

GREENSLINCH FARMHOUSE, SILVERTON, DEVON

SS 96957 03518

Results of Historic Building Recording

Mid Devon District Council planning reference 15/01558/LBC,
condition 3

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On behalf of:
Mr Tim Butler

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AC archaeology

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Summary

An historic building record of a ground-floor partition at Greenslinch Farmhouse, Silverton, Devon (SS 96957 03518) was prepared by AC archaeology in October 2015 to support a Listed Building Consent application for repairs and alterations to the building. In December 2015 post-consent recording of a roof truss took place after the removal of modern ceiling panels.

The partition is located within the former medieval open hall, which was ceiled over in the 17th century. The partition was probably constructed in the early 19th century to create a corridor between the house and (former) farm buildings to the west. One side is formed from reused wood, including floor boards, skirting boards, and two types of 17th-century panelling. During removal of the partition a post-medieval foot patten was discovered.

The roof truss is a fine example of a medieval jointed cruck, arched braced roof. The evidence of smoke-blackening supports the idea that the hall was originally open to the roof.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

1.1 This document presents the results of historic building recording carried out by AC archaeology in October and December 2015 at Greenslinch Farmhouse, Silverton, Devon (SS 96957 03518; Fig. 1). The recording was commissioned by Mr Tim Butler. The initial works were requested by the Mid Devon District Council Conservation Officer to inform proposals for alterations to the building in particular the removal of a partition dividing the current living room and a corridor. Subsequent recording of a roof truss was carried out as a condition (3) of the grant of planning permission for the works (Mid Devon District Council planning reference 15/01558/LBC).

1.2 Greenslinch is located 1.3km to the northwest of the centre of Silverton, and forms part of a hamlet of former farm buildings, now mostly used as residential accommodation. It is situated at a height of 110m aOD on a south-facing hillslope on the west side of a valley. The underlying geology of the area comprises Permian breccia of the Cadbury Breccia Formation, along with Permian sandstone of the Cadbury Breccia Formation, which in the lower slopes of the valley is overlain by quaternary head deposits of sand with clay and gravel (British Geological Survey 2015).

1.3 The farmhouse is Grade II Listed (National Heritage List no. 1169131; Devon Historic Environment Record MDV37585). The Historic England listing, prepared in 1986, provides the following description:

Farmhouse. C15 or C16, much altered. Cob and stone mix, rendered. Gabled-end slate roof. The present main range is probably the cross-wing to a truncated 3-room, cross-passage range that now serves as a rear wing. Internal end stacks. 2-storeys.

Front: 3-window range, all C19 casement windows; all other fenestration C20 metal frames.

Interior: right-hand room of main range possibly the lower end wing with 3 cross beams, chamfered, hollow step stopped, and evidence of bake oven and smoking chamber beside blocked fireplace. The rear wing contains 1 room, possibly the former hall, with 1 visible upper or jointed cruck, chamfered arched braces, and a pair of threaded purlins; the upper floor of this room is reached by an ancient newel stair, of oak, most risers, treads and the

string, original (perhaps C16). A blocked door in the end wall to this wing confirms that it once extended further. Roof space not examined.

2. AIMS

- 2.1** The principal aim of the initial recording was to provide a survey of the ground-floor partition between the living room and the corridor, and to assess the date and context of the feature. The subsequent recording focussed on preparing a record of the roof truss over the former open hall following removal of the modern ceiling lining.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1** A rapid desk-based appraisal, comprising an assessment of the relevant historic maps and documents held at the Devon Heritage Centre, and data held at the Devon County Historic Environment Record (HER), was carried out.

- 3.2** The recording comprised:

- A 1:50 plan of the living room and corridor showing the location of the partition, and a 1:20 elevation of the partition;
- A written description of the partition and notes on its context within the development of the house; and
- A photographic record of the partition, along with other areas of the house, as required to illustrate this report.
- A 1:20 drawing and a photographic record of the roof truss.

4. DOCUMENTARY BACKGROUND (Figs 2-3)

- 4.1** The property is first mentioned in the Domesday Book where Nicholas the Bowman (also referred to as Nicholas de Greneslinch) held Greneslinch from the Honour of Plympton. The entry states that four thanes held it jointly before 1066. It paid tax for three virgates of land, and had land for three ploughs, which are there, with one slave. There are four villagers and three smallholders. There are also two acres of meadow. It was formerly worth 10s, and its value is now 20s.

- 4.2** Nicholas was recorded to have held the manor by exchange, but the Domesday Book contains no details of the land he exchanged, despite leaving space for these to be recorded. This exchange may therefore be a term used in some legal fiction to conceal a defective title to a piece of land. Nicholas held other lands in the county, mainly on the southeast side of Dartmoor and South Devon between the Teign Estuary and Torbay, along with land in Warwickshire and Gloucestershire (Thorne & Thorne 1985, entry 48,2; Devon HER MDV11651). Other nearby, smaller settlements at Yard and Burn are also recorded in the Domesday Book (Thorne & Thorne, entries 47,10 and 47,9 respectively).

- 4.3** The placename is documented during the 13th and 14th centuries with various spellings (Gover *et al* 1931, 570). The name may derive from *hlinc* (a farmstead) prefixed by an Old English surname. An indenture dated 1599 also survives (Devon Heritage Centre 6617 M/E0).

4.4 The first detailed map to depict the farmhouse is the Silverton tithe map of 1842 (Fig. 2), although Donn's map of 1765 does mark the junction of the lane to the property with the road from Silverton to Bradninch. On the tithe map the house (plot 1106) is depicted as a being north-south aligned with an irregularly-shaped south end that steps out to the east. Attached to the west side of the house is an L-shaped range of non-residential buildings. The west range can be identified as a threshing barn due to the presence of horse engine house attached to its west side. To the south there is a small detached barn (in plot 1107 which was in separate ownership), and there is a further barn within plot 1106 to the west. To the southeast of the house is another building that still survives as the present garage. In the wider landscape, within the hamlet there are two further houses and other barns, all surrounded by gardens and orchards.

4.5 The tithe apportionment of 1842 details the landowner and occupier of the farm and the majority of the surrounding area at the time as Abraham Cleeve, who died of a fractured skull in 1845 at the age of 65. His wife Elizabeth died in 1841, and there is a marble slab with an inscription dedicated to them in the north wall of the nave at the church at Kentisbere. A summary of some of his land at Greenslinch, as recorded on the apportionment, is set out in Table 1 below.

Plot Number	Description and Land Premises	Use
1106	House Buildings Farm	
1061	Garden	Arable
1062	Culver Park	Pasture
1066	Dove Orchard	Orchard
1067	Little Bearley Orchard	Orchard
1068	Little Bearley	Arable
1099	Lower Coombe Mead	Pasture
1104	Great Orchard	Orchard
1109	Plot Orchard	
1110	Lower Thorn Park	Pasture

Table 1: Details from the Silverton tithe apportionment of 1842

4.6 The 1st edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1889 depicts a changed layout to the farm, with just the farmhouse extant, albeit with its south end removed; the attached agricultural buildings depicted on the tithe map had also been removed, along with the small barn to the south (Fig. 3). Extensions had been added to the west side of the detached barn to the west of the house and the east side of the building to the southeast of the farmhouse. A new smaller structure had been added to the north of this creating a yard. The removed farm buildings west of the house appear to have been replaced by new barns located to the northeast of the house. One of these new buildings is recorded on the HER as a bank barn (MDV37586).

4.7 The 2nd edition 25-inch Ordnance survey map of 1905, along with later 20th-century maps, shows no change in the layout or size of Greenslinch.

5. THE RECORDING (Figs 4-6; Plates 1-11)

5.1 The recorded partition is located within the present rear, west range on the west side of the house; its divides a living room that faces south from an east-west aligned corridor along the rear north side of the house. The current architectural finishes to the living room include a low skirting board and picture rail (Plate 1), which are present on all walls including the south face of the partition. The room is

ceiled, below which is a central, wide chamfered bridging beam. This extends through the partition and terminates in the north wall beyond the corridor.

5.2 The corridor is narrow – 1.05m wide – and links a rear lobby in the main east range with a blocked doorway in the west wall of the west range (Plate 2). This opening is partially splayed, and the blocking contains a narrow wooden-framed window with diagonal security bar, which itself has been blocked with bricks. The inside of the opening is defined by a wooden, pegged doorframe with a chamfer terminating in a high-level scroll, flat and bar stop (Plates 3-4), which is stylistically datable to the decades around 1650 or slightly earlier. In the north wall there is an opening into a stair turret. This was a thick wooden frame, which is partially obscured by plaster, and a secondary, inner moulded doorframe with the remains of 18th-century H-hinges. To the east is a doorway, now blocked in brick and incorporating a window. The floor of the corridor is mainly orange-red brick, laid in two directions, with an area of repair using concrete.

5.3 The partition is formed from vertical studs, which supports lath and plaster on its south face; this has been covered with wallpaper. The north side facing the corridor has been finished using a number of reused wooden architectural fittings (Plate 5). This extends to a height of up to 2.02m from the floor. Above this, the partition is plastered. A total of 19 different fittings and repairs have been identified, and are listed below, with measurements representing length by height as set into the partition.

1. Fragment of a probable floor board or stair tread with rounded top edge. 2.08m by 0.30m.
2. Fragment of a floor board. 1.06m by 0.26m.
3. Fragment of a floor board. 1.20m by 0.36m.
4. Fragment of a floor board. 0.86m by 0.26m.
5. Fragment of a floor board displaying a keyhole-shaped opening. 1.8m by 0.14m.
6. Fragment of a floor board, with a large sawn rounded corner. This piece may therefore be a stair tread; 0.82m by 0.28m.
7. Fragment of a floor board. 0.84m by 0.24m.
8. Panelling, comprising two panels flanked by wide plank stiles and separated by horizontal rails with ogee moulding (Plates 6-7). This moulding is continuous with moulding on applied vertical fillets. All the joints are nailed. The present top stile displays a number of keyhole and figure of eight-shaped openings. This panel is of a different design to nos 9, 12 and 14. 1.34m by 0.64m.
9. Cut-down upper section of panelling, comprising two plain panels with two rectangular top panels containing decoration; the base has been cut off, along with the side currently adjacent to the floor (Plates 8-9). Where the original base of the panel has been cut away another stile has been reset off centre. The panels are set into the stiles using the post-and-panel technique. All panels are defined by ogee mouldings with chamfered corners, which can be broadly dated to the 17th century. The upper panel is carved with a scroll decoration of leaves. Below this is a deeper panel of strapwork carved with three joined circles; the outer circles contain an identical open leaf design, whilst the inner design is inverted and features a more densely packed leaves. 0.90m by 0.64m.
10. Fragment of a floor board, split into two pieces, displaying a keyhole-shaped opening. 1.32m by 0.32m.
11. Fragment of a floor board. 1.32m by 0.32m.

12. Fragment of a top section of panelling, cut off on its current western side (Plate 10). It comprises three panels and the start of a fourth panel. The construction technique and moulding is the same as no. 9. 1.86m by 0.36m.
13. Fragment of a floor board displaying holes of various sizes and a scar of a now-removed bracket fitting. 1.54m by 0.46m.
14. Fragment of a rail from a top section of panelling as no. 12 (Plate 11). It has the same moulding and mortices as nos 9 and 12. 1.24m by 0.10m.
15. Fragment of a skirting board with ovolo moulding to the top edge (Plate 11). The detail of the moulding is very slender when compared to the *in situ* skirting boards in the house. 1.22m by 0.24m.
16. Fragment of a floor board displaying circular and hexagonal holes, along with the two scars of now-removed bracket fittings. 1.80m by 0.50m.
17. Fragment of a skirting board with ovolo moulding to the top edge. One edge is chamfered to match another board or fitting (e.g. in the corner of a room or a door frame). 1.16m by 0.28m.
18. Fragment of a floor board displaying a circular hole. 0.76m by 0.44m
19. A large area of 20th-century repair using treated pine tongue and grooved boards. 4.14m by 1.20m

The boot patten, by Dr Naomi Payne (Plate 12)

- 5.4** When the partition was removed an object was found concealed within the partition panelling. The object was a foot patten, a wood and metal overshoe used to protect shoes and elevate the wearer slightly in muddy or wet conditions. The foot patten consists of a flat piece of shaped wood with an iron ring attached to the underside. A toe piece and two leather straps are riveted to the wooden platform. The leather straps would have been tied together to keep them in place, hence the perforations at the ends. Foot pattens came into use around c. 1600 and usage declined during the 19th century as rubber overshoes and wellington boots became more common. The historical concealment of footwear within the fabric of buildings for superstitious reasons is well documented.

The roof of the west range, by Andrew Passmore and Stella De-Villiers (Plates 13-17)

- 5.5** The recorded roof truss is located in the present rear west wing, which was almost certainly the original hall and would have been open to the roof, as evidenced by the smoke-blackening on the truss. The truss is a jointed cruck, arched-braced roof with two through purlins. The collar is slightly cambered and joined to the rafters with pegged mortice and tenon joints. The truss and the purlins display empty sockets (with pegs remaining) for supporting wind braces located between the rows of purlins. Upon removal of the existing ceiling that had been at collar level it was identified that the apex of the truss had been removed, and all woodwork supporting the roof was modern, supported on slightly earlier (perhaps 19th-century) back purlins.
- 5.6** There is a second truss of the same type to the east of this one, concealed within a wall partition. Below the ceiling level the faint outline of the trusses can be seen in the plaster, and following removal of the ceiling top of the cambered collar and tops of sawn off trusses were exposed (see centre of Plate 14).

6. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSE, AND THE DATE AND CONTEXT OF THE PARTITION

The development of the house

6.1 The present Greenslinch farmhouse has its origins as a late medieval open-hall house. The building was radically altered in the 17th century (see below), but its original layout can be inferred from analysis of the surviving early features. The present rear west wing, was almost certainly the hall, and open to the roof, as evidenced by the smoke-blackened jointed cruck, arched braced roof truss, which displays evidence for removed windbraces, another feature of open-halled houses. In the usual Devon vernacular tradition this room would have faced south to make the most of the sunlight. It is not known whether the doorway in the northwest corner is an early or later feature. It could have led into an original inner parlour. Evidence from the tithe map indicates that by the mid 19th century the building extended to the west. To the east, the present south doorway leads into inner and outer lobbies (divided by a modern partition) and through an extension to a rear door. This area represents the original cross passage, albeit widened. Further evidence for this can be seen on the first floor where a second, largely obscured truss is present within the wall at the east end of the first-floor room over the partition between the present living room/corridor and lobbies.

6.2 The house was radically altered in the 17th century when the open hall was floored over. The service room/s at the east end of the house appear to have been entirely rebuilt and replaced with a new suite of rooms including a new entrance passage leading into the house from the east. At this date the former hall may have become the rear wing. The fireplace and bridging beams in the present kitchen date from this phase of alterations. A cursory inspection of the roof over the east range confirms that the trusses are not smoke-blackened and have lap joints; they could be of 17th-century date. The former hall was also floored over. The first-floor joists are obscured but were supported on a very wide, chamfered central bridging beam that extends north-south through the present living room and corridor. The stair turret almost certainly dates from this period rather than being an original feature as hinted at in the Listed Building description. It contains a chamfered 'newel' post similar to the bridging beams used elsewhere.

6.3 There are a few surviving 18th-century fittings in the house, mainly in the form of hinges to cupboards and doors (such as in the stair turret opening). By 1842 the east range extended further to the south than it does at present. The building also extended further to the west than at present and was in use as agricultural buildings. Oddly, this use is recorded as including the whole of the present west range.

6.4 By 1889 the farmstead had been reconfigured. The attached agricultural buildings on the west side were replaced by new buildings located to the northeast side of the house. The southern part of the east range of the farmhouse was demolished. The present south wall may have been rebuilt since the exposed sandstone masonry is similar in style to the new farm buildings. The inside of the house was probably generally refurbished at this time.

The date, context and significance of the partition

6.5 A firm date for the construction of the partition between the living room and corridor cannot be put forward, but it is likely to be of 19th-century date. Some of the features in the corridor, such as the 17th-century doorframe and the stair turret, clearly relate to earlier alterations in the house. The majority of the present brick floor appears to be contemporary with the partition, but the bricks cannot be

securely dated. The reused wood within the partition contains pieces of varying dates, from the 17th century, probably through to the late 18th century. The later pieces comprise the skirting boards and floorboards. As such, these provide a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the partition. On this basis an early 19th-century date for the partition is put forward, i.e. the partition was created to divide the corridor from the present living room when the wing and buildings to the west were used for agricultural purposes. Essentially the corridor provided an internal link from the house to the farm buildings. Whilst a later date is possible, the subsequent blocking of the doorway and the creation of a window here (before this itself was blocked perhaps in the mid 20th century), indicates that the usefulness of the corridor ceased when the buildings to the west were demolished. The current mid-late 19th-century layout of the rest of the house, including the main stairs to a first landing, meant that the stair turret, and the associated corridor, did not at that date provide the principal access to the first floor. A similar arrangement exists at South Yeo, Poughill, where there is a 17th-century stair turret, now providing first-floor access from the present kitchen, which is subsidiary to the main staircase (Passmore 2014).

- 6.6** The origin of the reused wood within the partition is unknown. It would be expected that it derives from the Greenslinch Farmhouse, but some of the pieces could have come from one of the nearby barns or houses within the hamlet. The most significant pieces are the panels 8, 9, 12 and 14. These can be generally dated to the 17th century, and the group of panels 9, 12 and 14 are very similar in both size and moulding to the painted panelling at the merchant's house of 18 North Street, Exeter (Parker *et. al.* 2013). Here dendrochronological analysis of one of the panels produced a felling date of A.D. 1573-1609, providing an early 17th-century date for the rebuilding of the house. However, the decoration on the panels is reminiscent of the work of the carpenters Thomas Dennis and William Searle who were producing chests in the second half of the 17th century. Taken with the other surviving architectural features, such as the doorframe in the corridor, a date possibly in the 2nd quarter of the 17th-century seems likely, although a later 17th-century date cannot be ruled out. If associated with the extensive remodelling of the house then these two types of panels could have been displayed in two of the primary public rooms of the house, or perhaps one of the corridors or lobbys.

7. COMMENTS

- 7.1** The works involved the removal of the partition and enlargement of the living room to its original size. Whilst this removal has an impact on the historic building, the significance of the partition is mainly drawn from the reused panels it contains rather than its current function within the house. Its removal allowed the former hall – the primary room of the medieval and early post-medieval house – to be reinstated to its original size. By doing this, the 17th-century layout of the room will also be recreated, enhancing the appreciation of the contemporary features currently hidden away in the corridor – namely the doorframe, the stair turret and the north end of the bridging beam. In this context, the removal of the partition can be considered as enhancing the understanding of the early development and layout of the house. Its removal has also led to the discovery of a foot patten.
- 7.2** The partition contains reused wood of varying dates, some of which is more significant than others. The most significant pieces – the 17th-century panelling – has been retained and displayed within the house.

- 7.3 The roof truss is a reasonably good example of a medieval jointed cruck, arched braced roof. Although altered and partially dismantled, the principal features, or evidence for them, can be discerned. The evidence of smoke-blackening, along with that for wind braces, supports the idea that the hall was originally open to the roof.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 The survey and recording was commissioned by Mr Tim Butler. The documentary research was carried out by Debra Costen and the recording undertaken by Andrew Passmore and Stella De-Villiers. The report illustrations were prepared by Elisabeth Patkai, Sarnia Blackmore and Stella De-Villiers.

9. SOURCES CONSULTED

Devon Heritage Centre

1842 Silverton tithe map and 1842 apportionment

DHC 6617 M/E0

Ordnance Survey 25-inch 1st edition Devonshire map sheet LV1.12, surveyed 1887, published 1889

Ordnance Survey 25-inch 2nd edition Devonshire map sheet LVI.12, surveyed 1887, revised 1903, published 1905

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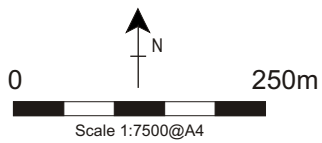
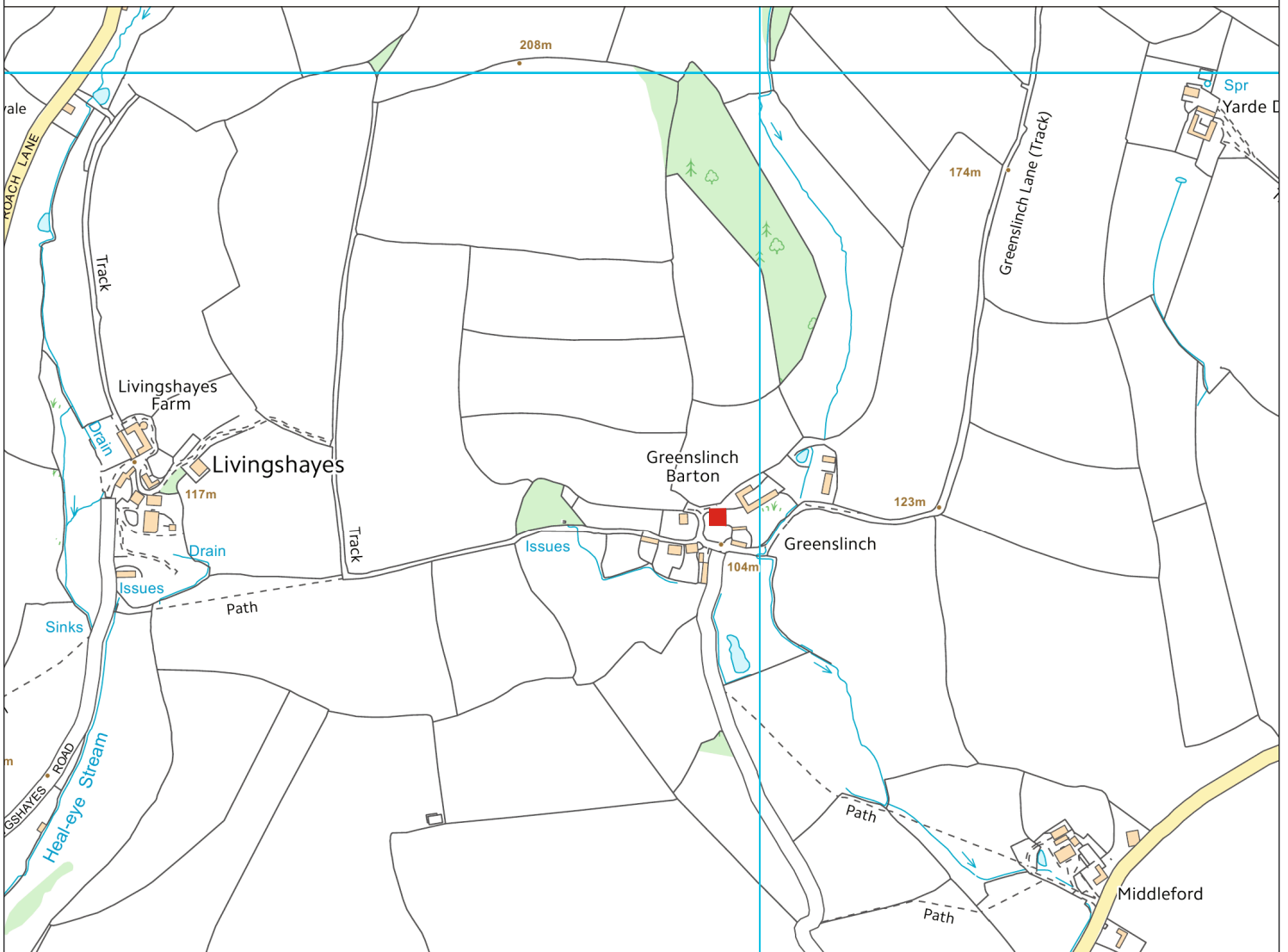
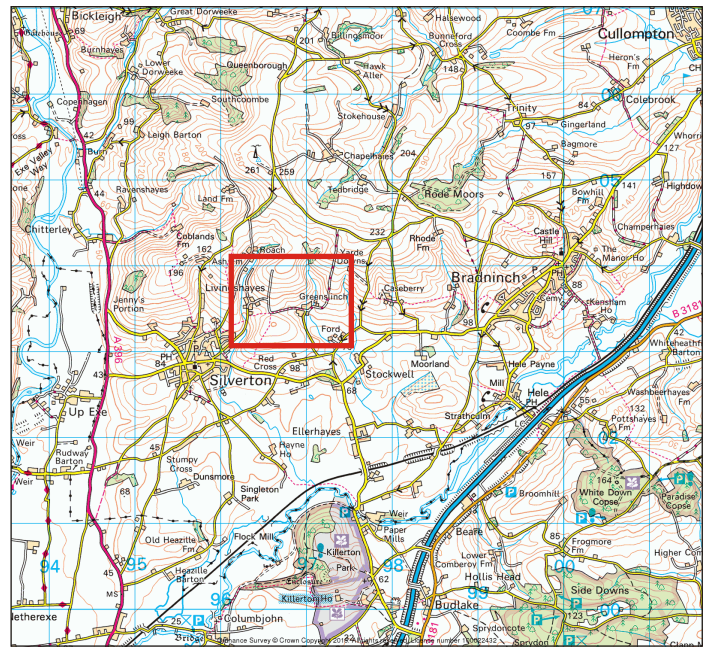
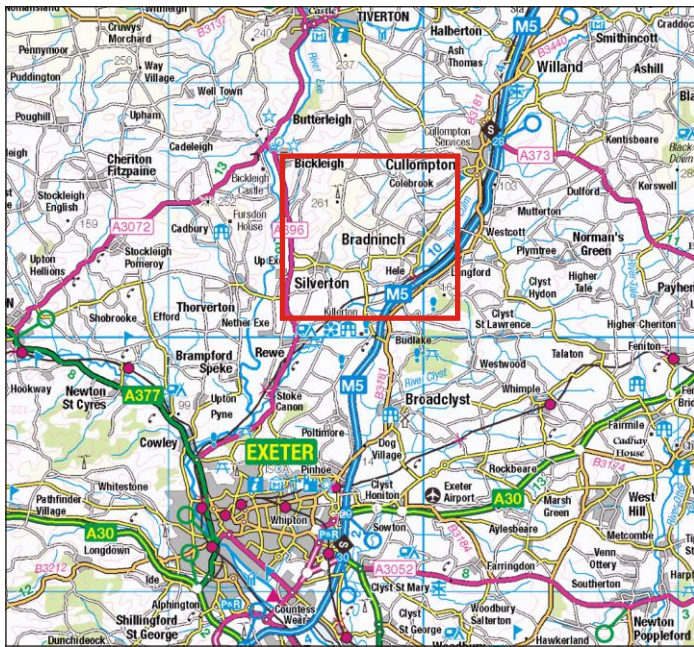
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National Heritage List for England, (<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>)



PROJECT

Greenslinch Farmhouse, Silvertown, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



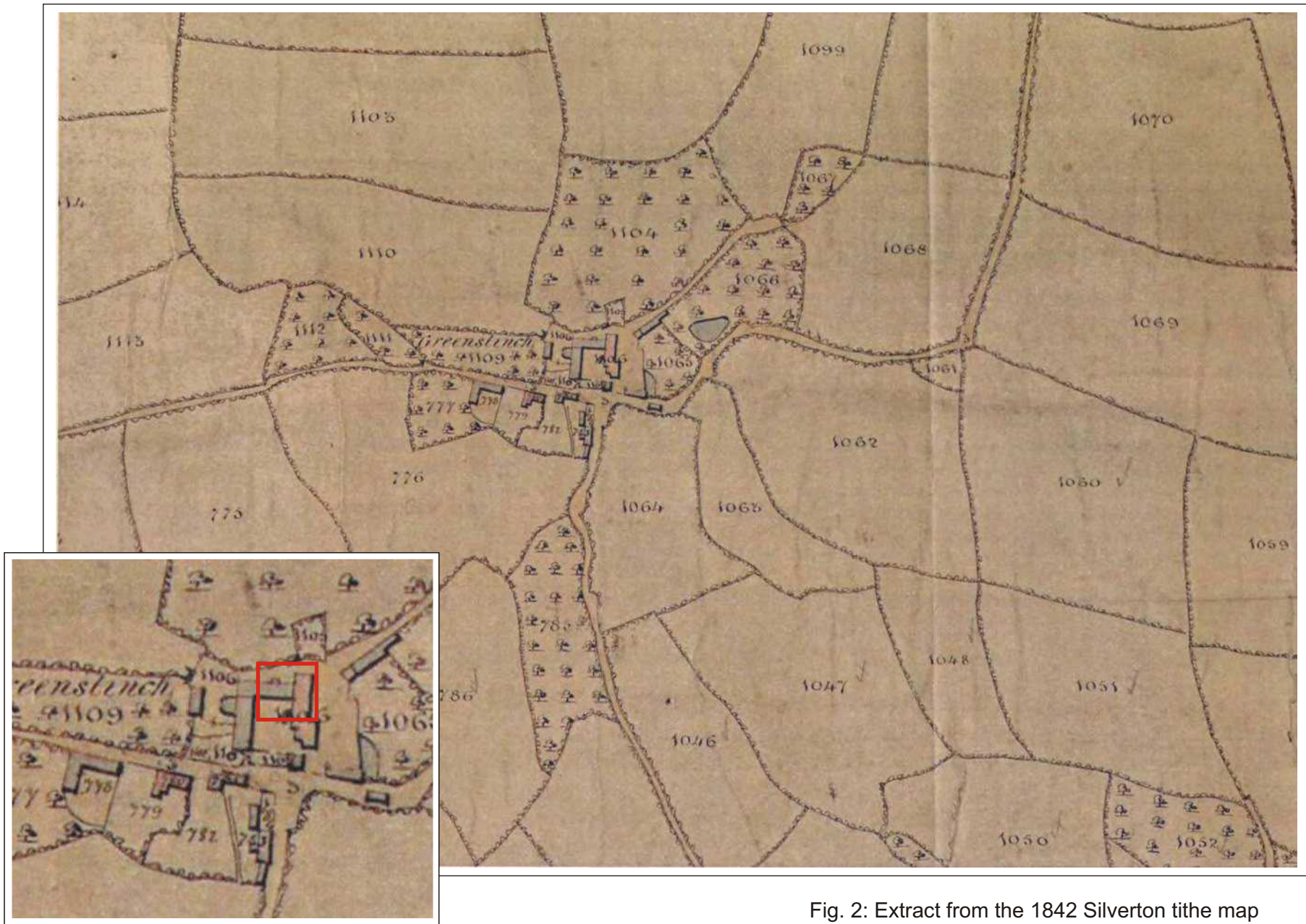


Fig. 2: Extract from the 1842 Silverton tithe map

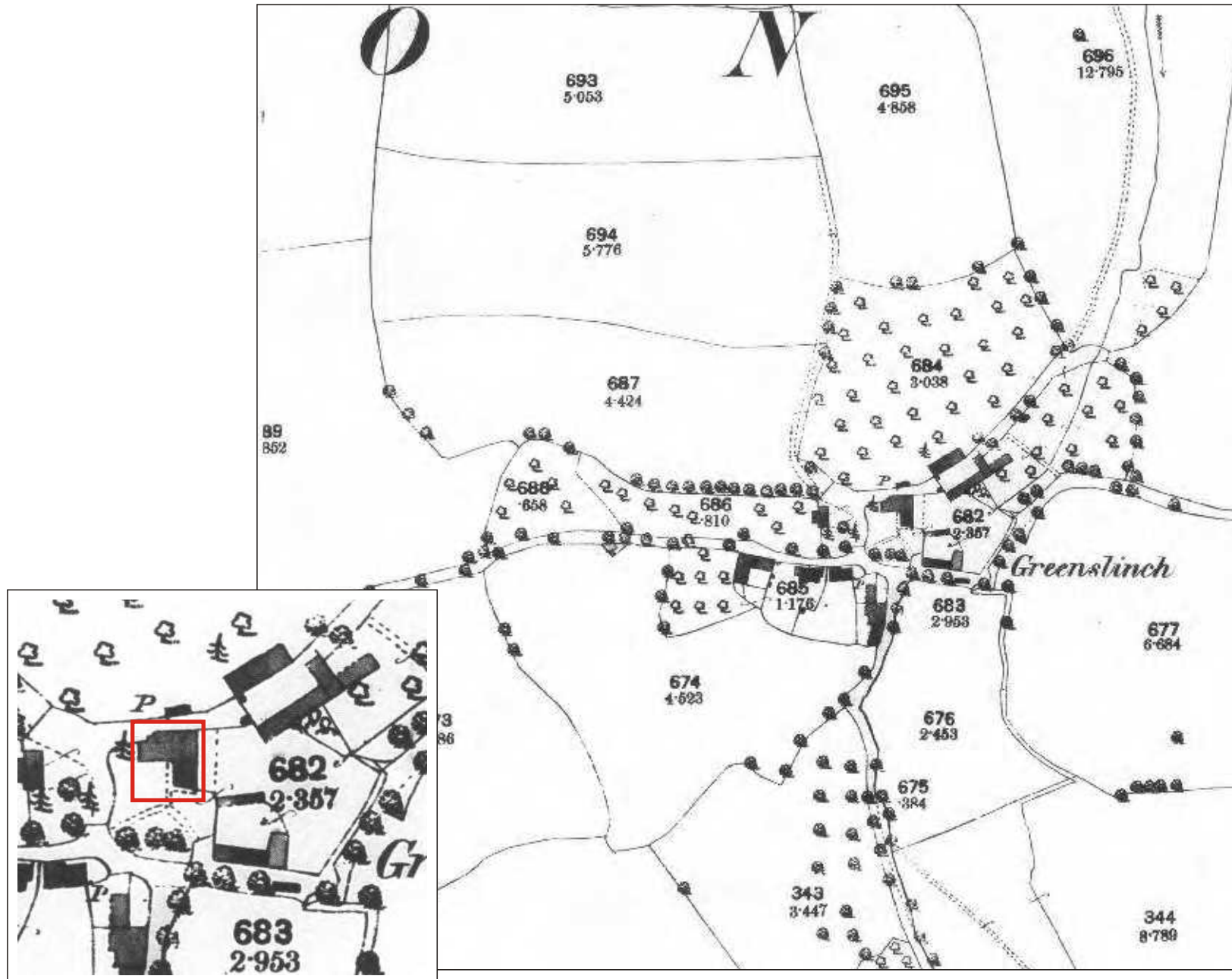
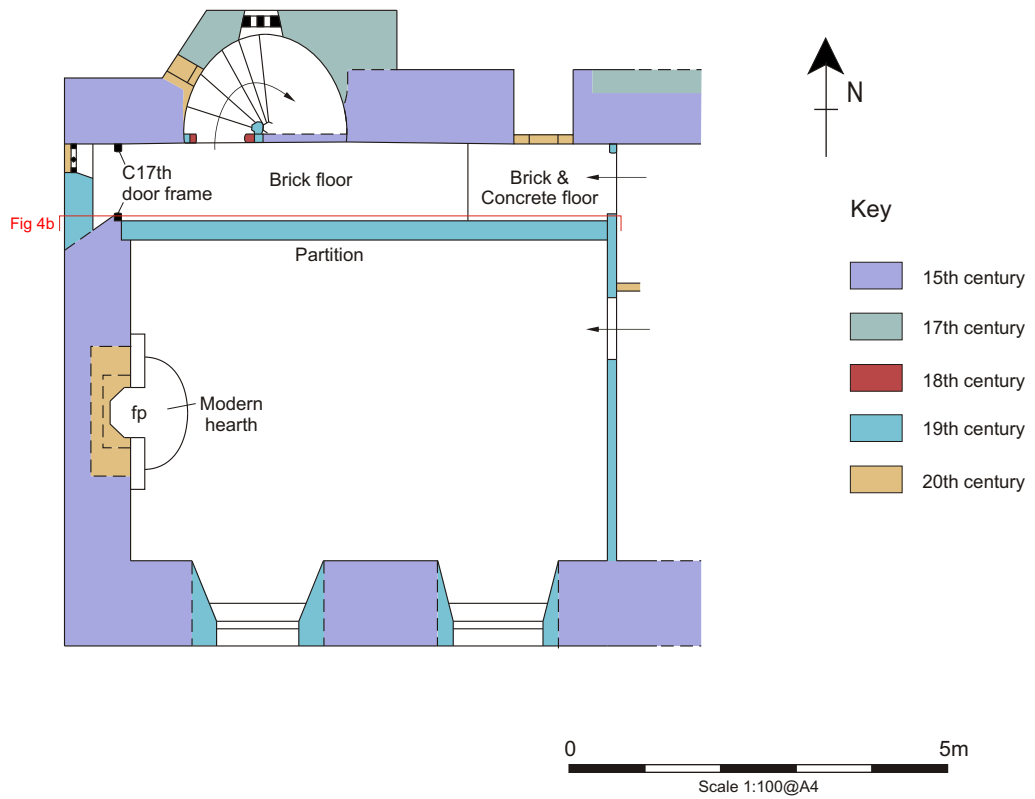
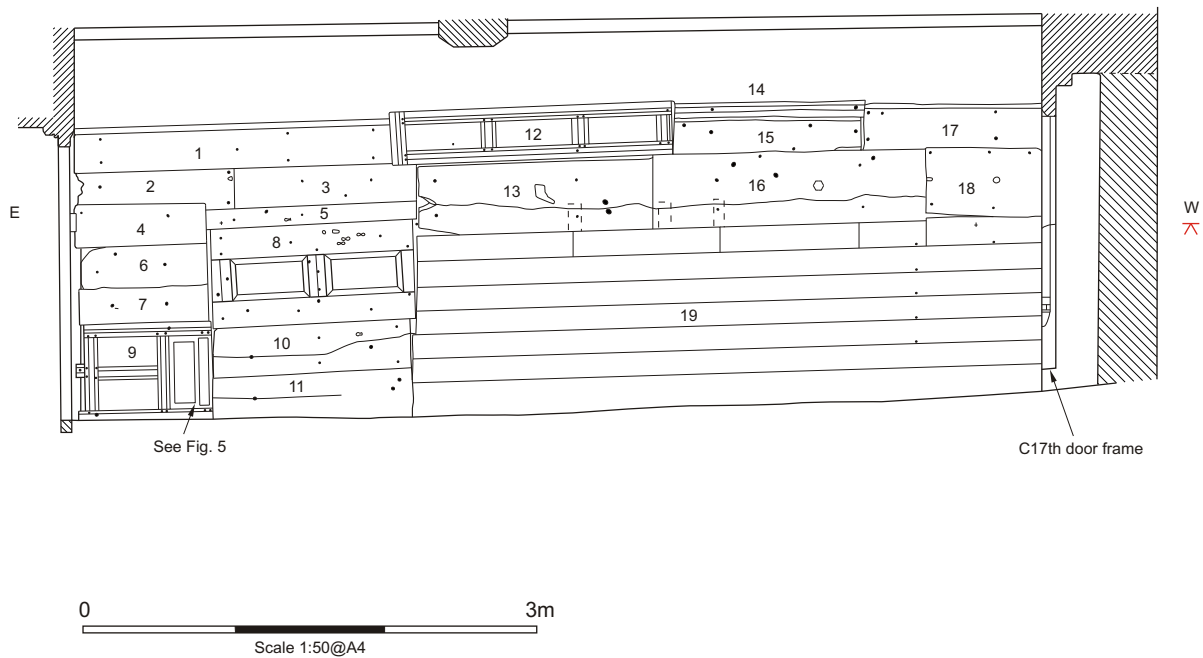


Fig. 3: Extract from the 25-inch 1889 Ordnance Survey map

a) Plan



b) Elevation of partition in former hall





PROJECT

Greenslinch Farm, Silverton, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 4: Plan and elevation



 Obscured detail
 projected detail

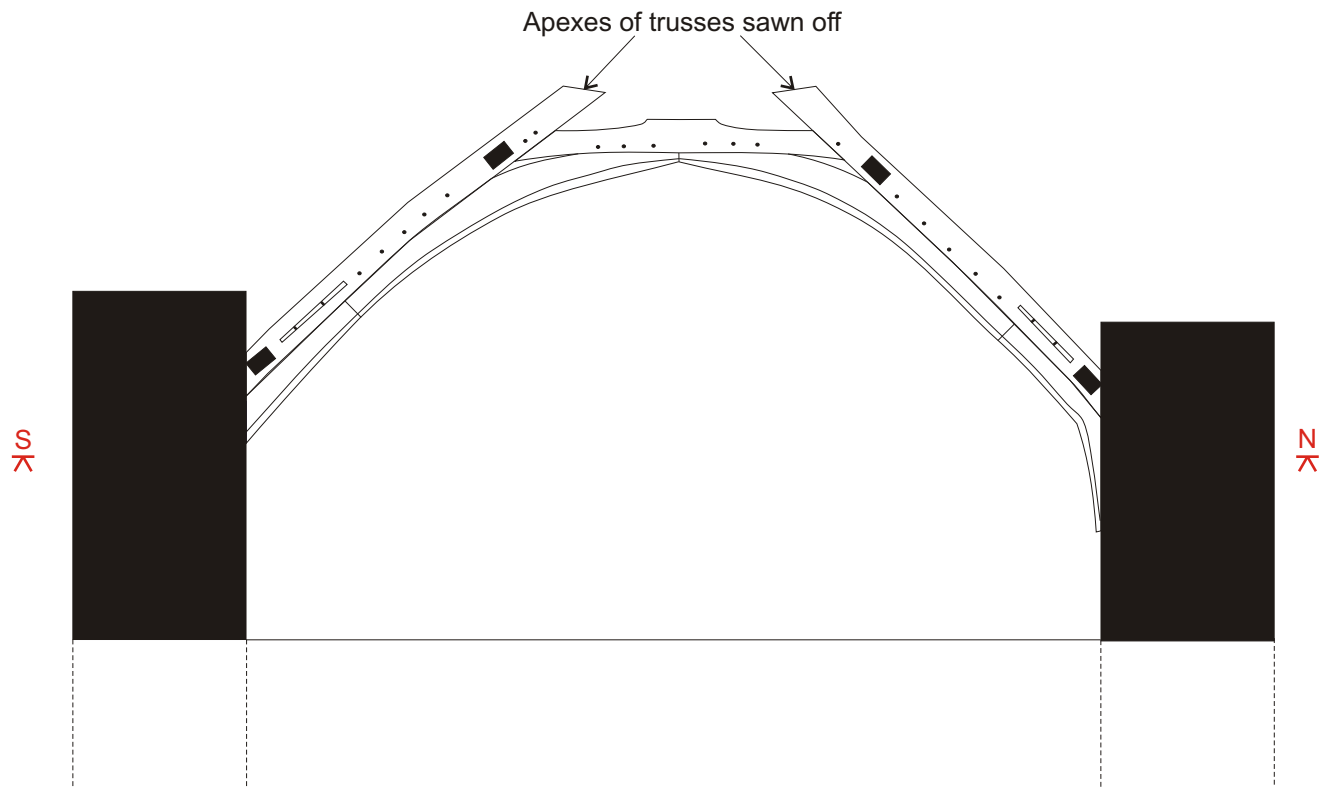
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PROJECT

Greenslinch Farm, Silverton, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 5: Detail of decoration on
panel 9



All modern roof timbers have been omitted from the drawing

PROJECT
Greenslinch Farm,
Silverton, Devon
TITLE
Fig. 6: Roof truss in the
west wing





Plate 1: The living room showing the partition to the right of the scale, viewed from the southeast. 1m scale



Plate 4: Detail of a stop on the corridor doorframe, viewed from the southeast

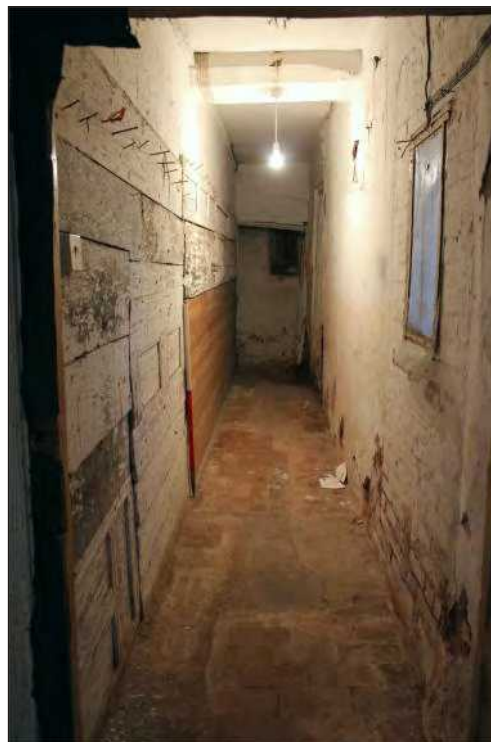


Plate 2: The corridor, viewed from the east. 1m scale



Plate 3: The blocked doorway at the west end of the corridor showing the 17th-century doorframe, viewed from the east. 1m scale



Plate 5: The partition, viewed from the northwest



Plate 6: Panel 8, viewed from the northwest



Plate 7: Detail of the moulding on panel 8, viewed from the north



Plate 8: Panel 9, viewed from the north



Plate 9: Detail of the decoration on panel 9, viewed from the north



Plate 10: Panel 12, viewed from the northwest



Plate 11: Panel 15 and skirting board 15, viewed from the north-northwest



Plate 12: Foot patten found concealed within the partition.
Courtesy of Peter Butler



Plate 13: Composite photo of the roof truss, looking west



Plate 14: Composite photo of the roof truss, looking east



Plate 15: Detailed view of empty socket in the truss with wooden pegs for supporting a wind brace, looking west



Plate 16: Detailed view of empty sockets in the purlin with wooden pegs for supporting a wind brace, looking north



Plate 17: Detailed view of empty peg holes in the purlin for supporting a wind brace, looking south

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