

**Historic building recording
at Church Hill Farm,
Church Hill
Beoley,
Worcestershire,**

Martin Cook BA MifA

16th August 2012
Minor revision 7th September 2010

WSM 47384

The School House
Church Lane
Tardebigge
Worcestershire
B60 3AH

07850 918755

Historic building recording at Church Hill Farm, Church Hill, Beoley, Worcestershire

Introduction

Historic building recording of a stable at Church Hill Farm, Church Hill, Beoley, Worcestershire (SP 0679 6941; planning ref B/11/0155; Fig 1) was undertaken at the request of Mr Ken Moore, on behalf of his client, according to a written scheme of investigation provided by Martin Cook BA MifA and approved by Mike Glyde of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service.

The project was undertaken in order to provide a descriptive account and interpretation of the historic and architectural development of the building, including discussion of its local, regional and national significance.

The documentary material

Documentary research at the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service took place on the 2nd August 2012 and a search of the Historic Environment Record was received on the 7th August 2012.

Historic mapping

The earliest available map was the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884-7 but this could not be reproduced for reasons of copyright. This appears to show the building in its current configuration. The Ordnance Survey map of 1905 (Fig 2) shows nothing different.

The Historic Environment Record

The site itself

Church Hill Farm, Church Hill, Beoley (WSM 61) is recorded on the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record as a farmhouse with its origins in the 17th century. It is described as follows:

Early 17th century, extended late 17th century with some late 20th century alterations. Timber-frame with brick infill and tile roof. T-plan, cross-wing at west end is late 17th century aligned north/south, other range early 17th century. Cross-wing of two storeys with gable-lit attic, two windows: 2-light casements; ground floor: a 3-light casement under pentice roof; main range one storey with attic lit by two gabled dormers; ground floor has a glass fronted conservatory with lean-to roof, to right-hand end a catslide roof over a 19th century addition with a 3-light casement. Interior: main range has a roof with two vertical and two raking struts to collar, cross-wing has a king-post roof and walls four square panels high.

It is associated with a 19th century farm building (WSM 42660: the subject of this recording project) which is described as an unlisted 19th century farm building recorded on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. It was part of a large farm complex (WSM 42661) of which only two sections survive. This farm complex is described as being a group of 19th century farm buildings recorded on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. All of the buildings with the exception of the one building to the north-east (WSM 4266) have been demolished, certainly before 1999, as photographic evidence records late 19th century red brick buildings on the site. The original farm had a dispersed character with two ranges. An L-shaped range southwest of the farmhouse (WSM 61) with a single yard, and a further U-shaped range to the south with eastern wing and detached buildings to the east. A range of pigsties was present south of the house.

In the vicinity of the site

Nearby are a number of important sites. To the west are a hillfort (early Neolithic to late Iron Age), a ringwork (medieval) and a castle (13th to 14th century AD) share the same reference number (WSM 45). There is some field and documentary evidence that suggests a pre-Saxon, probably prehistoric, earthwork is represented by a small enclosure at The Mount, Beoley. The irregular shape precludes Roman origin despite the proximity to Ryknield Street. The Great Charter of Edgar confirming lands of the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul at Pershore in 972 mentions the 'Burhleahe' or camp clearing as a landmark at this time. However, the site's position below the summit and the irregular shape could also point to cattle enclosures in line with other similar sites.

Unoccupied in the Saxon period, it was probably a minor strongpoint in the 13th century. It was subsequently developed as a manor house or hunting lodge of the Beauchamp's in the early medieval period, but apparently burnt down in 1303. Later a court and grange belonging to the family may have been sited here. There is possible reuse of the enclosure in the 13th century disturbances, notably the Barons War, although there is no indication of a major defensive site at this time. At a later date, possibly in the 14th century, the site was deserted. Later still, the site interior was taken over for agricultural use, though ridge and furrow evidence suggests that this was not medieval. It was finally used periodically as a marl pit.

To the north-west is St Leonard's Church, Beoley (WSM 51) founded in the 12th century AD. It was extended early 13th century, early 14th century, early 15th century and *c* 1580 and restored in 1885 and 1891.

Associated with the church in a churchyard cross (WSM 4587). Dating to the 15th century, it may have come from Bordesley Abbey after the Dissolution. The cross is Listed Grade II and is also scheduled as an ancient monument. Also associated with the church is the Vicarage, Church Hill, Beoley (WSM 56). This is a timber framed building originating in the 17th century AD.

Finally, adjacent to Church Hill Farm are two clay pits or quarries (WSM 42662 and 42663), dating to the 19th century.

The fieldwork

General

Fieldwork took place on the 3rd August 2012. It comprised a walk-around survey, with as-existing architect's plans and elevations which were annotated with historic information and photographs taken as appropriate.

Description

The building is a long low, rectangular structure of brick construction (Figs 3.1 to 3.3). It has been rendered but where the render is falling away it is possible to identify the bond as a somewhat irregular Flemish garden wall. With the exception of a few areas, where there are brick setts, the floor is of concrete. The roof is of a truss design, supporting purlins (Figs 3.4, 14 and 15) and common rafters, with red tiles. The trusses are of three designs: type A is a king post design; type B a tie beam design and type C a queen post design. The building is principally of one phase with an small extension (phase 2) comprising a tack room at its northern end. Internally it is sub-divided into tack room (phase 2), stables (phase 1) and loose boxes (phases 1 and 3).

Phase 1: early to mid 19th century

The building probably originally comprised a single stable (Fig 14) with two loose boxes at its southern end (Figs 19 and 21). There would have been a feeding trough, probably of wood, along its eastern side with water troughs above (Fig 13) and with the tack for each horse kept behind it on the western wall. It is likely that the stable space would have been sub-divided into stalls to prevent adjacent horses from kicking or biting each other. It is possible that at its northern end, until the construction of the tack room in phase 2, there was a hay loft over the first two bays as the roof trusses, from the north, are types C and B (Figs 3.4 and 14) which, due to their more open design, would have provided relatively easy access at tie beam level.

Phase 2: later 19th century

A tack room was built onto the northern end of the stable (Figs 3.1, 4 and 5). It was provided with a small fireplace (Fig 11). It seems likely that the fire surround was reused from somewhere else as it is not a very practical design for a tack room. When heating was provided in situations such as this it was usually for the purpose of assisting in the cleaning of the horse equipment and only indirectly for the comfort of the stable hands. This fire surround does not have the simplest provision for the heating of water. A single, wooden, harness hook survives from this time (Fig 10).

Phase 3: later 20th century

This phase sees the reorganization of the interior of the building (Fig 3.1). An ante-room was provided within the tack room by the means of a stud partition and plastic harness hooks replaced the wooden ones (Fig 12). However the greatest change was within the stable. The number of loose

boxes was increased by the insertion of block partition walls (Figs 15, 16, 17, 18 and 20). They may be identified as loose boxes, as opposed to stables, by the location of the water troughs which are positioned just inside the entrances. If these were stables the water would have been inaccessible to the horses. Loose box provision now took up more than half of the equine accommodation.

Unphased features

A pair of gate hinges was noted on the exterior of the north east elevation (Fig 8). These presumably relate to some sub-division of the surrounding yard. However, such a division does not appear on the Ordnance Survey maps and this sub-division probably pre-dates them. Various items of stable equipment were noted in the building including horse harness, riding hats and a measuring stick marked in 'hands' (Fig 16).

Interpretation and discussion

In the case of the stable, a publication by Peters (1969) *The development of farm buildings in western lowland Staffordshire up to 1880* has been used for comparative and interpretive purposes because it provides an analysis and classification of these buildings that is unavailable in Worcestershire. It should be noted that there is great regional variation in farmstead and farm buildings, and so a direct comparison to lowland Staffordshire need not necessarily strictly apply to a farmstead in north Worcestershire.

There were three forms which stables could take (Peters 1969). In the earliest surviving examples the horses faced along the axis of the building, but in most of those built after 1805 they faced across it (type 2). This type had appeared in Staffordshire soon after 1750 and nearly two-thirds of stables of which evidence survives are of this type. The third type was the loose box, which was always used in conjunction with one or both of the others; it appeared after 1815.

The type 2 design had a number of advantages over type 1. Firstly, it permitted much better ventilation to all the horses, whereas with the horses facing along the building only the outside ones had good ventilation. Secondly, if there were a large number of horses it was better to have them in one large stable rather than in a series of small ones as was necessary with type 1. It may have been this factor that was influential in the design of the Phase 1 stable at Church Hill Farm.

On this point Stephens (an agricultural pundit of the time) noted that:

Some imagine that twelve horses are too great a number on one stable, and that two stables of six stalls each would be better. Provided the stable is properly ventilated, no injury can arise to a larger than a smaller number of horses in it; and there are practical inconveniences in having two stables on a farm. These are, that neither the farmer nor farm-steward can personally superintend the grooming of horses in two stables; the orders given to the ploughman by the steward must be repeated in both stables; and that either all the ploughmen must be collected in one of the stables to receive their orders, or part of them not hearing the orders given to the rest, there cannot be that common understanding as to the work to be done which should exist among all classes of work-people on a farm

Young (another agricultural pundit) preferred small stables to avoid time being wasted by talking, but it would be easier to prevent this in one stable than in two. The most important of the two advantages in the eyes of the farmer seems to have been the second, owing to the growth in size of the waggon stable. This was largely the result of the increase in the size of farms which became very marked during the Napoleonic Wars and afterwards. Over six times as many type 2 as type 1 stables were built in Staffordshire between 1805 and 1880.

The earliest surviving type 2 stables in Staffordshire date from the mid-18th century. Most, however, date from after 1805. They were very adaptable in size, housing from two waggon horses to eleven. Type 2 stables have been divided into three groups according to the provision of subsidiary feeding or storage accommodation which is on the same level as the stable, thus excluding lofts.

Type 2a

This sub-group, to which the Phase 1 structure at Church Hill Farm belongs, contains those stables where no separate provision was made for the harness or feed, forming over four-fifths of the class. The majority had hay lofts so the problem of storage only arose in a few cases.

As there was no separate provision for the harness it was hung up behind the horses, but allowing for the space needed for windows and doors it was not necessarily behind the one that wore it.

Type 2b

This type contains those stables where additional rooms were provided for feed storage or preparation. This is the group to which the Phase 2 structure at Church Hill Farm belongs. In the case of Church Hill Farm, it is the provision of a subsidiary room for the harness but none for fodder that is relevant. These were found in Staffordshire from 1830 (type 2bii). Nearly all have lofts, thus accounting for the absence of a feed room. The use of a separate room had the disadvantage of taking the harness a little way from the horse: Tancred noted that it was more likely to be hung up and time was saved if the two were in close proximity. This was supported by Stephen's insistence on the horse having its harness removed when brought in at midday to enable both to cool. If it had to be carried to a separate room the ploughman might save time by leaving it on.

The final design, type 3, is that of the loose box. In this a horse was not tied up, but free to move about. It was thus much larger than a stall. Denton suggested that it should be about ten feet square. The first known example was built between 1818 and 1820. The loose box served the hackney (ie riding or carriage horse) and waggon (ie working horse) stables in different ways. Miles considered them better than stalls for the riding and carriage horses, in that, unlike the waggon horses, they were generally only used for a small part of the day. If tied up in a stall they were unable to move about and so exercise their feet. Which in consequence were liable to become deranged.

The loose box was not so necessary for waggon horses as they have regular exercise every day and they consequently had more need of rest than of motion in the stable. However, in connection with the waggon stable it could act as a foaling pen, it could house the foal during the day while its mother was working or to act as a hospital.

At Church Hill Farm it seems likely that, in Phase 1, the stables were largely, if not exclusively, for use by the working horses, with the two loose boxes used as hospitals or foaling pens. Subsequently, in Phase 3, much of the original stable space was converted to loose boxes and it is possible to infer that the accommodation was for the exclusive accommodation of horses used for recreational purposes. That the conversion was made using concrete blocks, and therefore took place at a recent date, supports this conclusion.

Assessment of the building's significance

Stables were a common feature of farms up to and beyond the Second World War. A mechanical replacement for the horse, the traction engine, had existed from the middle of the 19th century. However, it was not until after the first decade of the 20th century, when smaller and more affordable gasoline-powered machines began to become popular, that the numbers of horses, particularly on agricultural farms, began a slow decline. From the mid 20th century stables were abandoned or used for other purposes, very often as storage. In the latter decades of the 20th century stables that still remained have seen something of a renaissance as they have been used to house horses for purely recreational purposes. Some farms and former farms have provided riding facilities and schools for teaching what was becoming a lost skill.

Stables, such as the one at Church Hill Farm, are a valuable reminder of the vital role that horses once played in all parts of the economy from the production and transport of agricultural and other goods to the transport of people, either as riders, by coach or canal boat. The building has been much altered already, particularly with regard to the substantial loss of its mangers and original floors. Although it is listed Grade II by association with the adjacent farmhouse, it can only be said to be of moderate local importance.

Summary

Historic building recording was undertaken at Church Hill Farm, Church Hill, Beoley, Worcestershire. The building comprises a brick built stable with a red tile roof of the early to mid 19th century. Its original function must have been to accommodate the working horses of the farm. In the later 19th century a tack room was added to its northern end. In the later 20th century the interior was sub-divided to provide a greater number of loose boxes. This alteration must relate to the change in the use of the horse, from an animal providing motive power to one used primarily for recreational purposes.

Bibliography

Peters J E C 1969 *The development of farm buildings in western lowland Staffordshire up to 1880*

Acknowledgements

The author would particularly like to thank Mr Ken Moore, his client and Mr Mike Glyde of Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service for their kind cooperation.

Archive

The archive consists of:

- 4 Annotated scale drawings
- 1 DVD-ROM

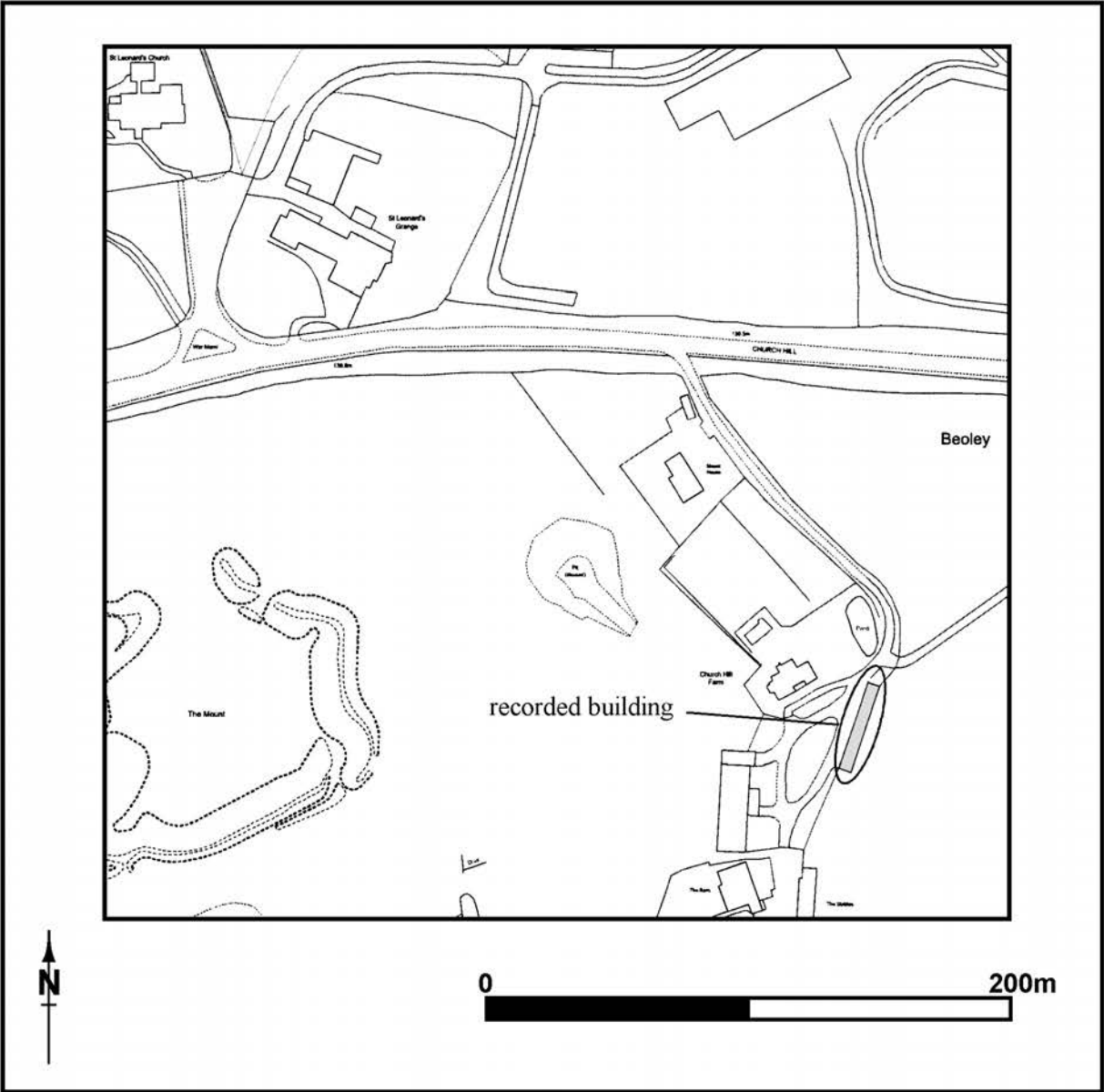
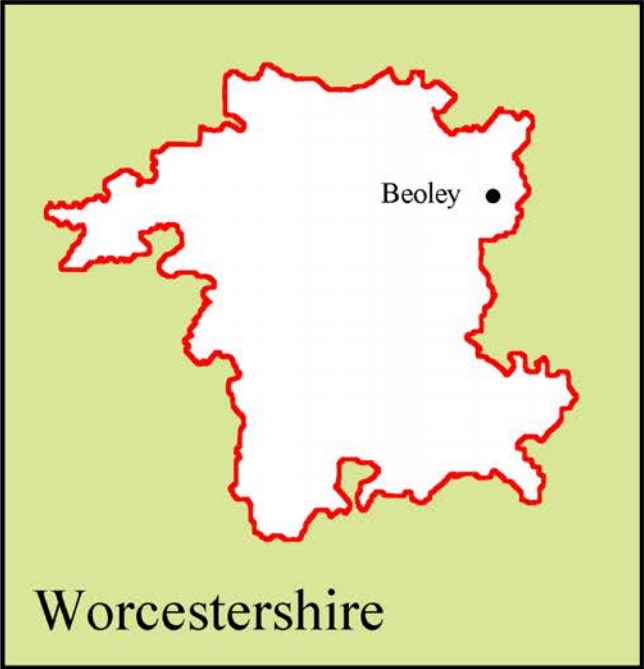


Fig 1: Location of site

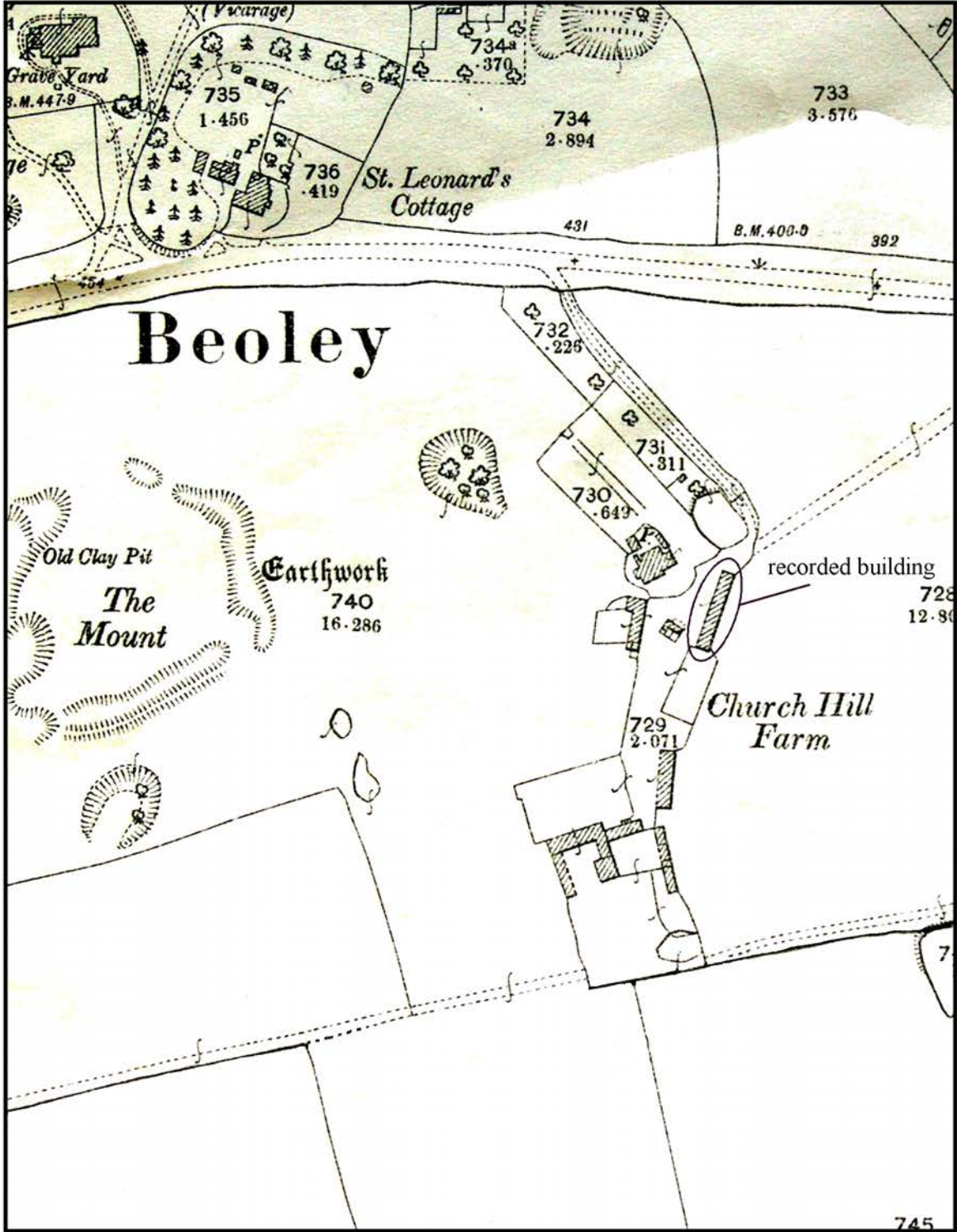
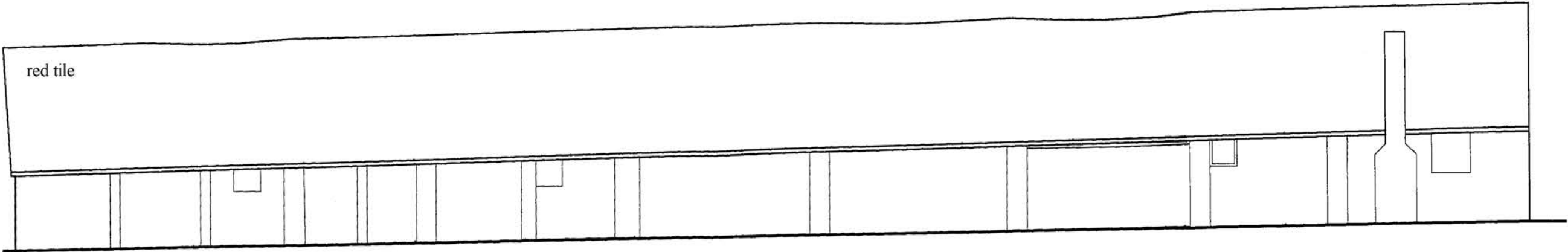


Fig 2: Historic mapping

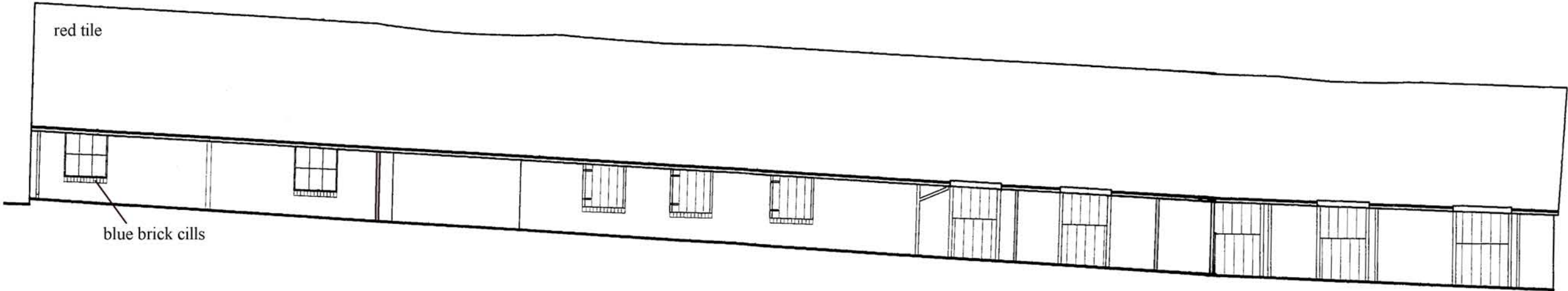


South-east elevation



all brickwork is a somewhat irregular Flemish garden wall bond
mostly covered by render

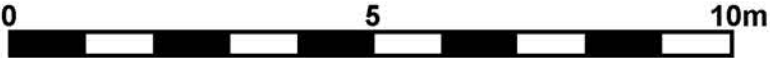
North-west elevation



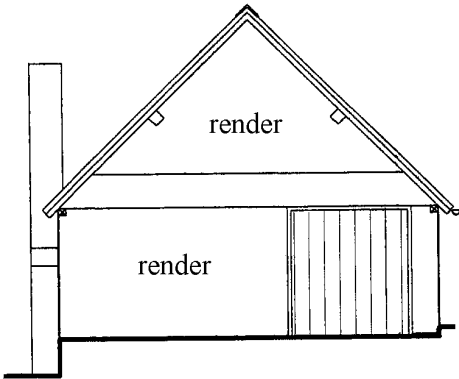
blue brick cills

all brickwork is a somewhat irregular Flemish garden wall bond
mostly covered by render

Fig 3.2: Elevations



North-east elevation



South-west elevation

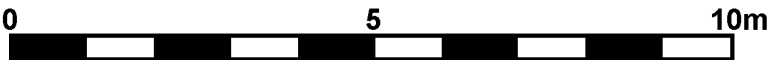
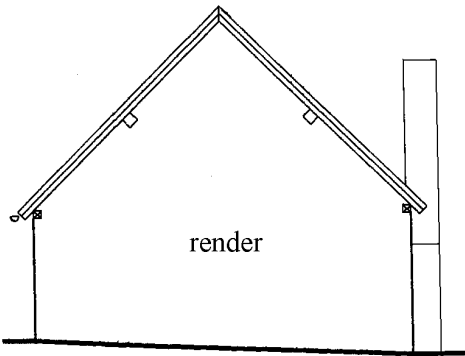
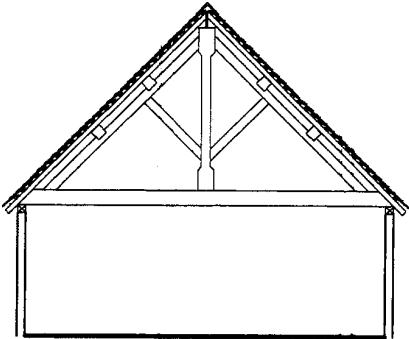
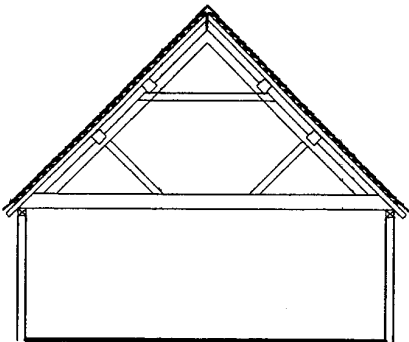


Fig 3.3: Elevations

Truss type A



Truss type B



Truss type C

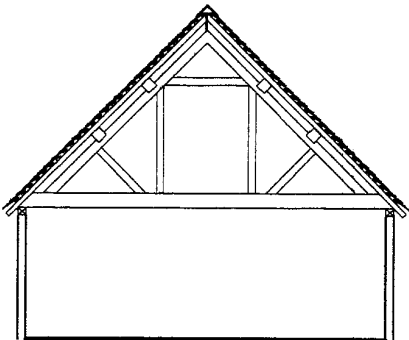


Fig 3.4: Types of roof truss



Fig 4: North-east elevation



Fig 5: North-west elevation



Fig 6: North-west elevation



Fig 7: North-west elevation



Fig 8: North-west elevation; detail of redundant hinges



Fig 9: South-west elevation; detail of redundant hinges



Fig 10: Phase 2 tackroom; detail of harness hook



Fig 11: Phase 2 tackroom; detail of fire surround



Fig 12: Phase 2 tackroom; detail of modern harness hooks



Fig 13: Phase 1 stable; detail of water trough



Fig 14: Phase 1 stable; general view showing truss type B



Fig 15: Phase 1 stable; general view showing truss type A



Fig 16: Phase 3 loose box; general view showing measuring stick marked in 'hands'



Fig 17: Phase 3 loose box showing detail of water trough



Fig 18: Phase 3 loose box showing detail of water trough



Fig 19: Phase 1 loose box showing detail of water trough



Fig 20: Phase 3 loose box



Fig 21: Phase 1 loose box showing detail of water trough



Fig 22: General view from south



Fig 23: General view from south