

Building recording at Obelisk Farm, Hockley Heath, Warwickshire



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With contributions by Tim Cornah

Summary

Following a fire which largely destroyed the roof of Obelisk Farm, Hockley Heath, Solihull, a programme of restoration works was planned and a planning application prepared.

Correspondence with Stratford on Avon District Council established that a programme of building recording was appropriate to record the structure as it stood and inform the restoration process.

Building recording to standards set by Historic England was undertaken in January 2016. This required photographing the exterior and interior of the building and annotating existing survey drawings along with further scale plans of elevations. This produced an archive of Obelisk Farm before any changes were made to the building.

Historical research and synthesis were also undertaken. Original records relating to Obelisk Farm were studied at Warwickshire County Archives as well as Shakespeare' Birthplace Trust archives. Historic maps and trade directories were also consulted. Online census records were accessed along with digitised historic mapping, aerial photographs and other online sources.

Analysis of Obelisk Farm was based upon the recorded fabric and documentary research. The development of the building was reconstructed and illustrated on phased ground plans and elevations. These have been reproduced at the end of the report along with relevant photographs.

The buildings at Obelisk Farm retain elements dating from the middle of the 16th century that were rebuilt and remodelled throughout the subsequent centuries. The positioning and layout of the house from its earliest phase appeared to respect the position of the chapel. This timber framed building retained an essentially medieval layout with its lower service end, as seen by the position of the fireplace, facing away from the chapel and estates to the west and north-west. The evidence for the layout of the house suggested two rooms on the ground floor with the potential for first floor rooms. One of the ground floor rooms appears to have been an open hall. Open halls are typical with smoke bays or smoke hood, which themselves date to the middle of the 16th century. The building was further developed in the 16th to 18th centuries, with the former fireplace being removed and two chimneys added. Whilst nothing is known of the farm during its earliest phase, the scale of the house is suggestive of occupancy by a yeoman farmer. In 1567 Edmund Fulwood granted lands to support a resident priest at the adjacent chapel, so the possibility remains that this house was built and the farm established for this purpose. By late 18th century, the farm had a mixed economy of both arable and pastoral.

The 19th century saw a substantial rebuild of the house, though keeping its general layout and facing. The rebuild was largely brick and consisted of extra living space with the earlier service elements of the house being retained. This change may have coincided to some degree with the move to an increasingly pastoral use of the wider farm, possibly based on a single economy such as dairy. This is supported by the addition of a dairy to the house in the mid-19th century. The buildings of the farm also changed to a significant degree in the middle of the 19th century with a threshing barn being added showing that some element of arable production was retained. The house and farm buildings remained largely unchanged throughout the rest of the 19th and 20th centuries. The predominant economy of the farm in the second half of the 20th century was dairy, as it remains.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

Recording of a historic building was undertaken at Obelisk Farm, Hockley Heath, Solihull (NGR SP 14623 71663). It was commissioned by Jonathan Symonds of David Symonds Associates (the Client) on behalf of their clients, Alne Estates. Obelisk Farm house has been damaged by a significant fire which largely destroyed the roof. The owners intend reconstruction of the house. A planning application for restoration works has been submitted to Stratford-on-Avon District Council (15/03257/LBC). This document is an interim report, documenting building recording undertaken prior to restoration works. Further recording will be undertaken during the reconstruction process.

The building is a designated heritage asset (grade II), within the terms used by the *National Planning Policy Framework*. The building is also registered with the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER; DWA2528).

No brief was prepared by the curator but the project conforms to the generality of briefs within the county. 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).

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 of the project are to complete a programme of building recording of

- Obelisk Farm, to Level 4 as defined by English Heritage (2006).

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Timothy Cornah (BA (Hons.), M.Sc); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA (Hons), M.Sc). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA). Adam Stanford (AerialCam) carried out the UAV flight, pole photography and subsequent photogrammetry.

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

- 1842 Tithe Map of the Hamlet of Nuthurst (IR30-36-107) Available from the National Archives, Figure 9
- 1886 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10560 Figure 10
- 1903 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10560 Figure 11
- 1914 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10560

- 1937 Ordnance Survey Map 1:2500

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

- (DR473-28) Survey and valuation of the estate belonging to the co-heiresses of the late Andrew Lord Archer, 1790-91. Available at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives
- (DR473-34) Agreement concerning the division of the Archer inheritance, dated 3 July 1812, including a plan. Available at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives
- (ER6/129/2) Umberslade Hall estate sales particulars dated 21 July 1825. Available at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

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

Fieldwork was undertaken between 11 January and 18 July 2016. Further field work may be undertaken during the building works.

Building recording consisted of a photographic survey of the interior and exterior of the buildings, analysis of their development, annotation of existing survey drawings and measured survey. All photographs were taken with photographic scales visible in each shot. The photographic survey was carried out with a Sony α 350 digital SLR camera as well as Black and White film photography. 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 and Building Phase sheets, complemented the photographic record along with measured drawings completed to scale. Measured drawings were completed from rectified photographs, as not all elevations were accessible. Further photography was undertaken using a UAV (drone) and a camera elevated on a pole in order to produce a rectified plan of the roof structure as well as creating a site archive.

The project conformed to the specification for a level 4 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 'a comprehensive analytical record' that will 'clarify the building's history in so far as it may be deduced from the structure itself' as well as 'draw on the full range of available resources and discuss the building's significance in terms of architectural, social, regional or economic history'.

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, annotated drawings and measured 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 Plate 1 to Plate 65. A phase plan and elevations have been reproduced as Figures 2-8. The location and direction of the plates are shown on Figures 10 and 11

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 to date.

4 Context

The geology of the site is recorded as Arden Sandstone Formation, with overlaying superficial glacial deposits of sand and gravel (BGS 2016). The farm is located on a slight high point in the landscape created by stream valleys to the west, south and east.

The following information is derived from Warwickshire Historic Environment Record data, unless stated otherwise. The record was searched within a radius of 1km, centred on Obelisk Farm with the exception of Hockley Heath which is part of the Solihull Metropolitan Borough.

Whilst a single landscape feature in the form of a potential Iron Age earth work (MWA5610, MWA5608) suggests prehistoric use of the area, it was not until the medieval era that widespread land use is evident, deriving firstly from four areas of remnant ridge and furrow, one of which is located immediately to the north of Obelisk Farm. To the north west of the farm was the site of the former Clay Hall (MWA1080), home of the Fulwood family and first recorded within the 12th century. It was named as Clay Hall within the 14th century with a private chapel and potentially demolished by the 18th century. It is marked as Clay Hall on a 1656 map of Warwickshire (Harvey and Thorpe 1959).

The site of the extant mortuary chapel 36m to the north of the farmhouse is believed to have had medieval origins (MWA993) and has been linked to the Fulwood family. A chapel at Nuthurst is recorded as existing by 1216 and in 1567 Edmund Fulwood granted lands to support a resident priest and for the repair of the chapel. Whilst some services are known to have been held in the chapel during the following centuries, the building deteriorated and was ruinous by 1730. It was replaced by the extant building in 1834, which in turn fell out of common usage by 1880 (MWA5132). The building is shown on the 1842 Tithe Map, Figure 5, though is of a slightly different layout to the extant building.

Whilst the current house at Umberslade dates to the 17th century, a medieval origin is also suggested. This is shown by the presence of a moated site within the park (MWA1076). The estate of Umberslade was given to Robert Archer in the 12th century. The estate was further extended within the 12th century and stayed within the Archer family for 600 years until the early 19th century (VCH 1949). Associated with this estate are two fishponds, also suggested to be of medieval origin (MWA1082, MWA1233).

Much of the extant landscape at Umberslade was created in the post-medieval period (MWA8617). The wider park is thought to have existed by around 1630 and the house itself constructed between 1693-8, along with formal gardens and monumental avenue as shown on illustration of 1731. Many of these gardens were redesigned within the 1740s and the Obelisk next to Obelisk farm built in 1749 by William Hiorne of Warwick (MWA1085). This is a Grade II listed building. It was built as a focal point to be seen from the hall itself with the ball at its top originally being gilded and supporting an eight armed cross. A suggestion for its construction is that it was to celebrate Thomas Archer's elevation to a peerage in 1747, though is part of the prevailing tradition for large landscape monuments at this time.

The wider landscape is of a predominantly post-medieval character, with a turnpike road being established through Hockley Heath at this time (MWA4775). Whilst there are many small field

enclosures within the area that have irregular boundaries suggesting earlier origins, there is sufficient evidence for parliamentary inclosure as shown by regular field boundaries. This process was predominant within the 18th century, extending into the 19th century. Many of the farmsteads of the wider area date to the 19th century; such as Harrisons Farm (HWA10329), Lodge Farm (HWA16107), Lapworth Hill Farm, (HWA16109) and Lapworth Farm (HWA16112). Hazelwood House is a Grade II listed house suggested to be of circa late 18th to early 19th century date (DWA25376).

The 19th century also saw a significant number of building and rebuilding within the area, most notably relating to the chapels and churches. The first was the mortuary chapel as discussed above in 1834 followed in 1877 by the Christ Church Baptist Church (DWA2535) to the north of Obelisk Farm and commissioned by George Frederick Muntz Jnr of Umberslade Hall. It is a Grade II* listed building. East Lodge House (DWA2531) was also built for Umberslade Park, in the late 19th century and is also Grade II listed.

During the 20th century, a Grade II listed war memorial was constructed at Christ Church Baptist Church. Farms such as Nuthurst Grange Farm were also constructed within the 20th century (HWA1611), though may have had earlier origins.

5 The building

5.1 Historical information

A valuation document of the estate of Andrew Archer, dated to 1790-1, describes Old Chapel Farm (later Obelisk Farm, as detailed below) as being held in rent for seven years from 1789. The tenants surname was Horton, his first name possibly being Thomas. The document states that "the buildings consist of a farm house containing kitchen, parlour, pantry, dairy and brewhouse, three chambers and one cheese chamber, the whole in tenantable condition- a barn (brick timber and tile) two cart lodges, pig cots &c in tolerable good repair". The entire farm at this date was valued at £2175, 14 shillings and 7 pence. The yearly rent paid for the farm was £57, 10, 0, whilst this tenant also paid a rent of £27 for Parke Mead, also in Nuthurst. The farm at this time had two fields of wheat, one barley, one oats, one beans, one pasture, two fallow with two listed meadows and a further listed as hay, detailing a mixed farming economy (DR473-28).

Further valuation documents relating to the Umberslade estate of 1812 show Nathaniel Vyse occupying three lots, though these are not named. Two of the lots paid about £4 in rent a year where as a further paid £58, 10, 3 and is likely to be Old Chapel Farm (DR473-34).

In 1825 a further valuation document of the Umberslade estate mentions both Obelisk Farm and Old Chapel Farm. It is clear from the attached map that Obelisk Farm was to the north-west of the present Obelisk Farm and that the present Obelisk Farm was then called Old Chapel Farm. The farm at this time had 14 fields, one is listed as pasture, one meadow and the remainder being meadow/arable. This suggests an increasingly single use farm with pasture land predominating. The occupier at this time was Mr Nathaniel Vyse who also occupied land in Umberslade Park. The farm itself is described as having a "farm house, barn and two cart lodges &c". The annual rent of the farm at this time was £207, 3, 2, suggesting the addition of extra land and possible price rises (ER6/129/2).

The house is shown on the 1842 Tithe Map, Figure 5, though not in significant detail. The apportionment information (Warwickshire County Council 2016) documents that the house and land were owned at this time by one Edward Bolton King of Umberslade who owned a substantial amount of other land in the parish. It was occupied by one John Jeffcutt who occupied 22 fields. He is not registered as having any holdings in adjacent parishes. The farm at this time was therefore an area of about 174 acres. The house name is not registered within the apportionment data. This map does show a range of L shaped agricultural buildings to the north of the house. This arrangement broadly continued onto the 1886 OS map, though it is clear that the extant threshing

barn was added between these maps, as well as the buildings on the south side of the yard, closest to the house. This arrangement continued onto the mid-20th century OS maps and remained extant. The extant arrangement of the house is shown on all of the OS maps.

The farm house was designated as Grade II listed in the late 20th century and was described as follows.

Farmhouse. C17 with later additions and alterations including early C19 refronting. Brick with painted render and plain-tile roof. T-shaped on plan. EXTERIOR: 2 storeys; 3-window range. Rear single-storey range with attic. 3 pilaster buttresses to front facade. Part-glazed door right of centre with hood, flanked by canted bay windows with casements with glazing bars under hipped roofs. First floor has tripartite casements with glazing bars and wooden mullions. Dentil eaves band. Right end has off-centre ridge and rear internal stack. INTERIOR: has remains of timber-framing: to front room a jowled stud, chamfered beams, inglenook fireplace with bressumer beam. Exposed wall plates. Plank doors. Rear range has beam with deeply-cut chamfer; attic has exposed purlins. Forms a group with Obelisk at Umberslade Park (qv).

5.2 Building development

The phasing described below is illustrated on Figures 2 to 8 and Plate 1 to Plate 65.

5.2.1 Phase 1: mid-16th century

Bay lengths as discussed below were measured from cross frame to cross frame, as opposed to their width which was measured from wall frame to wall frame.

The earliest remaining element of the building was a timber framed structure made up of at least three bays. The two remaining bays were aligned east to west with a further, now removed bay, on its western end. The wall framing was of square framing with a mid-rail at a height of about 2.10m above the extant internal floor surface and ridge beam about 2.60m above the wall plate. This highlights that the building was designed with both a ground and first floor.

The wall framing was visible on three sides of the structure, though most complete on its northern side (*Plate 6, Plate 7* and Figure 5). The posts of the wall frames ran the full way from the cill beam, no longer extant, to wall plate and were braced by long straight braces which ran from the cill beam to bay posts. This type of framing is more typical of a 17th century building than 16th, but not enough absolute dating has been undertaken to state this with certainty. A possible door position was visible in the northern side (Figure 5) which would have led into the hall, as outlined below. No windows were seen throughout this building though a timber re-used within Phase 4 could have been taken from this structure (*Plate 8*). Two mortices are visible with at least two small rectangular cuts for mullions. Peg holes along its rear may relate to a sliding shutter.

A further piece of dating evidence is the fact that the timbers were converted using double trestle or pit sawing, leaving 80-90 degree saw marks on the timbers. This change in saw technique has been suggested to date from the early 1540s in Herefordshire (James 2012), though this has not been corroborated throughout the West Midlands.

The bay at the structures eastern end was a very narrow bay of about 1.20m in length. Both of the cross frames that make up this thin bay were constructed using a collar and queen struts with single trenched purlins and a ridge piece. This type of truss is not untypical of a 16th century date within this area as by the later 16th and 17th centuries raking V struts were added above the collar (Harris 1993). These were noticeably absent here. The entire roof framing was covered by common rafters which were horizontally set. These were of thin scantling, measuring roughly four by two inches and were mostly halved sapling trees, squared by axe then halved by saw. These tapered towards the roof apex.

Both of the A frames of the thin bay (Figure 4, Plate 9 and Plate 10) were closed, as seen by grooves for wattling closest to the faces of each frame. The eastern frame was also closed below the tie beam, as seen by studs below, though evidence for this in the form of grooves and mortices and pegs for studs was missing on the base of the tie beam of the western frame.

This leaves some difficulty in interpreting this thin bay. Such bays in timber framed houses relate to either a spere truss associated with a cross passage in a medieval building, or the position of a fire place from building broadly post-dating 1550. At around this time, houses were commonly built with smoke bays, smoke hoods or chimneys, often in conjunction with an open hall as in medieval buildings.

The interpretation of this as a smoke bay is difficult given the lack of wall framing below the tie beam on the western side. However, smoke bays open below the tie beam level have been suggested elsewhere (Steane and Ayres 2013, p275-6) and this scenario remains a possibility here.

It is possible that there was a structure below the tie beam such as a wattle smoke hood, or a brick or stone chimney. The latter seems unlikely as there was no gap in the common rafters to accommodate it whereas a smoke hood would fit between the rafters without leaving many obvious traces. This area of the rafters above this bay could not be closely inspected so evidence confirming this or otherwise was not seen. A problem with the theory of their having been a smoke hood is that where they were installed into new buildings, they were not known to be installed into a thin separate bay as existed here. A further feature which is missing throughout within this bay is the presence of smoke blackening, although the interior of this bay was later part of a bedroom so all such evidence may have been removed, along with modern fire damage

Prior to the mid-16th century, such buildings were constructed with open halls with a fireplace at the centre. Smoke hoods and bays went out of fashion quickly throughout the second half of the century as houses were designed with brick or stone built chimneys (Harris 1993).

The structure during this phase appears to have had a gable end to the east of the thin bay as the purlins are chamfered at this point and did not extend through the Phase 2 structure (Plate 15). Some remnants of the end wall frame were visible within the later kitchen below (Figure 6 and *Plate 16*). This frame is reconstructed on (Figure 7)*Plate 4*. To the west of the thin bay was the widest of the remaining bays which extended as far as two jowl posts visible at its western end on the first floor (Plate 17). The tie beam and roof truss associated with this were removed during subsequent phases although it is clear that its carpentered side faced east (*Plate 18*), meaning that it was an internal frame. This bay measured about 4 metres (13 feet) in length. This is likely to have been the hall of the house, and been open to the roof similar to its medieval predecessors. No evidence for floor joists was seen internally throughout any of the remaining wall frames.

The bay at the western end of the hall is only suggested by the presence of the jowl heads at that point (Plate 17) and the continuation of the wall plate through the Phase 4 wall on the northern side. There are no grooves for wattling on the jowl posts to suggest that this was a closed bay frame so the possibility remains of the building having a two bay hall. However, this evidence is slight so such an arrangement cannot be clearly suggested. A single bay hall is more likely with a fireplace at its "lower" eastern end.

If a single bay hall is presumed, the rooms to its west are likely to have been the equivalent of a solar in earlier structures, primarily used for habitation. This arrangement would leave no known space for service elements of the house such as pantry and buttery, rooms which were typically situated beyond the fireplace at the "lower" end of the hall. Detached service elements such as kitchens are increasingly being suggested for houses without inbuilt service elements (Walker 2000). This essentially medieval layout as suggested here changed throughout the later 16th and 17th centuries and service elements were often built at the "upper" end of the hall. Though this was more associated with houses designed without a hall open to the roof, it cannot be ruled out in this case

5.2.2 Phase 2 late 16th to 17th century

A further bay was added onto the northern side of the Phase 1 building. It was joined at wall plate level (Figure 8) so would have been broadly the same height as the earlier structure with a first floor also possible. The position of a former jowl post at its northern end and a partially visible dovetail joint into the top of the wall plate suggests that this bay had two roof trusses aligned east to west. This addition therefore created an L shape with the Phase 1 structure.

The style of the framing is similar to the previous structure, though with a small straight brace running from the bay frame to the wall plate (Plate 19 to Plate 21). This style is not closely dateable but would be consistent with a building of the second half of the 16th century or the 17th century.

The carpentered face of the northernmost bay frame appears to have been on its northern side as suggested by the presence of a groove on the northern side of the post, suggesting that this was an external frame. This is supported by a lack of pegging visible on the opposing face. No mortices for the gable end wall frame or internal floors were visible on its rear (Plate 21), but may be covered by paint and later finishes.

The northernmost bay potentially extended as far as a post standing in the Phase 4 sitting room and dairy (Plate 22). This would make a bay of about 3m in length. The floor joists visible in the Phase 4 sitting room (Plate 23) are in a position that is consistent with the framing of this phase but are likely to be later replacements. They had a groove to hold wattling on their underside that ran their entire length, not leaving any gap for an internal doorway. One had two mortices which have been reduced in depth, suggesting that this timber has been re-used twice.

The function of this bay remains unknown but may have been further living space. The configuration of the western end of the Phase 1 structure at this time is also unknown and it is possible that it was removed at this point and replaced by a Phase 2 structure which no longer remains. The fireplace visible within the Phase 4 living room retains elements of an earlier structure, as evident after plaster stripping (Plate 24 and Plate 25). This may have been constructed during this phase but it possibly relates to Phase 3 as 17th century chimneys were more commonly built with stone at their base and brick above.

5.2.3 Phase 3 circa 18th century

This phase consisted of a structure on the eastern end of the Phase 1 gable (Plate 26 and Plate 27). It is a separate structure due to new purlins being further trenched into the principle rafters of the Phase 1 cross frame and the extension of the wall plates by use of a scarf joint (Plate 28) which was joined by metal fixings as would be typical of an 18th century or later date. The ridge piece was destroyed by the fire but the common rafters remained and were horizontally set small scantling timbers similar to Phase 1. No significant weathering evidence on the Phase 1 gable existed, potentially suggesting an intermediary structure. It also retained some of the detailing of Phase 1, as demonstrated by the simple chamfers on the wall plates and purlins as they exit the gable end (Plate 29).

The walls of this structure were entirely brick built using bricks two and a quarter inch in width. Whilst not closely dateable, these are certainly likely to predate the brick taxes of the 1780s, after which the gauge of individual bricks became wider in order to incur less tax. Three former window positions were seen on the ground floor (Plate 30), with a further on the first floor. Above this first floor window was a reused former wall plate, complete with a dovetail joint and rafter scotches. The dovetail is of a different type to that seen on the Phase 1 building, so is likely to have been part of another, unknown building (Plate 31). The use of this addition is unclear, though service function such as cold storage with a chamber above seems likely. One surviving kitchen beam had a simple step-stop chamfer which would not be untypical of a 17th or 18th century building (Plate 34).

The fireplace remaining within the kitchen (Plate 32) was added after the additional bay, though it is not likely to have been significantly after. The large beam bisecting the kitchen (Plate 33) was built into this fireplace and truncated the lower framing of the Phase 1 structure. Certainly after this

point, the Phase 1 fireplace became redundant, and is likely that it was at this time that the tie beam of the Phase 1 western gable was truncated in order to make a larger chamber above.

The function of this ground floor is likely to have been a kitchen, as it remained. Where the kitchen at this point finished is unknown given the changes of Phase 4. It is likely that the east-west aligned floor beam of the kitchen is also a Phase 4 addition. This is the last point at which the Phase 1 open hall could have been floored over, but it may have been significantly earlier than that.

The suggested layout at this time appears to correspond relatively closely to the description of the building in 1790-1 (DR473-28). This is particularly true of the first floor as the document refers to "three chambers and one cheese chamber" suggesting the presence of four first floor rooms. The description of "kitchen, parlour, pantry, dairy and brewhouse" relates less clearly to the ground floor, though a brewhouse is likely to have been a separate exterior structure and a pantry may have been a relatively small internal division.

5.2.4 Phase 4 Early 19th century

The 19th century saw a major rebuild of the house including the addition of an almost entirely new wing. It was probably at this time that much of the Phases 1 and 2 western element was removed. The new building consisted primarily of a north to south wing that was accessed by an offset doorway in its western side (Plate 35) that opened into a baffle entrance (Plate 38) with living rooms on either side (Plate 39) to (Plate 43). The central living room reused the fireplace, which was itself rebuilt in Phase 5.

The northernmost room (Plate 44) was accessed originally from the central living room, as well as from the northern gable. This was a cellar and appears to have been used for cold storage as it has a brick plinth running around its wall. This would have kept goods such as cheeses from contact with the ground, therefore preventing decay.

The central living room was accessed from a hall to the east (Plate 45) and (Plate 46) with new walls under a new beam to make a staircase and partition the western end of the kitchen (Plate 33). A door was added into the eastern side of the kitchen, between the remaining posts of the Phase 1 bay frames along with two windows which replaced those of Phase 3. The hall in turn provided access to two small storage rooms (Plate 47 and Plate 48). It was probably at this time that the stairs in the south-east corner of the kitchen were built (Plate 49). The first floor room this accessed was also fitted with a fireplace (Plate 50).

The rest of the first floor was accessed by the central staircase which led into the floored over element of the former open hall (Plate 51 and Plate 52) which remained unheated. The gable window of this room was probably also added at this time (Plate 53).

From the central staircase was a step up into a hallway (Plate 54) which had rooms at either end with a room at its centre (Plate 55 and Plate 56). The northern and central rooms had inbuilt fireplaces and are likely to have been bedrooms whilst the northern room may have been used for storage. The floor of this room was at the height of the two blocked windows seen in the gable end, (Plate 36 and Plate 57) suggesting it was once lower.

The overall layout of this phase confirms to some degree the layout of the earlier building with service elements at the eastern end and living rooms to the west. It faces towards both the chapel and Umberslade Park. Whilst the bricks that were used to construct this phase were of the same dimension and form as Phase 4, these phases are differentiated by the detailing at their gables. Phase 3 had bricks set diagonally (Plate 58) whilst for Phase 4 every second brick was set horizontally to the building (Plate 59).

The roof timbers of this phase were supported on softwood purlins set into the brickwork. There is likely to have been a central ridge but this no longer remained. The common rafters were also of softwood and vertically set.

This phase is dated based on it being likely to post-date the 1790-91 description of the building, as it is clear this phase had five first floor chambers.

5.2.5 Phase 5 Mid-19th century

This phase of the house consisted of an extra room on the ground floor accessed from northern end of the central hall and externally to the north (Plate 60 and Plate 61) with a first floor room above that was accessed from a doorway cut through the Phase 1 wall (Plate 62 and Plate 63). The ground floor room was not heated and may have had a function such as a dairy whilst the room above had a fireplace, suggestive of a bedroom.

A further single storey structure was added on to the north-east corner of the kitchen (Plate 59) and (Plate 64) that was probably used for storage. These structures retained the eaves detailing with every second brick being set horizontally. This detailing was also clear on a number of the farm buildings such as the threshing barns. The layout of these buildings cannot be seen on the 1842 Tithe Map, Figure 9, but is visible on the 1886s OS map, Figure 10.

5.2.6 Phase 6 20th century

This primarily consisted of a joining passage on the northern side of the kitchen (Plate 64 and Plate 65) along with a number of internal fixtures. Many of the doors are likely to be of 20th century date (Plate 42) as is the first floor bathroom.

6 Discussion

The buildings at Obelisk Farm retain elements dating from the middle of the 16th century that were rebuilt and remodelled throughout the subsequent centuries. This timeframe encompasses much of the notable development of the area during which time both Clay Hall and Umberslade Estate were established. The foundation of the chapel next to the site may be relevant to Clay Hall, which was first recorded in the 12th century. By the 14th century, a private chapel is suggested within this estate.

The positioning and layout of the house from its earliest phase appeared to respect the position of the chapel. This timber framed building retained an essentially medieval layout with its lower service end, as seen by the position of the fireplace, facing away from the chapel and estates to the west and north-west. The evidence for the layout of the house suggested two rooms on the ground floor and the potential for first floor rooms also. One of ground floor rooms was likely to have been an open hall. Open halls are typical with smoke bays or hoods, which themselves date to the middle of the 16th century. The building was further developed in the 16th to 18th centuries, with at least two further bays added along with two chimneys. Whilst nothing is known of the farm during its earliest phase, the scale of the house is suggestive of a small scale farmer. Houses in Stoneleigh, Warwickshire with four rooms were associated within anything between 3 and 71 acre farms, as seen through probate inventories within the 16th century (Alcock and Miles 2013). In 1567 Edmund Fulwood granted lands to support a resident priest at the adjacent chapel, so the possibility remains that this house was built and farm established for this purpose. By late 18th century, the farm had a mixed economy of both arable and pastoral.

The 19th century saw a substantial rebuild of the house, though keeping its general layout and facing. The rebuild was largely of brick and consisted of extra living space with the earlier service elements of the house being retained. This change may have coincided to some degree with the move to an increasingly pastoral use of the wider farm, possibly based on a single economy such as dairy, possibly as a result of the expansion of the city of Birmingham at this time. This is supported by the addition of a dairy to the house in the mid-19th century. The buildings of the farm also changed to a significant degree in the middle of the 19th century with a threshing barn being added showing that some element of arable production was retained. The house and farm buildings remained largely unchanged throughout the rest of the 19th and 20th centuries. The predominant economy of the farm in the second half of the 20th century was dairy, as it remained.

6.1 Research frameworks

Few specific research frameworks apply to the type of building recorded here. Documents such as the Archaeology of the West Midlands: A Framework for Research (Watt 2011) state that standing buildings are an important part of the Historic Environment and should be recorded. It also states that the recording of standing structures is important in understanding below ground stratigraphy and features.

A recent piece of research within the midlands (Alcock and Miles 2013) surveyed a number of medieval buildings and collated historical data. This work argues that building of the scale of Obelisk Farm in its earliest phase are likely to be the home of small scale farmers or peasants, rather than more wealthy yeoman farmers as previously assumed. Buildings such as this are therefore important in redefining our view of the late medieval and early post-medieval landscapes.

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.

Following a fire which largely destroyed the roof of Obelisk Farm, Hockley Heath, Solihull, (NGR SP 14623 71663) a programme of restoration works was planned and a planning application prepared. Correspondence with Stratford on Avon District Council established that a programme of building recording was appropriate to record the structure as it stood and inform the restoration process

The buildings at Obelisk Farm retain elements dating from the middle of the 16th century that were rebuilt and remodelled throughout the subsequent centuries. The positioning and layout of the house from its earliest phase appeared to respect the position of the chapel. This timber framed building retained an essentially medieval layout with its lower service end, as seen by the position of the fireplace, facing away from the chapel and estates to the west and north-west. The evidence for the layout of the house suggested two rooms on the ground floor with the potential for first floor rooms. One of the ground floor rooms appears to have been an open hall. Open halls are typical with smoke bays or smoke hood, which themselves date to the middle of the 16th century. The building was further developed in the 16th to 18th centuries, with the former fireplace being removed and two chimneys added. Whilst nothing is known of the farm during its earliest phase, the scale of the house is suggestive of a small yeoman farmer. In 1567 Edmund Fulwood granted lands to support a resident priest at the adjacent chapel, so the possibility remains that this house was built and the farm established for this purpose. By late 18th century, the farm had a mixed economy of both arable and pastoral.

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8 Acknowledgements

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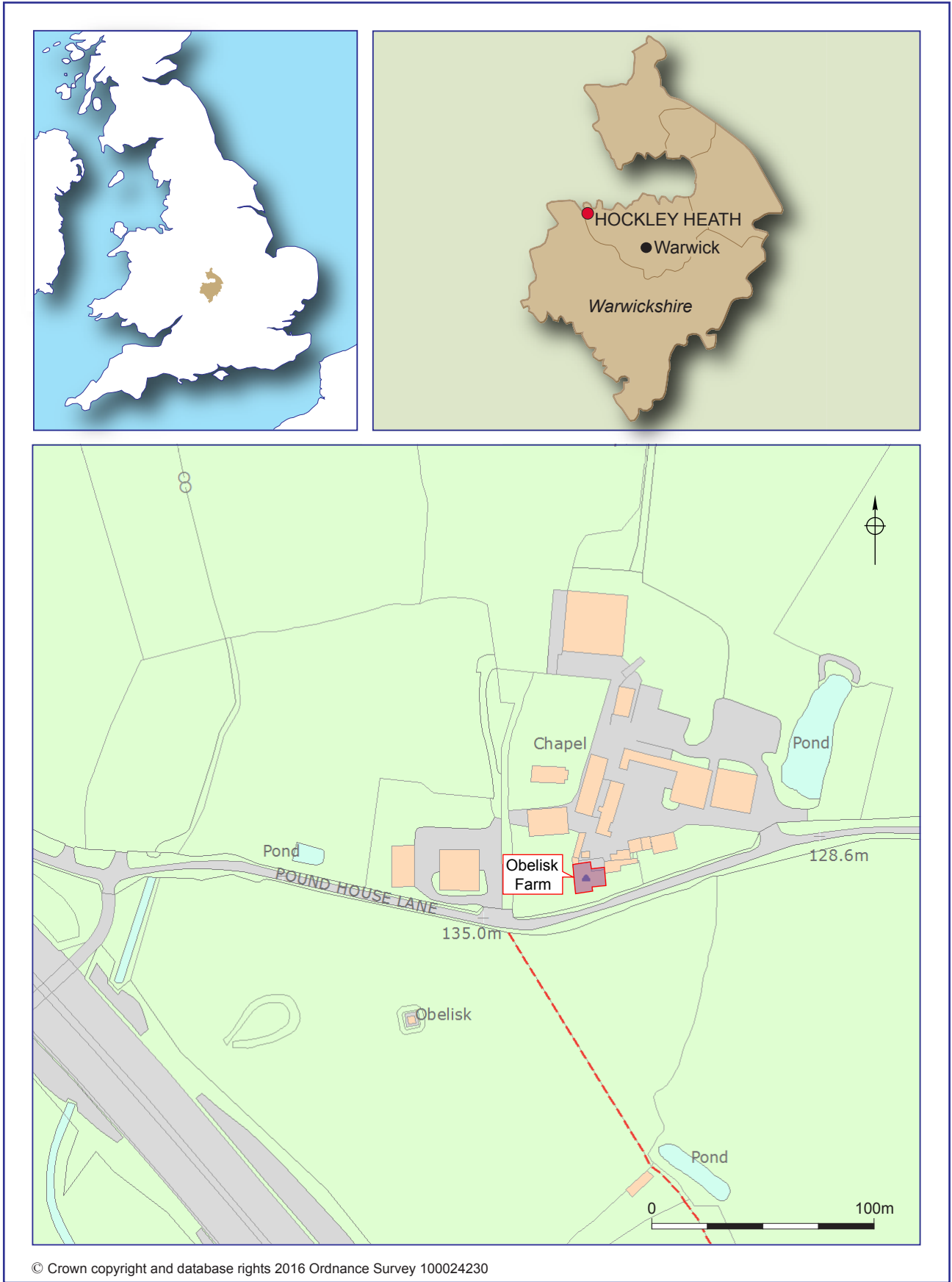
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Figures



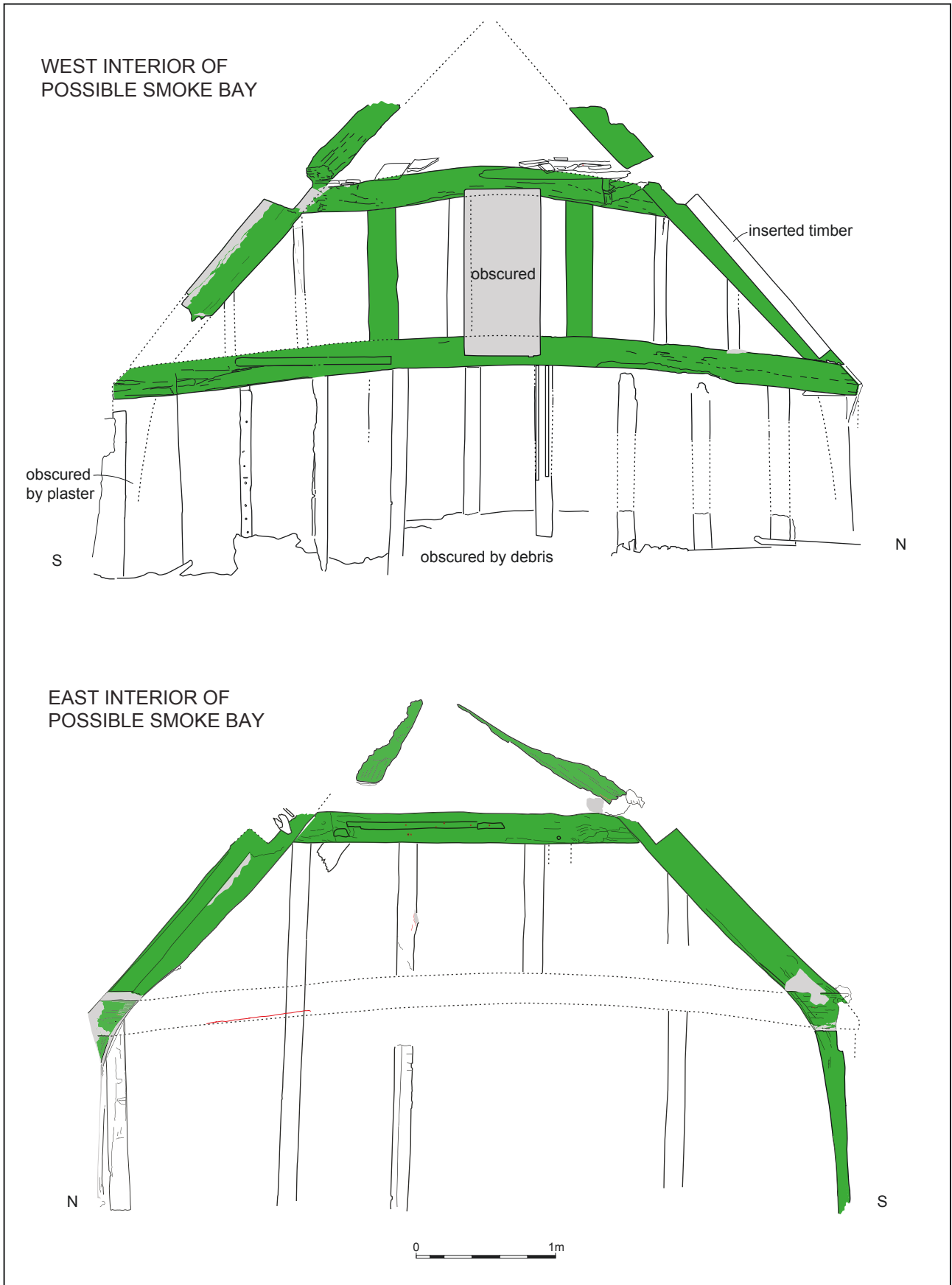
Location of the site

Figure 1



Plan of roof timbers

Figure 3



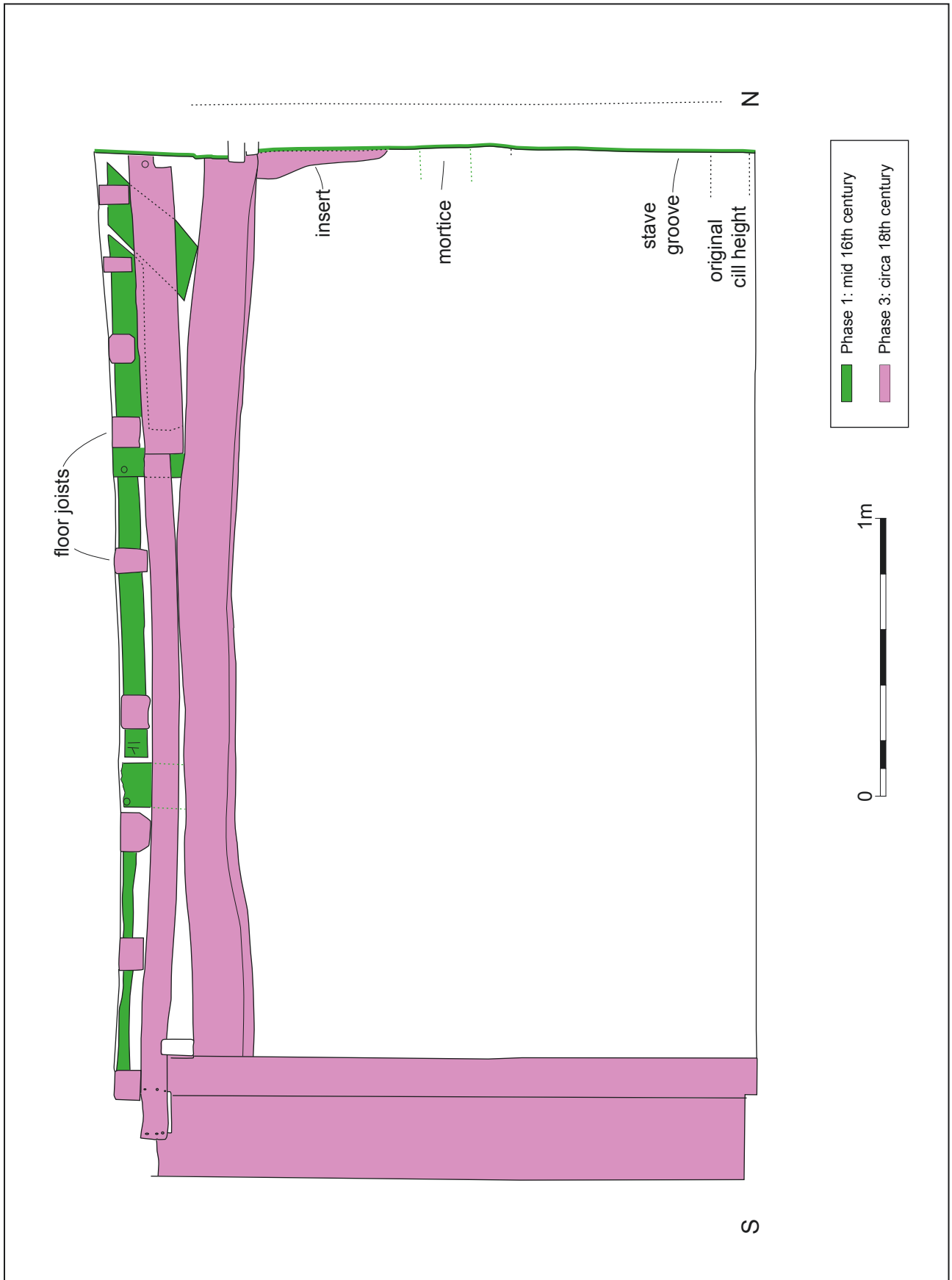
Elevations

Figure 4



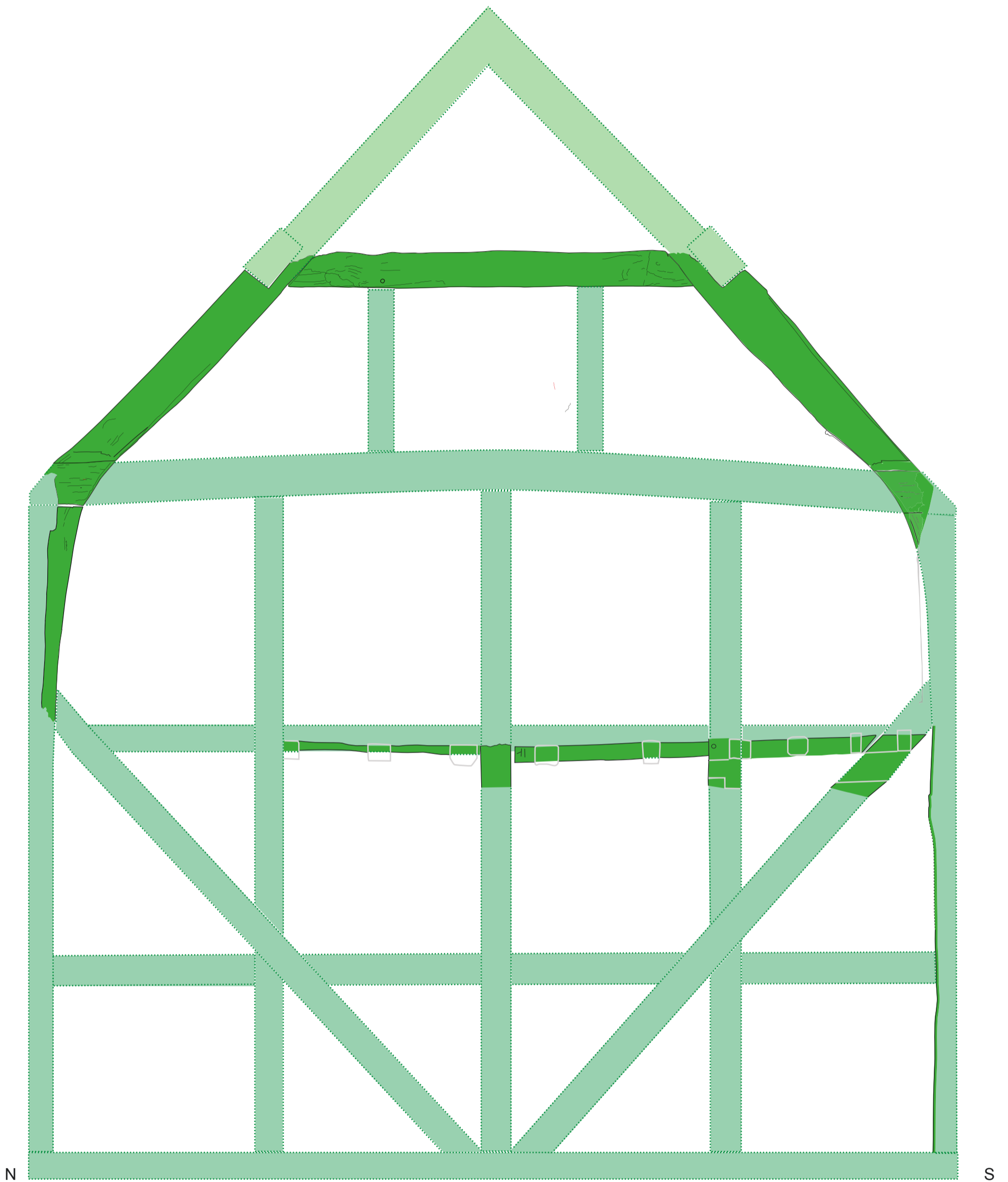
North facing elevation visible within the Phase 5 dairy and bedroom and Phase 6 passage

Figure 5



East facing elevation across central beam in kitchen

Figure 6

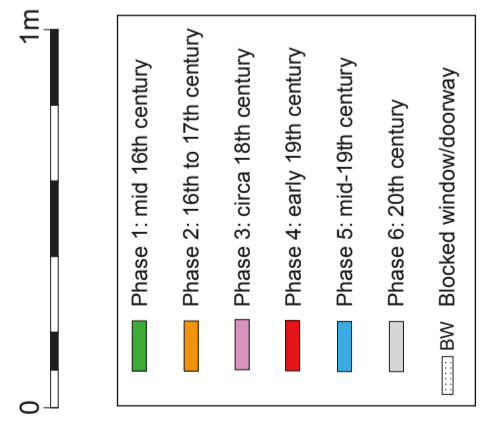
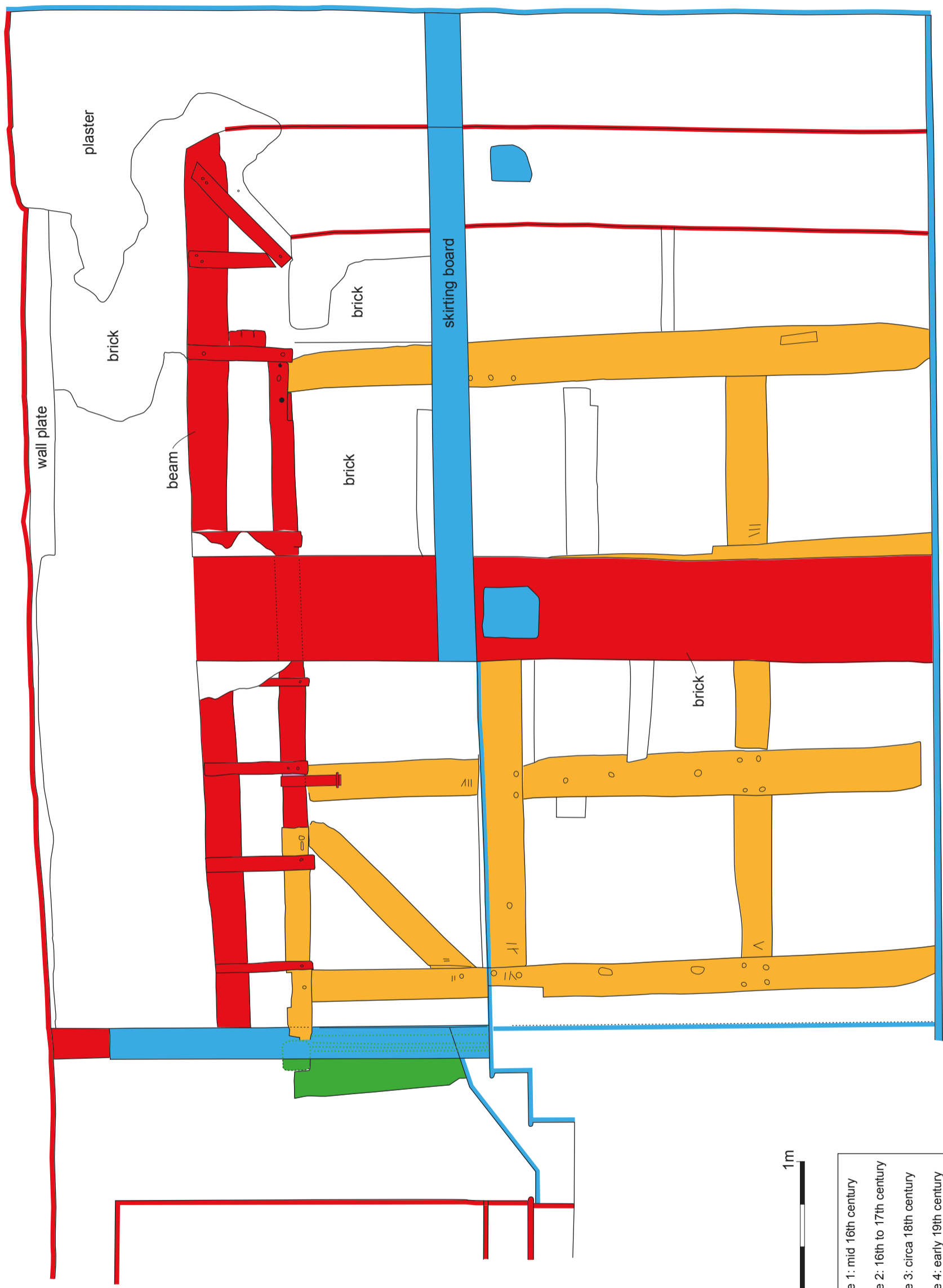


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Phase 1: mid 16th century
Phase 1: reconstructed

East facing reconstruction of Phase 1 gable frame

Figure 7

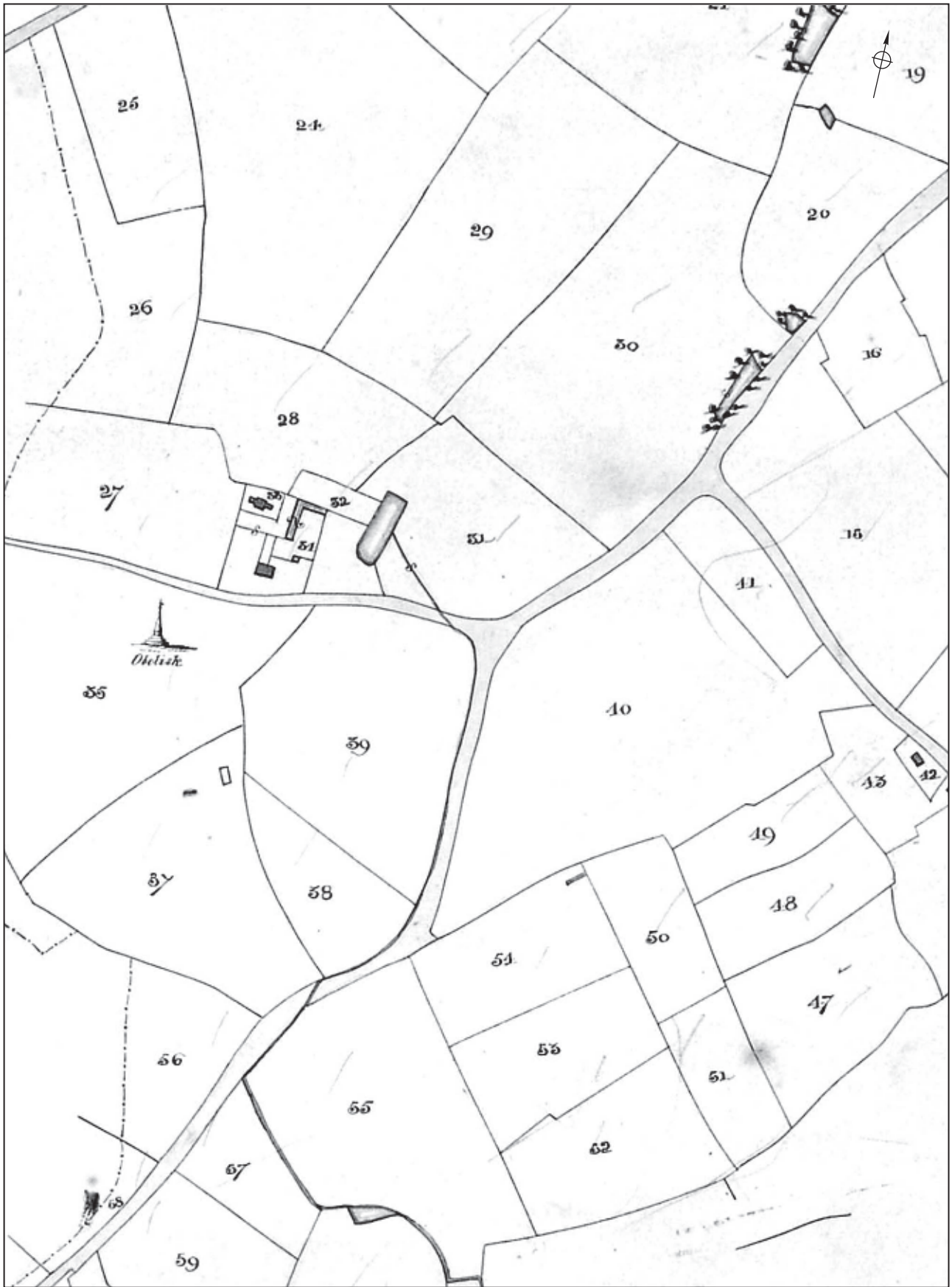


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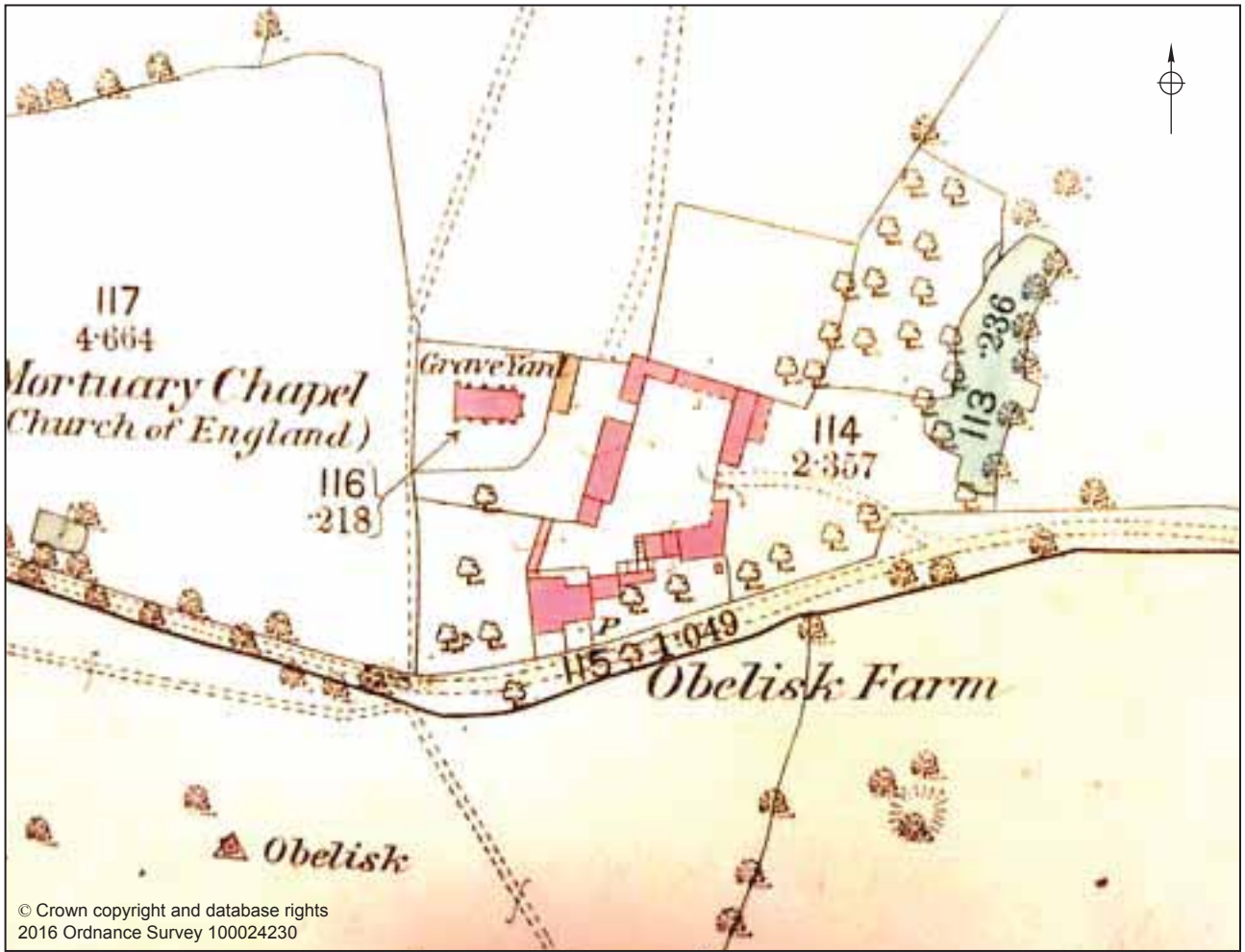
East facing elevation visible within the Phase 5 dairy and bedroom

Figure 8



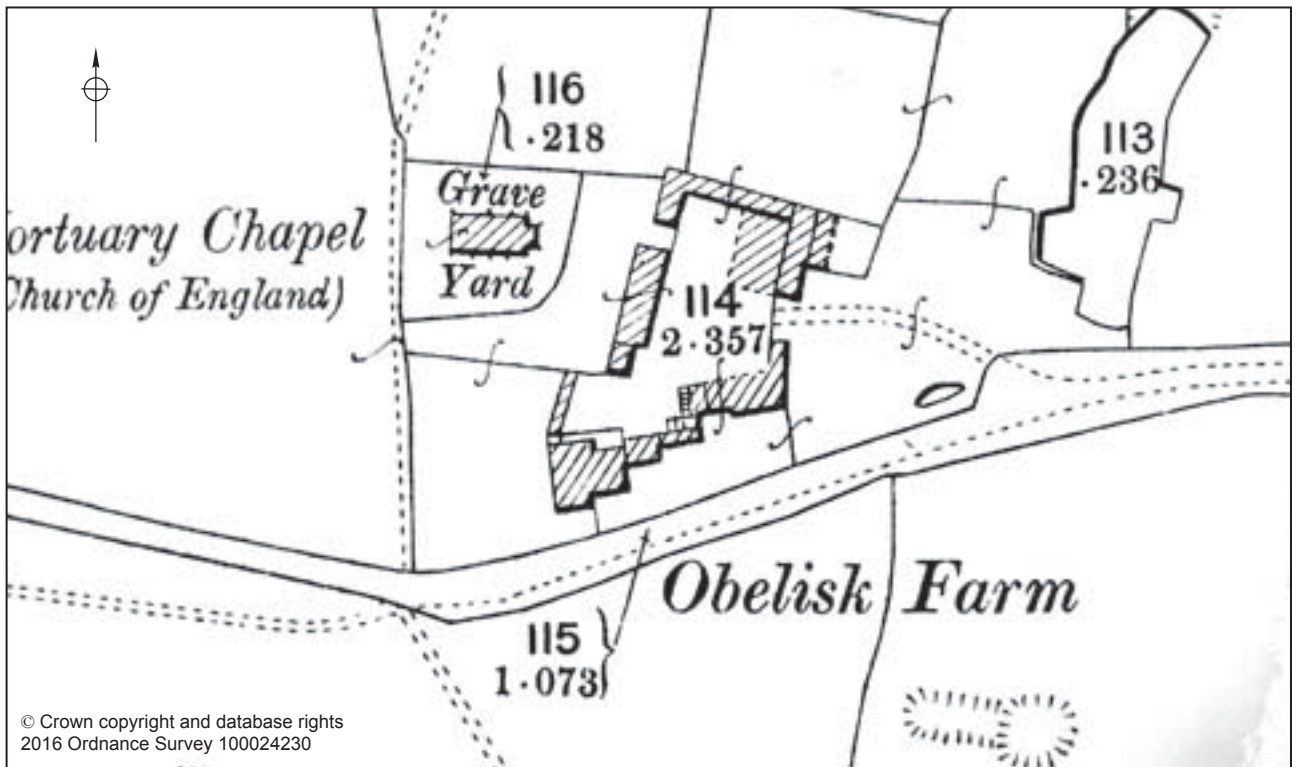
Extract from 1842 Tithe map

Figure 9



Extract from 1886 OS map

Figure 10



Extract from 1903 OS map

Figure 11

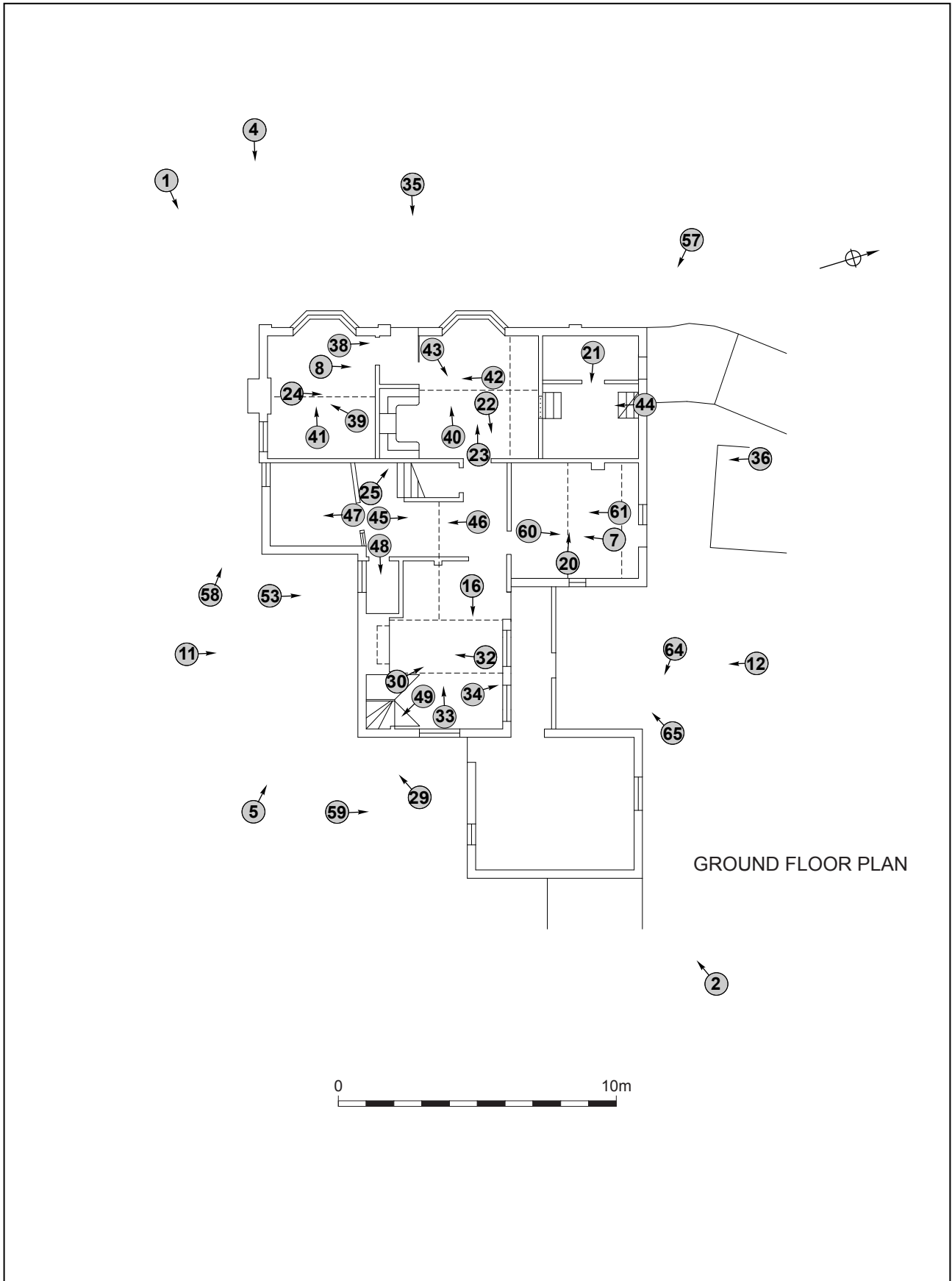


Photo locations (based upon David Symonds Associates Drg No 215729-S-03)

Figure 12

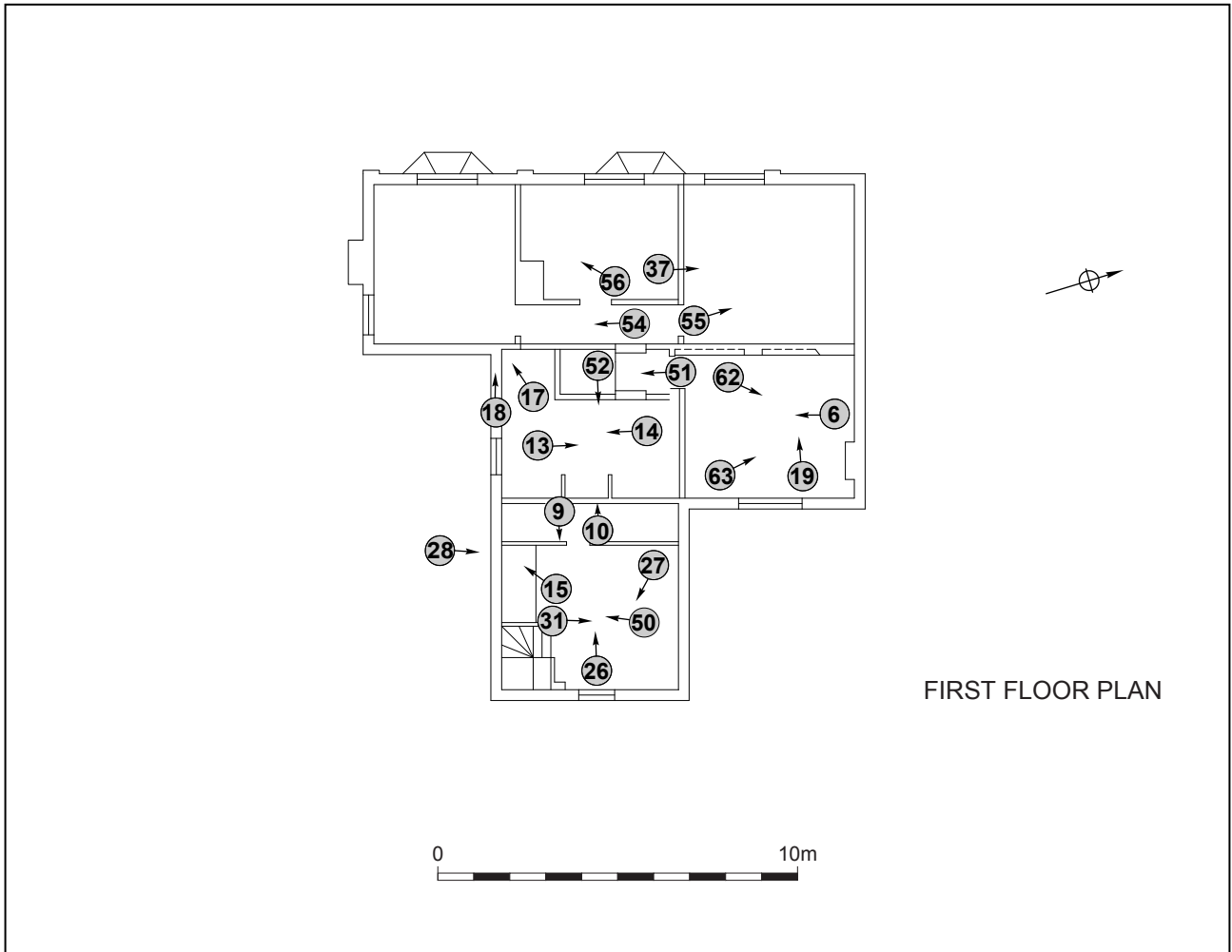


Photo locations (based upon David Symonds Associates Drg No 215729-S-03) Figure 13

Plates



Plate 1 The farm and chapel, looking north-east



Plate 2 The farmhouse, looking south west



Plate 3 The farmhouse roof, vertical



Plate 4 The farmhouse, looking east



Plate 5 The farmhouse, looking north-west



Plate 6 Phase 1 Wall frame with common rafters ends visible above the wall plate, looking south



Plate 7 Phase 1 Wall frame visible at ground floor level, looking south



Plate 8 Timber reused as a Phase 4 floor joist showing evidence of window framing, looking north



Plate 9 Rectified photograph of cross frame A Phase 1 fireplace interior (Figure 4), looking east



Plate 10 Rectified photograph of cross frame B Phase 1 fireplace interior (Figure 4), looking west



Plate 11 Rectified photograph of Phase 1 and 3 roof structures, looking north



Plate 12 Rectified photograph of Phase 1 and 3 roof structures, looking south



Plate 13 Rectified photograph of Phase 1 wall framing, looking north



Plate 14 Rectified photograph of Phase 1 wall framing, looking south



Plate 15 Phase 1 chamfered purlin end, looking west



Plate 16 Phase 1 former gable framing visible above a north south aligned beam in the later kitchen, looking east.



Plate 17 Phase 1 jowl post, looking south-west



Plate 18 Detail of the Phase 1 jowl post head showing the dovetail joint and sawn off tenon on the eastern side of the frame, looking west, scale 0.40m



Plate 19 Phase 2 wall frame, first floor looking west



Plate 20 Phase 2 wall frame, ground floor looking west



Plate 21 Phase 2 wall and cross frame post, looking east



Plate 22 Phase 2 wall and cross frame post, looking east



Plate 23 Possible Phase 1 timber, looking west



Plate 24 Building breaks showing the possible Phase 2 chimney, looking north



Plate 25 Building breaks showing the possible Phase 2 chimney, looking west



Plate 26 Phase 2 extension, looking west



Plate 27 Phase 2 extension, looking south east



Plate 28 Phase 3 scarf joint in the wall plate to the east of the Phase 1 gable, looking north



Plate 29 Phase 2 chamfered purlins, looking west



Plate 30 Phase 3 window arches above the later insertions, looking north-west



Plate 31 Blocked Phase 3 window and reused wall plate, looking north



Plate 32 Probable Phase 3 fireplace, looking south



Plate 33 Phase 2 and later kitchen, looking west



Plate 34 Chamfer on Phase 3 beam, looking north



Plate 35 Phase 4 house, looking east



Plate 36 Phases 4 and 5 gables, looking south



Plate 37 Phases 5 and 5 gables, looking north



Plate 38 Phase 4 baffle entrance, looking north



Plate 39 Phase 4 living room, looking south



Plate 40 Phase 4 living room, looking west



Plate 41 Phase 4 living room, looking west



Plate 42 Phase 4 living room, looking south



Plate 43 Phase 4 living room, looking east



Plate 44 Phase 4 cellar, looking south



Plate 45 Phase 4 hall, looking north



Plate 46 Phase 4 hall, looking south



Plate 47 Phase 4 storage room, looking south



Plate 48 Phase 4 storage room, looking east



Plate 49 Phase 4 kitchen stairs, looking south-east



Plate 50 Fireplace inserted into Phase 3 room, looking south-west



Plate 51 Phase 4 central staircase, looking south



Plate 52 Phase 4 room above former hall, looking east



Plate 53 Gabled window of Phase 4 room above former hall, looking north



Plate 54 Phase 4 landing, looking south



Plate 55 Phase 4 bed room, looking north-west



Plate 56 Phase 4 bed room, looking south-west



Plate 57 Phase 4, looking south-east



Plate 58 Phase 4, looking north-west



Plate 59 Phase 5, looking north



Plate 60 Phase 5 buttery, looking north



Plate 61 Phase 5 buttery, looking south



Plate 62 Phase 5 bedroom, looking north-east



Plate 63 Phase 5 bedroom, looking north



Plate 64 Phase 5, looking south-west



Plate 65 Phase 6, looking south-west

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 4 Building Phase Record AS45
- 7 Photographic records AS3
- 4 Black and white photographic films
- 916 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 6 Scale drawings
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Market Hall Museum

Market Place

Warwick

CV34 4SA

Tel: 01926 412 132 or 01926 412 500
