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# CHURCH LANE WHITBURN

## ~ ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION and HISTORIC BUILDINGS RECORD ~

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OCTOBER 2015



Prepared for: <i>Stella Property Investments</i>	By: <i>The Archaeological Practice Ltd.</i>
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CHURCH LANE  
WHITBURN  
SUNDERLAND

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS RECORD

Prepared by:

*The Archaeological Practice Ltd.*



**Frontispiece:** View east towards the site of the former tithe barn in the north-east corner of the evaluation site.

*Grid Reference:* NZ 4067 6160  
*Date of fieldwork:* October 2015  
*Oasis Number:* thearcha2-

## CONTENTS

### SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION
2. CULTURAL HERITAGE BACKGROUND
3. EVALUATION PROGRAMME
4. RESULTS
5. HISTORIC BUILDINGS RECORD
6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS
7. REFERENCES

### ILLUSTRATIONS

**Front Cover:** *View from the south-east of remains excavated in the north-east part of the site, with the tithe barn north wall in the background.*

**Frontispiece:** *View east towards the site of the former tithe barn in the north-east corner of the evaluation site.*

#### **Location Maps:**

- **Illus. 01:** *The Location of Whitburn, near Sunderland in the north-east of England.*
- **Illus. 02:** *Location of the evaluation site on the south side of Whitburn.*
- **Illus. 03:** *Location of the evaluation site (purple transparency) south-east of Whitburn church.*

#### **Historic Maps & Plans:**

- **Illus. 04:** *A 'Plan of the Village of Whitburn, seat of Sir H Williamson....1817', showing the evaluation site at bottom right.*

- **Illus. 05:** Extract from the Whitburn tithe map, 1839 showing the evaluation site at bottom right.
- **Illus. 06-11:** The Assessment site shown on successive editions of the Ordnance Survey Series, 1850s - 1960s.
- **Illus. 12:** The distribution of known sites of cultural heritage importance within and in the immediate vicinity of the assessment area, keyed to Section 4.1.

**Surveys, Excavation Plans & Section Drawings:**

- **Illus. 13:** Survey of Whitburn Tithe Barn site, Church Lane, Whitburn -13th Oct 2015.
- **Illus. 14:** Plan of Tithe Barn Trench, Church Lane, Whitburn, Archaeological Evaluation 2015.
- **Illus. 15:** West Facing Section of Tithe Barn Trench, Church Lane, Whitburn, Archaeological Evaluation 2015.
- **Illus. 16:** South Facing Section Feature in Tithe Barn Trench, Church Lane, Whitburn, Archaeological Evaluation 2015.
- **Illus. 17:** Plan of Trench 2, Church Lane, Whitburn, Archaeological Evaluation 2015.
- **Illus. 18:** East-facing section of Trench 3.
- **Illus. 19:** Elevation drawing of the Tithe Barn walls.
- **Illus. 20:** Key to the Photographic Record of the Tithe Barn and attached walls

**Historic Photographs:**

- **Illus. 21:** View of the tithe barn in 1905.
- **Illus. 21:** View of the tithe barn following a bombing raid in 1940.

**APPENDIX 1:**

***Photographic Archive for Archaeological Evaluation***

- *Photos 1-22*

*Photo. 01: View from the north of the south part of Trench 1, showing circular stone feature [12].*

*Photo. 02: View from the north over circular feature [12] uncovered at the north end of the south part of Trench 1, showing sandy deposit south of the presumed gingham.*

*Photo. 03: View from the west of possible post-hole incisions or post placements on or in the sandy deposit south of the circular feature in Trench 1.*

*Photo. 04: View from the south of cobbled floor deposit underlying the sandy deposit in the south part of Trench 1.*

*Photo. 05: View from the east of circular feature [12] in Trench 1.*

*Photo. 06: View from the west of circular feature [12] in Trench 1.*

*Photo. 07: Close-up view from the north of slot within circular feature [12] in Trench 1.*

*Photo. 08: General view northwards of the north part of the south wing of Trench 1 and part of the north wing, with the north wall of the tithe barn in the background.*

*Photo. 09: View of wall [08] and stone surfaces [11] and [17] from the east.*

*Photo. 10: View from the south of wall [08] and stone surfaces [11] and [17].*

*Photo. 11: View from the south-east of wall [08] and drain [15] interrupted by modern brick footings.*

*Photo. 12: View from the north-west of wall [08] and drain [15] interrupted by modern brick footings.*

*Photo. 13: View from the east of the west branch of Trench 2, showing brick floor.*

*Photo. 14: View from the north of brick floor in Trench 2.*

*Photo. 15: Detailed view from the east of brick floor, underlying flagging and cut for the E-W west end wall of the tithe barn.*

*Photo. 16: View from the north-east of the cut for the E-W west end wall of the tithe barn.*

*Photo. 17: View from the south-east of the cut for the E-W west end wall of the tithe barn, its east return and flagging to the south of it disturbed by modern building works.*

*Photo. 18: View from the east of the south-west corner of the tithe barn with socket for a doorway into a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century adjunct building to the south.*

*Photo. 19: View from the north-west east of the south end of Trench 2, showing the south-west corner of the tithe barn with doorway socket and flagging to the south.*

*Photo. 20: Trench 3 viewed from the south.*

*Photo. 21: A section of the south-facing internal elevation of the north wall of farm buildings attached to the west end of the tithe barn.*

*Photo. 22: The east-facing elevation of Trench 2, showing remains of a brick floor at c. 0.75 m bgl.*

**APPENDIX 2:**

***Photographic Archive for Historic Buildings Record***

- *Photos 1-45 (See Illus. 19)*

## SUMMARY

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*This document reports on a programme of archaeological evaluation and historic buildings record conducted within the bounds of a proposed development site on the east side of Church Lane, Whitburn.*

*The excavations and historic buildings record produced a number of significant results, uncovering the remains of a multi-phased agricultural buildings complex, the earliest of which are the south and west walls of the tithe barn which, on the basis of surviving structural and historic photographic evidence, is thought likely to be of later 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century origin, with later alterations, perhaps originating as a timber-framed building or, more likely, of 'hybrid' construction with posts carrying the roof structure and non-loadbearing stone walls between them. Remains of later structures, or phases of the same structures, include those of the internal features of a likely gingang and floor surfaces of farm buildings attached to the west and south of the tithe barn, the footings of which extend over a metre below current ground level.*

*No clear traces were found of the buildings known, from historic evidence, to have occupied a position south of the tithe barn, but a spread of rubble was found in a position consistent with the position of the south wall of the original, pre-early 19<sup>th</sup> century structure (and the north wall of its subsequent replacement). Other remains of these structures appear in the boundary wall of the plot south of the east wall of the tithe barn, as noted in the Historic Buildings Record.*

*While a 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century date for the barn is considered likely, no supporting evidence in the form of dateable artifacts has been uncovered. However, it remains possible that such finds could be present within some of the surfaces encountered during the excavation, especially in the north-east corner of the site, which were left largely intact. It is considered likely, however, that such early remains could be present on the site beyond the immediate environs of the tithe barn.*

*With respect to the proposed development of the site it is recommended that a strategy to mitigate the impact of groundworks carried out at depths likely to threaten the archaeological remains reported above should be developed prior to the commencement of development works.*

*Specifically, a strip, map and sample procedure should be implemented in the areas where the most complex archaeological remains have been uncovered and recorded, namely in the north-east corner of the site. The aim of this work should be to plan any archaeological remains uncovered during the first phase of development work and excavate a representative sample of those remains in order to record significant features, finds and deposits, particularly those considered part of, or associated with the tithe barn.*

*It is considered that an area of 10 by 10 metres in the north-east corner of the site should be closely investigated in this way, with a standard watching brief maintained on all other parts of the site where the depth of groundworks is considered sufficient to threaten potential archaeological remains.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION - PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

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### 2.1 Location and Planning Background (*Illus. 01 & 02*).

This document, prepared by the Archaeological Practice Ltd. has been commissioned by Stella Property Investments as a requirement of planning consent to inform the proposed redevelopment of an enclosed site on the east side of Church Lane, Whitburn (centred on Grid Reference NZ 4067 6160) (*see Illus. 01-03*).

An archaeological trenching strategy was requested by the Tyne & Wear Assistant County Archaeologist to determine whether significant archaeological remains might survive on the site. The purpose of the current evaluation, therefore, is to investigate the character and depth of deposits and structures in ground which could be disturbed by the construction work. The study represents the second stage in a programme of archaeological work which is likely subsequently to include mitigation works.

In addition, an historic buildings recording exercise was also required to record the visible remains of a tithe barn and associated walls.

### 2.2 Nature of Proposed Developments

It is proposed to build a large residential property on or close to the site of the former Church Lane House, retaining the present site boundary walls as well as the dividing wall between north and south parts of the site, which will be rebuilt in places where it has recently fallen into decay.

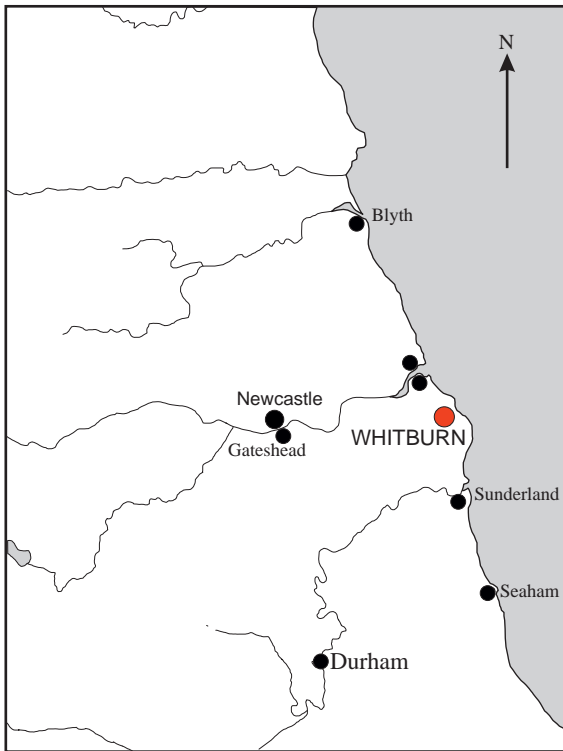
The proposed dwelling will comprise an open plan living area including a kitchen-living-dining space, a separate lounge, a study, a cinema room, a feature wine room, a utility, leisure space (including a swimming pool, gym and sauna), five en-suite bedrooms, storage space and garaging for four cars. The main part of the proposed house will be in the south part of the site, with the garages on the north side of the house and accessed by the route of the former driveway. The garages are single storey adjacent to the existing wall between north and south parts of the site. There is a 4 metre space between the house and the wall (larger in the wooded area)

In the north part of the site the building will float above ground level, incorporating the stone pillars of the former Whitburn Hall gardens. The axis of the pillars and the root protection areas of the trees will dictate the form of the building in the woodland of the north part of the site.

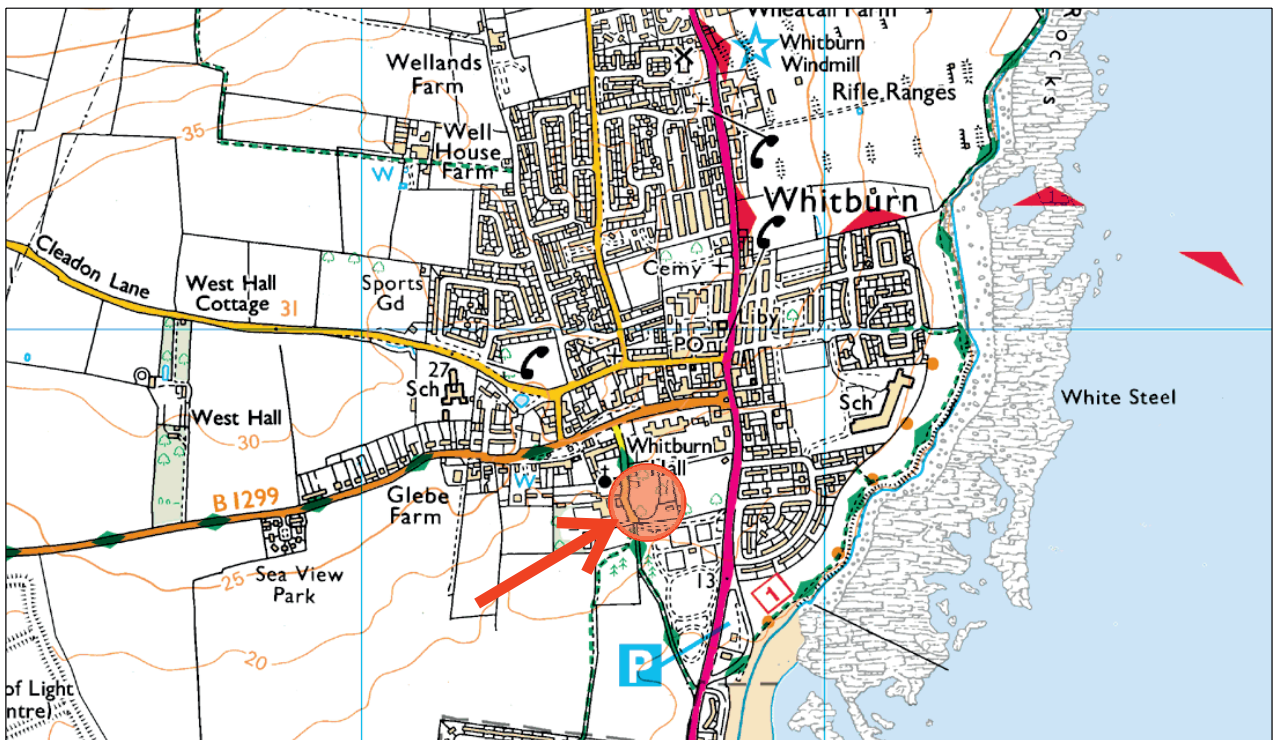
### 2.3 Previous Archaeological Assessment and Investigation

A desk-based assessment was carried out by The Archaeological Practice in 2005 and revised in 2014. This noted that very few archaeological events involving sub-surface investigation have previously been recorded in Whitburn, and even fewer have provided archaeologically significant results, although the village is known to be an early foundation and there are hints of pre-Conquest activity associated with the church. Archaeological watching briefs carried out at Close Cottage and Regent's Close Rest Home (formerly the Rectory) in October 2005 (PCA





*Illus. 01: The Location of Whitburn, near Sunderland in the north-east of England.*



*Illus. 02: Location of the evaluation site on the south side of Whitburn.*

2005) have provided evidence of medieval settlement in the form of pottery retrieved from pits.

## 2.4 Cultural Heritage Background and Constraints

There is no direct evidence for human activity within the bounds of the assessment area from the prehistoric, Roman or early medieval periods and, although an earlier settlement at Whitburn is possible – as suggested by the presence of a possible pre-Conquest decorated stone inserted in 1868 in the 12<sup>th</sup> century church tower (Ryder 1994; Hart 2004 - see below) –



Grave Slab reused as a church tower lintel -  
HER Number 12215 –  
Photograph by R Carlton, October 2015

records indicate that the village originated in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The current site is known to have been occupied by a tithe barn and other buildings associated with the church; the tithe barn is likely to be of late medieval origin (15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> centuries), but could be earlier and may have been rebuilt. Medieval occupation, suggested by documentary records and the village plan, is attested in the vicinity by finds of pits containing 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century pottery at the adjacent Close Cottage and Regent's Close Rest Home. Details of the current site are known from plans of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and later which show that the Rector's farm yard within which the tithe barn formerly stood was largely demolished in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but part of the tithe barn survived as a recognisable building until 1940 when it was damaged in an air raid and was subsequently demolished, all but its north wall being removed.

Prior to excavation it was considered that the remaining upstanding part of the tithe barn in the north-east corner of the site was of considerable local importance and that further, buried remains of this building may survive, and that parts of the east and north-west walls of the south part of the site are contemporary with it. It is also possible that other archaeological remains of residential and commercial character associated with the tithe barn may survive elsewhere on the site – historic maps show that a building south of the Tithe barn was apparently removed between 1817 and 1843 and replaced by a building to the south (the north wall of the new structure being (on the) remains of the south wall of its predecessor. Smaller structures adjoined the south side of the tithe barn range (which, from at least 1817 extended across the entire north side of the site); by c. 1860 one of these was an apparent gingang built against the south wall of the tithe barn at its extreme east end. All buildings on the site other than the tithe barn, including structures attached to its west end and south side, had been removed by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, to be replaced, by the 1950s, by a new bungalow immediately south of the former tithe barn and an associated garage structure in the north-east corner of the former tithe barn interior. The bungalow had been demolished by 2005 but the garage structure survived until at least that year.

It is clear from the above that any archaeological remains within the footprint of the former Church Lane House are likely to have been disturbed by works associated with various phases of construction and demolition up to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, but it was considered that there remains a strong possibility that undisturbed remains could survive in some parts of the site.

## 3. EVALUATION PROGRAMME

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### 3.1 Aims

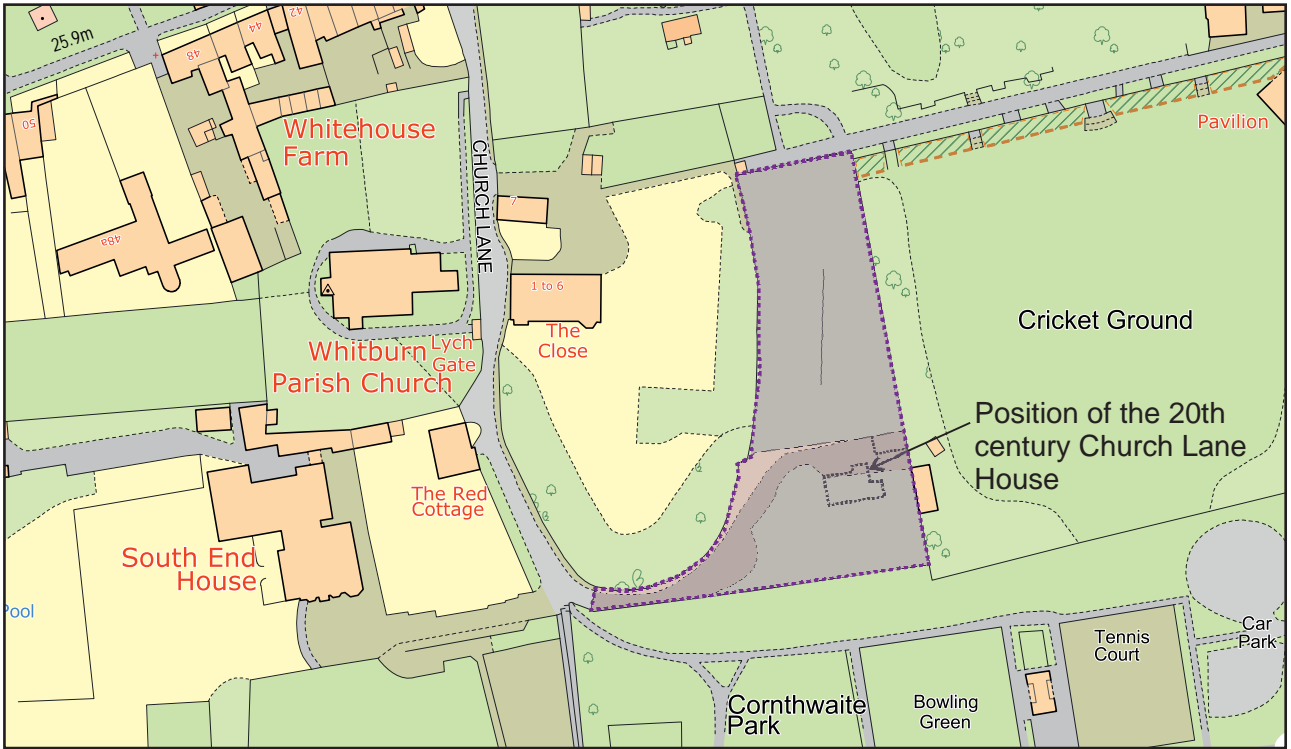
Given the potential archaeological sensitivity of the site, specifically the possibility of discovering preserved sub-surface remains associated with the medieval and post-medieval periods, a programme of archaeological trenching was requested to inform the Planning Authority of the character, nature, date, depth, and degree of survival of archaeological deposits there.

The evaluation programme implemented in October 2015 comprised excavation of a total of four trenches, distributed across the development site and ranging from 5 - 20 m (length) x 1.5 – 4 m (width). The trenches are keyed in to a site plan presented in *Illus. 03*. It was specified in the Brief approved by the Tyne & Wear Archaeological Officer that the trenches should be of sufficient depth to establish either the presence of natural sub-soil or the presence of any archaeological material.

### 3.2 Methods

Overburden on the site was removed by mechanical excavator supervised by archaeological staff from The Archaeological Practice Ltd. Hand excavation, including cleaning of the trench faces to reveal changes in context and potential features, was carried out prior to recording by the same, suitably qualified and experienced staff from the Archaeological Practice Ltd who also implemented standard Health and Safety guidelines.

Historic buildings recording, carried out by Peter Ryder and Richard Carlton, was carried out by visual inspection, a detailed written description of the upstanding tithe barn walls and more of the most significant features of the boundary walls attached to the west and south, detailed measurement and drawing of the tithe barn internal walls and photographic survey of the internal faces of all the site boundary walls and external faces of the tithe barn and its attached boundary wall to the south. All features were tied into the national grid by carrying out a digital survey.



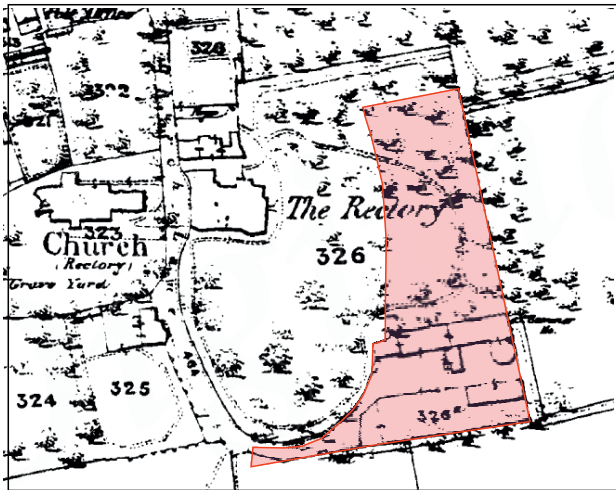
**Illus. 03:**  
Location of the evaluation site (purple transparency) south-east of Whitburn church.



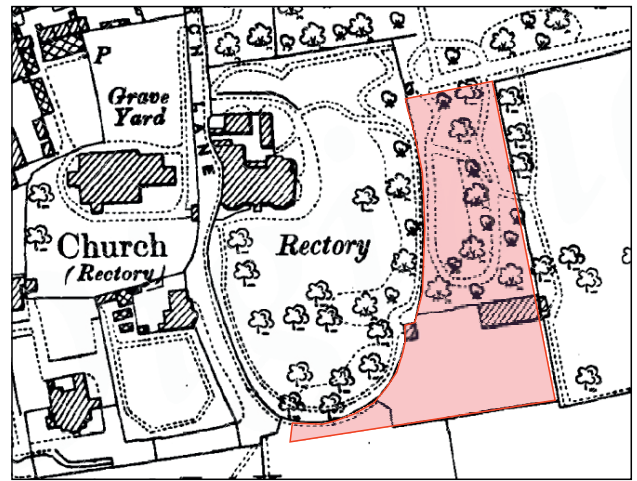
**Illus. 04:** A 'Plan of the Village of Whitburn, seat of Sir H Williamson....1817', showing the evaluation site at bottom right.



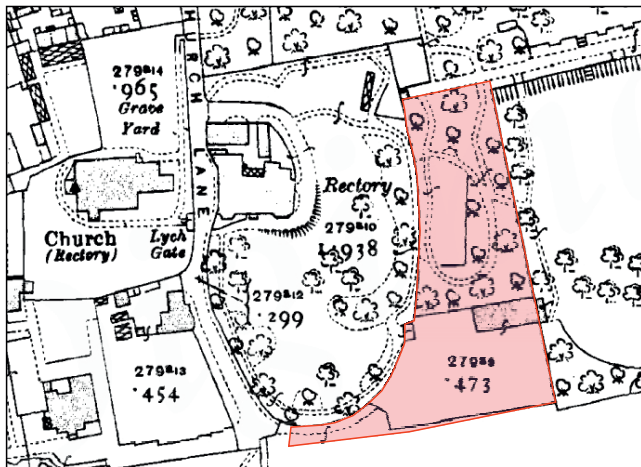
**Illus. 05:** Extract from the Whitburn tithe map, 1839 showing the evaluation site at bottom right.



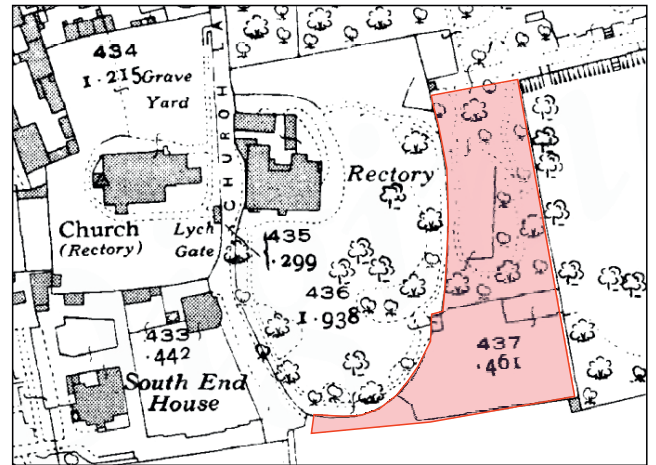
1850s



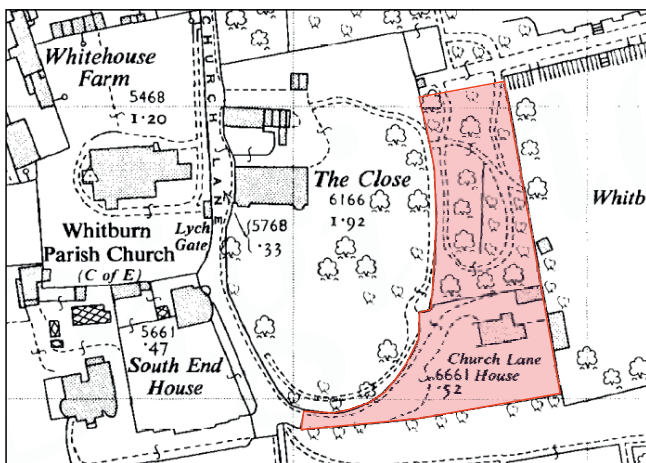
1890s



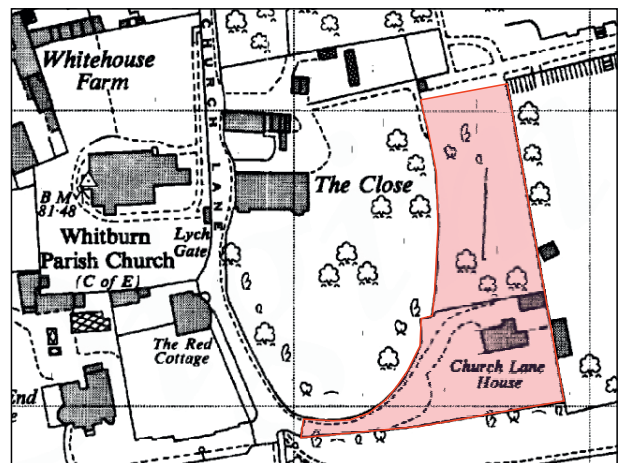
1910s



1930s



1950s



1960s

**Illus. 06-11:**

The Assessment site shown on successive editions of the Ordnance Survey Series, 1850s - 1960s

## 4. RESULTS

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### 4.1 Trench 1

#### 4.1.1 *Location and Dimensions:*

Trench 1 was excavated in the north-east corner of the site. The overall dimensions of the trench were as follows: 1.50 – 7.20 m (width) x 18.15 m (length) x 0.40 - 1.10 m (depth).

#### 4.1.2 *Stratigraphy and Archaeology: (See Illus. 12-16)*

Beneath the mixed topsoil [01] the south part of the trench was made up of layers of demolition deposits [26], [27] & [28] sitting on a pure beach sand [23] which, in turn, overlay a deposit of compacted small cobbles with pantile inclusions [24] at a depth of 1.0 - 1.10 m below ground level (bgl). The beach sand deposit [23] and underlying cobbled surface [24] extended as far north as a stone-built, semi-circular structure (clearly part of a circular structure) with rubble-built walls 0.44 m wide and standing up to 2 courses high. Further investigation of this feature revealed a slot [30], possibly for a timber beam, cut into the floor. Two possible post settings cut through deposit [23] were apparent south of circular feature [12]. The only other possible feature of note in the south part of Trench 1 was a deposit of rubble and lime mortar [28], apparently constituting a demolition deposit south of circular structure [12], in the approximate position of the south wall of a building appearing on a map of 1819 and north wall of its replacement seen on the subsequent Tithe and 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey plans.

Beyond the stone-built circular structure, the north part of the trench was occupied by a complex of stone features, including surfaces and structures, as well as cut features, all interrupted by the concrete footings of a post-War garage building. Most significant were the E-W footings of the Tithe Barn south wall [08], visible over a length of 5.60 m, 0.70 - 0.90 m wide, comprised of water-worn boulders faced on the south side. Approaching it from the north and apparently underlying it was a stone-drain, some 0.55 m wide and 0.60 m deep, filled with rough stone fragments and visible over a length of 6.6 m. A short section of this also appeared on the south side of the wall, but time pressure prevented testing it by excavation; it did not appear to extend as far as circular feature [12], however, suggesting that it may have been truncated by the latter.

South of the possible south extension to drain cut [15], on the south side of tithe barn wall [08] were two stone surfaces at different levels. One, metallised surface of small riverine pebbles form hard standing appeared to be cut by intrusion [19] – possibly a construction trench for wall [08], along its north edge, suggesting that it could be a surface of considerable age, potentially medieval in origin, though lacking corroboratory artefactual evidence. Between this surface and the tithe barn wall was an apparent post setting [29] set against south face of wall [08]. West of metallised surface [11] but not abutting it was a surface of large cobbles, of 0.15 – 0.25 m diam., abutting the south face of wall [08], comprising large riverine cobbles laid flat to form a hard standing of probable late, perhaps 19<sup>th</sup> century origin.

#### 4.1.3 *Interpretation:*

The remains of two principal structures were visible in Trench 1, namely, the south wall of the tithe barn, the north and east walls of which survive above ground, and a circular structure in the position of a later circular structure, of the sort normally interpreted as a horse-engine or gingang, visible on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey plan of c. 1860. With respect to the latter it seems likely that the feature uncovered during excavation is an internal element, perhaps

associated with grain processing (rolling rather than grinding) within a larger gingang structure supported by posts, the bases of two of which may be represented by features [29] and perhaps [16] and one of the possible post-holes noted above in deposit [23] south of feature [12]. It is not clear how to interpret the pure sand deposit [23] other than as a construction deposit above cobbled surface [24], but the presence of pantile within and upon the latter suggests that [23] is likely to be of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century origin. No clear traces were found of the buildings known, from historic evidence, to have occupied a position south of the tithe barn, but a spread of rubble [28] occupies a position consistent with the position of the south wall of the original, pre-early 19<sup>th</sup> century structure and the north wall of its subsequent replacement which, in turn, had been demolished by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Other remains of these structures appear in the boundary wall of the plot south of the east wall of the tithe barn (see *Historic Buildings Record*, below). The stone drain feature [15] may be of early origin, since it is set below the footings of the tithe barn, and may be contemporary with stone surface [11] which seems likely to be associated with the tithe barn.

#### 4.1.4 **Context List:**

- [01] Topsoil
- [02] Mortar Bedding
- [03] Robbing cut of tithe barn wall [08]. Intrusion for the removal of south wall of tithe barn. Vertical sided cut, 0.40 m deep, 0.95 m wide down onto wall footings.
- [04] Fill of [03]. Loose rubble with common lime mortar.
- [05] Layer 0.15m deep within footprint of tithe barn and extending 2.40m to the south of wall [08]. Mid red brown firm silty loam, occasional sandstone fragments. Interpreted as possible 19<sup>th</sup> century buried soil.
- [06] Fill of [07]. Mid to light brown firm plastic mixed clay and limestone fragments. Max. depth 0.40 m.
- [07] Cut of intrusion. Sharp break of slope: top. Smooth inclined sides. Gradual break of slope: base. Shallow concave base. 1 m wide 0.40 m deep (seen only in section).
- [08] Tithe Barn wall footings. Water worn limestone boulders laid fair faced on the south side to form wall with smaller pieces inserted behind them on the north side to give the finished width. 0.90m-0.70m wide 5.60m visible, truncated at its west end by service trench.
- [09] Layer abutting north side wall [08]. Red brown soft friable sandy loam, common crushed sandstone and lime mortar, max. depth 0.25 m. Interpreted as possible construction level of wall [08].
- [10] Layer beneath [09]. Dark grey soft loose sandy loam, with charcoal flecks throughout. Max. depth 0.40 m. Abuts or is cut by north side of wall [08]. Interpreted as a possible medieval layer. Closely resembles fill [13] in cut [15].
- [11] Metalled surface. Small riverine pebbles laid to form hard standing south of wall [08]. Cut by intrusion [19] along its north edge. Average diameter. 0.06 - 0.10m with a few 0.40 m diameter pieces. Interpreted as a metalled surface of possible medieval date = [15]?
- [12] Circular stone feature. Three random courses of fair faced limestone split blocks facing inwards to form a circle with a radius of approx. 1.70 m. Off-white hard lime mortar bonding. Maximum surviving height 0.30 m.
- [13] Fill of [15]. Dark grey soft loose sandy loam matrix of stone fill [16].
- [14] Fill of [15]. Backfill of upper portion of cut [15]. Firm, friable mixed clay sand. Max. depth 0.18 m.
- [15] Construction cut of narrow linear feature aligned NW-SE and extending for 6.60m in length. Observed to be 0.60 m in width x 0.50 m in depth. Sharp break of slope: top. Near vertical sides. Gradual break of slope: base. Flat base. Cut by the construction of wall [08] near its south end.



- [16] Stone fill of [15]. Riverine cobbles packed loosely into the entire length of linear feature [15]. Average diameter 0.10 - 0.15 m. A few larger angular pieces. Interpreted as possible disturbed post packing or wall footings.
- [17] Large cobbles south of [08]. Abutting south face of wall [08], large riverine cobbles laid flat to form hard standing, a few up to 0.25 m in diameter. Average diameter of individual cobbles 0.15 m. Interpreted as a cobbled 'hard-standing' surface of probable 19<sup>th</sup> century origin.
- [18] Layer of firm compacted greenish sandy loam with common crushed sandstone on the south side of wall [08]. Truncated on its north side by [19]. Unexcavated. Interpreted as a possible medieval construction level.
- [19] Unexcavated possible robbing cut of E-W return of [15].
- [20] Fill of [19]. Mixed light brown/yellow clay with angular sandstone pieces. Unexcavated.
- [21] Possible robbing cut on the north side of wall [08] = [19]?
- [22] Fill of [12]. Lime-rich demolition material within circular structure [12]. Mixed loose rubble and mortar, including common wall plaster, approx. 0.30 m. deep.
- [23] Layer of marine sand. Yellow soft loose sand, south and west of structure [12] and sealing cobbled surface [24]. Max. depth 0.12 m.
- [24] Cobbles south of 12. Beneath layer 23. Large riverine cobbles forming yard surface.
- [25] Demolition layer. Loose masonry rubble, roof tile, crushed mortar.
- [26] Loose demolition layer with common riverine cobbles max. depth 0.30m. Interpreted as a probable 20<sup>th</sup> century make up layer.
- [27] Dark brown silt loam layer south of structure [12]. Max. depth 0.10 m. = [05]? Interpreted as possible 19<sup>th</sup> century buried soil.
- [28] Limestone rubble blocks and lime mortar mix, constituting a demolition level south of structure [12]. Max. depth 0.25 m.
- [29] Post setting against south face of wall [08]. Sub circular in plan, max. diameter 0.40m. Sharp break of slope: top. Smooth steep sides. Sharp break of slope: base. Shallow concave base. Max. depth 0.22m.
- [30] Cut of possible timber. Narrow linear within structure [12] on its west side. Dimensions: 0.42 m wide, 1.16 m visible length, by 0.12 m deep. Sharp break of slope: top - Near vertical sides. Sharp break of slope: base - Flat base.
- [31] Fill of [30]. Coarse loose rubble material very similar to [22].

## 4.2 Trench 2

### 4.2.1 *Location and Dimensions:*

Trench 2, positioned in order to investigate the west end of the tithe barn at its junction with abutting farm buildings, comprised two arms, the main N-S arm being 1.50 – 2.2 m (width) x 10.0 m (length) x 0.50 m (max depth), with a shorter E-W arm attached to the west side of the main arm at its north end, being 6.9 m long and 1.5 m wide.

### 4.2.2 *Stratigraphy and Archaeology: (See Illus. 12-13 & 17)*

The cut of a largely robbed-out wall trench [32] on the line of the west end wall of the tithe barn was revealed below the mixed topsoil [01] and interrupted by a service cut 5 m from the north end of the trench. Some facing stones appeared to remain *in situ* within this wall trench, but the majority had been robbed away. A possible eastward return to this wall trench was apparent at its south end, with the socket for a doorway apparent here in what is assumed to be the inner face of the south-west corner of the tithe barn, beyond which a deposit of sandstone flooring [33] was revealed until it was truncated (by groundworks associated with the construction of a post-War bungalow). In the west arm of the trench was revealed, at shallow depth, a disturbed brick floor [34] of probably 19<sup>th</sup> century origin, while between this

floor and wall trench [32], at a depth below the brick floor but above the wall cut, were the remains of apparent stone flagged floor [35] the rest of which must extend westwards and may be an earlier phase of floor [34]

#### 4.2.3 **Interpretation:**

Remains here appear to constitute the west end of the tithe barn, represented by cut [32] which allows for a wall of c 0.75 m wide (between east edge of the cut and flagged floor [35]), approximately the same width as that of the south side of the tithe barn revealed by footings [08] in Trench 1. The socketed stone in the south-west corner is in a position consistent with a doorway from the tithe barn into an adjoining structure shown on the Tithe and First Edition Ordnance Survey Plans, with the surface [33] thus interpreted as an internal floor surface of early 19<sup>th</sup> century origin. Brick surface [34] is the remains of a floor in the range of farm buildings that adjoined the tithe barn until their demolition in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the remains of an apparent stone flagged floor [35] below it may be rather earlier, associated with the same or a pre-dating phase of farm buildings in this position and extending westwards and may be an earlier phase of brick floor [34].

#### 4.2.4 **Context List:**

- [01] Topsoil
- [32] TR#2. Wall. West end of tithe barn. 0.70 m wide, 10 m visible. Loose rubble and remaining wall footings. Unexcavated.
- [33] TR#2. Doorway through wall [32]. Sandstone socket stone. Sandstone flagstone threshold 1 m x 0.50 m, with riverine cobble flooring to the east.
- [34] TR#2. Brick floor west of [32]. Area of flooring extending 4.50m to the west of wall [32] made of house bricks, heavily disturbed.
- [35] Flagstone flooring underlying brick floor [34].
- [36] Deposit of mixed sandy-silt.

### 4.3 Trench 3

#### 4.3.1 **Location and Dimensions:**

Trench 3 was positioned against the inner face of the north wall of a range of farm buildings which, until the late- 19<sup>th</sup> century, extended west from the tithe barn. The overall dimensions of the trench were as follows: 2 m (width) x 3.5 m (length) x 1.35 m (max depth).

#### 4.3.2 **Stratigraphy and Archaeology:** (See *Illus. 00-00*)

Excavation revealed a wall face extending up to 1.20 m bgl, making a total wall height of 1.40 m, sitting upon natural, yellow boulder-clay. The trench was excavated to the depth of boulder clay for some 2.5 m southwards but no further remains were revealed at this level. Overlying the boulder clay, as revealed in the east-facing section of the trench (*Illus. 18*) were a succession of deposits, most of which associated with episodes of construction and demolition, but the lowest comprising a layer of loosely laid bricks (of earlier origin than those forming deposit [34] in Trench 2), upon a bed of mortar, itself sitting on the sub-soil.

#### 4.3.3 **Interpretation:**

A brick floor of 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> origin was revealed sitting on sub-soil just above the depth of the footings of the north wall of a range of farm buildings extending west from the tithe barn.

#### 4.3.4 **Context List:**

- [301] Topsoil – upper layer
- [302] Yellow dolomite

- [303] Topsoil – lower layer, as [301]
- [304] Mortar layer sealing red brick surface [305]
- [305] Red brick surface observed in east facing section (*see Illus. 18*) abutting sandstone wall at east end of trench, cement mortar bond
- [306] Cement mortar bedding for brick surface [305]
- [307] Thin layer of firm light greyish brown clay-silt with small pebble inclusions – similar to topsoil but lighter in colour and with less inclusions
- [308] Natural. Firm/friable light-mid reddish brown sandy boulder clay, various fractured sandstone and gritty/gravelly inclusions and banding

#### **4.4 Trench 4**

##### **4.4.1 Location and Dimensions:**

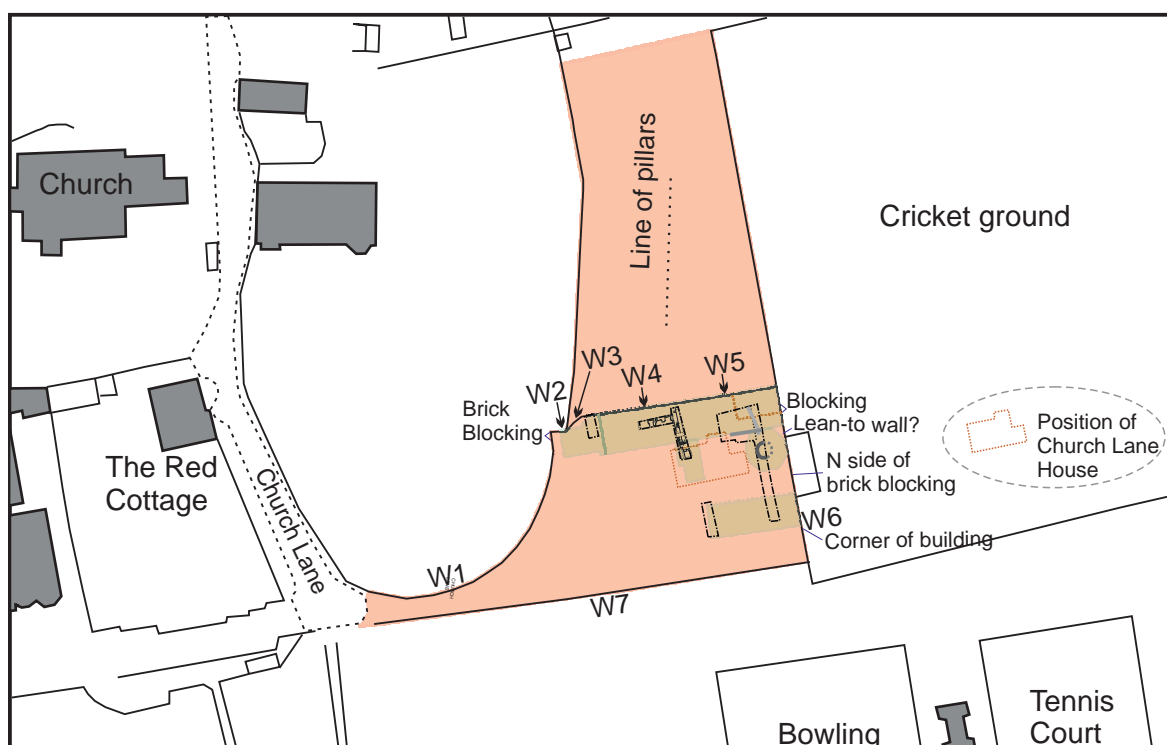
The overall dimensions of the trench were as follows: 1.50 m (width) x 6 m (length) x 0.5 m (max depth).

##### **4.4.2 Stratigraphy and Archaeology: (See Illus. 12-13)**

Trench 4 was excavated at the west end of the position of a barn, set just south of a barn shown on a plan of 1817, shown on the Tithe and First Edition Ordnance Survey plans south of the Tithe Barn. During excavation the mechanical excavator rapidly came upon some deeply-set concrete foundations which resisted attempts to break or remove them.

##### **4.4.3 Interpretation:**

The concrete foundations were interpreted as of modern origin, perhaps associated with the post-War bungalow just to the north, but could be the remains of an earlier barn on the site.



**Illus. 12:** The distribution of known sites of cultural heritage importance within and in the immediate vicinity of the assessment area (pink fill), keyed to Section 4.1 - showing the position of the former Church Lane House and recently removed outbuilding, and overlain by data transcribed from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey Map of c.1860 (green fill), showing the distribution of structures present in the middle of the 19th century.

**Wall 1 (W1)** Extends from the north side of the entrance along the north side of the site to north-west angle. Appears on all maps from early 19th century onwards.

**Wall 2 (W2)** Short section of wall eastwards from north-west angle towards doorway. Perhaps the south wall of a small annexe to the main east-west barn, the west half of which was removed in the second half of the 19th century.

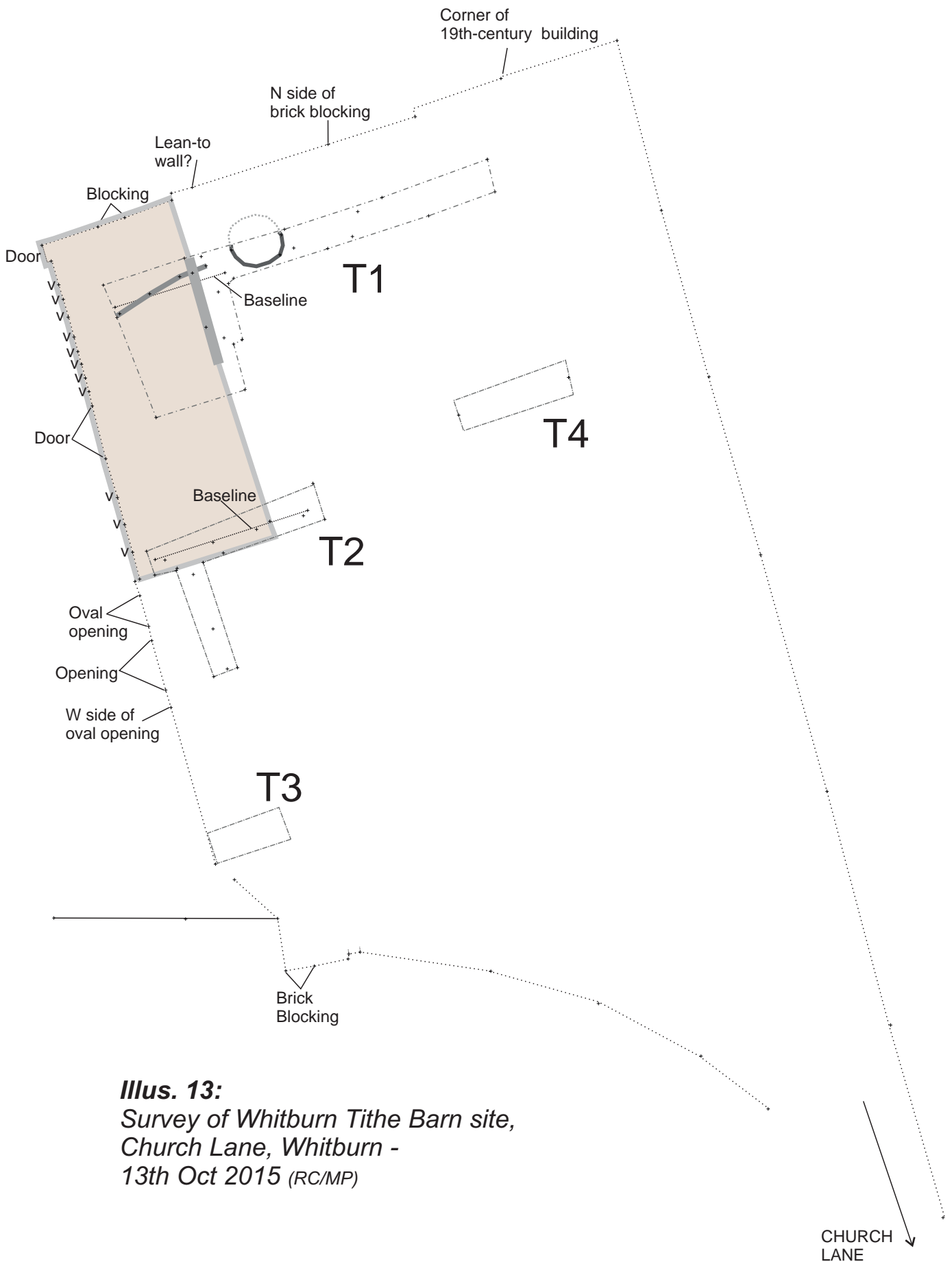
**Wall 3 (W3)** Short section of wall including doorway near north-west angle. This short section was constructed in order to accommodate the doorway in the period between 1922 and 1942.

**Wall 4 (W4)** Wall with three large oval openings running for c.17M eastwards from the doorway. This decorative boundary wall probably dates to the second half of the 19th century, following the annexation of part of the rectory gardens to Whitburn Hall and the construction of a landscaped garden there.

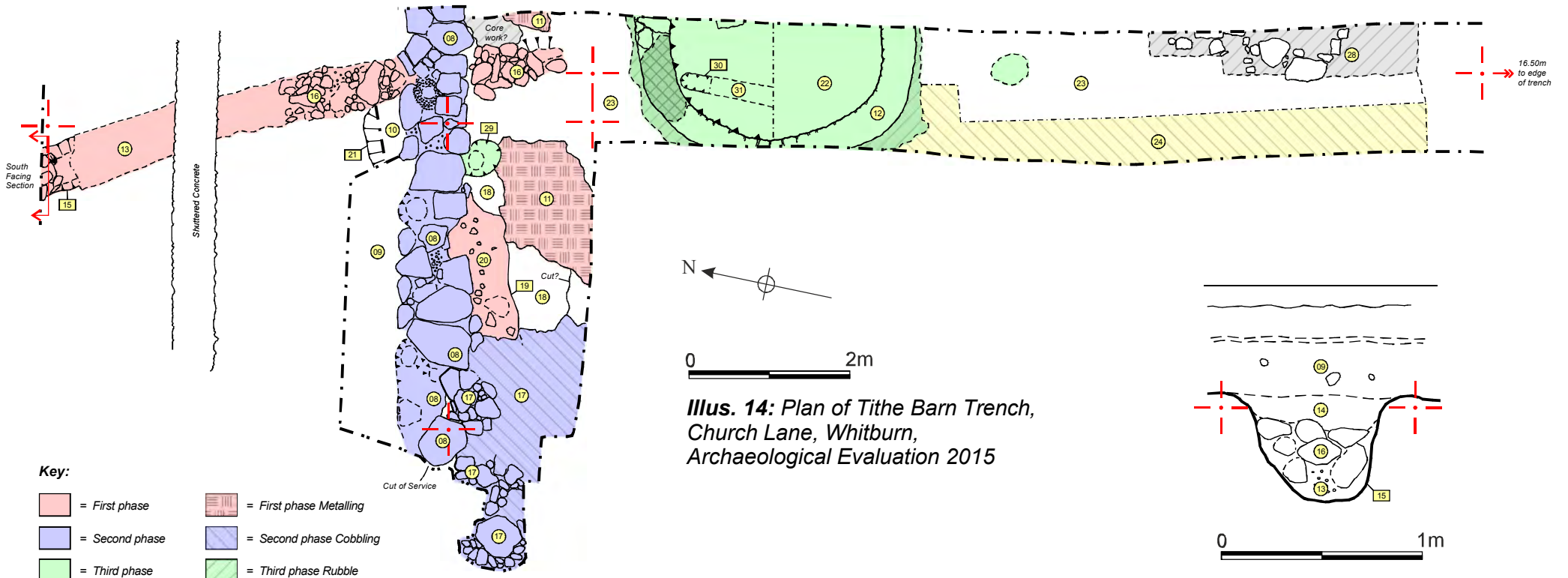
**Wall 5 (W5)** Wall with up to 15 v-shaped vents extending from east end of W4 to the north-east corner, a total of c.21M, incorporating a wide blocked opening towards the centre and a narrow doorway at its east end. This is the north wall of the tithe barn. The central opening may be contemporary, but the east end doorway, although medieval in appearance, is probably a later insert.

**Wall 6 (W6)** High east boundary wall, partly obscured (at north end) by surviving remains of a building and with marks (of a roofline) suggesting that an additional building once abutted. Appears on early 19th century maps.

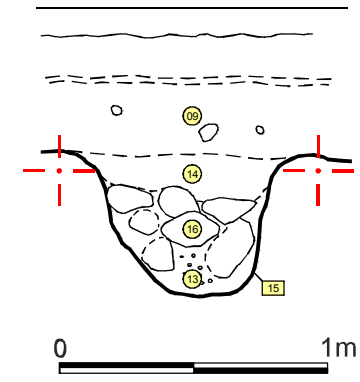
**Wall 7 (W7)** Low field wall, tumbled in places, marking the south boundary of the site. Appears early 19th century maps.



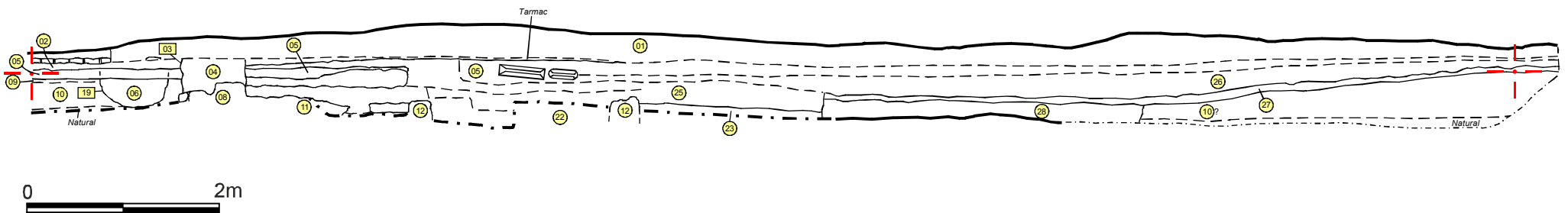
**Illus. 13:**  
*Survey of Whitburn Tithe Barn site,  
 Church Lane, Whitburn -  
 13th Oct 2015 (RC/MP)*



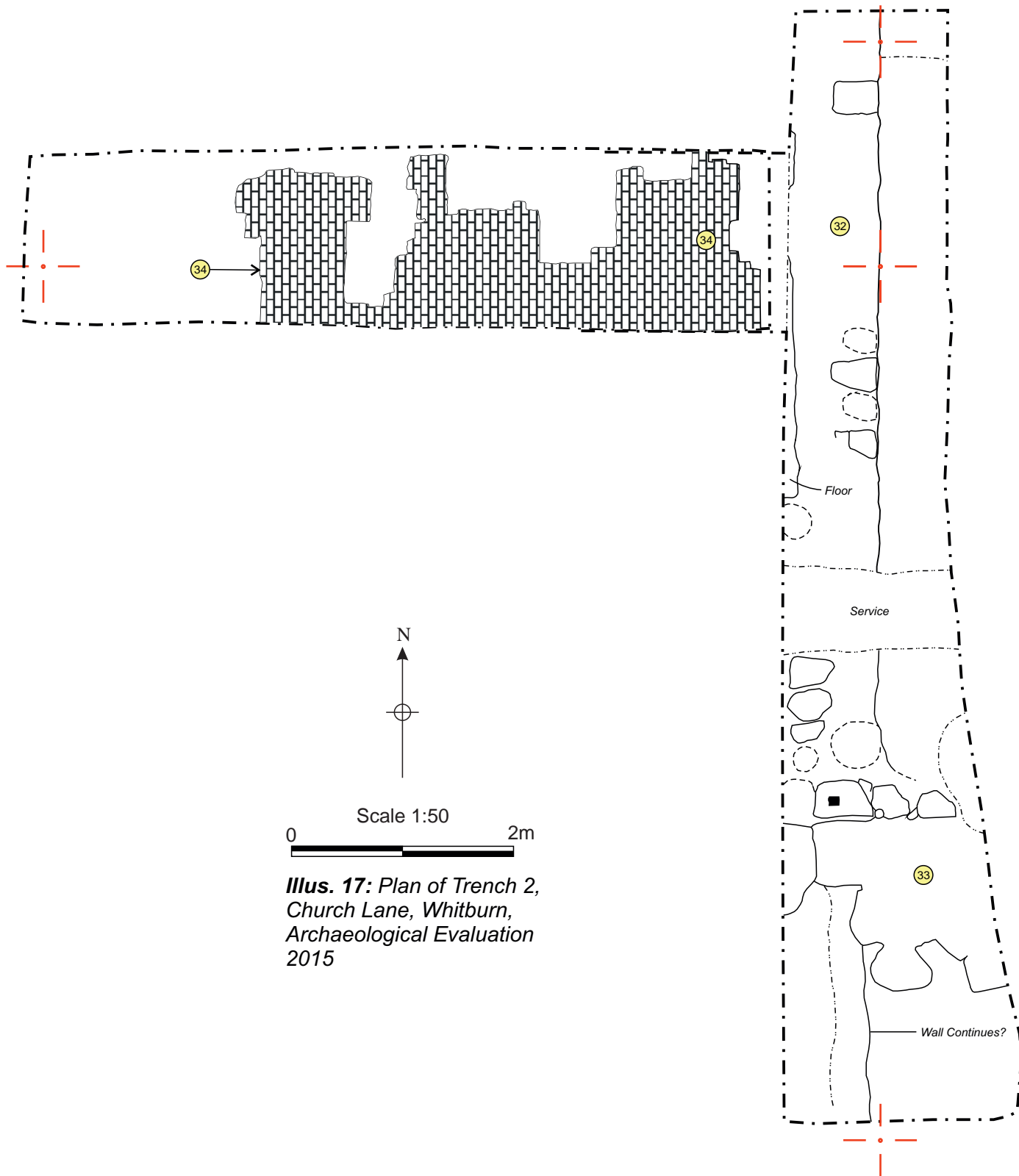
**Illus. 14:** Plan of Tithe Barn Trench, Church Lane, Whitburn, Archaeological Evaluation 2015



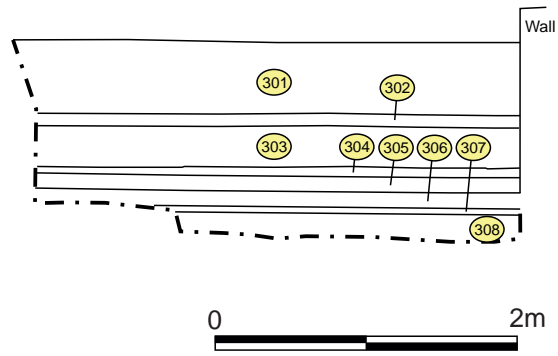
**Illus. 16:** South Facing Section Feature in Tithe Barn Trench, Church Lane, Whitburn, Archaeological Evaluation 2015



**Illus. 15:** West Facing Section of Tithe Barn Trench, Church Lane, Whitburn, Archaeological Evaluation 2015



**Illus. 17:** Plan of Trench 2,  
Church Lane, Whitburn,  
Archaeological Evaluation  
2015



**Illus. 18:** East-facing section of Trench 3



## 5. HISTORIC BUILDINGS RECORD

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### 5.1 Whitburn Tithe Barn

The Barn in its latest form has been a rectangular structure 21.3 m by 8.7 m externally, with walls c 0.68 m thick (description keyed to *Illus. 21*, below). The lower parts of the north wall and east end survive to a height (internally, above the latest concrete floor) of c 2.75 m, although their upper courses have been rebuilt and provided with a brick capping. The walls are constructed of coursed roughly-shaped blocks of Magnesian Limestone, of the concretionary form best known from the former Fulwell quarries and often used as an ornamental stone for rockeries etc. There are no real cut quoins or dressings; more elongate slabs are used for the triangular heads of a series of slit vents in the north wall, and that of a doorway at its east end.

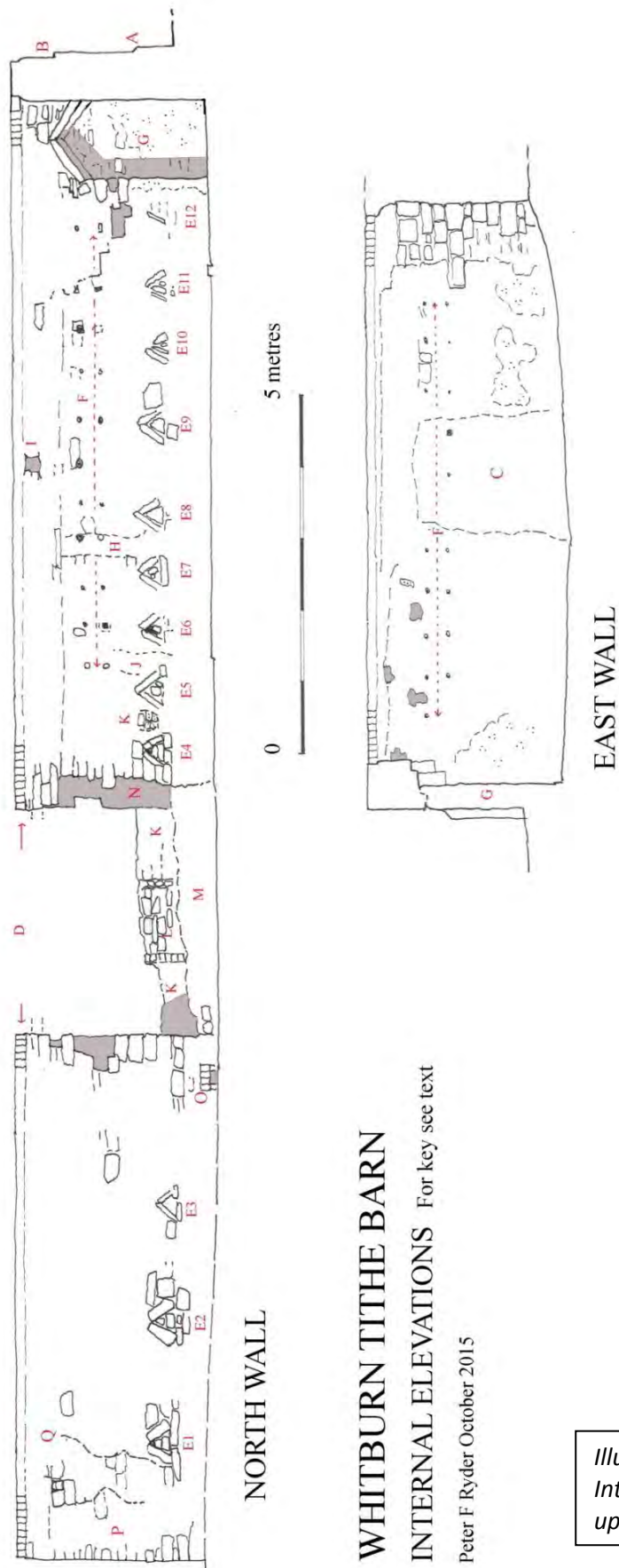
The east end of the building has a rough chamfered plinth (A) 0.65 m above the ground, and an offset (B) at 1.80 m; there has been a doorway (C) c 0.96 m wide set slightly south-of-centre, its head lost in the rebuilding of the upper courses of the wall. At the south-east corner the upper quoins (from 0.50 m above the plinth) have been removed to tie in the later boundary wall to the south.

The north wall has a threshing door (D) 3.20 m wide set a little west-of-centre; its jambs survive, in a somewhat ruinous state, and seem to course in with the walling suggesting that it is an original feature; rough sockets near the top of each jamb appear to have accommodated a timber lintel c 2.5 m above the ground. The wall has a series of triangular slit vents (E1 – E12) of c 0.30 m side, set low in the wall – internally their sills are c 0.5 m above the concrete floor, but externally only a few cm above the present ground level there; they are mostly infilled on the inner face of the wall, but open on the outer. They are placed somewhat irregularly – three in the shorter western section of wall, and nine in the eastern, in a group of five then four, only the west side of the easternmost of the final four (E13) surviving, seemingly destroyed when the doorway at the end of the wall was inserted.

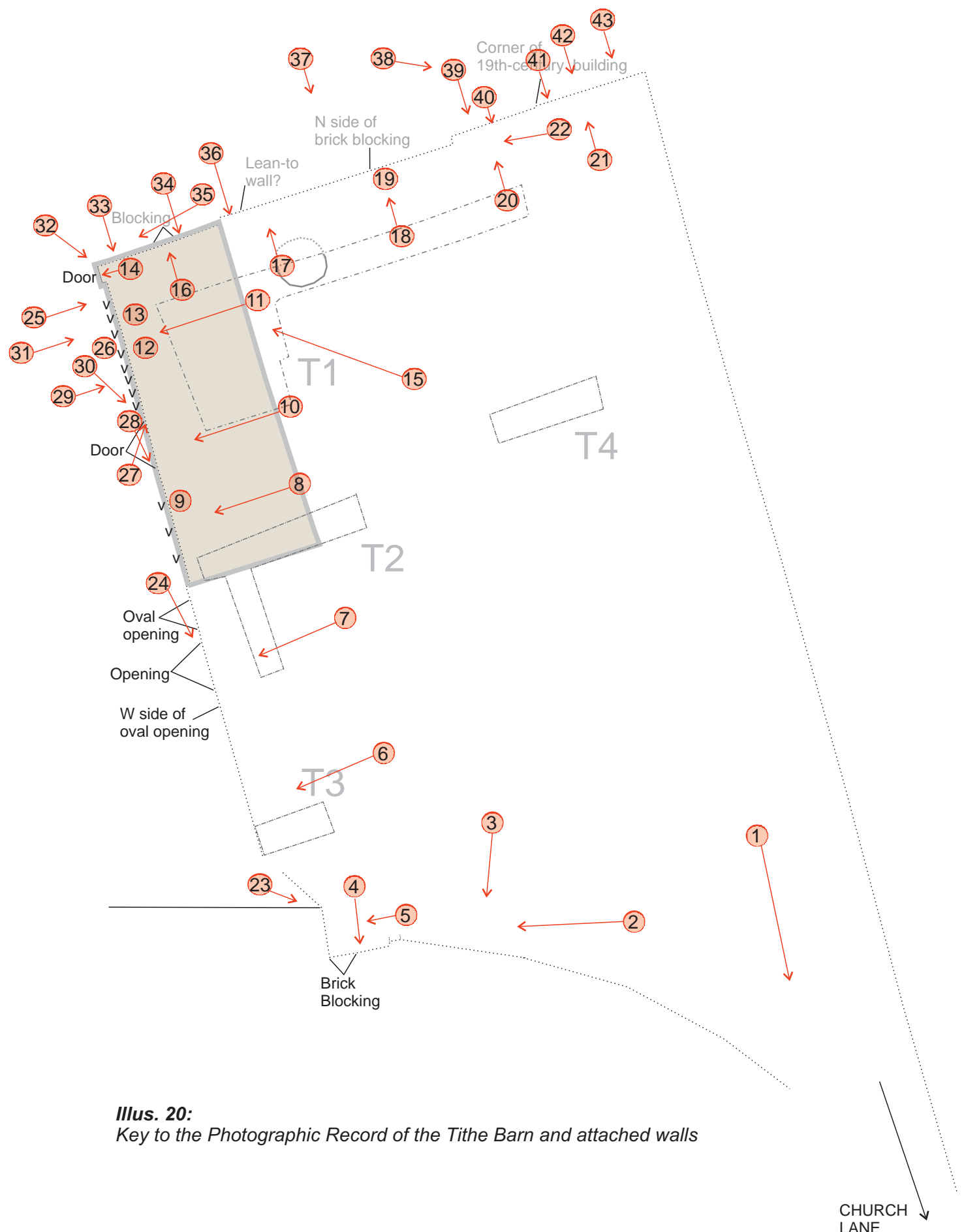
On the internal face of the east wall the blocking of the former doorway (C) is clearly visible – the opening seems to have been splayed, being considerably wider internally, although the exact lines of the jambs are not clear. The wall also has a series of vertical pairs of small sockets or stub-ends of timbers (F), set c 1.50 and 1.80 m above the floor, which appear to continue across the blocking of the doorway.

This same series of timbers/sockets (F) continues for most of the length of the eastern section of the north wall. The doorway at the eastern end of this wall (G), now blocked but forming a recess internally, has a triangular arched head that is a larger-scale version of the heads of the vents, formed by two inclined slabs; the recess formed by its rear arch has an 'inner order' formed by a second pair of inclined slabs set at a slightly lower level. The external face of the opening is much obscured by old render, but never seems to have had any cut dressings; externally it is clear that it is an insertion.

Internally the wall east of the threshing bay has a vertical feature (H) which could be the ghost of a removed cross-wall or post, 0.20 m thick, between the fourth and fifth vents from the west. A little to the east, between the fifth and sixth vents, there is what looks to be a rough socket (I) in the upper (rebuilt) section of the wall, just below the brick capping. Further west



*Illus. 19: Elevation drawing of the Internal elevation of the upstanding Tithe Barn walls.*



**Illus. 20:**  
 Key to the Photographic Record of the Tithe Barn and attached walls

there are hints of disturbance (J) between the second and third vents, and a rough socket (K) infilled with brick between the first and second.

The threshing door has been blocked by a thinner wall (K) (only the lower courses of which remain) which has a central doorway (L) with brick jambs, later blocked. This has then been re-faced internally, to bring it to the same thickness as the remainder of the wall, concealing the blocked door; the new masonry (M) also overlaps the outer east jamb of the original threshing doors, which seems to have been roughly cut back (N), possibly when a cross-wall or perhaps a post was removed.

The section of wall west of the threshing door has few features other than the more widely-spaced triangular vents, and a small opening (O), perhaps a drain, low down near the east end, linked in relatively recent brick. At the west end of the wall is an obvious area of secondary masonry (P) where the old west wall of the barn was taken down in the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century with another ragged joint (Q) a little to the east.

## 5.2 Other Structures

The surviving north wall of the Tithe Barn is adjoined at its west end by a length of garden wall which has had three large oval oculi, with keyed ashlar surrounds, and a pair of lower sections flanked by taller square piers with moulded capitals; the whole looks of late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century character and is almost certainly coeval with a line of piers extending to the north. It has suffered badly from vandalism in the last few years, and only the eastern oculus is now intact, although most of the cut ashlar from the toppled features seems to be still on site, so the wall could be reconstructed if desired.

At its west end there is a short gap and then a short diagonally-set length of wall linking to a section of walling which appears to represent the north and west sides of a small rectangular building of limestone rubble, with the stub of a south wall which seems roughly in line with the former south wall of the Tithe Barn. At the north end of the west wall is a low elliptical arch, turned in brick and infilled in brick as well, with a line of infilled joist holes just above it.

Another boundary wall extends south from the south-east corner of the Tithe Barn, built of roughly-coursed rubble, and incorporating the east end of an outbuilding with a pent roof set against the south side of the barn. Further south there is what looks to have been a semi-circular opening low in the wall, infilled in orange brick, with just beyond it some re-used architectural fragments, possibly mullions, which are hollow chamfers on two angles and straight ones on the others. Further on the internal wall-face steps back c 0.50 m, marking the north-east corner of an earlier building, the east end wall of which is incorporated in the present wall; it is of similar fabric to the Tithe barn, and has a blocked doorway with a slit vent to the south of it. The remaining length of wall is of more irregular rubble, but has some complex features.

## 5.3 Discussion

The earliest large-scale map of Whitburn so far traced, of 1817, shows the barn with a slightly shorter building in line with it to the west, with at the west end of that a smaller square building, the north and west walls of which still survive. There is also a building, slightly smaller than the barn, set parallel to it and a little to the south. The 1839 Tithe map shows a very similar arrangement, except that there are two small additional blocks adjoining the south wall

of the barn and the building to the south is shown a little further from the barn, as if rebuilt there (unless mistakenly represented on the earlier plan), so that the earlier walling incorporated in the present boundary wall is almost certainly its east end.; the accompanying schedule describes the Tithe Barn as being 22 yards long. The Ordnance Survey `1<sup>st</sup> edition 25":1 mile map of c1860 is again similar, except that the two small additional blocks are shown in slightly different positions; the western overlapped the south-west corner of the barn, and the eastern was shown as sub-circular, of the form one would normally associate with a horse engine or gingang. By the time of the second edition of the Ordnance Survey 25":1 mile map in the mid-1890s, all that remained of these buildings was the main barn, and the small square block at the west end of its range. A photograph of 1905 shows the barn without any adjacent structures other than the present walls attached to north-west and south-east corners; the wall attached to the north-west corner does not have the present oculi, which must elate to early-20<sup>th</sup> century garden works. The situation remains unchanged on maps until the 1930s; it is known that barn was partially demolished after being hit by an incendiary bomb in 1940.

The 1905 photograph (*Illus. 21*) shows a building, largely of coursed limestone rubble, with a roof of pantiles pitched at around 45°, with a partial course of stone slates to the eaves. In the south wall is a large threshing door, opposite that on the north, with to the west of it two ranges of square (rather than triangular) vents; there are other openings, not very clearly visible, to the east of the threshing door. The west gable seems to be partly rendered, and might have been partly rebuilt.



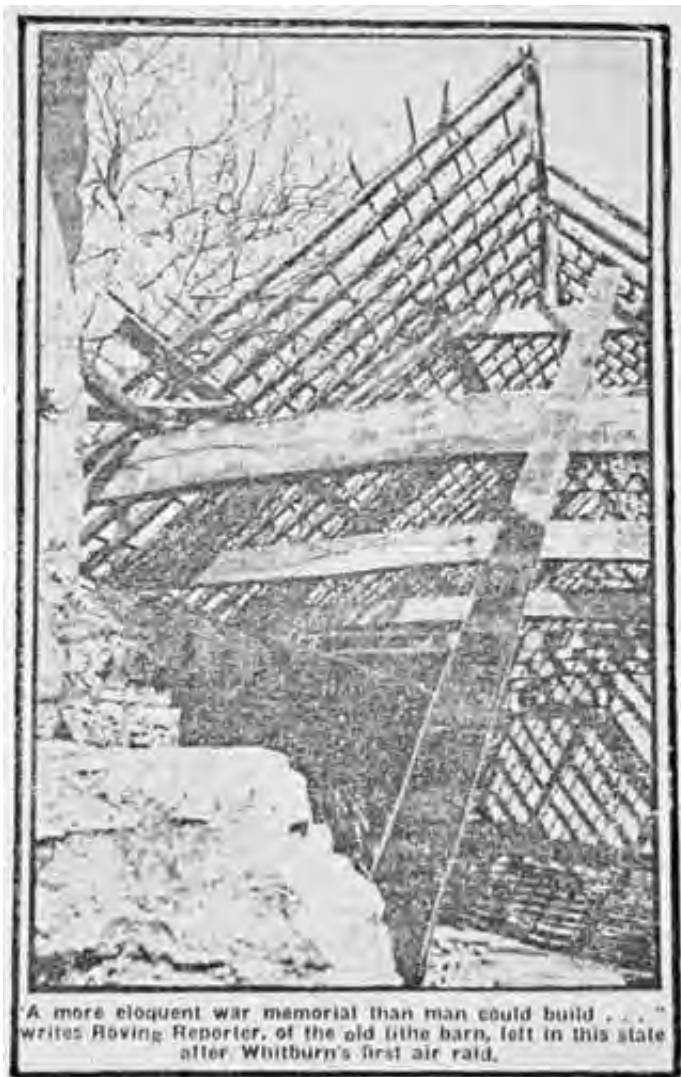
*Illus. 21: View of the tithe barn in 1905.*

One photograph of the interior of the building – or of its roof structure, as it lay ruinous c1940, has been traced (*Illus. 22*)<sup>1</sup> showing that the building had a truncated principal roof, a common late medieval and early sub-medieval form in County Durham. A series of early barns around Durham are discussed by Roberts (1999, *Durham Archaeological Journal* 14/15, 'The Buildings of the Religious Estates of Medieval Durham; a Tree Ring Dating Project', 141-160) several of

<sup>1</sup> An un-dated newspaper cutting in a scrapbook 'Whitburn Vol.2 The Village' held at St Mary's Church.

which had both truncated principal roofs and triangular vents; Roberts states (157, note 13): *'Triangular vents are not diagnostic features that can accurately date buildings, but their occurrence in County Durham is rare, while in such areas as Cumbria they are abundant. They are easily constricted, especially when the local stone is fissile and avoid the need for a load bearing lintel. Hence there are good pragmatic reasons for their use in any period. Of twenty-one buildings so far identified in the county with triangular vents, nearly all farm buildings, five are late medieval, eight are late sixteenth or seventeenth century, only two later, while six examples remain undated at present. These findings are not conclusive, but triangular vents in County Durham do seem to indicate a probability, no more, of early buildings'*.

One interesting possibility is raised by the features H and N in the north wall, which looks as if they might indicate the position of timber posts, suggesting this was once a timber-framed building. If the interior of the barn is divided into six equal bays, the jambs of the threshing door D would correlate exactly with the second and third trusses from the west, and feature H is only a few cm east of the position of the fifth truss. This could imply that the building was once fully timber-framed, or perhaps more likely that it was of 'hybrid' construction with posts carrying the roof structure and non-loadbearing stone walls between them. A 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century date is perhaps the most likely.



*Illus. 22: View of the tithe barn following a bombing raid in 1940.*

## 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1 Conclusions

The excavations and historic buildings record produced a number of significant results. The excavations uncovered the remains of a multi-phased buildings complex, the earliest of which are the south and west walls of the barn which may be of late medieval or early post-medieval origin, with possibly contemporary floor surfaces and a drain. Remains of later structures, or phases of the same structures, include those of the internal features of a likely gingang and floor surfaces of farm buildings attached to the west and south of the tithe barn. Few of these features, representing phases of farm buildings and related activities on the site, are associated with artefactual remains, although a compacted cobbled floor occupying much of the south end of Trench 1 was associated with broken pantile, suggesting post-medieval or early modern activity. An excavation against the west end of the internal north wall of the farm buildings attached to the tithe barn show that its footings extend over a metre below current ground level, while the exposure of the tithe barn footings at the east end of the site suggest similar foundation depths there.

No clear traces were found of the buildings known, from historic evidence, to have occupied a position south of the tithe barn, but a spread of rubble was found in a position consistent with the position of the south wall of the original, pre-early 19<sup>th</sup> century structure (and the north wall of its subsequent replacement). Other remains of these structures appear in the boundary wall of the plot south of the east wall of the tithe barn, as noted in the *Historic Buildings Record*.

Historic buildings analysis records a building of coursed limestone rubble, with a roof of pantiles pitched at around 45°, with a large threshing door in the north wall (opposite that known from an historic photograph in the south wall), with vents at low level in the north wall and other, smaller holes, presumably to support internal features, above. A photograph of the interior of the ruinous building after bombing c 1940 shows that the barn had a truncated principal roof, a common late medieval and early sub-medieval form in County Durham, often associated with triangular vents. Other features in the north wall indicate the possible presence of timber posts, suggesting this was once a timber-framed building or, more likely, of 'hybrid' construction with posts carrying the roof structure and non-loadbearing stone walls between them.

While a 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century date for the barn is considered the most likely, no supporting evidence in the form of dateable artifacts has been uncovered. However, it remains possible that such finds could be present within some of the surfaces encountered during the excavation, especially in the north-east corner of the site, which were left largely intact. It is considered led likely, however, that such early remains could be present on the site beyond the immediate environs of the tithe barn.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

It is recommended that a strategy to mitigate the impact of groundworks carried out at depths likely to threaten the archaeological remains reported above should be developed prior to the commencement of development works.

Specifically, a strip, map and sample procedure should be implemented in the areas where the most complex archaeological remains have been uncovered and recorded, namely in the north-east corner of the site. The aim of this work should be to plan any archaeological remains uncovered during the first phase of development work and excavate a representative sample of those remains in order to record significant features, finds and deposits, particularly those considered part of, or associated with the tithe barn.

It is considered that an area of 10 by 10 metres in the north-east corner of the site should be closely investigated in this way, with a standard watching brief maintained on all other parts of the site where the depth of groundworks is considered sufficient to threaten potential archaeological remains.



## 7. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1: Photographic Archive for Archaeological Evaluation



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



*Photo 4*



*Photo 5*



*Photo 6*



*Photo 7*



*Photo 8*



*Photo 9*



*Photo 10*



*Photo 11*



*Photo 12*



Photo 13



Photo 14



Photo 15



Photo 16



Photo 17



*Photo 18*



*Photo 19*





*Photo 20*



*Photo 21*



*Photo 22*

APPENDIX 2: Photographic Archive for Historic Building Recording



01-DSC\_8563



02-DSC\_8564



03-DSC\_8565



04-DSC\_8566



05-DSC\_8567



06-DSC\_8568



07-DSC\_8569



08-DSC\_8570



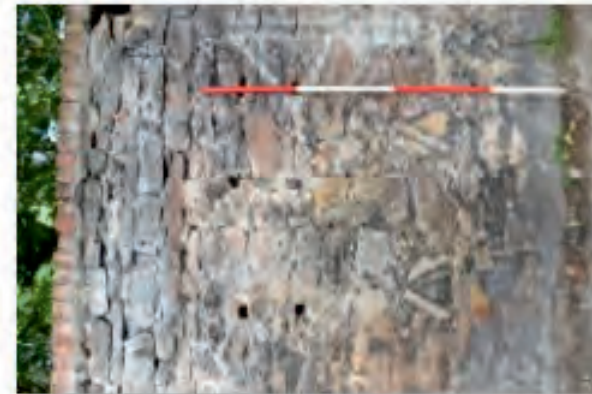
09-DSC\_8571



10-DSC\_8572



11-DSC\_8573



12-DSC\_8574



13-DSC\_8575



14-DSC\_8576i



15-DSC\_8576ii



16-DSC\_8577



17-DSC\_8578



18-DSC\_8579



19-DSC\_8581



20-DSC\_8582



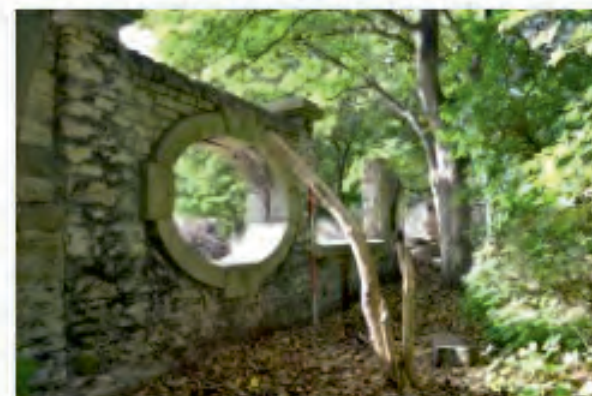
21-DSC\_8583



22-DSC\_8584



23-DSC\_8587i



24-DSC\_8587ii



25-DSC\_8588



26-DSC\_8589



27-DSC\_8590



28-DSC\_8591



29-DSC\_8592



30-DSC\_8593



31-DSC\_8594i



32-DSC\_8594ii



33-DSC\_8596



34-DSC\_8597



35-DSC\_8598



36-DSC\_8599



37-DSC\_8600



38-DSC\_8601i



39-DSC\_8601ii



40-DSC\_8602



41-DSC\_8603



42-DSC\_8604



43-DSC\_8605



44-DSC\_8608



45-DSC\_8609