Heneb: Clwyd-Powys Archaeology

Project PD25-107

Report 2158

James Farm, Ruabon

Level One Building Survey



Archaeoleg Clwyd-Powys
Heneb
Clwyd-Powys Archaeology

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Summary

Heneb undertook a level One building survey of a set of farm buildings in December 2025 on behalf of the James Estate Caravan Park, Ruabon, Wrexham, LL14 6DW in advance of the conversion of the building into five dwellings.

The survey found that the buildings were likely constructed between 1880 and 1900 replacing an earlier set of buildings likely to date to the mid-19th century. The buildings are still discernible but have been modified in the modern period. Traces of the earlier set of buildings are also still visible in some parts of the buildings.

Crynodeb

Cynhaliodd Heneb arolwg adeiladau Lefel 1 o adeiladau fferm ym mis Rhagfyr 2025 ar ran Parc Carafanau Ystad James, Rhiwabon, Wrecsam, LL14 6DW, cyn trosi'r adeiladau'n bum annedd.

Canfu'r arolwg fod yr adeiladau'n debygol o fod wedi'u hadeiladu rhwng 1880 a 1900, gan ddisodli adeiladau gynharach a oedd yn debygol o ddyddio i ganol y 19eg ganrif. Mae'r adeiladau'n dal i'w hadnabod, ond maent wedi'u haddasu yn y cyfnod modern.

1 Introduction

1.1. Heneb: Clwyd-Powys Archaeology were instructed by Bob Roberts (the client) to undertake a Level 1 Historic Building Recording (L1HBR) for proposed development of James Farm, Ruabon Wrexham, LL14 6DW (planning reference P/2020/0576) (Figures 1 and 2 and NGR SJ 30209 43373). The development involves the conversion the outbuildings to five dwellings. A detailed plan and elevations of the existing barns are shown in drawings 1 to 4 at the end of this report.



Figure 1: Location of the site. Google Imagery © 2025 Airbus, Bluesky, Infoterra Ltd & COWI A/S, Maxar Technologies Map data ©2025.

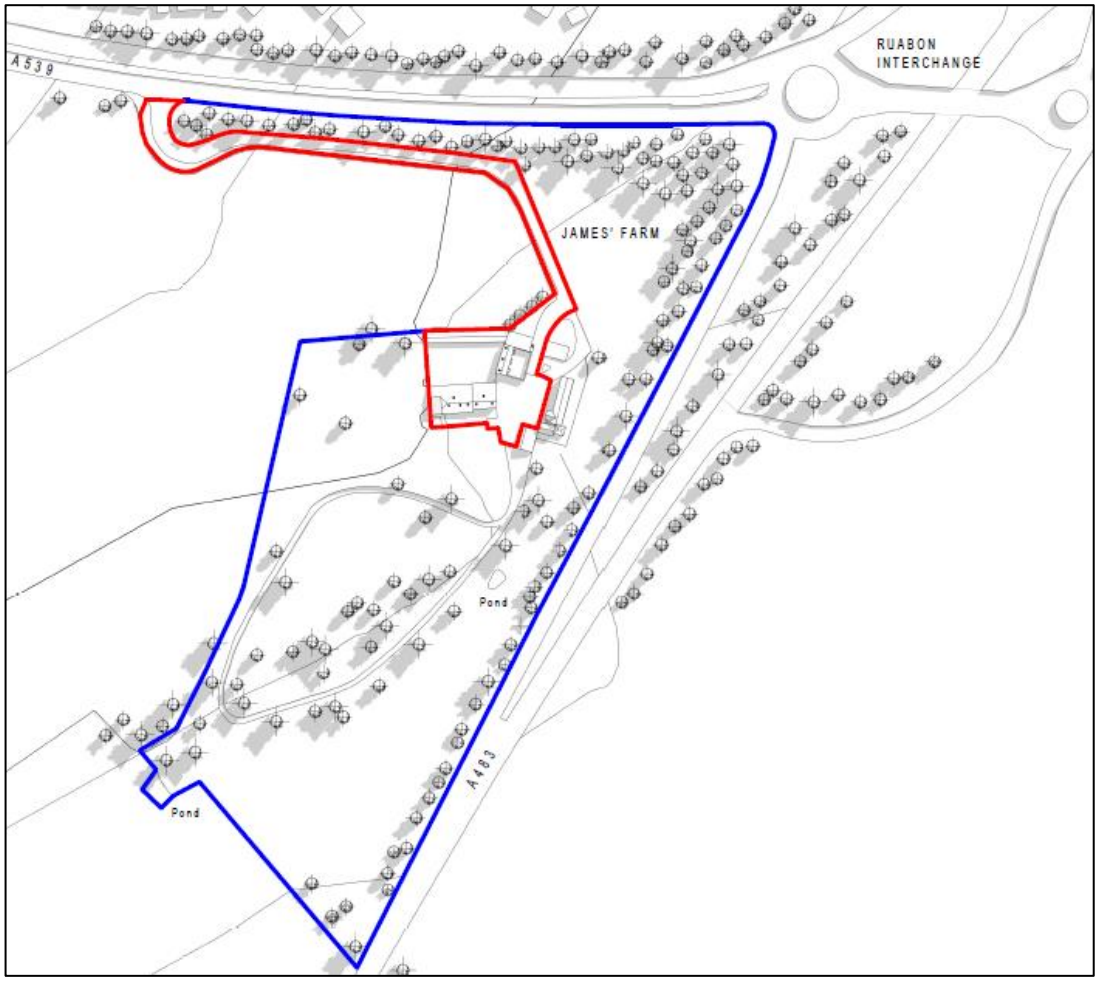


Figure 2: Location plan of the proposed development. Image courtesy of the client.

Location, geology and topography

1.2. The site is located just south of the town of Ruabon, adjacent to the A483 trunk road. It is located within a rural environment, with grassland and woodland planting, and hard standing for the caravan pitches.

1.3. The geology consists of the Elwy Formation - Mudstone, siltstone and sandstone. Sedimentary bedrock formed between 427.4 and 423.6 million years ago during the Silurian period. The superficial deposits consist of Alluvium - Clay, silt, sand and gravel. Sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 11.8 thousand years ago and the present during the Quaternary period.

2 Historical Background

2.1. Jame's Farm is not depicted on the 1845 Tithe Map, which depicted three houses on the site, which formed part of the Wynnstay Estate. The farm was constructed between 1845 and 1879 (Figure 3). The extant complex dates from between 1880 and 1900 and partially replaced the earlier farm buildings (Figure 4).

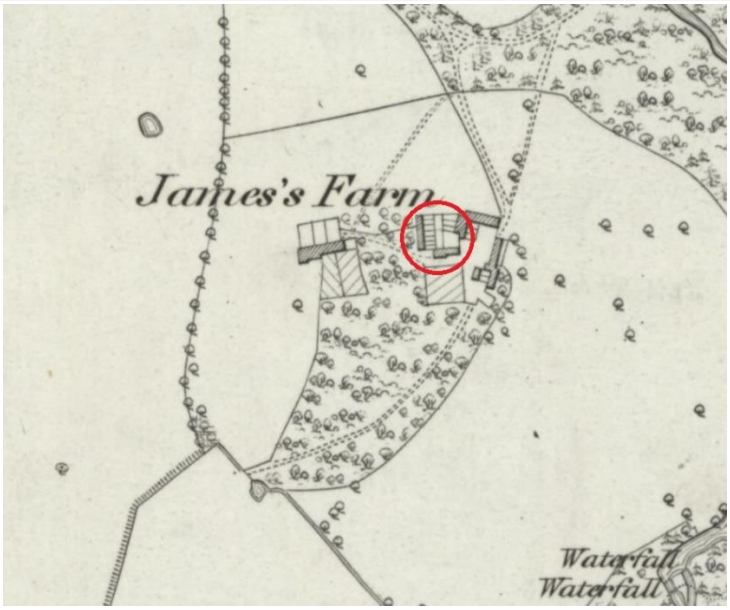


Figure 3. Extract from the 1879 Ordnance Survey map showing the study area prior to the construction of the extant buildings (circled in red). Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

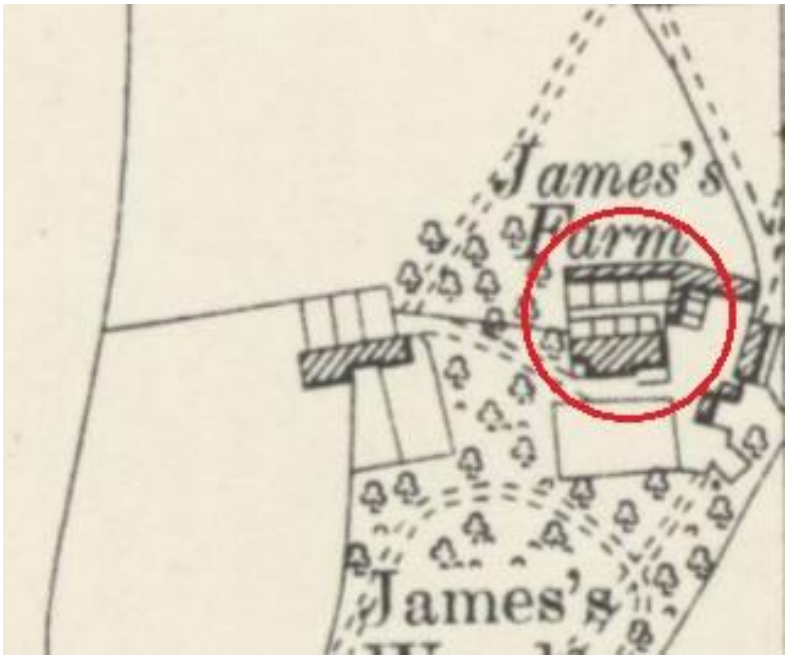


Figure 4. Extract from the 1900 Ordnance Survey map showing the study area (circled in red) and the extant buildings on the site. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

3 Building Survey

3.1. The survey was conducted in December 2025 in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) (2020) *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures.* A photographic location plan (Drawing 5) is located at the end of this report, with contact sheets containing all the photographs taken during the survey.

Overview

3.2. The complex consists of three buildings built around a central courtyard. All appear to have been built for the stabling of horses and the storage of associated fodder, tack and implements. The construction on the internal courtyard side is generally of red brick whilst the outside is of roughly dressed stone blocks with quoins at the corners and some dressed decorative elements, especially on building 2. All three structures show evidence of several phases of alterations and extensions over their lifetime. In the recent past some parts of buildings 1 and 2 have been used to rear dogs and have several kennels built into them. All buildings are currently used for general storage.

Building 1

3.3. Building one consists of a range of nine stables with each approximately 4m wide and 4m deep. External walls are built from roughly coursed stone blocks whilst internal walls and those facing into the courtyard are built from red brick. The roof is clad with thick slate tiles.

3.4. The two stables on each end of the range still retain their external brick walls facing out into the yard with windows and stable doors (Figure 5), whilst the five in the centre have had these walls removed to form open bays. This change is indicated by the presence of original plinth bricks where the doorways would have been and pivot stones for doors next to these, as well as the remains of wooden latches (Figures 6 and 7).

3.5. Five of these have triangular stone water troughs built into one or other of the rear corners of the stables (Figure 8). Four don't have any remaining signs of troughs, though they may have been removed when doorways were knocked through the partition walls between the stables (Figure 9). One bay shows the possible remains of a food manger in the corner (Figure 10).

3.6. All the stables in this range contained a wooden beam built into the brick work of the internal walls of all the stables at a height of approximately 0.8m about ground level, these have had a variety of small iron fittings attached, mainly consisting of rings and various nails that have been added over time.

3.7. The floors of all the stables in Building 1 consist of brick paving and the roof is tiled with thick coarse slates, possibly original (Figure 11). The roof has three vents spaced evenly along its ridge with one in the centre and the others approximately 8.5m from each end. The west gable end is constructed abutting a revetment wall and the east gable end abuts a presumed stone-built loading platform (Figure 12). The east end has timber lacing built into the exterior, this is not visible on the interior (Figure 13). Each gable end has a high-level iron air vent.



Figure 5. East end of building 1 with front wall of stable, window and doorway in situ. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_077



Figure 6. Parts of wooden latches visible protruding from multiple partition walls. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_074



Figure 7. Differences in brickwork and the pivot stone indicate a brick wall has been removed from the fronts of the open bays. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_064

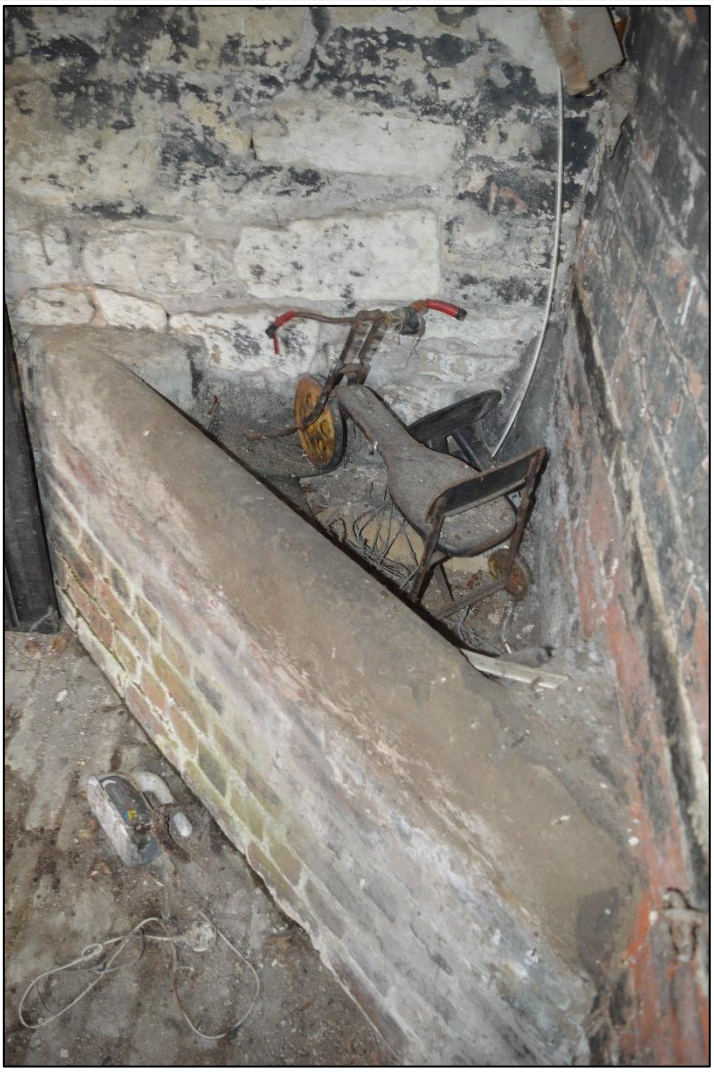


Figure 8. stone water trough in the rear corner of one of the stables in building 1. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_058.



Figure 9. doorway knocked through the rear of the partition walls, possibly removing any water trough. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_068.



Figure 10. Possible remains of food manger in rear corner of one of the stables. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_069.



Figure 11, Thick, Coarse slate roof tiles on building 1. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_051.



Figure 12. The east gable end of building 1 abutting an earlier presumed loading platform. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_083.



Figure 13. East gable end of building 1 with timber lacing. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_082.

Building 2

3.8. Building two consists of a range of three stables with small walled yards. The external walls are built from roughly dressed stone blocks on each end and facing into the courtyard with the front of the building being in red brick. The exterior wall of the building facing into the courtyard shows signs of multiple phases of alterations. To the front of the building each stable has a high walled yard with central gate at the end. The wall around each yard is brick on the inside and the exterior is faced with stone. The roof is tiled with thin slates, possibly indicating it has been reclad (Figure 14).

3.9. Each stable is accessed by a large door with overhead light (Figure 15). The stable at the south end still has the metal manger in situ (Figure 16) whilst the other only have the fittings or wall recess present (Figure 17). Triangular brick plinths were located in the rear corners of the central and north stables, these may have once been water troughs or upstands for troughs or they may be structural (Figure 18).

3.10. Above the stables is a loft space accessed via a staircase and ladder in the south stable. The staircase is a later addition, and the primary access was likely the ladder to the right of the door (Figures 20 and 21). The loft space originally had three high level access points on the exterior walls; one, still present and operational, on the south end. One blocked up with stonework on the west side facing into the courtyard, and one on the north end leading out to the loading stage which is now a glazed window (Figures 14, 19 and 23).

3.11. The rear side of building 2 facing the internal courtyard has several small patches of infill where there may have been wooden structures adjoining the side of the building, possibly including a raised floor. The yard has been surfaced with loose gravel so no further signs of these structures were visible during the survey (Figures 22 and 23).



Figure 14. Building 2 viewed from the south-east. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_088.



Figure 15. The central stable in building 2 as viewed from the yard. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_094

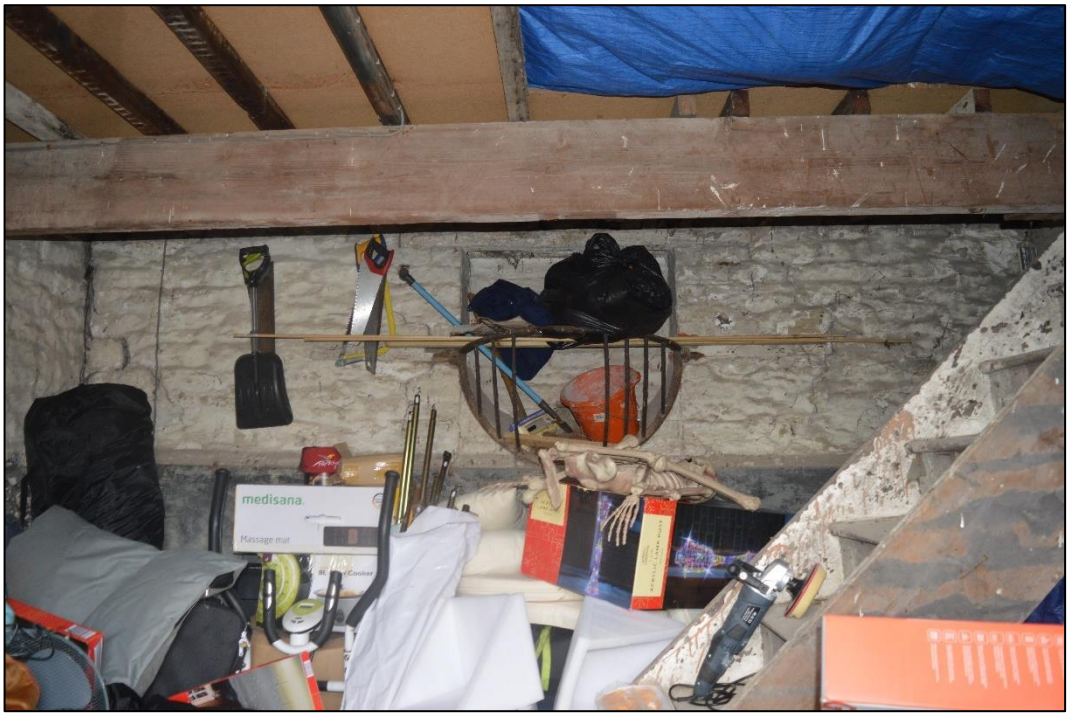


Figure 16. wall metal wall mounted manger. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_092.



Figure 17. recess for wall mounted manger in building 2. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_097.



Figure 18. Triangular brick plinth in the north stable. The north gable end of building 2 can be seen to be constructed on top of the stone loading platform. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_102.



Figure 19. Building 2 viewed from the north. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_085.



Figure 20. Ladder leading to the loft in the north stable. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_093.



Figure 21. The loft space in building 2 as viewed through the access on the south gable end. The top of the access ladder in the south stable is visible to the right. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_081.



Figure 22. the rear of building 2 as viewed form the courtyard. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_107,



Figure 23. the rear of Building 2 with detail of the blocked up access, bolts for internal metal wall mounted mangers and various potential putlog spaces. Differences in coursing and wall material can also be seen. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_108.

Building 3

3.12. Building three consists of a range of three single stables and one stable with four stalls as well as an ancillary building at the west end. The external walls are built from roughly dressed stone blocks to the front and east gable end. The rear of the building, facing into the courtyard, has had an extension built of red brick added, this shows signs of having several phases of alteration over time. The roof is tiled with thin slates, possibly indicating it has been reclad (Figures 24 and 25).

3.13. The three stables at the east end of the building are accessed by high doors with windows above and all contain recesses and fittings for wall mounted mangers (Figures 26 and 27).

3.14. The central portion of the building is accessed by a wide door with small window above (Figure 28). Inside there are four stalls with partitions of wood with iron fittings. There are four recesses in the rear wall, likely for wall mounted mangers (Figure 29). The floor within the stalls is paved with brick whilst the space between the stalls and front of the building is paved with stone flags. Between the two types of paving is a gutter running along the length of the building (Figure 30).

3.15. To the west of this is an area now used as a workshop and tool store which appears to be a later addition in stone and brick. To the west of this is an additional modern workshop (Figures, 24, 31, 32 and 33).

3.16. To the rear of the stables on the inside of the courtyard is a brick-built addition which likely housed implements and equipment (Figure 34). The only access to this from the front of the building is through a small door in the modern workshop and down a small wooden flight of stairs to account for the difference in ground level at this end of the building. This area has been much altered with the addition of brick walls, windows and doorways over time. In the east end of this range is a small office or workshop which houses a staircase along the eastern gable end allowing access to the loft space above the stables (Figures 35, 36 and 38). There is a high level access to the loft area on the east wall which still has some original fittings for lifting gear, at the time of the survey it was obscured by plant growth (Figure 39). In the floor of this workshop are two wooden beams which appear to have once been base plates, possibly for some sort of machinery, engine, boiler or generator (Figure 37).

3.17. The building is roofed in thin slates and there are visible lines in the slates where the building has been extended.



Figure 24. building 3 viewed from the south-west. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_031.



Figure 25. The east gable end of building 3. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_001.



Figure 26. The three stables at the east end of building 3. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_004.



Figure 27. internal recess for wall mounted manger. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_009.



Figure 28. The central portion of building 3. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_014.



Figure 29. wooden and iron stall fittings in the central portion of building 3. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_016.



Figure 30. the floor in the central stable. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_020.



Figure 31. the west end of building 3 viewed from the south-west. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_031.



Figure 32. what is probably the original west end of the stable block as viewed from inside the workshop/tool store. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_024.

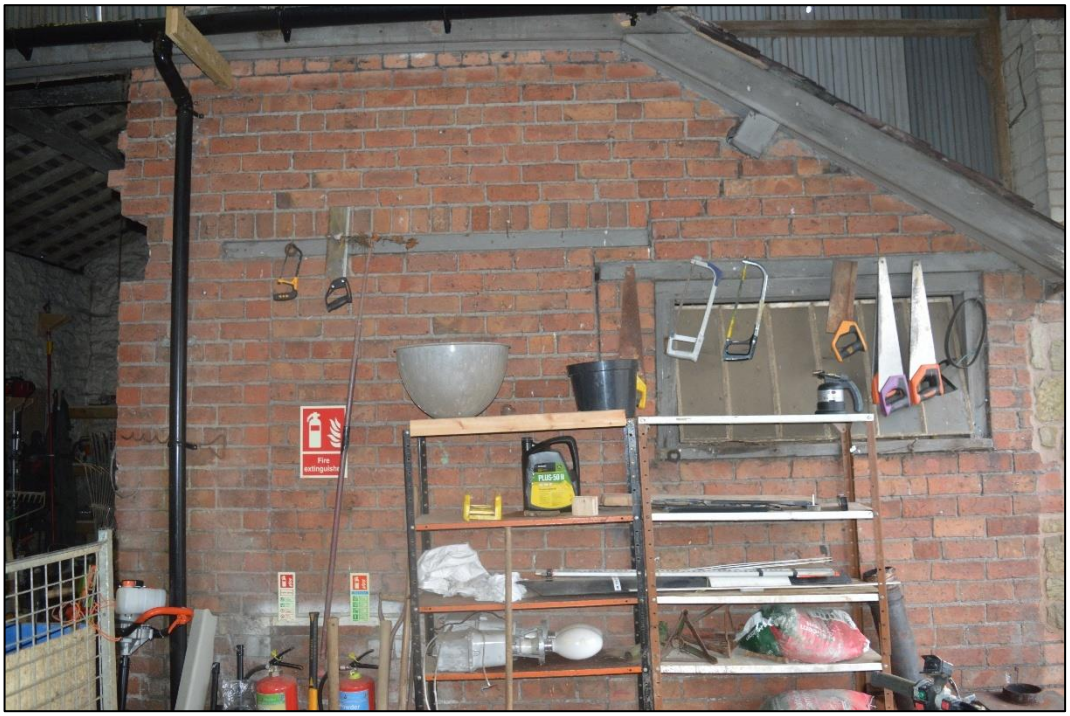


Figure 33. The gable end of the earlier phase of of extension of building 3 at the west end now visible inside the workshop. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_030.



Figure 34. The rear of building 3 facing into the courtyard. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_033.



Figure 35. The workshop at the east end of building 3. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_042.



Figre 36. The stairs leading to the loft space above the stables in building 3. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_046.



Figure 37. the wooden base plates built intot he floor of the workshop. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_045.



Figure 38. the loft space above the stables in building 3. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_047.



Figure 39. the high level access to the loft space in building 3. Photo: Heneb PD24-107_048.

4 Conclusions

4.1. The original buildings were likely constructed as a stud farm, though it doesn't appear on the tithe map. The buildings were constructed to a planned design using architectural flourishes and were likely partially replaced between 1880 and 1900 (see historical maps) replacing an earlier arrangement likely constructed in the mid-19th century, the remains of which can still be seen within the fabric of the building.

4.2. The condition of the original buildings and layout are still discernible and many original fittings and features still remain, but they have been somewhat modified and added to during the modern period.

5 Sources

Cartographic sources

1845 Tithe apportionment for Ruabon Parish

1879 Ordnance Survey 6 inch 1st edition Denbighshire Sheet 35

1900 Ordnance Survey 6 inch 2nd edition Denbighshire Sheet 35SW

6 Archive Selection Strategy

PD25-107 James Farm, Ruabon (NGR SJ 30209 43373) Level One Building Survey 05.01.2026 Selection Strategy v2.0	
Project Management	
Project Manager	Tim Malim
Project Supervisor	Karl Macrow
Archives Manager	Sophie Edwards
Project Stakeholders	
Project Lead / Project Assurance	Mark Walters, Development Control Archaeologist for Heneb: The Trust for Welsh Archaeology
Client / Landowner	R. Roberts
Other	David Hughes Architects
Collecting Institutions	
Regional HER	Clwyd-Powys
HER Enquiry Number	N/A
HER Event PRN	215675
Digital Archive Repository	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
Documentary Archive Repository	N/A
Finds Archive Repository	N/A
Museum Accession Number	N/A

Digital Project Data			
Project sub-folders	**Data**	**Retained**	**Selected for Archive**
Admin			
H&S - RAMS	Risk Assessment	Y	N
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation	Y	Y (as report appendix 1)
Client Data	Planning documents/other files provided by the client.	Y	N
Correspondence	Correspondence records relevant to the project	Y	N
Drafting	Working site drawings/illustrations	Y	N
Finds data	Finds catalogues/specialist reports etc	N/A	N/A
GIS data	Survey data	N/A	N/A
Metadata	Metadata report for all files submitted as part of the archive.	Y	Y
Photography	117 digital photographs (.tif)	N	Y
Report	HENEB Report 2158 (.docx/.pdf)	Y	Y
Report Illustrations	Illustrations generated for inclusion within the project report	Y	N
Research Data	Research data – always secondary sources and available elsewhere	Y	N
Site data	Scanned site records	N/A	N/A
Temporary	Temporary storage for temporary files – always deleted at project completion	N	N



EXISTING EAST ELEVATION
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EXISTING EAST SECTION
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PROJECT TITLE
JAMES' FARM, RUABON

DRAWING TITLE
EXISTING EXTERNAL ELEVATIONS - EAST

PROJECT No
19216

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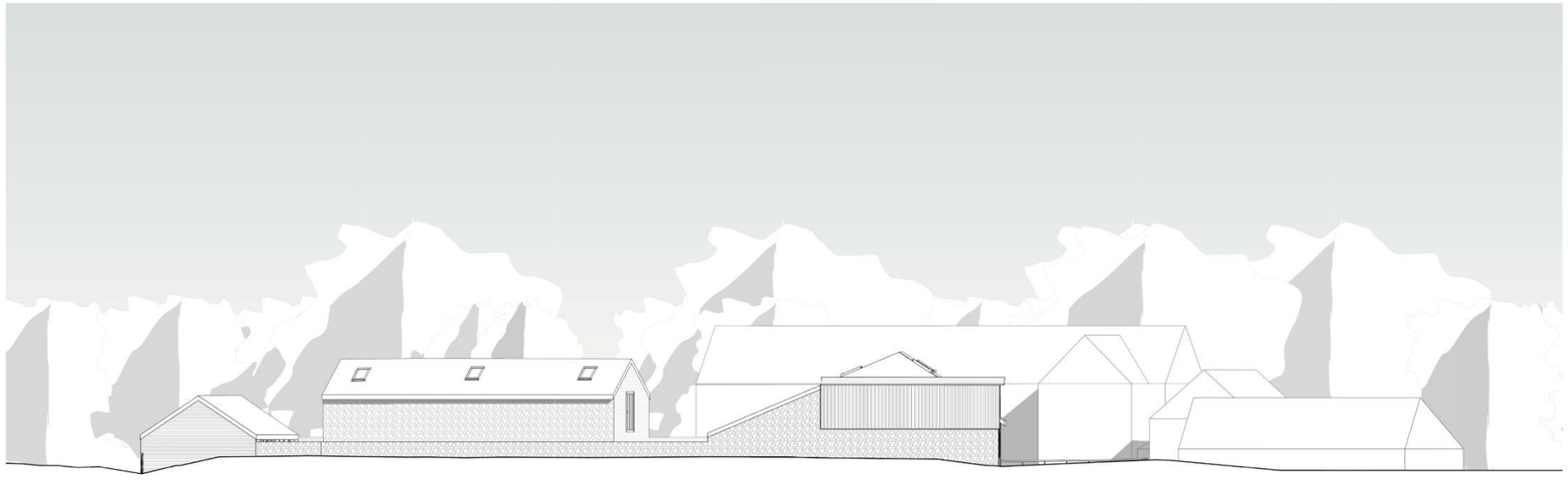
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Drawing 1: Existing external elevations - east



EXISTING SOUTH ELEVATION
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EXISTING WEST ELEVATION
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PROJECT TITLE
JAMES' FARM, RUABON

DRAWING TITLE
EXISTING EXTERNAL ELEVATIONS - SOUTH & WEST

PROJECT No 19216
SCALE @ A3 1 : 200

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Drawing 2: Existing external elevations – south and west



Drawing 3: existing ground floor plan



Drawing 4: Existing first floor plan



Drawing 5: Photograph location plan


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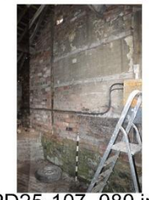

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