

Church View Barn Denchworth Oxfordshire



Building Investigation and Recording

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Church View Barn, Denchworth, Oxfordshire
Report on Historic Building Investigation

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Church View Barn, Denchworth, Oxfordshire

Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned to record Church View Barn ahead of the proposed demolition of the barn and replacement with a single storey dwelling on a similar footprint.

Church View Barn appears on the earliest available map of 1801 and retains the same footprint until the present day. Alterations and repairs to the brick and limestone structure occur regularly, particularly in the 20th century; the latest phase of use as offices and a store ended recently and the building is disused.

Although the barn is not listed, its setting within the conservation area and proximity to the Church and several listed buildings of importance in the village setting requires the recording of both the building and its context within the village before it is replaced.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by Vic Cox of V K Cox Developers to undertake a programme of historic building recording and archaeological investigation prior to demolition of the existing barn and construction of a single storey, two bedroomed dwelling at Church View Barn, Hyde Road, within the village of Denchworth, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 The recording relates to Planning Application reference: P14/V1262/FUL. Although it is not listed the barn is within Denchworth Conservation Area and the recording is to be undertaken to meet the requirements of Condition 14 of the planning permission.
- 1.1.3 Condition 14 states: '*No works shall take place on site prior to the making of a detailed record of the existing barn. This must be carried out by a building recording consultant or organisation in accordance with industry standard and using industry photographic tools which shall first have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Reason: As the building is of archaeological/historic importance in accordance with Policy HE1 and HE4 Local Plan 2011.*'

1.2 Aims and Objectives

- 1.2.1 The principal aims of the current work have been:
- to help meet the requirements of Condition 14 of the planning permission;
 - to investigate and record for posterity the building and its context within the setting in the village which will be impacted by the proposed works;
 - to enhance understanding of the nature of the structure;
 - to make the record publicly accessible through a report (a public document) and a project archive deposited with a public institution.

1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 The recording covered one building; a single storey barn latterly used for offices and storage.
- 1.3.2 The work comprised three principal elements: a photographic, a drawn and a written survey.
- 1.3.3 The *photographic survey* consisted of general external and internal photographs and specific details and was undertaken using 35mm black and white print film and digital photographs were taken using an 8 megapixel camera.
- 1.3.4 For the *drawn survey*, architect's drawings supporting the planning application were made available to OA. These drawings were used as a basis for the archaeological recording; locations of features being verified and the addition of further annotations for the purpose of phasing.
- 1.3.5 The *written survey* consisted of notes and annotations that complemented the photographic and drawn surveys and added further analytical and descriptive detail.

- 1.3.6 The recording and reporting corresponds to the recommendations of a Level 2 survey as defined by English Heritage in *Understanding Historic Buildings: a Guide to Good Recording Practice* (2006).
- 1.3.7 The site work for the recording of Church View Barn was undertaken on 4 September 2014.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Denchworth

- 2.1.1 Denchworth is a village and civil parish in the Vale of the White Horse district in Oxfordshire and lies approximately 3 miles north north west of Wantage (Fig 1). Until the Local Government reorganisation of 1974, Denchworth was in Berkshire.
- 2.1.2 Denchworth is set on the Gault Mudstones and Ampthill and Kimmeridge clay formations. The majority of the older buildings in the village are built of limestone, probably from the bedrock to the north, although many are trimmed in brick; brick appears to become more prevalent later.
- 2.1.3 The parish church is situated at the south of the village; Church View Barn is situated immediately to the north of the churchyard (Pl. 1).
- 2.1.4 There are eighteen listed buildings in the parish of Denchworth, with five being in the immediate vicinity of Church View Barn. The 17th-century Fox Inn on the opposite side of the road and the 19th-century Old School House to the south east are grade II listed, as is the relocated village cross stump which is now situated on the grass verge adjacent to the driveway to the property (Pl. 2). St James's Church, a grade II* listed building with 12th-century origins, is immediately to the south of the barn; the south wall of the barn being formed from the boundary wall of the churchyard. A headstone memorial with a separate grade II listing is within the churchyard.
- 2.1.5 The majority of the village of Denchworth makes up the Denchworth Conservation area.

2.2 Church View Barn

- 2.2.1 The Enclosure Map of 1801 shows the barn in its current location and apparently in its current form, however, enclosure maps rarely show detail, especially with regard to out buildings and agricultural buildings (Fig 2).
- 2.2.2 The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1878 shows a small projection at the north end of the building, although this has been removed by the Second Edition of 1899 and throughout the subsequent editions. Other than this, the footprint of the building has not changed (Figs 3&4).
- 2.2.3 A rectangular building on roughly the same alignment appears to the east of the barn throughout the same period, but has been demolished by the time of the 1960 6 inch OS map.

3 DESCRIPTION

3.1 External description

- 3.1.1 Church View Barn is a five-bay brick and limestone barn with a clay plain tiled gabled roof abutting the churchyard boundary wall to the south and the property boundary and adjacent footpath to the west.
- 3.1.2 The east elevation, the front elevation of the building, is much-altered (Pl. 3). The three surviving timber posts suggest that, prior to the modern blockwork enclosing the barn, the building was probably in use as an open fronted building, presumably a cart shed rather than for livestock due to the central village location.
- 3.1.3 The aforementioned timber posts have been replaced, seemingly in the later part of the 20th century, and are currently standing on staddle bases (Pl. 4). These staddles are all of different sizes and so does not suggest that they came from a granary locally. The second post from the south has been replaced by an internal steel frame abutted by blockwork and boarded over externally.
- 3.1.4 The alteration to the front elevation is of three broad phases: following an apparently short-lived phase as an open fronted cart shed, the interior was divided into three spaces, as described in section 3.2, and the eastern openings to the two northernmost bays infilled with blockwork and associated door and windows. The northernmost bay was rendered externally, whilst the second bay received only a rendered plinth (Pl. 5). At roughly the same time, although utilising different aerated concrete blocks, the front of the southernmost bay was infilled. The remaining two bays have been infilled in recent years, although work has stopped before doors and windows were fitted.
- 3.1.5 The west elevation, the rear of the building, comprises a coursed limestone rubble plinth with Flemish garden wall bond brickwork above (Pl. 6). The handmade bricks are bonded with lime mortar with occasional cement mortar repairs; originally, the joints were probably flush pointed but are now fairly degraded, the repointing displays some attempts at rough double struck pointing. The bricks are of assorted colours and many have fairly large inclusions (Pl. 7).
- 3.1.6 The limestone plinth shows some signs of repair, notably to the southernmost end where bricks have been used to substitute degraded stone. The occasional use of cement mortar to repoint the stonework in this area will have exacerbated the stone degradation (Pl. 8).
- 3.1.7 A course of Flemish garden wall bond and a course of headers followed by an eaves of cut bricks has been added to the top of the wall, likely at the time of roof replacement.
- 3.1.8 Cracking and a shift in the alignment of the brickwork is apparent to the southern end of the wall adjacent to the retaining boundary wall (Pl. 9). An area of different roof tiles is also apparent at this end of the building, however, this does not necessarily signify rebuilding: it may be an area of new tiles required at the time of reroofing.
- 3.1.9 The limestone boundary wall abuts the north western corner of the barn (Pl. 10).
- 3.1.10 The north elevation consists of coursed limestone rubble with short returns of the brickwork of the adjoining elevations to either edge (Pl. 11). Occasional bricks have been used for repairs. Heavy lichen growth obscures definition of the courses at high level.

- 3.1.11 The lower metre of the elevation lacks the heavy lichen growth of the remainder of the wall; repointing and degraded pointing prevent determination whether this is an area rebuilding or whether a lean-to structure has sheltered this area of the wall. The OS map of 1878 shows a projecting structure at this position which is likely to be the cause of the patching or sheltering of the stonework.
- 3.1.12 The south elevation of the barn is comprised of the coursed limestone rubble churchyard wall (Pl. 12). It appears that the barn was originally built utilising this existing retaining wall as the southern end of the building. The majority of this elevation, therefore, is not visible. The limestone wall extends approximately 75cm above the current ground level of the churchyard, sloping to the south west corner of the barn, where a short return of the brickwork of the west elevation is visible.
- 3.1.13 The gable of the south elevation is weatherboarded above a course of angled clay tiles intended to divert rain from the stonework.

3.2 Internal description

- 3.2.1 The internal space is divided into three rooms, with the northernmost room containing a further partitioned WC in the north-west corner (Fig 5).
- 3.2.2 The *Entrance Office* is a modern conversion utilising the northernmost end bay; a WC has been created by adding partitions to the north west of the room (Pl. 13). The internal walls have been finished in plaster and painted magnolia, obscuring the majority of the features of the walls and similarly the ceiling is plasterboarded, hiding the roof structure.
- 3.2.3 The bottom of the rear, western, wall of the room slopes and widens, indicating that the stone plinth is over twice the thickness of the brickwork which is flush with the stone to the external face (Pl. 14).
- 3.2.4 In the south eastern corner of the room, the corner of the staddle supporting the post projects from the walls (Pl. 15).
- 3.2.5 The door in the east elevation is a modern plank, ledge and braced door and the adjacent timber casement window is also modern. The storage heater and electrical fittings all date to the modern conversion, which appears to have taken place in the late 1980s or early 1990s. The laminate flooring is a recent addition, but has since failed due to damp (Pl. 16).
- 3.2.6 The modern partition walls between the offices and store are plastered block, while the partitions of the WC are of stud frame and plasterboard. The internal doors are hollow hardboard panelled doors.
- 3.2.7 The *Middle Office* is contemporary with and similar to the Entrance Office, although it does not have external access. It is accessed, through the modern internal doors, via a small step up from the Entrance Office to the north or from a step down from the Store to the south.
- 3.2.8 The electrical fittings are identical to the adjacent office and shelves to the rear of the room create a workbench area which disguises the sloping stone plinth. The floor has failed due to rotting floor joists (Pl. 17).

- 3.2.9 The ceiling in this room is higher and slopes to the front and rear, although it is of the same phase of alteration.
- 3.2.10 The *Store* has also been altered; the modern concrete floor slopes slightly to the front of the building and predates the blocking of the central bays, indicating that this was in use as a partially open fronted workshop or similar function following alteration (Pl. 18). Drains are to either side of the door to the Middle Office
- 3.2.11 The rear wall demonstrates the wider stone plinth, as in the other rooms, and the southern end wall also indicates that the concealed retaining wall has been similarly reinforced (Pl. 19).
- 3.2.12 The southernmost bay has been blocked to the front by aerated concrete blocks which have been painted; the two remaining bays have been blocked within the last few years, although the door and window openings have not been completed and instead have been boarded over (Pl. 20).
- 3.2.13 A modern steel frame has been added between the two newly-blocked bays and appears to replace the roof truss and timber post to the front elevation, however, the boarded ceiling and boarding to the front elevation obscure these elements. The tie rod attached to the cross-shaped anchor plate on the west elevation brickwork is tied into the steel column of this replacement frame (Pl. 21).
- 3.2.14 Much of the roof structure, where it survives, is obscured, however, the lower portion of the truss between the two southernmost bays is visible and shows the cross beam resting onto the wall plates to either end and the purlins being supported on cleats on the upper sides of the principal rafters. An iron bar acts as the post and is bolted to the cross beam, and to the couple above the ceiling (Pl. 22).
- 3.2.15 A short brace has been included inbetween this tie beam and the post and is the only one present, or at least visible. It is, interestingly, the only element of the visible timber structure which is pegged.
- 3.2.16 A hatch in the upper part of the northern partition provides access to the roof space over the two offices, however, this was not accessible at the time of the survey, although some digital photographs taken 'blind' show the rafters, battens, underside of the tiles and iron rod of the truss and also shows that the inside of the northern gable has been roughly plastered. Remnants of hardboard suggest that the northern bay was partitioned-off (Pl. 23).

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1.1 Church View Barn was constructed on its current footprint in a single phase in the 18th century, although it displays at least five phases of alteration to the original building during its period of use, beginning with the removal of a lean-to structure to the north elevation in the late 19th century.
- 4.1.2 Originally an open-fronted brick and limestone barn, the building appears to have been re-roofed in the early 20th century; some repairs to the southern end of the west elevation were carried out at this time.
- 4.1.3 In the late 1980s or early 1990s, the building was converted for a combined use of office and storage with a WC. Partitions divided the two northern bays into offices with a WC, providing windows and an external door. The southernmost bay was blocked to the front, but apparently not partitioned from the remainder of the storage space.
- 4.1.4 At this time or shortly after, the floor was cast with concrete and a steel frame was introduced for structural support.
- 4.1.5 Within the last few years, the remaining open bays were blocked, but remain unfinished. The floors of the offices were re-covered with laminate flooring.
- 4.1.6 Planning permission has been granted for the barn to be demolished and a new dwelling to be built on roughly the same footprint.

Angela Warner
September 2014

APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

William Page and P.H. Ditchfield (eds) *Victoria County History: A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 4* (1924)

English Heritage *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (2006)

Maps

A Map of the Parish of Dench-worth as divided and inclosed by Act of Parliament passed in the year 1801 by W Church, Wantage.

Ordnance Survey Map of 1878. 1:25 inch.

Ordnance Survey Map of 1899. 1:25 inch.

Ordnance Survey Map of 1912. 1:25 inch.

Ordnance Survey Map of 1973. 1:25 inch.

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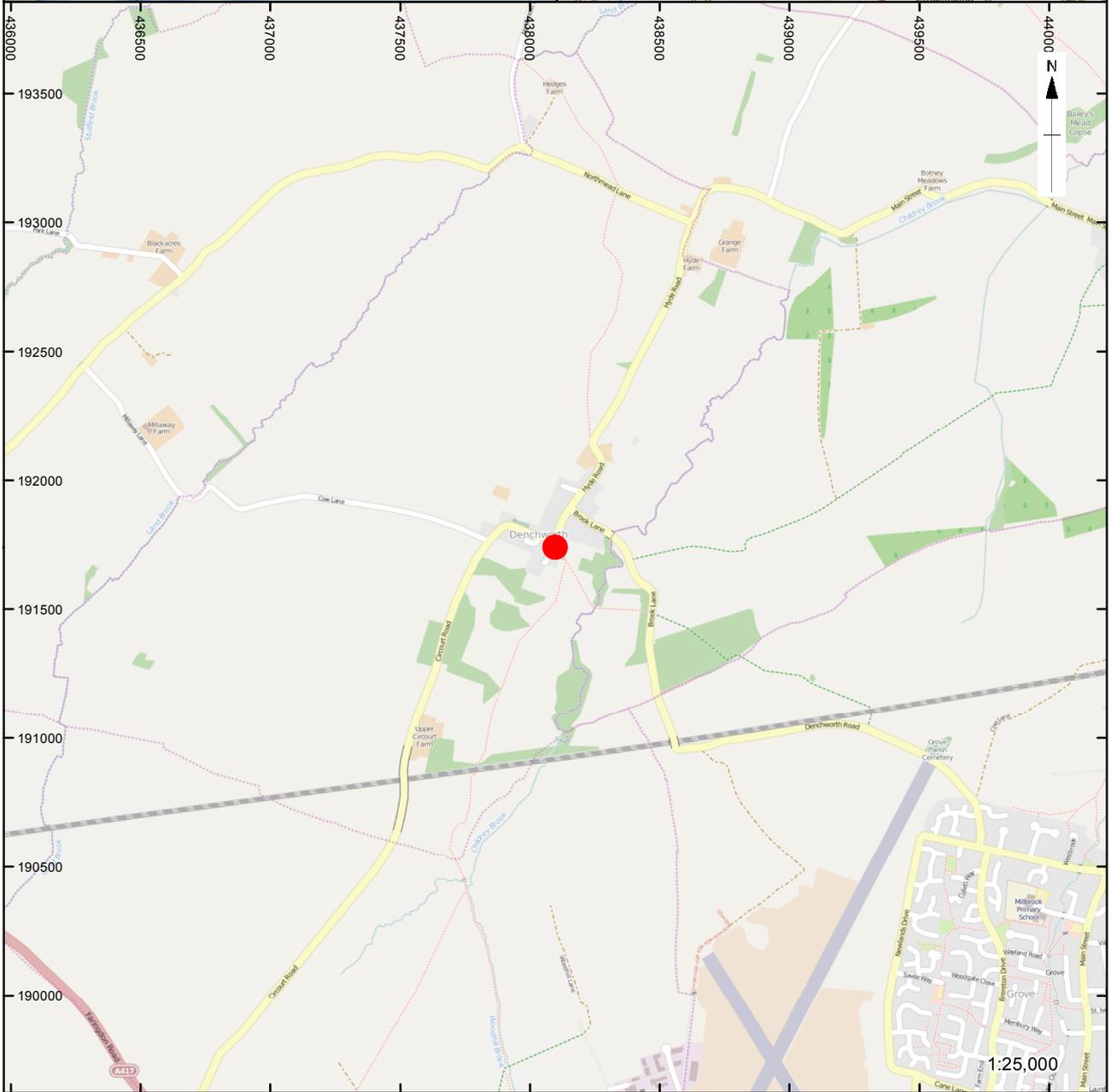
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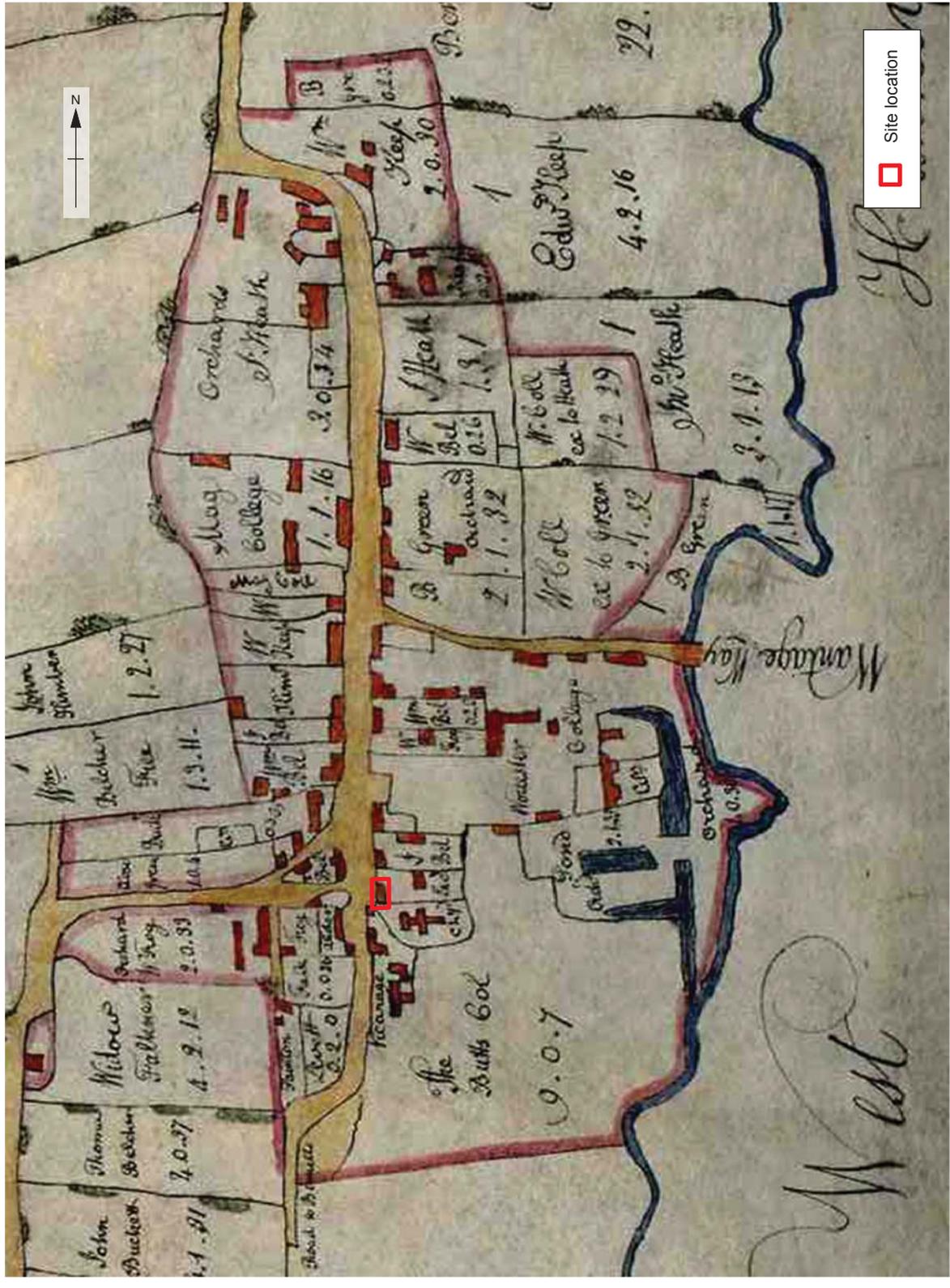
Accessed 8 September 2014



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Figure 1: Site location



Not to scale

Figure 2: Extract from the Deneworth enclosure map (1801)

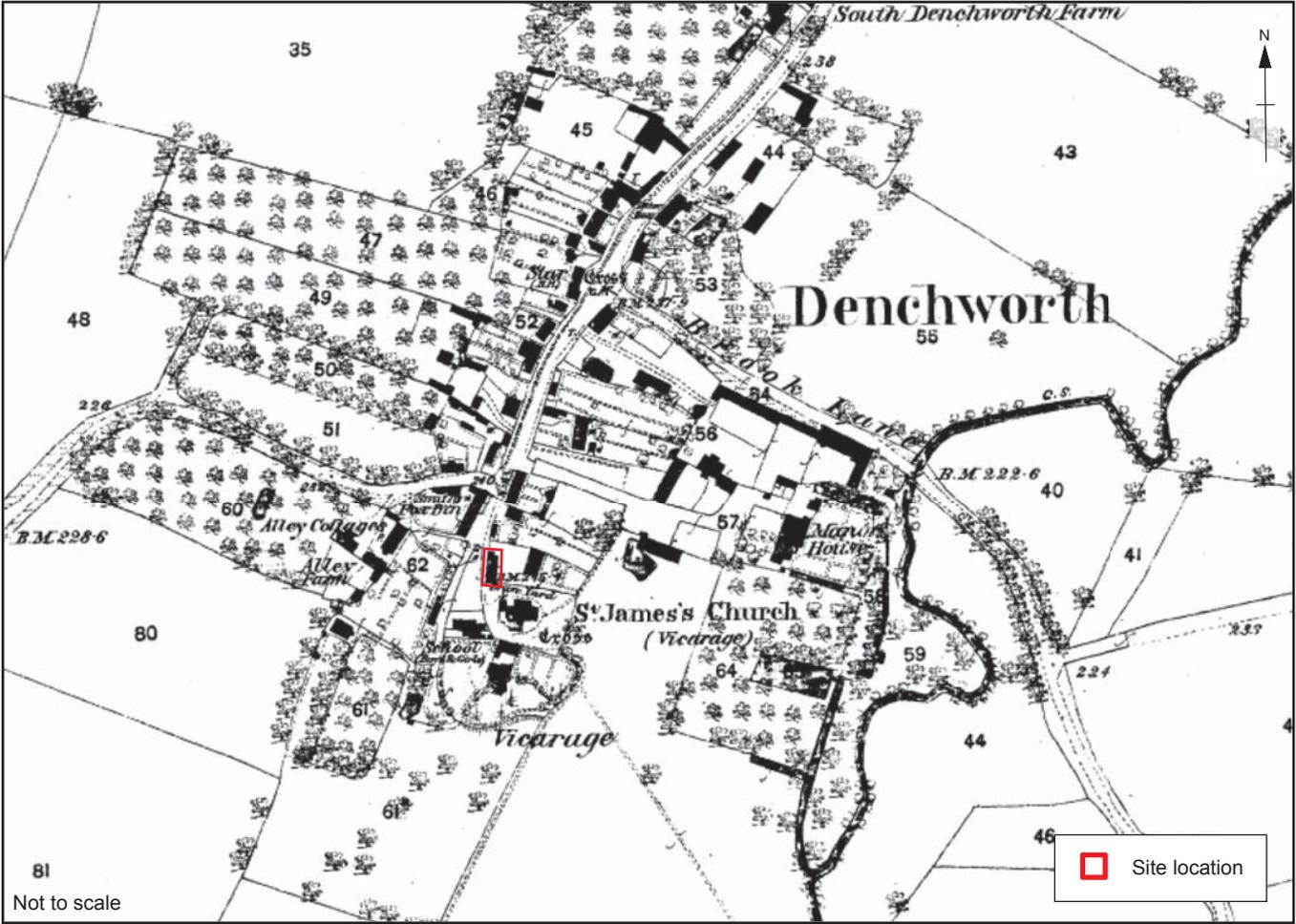


Figure 3: Extract from 1878 OS map

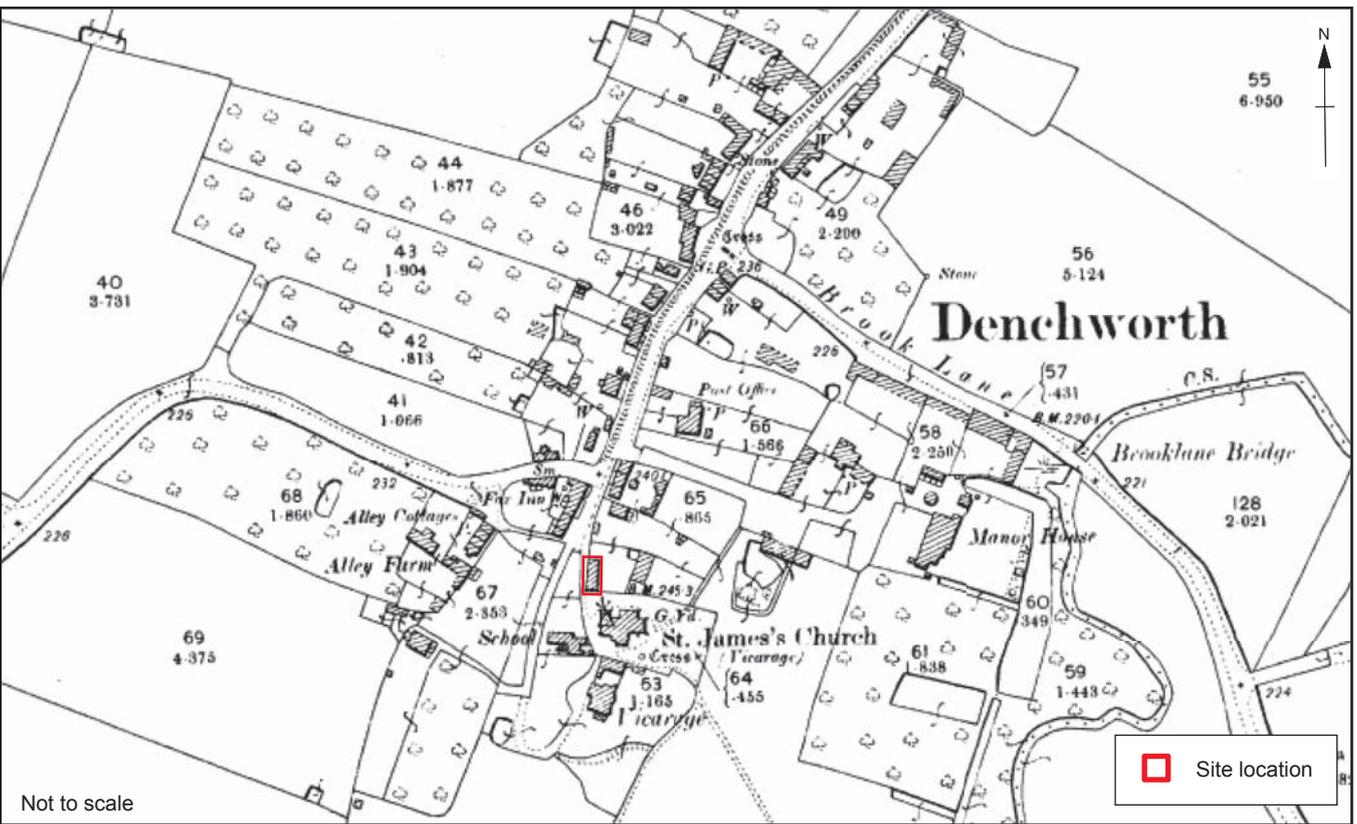
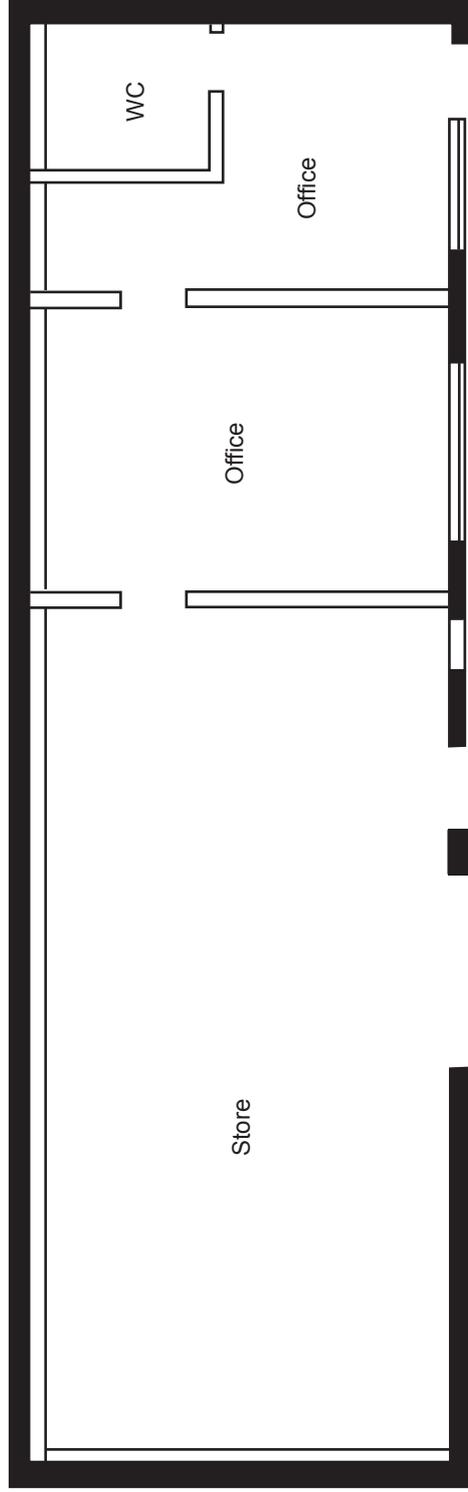
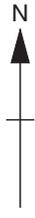


Figure 4: Extract from 1899 OS map



Not to scale

Figure 5: Layout of barn



Plate 1 Church View Barn in relation to the church



Plate 2 Church View Barn in relation to the village cross, church and Old School House



Plate 3 East elevation



Plate 4 Post on staddle base



Plate 5 Northern bays converted to offices



Plate 6 West elevation

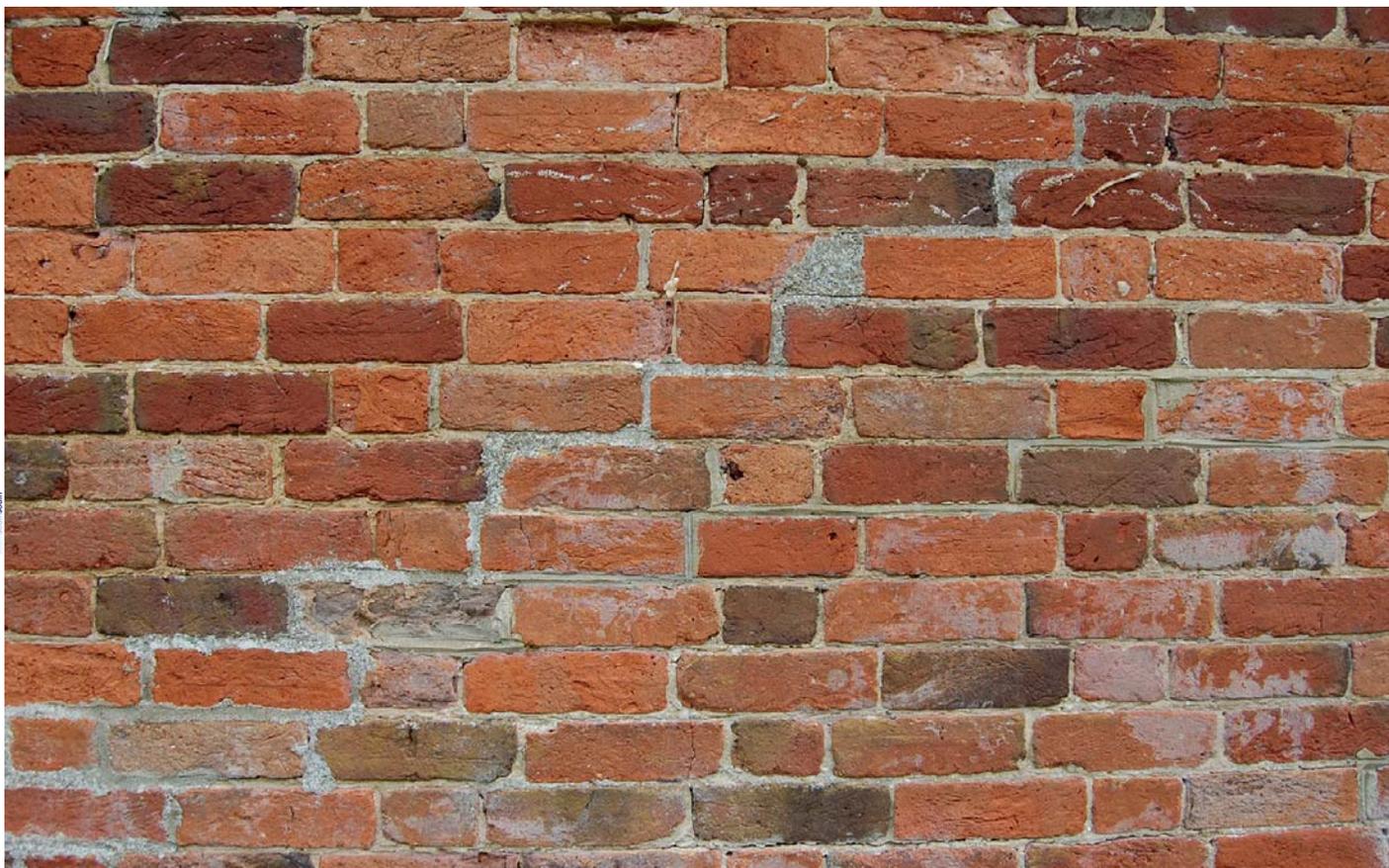


Plate 7 Brickwork of the west elevation including repointing



Plate 8 Signs of repair to the plinth of the west elevation



Plate 9 Repaired cracking in the west elevation



Plate 10 Limestone boundary wall abutting the barn



Plate 11 North elevation



Plate 12 South elevation



Plate 13 WC within the entrance office



Plate 14 Entrance office including rear wall



Plate 15 Staddle base visible in the corner of the office



Plate 16 Entrance door and window



Plate 17 Rear wall of the middle office



Plate 18 Store room



Plate 19 Rear and end wall of the store, demonstrating the thickness of the plinth



Plate 20 Blocking of the bays of the store room



Plate 21 Structural steel frame in the store room



Plate 22 Partially visible truss in the store room



Plate 23 Roof structure above the offices



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