

BARN AT HIGHER TRENANT FARM, ST NEOT, CORNWALL

(SX 21067 68576)

Results of historic building recording

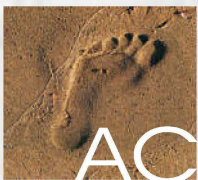
Caradon District Council planning reference 08/00119/FUL,
condition 9 and Cornwall Council planning reference
PA11/01556, condition 4

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Document No: ACD864/2/0

Date: March 2014



AC archaeology

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Summary

An historic building record of a barn at Higher Trenant Farm, St Neot, Cornwall (SX 21067 68576) was prepared by AC archaeology in March 2014. The barn is formed of three parts which represent several phases of construction. The oldest part is a two-storey bank barn, possibly of 17th-century date. The ground floor was a cow house whilst the first floor was used for threshing. Probably soon after its construction the barn was extended with a further probable smaller cow house with hayloft above. The barn was later further extended. This part has been extensively rebuilt and its date and original function are unknown. In line with late wartime Government recommendations, the cow houses were updated during the second half of the 20th century.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of historic building recording of a barn at Higher Trenant Farm, St Neot, Cornwall (SX 21067 68576; Fig. 1) carried out by AC archaeology on 4 March 2014. The recording was commissioned by Lynsey Arkinstall, and was required under condition 9 of the grant of planning permission (Caradon District Council reference 08/00119/FUL) for the "Conversion of agricultural barn to provide dwelling, construction of a new access and installation of a septic tank", and condition 4 of the grant of planning permission (Cornwall Council reference PA11/01556) for "Extension of time of 08/00119/FUL for the Conversion of agricultural barn to provide dwelling, construction of a new access and installation of a septic tank approved on 23 April 2008".

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 Higher Trenant Farm is located between St Neot and St Clear, within St Neot parish. The site is situated on a south-facing slope at around 160m aOD overlooking a tributary of the River Fowey. The underlying solid geology is granite.
- 2.2 The Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record (HER) has two entries for Trenant (MCO17564 and MCO17237). They give a first date for the placename Trenant as 1315; the *tre* element is indicative of an early medieval origin. There are later medieval references to what is now Higher and Lower Trenant. The former was first specifically recorded in 1371 as *Overa Trenant*, whilst the latter was called *Nethere Trenant* in 1507.
- 2.3 There are three other HER entries in the near vicinity of the farm. MCO9985 relates to field placenames *Chapel Park* and *Under Chapel*, perhaps indicative of a former religious building. MCO5381 records the site of a former medieval cross base located on the adjacent road. MCO24635 records the site of post-medieval corn mills situated on the stream west of the farm.
- 2.4 The barn is depicted on the 1st edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, and later revisions. The farm is situated within land identified as a medieval landscape by the Cornwall Historic Landscape Characterisation project.

3. AIMS

- 3.1** The development will have the potential to remove or obscure archaeological evidence relating to the architectural and archaeological history of the site. The aim of the investigation was to prepare a record of the barn to an appropriate level before works change it, and make the results available to interested parties.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The investigations were carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation for historic building recording prepared by AC archaeology (Passmore 2014) and the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (revised 2008). The recording was carried out to levels 2/3 as set out in English Heritage's 2006 document *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice*. A full written description of the building was prepared, together with alterations and amendments to the architect's as existing plans and elevations. A photographic record was also made.

5. BUILDING SURVEY (Fig. 2; Plates 1-8)

5.1 General description and layout

The barn is situated to the northeast of the farmhouse and is formed from three separate but attached elements (which are here referred to as rooms A-C). The barn is terraced into the hillside that slopes downhill from north to south. It faces south onto the farmyard. Rooms B and C are two storeyed, whilst room A is currently single storeyed. All three rooms have pitched roofs with straight gables. Rooms A and B are covered with slates, whilst room C has corrugated metal sheets covering its south face and corrugated asbestos sheeting covering its north face. The gable walls of rooms A and B have slate windspurs.

5.2 External description

South elevation (Plates 1-2)

In room A only a small portion of stonework at its west end is exposed. This comprises subangular granite blocks up to 0.60m long laid in rough courses, with quoins at the corners, bonded in a hard white-grey cement mortar. To the east of this is a large opening with a wooden lintel. The walls around this opening have been rendered. Attached to the west end of the elevation is a modern extension built from concrete blocks with a slightly sloping corrugated metal roof.

Room B is constructed from subangular granite blocks up to 0.80m long bonded with a hard grey-white cement mortar. Larger granite blocks have been used for quoins and around windows, as well as for the basal courses of the wall. The masonry continues as the north gable above the roofs of rooms A and C. Here, the blocks used are generally smaller and are laid in a more irregular manner.

There is a simple plat band between the ground and first floors. On the ground floor there are two doorways with wooden doors and shallow stone arches above. Between them is a later window opening with a concrete lintel. The reveals and any new masonry around the opening are obscured by a concrete render finish. On the first floor are two small rectangular, glazed slit ventilation openings and a central doorway. This has a wooden lintel and frame, filled with a low wooden door with 18th-century style strap hinges and a corrugated asbestos sheet above. The roofline continues down over the doorway as a porch supported on wooden beams

Room C is constructed from subangular granite blocks up to 0.80m long bonded with a hard grey-white cement mortar. Larger granite blocks have been used for quoins on the east corner and around the doorway. On the ground floor is a window opening with a granite lintel and slate sill. There are a few repairs around the opening. There is also a doorway with a stone arch defined by voussoirs and a prominent keystone, all made from a vesicular stone. Abutting the east side of the doorway is a tower of concrete blocks and a tall piece of granite (displaying feature and tare splitting marks), both which look like they have been used as gate posts. The present gate is to the east of these, and gives access to a field to the northeast of the farm.

West elevation (Plate 3)

The masonry continues from the south elevation of room A, but here incorporates occasional pieces of slate within the mortar joints. On the ground floor there is a central door opening with a wooden door, jambs around the opening and a granite lintel. This has a square first-floor opening above it with a wooden lintel. One of the jambs is reused, and incorporates a rectangular rebate. There is a later ground-floor opening to the north of the central opening; this has a concrete lintel with brick and cement used to form the opening. The stonework above and around the first-floor opening is blackened, which is due to smoke. The building has been heightened and this has been constructed in the same style as the lower part of the wall with granite bonded in hard light grey-white cement mortar. The scar of the original roof line is clearest on the north side. At the base of the wall there is a ceramic land drain encased in sloping concrete that incorporates a flat step up to the door.

North elevation (Plate 4)

The masonry of room A displays several phases of construction. The lower part on the west end continues around from the west elevation. To the east, the masonry is different, and constructed using subangular granite blocks up to 0.50m long, laid in rough courses, with a hard light brown-yellow cement mortar. Above these builds, the wall has been heightened as noted in the west elevation. Contemporary with this rebuild are two-metal framed windows. One has a concrete sill, the other has a slate sill, and both have concrete lintels.

A retaining wall to the north of this room has collapsed and material is slumped against the lower part of the wall.

The masonry of room B is the same as described in the north elevation, except it has no plat band. On the ground floor there is a doorway with a wooden lintel at the west end, with two ventilation slits to the east of this. These have been blocked, and are only visible internally.

The building has been terraced into the hillside, which is retained by a wall constructed up to the first-floor level. Outside the doorway the gap between the building and hillside opens out into an open structure. This is partially defined by a further retaining wall that abuts the main building. On the first floor there are a central doorway and two small ventilation slits. The doorway has a wooden frame, door and lintel, and is accessed over the gap behind the building via a step. It also has a small porch, supported on wooden beams, covered in slates continuing the pitch of the main roof above.

The masonry of room C is the same fabric as described in the south elevation, and is featureless. The room is also terraced into the hillside and the retaining wall behind room B continues along the length of this part of the building.

East elevation (Plate 5)

This elevation, forming the gable of room C, is the same masonry as described in the south elevation. On the first floor is a door opening with a wooden door and slate sill. It has a stone arch defined by voussoirs and a prominent keystone, all made from a vesicular stone. On the wall below this at ground floor level is a projecting stone. This may have formed part of a set of steps or support for a ladder to access the first-floor opening. There are two bolts in the wall on the ground floor to hold a door that would have given access to the area between the north elevation and the retaining wall. The roof is modern, and the top of the gable was repaired when the roof was replaced.

5.3 Internal description

Room A

This part of the barn is single storeyed. It has recently been subdivided into three stables, with two stalls divided by a primary internal partition. All of the walls have been rendered and painted, except the gable end walls which have only been partially rendered and painted. The heightening of the building noted on the external elevations has been constructed internally using concrete blocks. There is an iron shutter in the window opening in the west elevation. This has probably been reused since it smaller than the opening. It is not of any antiquity, and appears to have derived from an industrial rather than a farm building. The floor is concrete.

The roof is modern, and is formed of principal rafters with collars attached using bolts. It has angled struts between the principal rafters and the tie beam; these have simple lap joints and are bolted to the principal rafters and cross beam. The purlins sit on the back of the principal rafters and support the common rafters that hold a membrane and then the slates.

Room B (Plates 6-7)

The ground floor is divided into two parts – a main area to the west and a smaller area to the east. The two areas are divided by a concrete wall with a metal grille on top with a gate for access at its south end. The floor is concrete. It has a lower drain along the south side containing grooves, which had been infilled on the east side of the building. The lower parts of the walls have been rendered in cement. The central part of the main room contains animal stalls. The partition walls of these have been built using large pieces of slate and wooden beams. There is a feeding passage along the north side. The smaller area to the east functioned as a separate animal pen.

The first floor is supported on wooden joists and has been reinforced by the addition of two large horizontal steel I-beams that have been inserted against the south wall and along the in the central axis. These in turn are supported on steel posts. In the south elevation are two protruding stone blocks. These have blocks of wood on top and now support the metal beam. They may have originally supported a lower floor, or more likely an internal beam that supported the floor joists at their present height. Attached to the ceiling is a galvanised water pipe associated with the cattle stalls below.

The first floor spans the length of the room, and is open to the roof. It has wooden floorboards. The walls are covered with lime plaster and there are no visible original fixtures or fittings. There are small, high level rectangular blocked ventilation openings in the gable end walls which were not visible externally. The roof is formed from principal rafters lapped and pegged at their apex, with pegged curved collars and nailed straight tie beams. Additional nuts and bolts have been added to the

collars. Not all of the collars survive; some trusses display pegholes for removed timbers. One set of the trusses displayed carpenters marks in the form of "II" at the joints. The purlins sit on the back of the principal rafters and support the common rafters that hold the slates.

Room C (Plate 8)

The ground floor was latterly used to house livestock. It has a ceramic and concrete feeding trough with a manger above along the north wall, and a concrete floor. The first floor is supported on wooden joists as well as two horizontal steel I-beams that have been inserted close to the south and north walls. The latter is supported on a metal post. It was not safe to access the first floor, so this was not investigated.

6. COMMENTS

- 6.1** The barn is formed of three conjoined parts which represent several phases of construction. Room B is the oldest part of the barn, which on the basis of the pegged roof structure is likely to be of 17th-century date at the latest. It was a bank or chall barn with a dual function. The ground floor was used to house livestock, whilst the first floor was used for threshing and storage. The latter could be entered from the hillside behind, and in traditional manner had a further, opposed opening overlooking the farmyard. There is no evidence of mechanical threshing being used throughout the life of the building.
- 6.2** Room C was added onto room B. It contains no datable features, but the use of rounded arches to the doorways and the use of the same vesicular stone as in room B may indicate that construction to place soon after room B. It was designed to house animals on the ground floor with a hayloft above. It may have provided additional livestock accommodation, perhaps a specialist use such as a bull's or calves' house. Alternatively, it may have been a stable.
- 6.3** The retaining wall of the hillside behind rooms B and C would appear to be contemporary with the construction of the latter, and may reflect a need to control soil creep. The structure attached to the northwest corner of room B may be contemporary, although could be a primary feature; the opening appears to be primary. It is not clear whether it was originally roofed. It may simply have been a porch to the doorway, but given its large size, could have been used to store animal feed for use in the adjacent barn.
- 6.4** Room A was the last structure to be constructed. It contains no primary dating features and its original layout and functions are unknown. On the evidence of the opening in the west elevation it probably contained a first-floor used for storage that was probably accessed from an internal ladder.
- 6.5** Other than the additions to the building described above, there appears to have been little change until the later 20th century. In line with Government guidance, after the Second World War rooms B and C, which still housed livestock, were upgraded with new concrete floors and stalls added (where necessary). Alterations were made to the fenestration, with more emphasis on light and ventilation, and the walls were rendered or painted to improve hygiene.
- 6.6** Room A appears to have suffered a fire, which may have been the impetus for the recent alterations and conversion to stables. This work involved the removal of part of the front (south) wall, partial replacement of the north wall, and raising of the roofline with a new structure.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY

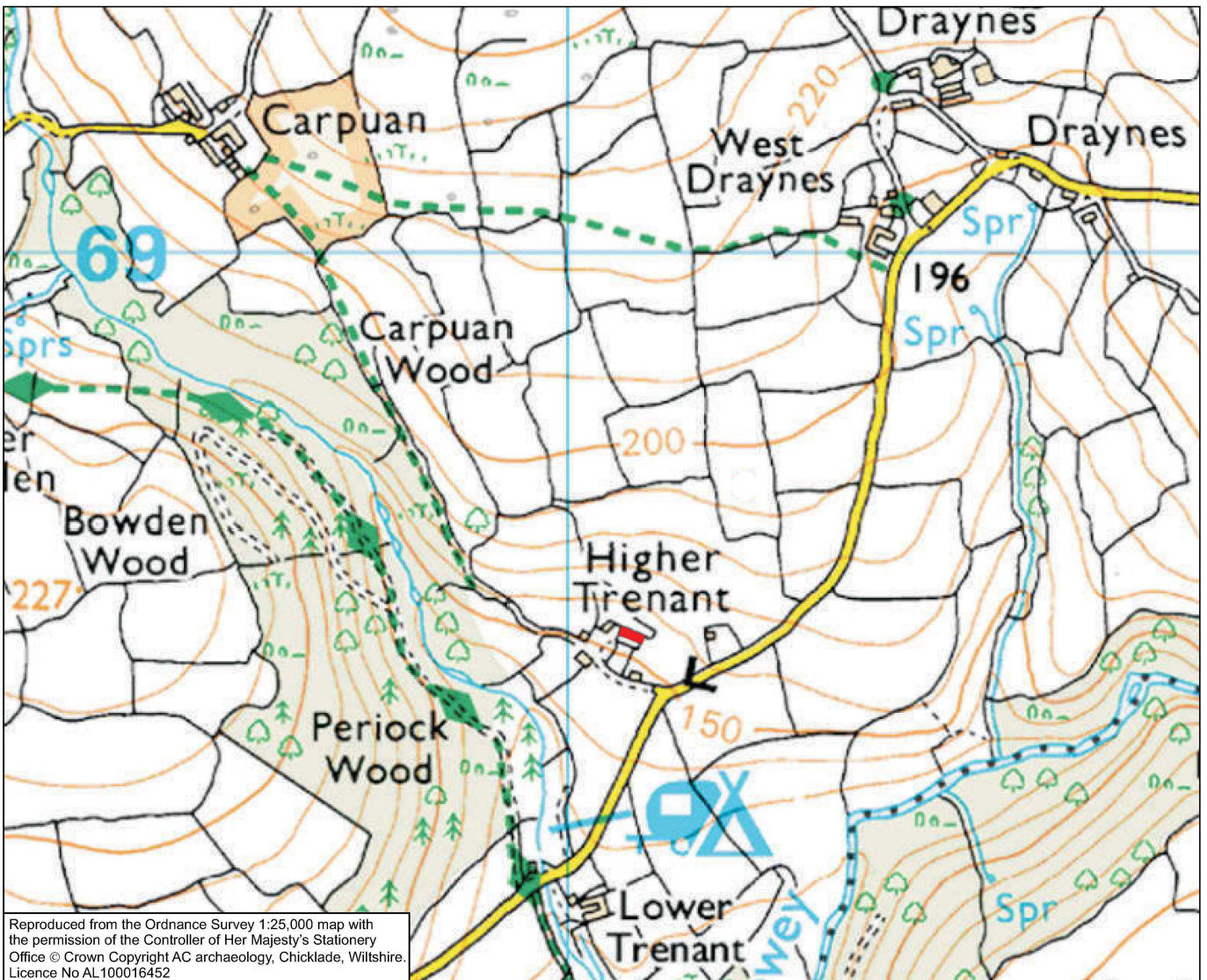
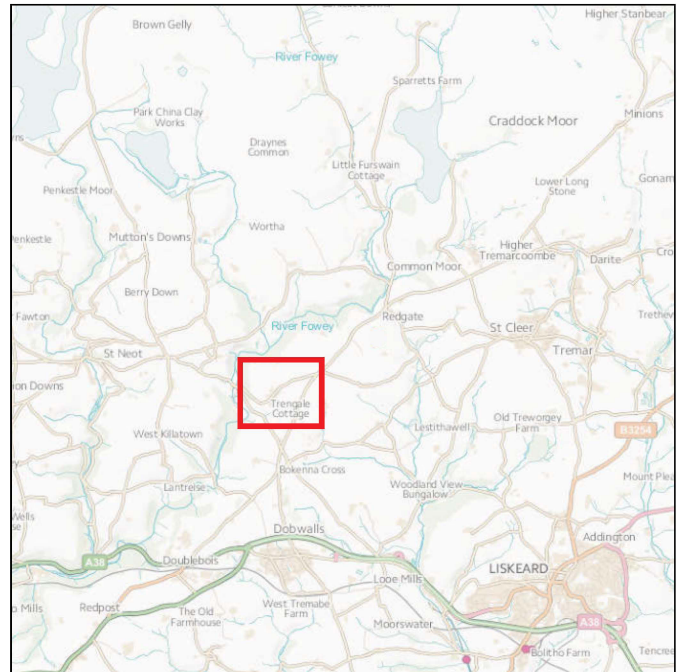
- 7.1** The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. It will be deposited at the Cornwall Record Office.
- 7.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identified 174685, which includes a digital copy of this report.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

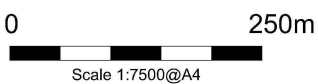
- 8.1** This report was commissioned by Lynsey Arkininstall. The project was managed for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore and carried out by Stella De-Villiers. The report was written by Stella De-Villiers, with the illustrations prepared by Elisabeth Patkai.

9. SOURCE CONSULTED

Passmore, A., 2014, *Barn at Higher Tenant Farm, St Neot, Cornwall (SX 21067 68576)*, *Written Scheme of Investigation for historic building recording*, AC archaeology Document No. **ACD864/1/0**



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 Location of site

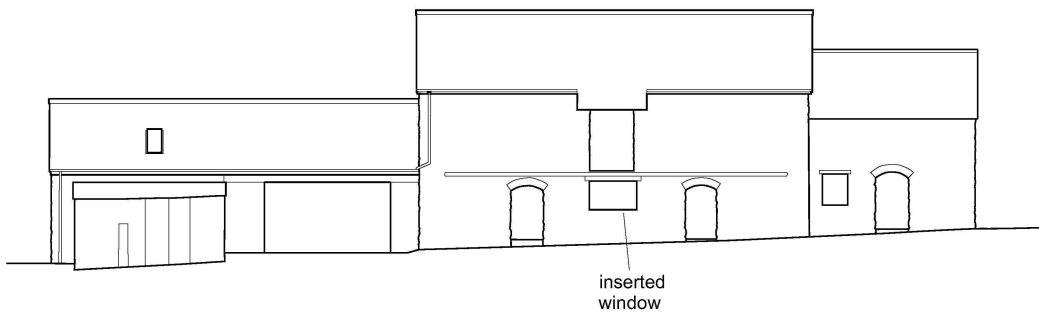
PROJECT

Higher Trenant Farm, St Neot, Cornwall

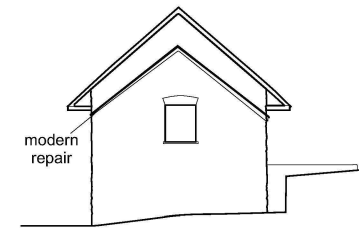
TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location

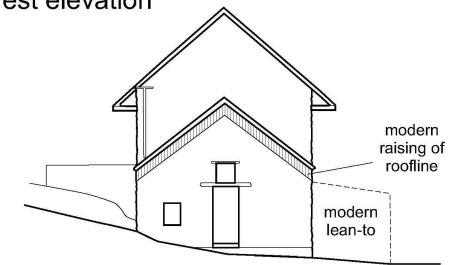
South elevation



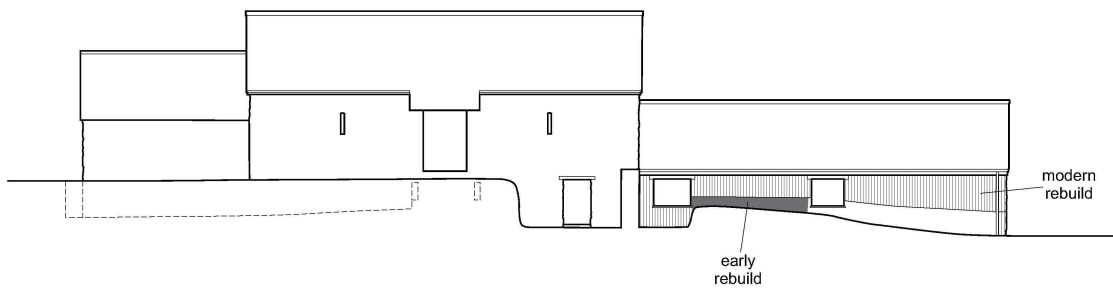
East elevation



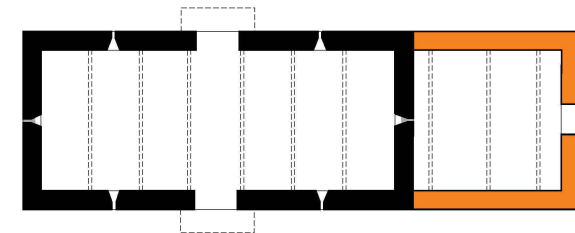
West elevation



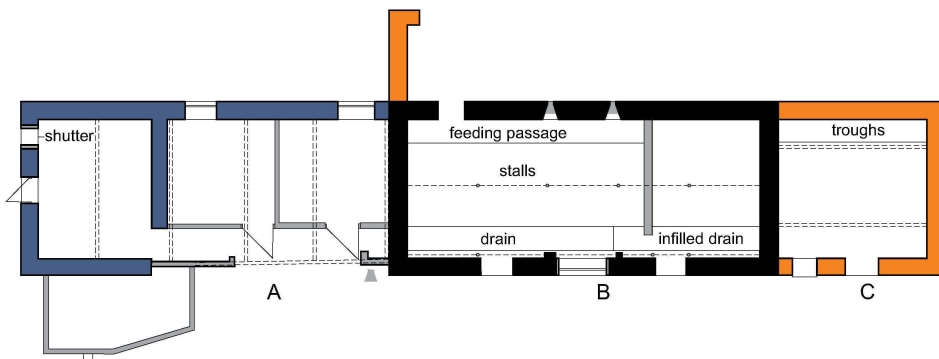
North elevation



First floor plan



Ground floor plan



- primary - ? C17
- secondary - ? C17
- tertiary
- C20



PROJECT

Higher Trenant Farm,
St Neot, Cornwall

TITLE

Fig. 2: Elevations and
plans





Plate 1: Room B, viewed from the south. 1m scale.



Plate 2: Room C, viewed from the south. 1m scale.



Plate 3: Room A, west elevation, also showing collapsed retaining wall on north side of building, viewed from the northwest. 1m scale.



Plate 4: Room B, north elevation, viewed from the north. 1m scale.



Plate. 5 The building viewed from the northeast, showing the rear elevation and the east elevation of room C.



Plate 6: The interior of room B showing the slate stalls, viewed from the south.



Plate 7: The first floor of room B showing the roof structure, viewed from the southeast.



Plate 8: The interior of room C showing the modern fittings, viewed from the southeast. 1m scale.

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