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*GREAT ISLE FARM  
NEWTON AYECLIFFE  
COUNTY DURHAM*

HISTORIC BUILDINGS RECORD

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JUNE 2022



*The Archaeological  
Practice Ltd.*



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*Frontispiece: View of blocked late-medieval four-pointed windows, with moulded surrounds and indications of tracery, located in the internal, north-facing elevation of the 'Chapel' Range.*

<b>Report title:</b>	<i>Great Isle Farm, Newton Ayecliffe, County Durham. Historic Buildings Record.</i>
<b>Stage:</b>	<i>Final</i>
<b>Project code:</b>	<i>AP 22/18</i>
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<b>OASIS ID:</b>	<i>thearcha2-510214</i>
<b>ADS Project ID:</b>	<i>20016663</i>
<b>Date issued:</b>	<i>23/06/2022</i>
<b>Planning reference:</b>	<i>N/A</i>
<b>Grid reference:</b>	<i>NZ 30311 26975 (centre)</i>
<b>Client:</b>	<i>Bright Water Landscape Partnership, with thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund</i>

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## SUMMARY

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*A programme of building recording has been carried out at Great Isle Farm, north-east of Newton Aycliffe as part of historic buildings recording project carried out on a group of Farmsteads and Mills for the Bright Water Landscape Partnership. To accompany a written description of the buildings a plan was produced by Peter Ryder, historic buildings consultant, and photographic recording undertaken in April, 2022 by colour digital photography using a Panasonic DMC-FZ1000. The visual record of the farmstead was further enhanced by digital scanning of part of the complex in April, 2022 and an attempt was made to research the history of the building through locally available historic maps and records.*

*The extensive complex of buildings at Great Isle Farm has its origins in the later medieval period, but elements of it survived when the complex was remodelled as a planned farm in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, since when it has undergone several phases of addition and alteration. The buildings are mostly built of roughly-coursed Magnesian Limestone rubble, with some use of brick and later buildings entirely of brick.*

*While elements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century planned farm have architectural merit, the principal claim to architectural and historic interest within the extant, above-ground fabric of the complex lies with the surviving medieval elements in the Farmhouse, Chapel Range, Stable and northern Barn, of which the Chapel Range is as once the most complete and vulnerable to decay.*

*While the Chapel Range is accepted by the Historic England Listing as late medieval in origin with subsequent alteration around 1600, the farmhouse is listed as of 17<sup>th</sup>-century origin and the stable and northern barn of 18<sup>th</sup>-century origin, indicating at least four major phases of development prior to the planned farm of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Recent reassessment of the buildings suggests, however, that while the Chapel Range (of which no evidence of ecclesiastical origin is apparent) is indeed of late-medieval origin, the other three listed buildings may also be earlier than previously thought. Evidence for elements of the Chapel Range extending into the Farmhouse indicate that part of the latter is also of late-medieval origin, while the thick north and east walls of the Stable and incorporated features such as rough quoins and chamfered window surrounds are more in keeping with a building of the late 17<sup>th</sup>- rather than 18<sup>th</sup>-century. The northern barn certainly displays features which appear earlier than their designated mid-18<sup>th</sup> century date, notably the moulded jambs of the southern doorways with relieving arches above which, along with some associated chamfered windows, sit well with a late 16<sup>th</sup>-century date of origin.*

*The medieval and/or early post-medieval remains contained within these structures, all of which were remodelled to some extent as part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century planned farm complex, include substantial remains of an important medieval/sub-medieval manorial complex that have received very little antiquarian attention, partly due to the oddly remote location and partly due to the early fabric being disguised by later alterations or concealed by render. Despite being afforded statutory protection by listing, fabric and features have been lost within living memory from these protected buildings some of which, it now appears, are likely to be of earlier origin than previously suspected. The presence of associated earthworks to the south and east of the farmstead, and the relative rarity of such medieval buildings in County Durham, renders the Great Isle complex particularly valuable and worthy of both conservation and further, detailed study.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Project Background

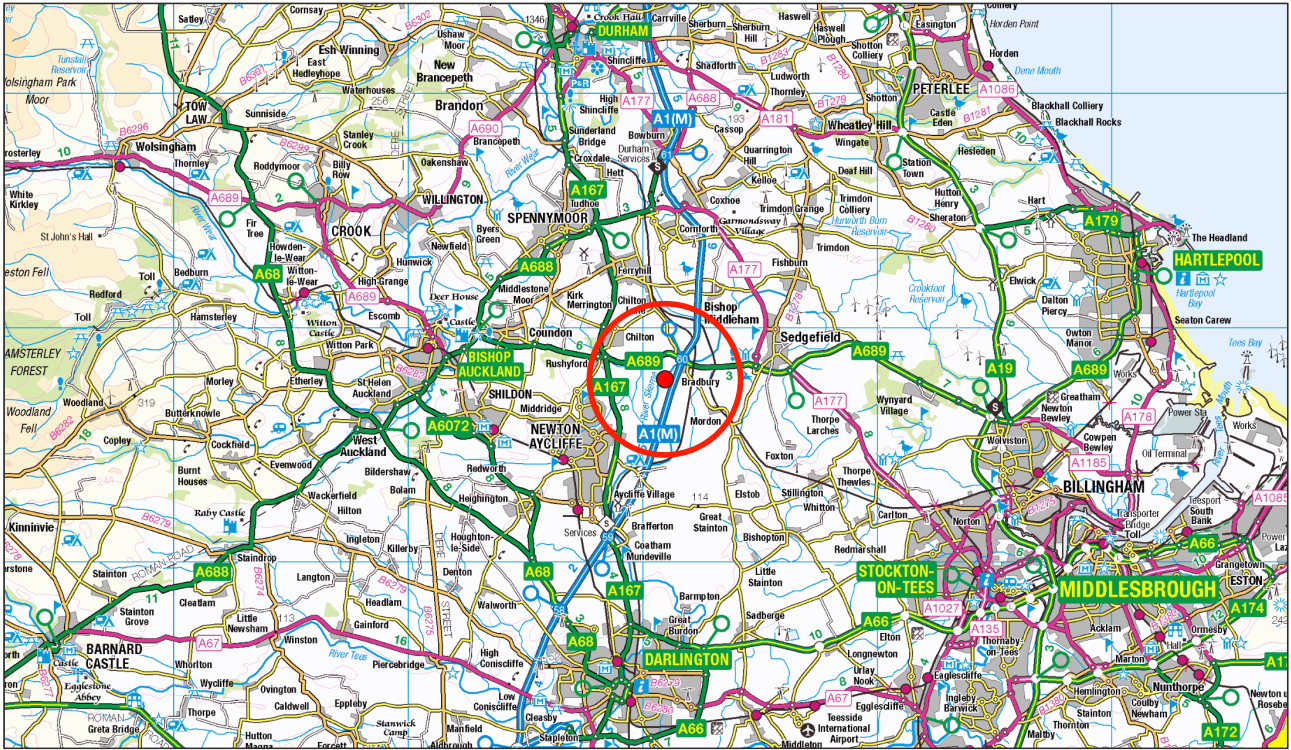
Great Isle Farm (NGR NZ 304270) stands on the west bank of the river Skerne, 2 km south-west of the village of Bradbury, and 0.6 km west of the modern A1M motorway. It stands alone amidst former marshlands, and can only be reached by a track over the motorway from Bradbury. The name implies that it stood on an island in surrounding marshland, which would certainly have afforded some degree of security but, although recognised as an important medieval site and partly under statutory protection, it is unclear whether the Great Isle manor contained defensible buildings?

The extant farm house and the barn are both grade II listed structures in poor repair, therefore at some risk and in need of support, but are not on the Heritage at Risk register. Part of the reason for the current investigation and recording exercise, therefore, is to assess their importance and current state of repair, identifying particular issues and any major losses in the period since detailed records of the buildings have been kept. The recording has been carried out as far as possible in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed for the Bright Water Landscape Partnership in January, 2020, as part of Built Heritage Lot 3 (Innovation) and Lot 4 (Medieval and Early Post-Medieval Secular Settlement) projects. Great Isle is considered both a farmstead for purposes of Lot 3 and as a 'High Status' Defensible Buildings for the purposes of Lot 4. The historic buildings comprising Great Isle Farm, including the medieval structures, were subject to Level 2 recording, where accessible.

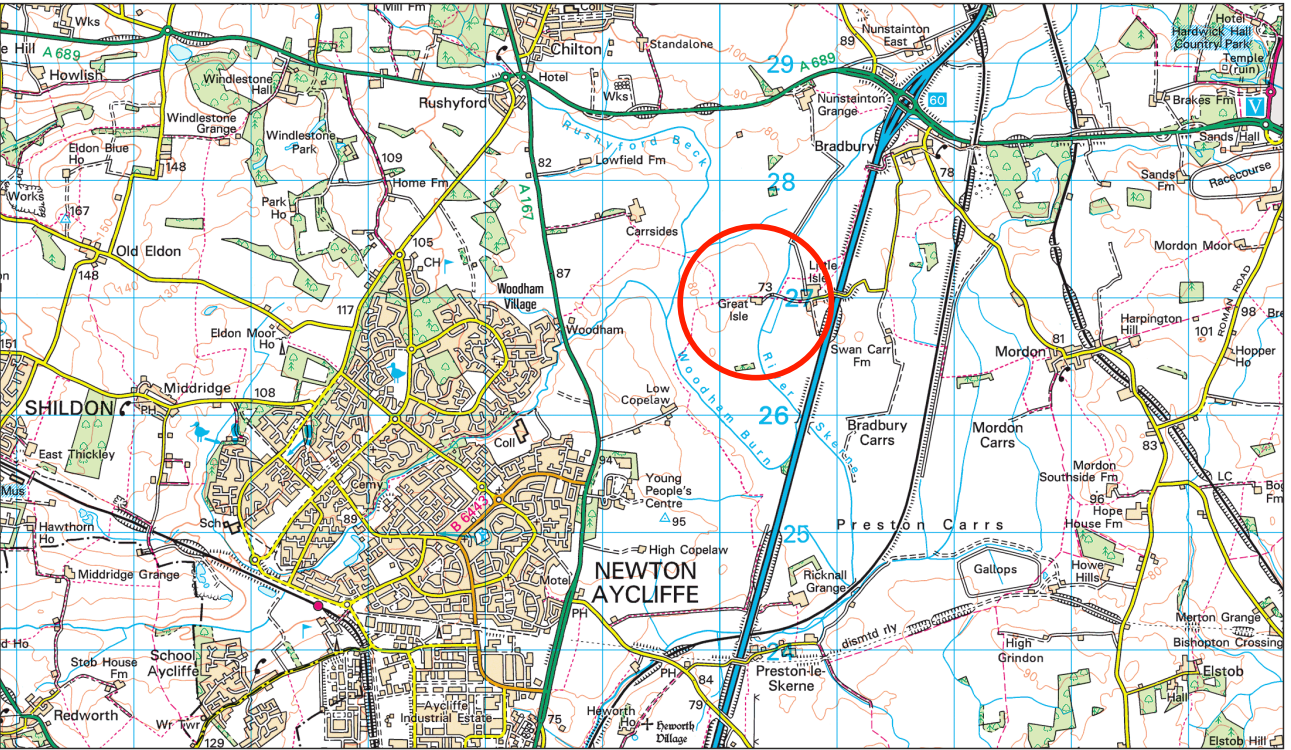
The overall approach of the Bright Water Landscape Partnership Built Heritage Lots 3 & 4 Archaeology Project was to gain a clearer understanding of the surviving planned farms and defensible buildings within the Bright Water Landscape Scheme area, whilst providing training in historic building recording methods and techniques to interested volunteers and furthering the understanding of the site and its environment by all members of the community, thereby reinforcing and developing the existing sense of place and belonging within the area and providing a springboard for further community-led initiatives in the field of archaeology. However, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic soon after agreement of the WSI necessitated a change in approach, with the majority of on-site recording being carried out by a greater number of professionals, supplemented by additional approaches (such as aerial photography), while an attempt was made to respond to the volunteer component of the project by providing online guides to building types of the Bright Water area, including historic farms, and the approaches and techniques used to record them.

### 1.2 Cultural Heritage Background

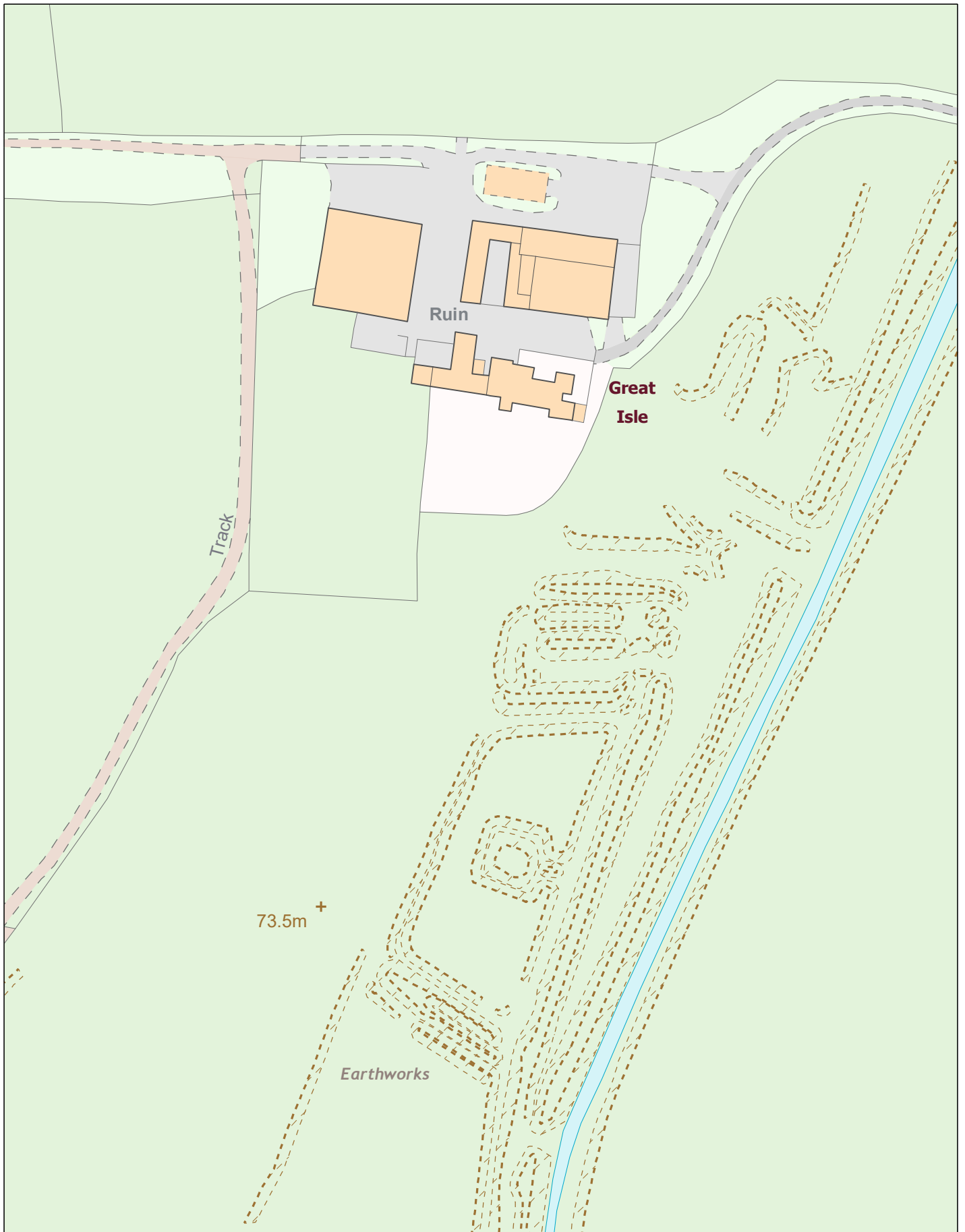
Robert Surtees in his *History of Durham* (III, 1823, 43-44) gives an outline of the history of the site; it was the home of the medieval family of l'Isle or de Insula, and until the 16th century was always linked to Bradbury. In the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century it passed to the Tempest family, with whom it remained into the 19th century. Surtees describes the site: *... 'deserted as it now is, and dreary and inaccessible as it must always have been (it) was once at least the scene of mirth and hospitality. In 1675 it was the seat of Col. John Tempest, the first and popular Member for the county of Durham. The mansion-house, which stands on a little plot of rising ground, surrounded by marshy level always liable to be inundated by the sluggish waters of the Skerne, still exhibits the wreck of the old manor-house, - projecting gables, narrow lights divided by stone mullions, and the ruins of gardens and orchards'.*



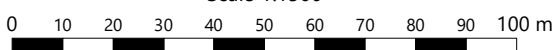
*Illus. 01: Regional view, showing the location of Great Isle (circled) to the north of Darlington.*



*Illus. 02: District view, showing the location of Great Isle (circled) to the north-east of Newton Aycliffe on the west side of the A1.*



Scale 1:1500



**Illus. 03:** Settlement view, showing the location of Great Isle Farm on the modern Ordnance Survey, with extensive medieval earthworks to the south and east.

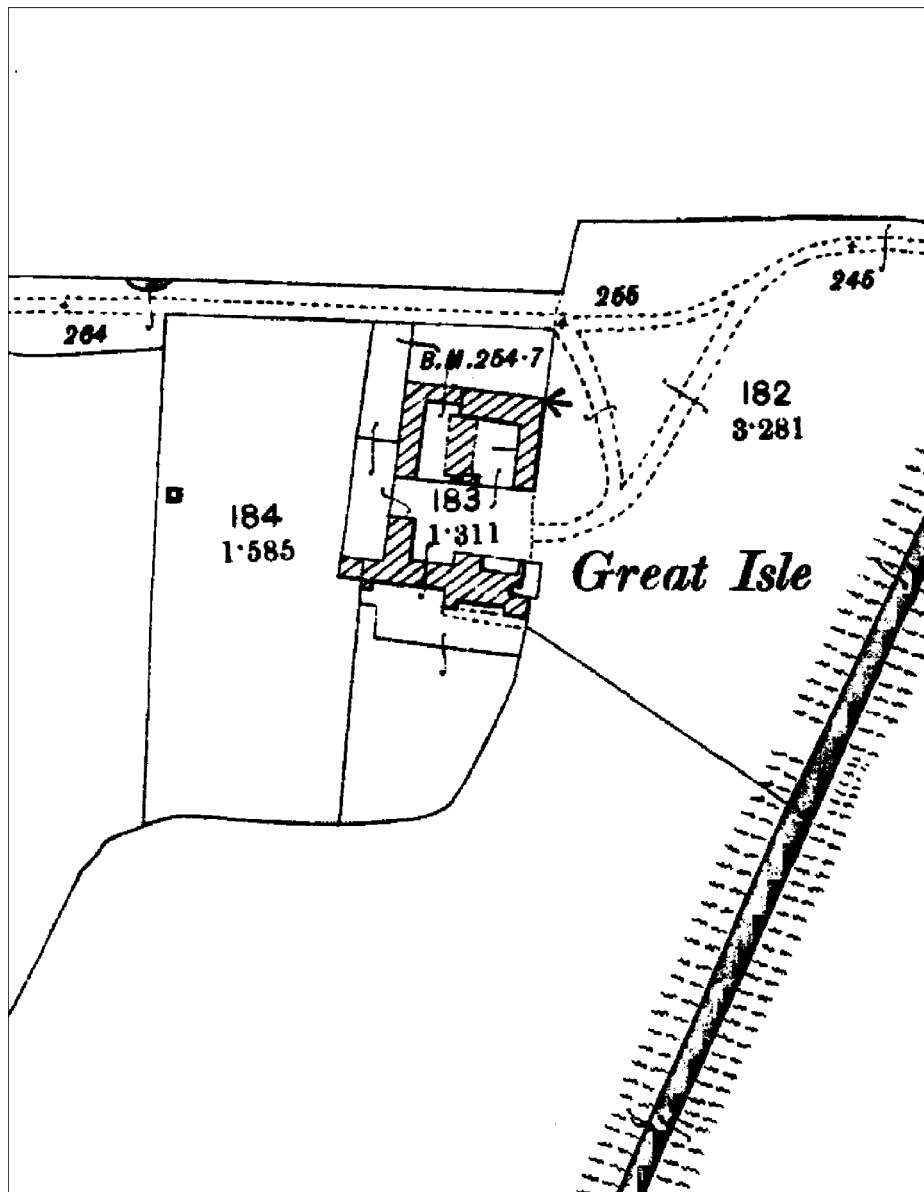




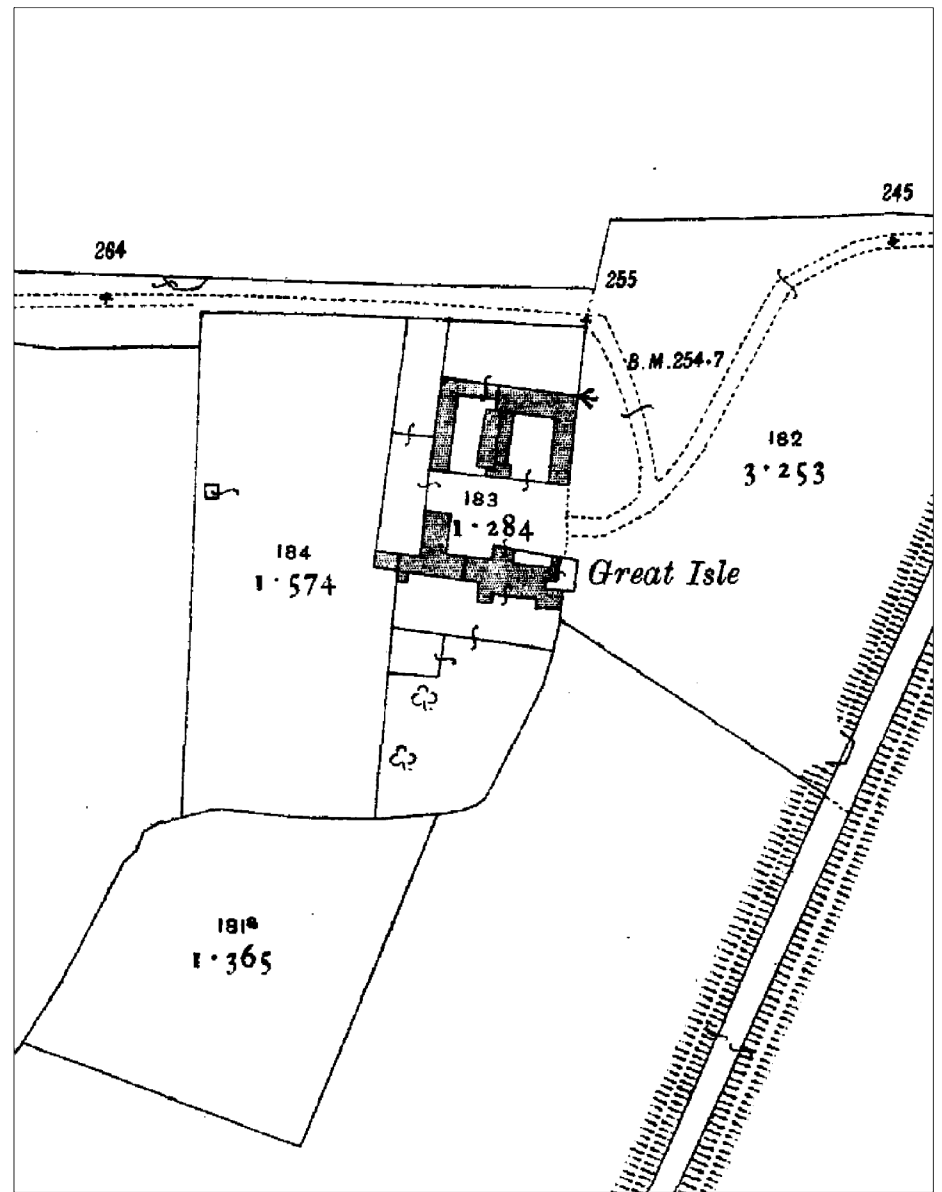
**Illus. 04:** Extract of the Bradbury Tithe Plan c.1838 (DDR-EA-TTH-1-26), showing Great Isle Farm (labelled as Isle Farm, with Little Isle labelled as Isle).



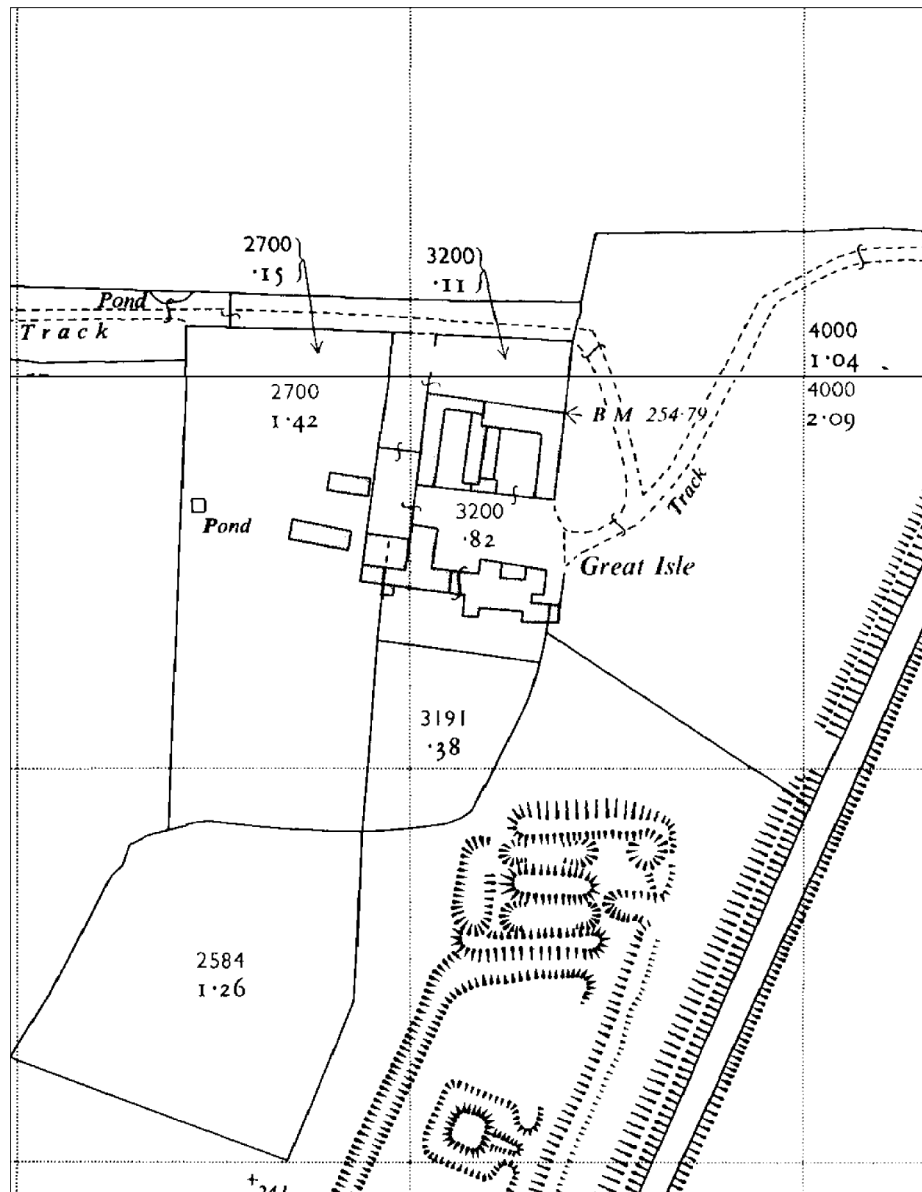
**Illus. 05:** Extract of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey, 6" series c.1859, showing Great Isle Farm and neighbouring Little Isle.



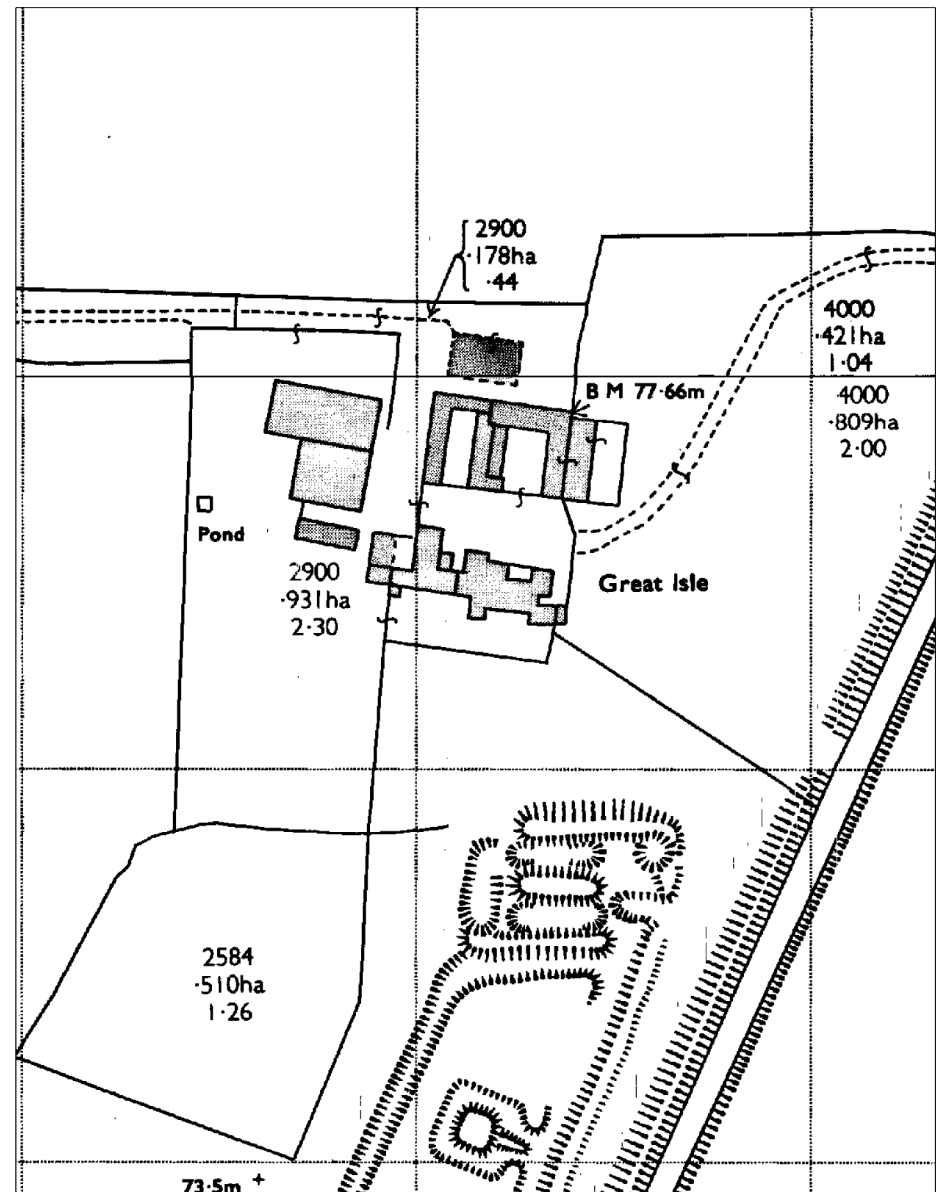
**Illus. 06:** Extract of the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey, 25" series c.1897, showing Great Isle Farm.



**Illus. 07:** Extract of the 3rd edition Ordnance Survey, 25" series c.1919, showing Great Isle Farm.



**Illus. 08:** Extract of the c.1963 edition Ordnance Survey, 25" series, showing Great Isle Farm.



**Illus. 09:** Extract of the c.1971 edition Ordnance Survey, 25" series, showing Great Isle Farm.

The importance of the site and its current buildings is reflected in the statutory protection afforded to some of its historic structures by means of Listed Building status:

**Listed Building Descriptions for Great Isle:**

**GREAT ISLE FARMHOUSE;** Listed Building Grade: II; List Entry Number: 1322844; Date first listed: 09-Jan-1968; National Grid Reference: NZ3032226947

*Substantial farmhouse. Mid C17 with major C19 alterations and additions. Rendered and pebble-dashed masonry and brick. Welsh slate and concrete ridged- tiled roofs and rebuilt brick chimneys. Main block with two lower additions to right.*

*2-storey, 3-bay main block with continuous, 2-storey, single-bay addition to right. Left bay has fragment of late C15-early C16 chamfered plinth (a continuation of the probable chapel range attached to left). Projecting, 2-storey gabled wing to second bay. Four steps to C20 glazed door and overlight in third bay. Late C20 casements in C19 openings with flush wedge lintels and projecting sills. Roof and gabled wing have shaped kneelers and C20 coped gables. Central ridge and end chimneys.*

*2-storey, single-bay addition to right has similar fenestration. Lower 2-storey, 2-bay outbuilding, attached to far right, breaks forward and has large, roughly- dressed alternate quoins and C20 fixed lights. C20 glazed conservatory, attached to right return, is not of special interest. Farmhouse included for group value with chapel range.*

**FORMER CHAPEL, ADJOINING WEST RETURN OF GREAT ISLE FARMHOUSE;** Listed Building Grade: II; List Entry Number: 1121503; Date first listed: 09-Jan-1968; National Grid Reference: NZ 30301 26948.

*Probably a former chapel and now used as a farm building. Late medieval, altered c.1600 and in mid C20. Coursed rubble with ashlar dressings and brick inner wall. Corrugated asbestos roof. Long, single-storey range, with chamfered plinth, attached to left return of farmhouse. Rebated door jamb at left end. 2 blocked, 4-centred arches, to right of centre, have filleted, hollow-chamfered rear arches. Square, partly-blocked and mutilated, 3-light mullioned-and-transomed window, with alternating, double-chamfered jambs, to right of pointed arches. 2 similar blocked windows to left of centre and several other blocked openings. Low monopitch roof. In a bad state of repair at time of survey.*

**STABLE, ADJOINING TO NORTH OF FORMER CHAPEL;** Listed Building Grade: II; List Entry Number: 1121504; Date first listed: 24-Feb-1986; National Grid Reference: NZ 30303 26958.

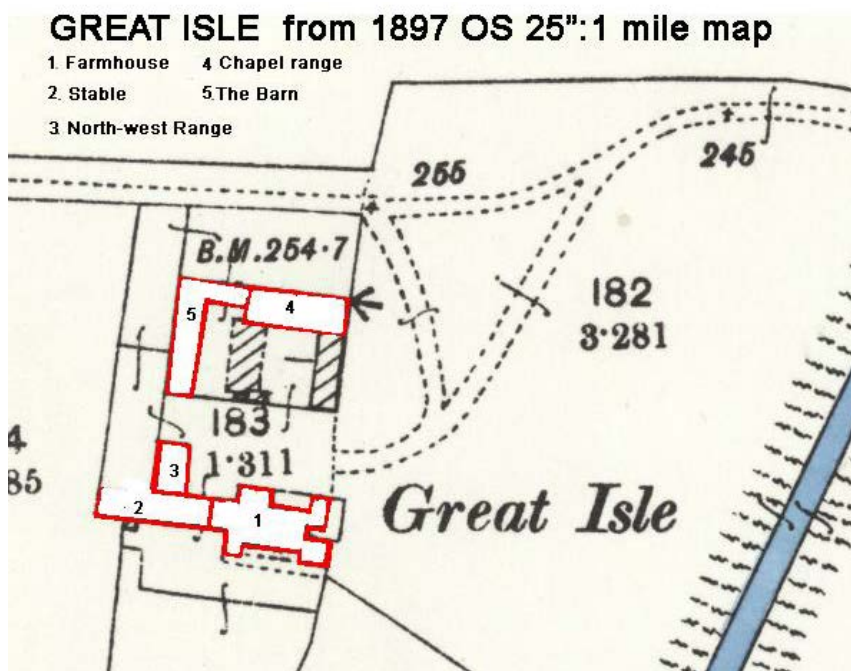
*Stable with loft over. Mid C18 with alterations. Coursed rubble with some later infill of dressed limestone. Concrete ridged-tiled roof. 2-storey, 3-bay stable attached to north of chapel near west return of farmhouse. Flush roughly-dressed quoins and mainly altered openings. East side has central doorway with large, alternating jambs and 2 square windows in chamfered stone surrounds. North return and west side each have 2 similar openings. Steeply-pitched roof, hipped over north return, has C19 shaped diagonal kneelers. Included for group value. C20 lean-to addition to east side is not of special interest.*

**BARN AND ATTACHED OUTBUILDINGS, 30 METRES NORTH OF GREAT ISLE FARMHOUSE;** Listed Building Grade: II; List Entry Number: 1322805; Date first listed: 24-Feb-1986; National Grid Reference: NZ 30307 26992

*Barn and outbuildings. Mid C18 barn and early C19 outbuildings. Coursed rubble with dressed quoins and some brick infill. Barn has corrugated asbestos roof. Outbuildings have pantiled roofs. L-plan range of outbuildings attached to west return of barn.*

*2-storey, 7-bay barn has flush quoins. South wall has 2 blocked doorways with alternating jambs and segmental rubble arches. 2 small rectangular openings above in chamfered surrounds. Tall blocked window set high in gabled east return. Roof carried on 6 C19 King-post trusses.*

*Single-storey range of loose-boxes and sheds. North range has 3 blocked segmental brick arches facing yard. West range has 2 Dutch doors facing yard and later bay added to south. South return has boarded door under segmental brick arch. Similar C19 openings to west and north rear walls. Roof is hipped over north-west corner. Included for group value.*



The current farm layout, while incorporating earlier elements, is essentially an example of a planned farm which reflects the principles of the agricultural revolution of the later 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Enclosure and the reorganisation of farm holdings was an essential step in paving the way for the 'agricultural improvement' movement by which landowners sought to increase the productivity and profitability of agriculture on their estates. Substantial investments were made to increase the size of livestock through breeding programmes, and to sweeten pasture and improve crop yields by the use of better crop rotation, field drains, fertilising with lime and other innovative techniques. Ultimately this agricultural revolution was a child of the Enlightenment, driven by the desire to ensure investment in agriculture was guided by scientific method, with new practices adopted on the basis of systematic trial and error, rather than tradition. County Durham was greatly involved in this process, and the gentleman farmers of the Bright Water Area, in particular, played a leading role in it. Thus, at Great Isla Farm the various farm buildings typically laid out around stackyards in such a way as

to ensure maximum efficiency, and the various byres and stables for housing livestock provided with stone floors with drainage channels.

The earliest plan of the farm, the Tithe Plan of 1839 shows the Farmhouse, Stable and Chapel ranges in the south, with the house lacking its current northern lean-to extension and off-set south-east component, both of which appear on the subsequent, mid-century 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey (OS) plan. The western barn also appears on the tithe plan, where the main farm-buildings, range in the north is shown around a narrow fold-yard almost entirely enclosed by four ranges, with only a narrow opening at the south end of the east range. The western range had been rebuilt further to the west, connected to the original northern Barn by a westward extension, by the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS, while the extensive south range had been entirely removed, leaving only the north and east ranges intact. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS plan also shows the new addition of a circular gingang on the northside of the north range towards its east end (i.e. on the present northern Barn). The south frontage of the house appears to have been extended slightly to the south, except its western bay which still appears flush with the south face of the Chapel Range to the west, while the north side of the house has been extended outwards into the farmyard. The subsequent 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the OS Series, published in 1898 shows that the gingang on the north side of the northern Barn has been removed and a middle N-S range added within the foldyard, attached to the south side of the north range where the older section joins the more recent, 19<sup>th</sup> century western addition. No major alterations are apparent to the Farmhouse, attached Chapel Range and Stable ranges, however, either here or on the subsequent 1919 edition of the OS series. Later editions show minor alterations to the north side of the house and additions to the central range of the farm-buildings and east side of the east range which appears to have been removed in recent decades when a large, modern barn was erected against the south side of the northern Barn. Other recent additions which began to appear from the 1960s, include detached barns to the west, north-west and north of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and older farm-buildings complex.

The history of the farm since the second wave of major agricultural innovations following World War 2 typify many of the problems facing such structures which are not readily adapted to the needs of modern agriculture, which favours much larger sheds accessible for large machinery. This in turn means that only limited repairs appear justifiable and they tend to be subject to piecemeal modification. Evidence for such adaptations is apparent in the structures at Hall Farm, but the building of new, larger sheds from around 1970 indicates that these changes were never successful, leaving the farm abandoned and susceptible to gradual physical decay.

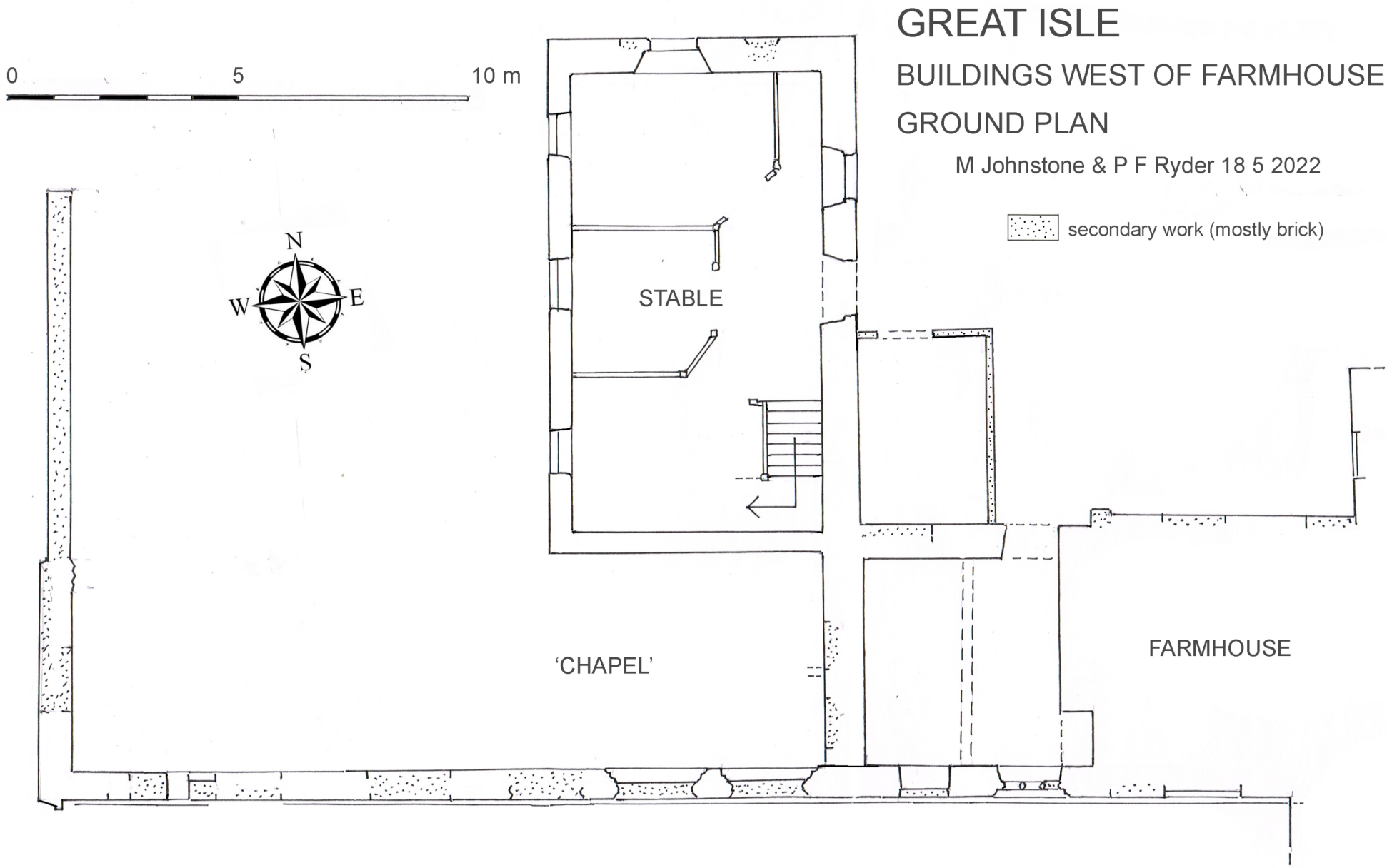
The gradual reduction in the number of working farms, through older farmers' retirement and the consequent merger of their farms, leaves newly redundant farmsteads at risk of conversion into housing, entailing drastic alteration to the overall character of the buildings. The recording programme carried out at Hall Farm for the Brightwater project ensures information on this farm is preserved, whatever its future fate, and helps to identify common features distinctive to the area.

### 1.3 Methodology

The photographic recording of this almost-entirely redundant farmstead was undertaken to accompany a drawn survey (*Illus. 10, 11 & 13*) and written description in April, 2022, using digital photography (see *Appendix 1*). All elevations were photographed as far as possible face-on and from a consistent height and perspective. Where possible, all record photographs included a scaled ranging pole. Where it was not possible to capture an entire elevation in a single photograph because of the constricted nature of the site, a series of partial elevations were recorded along with an oblique overall view of the full elevation.

The written and photographic record of the farm was enhanced, in April 2022 by use of a digital scanner to record significant parts of the complex, while, in addition, an attempt was made to research the history of the building through locally available historic maps and records which could shed light on the history of the buildings, although little of significance was located other than historic Ordnance Survey plans (*Illus. 05-09*).

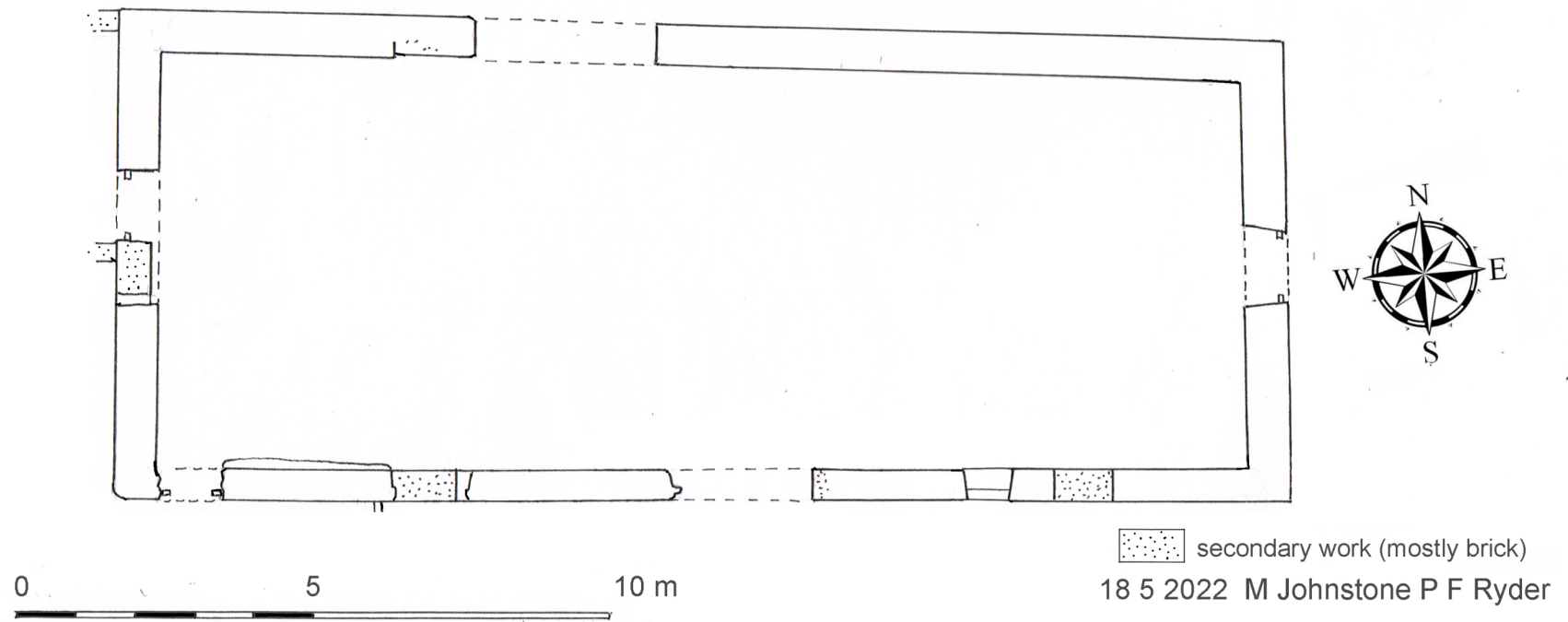




*Illus. 10: Ground plan of buildings west of farmhouse, Great Isle. Surveyed by The Archaeological Practice Ltd., 2022.*

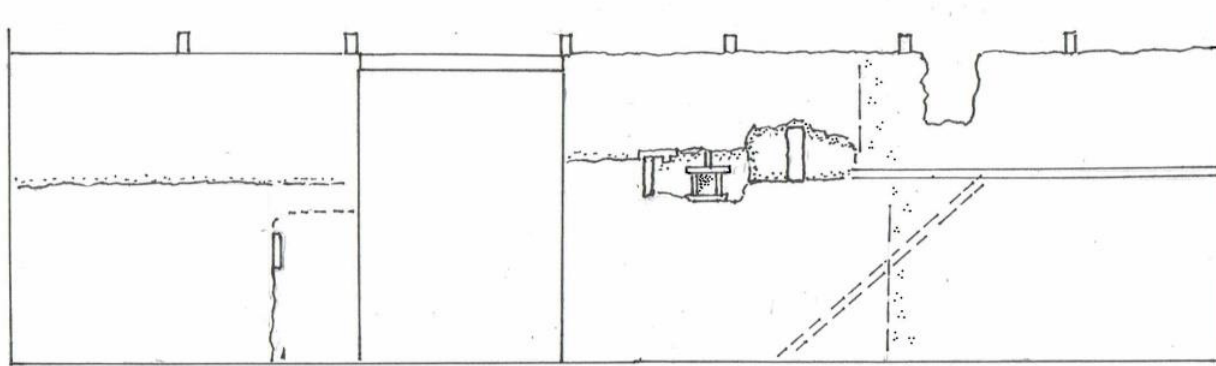
# GREAT ISLE. THE BARN

Plan at Ground Level

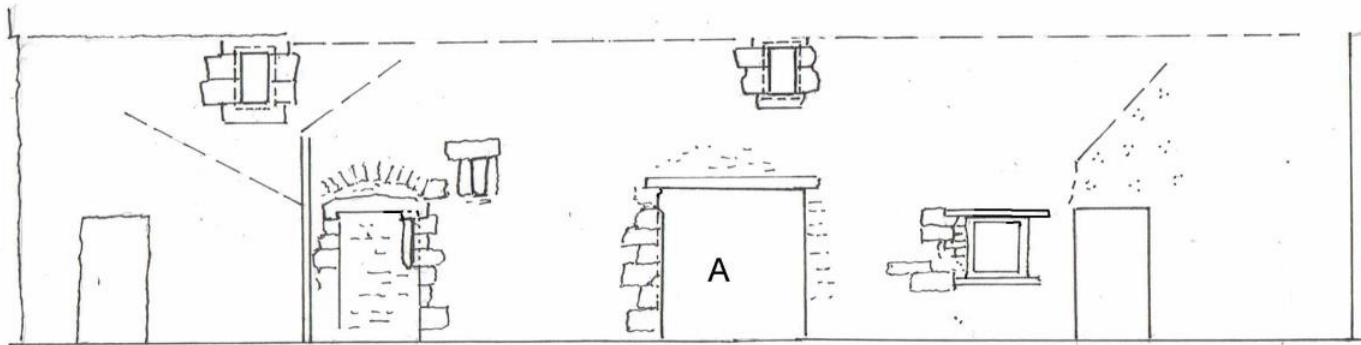


*Illus. 11: Ground plan of The Barn, Great Isle. Surveyed by The Archaeological Practice Ltd., 2022.*

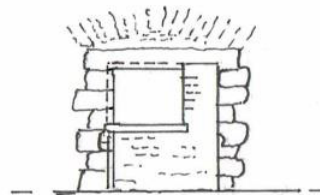
# GREAT ISLE, THE BARN SKETCH ELEVATIONS



INTERNAL ELEVATION OF NORTH WALL



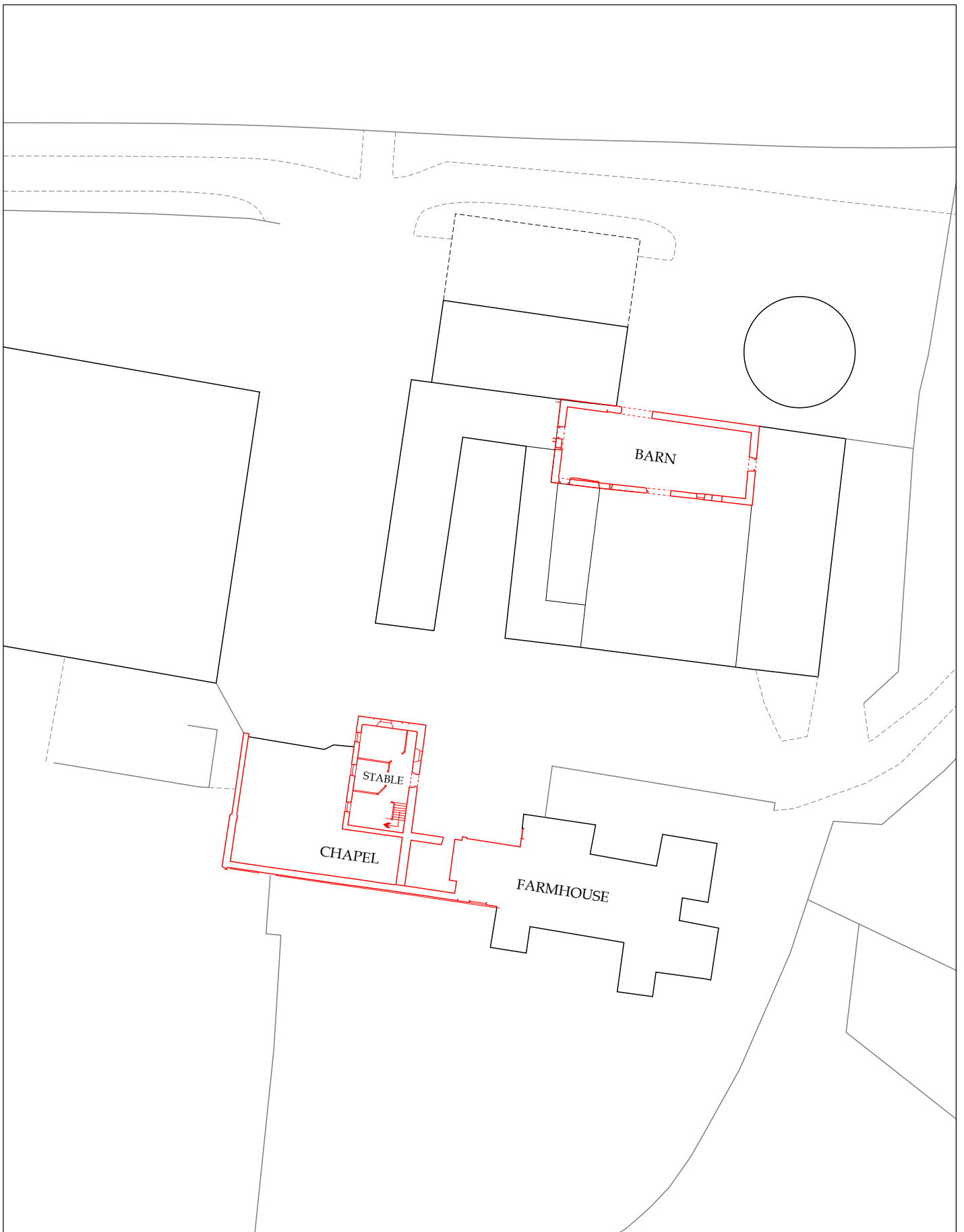
EXTERNAL ELEVATION OF SOUTH WALL



Doorway A from 2006 photograph

0 5 metres

PFR



Scale 1:500

0 4 8 12 16 20 24 28 32 36 40 m

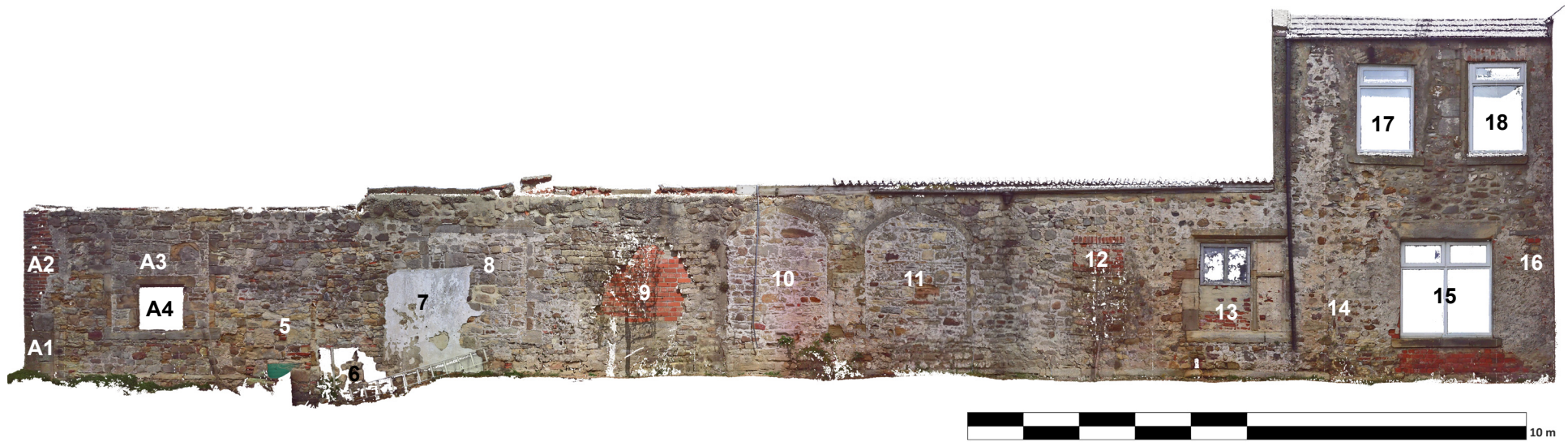
**Illus. 13:** Ground plan of the Great Isle Farm complex, showing the recently surveyed historic buildings in red.



*Illus. 14: Digital scan showing south facing elevation of south wall, The Chapel, Great Isle.*



*Illus. 15: Digital scan showing north facing elevation of south wall, The Chapel, Great Isle.*



*Illus. 16: Annotated digital scan of external south elevation of the Chapel Range, Great Isle.*

## 2. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Farmhouse stands on the south side of the buildings, with the single-storeyed Chapel Range, now partly roofless, extending west from it. The two-storeyed Stable Block is attached to the North side of the Chapel Range. Further north is the large Barn, set east-west, with a single-storey North-West Range extending west from it and then returning south.

In the following account, the sections of building recorded in more detail – the Chapel Range, Stable and Barn – have their walls code-lettered (A, B etc) and features numbered (A1, A2, etc.) so as to enable easy reference between the description, photographs and plans.

### 2.2 The Farmhouse (SEE APPENDIX 1: PHOTO. RECORD 06-11).

The following description of this complex structure deals only with its external elevations, since refurbishment works have obscured most or all traces of significant architectural detail within its interior. The exterior structure is in parts rendered and in parts heavily pointed, but it generally appears to be built of roughly coursed rubble/small stone with some cut dressings and some use of brick; the roofs are of Welsh slate. In keeping with the interior finish, all the window glazing is modern.

In plan the house consists of a two-storeyed main block, set east-west, with a short southern wing near its west end and an out-shut on the north. The block is broader to the east of the wing, the south wall being set a metre or so further forward. At the east end is a lower two-storeyed bay, which has two further single-storeyed adjuncts attached to its eastern angles, a north-south one on the northern and an east-west one on the southern.

First describing the south elevation, from west to east. The first bay is in line with the Chapel Range, and the early chamfered plinth of the latter continues beneath it. On the ground floor at the west end of the wall are indistinct traces of a low blocked opening (A14) and then a large window (A15) with a splayed lintel and a modern brick patch below, and to the east of its head what looks like part of the chamfered lintel of an earlier opening (A16). There are two close-set windows above, the western (A17) with a splayed lintel, and the eastern in an older opening (A18), with a casement-moulded west jamb, but a later brick soldier lintel.

Then comes the projecting wing, which is unusually narrow, and is pebble-dashed; there are no openings in either side wall; the south end has a vertical pair of featureless modern windows, and a coped gable on shaped kneelers, with a gable stack.

East of the wing is a two-bay section, rendered, with a doorway and broad window to the ground floor and two windows above, all the openings having splayed lintels but no other evidence of antiquity. At the south-east angle of the main block are good cut alternating quoins and a shaped kneeler. The lower bay beyond has a French window and a window above.

Finally, set forward, is the single-storeyed south-eastern adjunct, of roughly coursed stone (with quite substantial quoins) that has a doorway and a window, and a roof of modern pantiles.

The west elevation of the house, above the Chapel Range roof, is rendered and featureless.

The north side of the house, facing the farmyard, is again complex. At the east end is the projecting north-east adjunct, single-storeyed and with a low-pitched gable containing a blocked window with brick jambs, and what looks like a modern window to the west of it, with a small brick stack on the gable. There is a plain doorway in the west return.

The north side of the eastern bay of the house proper has one window to each floor, the lower probably recent. Then comes the main block, with good cut quoins at its north-east corner (and a moulded kneeler). The block has a partial two-storeyed out-shut set a little east of centre. East of the out-shut the main block has a doorway with a yellow sandstone lintel, and the faint outline of a blocked window to its west, and a single window above. Further west there is a former doorway hard up against the out-shut, infilled with brick, with a brick soldier lintel and the stone head of a narrow, chamfered window directly above that; further west is a what looks like another doorway infilled in old brick. On the first floor close to the out-shut is a window with a timber lintel and brick in its jambs.

The out-shut has clearly been heightened from one storey to two, and the upper third of the north wall is in brick of no great age. On the ground floor are two windows with timber lintels, the eastern in a former doorway opening. Both returns have a lower window with a brick flat-arched lintel (the eastern blocked) and a more recent window with a timber lintel above.

The north-west corner of the house is particularly enigmatic. There is a step-back c 0.50 m inside the line of the external face of the west gable, which is of old brick up to c 2 m and has only roughly-shaped quoins above – the whole angle looks disturbed, perhaps as if a wall returning north has been removed. The final section of walling is in line with the north wall of the Chapel Range, and is of better squared stone. It almost appears as if the present end wall of the house incorporates the earlier gable end of a slightly-narrower structure.

This only leaves the eastward-facing elevations of the various elements. That of the main block, rising above the roof of the lower eastern bay, has a pair of narrow upright windows, now blocked, with chamfered stone surrounds. The east end of the eastern bay has an irregular column of brickwork, of no great age, below its stack. The south-eastern adjunct has an end wall of roughly coursed stone, with a blocked square-headed doorway (there is now a plain doorway on the north return). The north-eastern adjunct has brickwork at its north end and older quoins at the south-east corner, and two featureless windows.

### **2.3 The Chapel Range** (*SEE APPENDIX 1: PHOTO. RECORD 12-31*).

*(Note that the name is given presumably due to the two large arched windows of ecclesiastical appearance; there does not seem any evidence that the range actually did contain a chapel)*

The so-called Chapel Range is built of roughly-coursed and roughly-shaped stone, with a chamfered plinth on the external face of its south wall. It had a modern monopitch roof of asbestos, most of which was destroyed in a recent storm. Describing the external face of the south wall (A) from west to east, low down at the west end is a stub of a wall returning south with the rebated jamb of a doorway opening west into a building of which nothing else survives above ground (A1). Above this the corner of the range has been rebuilt in old brick (A2) Then comes the remains of a large window with ashlar jambs (its head gone) (A3) reduced in old brick to a small window (A4) that reuses an old chamfered stone lintel, followed by a blocked door (A5) without any cut dressings (which cuts the plinth) then a ragged opening low in the wall (A6). An area of plaster (which relates to a now-vanished outbuilding shown on the older OS maps) (A7) overlaps the west jamb of a large blocked square-headed window (A8). Beyond a ragged hole patched in 20th century brick (A9) comes the most striking feature of the wall, a pair of large windows with four-centred arches, with ashlar surrounds, infilled in old brick (A10 & A11). Further east is a blocked window with a soldier lintel in brick, without cut



dressings (A12). Just before the house is a three-light square-headed mullioned-and-transomed window, partly blocked with a modern casement window inserted in the upper part of the opening made when the western mullion was removed (A13).

The internal face of the wall is described from the pair of large arched windows, as immediately east of these is a secondary cross wall. Internally the arched windows have surrounds moulded with a pair of rolls between two hollows; presumably they had some form of tracery, but any evidence of this is concealed by their brick blocking. Further west the internal face of the wall shows the same complex of blocked openings and patching as the exterior; the small window near the far end has an internal splay and jambs in old brick.

The west wall of the range (B) stands to a height of around 3 m. Internally there is a large central opening (probably a window) infilled in old brick, with cut blocks in its jambs and its head behind plaster (B1); on the external wall face only a single straight joint is visible, the south jamb of the window; north of this the wall seems to have been re-faced (B2) infilled in old brick, which has lost its head; north of this is the stub of the former north wall of the range (B3), and then a length of featureless old wall (B4).

As already mentioned, the east wall of the main part of the range is an inserted cross wall, which clearly butts up against the older fabric at its south end (C). It contains two openings (C1) and (C2) that appear to have been doorways, blocked in old brick, with above them and roughly central in the wall the stub of a heavy projecting beam (C3).

The wall on the north of the section of the range west of the cross-wall is in fact the featureless south end of the Stable; west of this any north wall has been removed.

Between the cross-wall and the present house is a short-roofed section of range. The north wall of this (D) has an entrance from the farmyard on the north by a doorway with a timber lintel (D1), and an infilled pitching door above (D2). West of this is a modern brick shed set in the re-entrant angle between the range and the Stable, within which a blocked doorway with a four-centred arch (D3) can be traced, with a relieving arch above that seems to have extended further west (D4). Inside the walls are plastered; there is one heavy old north-south beam at mid-height (D5). At the north end of the west wall (i.e. the cross wall C) two large corbels carry a projection, probably a chimney stack (C4), which would seem, to imply that the wall was once external. On the south is the window (A13) formed within the larger mullioned-and-transomed opening (see exterior description) and west of it a recess in the blocked opening (A12). The east wall (the west end wall of the house) has a low recess at its south end.

#### **2.4 The Stable Block (SEE APPENDIX 1: PHOTO. RECORD 32-46)**

This is a two-storeyed structure set north-south, adjacent to the Chapel Range. It is much-patched and has a bewildering variety of fabric types, and a pantile roof hipped to the north. There are quite well-cut, alternating quoins at the north-west corner, but much rougher ones at the north-east. The north and east walls are considerably thicker than the south and west ones, suggesting that they have been retained from some older structure. Quite a striking feature is seen in the swept kneelers set diagonally at the northern corners. The other distinctive feature is its upper floor windows – two on east (D3 & D4) and west (F5 & F6), and one set centrally in the north end (E4). These are roughly square openings (all now slatted) with irregular cut ashlar blocks in the jambs and unusual composite lintels, a central flat arch in old brick and a shaped ashlar block at either 7

end. The two on the east have both been narrowed slightly in old brick.

The east elevation (D), to the main farmyard, is partly concealed by a modern shed. On the ground floor is a modern door (with recent brick in the jambs) (D1) and to the north an older one (D2), now reduced to a window, with a timber lintel and quite elongate cut blocks in the jambs. Above the present doorway and just below the eaves is a very small blocked window that has had a chamfered surround (D5).

The north end wall (E) is especially complex. At ground-floor level east-of-centre is an upright light with a chamfered surround, now blocked (E1), then a window with old chamfered blocks in the west jamb, brick in the east, and a timber lintel (E2). On either side of it are patches of quite well squared and coursed small limestone blocks, the western one terminating to the west again a straight joint which may be an earlier jamb (E3). It is difficult to work out whether the better-quality masonry is patching, or the earliest fabric in a much-altered wall.

The west wall (F) has three ground-floor windows (F1 – F3), slightly different in shape and size and set at different levels, the central with a timber lintel (F2), and none with any cut dressings to their jambs. Above them is a thin band of old brick (F4) with sockets for the timbers of the roof of a removed outbuilding.

The south end wall of the stable (G) is featureless; it is on the line of the north wall of the original range, but is thinner than the section of older wall immediately to the east, and thus presumably a later rebuild.

The ground floor of the stable is divided into an entrance area and three stalls, divided by partitions boarded below with iron bars above; at the south-east corner is a stair, now in poor condition, rising south and then turning west. The upper floor is undivided; the windows all have brick internal jambs, and chamfered timber lintels. At the south end of the east wall is a disturbed area, perhaps part of a former fireplace relating to the corbelled-out projection on the opposite face of the wall.

The roof structure is of some age. There are two trusses, or principal rafter form with raking struts from tie to principals, carrying two levels of staggered butt purlins and a diagonally-set ridge.

## **2.5 The Barn** (*SEE APPENDIX 1: PHOTO. RECORD 78-108*)

This forms the eastern part of the range on the north of the farmyard, and is built of coursed roughly-shaped stone, with roughly-alternating quite elongate quoins at the east end, with some cut dressings, and a modern asbestos roof. Its south elevation is now covered by modern sheds, and the western part of its north elevation by a hay barn; the lower part of its west end is behind the adjacent farm building range.

The south elevation (H) has a broad opening with a timber lintel set more or less centrally (H1); the lower part of its west jamb survives from an earlier doorway, and has a casement moulding and an internal rebate.<sup>1</sup> Further west is another similar square-headed doorway (H2), still blocked, with a hollow-chamfered surround and a relieving arch above its head; above and to the east of it is an old slit window (H3), partly blocked internally whilst at the west end of the wall is a doorway that looks like a late insertion (H4). To the east of the central opening is a window with a broad splay (H5) then a plain blocked door (H6). At a higher level there is an upright window with a chamfered surround set more or less centrally (H7), and

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<sup>1</sup> In 2006 this opening was intact, although blocked. It was square-headed, with a relieving arch above the lintel.

another (above the shed roof) further west (H8). Internally at the west end of the wall is an irregular vertical column of larger blocks, of uncertain purpose.

The west end of the barn (I) has a large cart entrance (I1) later reduced to a doorway set against its north jamb (I2); above is a large window infilled with a mixture of old brick and rubble, with a slit vent in the blocking (I3).

The north wall (J) has a full-height cart entrance set west-of-centre (J1), under a timber lintel with a course of recent brick above; east of this are a slit vent (J2), and then a roughly-recessed area at mid-height in the internal face of the wall containing a recess framed by timbers (probably for the driveshaft from a horse engine house) (J3) followed by a second slit at mid-height (J4), and a ragged opening higher up (J5). West of the cart entrance is a straight joint (with a narrow slit-vent on it) that seems to be the west jamb of a former opening (J6).

The east end of the barn (K) has a central doorway with brick in its jambs and a timber lintel (K1), with what looks like a blocked pitching door above it (K2), which is set between two windows – the northern is blocked in recent brick (K3), the southern only shows as an internal recess (K4), as does a window in the apex of the gable (K5).

The roof is of seven bays with king-post trusses that have raking struts from the base of the posts, and carry two levels of upright-section purlins and a ridge board. The second truss from the east has had its tie-beam replaced by a collar at a higher level.

## **2.6 The North-West Range (SEE APPENDIX 1: PHOTO. RECORD 63-65)**

This is a small single-storey range largely built of roughly-coursed cobbles, with pantile roof. Old quoins show that the north-south section has been extended by c 5 m at its south end, where its roof is hipped, and there is a doorway in the end wall with a segmental old brick arch above a timber lintel. There are quite substantial cut quoins (perhaps indicating that an older structure has been incorporated) at the north-west corner. The east-west section has a range of three three-centred brick arches on the south, which have later infill with a variety of openings.

### 3. THE PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

<i>Photo number</i>	<i>Internal/ External</i>	<i>Description</i>
1-5, 47 & 50-57	External	Aerial views of Great Isle farm and southern earthworks.
6-11	External	External views of the farmhouse.
12-22	External	External views of the 'chapel' range.
23-31	Internal	Internal views of the 'chapel' range.
32-37	External	External views of the Stable range.
38-46	Internal	Internal views of the Stable range.
48-49	Internal	Internal views of the western adjunct to the farmhouse
58, 63, 66-8, 70-2, 75 & 77	External	Views of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century farm buildings.
78-92	External	Views of the northern barn.
59-62, 64-5, 69, 73-4 & 76	Internal	Views of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century farm buildings.
93-108	Internal	Views of the northern barn.

01	Aerial view of Great Isle farm in April, 2022
02	Oblique aerial view of Great Isle farm and earthworks from the south.
03	Oblique aerial view from the south of Great Isle earthworks with farm to rear
04	Oblique aerial view of Great Isle farm from the north-east.
05	Oblique aerial view of Great Isle earthworks from north north-east (NNE)
06	Great Isle farm viewed from the north-east.
07	Great Isle farm viewed from the south-east
08	View from SE of single-storeyed adjunct attached to the south-east angle of a two-storeyed bay attached to the east end of the main house
09	View from the south of single-storeyed adjunct attached to the south-east angle of a two-storeyed bay attached to the east end of the main house
10	View from the south of 2-bay eastern section of the farmhouse, with two-storeyed bay attached to the east
11	The south elevation of the farmhouse: west and east bays with, between them, a narrow projecting wing with coped gable on shaped kneelers and gable stack above.
12	The south elevation of the chapel range.
13	South view of the first bay of the farmhouse, in line with the Chapel Range.
14	South-west view of the first bay of the farmhouse, showing the early chamfered plinth of the chapel range continuing beneath it.
15	The east end of the chapel range, south frontage, with (to left) one of a pair of large blocked windows (A10 & A11), then a blocked window with a soldier lintel in brick, (A12) and, just before the house, a partly-blocked three-light square-headed mullioned-and-transomed window (A13).
16	South view of the central section of the 'chapel' range, showing (to left of view) a ragged hole patched in brick (A9) then a pair of blocked large windows with four-centred arches, with ashlar surrounds (A10 & A11).

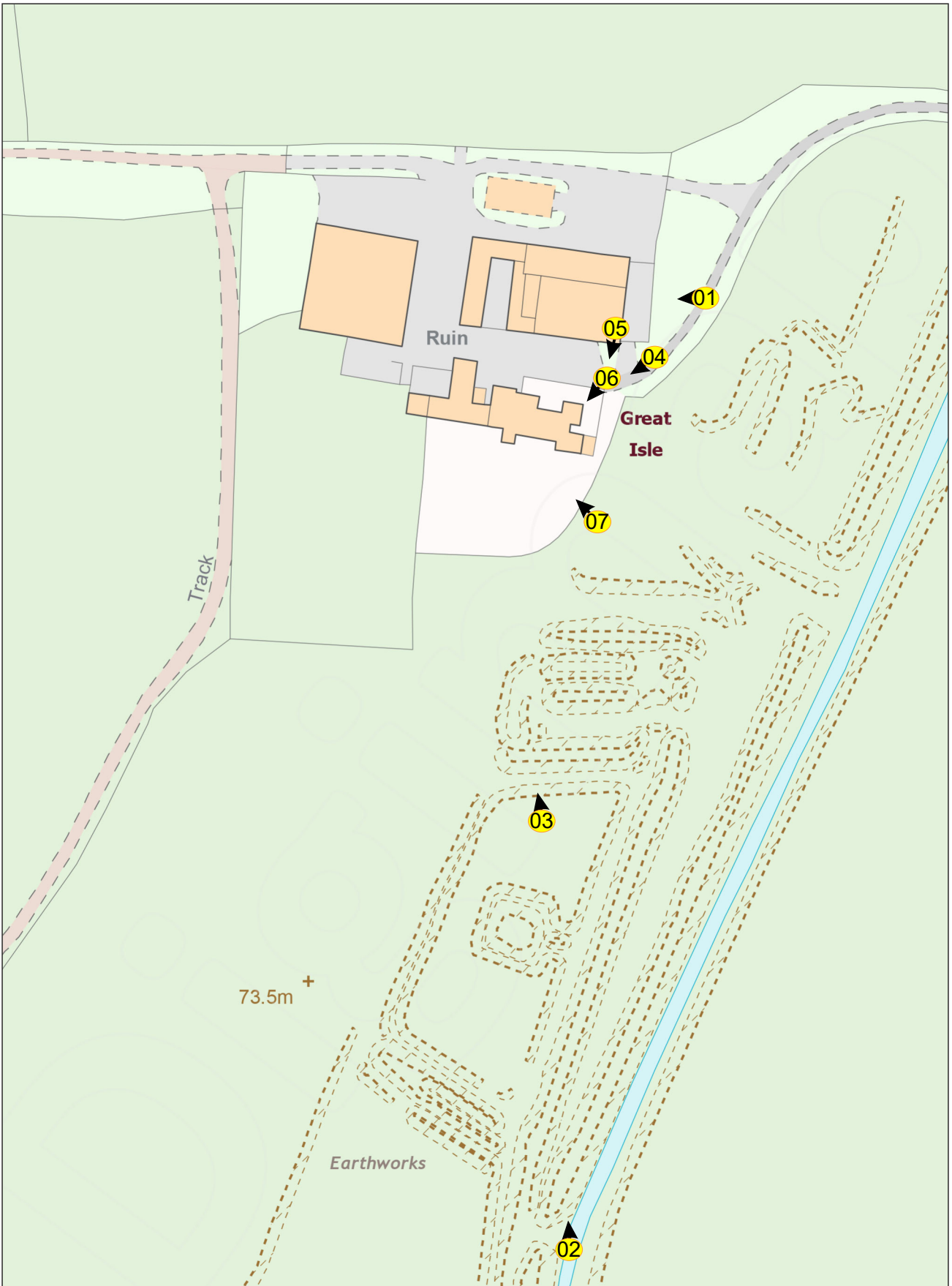
17	South view of the west-central section of the 'chapel' range, with an area of plaster (A8) from a removed outbuilding overlapping the west jamb of a large blocked square-headed window (A8).
18	South view of the west end of the 'chapel' range, with (from left) a stub of a wall returning south with the rebated jamb of a doorway opening west, then remains of a large window with ashlar jambs (A3) reduced to a small window (A4) reusing an old chamfered stone lintel, followed by a blocked door (A5) without cut dressings.
19	SW view of the south face of the chapel range, south wall.
20	Detailed view from the south of a stub of a wall returning south at the west end of the 'chapel' range, with the rebated jamb of a doorway opening west and brick rebuild above.
21	West view of the west wall of the range (B) with a single straight joint visible - the south jamb of a window.
22	View from WNW of a length of featureless old wall (B4), the west wall of the range north of the medieval section.
23	The east side of the west wall of the 'chapel' range (B)
24	The older, south part of the west wall of the chapel range (B) containing a large central opening (probably a window) infilled in old brick, with cut blocks in its jambs and its head behind plaster (B1).
25	The visible north elevation of the south wall of the 'chapel' range.
26	The west part of the visible north elevation of the south wall of the 'chapel' range, internal face showing the same complex of blocked openings and patching as the exterior (described above); the small window (A4) with an internal splay and jambs in old brick.
27	The central part of the visible north elevation of the south wall of the 'chapel' range.
28	North view of the arched windows (10 & 11) with moulded surrounds and indications that they contained tracery (any evidence for which is concealed by their brick blocking).
29	View east to the east wall of the main part of the range, an inserted cross wall, which butts up against the older fabric at its south end (C) and contains two blocked doorway openings (C1 & C2).
30	View north to the featureless south end of the Stable block, perhaps containing elements of the former north wall of the 'chapel' range.
31	The south end of the Stable block, with roofline of former attached outbuilding.
32	The stable block viewed from the south-west.
33	The west elevation of the stable block, with upper windows (F5 & F6) and the western of two swept kneelers set diagonally at the north corner.
34	The north part of the west elevation of the stable block, with the western of two swept kneelers set diagonally at the north corner.
35	The complex north elevation of the stable block, with, at GF level east-of-centre an upright light with chamfered surround, now blocked (E1), then a window with old chamfered blocks in the west jamb, and a timber lintel (E2). On either side of it are patches of quite well squared and coursed small limestone blocks, the western one terminating to the west in a straight joint which may be an earlier jamb (E3). Note swept kneelers set diagonally at the corners.
36	Blocked window (E1) with chamfered surround in the east part of the GF north elevation of the Barn.
37	The east elevation of the barn, with an older door (D2), now reduced to a window, to the north and remains of a very small blocked window with chamfered surround (D5)

	above the main door just below the eaves.
38	View of stalls in central part of stable at GF level.
39	View into the NW corner of the GF north room of the stable.
40	View into the SW corner of the GF north room of the stable.
41	View NE to main door in the east wall of the barn.
42	View north in the upper floor roof space of the barn.
43	View NE to the east wall of the barn at first floor level.
44	View west to the south end of the west wall of the barn at first floor level.
45	View to the internal north-elevation of the south gable end wall of the barn at first floor level.
46	View east to the internal face of the south end of the east wall of the barn and access to stairs
47	The external, north-facing north wall of the west wing of the farmhouse, with single-storeyed adjunct to the west.
48	View south into single-storeyed adjunct to the west wing of the farmhouse, with fireplace in the east wall.
49	View west within the single-storeyed adjunct to the west wing of the farmhouse, with stalls to the west and reused beam forming part of the rood structure.
50	View SE towards the north wall of the farmhouse and west face of its attached, northern out-shut.
51	View south to the north elevation of the farmhouse, including its northern out-shut.
52	View west to the east elevation of the northern out-shut to the farmhouse.
53	View south to the north elevation of the east end of the house and its eastern extension.
54	The north elevation of the north-eastern adjunct to the eastern extension of the farmhouse.
55	The east gable end elevation of the farmhouse and its north-eastern adjunct
56	View SSW to the north elevation of the south-east adjunct to the eastern extension to the farmhouse.
57	View west to the external east elevation of the south-east adjunct to the eastern extension to the farmhouse.
58	View north into yard enclosed by the north-west farm-buildings range (to left), the west part of the northern range (to rear) and a range of lean-to wooden sheds (to right of view) built against the west side of a relatively modern, brick-built barn.
59	View north within the wooden sheds extending south from the north range of farm-buildings.
60	View SE within the lean-to wooden shed built against the west side of a relatively modern barn south of the north range, showing a doorway in the west wall of the barn.
61	View within the lean-to wooden shed built against the west side of a relatively modern barn south of the north range, showing a doorway at the north end of the west wall of the barn.

62	View north within the lean-to wooden shed built against the west side of a relatively modern barn south of the north range, showing the western cart-shed opening in the south elevation of the 19 <sup>th</sup> -century west part of the north range.
63	View within the western fold yard to the central part of the south frontage of the eastern section of the North range.
64	View westwards from the east end of the western part of the north range of farm-buildings, showing modern stalls and partially-blocked cart-shed openings to the south (left of view).
65	View south-east from west-central doorway in the south side of the east part of the north range into the narrow foldyard seen on Photos. 58 & 63 (above).
66	The north part of the east elevation of the west range, within the fold yard seen on Photos. 58 & 63 (above).
67	The south part of the east elevation of the west range seen within the fold yard seen on Photos. 58 & 63 (above).
68	The south elevation of the west range of farm-buildings.
69	View north from the south end of the west range to the first partition wall within the range.
70	View from the south-west of the west range of farm-buildings.
71	The west elevation of the south part of the west range of farm-buildings.
72	The west elevation of the north part of the west range of farm-buildings.
73	Internal view within the central compartment of the west range, looking west.
74	Internal view within the central compartment of the west range, looking north.
75	North-east view of the north end of the west elevation of the west range.
76	Internal view of the north end compartment of the west range, looking east.
77	View south-east to the north-west corner of the North range of farm-buildings.
78	View west along the back (north) wall of the east range (lower east part of the north range is to rear of view).
79	The north elevation of the northern barn (east part of the north range).
80	The east (left of view) and north elevations of the northern barn.
81	The east gable end elevation of the northern barn - first floor and roof levels.
82	View SW to a door in the centre of the GF east elevation of the northern barn (east part of the North range of farm-buildings).
83	View west to the south end of the GF east elevation of the northern barn, showing straight joint resulting from addition of an outer skin(?).
84	View north within the modern east range of farm-buildings (modern shed with wooden lean-to on its west side) to the east and central parts of the external north elevation of the northern barn.
85	The west and central parts of the external north elevation of the northern barn.
86	Central doorway (H1) with modern timber lintel in the north elevation of the northern barn.
87	Detail of doorway (H1) showing the lower part of its west jamb surviving from an earlier doorway, with a casement moulding and internal rebate.
88	Blocked square-headed doorway (H2) (to left of view) with a hollow-chamfered surround and a relieving arch above its head, below and to west of an old slit window (H3).
89	Close-up view from the south of square-headed doorway (H2) in the west part of the south elevation of the northern barn.

90	Distant view from the south of the west end of the south elevation of the barn at first-floor level.
91	Window at first-floor level in the west end of the south elevation of the barn.
92	View from the east of the west jamb of doorway (H1), with a casement moulding and internal rebate.
93	View west of the northern barn interior.
94	View from ESE of the west part of the northern barn interior.
95	The internal east elevation of the west wall of the northern barn.
96	The internal south elevation of the central part of the north wall of the northern barn, with a roughly-recessed area at mid-height in the internal face of the wall containing a recess framed by timbers (probably for the driveshaft from a horse engine house).
97	The internal south elevation of the east part of the north wall of the northern barn.
98	View east of the northern barn interior, to wards its east gable end.
99	The internal GF west elevation of the east wall of the barn.
100	The internal GF east end of the north elevation of the south wall of the barn
101	View SW from first-floor level of the internal (N) face of the south wall of the barn.
102	The central-east part of the internal face of the south wall of the barn, with central cart entrance (expanded in size to the east in relatively recent times).
103	The central and west parts of the internal face of the south wall of the barn, with central cart entrance to left and blocked doorway (H2) to extreme right of view.
104	Close-up view of blocked, square-headed doorway (H2) towards the west end of the internal south wall of the barn.
105	The west end of the internal face of the south wall of the barn, with a doorway of likely modern origin.
106	View eastwards to the west-facing face of the east end wall of the barn at first-floor level.
107	Oblique north-east view of the internal face of the east end wall of the barn at first-floor level.
108	South view of the internal (N) face of the south wall of the barn at first-floor level.





*Illus. 17: Great Isle Farm: locations of wider landscape record views.*

Illus. 18: Key plan showing locations of record photographs at Great Isle Farm.

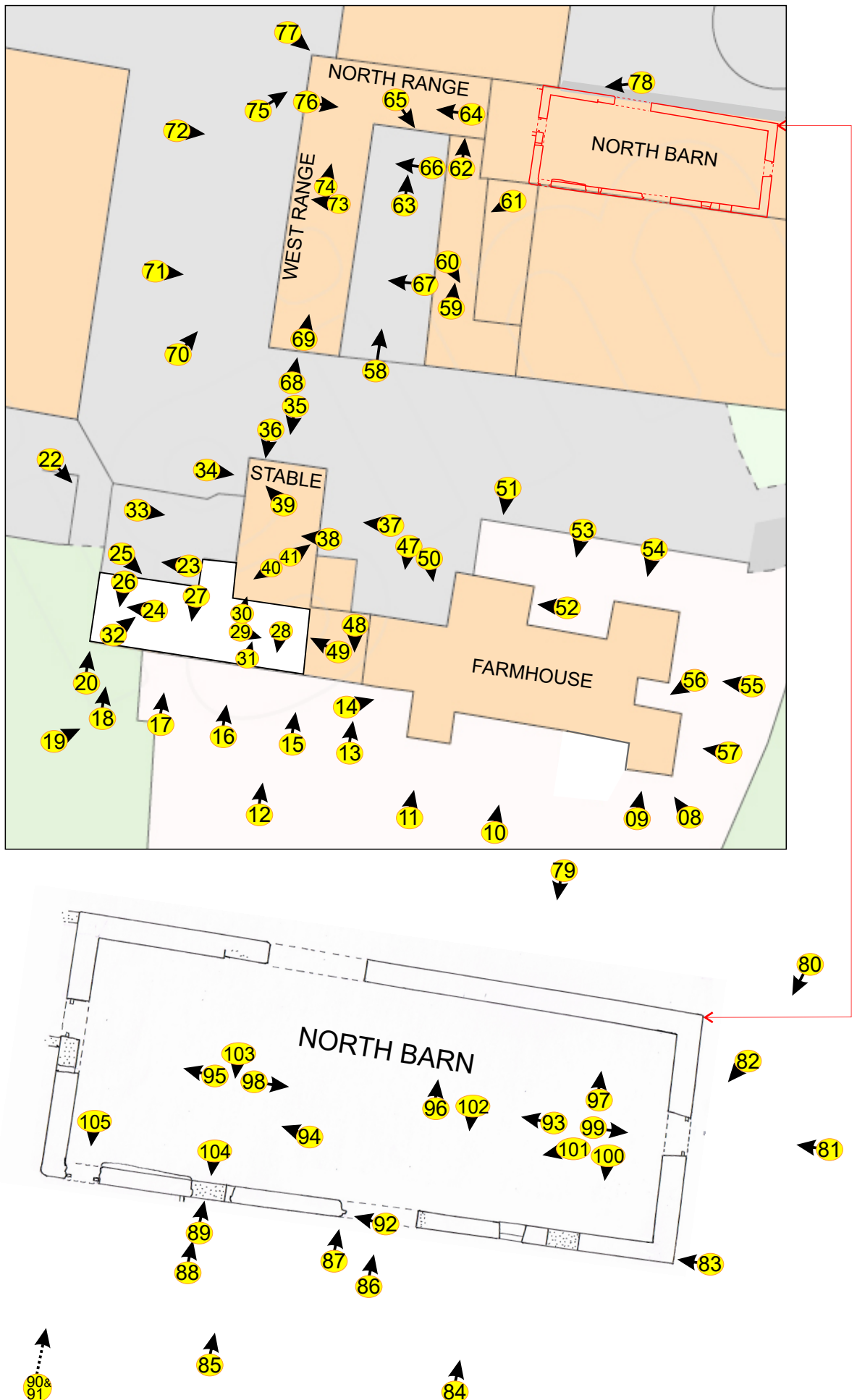




Photo 01.



Photo 02.



Photo 03.



Photo 04.



Photo 05.



Photo 06.



Photo 07.



Photo 08.



Photo 09.



Photo 10.



Photo 11.



Photo 12.



Photo 13.



Photo 14.



Photo 15.



Photo 16.



Photo 17.



Photo 18.



Photo 19.



Photo 20.



Photo 21.



Photo 22.



Photo 23.



Photo 24.





Photo 25.



Photo 26.



Photo 27.



Photo 28.



Photo 29.



Photo 30.



Photo 31.



Photo 32.



Photo 33.



Photo 34.



Photo 35.



Photo 36.



Photo 37.



Photo 38.



Photo 39.



Photo 40.



Photo 41.



Photo 42.



Photo 43.



Photo 44.



Photo 45



Photo 46



Photo 47



Photo 48



Photo 49



Photo 50



Photo 51



Photo 52



Photo 53



Photo 54



Photo 55



Photo 56





Photo 57



Photo 58



Photo 59



Photo 60



Photo 61



Photo 62



Photo 63

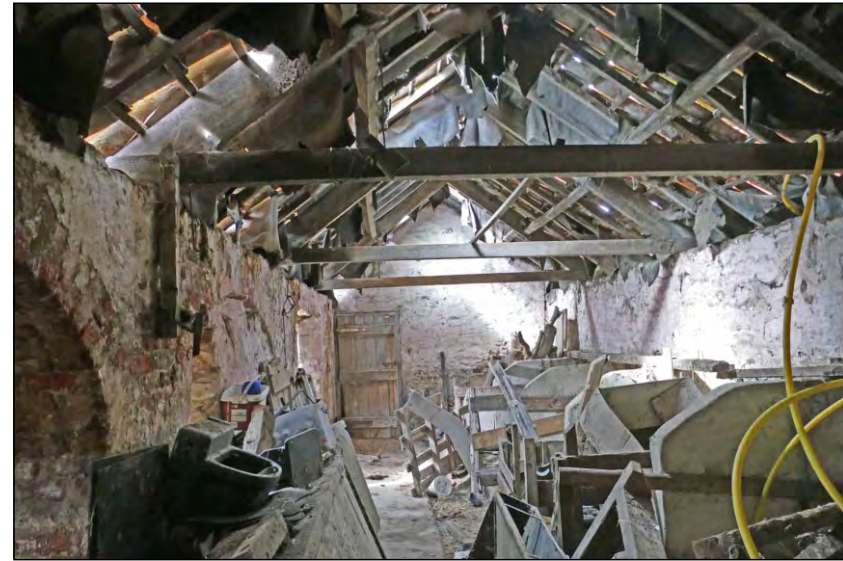


Photo 64



Photo 65



Photo 66



Photo 67



Photo 68



Photo 69



Photo 70



Photo 71



Photo 72



Photo 73



Photo 74



Photo 75



Photo 76



*Photo 77*



*Photo 78*



*Photo 79*



*Photo 80*



Photo 81



Photo 82



Photo 83



Photo 84



Photo 85



Photo 86



Photo 87



Photo 88





Photo 89



Photo 90



Photo 91



Photo92



Photo 93



Photo 94



Photo 95



Photo 96



Photo 97



Photo 98



Photo 99



Photo 100



Photo 101



Photo 102



Photo 103



Photo 104

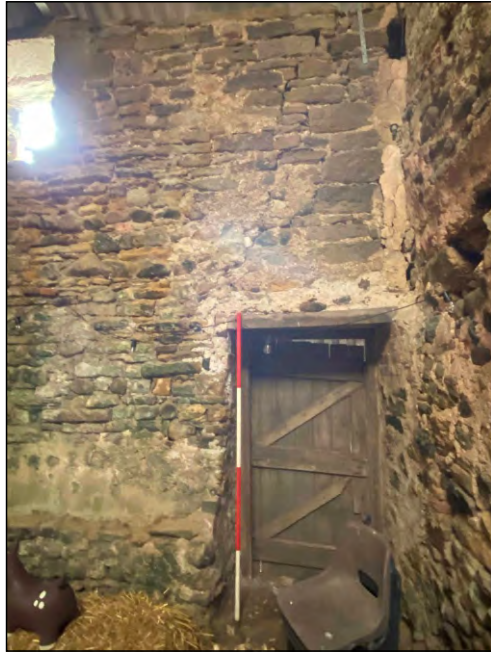


Photo 105



Photo 106



Photo 107



Photo 108

## 4. DISCUSSION

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The extensive complex of buildings at Great Isle Farm has its origins in the later medieval period, but elements of it survived when the complex was remodelled as a planned farm in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, since when it has undergone several phases of addition and alteration. The buildings are mostly built of roughly-coursed Magnesian Limestone rubble, with some use of brick and later buildings entirely of brick. Overall, in its most recent incarnation as a planned farm, the buildings provide a good example of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century farmstead, subsequently adapted between the mid-19<sup>th</sup> and mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries to suit changing requirements. Evidence for such adaptations is apparent in changes made to the structures at the farm, but the building of new, larger sheds from around 1970 indicates that these changes were not entirely successful, leaving the farm abandoned and susceptible to gradual physical decay.

While elements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century planned farm have architectural merit and are of local and potential regional interest in that regard, the principal claim to architectural and historic interest within the extant, above-ground fabric of the complex lies with the surviving medieval elements in the Farmhouse, Chapel Range, Stable and northern Barn, of which the Chapel Range is as once the most complete and vulnerable to decay.

While the Chapel Range (List Entry Number: 1121503) is accepted by the Historic England Listing as late medieval in origin with subsequent alteration around 1600, the farmhouse (List Entry Number: 1322844) is listed as of 17<sup>th</sup>-century origin and *the stable* (List Entry Number: 1121504) and northern barn (List Entry Number: 1322805) of 18<sup>th</sup>-century origin, which together indicates at least four major phases of development prior to the planned farm of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Recent reassessment of the buildings suggests, however, that while the Chapel Range (or which no evidence of ecclesiastical origin is apparent) is indeed of late-medieval origin - the four-centred windows certainly appear late 16<sup>th</sup>-century at latest - some or all of the other three listed buildings may also be earlier than previously thought. The first bay of the south elevation of the farmhouse, for example, is in line with the Chapel Range, and the early chamfered plinth of the latter continues beneath it, while on the ground floor at the west end of the wall are traces of several blocked openings, some with splayed and chamfered lintels which may be contemporary with the late-medieval Chapel Range. Similarly, the north and east walls of the Stable are considerably thicker than the south and west ones, and the north-east corner quoins notably rough, suggesting that they have been retained from some older structure, perhaps of late 17<sup>th</sup> century origin, while the complex north end wall contains several chamfered window surrounds, although it is difficult to work out whether these, and some better-quality masonry represent patching, or the earliest fabric in a much-altered wall. The northern barn also contains early remains, and traces of others lost in recent decades, which appear earlier than their designated mid-18<sup>th</sup> century date. The moulded jambs of the southern doorways with relieving arches above appear to be of 16<sup>th</sup>-century character and sit well as a group with the associated chamfered windows, which are all of late medieval or early post-medieval character, together suggesting a late 16<sup>th</sup>-century date of origin for the building.

The medieval and/or early post-medieval remains contained within these structures, all of which were remodelled to some extent as part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century planned farm complex, include substantial remains of an important medieval/sub-medieval manorial complex that have received very little antiquarian attention, partly due to the oddly remote location and partly due to the early fabric being disguised by later alterations or concealed by render. The presence of associated earthworks to the south and east, and relative rarity of such medieval buildings in County Durham renders the Great Isle complex particularly valuable and worthy of both conservation and further, detailed study.

Despite being afforded statutory protection by listing, fabric and features have been lost within living memory from the protected built features at Great Isle - notably from the broad opening in the south elevation of the Barn – whilst pragmatic use of the site as a working farm has continued.

## 5. REFERENCES

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