

Holly Farm

Alston

Axminster

EX13 7LG

Summary

This heritage statement has been written to support a proposal for a repair and restoration of a detached stone building associated with a Grade 2 listed building. Its purpose is to assess the significance of the stone building and the impact of the proposal.

Holly Farm is a Grade 2 listed building, located within the Blackdown Hills Natural Landscape. It was built in the late 18th century as a farmhouse with an attached barn/shippon. It is situated on a lane leading to the hamlet of Alston.

The farmhouse is of significance for its historic and architectural value although the significance of its component parts varies. The front elevation of the former farmhouse towards the west end of the building is the most architecturally significant and least altered aspect of the exterior. The east end, which was built as a barn or shippon probably at the same time as the house has a locally sourced split hardwood and straw thatched roof over clad with corrugated tin probably dating from the 1940's. The front elevation of the shippon is constructed with a stone stem wall with locally sourced cob.

There are a number of outbuildings in the curtilage of the Listed farmhouse including a recently renovated workshop space, greenhouse and a pole barn (in disrepair).

There is a Right of Way running through the farm holding. On the opposite side of the Right of Way there is a sloping paddock, a modern wooden stable, a stone building converted into a stable with a replacement mono pitch corrugated metal roof, now in a state of disrepair, with an attached concrete block stone building with a corrugated cement fibre roof which is also in need of repair. It is the intention to repair and preserve this building.

Context

Rural Devon is rich in vernacular farm buildings which reflect the geology, building traditions and farming practices of the county. In the East of the county stone and cob was the dominant building material and remained popular into the C19th.

Smaller farms dominated the area, sheep farming with some cattle created the agricultural landscape that defines the local topography. Grain crops such as oats and barley were grown in small quantities as a part of small-scale mixed farming. This generated a need for cow houses or shippons on the farmsteads that were built for over wintering a small number of cattle. On small farms, farmhouses were usually built under the same roof but usually without an internal connection between house and farm building.

Significance of Holly Farm

The farmhouse and former barn/shippon were listed Grade 2 in 1984.

Holly Farm is of high significance for its external form and features and is a good example of a vernacular farmhouse in the area. However, due to alterations that have been carried out to the property, the significance of different parts of the building varies. Internally the domestic layout has been altered and has less significance but the building envelope of the former barn/shippon at the east end remains of high significance for its historical and architectural value.

Historic development of Holly Farm

The form of the building is typical of 18th Century vernacular farmhouses in East Devon. It is constructed with semi dressed limestone and sandstone quoins and lintels with rubble infill under a later man-made slate roof. The shippon has a low stone wall with cob above and a corrugated tin roof over the remains of thatch. The date of construction is not precisely known, but the appearance and style of the building is consistent with a date in the late 18th century. The central doorway, with windows to the rooms to either side of a central corridor is typical. The property appears on the Tithe map of 1888 and the holding is shown subsequently in 1939 and 1971.

Repair and preservation of associated stone building

The farmhouse is situated on the east facing slopes overlooking the Axe Valley. The farmhouse faces North, directly onto a lane. The stone building, which is the subject of this proposal, lies perpendicular to the farmhouse, facing East. Due to the topography and curving line of the lane, when approaching from the A358, there is a full view of the east elevation of the stone building.



Figure 1. looking west from lane into Alston. Farmhouse on left, stone building facing.



Figure 2. looking south from Alston. Farmhouse facing, stone building on right.

Description of stone building

Although in a state of disrepair, it can clearly be seen that the stone building was built to a higher standard than would have been usual for agricultural purposes as these were typically of cob construction. The semi dressed stonework to the external corners and openings would suggest a previous alternative use. Confirmation that the outbuilding was originally residential can be found in the 1841 Tithe map *fig 3* where the Tithe 561a is referenced as “House and garden”. There is anecdotal evidence that suggests the building might have subsequently been used as a schoolhouse.

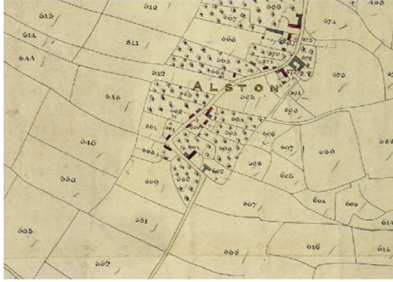


Figure 3. 1841 Tithe map.

It is thought that the original structure would have been similar to the farmhouse, a two story dwelling with a central door and windows to either side to both floors with the top floor window openings finishing at eaves level, under a thatched roof.

The outbuilding is constructed of mainly chert rubble with limestone quoins to the corners and openings *figs 4 and 5*.

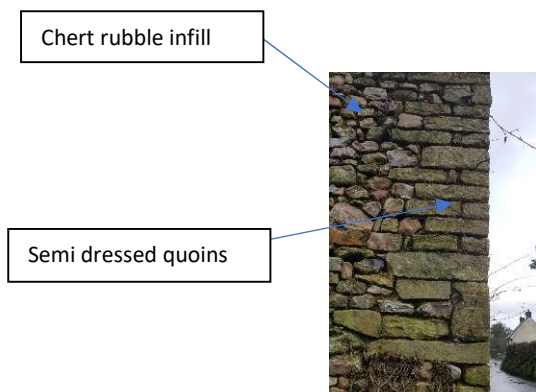


Figure 4. stone building corner.

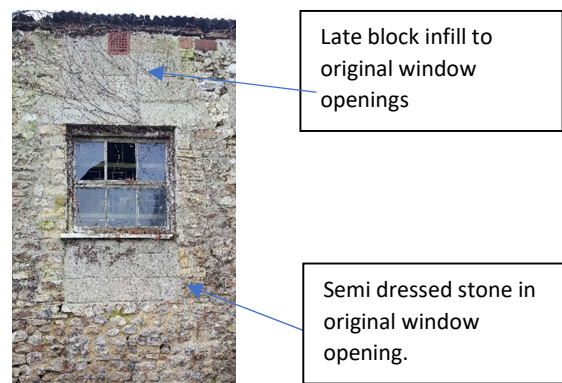


Figure 5. stone building window.

As typical of older buildings, it would appear that this building has evolved into its current form through changing needs and material availability. There is no evidence as to when these changes were made but the use of inappropriate materials and techniques have resulted in the premature failure of some elements.

The majority of these alterations are likely to have occurred when the property changed from residential to agricultural/equestrian use. These alterations can be summarised as: -

- The walls to the west elevation have been reduced in height to accommodate a mono pitch corrugated tin roof.
- Additional doors created in west elevation. *Fig 9*
- Additional door created in north elevation.
- Original doorway to east elevation infilled. *Fig 6*
- Window openings in east elevation partially infilled. *Figs 7 & 8*
- Concrete floor added.
- Blockwork stone building and timber store added. *Fig 10*
- Concrete apron laid.
- Internal blockwork stalls created.



Figure 6. infilled doorway.

There are currently two windows, one to each side of the former central door. This arrangement is the same architectural style as the farmhouse. The cement blocks above and below these windows would indicate that these windows have been replaced and significantly changed in position *fig 7*. The style of these windows would suggest they were fitted post 1940's. The windows have been raised up from the level of the ground floor windows possibly to protect them from damage from animals and to simplify the alteration.



Figure 7. left hand window.



Figure 8. right hand window.

Three doorways were created in the west face of the stone building *fig 9*, possibly utilising two previous window openings and an original doorway. One of these doorways has subsequently been infilled with concrete block. These alterations, along with water ingress from the failing roof and rainwater goods, have caused some structural instability on this wall.



Figure 9. west elevation

At some point a concrete block extension *fig 10* and an attached timber framed log store have been added around the northwest corner of the stone building. These are also in need of repair.



Figure 10. concrete block extension.

Impact assessment of proposal

This proposal is in response to

- The owner requires the property to be stabilised, made safe and be a useable asset.
- The building is associated to a Grade 2 listed heritage asset and preserving its historic and architectural character and inter-relationship with the Farmhouse is a priority.

It is proposed that,

- The walls of the stone building will be renovated with traditional materials. The west wall will be partially dismantled and rebuilt using existing materials.
- The wall to the west elevation will be rebuilt to the same height as the east and a metal clad hipped roof added.
- The concrete extension will be renovated, with a new corrugated steel gabled roof and stable doors.
- Create a continuous roof over the concrete extension and timber log store.

Conclusion

Holly Farm farmhouse is a Grade 2 listed building within the Blackdown Hills Natural Landscape. The proposal is

- to restore the stone building and reinstate a hipped roof line.
- to renovate the concrete extension and add a gabled roof incorporating the log store.

This proposal will stabilise and make safe the structure of the stone building whilst improving the visual amenity of a heritage asset. It will not cause harm to the heritage asset.
