demolished and the current Barn A is left standing alone. The current building appears to be smaller than that illustrated on the 1847 map.
- 5.2.6 **Barn B Phase 1:** this barn is first illustrated on the 1892 map (Fig 4). Prior to this, and illustrated on the 1847 map (Fig 3), the area was probably given over to trees. Map regression evidence appears to suggest that this building changed little over the intervening years with only a modern outshut being added.
- *Function:* both barns appear to have been used for a variety of purposes. Barn A and Barn B appear to have originally been threshing barns, which is evident from the large wagon doors with the smaller 'winnowing' doors to the rear, whilst the ventilation slits on the front elevations would have ventilated the storage bays either side of the threshing floors (Brunskill 1987). In addition, some livestock housing was also already evident from the presence of original stalls that were observed within each barn. Certainly, by the end of the nineteenth century, the barns were used as part of a farm that concentrated on dairy and sheep farming, which was common for the area (Fletcher 1961). This appears to be evident from the larger stalls for cattle, as well as the small folds (now a single large fold) that was depicted on the Tithe Map (1843) on the east end of the large barn. The reasons for this shift appears to be two-fold. In the first instance, the poor condition of the soil (Section 3.2) meant that arable farming was surely an inefficient use of the landscape. Moreover, this shift was simply a reflection of wider trends in farming during the nineteenth century (Barnwell and Giles 1997; Wade Martins 2002). In light of improved breeding methods, there was a notable shift from arable farming to the rearing of livestock and dairy produce in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, which was no doubt assisted by improved transportation. The rail network, in particular, ensured that milk (and to a lesser degree, butter and cheese), a previously perishable foodstuff, could now be transported quickly and efficiently to the urban centres (Harvey 1984), which in turn boosted an already increasing demand (Harvey 1980).

6. IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The present scheme of investigation and recording, prompted by the redevelopment of the barns will provide a record of the structures in their present condition.

6.2 IMPACT

6.2.1 There will undoubtedly be some impact on the barns, as some of the historic fabric and features in the interiors will undoubtedly be obscured following the building work. Much will depend on how sympathetic the materials and design of the proposed conversion will be to the existing structures.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.3.1 Following the building investigation and rapid desk-based assessment, it is envisaged that no further work will need to be carried out.

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7.1 PRIMARY AND CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

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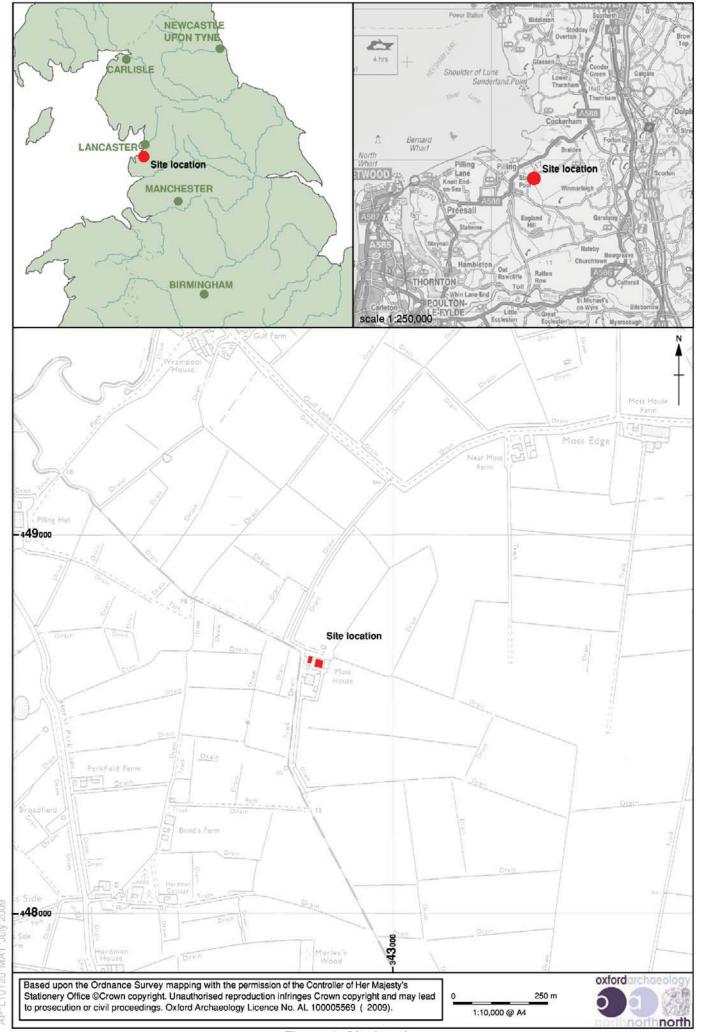


Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Plan of the farmstead, showing the position of the two barns

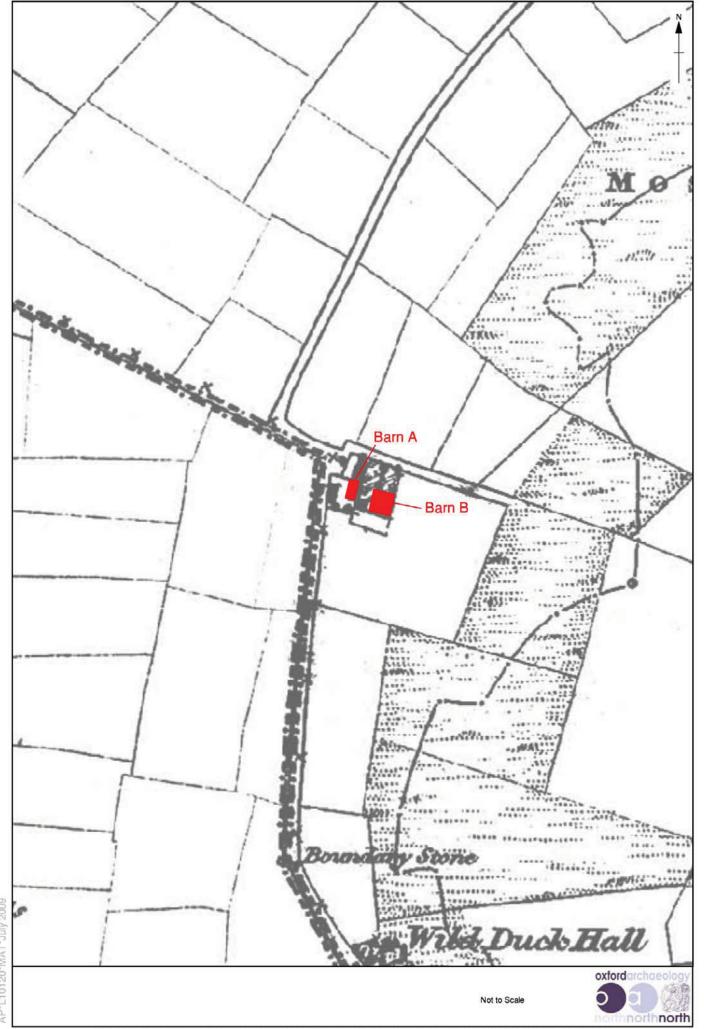


Figure 3: Extract from Ordnance Survey First Edition, 6 inch to 1 mile map, 1847

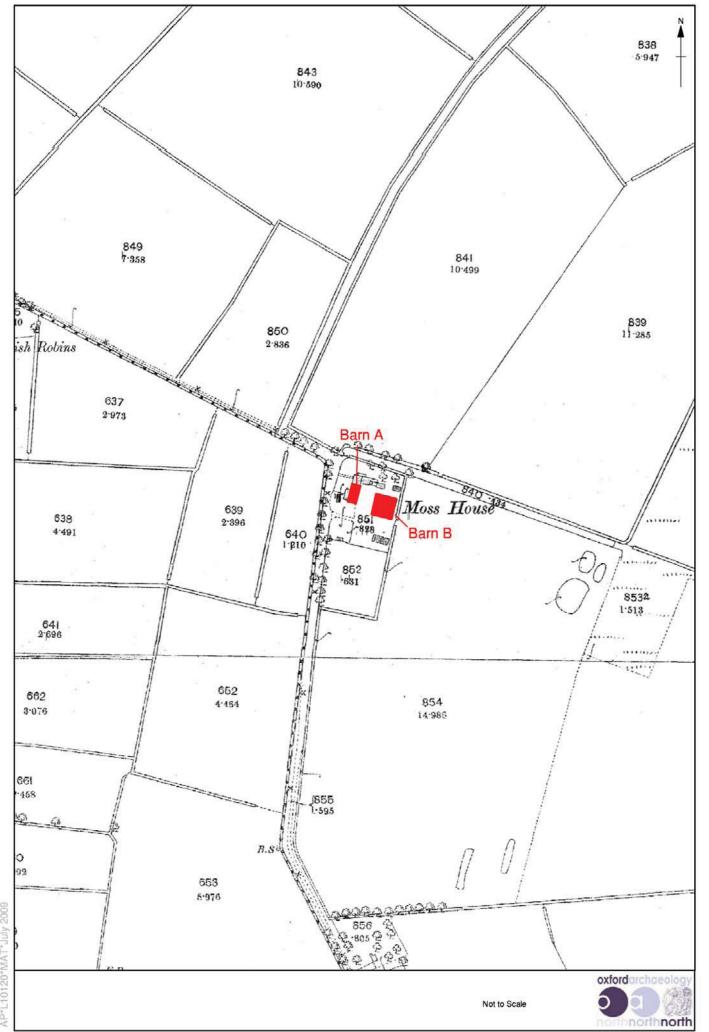


Figure 4: Extract from Ordnance Survey First Edition, 25 inch to 1 mile map, 1892

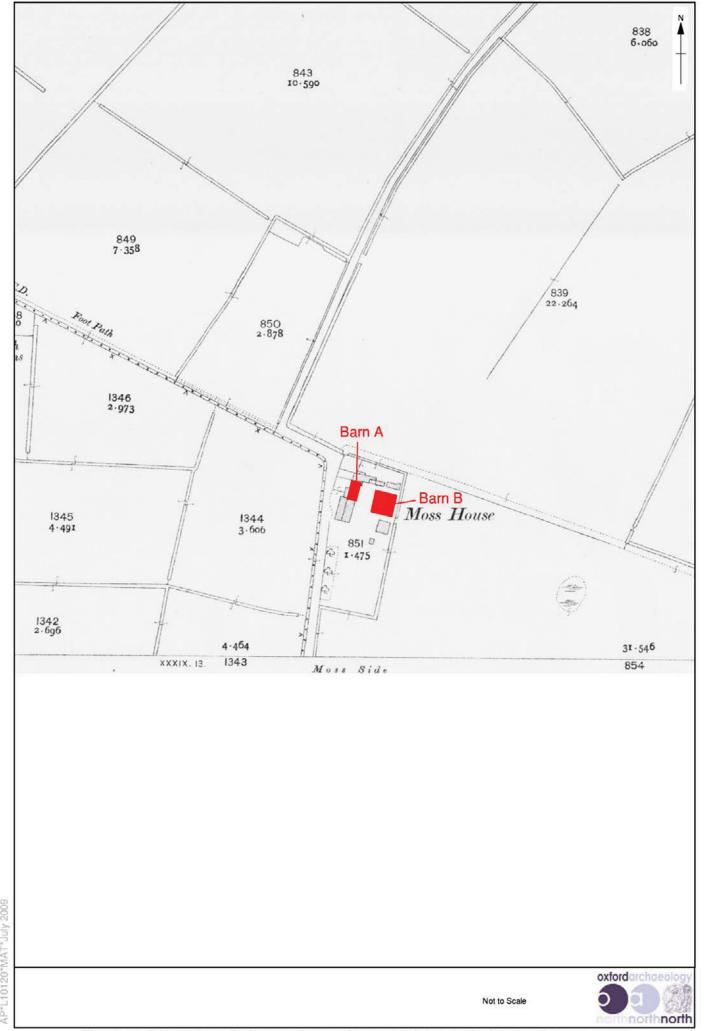


Figure 5: Extract from Ordnance Survey Second Edition, 25 inch to 1 mile map, 1912

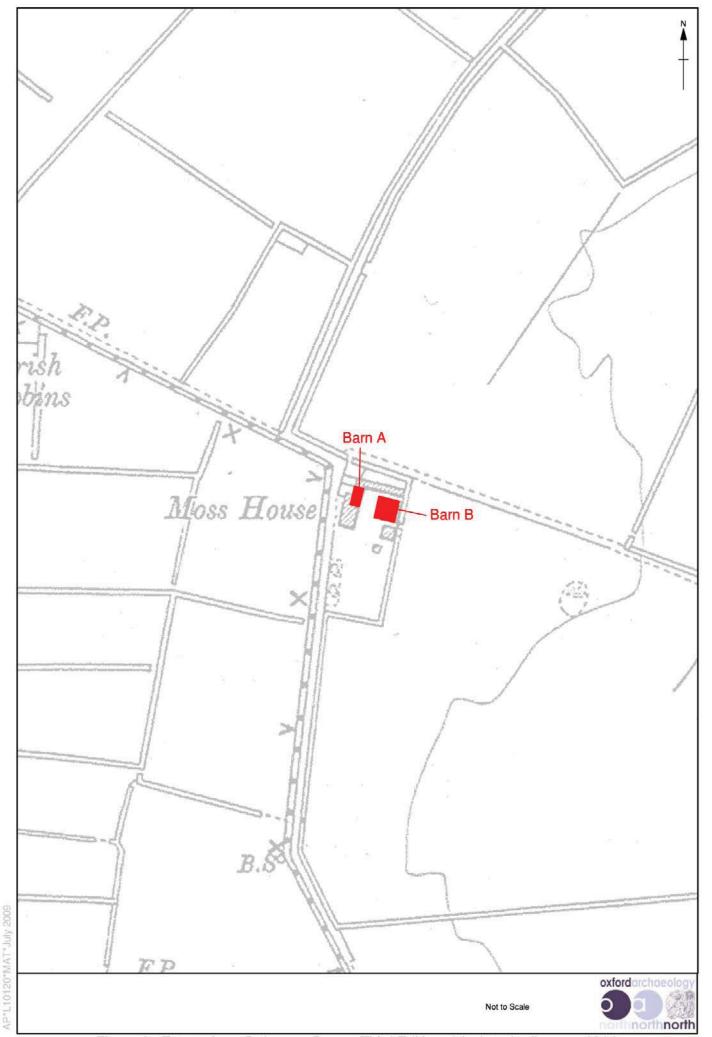


Figure 6: Extract from Ordnance Survey Third Edition, 6 inch to 1 mile map, 1914

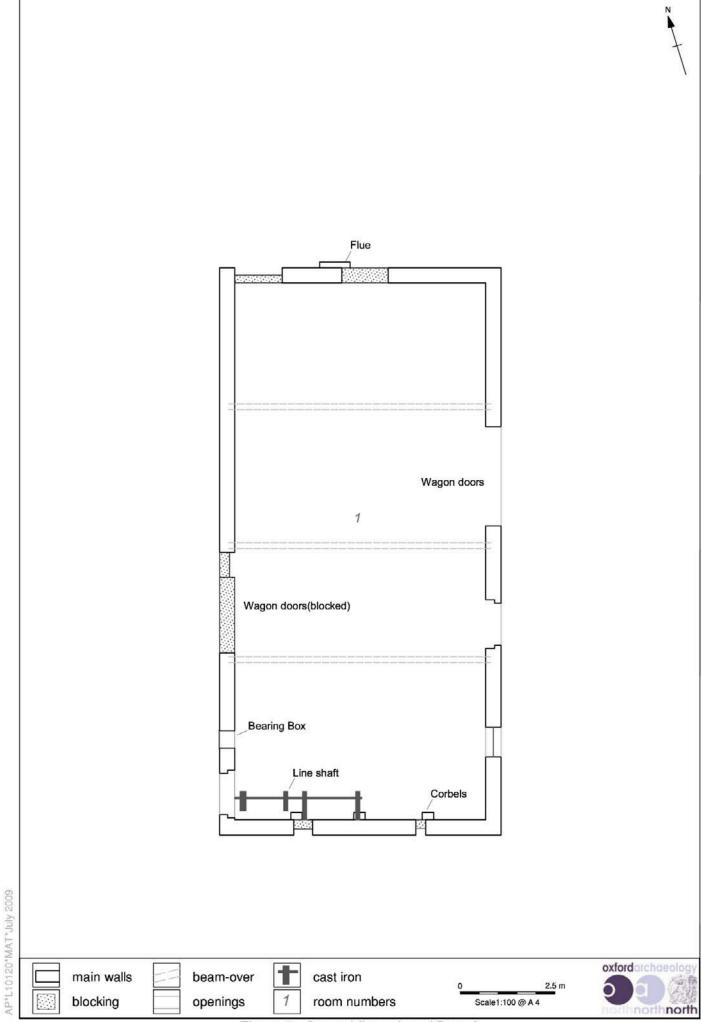


Figure 7: Ground floor plan of Barn A

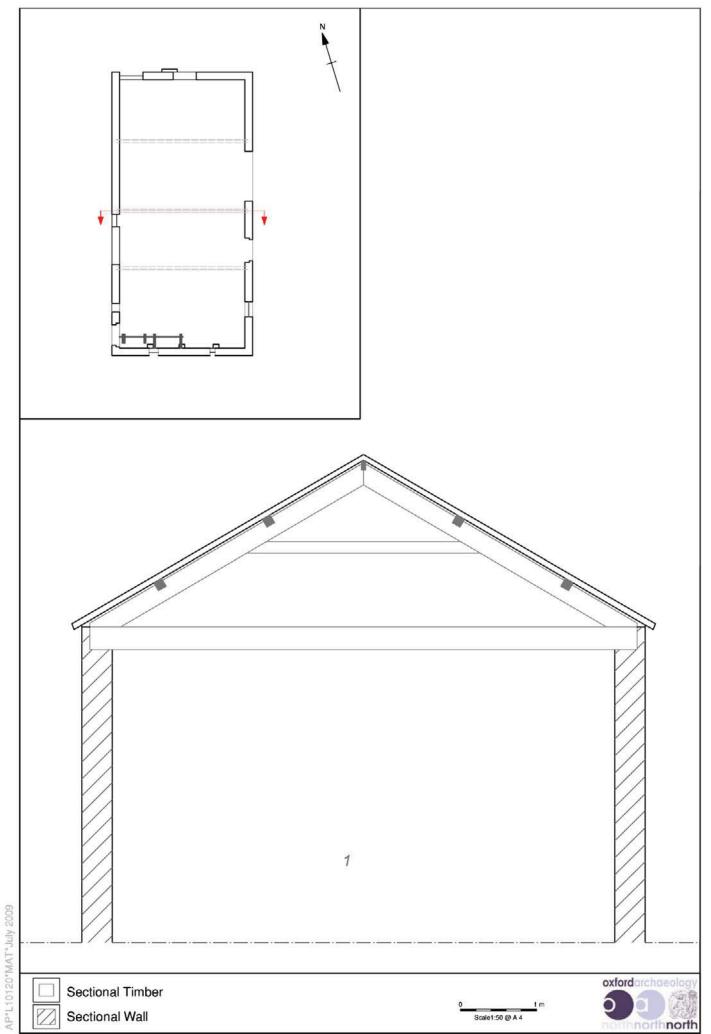


Figure 8: South-facing cross-section through Barn A

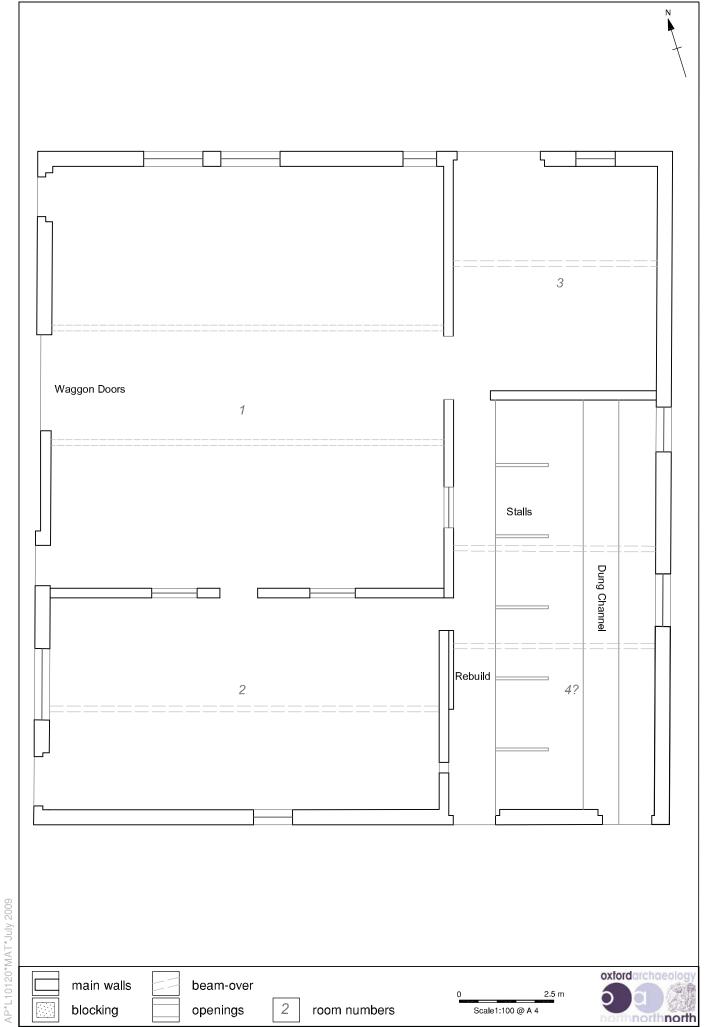


Figure 9: Ground floor plan of Barn B

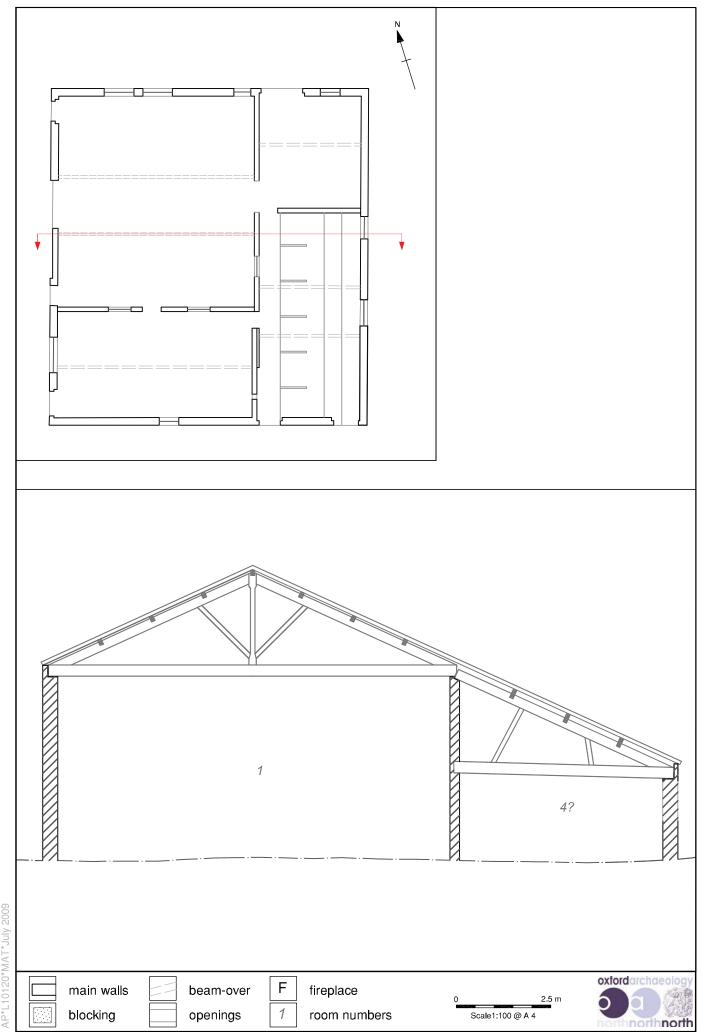


Figure 10: South-facing cross-section through Barn B



Plate 1: West-facing elevation of Barn A and the farmhouse



Plate 2: East-facing elevation of Barn A



Plate 3: Roof truss in Barn A



Plate 4: Door on the north facing elevation of Barn A

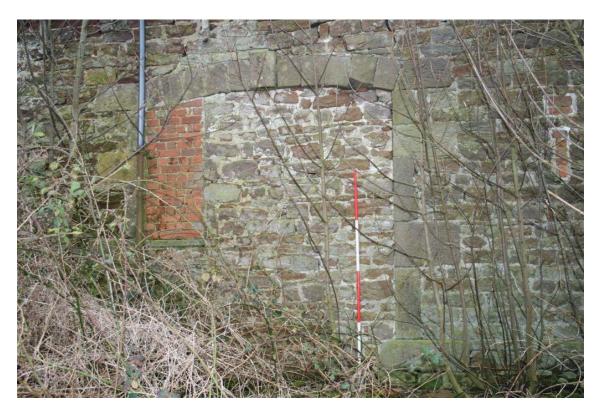


Plate 5: Blocked door and window on the west facing elevation of Barn A



Plate 6: Area 1 of Barn B



Plate 7: Area 2 of Barn B



Plate 8: Area 3 of Barn B



Plate 9: North end of the west elevation of Barn B



Plate 10: East end of the north elevation of Barn B



Plate 11: South elevation of Barn B



Plate 12: East elevation of Barn B



Plate 13: Internal view of Barn A