

A Historic Building Survey
of Farm Buildings
at
HALLCOURT FARM, MIDGHAM,
READING,
BERKSHIRE



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for
JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

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Introduction

This report was commissioned to satisfy a condition of planning consent from West Berkshire Council for the conversion of a group of unlisted historic farm buildings at Hallcourt Farm, Midgham, Berkshire, RG7 5TX into two self-contained dwellings and an annexe. The building recording has been carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by John Moore Heritage Services and approved by the Planning Authority (WSI 2009). The drawings used as a basis for Figs 2-5 & 10 are a survey by Gotlee Orchard-Lisle, architects and the buildings are distinguished by a pre-existing lettering system (A-M; Fig 2).

Hallcourt Farm lies to the west of New Road Hill (NGR SU 5665 6734) to the west of Hall Court and to the east of the 19th century farmhouse, both now separate properties. The house associated with the farm buildings lies to the north and was converted from a pair of cottages built c.1900. The farm buildings are ranged round two yards (Fig 2), the smaller (lamb yard) to the south and the larger to the east; this is bounded by a high wall which separates it from Hall Court.

History

Hallcourt was a medieval manor held in the time of Edward I (1272-1307) by John Hall, from which it derives its name. The present house (Hall Court) dates to c.1700 and the later descent of the manor is detailed by the VCH (1923, 311-29). By the mid 19th century the property had become part of the Midgham Park estate and was sold at auction in 1856 (ibid). In 1857 the ecclesiastical parish of Midgham, previously part of Thatcham, was formed and Hall Court was subsequently converted into the vicarage-house. At this time it was divided from the farm buildings by a new wall and a new farmhouse was built to the west. The existing house to the north, originally cottages, was converted by the present owner. Dairying was important from the 1930s when subsidies became available but before that beef and pigs were reared (inf. from owner).

The farm is marked on Roque's map of Berkshire published in 1761 but the farm buildings are shown at a larger scale on the Tithe map of 1842 (Fig 1; Berks RO). These include the implement shed (A) and barn (J) and a building on the site of the stables (M). By the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1880 (surveyed 1877) further buildings had been constructed including the smaller yard to the south and the new farmhouse (Fig 1); the 1936 edition shows little change.

Description

The overall site plan is shown on Fig 2; building plans at a larger scale on Fig 3 and elevations and sections on Figs 4, 5 and 10. Photographic figures are indicated individually below.

Implement shed (A; Fig 6)

This building is the most westerly of the group and is abutted by the cow-house (B) to the east. It is open-fronted to the north and is of timber-framed (probably elm) construction on a brick plinth, four bays long, weatherboarded externally with a roof of double Roman tiles. The weatherboarding is 19th century and there is an inscription on the west elevation: DANIEL LAWRENCE 1844. There is an aisle on the south side which has a low brick outer wall in Flemish bond, an extension of the brick plinth course; there was formerly a building butted against the west end (shown on old maps; Fig 1).

Interior - the posts have carefully formed jowled heads carrying straight tie beams, slighter principal rafters yoked at the apex, a ridge board, queen struts and straight collars clasping a single tier of purlins. The posts are morticed for wall plates which pass beneath the tie beams in normal assembly and have three-way braces. They have chamfered timber basal pads set on rebuilt brick piers and the posts on the north side are braced at the base by one or more oblique secondary struts. The south aisle posts are linked to the external wall by aisle ties. The trusses have chisel-cut carpenters' marks numbering from the west. The roof has modern felting and many of the rafters are renewed. The end walls have cill beams and a studwork frame with light diagonal braces to the corner posts.

Cow-house, shed & store (B; Fig 7)

This is a single-storeyed range running east from (A) and abutting the south-west corner of the barn (J). It is built of brick in Flemish garden wall bond with a peg-tiled roof. The north wall is plain brick with a door at each end. The four bays at the west end have a south wall of weatherboarded studwork on a brick plinth but were originally open-fronted; pyramidal staddle stones can be seen externally. The posts have shallow bearers carrying the wall plate and the trusses of machine-sawn pine have diagonal struts to the edge-set purlins. There is a concrete herringbone floor and a manger against the north wall which has brick piers supporting three roof trusses. A brick partition wall divides this unit from a three-bay open-fronted shed to the east which has cast iron columns on stone bases and the same roof structure. At the east end there is a single-bay store entered from the north.

Shed (C; Fig 8)

This forms the west end of a range of buildings on the south side of the lamb yard and is an open-fronted four-bay shed facing south with brick end and rear walls in Flemish garden wall bond and a double-Roman tiled roof. Plain square posts set on shallow stone bases are tenoned into the wall plate and there are three king post trusses of machine-sawn pine; the rafters are renewed.

Hog-house & pig pens (D, F; Figs 8-9)

At the east end of C and projecting to the south is a brick building in Flemish garden wall bond with a hipped peg-tiled roof. It is windowless, with doors in the north and south walls and a chimney stack on the south-east corner. Internally there is a small corner fireplace and a pitched brick floor; the roof is modern.

To the east and backing onto a continuation of the brick north wall is a pair of brick pig houses with shallow-pitched corrugated iron roofs and yards in front enclosed by concrete block walls. At the east end these adjoin a high brick wall which now forms the back of G. To the west a further three pens have been demolished to form a modern storage area.

Bull pens (G; Fig 9)

This is a single-storeyed range butted against a lean-to at the south end of the barn (J) and the east end of the pig pens (F). It is weatherboarded externally over studwork with a low-pitched corrugated iron roof. The interior is divided into four compartments; three have an inner spine wall of vertical boards, the fourth at the south end is butted against a brick wall in Flemish garden wall bond with a blocked door at the south end; this was originally open-fronted. The common rafter roof incorporates a mixture of timbers, some reused and has strutted tie beams at intervals. On the other side of the boarded partition the building is open to the west and has posts made of reused railway sleepers.

Barn (J; Figs 10-11)

The barn is aligned north-south and has later buildings butted against both ends. It is gabled to the north and hipped to the south with a gabled porch on the west side, a smaller opposed door and a through-passage at the north end; over the east door the roof is extended to form a porch with the eaves supported on struts. The building is timber-framed with cill beams set on brick plinths and is weatherboarded externally with a modern corrugated iron roof; the roof has been corrugated iron since c.1930. Part of the north wall is now inside building K where it has been underbuilt in brick below the mid-rail.

Interior – with the exception of a modern storage mezzanine at the north end the interior is undivided and five bays long with four oak trusses. These have posts with jowled heads carrying cambered tie beams, slighter principal rafters pegged at the apex, queen struts and straight collars clasping a single tier of windbraced purlins. The posts are morticed for wall plates which pass beneath the tie beams in normal assembly and have cranked braces. Lateral braces, indicated by mortices, have largely been removed and formerly existed in the west porch doorway although there are no corresponding mortices on the east side. There is a series of scratched carpenters' marks, I-III running north. The framing of the outer walls is largely exposed; cill beams, mid rails and wall plates are tenoned into the trusses and joined by subsidiary posts and rails; many of these timbers are original but survival is less good on the west side. The middle bay on the east side was formerly occupied by a large doorway which is marked by two full-height posts; the cill beam stops to either side and is absent from the doorway. As well as brace mortices the timbers framing the west door have mortices for a mid rail and a

central post suggesting that the present porch is a secondary feature. The wall plates have face-halved and bladed scarf joints. Mounted on the west wall is a pulley drive for milking machinery which was powered by a tractor.

Stables (K, L, M; Fig 12)

This is a single storied range which forms the north side of the eastern yard. The side and rear elevations are brick, the south yard elevation is weatherboarding on a brick plinth incorporating several doors and windows; one of the central bays was formerly open and has been filled with blockwork and corrugated iron; the roof is shallow-pitched Welsh slate with black glazed ridge tiles. There are short gabled return wings at either end; the west end is butted against the barn. Most of the east end wall is in Flemish bond incorporating three blocked openings, a door and two windows with arched heads but the gable is a later build in a paler brick. The earlier build continues into the first bay of the north wall and an offset marks the junction with the later build to the west. This is laid in Flemish garden wall bond with vitrified headers and has an offset eaves course. There are three small integral slatted windows with arched heads. The western return wall is in the same bond; one of the windows appears to have been converted from a door.

Interior – the east end (M) is used as a stable and has three roof trusses of machine-sawn pine; these have tie beams, raking queen posts, edge-set purlins and king bolts. The roof has a ridge board and there are braces to the posts in the south wall. To the west of a brick partition wall the building is used for storage but has the same roof structure.

Structural development

The farm buildings represent several different phases of construction (Fig 2) and the maps of 1842 and 1880 (Fig 1) give an indication as to when this took place.

1) c.1700 – the earliest building in the group is the fine five-bay timber-framed barn (J). Dating is problematic as the overall form and carpentry techniques of barns in the region continued with little change over a long period (Barnwell & Giles 1997, 17). It probably dates to the first half of the 18th century and may have been constructed c.1700 when Hall Court was rebuilt. However it could be earlier than this as the face-

halved and bladed scarf joints used in the wall plates occur in 17th century contexts (personal observation). The west porch is not an original feature and there appear originally to have been braces in what became the doorway; possibly the larger opening was initially on the east side. The porch appears to have been added by 1842.

2 *c.1800* – the implement shed (A) belongs to this phase and was a combined brick and timber-framed building. The basic framing is like that of the barn but the carefully formed ogee mouldings to the jowled heads of the posts suggest a date at the end of the 18th or start of the 19th century, a period when many cart-sheds were constructed in the region (Barnwell & Giles 1997, 39). Like the barn it was in existence by 1842. The east end of the stable block (M) which is earlier than the rest of the range was probably also built at this time; a building is shown in this position on the Tithe map.

3 *later 19th century* – the majority of the other buildings are brick and constructed in a distinctive Flemish garden wall bond. These include the stables (K/L/M) in their present form, the cow-house, shed and store (B) and the parallel range to the south (C/D/F). They were constructed between 1842 and 1880 (although B seems to replace an earlier building in the same position) when the first edition Ordnance Survey map shows the present layout, including some buildings which have since been demolished. The uniformity of their construction suggests that they were built c.1860 when the farm was separated from Hall Court.

4 *20th century* – the shed and bull boxes (G) date to the earlier 20th century and a lean-to shed has replaced some of the pig pens (F).

References

- Barnwell, P, & Giles, C, 1997 *English Farmsteads 1750-1914*, RCHME
Berks RO – Berkshire Record Office, Reading
VCH 1923 *Victoria History of the counties of England: Berkshire*, **3**
WSI 2009 – John Moore Heritage Services 2009 *Hallcourt farm, Midgham Green, Midgham, Historic Building Recording, Written Scheme of Investigation*

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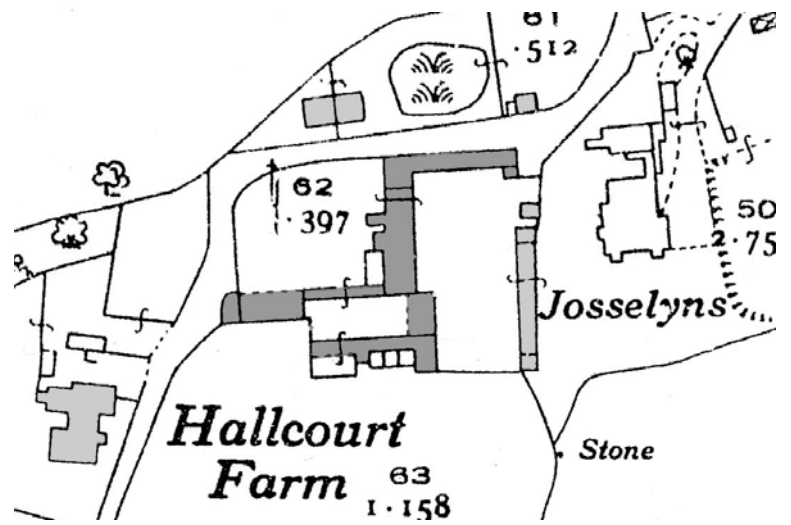
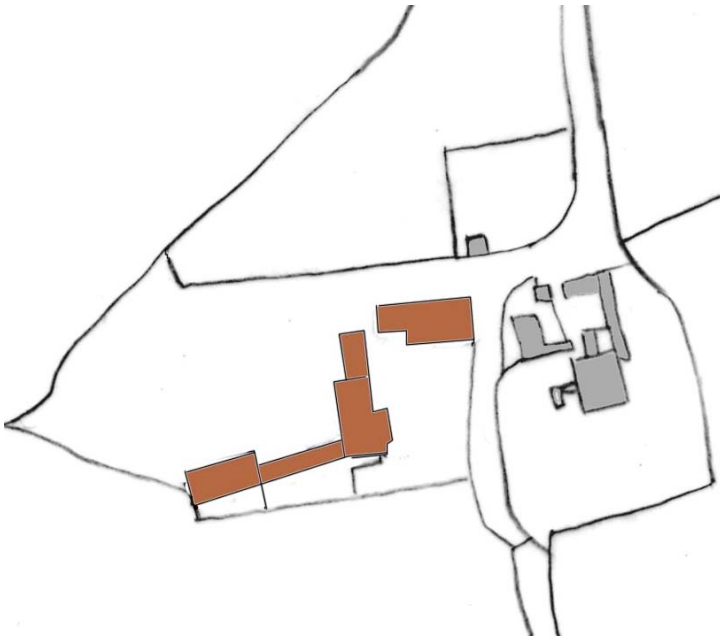
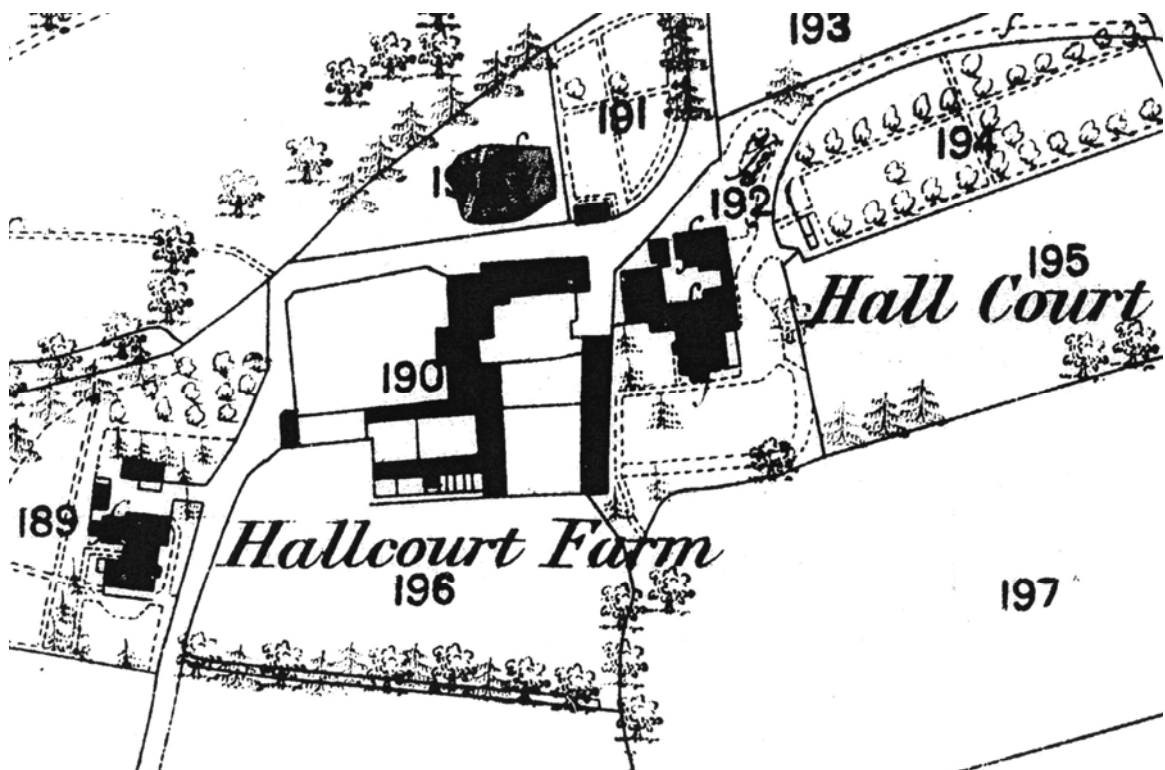


Fig 1 Maps

- 1842 Tithe map (tracing Berks RO); farm buildings in brown
- 1936 Ordnance Survey
- 1880 Ordnance Survey, 1st edition (surveyed 1877)



- c.1700
- 18th century (timber)
- 18th century (brick)
- 19th century
- 20th century

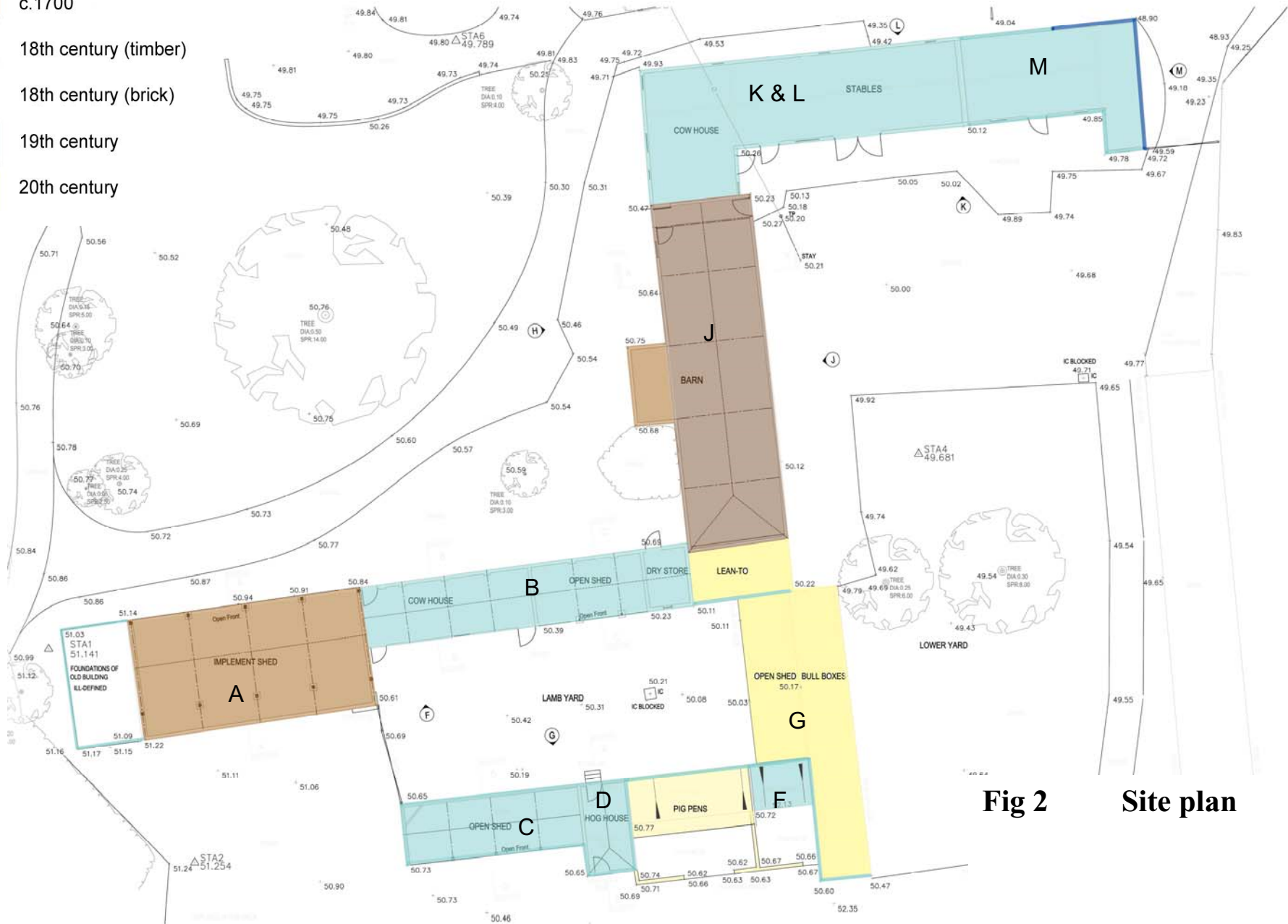


Fig 2 Site plan

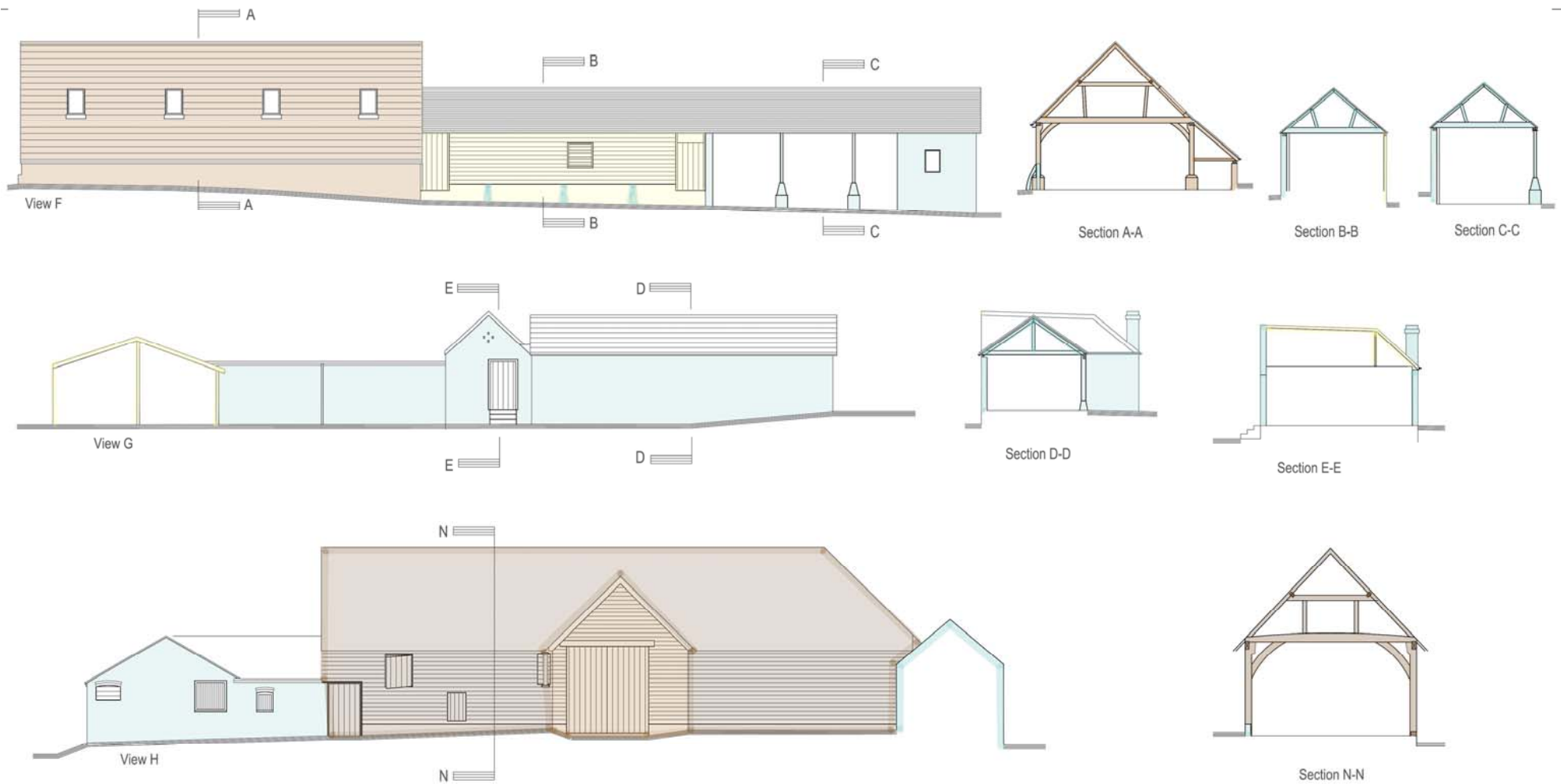


Fig 4 Elevations & Sections

South elevation; implement shed (A) & cowhouse (B) with cross sections (positions shown)
 North elevation; bull pens & hog house (C-G) with cross sections
 West elevation; barn (J) & stables (K) with cross section of barn

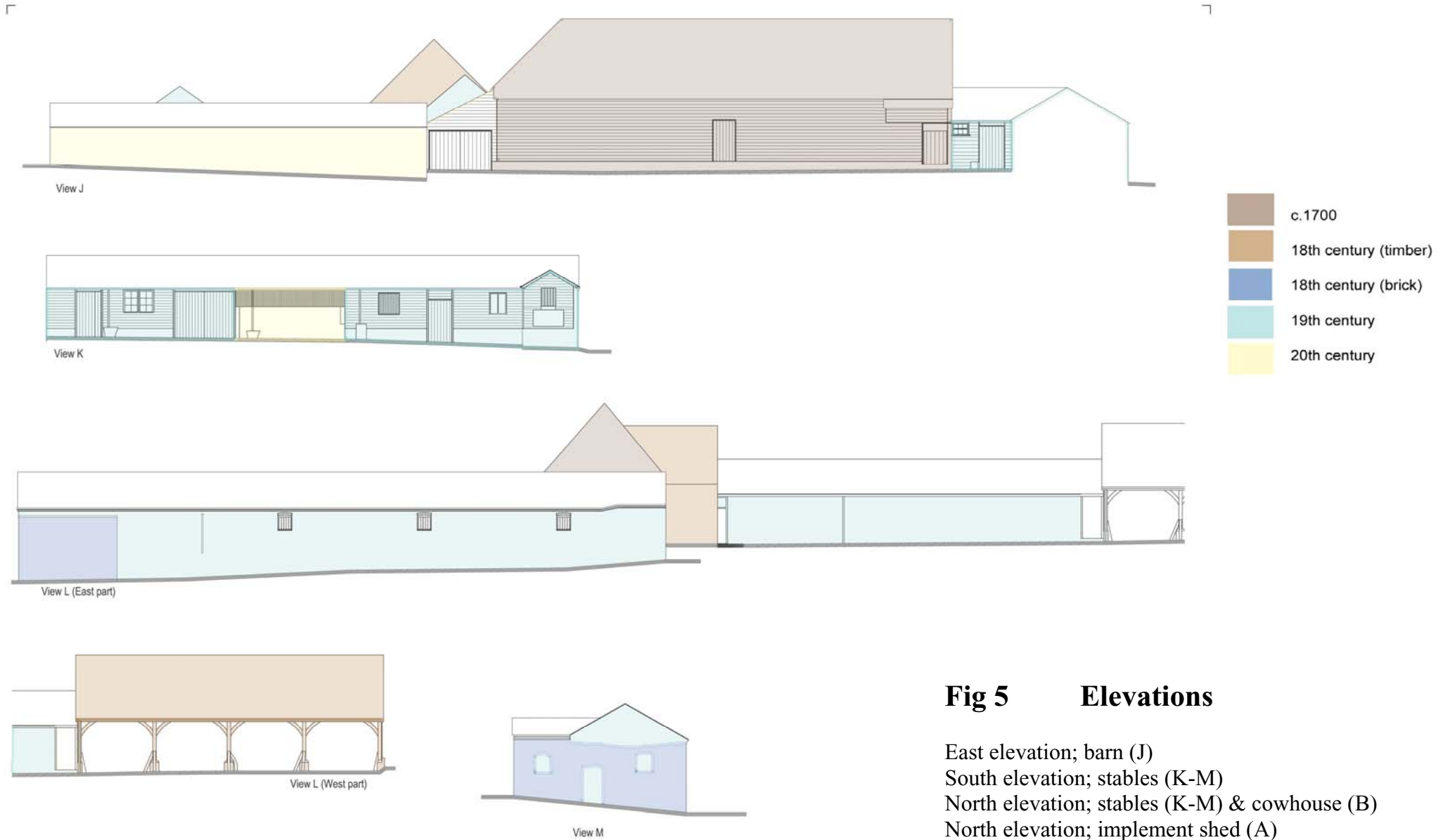


Fig 5 Elevations

East elevation; barn (J)
South elevation; stables (K-M)
North elevation; stables (K-M) & cowhouse (B)
North elevation; implement shed (A)
East elevation; stables (M)



Fig 6 Implement shed (A)

View from the west, barn in background

View from the south

Post detail with aisle tie (left)

View from north-west

Interior looking east

Aisle post with braces (centre)

Interior looking north-east (right)

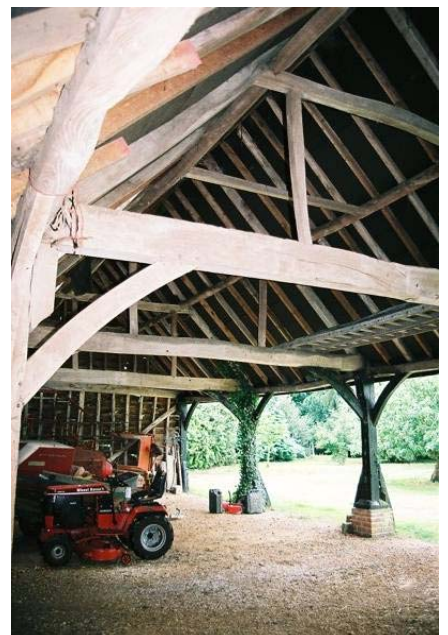
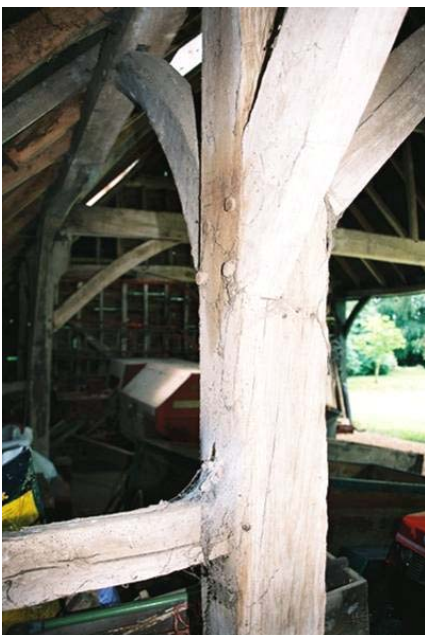




Fig 7 Cow-house (B)

(clockwise from top right)

View from south-east

South elevation; store at east end

South elevation; original post pad detail

Interior looking west

Interior looking west; post detail

View from south-west

View from north-west; A to right, J to left



Hallcourt Farm, Midgham, Berkshire



Fig 8 Pig house (C/D/F)

(clockwise from top right)

South elevation

Pig pens (F) from south

Brick wall east of pig pens backing (G)

View from west

View from north-west

South elevation; east end

South elevation; shed at west end





Fig 9 Hog house (D) & Bull boxes (G)

View of G from east

View of G from west

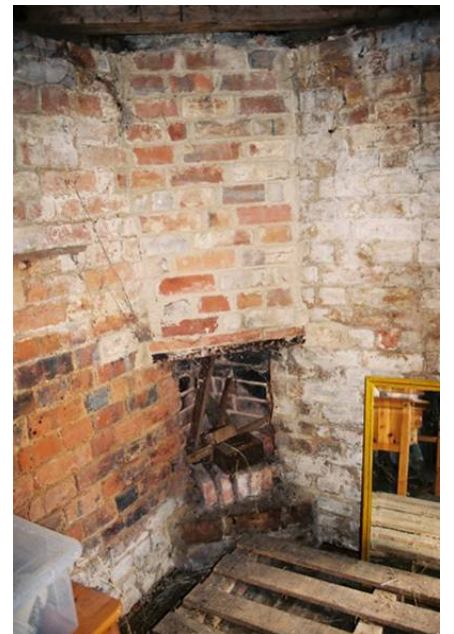
Interior of G looking north

View of G from north-east

Interior of G north end, east side (left)

Interior of D looking north (centre)

Interior of D; fireplace in SE corner (right)



Hallcourt Farm, Midgham, Berkshire



Fig 10 Barn (J)

View from east

Roof detail; north end of east elevation

Interior looking south

View from west

North wall in K; framing underbuilt in brick (left)

Interior looking north (centre)

Interior; door in east wall, posts mark original size

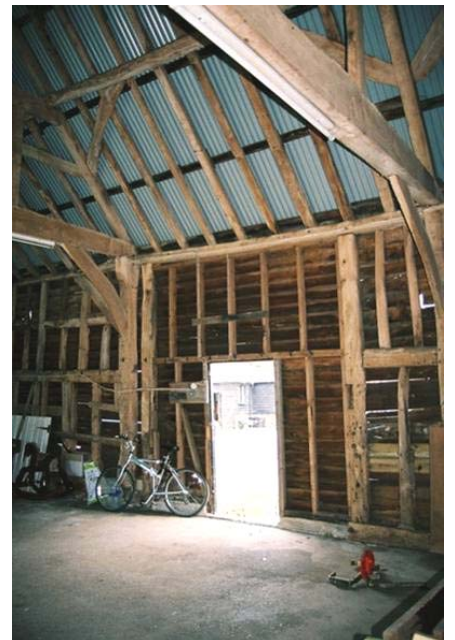




Fig 11 Barn (J)

(clockwise from top left)

Post on north side of porch with mortices for missing brace and mid-rail

Interior looking south

Interior looking north-west

South elevation; implement shed (A) & pig house (C, D, F)

North elevation: implement shed (A) & cow house (B)

West elevation; stable (K), barn (J), implement shed (A), shed (C)

Key as Fig 5

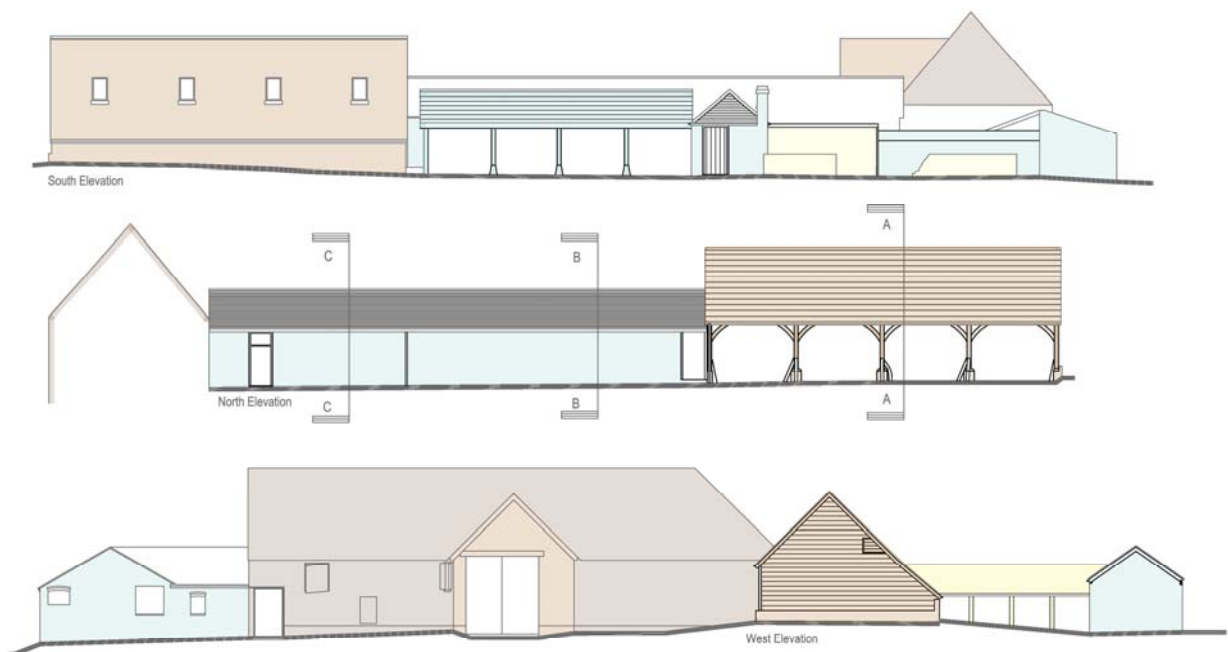




Fig 12 Stables (K-M)
(clockwise from above)

View from south-east

Interior of stable M looking west

East elevation of stable M with blocked door & windows

North elevation; detail of brick bond

View from north-west

West elevation; barn to right

