

**The Stable,  
Stone Farm,  
Blaxhall, Suffolk  
BLX 019**

**Historic Building Record**

OASIS ID: Suffolkc1-104365



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# **The Stable, Stone Farm, Station Road, Blaxhall, Suffolk**

**(TM 351 564)**

## **Historic Building Record**

*This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of an agricultural building currently in use as a stable. It has been prepared to a brief written by the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Edward Martin 5<sup>th</sup> May 2011 (ref. SpecHAA(EM)\_StoneFmStable\_Blaxhall\_pre\_2011), and is intended to inform and accompany a planning application.*

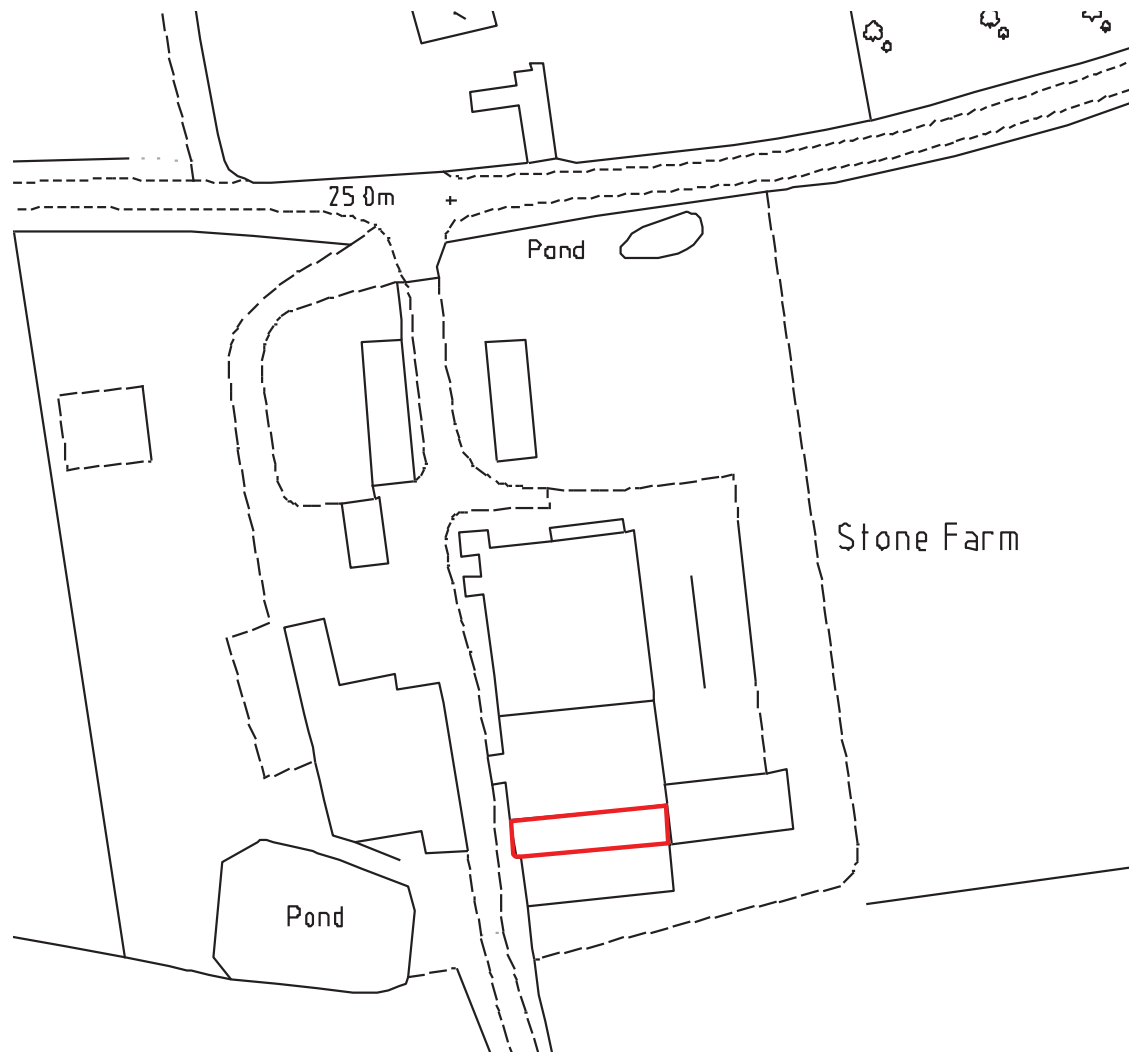
### **Introduction**

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 49 digital images (Appendix 1), but also includes 10 printed photographs of key features to illustrate the text (Appendix 2). Each image is described in a separate schedule and wherever possible includes a scale rod with half-metre divisions in red and white. The site was inspected on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2011, and the report reproduces relevant information from a similar survey of the cart shed on the site (Suffolk Historic Environment Record no. BLX 018; Oasis ID Suffolkc1-78330. June 2010).

### **Summary**

Stone Farm lies in open, arable countryside approximately 750 m south-west of Blaxhall parish church. Its name supposedly derives from a five-ton glacial erratic that local legend suggests was only the size of ‘two fists’ when ploughed up in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but has since grown to its present size. The story was published by George Ewart Evans and is commemorated by a painted sign beside the gate. At the time of the tithe survey in 1841 the farm was a substantial tenanted holding of 204 acres and the brick farmhouse appears to have been rebuilt shortly afterwards.

The stable at Stone Farm lies at the southern end of a large complex of contemporary brick yards and buildings that had been converted and occupied in recent months and were not available for inspection. The complex was shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1883 but not the tithe map of 1841 and was built in *circa* 1870 as a ‘model’ farm of considerable historic interest. Unfortunately any analysis of its precise layout and the purpose of each building is now impossible. The stable is a single-storied red-brick and pantiled structure on an east-west axis that extends to 22.25 m in length (73 ft). The interior is divided into five compartments which now accommodate horses but originally consisted of a cart shed or feed store, a narrow stall and three large loose boxes that were probably designed for bullocks. Each box opened onto a small yard to the south, of which no trace now survives, and was lit by a window and ventilated by a louver with adjustable slats. An original boarded manger survives in the narrow stall but the interior has otherwise been stripped of fixtures and fittings. While the complex as a whole would have been of historic interest prior to conversion, the ‘stable’ alone is not of special significance. It reflects the quality of the site’s Victorian redevelopment but is not of sufficient age or rarity to merit listing.

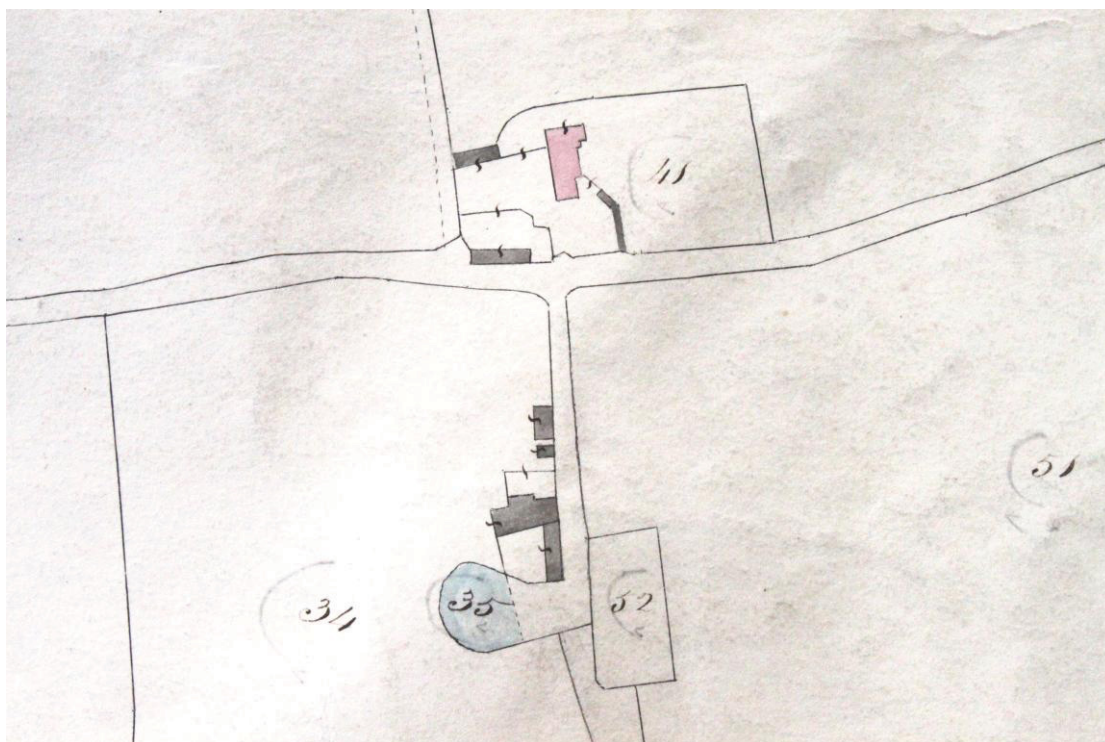


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**Figure 1**  
**Current Ordnance Survey Site Plan**  
 Outlining the stable in red and showing the previously converted farm buildings to the north and west. The farmhouse lies to the north of Station Road.

## Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record

Stone Farm lies in open, arable countryside approximately 750 m south-west of Blaxhall parish church. The farmhouse is ostensibly a double-pile red-brick and slated structure of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century but may conceal earlier fabric in its western range. A painted sign on the gate refers to the legend of the 'Blaxhall Stone' from which the farm is reputed to derive its name: a large glacial erratic in the grounds which has supposedly grown in size since it was ploughed up in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (illus. 3). The legend was discussed by George Ewart Evans in 'Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay' (p.211, 1956), and the stone is described as a five-ton piece of sandstone from a parent mass in Spilsby, Lincolnshire (megalithia.com). Such stories were commonly invented to explain the appearance of megaliths with no obvious local origin, but there is no mention of the story in White's Suffolk Directory of 1844 which names the property as Stones Farm. No buildings on the site are listed.



**Figure 2**

**Stone Farm on the Blaxhall tithe map of 1841 showing the farmhouse in red to the north of the road and a barn to the north of the pond. The farm complex which includes the stable to the east of the farm track had not been built at this time, and the site of the stable was occupied by a stack yard (no. 52).**

The farmhouse is divided from its farmyard to the south by Station Road (a single-track lane) and the site appears to occupy a medieval crossroads with unmade tracks extending to both north and south. At the time of the Blaxhall tithe survey in 1841 the farm was a substantial tenanted holding of 204 acres owned by the Honourable Mrs Sophia North (who owned much of the land in the parish) and occupied by Henry Toller. The main barn to the south of the yard and farmhouse occupied the same positions as today, although the house appeared significantly narrower, but there was no trace of the large complex of red-brick cattle sheds and yards to the east of the track which includes the stable. The latter was shown for the first time on the Ordnance Survey of 1883 (figures 2 and 3). Many local farms were extensively refurbished in this way during the 1850s and 1860s as cattle were introduced to compensate for falling cereal prices. The 1841 map names the adjoining field on the west (no. 34) as 'the barn field including yard' and that on the east (51) as 'stackyard field'. The small enclosure opposite the 'pond' (35) was the eponymous 'stackyard'. The farmhouse (41) was described only as 'house, barns, stables, etc.'). The 1883 Ordnance Survey shows three small yards adjoining the southern elevation of the stable, coinciding with the three loose boxes illustrated in figure 5. A date of *circa* 1870 is entirely consistent with its surviving structure. The building's layout remained unaltered in 1904, as shown in figure 4.

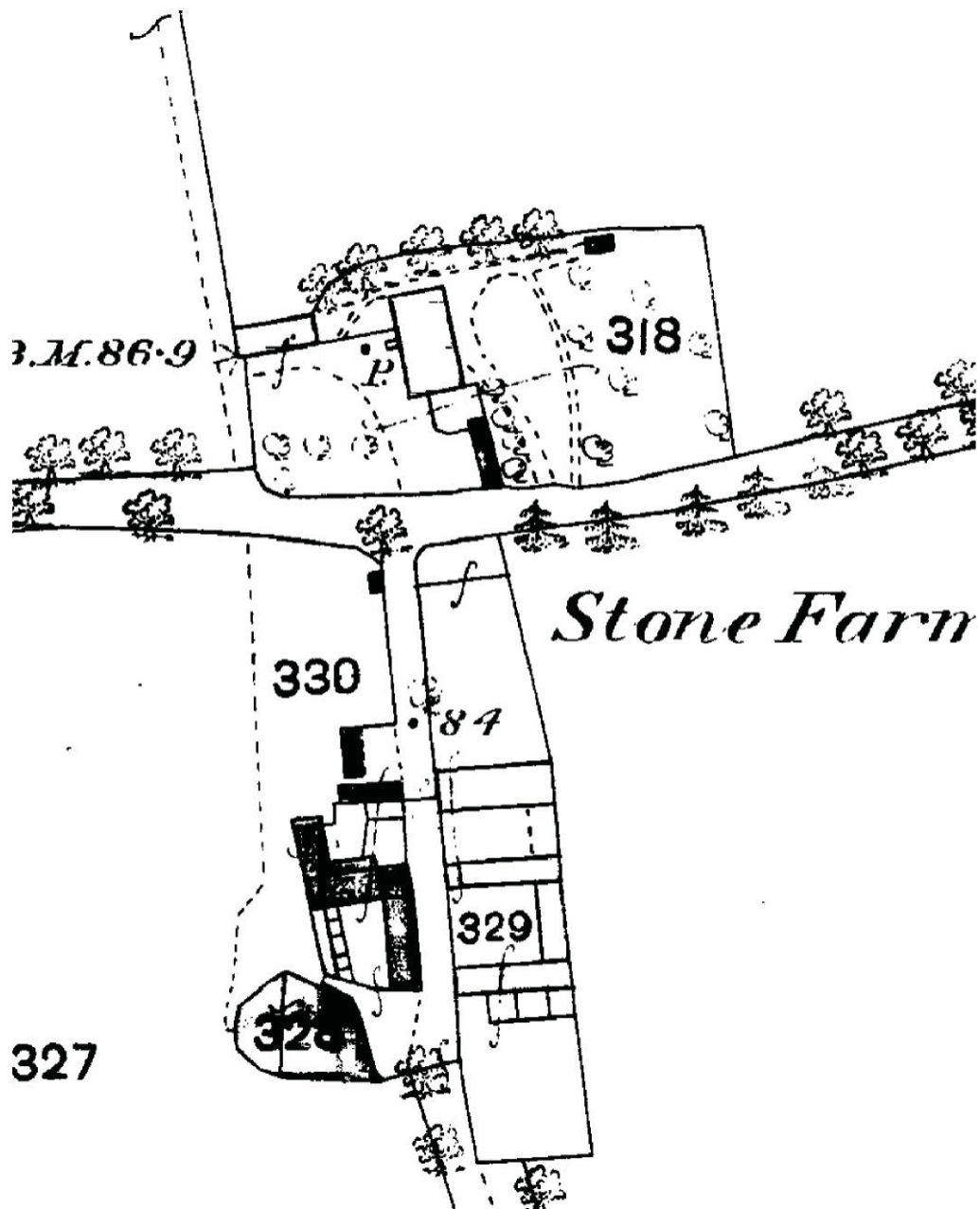


Figure 3

First edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1883 showing the new complex of cattle yards and sheds to the east of the farm track (built since 1841) and the enlarged or rebuilt farmhouse. The new stable to the south of the complex adjoined three small yards on the south, each coinciding with the loose boxes illustrated in figure 5.



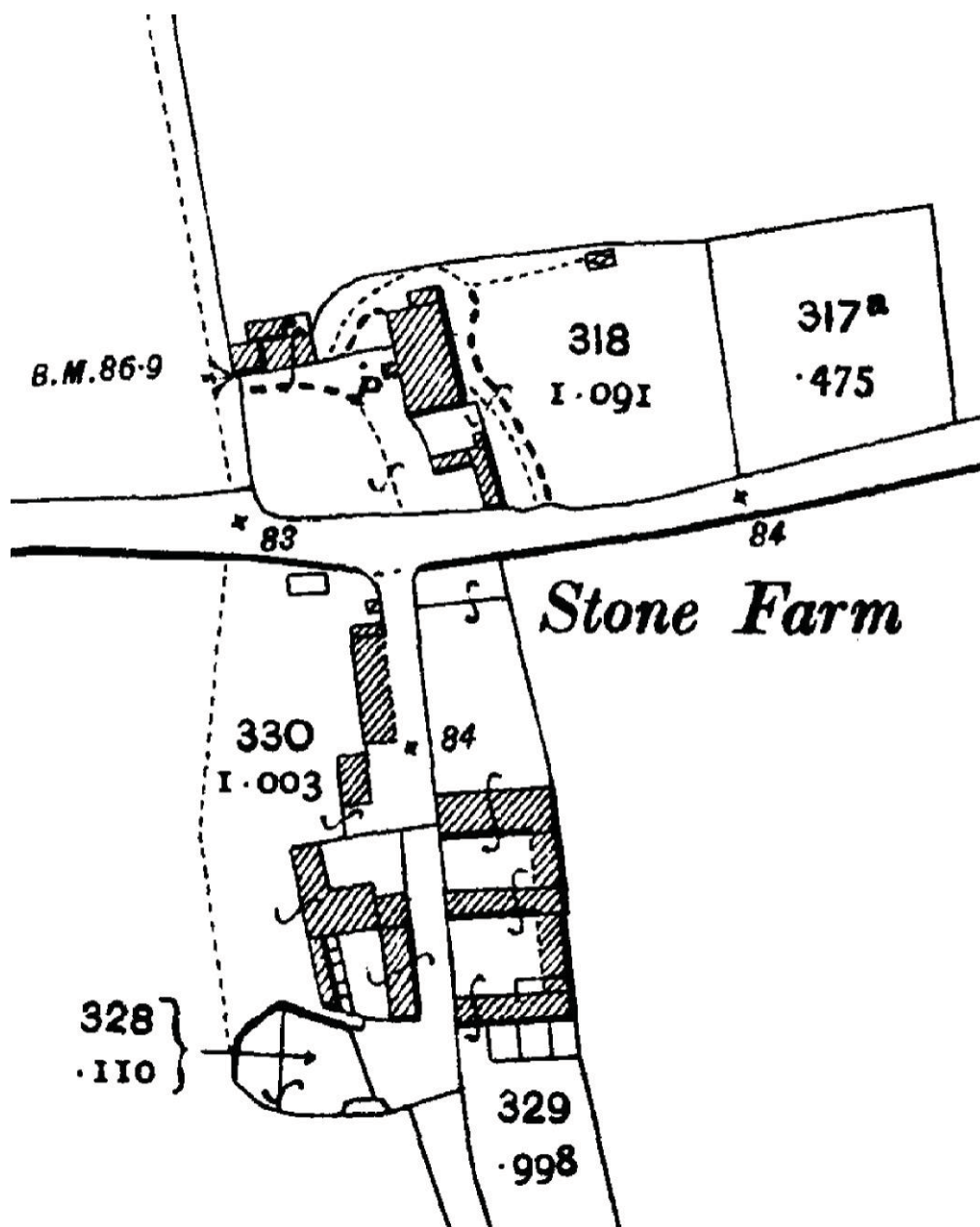


Figure 4

The second edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, showing the stable with its three small yards as in 1883. A large new cartshed had been built to the west of the site entrance since 1883.

## Building Analysis

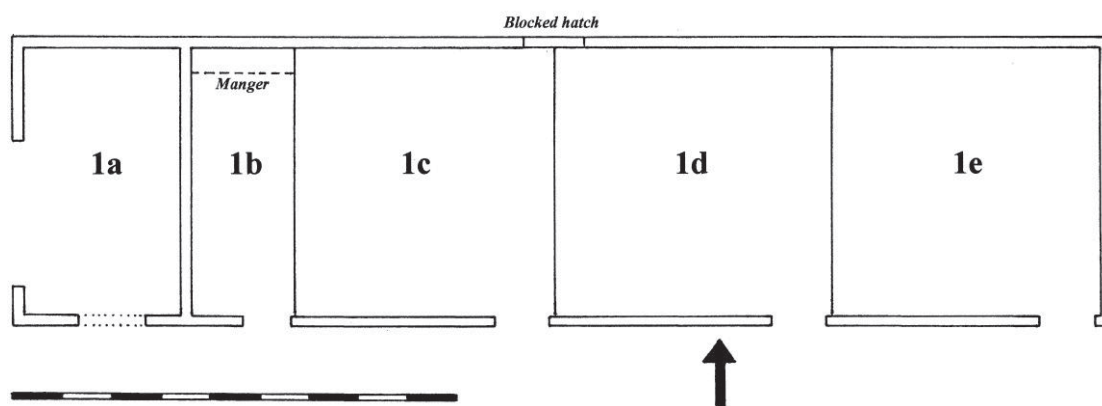


Figure 5

**Block plan of the stable identifying each compartment with a number for ease of reference in the text and photographic record. Single lines indicate boarded partitions and double lines brick walls. Not fully surveyed. Scale in metres.**

### Structure and Date

The stable at Stone Farm lies at the southern end of a large complex of contemporary brick yards and buildings that had been converted and occupied in recent months and were not available for inspection. The complex was shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1883 but not the tithe map of 1841 and was built in *circa* 1870 as a 'model' farm of considerable historic interest. Unfortunately any analysis of its precise layout and the purpose of each building is now impossible.

The stable is a single-storied red-brick structure on an east-west axis that rises to 2.6 m at its eaves (8.5 ft) and extends to 22.25 m in length by 5.8 m in width overall (73 ft by 19 ft). The bricks are laid in Monk bond (with two stretchers between every header) and the clasped-purlin hipped roof of machine-sawn softwood is covered in its original pantiles with the remains of reed fleaking beneath.

The interior is divided into five compartments as shown in figure 5. The western compartment was originally entered only from the adjoining farm track by double doors in its western gable, and was evidently designed as a cart shed or feed store. The present door in its southern elevation is a later insertion. The compartment to its east extends to just 2 m (80 ins) in width and is entered by a single original doorway from the south. Its timber jambs contain iron pintles for half-hung doors but the present wooden door (like those of the remaining compartments to the east) is secondary. An original boarded manger, rising to just 0.6 m (25 ins) from the floor, adjoins its northern internal wall and suggests the stall was intended for cattle rather than horses. This stall is not lit, but the three eastern compartments form a series of identical loose boxes divided by boarded partitions, each 5.4 m in width (17.5 ft) and with a southern door, window and slatted louver. There is evidence of a blocked window or hatch in the centre of the northern elevation (bisected by an ostensibly original lateral partition) that probably facilitated mucking out to the enclosed yard on the north. There is no longer any evidence of mangers or hay racks. The woodwork preserves traces of grey paint which is probably original, and the window frames contain chamfered central mullions and are rebated for glass (or possibly a lattice). The louvers are well made, with vertical bars by which the slats can be raised or lowered in unison.



Although used most recently as stabling for horses the loose boxes were almost certainly designed as bullock sheds, as indicated by the low height of the extant manger and the presence of three small yards on the Ordnance Surveys. Horses were not normally stalled in this way during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Historic Significance**

The stable forms part of a large, high status complex of yard buildings which reflect the new mid-19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural system of intensive, yard-based animal husbandry known today as Victorian High Farming. The complex as a whole would have been of considerable historic interest prior to its recent conversion, but the stable alone is not of special significance. It reflects the quality of the site's Victorian redevelopment, with well-made louvers and windows to each loose box, and was probably designed as a series of loose boxes for cattle rather than horses, but is not of sufficient age or rarity to merit listing.

## **Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record**

### **Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1**

#### **Photograph no.**

1. General view of site from south showing stable (1) to right and converted barn to left.
2. General view of site from east showing stable (1) to left and converted stable range and other farm buildings to right.
3. General view of site from south-east showing stable (1) in centre and 20th century boarded shed to left.
4. General view of site from south showing stable (1) to right and similar range of probable feed storage sheds to left.
5. Detail of ventilation louver in range of probable feed sheds to west of stable (1). Included for site context.
6. Western gable of stable (1) from south-west showing 20th century boarded shed or covered yard to right.
7. Western gable of stable (1) from south-west showing converted probable stable with hay loft in rear to left.
8. Western external gable of stable (1) showing original wide entrance to feed store or cart shed (1a).
9. Eastern external gable of stable (1) showing evidence of demolished attached shed to right.
10. Northern external elevation of stable (1) showing outline of blocked central window or hatch.
11. Interior from west of 20th century boarded shed or covered yard showing southern exterior of stable (1) to left.
12. Southern exterior of stable from south-west (1) showing secondary door to western unit (1a) left and original doors to right.
13. Southern exterior of stable (1) from south-east showing original doors and windows to the loose boxes.
14. Interior from east of 20th century boarded shed or covered yard showing southern exterior of stable (1) to right.
15. Western end of southern exterior showing later door (interrupting brickwork) to box 1a.
16. Western of southern exterior showing later door to box 1a left and original door to narrow stall (1b) to right.

17. Southern exterior showing door to narrow stall (1b) left and louver and window to loose box 1c to right.
18. Detail of slatted louver to box 1c in southern exterior of stable.
19. Detail of window to box 1c in southern exterior showing grey pigment and rebate for glass or lattice.
20. Southern exterior showing door to loose box 1c to right and door to narrow stall (1b) to left.
21. Southern exterior showing door to loose box 1d.
22. Eastern end of southern exterior showing door to loose box 1e to right and 1d to left with window and louver.
23. Interior from north of western loose box (1a) showing original gable entrance to right and secondary southern door to left.
24. Interior from south of western loose box (1a) showing original entrance in western gable to left.
25. Hipped western gable of original roof structure seen from south (box 1a) showing remains of reed fleaking under pantiles.
26. Interior of narrow stall (1b) from north showing southern entrance door.
27. Interior of narrow stall (1b) from southern entrance showing boarded manger in rear.
28. Detail of low boarded manger to northern interior of narrow stall (1b).
29. Roof structure from south within narrow stall (1b).
30. Interior of secondary door to narrow stall (1b). The door does not respect the pintles for an original half-hung door.
31. Detail of 20th century iron bolt to southern exterior of door to narrow stall (1b).
32. Interior from south of loose box 1c showing outline of blocked northern window or hatch to right (interrupted by partition).
33. Southern interior of box 1c showing original entrance, window and louver.
34. Interior of box 1c from east showing original louver to left.
35. Interior of box 1c from west showing original entrance to right.
36. Detail of original window with chamfered mullion in southern interior of box 1c.
37. Detail of original louver in southern interior of box 1c with adjusting bar to right.
38. Southern interior of stall 1d showing original window and louver to left.

39. Detail of original louver in southern interior of box 1d in open position with right-hand bar lowered.
40. Detail of original louver in southern interior of box 1d in closed position with right-hand bar raised.
41. Detail of circular apotropaic mark to southern interior of box 1d.
42. Interior of loose box 1d from east showing outline of blocked northern hatch or window to right.
43. Northern interior of box 1d showing outline of blocked hatch or window to left.
44. Interior of box 1d from west showing southern entrance to right.
45. Roof structure of box 1d from east showing scissor bracing with remains of reed fleaking beneath pantiles.
46. Southern interior of eastern loose box (1e) showing original door to left with window and louver to right.
47. Northern interior of eastern box (1e) showing eastern gable to right and junction with demolished northern shed.
48. Eastern interior of eastern loose box (1e).
49. Interior of eastern loose box (1e) from east showing boarded partition to box 1d.

*Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp. 11-15*

## **Appendix 2 (pp. 11-15): Selected Printed Photographs**



**Illus. 1. General view of site from south-west showing western gable of red-brick and pantiled single-storied stable (1) in centre with adjoining 20<sup>th</sup> century covered yard to right and converted barn to left.**



**Illus. 2. General view of site from the south-east showing the eastern gable of the stable (1) to the left and the converted probable stable range and other farm buildings to the right.**





**Illus. 3. The northern external elevation of the stable (1) showing the outline of a blocked central window or hatch. The roof and scar of a demolished wing that formerly projected from the eastern end of the structure is visible to the left.**



**Illus. 4. The southern exterior of the stable (1) from the south-west showing the secondary door to the western unit (1a) to the left and the original doors, windows and louvers to the right.**





**Illus. 5. The eastern end of the southern exterior of the stable (1) showing the original louver, glazed window and entrance to the eastern loose box (1e) to the right with the door to the neighbouring identical box (1d) to the left.**



**Illus. 6. Detail of the low boarded manger attached to the northern internal wall of the narrow stall (1b) adjoining the western vehicle or feed shed (1a). At just 0.65 m (25 ins) in height this manger was clearly designed for cattle rather than horses.**





**Illus. 7. Southern interior of penultimate eastern loose box (1d) showing its original door, window and louver.**



**Illus. 8. Detail of the original louver in the southern interior of the penultimate eastern box (1d). The slats are shown in the open position with the vertical control bar to the right lowered. Raising the bar closes the slats.**





**Illus. 9.** The original roof structure seen from the penultimate eastern box (1d) showing nailed scissor braces and collars with the remains of reed fleaking beneath the pantiles.



**Illus. 10.** Detail of the original window to the central loose box (1c) in its southern exterior, showing grey pigment and a rebate for glass (or possibly a lattice).