

BUILDING RECORDING
AT
UPPER BLACKSTONE FARM,
STOURPORT ROAD, BEWDLEY,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt and Shona Robson-Glyde

April 2010

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Project 3476
Report 1766
WSM 42125

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Building recording at Upper Blackstone Farm, Stourport Road, Bewdley, Worcestershire

Shona Robson-Glyde and Elizabeth Curran

Part 1 Project summary

Archaeological building recording was undertaken at Upper Blackstone Farm, Stourport Road, Bewdley, Worcestershire (NGR 7952 7407). It was undertaken on behalf of Olympia Homes Ltd, who intend to convert a complex of traditional farm building into residential use for which a planning application has been submitted. The project aimed to identify the historic nature of the structures on the site and provide a record of the buildings prior to their alteration or demolition.

Recording at Upper Blackstone Farm consisted of producing a record of all the buildings of the farmstead with the exception of the farmhouse. The farmhouse and adjacent large L-shaped barn are listed buildings. The buildings date back to the mid-late 18th century, when the farmhouse and a large threshing barn were constructed. The development of the farm continued through the 19th century with the construction of a further threshing barn, stables, and a timber built Dutch barn. The second threshing barn was constructed at the time of the Napoleonic Wars in order to meet the increased demand for grain as the import of food products was blocked by the French. The development of the farm in the 19th century included using new technological products such as cast iron water bowls and ceramic lined feed troughs, to combat the spread of cattle flu, and the use of machinery for threshing.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

Archaeological building recording was undertaken Upper Blackstone Farm (NGR 7952 7407), Stourport Road, Bewdley, Worcestershire (Fig 1), on behalf of Olympia Homes Ltd. The client intends to convert a complex of traditional farm building into residential use for which a planning application has been approved by Wyre Forest District Council (reference 07/0229). It is considered by the curator that a site of archaeological interest may be affected by this development (HER 34978).

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (IfA 2008),

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council (HEAS 2010a) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2010b).

1.3 Aims

The archaeological building recording intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of the building complex and its setting.

More specifically the following aims have been identified:

- To provide a descriptive account and interpretation of the building, including discussion of its local, regional and national significance.
- To contribute to the national and regional research objectives, in particular the Worcestershire Historic Farmstead Survey.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER) In addition to the sources listed in the bibliography the following sources were also consulted:

Cartographic sources

- Ordnance Survey maps of 1884.
- Kidderminster Foreign, West of Stour Tithe map - BA 1572 ref s760/405

Documentary sources

- Worcestershire Records Office - BA 12944/2 ref X899:1251 (Blackstone Map 1840); Bewdley parish photograph 34,200 (microfilm photographs of repairs to the Bewdley to Stourport Road).
- County histories (Worcestershire VCH 1913 and 1924).

2.2 Fieldwork methodology

2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2010 b).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 25 March and 26 March 2010. The site reference number and site code is WSM 42125.

Building recording consisted of a photographic survey of the interior and exterior of the buildings, analysis of their development and annotation of survey drawings. All photographs were taken with photographic scales visible in each shot. The photographic survey was carried out with Sony α 350 and Nikon D40x digital cameras. All photographs were recorded on pro-forma Photographic Record Sheets. Annotation of existing ground plans and elevations, complemented the photographic record along with notes taken whilst on site.

2.3 **Building recording methodology**

The project conformed to the specification for a level 3 survey as defined in the English Heritage document *Understanding historic buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (EH 2006). This level of survey is described as ‘an analytical record’ comprising of ‘an introductory description followed by a systematic account of the buildings origins, development and use’ (EH 2006). This required the following elements of survey:

Survey and drawings

- Plans of all main floors and elevations as existing (provided by client).
- Measured drawings showing the form of any architectural or functional detail not more readily captured by photography.

Photography

- Overall appearance of rooms and circulation areas.
- Detailed coverage of the building’s external appearance.
- Any detail, structural or decorative, relevant to the building’s design, development and use, which does not show on general photographs.

2.3.1 **Building analysis**

Analysis of the building was based upon the study of the photographic record, annotated drawings notes. It was also informed by the documentary sources. This allowed plans to be drawn up showing the structural development of the building. Figures 2 and 3 show the plans of the building and photographs have been reproduced as Plates 1-55. Further figures have been included showing maps or relevant documents (Fig 4).

2.4 **The methods in retrospect**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved

3. **Topographical, historical and archaeological context**

Upper Blackstone Farm is located on the western edge of the Stourport to Bewdley Road (B4195), immediately before the junction to the Bewdley to Kidderminster Road (A456). The site lies 1.5 miles to the south east of Bewdley and to the east of the River Severn. The geology of the site is characterised by the soils of the Bridgnorth Association, typical brown sands with permeable sandy profiles developed in reddish Permo-Triassic sandstone. The Bridgnorth association provides easily worked light land which favours arable cultivation and a wide range of crops can be grown, including cereals, potatoes and horticultural crops (Ragg *et al*, 1984, 112-116).

The town of Bewdley lies in the Wyre Forest District of Worcestershire. The main area of the town is situated on the western bank of the River Severn, including the main street, called Load Street, whose name derives from *lode*, or ferry. In 1472 Bewdley was granted borough status, which it was to retain until 1974. In 1832 Bewdley was enlarged to include the hamlets of Wribbenhall, Blackstone, Netherton, and Lower Mitton.

The village of Wribbenhall is clustered around the east of the bridge. There is no record of Wribbenhall until the Domesday Survey in which it is described as part of the sixteen

outlying farms or 'berewicks' of Kidderminster (VCH 1913, 158-173). Wribbenhall remained part of Kidderminster Foreign, West of Stour until 1901 when it became a separate civil parish.

Upper Blackstone Farm is situated immediately adjacent to the Blackstone Rock. This is a massive sandstone cliff overlooking the River Severn and has historically been part of the lands of Upper Blackstone Farm. A cave cut in the face of Blackstone Rock is known as the Blackstone Hermitage and is divided into living quarters and a chapel. In 1820 an account on a visit to the hermitage notes:

At present it is used for humble purposes, being filled with potatoes, cheese, and agricultural instruments, as a kind of farming repository to Mr Court [the owner of Upper Blackstone Farm], within whose grounds it stands...the present mode of occupation of this ancient hermitage should tend to obscure its venerable remains; which is literally the case, as the aperture above, which afforded light and air, has been closed up to guard against accidents (Laird, 1820 260).

Additional details into the layout of the cave are recorded on a later visit:

The doorway is rather low, and, as you enter, the kitchen appears to be on the right hand, for the chimney, cut clean through the rock, remains perfect, and traces of smoke seem to hang about the sides. Beyond the kitchen are two or three smaller rooms, an over head chamber, and a second opening in the rock, supposed to have been used as a belfry. The chapel lies to the left of the door way, and a small window remains over where, possibly, the alter stood (Wedley, 1914 4)

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) holds a number of records around Upper Blackstone Farm and in the area of the Stourport to Bewdley Road. These records are detailed below in Table 1. A large number of activities have taken place around the site of Upper Blackstone Farm. The majority of these activities took place as salvage recording during construction of the Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct (WSM 05540, 11055 and 11056). The recording revealed prehistoric activity and Roman and medieval finds along with an 18th and 19th century fairground. Other prehistoric activity was revealed by the recovery of finds during two periods of field walking in the area (WSM 32014 and 41821).

A number of monuments are also recorded on the HER. These include the Blackstone Rock hermitage (WSM 04175) and an underwater cave (WSM 41819) revealed by divers. The Blackstone Hill World War II searchlight battery is also recorded (WSM 33063).

A number of historic buildings are also listed on the HER including the listed buildings forming Lower Blackstone Farm and also those of Upper Blackstone Farm. Upper Blackstone farmhouse and barns were listed by the Department of the Environment in 1986 (DoE 1986, SO77SE 5/236 and 5/237). Their listing descriptions can be found below in Table 2.

Table 1: HER information (italics indicate those on or immediately adjacent to the site)

HER no	Name	NGR	Date	Description
Activities				
WSM 05540	Salvage recording in 1991, Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct, Bewdley	SO 79551 74425	Prehistoric to Modern	Flint pottery and fired clay were recovered in this field during salvage recording
WSM 11055	Salvage recording in 1991, Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct, Bewdley	SO 79868 74244	Prehistoric to Modern	Finds from salvage recording include bronze age flints, post-medieval pottery, tile and other material. NW corner of field parallel trenches of lazy-beds. Metal detecting finds include 18 th 19 th century coins. It is believed that a fairground used this field.
WSM 11056	Salvage recording in 1991, Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct, Bewdley	SO 79764 74031	Prehistoric to Medieval	Finds from filed of Upper Blackstone include bronze age flints and a hexagonal carnelian bead and a fragmentary jet bead, possibly of Roman date. Colluvium layers contain assemblage of medieval tile and green-glazed pottery.

WSM 32014	Field walking in 2002, Gymkhana Field, Blackstone near Bewdley	SO 79782 74248	Prehistoric to Modern	Produced evidence of prehistoric activity including worked flints, hammer stones. Two pieces of Roman pottery. Medieval and Post medieval pottery and tile.
WSM 41821	Field walking in 1985, Blackstone Farm, Bewdley Bypass	SO 79522 74271	Prehistoric	Several flints were recovered from this area
Buildings				
WSM 11067	Toll house, Stourport to Bewdley Road	SO 796663 74456	Post medieval	Original rectangular ground plan with front porch survives, with subsequent extension.
WSM 12851	Toll House Cottage	SO 79512 73851	Medieval to Modern	The cottage on the corner of the track to Devil's Spittleful from the Stourport-Bewdley Road is called 'Toll House cottage'. Oral History evidence.
WSM 17209	Storage Depot, Blackstone Rock	SO 79424 74042	Undated Modern	Cave Structure Red sandstone cave used for storage of dyes and press tools for steatite and porcelain products. Duplicates of those used in factory at Stourport in WWII. During the War company also made porcelain components for aircraft radar sets
WSM 34977	<i>Farmhouse, Upper Blackstone Farm, Bewdley</i>	<i>SO 79489 74099</i>	<i>Post—medieval to Modern</i>	<i>Grade II listed. Early 18th C, extended late 18th C with mid 19th C and some mid 20th C alterations.</i>
WSM 34978	<i>Barn and Stables, Upper Blackstone Farm, Bewdley</i>	<i>SO 79538 74071</i>	<i>Post—medieval to Modern</i>	<i>Grade II listed. Barn and stables. Late 18th C with some 20th C alterations.</i>
WSM 38969	Lower Blackstone Farm, Stourport Road, Bewdley	SO 79419 74226		Grade II listed. Early 17 th C, extended in 18 th C with late 18 th and late 20 th C alterations. Timber framed with painted brick under built in painted brick, tile roof. Three framed bays, hall in centre with stack to north and baffle entry from west. North bay heated parlour, south bay unheated service wing.
WSM 38970	Barn and Cart shed, Lower Blackstone Farm, Bewdley	SO 79443 74185		Grade II listed. Barn and cart shed. Late 18 th C with some late 9 th C alterations. About six roof bays aligned north/south. Three bays to south form barn, other three form cart shed. Barn has central cart entrance with semi-elliptical head and 2-leaf boarded door.
Desk based Assessments				
WSM 32743	Survey for the Fisheries of the Worcestershire Severn	SO 83541 46209	Medieval to post medieval	With notes on the Fords and Fisheries.
Landscape Components				
WSM 33624	<i>Area of Mesolithic Occupation, Bewdley</i>		<i>Mesolithic</i>	<i>60 metre contour defined using Devils Spittleful and Rifle Range SSSI</i>
Monuments				
WSM 04175	Blackstone Hermitage, South of Blackstone House	SO 79400 74100	Medieval to Modern	Blackstone Rock, a massive sandstone cliff overlooking the river has a cave cut into its face known as Blackstone hermitage
WSM 12784	Blackstone Ford, Bewdley	SO 79300 74200	Medieval	As late as 1313 there seems to have been no crossing over the Severn other than by fords. Crossing no longer possible as there has been a change in river level due to locking downstream.

WSM 23803	Fish Weir, River Severn, Ribbesford	SO 79100 74000	Medieval	Opposite Blackstone Rock there is an islet close to the west bank, an alternative location of a fish-weir mentioned in early extents.
WSM 33063	Searchlight Battery, Blackstone Hill, south west, Upper Blackstone Farm, Bewdley	SO 79359 73941	Modern	During WWII a searchlight battery was located on Blackstone Hill.
WSM 41819	Underwater Cave, near Blackstone Rock, Ribbesford	SO 79266 74040	Undated	Site of underwater cave, identified by amateur divers

Table 2: Listed buildings in the area (*italics indicate the site*)

Listing no	Grade	NGR	Address	Date	Information
5/236	II	SO 77 SE	<i>Upper Blackstone Farmhouse, Stourport Road, Bewdley, Wyre Forest, Worcestershire</i>	<i>Early 18th to mid 20th Century</i>	<i>Grade II listed. Early 18th C, extended late 18th C with mid 19th C and some mid 20th C alterations. Brick with tile roof. Two storeys with attic lit by casement in a gable to the right of centre, dentilled brick cornice; three windows: timber cross-window under segmental head to left, a 3-light casement under segmental head, and to right a 2-light casement under brick wedge lintel; ground floor: two to left as above, to right a timber cross-window, entrance under gable has a 19th C gabled tile canopy on a plan wooden posts, wooden architrave under segmental head with 6-panel door, upper four glazed.</i>
5/237	II	SO 77 SE	<i>Barn and stables about 30 metres east of Upper Blackstone Farmhouse, Stourport Road, Bewdley</i>	<i>18th to mid 20th Century</i>	<i>Barn and stables about 30 metres east of Upper Blackstone Farmhouse GV II Barn and stables. Late C18 with some mid-C20 alterations. Brick on stone plinth with tile roof. L-plan, barn with six roof bays extends to south, stables to west. East front: dentilled brick cornice, hit-and-miss ventilators, two cart entries with segmental head to left and basket arch to right, circular pitching hole in north gable; four C20 brick buttresses; stable range is lower with loft over stables, on north front has a central full-height entrance with C20 metal door.</i>

4. Results

Upper Blackstone Farm is situated to the south Bewdley on the east side of the River Severn and immediately adjacent to the Stourport Road. The buildings of the farm include two listed structures, the farmhouse and the large L-shaped barn. These buildings have been characterised as part of the Historic Farmsteads Characterisation project as being a 'regular courtyard multi yard' type with the tertiary character of 'regular courtyard f'. This means that the farmstead was historically arranged with buildings around at least two regular yards with the barns associated with the attached farmhouse and forming an 'F'-shaped layout. This character can still be seen in the layout of the buildings today. The farmhouse is located at the west of the farmstead with all of the buildings ranged to the east of the house.

The recording at the farm did not include the farmhouse but recorded all of the barns within the farmstead with the exception of two 20th century structures which will be demolished as part of the development. All of the buildings recorded were constructed in brick and some also had substantial sandstone foundations. Most had dentilled eaves cornices and segmental arched head openings. Many of the window openings were covered with timber louver vents and there were also cast-iron 'hit-and-miss' vents in a number of the walls.

4.1 Phasing

4.1.1 Phase 1 Mid to late 18th century (Figures 2 and 3)

In the mid to late 18th century, a brick built farmhouse (Plate 1) and large threshing barn (Plate 2) were constructed on land to the immediate north east of Blackstone Rock and south of Lower Blackstone Farm. It is probable that Upper and Lower Blackstone were once part of the same estate that was divided in the 18th century with the Upper Blackstone farmstead being constructed at that time. Lower Blackstone Farm has a farmhouse dating back to the early 17th century.

The threshing barn constructed at this time (Building 4), was constructed of hand made red brick measuring 9" x 4 ¼" x 2 ¾". They are coursed in Flemish Stretcher bond and the walls have honeycomb brickwork, which comprises ventilation holes built into the walls for the drying of straw and hay. The threshing barn consists of three bays with the central bays having large openings with basket arches (Plate 3). The walls are capped with a dentilated eaves cornice. An owl hole was also built into the north gable along with a pitching eye opening (Plate 4). Internally the building was arranged with a central stone floor (of lias) and brick floors to either side of this. The threshing barn was used to store the grain after it was harvested while it was drying. In winter the grain was threshed on the central stone floor and the straw would then be stored in the barn.

4.1.2 Phase 2 Late 18th century (Figures 2 and 3)

In the late 18th century, the threshing barn was extended west towards the farmhouse. A long range, with a covered entranceway into the yard, was constructed (Buildings 2 and 3, Plates 5 and 6). This range was constructed of very similar brick to that of the threshing barn (Building 4). The bricks measure 9" by 4 ¼" by 2 ¾" and are coursed in Flemish Stretcher bond with 4 rows of stretchers between each row of Flemish Bond. The eastern part (Building 3) of the range had cast-iron 'hit and miss' ventilators (Plate 7) and the whole range had a dentilated eaves cornice. The use of the ventilators shows that this structure was probably used for housing of cattle (Plate 8) and the rest of the range was used as stables (Plate 9). The interior of the stables had a brick built feeding trough with a segmental arched base and a wooden hay rack (Plate 10). The interior of the feeding trough was lined with ceramic tiles (Plate 11). Evidence from the cattle shed (Building 3) shows that it had also contained a feeding trough (Plate 12).

Also at this time, a small structure (south part of Building 10, Plate 13) was built close to the farmhouse and south of the stable built in this phase (Building 2). This building has been so radically altered since its construction that it is impossible to work out its function from the surviving fabric. Its proximity to the farmhouse suggests that it had a use associated with that building and therefore may have been a granary.

4.1.3 Phase 3 Early 19th century (Figures 2 and 3)

In the early 19th century another large threshing barn (Building 6) was constructed adjoining the south west gable of the 18th century barn (Building 4). The barn was constructed of red mould-made bricks measuring 9 ¼" by 4 ½" by 2 • " and has a dentilated eaves cornice. This barn (Plate 14) appears to be identical in style to the 18th century threshing barn however the size of the bricks in Building 6 are too large for the structure to be of an earlier date. The barn also uses English Garden Wall bond construction and has segmental arched openings on the central threshing bay (Plate 15) in comparison to the style of the earlier barn. There is also an obvious joint between the two barns (Plate 16). The construction of another threshing barn on the farm suggests that the farm was growing a large amount of grain by the 19th century.

Also constructed at this time was a small building (Building 1, Plate 17) to the west of the stable (Building 2). This structure (Plate 18) was built using mould-made red brick measuring 9 ½" by 4 ½" by 2 ¾" and coursed in Flemish Stretcher bond. The building may have been used as another stable, possibly for the owner's horse, considering its proximity to the farmhouse.

In the early to mid 19th century a small structure (Building 8, Plate 19) was built against the north west elevation of the early 19th century barn (Building 6). This building was constructed not long after the threshing barn itself had been built as can be seen by the building joint between the two structures (Plate 20), and the brick piercings still visible on the south west wall of the barn, seen from the interior of Building 8 (Plate 21). The bricks for this new building are coursed in English Stretcher bond and are 9" by 4" by 2 ¾" in size. It also has a dentilated eaves cornice. The building layout and its openings show that it was constructed for use as a stable with a hayloft above. The windows of the building originally had wooden louvers over them (Plate 22) to allow air circulation for the health of the animals.

4.1.4 **Phase 4 Mid 19th century** (Figures 2 and 3)

In the mid 19th century, a rectangular building (Building 10 dairy, Plate 23) was constructed close to the farmhouse and abutting the possible granary (Building 10 south part) built in the late 18th century. The building was constructed of bricks measuring 9" by 4 ½" by 3" and coursed in English Garden Wall bond. The dentilated eaves cornice was formed from bricks at an angle. The function of the building appears to have originally been a granary on the first floor, as the south west elevation has an external staircase with a dog kennel built into it (Plate 24). A first floor blocked opening was probably used as a taking in door to enable the grain to be loaded into the granary (Plate 25). The function of the ground floor however, is unclear. It has been a dairy during the 20th century and it is possible that this was also its original function.

Also at this time a barn (Building 9, Plate 26) was built to the north east of the early to mid 19th century stable (Building 8). This new building was constructed of brick measuring 9" by 4 ¼" by 3" and coursed in English Garden Wall bond. The building was partly constructed of large sandstone blocks (Plate 27) that appear to have come from an earlier structure, or have been hewn from the red sandstone cliffs of Blackstone Rock adjacent to the site. The function of the building seems to have been a cow house with hayloft above. The south east gable has a pitching at its apex (Plate 28) and the structure originally had a feeding trough with feeding passage behind it (Plate 29).

4.1.5 **Phase 5 Late 19th century** (Figures 2 and 3)

In the late 19th century, as evidenced by the 1903 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 4), a large barn was constructed in the south west of the site. This structure (Building 12, Plate 30) was built of timber, with large posts standing on sandstone post pads (Plate 31). The internal trusses are timber of queen-post construction (Plate 32). This barn is a Dutch barn, a structure designed for hay storage. It has a fixed roof for the hay to be protected from the weather and open sides to allow good ventilation. It is not unknown for hay if stored without ventilation to spontaneously combust.

Against the north west wall of the two threshing barns a stable (Building 5, Plate 33) was also constructed at this time. The building was constructed of cut-bricks measuring 9" by 4 ½" by 3" coursed in stretcher bond. The north east elevation has flat pilasters and iron-frame windows (Plate 34). The building was constructed with an integral effluent drainage channel (Plate 35) running out through the floor and into a drain in the courtyard (Plate 36). The internal fixtures appear to date from a short time later as they are more akin to the usage of the building as a cow house.

Also at this time, another possible stable (Building 10 stable, Plate 37) was constructed by walling off an area to the south east of the late 18th century possible granary and the mid 19th century granary. This structure probably extended into late 18th century granary and therefore gave it a new function.

An extension to the early to mid 19th century stable (Building 8) was built at this time. This extension (Plate 38) joined the stable to the mid 19th century cow house. The extension appears to have been used as a feed-mixing house and a chute (Plate 39) runs down from the roof space above the stable into the extension, ending in a wooden box (Plate 40).

The south west gable of the early 19th century threshing barn (Building 6) had a cartshed built against it in this period (Building 7, Plate 41). This was constructed of brick with wooden posts on the south east elevation. The cartshed had space for four carts or large machinery

such as ploughs. Above this was a granary (Plate 42) which had an external access staircase on the north west elevation of the building (Plate 43).

4.1.6 **Phase 6 Early 20th century** (Figures 2 and 3)

4.1.7 **Phase 6 Early 20th century** (Figures 2 and 3)

In the early 20th century an extension (Building 11, Plate 44) to the late 19th century stable and the possible 18th century granary (Building 10) was constructed. This building was partly open sided and had cast iron pillars holding up the roof. Internally the building had a brick feeding trough, with a ceramic tile lining, and concrete covered divisions (Plate 45). A wooden hayrack was fixed over the stalls and a water system with iron bowls was also in the stalls (Plate 46).

A very similar system to this was added into the late 19th century stable (Building 5) adjoining the two threshing barns. This has a concrete trough and stalls with cast iron water pipes and bowls (Plate 47) but the concrete stall divisions have cast iron tethering posts and chains (Plate 48).

This period within the development of the farm saw superficial changes to the structures. One of the most obvious things are the large buttresses (Plate 49) on the south east elevations of the two threshing barns (Building 4 and 6). These buttresses (Plate 50) are constructed of strong highly fired machine made bricks. A photograph of the building, taken in the 1930s, shows that the buttresses had not yet been added to the building. They may have been added to the structure soon after this, following the major works to alter the road immediately adjacent to the barns.

The granary close to the farmhouse (Building 10 dairy) had its ground floor dairy fixtures added during this period (Plate 51). The upper floor of the building was also altered by the insertion of an extra floor being added in the roof space with a wooden staircase (Plate 52) being added from the first to second floors as well as a chimney and fireplaces (Plate 53). It seems that the structure was being used to house the work force and may have only been used seasonally for travelling work people, like hop pickers in other areas.

Other small changes made to the buildings can be seen on Figures 2 and 3.

4.1.8 **Phase 6 Early 20th century** (Figures 2 and 3)

In the early 20th century an extension (Building 11, Plate 44) to the late 19th century stable and the possible 18th century granary (Building 10) was constructed. This building was partly open sided and had cast iron pillars holding up the roof. Internally the building had a brick feeding trough, with a ceramic tile lining, and concrete covered divisions (Plate 45). A wooden hayrack was fixed over the stalls and a water system with iron bowls was also in the stalls (Plate 46).

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5. **Synthesis**

The importance of Upper Blackstone Farm has already been recognised by the listing of the farmhouse and the large L-shaped barn, formed by the two threshing barns and the north stable extension. Upper Blackstone Farm was first developed in the mid to late 18th century, probably as a result of the Lower Blackstone estate being divided within a family. The expansion of the farm buildings began in the late 18th century and continued developing throughout the 19th century. This form of development is common and is driven by technological development or economic needs. Often a farmstead will contract, as well as expand, as the needs of the owner changed with the social and economic needs of the area.

The buildings recorded on Upper Blackstone Farm form the bulk of the farmstead, with only the farmhouse not being recorded at this time. Farmsteads, as well as their component buildings, have a layout or design closely related to their function. The buildings of Upper Blackstone are arranged around a main courtyard with the large threshing barns sheltering the yard. Upper Blackstone Farm began as an arable farm in the late 18th century, when it had a large threshing barn and stabling for the horses or oxen that guided the ploughs. Its first period of expansion took place in the early 19th century when a second threshing barn was constructed and then further stabling for the horses required for ploughing. This was followed in the late 19th century and then the early 20th century by the addition of two buildings to house small numbers of cattle. This shows that the farm is clearly an arable farm rather than one of mixed production, even into the 20th century. This is atypical, in general, for a Worcestershire farm where it is more usual to have a farmstead that includes shelter sheds along with crop processing buildings.

This concentration on the farming of arable land can be put down to the natural soils of the area. The geology of the area, the Bridgnorth Association (Ragg *et al* 1984, 114-116), forms part of a more extensive region of Triassic sandstone, concentrated in the north of Worcestershire. This region was shown to be one of the major arable regions of the county in the Land Utilisation Survey of the 1930s (Buchanan 1944, 605-609) as it also historically had been. Therefore it is not surprising that there are two large threshing barns at Upper Blackstone Farm. Buchanan, however, mentions the fact that the soil is light and declines quickly needing fertilising in order to continue cropping. In earlier periods, the crops needed to be rotated with grass to restore the land. The use of a large Dutch barn on the site is therefore typical for this area.

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Napoleonic Wars were being fought. As part of this the French ports were blockaded to English ships and therefore the supply of food to the country was cut off. As a result, the government called on an increased supply of wheat and cattle to be produce in order to feed the population. At this time the second large threshing barn at Upper Blackstone was constructed and it most likely that the farm was producing extra wheat as a result of this need for a greater supply of food. Also the soils of the area were more conducive to arable farming than dairy farming (Buchanan 1944, 605-609), as testified by the long term production of crops on the farm.

Threshing barns are the most important structure in a farm as the crops provides wheat for flour and food, fodder for animals, a seed crop for the next year, oats for work horses and straw for bedding. The processing of the crop by threshing provided practical work for the workforce in the winter time when there was little to do around the farm. Of course this employment was lost with the invention of threshing machines and the 19th century large threshing barn at Upper Blackstone has evidence of the use of such machinery in it. The adjoining building contains the remains of machinery (Plate 54) and a circular mark covering the floor of one of the bays appears to delineate the position of the threshing floor (Plate 55).

Along with the threshing barn, the other most important building was the granary as this is where the grain and oats were stored. A granary was constructed close to the farmhouse, often within the farmhouse, in order to better protect this important commodity of a future crop and

food supply. The kennel beneath the external steps was also a way of protecting the grain from being stolen by rats.

In the late 19th century the cattle plague (pleuropneumonia), devastated the dairy farmers in Britain and caused the use of cast-iron stable and cow house fitting to spread across the country. It was felt that the traditional wooden fittings of troughs, hayrack stalls and so on, retained the germs and perpetuated the disease among the herds (Grundy 2010). At Upper Blackstone, the use of cast iron and ceramic fittings seems to have been used alongside the tradition mood fittings. For example, one of the stables has a brick built trough lined with ceramic tiles but with a wooden edge to the trough. Another building has a cast iron water bowl and tethering post but a wooden hayrack. It seems this was one way to avoid the exorbitant price of completely replacing all the fittings with cast iron ones.

5.1 **Research frameworks**

There is an already recognised need to record agricultural buildings, prior to their loss, which can be seen not only by existing publications, such as Brunskill's Traditional farm buildings of Britain already in its fourth edition (Brunskill 2007), but also by the Historic Farm Buildings Characterisation project which is happening country wide. From this we will be able to identify the character of farm buildings in our region but also compare regional differences. Other studies have concentrated on individual areas such as The development of farm buildings in Western Lowland Staffordshire up to 1880 (J E C Peters 1969) and Historical Farm Buildings of Wales (E Wiliam 1986). An analysis of the agrarian settlement and buildings of Worcestershire is one which is missing in the library of historic building studies.

The Post Medieval Research Agenda for the West Midlands Regional Research Framework for Archaeology (<http://www.iaa.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/wmrrfa/seminar.shtml>) has been partly published. The seminar paper dealing with the early post-medieval in Worcestershire (Atkin 2003) mentions the importance of recording farm buildings but also the lack of any synthesis for the county 'There has been increasing building recording on farms and barns over the past five years...But we are not yet at a stage at which synthesis has been undertaken'.

6. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

Archaeological building recording was undertaken on behalf of Olympia Homes Ltd at Upper Blackstone Farm, Stourport Road, Bewdley, Worcestershire (NGR 7952 7407; HER 42125). Recording at Upper Blackstone Farm consisted of producing a record of all the buildings of the farmstead with the exception of the farmhouse. The farmhouse and adjacent large L-shaped barn are listed buildings. The buildings date back to the mid-late 18th century, when the farmhouse and a large threshing barn were constructed. The development of the farm continued through the 19th century with the construction of a further threshing barn, stables, and a timber built Dutch barn. The second threshing barn was constructed at the time of the Napoleonic Wars in order to meet the increased demand for grain as the import of food products was blocked by the French. The development of the farm in the 19th century included using new technological products such as cast iron water bowls and ceramic lined feed troughs, to combat the spread of cattle flu, and the use of machinery for threshing.

7. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project: Mike Humphries (Olympia Homes Ltd), Mike Glyde (Worcestershire County Council).

8. Personnel

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Shona Robson-Glyde. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Hal Dalwood. Fieldwork was undertaken by Elizabeth A Curran and Shona Robson-Glyde, and illustration by Carolyn Hunt and Shona Robson-Glyde..

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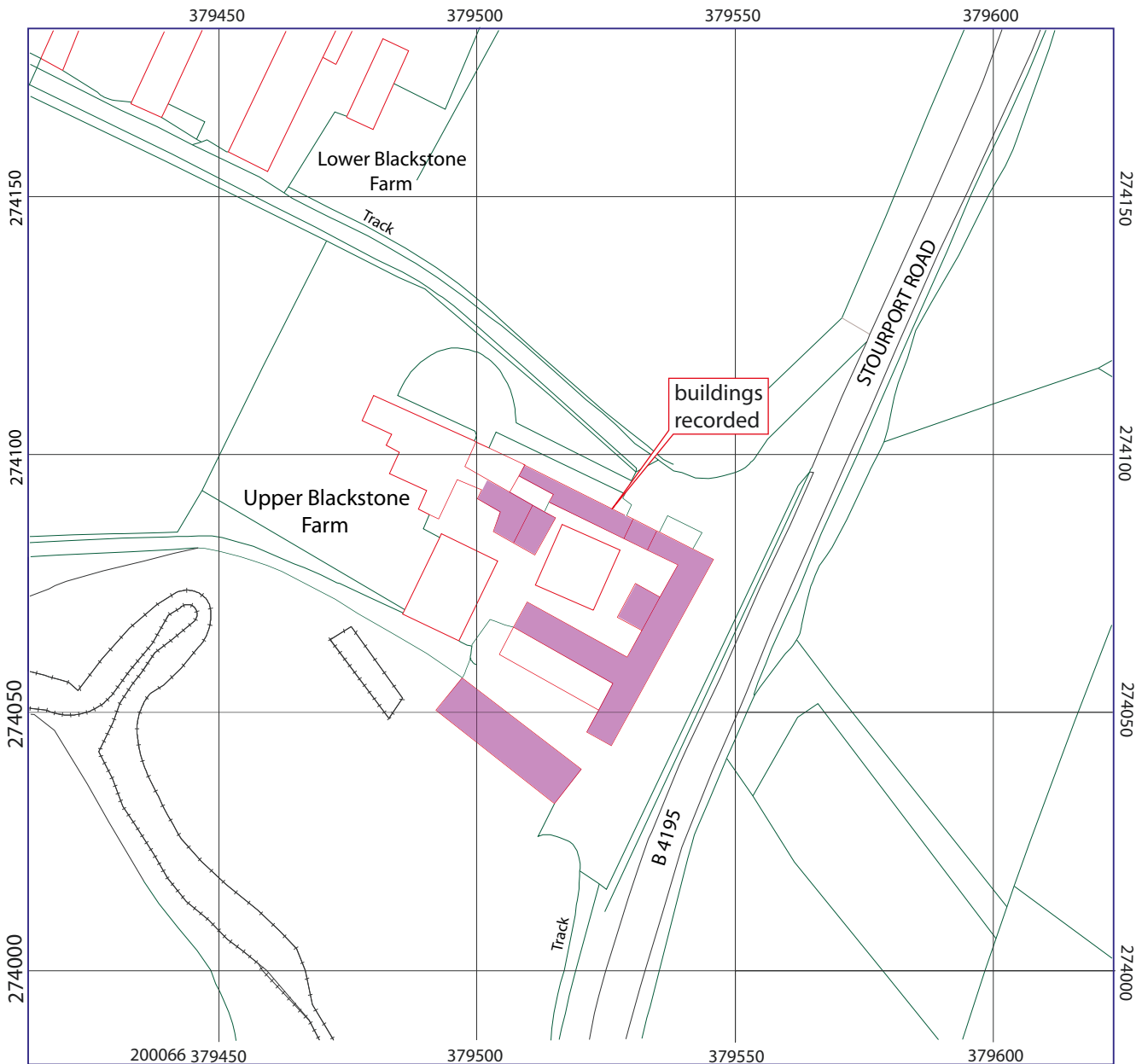
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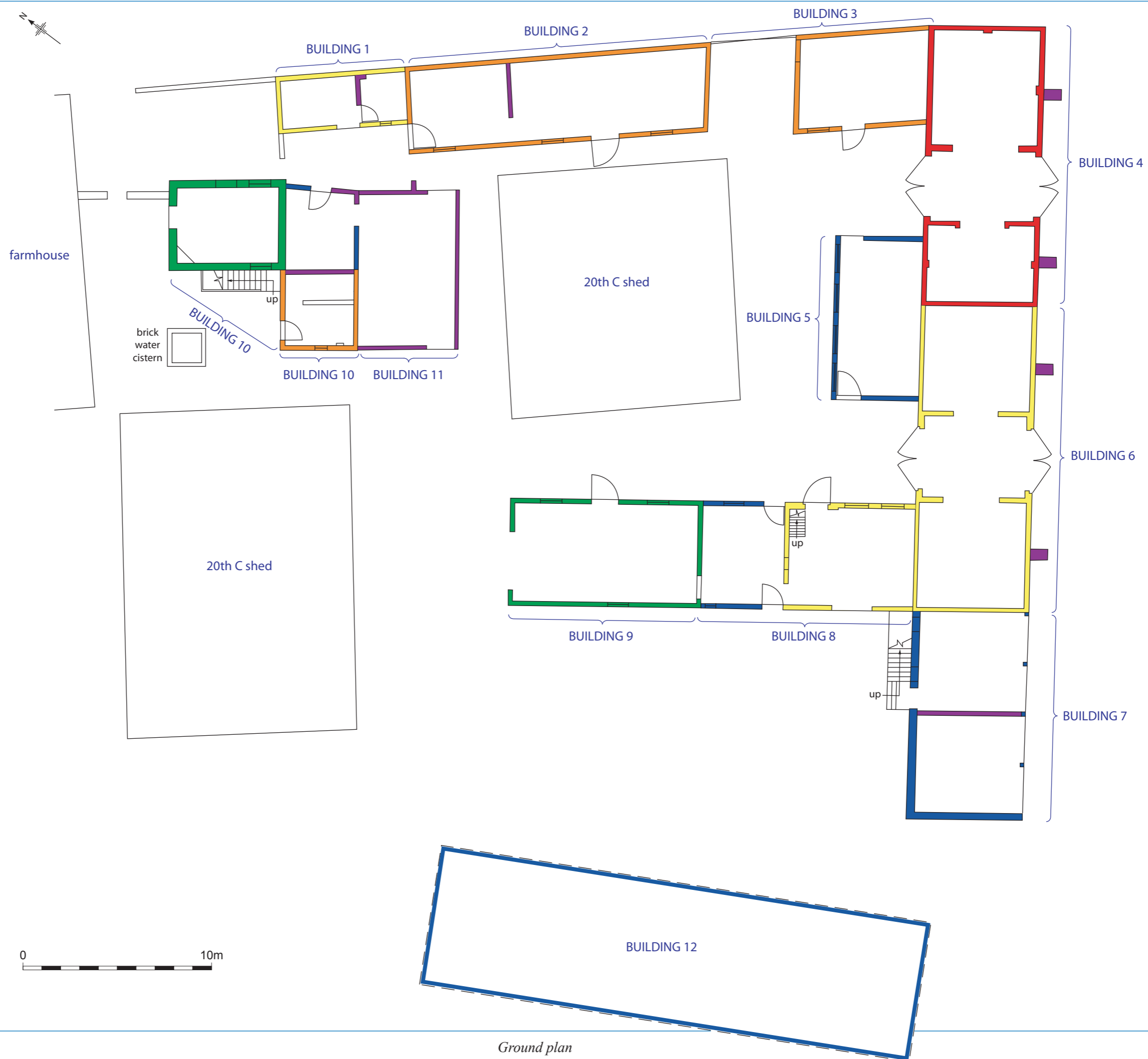
Figures



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Location of Upper Blackstone Farm

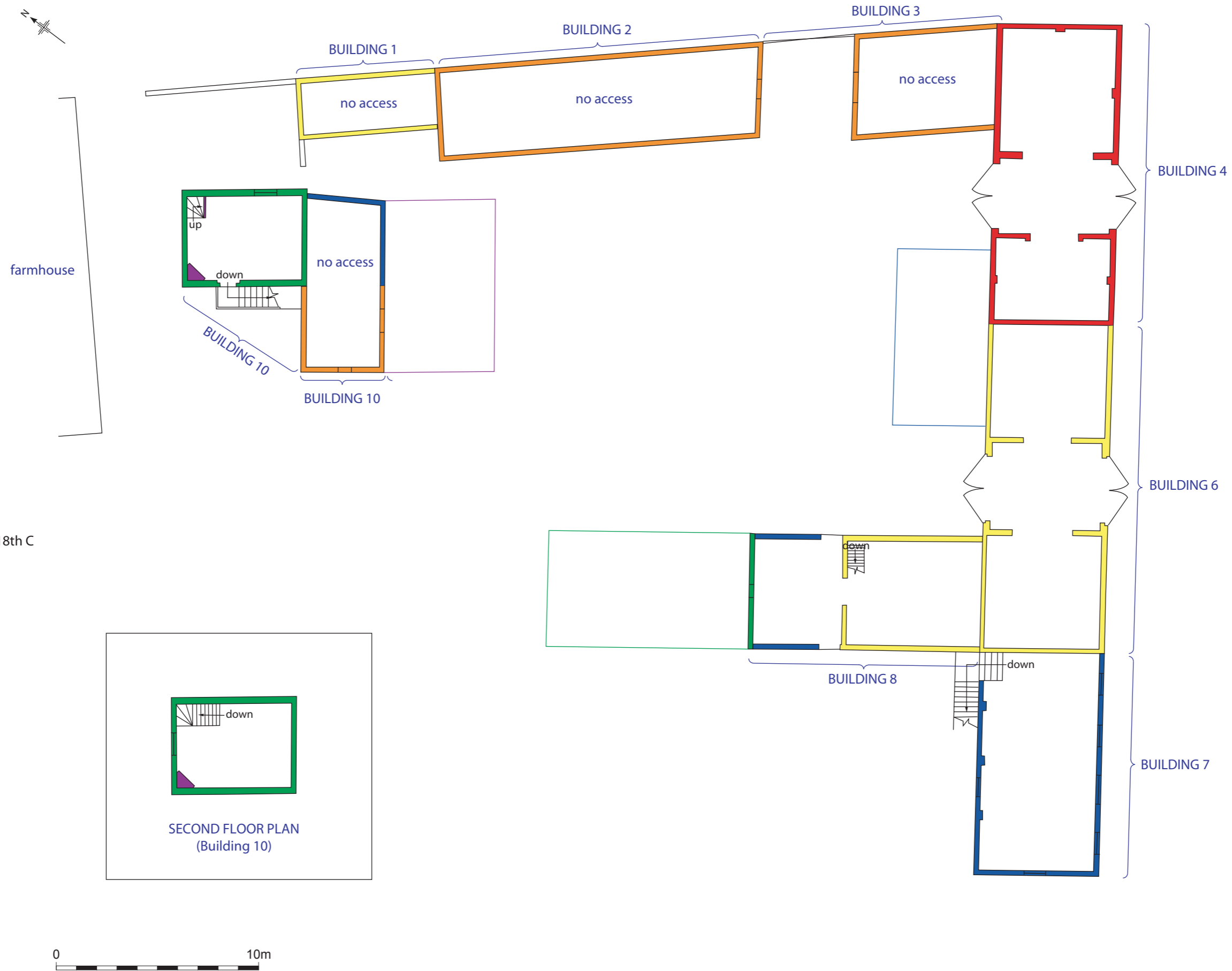
Figure 1



- mid to late 18th C
- late 18th C
- early 19th C
- mid 19th C
- late 19th C
- early 20th C

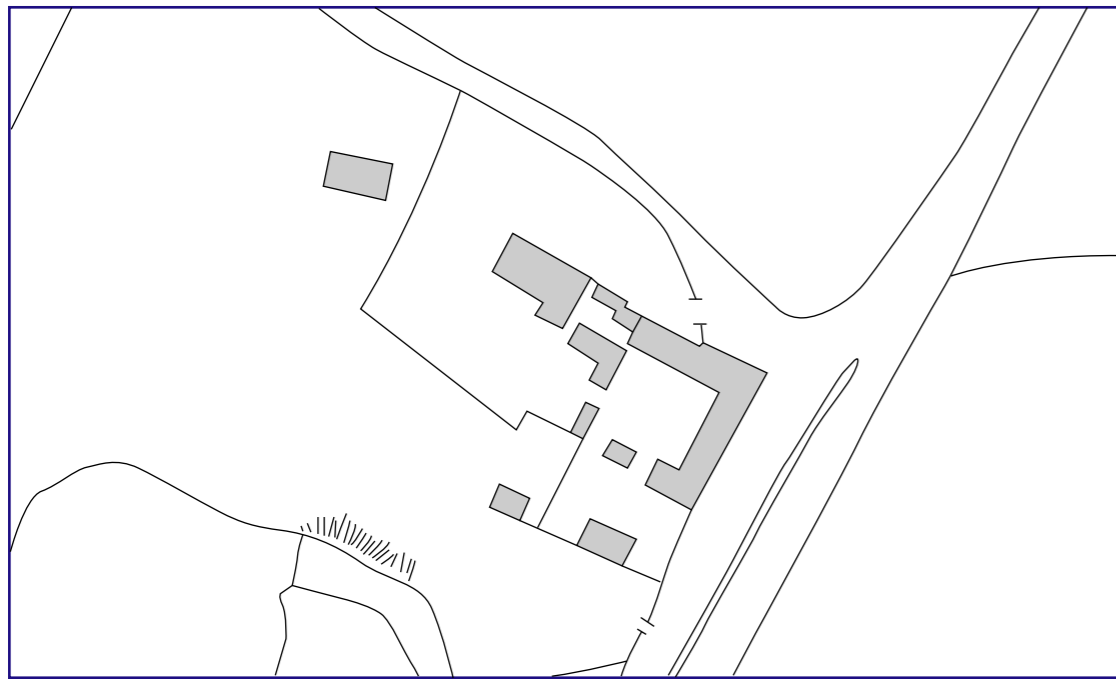
Ground plan

Figure 2



First and second floor plans

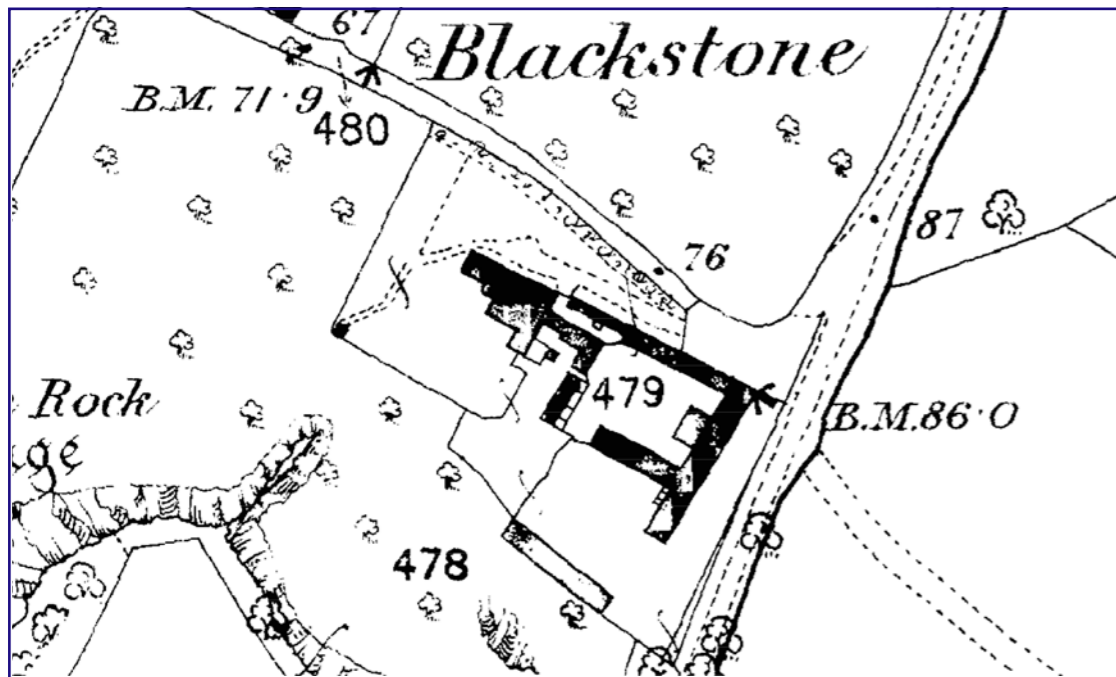
Figure 3



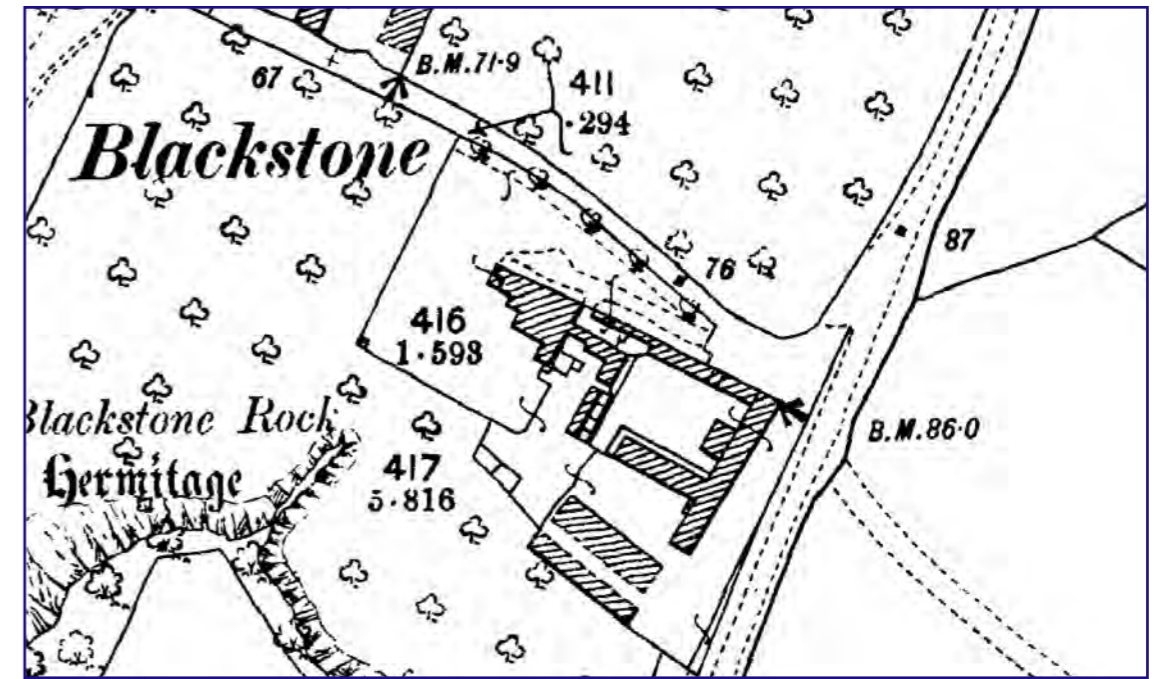
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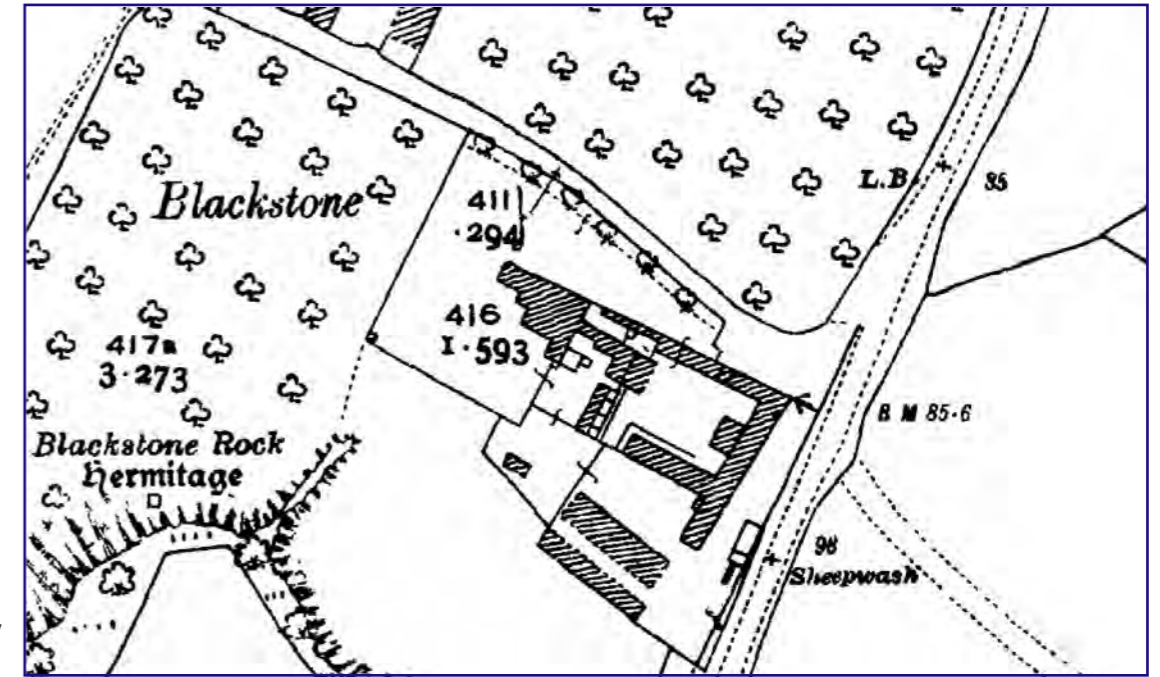
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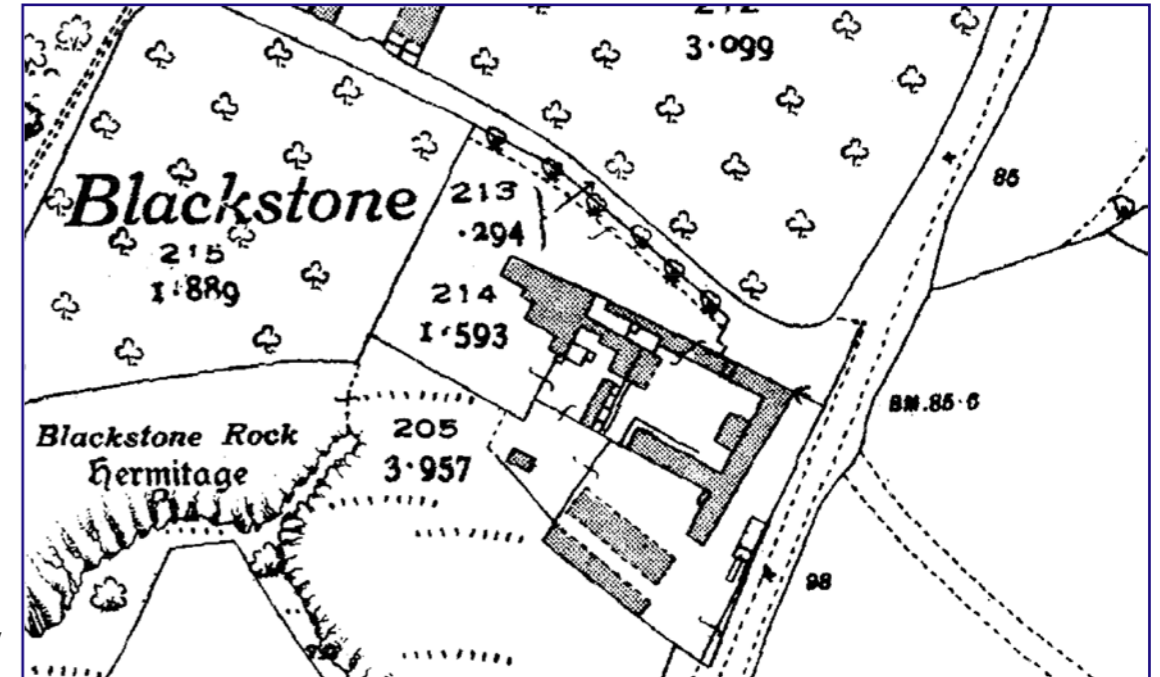
1884 - 1896 Ordnance Survey



1902-1903 Ordnance Survey



1927 Ordnance Survey



1938 Ordnance Survey

Plates



Plate 1: Brick built farmhouse at Upper Blackstone Farm, view south west



Plate 2: The south east elevation of threshing barn, Building 4



Plate 3: The basket arch of the threshing barn, as seen in the north west elevation, Building 4



Plate 4: North east elevation of Building 4, including pitching eye



Plate 5: North east elevation of Building 2



Plate 6: North east elevation of Building 3



Plate 7: Cast iron 'hit and miss' ventilators, as seen in the north east elevation of Building 3



Plate 8: South west elevation of Building 3



Plate 9: South west elevation of Building 2



Plate 10: Interior of Building 2, showing feeding trough and a hay rack



Plate 11: Example of the ceramic tiles lining the feeding trough, Building 2



Plate 12: Evidence of the feeding trough within Building 3



Plate 13: South west elevation of Building 10



Plate 14: South east elevation of the 19th century threshing barn, Building 6



Plate 15 North west elevation of Building 6, including segmental arched opening

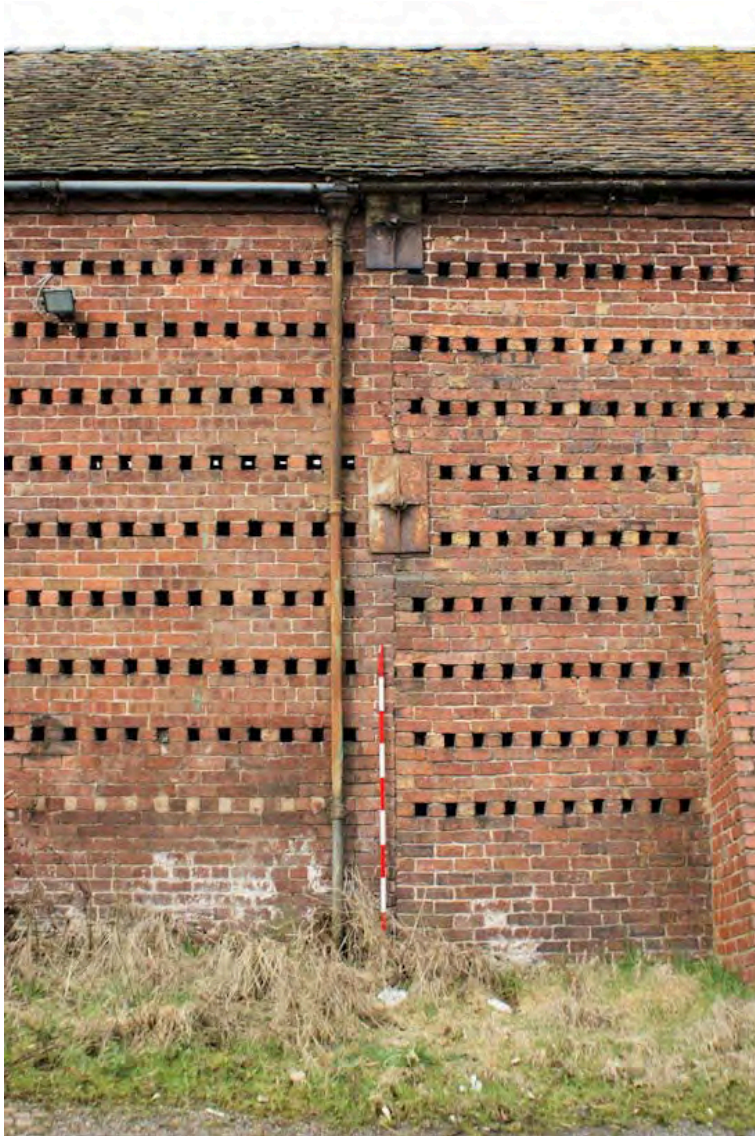


Plate 16: Building joint between Building 4 and 6



Plate 17: North east elevation of Building 1



Plate 18: South west elevation of Building 1



Plate 19: North east elevation of Building 8



Plate 20: The building break between the two structures, Building 6 and 8



Plate 21: Brick piercing, interior of Building 8, north west elevation of Building 6



Plate 22: Example of the window including wooden louvers, Building 8



Plate 23: South west elevation of 19th century Building 10



Plate 24: External staircase to provide access to the first floor, including dog kennel



Plate 25: Blocked opening visible in the north west elevation of Building 10



Plate 26: Building 9, view south



Plate 27: Detail of the construction technique used in Building 9, including large sandstone blocks



Plate 28: View of the pitching eye in the apex of the south east gable, Building 9



Plate 29: Site of the feeding passage seen in Building 9



Plate 30: The Dutch barn, Building 12, view south



Plate 31: Building 12, an example of a timber post standing on sandstone post pad



Plate 32: The internal view showing the queen-post construction of Building 12



Plate 33: North west elevation of Building 5



Plate 34: Detail of the window and pilasters in Building 5



Plate 35: View of the internal effluent drainage channel within Building 5



Plate 36: External view of the drain in the north west elevation of Building 5



Plate 37: Internal view of Building 10, stables



Plate 38: Mid-19th century extension to Building 8



Plate 39: Internal view of Building 8 showing the chute to the adjacent building



Plate 40: Internal view of mid 19th century extension to Building 8, showing end of chute, wooden box



Plate 41: South east elevation of the cart shed (Building 7)



Plate 42: Granary above Cart shed (Building 7)



Plate 43: External stairs leading to the Granary, Building 7



Plate 44: South east elevation of Building 11



Plate 45: Building 11, brick feeding troughs with ceramic tile lining and concrete covered divisions



Plate 46: Detail of the feeding trough within Building 11, showing the water system with iron bowls



Plate 47: Example of the concrete trough and stalls with cast iron water pipes and bowls in Building 5



Plate 48: Cast iron tethering post and chain, Building 5



Plate 49: The south eastern elevation of Buildings 4 and 6, with early 20th century buttresses



Plate 50: Detail of the buttress, Building 6



Plate 51: Dairy fixtures within Building 10



Plate 52: Staircase from the first to second floor within Building 10



Plate 53: Detail of the first floor fireplace within Building 10



Plate 54: Remains of machinery, Building 8



Plate 55: Circular marks on the concrete floor of Building 6

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 2 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 6 Photographic records AS3
- 416 Digital photographs
- 11 Scale drawings
- 2 Computer disks

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416