

**Historic building recording  
at Home Farm,  
St Peter's Lane,  
Besford,  
Worcestershire,  
WR8 9AP**

Martin Cook BA MifA

6th March 2014

WSM 49780

The School House  
Church Lane  
Tardebigge  
Worcestershire  
B60 3AH

07850 918755

# **Historic building recording at Home Farm, St Peter's Lane, Besford, Worcestershire, WR8 9AP**

## **Introduction**

Historic building recording of a group of buildings at Home Farm, St Peter's Lane, Besford, Worcestershire, WR8 9AP (SO 9121 4480; planning ref W/13/1182; Fig 1) was undertaken at the request of Sally Moore of Moule & Co (Architects), on behalf of her 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 buildings, including discussion of their local, regional and national significance.

## **The documentary material**

Documentary research at the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service took place on the 4th September 2013 and a search of the Historic Environment Record was received on the 5th September 2013.

## **Historic mapping**

The earliest available map was the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 but this could not be reproduced for reasons of copyright. This shows the Phase 1 and 2 buildings arranged on the north and west sides of a triangular courtyard with a short range of buildings on the eastern side (now demolished). The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1905 (Fig 2) shows the three principal recorded buildings forming an almost square courtyard, open to the south.

## **The Historic Environment Record**

### **Other barns in the vicinity of the site**

The nearest barn to the recorded structure is another such building on the same site. This is known as Besford Farm barn (WSM 03638), is of the 17th century and is listed Gd II. There is a further 17th century example at Church Farm (WSM 29243), a small timber frame and brick barn with a half hipped roof, also listed Gd II. There is one further example in the vicinity which is also at Church Farm (WSM 29715). This is a simple two bay timber framed structure with a weatherboard exterior. It is broadly dated to the post-medieval period (1540 AD to 1900 AD).

### **Other farm buildings in the vicinity of the site**

Other farm buildings in the vicinity of the site are both at Church Farm. These are Church Farmhouse itself (WSM 03637), dating to the 18th century and a combination farm building (WSM 29244) dating to the 19th century.

## **The fieldwork**

### *General*

Fieldwork took place on the 11th September 2013 and the 3rd March 2014. 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*

Phase 1: early to mid 19th century

A three-bay barn with a central threshing floor (Fig 3.1) was built in timber frame construction upon a stone dwarf wall. The stone dwarf wall was of squared, coursed stone construction, upon which was laid a timber cill beam (Figs 3.4: south and north elevations, 5 and 13). Tenoned into the cill beam were posts which at their upper end were tenoned into a timber wall plate (Figs 25 and 26). Diagonal braces were present at the corners of the frame (Fig 25). All timbers showed signs of re-use, usually in the form of multiple redundant mortices but on the cill there were the clear remains of a groove for wattle and daub infill. There were no such signs on the vertical timbers so the barn, in its present form, must always have been weather boarded (Figs 5 and 13).

Inside, the barn is divided into three approximately equal areas. There is the central threshing floor, which originally was floored with stone flags, and two storage bays, the western one being floored with brick and the eastern one being earthen. Access to the threshing floor is provided by full-height double doors on the southern side and part-height double doors on the northern side. The divisions between the threshing floor and the storage bays are pierced with what were once gated openings; the western division having its gate in its southern end, the eastern division having its gate in the northern (Figs 3.1 and 27). The hinges are still present (Fig 27). The roof trusses are of the queen post design supporting two purlins on each side which in turn support common rafters (Fig 24). The roof is clad in red tile.

#### Phase 2: by 1885

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 (Fig 2) shows that by this date a shelter shed or implement store had been constructed at the western end of the phase 1 barn (Fig 3.1). This is a simple structure comprising three walls in Flemish garden wall bond with cog dentilation at the eaves (Fig 14). The southern elevation is decorated with a diaper work diamond pattern executed in over-fired headers (Figs 3.4 and 16) and the roof at this end is hipped. The open east elevation is supported by four timber posts on concrete pad stones (Figs 3.5 and 4). The roof comprises a series of simple triangular trusses with a single purlin each side supported by a pair of braces (Fig 17). The purlins in turn support common rafters. The roof is clad in red tile (Fig 14).

#### Phase 3: by 1905

The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1905 (Fig 2) shows that by this date a combination building had been erected at the eastern end of the phase 1 barn (Fig 3.1) forming (with phases 1 and 2) a 'U' shaped courtyard, open to the south. This is an imposing structure built in Flemish bond on its south, north and east elevations and Flemish garden wall bond on its west elevation. Battered buttresses were provided at intervals and the arched openings and cills are executed in blue engineering brick (Figs 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 6, 7, 8 and 9). Other details include a date stone on the south elevation (Fig 7) which includes the Beauchamp crest and a date of 1888, the 8s being rendered with the alpha symbol, a steel-framed bulls-eye window on the north elevation (Figs 3.4 and 12) and a beam for a sack hoist on the east elevation (Figs 3.3 and 11).

Internally, the ground floor comprises three spaces. The northern-most was probably a carriage shed (Fig 18), which, since it originally had doors, would have been home to the family carriages, possibly a simple trap for everyday use and something grander, such as a landau, for social occasions. The two next spaces would have been the stables for the horses. The interiors had already been stripped when the recording project took place (Figs 19 and 20) so little can be said about them. The southern-most space included a vertical ladder for access to the first floor (Fig 20).

The first floor would have been a hayloft (Figs 3.2, 21 and 22). There were three ways of transferring hay into the loft: the first floor doors in the north and south elevations (Figs 3.4, 8 and 12) and the hoist on the east elevation (Figs 3.3 and 11).

The roof comprises a series of king-post roof trusses supporting two purlins on each side, which in turn support common rafters (Fig 23). The roof is clad in red tile.

#### Phase 4: by mid 20th century

A small lean-to extension was built in the corner between the phase 1 and phase 3 structures (Fig 3.1). This was erected in Flemish garden wall bond with a door in its north elevation (Figs 3.4 and 12). The upper half of its east elevation was occupied by a 'window' of wooden slats. It is roofed in corrugated asbestos. No evidence of its former use remained in its interior.

## Discussion

In the following discussion, 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.

### **Phase 1: early to mid 19th century**

A barn is a building for the processing and temporary storage of the grain crop: it is more a factory than a warehouse (Brunskill 1982). Many barns were originally intended for hand-flail threshing. The harvested crop was stored either in the barn or in a stack or rickyard near to the barn, depending upon the size of the yield. When the time came the crop was carried to the barn for threshing. The hand flail was the normal method, at least from the medieval period until almost the middle of the 19th century. This provided work for the farm hands during the winter months.

The space in which this activity took place was called the threshing floor which was usually a specially prepared surface in the barn. At Home Farm the threshing area was originally floored with flagstones.

A tall, unobstructed area was needed with good light for seeing the grains of corn. Home Farm is typical in that the area of the threshing floor is open to the roof. The doors usually opened outwards, as at Home Farm and usually did not extend down to the threshold but left a gap of about 450mm which could be filled with removable boards let into grooves in each door post. At Home Farm no evidence of such an arrangement exists although it is possible that the doors have been replaced.

Many barns had equally tall doors at both ends of the threshing floor which was not just to allow carts to pass through. At Home Farm the southern doors are the full height of the elevation, whereas the northern doors are approximately three-quarters of the elevation height. This suggests that the loaded wagon entered from the south and exited from the northern doors. On each side of the threshing floor were storage bays; in the case of Home Farm, one on each side.

Ventilation to the storage bays was only necessary to a limited extent. Corn was stored dry and needed much less ventilation than hay. In timber framed barns, such as Home Farm, air could flow freely through the walls. When the barn was empty, usually in the spring and early summer, it was often used for the temporary penning of animals, usually to facilitate the visit of a veterinary surgeon or to carry out some process such as shearing. To this end the divisions between the threshing floor and the storage bays were provided with some form of movable barrier. In the case of the barn at Home Farm a gate was provided at one end of each storage bay.

### **Phase 2: by 1885**

It was recommended by agricultural writers that the farmyard should face south and should be protected on the north by the barn (Brunskill 1982). This is the case at Home Farm. Very often, on at least one side the farmyard was protected by a shelter shed, also the case at Home Farm. This was a long, single storey building, open-fronted but with solid end walls and one solid side wall. Within the shelter shed would have been troughs to serve as mangers and racks to hold the hay although no evidence for these survives at Home Farm. Typically, there were no stall divisions and no means for tying the cattle.

### **Phase 3: by 1905**

Two types of horse were found on the farm: the wagon horse, used for agricultural work, and the hackney, used for pulling the carriage or trap or for riding (Peters 1969). On the larger farms the two types had separate stables, often built adjoining. It would appear that the stable at Home Farm was intended for hackney horses with provision to accommodate two carriages.

The interior of the building had already been removed before the recording project commenced but it is likely that the stable was a type 2 in Peters' classification. This was where the horses faced across the building instead of along it.

This arrangement had certain advantages. 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 earlier types.

Stables of this design were very adaptable in size, housing from two horses to eleven. Type 2 stables could be divided into sub-groups according to the provision of subsidiary feeding or storage accommodation which is on the same level as the stable, thus excluding lofts.

The type 2a sub-group contains those stables where no separate provision was made for the harness or feed, forming over four-fifths of the class. It is impossible to be certain but it seems likely that the example at Home Farm was one of this kind. 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. The majority of these stables had hay lofts, as did Home Farm, so the problem of storage only arose in a few cases.

The loft helped to keep the stable warm. Whilst cows would probably be tied up most of the winter and so keep a cowhouse warm, the horses were out all day and would return warm to a cold stable. Waistell, an agricultural pundit of the 19th century, while objecting to a ceiling over the wagon stable, preferred one over the hackney, as these horses were more susceptible to cold. The floor of the loft was generally well-made to prevent dust falling onto the horses below. Sometimes a plaster floor or ceiling was used.

#### **Phase 4: by mid 20th century**

It is unknown what the original function of this building was but it is possible that it was a special kind of stable known as a loose box. In this a horse was not tied up, but free to move about. It was thus much larger than a stall. Denton, another agricultural pundit, suggested that it should be about ten feet square. The loose box served the hackney and wagon stables in different ways. Miles considered them better than stalls for the riding and carriage horses, in that, unlike the wagon 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 the wagon horses as they had regular exercise every day and they consequently had more need of rest than of motion in the stable. However, in connection with the wagon stable it could act as a foaling pen, it could house the foal during the day while its mother was working and could act as a hospital. Apart from the last use, Stephens considered it best to have the loose box in the main stable, horses being gregarious.

### **Assessment of the buildings' significance**

Barns were a common feature of farms up to and beyond the Second World War. There is no Monuments Protection Programme class description for 'barns' in general although there is one for 'field barns'. This has been used to assess the significance of the barn at Home Farm. The four criteria for assessing class importance apply to field barns as follows:

#### **Period (currency)**

This class of monument is long-lived. Although the majority of standing examples only date from the mid-18th to mid-19th century, documentary evidence suggests that they were in use throughout much of the medieval period.

#### **Rarity**

These structures are common. Hundreds of field barns survive as standing buildings today, and many more are likely to have existed in the past.

#### **Diversity (form)**

There are very few truly different types of barn.

#### **Period (representivity)**

Barns are not especially representative of the post-medieval period. Field barns represent one of a large number of monuments characteristic of this period and while they represent a feature of one particular kind of farming regime they are not especially rich in evidence for most aspects of life at the time.

There is no Monuments Protection Programme class description for 'stables'. However, stables were another common feature of farms up to and beyond the 20th century. 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 is becoming a lost skill.

Stables, such as the one at Home 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 loss of its interior fixtures and fittings.

Similarly, there is no Monuments Protection Programme class description for 'shelter sheds'. This type of building is ubiquitous on post-medieval farms and, as with barn, while they represent a feature of one particular kind of farming regime they are not especially rich in evidence for most aspects of life at the time.

The barn, the stable and the shelter shed are unlisted, but the associated farm buildings to the south are designated as grade II listed buildings. The conversion of the barn, stable and shelter shed clearly have an impact on the setting of the listed building although the group can only be said to be of moderate local importance.

## **Summary**

Historic building recording was undertaken at Home Farm, St Peter's Lane, Besford, Worcestershire. A three-bay threshing barn, a combination building comprising a stable and carriage shed with a hay loft over and a shelter shed, all forming an enclosed 'U' shaped farmyard open to the south were recorded.

## **Bibliography**

Brunskill, R W, 1982 *Traditional farm buildings of Britain*

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 the client, Mr Edward Robinson and Mr David Robinson, Sally Moore of Moule & Co and Mr Mike Glyde of Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service for their kind cooperation.

## **Archive**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Hard copy of the report
- 1 Hard copy of the brief
- 1 Hard copy of the WSI
- 1 DVD-ROM
  - digital copy of the report
  - digital copy of the brief
  - digital copy of the WSI
  - digital copies of the report component files

It has been deposited at Hartlebury Museum.

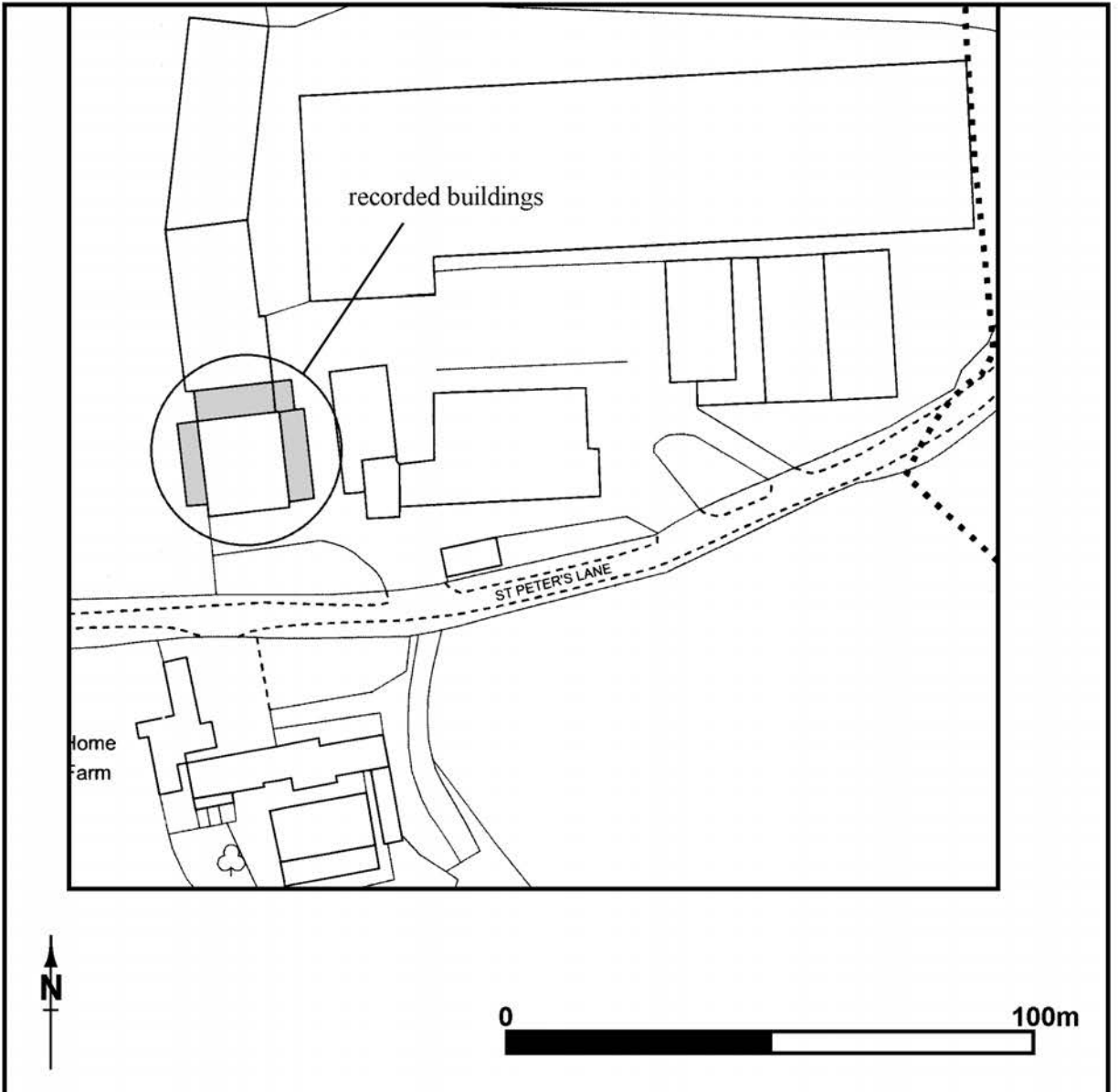
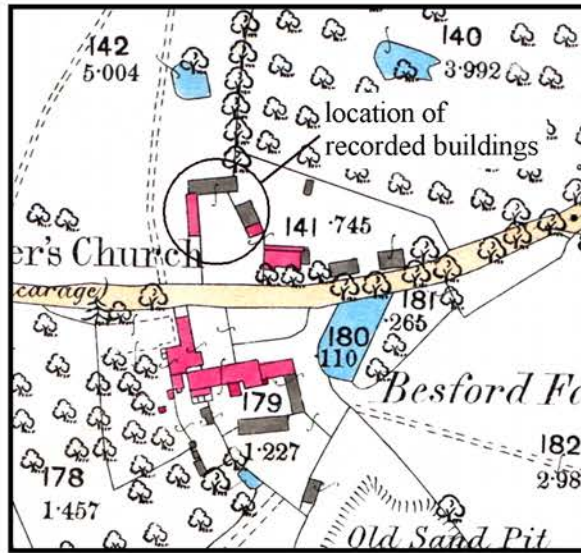


Fig 1: Location of site



1885



1905

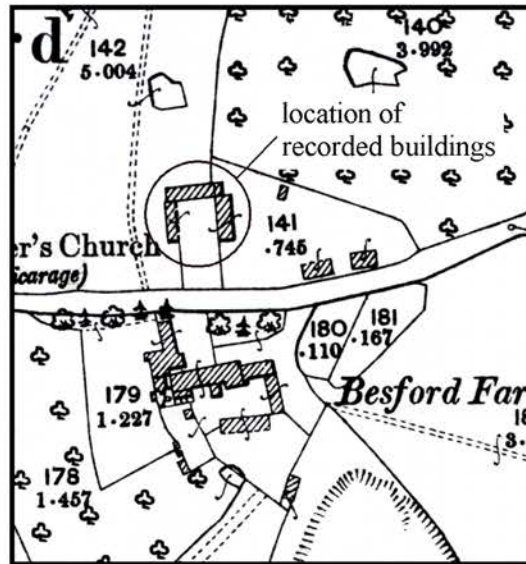


Fig 2: Historic mapping

- Phase 1: Early to mid 19th century
- Phase 2: By 1885
- Phase 3: By 1904
- Phase 4: By mid-20th century

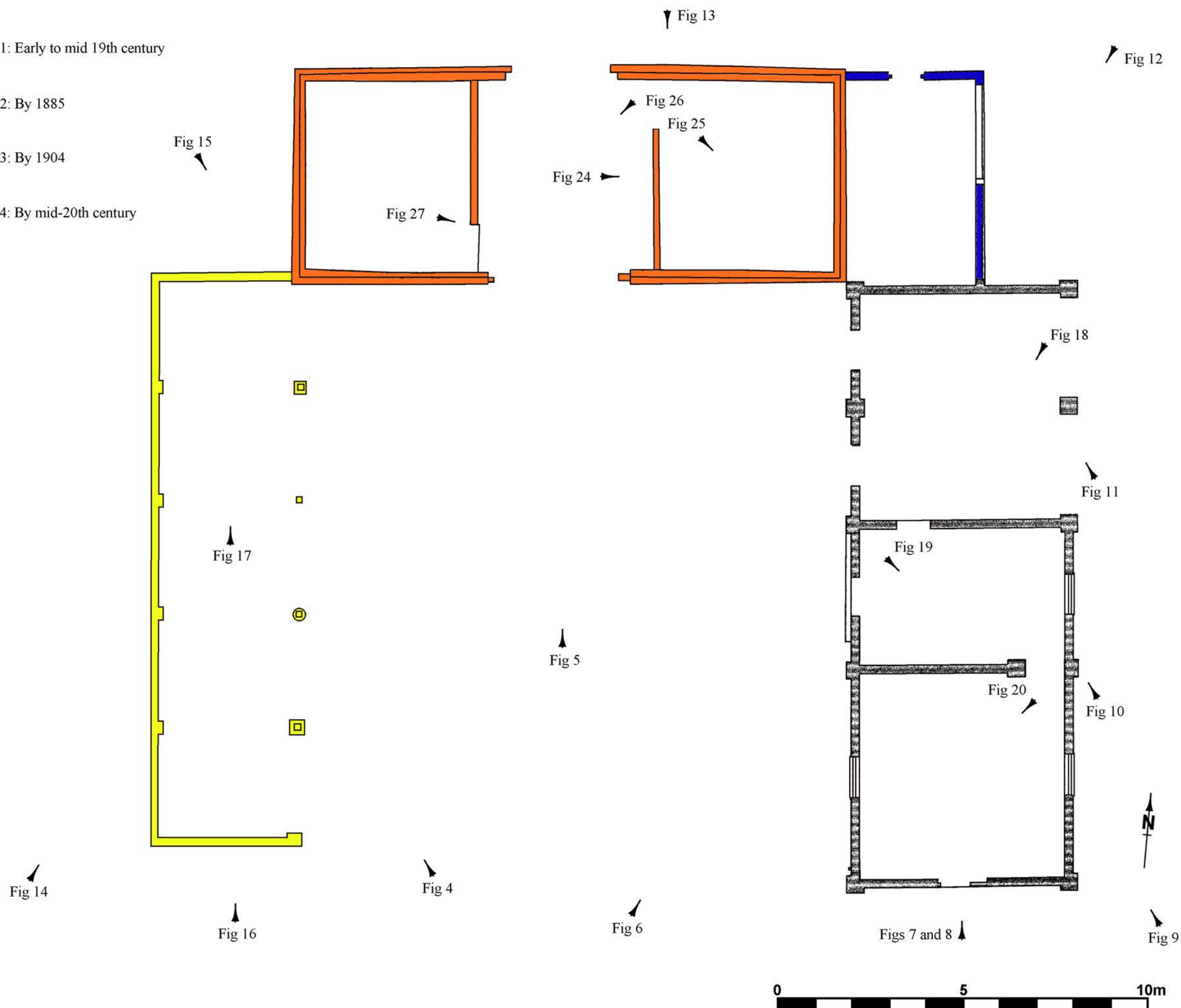






Fig 3.1: Ground floor plan

-  Phase 1: Early to mid 19th century
-  Phase 2: By 1885
-  Phase 3: By 1904
-  Phase 4: By mid-20th century

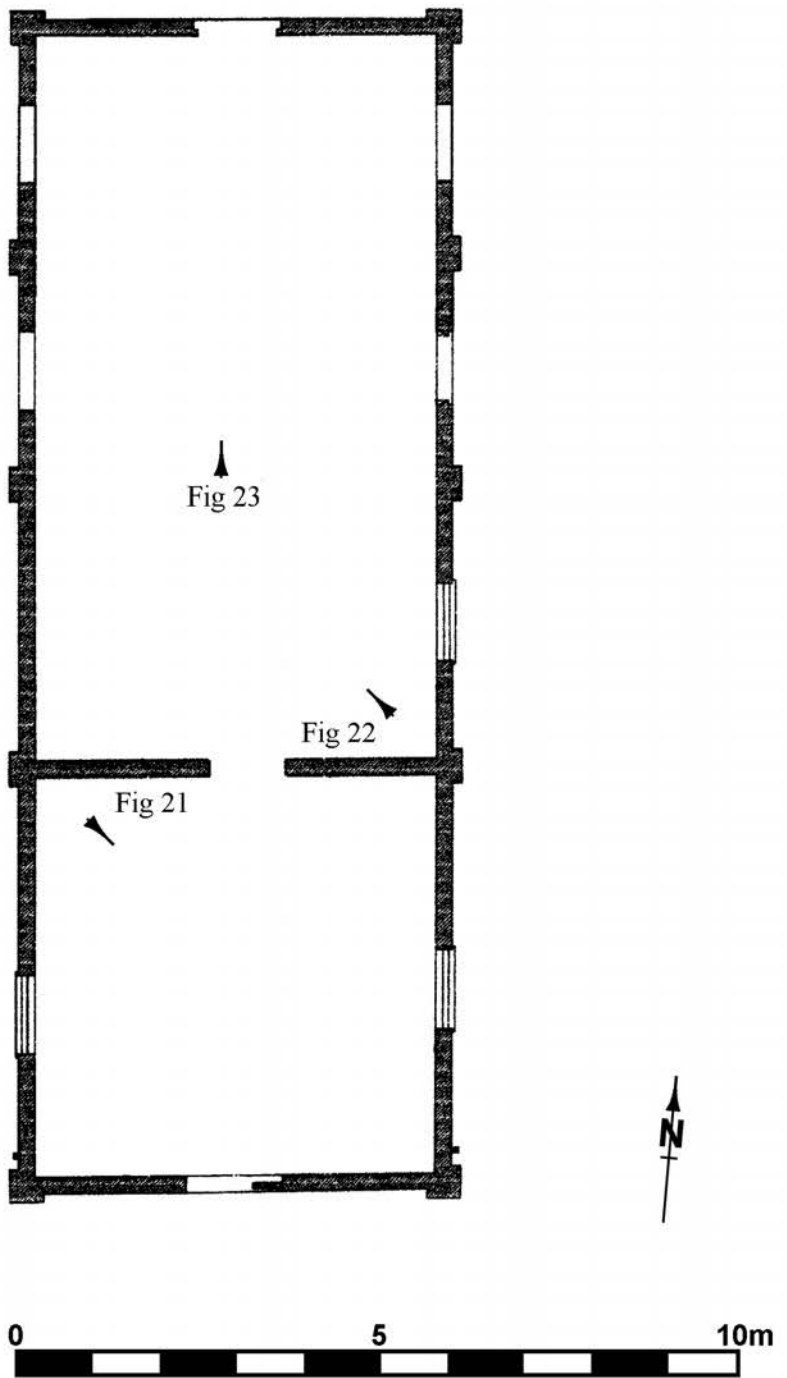
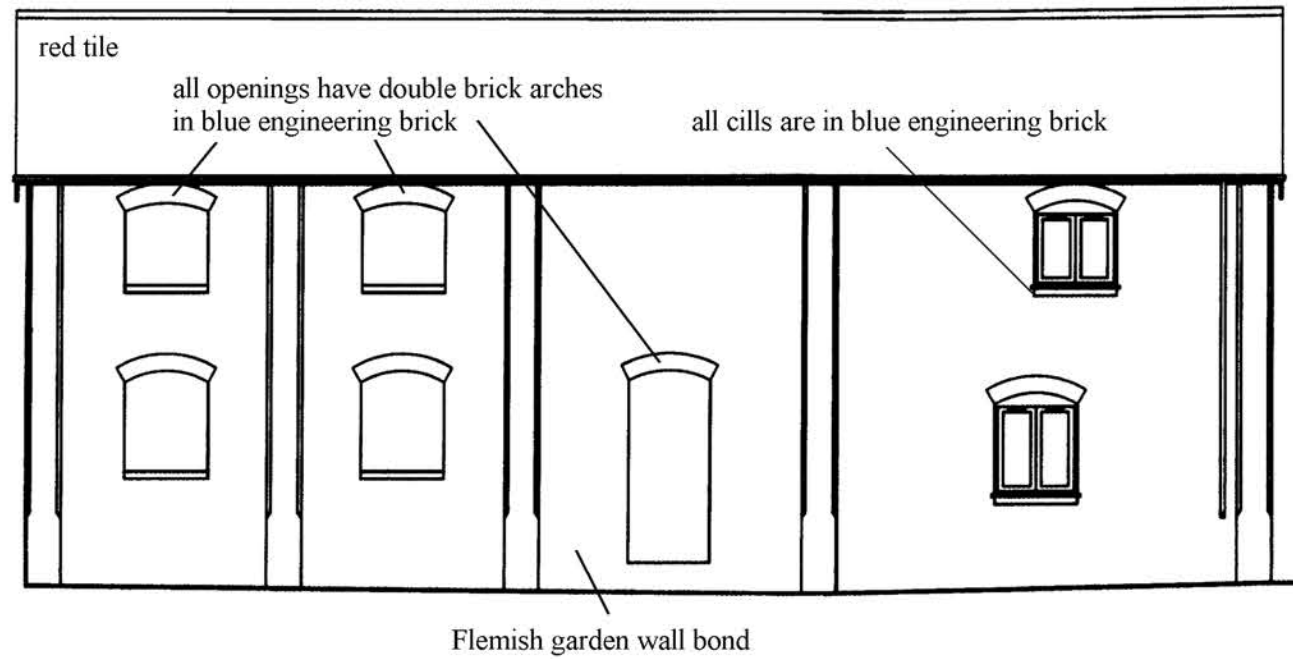


Fig 3.2: First floor plan

West elevation



East elevation

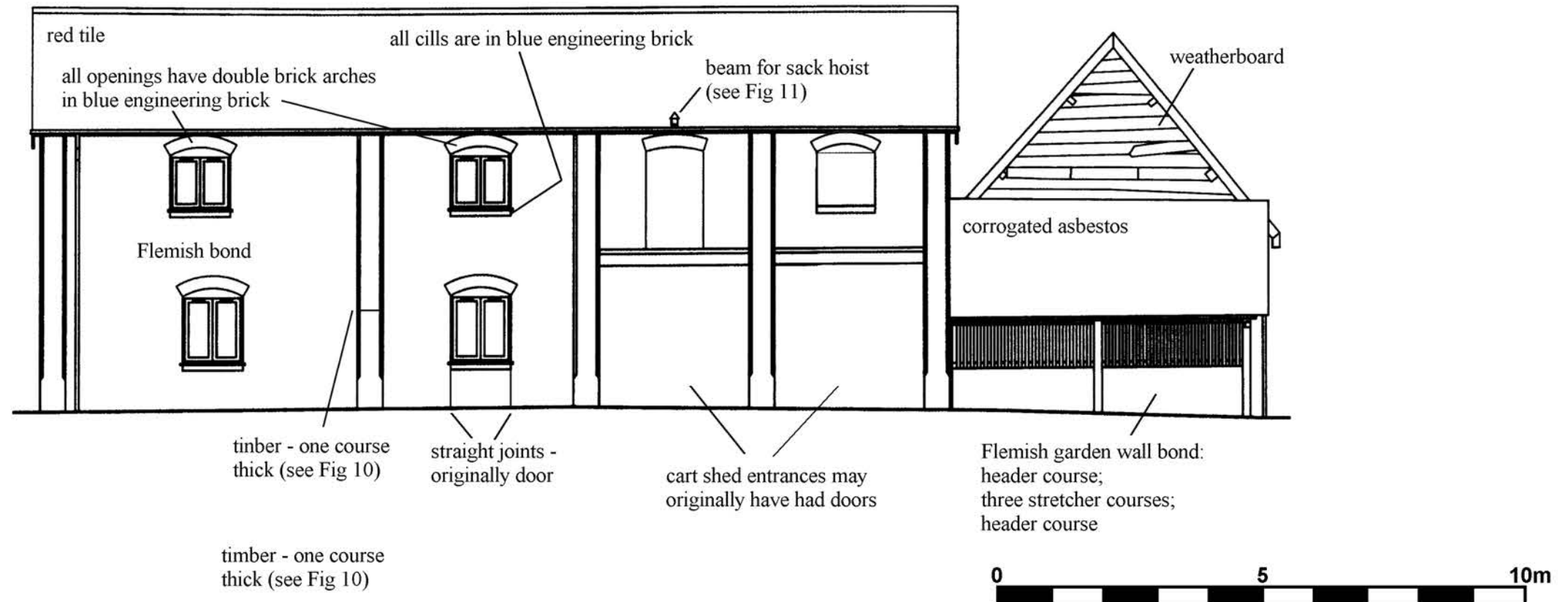


Fig 3.3: West and east elevations

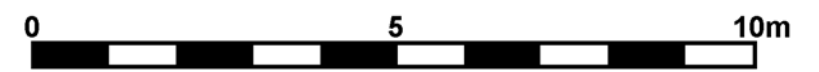
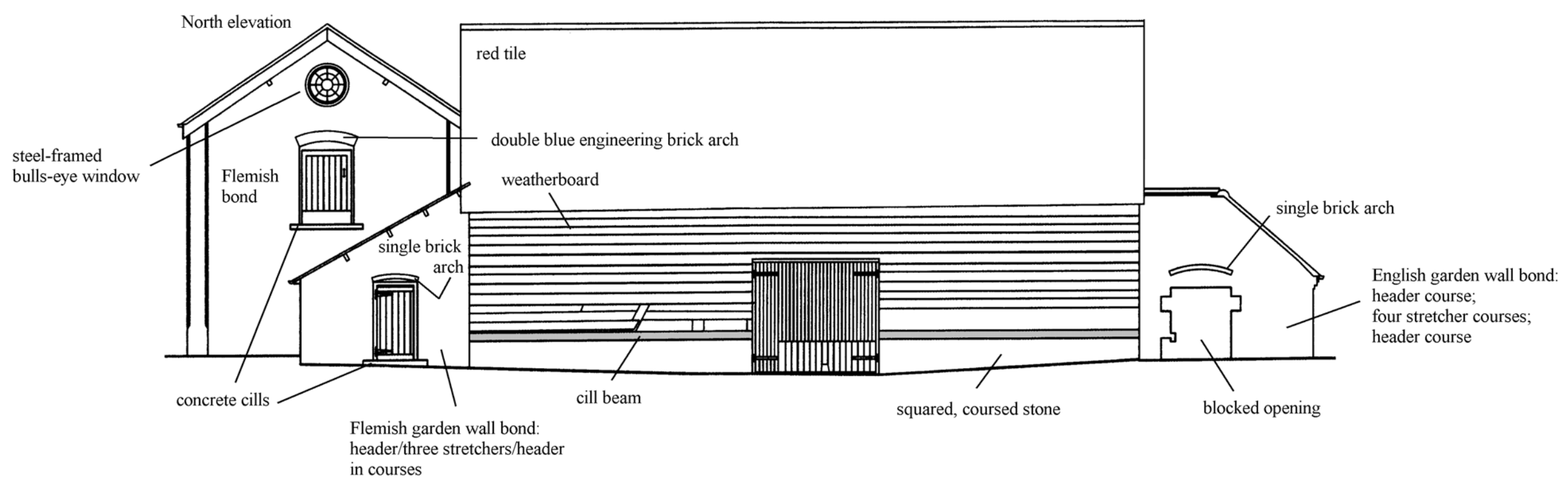
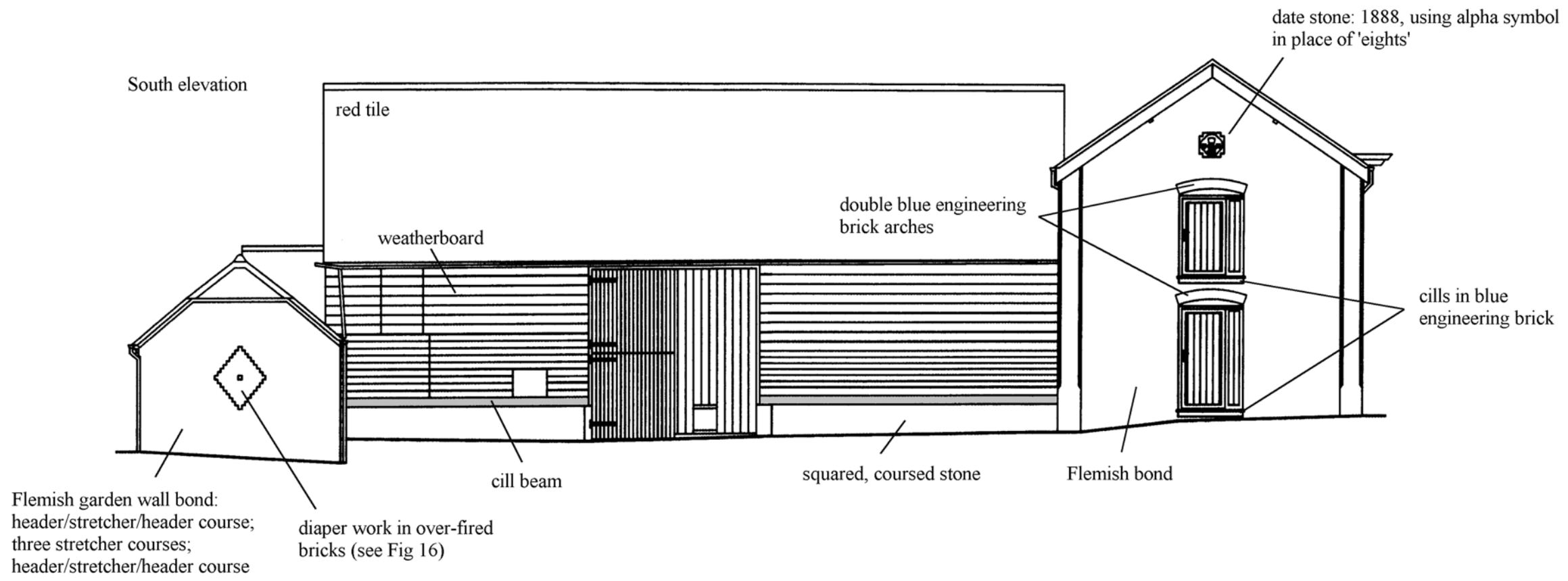
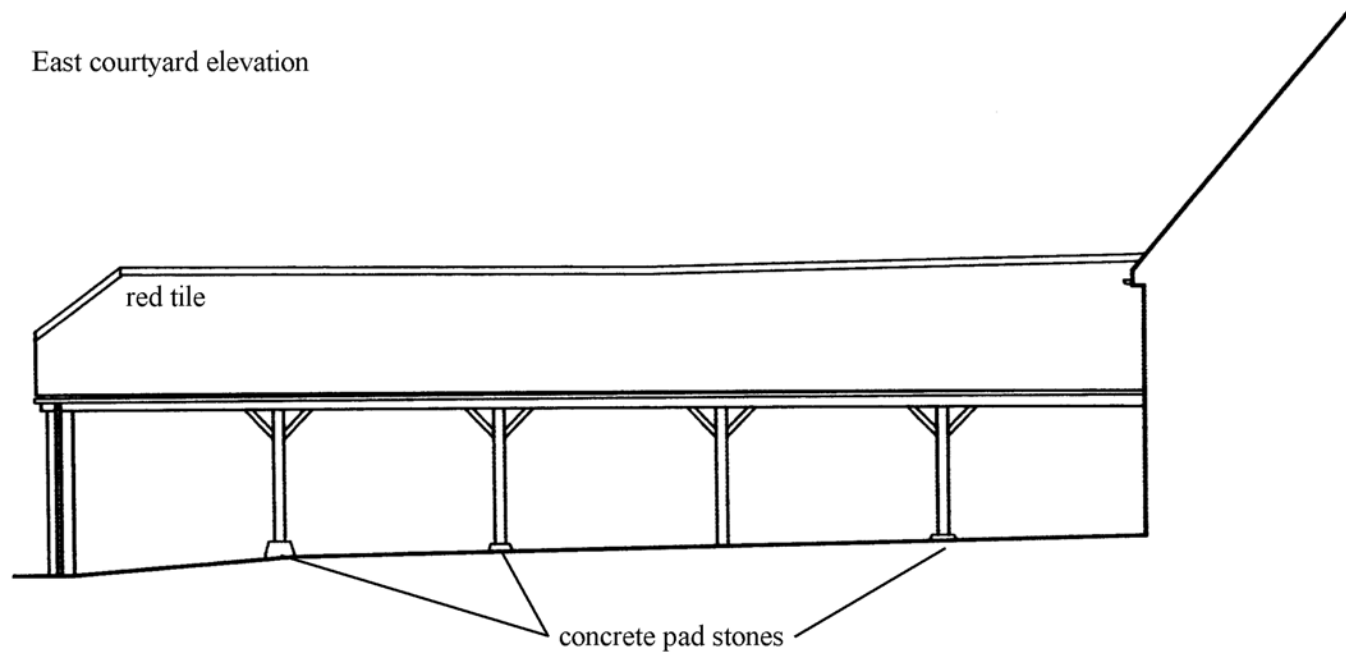


Fig 3.4: South and north elevations

East courtyard elevation



West courtyard elevation

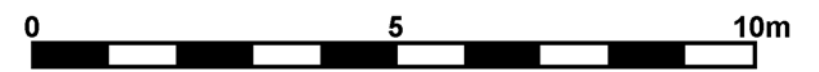
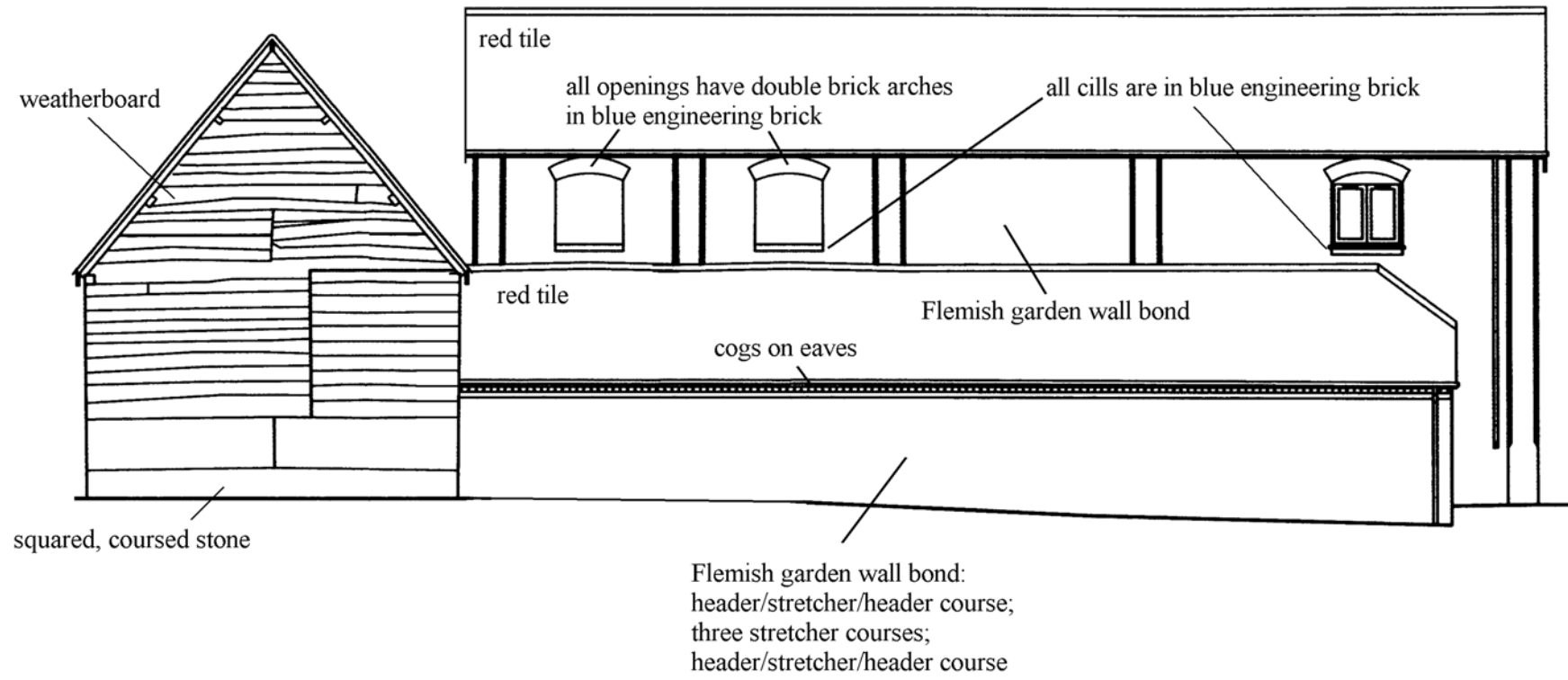


Fig 3.5: East and west courtyard elevations



Fig 4: Phase 2 shelter shed/implement shed; east elevation



Fig 5: Phase 1 barn; south elevation



Fig 6: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; west elevation



Fig 7: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; south elevation, detail of Beauchamp crest





Fig 8: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; south elevation



Fig 9: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; east elevation



Fig 10: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; east elevation, detail of timber inserted in buttress



Fig 11: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; east elevation, detail of sack hoist



Fig 12: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; north elevation and Phase 4 lean-to



Fig 13: Phase 1 barn; north elevation



Fig 14: Phase 2 shelter shed/implement shed; west elevation



Fig 15: Phase 1 barn; west elevation and Phase 2 shelter shed/implement shed; north elevation



Fig 16: Phase 2 shelter shed/implement shed; south elevation showing diaper work in over-fired bricks



Fig 17: Phase 2 shelter shed/implement shed showing detail of roof truss



Fig 18: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; ground floor

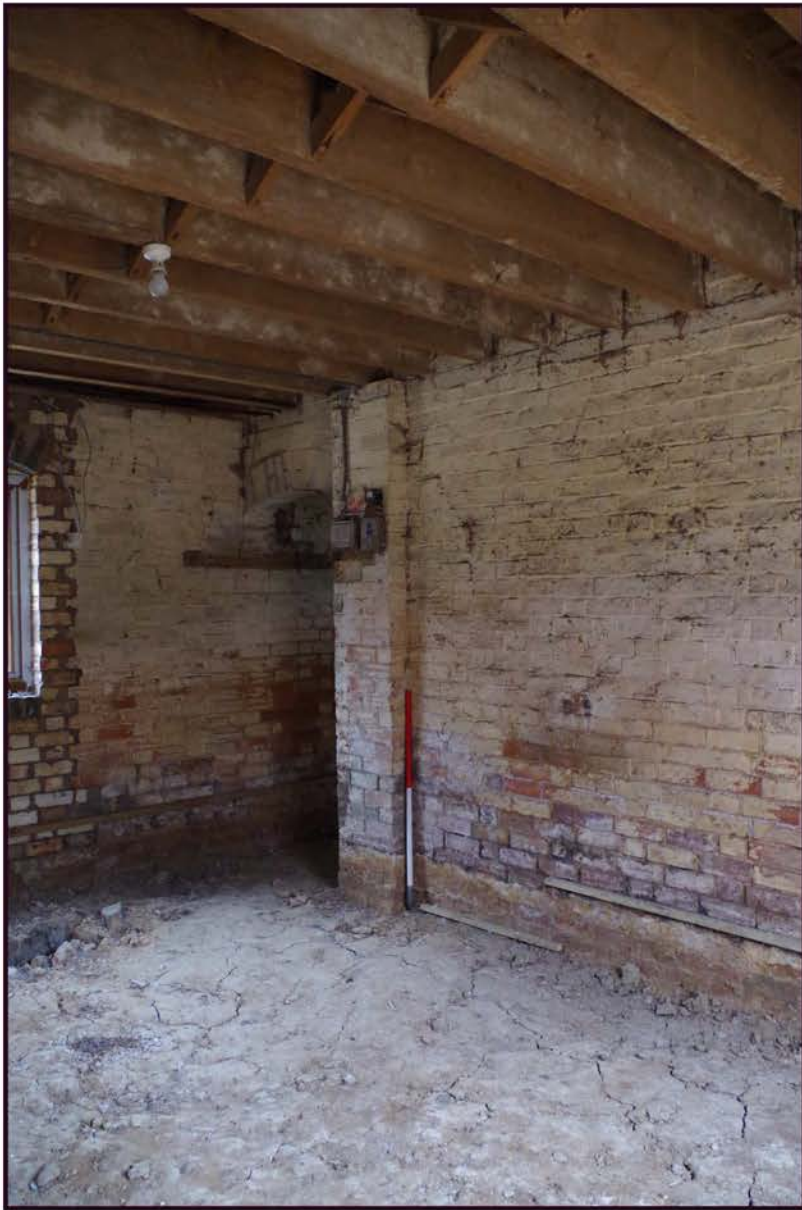


Fig 19: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; ground floor



Fig 20: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; ground floor, showing ladder to hay loft





Fig 21: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; first floor



Fig 22: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; first floor



Fig 23: Phase 3 cart shed and stable; detail of roof truss



Fig 24: Phase 1 barn; detail of roof truss



Fig 25: Phase 1 barn



Fig 26: Phase 1 barn



Fig 27: Phase 1 barn; detail of originally gated opening to bay division



Fig 28: General view of recorded buildings from the south-east



Fig 29: General view of farm buildings to the south



Fig 30: General view of recorded buildings from the south-west