

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**BUILDING ASSESSMENT**

**ON**

**OUTBUILDINGS AT COLTHORN FARM,**

**OXFORD ROAD, OLD MARSTON, OXFORD**

**NGR SU 5272 0855**

*On behalf of*

*Gina Carver*

**APRIL 2014**

**REPORT FOR** Gina Carver  
c/o Colthorn Farm  
Oxford Road  
Old Marston  
Oxon

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## **Colthorn Farm, Old Marston**

### ***Building Assessment and Watching Brief***

#### **SUMMARY**

*A building assessment was carried out on outbuildings at Colthorn Farm, Oxford Road, Old Marston by John Moor Heritage Services. The buildings are not listed and this is just a simple report of a level 1 to 2 to provide an understanding of the origins and development of the structures.*

*The North structure is the older of the two. Located centrally within this area is a probable cow shed of at least c 1850, with stone walls and a probable later slate roof. The second phase is the cart shed at the east end that was added c 1860-76. The corrugated structure on the west end was added 1921-37. Later additions occurred in the 1960s to 1970s.*

*The south structure is all of one phase of the 1960s or 1970s.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Location (Figure 1)**

Coltham Farm was until the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a functioning farm set in the village of Old Marston (NGR SP 5272 0855). This ceased with the construction of the Marston Ferry Road, and the subsequent division and sale of the land. The site is located just off the Oxford Road on the south side of the village, where a small trackway leads into the former farmyard and carried on beyond towards the Cherwell River and Back Lane. The two buildings concerned with this report lie on the west side of the farmyard, either side of the track.

Historically Old Marston hamlet was a chapelry attached to the church of Headington, and was located in the historic hundred of Bullingdon and county of Oxfordshire. The village of Old Marston is now incorporated into the City Of Oxford.

Topographically the site is located on a terrace alongside the River Cherwell, between 60-65m Ordnance Datum.

The village is located on the Summertown-Radley sand and gravel member, a second river terrace formed 3 million years ago ([mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html](http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html)). The gravel terrace subsequently overlies the Oxford Clay Formation and West Walton Formation that were laid down 156 to 165 million years ago in the Jurassic.

### **1.2 Commission**

The work was commissioned by Gina Carver.

### **1.3 Aim of Investigation**

The aim of the investigation of the report is to identify what survives of any historic building and to make a record of the structure as it now stands.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Designations**

Both structures are unlisted and neither of them falls within the curtilage of any other property that is listed. They are, however, located in the area of Old Marston's conservation area, the boundary of which runs along Back Lane (Oxford City Council 2012).

### **2.2 History of Development**

The name Marston was referred to as early as 1050 (though in a late 13<sup>th</sup> century document) as *Mersce*, with the suffix being added c. 1069 in *Mersttune* (Gelling 1953, 181); though the VCH (1957, 214-221) does not accept the early dates placing the earliest reference at 1122. The etymology is *tūn* on marshy ground (Gelling 1953, 181).

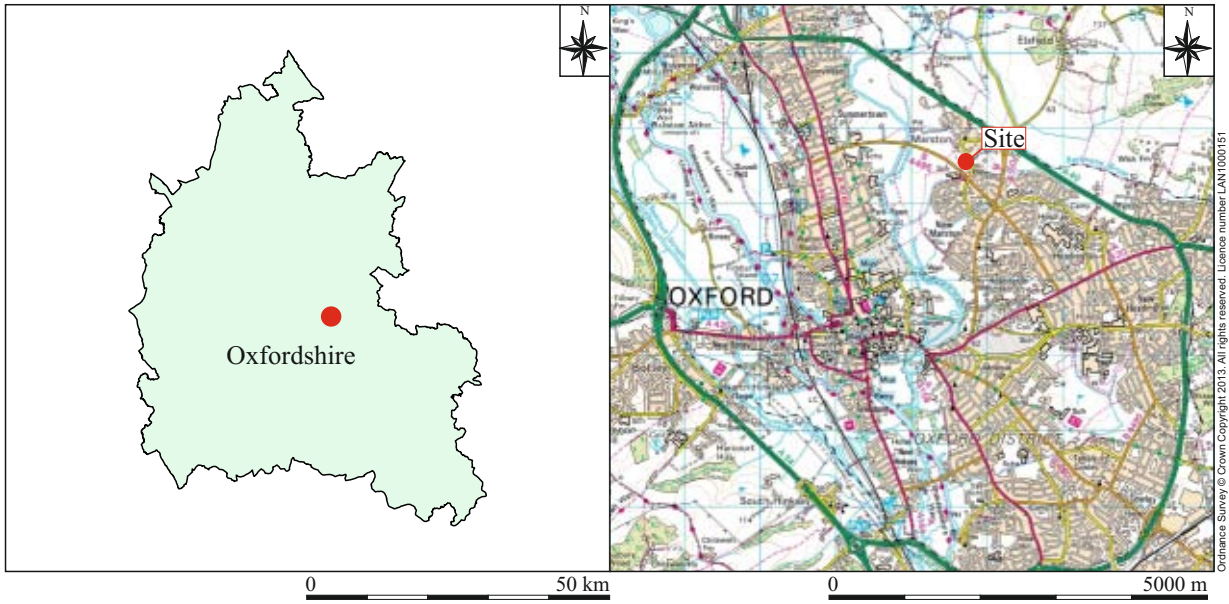


Figure 1: Site location

The medieval manor was attached to the manor of Headington and the church was an attached chapel to the church of Headington (VCH 1957, 214-221). The manorial history is one of absentee landlords, apart from the Croke family of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Brimblecombe 2009). Land in Marston was held as parcels by the colleges, chiefly Brasenose, and also as copyhold land by Yeoman farmers.



Figure 2 Jefferys' map of 1767



Figure 3 Davies' map of 1797



Map evidence for Marston survives back to 1605 at Corpus Christie College (ORO MPC744, MPC745); these maps show the road layout of the village with the church and seven houses. No buildings are identifiable in the location of Colthorn Farm or its outbuildings.

Two 18<sup>th</sup> century maps exist for Marston. The earliest is Jefferys' map of 1767 (OHC CP/103/M), which shows structures along the line of Oxford Road (Fig. 2). However, it is not possible to associate any of these specifically with the area of Colthorn Farm, although it could be feasible that some of them do. The same can be said about the other 18<sup>th</sup> century map by Davies in 1797 (OHC CH XX/2), (Fig.3).

On Bryant's map of 1824 (OHC P345/M/1) there are some buildings shown in the vicinity of Colthorn Farm, but it is impossible to be precise about their locations (Fig. 4).



Figure 4 Bryant's map of 1824

The Tithe Map of 1845 (OHC 263/M) shows a house in the location of what was the original farm building fronting onto the Oxford Road (Fig.5). This is in the location of a stone built property that still stands. To the rear and on the south side of the current property there are two structures, orientated east to west. Accepting the building as the original farmhouse fronting onto the Oxford Road, then these structures do not appear to be located in the places of later structures. There is always the possibility that one of them is meant to indicate the stone structure at the centre of the north range, but that this is simply wrongly located. Though this scenario is indeed possible at this time it is impossible to demonstrate.



Figure 5 Tithe Map of 1845

The subsequent series of Ordnance Survey maps at 1: 2,500 will enable us to form an opinion on when the current structures on the site were established. The map of 1878 shows the outline of the original farmhouse fronting on to the Oxford Road (Fig. 6). There are two buildings still on the south side. On the north side of the farm yard there are two buildings marked, which appear to correspond to two of the components that survive on the north side. These include a probable cowshed with three walls of stone and a brick shed that butts up to it. The map of 1899 shows the old farmhouse fronting onto the Oxford Road and a series of buildings on the south side that represent the structures on the south side of the courtyard. This building was constructed at some time from 1876 to 1899. The two east to west buildings on the north side are still there and there is a further building roughly in alignment with them at the west end but not joined, besides a small addition on the south side. The same arrangement can be identified on the map of 1921, and also on the map of 1937. The latter map, however, has an addition of a new structure constructed at the west end of the north buildings. This implies that the corrugated iron structure was constructed from 1921 to 1937. The last map of a detailed scale was in 1973, which shows that a new structure has been added on the south side, which represents the barn constructed probably in the 1960s, but undoubtedly at some time from 1937 to 1973.



Figure 6 Ordnance Survey First Edition map at 1: 2,500 of 1878

### 3 DESCRIPTION OF OUTBUILDINGS AT COLTHORN FARM

#### 3.1 Introduction and General Description

There are two ranges of buildings, one group located on the north and the other on the south side of the original farmyard. The north buildings, although with very little architectural value, is the more complicated with three distinct units that are all combined. The south building is essentially one construction of a late date.

#### 3.2 The North Range of Buildings

The central part of the north range has to be the oldest component. It contains a structure that was constructed of limestone walls on three sides, and was previously open on the south side (Fig. 7, Plate 1). The timbers in the roof space are saw cut and the roof is of slate. All of this may be 19<sup>th</sup> century, and possibly a later addition. The south side of this building has now been infilled with breezeblock walls creating a

number of units internally. The wall contains a sliding door at the east end and two windows immediately to the west of it. At the west end there is a stable door with a window to the east, then a further door and window.



Plate 1 Northern range central block, a reworked cow-shed



Plate 2 Detail in west gable of central cow-shed

The stone wall forming the west gable is visible internally and contains a blocked doorway on the north side (Fig. 7, Plate 2). Timber lintels have been imbedded into the wall to bind and strengthen the wall. Centrally in this wall there is a ventilation slit. In the east gable there is also evidence of a blocked doorway on the north side. The two entrances indicate that previously there was a passageway running behind a range of feeding stalls that no longer survive. Some of the trusses contain struts, but they have no evidence of chamfering.



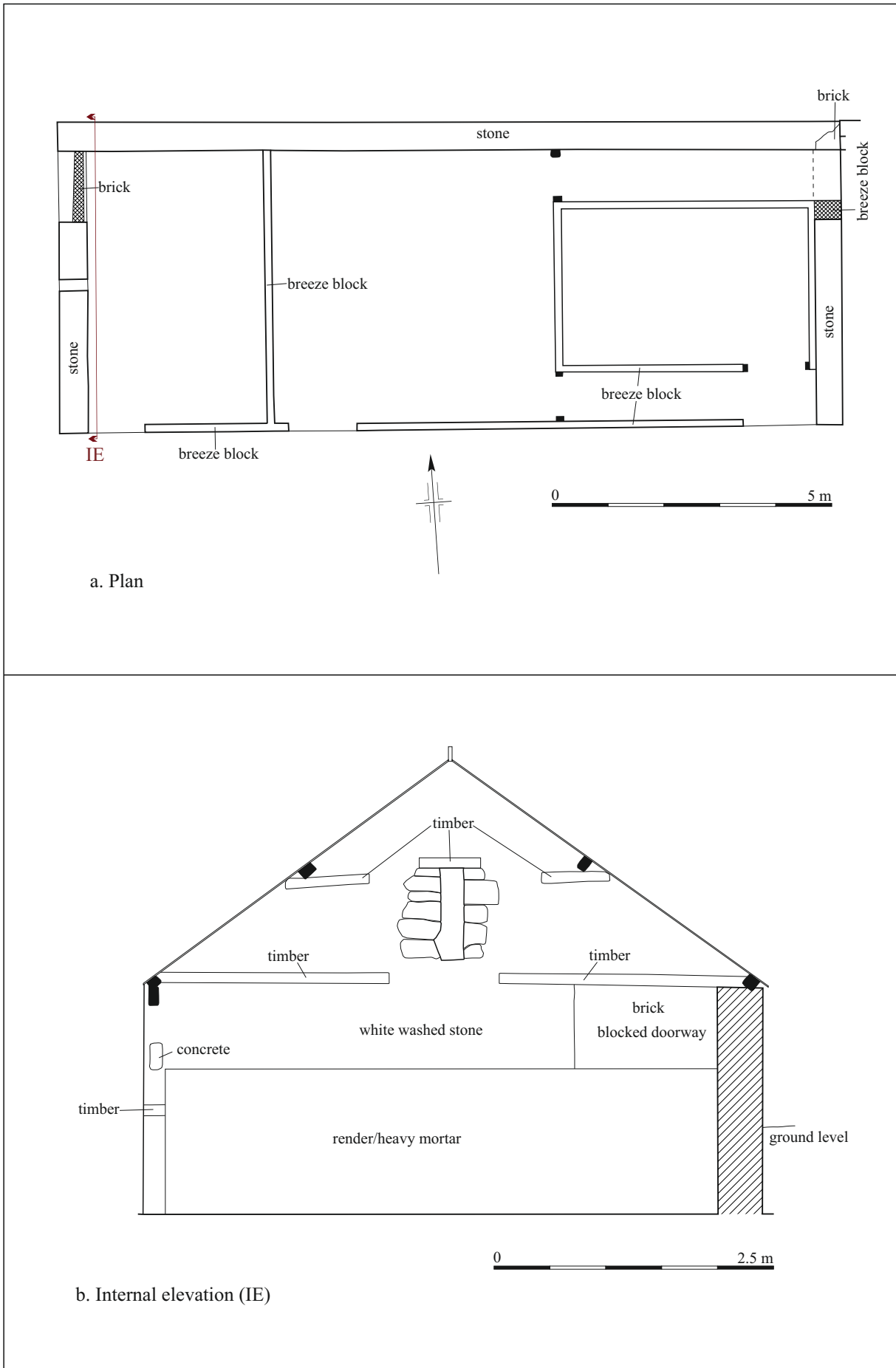


Figure 7: Plan and internal elevation



Plate 3 Northern range eastern part



Plate 4 Trusses in eastern part of North range

The east part of the north range is of brick and is butted up to the limestone wall of the central range (Plate 3). There are two component parts to this part of the structure; the west part is an enclosed room with a door on the east side and a window on its west side on the south façade. The other is open on the south side with two supporting posts on stone pads and curving braces. The roof space is open with trusses that contain king posts and struts (Plate 4). This part of the building is covered with modern 20th century pan tiles.

The west component of the north range is of a later construction and is also butted up to the limestone wall of the central range (Plate 5). This part of the structure is L-shaped with an extension on the north side. The structure has a dwarf brick wall over which there is a timber frame encased in corrugated iron. The south façade has a central stable door with two flanking windows.



Plate 5 North range, west end of south façade



Plate 6 North range, west gable

The west gable has a blocked up window (Plate 6), while the extension on the north side has dwarf brick walls with windows forming all of the wall space, except for a plank door on the west side, and corrugated cover on the east side. Internally there is a single standing central wooden post helping to support a flat lean-to roof of white asbestos sheeting (Plate 7). A plank door is located between the two component parts of this area of the structure. Internally in the main unit of this western part of the structure the trusses contain struts only (Plate 8). In the east wall, which is formed by the limestone wall of the central range, there is a bricked up doorway with timber lintel on the north side.



Plate 7 Interior of northern annex



Plate 8 Interior of west end, north range

### 3.3 The South Building

The southern building has three sides constructed of a breezeblock walling on the east, south and west sides (Plate 9). The structure is mainly open on the north side, where it faces across to the north range. The east and west walls have some four supporting piers. The open north side has four bays defined by uprights supported on breezeblock pads. Internally the trusses are steel framed structures that support a corrugated asbestos roof (Plate 10). There is an internal division separating the east bay of the barn from the other three and also a makeshift panelled area in the southwest corner.





Plate 9 West end of south building



Plate 10 Interior of south building

## 4 ASSESSMENT

### 4.1 Phases

The north range is the more complicated structure and essentially has some four phases, which can be roughly dated from map and material analysis. Phase 1 of the structure was dated by the map evidence to the central part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from 1845 to 1876. A date nearer 1850 is probably more likely. There is also the chance that the stone walls originate much earlier and that the roof is a later alteration or addition. This structure consisted of an open fronted cattle shed with a back passage behind the stalls so that the farmer could place feed in the stalls. There is a ventilation slit in the west gable, such features are difficult to date and occur in structures of a medieval and post-medieval date. It is not known at this time if this would have contained a grey slate roof, although it is a possibility. Phase 2 saw the construction of the eastern unit, which is also first shown on the map of 1876. The structure contains some yellow, and engineering, bricks, which were

not manufactured until after 1850. This means that the structure was probably erected c 1860-76. The structure also has signs of minor reworking with addition of later brick. Other minor phases could be speculated on from the maps at this point, but as none of this survives it is pointless in including it here as a full phase, and it is perhaps best to see it as a sub-phase. Phase 3 saw the construction of the corrugated west end. This was not on the map of 1921, but was on the map of 1937. The materials used in the structure are appropriate to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the map evidence helps us pin down the construction date to c. 1930. Phase 4 saw the internal refurbishment of the central cattle shed c 1960-70.

The south building is a structure of one major phase probably dated c 1960-70.

## **4.2 Listed Status**

The buildings are not listed but lie in a conservation area.

## **4.3 Historic and Architectural Assessment**

The buildings are of very little architectural merit and would never be listed. The northern range of buildings contains components that are historically of more interest. The remains of a cattle shed of at least c. 1850 in date, and a cart-shed of c. 1860. There are some traditional building designs, but the cutting of the timbers is more modern, being saw cut. There could be a later replacement of roof timbers on the stone component of the building. The western part of the north range and the complete south range show no traditional building techniques and are 20<sup>th</sup> century structures using modern materials.

## **5 THE CURRENT PROPOSAL**

The proposed alterations in planning will mean the following for these standing structures. The south range will be completely demolished. Historically and architecturally this will not be missed.

Of the north range of buildings, the eastern part of the structure, the cart-shed of c. 1860, this will be maintained. Of the central part of the structure a cow shed of c. 1850 or before, with internal alterations of c 1960-70, this will be demolished. The west part of the structure will be demolished; this part of the structure has no architectural merit.

The structures will be replaced by two dwellings.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

An assessment of the structures has described them and assessed any merit that they may have. The northern range of buildings is the more interesting in that it can be shown to have some four major phases of activity. This included the construction of a central limestone cow-shed in c. 1850, and an addition of a cart-shed in c. 1860 on the east side. In c. 1930 a chicken-shed was added at the west end, and in c. 1960-70 the cow-shed was

internally remodelled being divided into a number of rooms. The south building is of a single build of c. 1960-70.

Architecturally the southern building has no merit, while the north building has some interesting features it is unlikely to ever become a listed structure.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Gelling, M 1953 *The Place-names of Oxfordshire, Part 1*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Oxford City Council 2012 *Old Marston Conservation Area Appraisal Consultation Draft*, Oxford: Oxford City Council

VCH 1957 *A History of the County of Oxford, volume 5: Bullingdon Hundred*, London: Institute of Historic Research

### **Maps Oxfordshire History Centre**

ORO 263/M 1845 Marston Tithe Map

ORO MPC744, 745 1605 Corpus Christie estate maps

ORO MPC751 1769 Corpus Christie estate map

OS Map 1876 First Edition 1: 2,500

OS Map 1899 Second Edition 1: 2,500

OS Map 1921 Third Edition 1: 2,500

OS Map 1937 Fourth Edition 1: 2,500

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