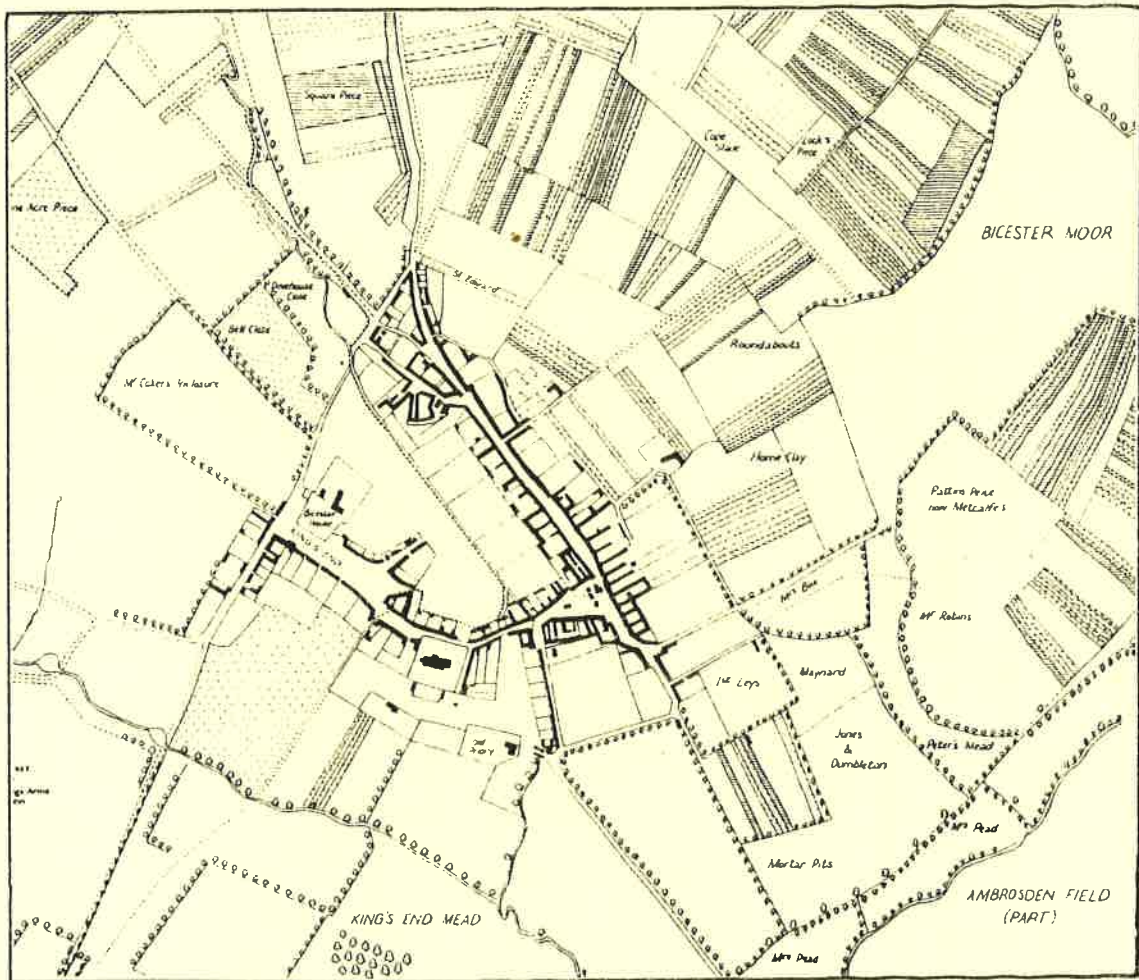


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M. Parker

The Old Stables, Priory Lane, Bicester

Architectural record prior to Conversion



Oxford Archaeological Unit
December 1995

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Architectural record prior to Conversion

NMR DATA	
Site Name	The Old Stables
Address	Priory Lane
Town	Bicester
Parish	Bicester
County	Oxon.
NGR	SP 5843 2209
Listed Status	Grade II
Visit/Survey Date	May 1995
OAU Site Code	BIOST 95

Oxford Archaeological Unit
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Architectural record prior to Conversion

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The Old Stables, Priory Lane, Bicester

Architectural record prior to Conversion

1. Introduction

Prior to their conversion to housing, the Old Stables in Priory Lane, Bicester were investigated and photographed by OAU in May 1995, as a condition of listed building consent under the terms of PPG15/16. The work was undertaken for Mr & Mrs M. Parker, in accordance with the County Archaeologist's brief and a specification prepared by OAU. This report describes the building, which was recorded by photography and a rapid survey. No significant discoveries were made in the partial disturbance below the ground floor.

2. History and Background

The building stand alongside the road next to the stream that marks the eastern edge of the precinct of Bicester Priory, and is situated at what is thought to have been the south-east corner of the precinct (Hinton 1968; Rodwell 1975). The priory church was itself further north (its east end crossed Priory Lane some 100 m to the north of the Stables), and while the priory mansion was demolished in 1673 (VCH 1959) the existing house known as the Old Priory lies immediately to the north of the Stables, and the two buildings may have been associated. The map of Bicester in 1753 shows the Old Priory but not the Stables (Dannatt 1963).

3. Description

3.1 *Exterior and general* (Photos 1/1-34)

The Stables consist of a two-storey stone range with a slate roof, and contain a central stable with a hayloft over and separate rooms at each end. There is no obvious evidence for structural changes, and the building is ostensibly of a single period.

The *walls* are of small limestone rubble, blank on the north and west sides. In the south wall is a single first-floor window, and all the other openings are towards the road. There is a central stable door, double doors at each end and a hay door on the first floor, and four windows on each floor; all the openings have timber lintels.

The *doors* are all of similar construction, with vertical planking supported on a frame of horizontal and diagonal planks (Ph. 1/21, 26-34). The *windows* have mostly been removed, but at least one on the ground floor was sashed, while that at the south end was a casement with bars and iron rods for the

glass (Ph. 2/19).

3.2 *Interior ground floor*

The ground floor consists of a stable in the central part with a loose box at one end, and cart or coach house at each end. The floors are of brick and stone paving with a drain running the length of the building; there is a pump at the south end of the drain. At the *south end* (Ph. 2/16-20) is a room with a fireplace and copper in the west wall, and a staircase in the south-east corner boxed with tongue-and-groove boarding (which also covers the walls of the room); there is also a boarded floor. This is probably a kitchen/wash-house associated with the accommodation upstairs, and it is separated from the next room by a timber partition. The *cart house* (Ph. 1/24; 2/13-14) has double doors and was capacious enough to store a vehicle, though it may also have been a harness room, and there are a number of hooks on the wall (and a gaslight fitting on the south wall). It contains in the north wall the pump mentioned above (Ph. 1/35-6). The *stable* occupies the centre of the building (Ph. 2/5-12), and was entered from a single door in the centre which gives access to a brick paved passage, while the stalls are paved with brick and stone. There are five stalls, with boarded wooden partitions between them, having a refined S-profile on the sloping top rail; the side and rear walls of the stalls are also boarded with tongue-and-groove. The front posts of the partitions have hooks for gates or bars across the front of the stalls, and there are water troughs and feeding baskets in the rear corners of each one. As is usual there are no windows in the back wall, but small wood-lined slots with sliding shutters at the top of the wall seem to have provided ventilation; the ceiling has mostly gone, but this was of lath and plaster on the soffits of the first-floor joists. At the north end of the stable is the one partition wall of stone, for which there is no apparent reason. Beyond it is a *loose box* (Ph. 2/1-4), with boarded ceiling, walls and partitions, topped by an open railings to the corridor. At the north end is a cart or *coach house* (Ph. 2/0), which was open to the roof at the time of examination, but may formerly have been floored over (no evidence for this was apparent in the walls, but see further below).

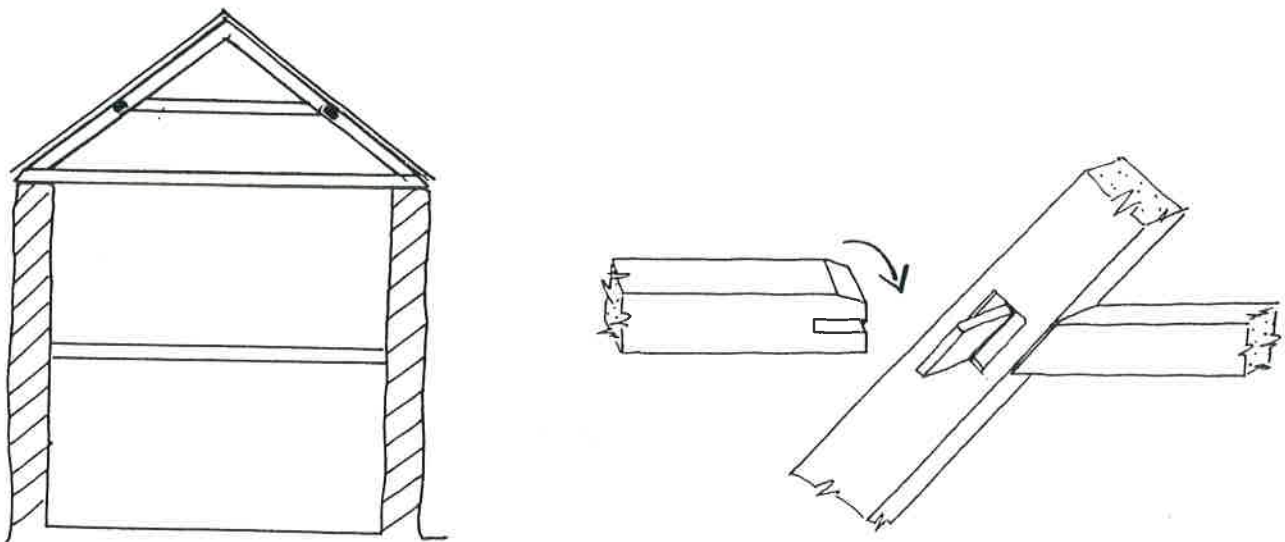
3.3 *Interior first floor*

The room at the *south end* is reached by the stair from the kitchen below (Ph. 2/20-26). It is lit by windows in the south and east walls, and in the west wall is a small iron grate (which has small side ovens and could have been used for cooking); it has a low ceiling at the level of the wallplates, and the boarded wall on the north side is wall-papered (partly on a newspaper of 1867). The *next room*, over part of the stable (Ph. 2/27-29), has one window and is unheated and is ceiled at the collar/purlin level room, painted with cream wash, and separated from the hayloft by a framed wall. It was presumably a bedroom, and contains a row of clothes hooks on a wooden board in the form of a series of protruding wooden disks (Ph. 2/27, 29) The

hayloft occupies the next two bays over the stable (Ph/ 2/30-35), and is open to the top of the roof. It was reached by a trap from below, and from the loading door in the front wall. At the time of examination the floor of the northern part of the hayloft was missing, but in the surviving south section there are traps at the back of the floor through which hay could be fed down into the stalls. The two rooms at the *north end* (Ph. 2/30, 34) have been partially dismantled and could not easily be reconstructed, since only the partition between them survives. The first room was beneath the roof bay that spans the stable and loose box, and only the scar of its south wall remains in the paintwork of the rear wall; it was ceiled at collar/purlin level. A door in the partition led through to the second room (Ph. 2/4). This may have been little more than a landing above the loose box, from a ladder or stair that no longer survives, since as noted above the outline of the room cannot easily be discerned on the walls, though the ceiling at tie-beam level seems to have extended to the north end wall, there is a window and the walls have a cream wash over them which may imply a decorative intent.

3.4 *The roof*

The roof (Ph. 2/6,30-32) has a tie and collar beam on each of the seven principal rafters, and a ridge piece. Longitudinal support is provided by butt purlins running between the principals, joined by being slotted onto free tenons which pass through the principal rafters. There are nine common rafters in each bay. Like most of the other timberwork, the roof is of elm.



Section of roof and detail of slotted purlin

4. Discussion

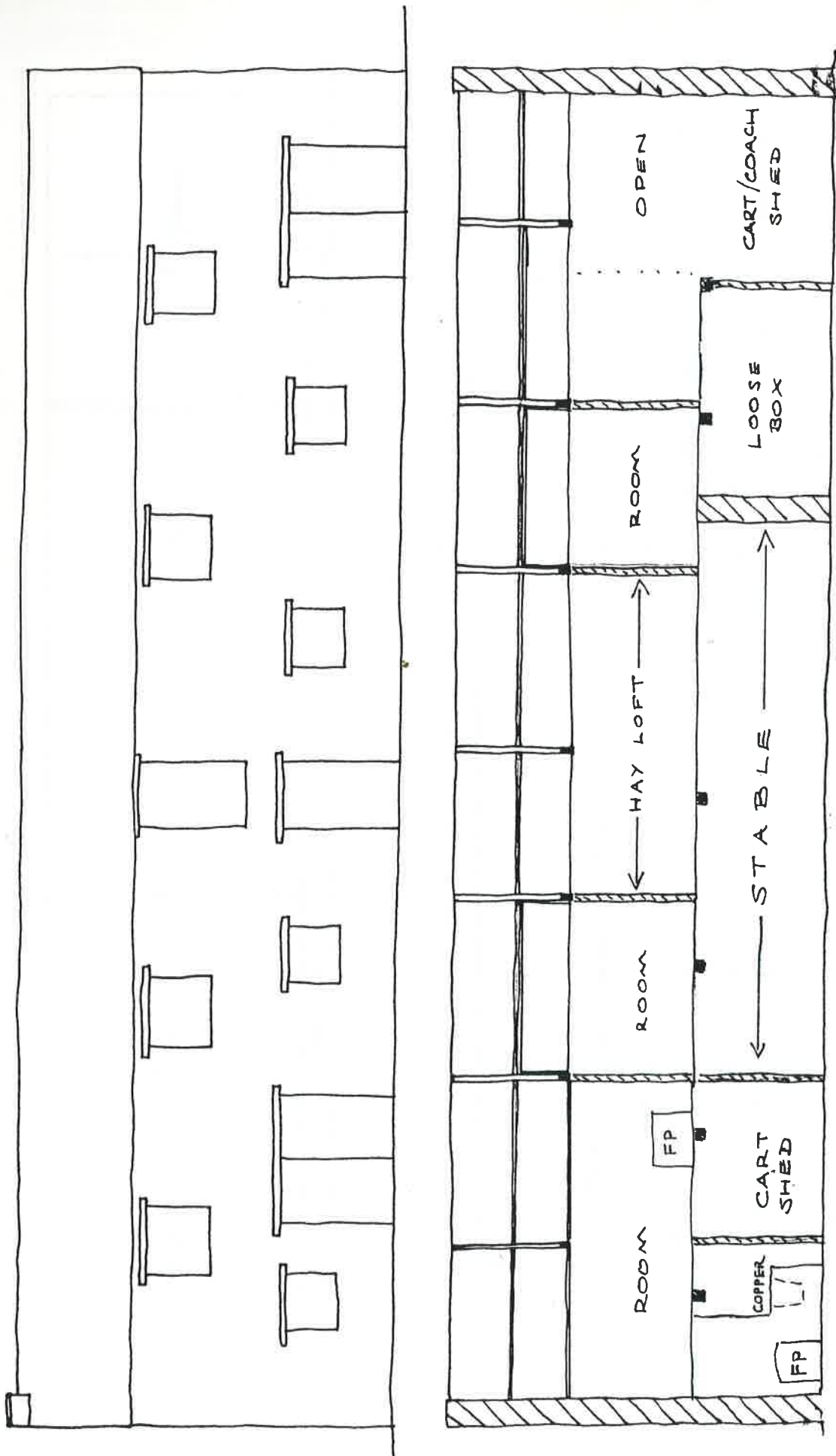
There is no reason to suppose that the building is of more than one period, and most of the fittings and features would point to date on construction in the first half of the 19th century. As such it is a good example of a working stable, with accommodation (perhaps for a family) at one end and a single room (probably for another servant) at the other, and space for carts or domestic carriage. None of the architectural features is especially remarkable, though the lead pump is of some interest and may have come from elsewhere. The use of the free tenon with slotted purlins in the roof is of interest, and is possibly a regional characteristic, having previously been noted in the Oxfordshire Cotswolds (e.g. at Chastleton House stables). It would be worth noting other examples of this joint.

J.T. Munby
Oxford Archaeological Unit
December 1995

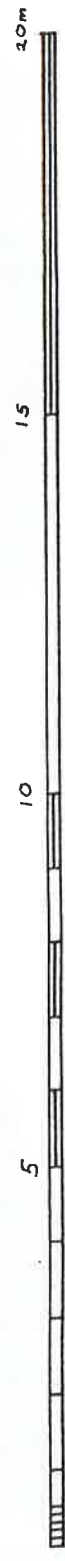
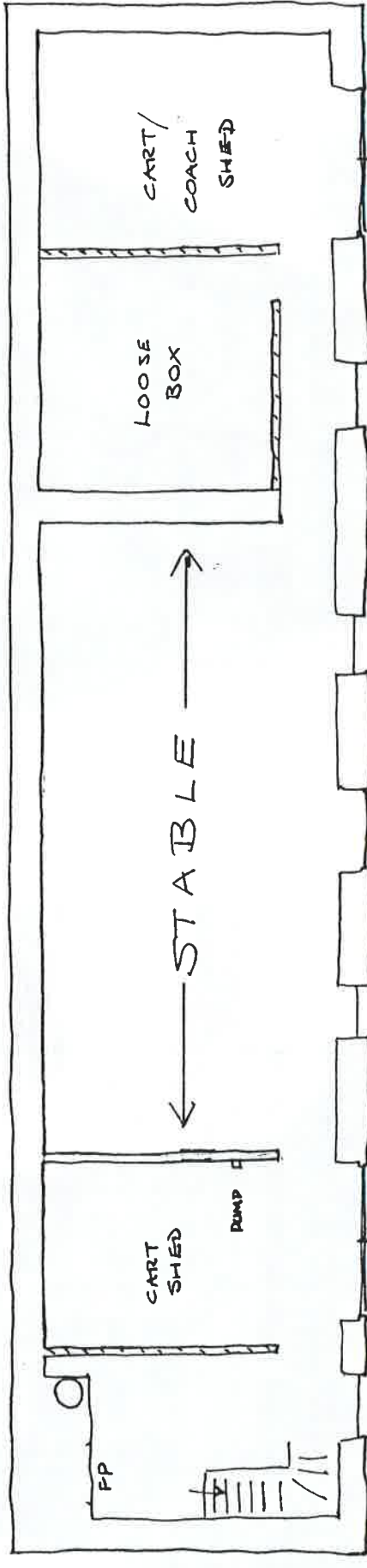
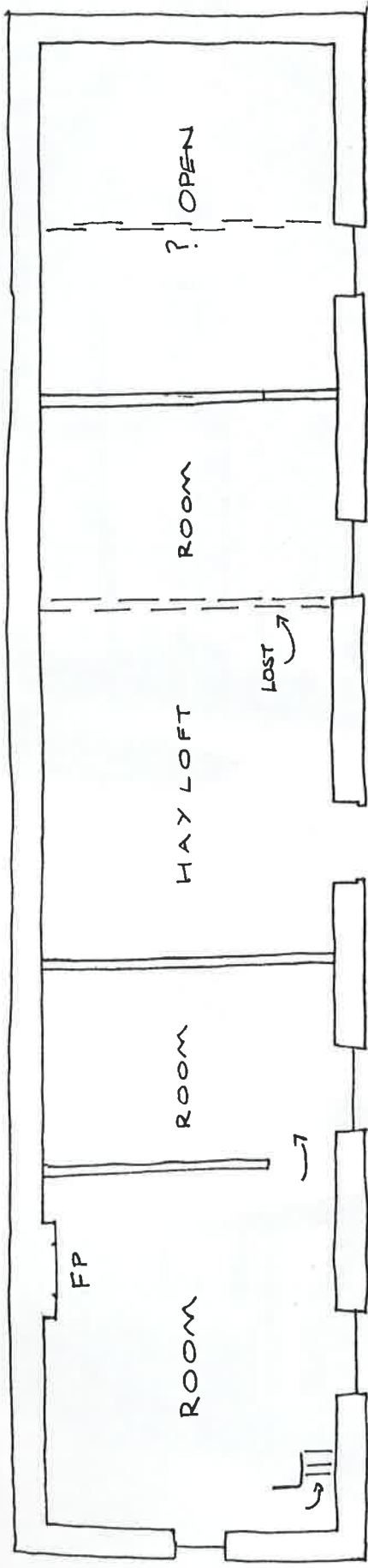
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References

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- Hinton, D., 1968 'Bicester Priory', *Oxoniensia* xxxiii (1968), 22-52.
- Rodwell, K, 1975 *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire*
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Bicester Old Stables: elevation and long section.



Bicester Old Stables: ground and first-floor plans






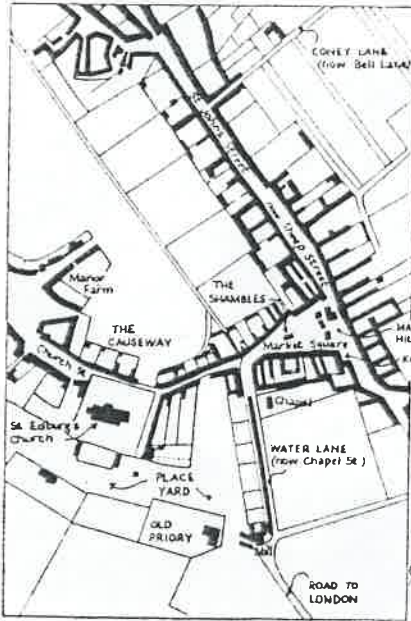
1. Bicester Old Stables, from south [1/2]



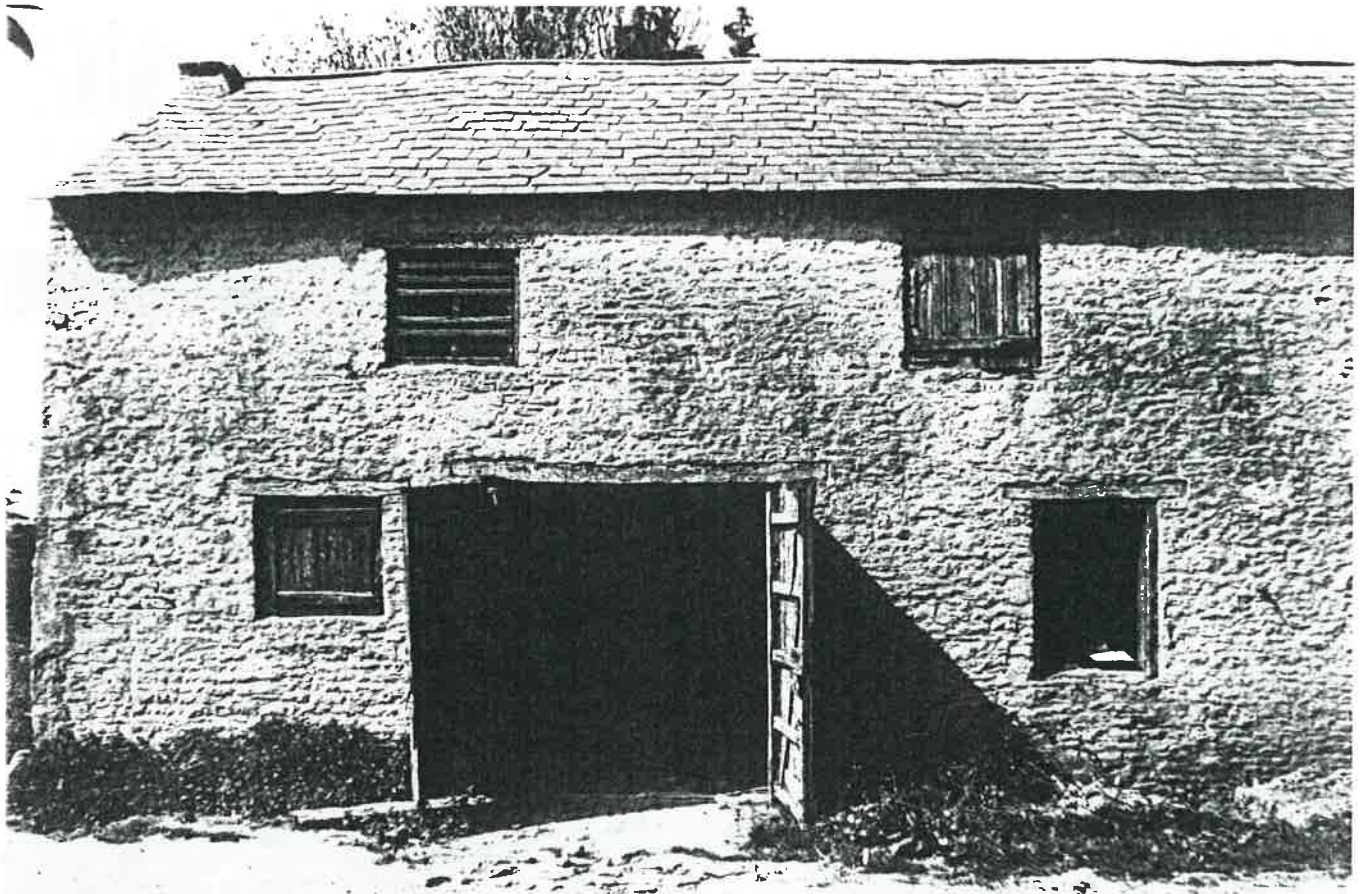
2. Bicester Old Stables, from north [1/8]

KING'S END, ARABLE

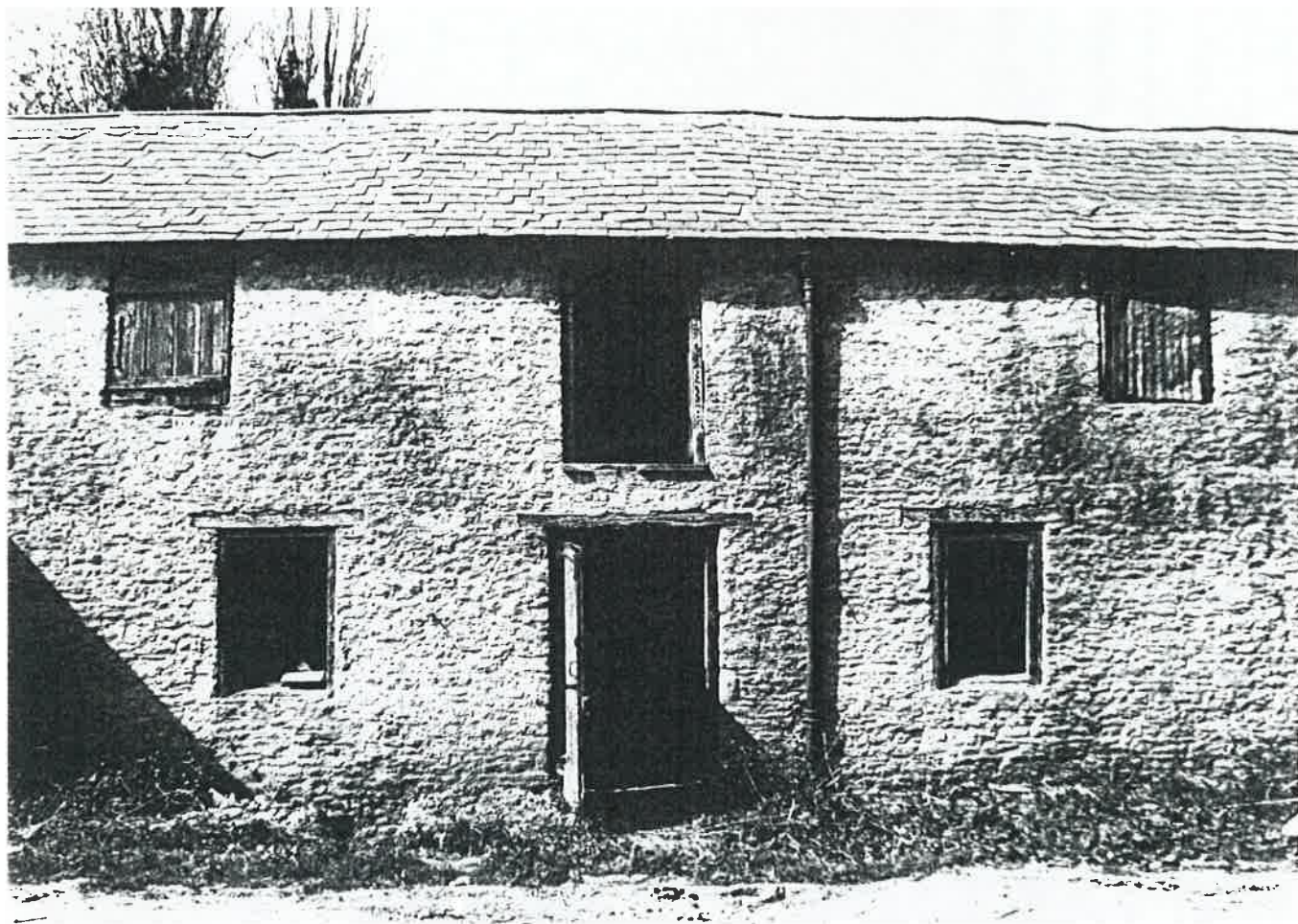
-  Land of Sr Edward Turner
-  Land of M^r John Pardee
-  Boundary between Manors



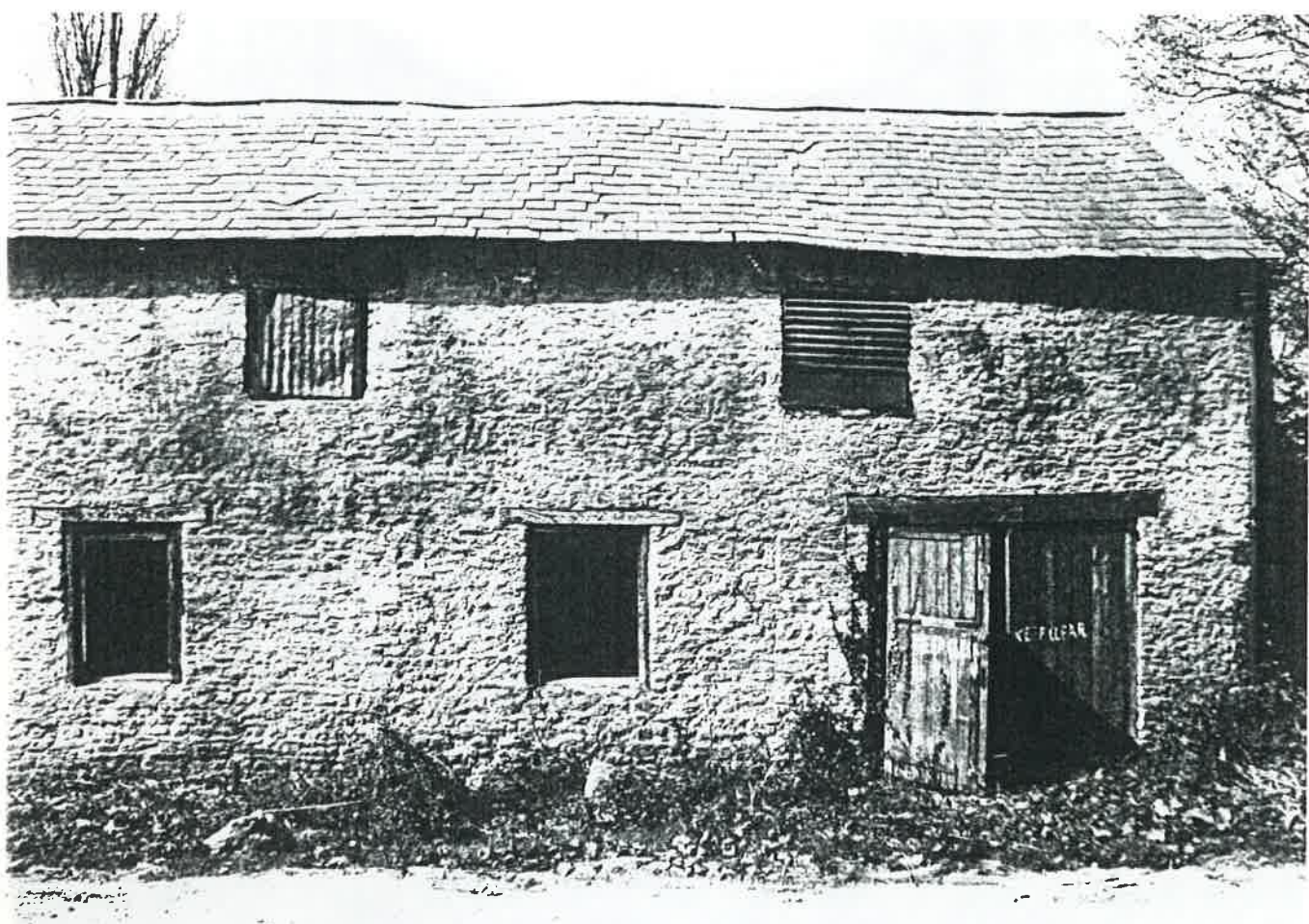
Bicester Old Stables. site on map of 1753



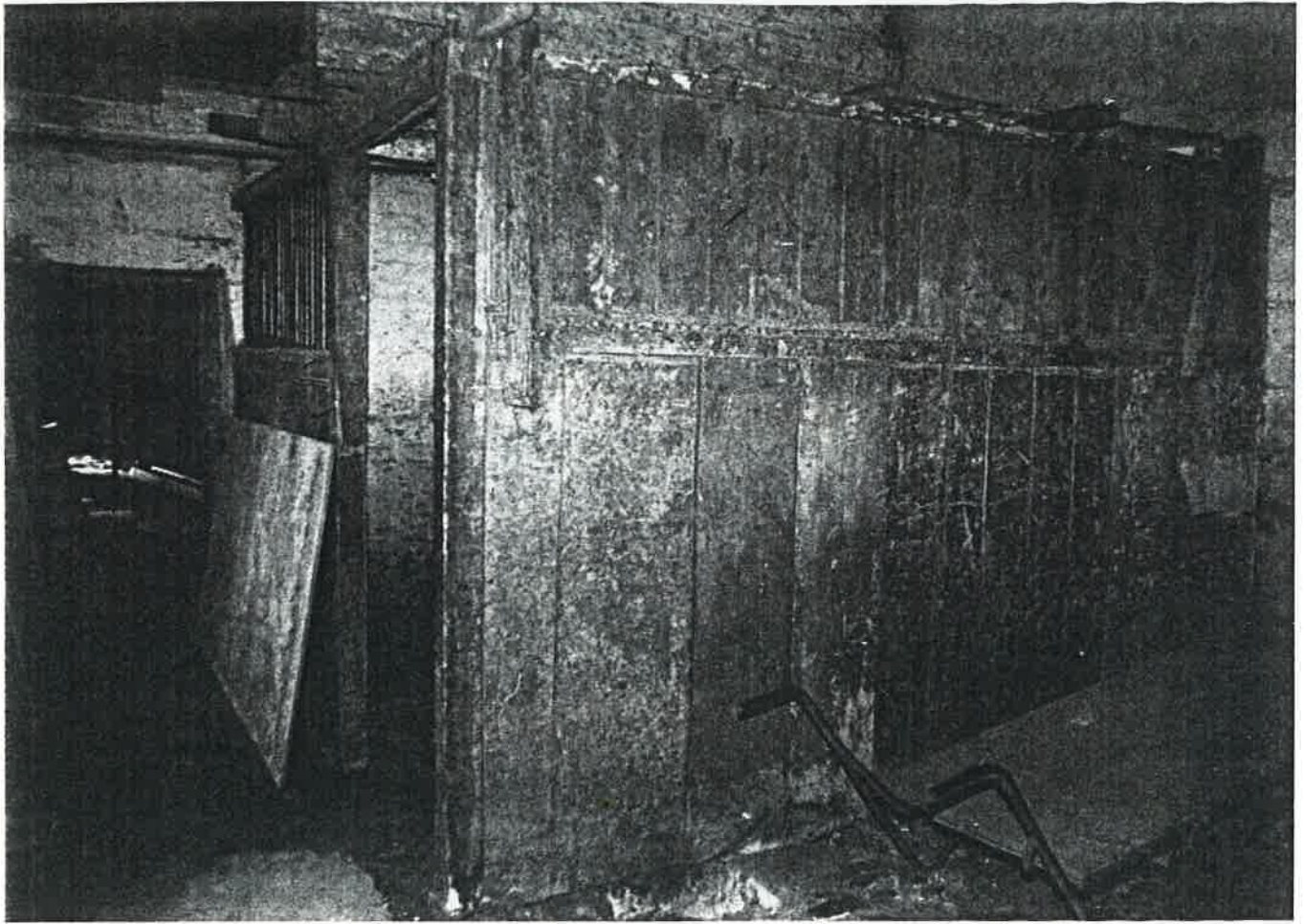
3. Bicester Old Stables. south end of east wall [1.3]



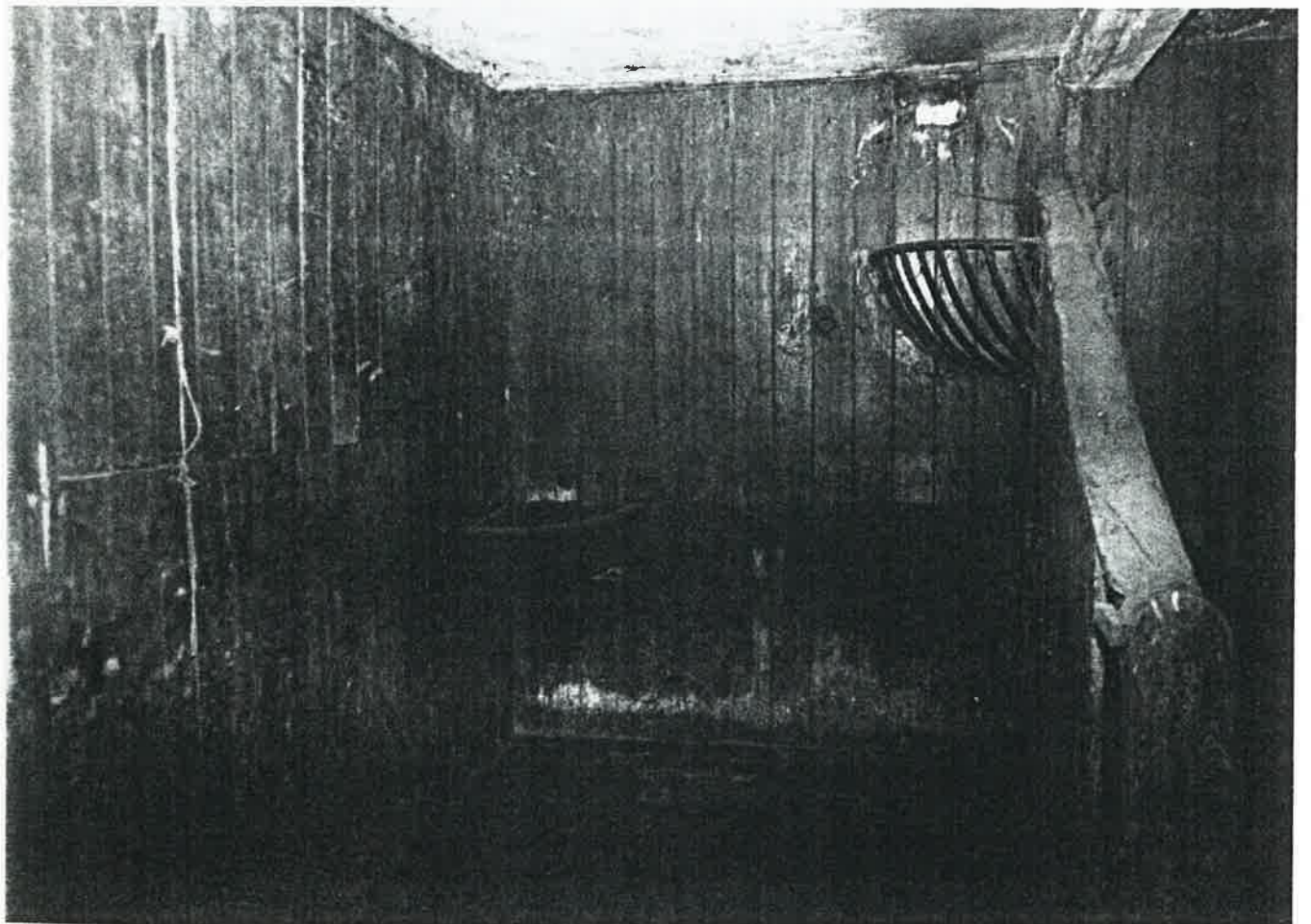
4. Bicester Old Stables. centre of east wall [1/4]



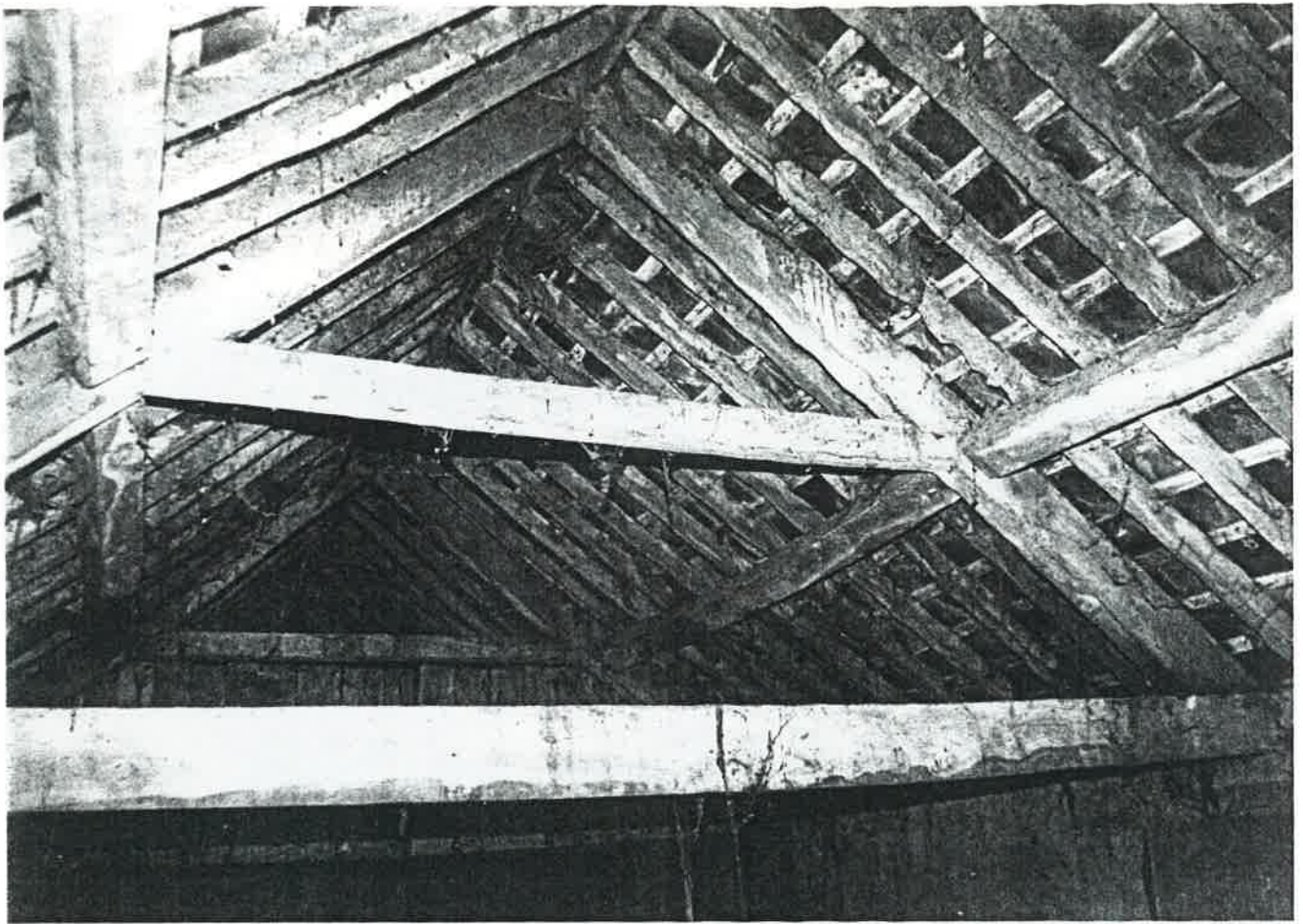
5. Bicester Old Stables. north end of east wall [1 5]



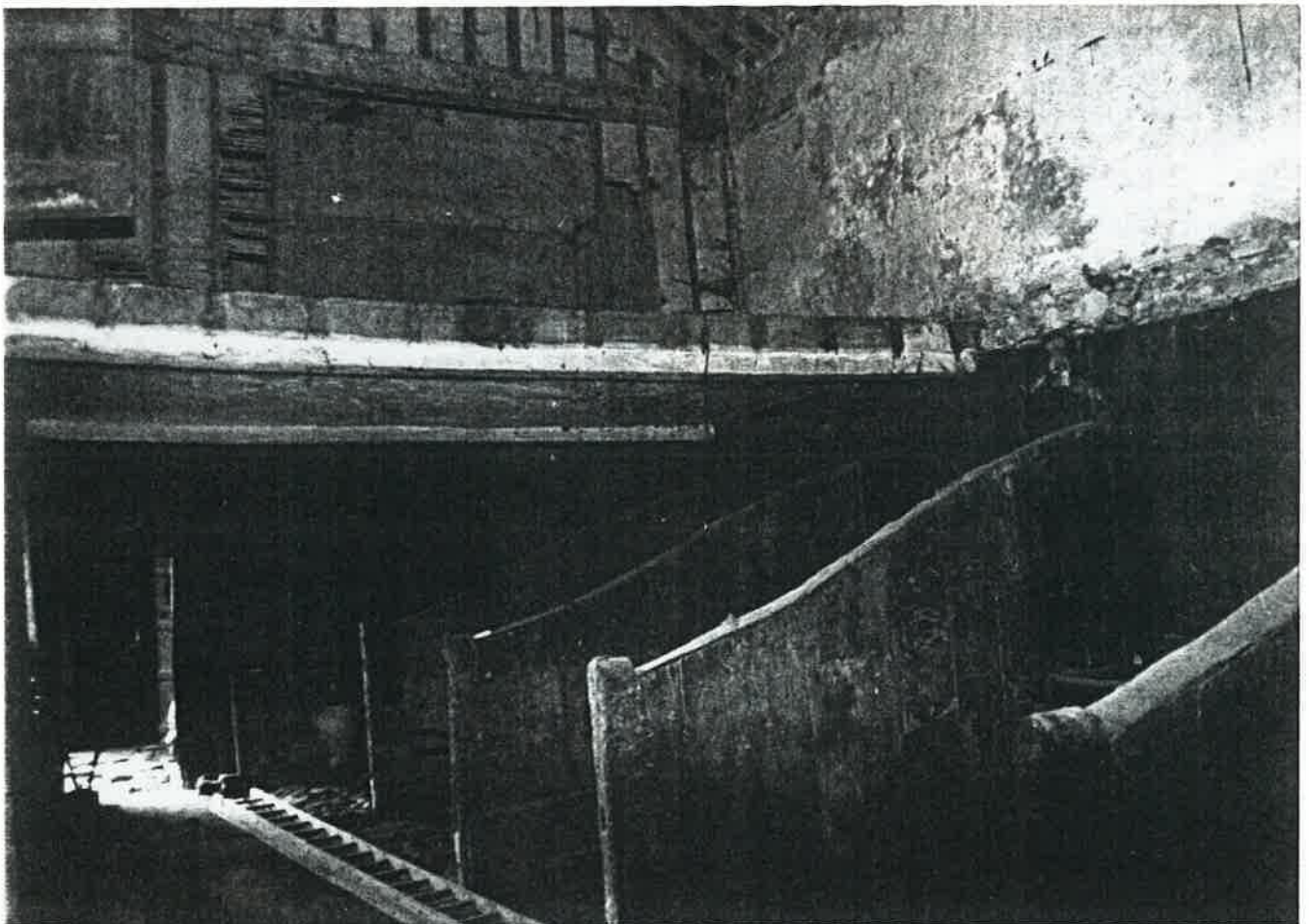
6. Bicester Old Stables. loose box at north end [2,1]



7. Bicester Old Stables. stall and fittings in stable [2,12]



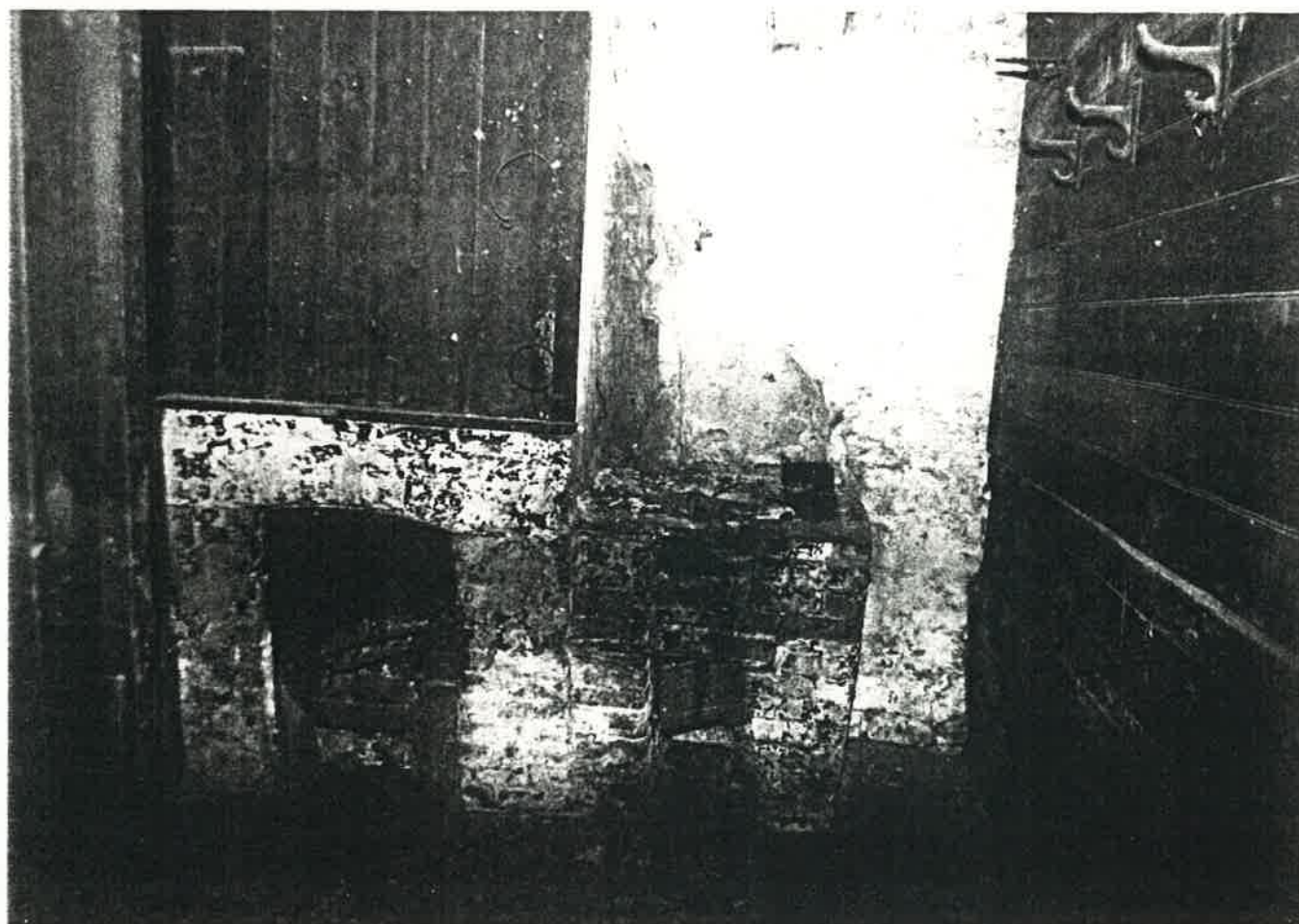
8. Bicester Old Stables, roof of hayloft [2/13]



9. Bicester Old Stables, stable stalls [2/5]



10. Bicester Old Stables, fireplace in upper room at south end [2/21]



11. Bicester Old Stables, room at south end of ground floor [2/16]



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