

SU 727 849/ 1985.

BIX MANOR FARM.

Parish:- BIX, OXON.

Owner:- P. Doyle.

This survey was carried out with the kind permission of the owner.



Bix Manor Farm - West Gable.

LISTED BUILDINGS ENTRY:- Grade II.

HOUSE. C17 with C19 and C20 alterations. Flint with brick dressings to ground floor, timber-framed first floor, rendered wing to right; tile roof; brick ridge chimneys. Main front at right-angles to street. 2-storey 3 window range with projecting C19 2-storey wing to right. Gabled roof. Three 3-light casements to first floor, 3-light casement to wing. C19 tiled gabled timber-framed porch to left with studded plank door. 2 rectangular bay windows under continuous lean-to roof to right, roof continues along side of wing. 3-light casement to ground floor of wing. Interior:- Jowled wall post visible along 1st floor corridor.

BARN. C17, extended possibly C19. Brick and flint base, timber-frame, C20th brick infill, tile roof. 3-bay barn with attached 3-bay barn to right. Central double-doored hipped midstrety. Jowled wall post, Queen post roof.

BIX MANOR FARM is situated high on the Chiltern hills at the south-western end of the parish of Bix. It may well represent the successor of the manorial site of Bix Gibbon, one of the two manors of the parish mentioned in Domesday, although it is impossible to say where each of the manors were. They lost their individual identity after they went into the ownership of the Stonors some time in the 14th century, although both are still shown on Christopher Saxton's map of 1607. The map is, however, too small to make an identification of the manorial sites possible.

Less than a mile north-east of the farm is the site of a small Romano-British villa, also on high ground, which had signs of later Saxon occupation, showing the continued occupation of this area for at least 1600 years.

The 1725 Stonor Estate Map shows William Benwell as the tenant of the farm of 90 acres. On the 1710 Stonor rent roll Wm. Benwell pays £82.15.0 p.a. Wm. Benwell owned or rented more land at Bix which is not shown as Stonor land on the map. His farm house is also situated just off the Stonor map but was drawn in by the map maker in the position where Manor Farm is to-day. His fields (coloured pink) are situated to the north of the turnpike road, which did not exist then, and which make up "Old Manor Farm" to-day.

A will made in 1697 by Henry Benwell yeoman throws some light on the Benwell family connection with Bix. Henry Benwell leaves his closes, arable land, coppices, barns and orchards to his two sons William and Thomas. Many of the field names can be identified on the Stonor Map and the 1840 Tithe Map, such as Church Ground, Greenmarsh, Plants Water, Bushy Coppice, Chambre, Hill Close, Crossleys, land in the Common Field and at Willises (a barn and orchard just to the west of the modern "Benwell's Farm"). In 1725 most fields seemed to have belonged to either of the Benwell brothers, with the exception of what is "Benwell's Farm" to-day, the tenant of which was then Henry Davies. In 1840 that farm is still recognizably the same (compare field names), the tenant is Thomas Turner, while Francis Dearlove is tenant of Manor farm, his fields still occupying the area to the north of the turnpike road.

Henry Benwell died a well off yeoman farmer. His inventory was worth £408.6.0. in September 1697. His house had 6 rooms. The 1665 Hearth Tax shows that H. Benwell had a house with 4 hearths. He had a well valued at £2.10.0. (no doubt a rare and much appreciated item on this farm in the dry Chilterns). He had a mixed farm with sheep (approximately a flock of 90), pigs and six cows. His corn in the barns was worth £65. £3 worth of corn was in sacks. He had probably sold quite a lot of his harvest already because £100.04.00. in ready money plus £50 in debts owing are mentioned in the inventory. It is very unusual for farming inventories to show large sums of ready money except at harvest time.

William Benwell's will of 1745 again mentions many of the same field names, but none refer to the present day "Benwell's Farm". He leaves his property to his son Joseph. After this I have no more documentary evidence connecting the Benwell family with Bix.

The farm remained a property of the Stonor family until 1894 when it was offered as lots 98 and 99 at a sale. A farm of 143 acres, a house with 3 reception rooms, 6 bedrooms and offices, one large double barn, cart and nag stables, cow houses, sheds, piggeries, granary, cart shed, engine house and yards, let to Mr. E. Baines. "Benwell's Farm" was also sold, as lot 103, it comprised 28 acres, also in the occupation of Mr. E. Baines.

Old Manor Farm did not exist and must have been created after this sale. The Manor Farm and Benwell's, together with what remained of Willises were still in one ownership in the 1930's. Farm accounts of the period 1928-34 survive

and are in the possession of Mr. Doyle. Some of the field names mentioned are familiar such as Willis Stable Meadow, Reynolds Meadow, Drews Wood, Orchard at Old Plough Inn, Hill Close and Spinnings Field. Col. Cousins was the owner or tenant at this time and kept meticulous accounts. It is interesting to see that a large milking herd had replaced the cereal production and flock of sheep of Henry Benwell's days. The oldest barn may well date from the 17th century, whilst the 3-bay extension is probably of late 18th or early 19th century date. Those were times of increased grain production, wheat for the growing population of London, barley for the growing malting trade of Henley. However, by the end of the 19th century farmers had to look elsewhere for a living. The cheap grain from America made production here unprofitable. The entries for the milk yields show that on average 275 to 290 gallons per week were produced (no numbers of cows given). The largest amount went to the Milk Marketing Board at Remenham Dairy, but the farm also supplied the population of Bix directly, including the school and rectory.

There are numerous entries about cow and calves' sales at Henley market, most cows were worth between £6 and £10. The farm also seems to have run a thriving market garden. Many seeds were bought from Sutton & Sons, Reading, and fruit and vegetables sold at Henley and at Bix. An annual tithe of £41.14.2. still had to be paid to the Rev. Formby. The only entry referring to arable on the farm is "1 1/4 days thrashing to Steam Saw Mill, Messrs. J. Froud & Sons, 1929" probably for home consumption since it does not appear on the sales entries.

Local Henley firms such as Waldens the builders carry out repair work to the barn at "Benwell's Farm"; Champions are suppliers of brooms, paint, cartridges and repairers of milking machines.

The farm buildings are arranged around a large yard with the double barn occupying the south side. A cow house adjoins the barn at right angles, backing onto the road. Opposite, on the east side of the yard is a brick and flint coach house, now converted into offices. The farm house occupies the north side of the yard. There are several smaller stables and loose boxes. Most of the farm buildings date from this or the end of the last century, as does the cow-house. ✓ All its roof timbers are white-washed. It is built of machine made bricks. None of the original furnishings remain.

The Farmhouse - see listed buildings entry - could well be the one described in the 1697 inventory of Henry Benwell, although much has been altered, the original 2-bay building still forms the central part. An internal inspection was not carried out.

The double barn.

A measured survey of this building was carried out. - It consists of two 3-bay buildings with central threshing floors, double doors and porches on the farm yard side. The overall length is 27.60m by 6m width. The older barn (called Barn I on the drawing) has substantial timbers, a low plinth, middle rail, tie and collar with queen struts and clasped purlins. The rafters are jointed at the apex. The barn is now weatherboarded on the farmyard side and has an attractive herringbone brick infill on the south side. There is, however, evidence that the lower square panels originally had wattle and daub infill (grooves along the top of the sole plate and holes in the underside of the middle rail), while the top panels seem to have had studs (also grooves along the top of the middle rail and empty mortises in the underside of the wall plate) - see sectional elevation. The porch is a later addition, it replaces a smaller exit door. The timbers in the porch are of narrow scantling and have diagonal struts, like those of Barn II.

Barn II adjoins barn I at its west gable. It has a high plinth, narrow studs and diagonal struts. The tie beam is very substantial, but the raking queen posts are narrow. They support the purlins. There are no principal rafters. The common rafters meet at a ridge piece. The central porch is of the same build and is $3\frac{1}{2}$ m long. The barn has a tiled roof. It is in excellent condition throughout and is now used for general storage.

The farm is no longer a working farm, and other farm buildings surrounding the yard are a brick and flint coach house, now converted into offices, as well as stable buildings and loose boxes. Most buildings are used for general storage purposes. Internal inspections were not carried out.

A copy of this report will go to the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments, London, and the Oxfordshire County Museum, Woodstock.

This survey was carried out by members of the Henley Archaeological & Historical Group.

Scale drawings:- B. Clenshaw, J. Howard, R. Gibson.

Photographs:- P. Anderson.

Report and research:- R. Gibson.



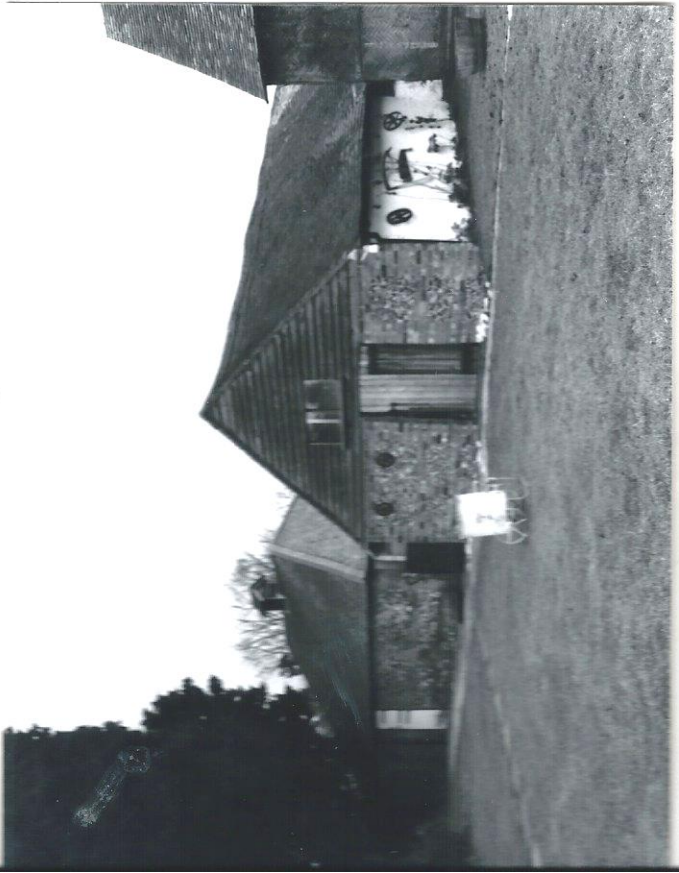
1985



1991



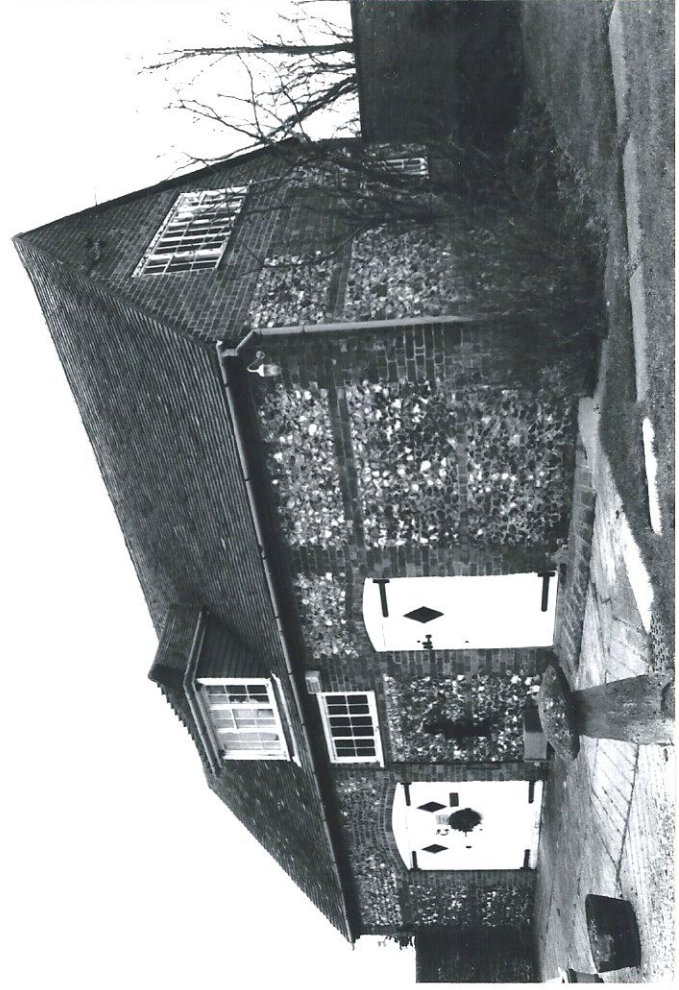
pen & stable block
myard with milking parlour & dairy



pen & stable block



Dairy, offices above



Coachhouse converted into offices

Bix Manor
Farm 1985



BARN I Truss B-1, Looking west



BARN, porch of barn I in foreground, north side



Double door of Barn II south side

Bix Manor Farm 1985



Cowshed

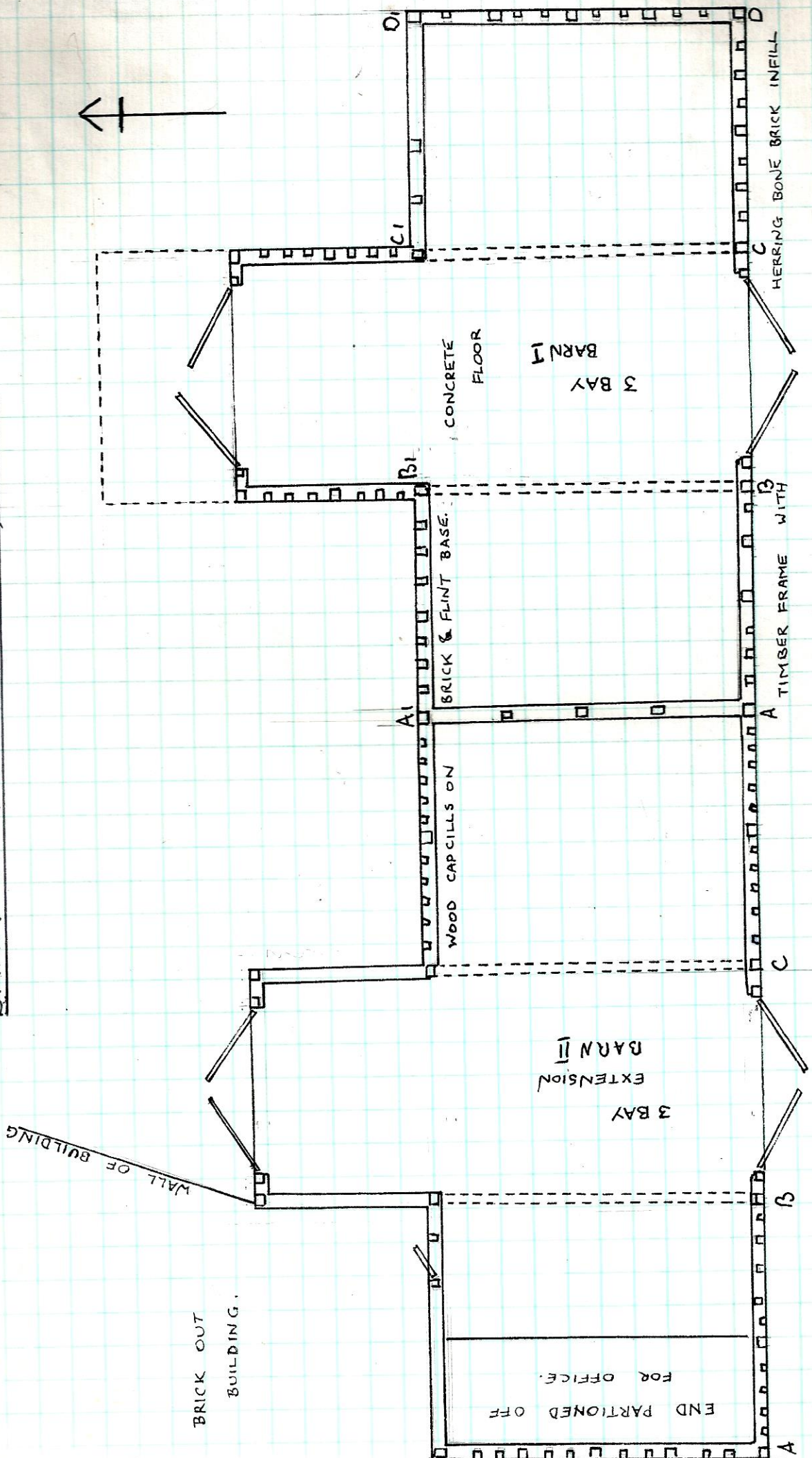
Main Barn gable



Bix Manor Farm 1989
(Barn)

R. Gisson
(Shelter sheds)

BARN at MANOR FARM, BIX.



SCALE: 0 1 2 3 METERS

J.H. 86

BRICK OUT BUILDING.

END PARTIONED OFF FOR OFFICE.

3 BAY BARN II EXTENSION

WOOD CAPSILLS ON

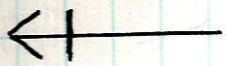
BRICK & FLINT BASE.

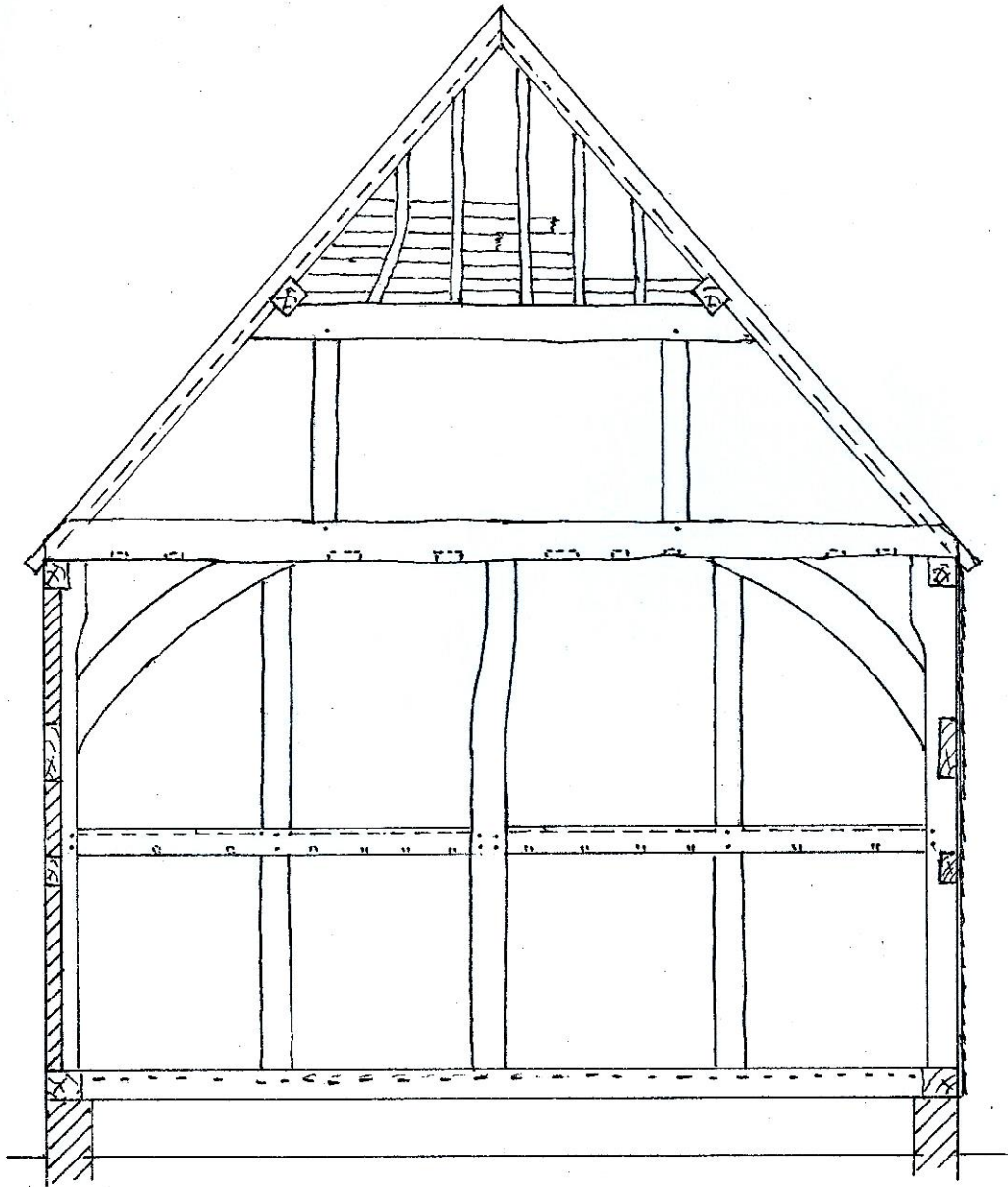
CONCRETE FLOOR

3 BAY BARN I

A TIMBER FRAME WITH

HERRING BONE BRICK INFILL





SECTIONAL ELEVATION A-A1

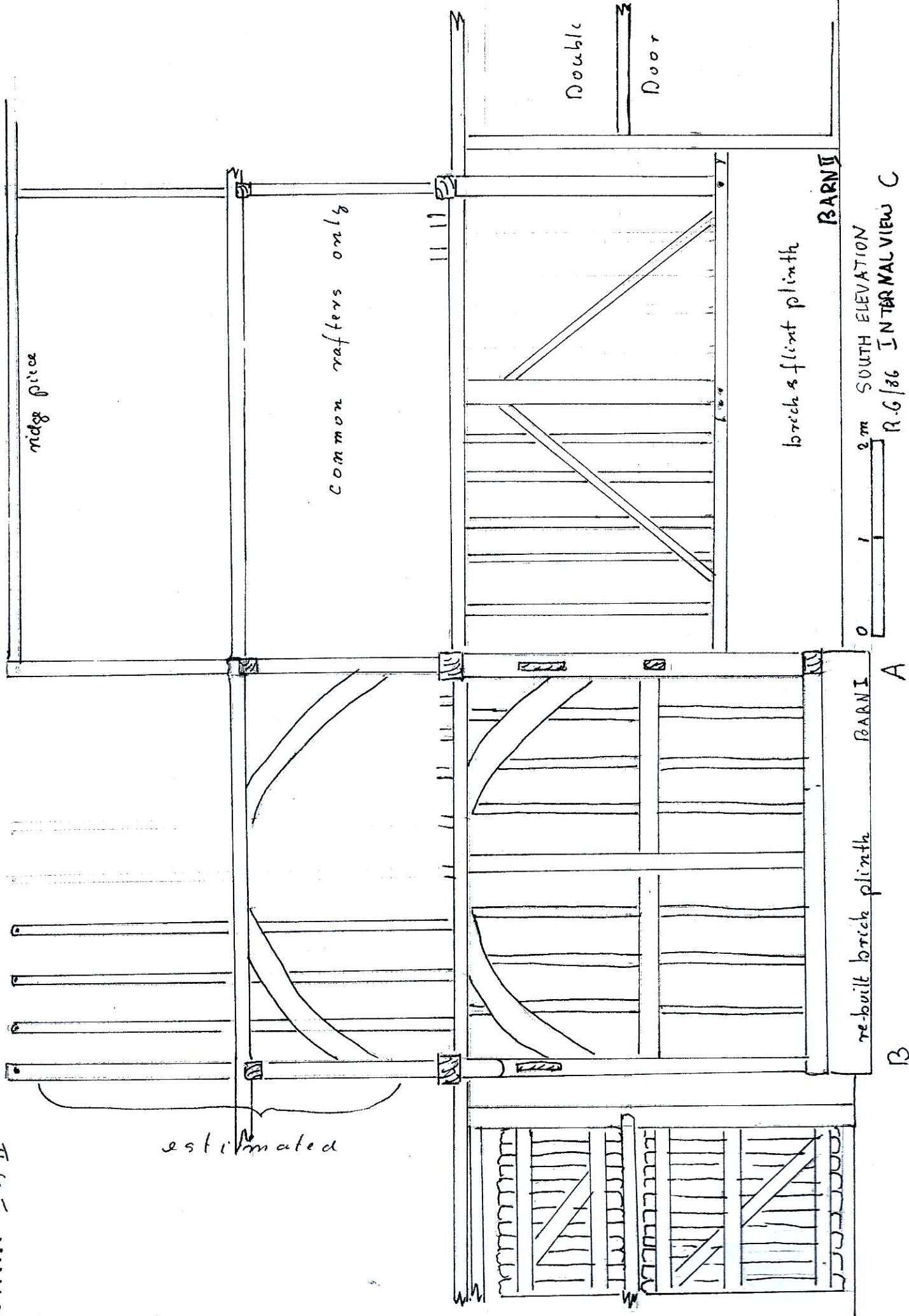


W.C.C./1985

BIX MANOR FARM BARN

BIX MANOR FARM

BARN I & II



An Inventory had and taken of the Goods and Chattells of Henry Benwell sen. of the parish of Bix in County Oxon. yeoman deceased the second and twentieth day of September Anno Domini 1697 in the ninth year of the raigne of our Sovereign Lord William the Third of England & King Defender of the faith, by William Barney and Edward Barney both of Bix aforesaid yeomen and William Soundy of the parish of Sonning - in ? aforesaid yeoman.

	£	s	d
Imprimis - his wearing Apparell	6	-	-
Item - in ready money	100	4	-
Item - in debts owing	50	0	0
<u>In the Roome over the Hall</u>			
Item - two Bedstedes and Furniture thereunto belonging	8	0	0
<u>In the Parlour Chamber</u>			
Item - two Beds and Furniture thereunto belonging and two Chests and Fouer Chaires	5	0	0
<u>In the servants Chamber</u>			
Item - one little Flockbed		10	0
<u>men</u>			
<u>In the/servants Chamber</u>			
Item - two little Flockbeds	1	0	0
Item - the pewter	2	0	0
Item - the Brass	2	5	0
<u>In the parlour</u>			
Item - one long table one sideboard with stoole and chaire	2	0	0
<u>In the Hall</u>			
Item - one table one cubboard and other things	1	5	0
Item - the Iron goods	1	0	0
Item - Barrells tubbs and other luber	2	0	0
Item - the Well	2	10	0
Item - the Horse and Harness	16	0	0
Item - the Hoggs and Piggs	5	10	0
Item - Hay	11	0	0
Item - Billetts	40	0	0
Item - Sheepe	21	0	0
Item - Carts plowes and Harwoves	6	0	0
Item - Cowracks ladders and Fann with other husbandrey Implements		15	0
Item - the Corne in Home Barne	50	0	0
Item - Six Cow Cattle	18	0	0
Item - the Corne at Willises Barne	15	0	0
Item - the Well tackle		12	0
Item - Corne in sacks	3	0	0
<u>Goods at Sonning in ye Hall</u>			
Item - one table & little cubbord		5	0
In the Chamber			
Item - one little bedd		10	0
Item - Corne in the Barne	33	0	0
Item - Hay	2	0	0
Item - Bords and plough timber		15	0
Item - the Linnen	1	5	0
The Totall	408	6	0

Edward Barney, William Barney,
Will Soundy
Exhib. 26. Nov. 1697

Excerpts from the will of Henry Benwell the elder, yeoman of Bix, made on 24th April 1697. (Original at Oxford Record Office)

to My loving wife Grace a messuage of one yard land in Eye and Dunsden of Sonning, Also an annuity of £ 6 out of the lands in Bix, and his sons William and Thomas to pay half each 4 times a year. Half the household goods to Grace.

- to Henry £ 10
- To Grace, my daughter, wife of John ffranklin £ 30
- to Elizabeth my daughter, wife of Alexander Durant £ 40
- to Grace, grandchild, daughter of John ffranklin £ 30
- to son Samuell Benwell
- to son ffrancis £ 50, to son Joseph annuity of £ 3

the fields are divided between sons William and Thomas as follows:

to William: 2 closes of arab., Croos Leys and Cross Leys Coppice
14 a.

Heath Close 5 a.
Close with wood called Lotts, 5 a.
Round Close, arable with wood
Squires Acre and Plants Water
Greenland Coppice, Greenmarsh 12 a.
Church Ground, 3 a.
Chambres $\frac{1}{2}$ a.
Bushy Coppice

to Thomas: Arable land, barns and orchard called Willises 5 a.
(N.B. nos. 126 and 127 on Tithe Map, then belonging to Greys Court, not marked on 1725 Stonor Estate Map)
Hill Close 9 a.
Leaze with shaws of wood
Hales Wood 30 a.
Higgins
Long Croft 12 a.
Engl. Croft 3 a
land lying in the Common Field of Bix


NB. It becomes apparent from this will that the 90 acres leased from the Stonors in 1725 (see encl. map) were only a small part of the large Benwell farm in 1697 prior to its division between the two brothers.


An earlier will by William Benwell of Rotherfield Greys of 1669 throws some more light on the Benwell property in Bix , ie. :

"Item - to my son Henry Benwell that messuage or tenement wherein he lately dwelt and all the arable lands thereonto belonging lying in the parish of Byx the which I heretofore purchased of Thomas Smith, and after his decease I bequeathe the same unto William Benwell, second sonne of my sonne Henry for and during the term of his natural life."

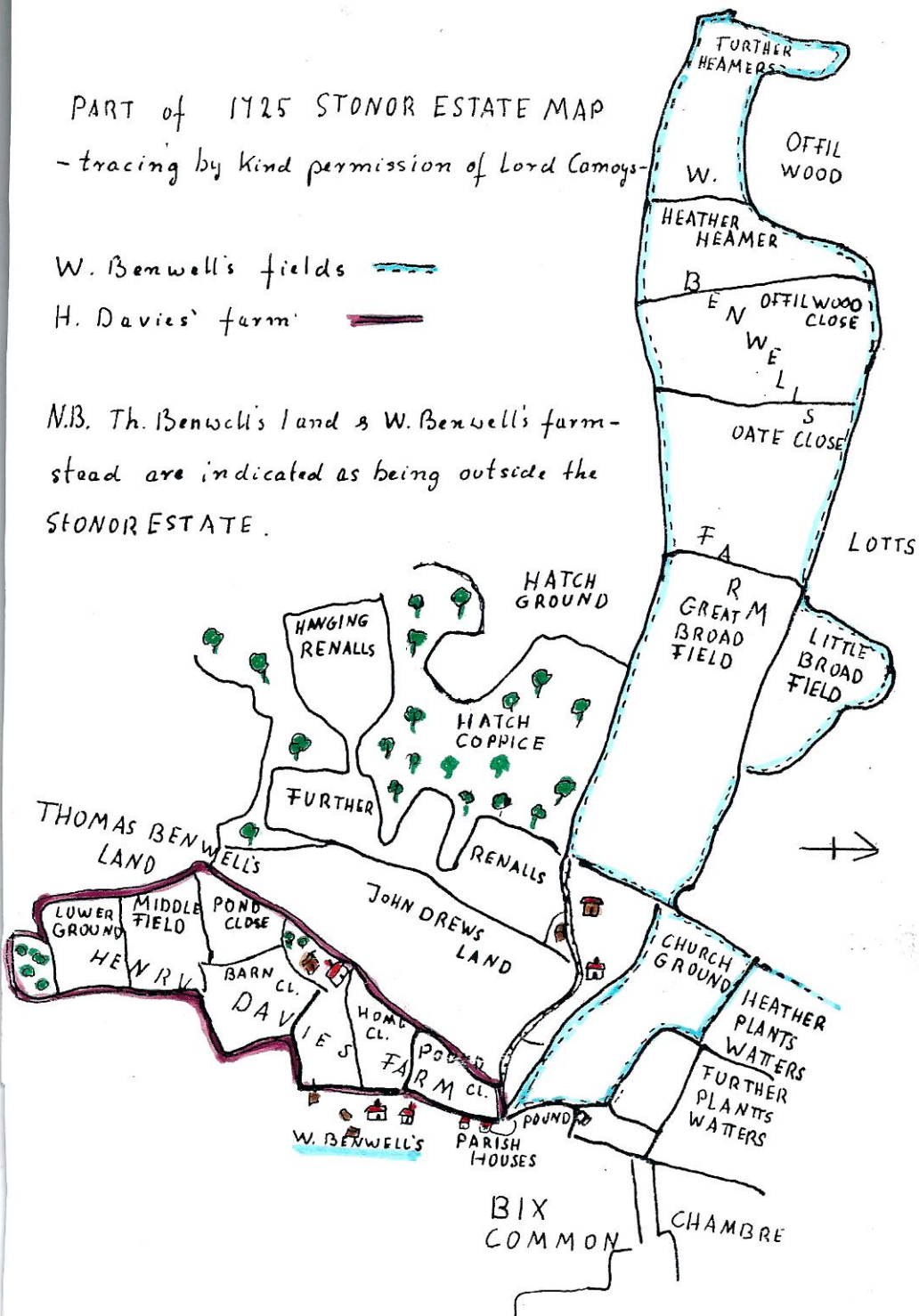
PART of 1725 STONOR ESTATE MAP

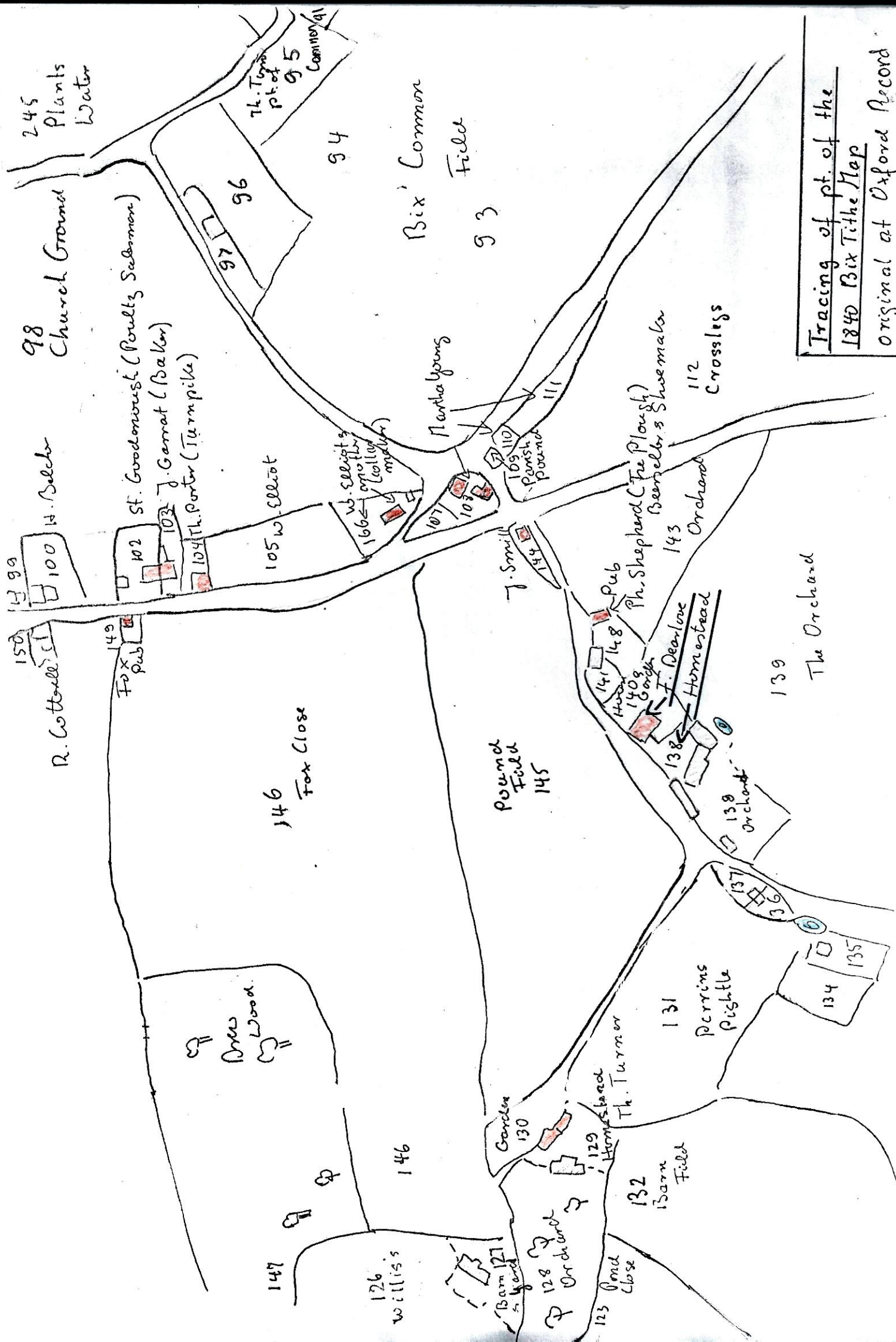
- tracing by kind permission of Lord Camoys -

W. Benwell's fields 

H. Davies' farm 

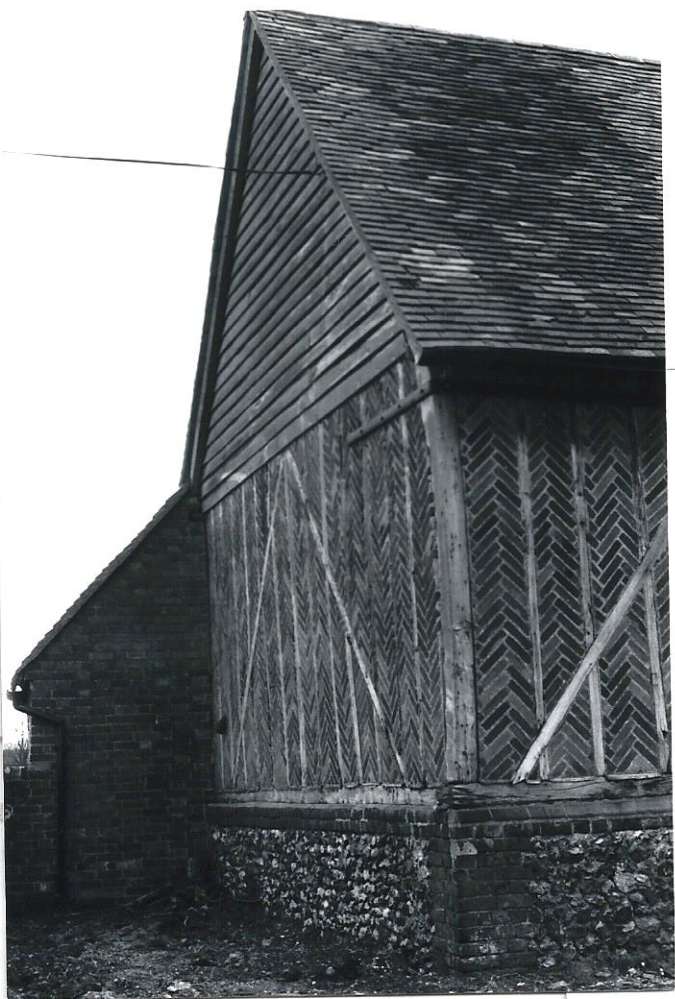
N.B. Th. Benwell's land & W. Benwell's farmstead are indicated as being outside the STONOR ESTATE.





Tracing of pt. of the
 1840 Bix Tithe Map
 Original at Oxford Record
 Office

Owner	Occupier	Tithe No.	Name of property	state
Lord Camoys	Francis Dearlove	91	Part of Bix Common	arable
		98	Church Ground	"
		112	Cross Leys	"
		138	Homestead	
		139	The orchard	grass
		140	House and garden	
		148	Reynolds	arable
		152	Three cornerd bit	"
		153	Little Broad field	"
		154	Great Broad field	"
		223	Further Highmoor	"
		224	Hither Highmoor	"
		225	Offal wood close	"
		227	Oat Close	"
		228	The Slipe	"
		229	Barnfield	"
		230	Barn & yard	
		232	The Lotts	"
		233	Lower Bears close	"
		234	Upper Bears close	"
		245	Plants water	"
		246	Chambre	"



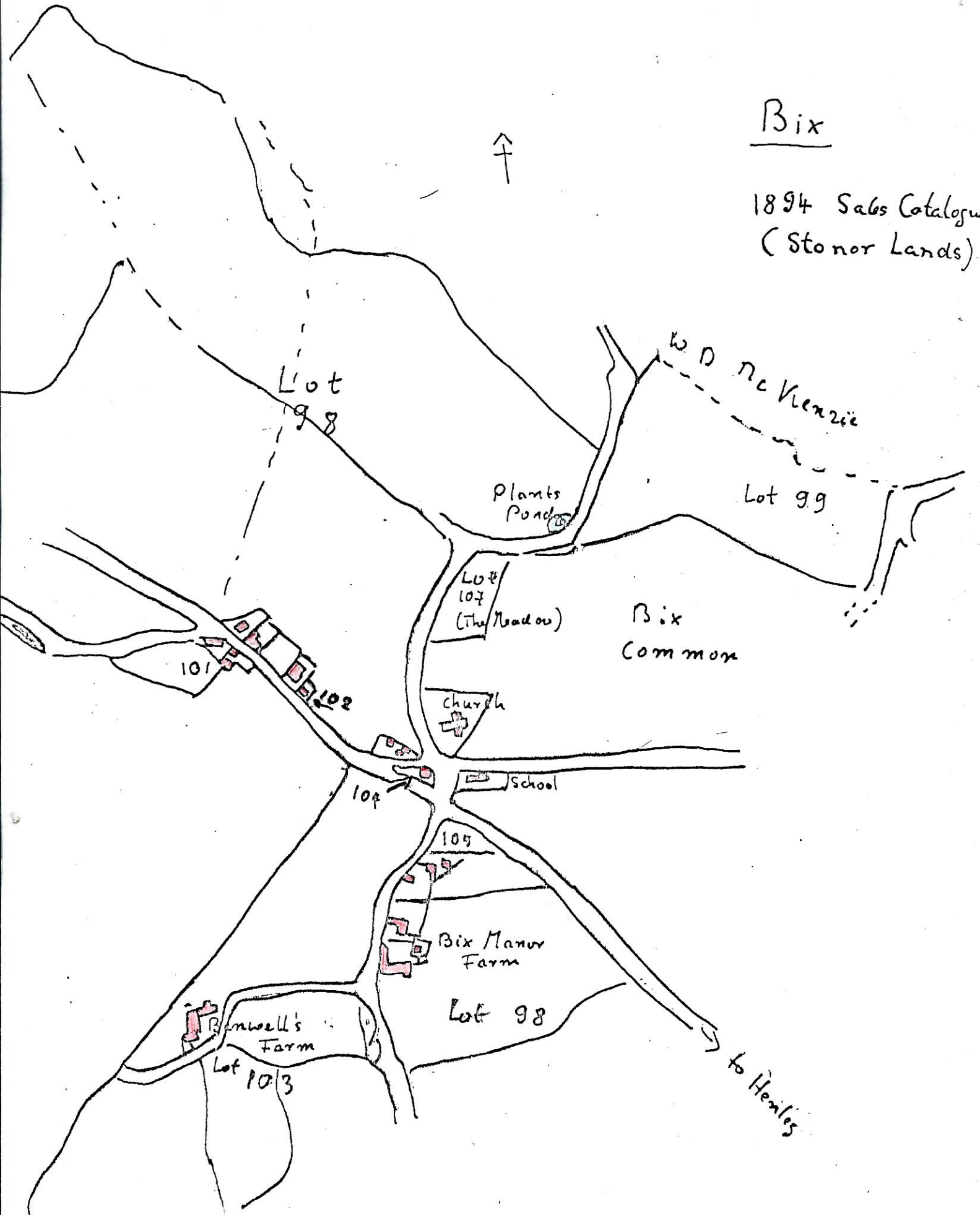
West gable of barn



North side of double barn

Bix

1894 Subs Catalogue
(Stonor Lands)



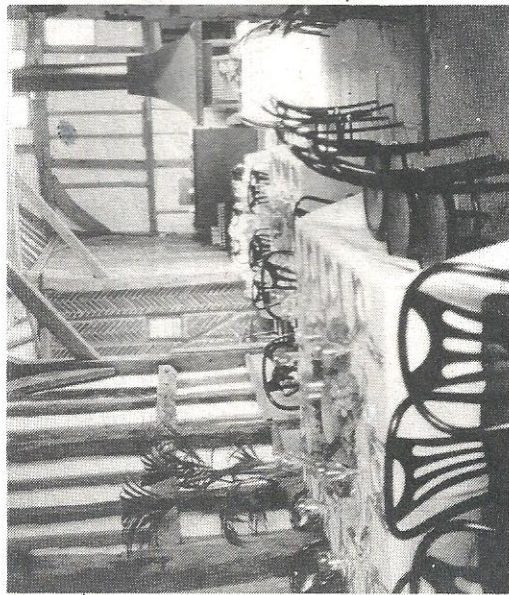
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