

# Building recording at The Old Barn, Crowle, Worcestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology  
*for Rob Pearce*

March 2021



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# THE OLD BARN CROWLE WORCESTERSHIRE

Building recording report

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## SITE INFORMATION

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Site name: The Old Barn, Crowle, Worcestershire  
Site code: WSM68403  
Local planning authority: Wychavon District Council  
Planning reference: 20/02387  
Central NGR: SO922563  
Commissioning client: Rob Pearce  
WA project number: P5060  
WA report number: 2905  
HER reference: WSM77443  
Oasis reference: fieldsec1-417131

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Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by
1	12/03/2021	T Cornah	Draft for comment	T Rogers

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## Building recording at The Old Barn, Crowle, Worcestershire

By Tim Cornah

### Summary

Building recording was undertaken at The Old Barn, Crowle, Worcestershire (NGR SO922563). It was commissioned by Rob Pearce, in advance of proposed conversion of the building. Planning permission has been granted subject to conditions including a programme of building recording.

The building was initially a three bay timber framed threshing barn with its gable facing onto the road. The building itself is of a form that is not closely dateable, but its features are suggestive of the mid 18th century building. A further bay was added soon after this initial phase. Later a brick element was added with detailing similar to that of Hyde Cottage, suggesting a contemporary construction date of some time shortly before they were depicted on the Enclosure map of 1808.

At that time the farmstead which included this building and Hyde Cottage was in the ownership of John Hunt who was farming at least 16 acres. The building and wider farmstead are well represented on the later maps from around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building presumably continued its agricultural function up to the second half of the 20th century when most of it was converted into a dwelling, which it remains.

# Report

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the project

Building recording was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in March 2021 at The Old Barn, Crowle (NGR SO922563). The project was commissioned by Rob Pearce, in advance of conversion of the building. A planning application has been submitted to Wychavon District Council and has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works (planning reference 20/02387).

The building is an undesignated heritage asset, within the terms used by the National Planning Policy Framework. The building is also registered with the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER; WSM68403).

No brief was provided but a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2021) and approved by Aidan Smyth of Wychavon District Council.

The building recording conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures (ClfA 2014a)*, as well as the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire (WCC 2019)*.

## 2 Project 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' (ClfA 2014a).

## 3 Project methodology

### 3.1 Documentary sources consulted

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER) covering a search area of 500m around the building.

#### *Cartographic sources*

- 1808 Enclosure map of Crowle (WRO BA 1497 1 and 2)
- 1884 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey Map 1:10,560
- 1904 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10,560

#### *Documentary sources*

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

### 3.2 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2021).

Fieldwork was undertaken on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The site reference number used by the Historic Environment Record to record archaeological "events", and site code used in the archive is WSM77443.

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 Canon EOS 200D digital SLR camera. All photographs were recorded on a pro-forma Photographic Record Sheet. Annotation of existing ground plans and elevations complemented the photographic record, along with photogrammetric survey.

The project conformed to the specification for a level 3 survey as defined in the Historic England document *Understanding historic buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (HE 2016). 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'. 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.

### 3.3 Building analysis

Analysis of the building was based on the study of the photographic record, photogrammetric record 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.

## 4 Site context

### 4.1 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located at the northern end of the village of Crowle, which is itself located about approximately 7.5km to the east of Worcester city centre. The barn stands immediately to the east of Church Road, with houses to the north and south, though with fields to the east.

The site is broadly flat and the historic mapping, the building has a bench mark height on its south-west corner and recorded as 208.3 feet (63.5m) AOD. This did not remain visible on the structure.

The underlying geology comprises bedrock of Wilmcote Limestone Member – mudstone and limestone, interbedded and formed in the Jurassic and Triassic periods. No superficial deposits are recorded (BGS 2021).

### 4.2 Historic and archaeological background

The following information is derived from the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record data, which was searched for a radius of 500m centred upon The Old Barn.

The village of Crowle is thought to have been Saxon in origin, and part of the broader Feckenham Forest (WSM42160), the bounds of which were documented in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The conjectured location of the medieval village of Crowle (WSM48403) is thought to have been to the south of the site, an area which remains the heart of the village. A potential area of shrunken medieval settlement is recorded to the east of the village (WSM07880) along with evidence of medieval agricultural practice such as ridge and furrow and rabbit warrening. Perhaps the most significant monument of the village is the site of Crowle Court which was a moated site and known to have been used as a monastic retreat (WSM07872).

The church of St John The Baptist (WSM07871) is located towards the south of the village and has remaining 14<sup>th</sup> century elements, though was extensively rebuilt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The only remaining medieval house is the 15<sup>th</sup> century timber framed Woodstock Cottage (WSM45873) to the south-east of the site.

The majority of buildings in the village are post-medieval in date including 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed houses such as Old Pear Tree House (WSM45868) and Number 1 Foredraught Lane (WSM68410) as well as a 17<sup>th</sup> century cottage (WSM68433) within the 19<sup>th</sup> century White House farmstead (WSM60598). To the immediate north-west of the site on the opposite side of the road is the Old House Farm (WSM60596) which was a farmstead from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Further 18<sup>th</sup> century houses survive within the village including Springfield Cottage (WSM68417) and The Paddocks (WSM68399) whilst Kemerton House (WSM61293) and The Innings (WSM68424) are 19<sup>th</sup> century in origin.

To the north-west of the site was the area now known as Crowle Green which had houses of 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date centred around The Old Chequers Public House (WSM68461) which is 17<sup>th</sup> century in date. One 19<sup>th</sup> century farmstead is registered to the north of this, Glebe Farm (WSM60605).

Of particular interest is Hyde Cottage (WSM61389) and its outbuilding (WSM68405) which are registered as 19<sup>th</sup> but are on the Enclosure map of 1808, suggesting an 18<sup>th</sup> century date. Notable are some of their detailing such as dentilled bricks at the eaves and step dentils of the gable ends, features which are shared with the Phase 3 element as outlined below.

## 5 The building

### 5.1 Building description

The building currently comprises an L shaped structure (Plate 1 to Plate 3). The main element is aligned east to west with a timber frame and brick structure at the western end and weather boarding at the eastern end with a brick only section between. A further north to south aligned brick element is present with a southern facing gable complete with a corner chimney stack. The roof of all these elements is ceramic tile covered. A three-dimensional model of the building can be accessed here <https://skfb.ly/6ZAZK>.

### 5.2 Historic information

Crowle was first mapped in detail on the Enclosure map of 1808 (WRO BA 1497 1 and 2) The barn is faintly visible with its outline as remaining, suggesting all extant elements were standing by this time. On the map, John Hunt is shown as owning the plot in free hold. The plot includes both the Old Barn and Hyde Cottage as well as its outbuilding to its south. No division between the buildings is evident. John Hunt also owned the field to the north east of the plot as well as a further on its own to the western side of Church Road. In total, he was farming at least 16 acres.

The Ordnance Survey Maps of 1884 and 1905 shows the building within its extant footprint. The building is shown within a separate enclosure, so it is not clear that it remains as part of the wider Hyde Cottage farmstead. To the north and east, the fields previously owned by John Hunt were shown as orchards by 1904.

### 5.3 Building development

Five phases were identified during the investigation of the building, which are described as follows:

- Phase 1: Mid 18<sup>th</sup> century
- Phase 2: Mid to late 18<sup>th</sup> century
- Phase 3: Late 18<sup>th</sup> century to 1808
- Phase 4: 1808 to 20<sup>th</sup> century

- Phase 5: 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century

### 5.3.1 Phase 1: Mid-18th century

This first phase consisted of a three bay barn structure aligned east to west, with its gable facing onto the road (Plate 4). Its western end frame consists of tall posts running full length from the tie beam to sill beam, with long straight braces running from the jowl posts to the sill beam. Three further posts run from the tie beam to collar and a further from collar to the apex of the principal rafters, which in turn support a ridge beam and purlins on each side. The setting out marks of the carpenters are visible, with the post base and sill beam joints numbered in Roman numerals I to V from north to south with a chisel (Plate 5).

Its eastern end frame is of broadly the same arrangement as that at the west, though without the central post running from the collar to apex (Figure 5). Some carpenters marks are visible on the former gable end and again in Roman numerals, but unusually this time cut with a race knife (Plate 6). A further difference is the numbering from I to VII from south to north, marking not only the post but also the brace joints. This difference of technique and tool may suggest different carpenters working on each truss. The use of a race knife for marking carpentry joints was normal in the medieval and early post medieval periods, but was highly unusual in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The wall framing (Plate 7) remains most consistently on the northern side of the building and again consists of posts running from sill beam to wall plate. No consistent indication of infill between the posts is present, suggesting that the walling was weather boarded from the outset. It is probable that some of the extant weather boarding was original, as they were pit sawn and fixed with handmade nails. Their being hand sawn certainly suggest a pre circa 1850 date, after which timbers were predominantly machine sawn. Another feature visible on the building is the partial use of nails for fixing some joints, as opposed to oak pegging. This practice probably started to some degree in the later 17<sup>th</sup> century but was common throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century in such agricultural buildings.

One interior truss remains largely complete (Figure 6) with its sill beam on a brick wall and long braces from it to the jowl posts. Above the tie beam, the principal rafters are interrupted by two vertical posts which have a collar running between and short angled braces between the posts and principal rafters. The carpentered face of this truss is on its western side, and faces the carpentered side of the next internal truss to the west, which is of the same configuration (Plate 8). It therefore seems highly likely that these open frames either side of a threshing floor, the large exterior doors of which were infilled during Phase 4. This would give the typical overall threshing barn arrangement of central threshing bay, with crop storage bays to its east and west which were open to the roof.

The roof consists of common rafters supported on the wall plates, purlins, and central ridge board. These in turn support laths, and ceramic tiles. It is likely that the tiles are replacements, with some of the rafters replaced also.

Evident through the building is a high degree of timber reuse, although the original form of the earlier structure is not clear. All of the closely visible timbers were pit sawn, suggesting a broadly post 1540 date for these timbers. The reused timbers were oak where visible, whereas within the new timbers of the structure, elm was typical. This use of elm started to some degree in the later 17<sup>th</sup> century in Worcestershire, but became common in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and extended into the 19<sup>th</sup>.

One further feature of one of the reused timbers was a concentration of burn marks orientated horizontally rather than vertically, indicating that they were made before the structure was erected (Plate 9). Such marks are widely considered to be apotropaic, perhaps specifically to ward off the devil and symbolically bringing light to the dark.

### 5.3.2 Phase 2: Mid to late 18th century

In this period, a single bay was added to the eastern end of the Phase 1 threshing barn (Plate 10 and Plate 11). Its style was similar with posts running from sill beam to wall plate and tie beam base, though with long braces running from sill beam to jowl posts on the end gable frame only. Above the



tie beam (Plate 12) is the same arrangement as the western end of Phase 1 structure with three vertical posts to the collar and a further central post from the collar to apex. This similarity of style suggests a date for this extension not long after Phase 1.

The floor within this single bay was a later addition, so it was originally open to the roof. It is therefore likely that it continued the crop storage function of the earlier phase, though this could not be confirmed.

### 5.3.3 Phase 3: Late 18<sup>th</sup> century to 1808

In this period a two bay brick extension was added to the southern side of the Phase 1 building, flush with its gable and parallel to the road (Plate 13 and Plate 14). The walling of this is of brick with dentilled eaves details, and stepped dentils running along the edge of the roof at its gable. Its brickwork is a variation of English Garden bond with three stretcher courses, followed by a course of alternating headers and stretchers. This bond and the same bricks continue around the Phase 1 and 2 plinth walls, excepting points of later rebuild, showing that their plinth walls were rebuilt at this time.

None of the doorways or windows within this structure could be confidently dated as original to the phase due to Phase 5 alterations, so how the structure was accessed is not clear. The point at which it joined to the Phase 1 barn was rebuilt to the apex of the new building, presumably in brick but this is not visible. It is not clear if access was originally possible between this structure and the Phase 1 barn given the later changes.

Internally the building was split over the ground and first floor, with a single truss dividing the first floor space (Plate 15). The tie beam and principal rafters of this truss are interrupted by two vertical posts which are linked by a collar, in manner similar to the Phase 1 internal trusses. The main differences are the interruption of the tie beam and the collar extending to a beam visible at just above head height level in the room below (Plate 16). This arrangement allowed easy access through the truss, effectively making a single two bay space on the first floor. No evidence of the ground floor beam is indicating a single ground floor space with no internal divisions.

With extensive later alterations, and internal coverings, suggesting a function for this structure is problematic. Its position next to the barn and within the farmyard as mapped in 1808 suggests an agricultural function, with likely further crop storage on the first floor.

### 5.3.4 Phase 4: 1808 to 20<sup>th</sup> century

It is likely that it was fairly early in this phase when the door into the Phase 2 bay was added, as well as the floor. A hatch door was inserted through the gable end of the Phase 2 addition, allowing access to the first floor, as well as a further hatch through the former Phase 1 gable (Figure 5). It is likely that these changes saw this element being used as stabling.

Remarkably few features of this Phase remains due to alterations during Phase 5.

### 5.3.5 Phase 5: 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, part of the Phase 1 barn along with the Phase 3 brick building were converted for domestic use. Two fireplaces were added, one within the Phase 1 element and one with the south west corner of the Phase 3 building. The brickwork of the chimney stacks clearly shows their 20<sup>th</sup> century origin. 20<sup>th</sup> century brickwork is clear within the position of the Phase 1 threshing doors, as well as in between the posts of that phase. It is likely that the external weather boarding was removed at that point also. Four dormer windows were added to the roof of the Phase 1 building, likely highlighting the first time the western bay of the barn had a first floor. Stairs were added within the Phase 3 building, only to be moved into the Phase 1 barn. Various further divisions as drawn on (Figures 2 and 3) date to this phase.

## 6 Discussion

The building was initially a three bay timber framed threshing barn with its gable facing onto the road. The building itself is of a form that is not closely dateable, but its features are suggestive of a mid 18th century building. Soon after its construction, a further bay was added to the the eastern end, using the same construction style, and continuing a crop storage function. Little can clearly be said of the building up to this point as to its position within the wider farmstead, given the similarities between the Phase 3 element of the building and Hyde Cottage and its outbuildings. These similarities strongly suggest that they were contemporary. It is therefore not clear with which farmstead the building associated prior to Phase 3.

The Phase 3 brick addition gave the structure the footprint first visible on the Enclosure map of 1808 as it remains. Hyde Cottage was also visible on the 1808 map, and both buildings were in common ownership of John Hunt as part of a 16 acre farm. A clearer sense of the farm is visible from this with most of its land situated towards the north east. It is likely that crops were brought into the northern side of the barn, and the stalks and husks separated on the central threshing floor. Stalks would then have been stored in the bays at either end, and eventually spread within animal housing or the farmyard to the south. Contrary to this suggestion is the lack of an illustrated yard dividing the house in 1808 and the lack of known animal housing. However a clear yard is depicted on Ordnance Survey maps of 1884 and 1904. Rotted and trampled manure would then be collected from the farmyard and spread back onto the fields as fertiliser.

The building presumably continued its agricultural function up to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when most of it was converted into a dwelling, which it remains.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved though 20<sup>th</sup> century alteration and coverings precluded a full understanding of the structure.

## 7 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Tim Cornah ACIfA who also produced and collated the report. The project was managed by Tom Rogers MCIfA.

## 8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank Rob Pearce for commissioning the project and his assistance throughout. The project was monitored by Aidan Smyth of Wychavon District Council and Worcestershire Archaeology would also like to thank him for his advice.

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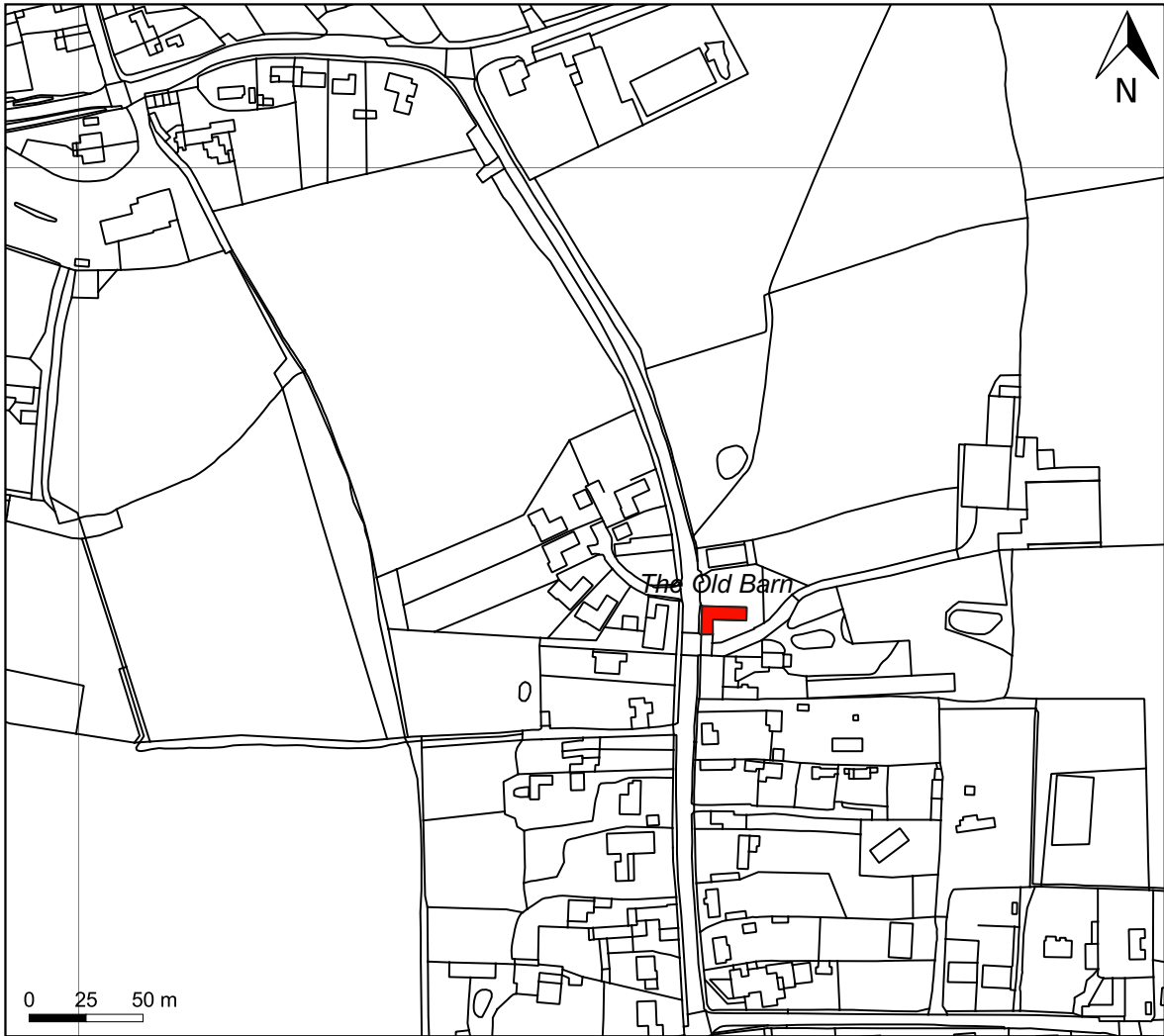
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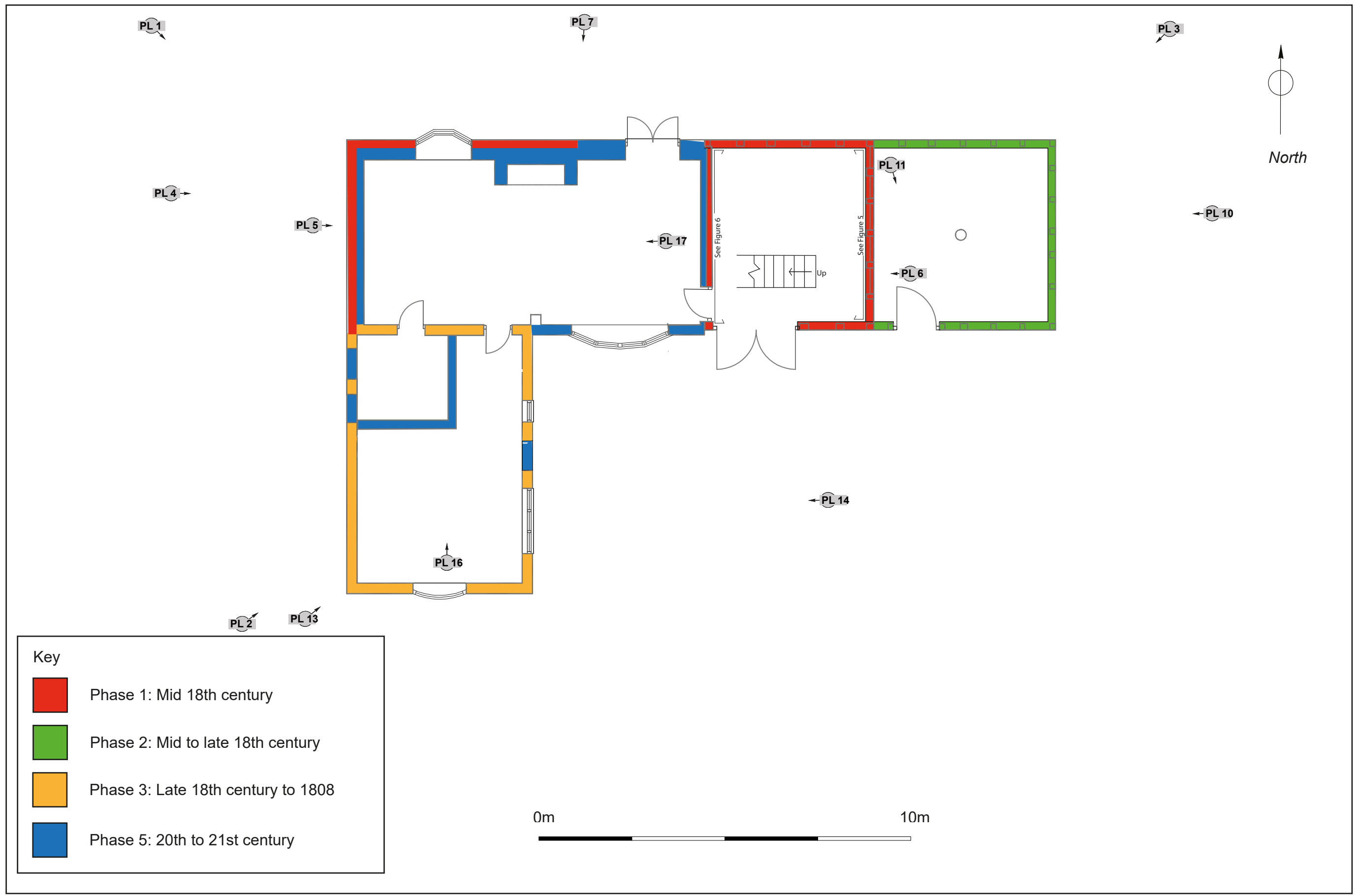
## Figures



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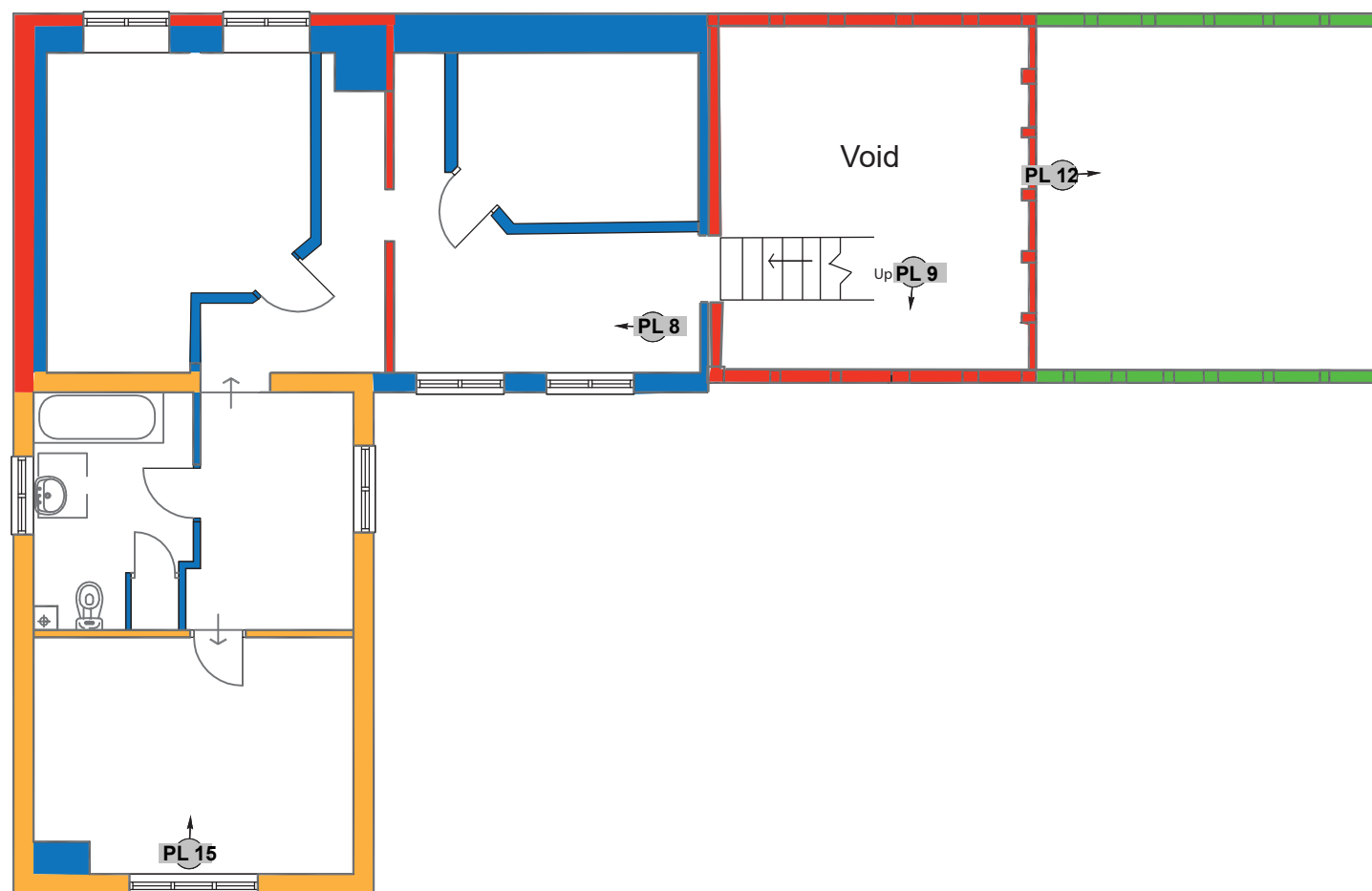
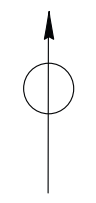
Location of the site

Figure 1







Ground floor plan with phasing (after RDL Raxter Drawing number 10735-01)

Figure 2



Key

-  Phase 1: Mid 18th century
-  Phase 2: Mid to late 18th century
-  Phase 3: Late 18th century to 1808
-  Phase 5: 20th to 21st century



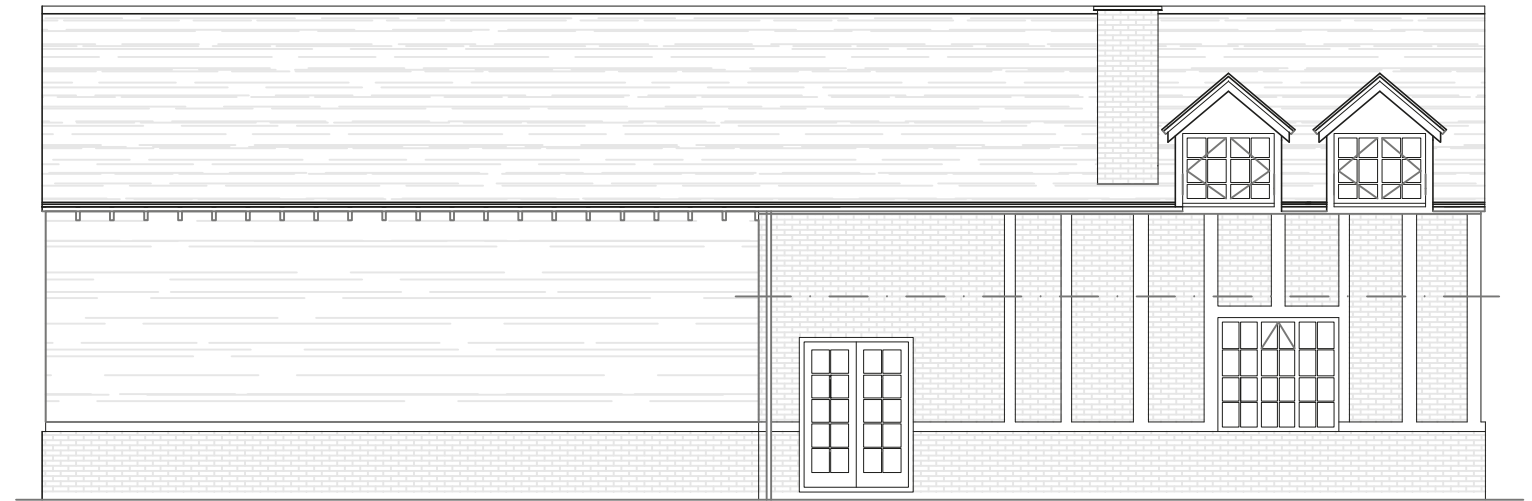
First floor plan with phasing (after RDL Raxter Drawing number 10735-01)

Figure 2





East elevation



North elevation



West elevation



South elevation



Elevations (after RDL Raxter Drawing number 10735-01)

Figure 4



0m

5m



*West facing photogrammetric elevation  
of Phase 1 gable end frame*

*Figure 5*



0m

5m

*East facing photogrammetric elevation  
of Phase 1 internal cross frame*

*Figure 6*



## Plates



*Plate 1 The building, looking south east with Hyde Cottage behind.*



*Plate 2 The building, looking north east*





*Plate 3 The building, looking south west*



*Plate 4 Phase 1 gable end, looking east, scale 1m*





*Plate 5 An example of the carpenters marks on the Phase 1 gable end, looking east, scale 0.5m*



*Plate 6 An example of the carpenters marks on the Phase 1 gable end, looking west, scale 0.5m*





*Plate 7 Phase 1 walling, looking south, scale 1m*





*Plate 8 Phase 1 internal cross frame truss, looking west, scale 1m*



*Plate 9 Burn marks on a Phase 1 reused timber, looking south*



*Plate 10 Phase 2 gable end, looking west, scale 1m*





*Plate 11 Phase 2 interior ground floor, looking south east, scale 1m*



*Plate 12 Phase 2 interior inserted first floor, looking east*





*Plate 13 Phase 3 addition, looking north east, scale 1m*



*Plate 14 Phase 3 addition, looking west, scale 1m*



*Plate 15 Phase 3 addition first floor roof truss, looking north, scale 1m*



*Plate 16 Phase 3 addition ground floor, looking north, scale 1m*





*Plate 17 Phase 1 ground floor with Phase 5 changes, looking west, scale 1m*



## Appendix 1: Summary of project archive (WSM77443)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Paper	Plan, Report, Survey
Digital	Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

*\*OASIS terminology*

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Worcestershire County Museum.