

Upper Court Barn, Higher Collaton, Halwell, Devon

NGR SX79675288

Results of historic building recording and an
archaeological watching brief

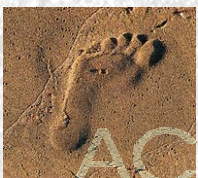
Planning ref. South Hams District Council 22/1487/04/F

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On behalf of:
Mrs Nia Enticknap

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archaeology

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Summary

Historic building recording and monitoring of groundworks associated with the conversion of a barn to residential use on land at Higher Collaton, Halwell, Devon (NGR SX79675288), was undertaken by AC archaeology during September 2009. An historic building assessment has been previously undertaken, which established that the barn may have originally been constructed as a medieval longhouse with shippen and used as a threshing barn by the latter part of the 17th century. At least another four subsequent phases of alteration and use were identified from the building's fabric.

The present work has established that the phasing and interpretation as set out in the earlier report are largely correct. It also confirmed that the building would originally have extended further to the north, as stone footings and a foundation trench were recorded during groundworks in that area. An internal cobbled surface was also present. Works alongside the northeast corner of the building, where a probable lean-to extension is shown on historic maps and partly survives within the northern boundary wall, established that concrete underpinning of the east wall of the barn and the insertion of the concrete yard surface is likely to have removed any below-ground evidence for this.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As part of works associated with the conversion of a barn to a single dwelling at Upper Court Barn, Higher Collaton, Blackawton, Halwell, Devon, additional historic building recording and an archaeological watching brief was carried out by AC archaeology during September 2009. The work was commissioned by the site owner Mrs Nia Enticknap. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.1 Halwell is a rural parish near the South Devon coast. Collaton is situated about 1.9km to the east of the village, and is positioned at the head of a shallow combe c. 0.5km to the south of the main road from Halwell to Dartmouth. It lies at around 180m OD and the underlying solid geology comprises Lower Devonian Slates and Sandstones.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An historic building assessment has been previously prepared for the building (Waterhouse 2004). When this assessment was undertaken the building was referred to as *Higher Barn*, while under the current planning application it is called *Upper Court Barn*.
- 2.2 A farmstead is recorded at Collaton as early as 1242, when it was documented as *Kolethon*. The barn itself contains many different phases of construction. It is thought that it may have originally been constructed as a medieval longhouse with shippen and used as a threshing barn by the latter part of the 17th century. At least another four subsequent phases of alteration and use were identified from the building's fabric.

3. AIMS OF THE WORK

- 3.1 The principal aim of the work was to investigate and record any historic fabric or architectural features either exposed by or removed by works associated with the conversion of the barn, in particular any which had been previously obscured or had not been noted in the earlier assessment report (Waterhouse 2004).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The investigation was carried out in accordance with a method statement prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2009) and a brief supplied by Devon County Council Historic Environment Service (Tait 2009).
- 4.2 The building was recorded to RCHM(E) Level 2 standards, as per English Heritage (2006) *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practices*. It comprised mainly a photographic record, supplemented by the annotation of the earlier phase plans prepared by Robert Waterhouse (2004) and of architect's plans.
- 4.3 The site was recorded in accordance with the AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and digital photographic records, and with reference to AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 1*.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction (Plan Fig. 2, elevation Fig. 3, Plates 1-4)

The findings as set out within this report supplement those previously described by Waterhouse (2004). Unless otherwise stated, the results and interpretation as set out in that report are still valid.

The barn is a low, two-storey structure aligned north-south (Plate 1). It is built mainly of coursed stone rubble with large areas of cob at first floor level. The roof is a modern replacement of corrugated metal sheets. It has a lean-to at the southern end of its eastern elevation and a sloping length of wall at the northern end, indicating the former presence of a second lean-to. Internally, the main building has two compartments divided by a split floor level/revetment (Fig. 2). The walls have remains of limewash and prior to conversion works there were surviving feeding troughs and hayracks.

5.2 Lower (southern) compartment

The floor within this compartment was composed of cobbles which were bisected by a cobbled drain. The northern end of the drain curved outwards towards the wide doorway in the eastern wall, where it had been truncated by the insertion of some concrete within the floor (Fig. 2).

The removal of the cobbled floor (Plate 2) and stone feed trough showed these features to be directly above natural subsoil, which was composed of red clay with angular slate stone inclusions. There were no buried remains present for any other internal fixtures or fittings, such as cattle stalls.

When the feed troughs were removed along the western wall, it was established that the western wall courses did not extend below the projecting backs of the troughs, with therefore the eastern and southern wall foundations 0.25m deeper than the western wall.

The central revetment had a 0.15m thick stone-facing against slate bedrock and compacted natural red clay. Its purpose was purely cosmetic.

5.3 Higher (northern) compartment

The loft floor underwent significant repairs during the late 20th century. Replacement joists were installed using second-hand wood (some lengths still bear lot number stickers of Hussey's the auctioneers of Newton Abbot) and supported with iron girders.

Before the concrete floor was fully removed in this compartment, smaller areas were initially dug (Fig. 2), which established that the floor was directly overlying natural clay and slate deposits. The exposed natural subsoil was disturbed in its upper levels, which was probably when an earlier floor was removed to make way for the concrete. No evidence for other internal fixtures or fittings was present.

5.4 Site of northeast lean-to

Following the removal of the concrete yard surface on the east side of the building, a 7.6m long and 0.8m wide north-south aligned trench (Trench 1 on Fig. 2) was excavated through the surface make-up layer. The trench was 0.3m deep and was positioned where foundations relating to a former lean-to might be present. The make-up layer contained a small amount of building material, including an iron pintle and small roof slate fragments, but no evidence for former foundations was present. It is likely that any buried evidence for a lean-to has been removed by later disturbance.

Some breaks were noted along the eave of the roof (Fig. 3 and Plate 3), which comprised two small concreted patches in the cob and a neat vertical break between the cob and the adjacent stone courses. All these features could relate to the positions of upper ends of rafters for a lean-to. A large concrete block repair occupies the approximate position where a southern end wall for the lean-to is suggested by the map evidence.

5.5 Continuation of building to the north

Groundworks immediately to the north of the barn revealed stone footings and an associated foundation trench, representing a former continuation of the building in this direction (Fig. 2 and Plate 4). Sufficient remains were uncovered to establish a full plan, with the footings and foundation trench extending internally for a further 5.7m northwards. A flat slate slab in the eastern wall may denote a threshold and a stone cobbled floor was partly exposed within the interior. The ground immediately adjacent to the present end wall of the barn was not subjected to any groundworks and therefore the relationship between the exposed and existing walls was not established.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1** The recording of the building has not identified any significant new information relating to its phasing, but it has confirmed that it was originally a much larger structure which extended further to the north, as depicted on the Halwell parish tithe map of 1839 (Waterhouse 2004, Map 1). The positions of the exposed wall foundations line up with the main walls to the existing barn, perhaps confirming the original (?17th century) function of the building as a longhouse with shippen, with the former living area at the northern, now demolished upper end as suggested by Waterhouse (2004, 4). The historic map evidence confirms that this part of the building was removed before 1886.

- 6.2 The sloping section of wall on the northern boundary to the site is likely to represent the end wall of a former lean-to on the northeast corner of the barn. An extension to the barn in this location is also shown on the Ordnance Survey series of maps dating from 1886 (Waterhouse 2004, Map 2) through to 1955 (Fig. 4). Later disturbance associated with the insertion of the concrete yard and underpinning of the walls, means that no buried evidence associated with the lean-to was identified, although cement repairs in the eastern existing wall elevation might indicate the position of holes for former rafters from a lean-to.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 7.1 The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, in 4 Halthais Workshops, Bradninch, Nr Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. They will be deposited at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, Plymouth under the accession number AR.2009.17. The OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 64614.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 The recording and watching brief was commissioned by Mrs Nia Enticknap. The fieldwork was carried out by Colin Wakeham and Chris Caine and the illustrations for this report were prepared by Sarah Cottam.

10. SOURCES CONSULTED

DRO Halwell Parish tithe map, 1839

Gawne, E. And Sanders, J. 1998: *Early Dartmoor Farmhouses*

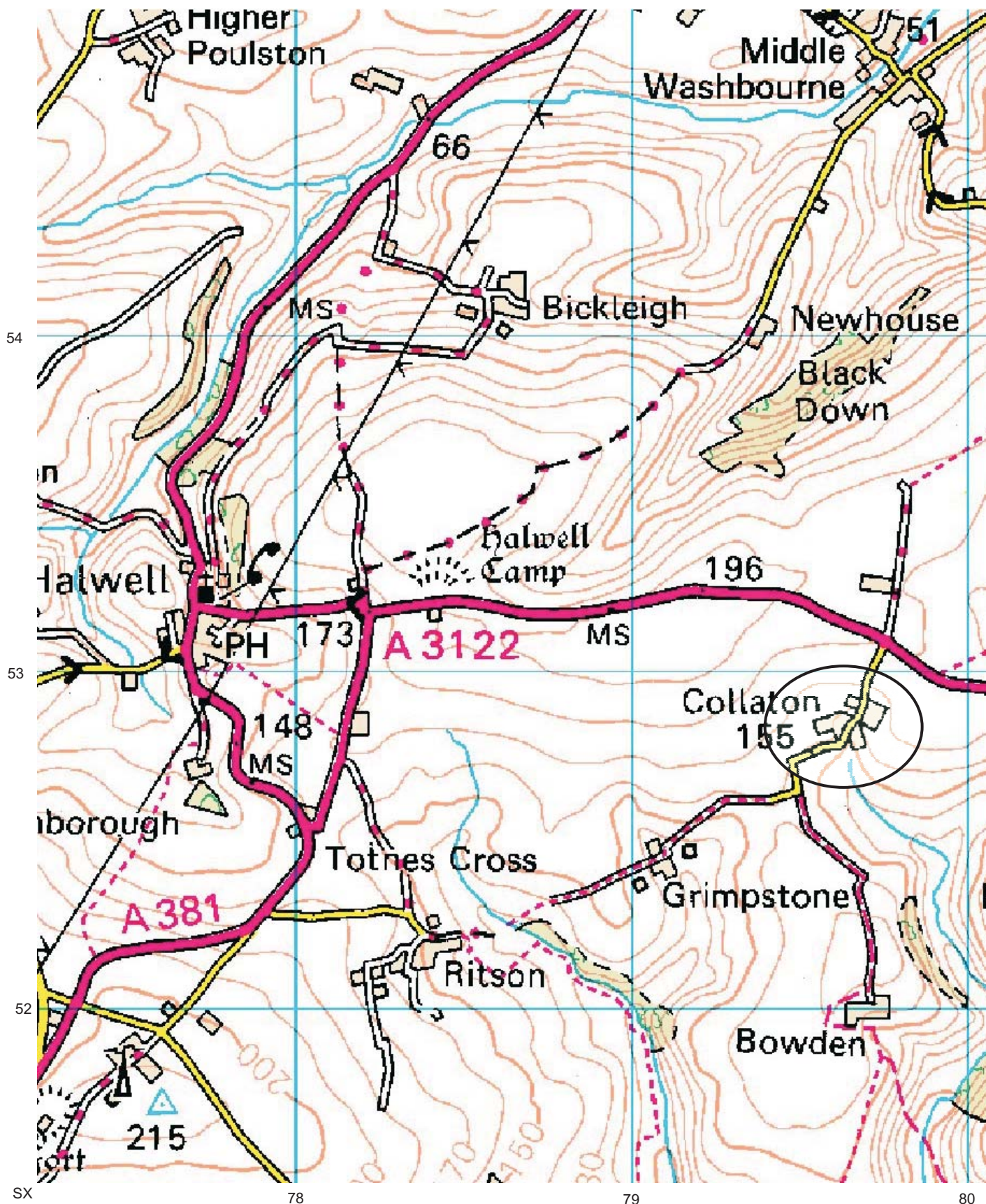
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Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map sheet SX7952, revised 1952, published 1955

Tait, G. 2009: *Brief for historic building recording: Higher Collaton Farm, Blackawton, Totnes, Devon*. DCHES document, ref. Arch/dc/sh/8059

Valentin, J. 2009: *Higher Barn, Collaton Farm, Blackawton, Halwell parish, Devon: Method statement for historic building recording*. AC archaeology document, ref. ACD91/1/0

Waterhouse, R. 2004: *Higher Barn, Collaton, near Halwell: An archaeological assessment*. Unpublished report for client



0 1km



PROJECT

Upper Court Barn, Collaton, Halwell

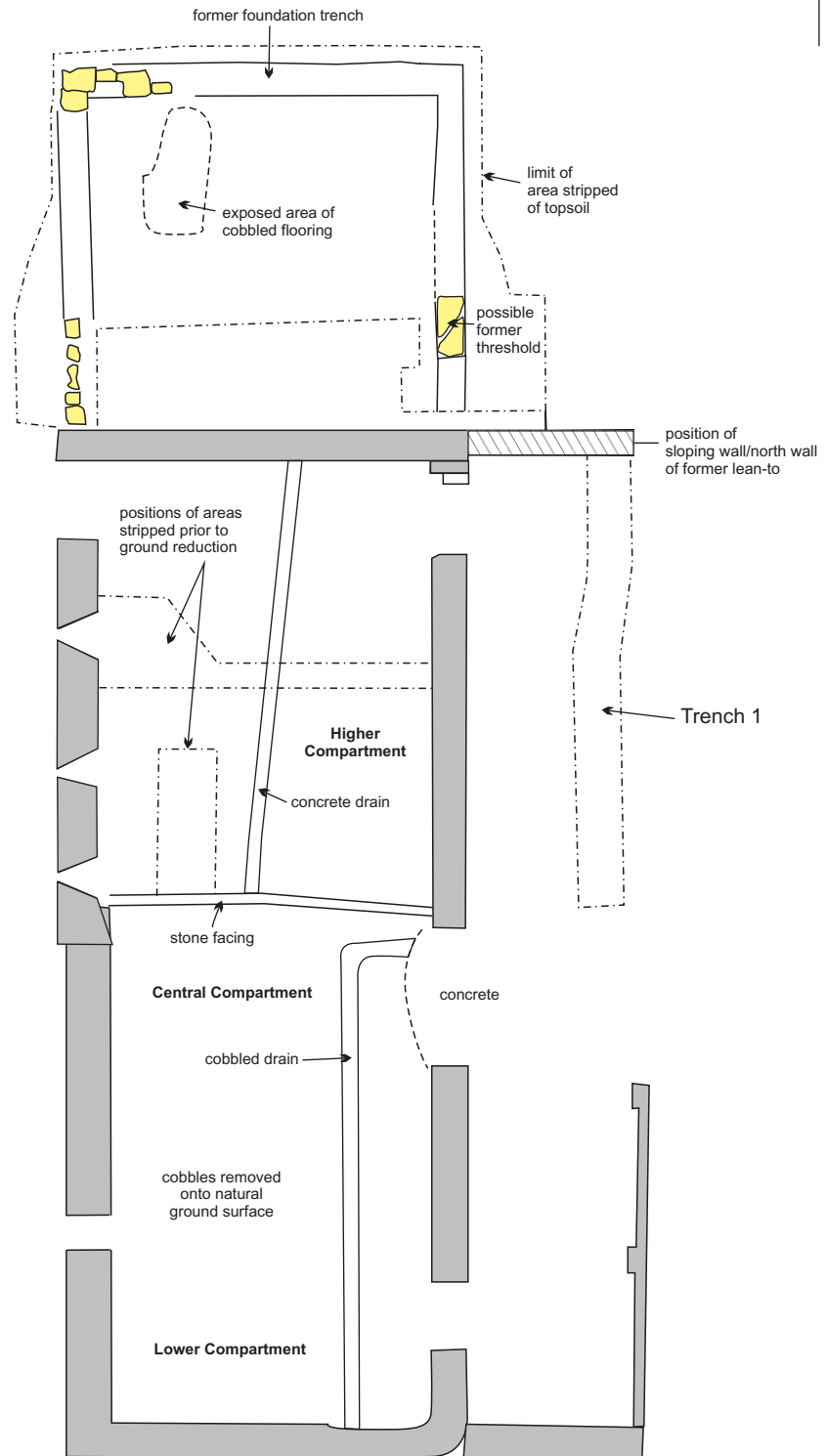
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Fig. 1
Site location

Key



Stone footings exposed during groundworks



0 5m



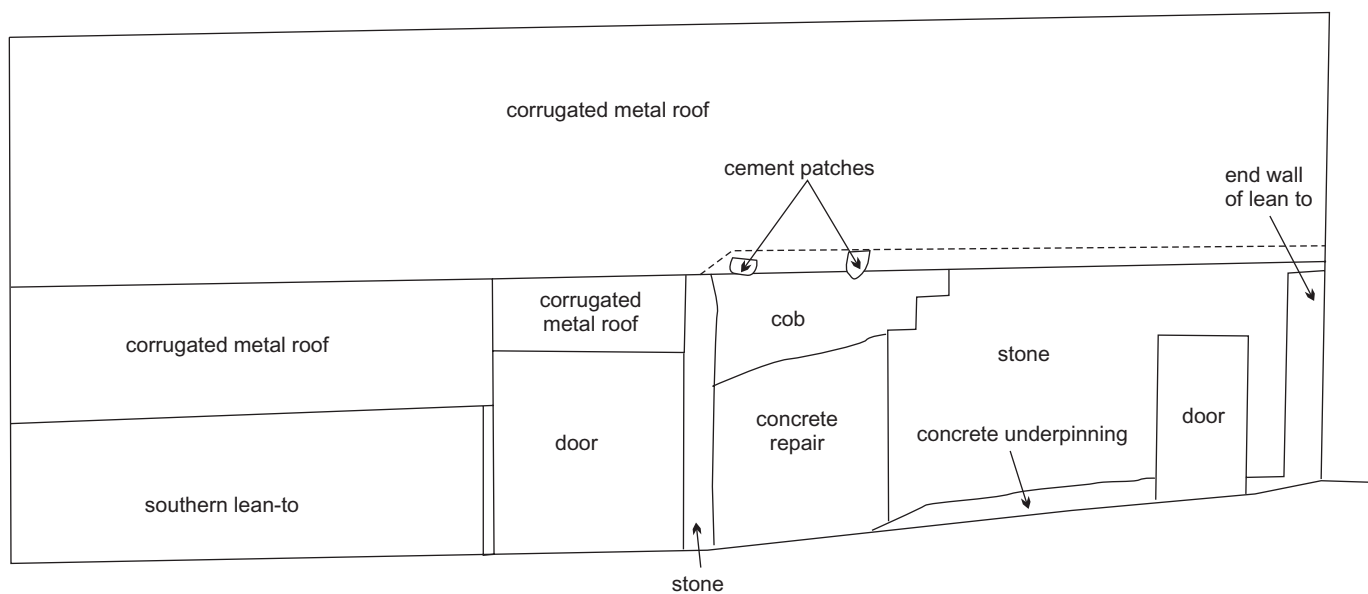
AC archaeology

PROJECT

Upper Court Barn, Collaton, Halwell

TITLE

Fig. 2:
Plan showing observations made during groundworks



0 5m

PROJECT



Upper Court Barn, Collaton, Halwell

TITLE

Fig. 3:
Eastern elevation of building



Plate 1: Eastern elevation of the building during early phases of groundworks.
View to west



Plate 2: Interior of Lower Compartment following removal of cobbled floor.
View to west

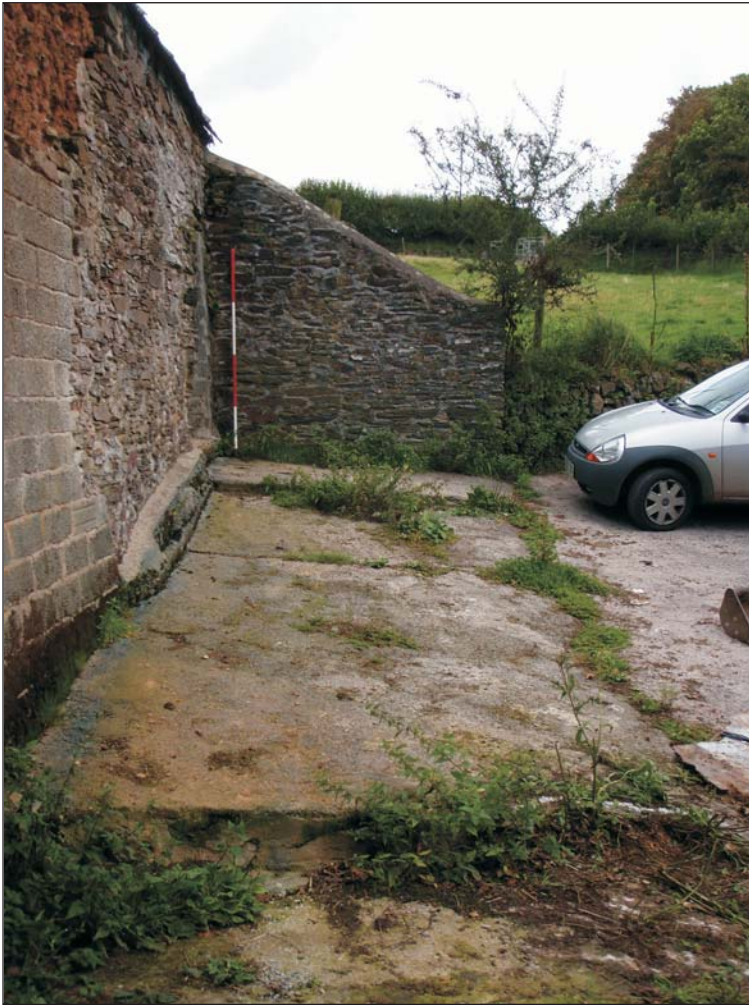


Plate 3:
Site of lean-to at northeast corner
of barn. View to north (scale 2m)



Plate 4:
Remnants of wall footings, north
side of standing barn.
View to west (scale 1m)

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