

Building recording at Stonehall Cottage Barn, Earls Croome, Worcestershire



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Project reference: P4765
Report reference: 2317
HER reference: WSM67778
Oasis id fieldsec1-244574

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Tim Cornah

Summary

Building recording was required to meet a planning condition relating to the redevelopment of a curtilage listed barn adjacent to the Grade II listed Stonehall Cottage, Quay Lane, Earls Croome.

A brief was prepared which specified that the buildings should be recorded to English Heritage specified standards prior to redevelopment works. This required photographing the exterior and interior of the building and annotating existing survey drawings. This produced an archive of Stonehall Cottage Barn before any changes were made to the building.

An element of historical research and synthesis was also carried out. Original records relating to Stonehall Cottage Barns were studied at Worcestershire Archives, along with online digitised historic mapping and other online sources.

Analysis of the buildings was based upon the recorded fabric and documentary research. The development of the buildings was reconstructed and illustrated on a phased ground plan. This has been reproduced at the end of the report along with relevant photographs.

Stonehall Cottage Barns are the remnants of a set of agricultural buildings which formerly stood in the curtilage of Stonehall Cottage but were largely demolished some time after 1938. On the parish tithe map of 1838 and subsequent Ordnance Surveys they are depicted as a U shaped rang of buildings to the north-east of the house. At the time of this study, they comprised a building used as an outhouse flanked by two brick walls.

Stonehall Cottage itself is thought to date to the 17th century, though no contemporary farm buildings survive from this period. The earliest element of the surviving agricultural buildings dates from the 18th century and appears to have been a barn, possibly a threshing barn with a door that faced into the yard and had ventilation slits. A further building was added to the south of barn, probably within the second half of the 19th century as suggested by the map evidence. This building was a stable.

An area of blackened bricks in the on fabric of the barn is evidence of a substantial fire and it is thought likely that this was the reason for demolition of all but a small part of the agricultural range. This fire is likely to have destroyed the historic roofs of the recorded buildings, of which only the former stable was re-roofed.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

Recording of a historic building was undertaken Stonehall Cottage Barn, Earls Croome, Worcestershire (NGR SO 86781 42230). It was commissioned by Mr C Morgan (the Client), who proposes the conversion to residential use of a barn, for which a planning application has been submitted to, and approved by, Malvern Hills District Council (reference number 15/01260/FUL).

The building is within the curtilage of Grade II designated heritage asset (NHLE 1082584), within the terms used by the National Planning Policy Framework. The building is also registered with the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER 53262).

The project conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council (WCC 2016) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2016).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (ClfA 2014) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The event reference for this project, given by the HER is (WSM67778).

2 Aims

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists defines the aims of building recording as 'a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building' (*Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures*, ClfA 2014a).

The aims and scope of the project, as detailed in the Brief (Section 3), are as follows:

- Level 3 standard is required prior to the conversion of the barn in order to ensure the preservation by record of this heritage asset in its current form. The aim of this survey is to:
 - Provide a descriptive and illustrative account and interpretation of the farm building, including discussion of its local, regional and national significance.
- A Level 3 record is defined as follows:
 - '... An analytical record, and will comprise an introductory description followed by a systematic account of the buildings origins, development and use, The record will include an account of the evidence on which the analyses has been based, allowing the validity of the record to be re-examined in detail. It will also include all drawn and photographic records that may be required to illustrate the buildings appearance and structure to support an historical analysis'. (*Understanding Historic Buildings – A guide to good recording practice*. Historic England 2006 p. 14).

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Timothy Cornah (BA (hons.), MSc); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA (hons), MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA).

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.3 List of sources consulted

Cartographic sources

- 1838 Tithe Map, Plan of the Parish of Earls Croome, Figure 2
- 1884 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10560
- 1902-4 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10560, Figure 2
- 1938 Ordnance Survey Map 1:25000

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2016).

Fieldwork was undertaken on the 1st of March 2016. The site reference number and site code is WSM 67778.

Building recording consisted of a photographic survey of the interior and exterior of the building, analysis of their development and annotation of existing survey drawings. All photographs were taken with photographic scales visible in each shot. The photographic survey was carried out with a Pentax digital SLR camera. All photographs were recorded on a pro-forma Photographic Record Sheet. Annotation of existing ground plans and elevations, and completion of pro-forma Building Record, complemented the photographic record.

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.

3.5 Building analysis

Analysis of the building was based on the study of the photographic record, building recording forms and annotated drawings. It was also informed by the documentary sources listed above. This allowed plans to be drawn up showing the structural development of the building.

The building as recorded is depicted in Plates 1-17. A phase plan has been reproduced as Figure 3.

3.6 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

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

4 Context

The village of Earls Croome is located within the valley of the River Severn, on its eastern bank. The topography is correspondingly low, with the site of Stonehall Cottage being at a height of about 16m AOD. The underlying geology is of Branscome Mudstone Formation, with no superficial deposits recorded (BGS 2016).

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) was searched within a radius of 500m of the site and the records are summarised below.

The HER records evidence for settlement of the area during the Iron Age and Roman periods, the most notable feature which is the Roman road from Worcester to Gloucester (WSM30539). Other Roman evidence. Earls Croome itself, to the south-east of Stonehall Cottage, developed in the Medieval era, and is included in the Domesday Book (WSM23358). Medieval settlement has been recognised by the recovery of various pieces of material culture of this date.

The built heritage within the 500m radius of the site is remnant from the 17th century onwards. Woodley Farm (WSM09187) survives from this date along with Stonehall Cottage itself (WSM 50144). It is possible that Stonehall Cottage had earlier origins given the presence of a possible moat to its immediate west (WSM07835), though its interpretation as such is far from certain. Emblem Villa, to the east of Stonehall, is thought to have been constructed in the 18th century (WSM39605) along with associated farm buildings (WSM39604).

These farms demonstrate the predominantly agricultural use of the area through the Post-medieval period. It is likely that it was during this time frame that the wider landscape took its current form with piecemeal and planned enclosure of the surroundings fields.

During the Second World War three buildings comprising a hangar (WSM44634), a storage building (WSM44635) and a barrack hut (WSM44636) were constructed close to the village.

Stonehall Cottage is grade II listed and described as follows

- *17th century, timber-frame and painted brick. Gable ended to front with plain tile roof. Renewed East side-wall chimney stack. One storey and attic, single room house. Gable ends brick to ground floor, central door to south gable, modern casement above. Collar- and tie- beam truss with queen posts. Three tiers of weathering to each gable. Three window west side, plastered ground floor. East side 19th century brick addition (NHLE 1082584).*

The farmstead is described as follows within the HER record

- *Partially extant 17th century listed farmstead with unconverted buildings. Regular courtyard of U-plan. The farmhouse is detached and set away from the yard. There has been significant loss (greater than 50%) of traditional buildings. Located within a loose farmstead cluster. Farmstead within or in association to a moated site (WSM53262)*

5 The building

5.1 Historical information

Stonehall Cottage and its associated buildings are shown on the tithe map of 1838, Figure 2. This shows the cottage as an L shaped structure with a pond to the west and a set of U shaped farm buildings to the north-east. Broadly the same arrangement is shown on the 1885 Ordnance Survey (OS) map and again in 1902-4, Figure 2. The 1884 and 1902-4 OS maps differ from the 1838 tithe map in that front of the U shaped buildings are parallel in 1838 and the south eastern element is slightly extended by 1884. This is likely to correspond to the Phase 2 Structure as outlined below.

The Phase 1 structure was to the north of this, with an entrance that faced into the yard to the west. The farm buildings are still visible on a 1938 OS map, but were subsequently largely demolished leaving a remnant former stable and two barn walls.

5.2 Building development

5.2.1 Phase 1: 18th century

The earliest phase of the building comprises a brick structure built upon a blue lias stone plinth wall (Plate 2 to Plate 4). It is only partially extant on three sides with the wall on the eastern side having been truncated at the northern end. There is a low recess close to this point (Plate 5). On the western side, the northern end of the wall was designed to finish at this point, suggesting an opening or door at this point (Plate 6). This opening was higher than would be required for pedestrian or animal access and is likely to have been for large door that would have opened to a threshing floor. The recess in the eastern wall may have housed a low level timber division, a feature also typically found next to a threshing floor and slits in the walls to encourage ventilation are also features typical of threshing barns. These are also present in the barn's southern former gable (Plate 14).

No roof or evidence for its former presence remained within this phase of the building. It is tentatively dated to the 18th century based upon its relatively thin gauge bricks and stone plinth wall below.

5.2.2 Phase 2 19th century

In the 19th century, a further single celled structure was added to the southern end of the Phase 1 structure (Plate 7). It is also brick built, with some blue lias stone being visible only under its eastern wall (Plate 8). It has a low arch-headed window on its western side with a wooden frame (Plate 9) and a further similar window on its eastern side (Plate 10) though the latter corresponded with internal floor level. The function of this is unclear but may have served as a place from which to remove manure and bedding from inside. It had no central mullion so such a function would be possible. The door in its southern gable end (Plate 11) was of a width which may be expected of stabling. The floor of the room is brick and spanned by two elm floor joists (Plate 12 to Plate 15). The ends of these above the doorway were placed upon an oak timber built into the brickwork. This timber showed evidence of having had a former use as shown by redundant mortice holes. The adjacent small round holes are likely to have been wattle stave holes, suggesting that this timber was once part of a wall frame (Plate 16). The common floor joists were Phase 3 pine replacements, though in the position of the original joists.

The original roof of this structure was replaced during Phase 3 as shown by modern timbers and a corrugated aluminium roof. The gable was probably also reduced at this point as the brick work did not survive significantly above the internal floor. Given that so much of the structure was missing, it is difficult to infer the use of the first floor space though a hayloft is possible.

5.2.3 Phase 3 Second half of the 20th century

At some time after the 1938 OS map, many of the farm buildings were demolished. The reason for the removal of these buildings may be suggested by an area of vitrification within the Phase 1 element (Plate 17) and some heat affected areas of stonework. This would suggest the buildings burnt down and were subsequently demolished, apart from the elements recorded here.

The floor of the Phase 1 element was concreted over and dog kennels added (Plate 2). A small breeze block division was also added in the south-east corner of the Phase 2 structure and the Phase 2 structure re-roofed.

6 Discussion

Whilst Stonehall House is thought to date to the 17th century, no contemporary farm buildings remained. The first surviving element was suggested to date from the 18th century and appears to have been a barn, possibly a threshing barn with a door that faced into the yard and had ventilation slits. This was first shown on the parish tithe map of 1838 as part of a U shaped yard to the north-

east of the house. A further building was added to the south of barn, probably within the second half of the 19th century as suggested by the map evidence. This building was consistent with stabling.

The farm yard buildings were shown again in 1938, but at some point after this, all but the recorded buildings were demolished. This demolition is likely to have followed after the buildings burnt down. This fire is likely to have destroyed the historic roofs of the recorded buildings. Only the former stable was re roofed in the 20th century.

6.1 Research frameworks

Farmsteads have been the subject of extensive study with general information assessments including Traditional farm buildings of Britain and their conservation (Brunskill 2007), The English Model Farm (Wade Martins 2002) and Historic Farm Buildings (Lake 1989). More detailed studies of particular areas have also been carried out including the development of farm buildings in Western Lowland Staffordshire up to 1880 (Peters 1969). Whilst these sources provide a framework for reference, they are not specific to the Worcestershire area.

The Worcestershire Historic Farmsteads Project, part of a country-wide English Heritage project to categorise farm buildings, has recently been completed and has allowed farmstead sizes and layouts to be tied to the landscapes in which they sit, for example (Lake, Hathaway and Robson-Glyde 2014). These allow comparison between farms in Worcestershire to take place and to identify areas where further research is needed.

7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology 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.

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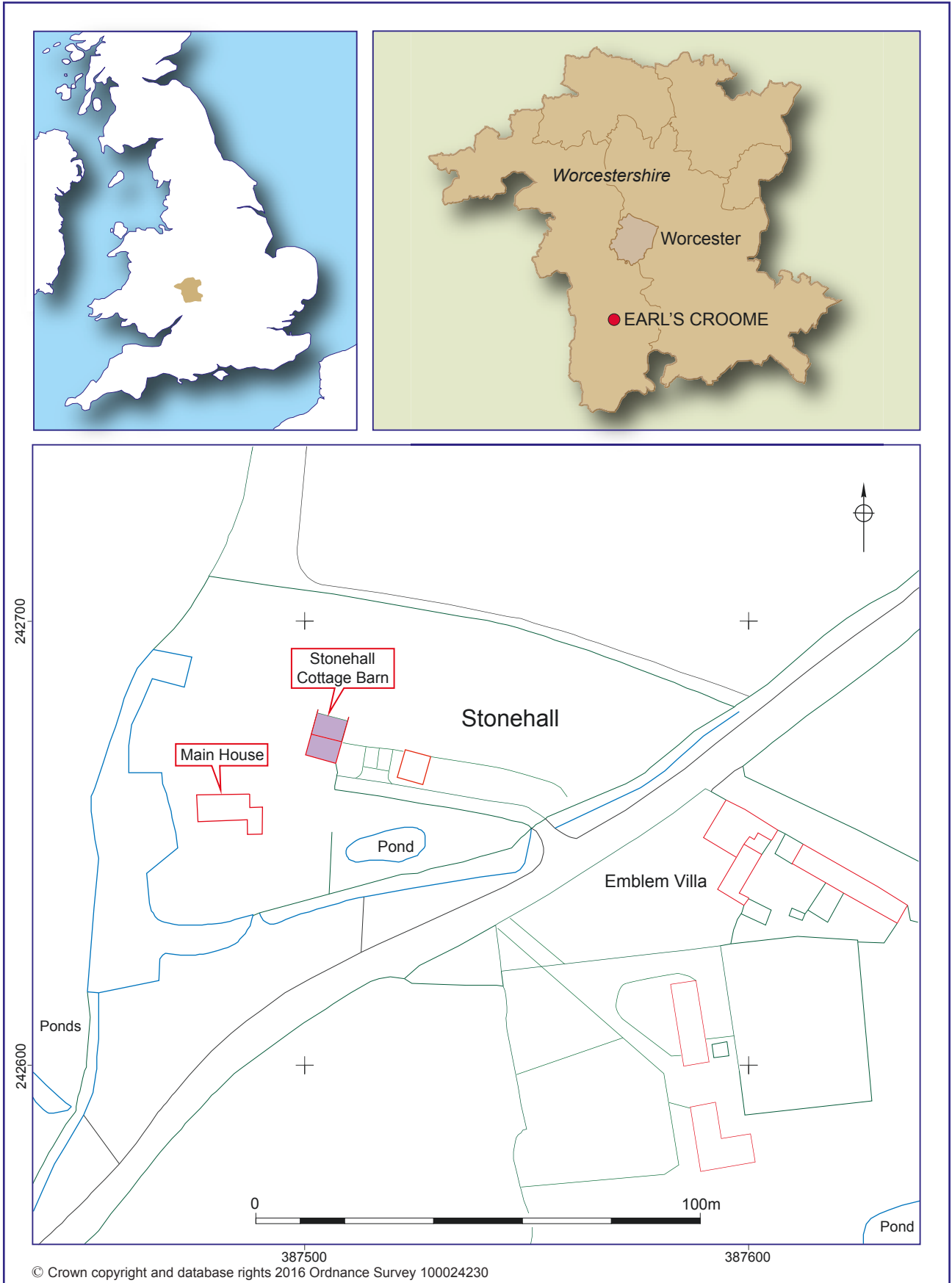
8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mr C Morgan the owner and Adrian Scruby Historic Environment Planning Archaeologist for Worcestershire County Council.

9 Bibliography

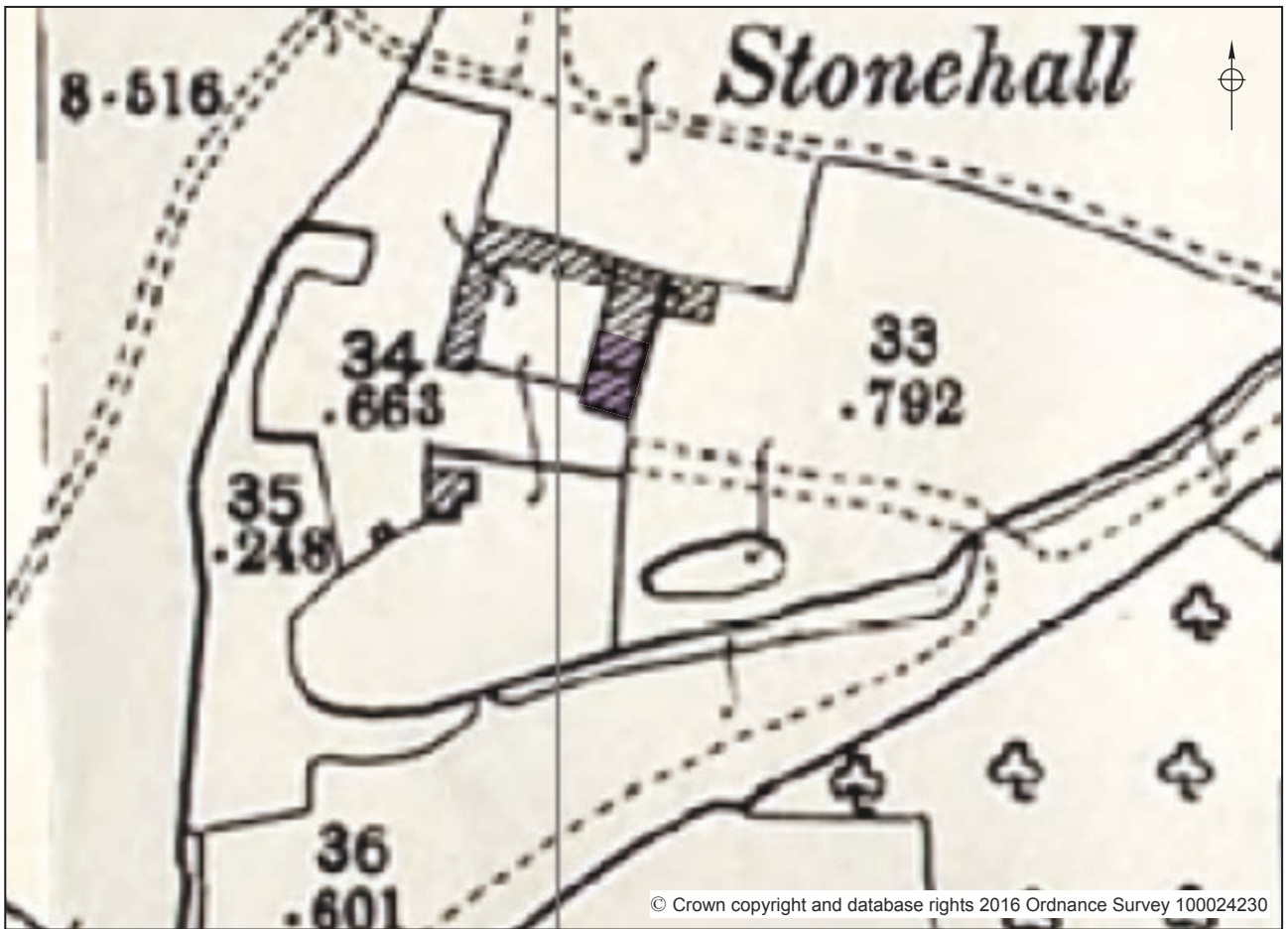
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Figures



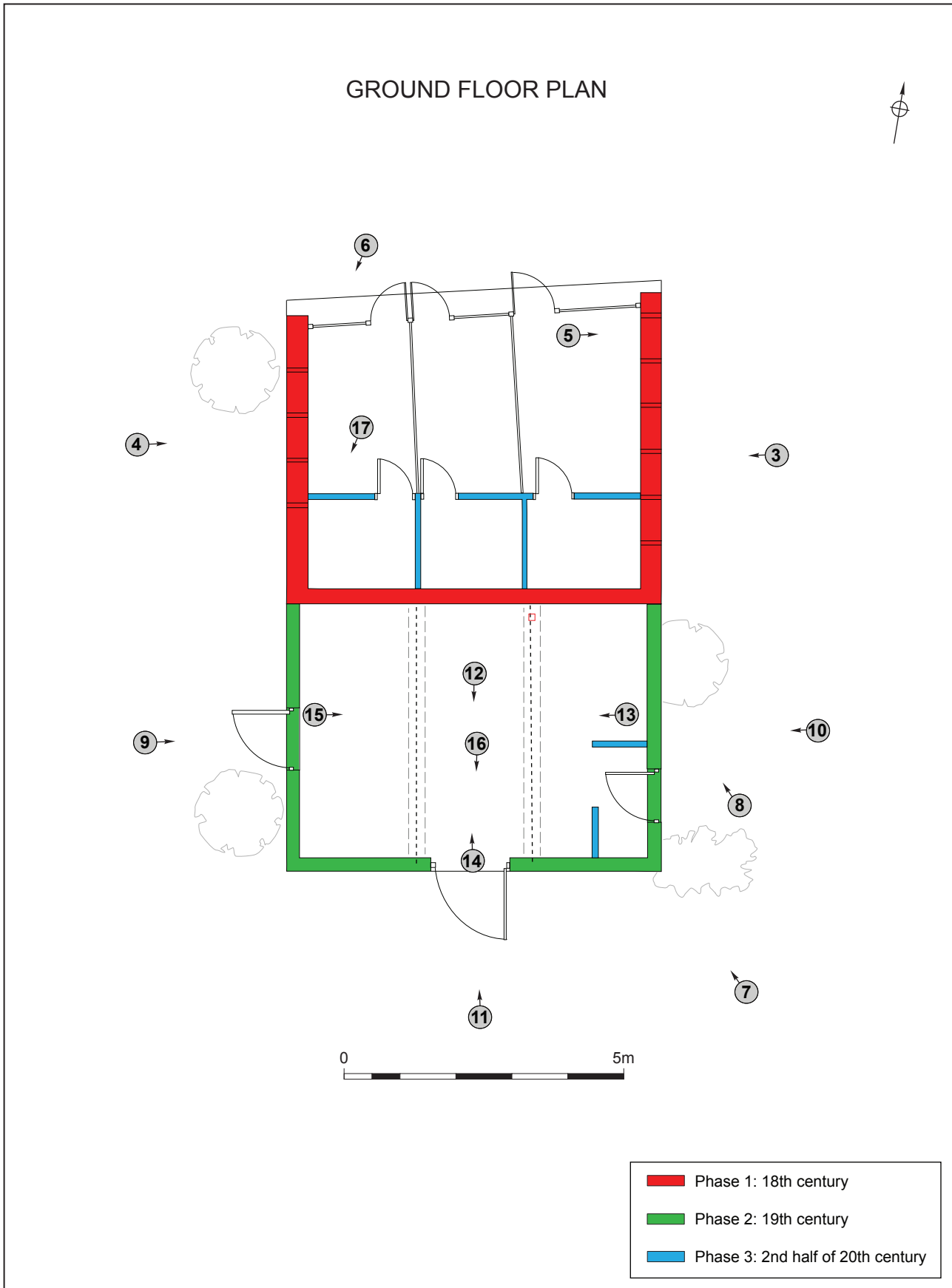
Location of the site

Figure 1



Extract from 1838 Tithe (above) and 1902-4 OS

Figure 2



Phase plan with photo locations (based upon Apex Drg No 100)

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1 The building and house, looking south



Plate 2 Phase 1 barn, looking south-west



Plate 3 Phase 1 barn, looking west



Plate 4 Phase 1 barn, looking east



Plate 5 Detail of Phase 1 barn, looking east



Plate 6 Phase 1 barn former entrance, looking south-west



Plate 7 Phase 2 stabling, looking north-west



Plate 8 Phase 2 stabling foundation, looking north-west



Plate 9 Phase 2 stabling, looking east



Plate 10 Phase 2 stabling, looking west



Plate 11 Phase 2 stabling, looking north



Plate 12 Phase 2 stabling, looking south

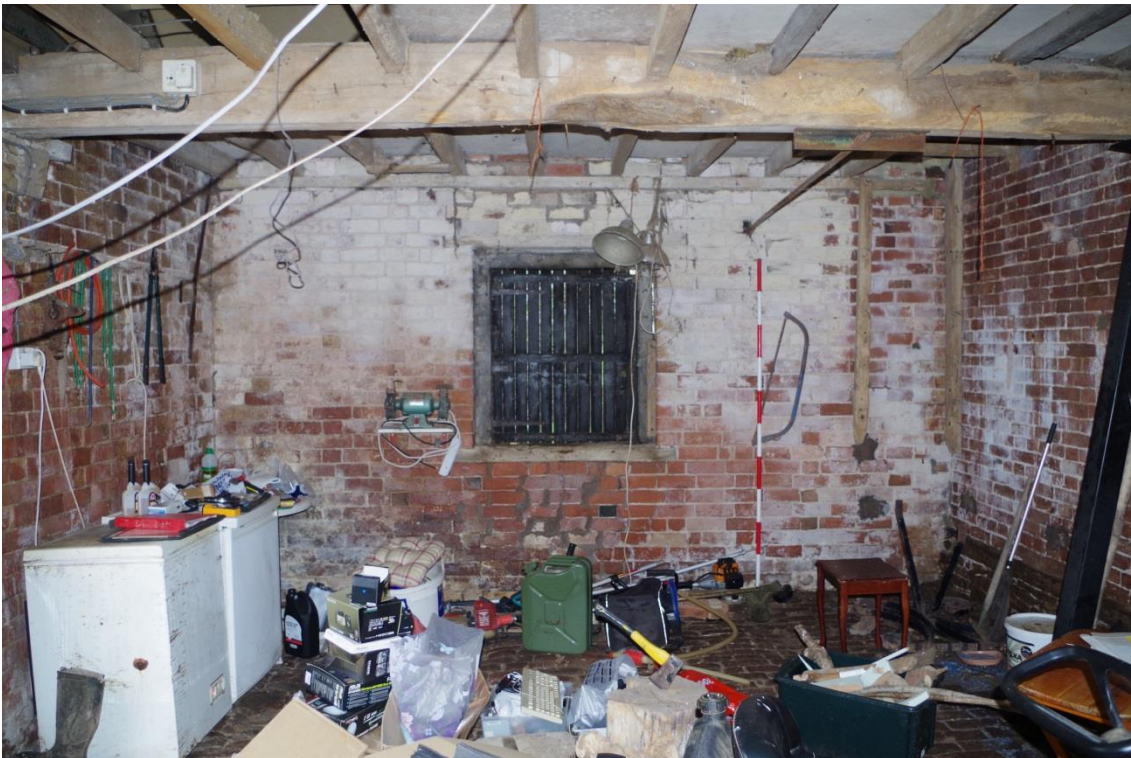


Plate 13 Phase 2 stabling, looking west



Plate 14 Phase 2 stabling, looking north



Plate 15 Phase 2 stabling, looking east



Plate 16 Phase 2 stabling, looking south



Plate 17 Evidence for a fire during Phase 3 as seen on the Phase 1 structure, looking south-west

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 67778)

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 3 Photographic records AS3
- 87 Digital photographs
- 2 Building Record Sheets
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

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