

**Historic building recording
of a barn at
Foster's Green Farm,
Foster's Green,
Lower Bentley,
Worcestershire,
B60 4HY**

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26th December 2020

WSM 73468

Oasis ref martinco1- 411410

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Historic building recording of a barn at Foster's Green Farm, Foster's Green, Lower Bentley, Worcestershire, B60 4HY

Introduction

Historic building recording of a barn at Foster's Green Farm, Foster's Green, Lower Bentley, Worcestershire, B60 4HY (SO 977 651, Fig 1), was undertaken at the request of Mr James Deakin. This was done according to a written scheme of investigation provided by Martin Cook BA MCIfA, based upon a condition for historic building recording (condition 4) applied to a planning consent (ref 19/00823/FUL and 19/00824/LBC) by Bromsgrove District Council, and a brief from Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service (dated 24th June 2020).

The project was undertaken to level two standard, in advance of conversion and restoration of the property.

Summary

Historic building recording was undertaken at a barn at Foster's Green Farm, Foster's Green, Lower Bentley, Worcestershire, B60 4HY. The recorded building was a three-bay threshing barn, some elements of which dated to before 1839, although it had been repaired and modified extensively. Of particular note was the re-use of timber, which was extensive, and the four principal trusses, all of which were of queen post design but none of which were the same as any of the others.

The documentary material

Documentary research at the Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service was curtailed by the Covid-19 pandemic. A search of the Historic Environment Record was received on the 29th September 2020.

Historic mapping

The earliest available map is the 1839 tithe map of Tardebigge. This cannot be reproduced for reasons of copyright but it shows a rectangular building in the same position as the building which is the subject of this project. Unfortunately, the map is damaged in this area and no detail can be discerned. The Ordnance Survey map of 1884 (Fig 2.1) shows the building in its current configuration, apparently surrounded by an orchard. The Ordnance Survey maps of 1904 and 1927 (Figs 2.2 and 2.3) show nothing different.

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record

General

The search area sits within a landscape of intermediate, rolling topography based on Limestone and Mudstone bedrock geology with superficial deposits of Alluvium. The field parcels are mainly characterised by piecemeal and parliamentary enclosure, the latter enclosing Bentley Common. The settlement pattern is principally interrupted row, dispersed along winding roads and there are isolated parcels of ancient and replanted woodland. Historic mapping also demonstrates the presence of several pre-1880s orchards within the local landscape but the majority of these have now been lost.

The site itself

WSM 37612

Barn at Foster's Farm; timber framed building (16th century AD to 21st century AD - 1575 AD to 2050 AD). Barn. Early 18th century with some late 19th century and mid-20th century repairs. Timber-frame, weatherboarded, on sandstone and brick plinth with tile roof. Three framed bays aligned north-east/south-west with central threshing floor. Framing: single rectangular panel high with straight tension braces.

Historic buildings apparently associated with the site

WSM 09940

Fosters Green Cottage (17th century AD to 21st century AD - 1650 AD to 2050 AD)

House. Mid-17th century with mid-19th century and late 20th century alterations and additions. Timber-framed on sandstone rubble base, painted brick infill and replacement walling, plain tiled roof.

Three framed bays aligned south-west/north-east, external chimney at south-west gable end with detached stack. Single storey and attic with dormers. Framing: three panels from sill to wall-plate, collar and tie-beam trusses at gable end with two struts to collar and V-struts in apex at south-west end. North-west front elevation: ground floor has a 2-light and a 3-light casement; two gabled dormers with 2-light casements; main entrance in left bay having a ledged and battened door. Chimney at south-west gable end is enclosed within a single-storey hipped-roofed 19th century addition with a dentilled eaves cornice; entrance into lobby with door at each side and chimney at south-west end. Interior not inspected. A large 20th century addition to the rear north-east of the building was under construction at time of survey (January 1985).

Fosters Green Cottage, partially extant 17th century listed farmstead with unconverted buildings. Regular courtyard of L-plan. Additional, prominent, linear plan components. The farmhouse is detached and set away from the yard. There has been a partial loss (less than 50%) of traditional buildings. Located within or in association to a hamlet. Large modern sheds are located to the side of the site.

WSM 24430

Fosters Green deserted settlement (medieval - 1066 AD to 1539 AD); earthworks observed in from of Fosters Green Farm. Ridge and furrow in field opposite. Buildings of 17th century date in the area.

WSM 37610

Fosters Green Farmhouse (17th century AD to 21st century AD - 1601 AD to 2050 AD)

Early 17th century with some late 20th century alterations. Timber-frame with painted herringbone brick infill on sandstone plinth with tile roof. Two framed bays aligned east/west with baffle-entry against central stack. East gable: two storeys with gable-lit attic, tie-beam and first floor slightly jettied with 5-light 20th century oriel to each floor. Entrance in south front. Framing: close-studding with mid-rail and straight tension braces; elaborately carved consoles to jetties. Gable truss has two collars, V- struts in apex; herringbone framing below lower collar now removed. Other gable-end is very similar.

Foster's Green Farm, partially extant 17th century listed farmstead with unconverted buildings. Loose courtyard with two sides of the courtyard formed by working agricultural buildings. Additional, prominent detached elements to the main plan. The farmhouse is detached and set away from the yard. There has been a partial loss (less than 50%) of traditional buildings. Located within or in association to a hamlet

WSM 37611

Cowhouse at Fosters Green Farm (18th century AD to 21st century AD - 1701 AD to 2050 AD)

Cowhouse, now outbuilding. Early 18th century with some late 20th century alterations. Timber-frame, weatherboarded, on sandstone and brick plinth, with corrugated iron roof. Four framed bays aligned north-west/south-east; bay to south-east of centre is open fronted on south-west side, other three bays have low entrances in same front. Framing: two square panels high with straight angle braces; intermediate trusses have two raking struts; gables have two struts to collar. Included for group value.

WSM 53103

Foster's Green Farm (17th century AD to 21st century AD - 1601 AD to 2050 AD)

Site of demolished farm buildings at Foster's Green Farm, partially extant 17th century listed farmstead with unconverted buildings. Loose courtyard with two sides of the courtyard formed by working agricultural buildings.

Additional, prominent detached elements to the main plan. The farmhouse is detached and set away from the yard. There has been a partial loss (less than 50%) of traditional buildings. Located within or in association to a hamlet.

WSM 53731

Site of farm building, Fosters Green Cottage (17th century AD to 21st century AD - 1601 AD to 2050 AD). Site of demolished farm buildings at Fosters Green Cottage, partially extant 17th century listed farmstead with unconverted buildings. Regular courtyard of L-plan. Additional, prominent, linear plan components. The farmhouse is detached and set away from the yard. There has been a partial

loss (less than 50%) of traditional buildings. Located within or in association to a hamlet. Large modern sheds are located to the side of the site

Historic buildings adjacent to the site

WSM 45377

Farm buildings, Dark Lane (19th century AD to 21st century AD - 1801 AD to 2050 AD) Unlisted 19th century farm buildings recorded on 1st, 2nd and 3rd Edition OS Map. Mostly likely a 19th century addition to Fosters Green Farm.

WSM 45379

Common Barn Farm, threshing barn (19th century AD to 21st century AD - 1801 AD to 2050 AD) Unlisted 19th century farm range recorded on 1st, 2nd and 3rd Edition OS Map. Farmhouse is L-shaped and lies to the south, converted from three bay threshing barn. Red brick, tiled roofs. Function of other buildings unclear as they are not visible from the road. Blocked up arched doorway in northern elevation. Pierced brickwork visible in western gable end.

WSM 53095

Common Barn Farm, farmstead (19th century AD to 21st century AD - 1801 AD to 2050 AD) Common Barn Farm, extant 19th century (?) unlisted farmstead with unconverted buildings. Regular courtyard of U-plan. Additional, prominent detached elements to the main plan. The farmhouse is attached to the agricultural range. Located within a loose farmstead cluster. Large modern sheds are located to the side of the site.

WSM 53096

High Elms Farm, farmstead (19th century AD to 21st century AD - 1801 AD to 2050 AD) partially extant 19th century (?) unlisted farmstead with unconverted buildings. Regular courtyard of L-plan. Additional, prominent detached elements to the main plan. The farmhouse is detached and set away from the yard. There has been a partial loss (less than 50%) of traditional buildings. Located within a loose farmstead cluster. Large modern sheds are located to the side of the site.

Monuments adjacent to the site

WSM 45376

Ridge and furrow southwest of Foster's Green (late 11th century AD to 21st century AD - 1066 AD to 2050 AD).

WSM 70592

Ridge and furrow at Foster's Green (medieval - 1066 AD to 1539 AD).

Landscape components – the site itself

WSM 60753

Foster's Green Farm (17th century AD to 21st century AD - 1601 AD to 2050 AD) partially extant 17th century listed farmstead with unconverted buildings. Loose courtyard with two sides of the courtyard formed by working agricultural buildings. Additional, prominent detached elements to the main plan. The farmhouse is detached and set away from the yard. There has been a partial loss (less than 50%) of traditional buildings. Located within or in association to a hamlet.

Landscape components – adjacent to the site

WSM 42160

Feckenham Forest (late 11th century AD to 17th century AD - 1066 AD to 1629 AD) 13th century boundary of Feckenham Forest.

WSM 61381

Fosters Green Cottage (17th century AD to 21st century AD - 1601 AD to 2050 AD) partially extant 17th century listed farmstead with unconverted buildings. Regular courtyard of L-plan. Additional, prominent, linear plan components. The farmhouse is detached and set away from the yard. There has been a partial loss (less than 50%) of traditional buildings. Located within or in association to a hamlet. Large modern sheds are located to the side of the site.

Summary of the documentary material

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record describes the building as:

early 18th century with some late 19th century and mid-20th century repairs. Timber-frame, weatherboarded, on sandstone and brick plinth with tile roof. Three framed bays aligned north-east/south-west with central threshing floor. Framing: single rectangular panel high with straight tension braces.

It is part of Foster's Green Farm, which is a partially extant 17th century listed farmstead with unconverted buildings including the farmhouse and a cowhouse, which are of comparable date. There is a loose courtyard with two sides of the courtyard formed by working agricultural buildings. There are additional, prominent detached elements to the main plan. The farmhouse is detached and set away from the yard. It is located within or in association to a hamlet and is part of Fosters Green deserted settlement.

The fieldwork

General

Fieldwork took place on the 12th October 2020. The building recording comprised a walk-over survey of the building with 'as existing' architect's plans and elevations. For the most part the elevations showed the external appearance which was modern weatherboard. A rapid survey was therefore made of the underlying timber frame. The plans and elevations were annotated with historic information relating to the construction and sequence of development of the building with photographs taken as appropriate (Figs 3.1 to 22).

Description

General

The plan form of the building has remained constant although it is clear that it has been repaired and rebuilt a number of times. In particular, the trusses have not only been repaired with reused timber, multiple redundant mortices and peg holes in more than one plane suggest that they were probably constructed of reused timbers in the first place (Fig 14).

Phase 1: pre-1839

The elevations

A stone dwarf wall was constructed around the perimeter of the building and across the edges of the threshing floor. This survives around most of the perimeter and on the north-eastern side of the threshing floor (Figs 3.1, 3.2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 12). This supported the timber-framed barn of this period.

Phase 2: pre-1884

The plan and elevations

The phase 1 timber-framed barn was dismantled and the dwarf wall repaired and raised in brick (Figs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15 and 16). The cill beams, the four trusses and the wall plates were then re-erected (Figs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19 and 20). On the doorpost of the north-west elevation are the remains of three transverse planks (Fig 22). On the doorposts of the same elevation are two steel fittings (Figs 23 and 24) and on the doorposts of the south-east elevation are two recesses (Figs 25 and 26).

The roof structure

Only the roof trusses from this period survive. These are queen post trusses (Figs 3.2, 17, 18, 19 and 20) but no two are the same.

Phase 3: late 20th century

The elevations

A number of posts were replaced (Figs 3.1 and 3.3), as were the doors on either side of the threshing floor (Figs 27 and 28).

The roof structure

The purlins, common rafters and braces were replaced (eg Fig 21). A supplementary tie beam and struts were added to truss 3 (Fig 18).

The floors of the barn

Either side of the threshing floor are concrete slabs. The threshing floor itself is of stone but was probably re-laid when the concrete was installed.

Interpretation

General

The barn was the most important building on the farm, the whole of the farmstead being theoretically planned around it (Peters 1969). This was because the economy of the area was, until the 19th century, principally arable. Indeed, before then the barn was probably the largest building. It was at first used to house all or most of the corn and to thresh it, sometimes housing in addition the threshed straw. During the 19th century it became the practice to prepare the food for the livestock. As the amount of preparation increased it was concentrated in one place, usually in or adjoining the barn, the design of which was modified accordingly. The relationship of the size and number of barns is thus very complex, depending not only on the type of farming but also on the progress of agriculture.

Before the early 19th century the barn was usually intended to house all the corn, and consequently needed to be large. Laurence, writing in 1726, noted the vast and costly barns built for this purpose; Houghton, one year later, implied that all the crops were to be embarned, and Loudon, in 1842, noted that barns were formally large enough to house all the corn grown on the farm. Many other writers, whilst disagreeing with it, imply that this was the general practice until well into the first half of the 19th century. Beatson, writing in 1796, gave as the commonly held reason, that the corn was housed more cheaply and was better secured in a barn than in ricks, that the cost of thatching was saved and that the crops were always at hand to be threshed. Dr Plot noted that ricks were used once the barn was full, implying that it was preferred to embarn all the crops if possible.

The threshing floor was usually in the middle of the barn, as at Foster's Green Farm, but its position could vary. The large doors opening onto it admitted laden carts and provided light for flail threshing and air for winnowing. It was often divided from the adjoining bays by low walls, built to prevent the loose straw falling back onto it. One of these (Fig 12) survives at Foster's Green Farm. Off it opened a cornhole, used to store the grain until it was to be winnowed. It is possible that the three transverse planks (Fig 22) are the remains of such an arrangement.

The cornhole was a small enclosure about six or seven feet high, usually plastered and having a timber top. It was sometimes known as a corn bin and was devised for flail threshing, holding the grain until it was winnowed.

The cornhole seems to be a development of the mid 18th century. They were added to some earlier buildings but not all flail threshing barns had them. The introduction of the winnowing machine did not affect their use, it was still necessary to wait for a reasonable quantity of grain before winnowing. Only with the introduction of the fixed and later portable threshing machines, which included machinery for winnowing and dressing the grain, did the cornhole become redundant.

If the whole barn were occupied by unthreshed corn, no room was left for threshed straw. Flail threshing was slow, spread out over the winter and sometimes even longer. Much of the straw could thus be consumed as threshed, any surplus being stored in lofts over the cowhouse, of which there is known to be an example at Foster's Green Farm (WSM 37611) and stable. Alternatively, if only one side of the barn were filled with corn, the straw could be housed in the other half and the threshing be done much faster. The use of machinery from the late 18th century was to make this the more usual practice. During the summer the bays could be used for other purposes. Hunt refers to using them for folding sheep at shearing time, a small door to the yard being provided to let them in, which also served for cleaning out the bays. Such an arrangement may have existed at Foster's Green Farm (Fig 16).

The relationship of barn and farm size has varied considerably depending upon farming practice and mechanization. On large arable farms there could be very large barns or more than one barn. Alternatively, the various corn crops could be ricked, saving the capital cost of large barns to the owner, only a small barn being needed to which to cart the ricks for threshing. This may have been the practice at Foster's Green Farm.

Classification

Peters (1969) classified the barns which dated from before 1880 into seven groups. Those built only to house and thresh the corn form five, being divided according to the position of the threshing floor. In the earliest surviving examples it is either in the middle, as at Foster's Green Farm, or more rarely, asymmetrically placed.

Type 1 barns

This is the oldest and largest of the seven classes and varied in date from the late 15th century to sometime after 1880. The threshing floor was in the middle of the barn with bays on either side open to the roof from ground level. They could be used in one of three ways. Firstly, both sides could be filled with unthreshed corn. With slow flail threshing the straw would be stored elsewhere or consumed as prepared. Secondly, only one side would be filled with corn, the other being left for threshed straw. Thirdly, very occasionally, and generally as an adaptation of an existing building, the barn could be used to house only straw. This was generally the result of using a portable threshing machine and thus dates from after 1850. There are three sub-groups, divided according to the number of bays.

Subgroup 1a

This is by far the largest sub-group and is the type seen at Foster's Green Farm. The barns are all of three bays, one on each side of the threshing floor. The outer bays are not necessarily exactly equal, but there is not more than 15% difference between them. This allows for irregularities in setting out and what may have been adjustments to make up for the room occupied by the cornhole.

The earliest examples in western, lowland Staffordshire date from the last quarter of the 16th century. The period from which most survive is 1780 to 1850, which is probably the date of the example at Foster's Green Farm. In the earlier cases the rebuilding was encouraged by the prosperity of the Napoleonic War period and in the later cases by the following depression, the landowner relieving agricultural distress by capital expenditure, a by then long-established custom. The decrease in popularity after 1850 was partly a result of the earlier burst of activity, and partly of increasing mechanization and High Farming introducing other types of barn.

Door sizes

The size of the doors opening onto the threshing floor was related to the way in which the barn was used.

Type 1 doors

Barns with high doors on both sides of the threshing floor make up nearly three-quarters of the examples, varying in date from the 16th century to the end of the period. They owed their popularity to their fitness for purpose and their adaptability. Loudon noted that they not only permitted laden carts or waggons to enter from either side, but provided light for flail threshing and air for winnowing. In the more developed later examples the doors began about two feet up, with a 'lift' to fill the gap, comprising of a series of planks let into grooves in either doorpost. This enabled the doors to clear the manure in the yard and also kept out pigs when threshing was proceeding. There was no evidence of this arrangement at Foster's Green Farm. However, the doors and their arrangement are thought to be modern.

The rickyard

The advantages of ricks for housing crops have been noted above but are chiefly that crops can be carted sooner to a barn and corn, straw and hay all keep better and taste sweeter out of a rick. The rickyard has always been connected with the barn in its use although they have not in every case adjoined. The small size of the barn at Foster's Green Farm may indicate the use of a rickyard.

Bibliography

Traditional sources

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 James Deakin and Emma Hancox of Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service for their kind co-operation.

Archive

The physical archive consists of:

10 x A4 pages

23 x illustrations of various sizes

The text of the report

Illustrations for the report

It has been deposited at Worcestershire County Museum, Hartlebury.

The digital archive consists of:

10 x A4 pages

23 x illustrations of various sizes

1 x copy of the combined report

The text of the report (.docx format)

Illustrations for the report (.bmp format)

(.pdf format)

This has been deposited with OASIS.

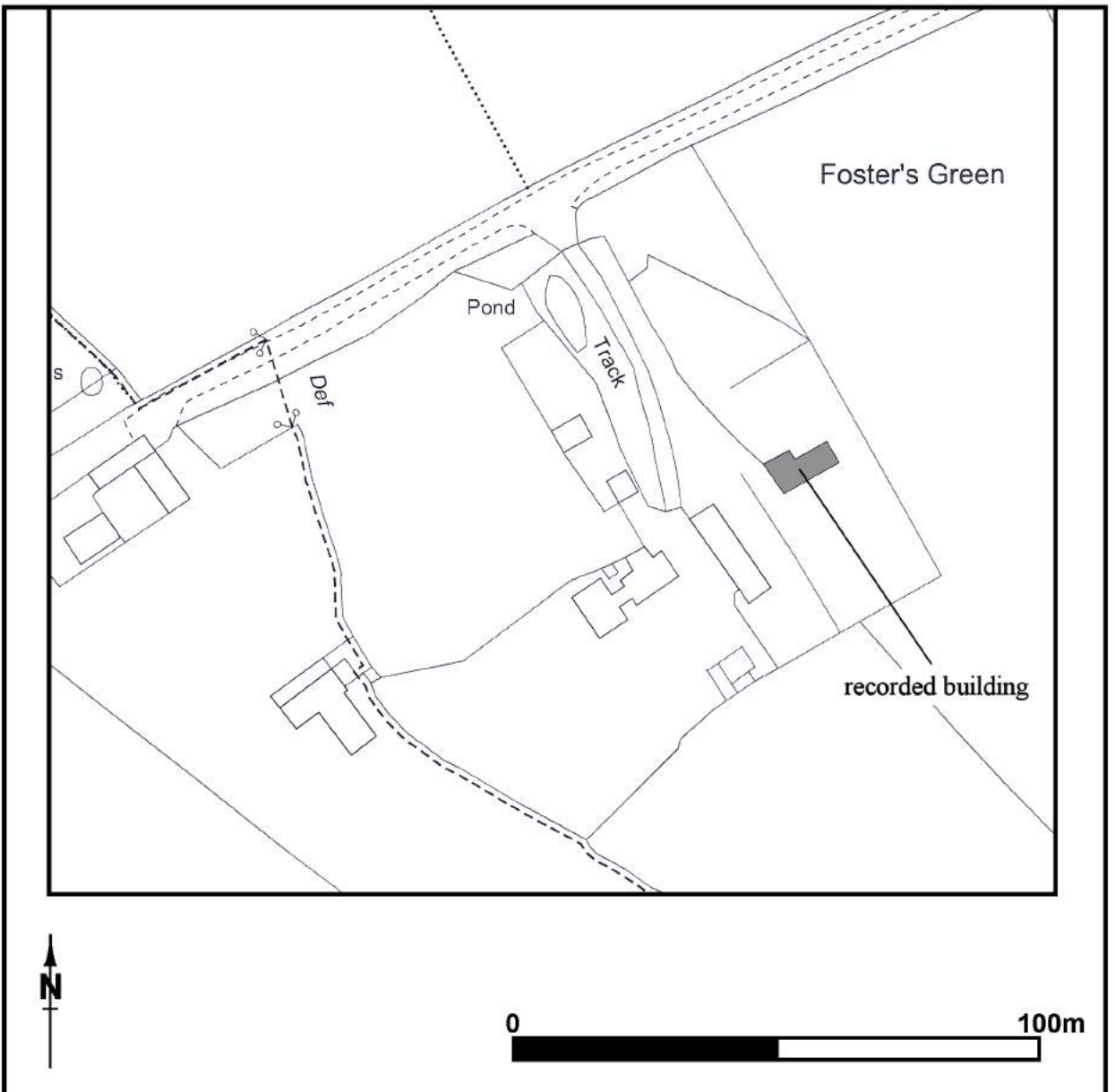
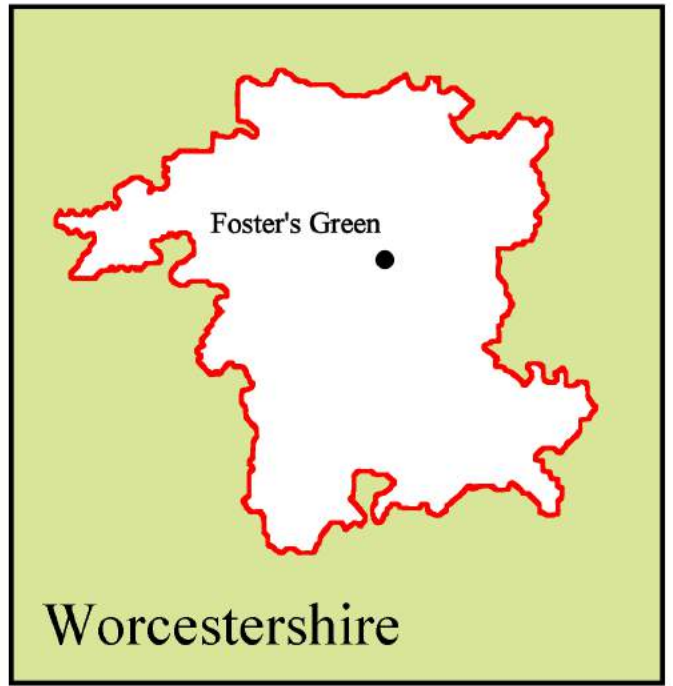


Fig 1: Location of site

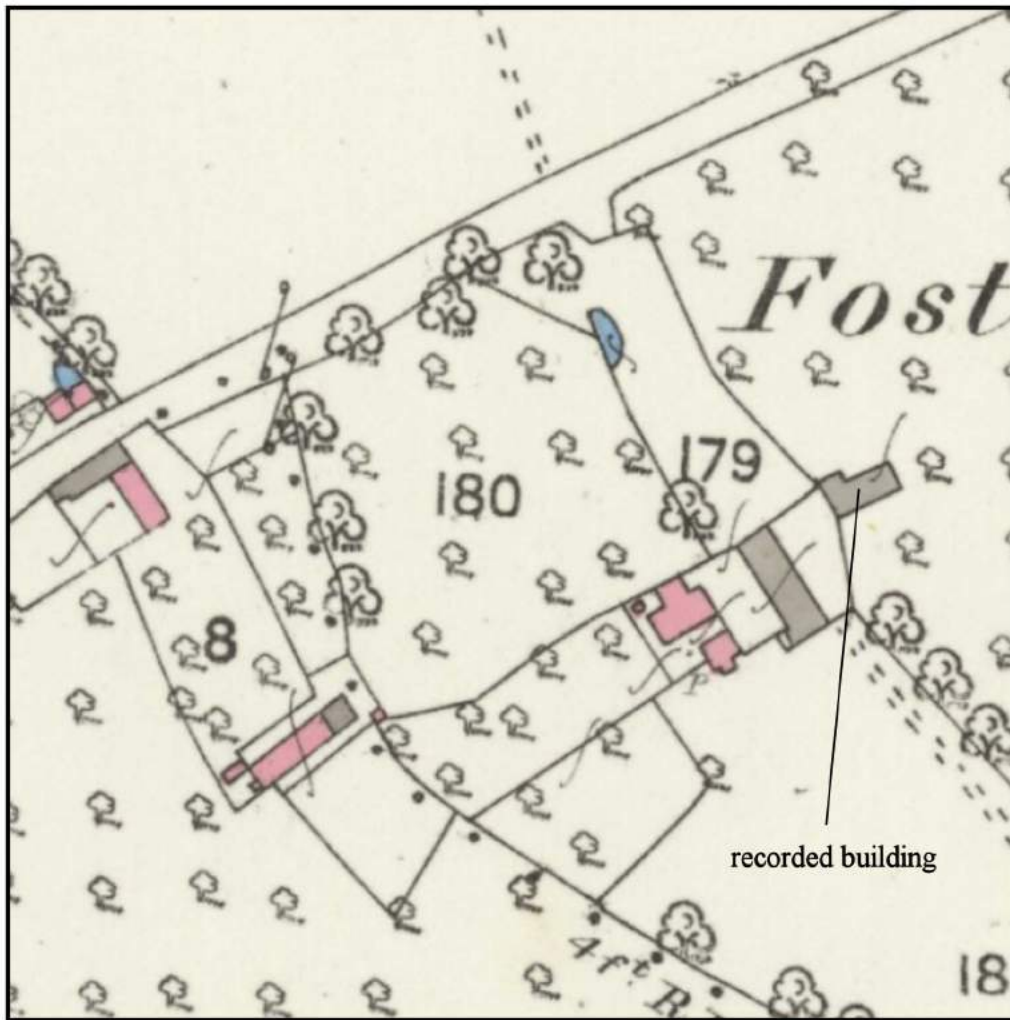


Fig 2.1: Ordnance Survey map of 1884



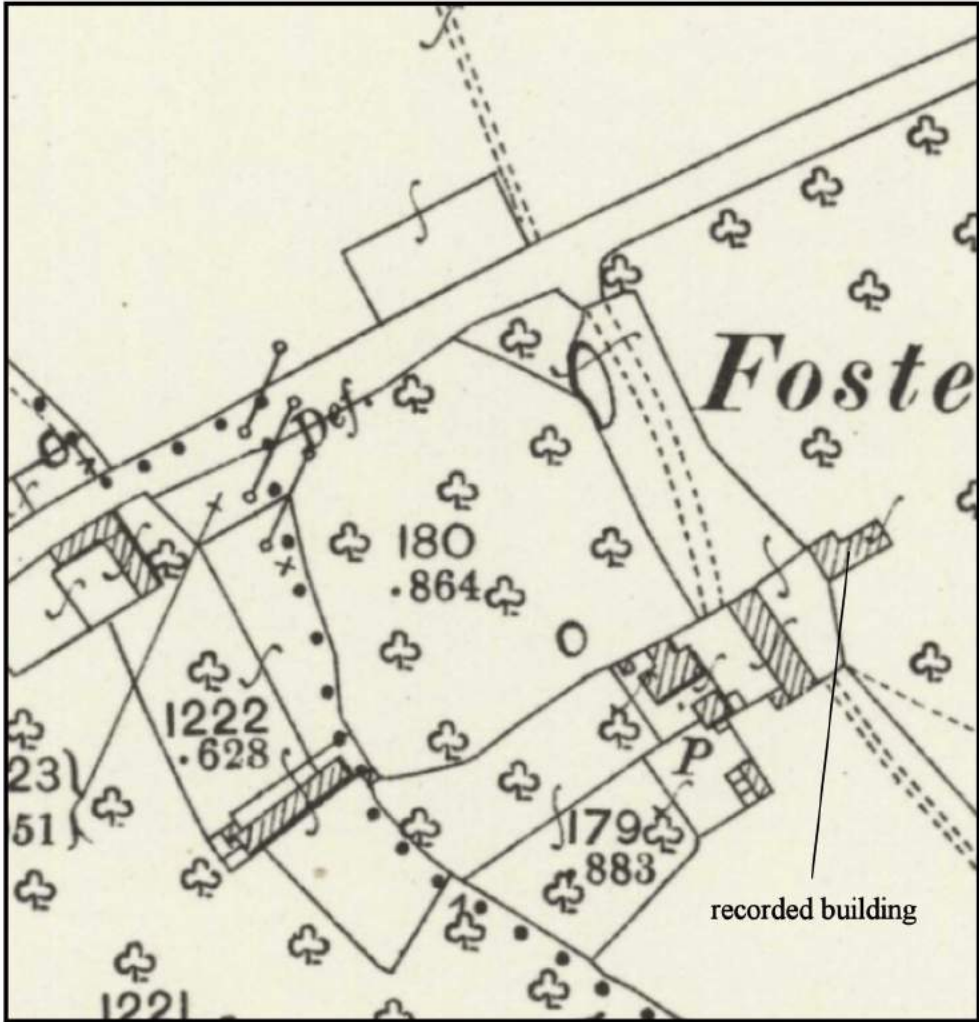


Fig 2.2: Ordnance Survey map of 1904

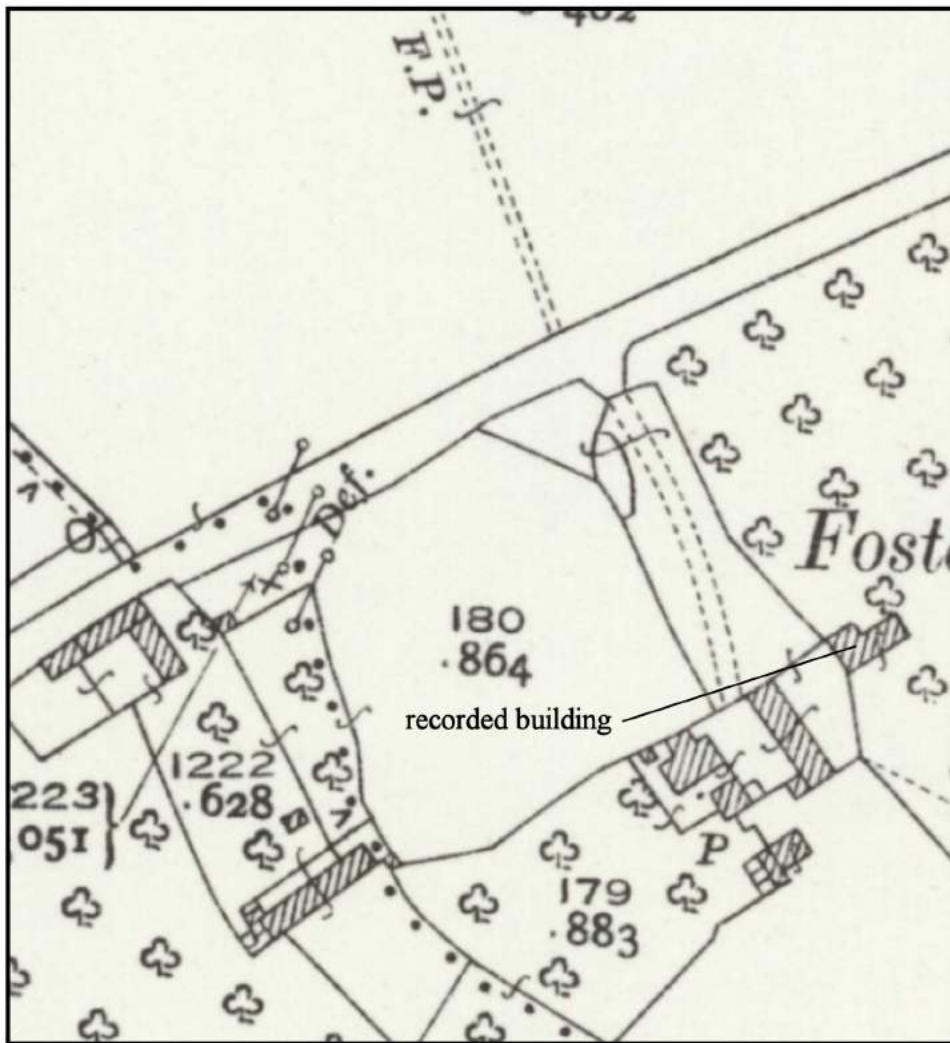


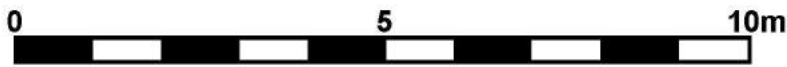
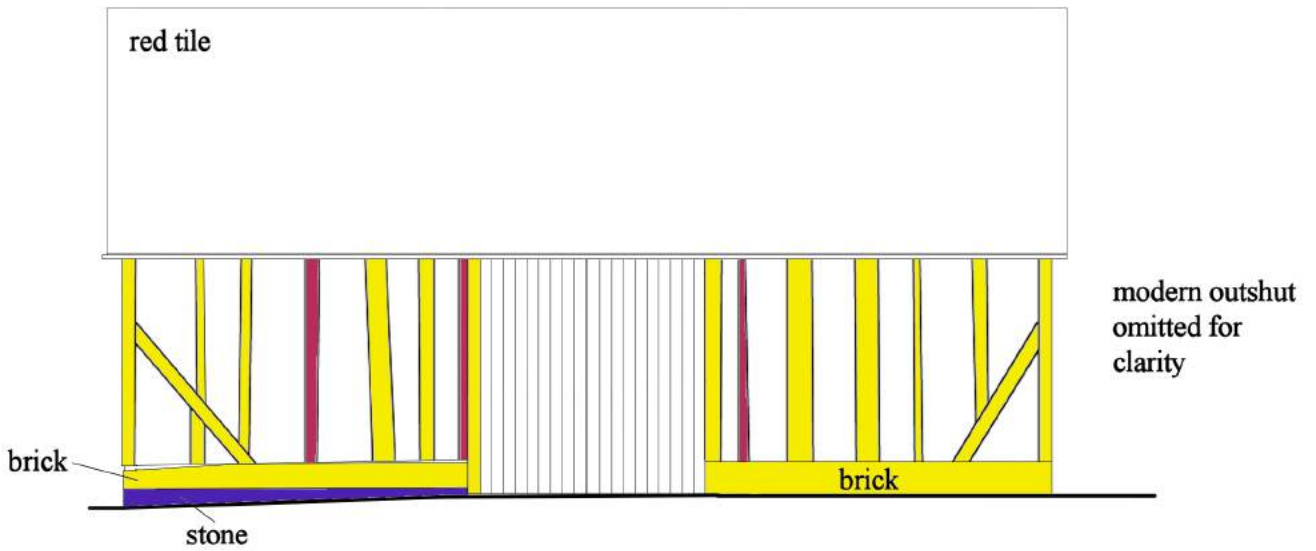
Fig 2.3: Ordnance Survey map of 1927



South-east elevation - weather board omitted



North-west elevation - weather board omitted



- Phase 1: pre 1839
- Phase 2: pre 1884
- Phase 3: late 20th century

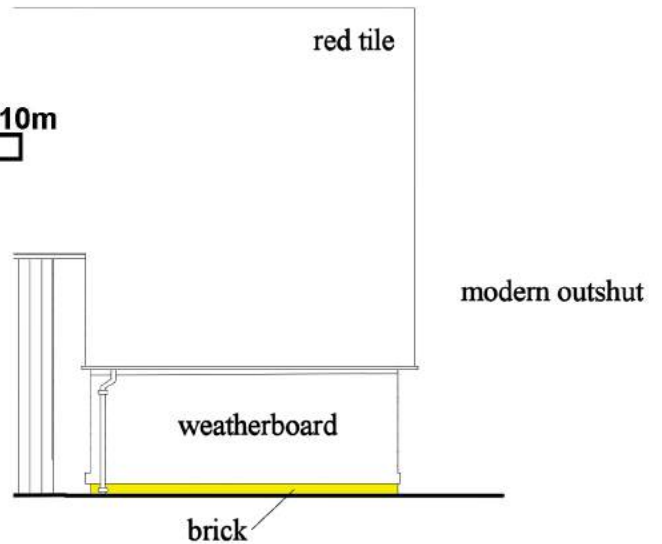
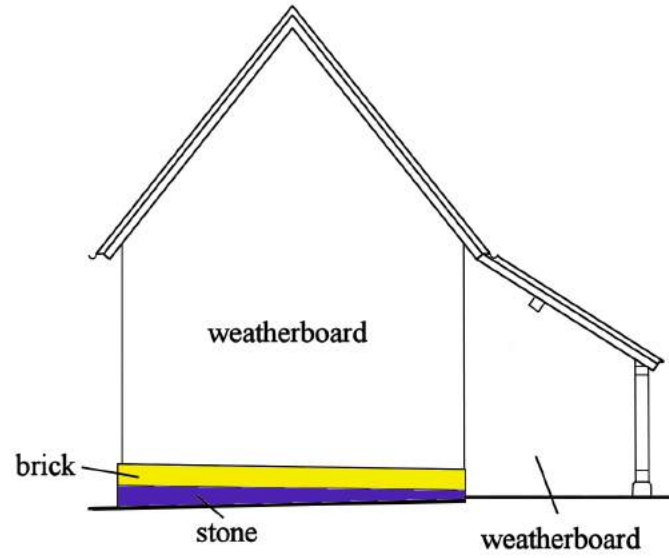
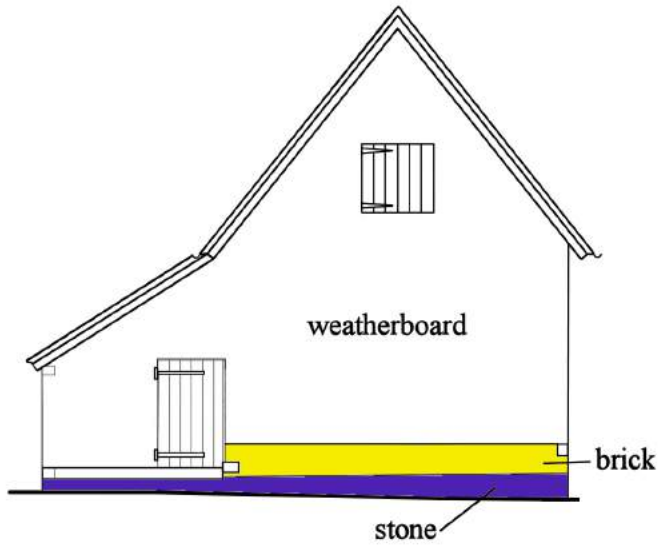


Fig 3.1: South-east and north-west elevations

South-west elevation

North-east elevation

- Phase 1: pre 1839
- Phase 2: pre 1884
- Phase 3: late 20th century



Truss 1

Truss 2

Truss 3

Truss 4

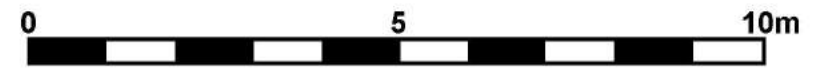
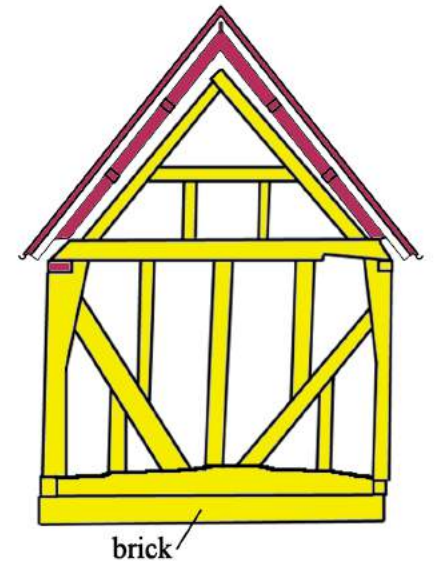
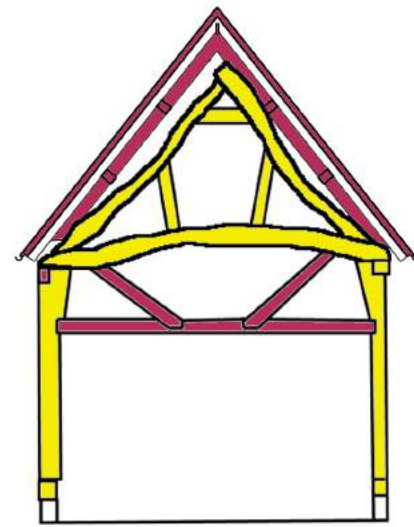
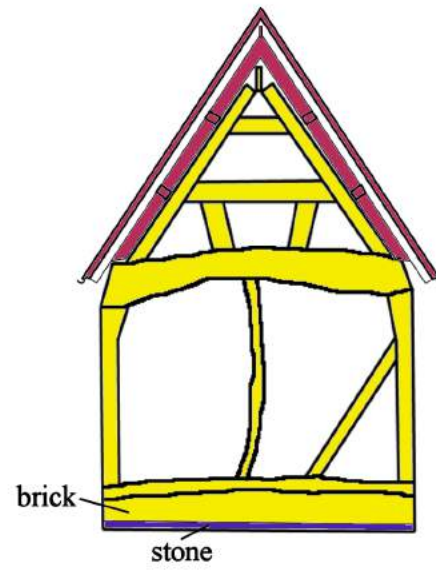
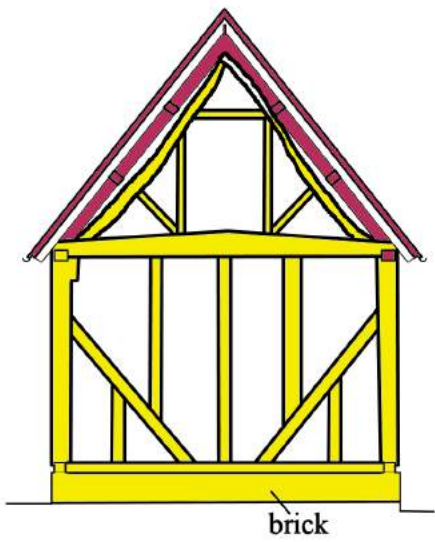


Fig 3.2: South-west and north-east elevations and trusses 1 to 4

- Phase 1: pre 1839
- Phase 2: pre 1884
- Phase 3: late 20th century

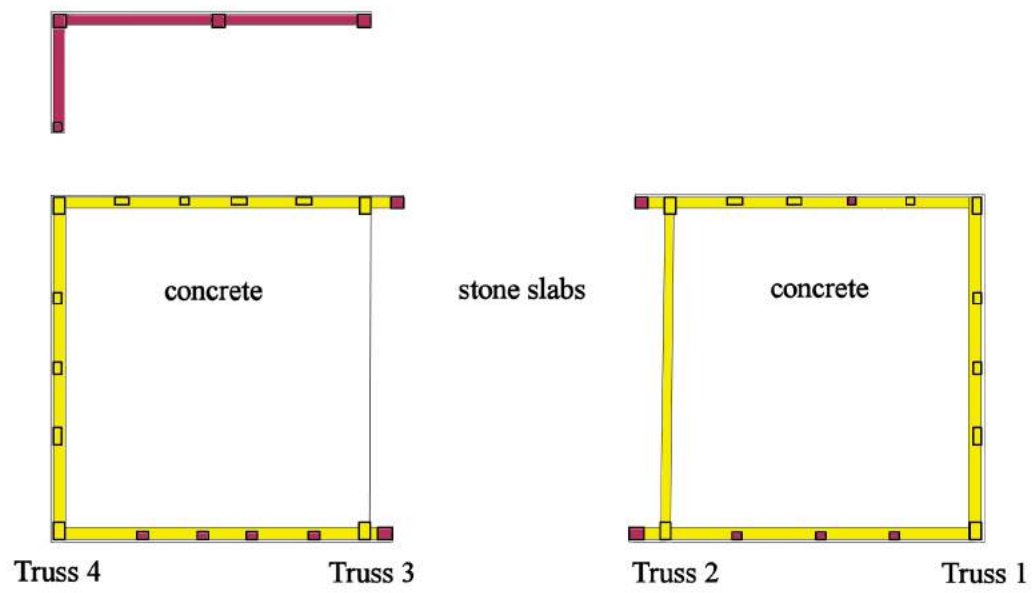


Fig 3.3: Plan of barn

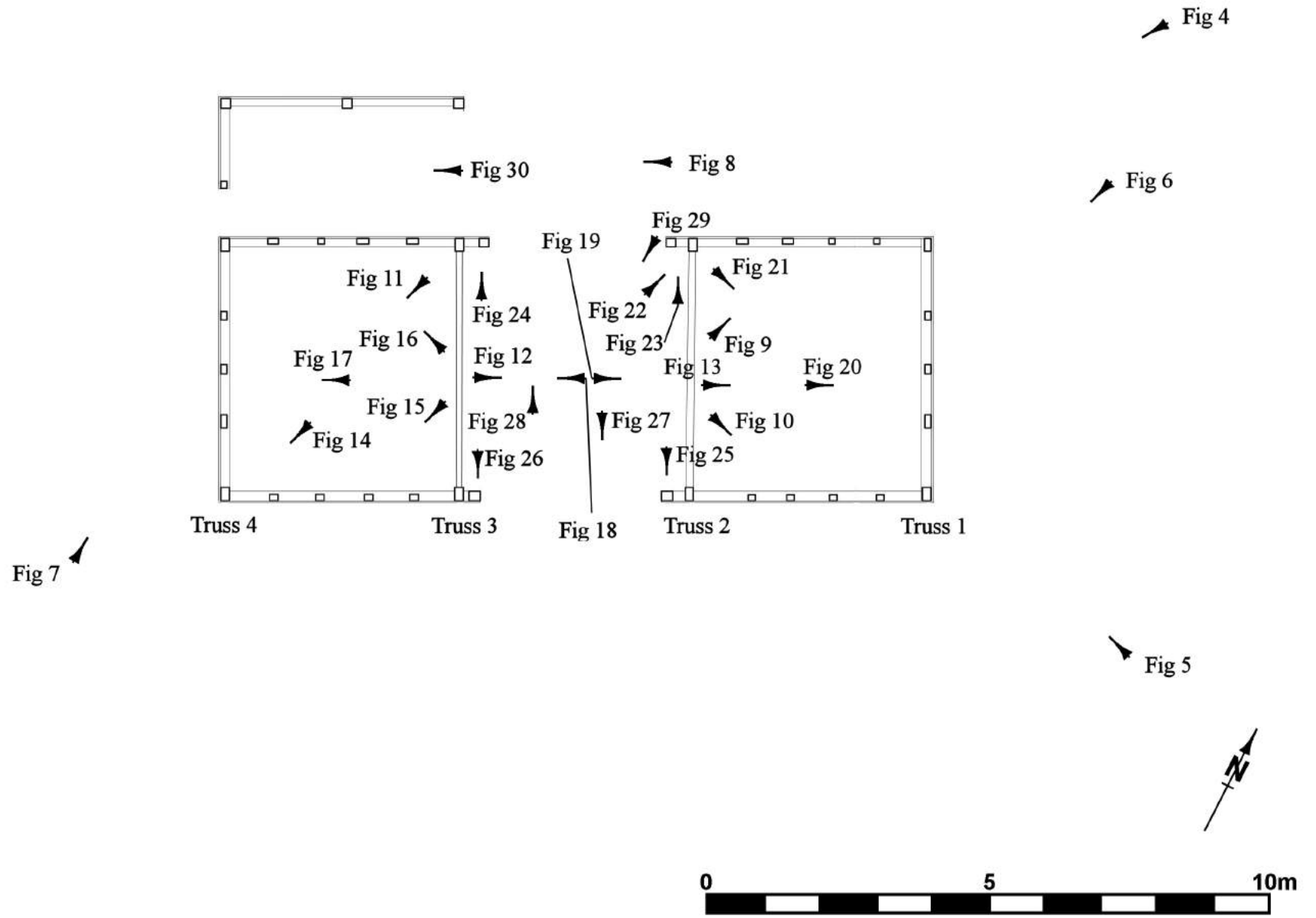


Fig 3.4: Location of Figs 4 to 30



Fig 4: North-west elevation



Fig 5: South-east elevation



Fig 6: North-east elevation



Fig 7: South-west elevation



Fig 8: Part of north-east elevation



Fig 9: Barn interior; north-west elevation, north-east end



Fig 10: Barn interior; south-east elevation, north-east end



Fig 11: Truss 4



Fig 12: Truss 2



Fig 13: Truss 1



Fig 14: Detail of south corner of barn



Fig 15: Barn interior; south-west elevation, south-west end



Fig 16: Interior of barn; north-west elevation, south-west end



Fig 17: Upper part of truss 4



Fig 18: Upper part of truss 3



Fig 19: Upper part of truss 2



Fig 20: Upper part of truss 1



Fig 21: East corner of barn showing modern roof structure



Fig 22: Barn interior; north-west elevation, south-west end, detail of possible cornhole



Fig 23: Barn interior; north-west elevation, adjacent to edge of threshing floor door, detail of metal fitting

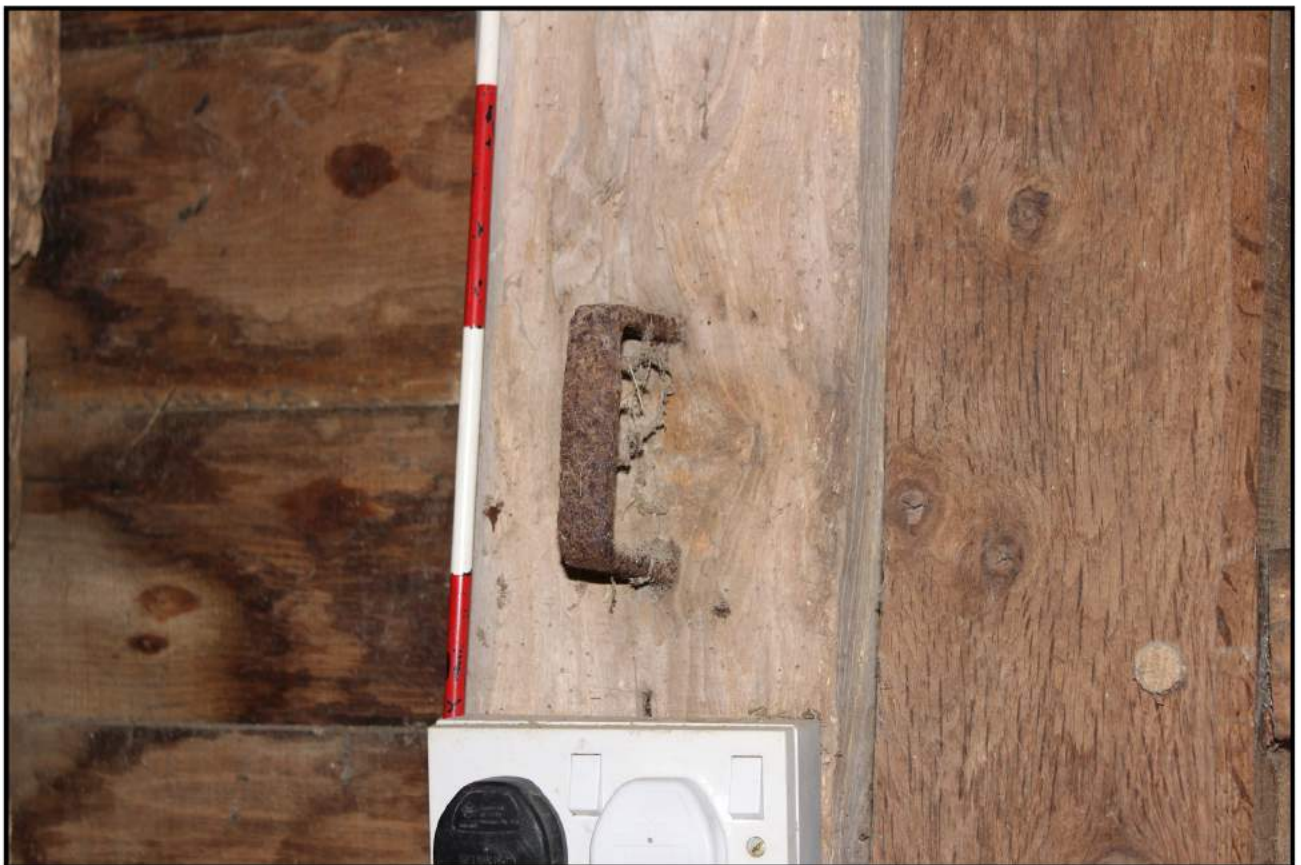


Fig 24: Barn interior; north-west elevation, adjacent to edge of threshing floor door, detail of metal fitting

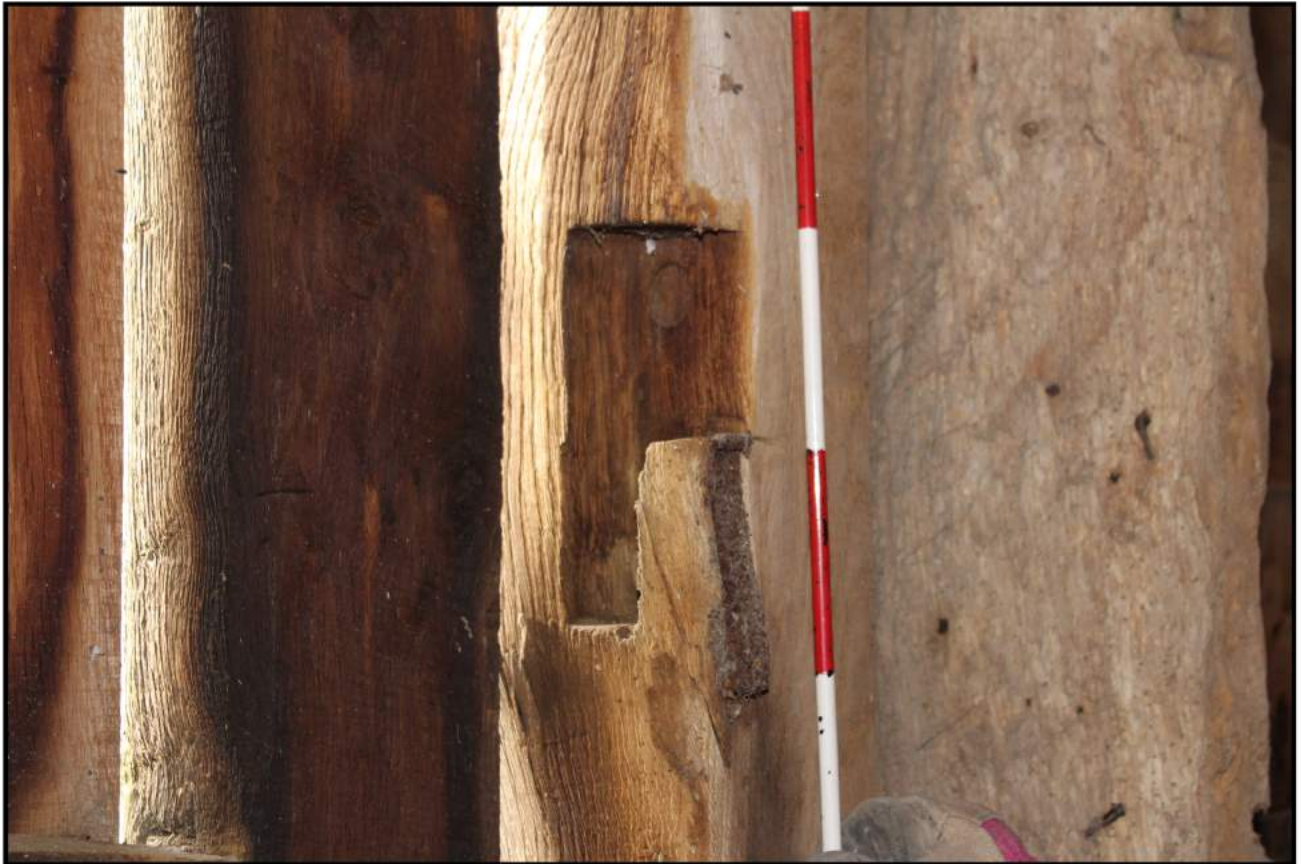


Fig 25: Barn interior; south-east elevation, adjacent to edge of threshing floor door, slot in post



Fig 26: Barn interior; south-east elevation, adjacent to edge of threshing floor door, slot in post



Fig 27: Barn interior; south-east elevation, detail of threshing floor doors



Fig 28: Barn interior; north-west elevation, detail of threshing floor doors



Fig 29: The threshing floor; relaid when the concrete floors were installed



Fig 30: The outshut; modern construction on historic footprint

Appendix 1: OASIS form

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: martinco1-411410

Project details

Project name	Foster's Green Farm
Short description of the project	Historic building recording of a barn at Foster's Green Farm, Foster's Green, Lower Bentley, Worcestershire, B60 4HY
Project dates	Start: 12-08-2020 End: 26-12-2020
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	19/00824/LBC - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	WSM 73468 - HER event no.
Type of project	Building Recording
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	BARN Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	WORCESTERSHIRE BROMSGROVE BENTLEY PAUNCEFOOT Foster's Green Farm, Foster's Green, Lower Bentley, Worcestershire
Postcode	B60 4HY
Study area	80 Square metres
Site coordinates	SO 977 651 52.283644206103 -2.033719767109 52 17 01 N 002 02 01 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0m Max: 0m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Martin Cook BA MCIfA
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Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Martin Cook BA MCIfA
Project director/manager	Martin Cook BA MCIfA
Project supervisor	Martin Cook BA MCIfA
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	ADS
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Worcestershire County Museum
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Historic building recording of a barn at Foster's Green Farm, Foster's Green, Lower Bentley, Worcestershire, B60 4HY
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Cook, M.
Date	2020
Issuer or publisher	Martin Cook MCIfA
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