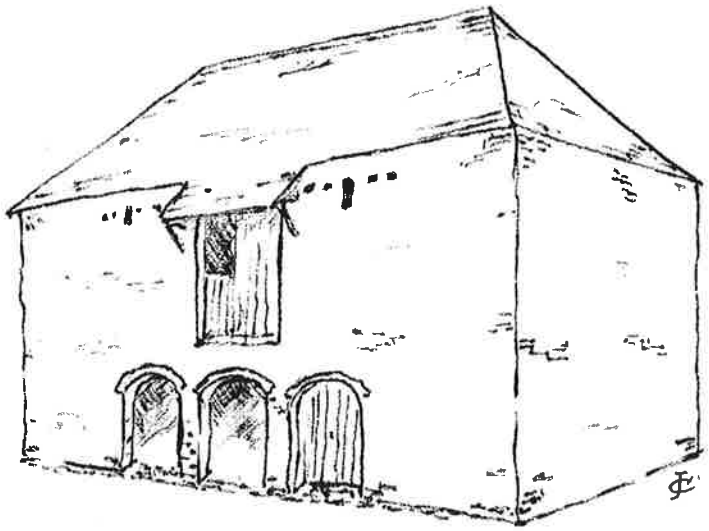
Moorstone Barton Granary



Devonshire Association 2005

MOORSTONE BARTON, HALBERTON

INTRODUCTION

Moorstone Barton is in the parish of Halberton, one and half miles from Cullompton and one mile from Willand at OS National Grid Reference ST 017099.

The granary and barn at Moorstone Barton was surveyed in the winter of 2003/4; it is part of a range of nineteenth century barns, linhays and other farm buildings forming a yard. The listed buildings register describes it as 'the single most important building; hipped roofs, brought down as a cat slide over the central double door hayloft, the doors nineteenth century; ground floor arcade of 3 round-headed arches, with brick voussoirs. Nesting holes or bee boles under the eaves.'

It is not shown on the tithe map but does appear on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1888. It stands in one corner of an older yard consisting of linhays and shelter sheds, with a much earlier house behind. The farm at the time of the tithe survey (1840) was predominately a livestock farm of 267 acres, of which 37 were meadow, 157 pasture and 45 arable; there were also 8 acres of orchard and nursery. The landowner was the Earl of Egremont and the tenant was John Were.

THE BARN

The barn is built in random rubble of a mixture of local sandstone and volcanic trap. The roof is of slate on hardwood roof timbers and appears never to have had gutters or rainwater pipes. At ground floor level the yard elevation contains three large openings with brick segmental arches, two are open with no joinery and the third has a pair of doors. Internally there is a brick crosswall (possibly original) containing a large hatch. The compartment enclosed by this wall is now a chemical store and access was not possible. In the open fronted area there is an oil stained recess cut into the back wall and an oil stained 5ins x 3ins (125mm x 75mm) hardwood bearer bolted to the underside of the joists indicating that there could well have been a horse engine in this area. Neither the tithe map nor the 1888 O.S. map shows a horse engine house at Moorstone which is unusual for a farm of this size. There is also a small concrete machine base in this area. The floor is now concrete but this is probably laid over a cobbled floor, similar to the yard paving. The upper floor is of 12 ins x 2ins (300m x 50mm) hardwood planks with steel tongues, on hardwood joists and beams. There are two opposing threshing doors with slated canopies over and a threshing floor between. The listed buildings register describes the upper floor as a hayloft but this seems unlikely; the walls are rendered internally which suggests it could have been intended as a granary.

The doors have one single leaf and one horizontally divided leaf, this three-part door system is a common feature of threshing barns. On either side of these doors are 6ins x 14ins (150mm x 350mm) holes through the walls at a high level, either for ventilation or for owls. On the yard side there are other holes (8 in all) which go partway into the wall; the listing suggests these are nesting holes or bee boles[1] but they are definitely not the latter. The listing also describes the segmental arches as having brick voussoirs (see Fletcher 1959) but in fact the bricks themselves are rectangular - the curve is achieved by varying the mortar joint width. Hardwood generally is elm or chestnut. There are signs of hatches through the upper floor for ladder access but no stairs. There is a large hatchway in the wall between the store and the machinery area. The doors at front and back of the store appear to be original.

A suggested use for this building when new is as follows:- cereals grown on the farm could have been gathered into ricks at the back of the barn, processed by mobile steam threshers and the crop stored in the upper part by way of the large double doors. There could have been a root store in the enclosed ground floor area and milling and mixing machinery in

the open area to process animal feed for cattle kept in the extensive ranges of linhays around the yard.

CONCLUSIONS

The Recorders have examined other 2-storey barns - at Gittisham Farm (*Transactions*, 2001, 290-300) and Rewe Barton[2]. They seem to be a nineteenth century feature reflecting the increasing mechanisation of the industry ranging from water or horse power, through steam to the internal combustion engine, which made possible the use of hoists and conveyors to access the upper floor. They were particularly useful in Devon's mixed farming economy where the main 'off-farm' products were livestock and dairy items, in increasing demand in the rapidly growing towns served by railways[3]. Cereals, hay and root crops grown and stored on the farm could be used to feed animals throughout the winter.

Although the design of the upper floor appears to be that of a traditional hand threshing barn we should not assume that its builders were benighted peasants who had not kept up with the times. The features of large opposing doors split horizontally with a heavy boarded floor between them had advantages for loading and unloading produce into the yard or to the access road outside it and the canopies would prevent rain driving into the barn when the doors were open. The lower floor could be used as processing area or equipment store. A truly multi-purpose Victorian agricultural building.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Recorders are indebted to Mr Andrew Maunder for allowing us to record the barn and to Mr Rowell and Mr Saunders who offered help and information.

Recorders: Brian Rolf: survey and research; John Cann: survey, drawings, maps and photography. Valerie Cann: typing.

NOTES AND REFERENCES TO UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

1 Bee Boles: these are recesses in walls large enough to take a skep (a straw beehive) usually at an accessible height for the beekeeper whilst standing.

2 A photographic survey was carried out by the Recorders at Rewe Barton Farm, Rewe in 2000 prior to its conversion to residential use and a file has been deposited in the Sites and Monuments Record at County Hall.

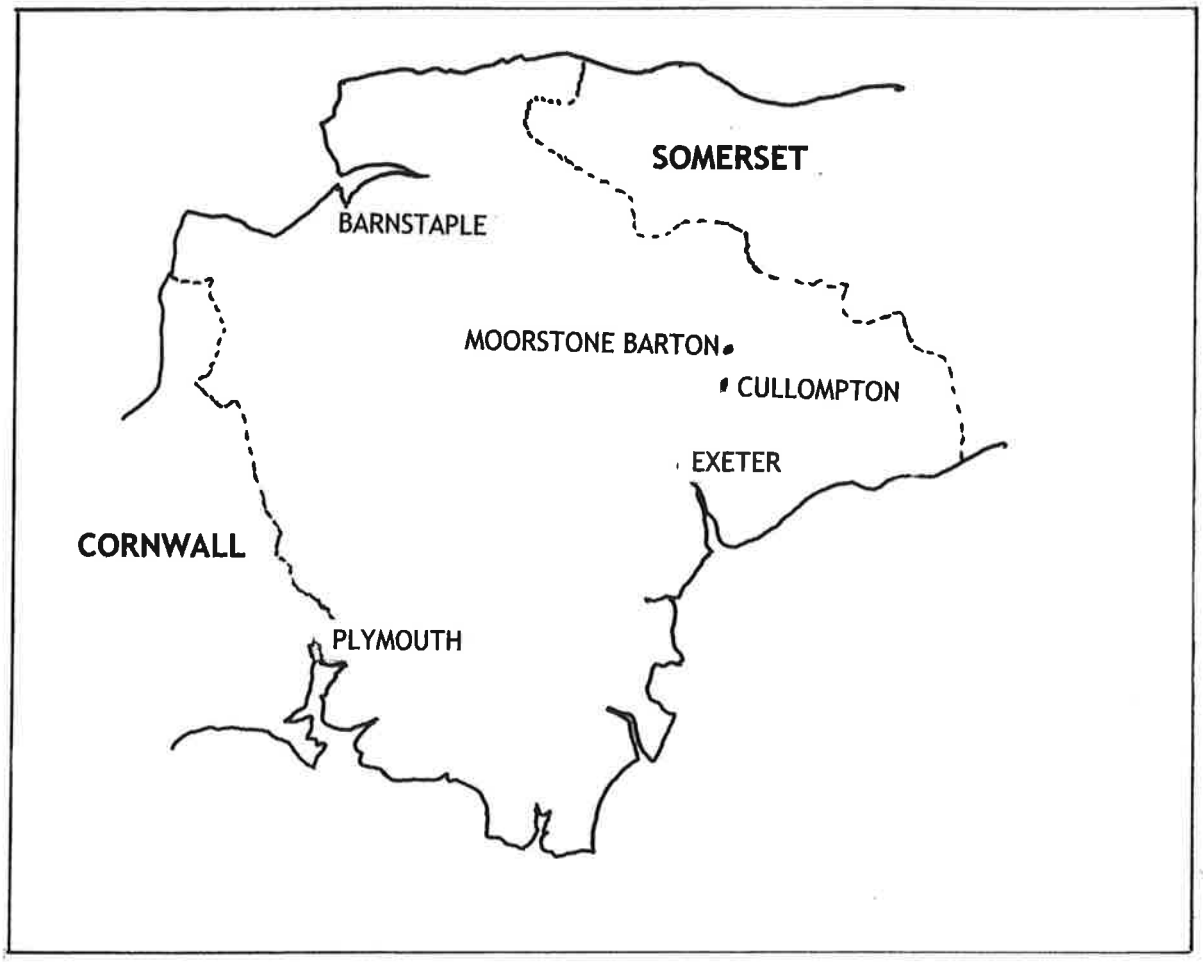
3 The railway reached Tiverton Junction in 1843 and Exeter (St David's) in 1844.

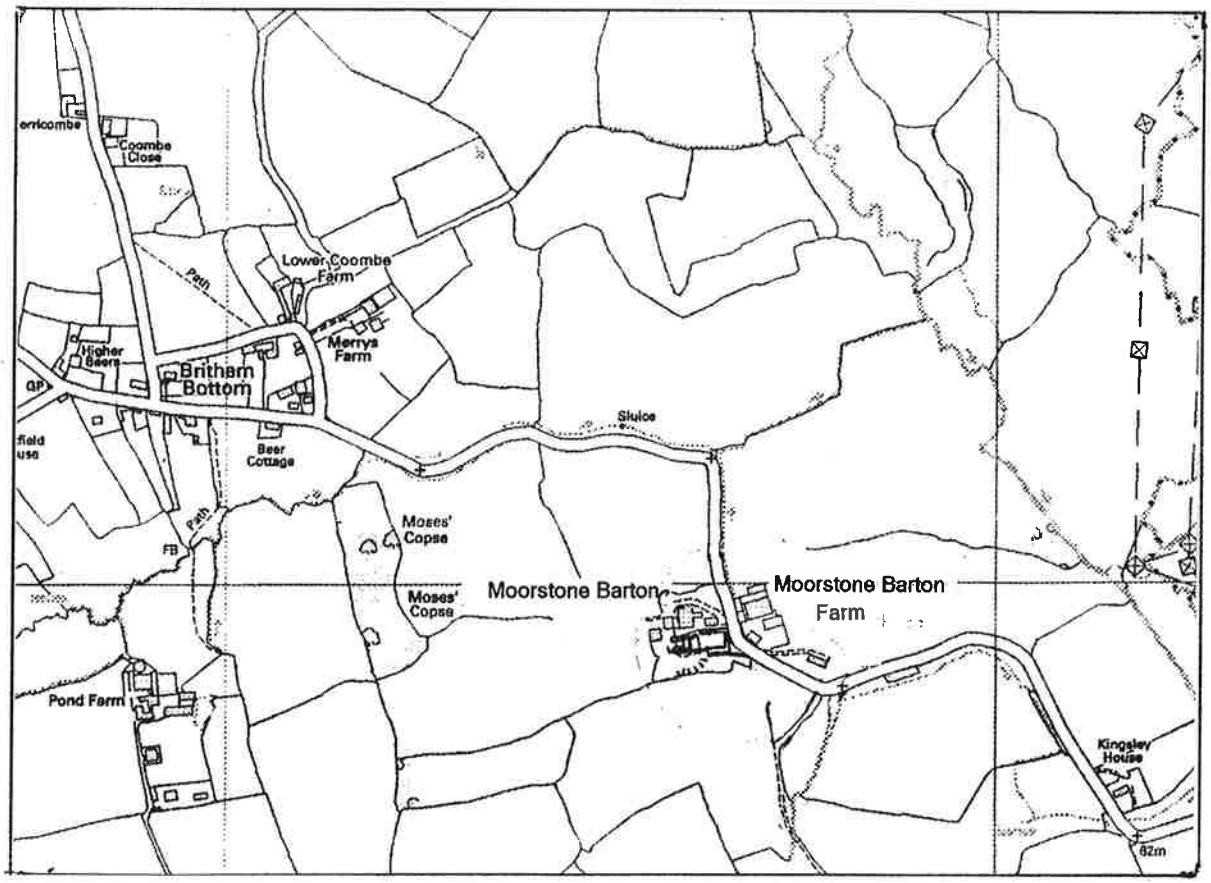
4 Moorstone Barton is private property. It is a working farm and is not accessible to the general public.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

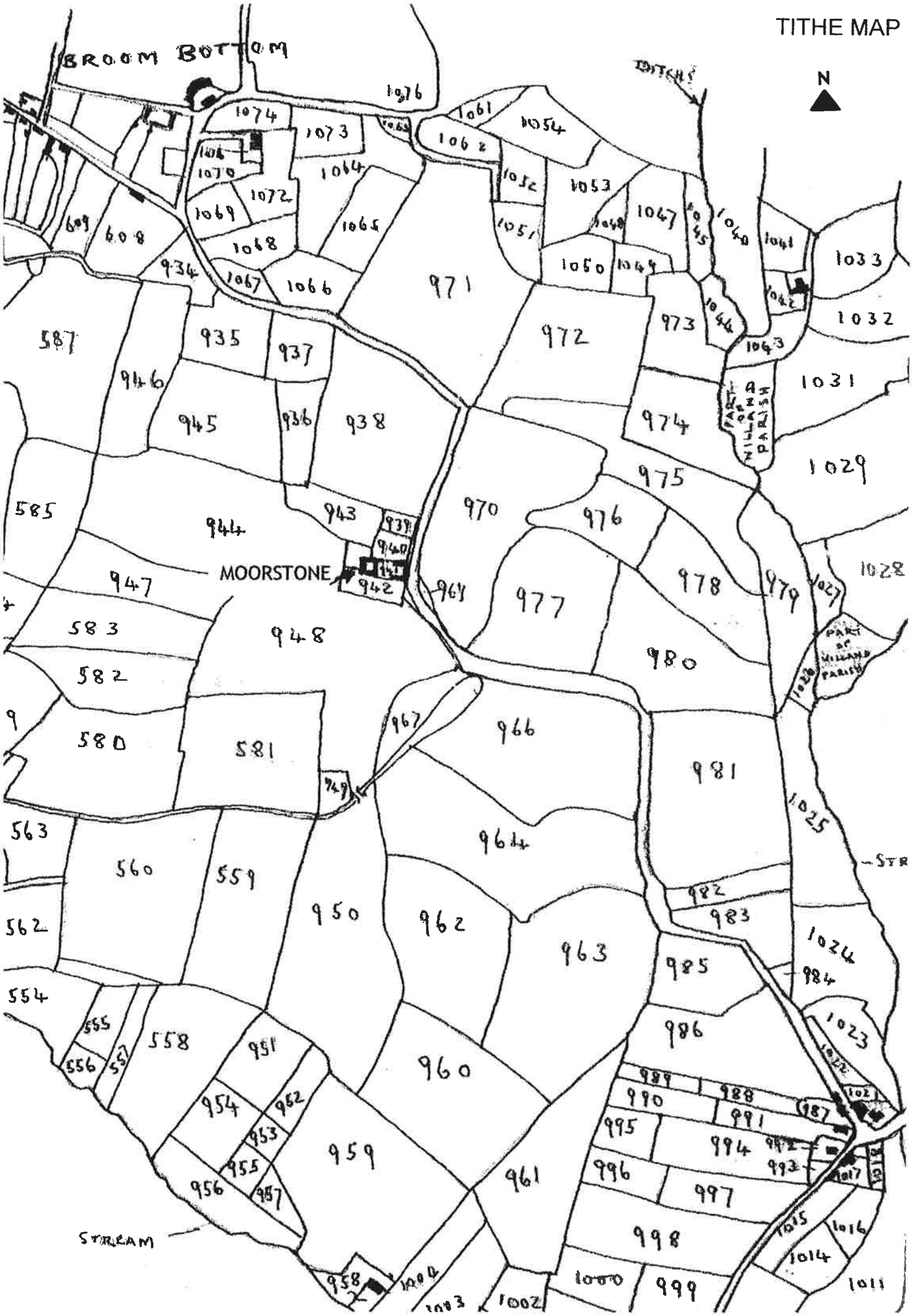
Sir Banister Fletcher 1896 (reprinted 1959) *A History of Architecture.* Voussoirs: the truncated wedge shaped blocks forming an arch.

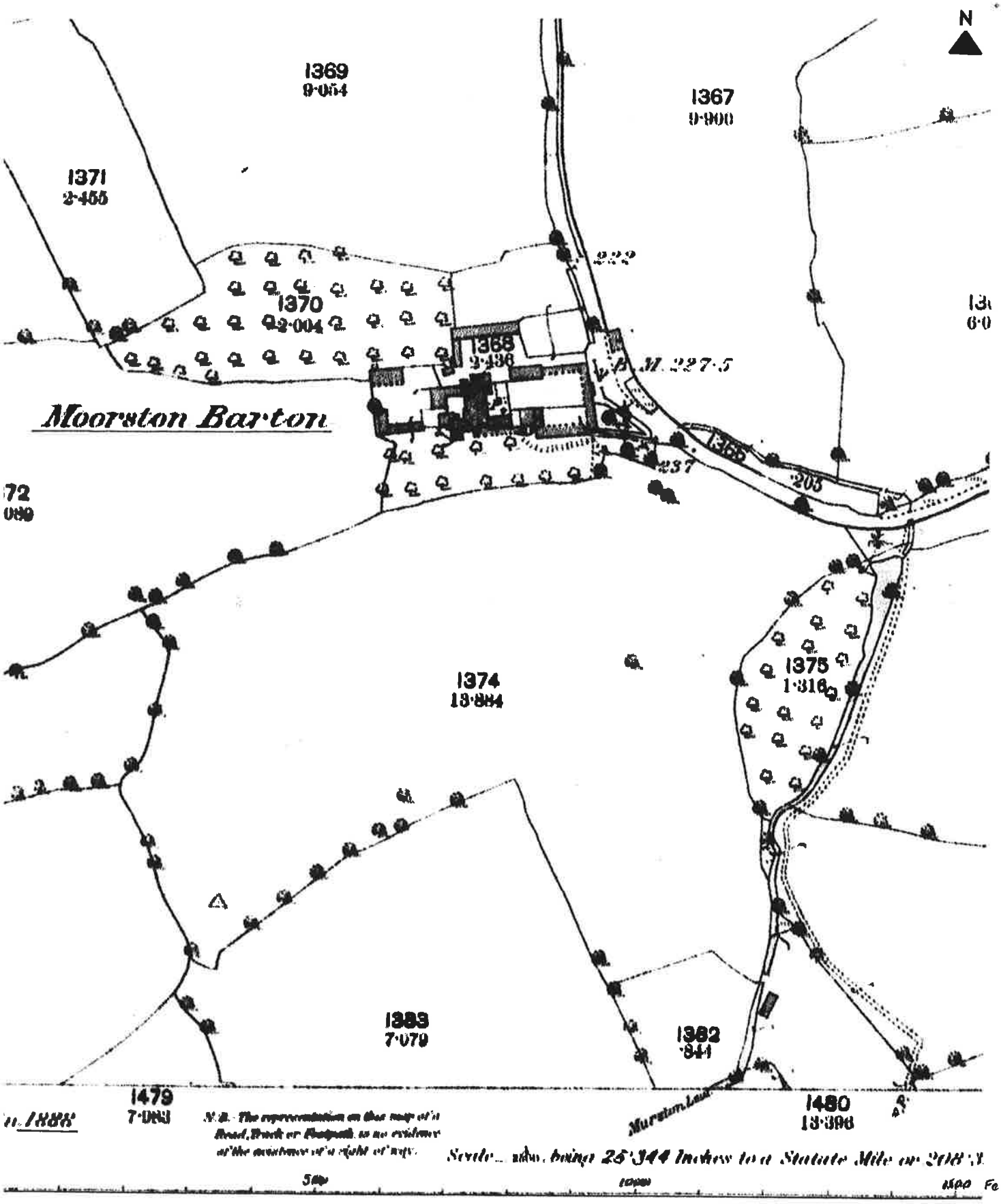
5th Report of the Recorders of Buildings **2001** *Rep.Trans.Devon.Ass.Advmt.Sci.*, **133**, 290-300. 2-storey barns were also built on the Maristow Estate where they were known as chamber barns. *Colin Wakeham, Maristow Estate Farmhouses 1800-1913* **2003** *Rep.Trans.Devon.Ass.Advmt.Sci.*, **135** 169 Note 6.


SOMERSET
BARNSTAPLE
MOORSTONE BARTON
CULLOMPTON
EXETER
CORNWALL
PLYMOUTH


Coombe Close
Lower Coombe Farm
Path
Higher Beers
Merrys Farm
Brithem Bottom
Sluice
Beer Cottage
Moses' Copse
Moorstone Barton
Moorstone Barton Farm
Pond Farm
Kingsley House
62m

TITHE MAP


BROOM BOTTOM
DITCH
N
MOORSTONE
STREAM
PART OF WILLAND PARISH
STR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9·900
1371
2·455
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2·436
Moorston Barton
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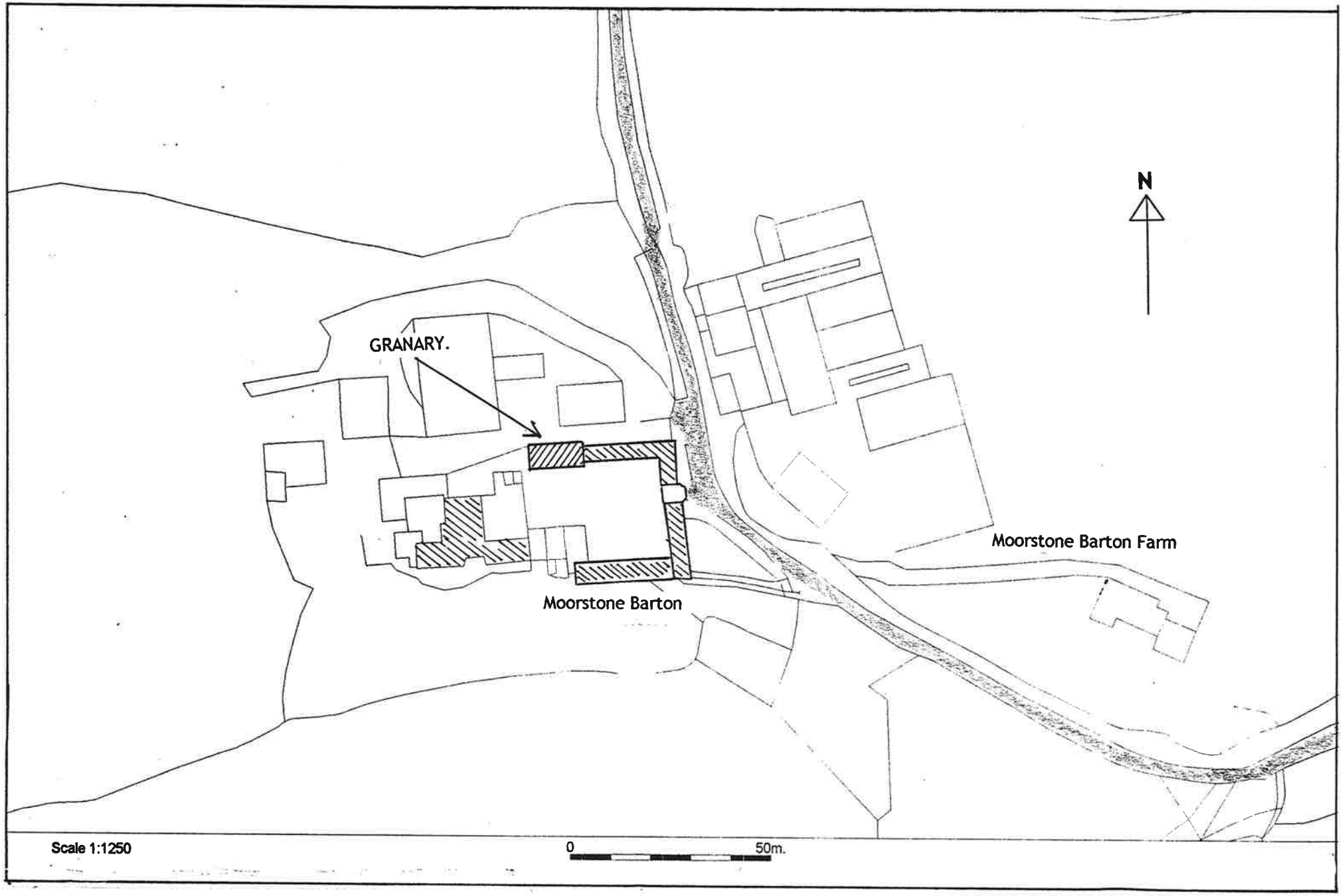
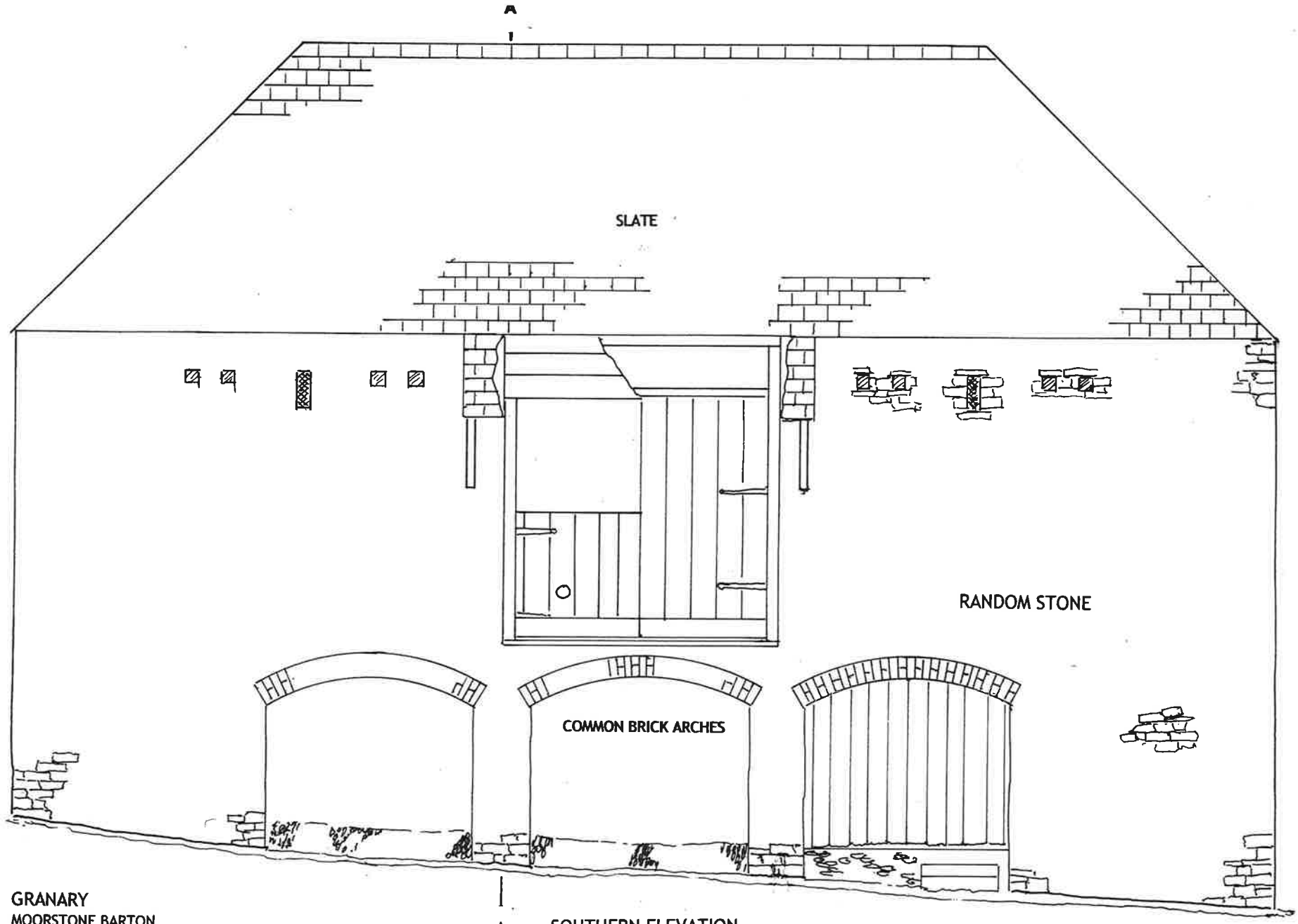
13·884
1375
1·316
1383
7·079
1382
·844
1479
7·083
1480
13·396
Murston Lane
Scale... mile, being 25·344 inches to a Statute Mile or 2112 ft.

RECTED.


N
GRANARY.
Moorstone Barton Farm
Moorstone Barton
Scale 1:1250
0
50m.

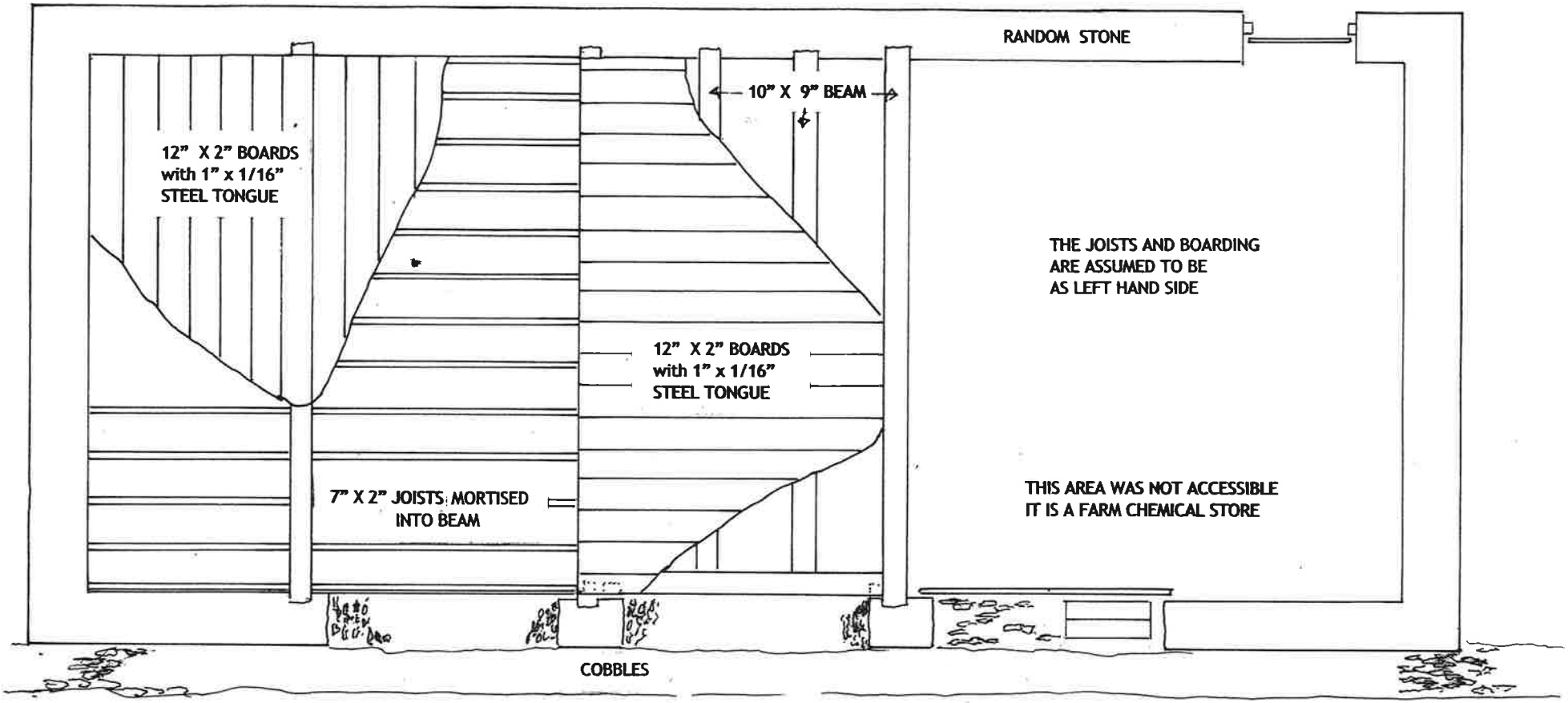


GRANARY
MOORSTONE BARTON
HALBERTON.

Surveyed by J Cann and B Rolf
DEVONSHIRE ASSOCIATION

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Feet

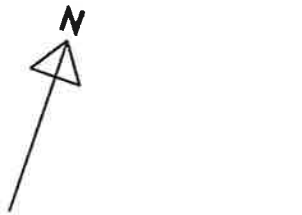
DETAIL OF RECESS CUT INTO BACK WALL

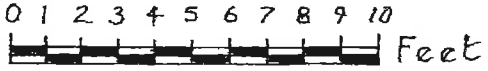


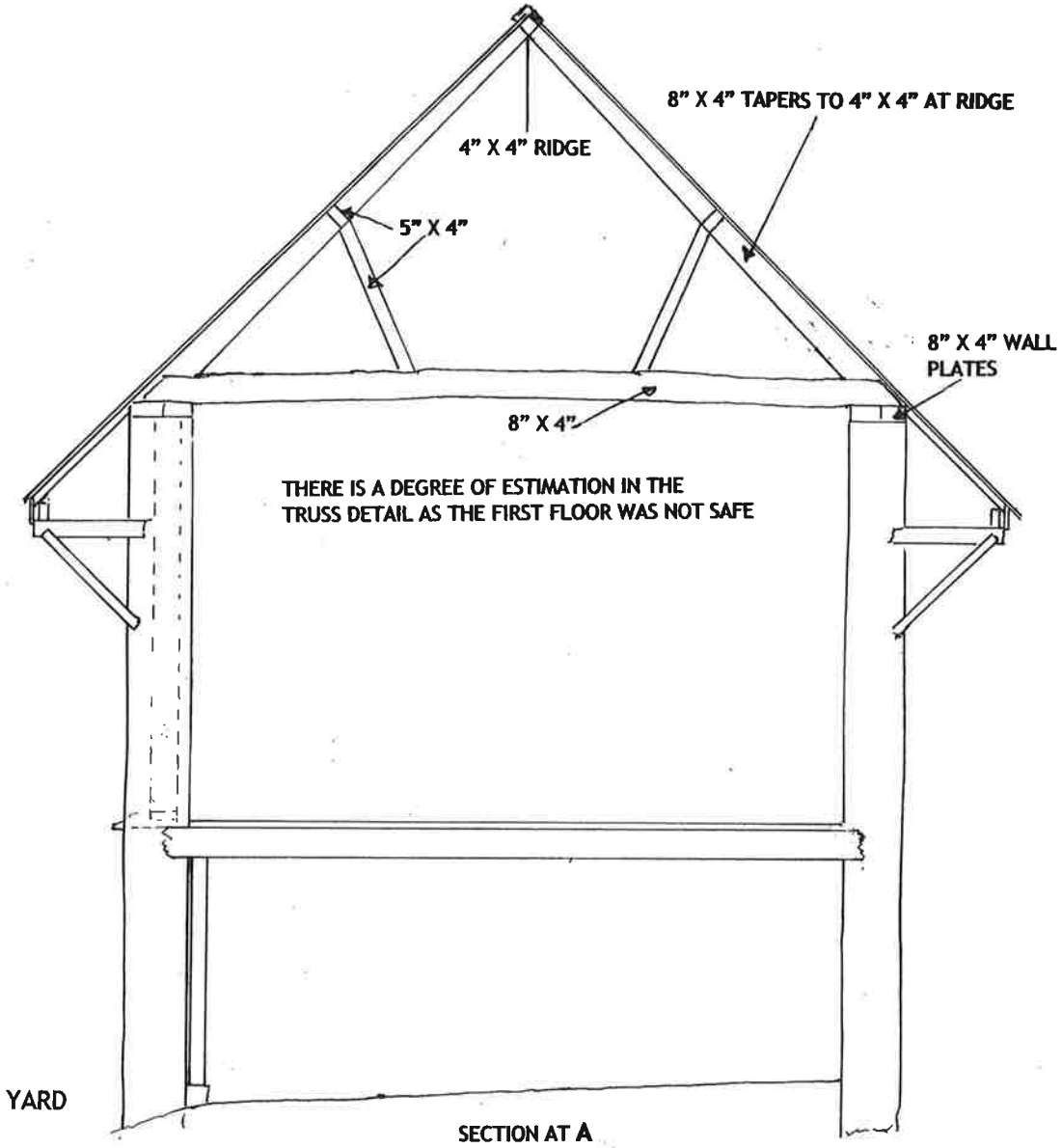
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

GRANARY
MOORSTONE BARTON
HALBERTON

Surveyed by J Cann and B Rolf
DEVONSHIRE ASSOCIATION







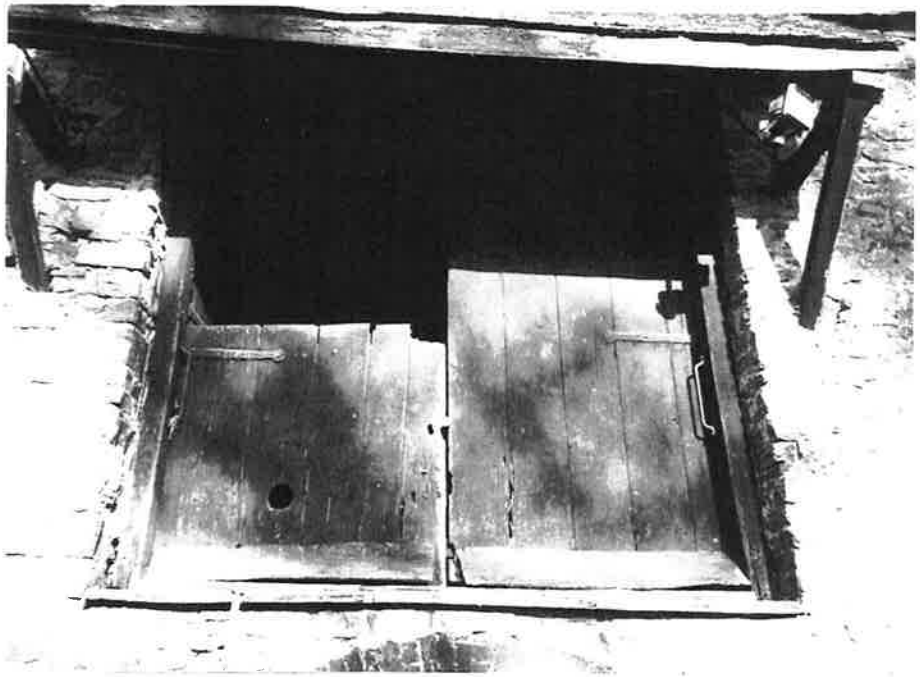
GRANARY
MOORSTONE BARTON
HALBERTON.

Surveyed by J Cann and B Rolf
DEVONSHIRE ASSOCIATION

0 1 2 3 4 5 Feet

The granary from the yard

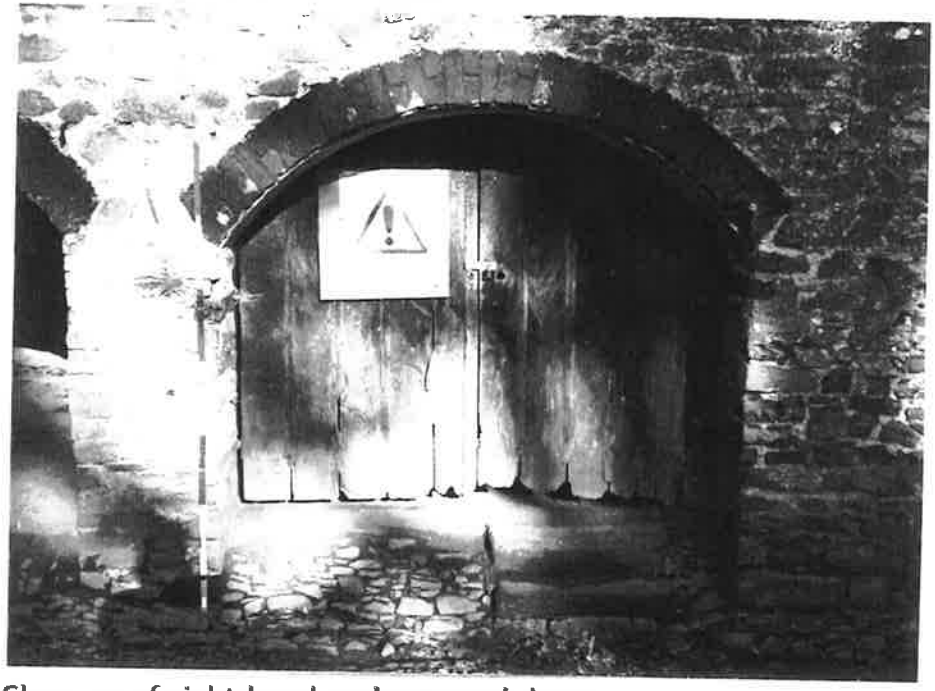
The granary and linhays from the SE



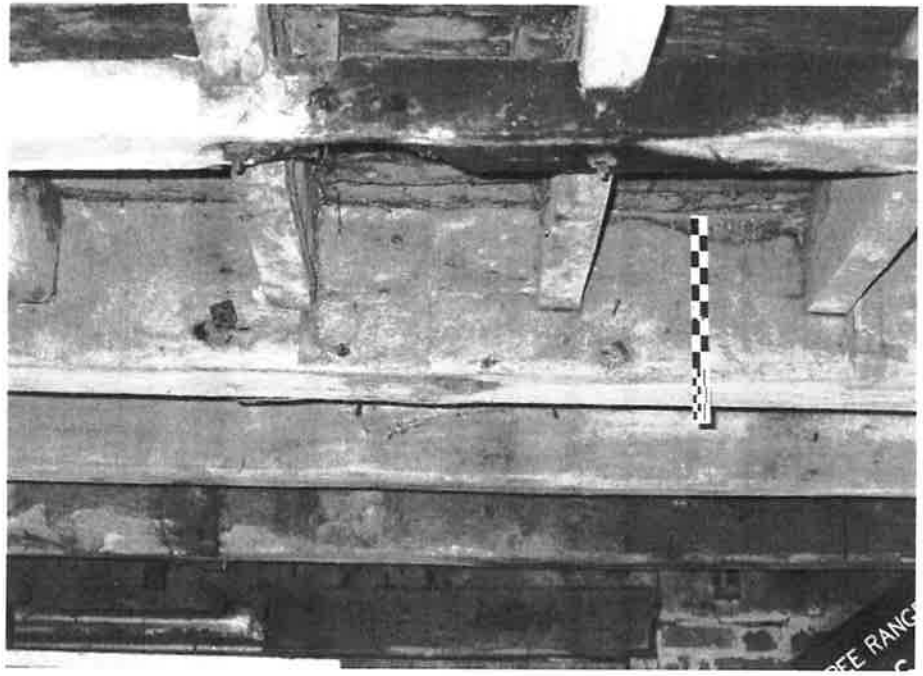
Doors at first floor level

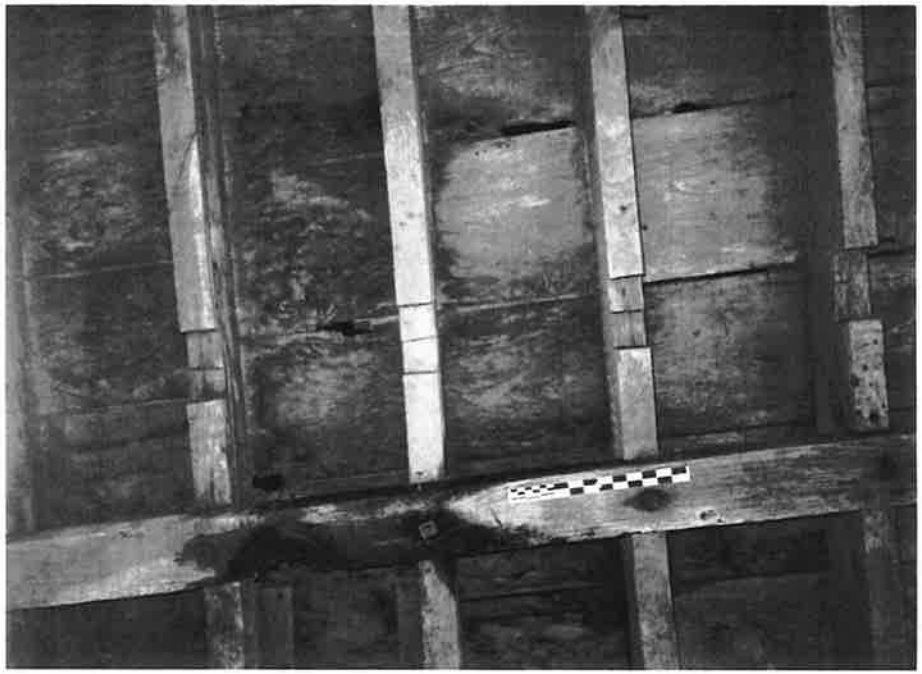
Porch over doors

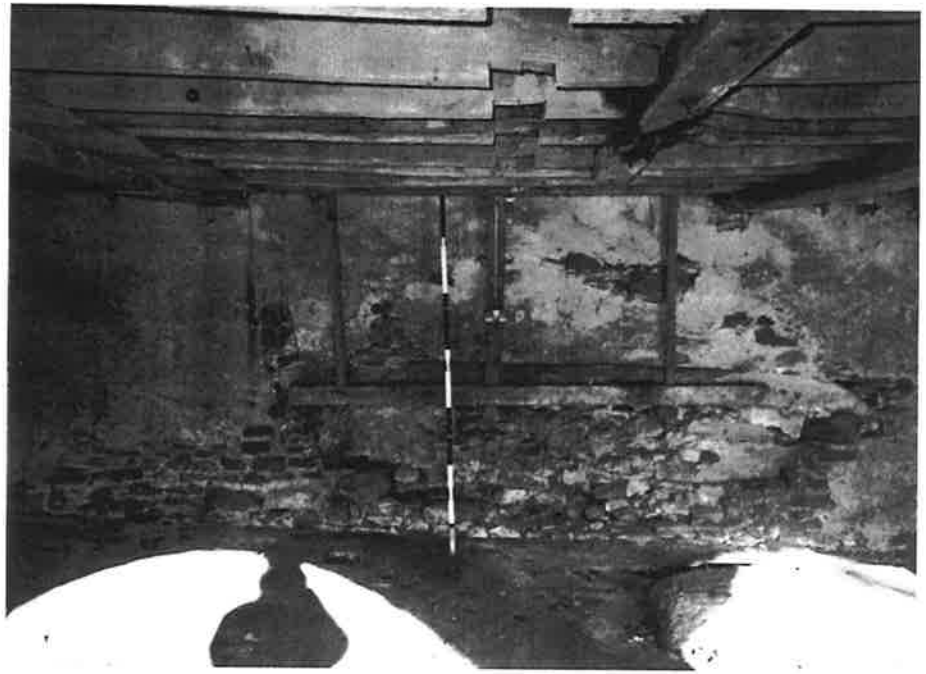
Close up of left hand archway



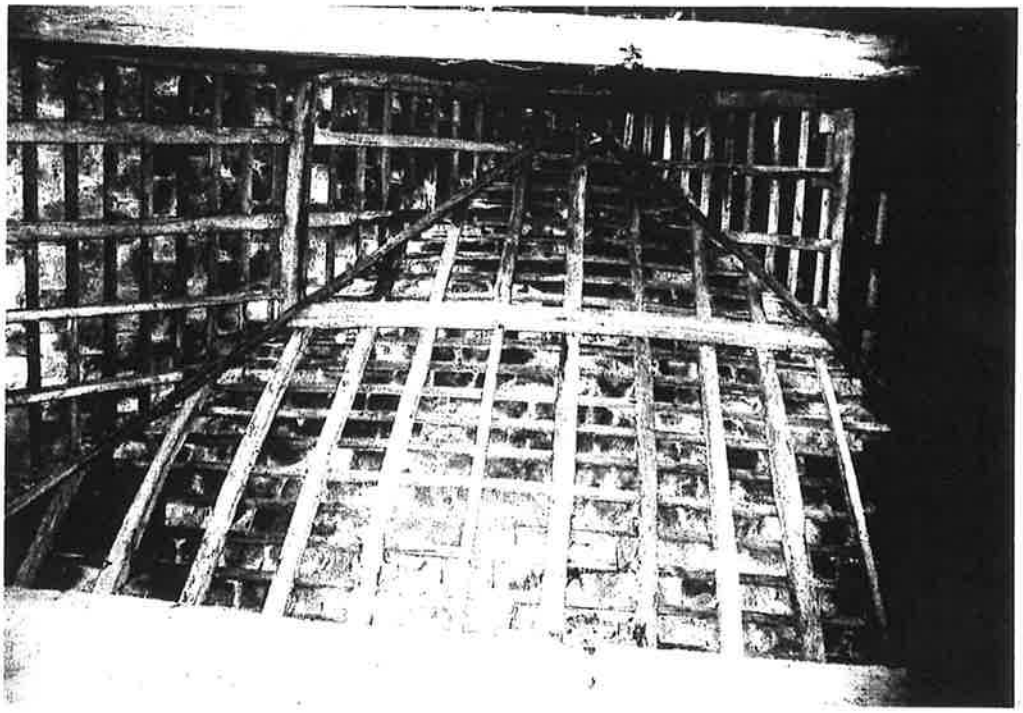
Close up of right hand archway and doors



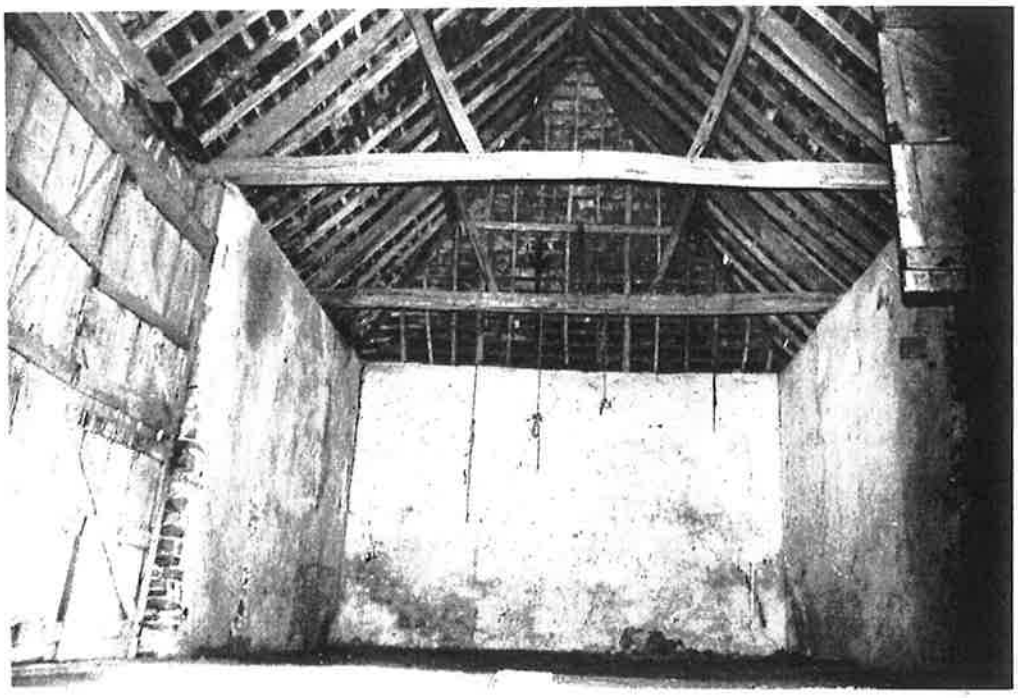




THE OIL STAINED BEAM BOLTED TO THE JOISTS AND THE CURVED RECESS CUT INTO THE BACK WALL GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE COULD HAVE BEEN A HORSE-ENGINE ON THE GROUND FLOOR.



Roof detail



First floor showing the plastered walls