

Barrat Farm
Swaindrod Lane, Littleborough, Greater Manchester:
Photographic Record



March 2009

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CONTENTS

List of photographs

1	Introduction	1
2	Location and current use	1
3	Planning background.....	1
4	Historical background.....	2
5	Recording methodology.....	3
6	Description of the buildings	3
7	Conclusion	5
	Appendix: Contents of the project archive.....	6

Figures:

1: Location maps	4: Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, 1910
2: Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map, 1851	5: Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, 1930
3: Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, 1893	6: Site plan with key to photographs

Photographs

SUMMARY

Barrat Farm is a laithe-house of early 19th century date (probably of 1829), with later additions, which is largely unaltered and in an isolated upland position near Littleborough (NGR: SD 958180). It comprises a small house and adjoining three-bay combination barn, with the remains of a cottage attached at one end. Photographic recording was carried out for Mr Tony Mills in March 2009 before development at the site, as required by planning consent from Rochdale MBC, and this report presents the results of this.

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BARRAT FARM, SWAINDROD LANE, LITTLEBOROUGH, GREATER MANCHESTER:

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo Subject

- 1 General view of the house and barn, from the south-west
- 2 House and barn, from the south-west
- 3 The house, from the south
- 4 South gable of the house
- 5 House and south end of barn, from the west
- 6 House and barn, from the south-east
- 7 Rear elevation of house and barn
- 8 Rear elevation of the house
- 9 The barn, from the south-west
- 10 Front elevation of the barn, from the north-west
- 11 Detail of cart entrance to barn, and window over
- 12 Detail of dated window in front elevation of barn
- 13 Detail of doorway at north end of barn
- 14 Rear elevation of the barn
- 15 Barn and house, from the north
- 16 North gable of the barn
- 17 Interior of barn, from the north-west
- 18 View of underside of barn roof, from the west
- 19 North-west addition, from the south
- 20 Detail of blocked doorway into addition, from the south-west
- 21 East side of north-west addition
- 22 North side of north-west addition

BARRAT FARM, SWAINDROD LANE, LITTLEBOROUGH, GREATER MANCHESTER: PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the results of photographic recording at Barrat Farm, near Littleborough, in Greater Manchester. The work was commissioned by the owner and developer Mr Tony Mills, and carried out in March 2009, to fulfil a condition of planning and listed building consent from Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for various alterations at the site.
- 1.2 Barrat Farm is a good example of a "laithe-house", a dwelling adjoining and contemporary with a small combination barn. The building bears a datestone which is not entirely legible, but which probably reads 1829, a likely date for the present structure. A small addition at one end, now of a single storey, is likely to be of a slightly later date.
- 1.3 The recording work was carried out to a brief verbally agreed with Susan Magnall of Rochdale MBC, and was essentially photographic, although this was supplemented by a study of readily available historic maps. This report will be submitted to the client, Rochdale MBC, the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record, and the Rochdale Local Studies Library, who will also receive the project archive.

2 Location and current use

- 2.1 Barrat Farm is isolated and stands on west-facing enclosed improved moorland about 2km north-east of Littleborough, at around 275m above sea level, at NGR: SD 958180 (Figure 1). It is reached from Swaindrod Lane, a rough track which also serves a number of other dwellings in the area.
- 2.2 There is a single range of buildings at the site: the barn and house form an L-shaped arrangement facing west-south-west (hereafter west), and there is a small addition at the north-west corner.
- 2.3 The house is occupied as a dwelling but the adjoining barn is now used only for storage, and does not appear to have been in farming use for several years.

3 Planning background

- 3.1 The range of buildings at Barrat Farm is listed as having special architectural or historic interest (grade 2). The identifying description reads:

Laithe-house. Early C19. Hammer-dressed watershot stone with graduated stone slate roof. 1-bay double-depth house with large barn adjoining to left. The house is deeper than the barn, projecting at the front and with the gable being its principal elevation, an unusual form for a laithe-house to take. A C20 porch has been added within the angle. The original entrance (now a window) is in the gable end which has two 2-light flat-faced mullion windows and 2 windows with square-cut surrounds. 2 windows to rear, one of which is blocked, and a later window. Ridge chimney stack. The barn has a symmetrical elevation dominated by a basket-arched cart entry with impost blocks. On either side is a door with square-cut stone surround and a small adjoining window and above is an arched light with impost blocks, keystone and a lintel inscribed 1879. Later lean-to addition against left gable and rear of barn.

- 3.2 Planning and listed building consents were granted by Rochdale MBC on 7 January 2009, for: “conversion and extension of former dwelling to bungalow and change of use of laithe barn to domestic extension and alterations to existing farmhouse”; and “alterations to listed building” respectively (application numbers 08/D51511 and 08/D51535). Both consents include a condition that a detailed archaeological record be made of the building prior to development, which this report and the project archive are intended to provide.

4 Historical background

- 4.1 Traditional farm buildings are of historical interest because they contribute to an understanding of the vernacular architecture and past farming systems of the region. As a group they are under threat due to redundancy and neglect, as well as their potential for conversion, and records of them can help provide an understanding of this diminishing and irreplaceable stock.
- 4.2 As an example of a largely unaltered laithe-house, Barrat Farm is a building type characteristic of the south Pennines and particularly of those regions where small scale agriculture was combined with domestic textile working. The term laithe-house was coined by Brunskill¹, who observes that the peak period for their construction was between 1780 and 1820, although examples are known from around 1650 to 1880.
- 4.3 Little is known of the history of Barrat Farm itself, which was previously known simply as Barrat, probably the name of the individual who established it. The 1841 census records it as an uninhabited house. Ordnance Survey maps show that it was largely unchanged between the 1840s (Figure 2), and the early 20th century (Figures 3 & 4), when three successive map editions appear to show the north-west addition as present. The latter two maps also show a small porch or similar structure at the south-west corner of the house. Between 1909 and 1929

¹ Brunskill, RW 1987 *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain*, p110

this was demolished, and the north-west building was extended to the west (Figure 5).

5 Recording methodology

- 5.1 The photographic recording took place on 9 March 2009, and primarily involved external photography of the buildings at the site, and a written account.
- 5.2 The main photographic record was made using a medium format camera with perspective control and other lenses, and black and white film for its archival qualities; this was duplicated with colour digital photography. Some shots were taken using a 2m ranging pole marked with 0.5m graduations as a scale, and the locations of the photographs are shown on a site plan. All the black and white photographs have been printed to a size of 7" x 5", and the digital photographs to a comparable size, and both form part of the project archive. The black and white photographs are copied in this report, where they are referred to by numbers in **bold**.

6 Description of the buildings

- 6.1 The L-shaped range which forms the laithe-house is built from coursed, squared and partly watershot gritstone, of good quality to the west and south sides, but of slightly poorer stone to the east and north. Dressings are also of gritstone and are generally plain and square-cut, while the roof is of stone slate with stone ridge, with a single ridge stack to the wall which separates house from barn.
- 6.2 The house forms the south end of the range and projects to the west of the barn. Its front elevation is the south gable, and is of three storeys, the top floor being within the roof. A doorway with tie-stone or interrupted jambs was probably the original entrance into the building (now a window), and led into the west part of the house; there is a regular pattern of windows elsewhere in this wall, with ground and first floor each having a two-light window with square, flat-faced mullion (indicating that this rear room would have been the principal, heated living room), and a third window directly over the former entrance. The attic window has been reduced in size.
- 6.3 To the west side of the house is a modern, inserted window opening within the original fabric; the ground floor has been extended to the north of here, and contains a second window. There is also a modern timber porch on rubble plinth walls. To the rear of the house there is no clear joint between house and barn, but there is a hint of a change in construction, perhaps resulting from different pointing. The house has central windows to ground and first floor (the upper blocked), and an inserted window, suggesting the later division of the main first floor room. The interior of the house was not inspected but is evidently a single

bay wide, and comprises a main room on each floor, with an outer room on each floor on the west side, and an attic room.

- 6.4 The barn is three bays long and its west front is arranged symmetrically. A cart entrance with tie-stone jambs, impost blocks, and shallow basket arch with keystone is the principal entrance, and is served by a flagged causeway along the length of the building. A narrow window over it with arched head and keystone is inscribed with a date; the left part clearly reads 18, the right part is thought to read 29, but alternatively may read 49 or otherwise, although given the documented presence of the building in 1841, 1829 is a more likely ascription. Other openings in this front elevation include the two outer doorways with adjacent narrow windows, each of which serves a shippon facing onto the central bay in the barn. The right-hand doorway is now hidden by the modern porch, but does not appear to have been altered.
- 6.5 To the rear, the barn has a crudely blocked doorway (the door remains in place beyond this masonry), which might be termed a winnowing doorway, although it is doubtful if cereal crops were grown at this altitude in the 19th century, and the opening may simply have been an exit for the horse. There are also a few blocked breathers near the top of the wall, and a larger, inserted and now infilled hole, towards the right-hand quoin. The north gable has blocked breathers and a circular owl hole, cut from a single stone.
- 6.6 The interior of the barn was not recorded in detail, but comprises a central bay open to the roof (except where a later loft has been built over it next to the rear wall), with flagged floor. To either side are shippons for six animals, with stalls divided by boskins fashioned from square-sawn softwood which also support hay lofts. The shippons have concrete floors, but retain their muck channels or "groups". They are also served by recesses within the end walls, which may have been for standing lamps or milk cans. The barn roof has two queen-strut trusses, also of imported softwood; although most of the purlins are of oak or other hardwood, no obvious signs of re-use were observed which might indicate the presence of an earlier building at the site. Mr Mills also reports that similar hardwood roof timbers exist in the house.
- 6.7 The building which stands at the north-west corner of the range is of relatively minor interest but clearly represents a former dwelling; the present owner, Mr Mills, knew of a local resident who had been born in it around the turn of the 20th century. The part nearest the barn is of stone, which has clearly been built up against the barn's gable, and although of a single storey it seems to have been reduced to this height, so formerly was probably a two storey cottage, of a single room on each floor. In the south front is a blocked doorway with good jambs to each side, but this only measures 0.6m (2 feet) wide, which is inexplicably narrow. Otherwise, the front contains a garage door, over which the masonry

has been rebuilt. The two other stone walls, to east and north, do not appear to contain any original openings, the rear doorway lacking any dressings. The west side of this stone structure has been taken down, probably when the brick-built west part was added in the 1910s or 1920s, and this implies that the dwelling had already fallen out of use by this date. Traces of blue wall paint remain inside the present asbestos-roofed structure, but no other features which are not visible externally. Given the small size of it, it would therefore appear that this building was a small dwelling, probably for a servant or family member, and perhaps in use only for a short time during the late 19th century or very early 20th century.

7 Conclusion

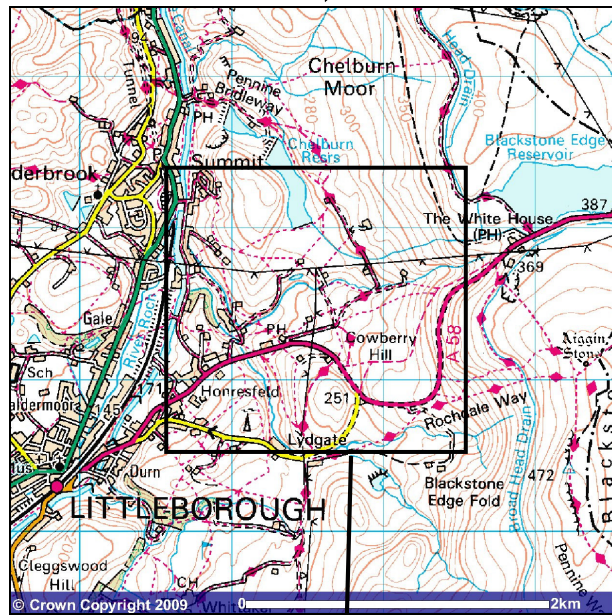
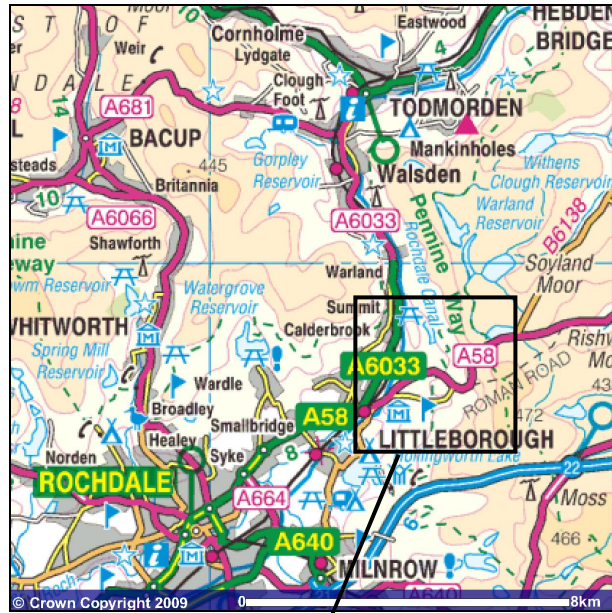
- 7.1 The present laithe-house at Barrat Farm is of early 19th century date and is a good example of its type, although the arrangement of the house is unusual in that it does not face the same way as the barn, but its gable serves as its front elevation. No clear evidence exists for any building at the site prior to the present range, although the presence of hardwood roof timbers in both house and barn hints at this, as does the fact that some of the neighbouring farmhouses are of 17th century date. The remains of a former cottage at the north-west corner attest to the existence of a second dwelling at the site, but these are not thought to be historically or archaeologically significant and the second dwelling may have been built as an ephemeral structure, some time after the barn's construction.

Appendix: Contents of the project archive

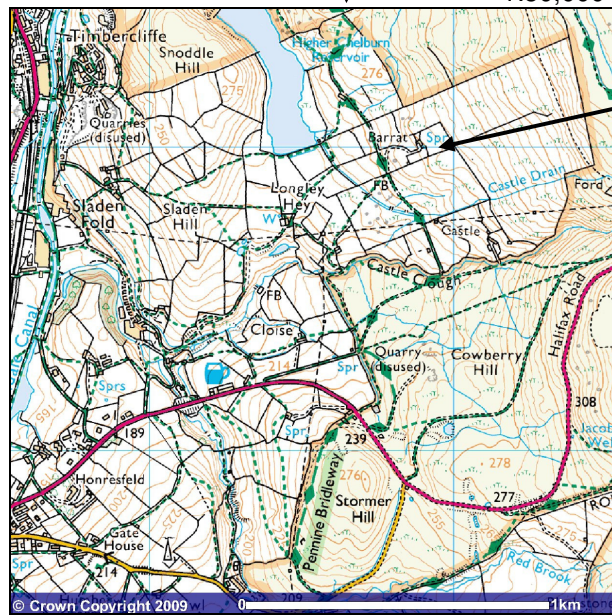
To be deposited with the Rochdale Local Studies Library

1 file, containing:

- a copy of this report
- full set of black and white photographs and negatives
- full set of colour digital prints



1:50,000



1:25,000

Figure 1: Location maps

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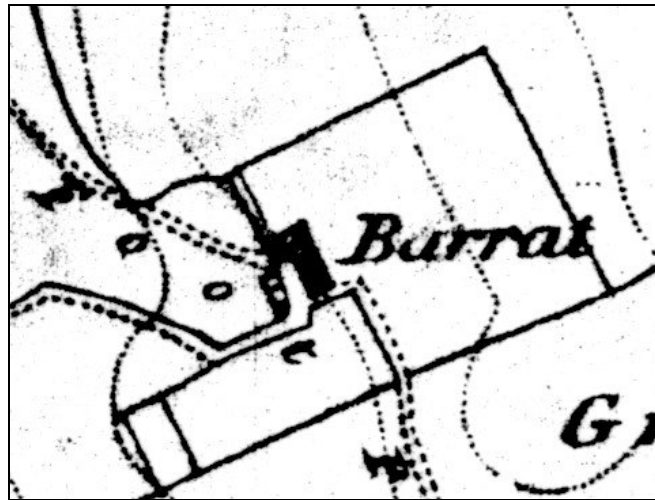
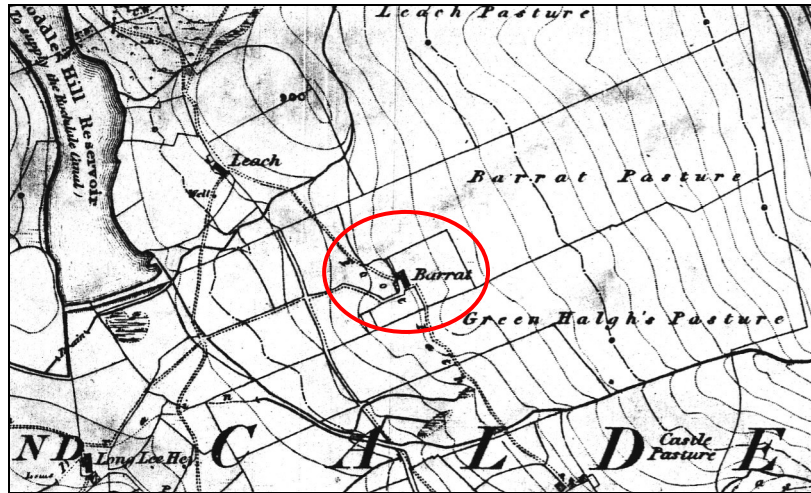


Figure 2: Ordnance Survey 1:10560/6" to mile map (lower extract enlarged to 1:2500)
Published 1851 (surveyed 1847-8); Lancashire sheet 81

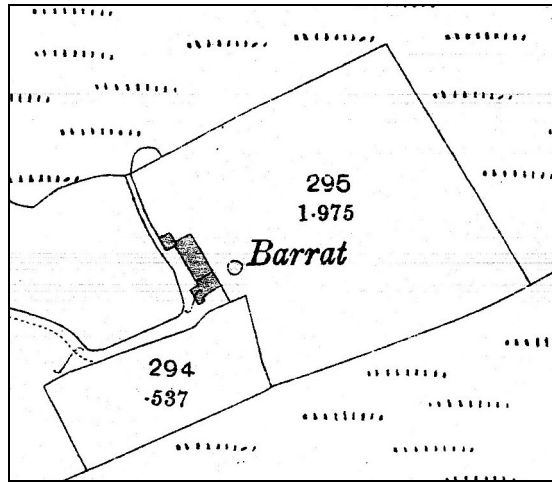


Figure 3: Ordnance Survey 1:2500/25" to mile map. Published 1893 (surveyed 1891); Lancashire sheet 81.7

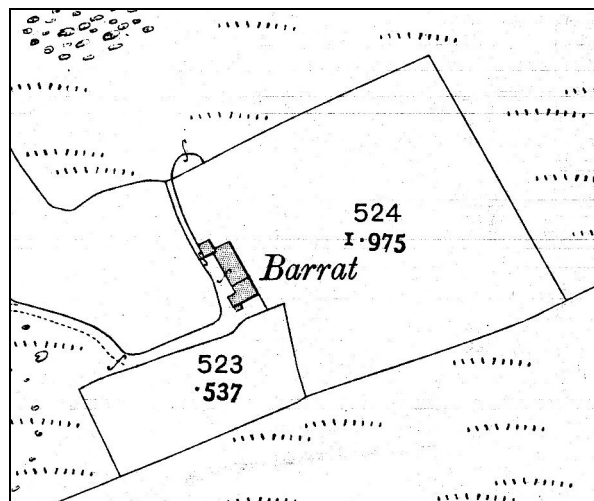


Figure 4: Ordnance Survey 1:2500/25" to mile map. Published 1910 (revised 1909); Lancashire sheet 81.7

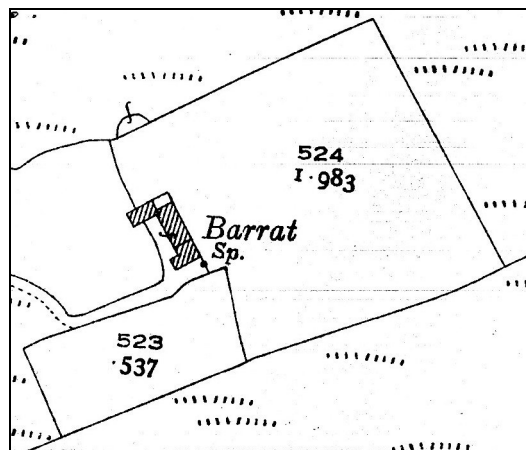


Figure 5: Ordnance Survey 1:2500/25" to mile map. Published 1930 (revised 1929); Lancashire sheet 81.7
Shows the addition of the brick shed

