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*Site & Landscape Survey*

*Interpretation, Design & Display*

**Barn at Gun Lane, Sherington, Milton Keynes  
Buckinghamshire**

**Historic Building Recording**

**Report No. MK019/15**

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Date issued	September 2015
Version	0
OASIS Reference	cfaarcha1-223230
Planning Application No.	12/00858/FULL
Grid Ref.	SP 88970 47150

This document has been prepared in accordance with CFA Archaeology Ltd standard procedures.

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Buckinghamshire**

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## Summary

A Level 2 historic building recording was carried out by CFA Archaeology Ltd on a timber-framed barn next to Gun Lane, Sherington, Milton Keynes. The work was undertaken on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2015 in advance of the barn being converted to a house by Bernard Soul. The barn is located in the south-east corner of a field known as ‘The Shoulder of Mutton Field’ which lies 450m north of the centre of Sherington. The barn is constructed largely from re-used hewn and pit-sawn adze-trimmed pine with structural elements clearly taken from earlier timber-framed buildings probably dating to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The main frame is largely mortised together and strengthened with nails. The roof rafters are pine poles that are nailed to purlins and a pine ridgepole. The barn is roofed in corrugated iron but originally it was thatched and some of the laths relating to this original roof survive. The barn has an open front, a later alteration probably relating to the conversion of the building into a cart shed. The building dates to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with alterations to the front wall dating to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and re-roofing in the 1950s.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a level 2 Historic Building Recording of a barn next to Gun Lane, Sherington, Milton Keynes undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd on behalf of Bernard Soul. The work took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2015 prior to conversion of the barn into a house (ref. 12/00858/FULL). The building recording followed methods outlined in a written scheme of investigation approved by the senior archaeological officer for Milton Keynes Council.

### 1.1 Site Location and Description

The barn is located approximately 450m north of the centre of Sherington at SP 88968 47148 in the south-east corner of a field known as ‘The Shoulder of Mutton Field’. This field, currently pasture, slopes down gently from north to south (fig. 7). The barn is bordered to the east by a hedge running next to Gun Lane which has not been maintained and has become overgrown with vegetation. This has protected the barn from weathering on this side but it also obscured this end of the building for the survey (fig. 8). South of the barn is the boggy corner of the field and beyond, trees on land belonging to Coney Grey, the property to the south-west. West and north of the barn is open pasture.

### 1.2 Historical background

The 1796 Enclosure map does not show the barn however the site is shown within a field named ‘Far Coneygree’ the middle of three enclosures between High Street and Gun Lane, north of an irregular field boundary. These enclosures (the others called ‘First Coneygree’ and ‘Willow Bed’) belonged to Samuel Boddington, a gentleman who owned several other plots of land in Sherington. In 1830 when he died the land appears to have been inherited by his three sons who subsequently sold it on. His Last Will and Testament dated June of that year states that he wants them to sell the land (the two Coneygrays and Willowbecks) ‘now in the occupation of Mr Pettit’ within twelve months. There are no easily obtainable records for the subsequent owners. By 1885 the OS map shows the three enclosures merged into two fields, the northern one clearly the current ‘Shoulder of Mutton’ field. The barn is shown in its current location with two small pens attached to it to the north and south. A similar small structure is shown fronting Gun Lane in the southern field. There are no changes to the mapping until the 1926 map when the small pen north of the barn is no longer shown. The large dwelling of known as Coney Grey to the south-west is not shown until after the 1950s.

## **1.4 Project Objectives**

Milton Keynes Council have previously advised that a record of the barn should be made prior to development. The requirement in the agreed written scheme of investigation (WSI) by CFA was for a Level 2 survey (using English Heritage / Historic England as guidance).

Project objectives were to:

- To create a record of the barn prior to its alteration
- Establish the building's original form, function, date and sequence of development.

## **2. WORKING METHODS**

A photographic record of the barn was made using a Nikon D300 Digital SLR Camera with a wide angle lens for interior shots. All photos documenting the external and internal appearance of the barn were photographed with 2m ranging rods. A number of close-up shots were also taken of construction details and re-used timber. Oblique photos were taken to give an impression of the size and shape of the barn and shots were taken of the structure in its landscape setting. An annotated plan was drawn with a hand tape and Leica Disto and corrected for any errors with open source 'structure from motion' software (photogrammetry). Elevations and sections were recorded by measured sketches and also corrected by photogrammetry. Existing site plans provided by the client were used to tie the building's location to the OS national grid. Notes on materials and construction methods were taken by hand.

### **2.6 Standards and Guidance**

CFA Archaeology is a registered organisation (RO) with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). All work was conducted in accordance with relevant CIfA Standards and Guidance documents (CIfA 2014), English Heritage Guidance (EH 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008a and 2008b), CFA's standard methodology and the terms of the specification issued by the senior archaeological officer for Milton Keynes Council.

### **2.7 Archiving**

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, plans, elevations, digital records and the report, will be deposited with the Buckingham Museum Resource Centre within an agreed timescale. The archive will be ordered, indexed and conform to the requirements of the depositing museum and to all relevant professional guidance (Brown 2011, MGC 1994, SMA 1995, Ferguson and Murray 1997, UKIC 1990 and EH 2006).

### 3. RESULTS

Illustrations and photos referred to in the text can be found at the back of this report, see figs 1-33. The full photographic record will be deposited in the archive.

#### 3.1 Description

The barn is timber-framed measuring 8.5m by 5m with three equal bays opening to the south (figs. 9 and 10). Wall studs are covered in weatherboarding and where this has rotted or fallen away, patched with corrugated iron and a re-used door (on the east gable, see fig. 11). The weatherboarding comprises a variety of wide circular-sawn pine planks fixed with square and round-headed nails. The roof is covered with corrugated iron and is partially hipped on both gables. Galvanised guttering and a downpipe are present on the front elevation and in the south-east corner. Three railway sleepers have been placed around the barn, two in front of the central posts on the front elevation and one at the north-west corner. The floor of the barn slopes down gently to the south and is of earth. A nailed pine frame for an animal feeding trough is built against the rear wall (fig.12). This trough is partly obscured by chipboard resting against the rear wall. A division has been created between the east and central bays by three vertical posts, clearly re-used planks, nailed to the truss above and buried in the floor (fig.13). A re-used gate, a door and corrugated iron sheet form the main part of the division which is clearly not very old.

The main structure comprises the two gables (figs. 14 & 15) and the two central trusses marking the bay divisions. These are supported on nine posts connected by tiebeams running north-south and a wall plate and bressumer beam running east-west. The four corner posts and the two posts supporting the middle of the rear wall are re-used hewn and adze trimmed timber with various notches, mortises and auger holes. Three of the posts along the front wall supporting the bressumer show no signs of re-use and are rounded pine poles. The wall plate is constructed from three lengths of squared softwood timber, hewn and adze trimmed, joined with face-halved scarf joints (fig. 16). The wall plate is fixed to the upright posts with mortis and tenon joints. The bressumer is made of two rounded pine poles joined with a splayed scarf joint. Diagonal bracing, sawn softwood, is fixed using round-headed nails to the front posts supporting the central roof trusses. This bracing ties together the posts, the bressumer beam and the tiebeams of the trusses (fig 17).

The gable walls have sill beams resting on the soil into which studs are mortised. It is these studs to which the weatherboarding and corrugated iron on the outside of the building has been nailed. The studs for both gables and rear wall are made from a variety of softwood timber, including adze trimmed and pit-sawn pine, quartered, halved or squared (figs. 18 & 19). Some studs have large notches cut into their inner faces to accommodate the tiebeams and wall plate (fig. 20). These appear to be nailed to the tiebeams / wall plate from the outside. Many of the studs however are connected to the latter with mortis and tenon joints and nailed with squared nails (fig. 21 and 22). The precise nature of the sill beams is difficult to gauge: the beam on the west side of the barn has partly rotted away leaving the studs hanging (fig. 23); that of the east gable is buried under soil. In both cases the studs appeared to be set into mortise holes. There is presumably also a sill for the rear wall but this is obscured by the wooden feeding trough frame. Opposing diagonal downward bracing is present on the lower part of the gable walls and east and west panels of the rear wall, with upper ends either nailed or mortised to corner posts and lower ends attached to sill beams (fig. 19). Studs are nailed to this bracing. The bracing is all hewn, adze trimmed pine. The tiebeams for the gables (pit-sawn adze-trimmed squared pine) rest on top of the wall plate and the bressumer beam. An exception is the south

end of the west gable where the tiebeam stops short of the bressumer as it has rotted (the southern rafter for this truss has been replaced with modern timber). The gable trusses have raking struts tenoned into the tiebeams and pegged from the outside, rising to collars which are nailed or pegged to the struts (figs. 14 & 15). The collars support the perlines of the roof. Studs are fixed between the tiebeams and the collars and posts rising from the middle of the tiebeams provide further support for the collars. Beams placed above the collars (effectively sandwiching the purlins) provide support for the rafters of the hipped part of the roof. The beam on the west is appears original and has partly rotted. Raking struts, collars, central posts and beams for the hipped roof all appear to be of hewn adze trimmed pine. The principal trusses are similar in design to the gables with raking struts rising to principle rafters (fig. 6). These are tenoned at both ends. There are no central truss posts. Tiebeams and struts appear to be pit-sawn and adze trimmed squared pine.

Both roof purlins are constructed from two lengths of pine joined with a splayed scarf joints. The southern purlin is squared, adze trimmed and trenched into the principal rafters (fig. 24). The northern purlin is also adze trimmed but is much smaller and rests on the principal rafters supported by small chocks of wood presumably nailed to the rafters (fig. 25). The common roof rafters are nearly all rounded pine poles, roughly shaved of bark, running from the wall plate / bressumer beam, to the ridgepole (fig. 28). The ridgepole is also of rounded pine shaved of bark. The rafters are nailed to the purlins and the wall plate / bressumer beam. Detailed inspection showed that the nails connecting the rafters to the bressumer were round with earlier squared nails present but bent over. This suggests the rafters have been detached and re-nailed (fig. 26), a sign that the bressumer is a later insertion into the building. In places rafter poles are half the length of the roof and end at the purlins. The ridge pole, which has rotted away at the west end, is made from two lengths of timber joined with a splayed scarf joint. Rafter braces have been fixed on both sides of the roof to the east and west, mirroring the bracing for the wall below (fig. 27). These comprise adze trimmed pine (and a modern plank in the south-west corner) nailed to the rafters from the inside. A variety of laths are fixed to the upper faces of the rafters (presumably with nails) including some modern insertions relating to the corrugated iron roof. In two distinct areas on the south-facing roof pitch there are small split roundwood laths (figs. 29 & 30). These are likely to be the remnants of an earlier roof which would most likely have been thatched. On the northern pitch most of the laths appear to be irregular, possibly pit-sawn pine planks (fig. 27). Nailed to the rafters above these laths were ten modern planks running across the roof to which the corrugated iron was fixed.

### **3.2 Re-used timber**

Of the main posts that could be viewed, three have clear evidence of re-use: the post in the south-west corner has auger holes corresponding to mortises on its outer face, the south-east corner post has an auger hole on its outer face and western-central post of the rear wall has two mortise holes. The southern principal rafter of the eastern truss has many auger holes (some in pairs) as does the northern rafter of the western truss. The opposing rafter for the latter has regularly spaced auger holes. These differences show that the timber for principal rafters have been selected from different sources. The east end of the northern purlin also has regularly spaced auger holes and the western end of the southern purlin has a clear slot which may mark where the purlin was trenched into a principle rafter on a previous building. The lower half of the central post supporting the collar in the eastern gable has been squared while its upper end is round. This finishing occurs nowhere else in the barn showing that the post is likely to be re-used. The same post also has a mortise in its upper end running north-south. The struts to the left and right of this post also have mortise holes. Three studs have markings: a stud in the lower left face of the east-facing elevation has auger hols and a peg; studs on either side of the

central post supporting the collar in the same elevation also have auger holes. A single stud in the west-facing elevation has a large mortise.

Some structural elements in the barn appear to have been re-used as single units. The central post and two raking struts of east-facing elevation all have mortises in their upper ends which are probably related and it seems likely that the tiebeam, struts and central post were taken together from a previous building. The struts and tiebeam of the eastern truss have corresponding assembly marks 'I' and 'II' and are from similarly finished wood suggesting that this element of the truss was also taken from a previous building without being dismantled (fig. 33).

### **3.3 Date and sequence of development**

The re-used timber is all hewn or pit-sawn and adze trimmed suggesting that it was recovered from buildings dating to before the advent of the circular saw, which did not become common until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The use of pine rather than hardwood suggests a relatively late date for these elements probably no earlier than the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when pine became more common due to increasing interest in afforestation. The timber is likely to have been local to Sheringham: no markings were found on the wood indicating it was imported and most pieces had only received cursory shaving and trimming after being sawn/hewn (several of the tie beams still had bark left on). It seems likely that the original buildings from which the timber was sourced were located in Sheringham but the use of softwood rather than hardwood suggests these may have been agricultural buildings rather than houses.

Aside from the re-used timber, the most common element relating to the main frame of the barn are the squared nails for fixing the studs and rafters to the wall plate. Though these could not be investigated fully, the nails are clearly either wrought or are cut nails which are rare after the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The documentary evidence shows that there is no barn marked in 1796 and the Last Will and Testament of Samuel Boddington shows that the three fields at the site (the two Coneygrays and Willowbecks) were still intact by 1830. By 1885 the fields have been merged into two and the barn is shown. While it is possible that the barn was built by the tenant farmer Mr Pettit while Samuel Boddington was alive, it seems possible that it was constructed after Samuel's death when the land was sold and re-organised into two fields (Coney Grey and Shoulder of Mutton). Alternatively, this re-organisation of the land may have been associated with the alteration of the barn's front wall (see below) rather than its initial construction. Taken together, the evidence presented points to an early-mid 19<sup>th</sup> century date for the original construction of the barn which incorporated structural elements and timber from local late 18<sup>th</sup> century agricultural buildings.

The barn would originally have been thatched, clear from the steep angle of the roof (at 53 degrees). Thatch could have been easily tied to the split laths and these are probably from an original roof. The difference between the plank laths on the northern pitch and split laths on the southern is an indication that the laths may have been replaced at some point during re-thatching.

The original barn does not appear to have been open at the front. The poles supporting the bressumer and the bressumer beam itself do not show evidence of re-use and the timber is all rounded contrasting with all other major frame timbers of the barn. The original post in the south-west corner has also been superseded by a new post supporting the open front (fig. 31). Further evidence is the use of round nails to attach the rafters to the bressumer (see above). The original barn is likely to have had a front wall similar in design to the rear wall though with an



entranceway. The alteration to the front of the barn will have occurred during or after the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when round nails became common. The bracing of the new posts appears to be part of the design and would have prevented sideways movement. There has also been an attempt to prevent sideways movement by attaching wrought iron straps to the two middle posts and the tiebeams of the principle rafters (fig. 31). This may indicate that the new open front was unstable, though it may have been a precaution taken as part of the original design. The current weatherboarding which is sawn using a circular saw probably also dates from this period.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the roof was replaced with corrugated iron and a gutter was fixed to the front of the barn. Given that the corrugated iron is still in relatively good condition, this appears to have been done in the 1950s or later. The rotten beam supporting the hipped roof on the west gable and the rotted ridgepole on this side shows that the roof was leaking badly prior to this improvement.

### **3.2 Form and Function**

There is little evidence to determine the function of the original barn; however the barn's high roof and good ventilation would have been perfect for storage of hay. It is conceivable that planking could have been placed to span the gables and trusses creating a temporary hay loft (just as a modern plank has been placed over them today, see fig. 14). The location of the barn suggests it served the Shoulder of Mutton Field which was probably largely pasture as may have been the smaller field of Far Coneygree before it. The ground floor of the barn was probably originally used to shelter animals. The opening up of the front wall is probably associated with a change in use of the barn to a cart or equipment shed. The carts could have been used in the local field but the close proximity of Gun Lane would also have been good for transporting carts and machinery elsewhere. The lack of hardstanding ground and the slope of the floor however would not have been ideal and it is clear from the animal feeding trough and thick build up of soil that the barn continued to be used for sheltering and feeding animals - probably horses rather than cows as there is a lack of drainage. The part-hipped design of the barn appears to be original as can be seen by the old beam supporting hip on the west gable.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

The barn appears to date to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was constructed from re-used pit-sawn and hewn pine timber taken from 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings. Subsequently the building was altered to have an open front in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The barn may have been constructed under the supervision of Samuel Boddington who owned the land until his death in 1830.

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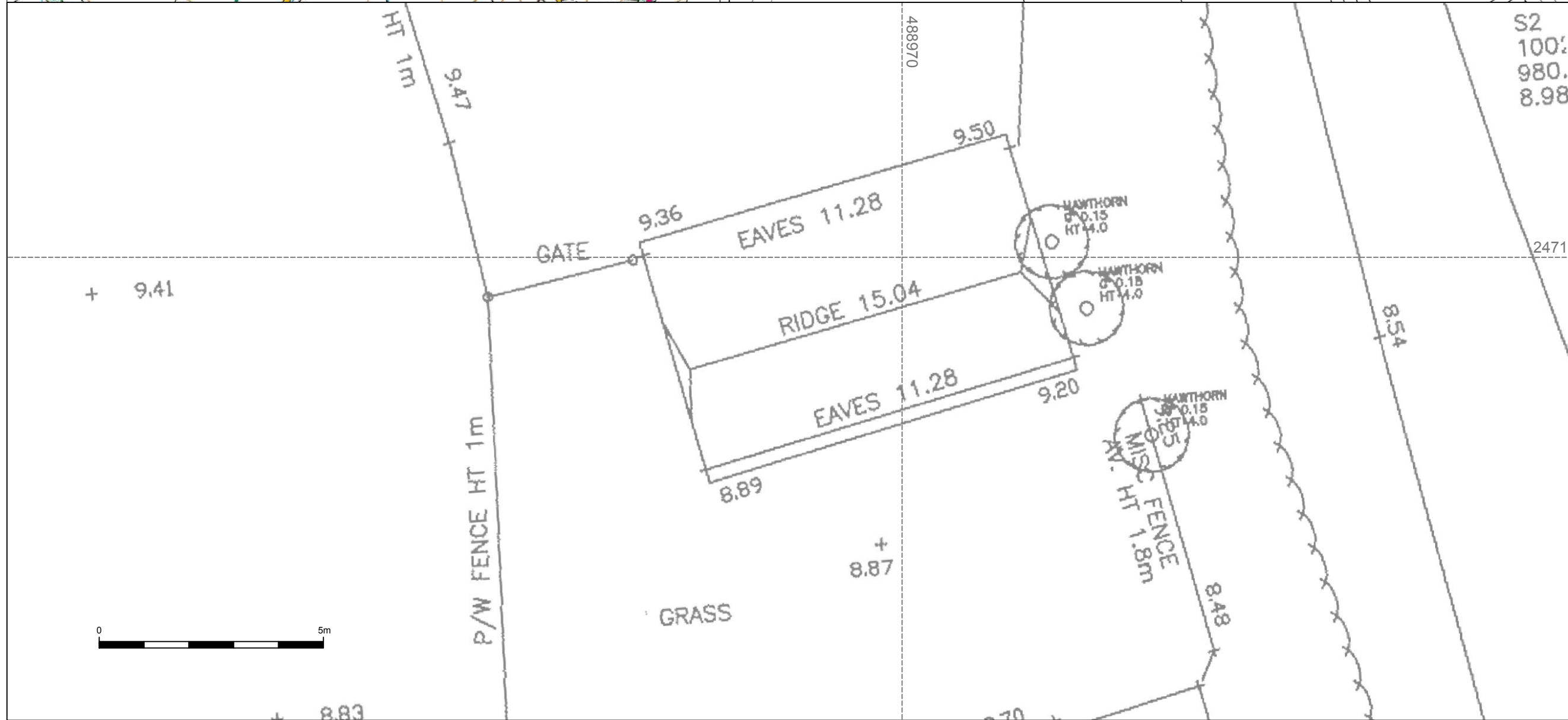
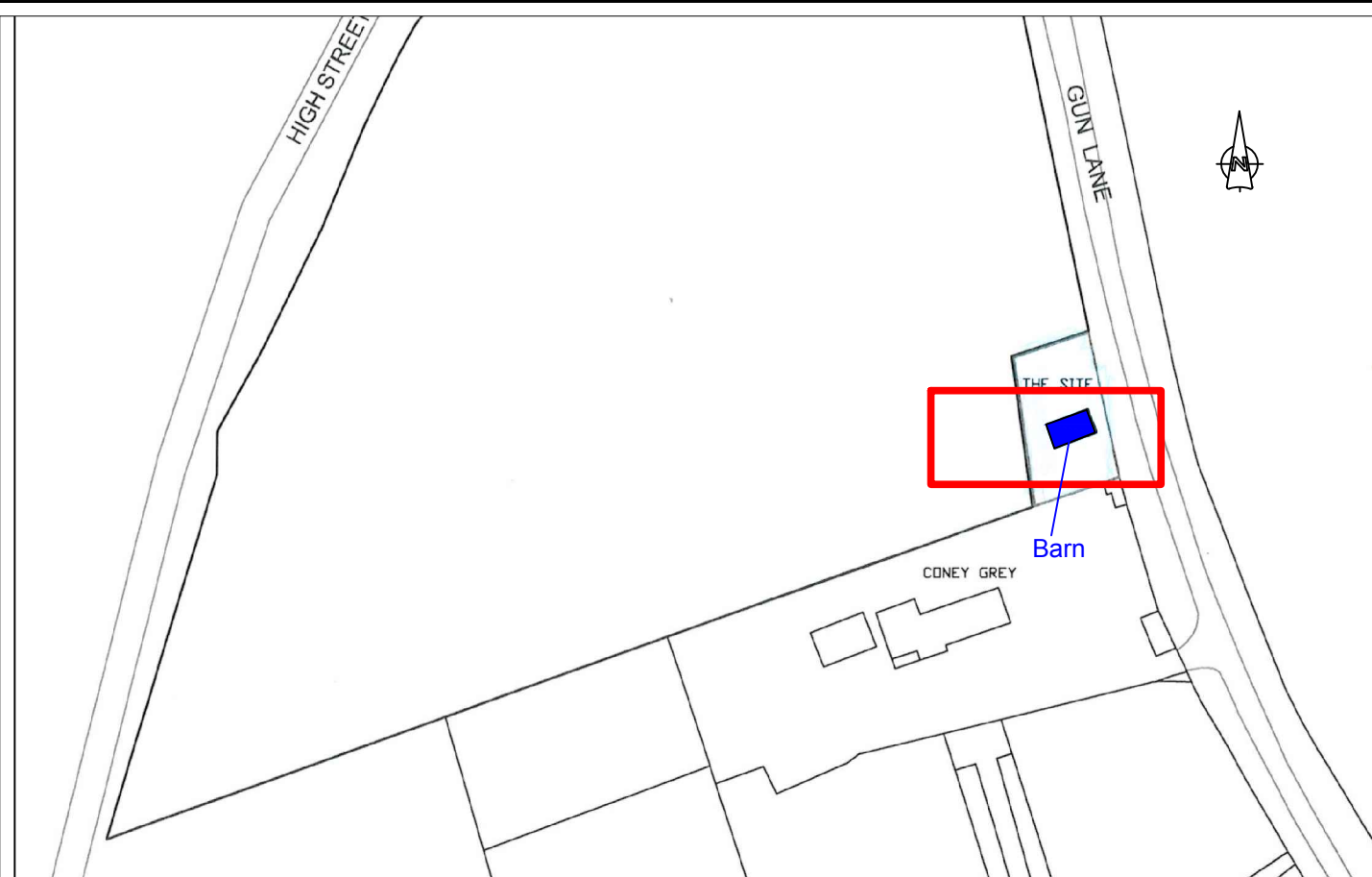
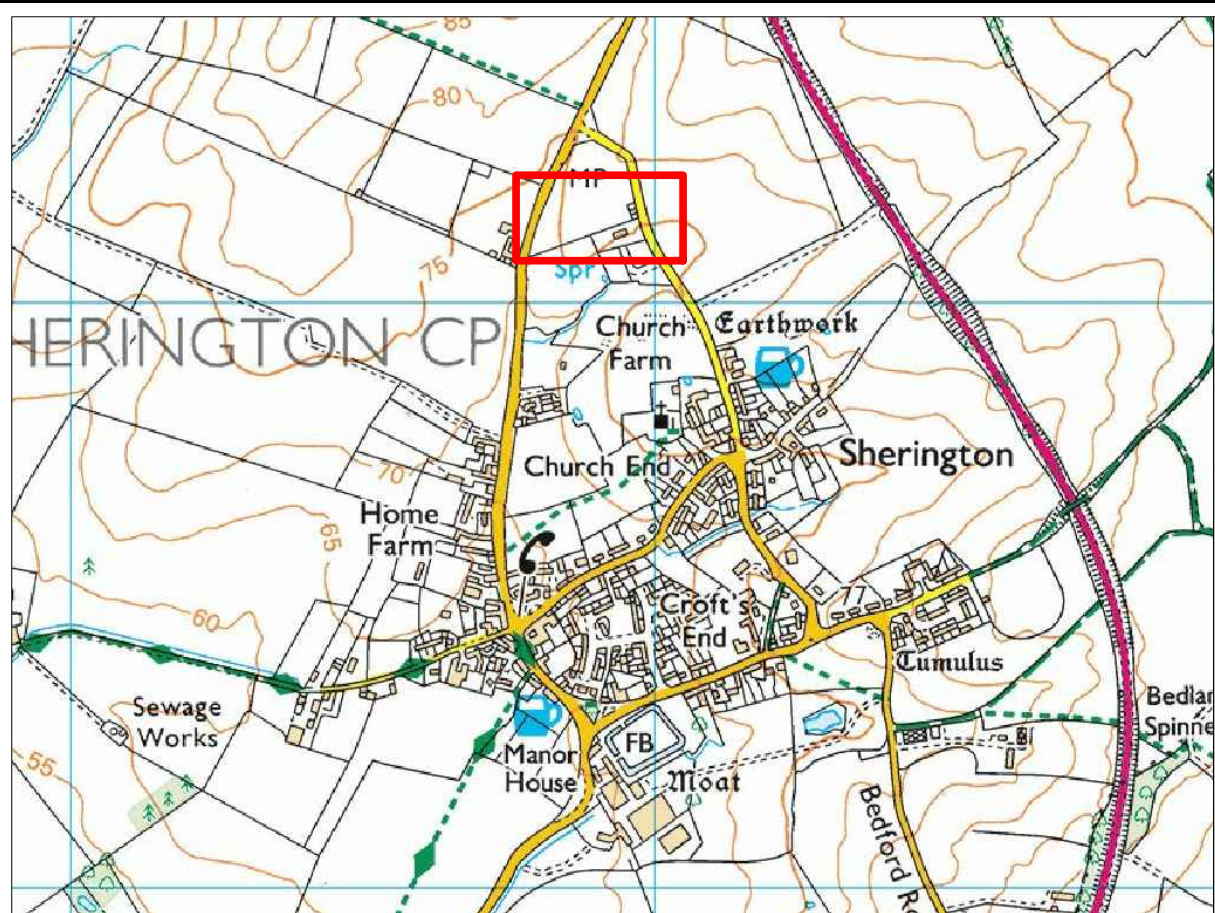
### ***Cartographic Sources and Other***

Historic Ordnance Survey Mapping, 6 inch maps

1796 Enclosure map of Sherington

Last Will and Testament of Samuel Boddington, June 1830

Sherington Historical Society Website



Key:

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Fig. No: 1 Report No: MK019/15

Title:  
 Location of barn

Project:  
 Barn at Gun Lane,  
 Sherington, Milton Keynes  
 Buckinghamshire

Client:  
 Bernard Soul

Scale at A3:  
 1:100

Drawn by: TB Checked: MR Date: 13/09/2015

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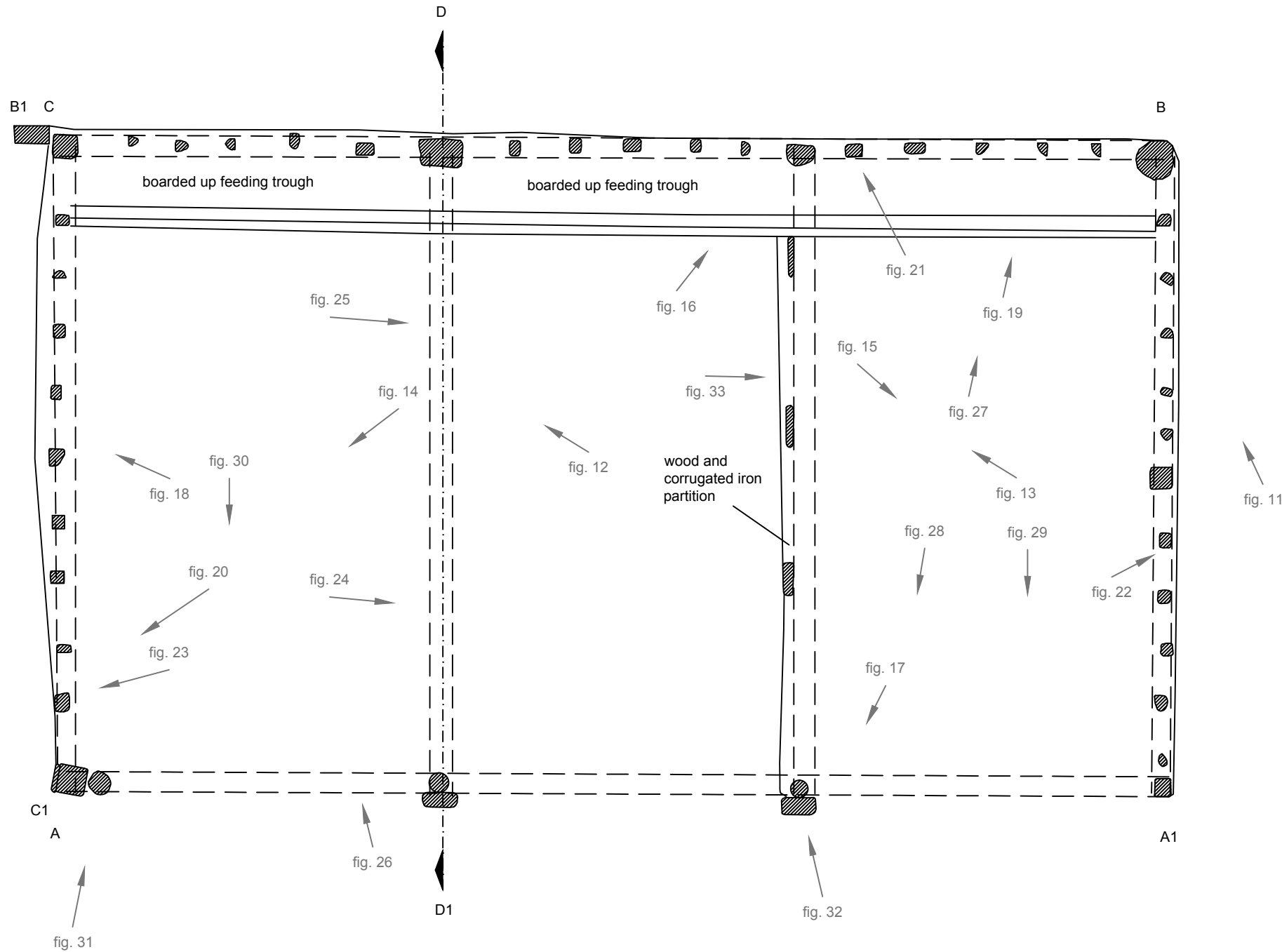
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fig. 7



fig. 8

fig. 10



**Key:**

-  Beams
-  Posts and studs
-  Photo location

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Fig. No: **2** Report No: **MK019/15**

Title:  
**Plan of barn and photo locations**

Project:  
**Barn at Gun Lane,  
 Sherington, Milton Keynes  
 Buckinghamshire**

Client:  
**Bernard Soul**

Scale at A3:  
**1:40**

Drawn by: **TB** Checked: **MR** Date: **13/09/2015**

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fig. 9



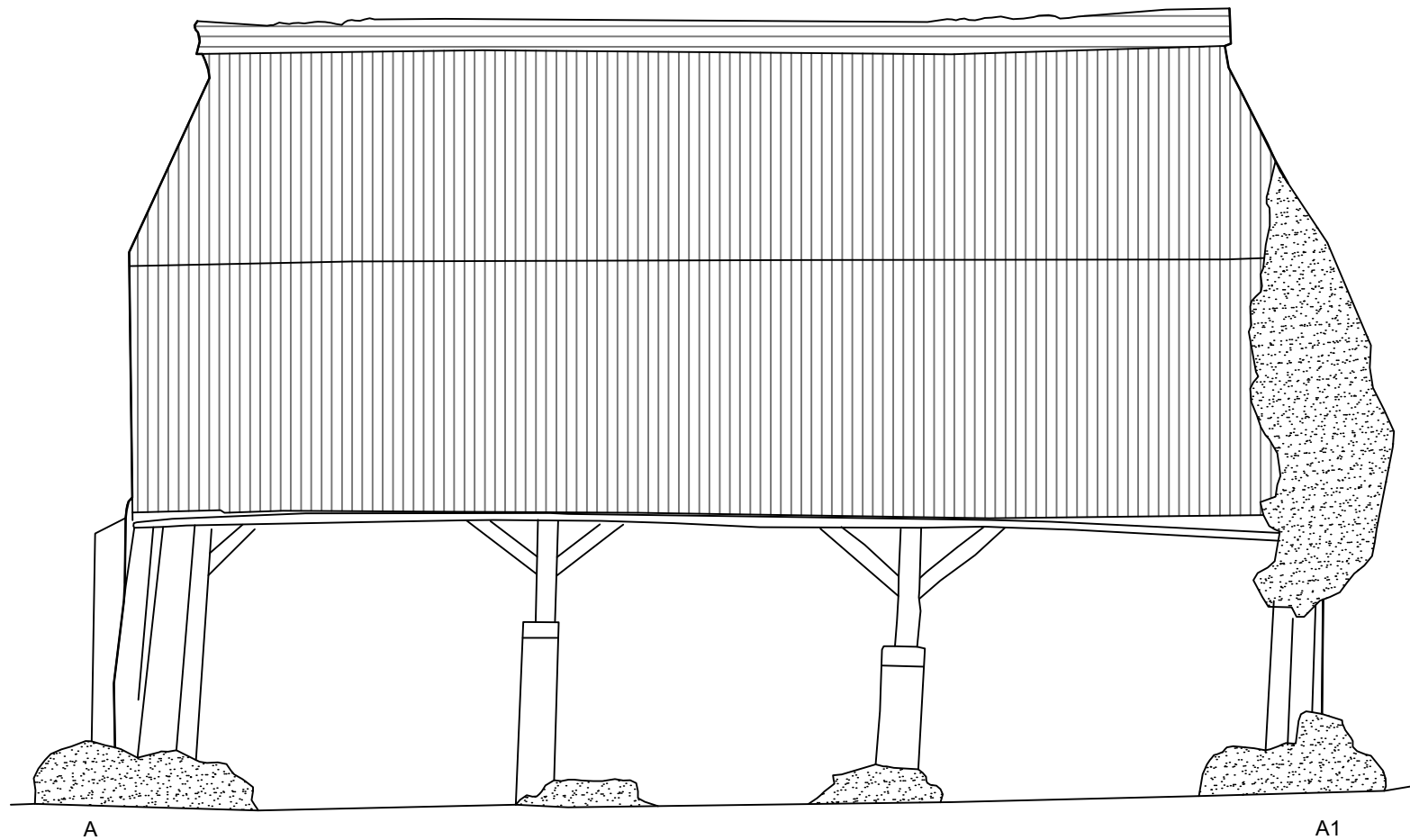


Fig 3 - South-facing elevation

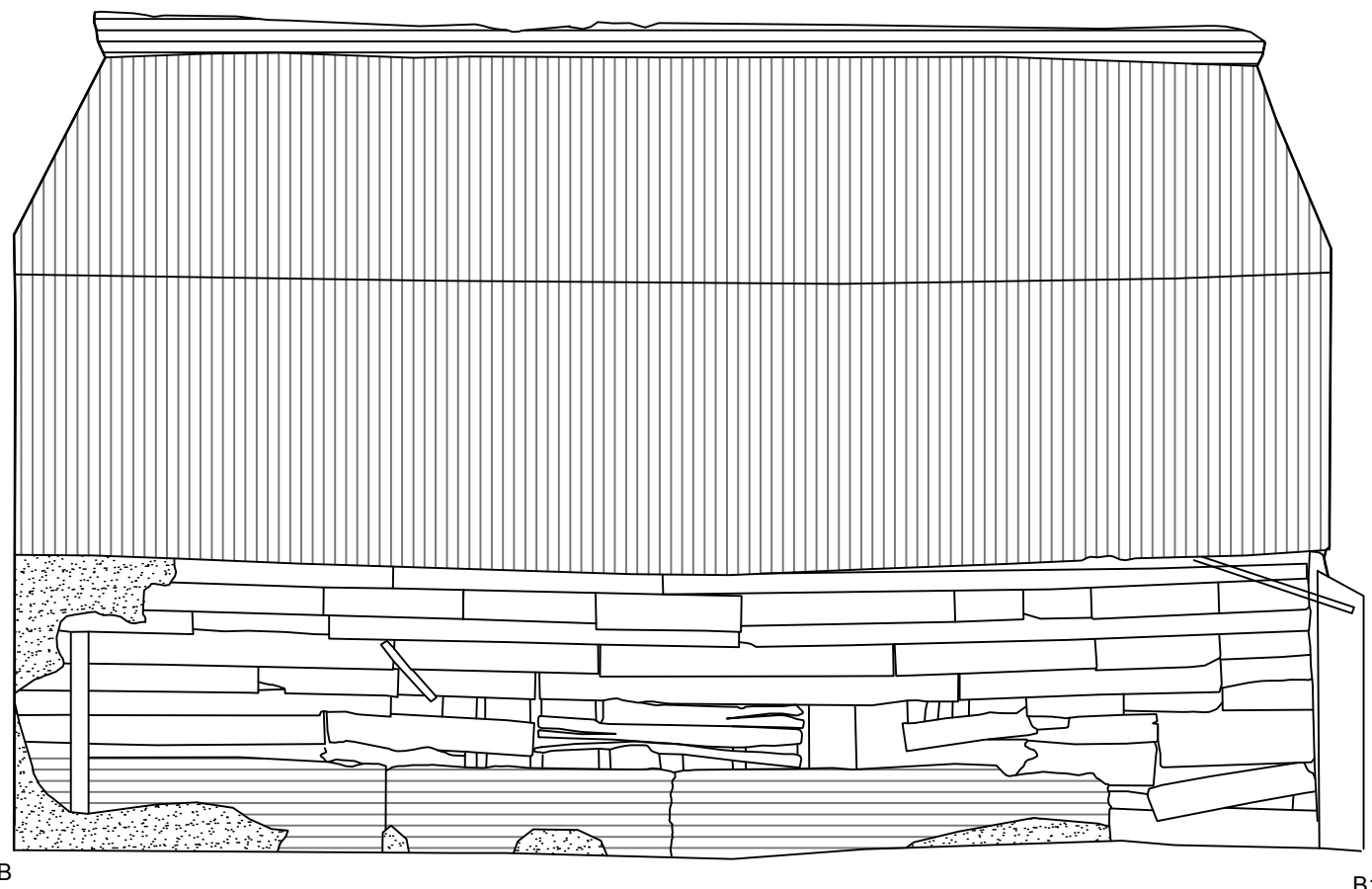


Fig 4 - North-facing elevation

Key:



Fig. Nos: 3-4 Report No: MK019/15

Title:  
Elevations

Project:  
Barn at Gun Lane,  
Sherington, Milton Keynes  
Buckinghamshire

Client:  
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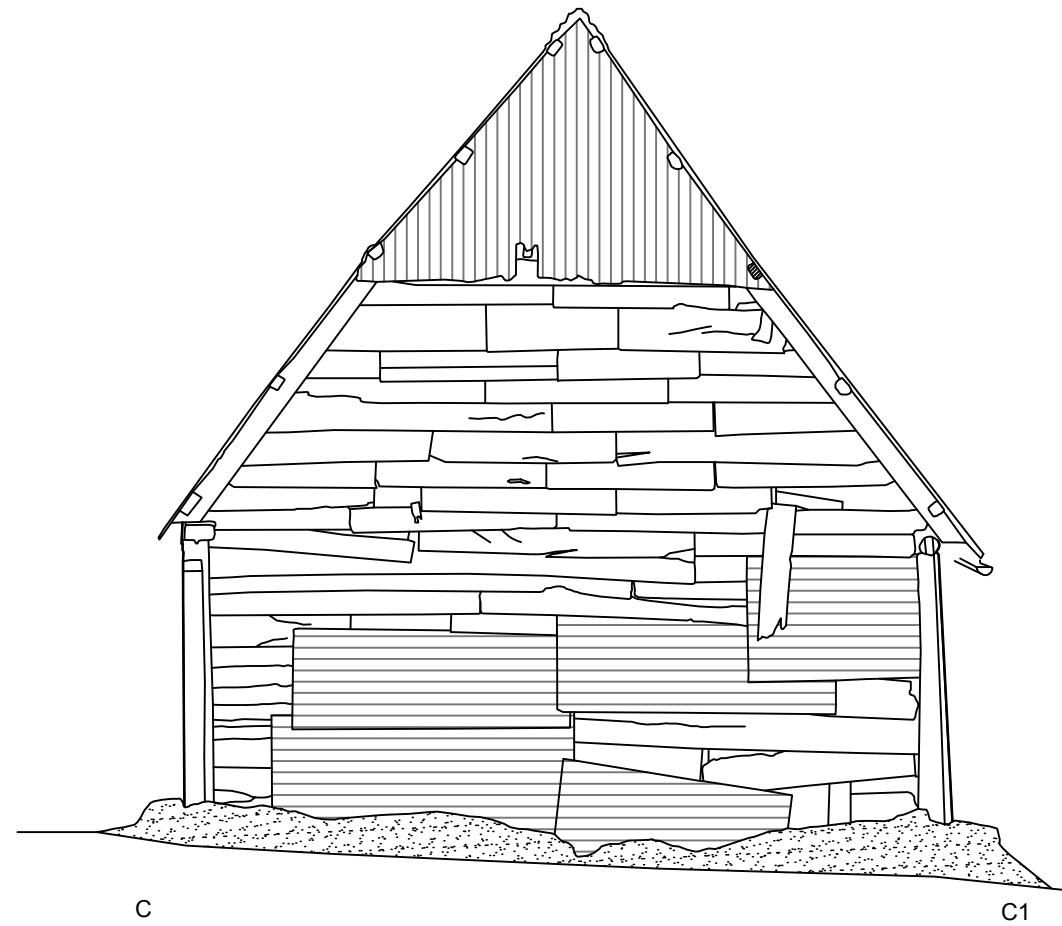


Fig 5 - West-facing elevation

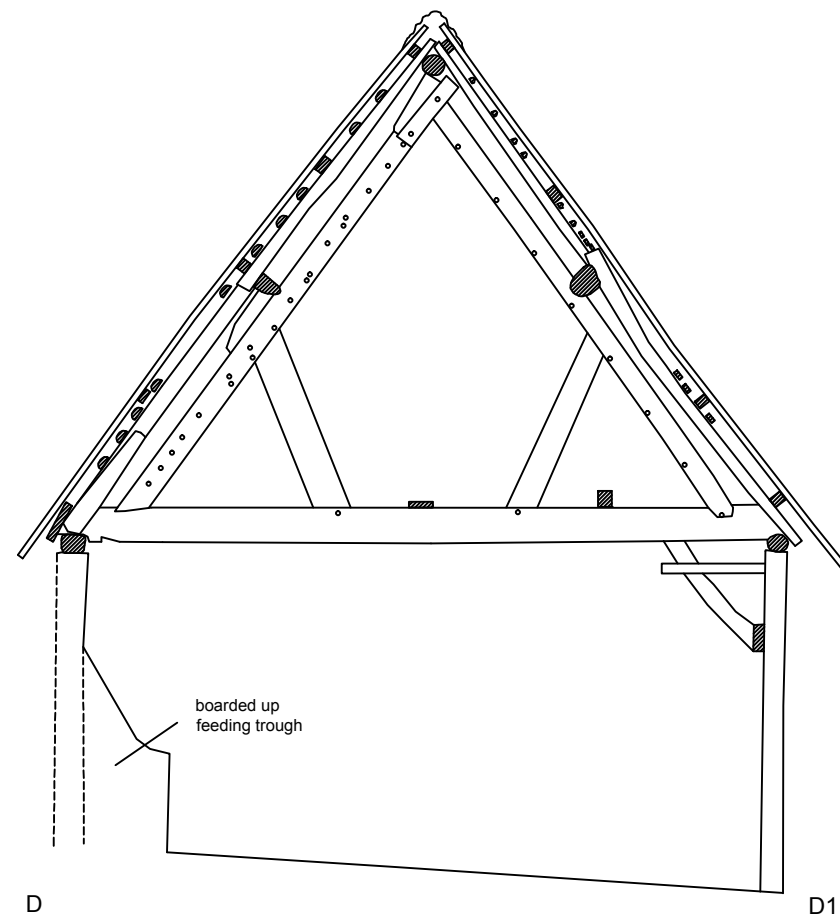




Fig 6 - Section



Key:

-  Timber in cross-section
-  Vegetation

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Fig. Nos: **5-6** Report No: **MK019/15**

Title:  
**Elevation and section**

Project:  
**Barn at Gun Lane,  
 Sherington, Milton Keynes  
 Buckinghamshire**

Client:  
**Bernard Soul**

Scale at A3:  
**1:50**

Drawn by: **TB** Checked: **MR** Date: **13/09/2015**

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Fig. 7 - View of barn in corner of field



Fig. 8 - View of barn from the east



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*Fig. 9 - Front and west elevations of barn*



*Fig. 10 - Centre of the rear elevation*



*Fig. 11 - A door patching the weatherboarding on E gable*



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*Fig. 12 - Shot of interior showing boarded up animal feeding trough*



*Fig. 13 - The division between east and central bays*



*Fig. 14 - Interior shot of W gable*



*Fig. 15 - Interior shot of E gable*



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Fig. 16 - Shot of wall plate of rear wall



Fig. 17 - Shot of bressumer beam and bracing supporting central posts



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Fig. 18 - Studs, west gable



Fig. 19 - Studs, east end of rear wall



Fig. 20 - Notched stud attached to tiebeam, west gable



Fig. 21 - Stud mortised to wall plate, east end of rear wall



Fig. 22 - Stud mortised and nailed to tiebeam, east gable



Fig. 23 - Shot of sill beam of west gable



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*Fig. 24 - Shot of southern purlin showing trenching*



*Fig. 25 - Shot of northern purlin showing chocks*



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*Fig. 26 - Rafter nailed to the bressumer beam with round nail*



*Fig. 27 - Rafter bracing, east end of northern pitch*



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Fig. 28 - General shot of rafters, south pitch



Fig. 29 - Shot of split laths, east end of south pitch



Fig. 30 - Split laths at west end of south pitch



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Fig. 28- 30

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*Fig. 31 - The round pole replacing the original post, south-west corner*



*Fig. 32 - Iron strap joining the post, bressumer beam and tiebeam, east post, front elevation*



*Fig. 33 - Assembly marks on eastern truss*



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Fig. **31- 33**

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