

**Historical Building Recording at Valley Farm Barn  
Brettenham Road Felsham  
Suffolk**



Grid Reference: TL 950 566  
Planning Application No.: 3148/15  
HER No.: FHM 032  
Oasis No.: 241660  
HER Ref: I. No. 9179901

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Cover picture: The Barn from the south-west

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## **Historical Building Recording at Valley Farm Barn**

**Brettenham Road Felsham**  
**Suffolk**  
*Archaeological Record*

Grid reference: TL 950 566

## Summary

This report provides a written and photographic record (English Heritage, level 2) for a redundant barn at Valley Farm Brettenham Road Felsham Suffolk, prior to its conversion to a domestic dwelling.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) level 2 for a redundant barn at Valley Farm Brettenham Road Felsham. It has been prepared to a brief designed by the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Richard Hoggett Archaeological Officer, ref: *Historical Building Recording at Valley Farm Barn Brettenham Road Felsham Suffolk*, (dated the 17th of February 2016) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion to a domestic dwelling.

1.2 This report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 6 megapixel digital images (Appendix 1) and includes printed photographs of key features of the building and its environs (Appendix 2). Each digital and printed photograph is described in the appendices. The CD also contains this report in MS Word format. The building was inspected and recorded on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2013, when the accompanying photographs were taken – a scale has been used where possible, being a two metre scale staff.

## 2. Planning Background

2.1 The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has granted planning consent conditional upon an agreed programme of historic building recording work taking place in accordance with this Written Scheme of Investigation

2.2 The planning application, 3148/ 15, was granted by Mid Suffolk District Council, for the conversion of a redundant barn to form a new dwelling. In order to ensure that satisfactory arrangements are made for the investigation, and recording of the site, its buildings and setting, and to comply with Policy of the Council's Local Plan.

## 3. Site Location

Grid Ref: TL 950 566



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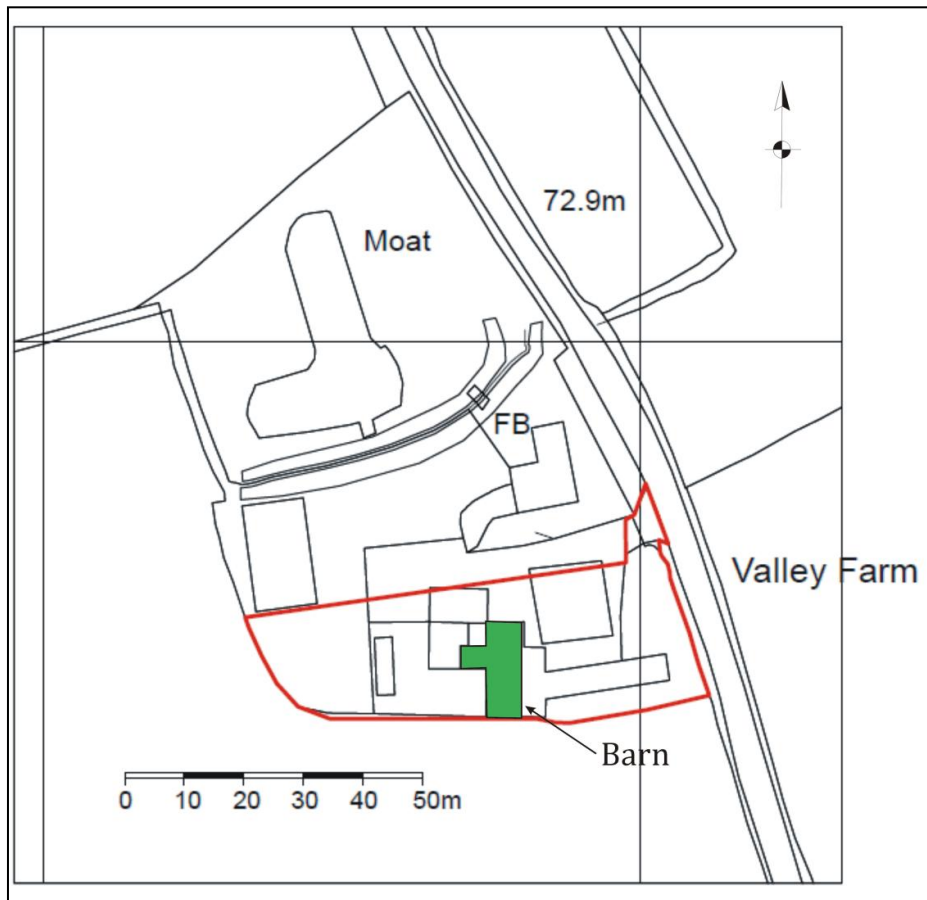
***Figure 1. Felsham and site location***

1.1 Felsham is a village in central-west Suffolk, within the jurisdiction of Mid Suffolk District Council. The village lies 8 miles south-east of Bury St Edmunds. The site is situated 0.5km south-east of the village of Felsham at a height of 74.32m (AOD).

1.2 The solid geology consists of undivided, chalky, pebbly clay derived from the Lowestoft Till Formation (BGS 206).



*Figure 2. Earth view of Valley Farm barn*



*Figure 3. Block plan of site*

## 4. Archaeological and Historical Background

### 4.1 Archaeological Background

The archaeological brief for this project states: '*Although not listed, the submitted supporting documents describe the barn as having a traditional Suffolk timber frame and it is also depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of the county, indicating that the structure is over 120 years old. As such, the barn should be considered to be a non-designated Heritage Asset under the terms of the NPPF and requires archaeological recording prior to conversion*' (SCCA/CT Brief, dated the 17th of February 2016, Dr. R.Hoggett).

### 4.2 Historical Background

The name Felsham is derived from the Anglo Saxon name *Faeles ham* or Faeles home (*faele* meaning good or faithful). Faelews home may have occupied the site of the present Felsham Hall which stands within an ancient moat, but Capel Farm, at 2 km south-west on the parish boundary is built on the site of an earlier hall dating to the 13th century. (Birch, M, 2003).

The Domesday Survey (1086) for Felsham in Suffolk is recorded as follows:

*'In Felsham 25 free men with 3 carucates of land. 1 villager; 5 smallholders. Adelund (holds) 1 and a half carucates of land. 8 free men hold 4 carucates; value 50s. Always 8 ploughs between them all.*

*Meadow, 5 acres.*

*These free men could grant and sell their lands, ...still belonged to St Edmund's.*

*Value then 30s; now 60s.*

*A church with 10 acres of free land in alms.*

*It has 8 furlongs in length and 6 in width; 5d in tax.'*

*(Morris, J, ed.,1986)*

By the 19th c., Felsham was considered 'a well-built village, has in its parish 398 souls and 1605 acres of land' rising to as great an altitude as any in Suffolk " recorded by William White (Wight, W, 1844). Actually, at 74m it is not the highest point, just to the east of Valley farm is the highest point in Suffolk at 81m.

## 5. Cartographic & Records Evidence

5.1 Unfortunately, only a few maps were available for Felsham in the Suffolk Records Office among those missing were the Enclosure map and awards and the First edition Ordnance Survey map, which is available on the internet. The Tithe map and awards do exist and the Tithe map is illustrated below along with the maps that were available.



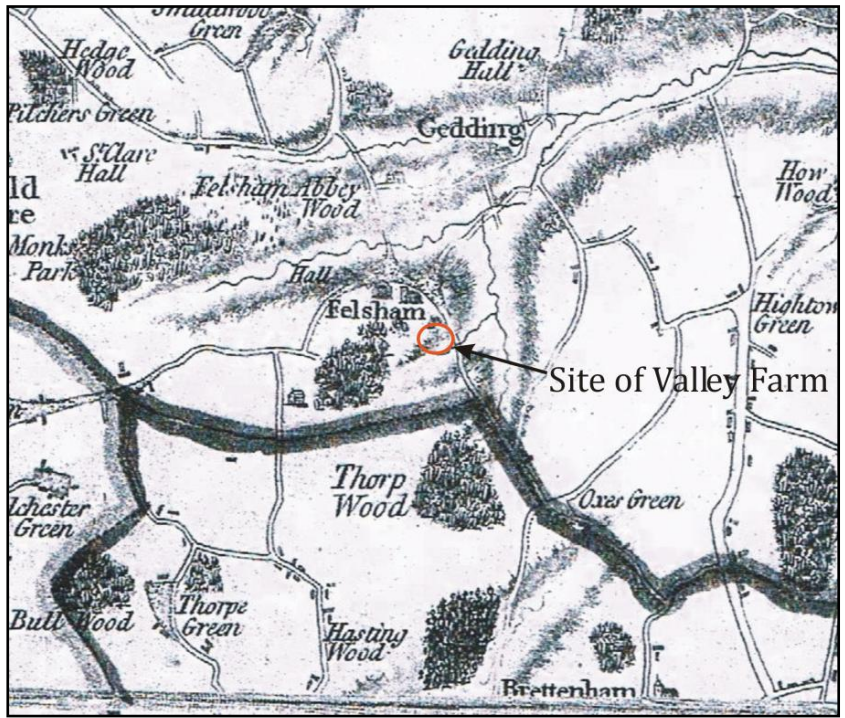


Figure 3. Hodkinson's map of Cockfield, 1783

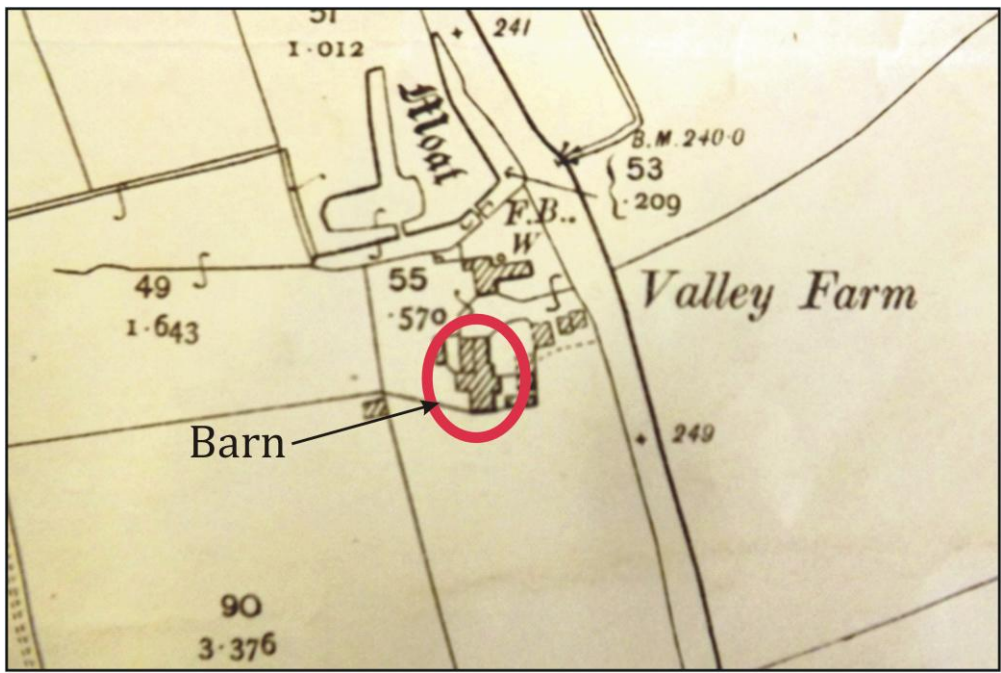
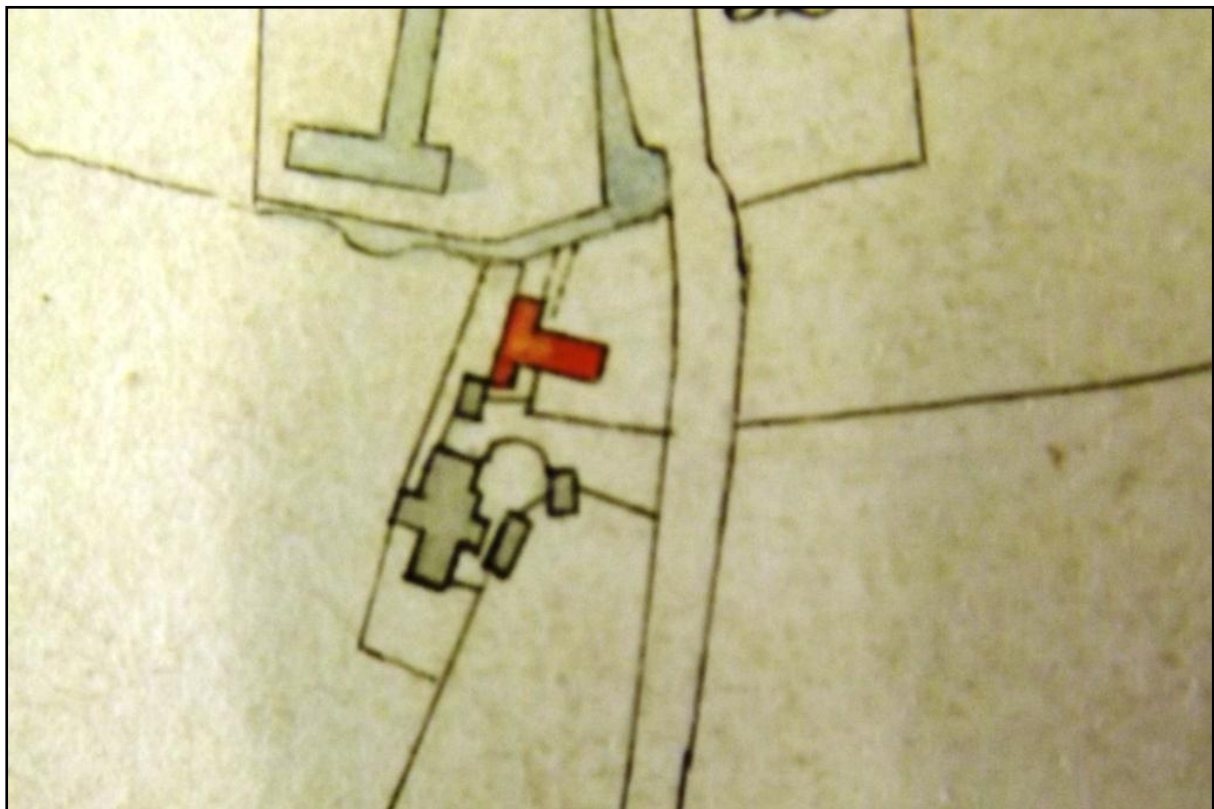


Figure 4. The Tithe map of 1839 (25 inch series)



*Figure 4. First edition Ordnance Survey of Felsham and Valley Farm (1884)*



*Figure 5. The Ordnance Survey of 1904 (2nd Edition)- 6 inch series)*

### 5.1. Discussion of Map Evidence

Valley Farm does not appear on the map by Hodskinson of 1783 (fig. 3), although a farm must have existed here or close by at the time of mapping due to the age of the barn at Valley Farm. For those familiar with this map, it has been demonstrated before that Hodskinson's map is not wholly reliable and a missing building or buildings group is not uncommon, and when it is shown it is often not very clear.

The barn is shown on the Tithe map ( fig. 4) with a number of extensions, showing that it had been extended certainly by the early 19th century. Extensions to the north-west are evident and exist today with a range of more recent stabling to the north. A lean-to extension to the east is not shown on any of the maps and must date to the early 20th century. Two small buildings are shown on all maps to the east, but they no longer exist. All maps show a different plan to the house that exists today, which suggests that the present house has been considerably altered or replaced altogether. A visual internal inspection of the house was not available but it does appear to be of a fairly recent construction, for example probably c. 20th century.

The 1839 Tithe apportionment gives Valley Farm as part of songfield (app No. 152) and the farmhouse belonging to Reverend Charles Goodwin who let it to Isaac Gosling; the apportionment states: *Farm House - Homestead, Garden, home & meadow.* (App No. 153)

## 6. Methodology

6.1 A level 2 (English Heritage 2006) photographic record was undertaken to a brief designed by the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Dr Richard Hoggett).

6.2 A visual inspection was carried out and notes were taken on the features, construction and dimensions of the building. Measurements were taken externally and internally and a scale plan was drawn at 1:50. A series of photographs were taken externally and internally. The photographic record comprised of digital images at 10 million pixels.

6.3 From the evidence presented, an interpretation of the building's function, form and date was made.

6.4 Within the report, all image references refer to the digital images as listed in appendix I.

6.5 All images referred to can be found in appendix II.





*Figure 6. Block plan of Barn and related buildings*

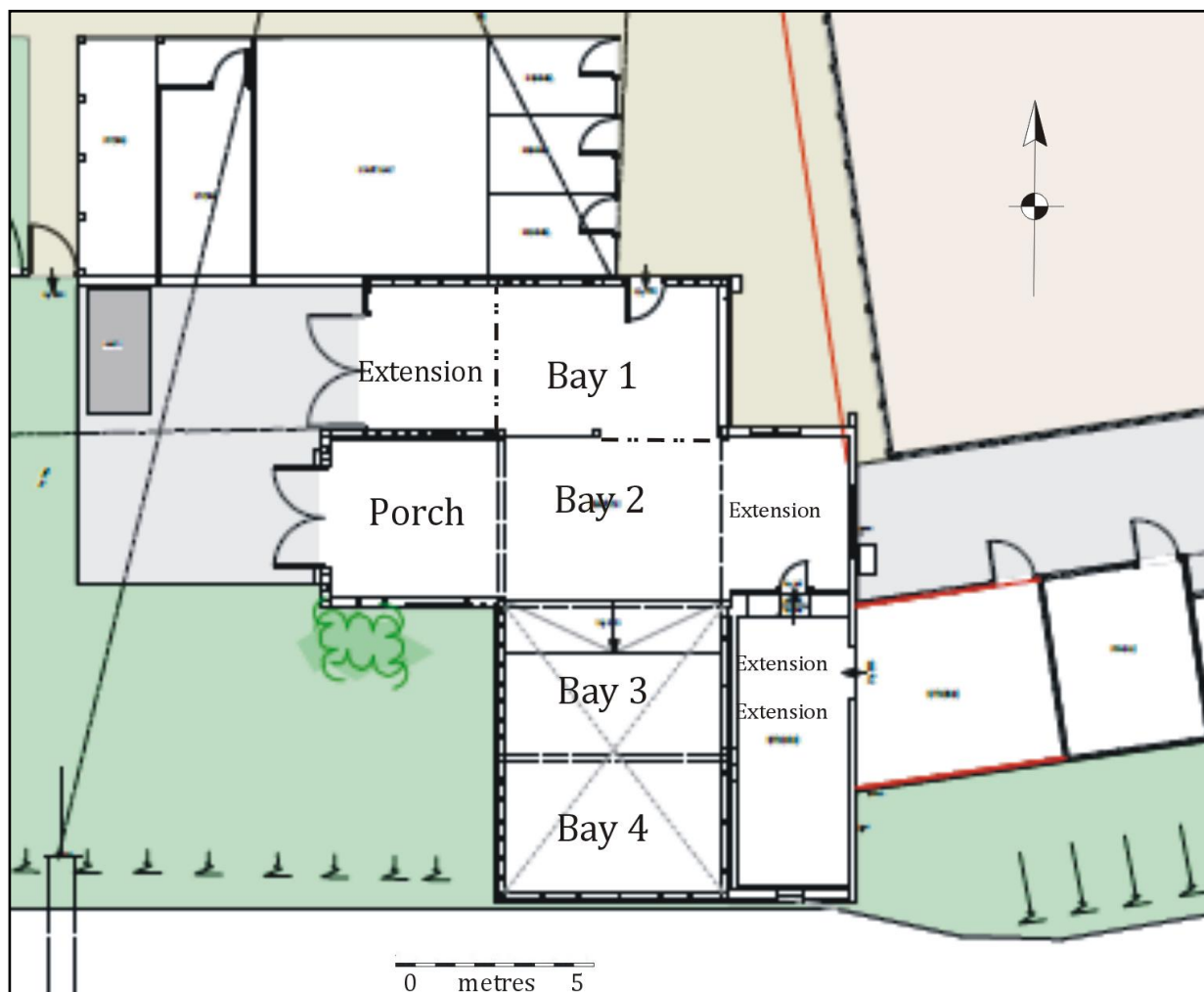
## 7. Building Analysis

### 7.1 General Introduction

Valley Farm Barn is a four bay threshing barn, built in one phase with extensions to the north-west and a lean-to to the east elevation; bays 1 & 2 are ceiled over (plt. 15). Bay 2 is the threshing floor with the porch (plt. 7) facing west with its original high doors to allow access for heavily laden carts. The barn measures 15.20m in length by 6.00m in width. Construction is timber-framed upon a brick plinth of red hand-made bricks (plt. 29). The external walls are wooden-cladded, finished in black pitch; the roof, originally thatched, is covered with corrugated iron sheeting. The roof is now in two distinct pitches (plts 31, 32), giving the impression of an added bay or an extension to the smaller, taller bay. This has resulted from a roof alteration whereby the main section of the roof has been lowered on its east-facing pitch and truncated, presumably a modification to remedy some rotted roof timbers at the apex. The pitch, west-facing remains the same and meets the original height of the entire roof as in the higher northern section (plts 31, 32)).

### 7.2 Wall Construction

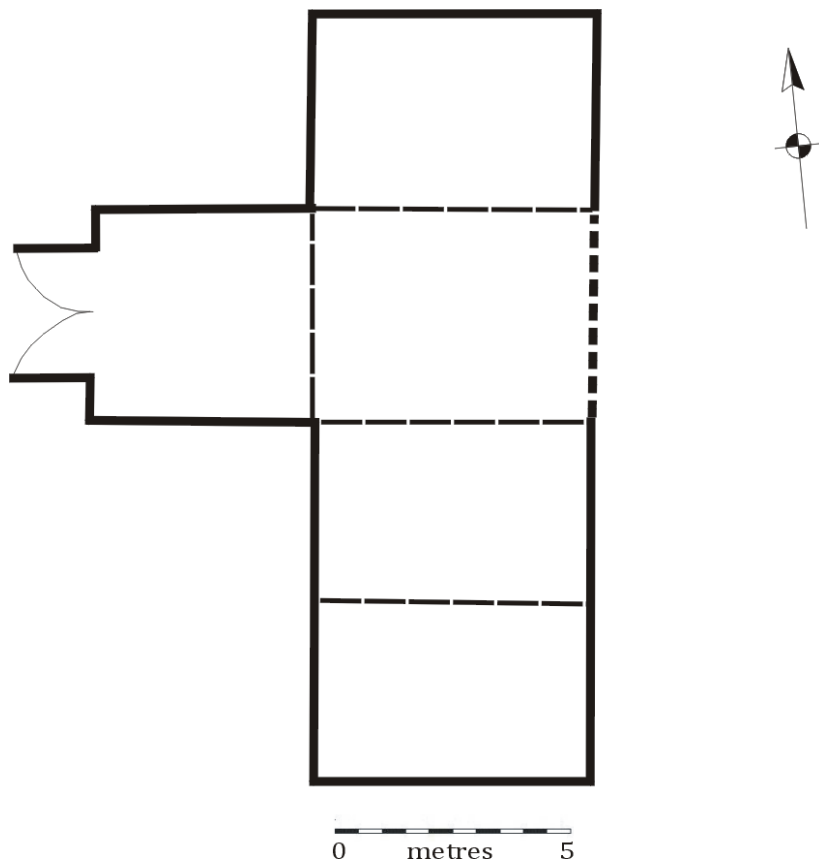
Large sections of the original walls have been replaced in recent times, leaving only two walls of original fabric; the west lower elevation and the east upper elevation, most of the porch still retains its original timbering. The framing is light to medium, typical of the 17th - 18th centuries with principal posts placed at each bay division. The jointing is mainly with nails with some peg jointing to the top plate.



*Figure 7. Plan of Barn at 1:50*

### **7.3 Roof Construction**

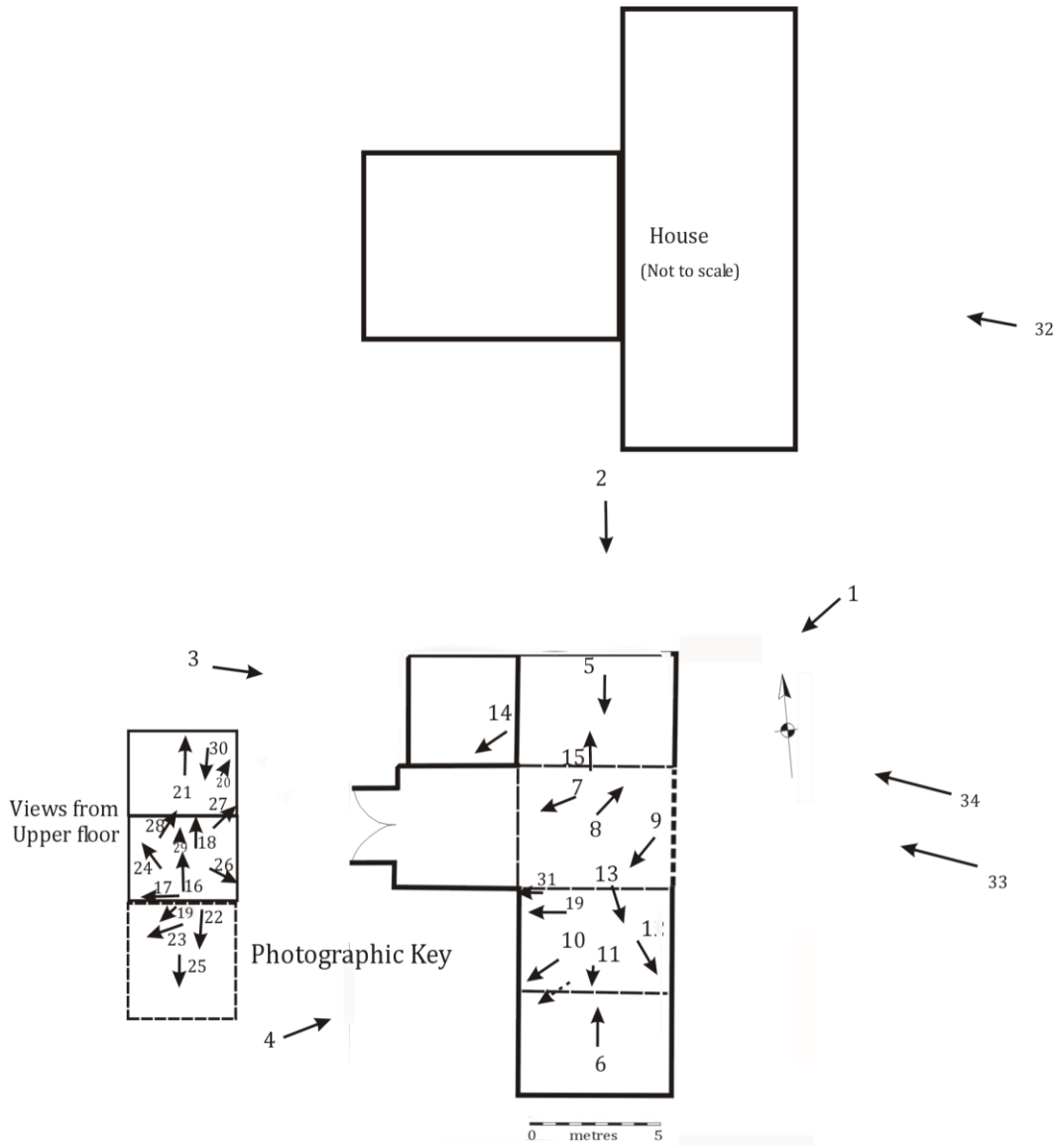
The construction method of the roof is a standard A-frame with tie beams spanning the top plates to principal rafters and collars retaining near the apex. Jointing is a mixture with nails and with peg joints predominating. There is no longitudinal ridge pole and the purlins are irregularly placed, staggered to each other and fixed with nails and peg joints (plt.19). The roof appears to be original with some replacement timbers, roughly hewn and sawn (plts. 16 - 28 ). The barn retains the usual later applied bolted knee braces (plts.10 & 12 ), typical of improvements made to the barn in the early 19th century. The blind tenons are all that remain of the joints, which retained the lower arched braces (plts. 11 & 12 ) and can be clearly seen behind the knee joints and are visible in their entirety under the tie beams. Original arched braces (plts.16 & 17) still support the upper bays 1 & 2, which clearly shows that this end of the barn was not so crucial for storage as was the lower end bays 3 & 4, as the later knee joints were not used.



*Figure 8. Original plan of the barn (phase 1)*

#### **7.4 Attached Buildings and Extensions**

An extension to the barn was created to in-fill the area between the porch and the northern section of the west-facing elevation wall (see figs 4, 5 & 9). This had existed as early as 1839 when it is first recorded on the Tithe map; it probably does not date much earlier than this time so around the early 19th century. A further extension also existed ( to the north gable end wall, joining the previously mentioned (see fig. 4). The northern extension to the gable end wall no longer exists and is replaced by kennels and more storage areas. Both of these extensions were carried out possibly around the same time as the knee brace insertions, to replace the earlier lower arched braces, which would also have occurred in the early part of the 19th century; thus expanding and modernising the whole barn. A lean-to construction is also attached to the east-facing elevation wall.. The lean-to started off as a small extension to the east side giving the impression of an opposing porch, which it may have been originally, but is certainly now a simple lean-to structure extended in more recent times and not shown in its existing entirety on any of the maps.



**Figure 9. Photographic directional key to the barn**

## 8. Context and Setting of the Building

Valley Farm barn is a single phase construction consisting of four bays. The extensions could be referred to as phases, but part of the extension no longer exists and the lean-to is a common addition much later than the original construction. It is typical of many Suffolk barns consisting of three or four bays. The extensions represents a period of ‘‘gearing-up production’’ at a time when demand for foodstuffs was increasing dramatically. Increased agricultural productivity, encouraged by rising grain prices and the demands of an increasingly urban population, was enabled by the expansion of the cultivated area (especially from the 1790s to 1815), due to the continued reorganisation and enlargement of holdings, and the final phase of the enclosure. Further trends to improve barns at this date was the introduction of the **Corn Laws** introduced by the *Importation Act of 1815*. The **Corn Laws** were trade laws designed to protect cereal producers in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland against competition from less expensive foreign imports between 1815 and 1846. To ensure that British landowners reaped all the financial profits from farming, the corn laws imposed steep import duties, making it too expensive for anyone to import grain from other countries, even when the people of Great Britain and Ireland needed the food (as in times of famine).

The barn within the building group is usually the earliest of the structures, however in the case of Valley Farm no other early buildings have survived. The farmhouse appears to be later than the house depicted on the maps and so the barn now sits alone as a survivor of what may have existed as part of the original farm buildings.

## 9. Interpretation

Among the dating evidence and diagnostic features within the barn are the removed arch-braces. These were removed and replaced by bolted knee braces, an improvement which allows better access for carts and storage. The modifications carried out to the barn are quite common with many barns having been enlarged in some way or another: ‘*Eighteenth-century alterations such as the expansion of barn space by taking down divisions, extending the building, adding porches or building an entirely new barn are all changes which are part of the farm’s history.*’ (English Heritage 2012). The blind tenons left behind after the removal of the lower arched braces are indicative of a barn pre-dating the early 19th century. The combination of good quality peg joints and nails point to a late 17th to early 18th century date, with nails being introduced more commonly in local vernacular architecture during the latter part of the 17th century and used fairly predominantly thereon, there are variations in construction methods and as a result there are exceptions to this.

A further diagnostic feature of the barn is the bricks that form the plinth to support the farming of the barn. The brick plinth (plt. 29) is constructed mainly in *English Bond*, a common seventeenth century form that was used until the end of the 17th century, but did continue into the 18th century for a while.



## 10. Conclusion

Valley Farm Barn is a typical agricultural building of its type, found throughout the eastern counties and belonging to a small prospering farm. Its form including four bays is an average size for a small farm, common to Suffolk from the late medieval period; this example dates to the late 17th- 18th centuries like so many others that were built at this time. Structurally, it has undergone extensive repairs, mainly to the walls which now contain some modern framing and other material changes are a corrugated iron roof replacing an earlier thatch.

The odd looking higher bay to the north end is a result of alterations to the roof construction and is contemporary with the remainder of the building.

The barn is a solitary survivor from what may have existed on the site before; presumably a range of farm buildings were removed including a farmhouse pre-dating the existing one, leaving the barn as a reminder of what had been a small Suffolk farm.

## 11. Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Kate Duckett for allowing access to the property and funding this report. The site work and report were completed by Dennis Payne BA (Hons) ACIfA

## Bibliography

Alcock, N.W; Barley, M.W. Dixon.; P, W.; Meeson, R. A; 1996, Recording Timber-Framed Buildings: An Illustrated Glossary; *Practical Handbook in Archaeology, No. 5.* (CBA)

Birch, M. 2003, Origins Of Suffolk Place Names, Castell Publishing Mendlesham Suffolk

English Heritage, 2012 Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: *A guide to good practice*

Rumble, A. R. (ed.), 1986, *Domesday Book, vol. 34: Suffolk*, (2 vols. Phillimore)

White, W. 1844, *History Gazetteer and Directory of Suffolk (1970 ed.)*, David and Charles (Publishers) Limited South Devon House Railway Station Newton Abbot Devon

## Sources:

**The Suffolk County Council Historic Environment Record, Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds Suffolk**

**The Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds**

Maps Consulted:

The Tithe Apportionment, ERO ref: T61/1

Tithe map (1839) of Felsham, ERO Ref: T61/2

Ordnance Survey of Felsham, 1904 (2nd ed.), ERO ref: 55/11

Other maps:

Hodskinson's map of Felsham, 1783

## Appendix I: Black and White Photographic Archive in Report

(Full photographic archive on accompanying CD)

Table 1: Black and White Photographic archive

Key to (fig. 9)	Description	Taken from	Date 02/03/16
1	Barn exterior	North-east	
2	Barn exterior	North	
3	Barn exterior	North-west	
4	Barn exterior	South-west	
5	Barn interior	North	
6	Barn interior	South	
7	Barn interior, towards porch	North-east	
8	Original studwork	South-west	
9	Corner post with blind tenon	North-east	
10	Bolted knee brace	North-east	
11	Removed arched brace (blind tenon)	North	
12	Bolted knee brace over blind tenon (sawn off joint)	North-west	
13	Replaced wall section to east elevation and south gable end	North	
14	View towards porch	North-east	
15	South gable end wall interior (replaced work)	South	
16	Tie beam with original arched braces between bays 3 & 4	South	
17	Tie beam with original arched braces between bays 3 & 4	East	
18	Roof detail under high end section	vertical	
19	Roof detail (purlins attached by nails)	vertical	
20	Roof detail (over bay 4)	South-west	
21	Gable end wall upper studwork corner bracing and posts	South	
22	Roof detail between high and low sections	North	
23	Lowered roof detail at the join with the higher section-west-facing	North-east	

Key to fig. 9	Description	Taken from	Date 02/03/16
24	Roof detail under high section of roof (north-west section)	South-east	
25	Roof truss detail looking south under lowered section of roof	North	
26	Rafters no longer supported or joined to top plate (evidence of lowering of roof)	North-west	
27	Undisturbed, correctly placed rafters under high section of roof	South-west	
28	Collars over bays 3-4, peg jointed with nailed strengtheners	South-west	
29	Brick plinth detail showing English Bond coursework in red brick (shot 31)	East	
30	Valley farm House	East	
31	Roof detail showing original height (high end and the altered lower end, from the road (shot 33)	East	
32	Exterior of roof alteration, general view, (shot 34)	East	

**Appendix II: Digital Images**



*Plate 1. Valley Farm Barn from the north-east*



*Plate 2. Barn from the east*



*Plate 3. Barn from the north-west*



*Plate 4. Barn from the west*



*Plate 5. Interior view from the north*



*Plate 6. Interior view from the south*  
II





*Plate 7. Interior towards the porch from the east*



*Plate 8. Original studwork on east-facing elevation wall interior*



*Plate 9. Original studwork on west-facing elevation wall*



*Plate 10. Bolted knee brace (early 19th c.) between bays 1 & 2*



*Plate 11. Blind tenon in tie beam for the earlier arched brace*





*Plate 12. Bolted knee brace over blind tenon (sawn off joint)*



*Plate 13. Replaced wall section to east elevation and south gable end*



*Plate 14. Original studwork to the porch (originally the outer wall)*



*Plate 15. South gable end wall interior (replaced work)*





*Plate 16. Tie beam with original arched braces between bays 3 & 4*



*Plate 17. Tie beam and arched brace between bays 2 & 3*



*Plate 18. Roof detail under higher section of roof*



*Plate 19. Roof detail: purlins attached by nails (not on key-plan)*





*Plate 20. Roof construction showing diagonal wind brace and butt purlins under bay*  
4



*Plate 21. Gable end studwork detail; corner posts with arched bracing*



*Plate 22. Roof detail between high and low sections, looking north*



*Plate 23. Lowered roof detail at the join with the higher section-west-facing*





*Plate 24. Roof detail under high section of roof (north-west section)*



*Plate 25. Roof truss detail looking south under lowered section of roof*





*Plate 26. Rafters no longer supported or joined to top plate  
(evidence of lowering of roof)*



*Plate 27, Undisturbed, correctly placed rafters under high section of roof*





*Plate 28. Collars over bays 3-4, peg jointed with nailed strengtheners*



*Plate 29. Brick plinth detail showing English Bond coursework in red brick (shot 31)*





*Plate 30. Valley Farm House*



*Plate 31 Roof detail showing original height (high end and the altered lower end, from the road (shot 33))*



*Plate 32. Exterior of roof alteration, general view, (shot 34)*

