LINHAY AT LOWER WESTOWN HEMYOCK, DEVON

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

June 2015

Martin Watts

1 Trinity Cottages
Cullompton
Devon
EX15 1PE

Project LWL254

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Summary
A linhay – a traditional Devon farm building which provided shelter for stock at ground level and fodder storage above – which formed part of a farm and mill complex at Lower Westown, Hemyock, Devon, was recorded prior to its conversion to domestic use. The building, which dates from between c.*1840 and 1887, is a 7-bay structure built of stone and timber under a corrugated sheet metal roof.*

Introduction
This report has been compiled at the request of the building owner, to record the historic fabric which will be affected by the proposed development of a redundant agricultural building at Lower Westown, Hemyock, Devon, EX15 3RN. It follows a Written Scheme of Investigation for historic building recording submitted to the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Devon County Council, for an archaeological/historic building survey to accompany a planning application to Mid Devon District Council for conversion of the building to provide domestic accommodation (planning reference 13/01378/FULL).

The building which is the subject of this report is not listed nor understood to be within the curtilage of a listed building.

A non-intrusive site survey was carried out on 26 May 2015. The building recording broadly conforms to Level 2-3 as set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006).

Digital copies of this report will be deposited with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Service and uploaded onto the OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS) database under the identification number martinwa1-210489.

This report is intended to be read with the drawings and photographs attached. The drawings are based on plans and a section through the existing building prepared by Bondstones Planning and Design in 2013.

Location
Lower Westown comprises a small group of buildings which include a former water-powered corn mill and a farmhouse, located in the west of Hemyock parish, on the south bank of the river Culm. The buildings stand about 110m above Ordnance Datum. The linhay is a free-standing building located at the west end of the site at NGR ST 1210 1373, with an enclosed level area to its south/south-west. This formed an open yard for stock and appears to have been cut into the natural slope of the ground. The underlying geology is Triassic rocks of the Mercia Mudstone Group (http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/ accessed 9 June 2015).

Historical background

Westown is recorded as *Weston,* 'west farm', in 1566 (Gover *et al* 1932, 618). Lower Westown was a riverside farm, perhaps secondary to 'Old Westown' and 'Higher Westown' which are marked on the 1802 Ordnance Survey drawing (OSD 44 Part1)[1], Higher Westown being close to the road from Culmstock to Hemyock (Figure 1). Lower Westown was occupied by Samuel Farrant in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (DHC, 3137A/PO/ 49/33 and 50/44: apprenticeship records). The watermill at Lower Westown appears to have been newly-built in about 1813, the property being advertised to let as 'All that Dwelling House... with an excellent set of Water Grist Mills, lately erected, and capable of working to any extent... Mr John Broom Farrant (the owner) at Lower West Town...' (*Sherborne Mercury*, 29 November 1813). It was still to let a year later, then described as 'all those newly erected Grist and Flour Mills called Westown Mills... together with a Bake-house, Dwelling-house, six or ten acres of exceeding rich meadow and pasture land, a Threshing Machine in complete repair, a Rick Barton, Courtlage, Garden, and every other convenience for carrying on an extensive concern.' (*Woolmer's Gazette*, 5 November 1814, 4e). In 1816 the property remained un-let and an advertisement suggested that the mill 'may easily be converted into a woollen or cloth manufactory' and that the threshing machine attached to the mill 'may be let to the tenant for the accommodation of the neighbourhood.' (*Sherborne Mercury*, 22 January 1816). In 1817 John Farrant was declared bankrupt (*Exeter Flying Post*, 6 November 1817, 2) and it is possible that building the mill, perhaps as a speculative venture encouraged by the high price of grain and flour during the Napoleonic Wars, and the inability to let it during the slump after the wars, may have over-stretched his resources.

By the time of the tithe survey of *c*.1840, Lower Westown was owned by Joseph Davy and occupied by John Cork, his total holding being just over 110 acres (44.5 hectares). From the description of the fields in the tithe apportionment, 30 per cent were arable, a further 30 per cent meadow and just under 20 per cent pasture, the remainder being gardens, orchards, woods, plantation and furze (rough grazing). This reflects the mixed farming economy familiar in mid-19th century Devon, with livestock being as important as grain crops. This may have provided the need for a linhay, which was built on a plot of land numbered 571, which is named 'Machine Courtlage' - implying its position was adjacent to the building containing the threshing machine - in the tithe award. In 1853 Philip Cork is referred to as the under-tenant of Messrs Frederick and Simon Lane, who tenanted 'Desirable Farms and MILLS of or called LOWER WESTOWN and CULM DAVY, otherwise HOME ESTATE or CLEMENTS' which were then being advertised to let (*Exeter Flying Post*, 15 September 1853, 1b).

It is clear, however, that the linhay was not built until after the Hemyock tithe map was drawn in *c*.1840 (Figure 2). The outbuilding to its east, which still stands and is described briefly below, is shown on the tithe map, however, and both this building and the linhay appear on the first edition large-scale Ordnance Survey maps (1:2500 and 1:10560), for which the survey was carried out in 1887 (Figure 3). The first edition OS map also shows a building adjoining the west end of the linhay, perhaps the location of the thresher, which had gone by the time the revisions for the second edition map were carried out in 1903 (Figure 4). Both editions also show the small enclosed yard area on the south side of the linhay.

[1] http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/ordsurvdraw/ accessed 27 May 2015

Description of the linhay

A linhay is an open-fronted building with a dual function, providing shelter for cattle at yard level and the storage of fodder on the loft or tallet floor above. It is a distinctive local type of farm building, prevalent in Devon but virtually unknown elsewhere in England (Alcock 1963; Child 1995, 71). The linhay at Lower Westown is a typical medium-sized example. It is approximately 22m in length by 5.5m deep externally, and orientated about west-east, its open front facing slightly west of south. For convenience, the cardinal points are used in this description. In front of the building is a level area, at present overgrown, which would have served as a small stock yard. It appears to have been partly enclosed by a stone wall. No hard standing area was apparent, although an aerial photograph (see page 10) shows what might be a narrow strip immediately in front of the building.

The building contains seven structural bays, each about 2.7m wide between the front posts by which the bays are defined. The rear wall and gable ends are built of roughly coursed rubble stone masonry, a chert-like local stone which is bedded in a white lime mortar. The west gable wall, which is 45cm thick, is squarely built; the east gable wall has been repaired and repointed with cement mortar. Internally the walls were lime-washed; this coating survives more clearly above about 1.2m, having been rubbed off by animals at the lower level.

The principal features of the ground floor are shown on the plan (Figure 5) and the roof construction on the section (Figure 6). For the purposes of this report the bays are numbered from west to east and described as follows:

Bay 1: has the remains of a cobbled floor, with a timber cill beam set in floor 2.77m off the rear wall which forms a front edge to the cobbles. Fixed against the rear wall in the north-west corner is the string of a set of steps which led up to the tallet floor. The outer string is displaced and re-used as a prop against the partition between bays 1 and 2. There is a small recess in north wall, 10cm wide by 11cm high, 1.7m in from west gable (see photograph). The purpose of this is unclear. The tallet floor is carried on nine softwood joists of 10 by 5cm section, at about 40-50cm centres, the spacing and number of joists varying slightly from bay to bay. Some bays have an outer joist in front of the front posts. The joists have been renewed, their west ends being cemented into the gable wall.

The beam between bays 1 and 2 has a scarf repair at north end. It is of oak, about 15cm square section, tenoned and pegged through front post. A carpenter's mark 'v' is cut into its west side close to the front post. The vertical front post is very knotty oak, approximately 21cm wide by 19cm deep, which stands on large roughly squared chert block. The head of the post has been repaired by the addition of top section tenoned onto it (see below).

Bay 2: has the remains of a cobbled floor from about 1.5m off the rear wall. There is a small recess in the rear wall, 9cm wide by 10cm high and about 20cm deep, in a similar position to that in bay 1. A timber post and horizontal corrugated metal sheet partition has been inserted between bays 1 and 2. The beam between bays 2 and 3 has been scarf repaired at its north end and has a carpenter's mark 'I' on its west side near the front post. The tenon on the south end of the beam projects 13cm beyond front post, to which it is pegged with a single peg of about 2.5cm diameter (see photograph). The front post between bays 2 and 3 stands on a roughly squared stone block. It is a very wormy timber, with hinge pintles driven in for lower half doors to both bays. The top of the post has been repaired by a block tenoned into it, similar to the post between bays 1 and 2. The tallet floor is carried on seven joists over bay 2, the joists running over the tops of beams between bays 1- 2 and 2 - 3.

Bay 3: has concrete laid over the cobbles over part of the floor. It appears that the cobbled flooring has been deliberately removed along the rear (north) of bays 2 and 3, perhaps to create a passage with greater headroom. The beam between bays 3 and 4 has been renewed. There are two vertical timbers under it towards the rear, forming door posts for a re-used vertically-boarded door, and some horizontal timber boarding between this doorway and the front post. The tallet floor joists run over top of the beam, off which they are packed, with thicker packing towards the front as the beam falls slightly at its outer (south) end. The front post stands on a stone block, the top of which is set flush to the ground. The upper front parts of bays 3 and 4 have been partially closed with horizontal corrugated metal sheeting.

Bay 4: the concrete slab flooring in bay 3 extends into the west half of this bay, the remainder of the floor being uneven earth and some cobbles; the timber cill beam set in the floor along the southern edge of the cobbles is clearly exposed. This is the central bay of the building and has a door through the north wall. There is a ledged and braced vertically-boarded plank door hung in a plain pegged frame of hand-sawn sturdy 12 by 9cm oak timbers, the frame being older (?perhaps original) than the door. The door opening has an slightly arched head with stone voussoirs externally on the north side. Above the head of the door and along some of the beams are the remains of electric lighting cables with light fittings and several switches. On the east side of bay 4 is a set of steps which lead up to the tallet floor. The step strings and treads are made from sawn-down former railway sleepers. These steps are not in the original position (see bay 1 above). The beam between bays 4 and 5 has been renewed, similar to that between bays 3 and 4, its outer end falling slightly downwards. It is tenoned through the front post, with timber block under the tenon, and the peg hole for the original beam is now misaligned. There are nine joists with a trimmed opening for the steps. The south front of the bay is divided by a central vertical post. Vertical corrugated metal sheeting extends across the east half of this bay opening and also the front of bay 5.

Bay 5: has a concrete slab across middle part of the floor with remains of the timber cill beam exposed. The floor is roughly cobbled floor between the cill beam and the south front of the bay. The beam between bays 5 and 6 has a scarf repair at its north end and the front end is tenoned and pegged through the post. This beam, which has a run-out chamfer on its east side, was white-washed. There is the possible remains of a carpenter's mark on its west side at the front. The front post is a very knotty squared timber standing on squared stone block.

Bay 6: the floor is similar to that in bay 5. The south front is fully closed externally with corrugated metal sheet, which covers over a re-used casement window which is visible on the inside. The beam between bays 6 and 7 has been neatly scarf repaired at its north end, where it enters the rear wall. This and the beam between bays 5 and 6 are both cut from a large log which has been quartered, both beams being about 16cm deep by 14cm wide. The beam is tenoned and pegged through the front post and has 'II' cut into its east side near the front post. The front post, a sparingly converted and knotty timber, stands on stone block.

Bay 7: the floor cill beam is clearly exposed over the width of this bay; it is about 25cm wide by 10cm minimum depth. Some cobbles remain.

The tallet floor has been completely renewed with ex 18cm wide tongued and grooved boarding nailed to the joists. In the north wall of bay 5 is a loading hatch, with a relatively new vertically-boarded ledged and braced door hung in a plain pegged oak frame. The opening is square-sided, with some brickwork forming the reveals, to full height on the east

side. The northern wall head is roughly levelled, with timber blocks set in to support the ends of the truss tie beams. The block which supports the north end of the tie beam between bays 2 and 3 has 'II' cut into it.

The roof is carried on six trusses which are all of similar construction, with tie beams, king posts, struts and principals, the feet of which are tenoned into the tops of the tie beams. The timber used is a mixture of hardwood, oak and possibly elm and/or ash, with some pine. The roof pitch is about 33 degrees. Typical dimensions are: tie beam: 17cm by 10.5cm; king post: 21cm by 8cm at foot and head, shouldered down to 11.5cm by 8cm for the central part; struts: 5cm x 8cm; principals: 15cm by 9cm. The tie beams project beyond the heads of the vertical bay posts, which are tenoned into them, by about 0.5m. The heads of the front posts to bays 1-2 and 2-3 have both been heightened by about 20cm, with re-used timber pieces tenoned into them (see photograph). The raking struts, which were nailed to the sloping shoulders near the foot of the king posts and to the underside of the principals, were originally on both sides, but several are now missing. The original ridge appears to have been a single vertical board, now with timber plates added on both faces. The king posts are bolted through the tie beams with a vertical bolt and captive square nut set into the foot of the king post on the west side.

There is a single row of purlins at mid-span on both slopes. The front slope purlins to bays 1 to 3 are replacements, being 10cm square sawn timbers carried on cleats and blocks; those to the rear (north slope) are older pine timbers with overlays. The front purlin in bay 4 and the rear purlins in bays 4 and 5 are also fairly modern squared circular-sawn timbers. In bays 5 and 6 the front purlin is a squared pine pole which tapers to its west end, with a plate or overlay added, and similar timbers have been used on the rear slope of bays 6 and 7. The front purlin in bay 7 comprises several reused modern softwood timbers. There is an eaves purlin along the south front,which is carried on the projecting outer ends of the tie beams, made up of lengths of reused softwood timber, and a light timber eaves purlin/wall plate along the head of the wall to the north, under the eaves of the corrugated metal sheeting. Both roof slopes are clad with corrugated metal sheet. They were possibly originally slated; some slates are stacked at ground level in bay 7 and further evidence may be found when the site is cleared.

Outbuilding

To the east of the linhay is a former agricultural building which is shown on the tithe map of *c*.1840. It is about 12m long by 2.5m deep internally, orientated about north-south, and of five bays. Bays 1 to 3 from the south were formerly extended forwards on the west side to form pigsties (see aerial photograph, page 10). The rear (east) wall is of rubble stone to a height of about 1.5m, with about 0.45m lift of cob above, forming the wall head. The south gable is of stone, extended outwards in concrete block, and north gable end has been rebuilt in concrete blockwork. The west front appears to have been open (perhaps formerly with doors closing the bay fronts), with timber posts defining the bays. The floor, which is mostly obscured with debris, is of concrete with some stone, which steps up in the three southern bays. There is a concrete feed/water trough in visible towards the rear wall in the north bay. The roof is quite steeply pitched (probably originally thatched), with simple rustic trusses. The principals are lapped and pegged at their apexes and their feet are tenoned and pegged into the tie beams. The trusses are numbered from the south with carpenter's marks clearly visible on the central truss (see photograph). There is a single row of modern timber purlins on both roof slopes and a vertical ridge board, the roof slopes being clad with corrugated metal sheet.

Conclusion

The linhay at Lower Westown conforms broadly to Alcock's T1 type (Alcock 1963), although it is acknowledged that his pioneer study, which was carried out over 50 years ago, was based on a relatively small sample. As with many minor agricultural buildings, it is difficult to date precisely, but from map evidence was built between *c.*1840 and 1887. It is a typical example of a medium-sized Devon linhay, built of locally-sourced materials. While the roof structure appears to be original, with the loss of some of the raking struts, the tallet floor was been completely re-joisted and boarded and several of the main beams have been repaired, having had new ends scarfed on where they are built into the north wall. The ground floor appears to have been formerly cobbled, at least from the timber cill beam to the rear wall, with later concrete flooring on top of the cobbles in some bays. The timber cill beam is not a familiar feature and its exact function is not clear. The internal partitions and closures at the front of several bays towards the east end are not original, rather representing a more recent phase of use for housing livestock. The front appears fully closed on an aerial photograph taken probably in the 1970s (see page 10 below). The building is at present only partly in use as a wood shed and it is considered that the proposed scheme will allow the repair and retention of the surviving primary elements of the building, that is, the roof structure and the front posts.

It is considered that no further recording is required.

Martin Watts
June 2015

References

Alcock, N.W. 1963: Devonshire linhays: a vernacular tradition. *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 95, 117-30

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Gover, J.E.B, Mawer, A and Stenton, F.M. 1932: *The Place-Names of Devon* 2

Acknowledgements

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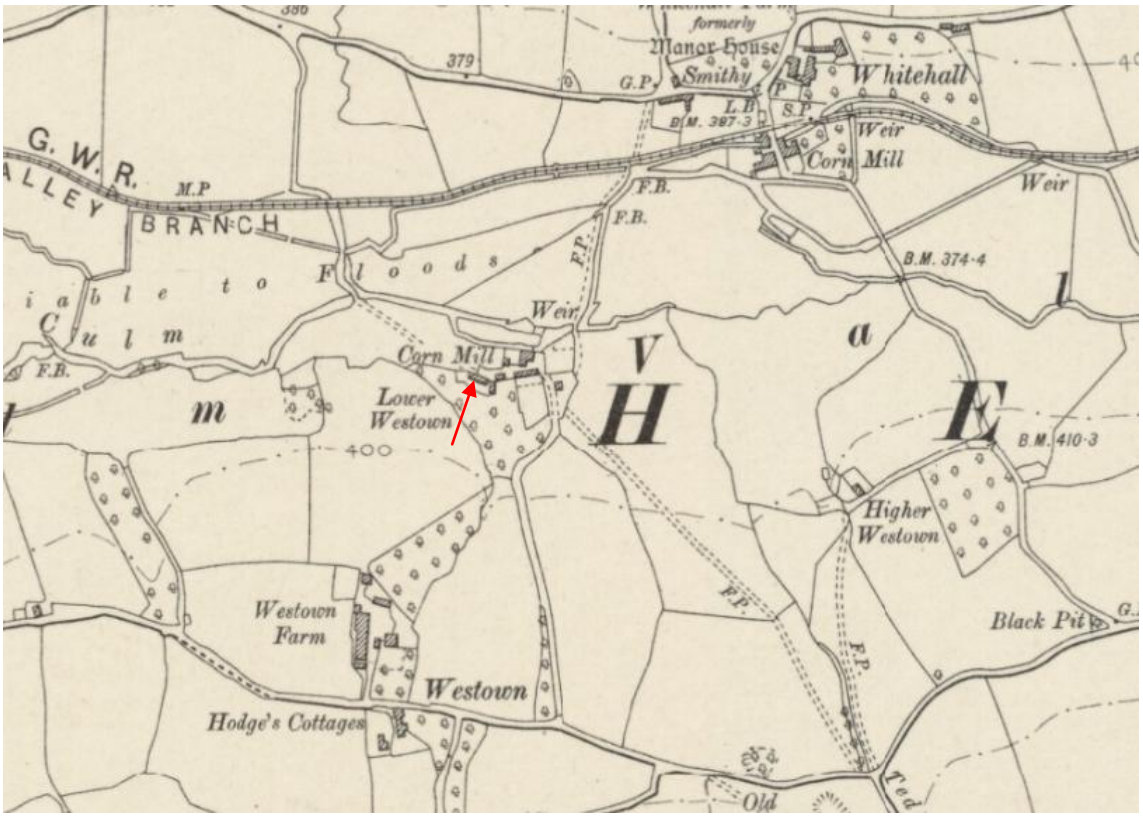

Figure 1: Lower Westown. Location from Ordnance Survey 1:10560, 1903/6 (National Library of Scotland) The position of the linhay is indicated in red

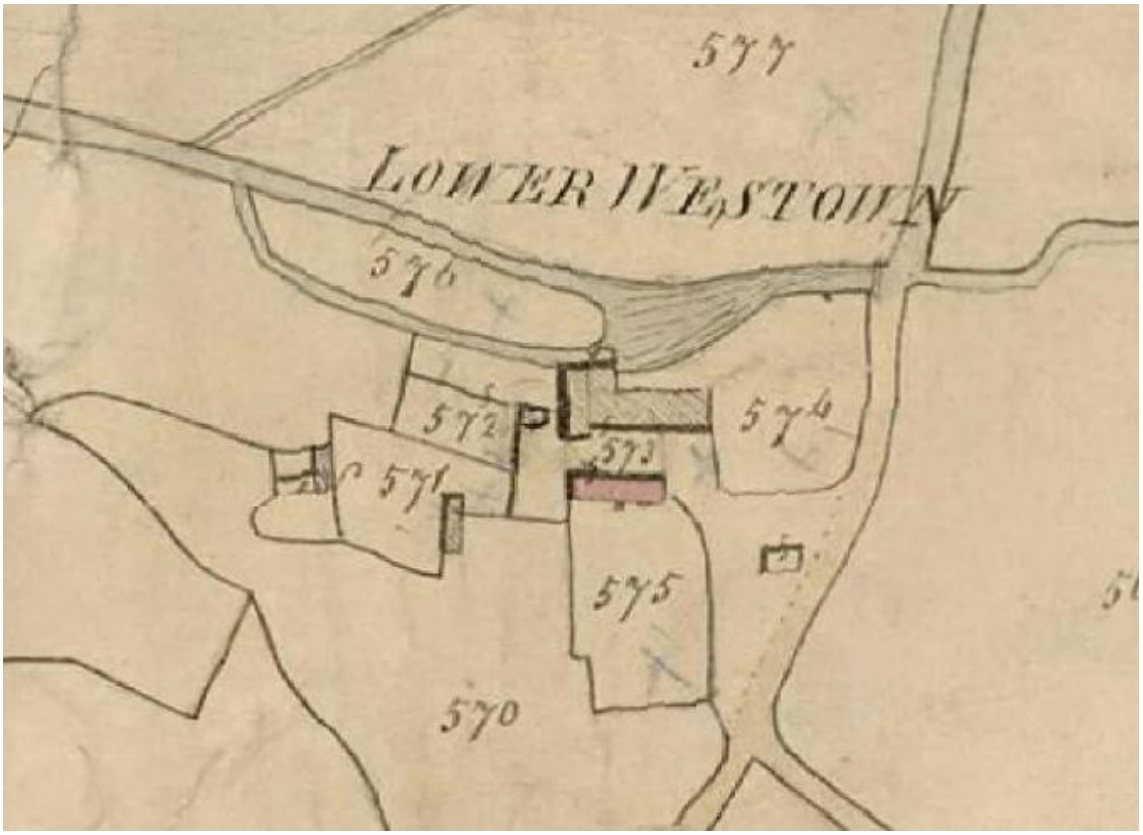

Figure 2: Lower Westown, from the Hemyock tithe map, *c*.1840 (DCC HER) The linhay was built in the plot numbered 571 after the map was surveyed.

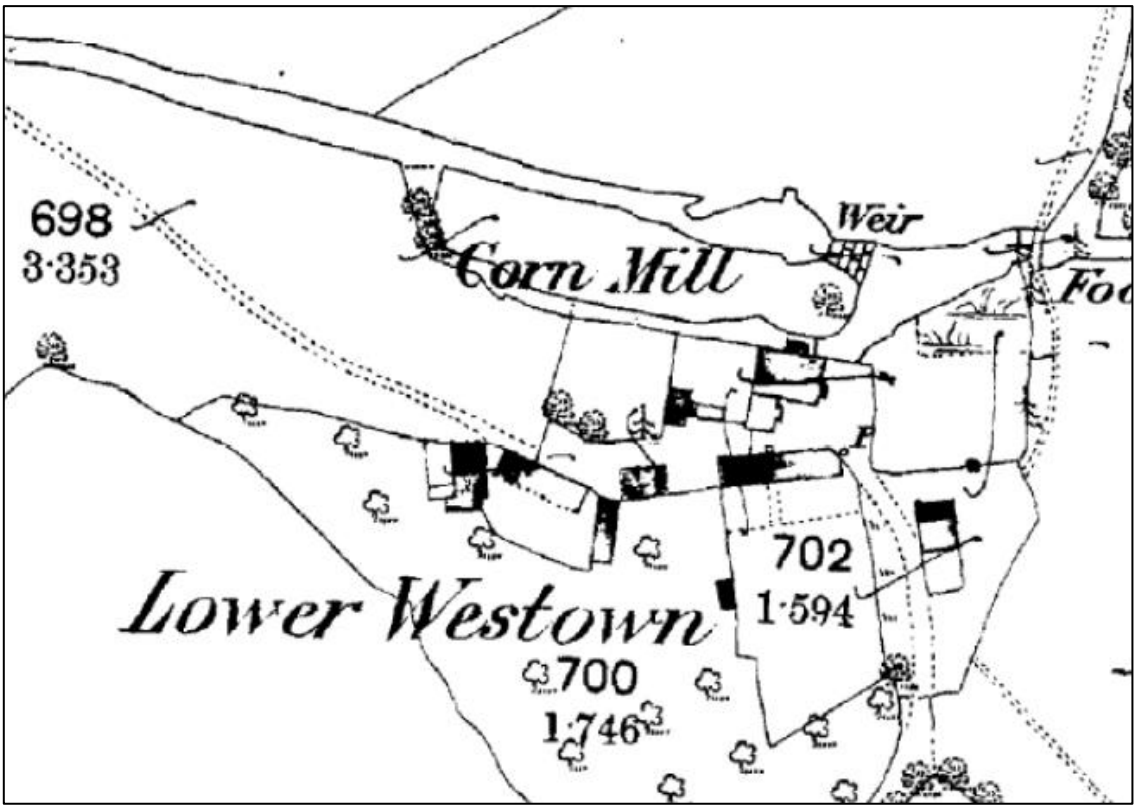

Figure 3: Lower Westown. Ordnance Survey 1:2500, first edition, surveyed 1887

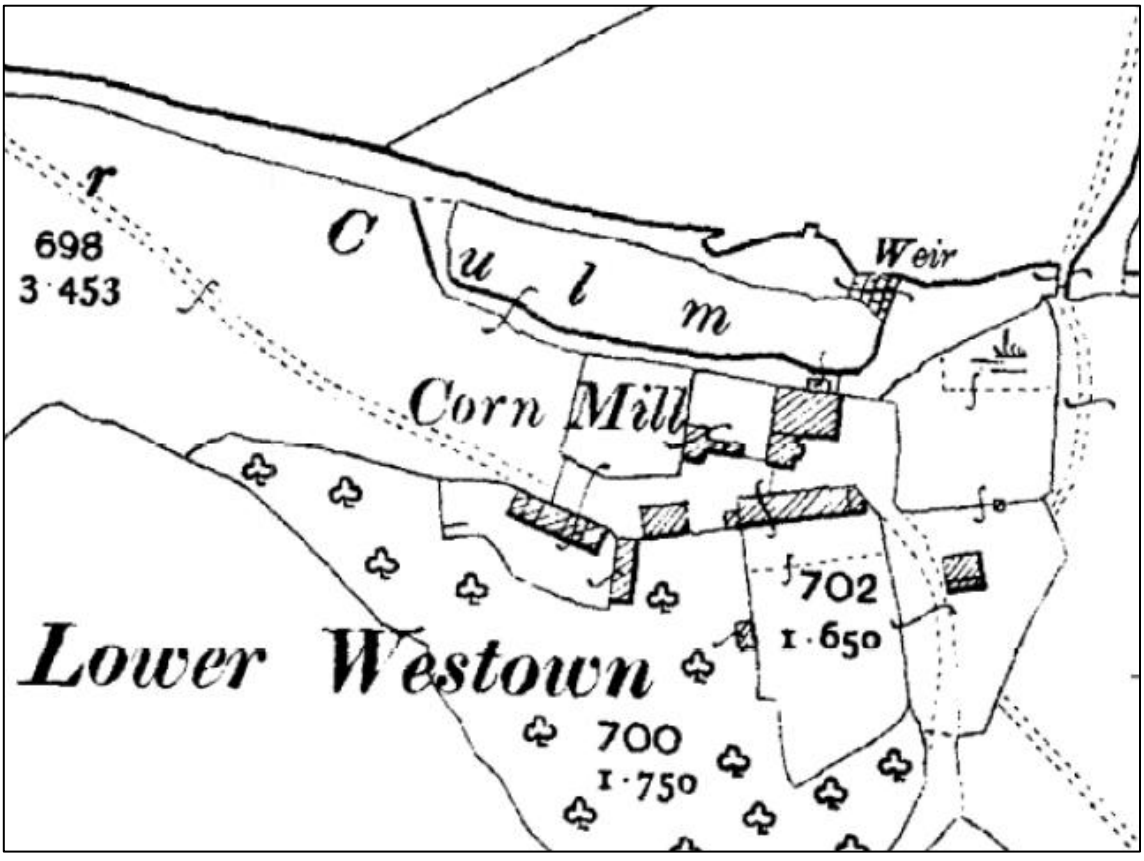

Figure 4: Lower Westown. Ordnance Survey 1:2500, second edition, revised 1903

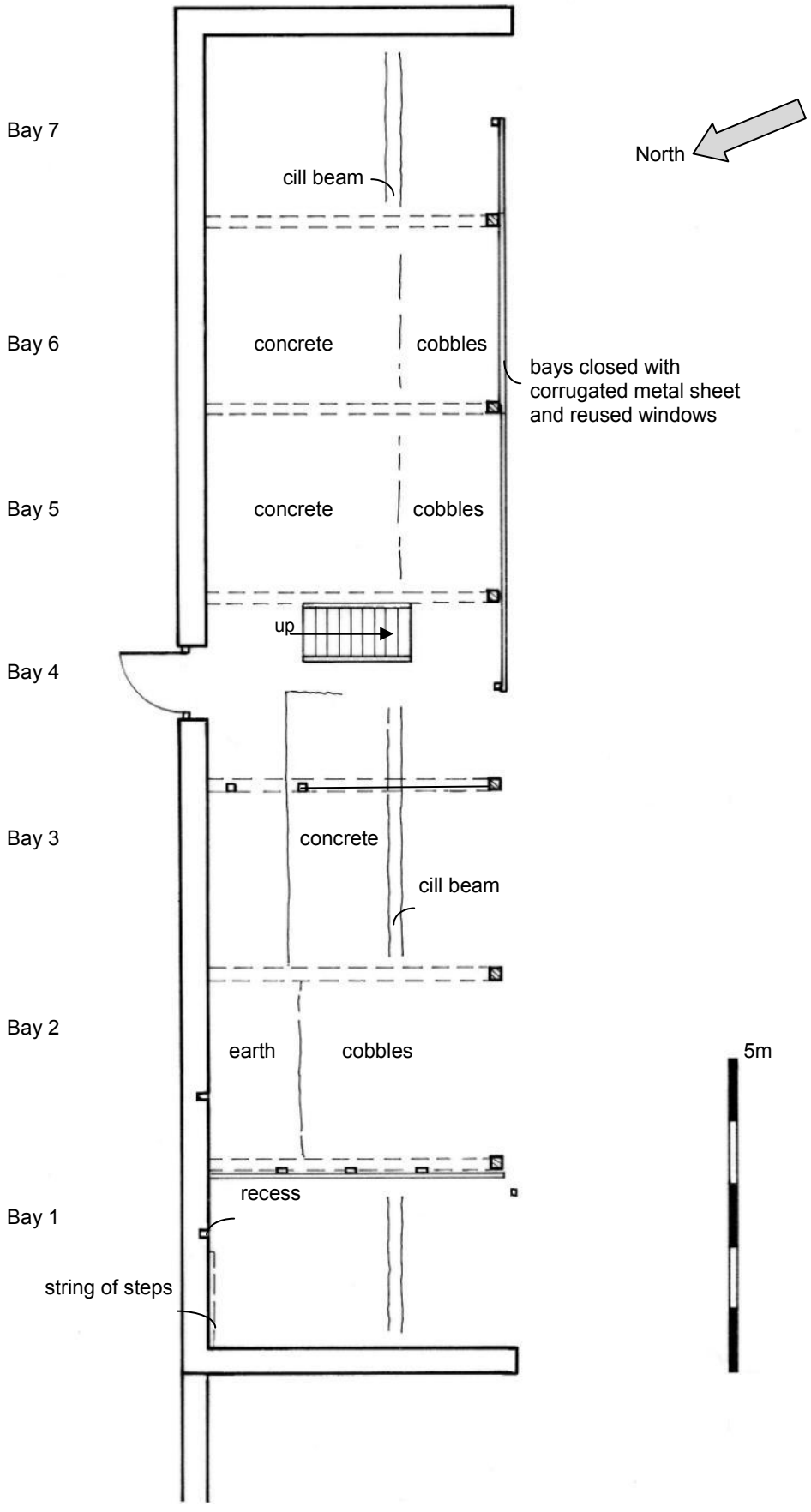

Figure 5: Lower Westown linhay: ground plan

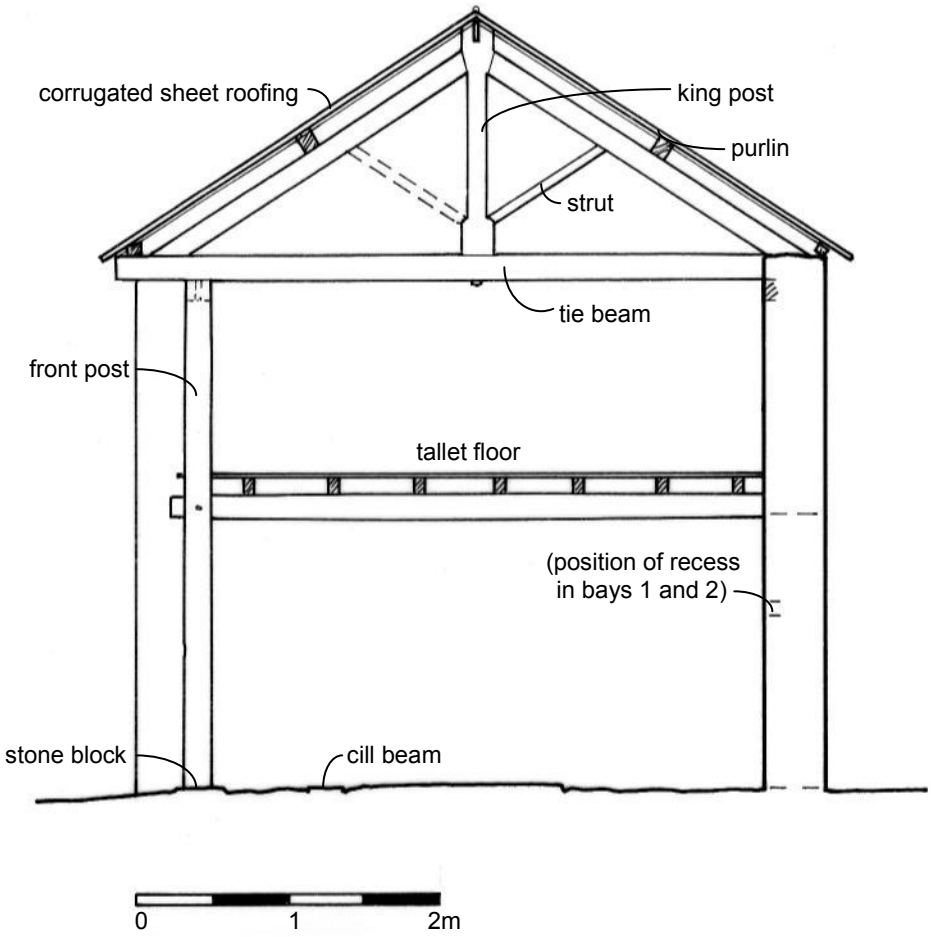

Figure 6: Lower Westown linhay. North-south section, looking west

Lower Westown from the south: copied from an aerial photograph ?1970s, in the possession of Tim Julier. The linhay is in the bottom left-hand corner.

Lower Westown linhay, from the south

West gable end of linhay, with outbuilding to east

North elevation of linhay, from the north-east

Doorway into central bay of linhay with loading door above to the left

Rear wall of bay 1, with string of steps up to tallet floor

Inserted partition between bays 1 and 2, looking west, showing outer string of steps reused

Inserted partition between bays 3 and 4, looking east

Door in north wall of bay 4

Ground floor interior at east end of linhay

Floor in rear of bay 3, looking east

Floor in bay 5, looking east, showing cill timber

Bay beam, south end, showing carpenter's mark and tenon through front post, bays 2-3

Scarf repair at north end of beam between bays 5 and 6

Tallet floor, looking east from stairway in bay 4

Interior of loading door in north wall of bay 5

Roof trusses, looking east

Roof trusses, looking to north-west corner

Detail of head of front post with added top section and projection of tie beam

Detail of tie beam bearing block with carpenter's mark built into north wall head

Apex of roof truss

Foot of king post, showing captive nut and bolt fixing

Outbuilding to east of linhay, from the west

Feed/water trough in north-east corner of outbuilding

Outbuilding roof, looking south

Detail of roof truss/front post on west side, showing construction and carpenter's marks