



**Heritage Assessment for 1-4 The Barracks,
Bransbury, Hampshire, SO21 3QJ**

October 2021

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Following a severe fire in 1-4 The Barracks, Bransbury, Hampshire, decisions need to be taken over the future of the building. This Heritage Assessment aims to provide the necessary historical and archaeological background to facilitate such decisions.

Documentary research and historic building analysis have demonstrated that the building was constructed between 1857 and 1871, probably as farm workers cottages linked to the nearby Bransbury Farm. Four phases of additions and alterations have followed, the second of which led to the loss of all the original window openings, and the third to the removal of all the original internal partitions and features, save the staircases.

BACKGROUND

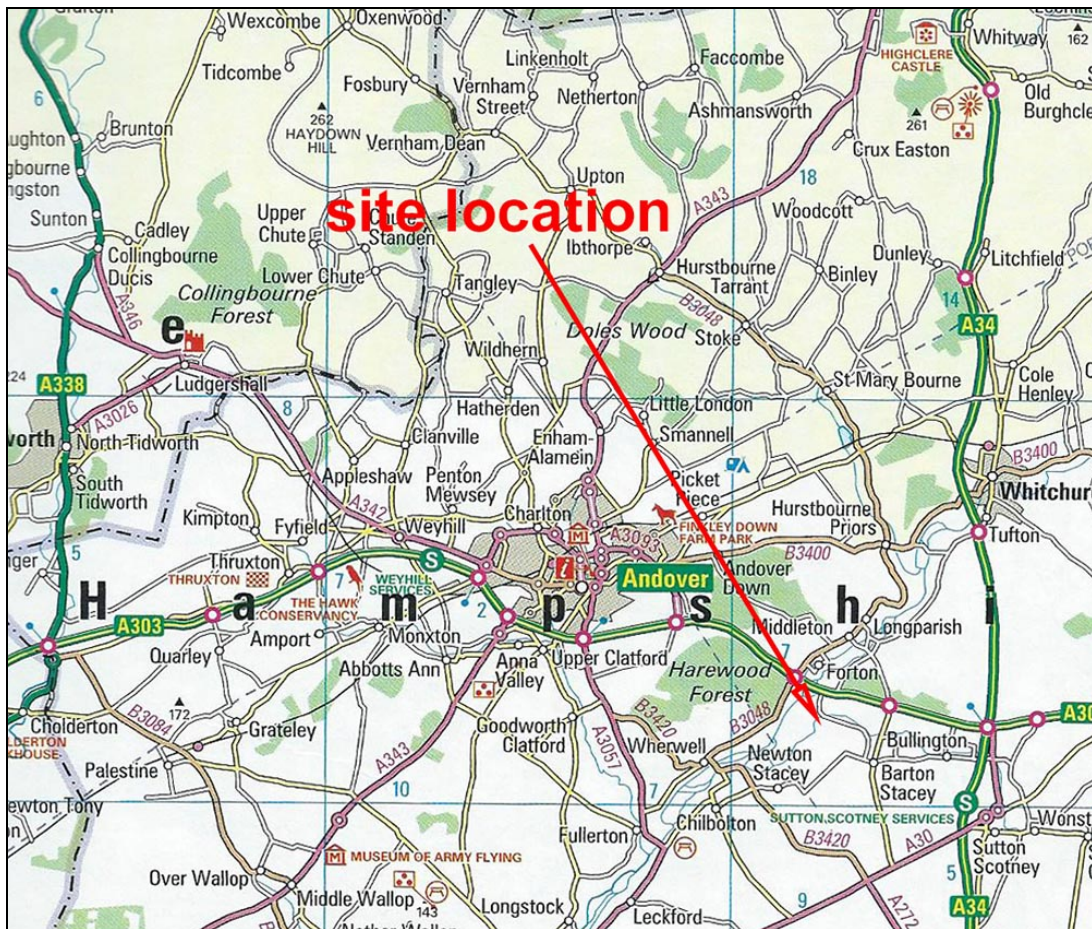


Figure 1 Site location. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

1. 1-4 The Barracks lies within the hamlet of Bransbury in the parish of Barton Stacey in Hampshire. The hamlet lies c.6.5km to the south-east of the town of Andover, c.450m south of the A303 and c.600m to the east of the River Test. 1-4 The Barracks sits at 50m aOD and is centred at SU 4221 4232. The underlying geology of the site is the Seaford Chalk Formation overlain by River Terrace Deposits.
2. On the 7th March 2021 1-4 The Barracks suffered severe damage as a result of a fire, the owner is therefore seeking to determine whether the building is suitable for restoration or should instead be demolished. In order to inform themselves, the Local Planning Authority and Historic England of the heritage issues relating to either option, they have commissioned West Sussex Archaeology Ltd to draw up this Heritage Assessment.
3. It is not the purpose of this Heritage Assessment to rehearse the clauses of the various publically available planning legislation, guidance and policy documents, suffice it to say that these provide the framework within which the heritage issues relevant to this site will be discussed. With reference to this project these are: the National

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Planning Policy Framework (2018 revision); the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; and the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan DPD (2016), pp. 128-131.

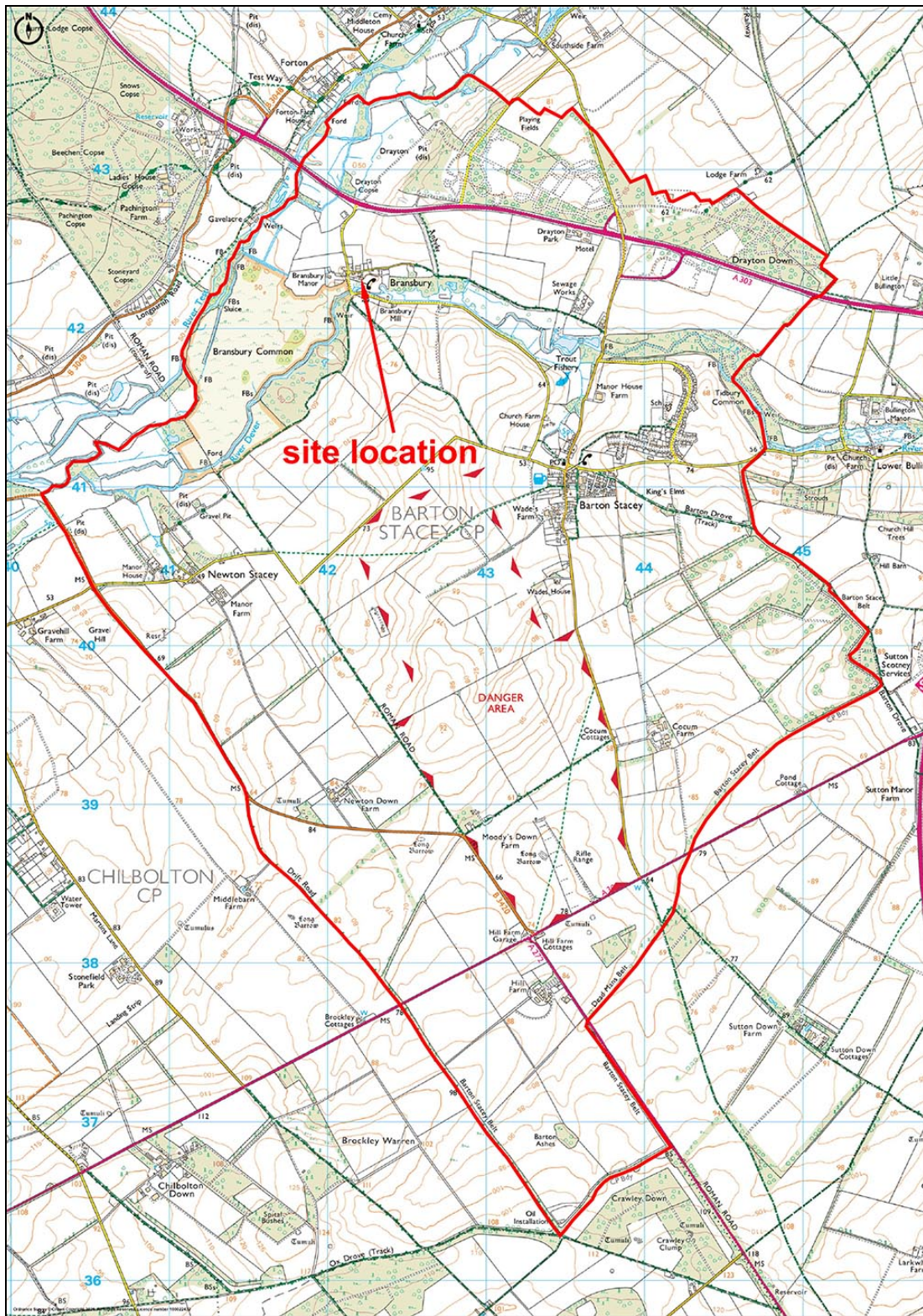


Figure 2 Site location, with Barton Stacey parish boundary outlined in red. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

THE HERITAGE ASSETS

Designated Assets

1. 1-4 The Barracks is a Grade II Listed Building (No.1339290, Listed on 21st March 1984). The Listing description states: "Row of 4 cottages. Early C19. Rendered walls, thatched roof. South front of 2 storeys, 4 windows. Casements. 4 rustic porches with corrugated asbestos canopy, and boarded doors. Central stone plaque inscribed 'Restored 1900 R.K.H.'"
2. There are five other Listed Buildings within the hamlet of Bransbury: Bransbury Manor (Grade II, No.1093468, Listed on. 21st March 1984), a late 18th century house; Wall (20 Yards East Of Bransbury Manor) (Grade II, No.1093469, Listed 21st March 1984), early 19th century kitchen garden wall; Farm Buildings (20 Yards East of Bransbury Manor) (Grade II, No.1339289, Listed on 21st March 1984), 18th century wagon store with extensions; Riverside Cottage (Grade II, No.1093470, Listed on 21st March 1984), a pair of early 19th century houses; Bransbury Mill (Grade II, No.1093471, Listed on 21st March 1984), early 19th century mill.

Documentary Evidence

1. Bransbury was a manor within the parish of Barton Stacey, which was held of the Bishop of Winchester at the time of the Domesday Survey and subsequently of the Prior and convent of St. Swithun. After the Dissolution Henry VIII granted the manor of Bransbury to the Dean and Chapter of Winchester who held it until the later 19th century, with the exception of the years 1649 – 1660 when it was acquired by Stephen Hurst and Richard Tutt.
2. The Barton Stacey tithe map of 1840 does not show the Barracks, but the empty plot within which it will later sit is owned, according to the Apportionment, by the Dean & Chapter of the Cathedral of Winchester and the executors of William Courtney (the tenant farmer of Bransbury manor), and is described as a "garden" (HRO No.CD/340). A plan of the manor of Bransbury dated 5th December 1845 (HRO No.DC/J14/9/1) still does not show the Barracks, with the land remaining in the hands of the Dean and Chapter of Winchester. Again a map of Bransbury Manor Farm, Barton Stacey, in the ownership of the Dean and Chapter, dated 1857, marks no building within the plot (HRO No.11M59/WDC/E2/6275). The last account book of the Dean & Chapter held by the Hampshire Record Office to mention Bransbury is one dated to 1861 (HRO No. DC/C5/160), which indicates that the manor was still owned by them at this date.



Figure 3 Extract from the Barton Stacey Tithe map of 1840 (HRO No.CD/340), the site of the Barracks is outlined in red

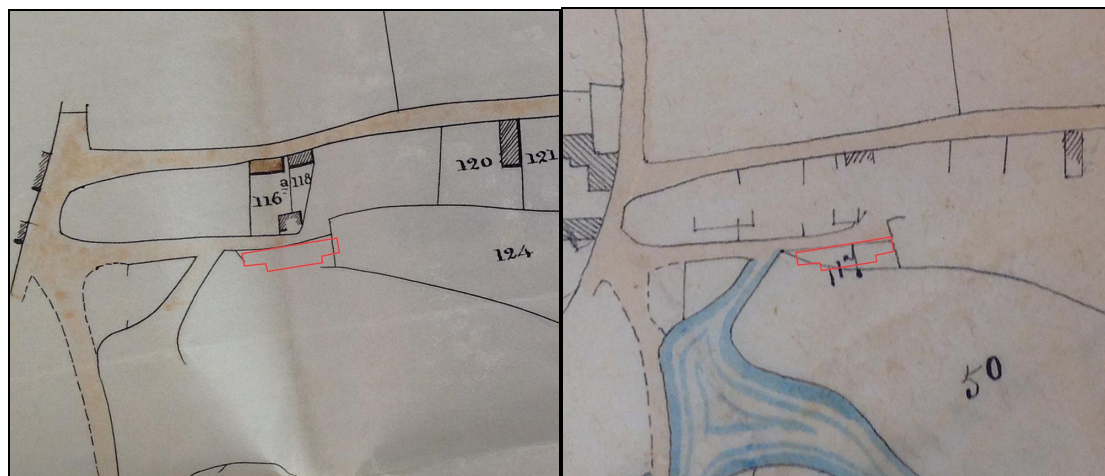


Figure 4 Extracts from maps dated 1845 and 1857 showing the plot still empty (HRO Nos. DC/J14/9/1 & 11M59/WDC/E2/6275)

3. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1871 does show the Barracks, therefore it can be assumed that it was constructed between 1857 and 1871. The building depicted on the 1871 OS map consists of a row of four cottages, with outshots at each end. The western two cottages each have small front gardens, while the eastern pair seem to share a larger plot which includes a well. The 2nd edition of 1895 shows no change to this.

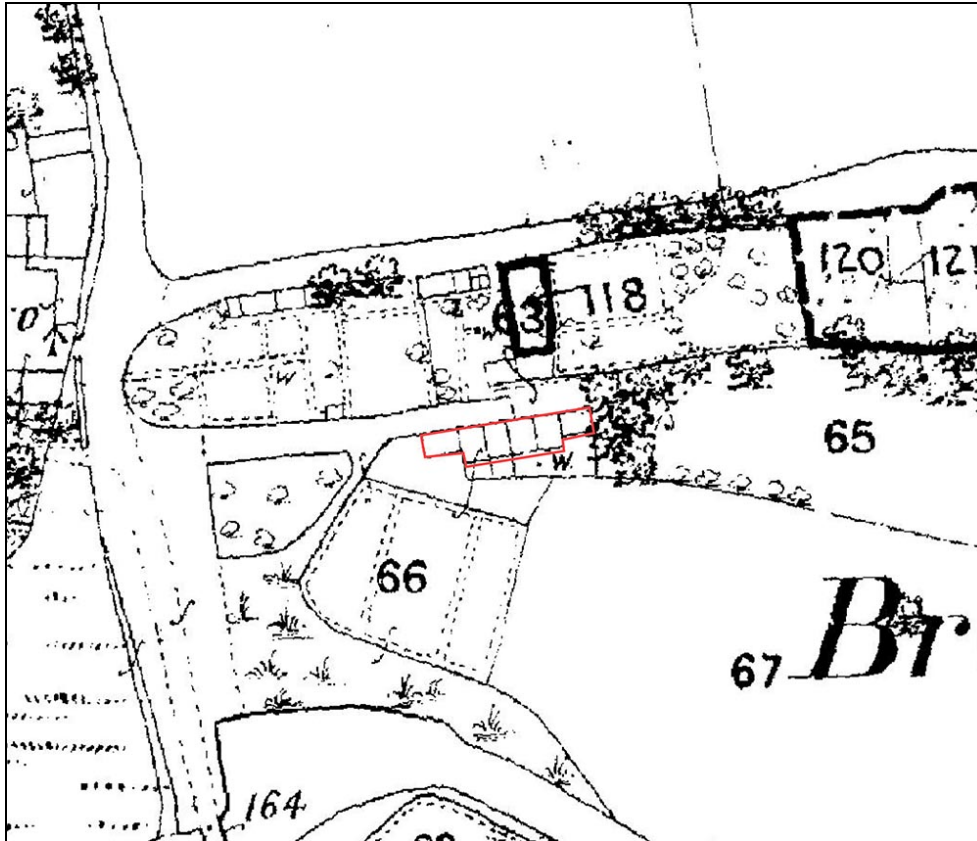


Figure 5 Extract from the 1st edition OS map of 1871 showing the Barracks (outlined in red)

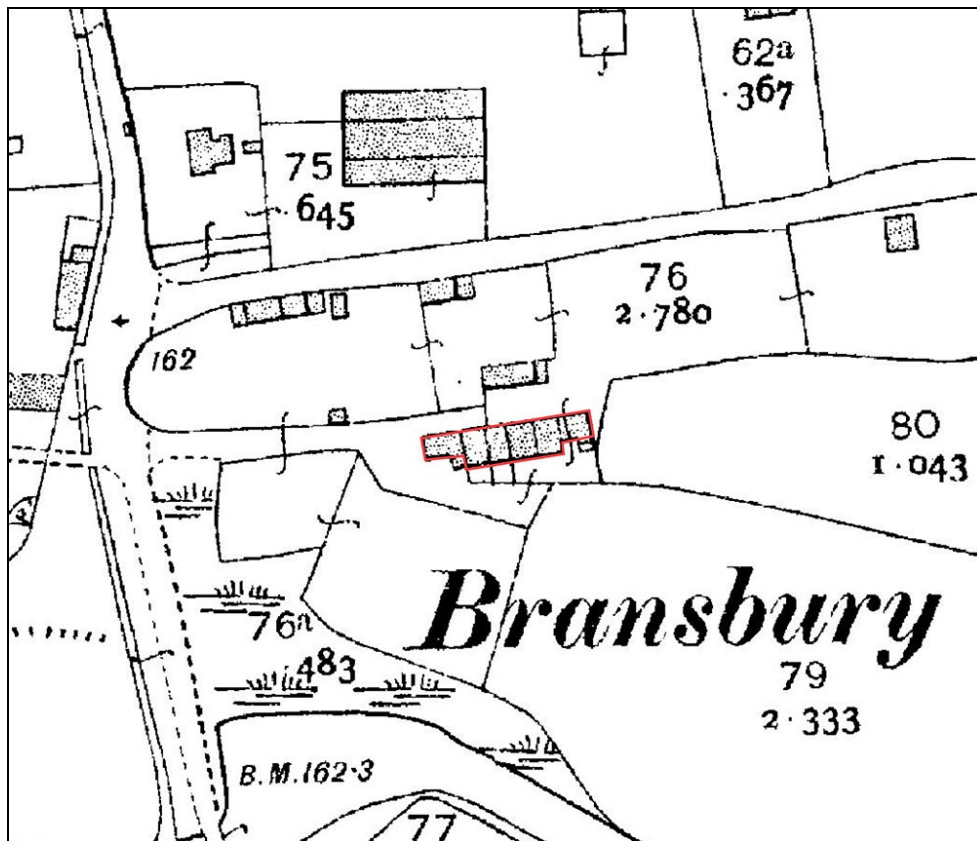


Figure 6 Extract from the 3rd edition OS map of 1910 showing the Barracks (outlined in red)

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1. By 1900 The Barracks had passed into the ownership of the "R. K. H." recorded on the date stone set into the south front of the cottages. These initials stand for Robert Kirkham Hodgson who inherited the Gavelacre Estate from his uncle, J. S. Hodgson, in the late 19th century (WSA, p.32-3). It is not known when Hodgson senior acquired the plot of The Barracks, and therefore we cannot be certain whether he was the owner at the time the cottages were built or whether it was still the Dean & Chapter. However it is clear from the 1857 map that the site of The Barracks did form part of the tenancy of Bransbury Farm, and Charles Henry Pain Courtney, the tenant at that date, lived until 1883 (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/genealogy/records/charles-henry-pain-courtney-24-b98mww>). The most likely scenario is that it was Courtney who was the instigator for the building project, possibly to create accommodation for his farm labourers.
2. The OS map of 1910 indicates that two small structures had been constructed by this date to the rear of the outshots and the well is no longer shown. These changes may be the result of the restoration works carried out by "R.K.H." (Hodgson) in 1900. The rear extensions would appear to have been removed by the date of the 1976-8 OS edition, with the eastern of the central cottages now having a separate enclosed garden.

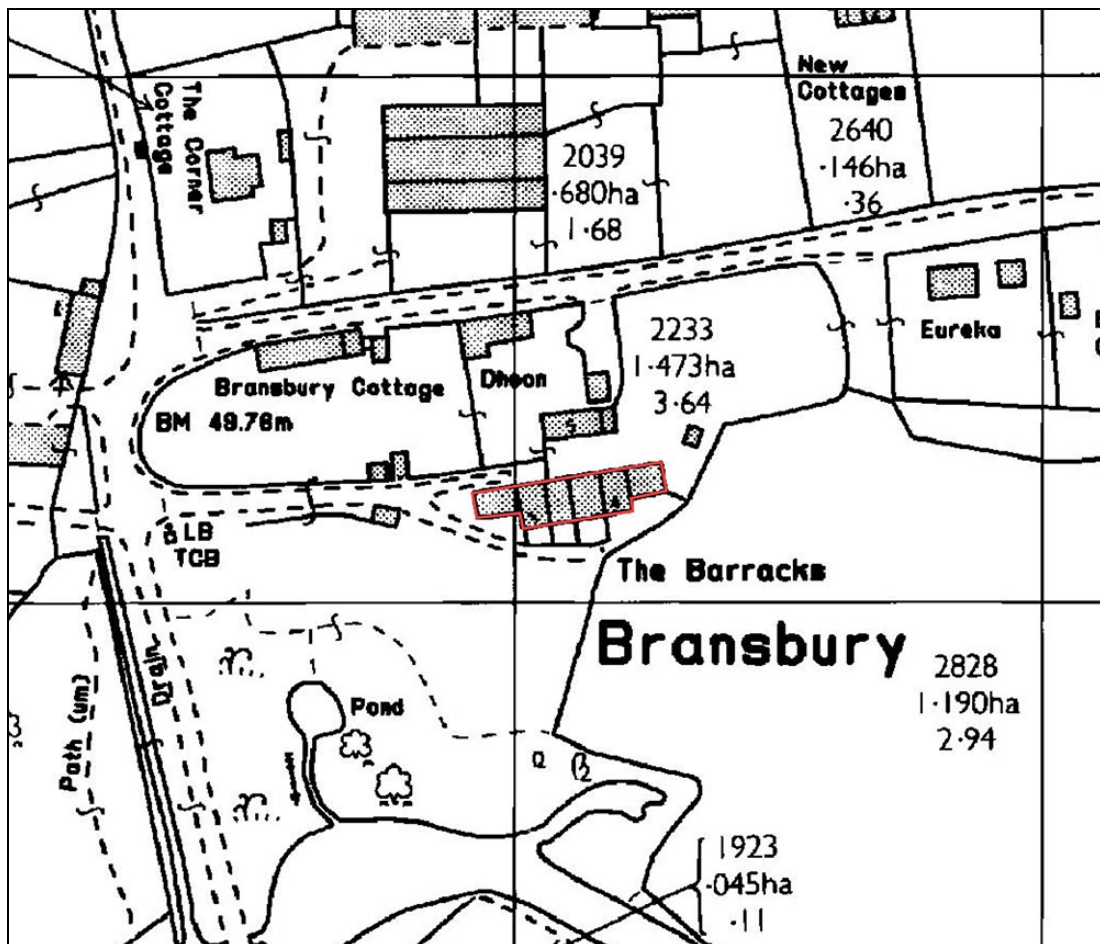


Figure 7 Extract from the 1976-8 OS map showing the Barracks (outlined in red)

3. A photograph of 1983 shows the north elevation of the cottages as they were then, described on the rear as a “part thatched, part tiled building” (HRO No.126M90/23/4).



Figure 8 Photograph of the north elevation of the Barracks taken in 1983 (HRO No.126M90/23/4)



Figure 9 The same view taken during the site visit on 11th October 2021



Figure 10 The remains of the roof of the Barracks, looking east. The fire damage progressively gets worse from No.1, in the foreground, through No.2, which still retains the frame of its studwork in its upper rear rooms, to No.3, where the internal rooms are largely intact, to No.4, where there is little visible damage.

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Figure 11 Phased plan of The Barracks

Physical Evidence

1. A site visit was undertaken by George Anelay (West Sussex Archaeology Ltd) and Joe Thompson (Sussex Oak & Iron) on 11th October 2021, which resulted in the identification of five phases to the building.
2. **Phase 1**, dated to between 1857 and 1871 on the map evidence, involved the construction of a row of four two-storeyed cottages. The walls are constructed of chalk cob, a not uncommon building material in this part of Hampshire, sitting upon a dwarf wall laid in flint. The dwarf wall has brick quoins at the four corners and is tarred, although the latter may not be original. The chalk cob wall extends from above the flint dwarf wall to the eaves and appears to be between 500mm to 600mm in thickness. Each cottage has a two-flue brick stack, with Nos.1 & 2 built back-to-back as are Nos. 3 & 4. The bricks are well made, of even size and consistency with an orangey/red colour, and were laid in an earth-based mortar. There were originally two fireplaces to each cottage, one on the ground and one on the first floors. The upper ones have since been covered over (see Phase 4 below).



Figure 12 Exposed section of cob walling in first floor rear room of No.1, looking east



Figure 13 Detail of the chalk cob walling



Figure 14 The dwarf wall supporting the cob of the cottages (to the left of the wooden fence) and the higher level one supporting the walls of the western outshot (to the right)



Figure 15 Ground floor fireplace in the front room of No.1, looking east



Figure 16 The first floor fireplaces now lie blocked up just to the left of the right hand Phase 4 wall, here seen in No.2, looking west

3. The roof is constructed of softwood pole rafters resting on a softwood pole ridge above softwood side purlins. These are supported by softwood collars, but with poplar raking struts and poplar wall-plates. Poplar tends to grow well on wet but not waterlogged sites and the surrounding area may well be a suitable habitat. The use of Poplar, in England, as a structural timber is scarce but not rare in the 18th and 19th centuries. The roof covering was, and still is, thatch, tied to cleft oak laths with tarred twine. The ceiling joists and first floor joists within the cottages are hewn and sawn poplar, with the ceilings composed of lath and plaster covered with two coats of plasterwork comprising a pricking up coat and a finish coat using lime based plaster and finished in a limewash or distemper. The first floor joists are arranged in two lengths running from the front to back of the cottages, supported by an internal partitioning wall between its two original rooms, although this has since been replaced (see Phase 4).



Figure 17 The surviving section of roof over No.4, showing its construction, looking east



Figure 18 Detail of the inside of the roof, showing the cleft oak laths and tarred twine, used to fix the base coat of the straw



Figure 19 The northern first floor poplar joists, here still partly supported on the dividing wall between the two ground floor rooms in No.1, with the elm floor boards above, and a remnant of the lath and plaster in the corner, looking south-west

4. On the first floor, across each of the four cottages, a grooved timber of poplar runs east-west at ceiling level below the ridge. The groove would have accommodated thin boarding, acting as a partition between the heated front bedroom and the two unheated bedrooms/lodging rooms behind. Further grooved timbers ran perpendicularly northwards off these to hold the thin boarding partition that separated the two rear rooms. The floorboards throughout at first floor level appear to be sawn from elm. A single staircase rises from ground to first floor in each cottage in the southern corner opposite the fireplace. The carriage pieces, treads and risers are all of imported softwood.



Figure 20 The grooved timbers in the first floor ceilings that once accommodated thin boarded partitions. To the left is the east-west running one in No.2 (looking east), and to the right is the north-south running example in No.3 (looking north)

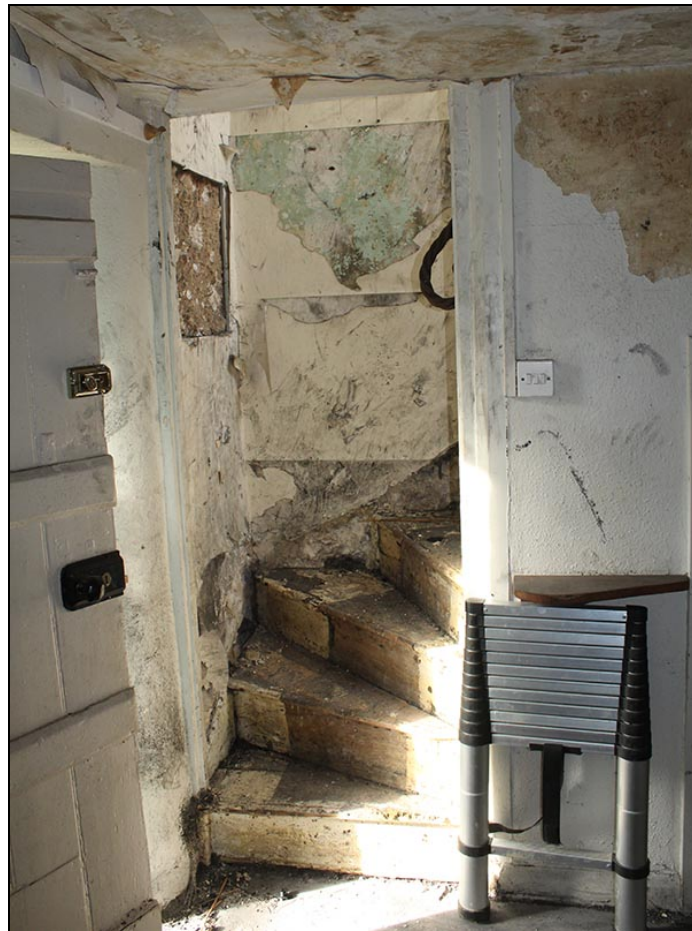


Figure 21 The base of the staircase in the ground floor of No.1, looking west

- Phase 2**, dated to before 1871, involved the addition of single storey outshots to the east and west ends of the terrace of four cottages, presumably for the storage of fuel and other items. Each outshot was partitioned into two, presumably so that each cottage had its own store. These outshots were clearly not built as a piece with the neighbouring cottages, since the brick quoins are separate, do not align, and the former's dwarf wall incorporates a central brick pier, a detail not present in that of the latter. Their original walls were of chalk cob and their roofs of thatch, as evidenced by tarred twine marks surviving on the rafters, to match the cottages. The roof rafters, where not replaced by later alterations, are of softwood poles.



Figure 22 Tarred twine mark on one of the rafters of the eastern outshot, indicating that it was once thatched like the neighbouring cottages, looking east

- Phase 3**, dated to 1900, is the restoration of R. K. Hodgson, memorialised by the carved stone plaque, recessed centrally within a bevelled brick border on the south face of the cottages. This restoration comprised: new external privies; renewed doors and windows; and the replacement of the outshot thatch with tiles. The new privies were constructed of brick, laid in a lime based mortar, with a plain clay tiled roof over and louvres over the doors. All four privies show infilled brickwork low down on the rear wall. This is interpreted as possible evidence for a "hog bog" possibly with the pig-sty or sties attached to the rear of the privies. The keeping of a pig was an important aspect of Victorian husbandry for cottagers. No evidence of any earlier privies survives, so they may have been of earthfast timber construction or earth walled and therefore in need of repair by this date.



Figure 23 The restoration stone centrally set into the south face of the cottages



Figure 24 The eastern pair of new brick privies of Phase 3, looking west



Figure 25 The infilled brickwork in the rear wall of the northern of the two eastern privies, indicating the location of a hole that once may have been linked to a pig-sty behind

7. The existing front doors to Nos.1-3 are probably of Phase 3, judging by their form of construction, and a single surviving understairs cupboard (in No.2) would appear to match. The casement windows inserted in this phase all have six-lights and bevelled brick sills. It is probable that all the Phase 1 windows were removed and replaced, although later Phase 4 changes to the rear windows on the first floor mean that we cannot be certain that they too were included with the others. Certainly no trace of any of the original Phase 1 windows exists. Window catches from this phase survive only on the ground floor south window in No.1 and ground floor rear window in No.2.



Figure 26 The front door of No.1, probably of Phase 3, and the understairs cupboard in No.2

1. The thatch on the outshots was probably removed during this phase and replaced with a plain clay tiled roof, certainly the 1983 photograph describes the building as “part thatched and part tiled”. Later, in Phase 4, the tiles were replaced with shingles, but the ridge tiles retained. The latter have a manufacturer’s stamp with the words “Major Late Sealy Bridgwater”. The Sealy brick and tile works in Bridgwater, Somerset, were taken over by H C Major in 1872, therefore these tiles must date after the original construction of the outshots shown on the 1871 Ordnance Survey map.



Figure 27 A typical Phase 3 window, with bevelled sill



Figure 28 Two of the three surviving Phase 3 window catches, here in the rear room of No.2



Figure 29 The Phase 3 ridge tiles over the eastern outshot, looking south



Figure 30 Detail of one of the Phase 3 ridge tiles, showing the maker's stamp

- Phase 4**, dating from 1970 – 1989, saw the removal of a large amount of the earlier phases' building fabric, both internally and to a lesser extent externally. In all the cottages windows were inserted into the rear north wall at ground floor level to serve newly created bathrooms (see Figure 13 for an example) and pantries, and at first floor level, replacing those already existing. In the case of the latter, this led to the removal of a more substantial area of the cob walling since the decision was taken to replace that existing between the windows with modern brick and concrete.



Figure 31 New Phase 4 window in the pantry of No.2, looking north



Figure 32 New Phase 4 windows, with quarry tiles laid in the sills, in the first floor rear wall of No.1, looking north

3. Internally these Phase 4 changes were linked to the re-ordering of both the ground and first floor layouts. On the first floor the earlier partitions were swept away and stud walling, using imported softwood, plasterboard and new doors, was inserted to form an upstairs landing that obviated the need to pass through one of the rear bedrooms to access the other. The original first floor fireplaces in the front rooms were also infilled, since they did not fit with the new subdivisions.



Figure 33 The new first floor layout of Phase 4, here in No.2, looking south

4. On the ground floor in Phase 4, the original timber partition that had separated the front and rear rooms was replaced in brick, with the rear space subdivided by additional brick walls into three to form a bathroom, kitchen and pantry/cupboards. Coal-fired ranges with back boilers were introduced into the old fireplaces, tied to hot water cylinders located in the adjacent cupboard.



Figure 34 The Phase 4 ground floor internal partitions dividing the rear space into bathroom (to the left), kitchen (centre) and pantry/cupboards, here in No.1.



Figure 35 The Phase 4 pantry (to the left) and cupboards (to the right) in No.1, the only cottage in which they were not later altered or removed, looking east.

5. Also in Phase 4 both outshots had their cob gable walls removed, replaced in blockwork and rendered over, with the western outshot having its southern elevation rebuilt in brick. The Phase 3 plain clay tiles of their roofs were also removed, after 1983, and replaced with Western Red Cedar shingles, though, as mentioned above, the ridge tiles were retained and reused.
6. **Phase 5**, dating to the early 21st century, includes works carried out by both the Middleton Estate, the current owners, and the tenants. The Estate inserted steel flue liners within the chimneys, from the ground floor, in all four Cottages in 2011, and then re-thatched the roofs of Nos. 1 & 2 in 2018. In addition they carried out a range of other general repairs, electrical work and external decoration. During this same phase, or possibly in the later 20th century, the tenants themselves carried out various minor works to personalise their cottages, most significantly both Nos. 3 & 4 removed the cupboards behind the stairs to enlarge their front rooms.

CONCLUSION

1. This mid-19th century row of four farmworkers cottages, as originally built with chalk cob walls and a thatched roof, conforms very closely to their design as laid down by Gwilt in his encyclopaedia of 1842, in terms of their layout and function. He had stated that “no cottage ought to be erected which does not contain a warm, comfortable, plain room, with an oven to bake the bread of its occupier; a small closet for the beer and provisions, two wholesome lodging rooms, one whereof should be for the man and his wife, and the other for his children. It would be well always, if possible, that the boys and girls in a cottage should be separated; but this unfortunately entails an expense, and perhaps is not so materially necessary, because the boys find employment at an early age. A shed for fuel should be attached” (Gwilt, p.816). However subsequent changes have led to significant losses in the original fabric.

2. As will have been noted in the above presentation of the documentary and physical evidence, the date of construction for the Barracks in the Listing description of the early 19th century does not tally with the clear map evidence, which places it within the period 1857 to 1871. This change in date does provoke some questions over its Listing status, since while for the period before 1850 there is a general presumption for the Listing of all surviving houses without substantial alteration, after 1850 the bar is raised “because of the increase in the number of houses and estates built and which survive” (Historic England, p.22). This means that “a greater degree of selection will apply, with the threshold for listing becoming higher as they approach the present day” (Ibid., p.22).
3. In the case of the Barracks, while this is not a matter of determining an application for Listing, there is a possibility that de-Listing will be sought, and as such it is necessary to re-assess the building’s significance. Its re-assignment to the period 1850 to 1939 does therefore have a bearing on this, and two key factors need to be discussed: its rarity and its completeness.
4. In terms of its rarity, as has been mentioned above, chalk cob cottages of the 18th and 19th century are a not uncommon survival amongst the buildings of the Test Valley and the wider Andover region. Of the approximately 2250 Listed Buildings within the Test Valley of all types, some 120 are constructed of cob, not including the numerous Listed boundary walls. 64 of these buildings are cob dwellings belonging to the 18th century, with a further 15 dwellings of 19th century date. This latter figure may exclude cob houses post-1850 should they have failed to meet the tighter criteria governing the Listing of buildings after that date.
5. In terms of completeness, the outer walls are largely intact, albeit with the loss of all the original window openings and parts of the rear first storey fabric. The roof survives only over No.4 at the eastern end of the terrace. Internally the only original features to survive are the four staircases, with the original first floor layout no longer visible, and the ground partition replaced and multiplied in brick. Therefore should restoration of these cottages be considered, it must be remembered that in terms of fabric, it will be solely the cob walls and the eastern end of the roof that will represent the original building.
6. It is not the function of this report to comment upon the condition of the surviving cob walling, save to state that it was historically considered important to prevent water ingress for the sake of its stability, hence the use of dwarf walls in flint and brick, the projecting of the eaves, and the use of render. The extinguishing of the fire in March 2021 has inevitably led to the ingress of much water into the upper part of the cob walling in Nos.1-3.

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