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Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Historic Building Assessment of buildings at Lower Grange Farm, Markfield, Leicestershire (NGR SK 498 094)

Gerwyn Richards



ULAS Report No 2010-121
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An Historic Building Assessment of Buildings at Lower Grange Farm, London Road, Markfield, Leicestershire (NGR SK 489 094)

Pre Planning Enquiry

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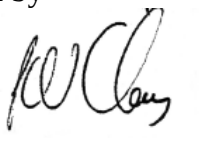
Signed:  **Date**: …18.06.2010.

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Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services was commissioned by Jelson Ltd to undertake an historic building assessment of a number of agricultural buildings at Lower Grange Farm, Markfield, Leicestershire. Planning permission is being sought to re-develop the site for residential use, retaining some of the outbuildings and demolishing others.

Although Lower Grange Farm has the appearance of a late 19th-century 'Model Farm', detailed examination of the site suggests there may be an earlier building included within the proposed development area. All of the buildings are of mixed construction using granite rubble and brick with a number of different roofing materials. A study of readily available documentary sources did not reveal any specific information about Lower Grange Farm. Early map sources do suggest there were some buildings within the proposed development area in the early 19th century.

Also noted on the site were the remains of two Leicester trams, car 31 and car 27, originally brought to the farm for use as chicken coops. Apart from the preserved car No. 76 at Crich, these are the only other known survivals from the fleet which was withdrawn in 1949 when the system closed.

1. Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services was commissioned by Jelson Ltd to undertake an historic building assessment of a number agricultural outbuildings at Lower Grange Farm, London Road, Markfield, Leicestershire (SK 489 094). Planning permission is being sought for the re-development of the farmyard and a number of the adjacent fields for residential use. This re-development will require the demolition of all of the standing buildings, with the exception of the farmhouse itself and two outbuildings.

As the proposed works will have a significant impact upon the historic fabric of the buildings, the Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council, on behalf of the planning authority has recommended that an historic building assessment be carried out prior to the works commencing. The record should be undertaken to a level 2 standard as defined in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006). The proposed works will provide the planning authority with

the base line information from which an appropriate and informed decision can be made by the planning authority.

The project was completed in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing buildings or Structures*. In addition, Leicestershire County Council's *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* was followed.

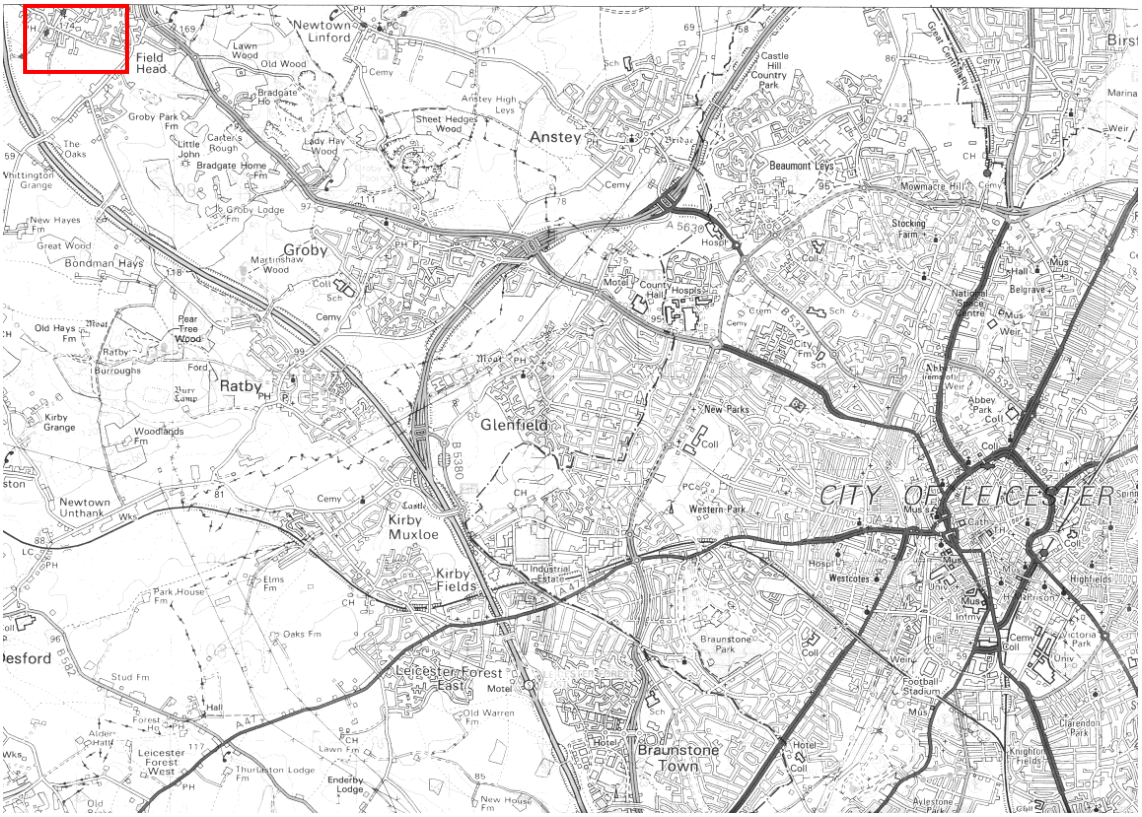

Figure 1. Site location

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2. Aims and Methodology

The aim of assessment is to provide base-line information for the buildings in their current state, prior to alteration or repair, to standards set down by English Heritage (2006) from which appropriate and informed decision can be made by the planning authority.

The building assessment was undertaken by the author on June 9th 2010. The photographic survey covered items 1-6 in paragraph 4.4.7 of the English Heritage guidelines (2006, 11). Photographs are in both digital format, taken as raw image files and converted to TIFFs (Tagged Image File Format) and 35mm monochrome negatives.

Orientation: This historic building assessment covers four outbuildings and the farmhouse. The farmhouse and two of the buildings form a rectangular farmyard at the southern end of the proposed development area with other buildings to the north and north-east. The buildings are aligned north-east to south-west and north-west to south-east, but for ease of reference this has been simplified to north-south and east-west in the following report. The main orientation is north-west to south-east following the alignment of London Road to the north. The principal elevation of each building is normally facing the farmhouse. Where the terms 'left', 'right', 'front' and 'back' etc. are used in the report, this is in relation to these principal elevations.

For the purpose of this report each building has been identified with a number prefix (*Figure 3*). There are a number of other structures within the proposed development area, which although not directly covered by this assessment will be mentioned. Due to the condition of the buildings and the fact that the farmhouse was currently occupied, internal examination was not possible.

As far as is known, the structures have not previously been subject to a programme of historic building recording.



Figure 2
Proposed development area, showing buildings to be retained (bottom left).

3. Description of the Buildings

3.1 Building 1

Building 1 is aligned north-west to south-east and adjoins the north-west corner of the farmhouse. It is a linear plan of two bays, the eastern of which is two-storey and the western, single-storey. The northern elevation of the building is of granite rubble construction with a red-brick eastern gable, a pantile roof to the east and Welsh slate to the west. The exposed gable between the two bays is also brick built, as is the southern elevation. The quoins, window surround and corbelling are also brick built and all the brickwork appears to be contemporary. The bricks themselves seemed to be handmade, measured 2¾ inches by 9 inches by 4½ inches and were not laid with any discernable bond pattern.

On the eastern gable there is an external chimney stack which, unusually, does not reach above the eaves and has been extended in height above this level with two lengths of ceramic drain. This unusual arrangement suggests that either the roof line has been lifted or the chimney has been altered, a straight joint visible in the chimney suggesting it may be the latter.

On the eastern part of the building, there is saw-tooth corbelling at eaves height, part of which has been removed in order to fit a cast iron tie bar. There is no such corbelling on the western part of the building and it is likely therefore that this was also once of two stories but has been reduced, entailing the construction of the western brick gable of the eastern bay. The latter has brick quoins at first floor only, presumably cut into the pre-existing granite wall.

A detailed internal examination of the building was not possible due concerns over the condition of the roofs. A limited view through an open door indicated the partition walls were all brick built and the painted plaster finish of the first floor suggests this part, at least, had an original domestic function.

The limited view of the easternmost roof structure suggested it was a bolted king post truss.

3.2 Building 2

Building 2, to the north-east of building 1, is a linear building of three bays, again aligned north-west to south-east. It is of granite rubble construction with a corrugated asbestos cement sheet roof. The quoins and window surrounds are of the same red brick seen within Building 1. The roof is a bolted king post with raking struts.

There is no clear evidence of the building's original function. There is a wide entrance with a pedestrian door nearby on the westernmost end, suggesting this may have originally been a cart shed. The easternmost bay, which has a lower roofline has a number of stalls, but these are clearly later additions. The partition wall between the larger eastern bays is granite rubble and is likely to be original. The partition wall

within between the middle bay and the westernmost bay is brick and may be a later addition.

Again the building is in a ruinous condition with the eastern gable wall partially collapsed and a large collapse in the northern wall which has caused one of the roof trusses to drop.

3.3 Building 3

Building 3 lies to the north-west of Building 1, at right angles, on a north-east to south-west alignment. It is a linear range of two bays, again of granite rubble construction with a roof of corrugated asbestos cement sheets and Welsh slate. The southern bay is the larger of the two, with a large central door and was originally likely to be a threshing barn, the roof is a bolted king post with raking struts, supporting Welsh Slate roof.

There appears to be a straight joint between the two bays, indicating they are not contemporary. The stonework of the smaller northern bay is much rougher and poorly finished and the pitch of the roof is noticeably steeper. It is difficult to ascertain whether this bay is a poorly built later extension or an earlier retained building which may originally have been thatched.

There was no internal access to northern bay and only a limited internal view of the southern bay.

3.4 Building 4

Building 4 is located to the north-west of the farmhouse and is almost completely concealed by undergrowth and other buildings so no detailed assessment was possible. It appears to be a largely brick construction with a Welsh slate roof with a ruined gable of granite rubble to the west, possibly the remains of another building.

3.5 The Farmhouse

The farmhouse is to be retained within the proposed planning application. As it is still occupied, internal examination was not possible. A rapid external assessment of this structure indicates at least three likely phases of building. There appear to be two smaller, possibly earlier, cottages to the north, both in painted red brick (brick dimensions 2¼ x 8½ x 4½inch). The roofs are local Swithland slate with gable chimneys. There is a straight joint between the two cottages, suggesting they are not contemporary.

The southernmost part of the farmhouse is considerably larger and was originally a much grander building. Again it is in painted red brick (brick dimensions 3 x 9 x 4inch); the bricks appear later than those used within the cottages. The roof once again is Swithland slate and hipped. There is a large central chimney.

3.6 Other buildings/Structures

There are a number of other buildings within the proposed development area, mostly mass-produced late 20th-century structures, including two Dutch Barns and two other corrugated asbestos-cement-clad steel-framed buildings. There is also an owner-built structure of recycled telegraph poles and corrugated tinned sheets. Such buildings are of little historic or architectural interest, but do illustrate the 20th-century development of the farm.

Most interesting, however, are the remains of two Leicester trams, car 31 and car 27, originally brought to the farm for use as chicken coops. Parts of these cars had also been re-used within a number of buildings on the site. The Leicester tramway system ceased operation in November 1949 and most of the cars – all double-decked and dating from 1902– were broken up for scrap, with a few being recycled for other purposes. The latter included car 76, now the sole intact survivor of the fleet, used as a cricket pavilion in Yorkshire before being rescued and restored at the National Tramway Museum at Crich, Derbyshire. During the restoration it is understood that some parts, such as the staircases, were salvaged by enthusiasts from the trams on this site. Although in a state of near complete dereliction, these trams are the only other known survivors apart from the one at Crich.

4. Discussion

Lower Grange Farm appears to be a mid- to late 19th-century farm built along the lines of a model farm. Superficially the buildings, with the exception of those of the 20th-century, all appear contemporary and date from the mid- to late 19th century. However, there were a number of ambiguities observed during the course of this assessment which suggests that earlier buildings may have been incorporated into the new build. It is possible that the northern bay of building 3 is a retained earlier building along with the two smaller cottages on the northern side of the farmhouse.

The earliest available map of the proposed development area is the 'Old Series' 1 inch map of 1835 (*Figure 4*), on which there a number of possible buildings recorded within the proposed development area. Unfortunately, the lack of detail prevents an accurate identification of the buildings. A later Parish Map of 1847 (*Figure 5*), however, shows the proposed development area as an un-enclosed field. By the time of the publication of the first edition Ordnance Survey (*Figure 6*) some 30 years later, Lower Grange Farm is recorded, along with field boundaries. The amount of woodland recorded by the Ordnance Survey may suggest that until the later 19th century the area had remained wooded.

Large areas of Charnwood Forest remained intact until the late 19th century. Prior to this, small settlements or even individual families would eke out an existence on uncultivated land called 'the waste' between older established enclosed land. Accommodation would have been in simple single room houses built in local materials. When stone became more readily available with the growth of nearby quarrying, such buildings were frequently re-built in poor-quality quarry waste. It is possible; therefore, that the buildings within Lower Grange Farm which appear to be earlier, especially the

northernmost bay of building 3 may relate to an earlier land use and Lower Grange Farm itself was built in this location because there was already an established farmstead here.

5. Conclusion

Lower Grange Farm is a typical example of the late 19th-century farms built in this part of Leicestershire. Although it is possible that the farm originally belonged to either the Groby or Bradgate estates, no documentary evidence of this could be found and the farm is not listed in the particulars for the sale of Bradgate Estate in 1925. Limited cartographic evidence suggests that buildings dating from at least the early 19th century occupied part of the proposed development area. Although no clear evidence of these was observed during the survey, part of building 3 may be an earlier structure. All of the buildings are in a poor state of repair and a detailed internal assessment was not possible. Whilst not strictly part of the survey, evidence for the poorly preserved remains of two Leicester tramcars of the early 20th century was noted on the site and it is considered that these are worthy of record before they are removed.

6. Bibliography

English Heritage, 2006 *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice.* London: English Heritage.

PPS 5 2010 *Planning and the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government March 2010)

Ramsey, D.A. 2000 *Newtown Linford Notes & The Leicestershire Slate Industry.* D.A. Ramsey Leicester.

Pearson MSW, 1971 *Leicester's Trams in Retrospect*

7. Archive & Publication

The site archive consists of

1 A2 permatrace sheet containing sketch plans & site notes
DVD containing 50 digital images
2 Contact sheets
50 Black & White negatives and contact prints
2 A4 photo record sheets
1 A2 paper drawings of plans & elevations (existing and proposed)
Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report Number 2010-121)

The archive will be held at Leicester County Council Museums under the Accession Number X.A97.2010

A version of the summary (above) will be submitted to the editor of the local journal *Transactions of Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* for inclusion in the next edition.

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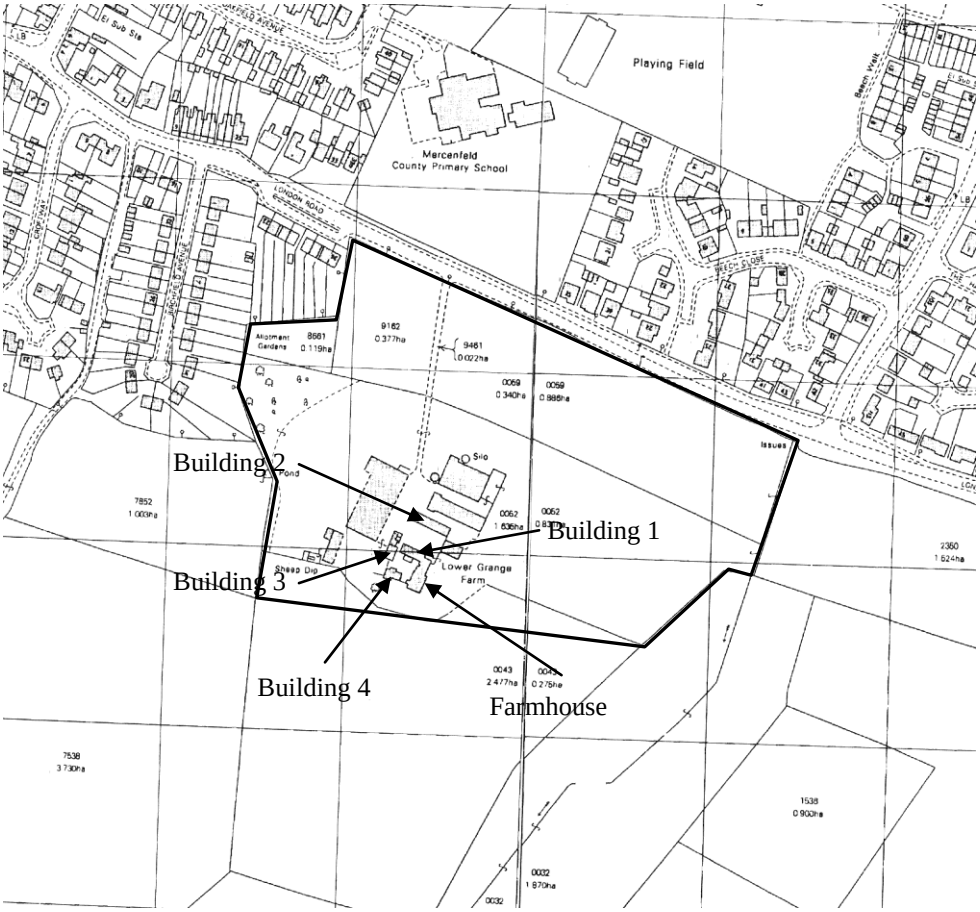


Figure 3 Building Identification.
(Not to Scale).

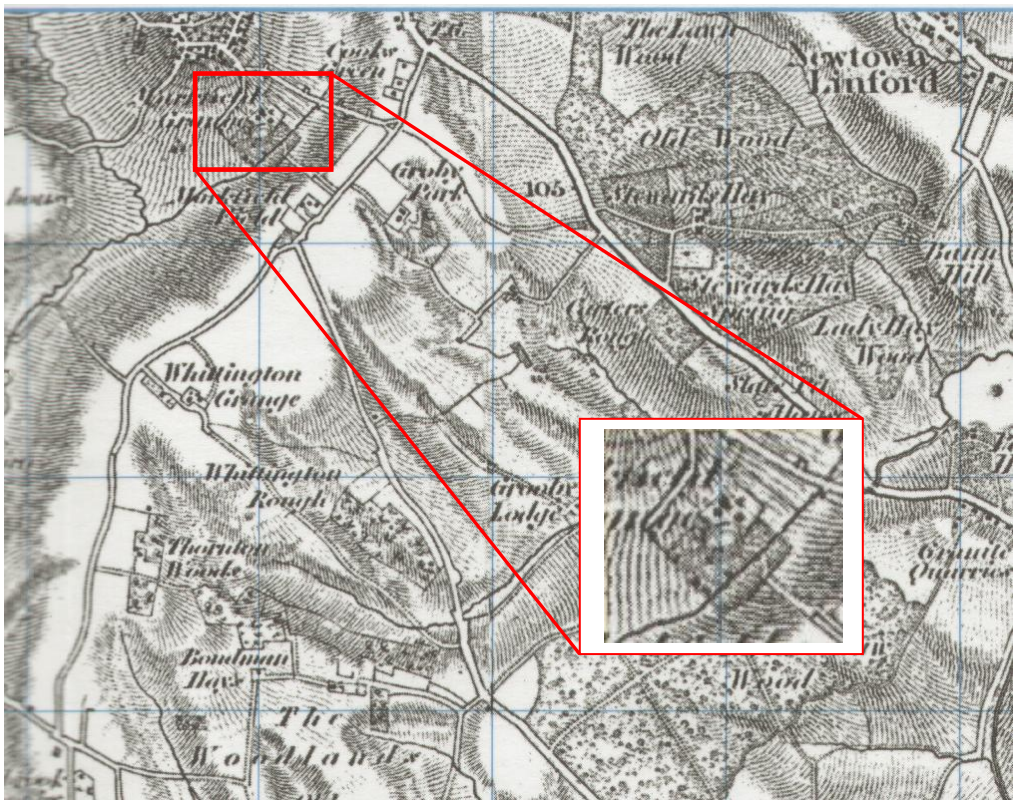


Figure 4 One Inch "Old Series" Map 1835
showing possible buildings within the proposed development area (with enlargement).

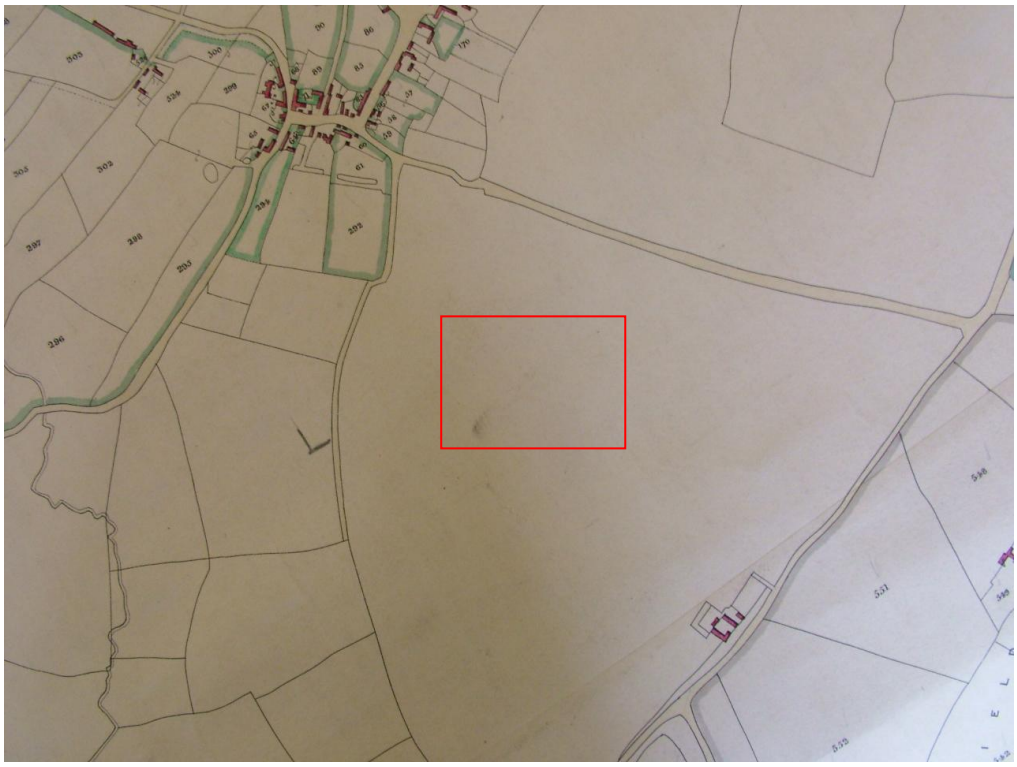


Figure 5
Detail of 1847 map of Markfield, showing no buildings within the proposed development area.

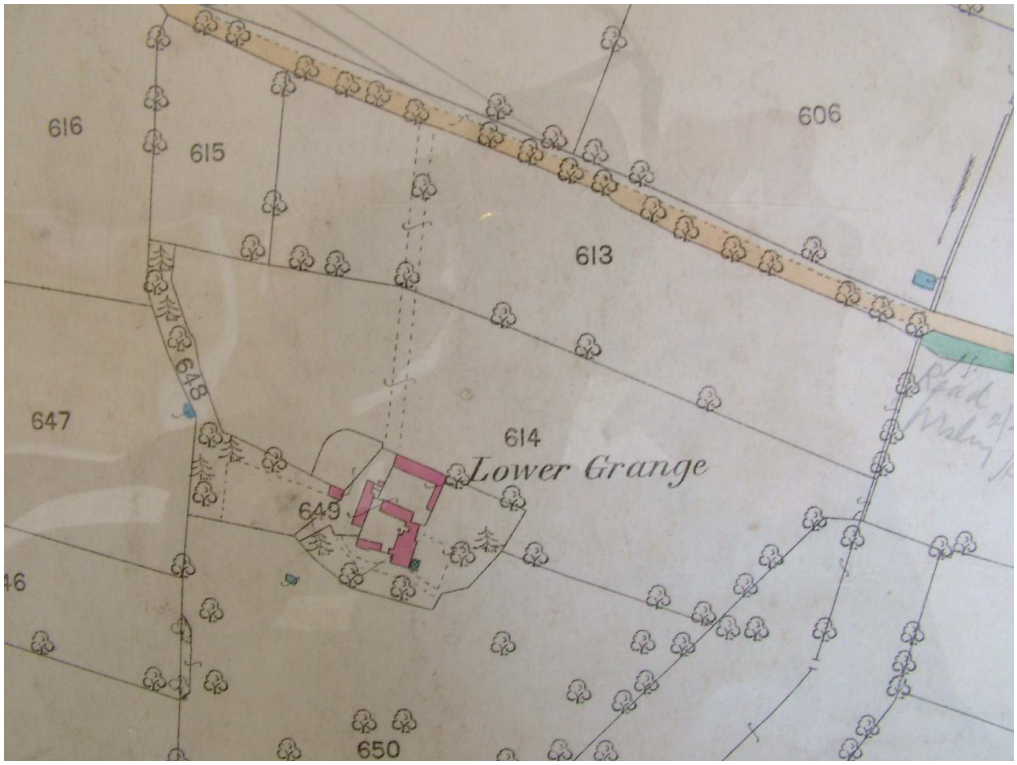
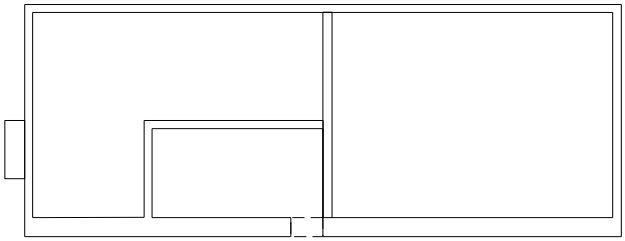
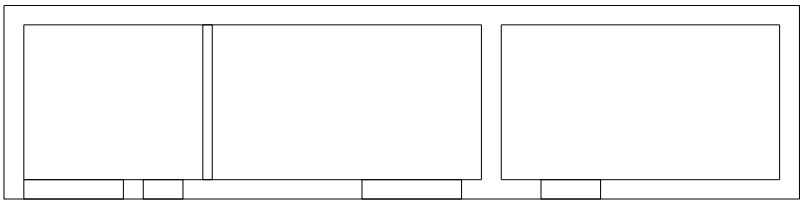


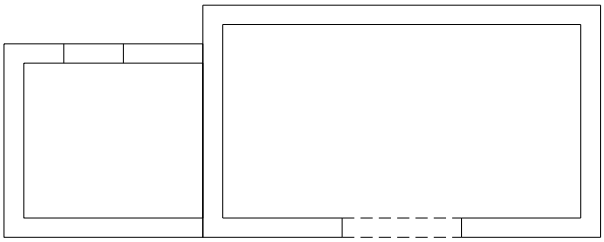
Figure 6
Detail of 1886 edition of OS map (Sheet XXIV.14).



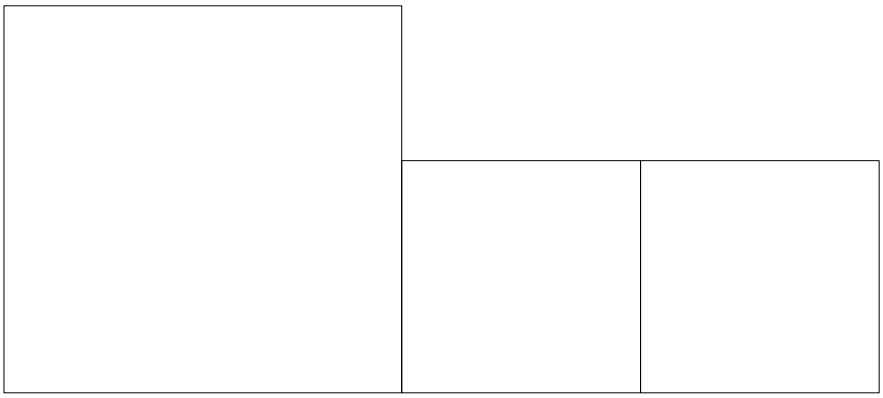
Building 1



Building 2



Building 3



Farmhouse (Outline Plan Only).

Figure 7 Sketch plan of assessed buildings (ground floor plans only).

8. Colour Plates



Colour Plate 1 Building 1 (looking south).



Colour Plate 2 Building 2 (looking east-north-east).



Colour Plate 3 Building 3 (looking south).



Colour Plate 4 Building 4 (looking south-east).



Colour Plate 5 Farmhouse (looking west-south-west).



Colour Plate 6 Tram remains.



Colour Plate 7 Modern farm buildings.

Contact Details

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