

# RED HOUSE: Barn and Coach House

Gomersal

Heritage Assessment to Assess the Significance of the former Red House Museum

Undertaken by TheUrbanGlow  
Design & Heritage Ltd 2026



## Executive Summary

The former Red House Museum and associated Barn and Coach House, in Gomersal has a plethora of historical associations and is a key part of the history of the Heavy Woollen District to which it belongs. The house itself epitomises the history of the Taylor's and of the Yorkes who Charlotte Bronte wrote so descriptively of in her novel Shirley. The house and the grounds therefore has strong tangible and intangible connections. The known history of the site dates from around 1550 when the land was bought by the Taylors, but the site has always evolved and changed, not least Red House itself which has seen huge changes, some of them rather heavy handed, over its long history. The Barn and Coach House present a valuable insight into the agricultural and trade functions of the estate and broader conservation area. Despite the many phases of historic change on the site, its historic assets remain of high local and national significance.



Undertaken by TheUrbanGlow Design & Heritage Ltd  
**TheUrbanGlow are HESPR Registered Service Providers for the Historic Environment**

2026  
TheUrbanGlow Design & Heritage  
[www.urbanglowdesign.com](http://www.urbanglowdesign.com)

## INTRODUCTION

A detailed heritage assessment of the wider site, including the principal building formerly known as Red House Museum, has already been undertaken as part of earlier stages of the planning process. That prior assessment established the historical context, significance, development and contribution of the site as a whole. With that baseline now in place, TheUrbanGlow Design & Heritage Ltd were asked to provide a baseline assessment and initial recording of the buildings prior to the permission being implemented, in order to address the requirements of Condition 12 of application reference 2025/92166, which required the following:

1) The barn - archaeological recording/building survey Level 2-3 prior to conversion, in order to capture elements of layout, fabric and details which indicate its history/uses/details/machinery which are likely to be lost during conversion works.

The case officer subsequently confirmed that archaeological recording would not be necessary for Red House nor the barns and coach house due to the relative lack of survival or removal of extant features. As such this document focuses on The Barn and The Coach House, the subsidiary service buildings within the statutory listing curtilage.

This document has been undertaken to a Level 2/3 recording standard whereby a full building inspection was carried out and first hand research was undertaken to help understand the significance and function of the existing spaces within the context of the buildings. A photographic record was undertaken whereby all accessible rooms and spaces were photographed and the setting and situation of the buildings externally was also recorded. Where specific features were found these were photographed using ranging poles and scale bar to enable an accurate capture of historic features and elements of basic photogrammetry were also employed to more fully understand the detail of hard to photograph features or where a better illustrative medium was felt necessary.

## METHODOLOGY

The statement was carried out by Mr Andrew Graham who is Director of TheUrbanGlow Design and Heritage Ltd and Mr William Smith, Associate Archaeologist. A full site visit was carried out in February 2026 with the site and buildings being fully inspected. Photographs were taken of the external elevations of the buildings as well as internal accessible spaces. Further to this general exterior views of the wider site and the relationship to Red House were also taken. Scale bars and ranging devices were used that meet appropriate British Standard for archaeological recording. Images were retained in RAW format and TIFF and taken with a Nikon D90 SLR and Canon G5 as well as more general images taken by iPhone 17.

Much research was undertaken for previous assessments of Red House and the site specifically and this has been utilised and replicated here with suitable editorial additions so as to ensure the main focus of the report is upon the barn and coach house of the site.

This report is indebted to the valuable work of the Friends of Red House, Dr Stephen Counce, and Caroline Goodwill whose work has shone a light upon the significance of this building and site within the context of the early industrial development of the region.



The Barn and Coach House are listed as Grade II\* as curtilage assets to the principal house.

### Statutory List Description

#### Red House - Grade II\*

**Date First Listed - 12 January 1967**

**Date Listing Reviewed - 8 November 2012.**

### SUMMARY

House with barn and coach house, dating to c.1660, with alterations of the C18 and early C20, formerly belonging to the Taylor family and having close association with Charlotte Brontë.

### REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

The Red House is designated at Grade II\* for the following principal reasons: \* Architecture: the house contains some good survivals of the Georgian period, including a staircase, fireplaces and windows, embedded in a late C17 core; \* Function/industrial interest: the architecture of the house, barn and coach house reflects the function and development of this hub for the emerging and developing woollen cloth industry through the C17, C18 and C19; \* Historic interest: Mary Taylor, a radical feminist of the mid C18, was born and brought up in the house; \* Literary interest: Charlotte Brontë based the house 'Briarmains' and the 'Yorke' family in her novel 'Shirley' on the Red House and the Taylor family, with whom she stayed as a friend of Mary Taylor.

### MATERIALS

The house is constructed of red brick with stone quoins and a stone slate roof.

### PLAN

The two-storey house has six bays aligned east-north-east to west-south-west. The roof is hipped to the front (south-facing), with four gables to the rear, the westernmost gable extending beyond the line of the front. An attached square block with a hipped roof is situated to the north-east of the main house. A coach house and barn are situated to the west beyond gardens.

### EXTERIOR

The main elevation has an off-centre entrance doorway with small flanking windows and a double semi-circular fanlight with glazing bars. To either side is a six-over-six un-horned sash window, and beyond those a canted bay window with stone dressings. On the first floor are three two-light sash windows and two single sashes, all six-over-six, alternating. To the left is a further bay, slightly recessed, added in the early C20 with one first-floor sash window. The left return (west side) has a large, five-light ground-floor window and a single sash window above. Towards the rear is a projecting section without windows. The right return (east side) has a two-light window with stone dressings to the left and a large window in a square bay under a slate roof to the ground floor, and two first-floor windows with stone dressings. To the right is an attached building in coursed dressed stone with a hipped roof. It has two-light pointed arch windows at first-floor level on the south, east and north sides; the west side which extends beyond the rear wall of the house is brick above with two first-floor windows and a recessed ground floor with two doors. The rear wall of the house, rebuilt in 1995-7, has four gables and a range of modern sash windows in each bay.

### INTERIOR

The front door opens into a spacious hall from which the main staircase rises to the right, with an open galleried landing to the rear. The staircase has slender wooden balusters. Below the gallery the ground floor has been opened out with three round arches leading to a shop area

to the rear. To the left is the parlour, extended in the early C20, with decorative plasterwork and alcoves to either side of the fireplace, and a kitchen and scullery to the rear, each with a range. A back stair leads up from the kitchen. To the right is a study at the front with a dining room behind, both having a similar fireplace with white marble surrounds and cast iron grates; the grates appear late C18 but the surrounds are in a mid Victorian style. The dining room contains the stained glass window described in Charlotte Brontë's 'Shirley'. On the first floor is a series of rooms, of which three are dressed as bedrooms. These all have fireplaces including an attractively decorated all-in-one cast iron grate and surround. Other rooms are used as offices, meeting room and exhibition room. All doors, including the main front door, are modern replacements.

### SUBSIDIARY ITEMS

The barn, situated to the west of the house and aligned at right angles to it, is a two-storey building in stone with quoins and a hipped stone slate roof. The east elevation, facing the house, has a central cart entrance with a large two-light window above flanked by a circular window to either side, and three further smaller doors. The north end, facing the coach house has a central doorway and a loading door above, and the west side has a single doorway and a row of ventilation slits above. Internally the barn has two floors with modern partitions on the ground floor, open above with exposed roof structure of pegged trusses.

The single-storey coach house is also in stone with a stone slate roof, and consists of four open-fronted arches, the right hand one blocked, with a doorway to the left. The interior has been restored with new and reused timbers.



*Principal Front Elevation of Red House*



*Barn to West of the site*

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

The history of the Spen Valley and the Heavy Woollen District in North Kirklees is rich and fascinating, although, sadly, it often tends to be overlooked. In the 1086 Domesday Survey Gomersal belongs to Ilbert De Lacy and is listed as uninhabited waste and Birstall is entirely absent, even though the area likely contained Roman settlement and was certainly a notable village with a church by 1291<sup>1</sup>. Topographical analysis shows that Gomersal stretches along a ridge of high ground, marking the boundary between Birstall on one side and Cleckheaton and Liversedge on the other. Such a position would be typically suggestive of an early settlement. Some commentators have suggested this alignment being a likely route of a Roman road although this has never been recorded, neither did Margery<sup>2</sup> consider it a possibility.

The ancient parish of Birstall spanned both sides of the hill, with Gomersal village situated at its centre. Birstall Church, located away from the village downhill to the north, served a much larger area, including Gomersal and Liversedge. The reasons for the Church's remote location remain unclear—could it be linked to a lost village, or perhaps to a much older priory or religious site at Birstall? Some suggest it might even have been associated with a pre-Christian site near natural springs, though there is no evidence to confirm this<sup>3</sup>. There are however 11th century fragments in the church and its tower has origins dating to this time.

The two settlements were certainly in existence by the early middle ages and a reference of 1342 describes the agreement of boundary issues by several local yeoman from 'Birstal, Gomersal' and 'Leversegge'<sup>4</sup>. Gomersal itself appears to be focussed around two focal points at Gomersal Hill Top and Great Gomersal. It is likely therefore that the Holme Lane to Heckmondwike Turnpike Road of 1825 (now Oxford

Road) superseded an earlier north south route possibly marked by Upper Lane on the 1854 plan and the long linear fields extending in both directions from this road could suggest some form of Medieval planning. Pollard Hall and Red House each had access to this route, with Pollard Hall seemingly having a direct path running south west towards St Mary's Church. The turnpike therefore bisected the lands of Pollard Hall and Red House from lands to the east and was likely widened at some point in the later 19th or early 20th century. As such the character of Oxford Road is largely a 19th century creation.

### The Early Red House Estate

The story of Red House is intertwined with social, economic, architectural, and literary history of the area, making it one of the more remarkable sites in the area<sup>5</sup>. The site of the house appears to have been purchased around the mid 16th century at a time when the old (possibly monastic) estates were being sold off following Henry VIII's Dissolution. The new purchasers were newly affluent Yeomen who, in this part of the country, were pioneering new industrial and agricultural methods that ultimately led to the predominance of industry and cloth weaving work in the West Riding.

The historic development of the Spen Valley and the wider Heavy Woollen District in North Kirklees provides an essential backdrop to understanding the origins and evolution of the Barn and Coach House at Red House and it is fundamental in explaining why such agricultural service buildings emerged here, how they functioned, and why they remain so significant to the narrative of the estate.

From an early date, the agricultural hinterland of Gomersal required service structures, barns, storage buildings, stabling and ancillary outbuildings - to manage the produce, livestock and resources that sustained the developing settlements and townships.

By the fourteenth century, written references confirm the presence of established local families and defined boundaries, indicating a settled

agricultural community. Gomersal appears to have focused around two nuclei - Gomersal Hill Top and Great Gomersal - both surrounded by strips of farmland whose long, linear plots are still visible in early nineteenth-century mapping likely preserving elements of medieval planning. In such a context, buildings like the Barn and Coach House formed the operational heart of estate farms, organising the movement, storage and processing of agricultural goods.

The Barn and Coach House at Red House represent the continuation and evolution of this pattern. Their placement, scale and materials reflect a landscape long shaped by cultivation, stock-rearing and estate management.

The development of the Red House estate itself must be understood within this wider agricultural transformation. From the mid-sixteenth century, following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, newly affluent yeoman families acquired former monastic lands across the region. In Gomersal, the Taylor family - who bought the Red House site around 1550 - embody this transition from traditional farming to emerging proto-industrial enterprise<sup>6</sup>. Richard Taylor's purchase of the house, garden, croft and associated land placed him among those yeomen who blended agriculture with commercial wool and cloth dealings, paving the way for the district's later prominence in textile production.

The Taylor family who purchased the land here around 1550 represent this interesting hybrid between estate owners and early merchant industrialists and it was Richard Taylor who purchased the site that consisted of a house, garden, croft and other land. His son, Thomas bought and sold wool and cloth and was one of a newly emerging gentry class who were developing these traditionally small scale industries into something larger and more organised.

At this early stage, the site almost certainly comprised not only the house but also the Barn and one or more outbuildings arranged around a service yard. The Barn would have been central to managing crops,

6. See Joan Kent, "The Rural Middling Sort" in *Early Modern England, circa 1640 – 1740* Cambridge University Press

storing grain or hay, housing livestock or processing produce; the Coach House, or an earlier equivalent, would have aided the movement of goods, carts and animals between estate and market. Their functional positioning, adjacent to the dwelling yet forming a distinct working zone and reflects the typical organisation of middling gentry estates of the period. These estates relied heavily on mixed agricultural activity, and the Barn and Coach House would have been vital components in sustaining both the household and its early commercial interests.

The architectural language of these buildings reinforces their role. The Barn's robust sandstone construction, ventilating slits and loading arrangements speak to long-standing agricultural use, while its more formalised frontage reflects the gradual elevation of the estate's status. Similarly, the Coach House, with its arched bays and durable materials, marks the increasing importance of movement, cartage and horse-power to both agricultural practice and estate management.

Thus, throughout the early and later phases of Red House's history, the Barn and Coach House sit at the centre of its working identity. They articulate the continuous agricultural thread running from medieval land organisation, through yeoman farming and early textile enterprise, and into the Georgian and Victorian period where estates combined genteel domestic refinement with productive service yards. Their survival provides critical insight into how the site functioned, how wealth was generated and sustained, and how the estate evolved in response to the changing social and economic circumstances of Gomersal and the wider Spen Valley.

In 1690 more detail is given with regards the site as William Taylor's Will described the "*Old House wherein I now inhabit and dwell...one laithe or barne at the West End of the said house...and the rentes thereof.*" He gave to his son James "*The New House...two Closes of land...called Nether Bawsincliffe Close and Fusden Inge.*" The site of these fields are discernible around the junction of Fusden Lane and Bawsincliffe Lane which is now Cliffe Lane.

1. WYAS suggests the finding of tessellated tiles around the old feast ground of Birstall, now housing behind the library and a Roman coin hoard was found in the area of Wilton Park

2. Margery 'Roman Roads of Britain' 1955.

3. Both Malcolm Clegg and the author of this report have queried the unusual location of the church of St Peter in Birstall. Was it simple to link the two settlements of Birstall and Gomersal or does it relate to some long lost settlement as would be more typical?

4. See ref 12639 as related in *Gomersal Past and Present* by H. Ashwell Cadmen 1930.

5. Much of the following is indebted to Stephen Caunce see refs below.



## The Georgian Estate

By the later eighteenth century, the wider estate underwent significant architectural refinement, a process that also frames the evolving role of the Barn and Coach House. While earlier phases of work fundamentally reshaped the main house - introducing the more fashionable Georgian frontage, reorganised internal circulation and the elevated status spaces that characterised its gentrification - these changes also had direct implications for the supporting service buildings. As the main residence adopted a more formal and aspirational appearance, the Barn and Coach House became even more integral to the functioning and presentation of the estate, reflecting both practical requirements and the expectations of a growing industry around the production and sale of cloth.

Although much of the internal evidence for the original fabric has since been removed, the Barn and Coach House preserve a clear continuity of purpose. They illustrate how the estate balanced the increasing refinement of both polite domestic architecture, the essential everyday activities of storage, stabling and agricultural and the newly affluent business of cloth manufacturing. The Barn, with its combination of formalised façade and utilitarian rear ranges, reflects the transitional nature of the period: part functional farm building, part consciously positioned component of a grand house and part functional premises to show clients the fine cloth capable of usurping that of the cities of Leeds and Wakefield. Its symmetrical elevation, large finely designed windows, and carriage opening demonstrate this dual identity, supporting both the working agricultural life of the estate and its outward presentation.

The Coach House, too, illustrates this shift. The rhythm of its arched openings, the scale of its bays and the robustness of its construction signal a building intended not simply for storage but for the management and movement of carriages central to both agricultural activity and gentrified estate living. In the context of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, such structures were critical to the functioning of estates where transport, horse-power and the movement of goods underpinned daily life. Their arrangement around the service yard

reflects a deliberate spatial hierarchy when viewed from the house itself.

The period's cultural associations - famously captured through later literary references to the Taylor family and the Red House's depiction as "Briarmains" help illuminate how such estates were understood socially. The house provided the visible expression of status, but it was the activity emanating from the rear ranges, conveyed through the Barn and Coach House, that maintained the estate's rhythm and identity as well as the Taylor's wealth. While the parlours, galleries and hallways offered a setting for conversation, debate and genteel life, the Barn and Coach House formed the practical heart of the property, facilitating not only the storage of produce, but also the product of the estate industry that was to give birth to such large scale enterprises as Hunsworth Mill.

In this way, the Barn and Coach House are essential to the narrative arc of the estate. They stand not as peripheral structures but as buildings that articulate how the estate functioned in reality and how this cottage industry grew into a huge enterprise that ended up competing with much larger places nearby. Their surviving architectural fabric therefore provides an invaluable counterpoint to the changes made to the house itself, preserving tangible evidence of the practical, working identity that defined the estate's historic character and the earlier industrial character of the Spen valley area as a whole.

## Later History

Following the sale of the house by Dr Richard Waring Taylor, presumably to one of his professional acquaintances, Dr John Clifford Sykes in 1920, the house continued life as a private home until Dr Sykes' death in 1938. Following probate the house was put up for sale again by Miss Sykes and it was advertised as the *"Briarmains of Shirley' that contained 3 reception rooms, large hall, cloak room, 6 bedrooms and sewing room, 1 bathroom with lavatory and 1 separate lavatory, Maids' bath, central heating, 2 large kitchen and larger and 2 cellars, Outside lavatory, wash house and coalhouse, garage for 3 cars, outhouses and 2 greenhouses, garden and paddock about 3 and half acres."*

The accompanying drawing with this advert showed the front elevation of the house with the "walnut-trees rising tall behind the house" as Bronte described. The purchasers were a Mr and Mrs Norman and Dorothy Shaw. Dorothy was a keen artist with an interest in the local area and she produced many nice sketches of both Red House and the surroundings including several drawings from within the property.

The site was again put up for sale in 1969 and was bought by the Spenborough Council to become a museum. In 1974 the newly contrived Kirklees Council took over the museum. It is unclear exactly what happened following these sales but some extensive renovations certainly took place. These included the drylining of many of the walls, including the main ground floor parlour, the re-plastering (in gypsum plaster) of several areas, the lifting of the hallway stone flags and the insertion of a plastic (likely non breathable) membrane beneath, and the boxing in of fireplaces. Most disturbing is the wholesale rebuilding of the entire rear elevation in 1996 due the rear wall becoming unsafe and the stripping out of any and all historic roof structure in the loft including the likely dismantling of any historic ceilings.

Moreover, due to the house being a museum of 'Georgian life' the Victorian fireplace in the ground floor parlour was removed and replaced with a Georgian grate and surround from elsewhere. Such artistic license has, ironically, significantly eroded the authenticity of the house and made it incredibly difficult to date the phasing of the building or even to appreciate any remaining historic fabric within. The only area of likely original fabric exists around the eastern bay window ceiling and the likely reused floorboards to the rear upstairs bedroom, as well as the alchoves and cellars.

In 2012 the site was re-assessed by Historic England and, despite these drastic and perhaps heavy handed internal changes, the property was re-grade as a Grade II\* Listed Building, presumably mainly due to its connection to the Bronte's. However the evidence of growing cottage industrial activity and cloth manufacturer could have influenced this decision also.

In 2017 the museum was closed to the public pending Local Authority funding cuts. The live in guardians of the house were subsequently moved out and the house and land left unoccupied. Not surprisingly, following this action, vandalism commenced and stone slate roofing from the barn was stolen forthwith. Remarkably, the house has survived and was recently put up for sale by the Council. The museum element are maintained at time of writing but shed little light or interest with regards museum interpretation other than the evidence of aesthetic considerations overtaking those of historic significance.

## Chronology of Red House Estate

1550 - The site bought by Richard Taylor, likely Merchant Trader dealing with cloth. The site was bought with a house, garden, croft and other land.

1660 - William Taylor built a new house next door to the 'old house' around the same time that Pollard Hall (in its present form) was constructed. Notably this new house was built using red brick which, (years later) earned it the name 'Red House'.

1736-1805 - The site became a cloth manufacturing and finishing businesses that likely started on site before expanding to larger premises off site. The large barn to the top of the site was built in around 1773 and was possibly used to finish or inspect cloth and there was early evidence of dyeing to the front of the existing Red House. John Taylor expanded the business and built nearby Hunsworth Mill for fulling and perhaps cloth finishing, he also built the Taylor Chapel for the New Connexion Methodists in around 1800.

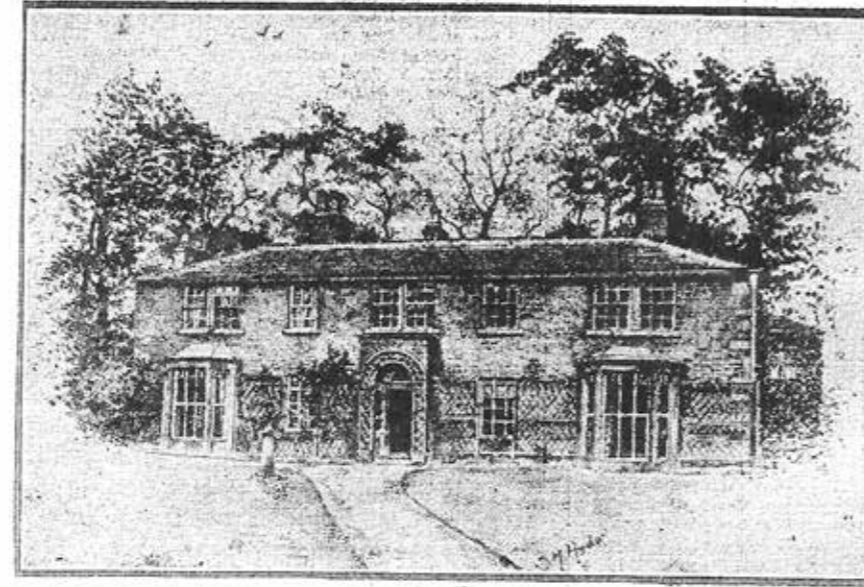
1783 - John Wesley visited John Taylor at Red House and was reputed to have signed his name on a window!

1811-1816 - Luddite uprisings and the Taylor's Hunsworth Mill attacked.

1825 - Holme Lane to Heckmondwike Turnpike Road constructed likely



Top Left: Mary Taylor on an expedition to the Alps. Below Left: the recent plaque to Red House and Mary Taylor on the Oxford Road frontage. Right: Sales advert for the sale in 1938 by the Skykes family.



FOR SALE — HISTORIC BRONTE HOUSE  
**THE RED HOUSE, GOMERSAL.**  
 (Briarmains of Shirley.)

3 Reception Rooms, Large Hall, Cloak Room, 6 Bedrooms and Sewing Room, 1 Bathroom with Lavatory and 1 separate Lavatory, Maids' Bath, Central Heating. 2 Large Kitchens and Larder and 2 Cellars, Outside Lavatory, Wash-house and Coalhouse, Garage for 3 cars. Outhouses and 2 Greenhouses, Garden and Paddock about 3½ acres.

Apply: MISS SYKES, THE RED HOUSE, GOMERSAL.



Historic detailed maps of Red House show the building and its subsequent phasing. The first edition Ordnance Survey plan (top left) shows the house with formal gardens to its south and west with a protrusion to the front and other associated building to the rear west side. The carriage drive is also visible leading to the foldyard where the great barn is located. This was likely the Laith barn and its foundation was probably used for the later greenhouses on the site. An other entrance into the site is visible to the west which may well have been the main entry into the site prior to the turnpiking of the Oxford Road. The line of this driveway is still to be seen as a banked, tree lined causeway along the same alignment.

The 1888 map shows the general size of Red House remaining but the frontage element has now been removed and replaced by a similar protrusion to the rear. The large barn has gone to be replaced by the carriage house and a linear greenhouse that extended along the north western boundary.

The more detailed Ordnance Survey plan of 1894 is the earliest detailed representation of the house. The outbuildings are clearly visible, as is the greenhouse together with one other building to the south of the plot. The access to the rear is also clearly visible and demonstrates that this route was in use for access for a considerable amount of time until relatively recently. (source The Leeds Library)

modifying any existing route and segregating Pollard Hall and Red House from their respective lands to the east.

1826 - Joshua Taylor, the son of John, appears to have provided the inspiration for Charlotte Bronte, his estate was valued at £30,000 at this time. Around this time onsite industry ended and the gardens were changed to be more formal.

1849 - Shirley is published by Charlotte Bronte under the pseudonym Currer Bell.

1853 - Barn and Coachhouse documented on First Edition OS Map as present in current locations

Later 19th Century - Fireplaces installed of marble to upper chamber and main parlours.

Late 19th/Early 20th century - New window installed to overlook the gardens.

1920 - Red House sold by Dr Richard Waring Taylor to Dr John Clifford Sykes.

1938 - Dr Sykes died and Red House put up for sale again to be bought by the Shaw family. Dorothy Shaw undertook many sketches of the house and its surrounds.

1967 - Red House is added to the National Heritage List as a Grade II Listed Building.

1969 - The house came up for sale again and was purchased by Spenborough Council with the intention to open the building as a museum.

1974 - Kirklees Council took responsibility for the Red House Museum

1995 -97 - Rebuilding of the entire rear elevation of the house.

Late 20th century - Several modifications were undertaken within Red House, this not only included the rebuilding of the entire rear elevation, but also the dry lining of several rooms, the installation of 'georgian' fireplaces in place of the Victorian ones and the complete removal of all historic roof timbers and even internal ceiling structures.

2012 - Despite these changes the building was re-designated a Grade II\* Listed Building on 8 November 2012.

2016 - Red House was closed as a museum.

2024 - Red House auctioned for sale.

2025 - Planning and Listed Building consent approved for conversion of the buildings to housing.

## SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The architectural and historical significance of Red House and its subsidiary buildings is considerable. This is enhanced through the literary connections of the estate and its subsequent communal significance. However, much evidential value has been lost through arguably inappropriate alterations where valuable historic fabric has been lost. The building therefore exhibits the following heritage values:

**Evidential value:** *the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.*

The archaeological potential of the site is likely low due to past disturbance, however little is understood about the plethora of historic buildings and structures that existed on the site from as early as 1550. As such the site may contain elements of evidential value that can shed light both upon the functional operations of Red House as a place of industry associated with the cloth trade as well as potential to shed light upon notable earlier structures such as the old (1550) house.

The barn and coach house represent a good example of a 19th century service complex with architectural detailing, materials and spatial arrangement which provide insight into the historic estate management, transport and agricultural practice. The early lifting mechanism remaining in situ is also of significance and presents an important insight into early logistics of the working estate. However, the extent to which this is original, remains unclear.

Red House itself remains a puzzle to date accurately in terms of phasing, not least because so much historic fabric has been removed. As such, Red House does retain some evidential value in its remaining fabric, but much, (such as the rear elevation and roof structure) has been removed, thereby diminishing any value.

Despite this, when taken as a whole, the site of Red House and its outbuildings retains a potentially **High** level of Evidential value.

**Historical value:** the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present.

The Red House has important historical associations with a key family of the area as well as associative connections to Charlotte Bronte. These values survive in the fabric of the buildings, especially through the fact that the building is still recognisable to that that Charlotte knew and described in detail. The local historical value as a house of middling gentry and early industrial pioneers in the cloth trade as well as the building being the first such brick building of its type in the local area are also of interest.

The Barn includes early medieval timbers, which are likely a direct connection to the former Medieval residence on the site, which predates the Red House. The historical value of the site is therefore considered to be **Very High**.

**Aesthetic value:** the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Together, the Barn and Coach House form a unified service courtyard, likely arranged around the working yard for carriage manoeuvring, and storage. The use of sandstone, stone slate roofing and design presents a deliberate design to the Red House, and aesthetic value exists in the vernacular of the Georgian estate design and configuration.

The Red House itself is a building of many phases and externally at least its principal elevation survives as it was seen by Bronte. The house retains its interest as a building of grandeur that has used a material still now not wholly common in the area. Inside the building has seen much artistic licence imposed upon it including dry lining and the removal of most notable or original decorative features. Nevertheless the site epitomises the legacy of history and as such the aesthetic value of the building is **Medium/High**.

## DISCUSSION

Red House is undoubtedly an important building. It not only represents tangible evidence and intangible values related to the Bronte's but also epitomises the character of this part of Yorkshire in what became, arguably, its hey day. The association of this site with the early transition from small scale weaving, to more industrial scale manufacturing, together with it being the seat of one of the main local families behind this change, and the income and money that came with it, makes this site very important.

Ultimately this site represents the thoughts of many local people that the Heavy Woollen District was not simply an 'industrial' area to be dismissed or forgotten about, but it was, together with nearby Leeds, Halifax and Bradford, a core component of what made modern Britain great.

It is now rare to find such buildings that so many local people have knowledge of. Through its life as a museum it made an impact upon school children throughout the area and its strong connection to Charlotte Bronte enabled people to see for themselves what this area was truly like before it became overrun with unrestrained development of the late 20th century.

The main Red House is, just about, still legible as having a 17th century core, even though only few elements of this building now survive. The Georgian character that was so precious to the past custodians of the building is still present, but has been very much altered with lots of artistic licence in the features within. Indeed, so little historic fabric remains within Red House itself that it is really only the walls, room divisions and the footprint of the building that maintain any resemblance to where the Taylor's (or the Yorke's) once lived.

Nevertheless, the historic images we have provide enough evidence for us to directly relate to these spaces and to feel the intangible qualities that those past inhabitants and visitors left behind. The fabric has been

altered, the roof gone and the rear elevation rebuilt, but, the house itself remains, like the ship of Theseus, restored but still the same(?)

Outside, it has been demonstrated that this site has evolved and altered many times through its long history. The site is now read as one of east and west, even though the division between these two halves was always a practical one.

The Barn and Coach House form an architecturally coherent and historically significant early industrial complex associated with the Red House estate. Both buildings appear in their present form and position on the 1853 First Edition OS map, demonstrating that the essential layout of the estate's working yard had been established by the mid-19th century with the exception of a new entrance from Oxford Road later on.

Together, these buildings represent a late eighteenth to early nineteenth-century ensemble built in coursed sandstone with stone-slate roofing, reflecting a blend of vernacular agricultural practice and the more refined architectural tendencies associated with Georgian estate planning. Their distribution, hierarchy of elevations, and shared material palette all point to a deliberately planned arrangement, constructed to provide the Red House with the carriage storage, stabling, and industrial capacity expected of a well-ordered landed property of the period.

Most notably however the buildings tread the fine line between a show of quality and greatness around a particular product (in this local cloth manufacturing) the ability to inspect or even present to client's and the utilitarian practicalities that such a site would demand. In this sense the Red House estate was a microcosm of early industrial practicality, status and entrepreneurship prior to such enterprises moving to the mighty large scale mills that the area was so famous for. The setting in the 18th century was therefore perhaps rather like a modern French vineyard where the château is supplemented by a working yard selling a high class product to a variety of clients, where there was enough 'show' to exhibit the product but enough practicality to allow the industry to function and enough natural light to appreciate the end result!

## DESCRIPTION OF THE BARN

The Barn is the most architecturally prominent of the pair of ancillary buildings that survive today. It consists of three divided bays to the ground floor and a single open floor above. The partitions below are modern brick walls and the stone slab ground floor was laid upon a modern damp proof membrane. As such very little historic evidence survives from this lower floor. The building was evidently intended to form the principal outward-facing building within the service court to both impress clients and to respond to the setting of the Red House itself. It is a substantial two-storey structure constructed in sandstone, with a hipped stone-slate roof and quoins. This elevation is carefully composed around a large central round-headed cart entrance, above which sits well-proportioned twin loft mullioned windows flanked symmetrically by circular oculi that set this building apart as something special. This refined façade demonstrates a degree of architectural ambition that combines polite architecture with the practical uses of cloth manufactory, drawing upon refined Georgian symmetry and reflecting its visibility from the main house. The east elevation contrasts with the rougher and largely windowless north and west sides, reinforcing the building's clear architectural hierarchy.

While the principal façade conveys a degree of status, the secondary elevation therefore emphasises lower functional status. The west wall contains a small doorway beneath a row of slender ventilation slits, a characteristic feature of agricultural buildings requiring airflow while minimising light and exposure. The northern elevation includes a ground-floor doorway and an upper loading door, indicating the use of the upper floor for storage or movement of goods. The varying degrees of finish in the masonry - finely dressed on the front, utilitarian elsewhere - demonstrate a deliberate approach to economy and practicality without compromising the building's presence within the estate landscape.

Internally, the Barn retains two levels, with later brick partitions at ground floor but an upper storey that survives largely open, exposing a complex roof structure. The roof timbers include pegged trusses with double limbs. To the ground floor the timbers contain evidence of earlier historic

reuse, such as redundant mortices, crudely axe-worked surfacing, and peg holes from earlier phases of carpentry. These features confirm the integration of salvaged medieval or early post-medieval oak elements into the build, potentially enhancing the building's evidential value and contributing an additional layer of structural history. These timbers original provenance is likely to be that of the former Medieval structure located to the immediate West of the Red House or they may have been reused by Kirklees following removal of the main house's roof timbers. If this is the case this entire floor could be a fabrication of the building's use as a museum as there is a good mix of modern and older timbers underlaying a modern floor. There are however also Baltic timber marks consistent with an 18th century date that are likely contemporary with the barn itself. These marks may shed light on the origin of the timber with the 'W' illustrating a potential origin or ship to which the timber was assigned.

The survival of traditional ventilation features, including deep internal splays and timber lintels associated with slit vents, reinforces the Barn's historic character and may suggest an earlier agricultural building was modified in the 18th century. The large first floor windows and taking in door are evidence of the growing industry taking precedence over any potential earlier agricultural function and the smart, large windows could well have been used for the inspection of cloth by prospective purchasers or to impress clients?

The surviving mechanism of the lifting gear maintains a heavy mechanism around a solid timber barrel. This feature is curious as it may involve some modern timber that could either be repair or reconstruction. As such it is unclear whether the lifting gear is original or something later inserted by the museum. In heritage terms, the Barn's significance arises from the combination of its architectural refinement, evidential fabric, and functional legibility as well as its reuse of earlier timbers and the presence of dating evidence therein. The symmetrical façade with its oculi windows and carriage arch is both aesthetically notable and unusually formal for a service building, indicating its role within the estate hierarchy and in the early cloth industry.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE COACH HOUSE

The Coach House stands as a companion building to the Barn and completes the service yard's architectural composition. It is a single-storey stone structure with a stone-slate roof, defined most strikingly by a series of four open-fronted round-headed arches, one of which has since been blocked. These wide arches, constructed with well-cut stone voussoirs and originally open to the yard, clearly signal the building's original function as a coach house or cart shed, providing bays for the storage of carriages, carts, or later estate vehicles. A later subdivision to the east likely created a forge. Compared with the Barn, the Coach House is more utilitarian in character, reflected in its simpler masonry, limited articulation, and functional internal layout. Its walls are built in coursed sandstone with evidence of later patch repairs, while the stone-slate roof is laid in traditional diminishing courses, forming a single continuous span over the open bays. A previous greenhouse or nursery structure projected east from the listed fabric in the early 20th century. This was removed and replaced with a modern, modest sized service block extension.

The interior has undergone some significant restoration and indeed some artistic licence has been used as a result. This incorporates new and reused and refinished later timbers that demonstrate both the building's adaptation over time and the intent of the museum to illustrate a certain interpretation of heritage. The restoration has been undertaken well and the replacement roof is traditional in its form and authentic to the original, one truss of which appears to remain in situ albeit not functioning as it once did.

The Coach House's heritage interest derives from its clear functional identity, its well-preserved architectural rhythm of repeated arches, and its contribution to the unified appearance of the service yard. Its simplicity is intentional, serving as the practical counterpoint to the Barn's more decorative front, yet it remains integral to understanding the daily operations of the estate, particularly the movement and storage of horses and vehicles.

## RELATIONSHIP TO THE RED HOUSE

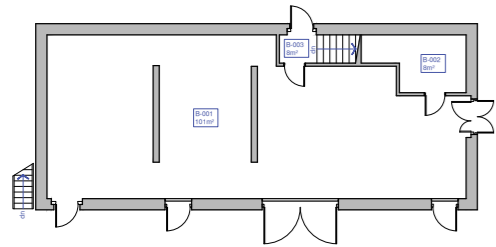
Together, the Barn and Coach House form a well-planned and cohesive service courtyard that historically supported the Red House and its early industrial enterprise. The Barn's formal elevation consciously faces the house, indicating its intended visibility and signalling its importance within the estate's functional hierarchy. The Coach House, positioned nearby and aligned at right angles, forms a complementary range, helping to define the circulation space used for manoeuvring carriages, tending horses, and conducting daily estate operations. Their consistent use of sandstone masonry and stone-slate roofing visually ties them to one another and emphasises the striking red architectural character of the main house, while the deliberate variation in refinement between elevations demonstrates careful planning in their presentation away from the domestic core of the estate towards the original and later lower status entrance into the site from the west. This route is still preserved in a liner earthwork and demarked by a row of trees and would have entered a much more utilitarian courtyard to this side of the estate, well away from the house.

The Barn structure is likely related to the re configuration of the site and the demolition of the former Medieval dwelling. The salvage of earlier-timbers and former mortice and joints suggest pre-18th century carpentry and an explicit connection to the previous form of the site and the habitation of the Red House estate.

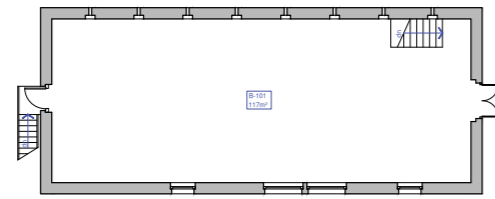
This interconnected group illustrates the balance between practicality and polite design that characterises many Georgian and early Victorian estate complexes. The Barn provides the architectural focal point, the Coach House supplies essential functional support, and together they establish a working environment that complemented rather than competed with the Red House. Their spatial arrangement, aesthetic coherence, and surviving fabric allow for an understanding of the operational mechanics and hierarchical visual order. Although the rear entry is now defunct, the relationship with Red House adds considerably to the site's wider heritage significance.

## PLANS

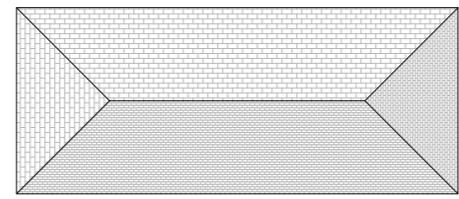
**BARN BUILDING**



1 GROUND FLOOR PLAN AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



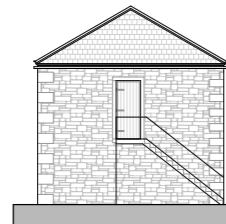
2 FIRST FLOOR PLAN AS EXISTING  
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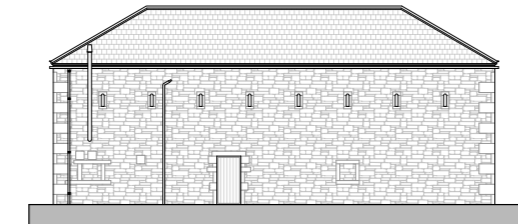
3 ROOF PLAN AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



4 EAST ELEVATION AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



5 SOUTH ELEVATION AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



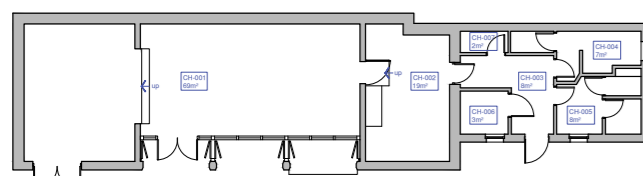
6 WEST ELEVATION AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



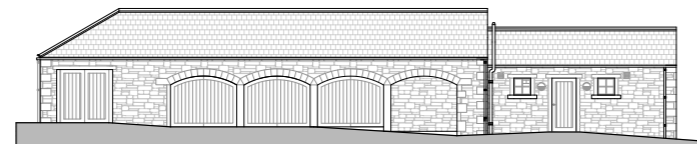
7 NORTH ELEVATION AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100

Do not scale from this drawing. Northlight Architectural Consultants Ltd have  
checked the building plans for compliance with the Building Regulations. The contractor must check all dimensions on the building construction or  
construction of materials. This drawing is intended for use as a guide  
and should not be used for construction without the consent of Northlight Architectural Consultants Ltd.

**COACH HOUSE BUILDING**



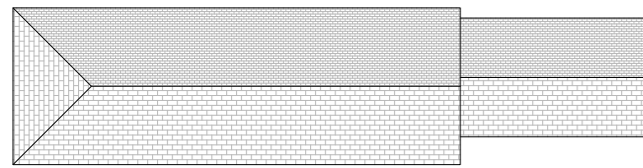
8 GROUND FLOOR PLAN AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



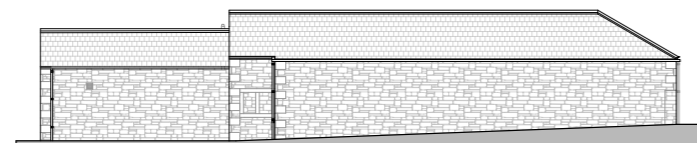
10 SOUTH ELEVATION AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



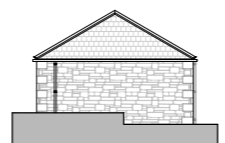
11 EAST ELEVATION AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



9 ROOF PLAN AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



12 NORTH ELEVATION AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



13 WEST ELEVATION AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



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Barn Building & Coach House Building  
Plans & Elevations as Existing

PLANNING APPLICATION

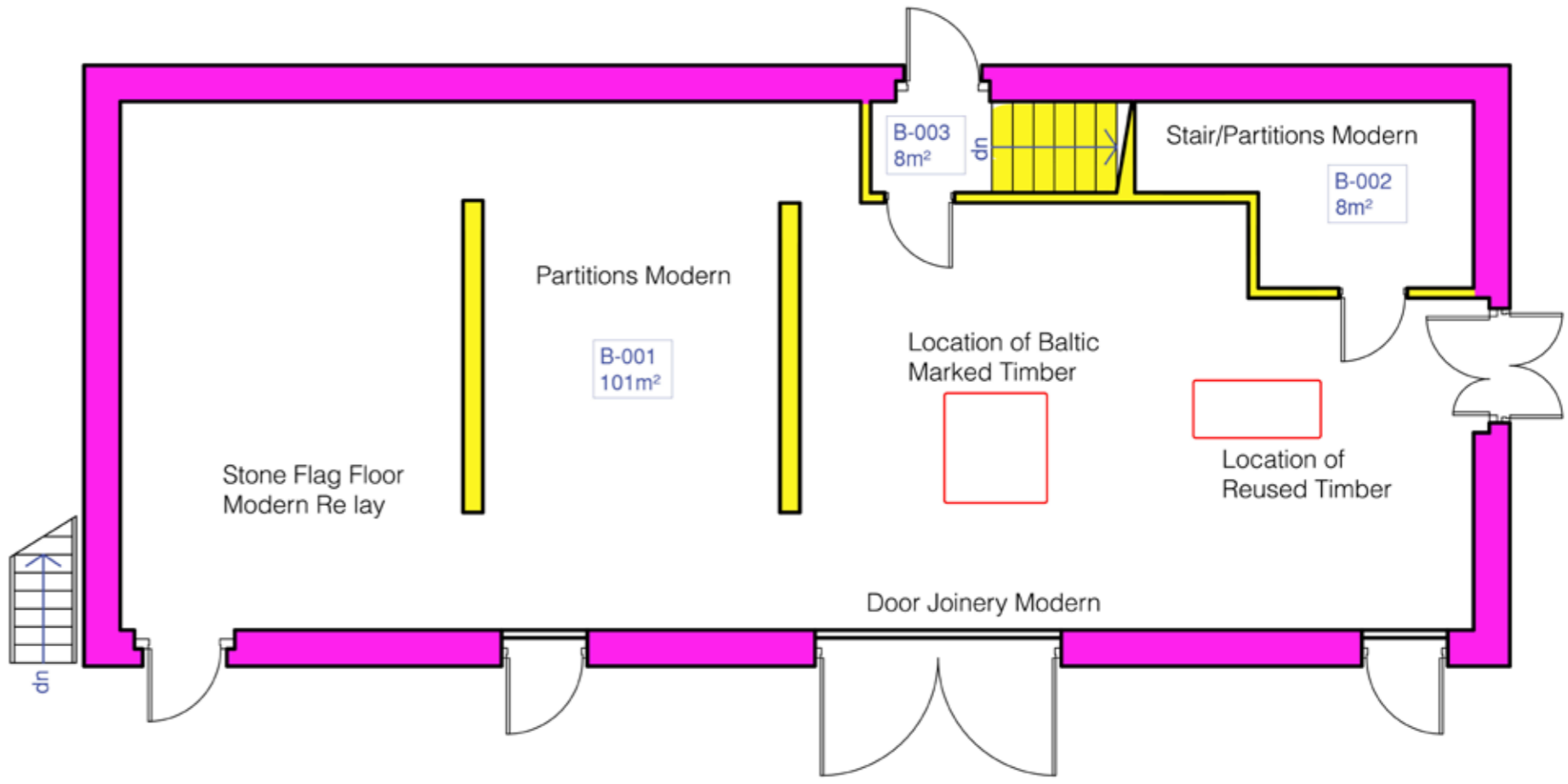
As Shown CG

Jan '25 -

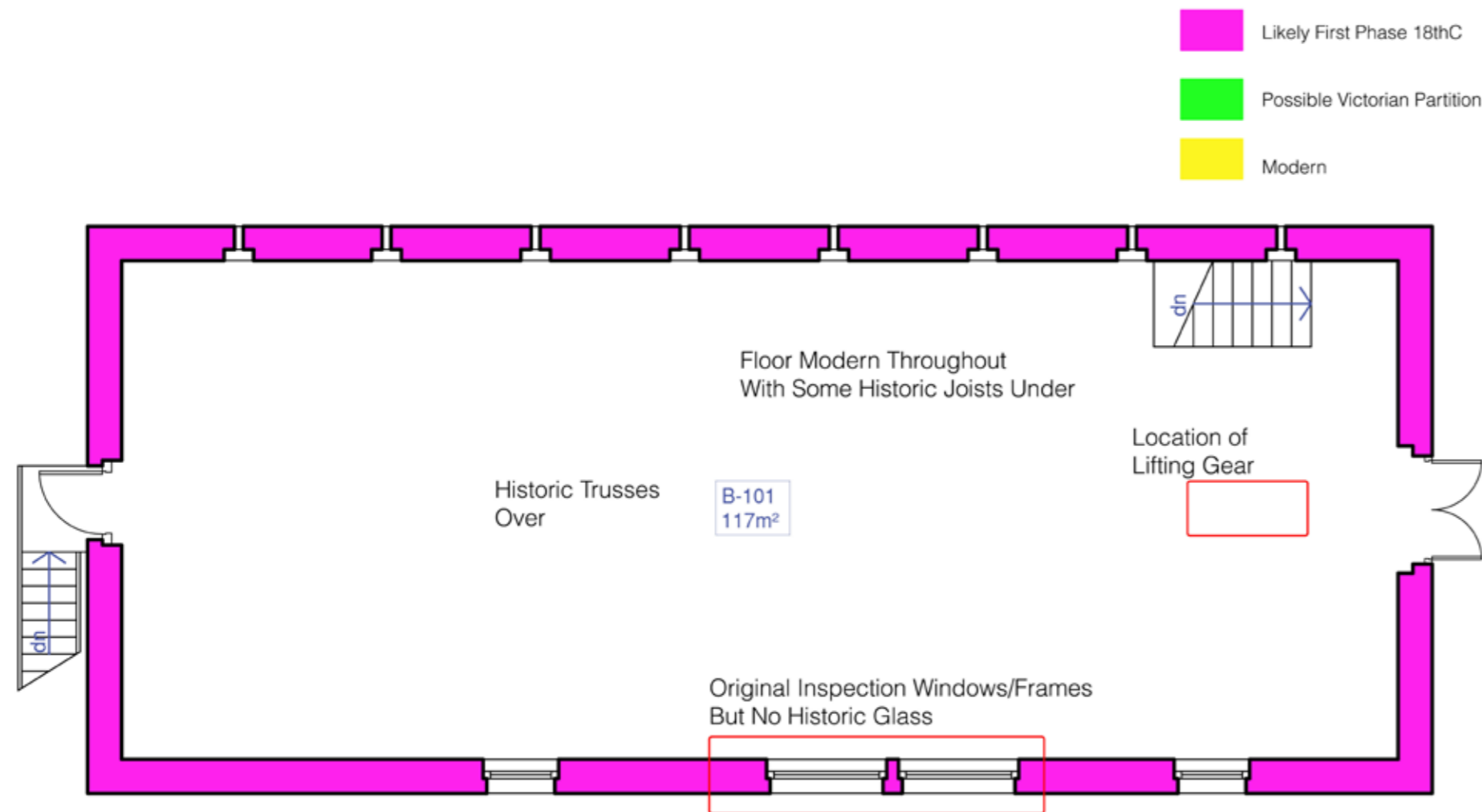
24.034/ (EX)03 -

**BARN BUILDING**

- Likely First Phase 18thC
- Possible Victorian Partition
- Modern

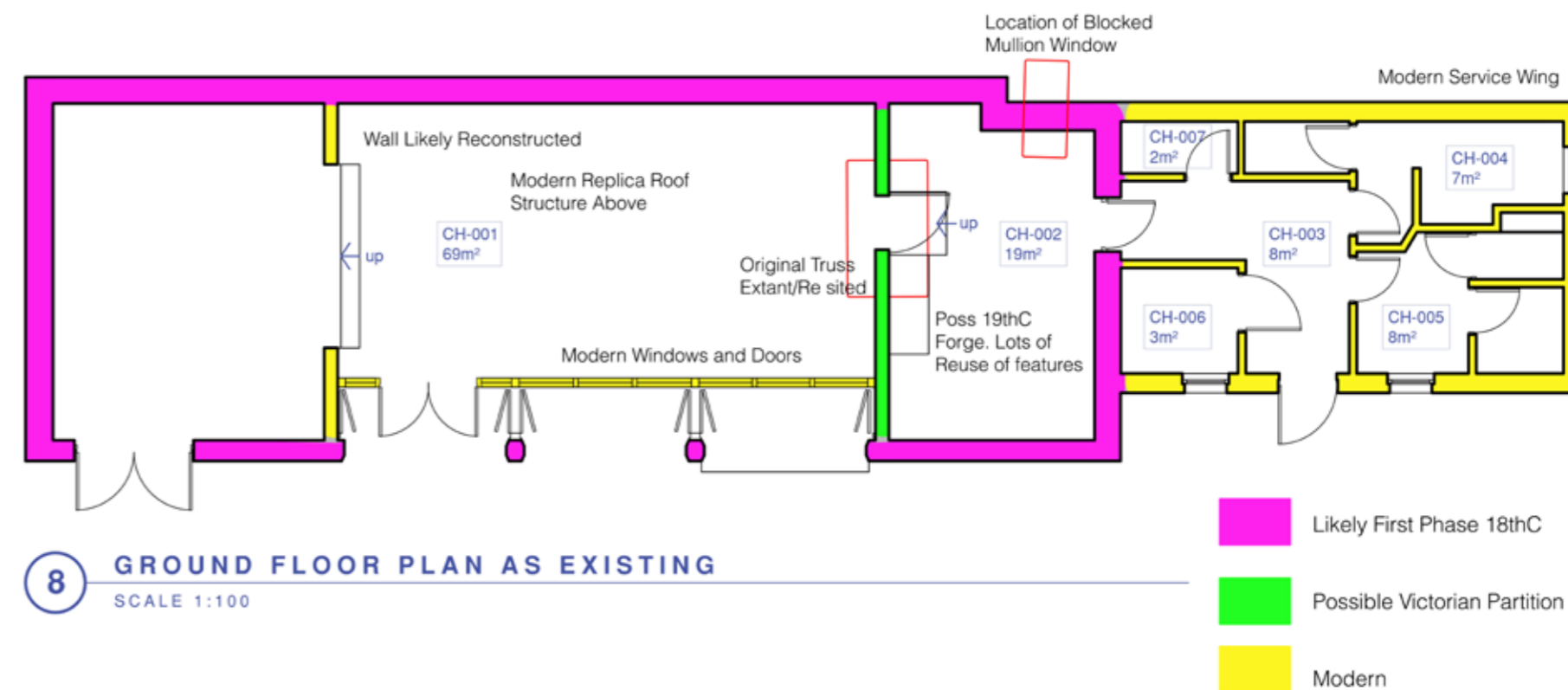


1 GROUND FLOOR PLAN AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100



**2** FIRST FLOOR PLAN AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100

## COACH HOUSE BUILDING



**8** GROUND FLOOR PLAN AS EXISTING  
SCALE 1:100

PLATES



*Red House as seen from the lower end of the Coach House courtyard*



*View of the barn from the Red House garden.*



*View towards the barns from the existing driveway*



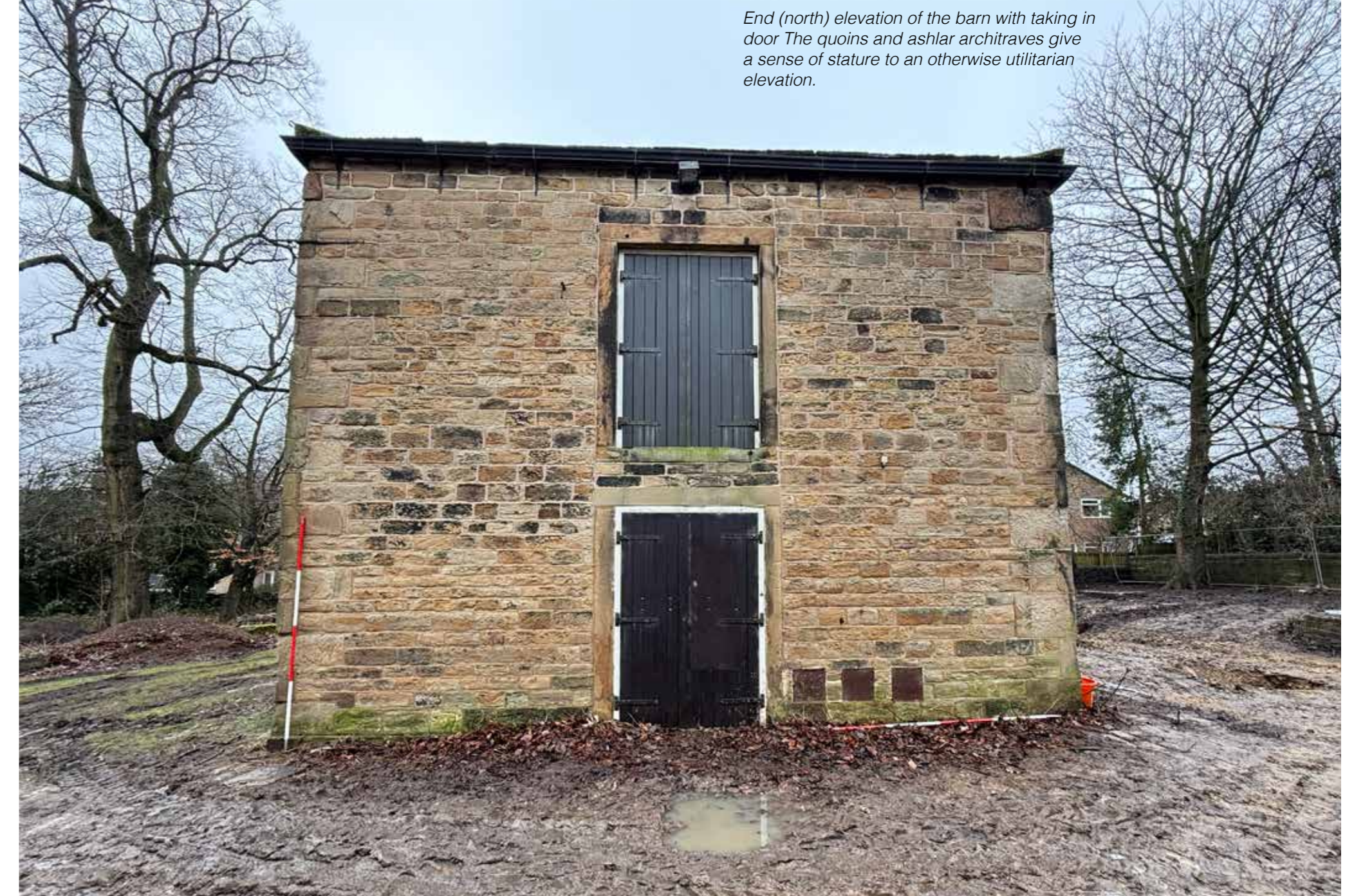
*Western part of the site showing the later greenhouses that likely used the lower courses of the old barn for its foundation. c 1900.*



*The same view today. The greenhouses replaced by a later toilet block.*



North East facing elevation showing the central arched doorway and smaller pedestrian flanking doors. Upper floor windows include the circular windows and central paned rectangular windows which provided light to the loft likely for the inspection of cloth. The high quality masonry and quoining show a combination of aesthetic value and practicality associated with the early cloth industry that was later to grow into huge mills such as Hunsworth.



End (north) elevation of the barn with taking in door. The quoins and ashlar architraves give a sense of stature to an otherwise utilitarian elevation.

Rear (West) elevation of the barn. The smart front elevation is a stark contrast to this elevation where utilitarian agricultural aesthetic dominates.



Rear (West) elevation of the barn



*Rear (West) elevation of the barn from around the area where the original access came into the site.*



*View of the former access into the site from the west, demarked by the line of trees.*



*Closer image of the carriage doors - large timber double doors are finished in dark brown paint.*



*Foundation detail*



*Closer image of ventilation slits*



*Close up of Barn upper windows. Intentionally large for the inspection of cloth.*



**Uneven stone sizes and mortar joints suggests little decorative intent.**



*Barn: South bay. Note brick partition wall.*



*Barn: Ground floor end (north) bay. Reused timbers marked.*



*Barn: Ground floor central room. Note the later brick partitions. The stone flags are modern and laid upon a concrete base with damp proof membrane beneath.*

Internally, the Barns earliest phases are represented in the surviving first floor structure. The upper level is open to the rafters, and displays a mixture of reused historic timbers and later machine-cut additions. The most striking aspect is the large, heavily aged, oak beam to the first floor bearing redundant mortices, rough cut surfaces and sawn through peg holes. This timber clearly formed part of a medieval timber framed structure, and likely relates to a previous structure on the site.

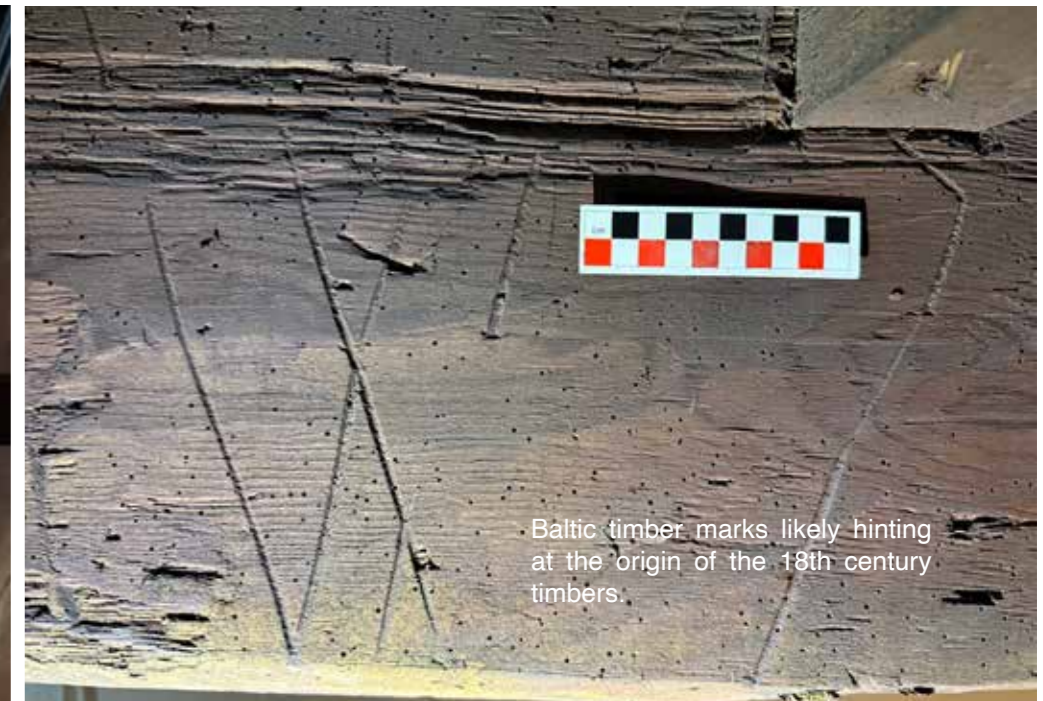
Further phases around this core beam are evident with later rafters, joists and latterly, machine sawn relatively modern flooring which likely relates to the implementation of the modern visitor centre. This ceiling represents the incremental re-roofing and flooring carried out within the Barn through the 19th and 20th century and its adaptation over time. The Baltic marks likely represent the elements of the original Barn construction.



*The ground floor ceiling shows several phases of construction. Sound Medieval oak was retained and damaged rafters and joists replaced in later centuries.*



*Primary beam with evidence reuse through irregular tool markings and empty rectangular mortices*



*Baltic timber marks likely hinting at the origin of the 18th century timbers.*



*Photogrammetry of the underside of a reused timber to the first floor. The timber has been sawn through and reused giving a cross section through the mortice joint, the peg holes cut through their centre. This timber likely originated from the first house on this site.*



*Barn: Upper floor with extant trusses and the large windows allowing maximum light. The floorboards are modern.*



Main windows to the upper floor.



Internal view looking West with internal view of ventilation slits..

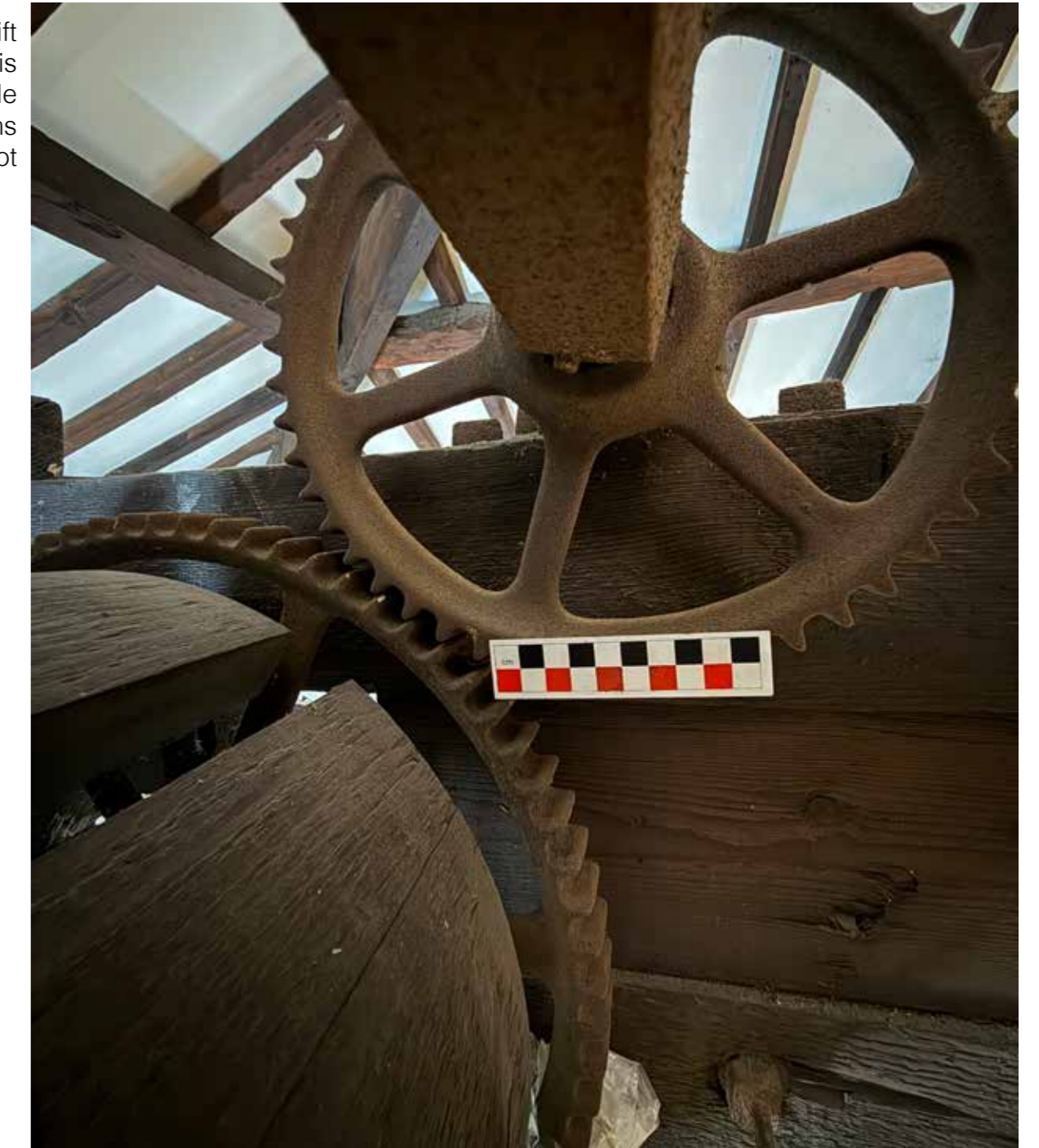


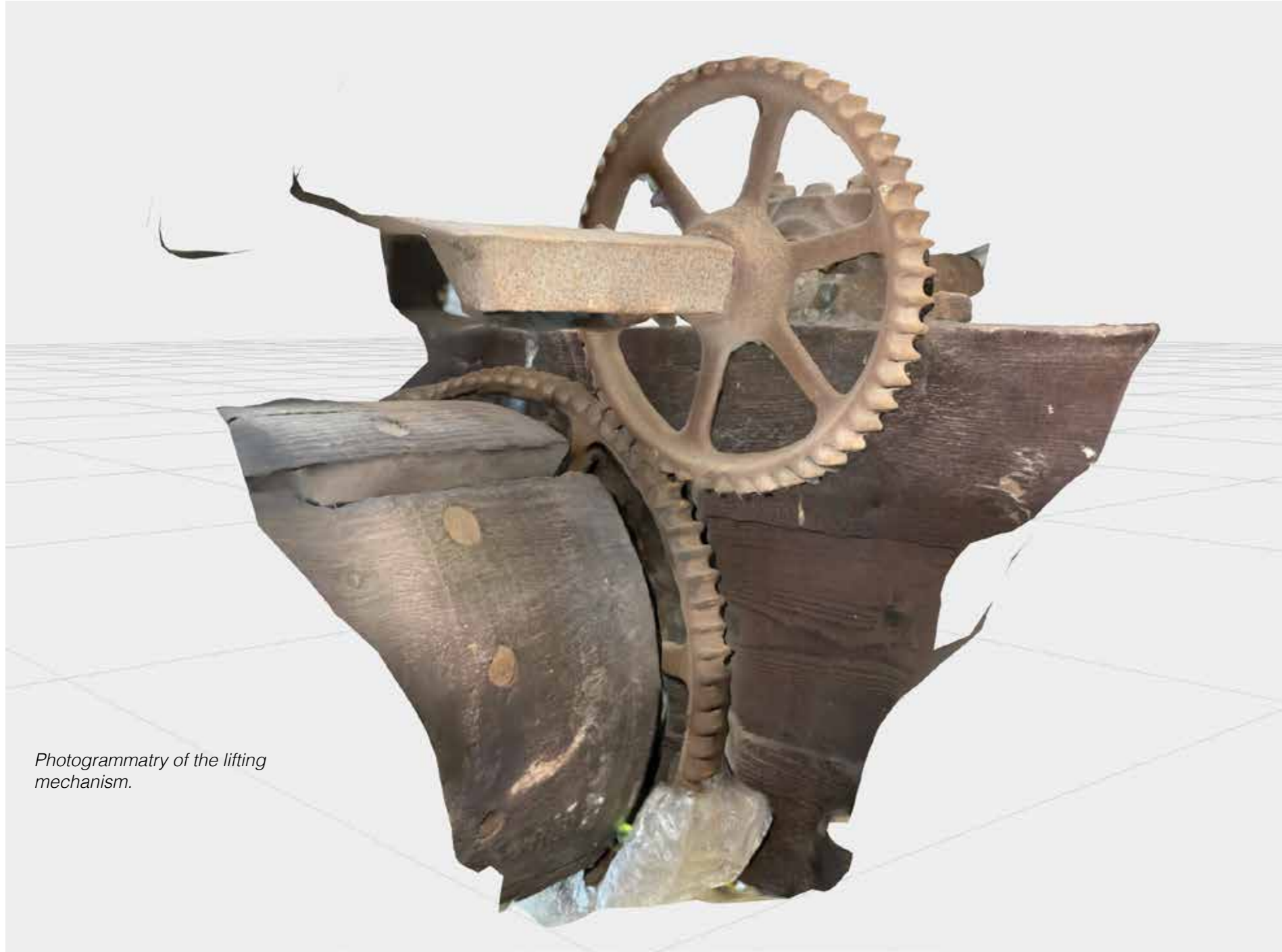
The timber doors, and windows are original in proportion and where introduced, replacement material appears to reflect the original aesthetic and design.

The minimal openings on the rear elevation notes the functional purpose and focus on ventilation and service infrastructure.

Access to the upper floor is via a modern single staircase.

The upper floor of the Barn presents an in-situ lift mechanism. The machine appears original in form and is positioned in a functional position with the granary style door. However, confirmation that this is original in terms of the Barn structure and of contemporary origin is not possible based on existing sources.





*Photogrammatry of the lifting mechanism.*

## COACH HOUSE

Inside the building the interior is simple and open. The single-span roof rests on what appears to be replaced and modern timbers, introduced through 20th century restoration work, for the purpose of the visitor centre.

The absence of internal partitions reinforces the use of the space as a functional coaching house, with accesses directed to the courtyard and proportional relationships structured and designed around the transport and sheltering functions.

The level of restoration internally, has seen many features stripped, however some minor detailing is evident including residual indications of utilities such as water provision in via a drain / trough and a indications of modification and re purposing of space, via infilling of previous accesses and windows.

The east room was likely once a forge with mullion window to the rear but no features other than this window still remain.





Cart Entrance



Photogrammetry of the Voussoirs associated with the coach house arch, showing the cut of stone and attention to detail through splays and triangular capital head.

South Elevation of the Coach House



South Elevation of the Coach House





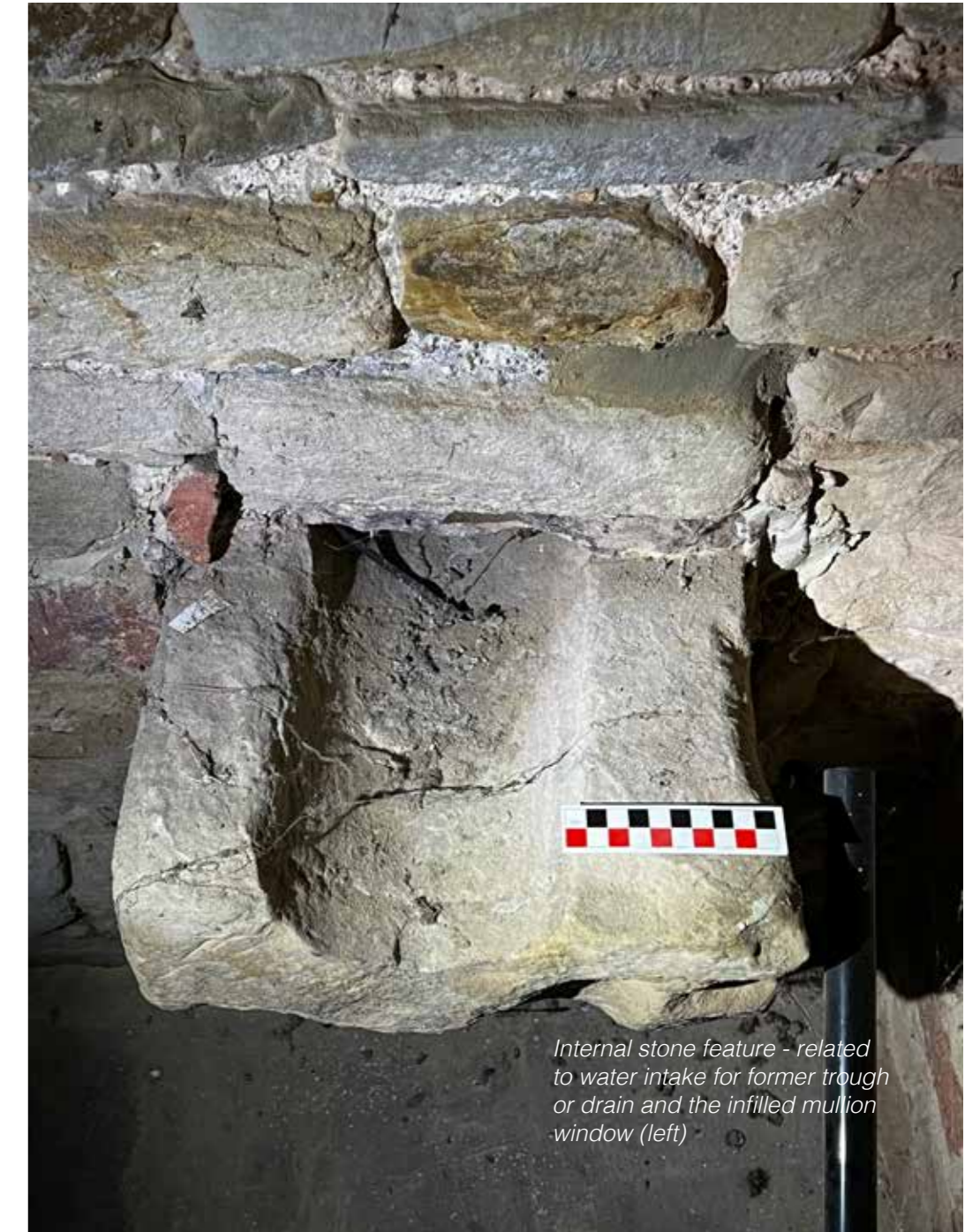
*Interior of a very dark space. The trusses are modern copies. The brick wall likely marks the forge workshop which once sported a slender chimney.*



*Detail of the modern trusses. Likely larger than the originals but a high quality copy.*



*Internal view facing South of the infilled carriage arch.*



*Internal stone feature - related to water intake for former trough or drain and the infilled mullion window (left)*



*Internal Access West, to the listed Coach House. This partition may demark the forge area and retains a (non functioning) original truss above.*

**END**  
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