

PYT HOUSE FARM BARN ASHAMPSTEAD, WEST BERKSHIRE

Heritage Statement



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**PYT HOUSE FARM BARN
ASHAMPSTEAD, WEST BERKSHIRE**

Archaeological Building Recording

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BSc. (Hons.) PG Dip. IHBC MCIfA

June 2019

**FORUM
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SUMMARY

ADDRESS: Pyt House, Ashampstead, Reading, West Berkshire RG8 8RA

NGR: SU 57755 75983

STAUS: Barn and shelter shed: Unlisted.

The farmhouse is listed Grade II but barn believed to have been in separate ownership to the house at date of listing and so was not considered to be curtilage listed.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:

The barn is a four-bay timber-framed building with an aisle to the rear, west side and the threshing bay is in the second of bay from the north. The barn has weatherboarded walls above a brick plinth and half-hipped plain clay tile roof with a hipped porch to the west side of the threshing bay.

The form of framing to the walls of the barn, using long, raking shores that pass tall, thin struts between sole plate and wall plate is typical of barn construction in the later 18th century and early 19th century. The framing is notable due to some of the detail of its construction, in particular, the unusual use of under-rafter to Trusses II, III and IV, and the curved braces to the walls of the aisle. The latter indicate an unusual level of care in the design and construction of the building.

The shelter shed is larger than the usual form of this building type due to the presence of an aisle which either was originally intended to serve as/has been made into a feeding passage. This building is probably of 19th century date.

WORKS UNDERTAKEN:

Building recording was required by West Berkshire Council as part of a consent for the conversion of the barn and shelter shed to residential use (15/02650/FUL). Photographic recording was undertaken in June 2019 by Forum Heritage Services to Level 2 of *Understanding Historic Buildings - a guide to good recording practice* (Historic England 2016).

PERSONNEL: The recording and report preparation was undertaken by Bob Edwards BSc (Hons) PG Dip. IHBC MCIfA, Director of Forum Heritage Services.

DATE: June 2019.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Pyt Farm is an historic farmstead located approximately 2km to the south-east of the village of Ashampstead, West Berkshire (SU 57755 75983). The farmstead consists of a Grade II listed farmhouse, believed to date from the 16th century, and three unlisted barns, a cart shed and a shelter shed.
- 1.2 West Berkshire Council recently granted planning permission for the conversion of one of the barns and the attached shelter shed to residential use (15/02650/FUL). The planning consent included a condition requiring the recording of the barn and shed before the commencement of building works.
- 1.3 Forum Heritage Services prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the recording which has been approved by the Council. Bob Edwards BSc (Hons) PG Dip. IHBC MCIfA, Director of Forum Heritage Services, visited the property in June 2019 to undertake the recording and subsequently prepared this report. Plans showing the location of photographs taken are presented in Appendix I. The photos are held on CD and copies of the report and images will be submitted to the local planning authority, the Historic Environment Record and the West Berkshire Museum, Newbury.

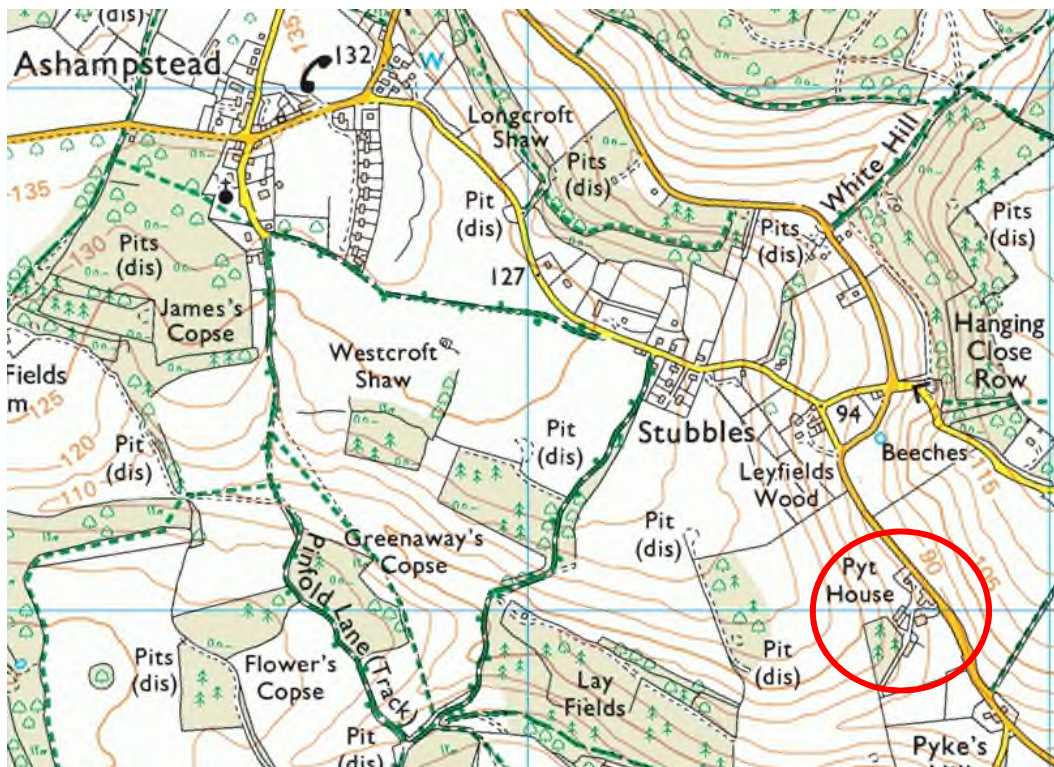


Figure 1 Site location plan. © Ordnance Survey/Getmapping.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Pyt House contains elements of a 16th century house but the Victoria History of the County of Berkshire (Ditchfield and Page 1924) suggests that Pyt House has earlier, medieval origins:

The origin of PYT HOUSE probably appears in the 'land of William de Puteo in Æshamstede,' which Richard de Vernon acquired of Henry of Newburgh circa 1180. Alexander son of William de Peteo received certain land in Basildon at fee farm from William de Vernon early in the 13th century. William atte Putte was a juror of Basildon in 1341. The Wyle in Hampstead Norris is probably the 'puteus' or 'putte' from which they are named. Walter de la Wyle sold a messuage and land in Basildon with 'la Wyle' to Richard de Coleshill in 1270, and Ellis de Coleshill had in 1311 a grant of free warren in his lands in Basildon, Ashampstead, Hampstead (Norris) and 'Wile.' In 1356 3 carucates of land in these places were settled on Isabel de Brompton for life with remainder to Thomas de Coleshill and Lucy his wife and their children Richard, Thomas and Isabel. The last-mentioned Isabel married Hugh Crane and succeeded on the death of her brothers to the estate, of which she died seised in 1410. Her heir was her grandson Richard son of Robert Inkpen. The Pitt family were living here in the 16th century, and in 1588 Richard Pitt leased a messuage called Porters in Ashampstead for eleven years to Edward Ruffyn. Possibly this messuage was the 'manor of Pitthouse Farm' which was conveyed by the Sayers in 1747 and 1755. It was purchased with the principal manor by Mr. Hopkins, and sold after 1899 to Major Robert Mercer Barry, the present owner.

- 2.2 The barn and shelter shed are shown on the 1st edition 25" Ordnance Survey map of 1878.

3.0 DESCRIPTION

Farmstead

- 3.1 Pyt Farm consists of a main cluster of house and two barns, one with an attached cart shed which faces onto the road, the yard area now being a gravelled parking and turning area bordered by the lawn of the house. These two barns are located to the north of the house and are timber-framed buildings with plain clay tile roofs. The western barn of the two is aisled to both sides.
- 3.2 To the north-west of the farmhouse is a third barn with an attached shelter shed built in-line with the barn, the shelter shed having a walled yard area to its south-east which historic maps show had buildings to the south-west and south-east sides.

Barn

NB: The barn is aligned north-east to south-west but for ease of reference in this report the barn is described as being aligned north – south with an aisle to the rear, west and the principal elevation facing east.

- 3.3 The barn is a four-bay timber-framed building with an aisle to the rear, west side and the threshing bay is in the second of bay from the north. The barn has weatherboarded walls above a brick plinth and half-hipped plain clay tile roof with a hipped porch to the west side of the threshing bay faced with corrugated sheet metal (Figures 2 and 3). The plinth to the north gable may have been rebuilt using cementitious mortar. Most of the weatherboarding is modern softwood with an area of older boarding at lower level on the north elevation. The timber-frame is predominantly constructed in oak, but the tie beams are of softwood and

there are occasional softwood elements in the stud work of the walls which appear unlikely to be original. The wall plate on the west side is also a softwood.



Figure 2 Barn, east elevation.



Figure 3 Barn, north and west elevations.

3.4

The barn appears to be a building of primary timber-framing, i.e. it appears that most, if not all of the timbers used in this building are in their primary use in this building, with very little evidence for re-used timbers. The wall framing is typical late 18th/early 19th century framing consisting of tall scantling studs stretching between the soleplate and the wall plate or tie beams at the gable ends with long, raking shores between the principal posts down to the foot of the central more substantial posts to the centre of each bay and at the centre of the gable ends (Figure 4). One of the features of this building are the raking shores to the walls of the aisle; rather than being straight timbers, these shores gently curve, all but two are clearly having been cut specifically to give this effect, the other two having a less steep and slightly more irregular curve, but the overall effect is pleasing and suggests a degree of quality in the construction of this building (Figure 5).



Figure 4 Barn interior facing north showing the wall framing of thin studs and long, raking shores.



Figure 5 The wall framing to the aisle in Bay 1 showing the curved shores.

3.5

There is no porch on the east elevation where the former double-doors have been removed. The door posts survive in-situ with one old pintle hinge on the south post. The posts have sockets for a timber to be inserted to secure the doors internally. On the west side, the doors have also been removed and replaced by a smaller set of double doors with the remaining part of the opening covered in corrugated sheet metal. Again, there are sockets in the posts for bars to secure the doors internally. Over the aisle there is a hipped roof to provide the necessary headroom. The arcade post between Bays 3 and 4 is supported on a brick pier with a timber pad on top, but the other two arcade posts are now supported on concrete

bases but retain the timber pads. An aisle tie survives on Truss IV but to Trusses II and III there are angled braces which support the ends of the purlins over the aisle.

- 3.6 Within the east wall of Bay 4 there an opening has been inserted which has cut through the raking shore but has now been boarded over externally. There was also an opening in the south end above the soleplate, which also has been boarded over, and a door at the south end of the aisle gives access to a feeding passage in the attached shelter shed.
- 3.7 The arcade post of Truss IV has a series of housings which seem to correspond on its north and south faces, but there are no marks on the arcade post to the north of Truss III or on the west post of Truss V that correspond with these housings. There is also a void mortise in its west face, presumably for a tie across to the post on the aisle wall. Although the bottom of this timber has been truncated and a horizontal block of wood has been inserted. There is a similar tie from the arcade post of Truss III and also a void mortise in the arcade post of Truss II.
- 3.8 The roof trusses to the gables consist of both queen struts and raking struts, the queen struts connecting to a collar which clasps the upper set of purlins whilst the raking struts, clasp the lower purlins of the main roof (Figure 6). The three trusses defining the bays have gently curving braces between the principal posts and the tie beams, principal rafters and curved under rafters between the tie and the collar, the curve enabling the under rafters to clasp the lower purlins which are also housed into the soffit of the principal rafters (Figure 7). The principal posts are generally square in section with angle cut jowls; the only principal post that really marginally differs from this pattern is the post to the east side of Truss I at the north gable where the jowl has a gentle curve rather than angle cut but is otherwise of similar form.



Figure 6 The roof truss of Truss I at the north end of the barn with queen and raking struts.



Figure 7 Truss II with inner rafters supporting the lower set of purlins.

- 3.9 There are no typical wind braces but within Bay 1 at the north end there are long angled shores, which span the width of the bay, that to the west, rising from Truss II up to the half-hip and on the east side, rising from close to the east post of Truss I up to above the collar of Truss II. In the Bay 4 at the south end there are similar long raking timbers set in opposing directions as in Bay 1. The roof retains most of its common rafters which meet at a ridge board, the only area where the rafters have been replaced is over the aisle in Bay 1 where the rafters and the purlin have been replaced by modern softwood. The purlin over the aisle in Bay 3 has been supplemented by a large softwood timber.
- 3.10 The floor the barn is of modern concrete which has a level change to the aisle in Bays 3 and 4. On the line of the arcade there are post holes suggesting that the barn may have been at least partly converted to animal housing, the aisle forming a feed passage.

Shelter shed

- 3.11 The shelter shed is a building of five bays with brick walls to the south and west, the south wall being laid in Flemish Garden Wall bond and probably replacing a timber stud wall as there are posts to the front and on the line of the arcade plate to the rear (Figure 8). The brickwork of the wall to the rear of the aisle appears to have been rebuilt using cement mortar and the rafters over the aisle are all modern softwood timbers. The roof is of plain clay tiles and hipped to the south.
- 3.12 The shelter shed has a small aisle to the rear which appears to have served as a feeding passage; hay racks and mangers remain in-situ although the mangers are in various states of collapse with the manger in Bay 4 being almost entirely lost (Figure 9).



Figure 8 Shelter shed, east elevation.



Figure 9 Shelter shed interior facing north-west.

3.12

The building has five roof trusses with Truss I set adjacent to the south gable wall of the barn. The trusses are all of queen-strut construction with clasped purlins and a narrow ridge board (Figure 10). The braces between the ties and posts are generally straight although some have slight or irregular curves. The posts have jowls with ogee or cyma recta mouldings (Figure 11). The tie beams of Trusses I – III are reused timbers as evidenced by void mortises in the soffits inside the triangle defined by the down braces. The tie beams of Trusses IV and V are slightly more regular softwood timbers with no evidence of reuse. To the front there are slightly curved braces and from the arcade posts to the arcade plate there are a mixture of the slightly curved and straight braces.



Figure 10 Truss V, north face.



Figure 11
Post of Truss V showing the cyma recta
moulding to the jowl.

3.13

Truss II has been 'closed' by horizontal battens between the queen struts and other studs, above the tie beam up to the collar, and vertical battens from collars up to the principal rafters (Figure 12). Below the tie beam there are wider, vertically set boards from the tie beam down to an inserted horizontal member set at the level of the bottom of the jowl. There is a similar horizontal timber on Truss I but no evidence for the closure of this truss. At lower level evidence for a partition is provided by a gap between the mangers in Bays 1 and 2 and marks on the inner faces of the arcade post and front principal post showing that there were timbers abutting these posts where painting/blackening of the timbers did not reach because of the presence of the timbers. There are also three sockets in the concrete floor on the

general line of the partition although set slightly to the north of the line of this partition; they may be later reinforcements to a partition which was then present. On the posts of Truss IV there are attached vertical timbers and areas which lack staining where there were also horizontal timbers suggesting that there was also a partition between Bays 3 and 4 and there are also sockets in the concrete floor on this line. On the front posts defining Bay 4 there are large mortises and housings for some method of closing this bay and similar but differently set housings across Bay 5.



Figure 12 Roof structure looking north with the closed truss, Truss II.

- 3.14 The roof trusses II-V have carpenter's marks which are generally consistent to on the tie beam/joints to the tie; I on the principal rafter above the arcade plate, II on the western queen strut and tie beam, III on the eastern queen strut and tie beam and IIII on the end of the tie beam to the east. Truss III differs in that there is a CC mark made using a gouge at the base of the queen strut to the west with a CCC on the eastern queen strut. There are other marks on the braces, posts and queen struts which are not so regular in their presence across the trusses.

4.0 ANALYSIS

- 4.1 The form of framing to the walls of the barn, using long, raking shores that pass tall, thin struts between sole plate and wall plate is typical of barn construction in the later 18th century and early 19th century.
- 4.2 The recorded barn at Pyt Farm is notable due to the fact that it is a building of primary framing with little evidence of re-used timbers and by some of the detail of its construction, in particular, the unusual use of under-rafters to Trusses II, III and IV, and the curved braces to the walls of the aisle. The latter indicate an unusual level of care in the design and construction of the building.
- 4.3 The shelter shed is larger than the usual form of this building type due to the presence of an aisle which either was originally intended to serve as/has been made into a feeding passage. This building is probably of 19th century date.

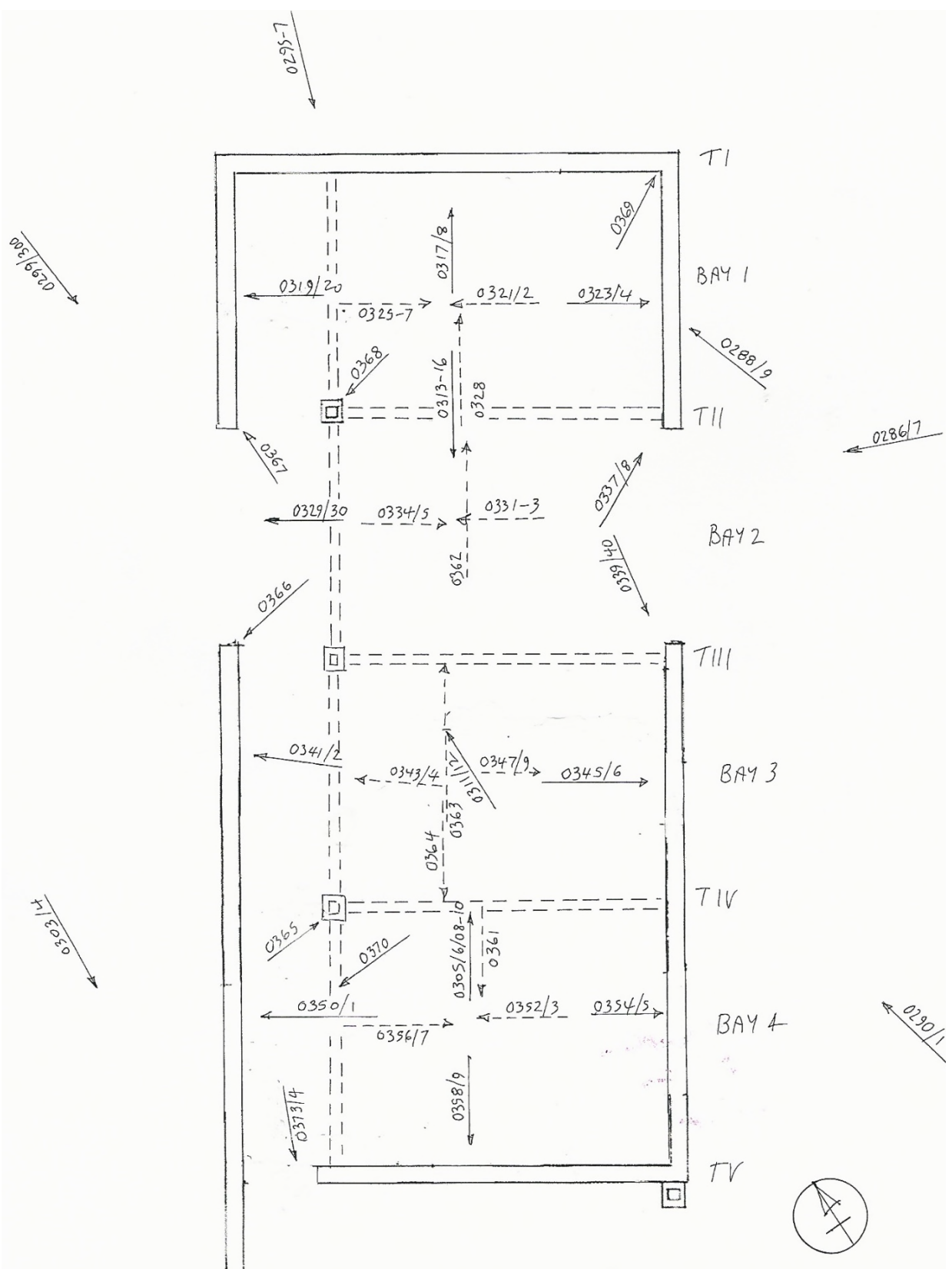
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SOURCES

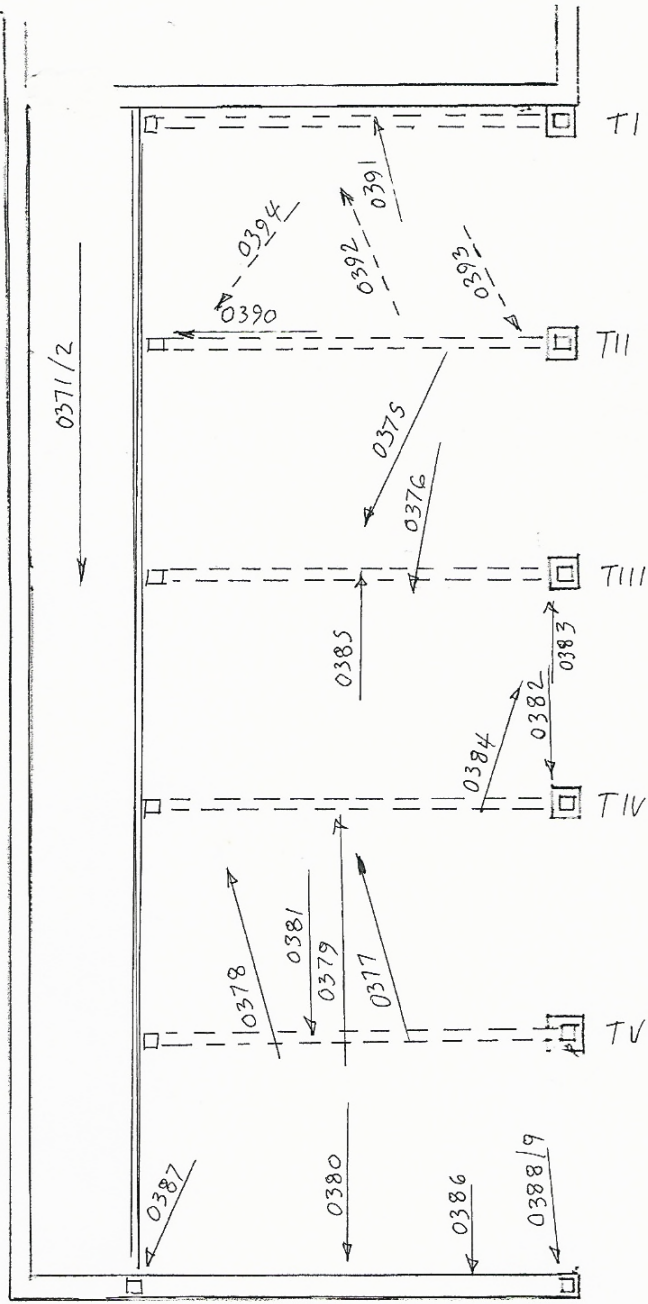
Ditchfield P H and Page W eds. (1923) *A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 3*, pp. 449-452. London *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/berks/vol3/pp449-452> [accessed 17 June 2019].

APPENDIX I

Photograph Location Plans



BARN
(Not to scale)

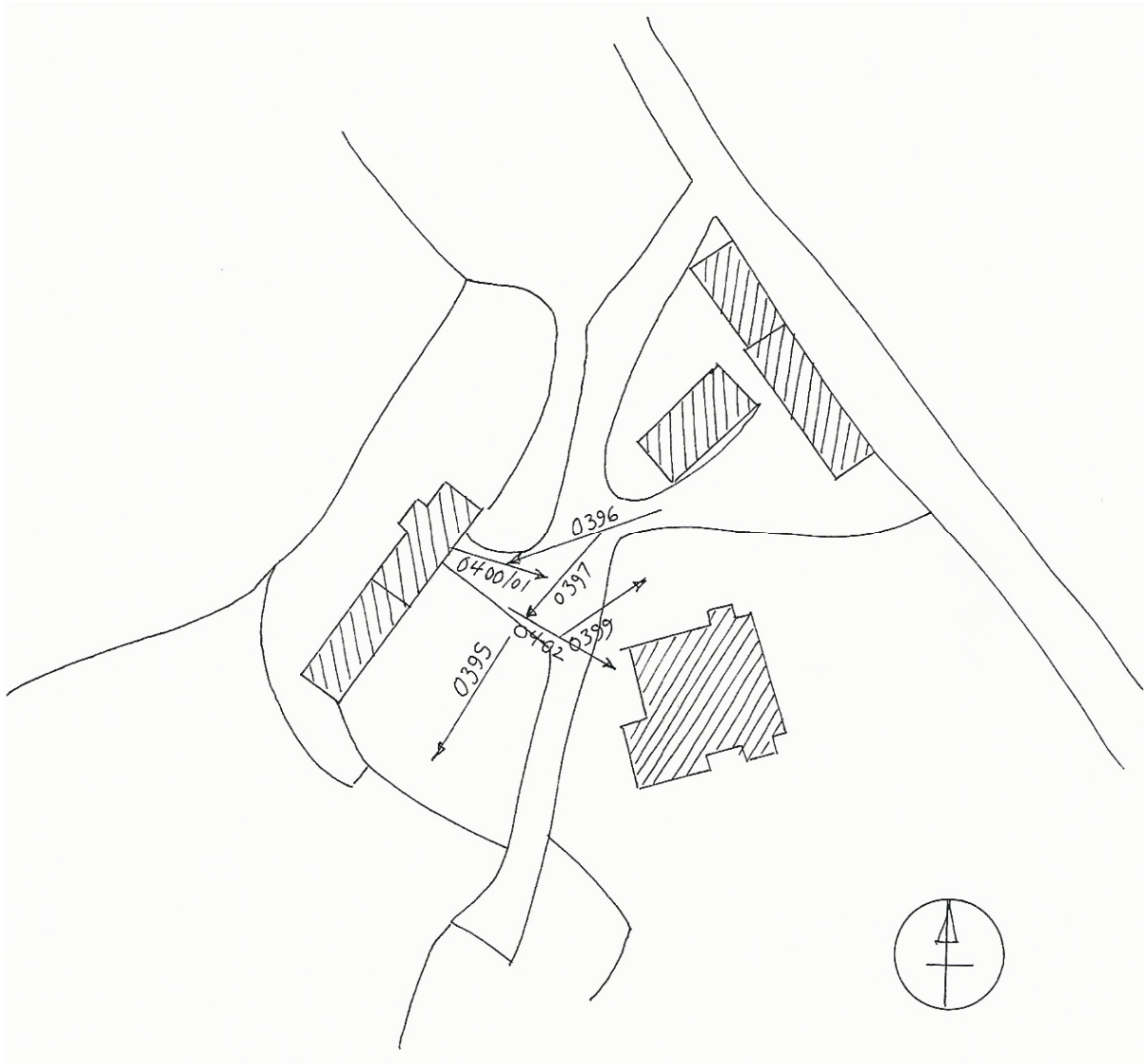


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SHELTER SHED
(Not to scale)



SITE VIEWS
(Not to scale)