

Shackerley House Farm
Mellor, Lancashire:
Drawn record of roof timbers



March 2018

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and may contain blank pages*

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SUMMARY

Shackerley House Farm (NGR: SD 65837 29769) is a grade II listed farmhouse likely to be 17th century in origin, but much altered in 1993, and damaged by fire in 2017. A drawn record of the historic roof timbers was carried out for Bedfords Surveyors Ltd, before their replacement, as a condition of planning and listed building consents from Ribble Valley Borough Council.

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SHACKERLEY HOUSE FARM, MELLOR, LANCASHIRE:

DRAWN RECORD OF ROOF TIMBERS

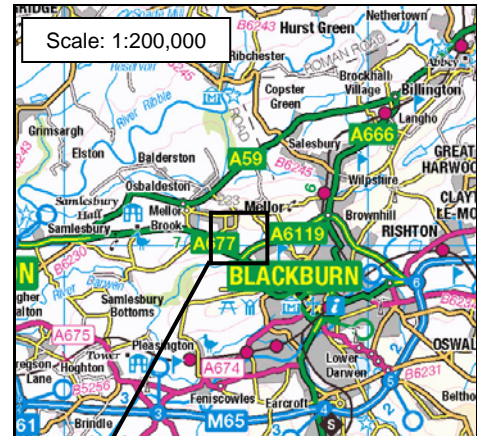
1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the results of the recording of historic roof timbers at Shackerley House Farm, Mellor, Lancashire, which was commissioned by Bedfords Surveyors Ltd, on behalf of the owners' insurers, to fulfil conditions of planning and listed building consents from Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC), for the reinstatement of the former farmhouse following fire damage. The survey was carried out in March 2018.
- 1.2 Shackerley House Farm, formerly Shackerley, is a grade II listed house with 17th century origins, which was much altered in 1993. One of the changes made at the time was the replacement of the existing stone slate and asbestos-cement roof with one of thatch. In 2017 there was a fire at the house, necessitating the reinstatement of the roof, including the two trusses, which are believed to be 17th century, and likely to contain timbers re-used from an earlier date.
- 1.3 The present work comprises a drawn record of the historic roof timbers, specifically a general plan, and elevation drawings of the two trusses. This report will be submitted to the clients, RVBC, and the Lancashire Archaeology Advisory Service, as well as to the Oasis Project¹ for publication on the internet via the Archaeology Data Service.

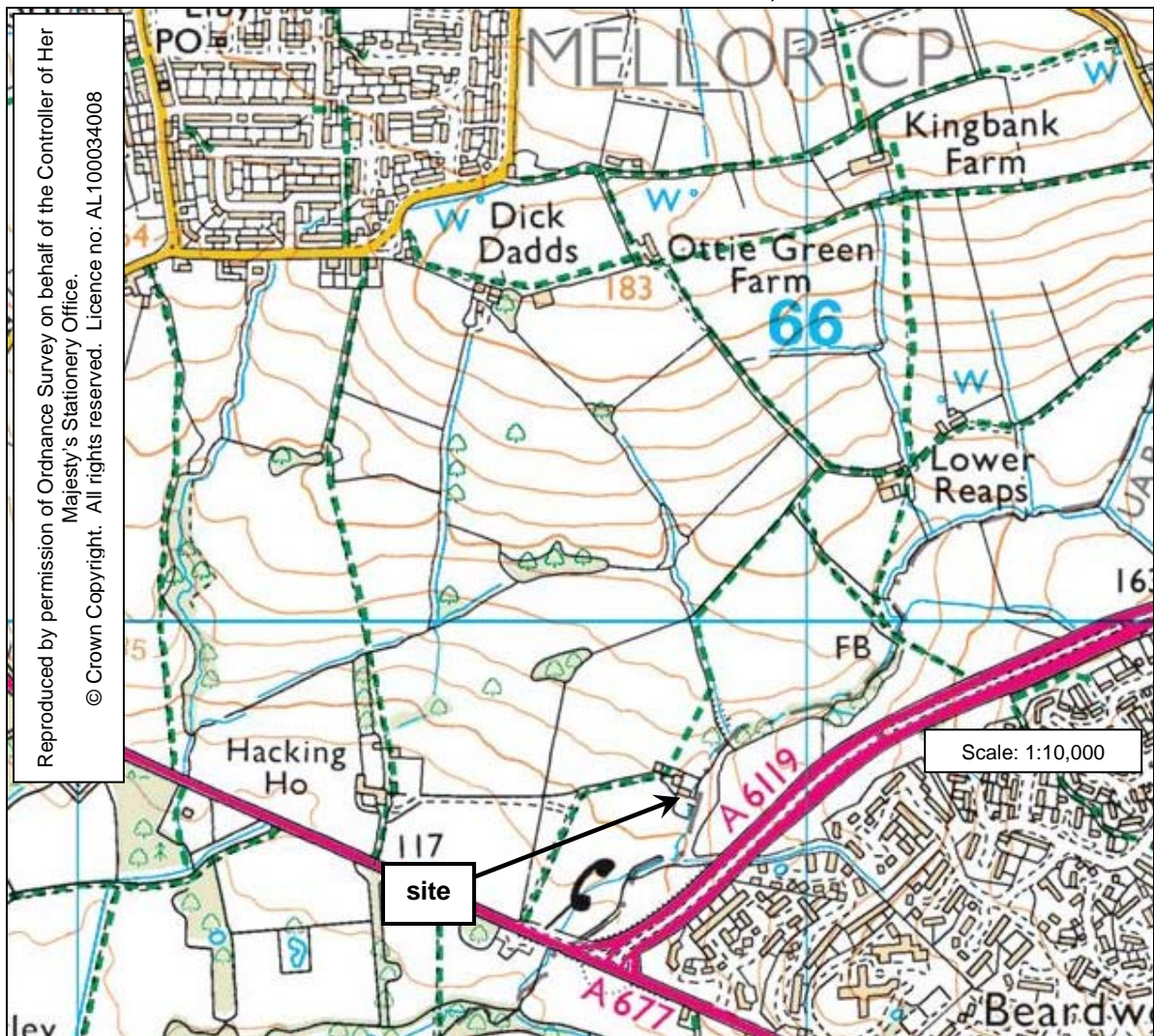
2 Location and current use

- 2.1 Shackerley House Farm stands in Mellor civil parish at NGR: SD 65837 29769, very close to the boundary with Blackburn-with-Darwen, which follows the adjacent unmarked beck. It stands about 300m north of the A677 Preston New Road, off which is the track to the site, and 100m west of the A6119 Yew Tree Drive. The farm is set within pasture fields, enclosed by hedgerows and fences, although the land to the east of Yew Tree Drive is occupied by suburban housing.
- 2.2 The buildings at the farm (no longer an agricultural holding) include the detached former farmhouse, with a barn and other minor outbuildings to the north-west.

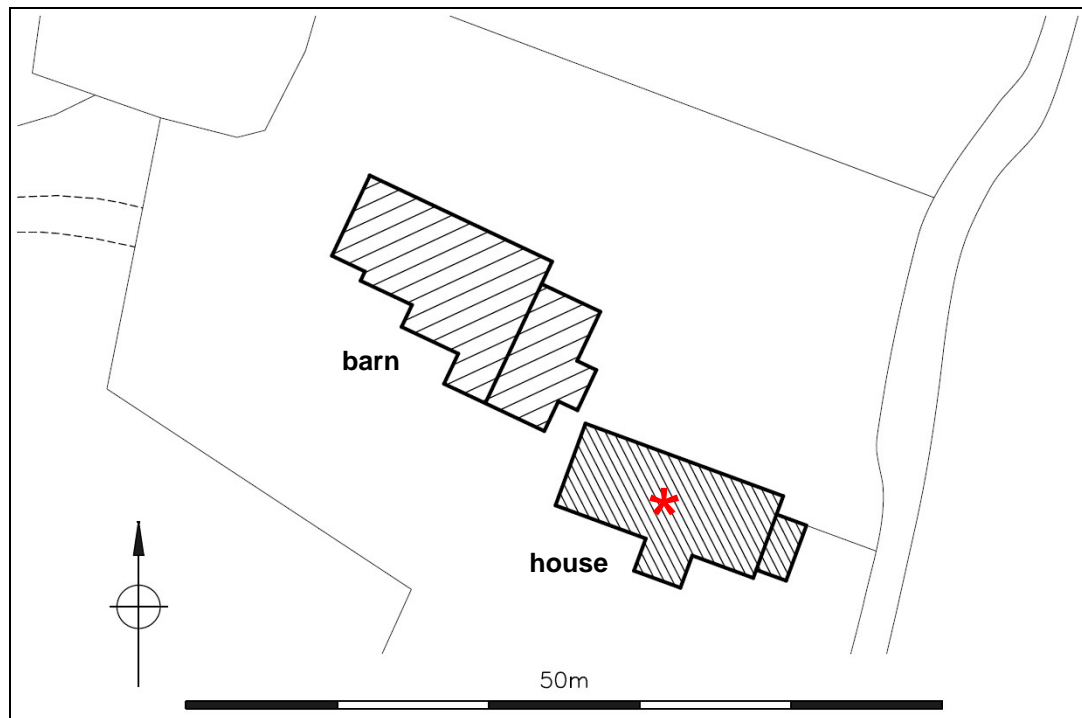
¹ [Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations](#)



1: Location map (i)



2: Location map (ii)



3: Site plan (1:500)

3 Planning background

3.1 Planning permission and listed building consent for “*Reinstatement of grade II listed former farmhouse following fire damage to incorporate material change in roof, covering from thatch to slate*” were granted by RVBC on 27 November 2017 (application nos. 3/2017/0918 and 3/2017/0940).

3.2 In their consultation response to the applications, the Lancashire Archaeology Advisory Service commented that:

“Given the changes to the main body of the house in 1993, the intention to retain all historic features and the reasonable level of illustration in the heritage assessment, it is not considered necessary to require an overall building record as a condition of any planning approval. It would appear appropriate, however, to ask for a drawn record of the extant historic roof trusses, purlins and ridge prior to their removal. This record should utilise the guidance and conventions set out in “Understanding Historic Buildings” (Historic England 2016).”

3.3 Within both of the consents granted on 27 November 2017, the local planning authority included the following condition (no. 4):

“No development, site clearance/preparation, or demolition shall commence until the applicant or their agent or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of building [recording] in accordance with a

written scheme of investigation, which shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The programme of recording shall include the preparation of a drawn record of the historic roof structure, including the trusses, purlins and ridge but not the 1993 replacement rafters. This record shall utilise the standards and conventions set out in Understanding Historic Buildings (Historic England 2016). All works shall be undertaken by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional contractor and comply with the standards and guidance set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA)."

4 Previous investigative work

- 4.1 In 2017, after the fire, the present author inspected the building and compiled an application for the de-listing of the farmhouse, which was not entertained by Historic England, due to the building already being subject to planning advice from RVBC. Subsequently, an Assessment of Significance was produced², to support the planning and listed building consent applications, which have now been approved.

5 Archaeological and historical background

- 5.1 Little is known of the history of the house or farm at Shackerley prior to the late 20th century, and it appears essentially to have formed a small farmstead typical of the locality, perhaps established in the 17th century, with house and barn providing the necessary accommodation for small-scale farming and possibly domestic industry. It had however become derelict by the 1990s.
- 5.2 In 1993, planning and listed building consents were granted by Ribble Valley Borough Council, for "part demolition and rebuilding and replacement roof to an existing dwelling" (3/1993/0216 & 3/1993/0217), and these were implemented. The most significant part of the application concerned the replacement of the existing roof coverings, then partly stone slate and partly asbestos cement sheet, with reed thatch, as well as the rebuilding of the front wall and west gable, and much of the interior.
- 5.3 The farmhouse's original roof structure remains largely intact and is formed from oak timbers, a number of which show evidence for previous use, as is commonly the case. There are two trusses over the western part of the building, and the cross-wall supports the roof between bays three and four. The trusses are of principal rafter construction, comprising tie beam, principal rafters and collar, and

² Stephen Haigh August 2017 *Shackerley House Farm, Preston New Road, Mellor, Blackburn: Assessment of Heritage Significance*

have pegged joints. They support two side purlins to each pitch, and a diamond-set ridge.

6 Recording methodology

- 6.1 The present recording was carried out during a site visit on 20 March 2018, and was confined to measured survey of the historic roof timbers. A plan of these at 1:100 scale, and elevation drawings of the upper faces of the two roof trusses at 1:20, were produced by hand measurement.
- 6.2 A small number of photographs are included for illustration.

7 Details of the roof structure

- 7.1 All of the historic roof timbers are of oak. They are typical of the south Pennines and adjacent areas, in their relatively thin scantling, and irregular, knotty appearance, which implies relatively fast or spasmodic growth, such as may have taken place in overgrown hedgerows or woodland pasture, rather than well managed woodland.

East truss (I)

- 7.2 The east truss faces east, towards the house's main fireplace, and has a tie beam which appears to have been re-used from a timber-framed building, as it has redundant, paired halvings on its upper face. Of these halvings, the two lower ones would then have held the upper ends of arch braces from wall posts at either end, while the upper ones would have held the lower ends of raking struts, in different positions from those employed in the present arrangement. The tie beam also has a row of peg or stave holes (some still filled), approximately 400mm apart, which are also likely to date from the timber's original use, perhaps as part of an earlier ceiling or canopy associated with the tie beam. On the top face of the tie beam is a row of shallow, rectangular joist sockets, likely to have supported the ceiling structure in the 17th century house or later.
- 7.3 The two principal rafters are tenoned into the ends of the tie beam, with two pegs securing each tenon, and at each joint there is a pair of Roman "I"s impressed into the surface with a chisel. There are a number of peg holes and pegs within them, which do not relate to the present structure, again raising the likelihood that they have been re-used from an earlier building. Both were formerly supported by raking struts, although only the north strut survives. Its tenons at either end are held in place by single pegs, and the survival of these pegs and

associated mortices in the south half of the truss indicates the former position of a second matching strut there. A collar ties the upper parts of the principal rafters, but above these the ends have been destroyed by fire.

- 7.4 The backs of the principal rafters have trenches cut for two side purlins each. These purlins vary in scantling, but all are of “whole tree” section, and the lower north purlin is staggered over the truss.

West truss (II)

- 7.5 The second truss is structurally identical, but the individual conformation and timbers display different characteristics. The tie beam lacks the redundant halvings and row of mid level peg holes seen in the east truss, but does have a row of joist sockets on its upper surface. The numeral “II” is used at either end to mark the joints with the principal rafters. Both raking struts have been removed, but the collar remains intact. Redundant peg holes are evident on the face of the principal rafters, and at the apex, there is less fire damage than in the east truss. Here, the two are halved together, with the joint being held in place by two pegs, and the diamond-set ridge sits between them.

Purlins

- 7.6 Within bays 1, 2 and 3 of the house (counting from west to east), each of the four side purlins are made up of two lengths of timber. The two on the south pitch have bridled joints, while in the north pitch, the lower purlins are staggered over the east truss, and the upper purlins appear to be scarf-jointed together. In all cases, the timbers which make up these four components are of different lengths. In bay 4, the purlins simply span between the masonry cross-walls to either side. Some of the purlins display further evidence for previous uses, in the presence of redundant joints and peg holes.

8 Conclusion

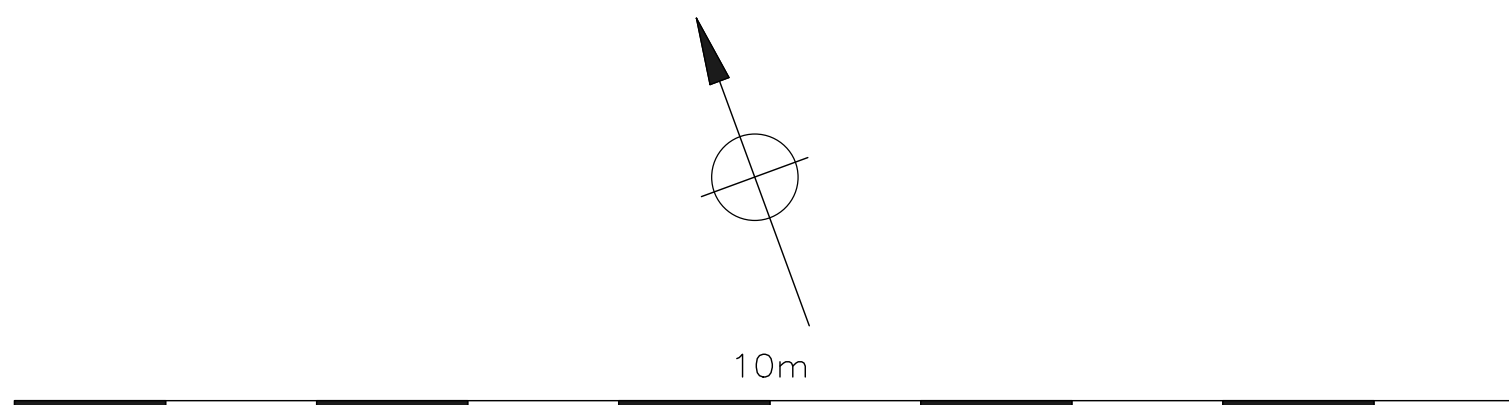
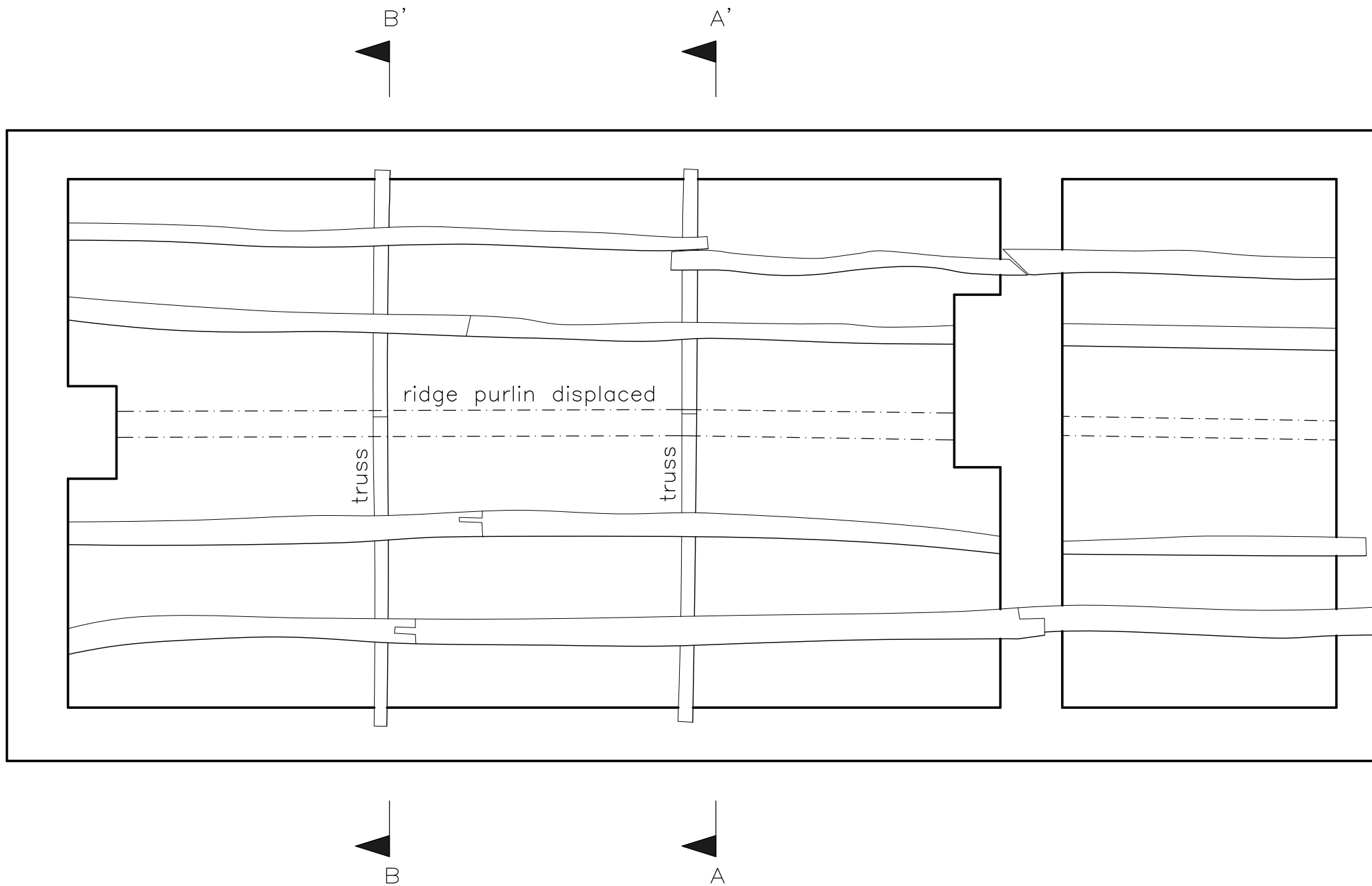
- 8.1 The roof timbers recorded no doubt essentially represent the structure of the roof when the house was built in the 17th century, although a number of them show marks of re-use and are likely to derive from one or more earlier timber-framed buildings and so are conceivably late medieval in date. The type of timber used is typical for the district, in the absence of well-grown material with substantial scantling from properly managed woodland, as can be found in other parts of the country: in contrast, for the most part it is irregular and displays uneven growth patterns. The form of the principal rafter trusses with collars and raking struts suggests a relatively late date in the local vernacular tradition.



Photo 1: West face (upper face) of west truss



Photo 2: Detail of pegs and numbering on west truss



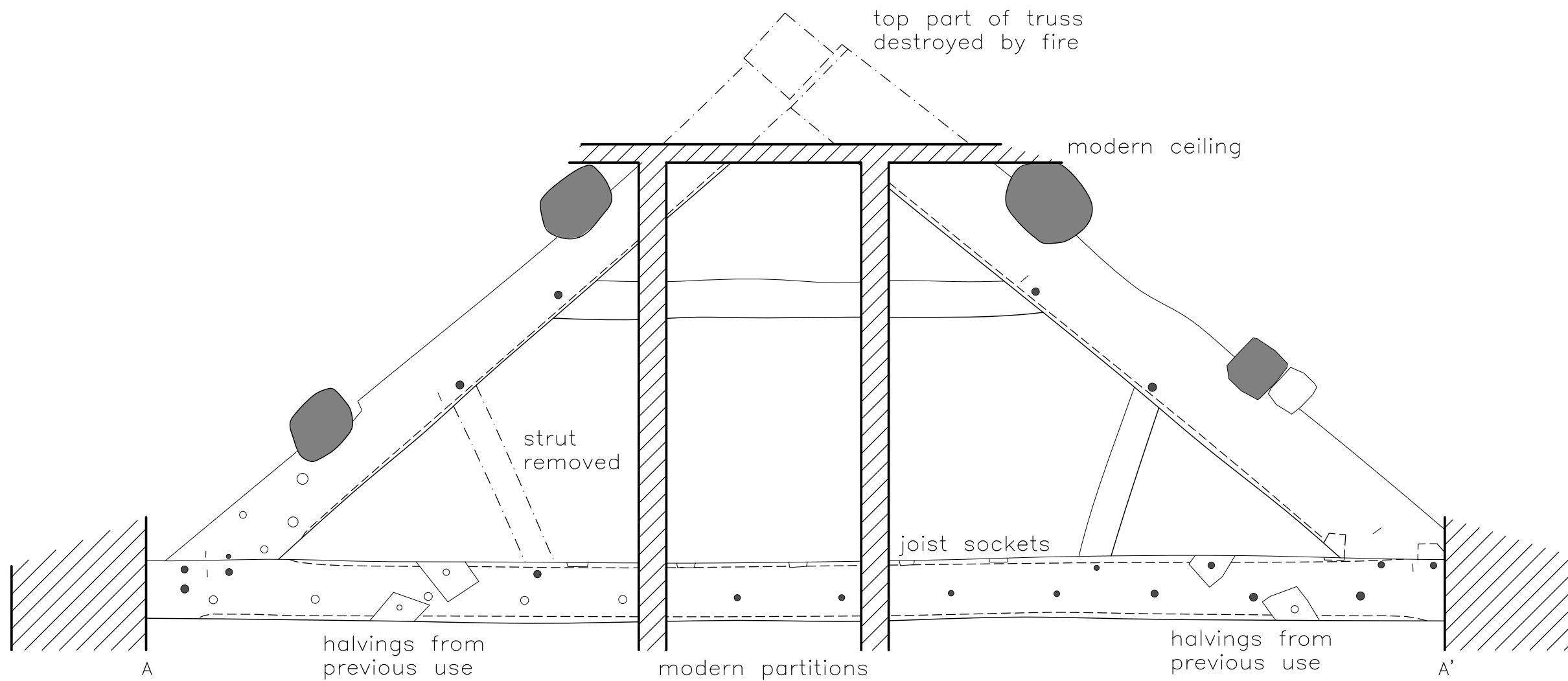
SHACKERLEY HOUSE FARM
 MELLOR
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 (NGR: SD 65837 29769):
 RECORD OF ROOF TIMBERS

FIGURE 4:
 PLAN OF PRINCIPAL ROOF TIMBERS

SCALE: 1:50 (at A3)

DATE OF SURVEY: MARCH 2018

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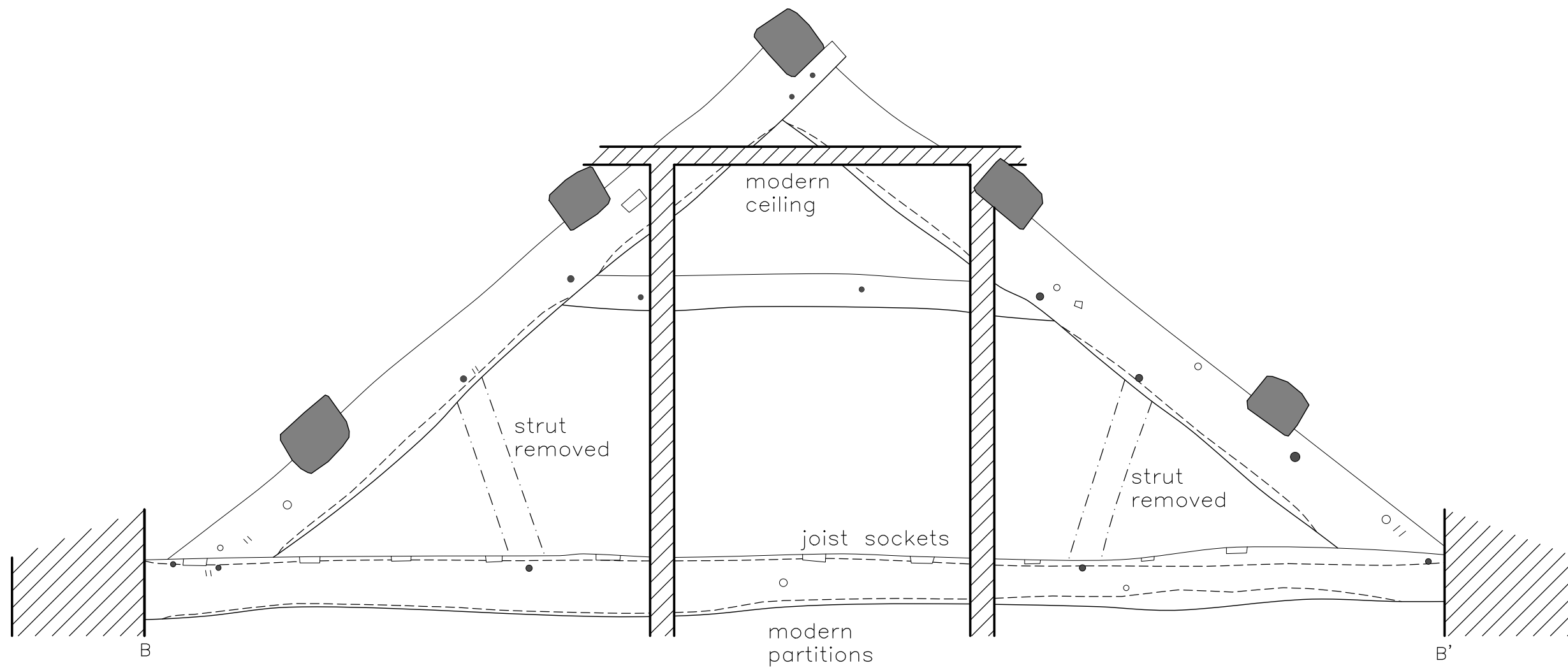
SHACKERLEY HOUSE FARM
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FIGURE 5:
 EAST ROOF TRUSS
 EAST ELEVATION (UPPER FACE)

SCALE: 1:20 (at A3)

DATE OF SURVEY: MARCH 2018

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SHACKERLEY HOUSE FARM
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FIGURE 6:
 WEST ROOF TRUSS
 EAST ELEVATION (UPPER FACE)

SCALE: 1:20 (at A3)

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