

Lower Wotton Farm, Yeoford, Colebrooke, Devon

NGR SX 76199 98097

Results of historic building recording

Mid Devon District Council planning reference 11/0099/LBC

Prepared by
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On behalf of Mr Henry Rising

Document No: ACD366/2/0

Date: April 2012



AC archaeology

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Summary

An historic building record of a linhay was prepared by AC archaeology in September 2011 prior to its conversion into ancillary accommodation. The barn was probably constructed in the early 18th century. The building has an unusual design with two open fronts – one onto the farmyard, the other onto a rear access track. Several reused timbers from the medieval farmhouse have been incorporated into the building. In the 18th century one bay was divided to form a stall, possibly a calf house, whilst a piggery was added to the end of the barn in the early 19th century.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 An historic building record of a linhay at Lower Wotton Farm, Yeoford, Colebrooke, Devon (SX 76199 98097; Fig. 1) was prepared by AC archaeology on 21 September 2011. The recording was commissioned by Mr Henry Rising and was required under condition 3 of the grant of listed building consent (Mid Devon District Council application number 11/00991/LBC) for the conversion of the linhay to ancillary accommodation.
- 1.2 Lower Wotton Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building (National Heritage List number 1171060), described as being of late 17th-century date with 19th-century alterations and extensions, including an agricultural building.
- 1.3 The associated barns and lincays are also Grade II listed (National Heritage List number 1106991). Extracts from the listing description for the surveyed linhay are presented below.

The main range faces south-east and comprises a C16 barn with byre and hayloft added to right and range extended further right (north-east) by C17 linhay.

The linhay adjoining the byre is an unusual double-fronted variety. An axial cob wall separates front and back stalls but only stands to first floor level leaving the tallet open. It is 4 bays (Alcock's Type T1) with full height posts of large scantling and the crossbeams are tusk-tenoned to the posts. The roof trusses are C19 A-frame replacements with lap-jointed collars fixed with iron nails and wooden pegs.

Both linhay roofs are hipped at the end.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 2)

- 2.1 Lower Wotton Farm is a remote farmstead within Colebrooke Parish, and lies 2km to the southwest of Yeoford. It is situated at a height of 90m aOD above the River Troney, a tributary of the River Yeo. The underlying geology is mudstone and siltstone of the Ashton mudstone member and Crackington formation.
- 2.2 The only pre-medieval archaeological site or findspot in the vicinity is the Berry Ball hillfort, which is located 600m to the south of the farm on a hilltop overlooking the River Troney. Excavations in advance of the water pipeline through the hillfort in 1998 uncovered evidence of roundhouses and occupation preceding the construction of the defences. Calibrated radiocarbon determinations indicated occupation in the 4th to 3rd centuries BC (Manning and Quinnell 2009).

- 2.3** The historic nature of the farm has been noted from the listed building descriptions (above), and this is reflected in the historic mapping (Fig. 2). The 1845 Colebrooke tithe map depicts the farmhouse, with agricultural buildings to the north and west, surrounded by woods and orchards. The accompanying apportionment of the same date records the owner as John Henry Hippisley Esq, with the farm being occupied by John Dart. The 1885 Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:2500 map depicts further agricultural buildings as well as a new horse engine house attached to the north-west corner of the farmyard.
- 2.4** In 2004 an archaeological survey of the farmhouse was prepared by Exeter Archaeology in advance of proposed alterations (Parker 2004; see also HER entry 38439). During this survey it was noted that the open front of the linhay was supported on two large reused timbers, serving as vertical posts.

One of these timbers is of massive scantling, and has mortices for other timbers in three of its sides [Type **A**]. The fourth side of the timber has been carved into a deep, shallow cove, which may well have formed the face of a jetty bressumer overlooking an open hall. The opposite side of this timber contains a row of regularly spaced, pegged mortices, which clearly represent the sockets for first-floor joists forming a storeyed end to the hall. The 'underside' of the timber contains sockets compatible with a stud-and-panel screen or partition containing at least one doorway, and the 'upper' side has sockets suitable for vertical studs forming the wall of the first-floor chamber overlooking the hall. Unfortunately it was not possible to establish whether the timbers were smoke-blackened, and the existence of a central hearth in association with this structure remains conjectural.

The second timber supporting the front of the linhay appears to represent a large beam, with open housed joist sockets in both sides [Type **B**]. This seems to have been derived from the first floor of a storeyed building at least two bays wide. The timber is comparable in length and its sockets in size with those of the putative 'jetty bressummer', described above, and it seems likely that they are from the same structure (ibid., 6, with bold numbers referring to recorded timbers – see section 5 below).

3. AIMS

- 3.1** The objective of the investigation was set out in a brief (Reed 2011) provided by Devon County Council's Archaeological Officer. The aim of the project was to prepare a record of the historic building prior to the commencement of the development and to record any architectural features or fabric exposed during the conversion.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** All works were undertaken in accordance with the brief and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Passmore 2011).
- 4.2** The fieldwork comprised a photographic, written and drawn survey, carried out to 'Level 3', as set out in the English Heritage 2003 document *Understanding Historic Buildings*. The record considered:
- Site layout and organisation,
 - Function,

- Materials and method of construction,
 - Fenestration,
 - Internal arrangements,
 - Original fixings and fittings,
 - Subsequent fixtures and fittings, evidence of use and status,
 - Ephemeral evidence of occupation and use, particularly any evidence of historic graffiti, and
 - Date/period of initial building and subsequent alterations.
- 4.3** The photographic record included general views of the building, both internally and externally, as well as details of architectural features and fixtures and fittings. The record was made using a high-quality digital camera, with details of photographs taken made on *pro forma* record sheets.
- 4.4** A ground-floor plan and the north-west and south-west elevations of the linhay were recorded at a scale of 1:50. Details of reused timbers were drawn at a larger scale.
- 5. THE LINHAY (Figs 3-4; Plates 1-6)**
- 5.1** The linhay is an addition to the farmyard, and adjoins an earlier byre. It measures 10.3m by 4.5m, and is divided into four bays by timber posts. A piggery has been added to its north-east elevation (see section 5.6 below). The building has an usual design, being double fronted with open elevations facing both the farmyard to the south and an access track to the north (Plates 1-2). The ground-floor stalls are divided by an axial yellow cob wall laid on a stone footing; the tallet above is fully open. A wide opening has been inserted into one of the central bays. Here the cob has been refaced with bricks, and two large timbers inserted as a doorframe that also support the first-floor beams (Plate 3). Both timbers have four sockets on their inside faces and two sockets on their south faces. These may relate to an earlier use, although it is possible that the sockets facing the doorway could have held wooden bars blocking the opening. Tethering chains are attached to the posts, as is a wooden bar, probably associated with a door latch. Elsewhere, the cob has been partially refaced using red bricks that abut the earlier bricks of the inserted opening. The 20th-century concrete floor had been removed from the barn, and no evidence for earlier stone or cobbled surfaces was visible.
- 5.2** The west elevation is the east gable elevation of the earlier byre and is constructed of cob on a stone footing. Some of the cob has been refaced in brick. The north elevation of the linhay is also of the same construction, again with some brick repairs, and was further altered when the piggery was added (see below). The south elevation of the eastern bay has been infilled using mixed rubble masonry as a footing for yellow cob. The wall incorporated a doorway that has subsequently been infilled using widely-spaced bricks; adjacent masonry was rebuilt at the same time. This probably took place in the late 20th-century. The wall also incorporates a small high level window.
- 5.3** The roof and first-floor beams are supported on rows of three vertical posts, five of which are reused. Three types of timbers are present. Type A is a jetty bressumer and has been previously been recorded by Parker (section 2.4 above). Type B posts are beams from a first-floor structure (Plate 5) and have also been noted by Parker (section 2.4 above). Three of these beams were noted in the linhay. Type C is a plain rectangular timber with series of widely-spaced stave holes (presumably for a wattle and daub partition) in one side. It may have formed the head or cill of a screen.

Attached to these posts are pintles and a timber latch hook, all associated with former doorways into the linhay.

- 5.4** The first floor – consisting of wide wooden planks – is supported on a substantial timber superstructure. Large beams set into the central cob wall are attached to the vertical posts by long tongues fixed using single wooden pegs (Plate 5). The undersides of some of the tongues are curved. These beams support floor joists that overlap on top of the beams. Further joists have been laid outside the posts on top of the tongues. The first floor is almost entirely open on the long axis allowing access for storage from both sides. One bay has been infilled using corrugated iron sheets.
- 5.5** The roof trusses are 19th-century A-frame replacements with lap-jointed collars fixed with iron nails and wooden pegs. The feet of the trusses sit in large sockets in the top of the vertical posts. The corrugated iron roof is supported on rows of three back purlins. The gable openings are boarded up with vertical planks.
- 5.6** The piggery is a single-storey addition with a pitched roof (Plate 6). It is largely covered by modern plaster, but large rubble stonework, along with a cill beam on the south elevation, is visible below. This beam also appears to have been reused since what appear to be sockets are filled with plaster. Although the building is shown on the 1905 OS 1:2500 map and is probably also depicted on the 1888 OS map, the character of the masonry, in conjunction with the fresh state of the plaster above, probably indicates the building has been restored in the recent past. The east elevation incorporates three plank doors, each with different strap hinges. Against this wall an early surface of pitched rectangular slate cobbles survives. This building has a modern corrugated iron sheet roof.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1** The recorded barn is a linhay – that is a cow house with an open front and a tallet or hay loft above. The plan form of the barn is unusual. Most lincays have a single open front, and whilst double-fronted lincays are known, they rarely appear in the literature on farm buildings. Alcock (1963, 122), for example, refers to an unlofted double-fronted linhay on Braunton Marshes, and a fully open and lofted deer barn or shelter has been recorded on the Stevenstone Estate near Great Torrington (Passmore 2009).
- 6.2** The date of the linhay is unclear. It is attached to a byre of probable 16th-century date, and the listed building description puts forward a 17th century date for its construction. The lack of evidence for early diagnostic dating features, such as a cruck roof, would indicate a date from the late 17th century onwards (Alcock 1963, 125), whilst Parker (2004, 4-5) suggests that the lincays were built in the early 18th century at the same time as the farmhouse was extensively remodelled. The latter seems most likely although a later 17th-century date remains possible.
- 6.3** The building appears to have remained in use as a linhay until the recent past. It has been adapted, probably in the early 19th-century, with the infilling of one bay to form a separate stall, perhaps to be used as a calf house. Repairs to the cob walls have also been made, and the roof replaced – the latter associated with a wider replacement of the roofs of the farm buildings in the 19th century. The linhay was extended, probably in the early 19th century, with the addition of a piggery.

7. OASIS ENTRY AND ARCHIVE

- 7.1 An entry to the OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological investigationS) database has been completed, and has the identifying code 118626.
- 7.2 The paper and digital archive are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, in Unit 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, Nr Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ, but will ultimately be deposited under the relevant accession number at the RAMM, Exeter, at the earliest in 2013 when the current museum non-acceptance policy will be reviewed. The RAMM reference number is 11/52.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 The documentary research was carried out by Kerry Kerr-Peterson and the building survey undertaken by Paul Jones. The report was prepared by Andrew Passmore, based on a draft text written by Kerry Tyler; the illustrations were prepared by Elizabeth Patkai.

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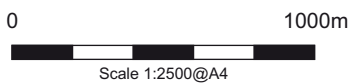
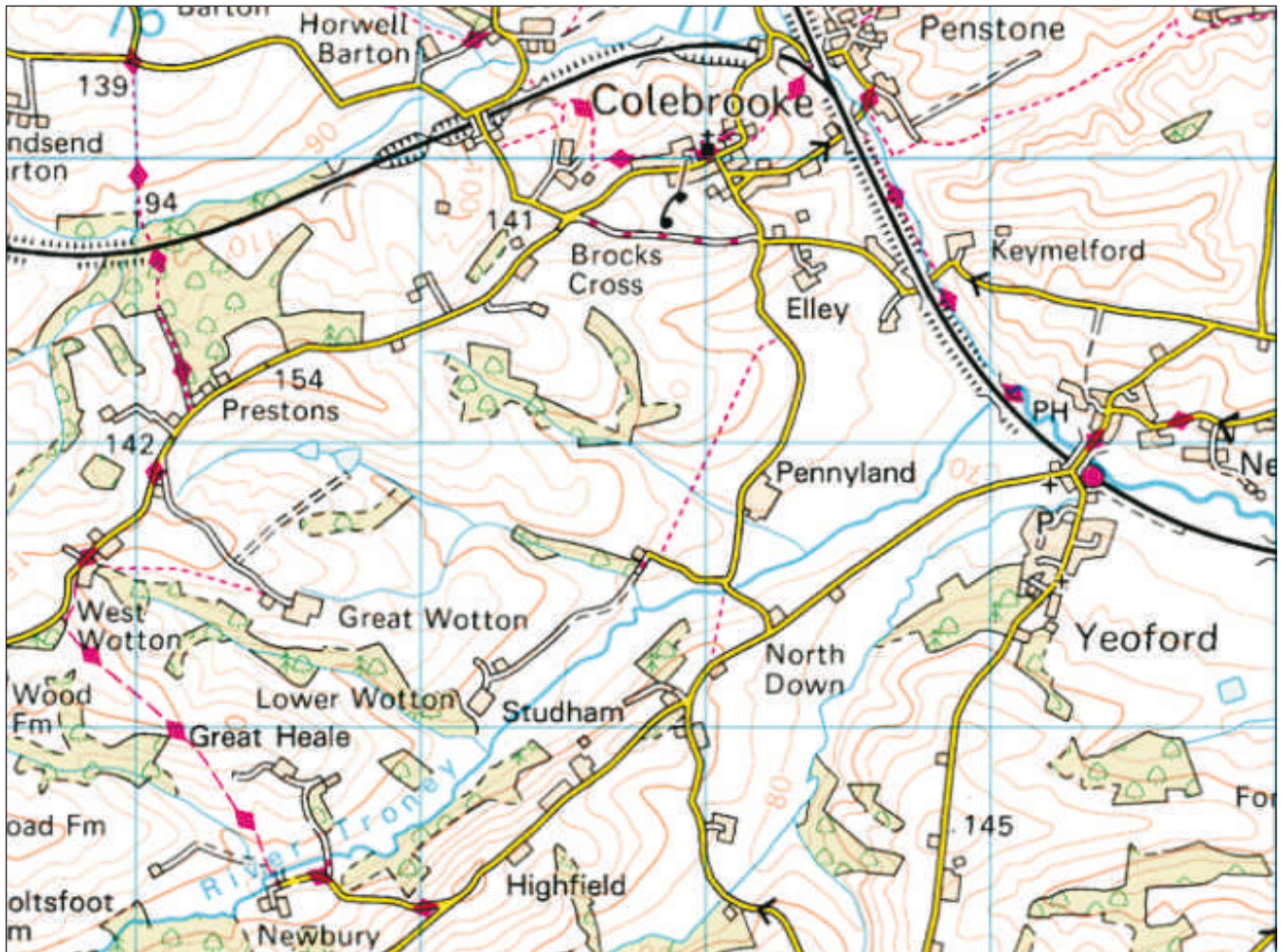
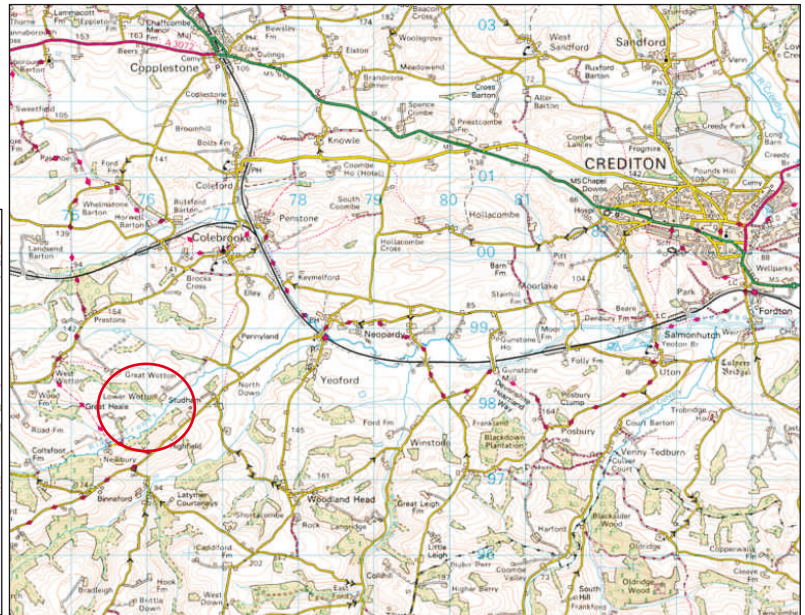
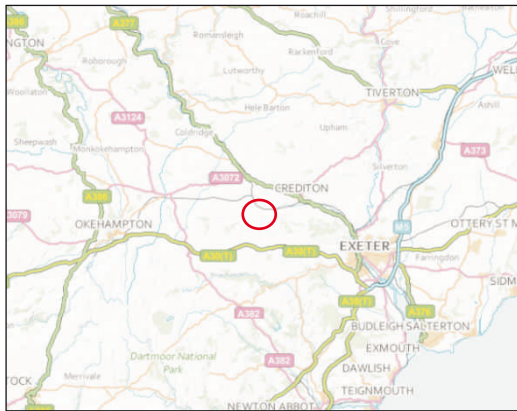
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PROJECT

Lower Wotton Farm

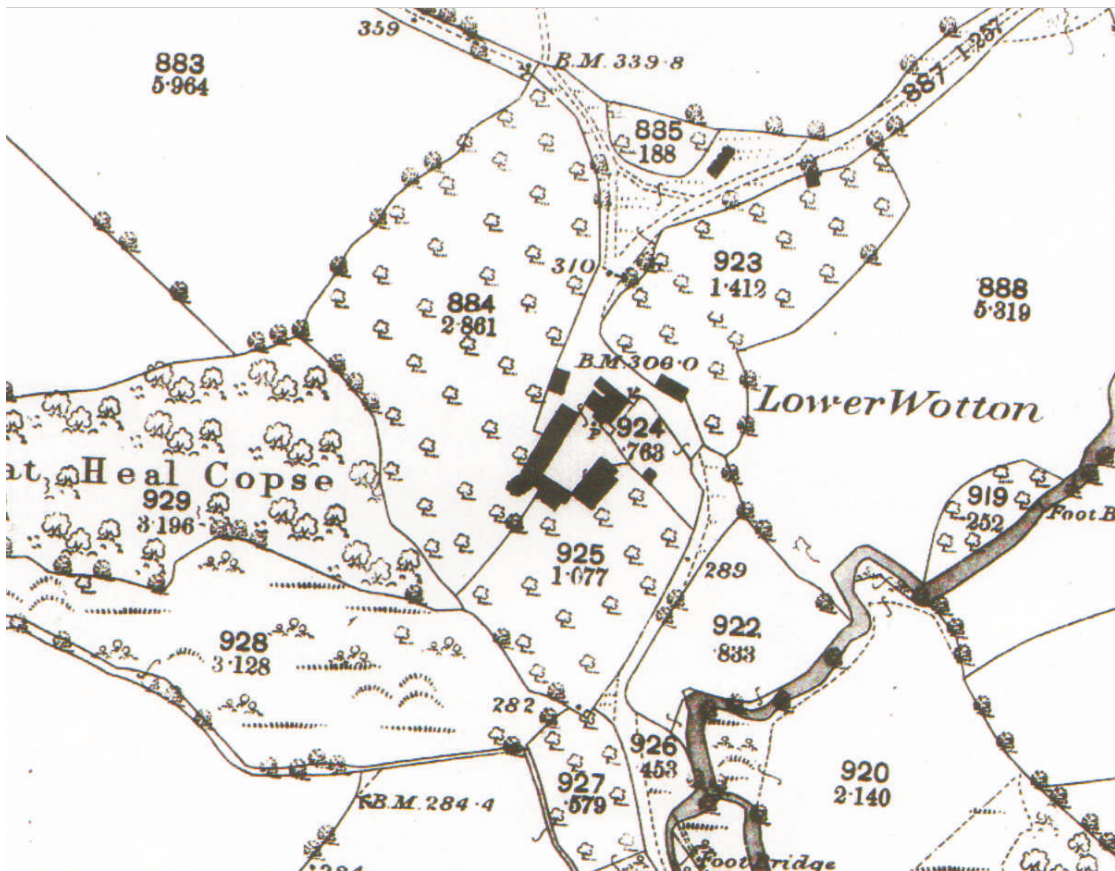
TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location





Extract from the 1845 Colebrook tithe map



Extract from the Ordnance Survey 25" map sheet. 66.1, surveyed 1888, published 1889

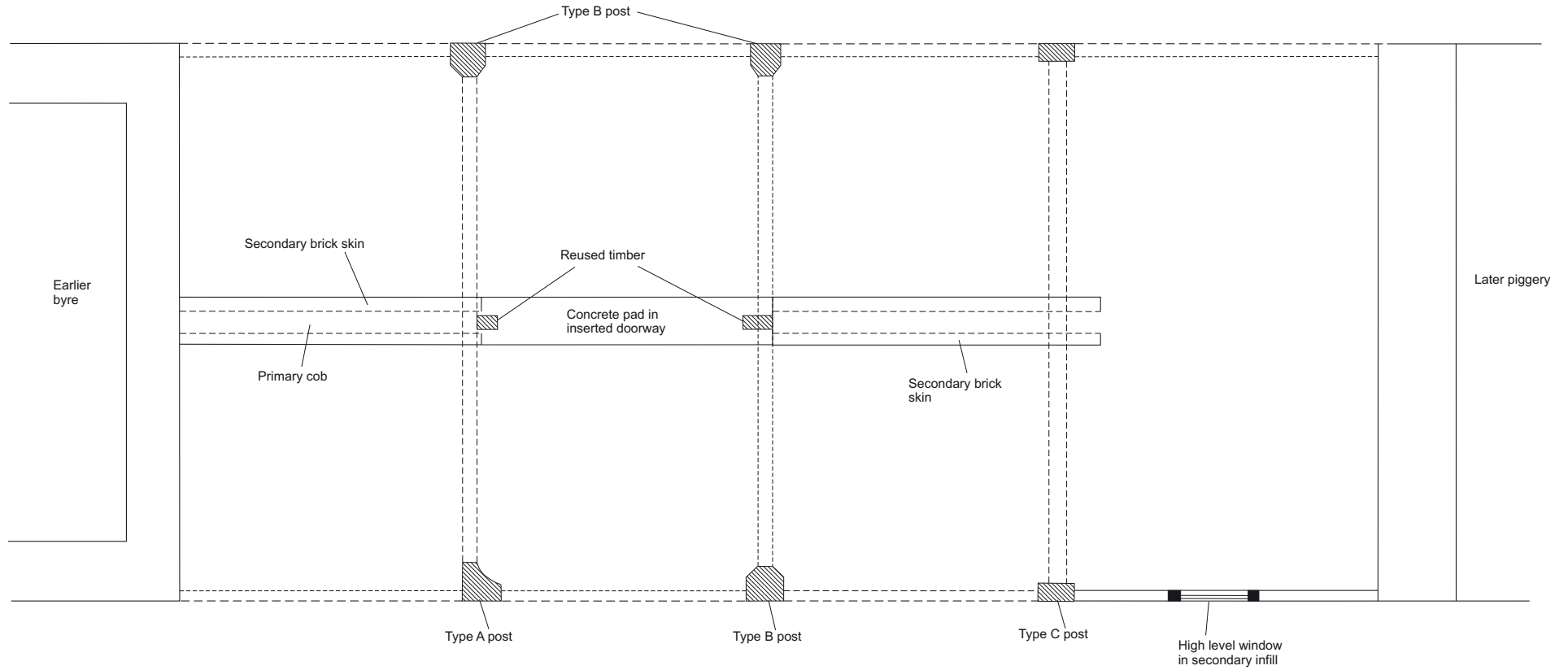
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Lower Wotton Farm

TITLE

Fig. 2: Historic maps

a) Floor plan of Lower Wotton Farmhouse

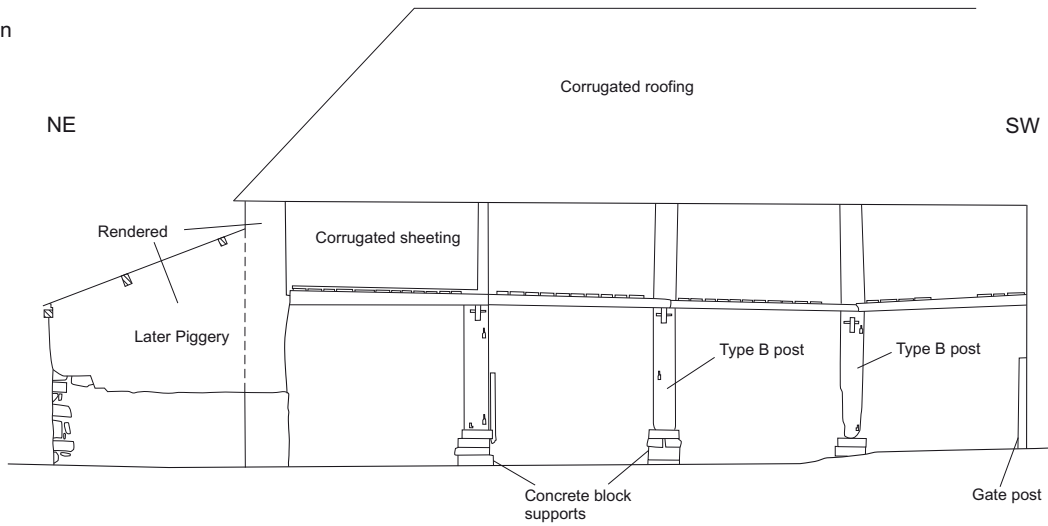


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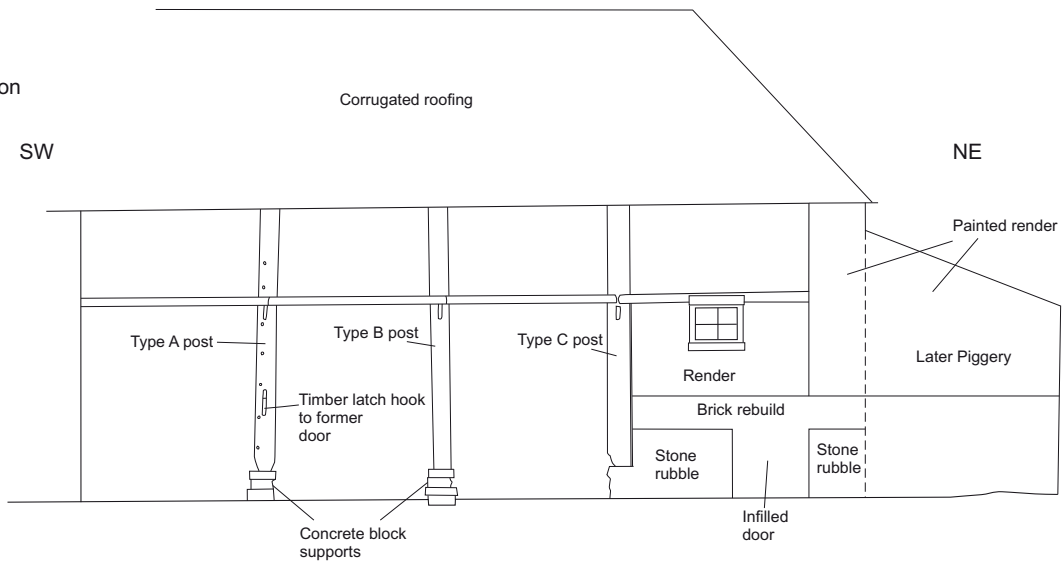
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Fig. 3: Floor plan



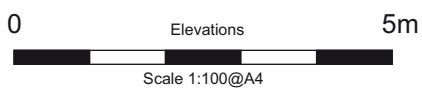
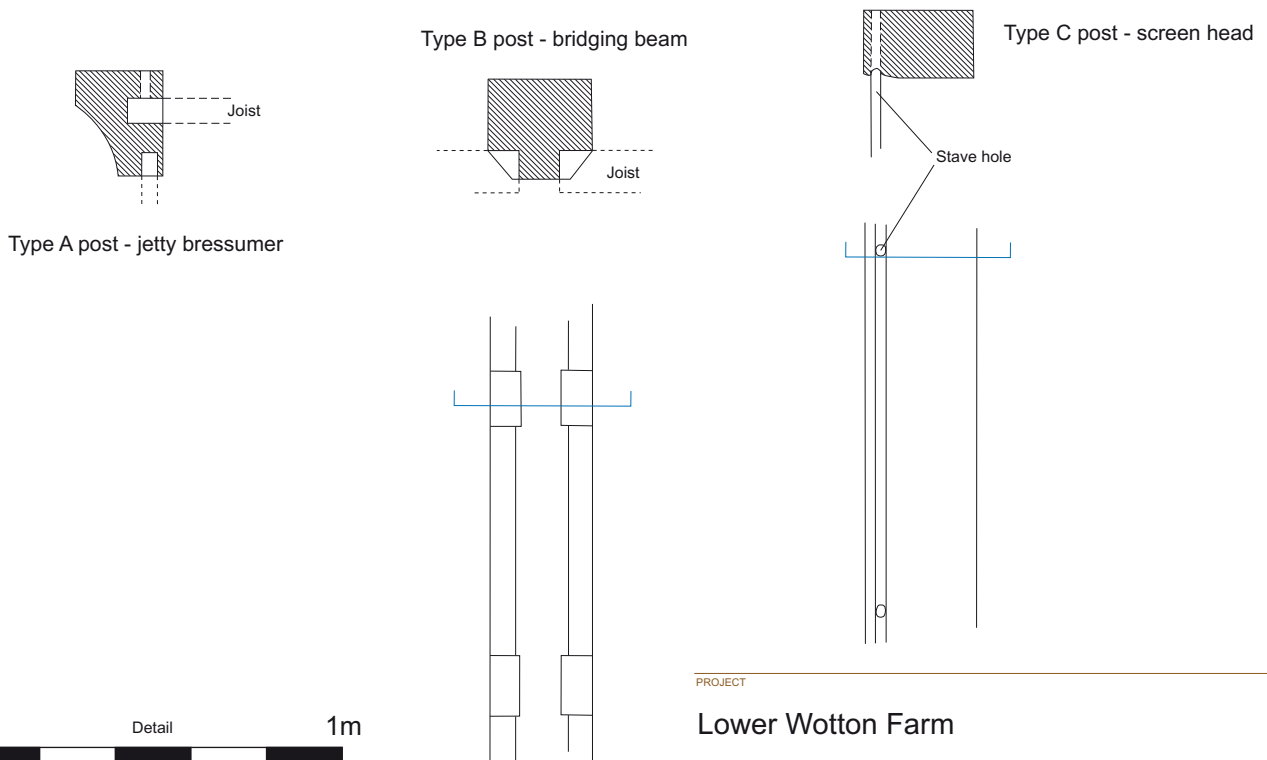
a) NW elevation



b) SE elevation



c) Detail of reused timbers



PROJECT

Lower Wotton Farm

TITLE

Fig. 4: Elevations and timber details



Plate 1: The linhay viewed from the east.



Plate 2: The linhay viewed from the northwest.



Plate 3: The inserted opening in the spine wall, viewed from the east.



Plate 4: The Type A post in the south-east elevation, viewed from the northeast.



Plate 5: Type B posts in the north-west elevation, also showing pegged tongue on the first-floor beam. View from the northeast.



Plate 6: The piggy viewed from the northeast.

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