

**An Archaeological Interpretative Survey
of
Farm Buildings at Colbrans,
Laughton, East Sussex**

**Commissioned by
Mr T. W. Simpson**



Project Ref. 2945

**by
David Martin FSA IHBC MIFA
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2007

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**Archaeology South-East
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STANDING BUILDINGS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIVE SURVEYS

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

ABOUT THESE SURVEYS

The intended purpose of an *Archaeological Interpretative Survey* is to give an overview of the date, sequence of construction, and principal architectural features of a building. As such, they should not be regarded as a detailed archaeological record, nor should they be taken as definitive. Further research, particularly that undertaken during building works, is likely to refine and extend the archaeological record.

These reports are aimed at three groups of user, namely those owners who wish to know more about their property, those persons (architects and planners) who are charged with the responsibility for both conserving the buildings and ensuring that they are carefully adapted to the needs of the future, and finally the academic carrying out wider historical or archaeological research. A secure use for the future is, in our opinion, the only way of ensuring the long-term survival of any historical building.

INVESTIGATIVE TECHNIQUE

Unless noted to the contrary, the assessments involve a visual inspection of the fabric, both internally and externally, including any accessible roof voids and basement areas. Except where building works are being carried out, intrusive techniques are inappropriate. Interpretation of the fabric and fittings therefore relies principally upon inspection of the visible evidence. As part of the interpretative procedure, a measured outline survey of every property is undertaken.

THE WRITTEN REPORT

For ease of reference the written reports are divided into sections under a series of headings and sub-headings. The typical sequence of headings is as follows:-

- 1 Location of the building.
- 2 Sequence of development.
- 3 Detailed architectural description, arranged period-by-period.

THE DRAWINGS

A set of drawings produced from an measured outline survey is included within the body of each report. The purpose of these drawings is to identify the features included within the written text and to illustrate, as far as is known, the form of the structure during its various stages of development. For clarity the drawings have been prepared in the form of scale 'sketches', rather than detailed archaeological record drawings. For reasons of economy, the making of detailed archaeological drawings is restricted to stripped-out or exceptionally important buildings.

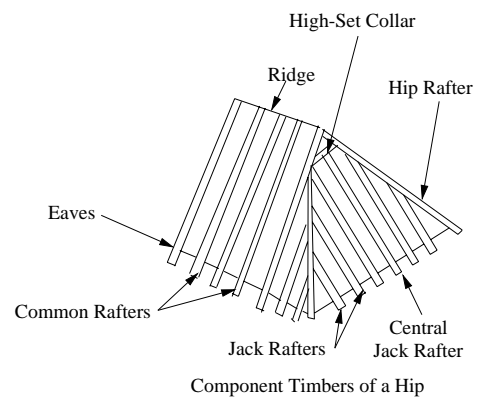
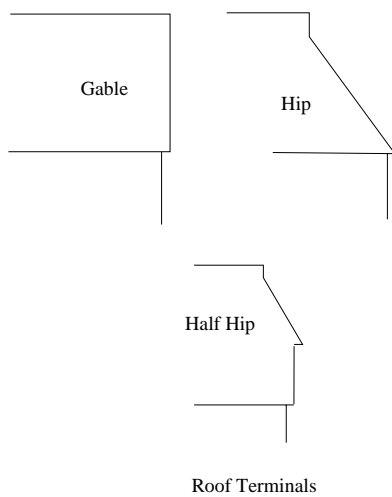
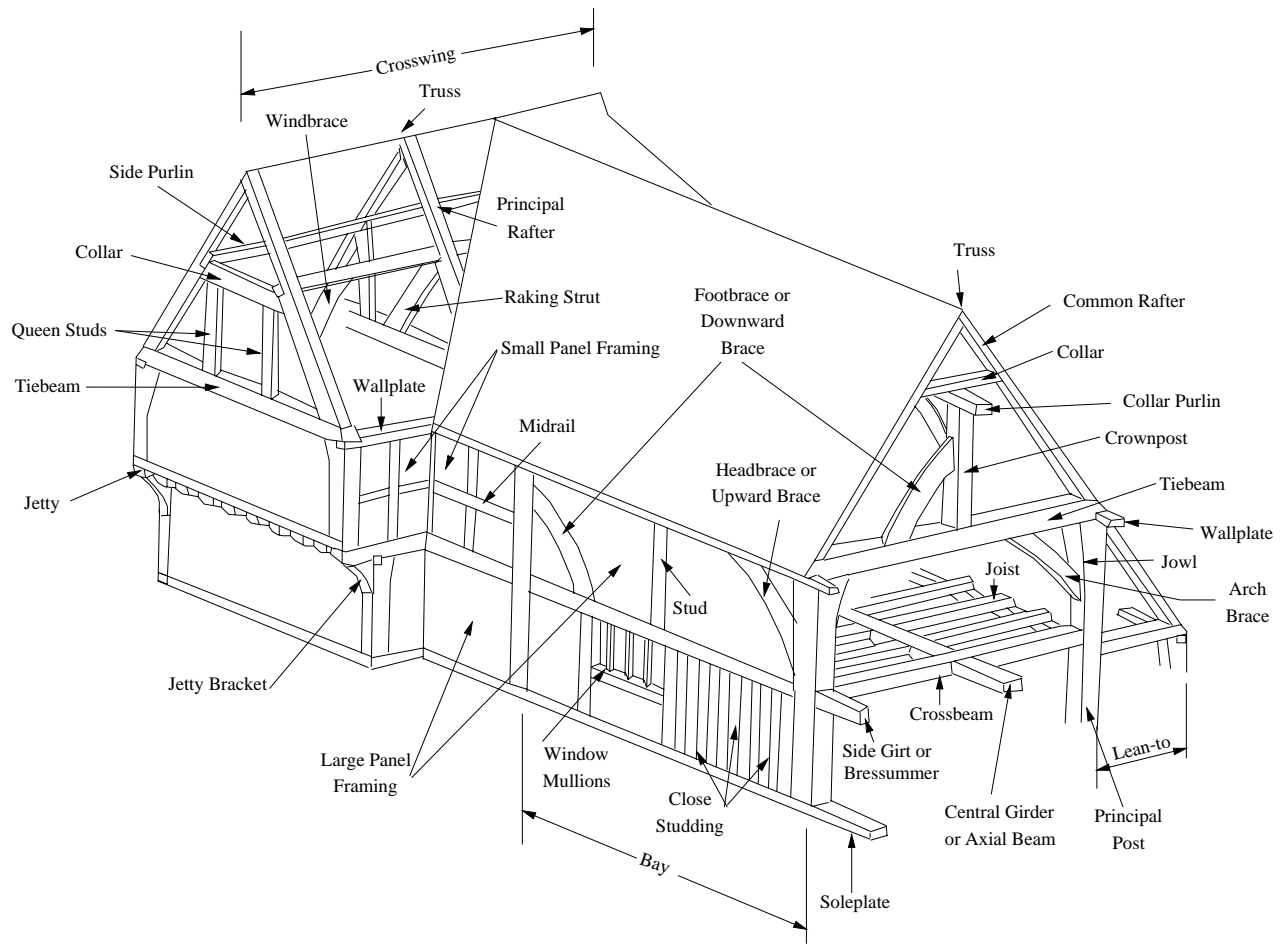
The symbols as used in the drawings attached to this report are as follows:

—————	Surviving Timber-Framed Wall
///////	Surviving Brick or Stone Wall
-----	Features evidenced but destroyed or masked from view
- - - - -	Beam or feature immediately overhead
.....	Conjectural or very approximate
■	Structural timber
?	Details unknown or doubtful

OTHER CONVENTIONS USED -

1 Doors are shown in plan only where known: hence rooms may appear to have no obvious means of access.

2 With the exception of rafters, wallplates, and some chimneys and roof-lines, sections show features cut by or immediately adjacent to the cutting line only.



GLOSSARY OF PRINCIPAL TERMS

REPORT NO. 1660

LAUGHTON - FARM BUILDINGS AT COLBRANS

Centred at NGR TQ 4890 1265

LOCATION

The buildings which are the subject of this present report represent the now largely redundant farm buildings centred on a walled cattle yard associated with the house known today as Colbrans (previously Colbrands), located a little under a mile to the west of Laughton parish church. As the extracts from the 1:2500 O.S. plans reproduced in Drawing No. 1660/1 show, the house is located a little to the south of the farm yard.

The three farm buildings covered by this interpretative survey are a barn built on an ESE-WNW axis (hereafter assumed east to west) against and parallel to the yard's north-eastern boundary, an open-fronted shelter shed forming the north-western side of the yard and built upon a NNE-SSW axis (hereafter assumed north to south), and, occupying the angle between these two buildings, a detached wagon lodge aligned NNE-SSW (hereafter assumed north to south).

LISTED STATUS OF THE BUILDING

None of the farm buildings covered by this report are listed in their own right, and (in the opinion of the authors of this report) none contain sufficient merit to warrant individual listing. The house was listed grade II on 12th August 1981 under the address 'Colbrands, Cow Road, Laughton', its listed building reference being TQ 41 SE 10/558. The description in the list entry is purely for the purpose of recognition and is normally, therefore, primarily based on external appearance. For this reason neither the date nor the description should be treated as definitive. The date of the house is given as E C19 [Source: English Heritage, Images of England - website]. If this date is correct, it makes the house broadly contemporary with the farm yard's open-fronted shelter shed.

OVERVIEW OF THE YARD AND BUILDINGS

Taken at a glance, the historical maps of 1875 to 1976 reproduced in Drawing No. 1660/1 appear to show little development in the layout of the buildings since the late 19th century: the footprint throughout the period is very much as still existing today. However, there is one subtle, but significant difference between the depiction as given

in 1899 and that of 1910 in that the former shows the south wall of the barn set in line with the yard's northern wall, whereas the 1910 plan shows the same kinked alignment as exists within the arrangement today (compare enlarged details in Drawing No. 1660/4 with the outline plan as currently existing and depicted in Drawing No. 1660/2). This cartographic evidence does not prove that the barn was rebuilt between 1899 and 1910 - the difference could be accounted for by the removal of a southern aisle, but such a date fits well with the architectural features contained within the building - walls of cavity construction built in stretcher bond with a slate damp proof course, concrete lintels to the openings, iron ventilation grills, and a cut-and-pitch roof of reused, widely-spaced machine-cut softwood designed to carry a sheet covering. Under normal circumstances the combination of these two sources of data would be sufficient, though some local residents apparently give the date of the barn's reconstruction as the mid 20th century (*pers. comm.* Glenn Moore) and, although such a late date seems less likely on account of the slate dpc and the present condition of the ventilation grills, such a date cannot be ruled out. What is certain is that the present building represents a total 20th-century rebuild on the footprint of its predecessor - the only material reused from the earlier structure are four tiebeams, refixed out of sequence.

The other two buildings are essentially those shown in the 1st edition 1875 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map, but the wagon lodge has either been subjected to very heavy repair or total reconstruction (probably the latter). Too little 'early' work survives to allow a close date to be put on this structure, though it is very unlikely to predate the late 18th century. The most complete structure is the open-fronted shelter shed which, apart from some limited rebuilding adjacent to the northern doorway, survives substantially as built in the early 19th century. It post dates the north and south walls of the cattle yard and may incorporate some slightly earlier work within the lower stages of its rear (western) wall.

All three buildings are more fully discussed within the more detailed architectural description which follows.

DETAILED ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

THE BARN (20th C) [see Drawing Nos. 1660/1-4]

The five-bay 'crop-storage' element of the barn measures approximately 19.85 metres x 7.05 metres (c65 ft x c23 ft) overall its external walls, which are constructed entirely in cavity brickwork, complete with a Welsh slate dpc and cast iron ventilation grills. There are attached piers built beneath the ends of the four reused tiebeams. The main, tall, wide entrance is contained within the central bay of the north elevation with a pedestrian door opposite, in the south wall. The latter is flanked by paired high-level windows in the adjacent bays, with a further pair of windows in the eastern gable wall.

The layout is traditional, consisting of two storage bays set on either side of a central 'wagon way/threshing area' - quite likely this replicates the internal layout of the building's predecessor. Certainly the reused tiebeams indicate that the main body of the earlier building was of the same width as its successor (assuming the tiebeams originate from the earlier building on this site). The most likely explanation for the difference in the alignment of the south wall as indicated in the historical maps (see above) is that a rear aisle was omitted in the reconstruction. That the re-alignment of this wall is fact rather than a cartographic error is proven by a straight joint in the eastern wall of the cattle yard, 1.95 metres (6'4") to the south of the present barn's south-eastern quoin. This measurement is typical of the width of an aisle - a common feature in the area - whilst the section of wall to the north of the straight joint is contemporary with the present structure and is later in date than the rest of the wall. The roof is of secondhand modern softwood, is shallow pitched, and was always intended to carry a covering of sheet material.

Against the northern wall of the barn, to the east of the main doors, is a two-bay lean-to outshut open on its eastern and western ends and built with solid, rather than cavity walling. Wrapping around the north-western corner of the building is yet another outshut with solid brick walls - a brick-built implement shed which is subdivided in its width so as to incorporate a shed to the south, accessed from the cattle yard. Both outshuts are contemporary with the main part of the building.

Reused within the barn, tying the wallplates at the bay divisions marked A-A, B-B, C-C and D-D in Drawing No. 1660/2, are the four secondhand tiebeams referred to earlier, probably reused from the building's predecessor. Three of these tiebeams (A-A, B-B and D-D) indicate that the main body of the building from which they originated was of similar width to the present structure. The fourth tiebeam (C-C) has an extra redundant headbrace mortice at one end indicating that it has been reused at least twice, the initial use being from a wider structure.

Because the tiebeams contain mortice information which may be relevant to the present building's predecessor, they are described below. The pattern of the mortice evidence indicates that they have been reused out of their original sequence.

The tiebeam at Truss A-A has a mortice for a heavy central intermediate post, flanked at some distance by a stud on either side, beyond which are mortices for headbraces. This indicates a closed wall, though there are no stave holes (necessary to support panels of daub infill between the former upright timbers) which indicate that this truss was almost certainly clad with weatherboarding. On top of the tiebeam (where it has not rotted) is a central peg hole, perhaps indicating that this tiebeam is of medieval date and supported a crownpost.

At truss B-B the underside of the tiebeam incorporates mortices for two studs with headbraces beyond. In this instance there are round-ended mortices for stave holes between the main mortices, showing that this tiebeam stood at the head of a daub-infilled wall. The mortices are set for a wall which was flush towards the western side of

the truss, which is contradictory to its present position within the sequence, even allowing for the possibility of the original barn having been extended.

Truss C-C has three mortices visible beneath it, all for headbraces. The pair of mortices at the southern end indicate that the tiebeam had been reused twice, once from a wider building, after which it was cut down in its length to match that of the other reused tiebeams. This tiebeam came from an arch-braced open truss.

The final tiebeam, at Truss D-D, is slightly cambered within its length and is likewise from an arch-braced open truss.

WAGON LODGE (?Perhaps late 18th C, but mainly rebuilt) **[Drawing No. 1660/5]**

LAYOUT

The wagon lodge is located at the western end of the barn, from which it is detached. It is constructed in three bays with a low lean-to outshut at its southern end. Running along most of the west elevation is a second lean-to outshut which, in its present incarnation, is entirely modern, but replaces a lean-to shown on the 1875 O.S. map (see Drawing Nos. 1660/1 and 1660/4). The main three-bay body of the building measures 4.85 metres (15'11") wide by 8.35 metres (27'4") long, to which should be added the 1.60 metre (5'3") southern end lean-to. The building was originally entirely open between its wall posts. Although the frame has subsided and distorted badly (making it impossible to ascertain accurate 'as built' vertical measurements) the height from ground to top of wallplate averages only 2.15 metres (7'0").

WALL DESIGN

As first built, the lodge was essentially a roof supported by heavy posts (on average 265 mm x 140 mm). The posts are absent of jowled heads, which instead joint directly into the (130 mm x 145 mm) wallplates without any direct contact with the tiebeams. The posts (probably secondhand material) rise from short timber soleplates which are in turn carried by two-and-a-half brick by one-brick piers. The piers are of varying heights, apparently to suit the slope on the ground and the available length of the individual posts, and several piers having now partially overturned. The tiebeams are carried in normal assembly, being dovetailed over the wallplates. There appears to have been remarkably little provision incorporated in the construction to prevent racking. The only restraint against longitudinal racking is the tight, double-pegged, mortice-and-tenon joint between the head of the posts and the wallplates - there is no bracing. Even less provision is incorporated across the building. Metal straps have been included/?added to strap the tiebeams to the wallplates and two knee braces/brackets of timber are

nailed into position to triangulate between the western posts of trusses G-G and H-H and the tiebeams, but there is nothing else. It is unclear whether the knees represent primary features or later additions but, whichever is the case, the design is both poor and weak. On the western face of the western wall posts timber splints run down the posts, continue down the face of the brick piers and into the ground so as to act as strengtheners, but these were added when the lodge racked, as was inevitable given the design.

Apart from the map evidence and roughly-formed dovetails cut into the western posts in order to 'support' the ends of tiebeams, no details survive to indicate the form of the predecessor to the modern lean-to outshut on the western side of the lodge

ROOF

The roof, together with the western wallplate, represent a 19th-century replacement of the original. Given the replacement of the wallplate it would be logical that the lodge was dismantled and rebuilt as part of this repair, but the fact that the new roof does not accurately reflect the subsidence of the frame suggests to the contrary. The redundant birdsmouths for the rafters of the original roof are visible in the retained eastern wallplate and tiebeams, but are absent from the replacement western wallplate. The present 19th-century roof is of hipped construction and uses clasped side purlins supported by nailed-on collars, now mostly modern replacements. At the apex is a continuous ridge board.

Unlike the rebuilt roof over the main part, the roof over the southern end lean-to outshut uses rafters of roughly squared poles. At their heads they are carried by the tiebeam of truss H-H. The wallplate of the outshut is secondhand material and has had to be spliced in its length. The rafters may indicate that the roof over the main section of the building was likewise originally of this rough form - it would reflect the rest of the construction!

SHELTER SHED (Early 19th C) [Drawing Nos. 1660/2 and 1660/6]

LAYOUT

The five-bay, open-fronted shelter shed faces east into an enclosed yard and (as the joints to the yard walls indicate) post dates the yard itself, most likely replacing an earlier shelter shed upon the same site. The shed measures 13.90 metres (45'7") long at the rear, reducing to 13.30 metres (43'8") at the front, the northern end wall being skewed so as to respect the alignment of the boundary wall. The overall width is 4.35 metres (14'3") and the average storey height from internal ground to top of wallplate is 2.05 metres (6'9"). Because of the southward slope on the site, the external face of the southern end wall is somewhat greater.

This building is easily the most interesting of the three covered by this report, and is also the most complete and least altered.

WALL DESIGN, OPENINGS AND DOORWAYS

Except for the timber posts incorporated within the open front, the building is of mass wall construction, using methods common along the South Downs and their scarp foot - the Downs adjacent to Ringmer are about two miles distant from the site. A mix of materials have been utilized: mostly coursed flint and a local blocky, shelly limestone, but with a few random bricks laid on edge, at a slightly canted angle, incorporated into the inner facing. The mortar of the horizontal courses are lined out - a typical early 19th-century feature locally. All dressings are of brick toothed in blocks three courses high, alternating one-and-a-half bricks, and one brick wide. The lower half of the western (rear) wall is mainly un-knapped flints laid in lime mortar, but, above this, roughly-squared blocks of shelly limestone has been used. This variation could merely reflect the materials available, but perhaps indicates that the lower section incorporates a boundary wall which was raised and widened internally when used for the shelter shed. The southern wall in contrast is of coursed flints (mainly un-knapped) throughout its height, whilst the northern wall uses neat, roughly-squared shelly limestone throughout.

At the south-eastern corner, where the shelter shed abuts the yard wall, the shed utilizes the quoin of the earlier yard wall, to which it is block bonded using a cut-in stretcher brick every fourth course. Where the shed rises above the level of the yard wall a standard brick quoin finishes off the corner. The brickwork terminates some distance above modern ground level with rough-faced wall below, indicating that the ground level has been lowered.

Set at a low level adjacent to the brick quoin at the southern end of the western (rear) wall is an original 660 mm x 550 mm opening (now blocked) capped a brick-on-edge segmental arched head. This probably represents a mucking-out hole. The only other opening through the three mass walls is at the eastern end of the northern elevation where a doorway leads northwards. The brick jambs of the opening incorporate external brick-built closing rebates, as opposed to the more usual timber jambs. On the eastern side the jamb is incorporated into the north-eastern quoin of the building: all but the base of the western jamb has been rebuilt.

Along the open front (facing into the yard) the wallplate is supported by principal posts without jowls. There are no additional supports beneath the front wallplate, either in the form of under-plates or arch bracing. Because the posts within the open front are slightly wider than the wallplate, their faces extend up the internal face of the wallplate as thin upstands of timber. There are no joints between these upstands and the tiebeams, which are dovetailed over the wallplates in the usual manner. However, over the end walls the tiebeams are plate-like in section and are set level with the front and

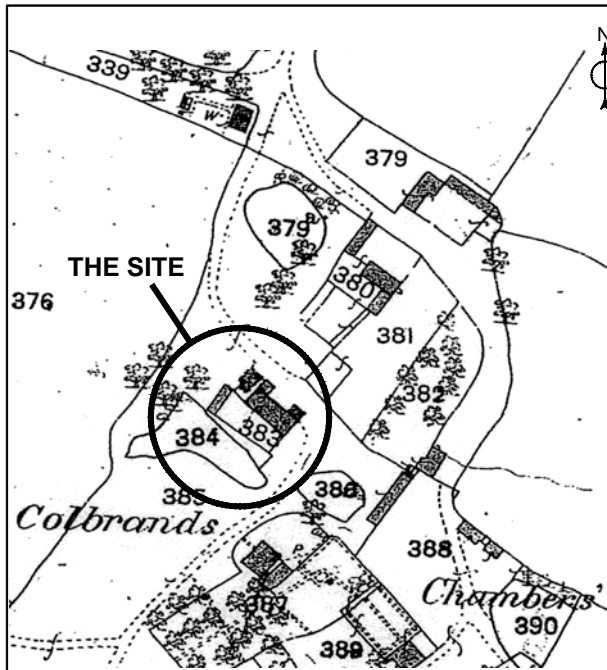
rear wallplates - a common feature at this period. The corner intersections are not strengthened by dragon ties.

ROOF

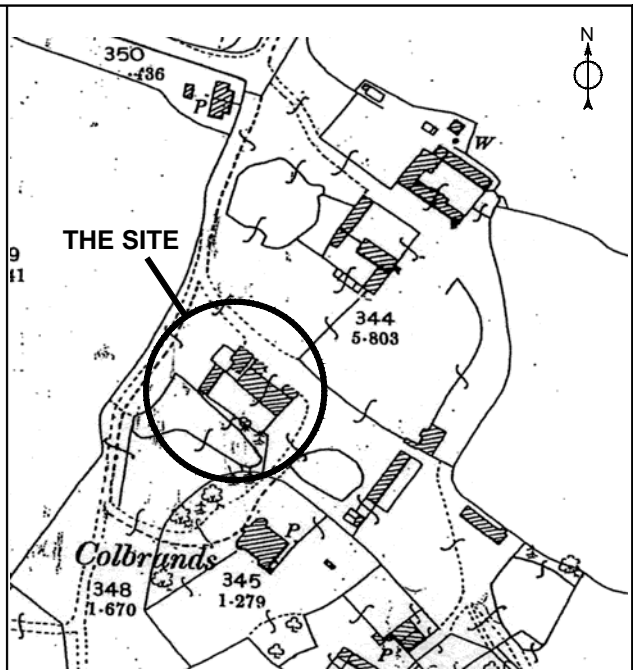
The fully hipped, clasped-side-purlin roof is built with prefabricated trusses over each of the four internal tiebeams (J-J, K-K, L-L, M-M). At the apex, supported by cleats nailed against the side faces of the principal rafters, are ridgeboards to which the heads of the common rafters are nailed. Each prefabricated truss incorporates a jointed-in collar and a pair of principal rafters bridle jointed at the apex. These timbers, together with the pair of common rafters supporting the head of each hip, the hip rafters, clasped side purlins and ridgeboards are neatly carpentered using sawn, squared, hardwood timbers. In contrast, the common rafters and jack rafters are roughly squared softwood poles.

Because of the angled alignment of the northern end wall, the hipped terminal at this end is built on a skew and, as a result, its pitch varies as it crosses the building, with five jack rafters in the rear slope, but only four in the front slope.

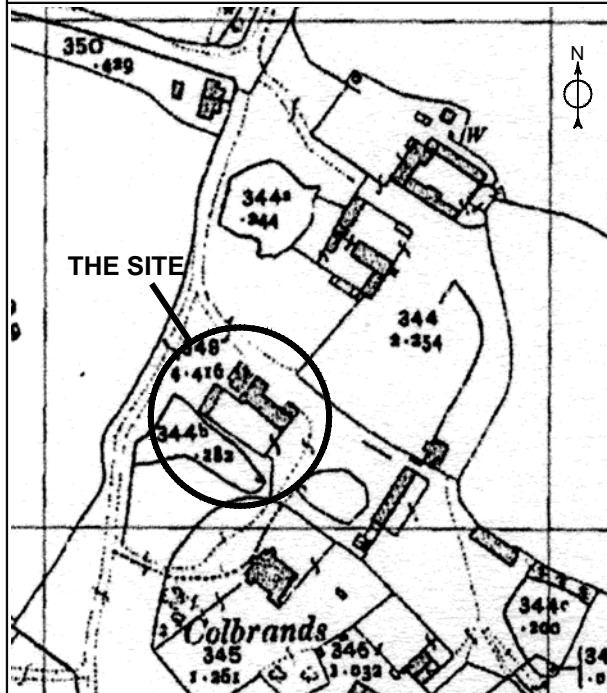
Although now covered in corrugated sheeting, the centres of the battens which remain suggest that, as with the main house, the roof was original covered with slate.



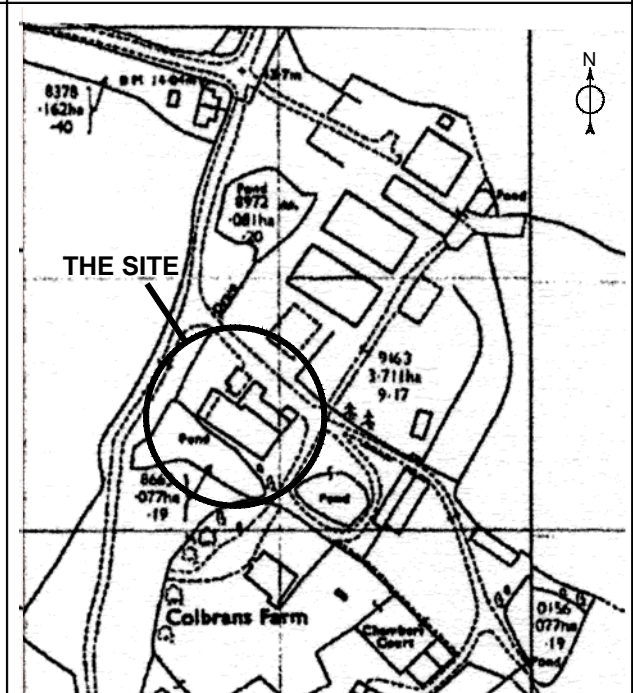
ENLARGED EXTRACT FROM 1st EDITION 25" O.S. PLAN, 1875
 [Crown Copyright Ordnance Survey 100021184. All rights reserved]



ENLARGED EXTRACT FROM 2nd EDITION 25" O.S. PLAN, 1899
 [Crown Copyright Ordnance Survey 100021184. All rights reserved]



ENLARGED EXTRACT FROM 3rd EDITION 25" O.S. PLAN, 1910
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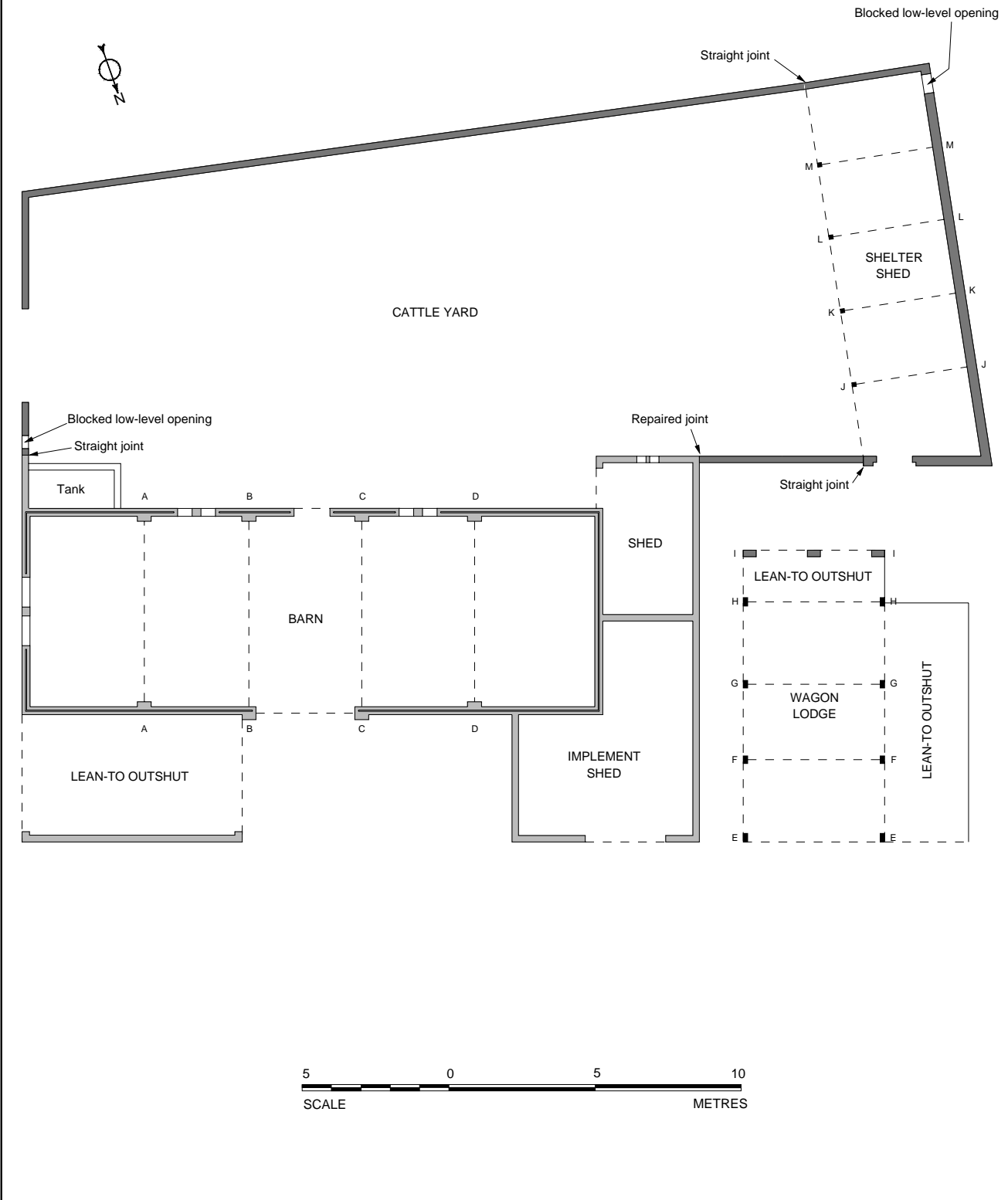


ENLARGED EXTRACT FROM REVISED EDITION 25" O.S. PLAN, 1976
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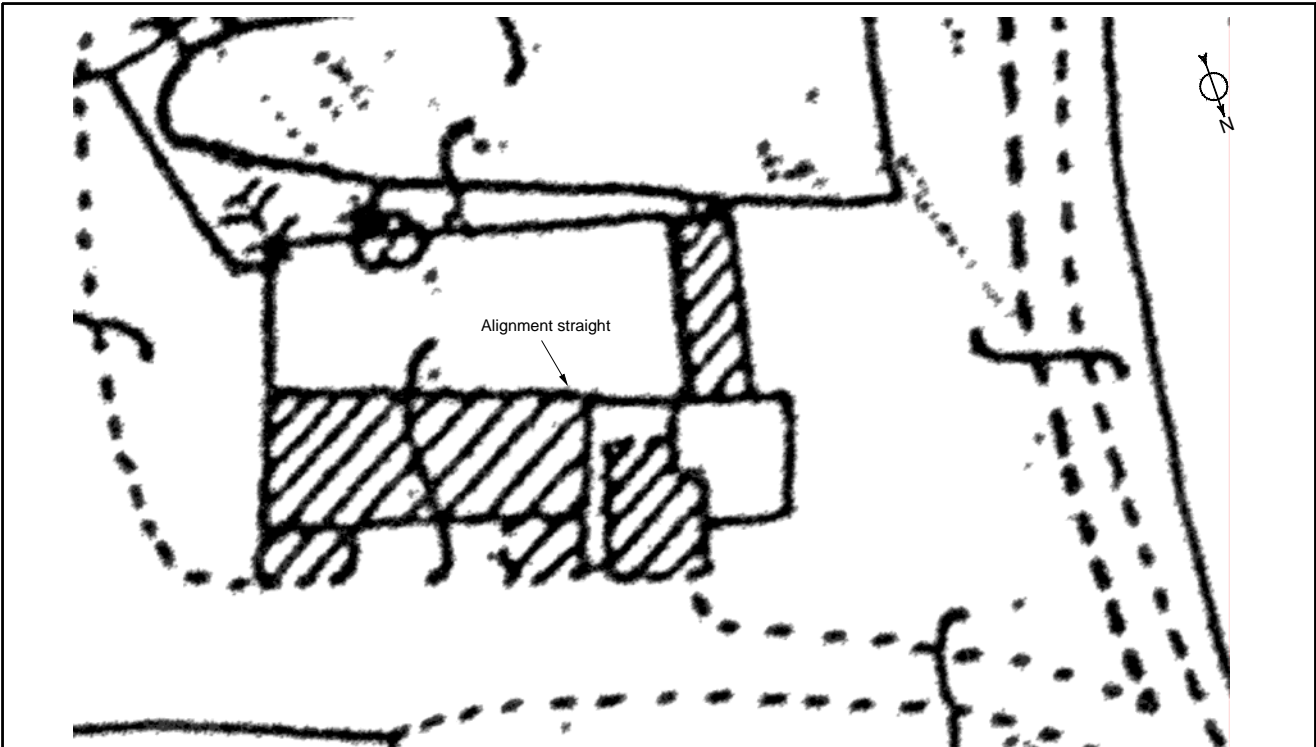


FARM BUILDINGS AT COLBRANS, LAUGHTON, EAST SUSSEX				Site Ref	P87/04
EXTRACTS FROM ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPS				Drawing No.	1660/1
Drawn By	D Martin	Revision No	-	Date of original survey	2007
				Date of this revision	2007

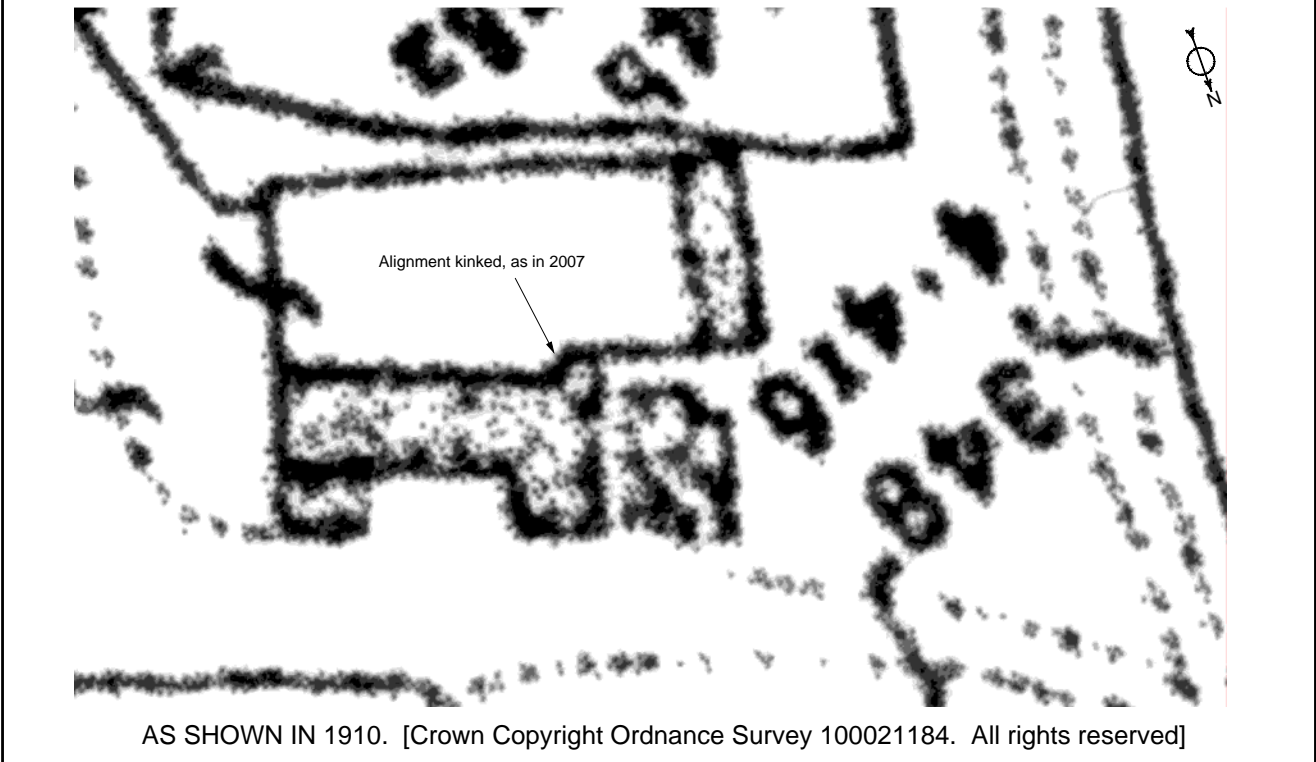
OUTLINE PLAN FOR PURPOSE OF IDENTIFICATION - SOME DETAILS SHOWN APPROXIMATE ONLY



FARM BUILDINGS AT COLBRANS, LAUGHTON, EAST SUSSEX OUTLINE PLAN OF BARN, WAGON LODGE, SHELTER SHED AND YARD				Site Ref	P87/04
				Drawing No.	1660/2
Drawn By	D Martin	Revision No	-	Date of original survey	2007
				Date of this revision	2007

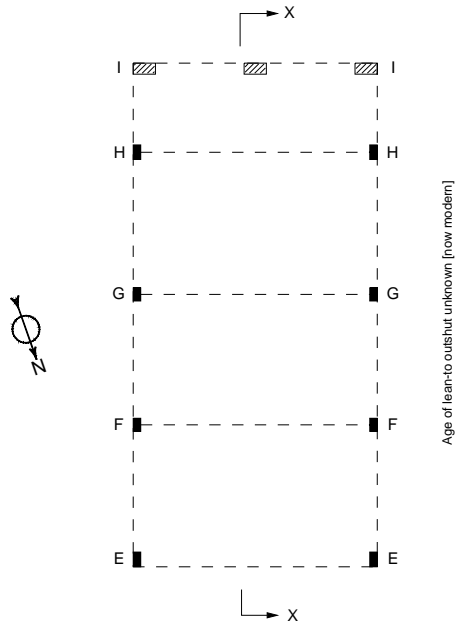


AS SHOWN IN 1899 (1875 similar). [Crown Copyright Ordnance Survey 100021184. All rights reserved]

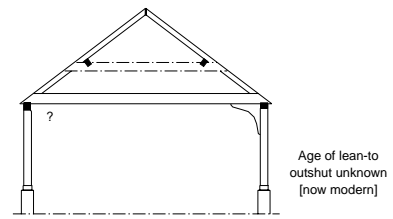


AS SHOWN IN 1910. [Crown Copyright Ordnance Survey 100021184. All rights reserved]

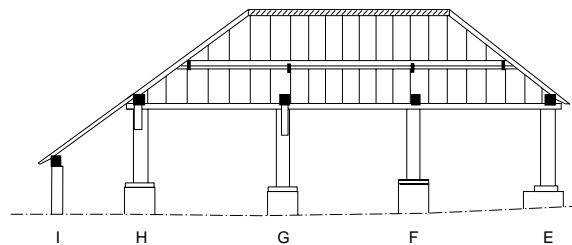
FARM BUILDINGS AT COLBRANS, LAUGHTON, EAST SUSSEX ENLARGEMENTS OF 1899 AND 1910 25" O.S. PLANS				Site Ref	P87/04
				Drawing No.	1660/4
Drawn By	D Martin	Revision No	-	Date of original survey	2007
		Date of this revision	2007		



GROUND-FLOOR PLAN



TRUSS G-G FROM NORTH

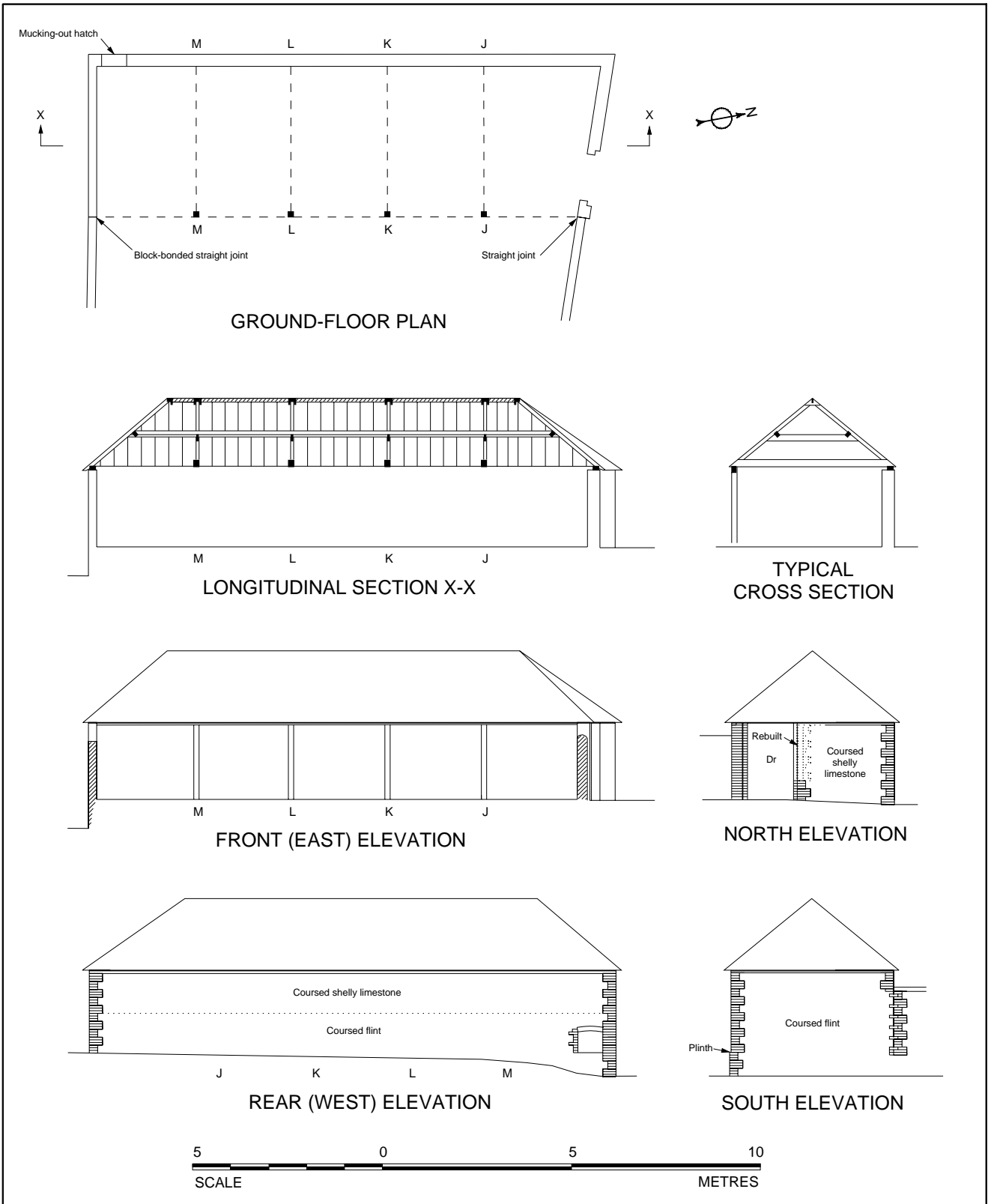


APPROXIMATE LONGITUDINAL SECTION X-X SHOWING INTERIOR OF WEST WALL

[THE BUILDING HAS SUFFERED SEVERE MOVEMENT SINCE RECONSTRUCTION]



FARM BUILDINGS AT COLBRANS, LAUGHTON, EAST SUSSEX RECONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS OF WAGON LODGE AS REBUILT				Site Ref	P87/04		
				Drawing No.	1660/5		
Drawn By	D Martin	Revision No	-	Date of original survey	2007	Date of this revision	2007



FARM BUILDINGS AT COLBRANS, LAUGHTON, EAST SUSSEX RECONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS OF SHELTER SHED AS FIRST BUILT				Site Ref	P87/04
				Drawing No.	1660/6
Drawn By	D Martin	Revision No	-	Date of original survey	2007
				Date of this revision	2007

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