

# Bury Lane Garage Rickmansworth



**Historic Building Recording**



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## Bury Lane Garage, Rickmansworth

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## Bury Lane Garage, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire

### BUILDING RECORDING AND INVESTIGATION

#### SUMMARY

*Oxford Archaeology (OA) has carried out a programme of historic building recording at Bury Garage, Bury Lane, Rickmansworth. The first garage building was probably built in the 1950s (being first shown on the 1960 map) and the construction utilised adjacent 18/19th century walling. This building and the forecourt was formerly a petrol garage but is now currently being used as a car wash. The south eastern range has most recently been used as a shop. The rear building is later in date but pre-dates a map of 1971 and has been used as a repair garage.*

*The buildings are unlisted and are of relatively commonplace construction but the 1960s building retains much of its original features. This report has been undertaken as a condition of planning approval for the demolition of the garages and their replacement with housing.*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Oxford Architects to undertake a programme of historic building recording of Bury Lane Garage, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. The development of the site will result in the demolition of the present garages to make way for five two storey houses. Recording of these structures has been required by Three Rivers District Council as part of planning permission.

1.1.2 A further condition of planning approval requires below-ground archaeological monitoring during intrusive works on the site. The current document only covers the building recording works; the below ground investigation will be reported separately.

1.1.3 Oxford Archaeology were previously commissioned by Oxford Architects to complete a desktop assessment for this project. The final report, dated October 2006, provided a background history of the buildings and its findings have been utilised in the current document.

### 1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 The general aims were:

- To record the two buildings in their present form.
- To record any original features which are to be demolished.
- To produce an archive record detailing the findings of the survey.

### 1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 The recording programme was generally undertaken to English Heritage Level II (as defined by English Heritage in *Understanding Historic Buildings: a Guide to Good Recording Practice*, 2006) and so consisted of a photographic and a written survey.
- 1.3.2 The photographic survey comprised general views and specific features, both internal and external. This was undertaken using a 35mm black and white film, colour slide film and digital photography. The written survey provides additional descriptive and analytical detail, with annotation of architects plans provided by Oxford Architects.
- 1.3.3 The archive will consist of photographs, negatives, site notes and a copy of this report.

## 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The following historical background is based largely on the previous desk-based assessment of the site issued by OA in October 2006. The figures from the desk-based assessment have not been reproduced here largely because it is assumed that the two documents will be read in conjunction with each other.
- 2.1.2 The parish of Rickmansworth is situated in the Colne Valley, Hertfordshire. Cartographic evidence indicates this site was occupied by grassland or meadow until 1822. Bryant's map, published in 1822, illustrates buildings in the vicinity of the site; however, the scale and detail make it difficult to determine whether these existed within the boundaries of the present site.
- 2.1.3 The 1839 Tithe Map indicates that the site was situated on the border of the town. At this time the site was occupied by three sets of buildings, which were used as cottages and stables. These buildings form an L-shaped complex, with one east to west range at the north-east corner of the site and the other range across the site towards its centre. Neither of these ranges survive today.
- 2.1.4 The Ordnance Survey map of 1878 shows little change to the general plan of the site, although two buildings have been converted into a single dwelling. The Second Edition OS map of 1893 illustrates the expansion of one building, but this does not alter the plan of the site. Despite the continuing development of Rickmansworth the site was still only just located within the urban area. A third addition to the site is depicted on the OS map of 1914 but it is not labelled, and is not shown of the 1960s revision.
- 2.1.5 The site is currently occupied by two buildings. The smaller of the two is situated to the east and first appears of the revised Ordnance Survey map of 1960. The map shows that in 1960 the eastern end of the building continued east slightly further than the building which survives today on site and was terminated by a square ended structure. The existing building has a angled end. The majority of this building is

used as a car wash, with the exception of a small wing of the building which was a clothes shop. The second building to the rear (west) of the site is first illustrated on the revised OS map of 1971. Its most recent use was as an MOT garage.

### 3 **DESCRIPTION**

#### 3.1 **Introduction**

3.1.1 Bury Lane Garage consists of two buildings. The first (building A) lies in the eastern half of the site. This is a single storey structure, square in plan, with a wing projecting from the east end of the southern elevation. This creates an L-shape at the front of the site where the forecourt for the garage is located. Although both buildings are of similar date the linear block appears to have been a slightly later addition. A wall, part of which appears dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, runs the length of the south facing elevation.

3.1.2 The second (building B) is situated behind the first to the west of the site. This is a larger building also square in plan. Access to building B is along the north side of the first building.

#### 3.2 **Building A - external description**

3.2.1 Building A is predominantly a brick structure employing English bond, painted white and featuring intermittent areas of rendering. An Ordnance Survey plan of 1960 show that the building had been constructed by this date although there have been a series of alterations since then. The southern elevation abutts probable 18th century wall and so is completely obscured from view.

3.2.2 A gabled slate roof, using decorative clay ridge tiles, covers the eastern section of the main building, whereas a flat roof has been added at the rear (western) section. It is likely that the whole building would originally have had a series of east-west ridges with gabled ends to form a saw-tooth profile and that these were replaced by the flat structure. The roof over the linear extension was a single-slope pitched roof which is hipped at the eastern end, whereas the opposing end is gabled. The eastern end is terminated with a raking plan but it is known from map evidence that this is a secondary alteration and that in 1960 this part of the building continued slightly further to the east and its end was square-on to the road. This roofline and that of the eastern end of the main building do not meet (suggesting they were not built together) and thus small areas of the earlier wall are visible (albeit largely obscured by vegetation).

3.2.3 The eastern facade of the main block forms the front of the garage, which is divided by two double plank and batten doors with strap hinges. These allow vehicles access into the workshop space. Evidence of a pedestrian entrance is located to the south of the doors. This has since been blocked using modern breeze-blocks, although the wooden lintel remains in-situ.

- 3.2.4 Alterations to the roofline divide the northern elevation into three sections. To the east is a gable end and smooth areas at the top of the ridge suggest that sections have been re-mortared and repaired. This end features a square headed casement window surmounted by a thin concrete lintel. The second and third sections of the roofline support a flat roof although as referred to above this is believed to have replaced a 'saw-tooth' profile roof. This was part of a later phase as the brickwork partially covers the bottom of the gable suggesting that the roofline has been lifted. Towards the western end the height of the roofline decreases by two courses. A redundant gable sited at the west end of the south elevation supports this conclusion.
- 3.2.5 Entrance into the workshop can be gained from the north through a door located roughly half way along the facade. This entrance consists of a wooden square headed door with a panel of reinforced glass to the east. A small square casement window with a top hung fanlight features in the west end of the north elevation. Fixtures include an eye loop embedded within the brickwork of the gable end and a pulley system fixed above the doorway.
- 3.2.6 An alleyway between the two buildings provides access to the rear of building A. The southern elevation is constructed from a mixture of original brickwork and breeze-block. It appears that the breeze-blocks have been used to repair this area as they surround a section of primary wall. This may have occurred at the same time as the construction of the second building, which is predominately a breeze-block structure.
- 3.2.7 The wing projecting from the east of building A was occupied by a clothes shop. Access to the building is through two doorways within the northern elevation. The entrance furthest west features a glazed panelled door with a casement window immediately to the west, both of which are surmounted by a single wooden lintel. The bottom of the window features a course of headers on end. A straight joint spans six courses directly below the window suggesting that it may originally have been much larger. The second entrance to the clothes shop is at the east end. This door is a glazed panelled door which is surmounted by a rough segmental arch of tapered stretchers.
- 3.2.8 In the centre of the facade is another door, which leads to a small bathroom. A casement window with a top hung fanlight features immediately to the west. A modern light fixture remains above the doorway and an external light switch is found to the west.
- 3.2.9 The eastern elevation of the wing is angled to the south. A large window, divided in three by two wooden mullions, is surmounted by a large concrete lintel. Stretcher bond is used in this elevation and so it is likely that this wall would have been altered as part of a later phase, when the building was converted to a shop. A concrete plinth, five courses in depth, spans the bottom of the facade.

### 3.3 Building A - internal description

3.3.1 The interior of building A is divided into two areas, the office and the main workshop. The workshop has been partitioned with breezeblocks to provide a smaller working area probably when the garage became a car wash. The roof is supported by steel beams with a suspended plaster board ceiling, which is failing in parts. The walls are rendered to the height of the windows, which is also failing in places exposing the brickwork. The floor is a patchwork of concrete, small square tiles and brickwork. The exposed brickwork suggests this was the floor material employed in the primary phase, which was later covered by concrete.

3.3.2 There is little in the way of fixtures, although there is a mixture of light fittings. Metal bars are used across the windows, as a form of security.

3.3.3 The brickwork in the western elevation is more exposed internally. This reveals the use of Flemish garden wall bond. This does not appear anywhere else on the site and so is probably remaining from the primary phase. To the south of the walled section is a plinth of engineering bricks on end. Breezeblocks are used above, indicating the location of an earlier exit.

3.3.4 To the south are two doorways. The plank and batten door to the east is reached by a step 39cm in height, and leads to a small yard. The second entrance to the west provides access to an office space. A plaster board partition creates a second smaller space in the north-west corner. There is a buttress in the main room supporting the southern wall measuring 198cm x 56cm x 12 cm. A course of headers on end are inline with the top of the buttress. The west wall contains a primary window frame, boarded externally, and a brick pier in the south-west corner.

3.3.5 The interior of the wing can not be accessed from the main part of the building. This section has been modernised when its use was converted to a shop. The main entrance to the shop is at the east end of the wing and the large window provides a display area. The single door to the east of the north elevation allowed customers access to the building. This single space is oddly shaped due to the angled eastern elevation. A 1980s suspended ceiling has been fitted throughout and is failing in places. The walls have been completely plastered and little evidence of primary fixtures or fittings remain. In recent years the building has been subjected to flooding and so damp has become a problem throughout the building.

3.3.6 A hallway leads to a small bathroom and a walk through kitchen area. The most western room was used as a stock room. Metal bars are used on both the door and window.

### 3.4 Building B - external description

3.4.1 Building B which is believed to date to the 1960s, being first shown on the 1971 map, and it is located to the rear of building A. The building is constructed from a



square industrial portal frame, with a lean-to to the west. Breeze blocks form the bottom half of all elevations. The upper half of the building and the roof is covered by corrugated plastic cladding, which covers sections of wave form concrete. Clear sections of cladding are found in the gable ends and intermittently throughout the roof, allowing natural light into the building. A form of metal trim is used along the roofline, with concrete corbelling lining the east and west elevations.

- 3.4.2 A large wooden door, the full height of the building, permits access through the north corner of the eastern elevation. A smaller doorway is inserted within the main door. This door slides to the south on a series of runners. Evidence of the primary door exists, as earlier runners have since been covered with wooden boards. A second doorway within the western elevation has been blocked.

### 3.5 **Building B - internal description**

- 3.5.1 The workshop is a single open space with three posts to the west supporting the lean-to, which divide the area into four unequal bays. The concrete portal frame is visible from the interior and is failing in parts.
- 3.5.2 A small single cell area has been enclosed in the north west corner (bay one), with a door to the north, and a elongated window facing east. Four small square marks in the floor indicate where a car ramp would have stood. A set of rails at the end of this area run north-south.
- 3.5.3 A large portion of the flooring in the second bay appears to have been in-filled, indicating the possible location of a pit. A plaster board wall roughly 2m in height divides the second and third bays from the supporting post to the western elevation. The blocked doorway in the western elevation would have led into bay three.
- 3.5.4 In the south east corner is a small enclosed office area constructed from a steel frame and plasterboard. Entrance is through a door in the north elevation. Immediately to the east is a horizontally sliding window. The area is divided in two, with a lobby area to the north, and office to the south. A window in the partition allows communication between the two spaces.
- 3.5.5 Few of the primary fixtures remain. An assortment of light fittings feature in the roof space. A portable steel storage area is located in south west corner.

## 4 **HISTORIC WALL**

- 4.1.1 The south wall of the site is significantly higher in places than the adjacent buildings and although it is largely obscured by vegetation (on the south side) and by buildings (on the north) it is clear that part of the wall is significantly older than the main buildings on the site. The larger taller section of the wall to the east is constructed of Flemish bond, dating to the 20th century , and the wall then drops in height by roughly 2.25m to a second section. This section is also in Flemish bond, with the bricks measuring approximately 22cm x 6.25cm, and varying in colour.

There is a section of rendering measuring roughly 2.5m midway along the wall. The end of the wall lines up with the south west corner of building A and features a pier. The evidence suggests this section of wall dates to the late 18th or early 19th century.

## 5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 The surviving buildings at Bury Garage are clearly of relatively limited historical or architectural significance. They are not listed and they are not particularly old, probably dating to the 1950s and 1960s, but they will have served a function within Rickmansworth throughout the second half of the 20th-century and will have been known locally. They are not of sufficient interest to warrant preservation in-situ but producing an outline record of the structures prior to their demolition, as has been undertaken in the current work, is a valuable exercise to document for future generations the current form of this site and its buildings.
- 5.1.2 The work has confirmed that one building probably dates to the 1950s, although it has been subsequently altered, and the other building probably dates to the 1960s. Both buildings still retain some original features contemporary with the construction date. In addition to the two post-war buildings that will be demolished the site also retains a section of wall of possible 18th-century date and this will be incorporated into the new development.

Charlotte Newman  
Oxford Archaeology  
June 2007

### **Bibliography**

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English Heritage *Understanding Historic Buildings: a Guide to Good Recording Practice* (2006)

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Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

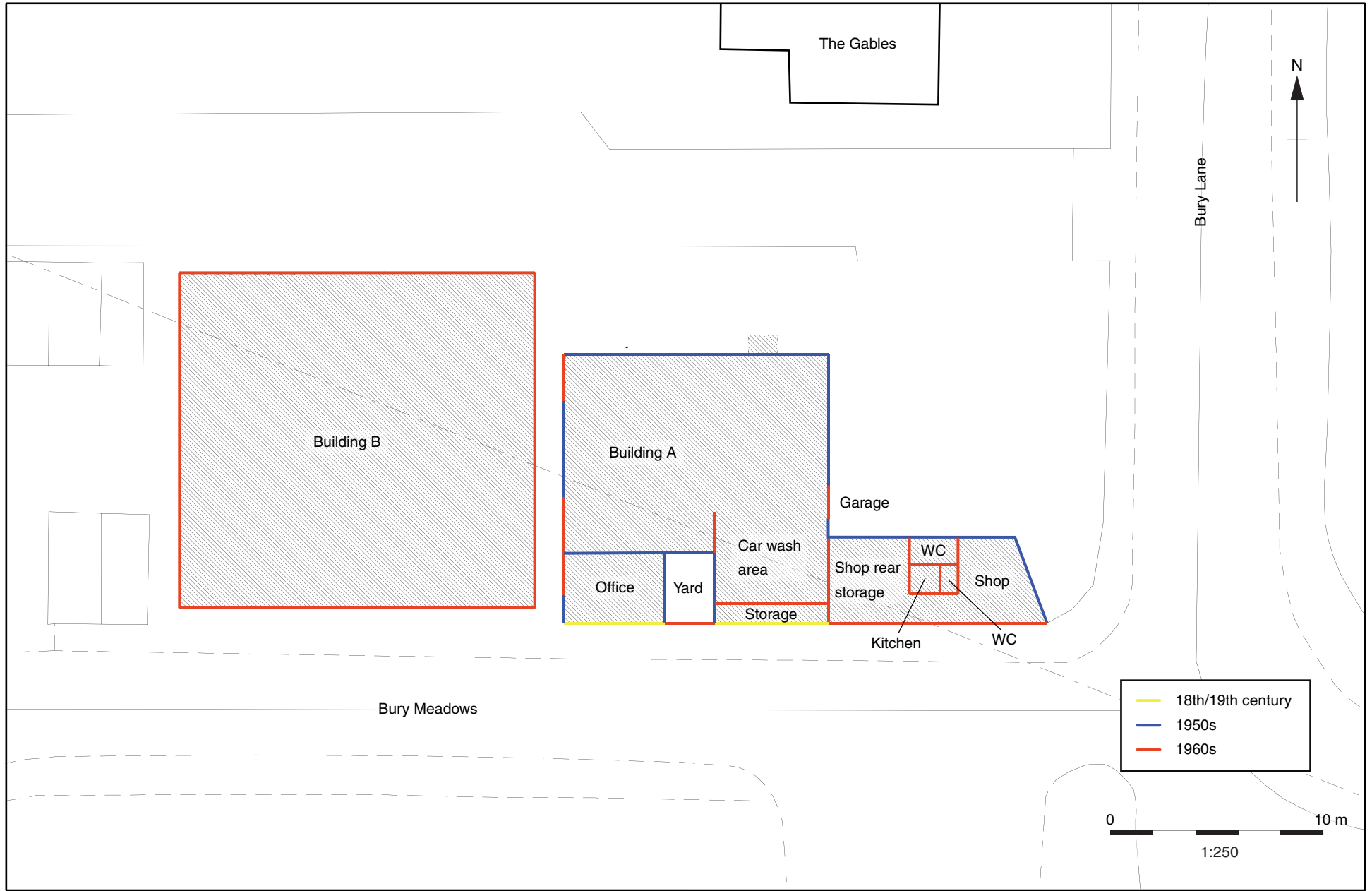


Figure 2: Phase plan of buildings

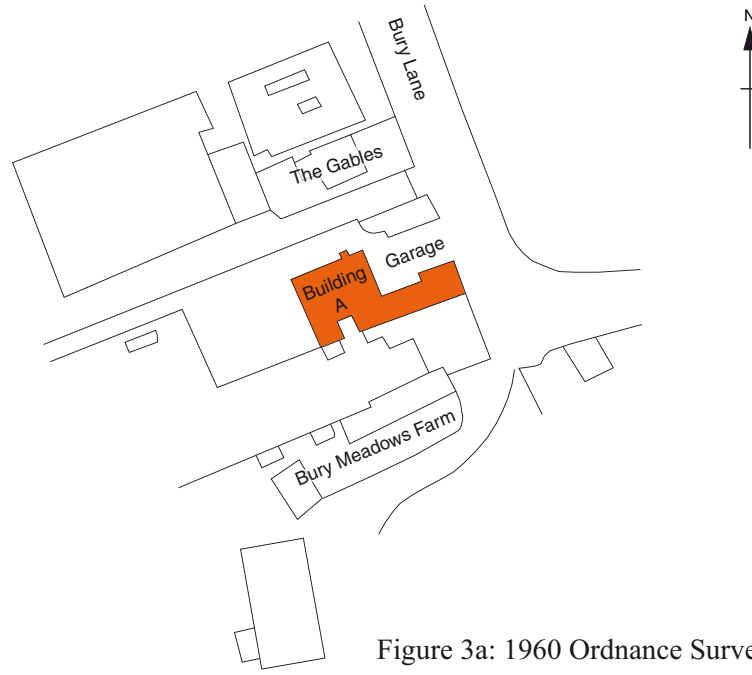


Figure 3a: 1960 Ordnance Survey 1:1250 Map

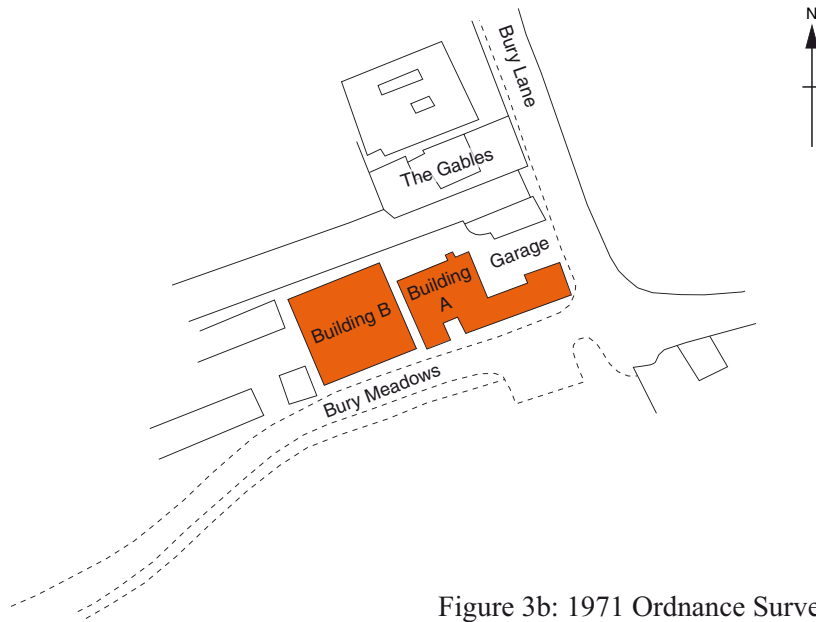


Figure 3b: 1971 Ordnance Survey 1:1250 Map