

HILL BARTON, EXETER, DEVON

(Centred on SX 955 929)

Results of historic building recording

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On behalf of:
Persimmon Homes South West

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AC archaeology

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(Centred on SX 946 935)

Results of historic building recording

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Summary

An historic building record of Hill Barton House and associated farm buildings was prepared by AC archaeology in June 2015 prior to the demolition of the structures. The house and the majority of the farm buildings date to between 1844 and 1890 when the farm was reorganised. Only the exterior walls of the U-shaped range of farm buildings were retained from the earlier farmyard. After 1844 the previous haphazard layout of farm buildings was swept away and replaced with a courtyard layout with a farmhouse along one side, and a detached barn to the east.

The house retains some original internal fittings, but was altered after the property went out of use as a farm. The ground-floor in particular was altered, and new extensions added. The western building in the U shaped range may have been designed as for several uses including livestock accommodation and storage. The original function of the eastern building could not be determined. It was later partially converted into accommodation as part of the extended house. The old barn was primarily a threshing barn, with the southern part of the building used to shelter animals with a hayloft above.

1. INTRODUCTION (Figs 1-2)

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of historic building recording undertaken by AC archaeology during June 2015 at Hill Barton House, Hill Barton Road, Exeter (SX 93488 92947). The work was commissioned by Persimmon Homes South West, and the scope of works was agreed with the Exeter City Council Principal Project Manager (Heritage).
- 1.2 The recorded buildings comprised Hill Barton house and its associated farm buildings. The wider development site occupies approximately 23 hectares of agricultural land located on the eastern outskirts of Exeter, situated east of Hill Barton Road, south of Hollow Lane, north of the railway line and west of the MET office. The underlying solid geology of the site is mixed, mainly comprising sandstone of the Monkerton and Dawlish Formations, but with an outcrop of Heavitree Breccia to the east.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Figs 3-5)

- 2.1 As part of the initial planning application a baseline Archaeological and Cultural Heritage chapter for an Environmental Statement was prepared by Archaeadia (2012), which was supported by the results of a geophysical survey (Austrums and Haddrell 2011). The baseline study established that there is general potential for prehistoric and Romano-British remains to be present in the area including evidence for settlement, funerary activity and land division. More recently, a possible Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age henge monument (or later enclosure) has been identified during development of land immediately to the north of the farm, as well as evidence for Romano-British occupation and former field systems. Some of the latter, represented by a series of ditches, continue into the present site (A. Pye pers. comm.). The northern boundary of the wider site is formed by Hollow Lane, which could represent the alignment of a Roman road extending towards the city.
- 2.2 The former Hill Barton Farm, located in the vicinity of Hill Barton House, is likely to have originated as a medieval farmstead. The farmstead is first recorded in detail on the Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1801 (Fig. 3). On the parish tithe map of 1844 the

individual buildings on the farm can be seen more clearly (Fig. 4). At this time the farmhouse was located on the eastern side of the farm complex with three buildings to the north, two to the south and a long range with round engine house to the west. In front of the engine house was a pond within the centre of the farmyard. By the time of the OS map of 1890 the layout of the farm had changed radically (Fig. 5). All the buildings except the long range to the west had been demolished. New buildings were added forming a U-shaped farmyard. The farmhouse had been rebuilt at the southern end of the farmyard forming its fourth side. A large barn had been constructed to the east. On the 1933 OS map there had been very little change to the farm with the exception of a new building on the southeast side of the barn. Since then there have also been very few changes except that the additional building depicted on the 1933 map has been demolished and a large barn has been added on the eastern side of the existing barn.

- 2.3** The area around the farm was investigated as part of a wider trench evaluation of the whole development site (Farnell and Valentin 2015). No conclusive evidence for an earlier farm was identified due to heavy truncation of the site during its later 19C rebuilding, although some features, mainly ditches of medieval and post-medieval date were exposed. Within the area of the farm buildings there had been extensive modern truncation and no historic deposits survived.

3. AIM

- 3.1** The aim of the investigation was to prepare a record of Hill Barton House and the farm buildings prior to their demolition, in particular to make a photographic record of their exteriors and interiors.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The recording was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (revised 2015), and in line with the AC archaeology *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*. Reference was also made to *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice*.

- 4.2** The survey comprised:

- A written description; and
- A photographic record showing the general nature and character of the buildings as well as more-detailed photographs of fixtures, fittings and architectural features.

5. BUILDING SURVEY (Plates 1-29)

5.1 Hill Barton House

External description

The house has a hipped slate roof with single dormer windows in all pitches; these have wooden barge boards and slate pitches (Plates 1-4). The dormer in the north elevation has been converted into a fire escape (see below). The external walls are all rendered, and there are modern extensions attached to the north, south and east

sides. The single-storey north extension is constructed of brick under a pitched slate roof. Its west elevation is rendered and contains a wooden-framed window, with the upper part clad in timber. There is a doorway in the north elevation. The lower parts of its walls of the single-storey south extension are rendered, with its upper sections clad in timber. Between these are large UPVC windows, and UPVC doors. It has a flat felt roof. The east extension is L-shaped, under a flat felt roof with walls clad in wood. It has a metal framed door and a mixture of wooden- and metal-framed windows.

The west elevation forms the front of the house facing Hill Barton Road. It has a modern central door beneath a porch supported on pillars. On the ground floor are two windows containing 12-pane sash windows, and on the first floor above the doorway is a single window with a two-pane sash. This has a moulded surround and a narrow piece of board with a decorative scalloped tail at the top. On the first floor of the south elevation there are three modern UPVC windows. The ground floor openings are obscured by the modern extension but originally comprised two doorways and a window. The ground floor of the east elevation is also obscured by the modern extension; there are no openings on the first floor. The north elevation incorporates three windows and a door on the ground floor. Those that have not been boarded up have wooden frames. On the first floor are two windows, both with two-pane sashes and a door that gives access to a fire escape. The fire escape consists of a large brick and metal tower with access and stairs from each floor. The dormer window in the roof has been converted into a door giving access to the fire escape from the loft accommodation.

To the rear (east side) of the house there is a garden with a modern covered veranda extending between the modern extensions. There are metal railings and a gate located to the south of the old barn and there is a roof scar and beam in the south elevation of the barn indicating the presence of a now-removed single-storey structure with the garden.

Internal description

The house has three floors, with rooms set around a central corridor containing the staircases. The third-floor accommodation is in the roof space. A modern lift has been added to provide further access to the upper floors. On the ground floor are three domestic rooms, two sets of toilets and a kitchen, all served by a T-shaped corridor. The modern extensions to the south and east are open-plan rooms and are also internally entered from the corridor. The smaller northern extension was used as a utility room. On the first floor there are five bedrooms and a bathroom, whilst on the second floor are two small bedsits and an associated shared bathroom.

The house has a modern finish throughout and very few original fixtures or fittings have been retained. Some essence of its original finish can be however discerned in the three ground-floor domestic rooms on the ground floor which retain some of the wooden skirting boards, dado rails and wooden panelled surrounds to the windows (Plate 5). There are also wooden skirting boards and door surrounds to the domestic rooms in the corridor. The stairs have a dog leg design with a simple handrail and stick balusters. In the kitchen there is a large breccia fireplace with a wooden surround in the east elevation (Plate 6). The surround has had decorative wooden pieces added to it. The surround has been cut off on the north side indicating that the room has been subdivided. This was probably a recent alteration when the adjacent lift was inserted. In the northwest bedroom on the first floor there is a fireplace in the west elevation. This has a wooden surround onto which a radiator has been attached (Plate 7). On the second floor the side of the room are formed by lath and plaster partitions. Behind these partitions are two cupboards on the north side of the house.

Here the top of the north elevation and the ends of the roof trusses are visible (Plate 8). The wall is constructed of small sub-angular stones with areas of brickwork and modern blockwork repairs. The ends of the trusses terminate in the top of the wall, along with short lengths of collars just above the floor level. The slate roof and associated battens are set onto closely-set secondary rafters that are laid onto back purlins.

5.2 U range of farm buildings

This range is formed by two long buildings aligned north-south, connected by a central gateway at their north ends. The yard between the buildings is divided by a low brick wall.

Apart from its east elevation, the western building is entirely constructed of sub-rectangular breccia blocks bonded in a reddish-white lime mortar with frequent inclusions; these walls have been rendered (Plates 9-10). In the west elevation there are eight square metal-framed windows. The wall of this elevation projects northwards past its junction with the north elevation, reflecting the position of a former building. The north elevation contains no openings but some of the breccia blocks are very large, measuring up to 60 x 50 cm, larger than those on the other walls of the range. The east elevation is constructed using red bricks (Plates 11-12). There are four doors and four windows in the elevation. Three of the openings have flattened arches, with the jambs utilising bullnose bricks. One of the openings at the north end is a double door and the window to the south is identical to those in the west elevation. The south elevation has been rendered and is mostly occupied by an inserted garage door. The roof is in a very poor condition and has partially collapsed at the north end and is missing many slates. It is supported on king post trusses with diagonal struts, which have their ends set into the walls (Plates 13 and 14). The back purlins and rafters have are nailed joints. Many of the roof timbers have been replaced.

Internally the western building has been divided into four rooms with brick partitions and timber panelling in the gables. The south room has been converted from agricultural use to a garage and store (Plate 13). It has a concrete floor which steps down to the south; the walls have been painted. The three rooms to the north all retain evidence for their original use of housing livestock (Plate 14). The northern room is twice the size of the other two rooms. There is a feeding passage that runs along the west side of the building, adjacent to which are feeding troughs, mangers and water bowls. Doors in the western side of the partition walls provide continuous access to the feeding passage. In the central room shelving has been inserted, with the earlier fittings retained.

The building at the north end of the west range is constructed of red brick laid in Flemish bond with dark grey cement. The corners of the east elevation are curved using bullnose bricks, with the northeast corner forming one side of the gateway (Plate 15). There is a double door opening in the east elevation, and a window opening in the south elevation.

The north and east elevations of the eastern building are constructed of sub-rectangular breccia blocks bonded in a reddish-white lime mortar with frequent inclusions; the external faces have been rendered. The majority of the western elevation was obscured by vegetation, although at the south end a modern veranda projects out into the yard from the building (Plate 16).

Internally the southern part of the eastern building can be accessed through the modern extension on the east side of the main house. This end of the building has

been converted into residential accommodation and is divided into many rooms including a bathroom, kitchen, sitting room and three bedrooms (plate 17). The finishes throughout are all modern and no original fixtures or fittings survive. In a few areas where the wall plaster has come off the walls behind have been painted with what appears to be tar, presumably to prevent damp.

At the north end of the east range is a brick building mirroring the position, general size and construction techniques, of the similar structure on the west side of the range. Due to vegetation no openings could be observed, although there do not appear to be any large external openings (Plate 18).

5.3 The old barn

External description

The walls of the building are rendered but internally sub-rectangular breccia blocks are visible (plates 19-21), with small areas of brick repairs, mainly around the openings. There are opposing, roughly central, double wooden doors in the east and west elevations, which are flanked by buttresses with wooden lintels. On the east elevation the roof extends down over the doorway forming a porch. In the north elevation there is a tall, wide opening with double wooden doors; this is also flanked by buttresses, again with a wooden lintel. At the southern end of the barn, in the east elevation there is a ground-floor doorway and window, with a first-floor window over, and in the east elevation a ground floor double door with two windows on the first floor. There is a further tall window or loading door in the north end of the east elevation.

Between the old barn and the U range is an area of hardstanding with the overgrown remains of a modern demolished building.

Internal description

The barn is divided into two rooms by a wall of sub-angular breccia blocks; the northern room is larger than the southern room. There is no access internally between these spaces (Plates 22-25). Some parts of the walls in both rooms have been lime washed. The northern room has a concrete floor, and against the west wall concrete bases for machinery have been set into this floor. In the east wall are many holes for former beams, some still containing the studs of beams (Plates 26-27). Some of these may represent evidence for a partial first floor. Other, lower holes and areas of altered masonry are probably associated with a former building attached to the east side of the barn, which may have been a horse-engine house.

In the southern room there was a first-floor hayloft, most of which has been removed with only two of the floor beams surviving. The joists have been sawn off leaving stubs of wood embedded within the walls. The ground floor of this space was probably used for housing individual animals. There is a slight step in the floor level and at the same point there are holes in the south wall suggesting the former presence of a partition.

The barn has a queen post roof, with some trusses having additional diagonal braces and a central post to the roof apex. The purlins rest on the back of the trusses with the secondary rafters sitting on the back of these timbers. All the timbers are bolted together and most of the timbers are replacements. The ends of the trusses have been built into the upper part of the wall. The roof itself is hipped and covered with corrugated sheeting.

5.4 The new barn

External description

This barn has been added to the west side of the old barn. The lower portions of the walls are constructed using concrete blocks laid between steel posts that support the roof and wooden slats (providing ventilation) that form the upper parts of the walls (Plate 28). There are three large doors in the north elevation and a single door in the south elevation. The barn has a pitched roof with corrugated sheeting and plastic skylights.

Internal description

The building was used for housing livestock with large open pens for the animals, and with feeding troughs running north-south dividing the pens (Plate 29). There is a separate area to the west which does not contain troughs; this may therefore have been used for storage rather than as a separate animal pen. A concrete ramp in the southwest corner of the barn leads into the old barn. There is no evidence for the structure on the east side of the old barn depicted on historic mapping.

6. COMMENTS

- 6.1 The house and the majority of the farm buildings date between 1844 and 1890. Only the boundary walls of the present farmyard are of an earlier date and have been incorporated into the 19th-century buildings. After 1844 the previous haphazard layout of farm buildings was swept away and replaced with a courtyard layout, with a farmhouse along one side, and detached barn to the east.
- 6.2 The house retains some detailing with a pleasant main frontage, and decorative features surviving in the domestic rooms on the ground floor. It is clear that the house was well-appointed, with accommodation provided on three floors, including (presumably servants) rooms in the attic, and good architectural treatment to the main public rooms. However the aesthetic appeal and historic nature of the house has been greatly diminished by the addition of several modern extensions, the replacement of windows and alterations to the interior. The most recent alterations have included changes to the ground-floor layout with the insertion of a new corridor and creation of a lift shaft. Original features such as fireplaces have also been filled in and the associated chimney stacks removed.
- 6.3 The western building in the U-shaped range was rebuilt in the 19th century, and given the irregular fenestration of the east elevation, may have been designed for multiple uses, including storage and livestock accommodation. No early internal fittings survive, and the recorded troughs are associated with a later refurbishment. The building was altered when the farm had gone out of use.
- 6.4 The eastern range was so overgrown at the time of this survey, and nothing can be said about its original use. The southern end was converted to residential accommodation after the farm had gone out of use. Here no historic fixtures and fittings were recorded.
- 6.5 The old barn is a large imposing structure contemporary with, but detached from, the farmyard to the west. The building probably had multiple functions, which is not uncommon for long Devon barns. The northern room was probably originally a threshing barn, before being used for general storage. The nature and use of the (removed) modern machinery is unknown. The removed structure on its east side, recorded on historic maps, may have been a horse engine house associated with

threshing. The southern room was probably used for the sheltering of animals with a hayloft over.

7. ARCHIVE

- 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 is stored with the archive from the evaluation and a future phase of excavation, and will ultimately be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

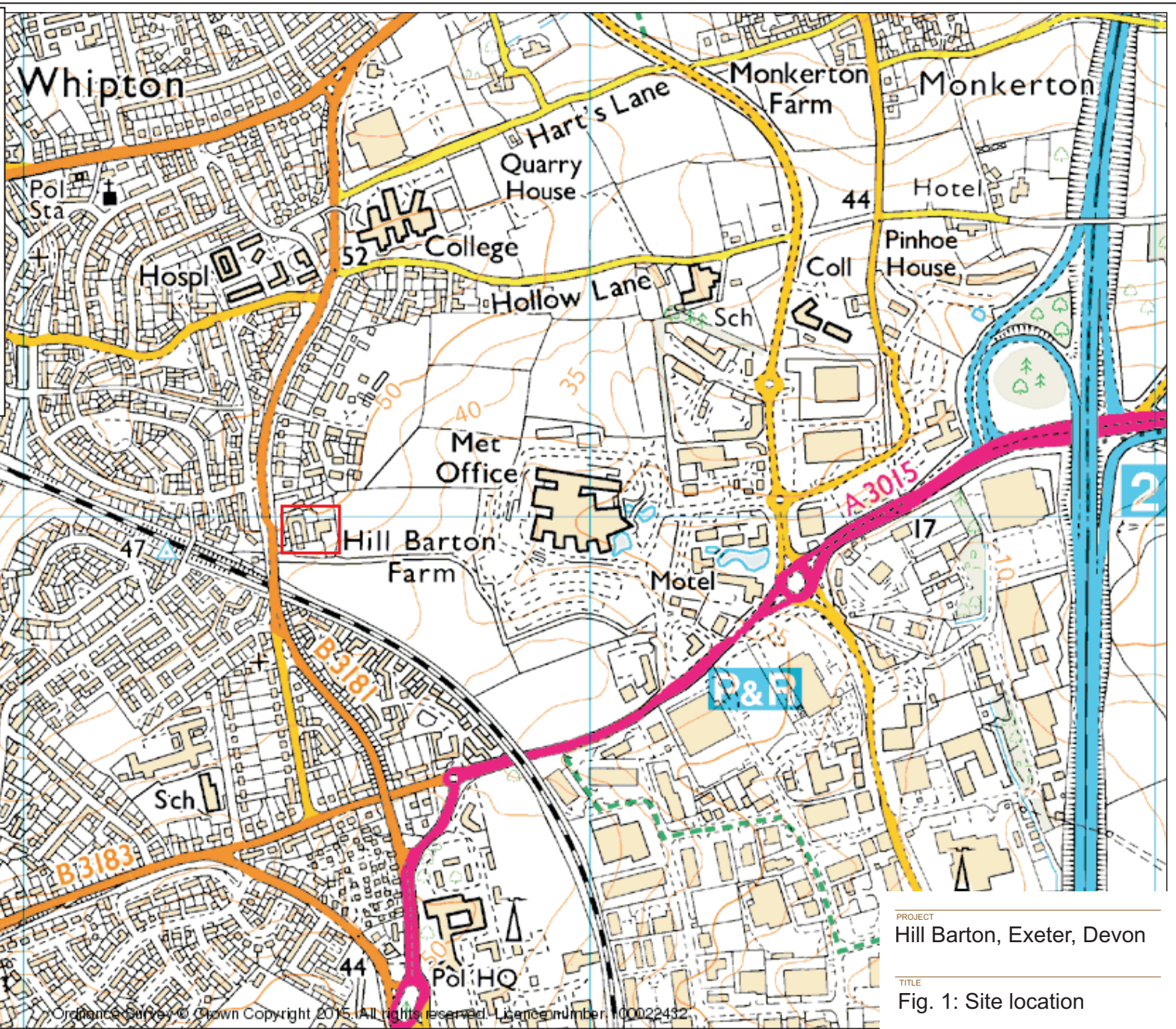
- 8.1 This report was commissioned by Persimmon Homes South West, and managed for Persimmon by Tom Biddle, and for AC archaeology by John Valentin. The fieldwork was carried out by Stella De-Villiers and Alex Farnell. The report and illustrations were prepared by Stella De-Villiers.

9. SOURCES CONSULTED

Archaedia, 2011, *Chapter 17: Archaeology and Cultural Heritage*. Submitted as part of Environmental Statement for the outline planning application

Austrums, R., and Haddrell, S., 2011, *Hill Barton, Exeter, Devon, Geophysical Survey Report*. Stratascan Job Ref. **J2954**

Farnell, A., and Valentin, J., 2015, *Land off Hill Barton Road, Exeter, Devon, Centred on SX 955 929, Results of an archaeological trench evaluation of Phase 1 development land, Planning reference: Exeter City Council 12/0472/01, AC archaeology document no. **ACD992/2/0***



PROJECT
Hill Barton, Exeter, Devon

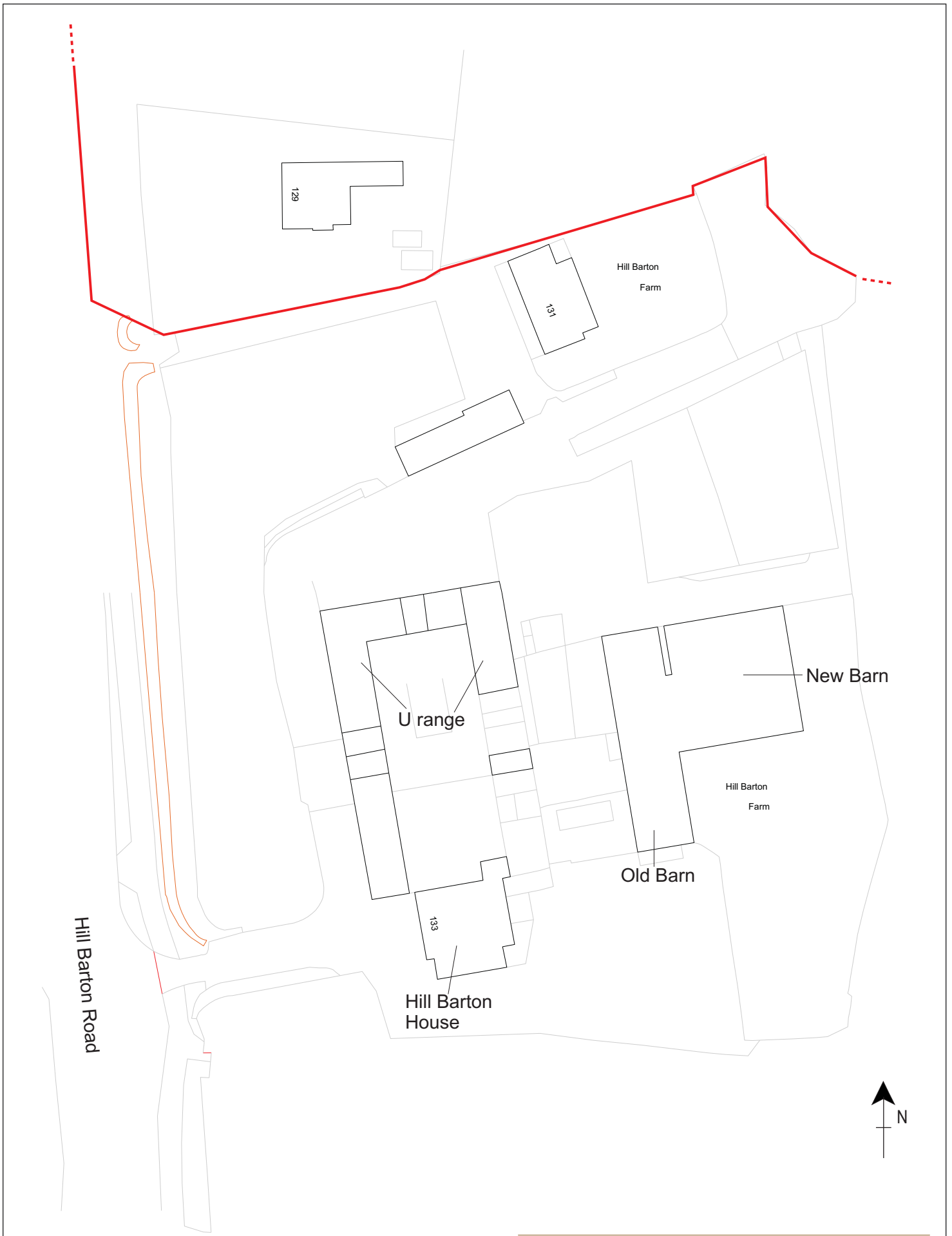
TITLE
Fig. 1: Site location

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Site location





Hill Barton Road

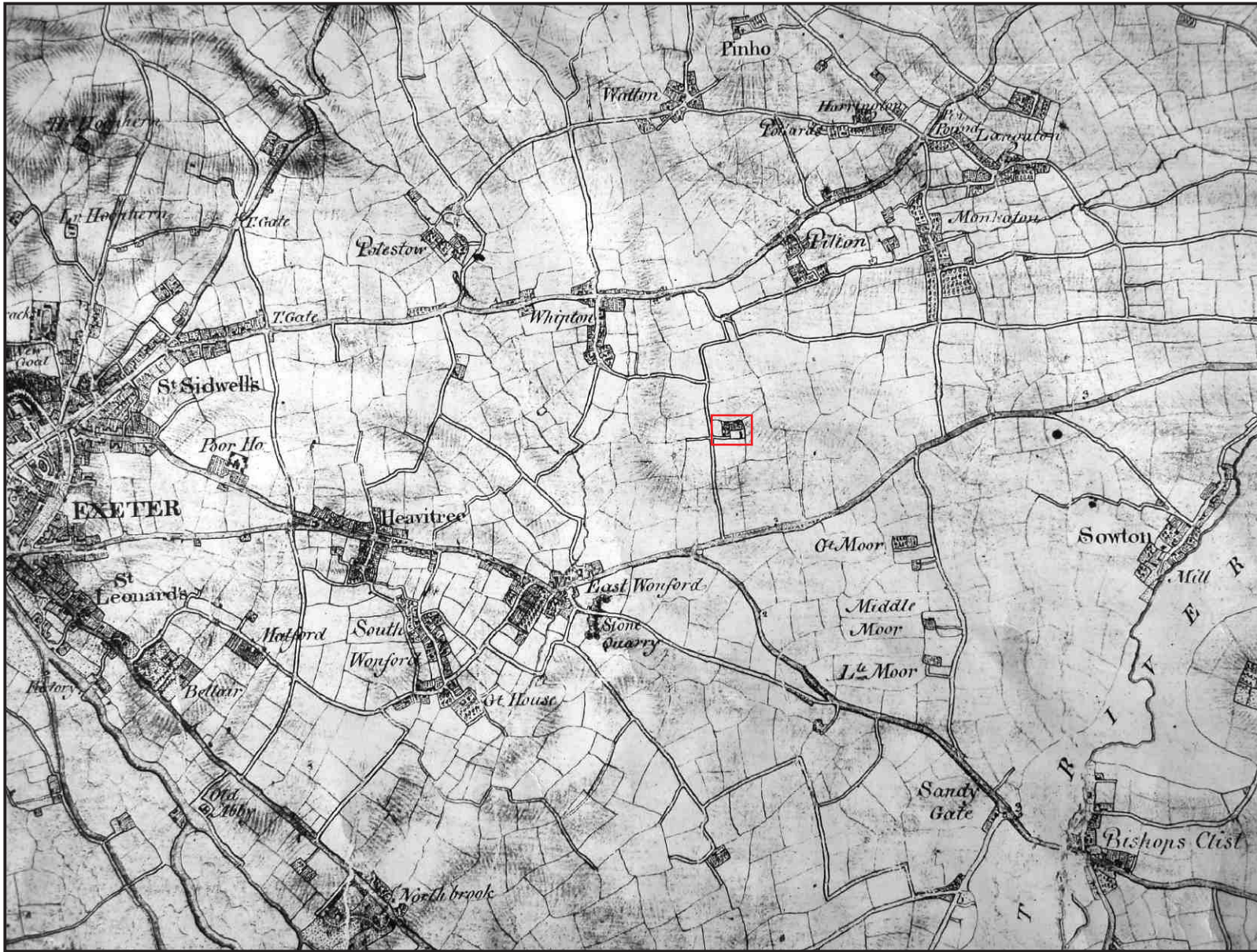
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Hill Barton, Exeter, Devon

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Fig. 2: Site layout





PROJECT
Hill Barton, Exeter, Devon

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Fig. 3: Extract from the
Ordnance Survey surveyors
drawing, published 1801

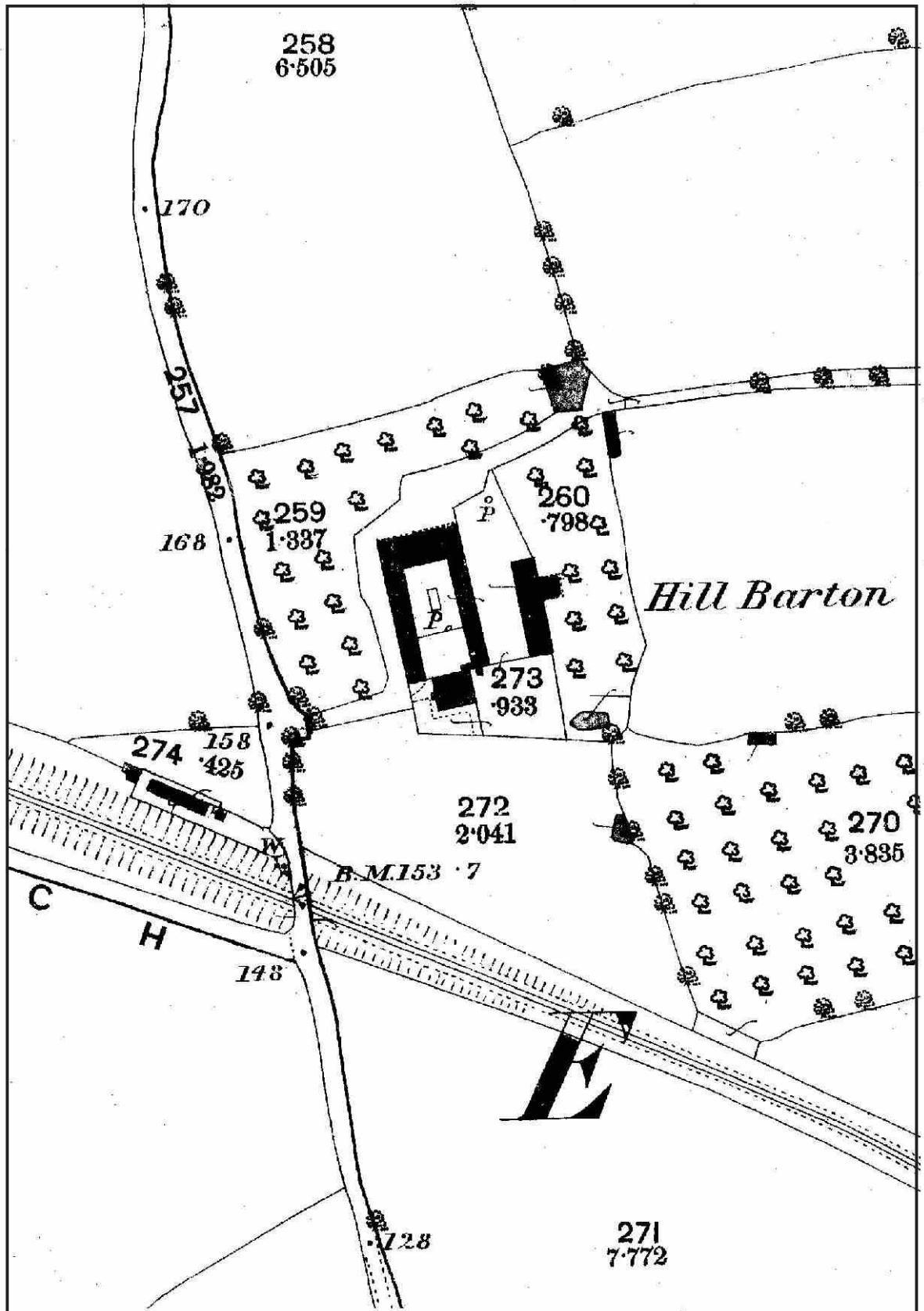


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Hill Barton, Exeter, Devon

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Fig. 4: Extract from the Heavitree
tithe map of 1844



PROJECT

Hill Barton, Exeter, Devon

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Fig. 5: Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1890



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Plate 1: The west elevation of the house, looking northeast (1m scale)



Plate 2: The south elevation of the house, looking north (1m scale)



Plate 3: The east elevation of the house, looking northwest



Plate 4: The north elevation of the house, looking south (1m scale)



Plate 5: An example of the decorative detailing in the rooms on the ground floor of the house, looking south (1m scale)



Plate 6: The fireplace on the ground floor of the house, looking northeast (1m scale)



Plate 7: The fireplace on the first floor of the house, looking west (1m scale)



Plate 8: The top of the wall and roof trusses in the house, looking northeast



Plate 9: The west elevation of the western building in the U range, looking northeast (1m scale)



Plate 10: The west elevation of the western building in the U range, looking southeast (1m scale)



Plate 11: The east elevation of the western building in the U range, looking southwest (1m scale)



Plate 12: The east elevation of the western building in the U range, looking west (1m scale)



Plate 13: The southern end of the western building in the U range, looking southwest



Plate 14: The northern end of the western building in the U range, looking southwest



Plate 15: The building at the north end of the western building in the U range, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 16: The southern end of the eastern building in the U range, looking southeast (1m scale)



Plate 17: The kitchen in the southern end of the eastern building in the U range, looking north



Plate 18: The building at the north end of the eastern building in the U range, looking northeast (1m scale)



Plate 19: The north elevation of the old barn, looking south (1m scale)



Plate 20: The west elevation of the old barn, looking southeast (1m scale)



Plate 21: The east elevation of the old barn, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 22: The northern end of the old barn, looking south (1m scale)



Plate 23: The northern end of the old barn, looking north (1m scale)



Plate 24: The southern end of the old barn, looking southwest (1m scale)



Plate 25: The southern end of the old barn, looking southeast (1m scale)



Plate 26: Concrete bases for machines in the northern end of the old barn, looking southwest



Plate 27: Holes for beams in the northern end of the old barn, looking northeast (1m scale)



Plate 28: The north elevation of the new barn, looking southeast (1m scale)



Plate 29: The new barn, looking south east

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