

BARN AT WHEATLEY FARM, THORNLEY-WITH-WHEATLEY, LANCASHIRE:

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

1 Introduction

- 1.1 A planning application is currently in preparation by Judith Douglas Town Planning Ltd on behalf of the landowners Messrs Hayhurst, for the conversion of farm buildings to dwellings, with associated works. This document assesses the heritage significance of the existing buildings, the site and its setting, in order to inform the application, as recommended by the NPPF and the HEPPG *Planning for the Historic Environment*. It has been produced by Stephen Haigh MA, buildings archaeologist, following a site visit on 25 May 2016.

2 Site location

- 2.1 Wheatley Farm, formerly just “Wheatley”, now comprises a single dwelling and farm buildings, with the barns proposed for conversion being centred at NGR: SD 62036 39858, and lying at 110m above sea level, some 2.5km north-east of the town of Longridge. The farm straddles the minor road known as Four Acre Lane, with the farmhouse on the north side and the historic farm buildings on the south. The land to the north-west forms a relatively flat area with the River Loud at its centre, but the farm lies at the foot of the north-west slope of Longridge Fell which rises immediately to the south-east. It is surrounded by pasture fields with some woodland, enclosed by a mixture of hedgerows, dry-stone walls and fences.
- 2.2 The historic farm buildings comprise a stone-built barn facing south-west and set into the slope, with a modern shed adjoining its rear. There is a small stone trap-house to the south-west of the barn, facing north-east towards it, and to the north of the barn is a detached mid 20th century shippon and dairy, with roadside access.

3 Relevant heritage assets

- 3.1 Wheatley Farmhouse and a former stable adjoining to its south has been a grade II listed building of special architectural or historic interest since 1967¹, but there are no other nationally or locally designated heritage assets within or in the immediate vicinity of the site, according to the Lancashire Historic Environment Record².
- 3.2 The listed building description for the house and stable reads:

¹ National Heritage List no. 1147523

² Response to enquiry, provided 4 March 2016

II H Farmhouse, 'R A 1774' on plaque. Squared, coursed sandstone with slate roof. House of central-entry double-pile plan with end stacks. 2 storeys with attic. Windows have plain stone surrounds, having lost their square mullions. The door has a shouldered architrave with narrow pulvinated frieze and moulded pediment. Attached towards the rear of the right-hand gable is a large stone trough carved from one piece of stone and dated '1832'. The rear wall has plain stone window surrounds, the 2 on the 1st floor retaining their square mullions and being of 2 lights. The rear door is now within a later extension and has an architrave with 'EHA 1758' incised on the lintel. Adjoining to the left is a former stable or shippon having a door with plain stone surround, and a round pitching hole with plain stone surround on the 1st floor of the left-hand gable. Above is a square pitching hole.

4 History of the site

- 4.1 Wheatley was formerly the principal partner of the historic township of Thornley-with-Wheatley, and was mentioned in Domesday Book, but in later years was reduced to its present position secondary to Thornley³. Little is known of its later history but it lies at the edge of a large swathe of "ancient enclosure" at the foot of Longridge Fell, which would have been divided up before 1600 into relatively small enclosed fields for management by individual landholders or tenants. Such land occupies about a quarter of the modern county and was increasingly dedicated in the late medieval and industrial periods towards pastoral farming for meat and dairy production. The land to the north of Four Acre Lane is however characterised as "modern enclosure", its boundary pattern supposedly dating from the 20th century⁴.
- 4.2 Historic maps show that in the mid 19th century (figures 1 & 2), the buildings at Wheatley included the farmhouse, barn and trap-house (although the rather sketchy tithe maps omits the last of these), and in the 1840s the tithe schedule recorded that property was owned and occupied by Richard Dunkerdale, who farmed 50 acres. (The identity of "R A", whose initials appear on the farmhouse, has not been elucidated.) Ordnance Survey maps from the late 19th century show little change at the farm (figures 3 to 5), but by the mid 1950s, the new cow-house or shippon had been built to the north of the barn.

³ 'Townships: Thornley with Wheatley', in *A History of the County of Lancaster: Volume 7*, ed William Farrer and J Brownbill (London, 1912)

⁴ Lancashire County Council *MARIO Maps & Related Information Online*

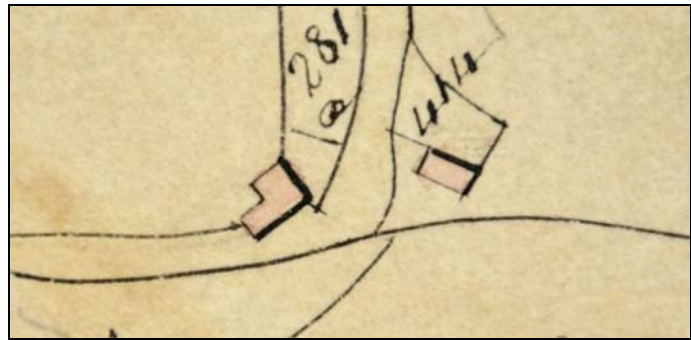


Figure 1: 1840 tithe map⁵



Figure 2: OS 1847 1:10560 map⁶



Figure 3: OS 1:2500 map, 1893⁷



Figure 4: OS 1:2500 map 1912⁸

⁵ *Plan of the Township of Thornley with Wheatley in the Parish of Chipping.. by Chas Birket 1840, Part 2* (Lancashire Archives DRB 1/42) Reproduced by kind permission.

⁶ Lancashire, sheet 54. Surveyed 1844

⁷ Lancashire, sheet 54.1, surveyed 1892

⁸ Lancashire, sheet 54.1, revised 1910

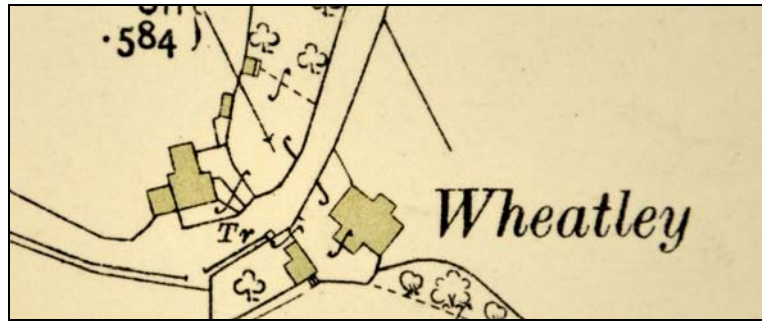


Figure 5: OS 1:2500 map 1932⁹

5 The setting and buildings

Setting

- 5.1 Wheatley Farm is set on slightly undulating land at the foot of Longridge Fell, with the farm buildings forming a discrete group, clearly separated from the farmhouse by the public road. This separation of house and farm raises the status of the former, though it was probably still considered to be the home of a yeoman farmer rather than of a gentleman. The clustering of barn, trap-house and mid 20th century shippon creates a coherent group of farm buildings of various ages, enclosed on the roadside by a good stone wall, which have been little altered by more recent intervention, with the exception of a modern shed to the rear of the barn. The focus of present farming is in a group of much larger sheds to the south of the farmhouse, separated by the historic group by open space beyond the trap-house, formerly gardens or orchards.



Photo 1: Farm buildings group, from the north

⁹ Lancashire, sheet 54.1, revised 1930

Barn

- 5.2 The barn at Wheatley is likely to be late 18th century and therefore of similar date to the farmhouse. It is a four bay, two storey structure which is fairly typical of the combination barns found throughout this part of Lancashire, and it is built down the slope in the manner of a bank barn. The walls are mostly of random sandstone rubble, though the north-west gable has been rebuilt in recent years with a concrete block inner leaf, and the roof is blue slate with roof lights, no doubt attributable to a 20th century re-roofing.



Photo 2: Front of barn and rebuilt gable

- 5.3 The main entrance is in the south-west side of the barn via a projecting entry or porch, which has been extended to the north-west by a narrow, full height lean-to, probably 19th century. There is also a projection on the rear elevation opposite the front porch, though this is another addition to the building (shown on the 1840s map), which lacks a full width opening and only has two side doorways, the south one now reduced to a window. There are various ground floor windows to the front and rear but none is original, and the pattern of openings in the rebuilt north-west gable is also likely to be modern, rather than a reproduction of the historic pattern. A modern, off-centre forking hole is also present in the south-east gable.



Photo 3: Front of barn



Photo 4: Rear elevation

- 5.4 Some original features are present within the south-west porch, including the cobbled floor, loft beams, and harr-hung oak door frames (ie. stile and rails), though the doors have been much repaired. The original rear doorway opposite this is full width and has a stone arch over a timber lintel fashioned from a re-used cruck blade, but as noted above could not be used due to the later lean-to added to the rear elevation.
- 5.5 The barn interior is divided on the ground floor by a stone wall, to enclose a shippon in the north-west end, and support the hay loft over it, with the two south-east bays being open to the roof. This is an entirely characteristic arrangement, though the difference in floor level between the two ends is greater than is usually encountered. None of the original shippon fixtures remain in situ, and the loft over this end of the building is partly carried on steel beams, so quite how this area was arranged historically cannot now be determined. The three

king post roof trusses, of square-sawn softwood and with bolted purlin ends, are not original and were probably introduced with the re-slating of the building in the 20th century.

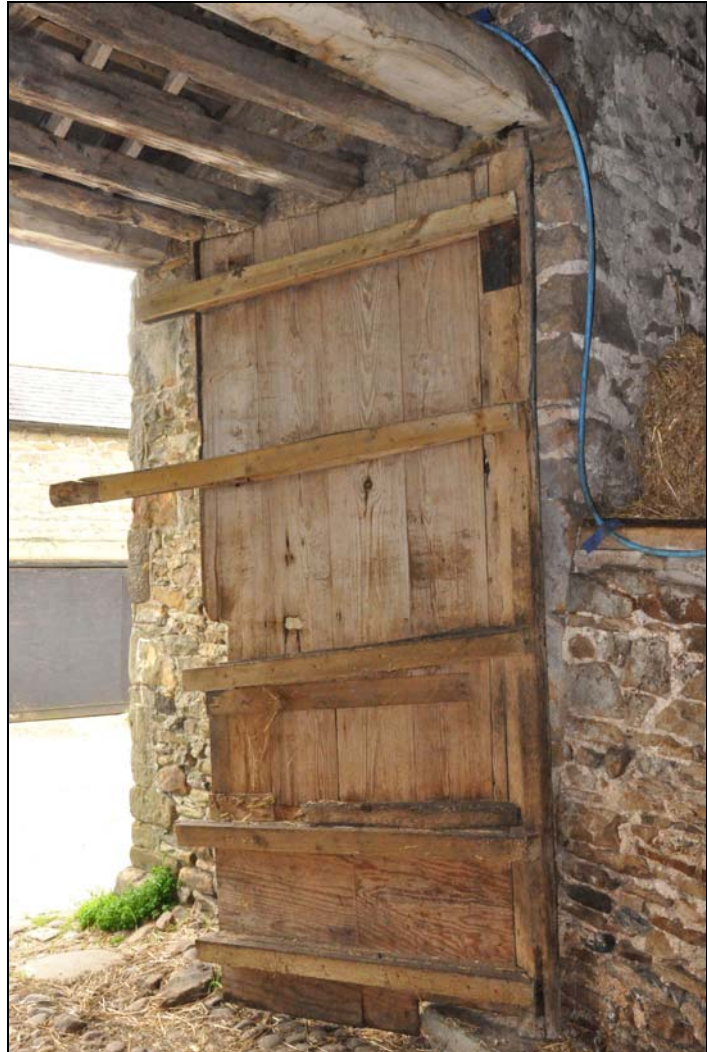


Photo 5: Historic door, loft beams and cobbled floor in front porch

- 5.6 In summary, the barn is a much altered historic building, although externally it is still very much traditional in appearance, characteristic of the 18th or early 19th century farms of the district, and retains an essentially historic footprint and pattern of openings. The essential internal divisions remain unchanged but only a small number of historic internal fixtures survive, mostly associated with the south-west entrance. Overall therefore it has medium heritage significance, with its setting being an important aspect of this.



Photo 6: Barn interior with wall enclosing shippon



Photo 7: Present shippon

Trap-house

- 5.7 The small trap-house to the south-west of the barn is also of heritage significance as a largely unaltered farm building, in this case bearing the date of 1820 and the initials “D R A”, likely to be those of a relative of the builder of the farmhouse in the 1770s. It is of generally similar materials to those used in the barn, although the lintel inscribed with the date is further decorated by parallel tooling along its length. It too has been re-roofed with blue slate, though a lean-to along the north-west gable retains the original stone slates. Associated with it

is the garden boundary wall with half-round coping, and a flight of stone steps to the south-east gable, beneath which is a cavity perhaps used as a dog kennel at one time. There appear to have been no changes to any of the openings, and the window in the north-west gable retains a small paned frame, perhaps original, though the main doorway now has a 20th century sliding door fitted.

- 5.8 The trap-house is important as a little altered and dated structure of the early 19th century, which was clearly important to the farm as housing its owners means of transport. Its small scale and pleasing aesthetic qualities within the group contribute to its significance.



Photo 8: Trap-house

Brick-built shippon

- 5.9 To the north of the barn, the mid 20th century brick-built shippon (known to the owners as the “new shippon”) represents an important phase in the farm’s history, when it specialised in and intensified dairy production. A combination of vacuum-powered milking and more stringent hygiene regulations were probably driving forces for the construction of this building, as well as the opportunity to house more cows and increase output.



Photo 9: Trap-house

5.10 The shippon is of modest size by today's standards, being five bays long, and has a blue slate roof with salt-glazed ventilation cowls and roof lights; there is a regular pattern of hopper-opening windows to both sides, and a large doorway in the south side (probably enlarged) allows tractor access. Attached to the west side, perhaps as an additional phase, is a lean-to on a lower level and accessible from the roadside, which would have contained machinery and milk storage space. The interior of the main part of the building has modern cubicles, which probably replaced more traditional stalls in which the cows would have been tied.



Photo 10: Brick shippon



Photo 11: Brick shippon

- 5.11 The shippon also has heritage value as a member of the group of farm buildings and as a relatively recent agricultural structure, of a type which is however now generally redundant. Such buildings are no less subject to attrition and demolition as older types of farm buildings, and this is an externally well-preserved example, which stands discrete from but alongside other members of the group.

6 Statement of significance

- 6.1 The farm buildings at Wheatley Farm form a coherent and aesthetically pleasing group of combination barn, trap-house and shippon, sited away from but within easy reach of the farmhouse. The barn is the dominant member and focus of the group, and is externally still very much of historic character, though it has undergone some minor changes and has been extended by the modern shed to its rear, which however could be demolished to enhance the buildings' setting. While few internal fixtures remain within it, its principal divisions and varied floor levels are still very much in evidence and contribute to its interest. The barn, and the largely unaltered 1820 trap-house and mid 20th century detached shippon with which it is now associated, in combination clearly have heritage significance which is worthy of preservation.

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