

Rookery Farm Barn, Church Road,
Westhorpe, Stowmarket, Suffolk

Archaeological Record



Dennis Payne BA (Hons)
Archaeological Services
Tudor Cottage, Church Road
Westhorpe, Stowmarket
Suffolk IP14 4SU

Dennis R Payne BA (Hons)
Archaeological Services
Tel. (01449) 780194
E-Mail: archaeoserv@aol.com

Rookery Farm Barn
Church Rd
Westhorpe,
Stowmarket,
Suffolk

(TM 0443 6914)

Archaeological Record

This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) level 2 of a redundant barn at Rookery Farm, Westhorpe. It has been prepared to a brief designed by the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Dr Jess Tipper, ref: Rookery Barn Farm, Westhorpe, Suffolk, 2008, dated 20th June 2008) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for domestic conversion (Mid Suffolk Council application ref: 0029/08).

Introduction

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 between the 18th and 22nd of August 2008, when the accompanying photographs were taken – a scale has been used where possible, being a three metre scale staff.

Summary

The village of Westhorpe lies within the administration of Mid Suffolk District Council, is 8 miles north of Stowmarket and 13 miles from Bury St Edmunds.

Rookery Farm lies within an historic settlement core (western) of the village, a linear village with two distinct areas of settlement. The western nucleus contains Rookery Farm and the church of St Margaret's, circa late fourteenth century, which is recorded in the County Historic Environment Record (WTP005). The eastern nucleus contains The Green (at the junction with Wyverstone road) and Westhorpe Hall. Westhorpe Hall is important as it was once home to Mary Tudor, Queen of France, and Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, who she married in 1515.

Rookery Farm barn is part of a range of farm outbuildings, the principal being Rookery Farm House, a building of important historical and architectural interest. The house is grade II listed and is thought to date from the mid-late fifteenth century and possibly was once a guildhall. The timber structure of the house was inspected as part of this work, and indicates to its probable importance, for example, the hall with its large fire place contains opposing - jowled - storey posts with early Perpendicular moulded corbels. It is an unusual building, and its original function and architectural arrangements remain unclear other than its possible use as a guildhall (Listed Building report, ref. No. 279567)

The Barn, sited 30 metres south-east of the farmhouse (fig.1), measures 17.1 metres in length by 4.9 metres in width, contains five bays, being a traditional plan. Each bay is defined by bolted-knee bracing, principal posts and tie beams all retained by nails, which appear to be original. The barn occupies a south-west to north-east alignment facing the farm house and the area between the two buildings would have, presumably, contained the farm yard. The two sets of opposing main doors are situated within the central bay, as is usual, to facilitate winnowing of cereal crops. The south-facing doorway measures 3.5 metres wide by 3.2 metres high, and the opposing north-facing doorway measures 3.5 metres wide by 2.4 metres high. The south-facing doorway being nearly a metre higher than the northern doorway suggests loaded carts directly from the fields could enter the barn more easily. The north doorway has been altered considerably.

Cartographic evidence

The earliest map of Westthorpe to be found in the Suffolk Records Office is the Tithe map dated 1810 shown below.



Figure 1. The 1810 Tithe map showing Rookery Farm, the barn and associated out-buildings

The 1810 Tithe map shows a number of smaller associated outbuildings with Rookery Barn. To the north-east are a series of small buildings attached to the north-east facing gable end wall; these no longer exist. Similarly, a building can be seen to the south-west; the foundation walls were noted during the inspection, now lying under considerable undergrowth. The buildings to the north-west, making up the present range, (enclosing the present yard) are clearly marked along with the cart-shed type building, listed as No. 5 on the block plan shown below (fig.5). The pond shown to the south of the barn is still present, but the small building on the boundary of plot 210 and 209, to the east of the pond, no longer exists.

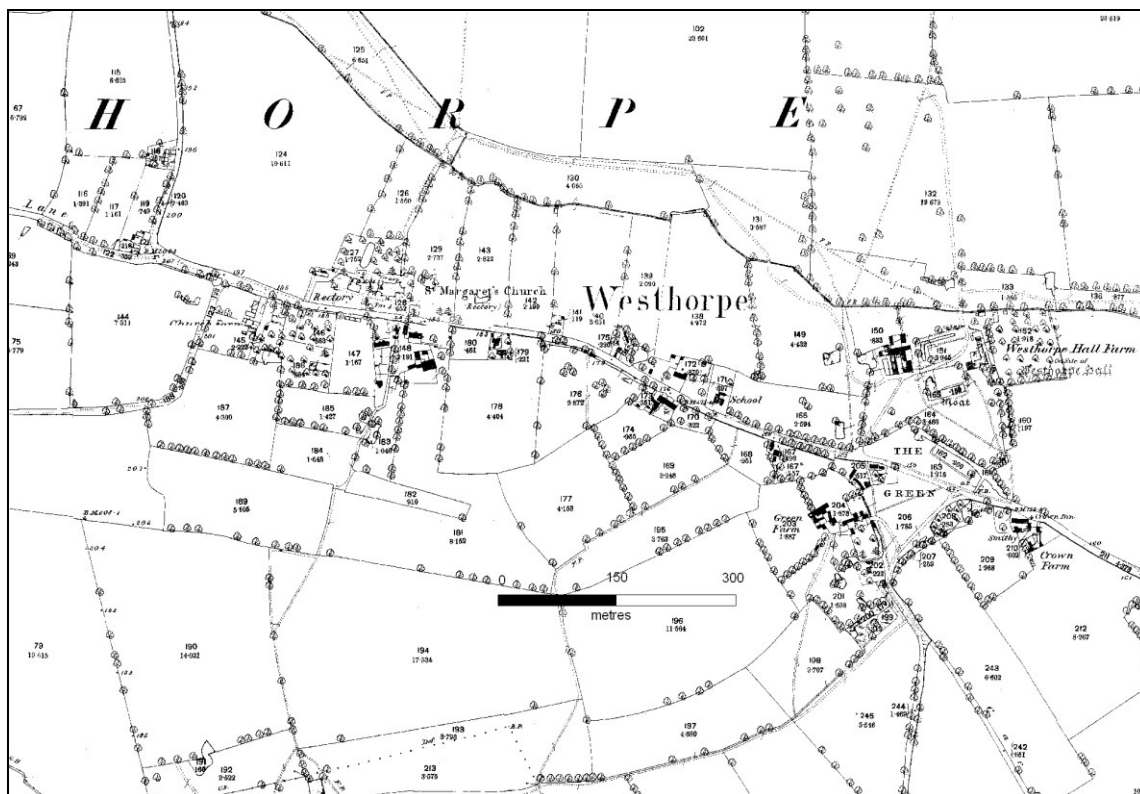


Figure 2. 1880's Ordnance Survey map of Westthorpe

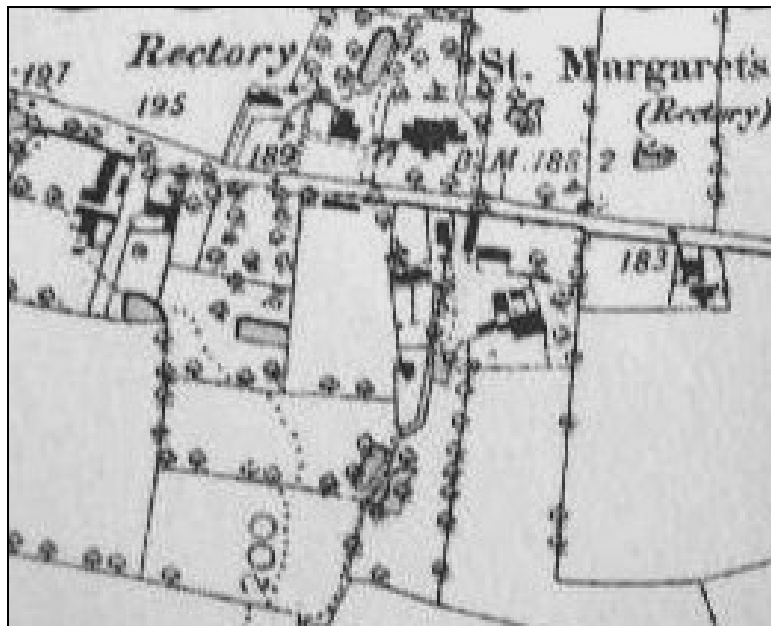


Figure 3. Detail of the 1st edition ordnance survey, circa 1880

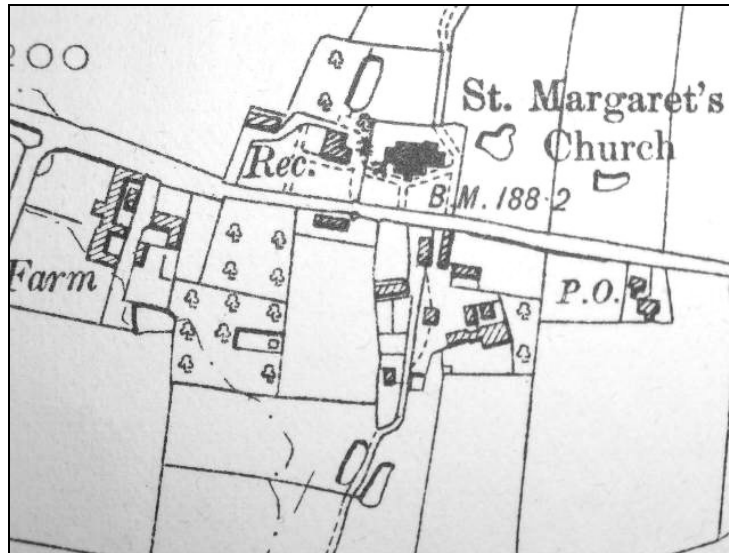


Figure 4. Detail of the 1904 2nd edition Ordnance survey

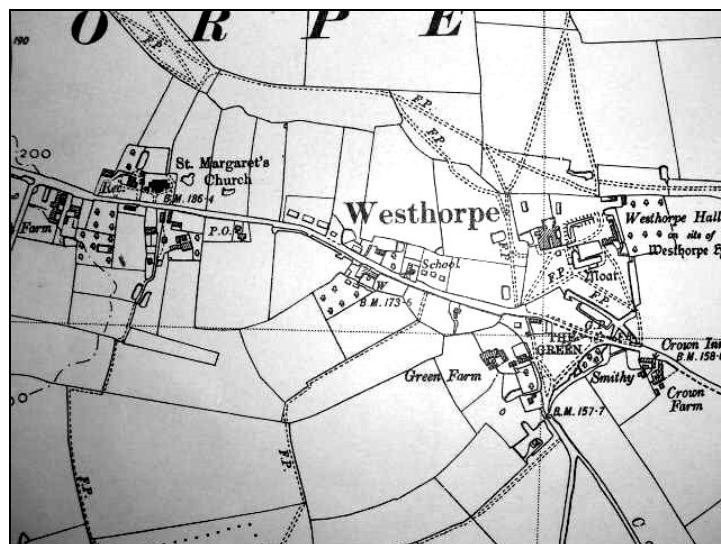


Figure 5. Ordnance Survey of Westhorpe, dated 1950 (revised edition)

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey dated to the 1880's shows little change to the layout of the barn and its related outbuildings except for the outbuildings attached to the north-east facing gable end wall have now been removed. No change to the barn's development can be seen from the time of the 1880's survey – during the drawing up of the 2nd edition O.S. of 1904-through to the publication of the 1950 (revised edition) O.S. map, except for those mentioned above.

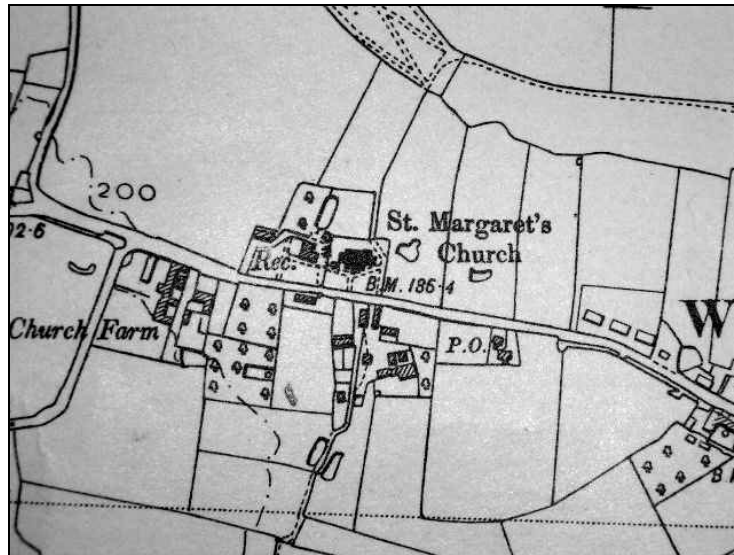


Figure 6. Detail of the Ordnance Survey (showing Rookery Farm at the centre of the map) dated 1950

Historic Site Context

The village of Westhorpe lies within the administration of Mid Suffolk District Council, is 8 miles north of Stowmarket and 13 miles from Bury St Edmunds.

Rookery Farm lies within an historic settlement core (western) of the village, a linear village with two distinct areas of settlement. The western nucleus containing Rookery Farm also contains the church of St Margaret's, circa late fourteenth century, which is recorded in the County Historic Environment Record (WTP005). The eastern nucleus contains The Green (at the junction with Wyverstone road) and Westhorpe Hall.

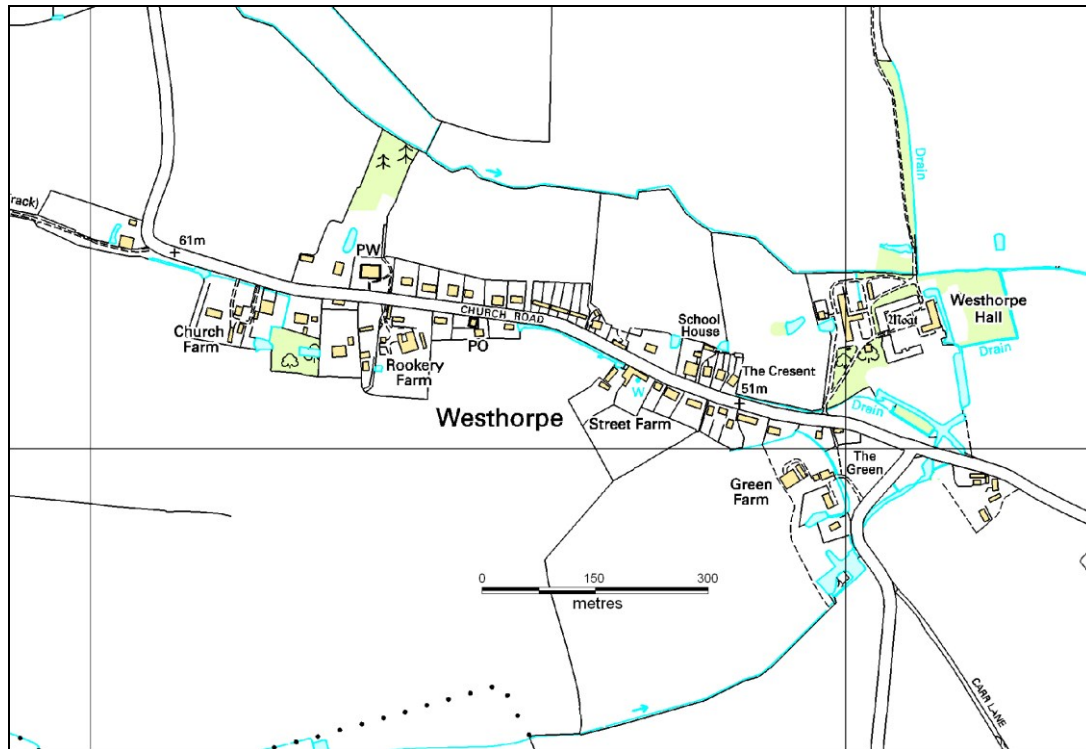


Figure 7. Modern Ordnance Survey map of Westhorpe with Rookery Farm in the western core of the village

Westhorpe is recorded in White's History, Gazetteer and Directory(1844) with the following entry: 'Westhorpe, 5 miles south of Botesdale, and north-west of of Mendlesham, and 8 miles north of Stowmarket, is a pleasant village and parish, containing 264 souls, and 1332 acres, 1 rod and 19 poles of land. Lady Nightingdale is the lady of the manor, and owner of a great part of the soil, and the remainder belongs to George Tomline, Esquire, Mr J. Kerry, and several smaller free copyholders. The latter are subject to arbitrary fines. When Domesday survey was made, Westhorpe belonged to Gilbert de Blund. William de Ellingham, or Elmham, obtained a grant for a market and fair here in 1371, but they have long been obsolete. It was the manor of William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, when he was beheaded in 1450. It was afterwards granted to *Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk*, who married his third wife, *Mary Tudor, Dowager Queen of France*, and sister to Henry VIII., in 1571, and here they resided in great splendour, at Westhorpe Hall, which was demolished many years ago.'

(White, W., History, Gazetteer and Directory of Suffolk, 1844)

Rookery Farm barn is part of a range of farm outbuildings, the principal being Rookery Farm House, a building of important architectural and historical interest. The house is grade II listed and is thought to date from the mid-late fifteenth century and possibly was once a guildhall. The timber structure of the house indicates to its probable importance, for example, the hall with its large fire place contains opposing jowled-storey posts with early Perpendicular moulded corbels. It is an unusual building, and its original function and architectural arrangements remain unclear other than its possible use as a guildhall. (Listed Building report 279567).

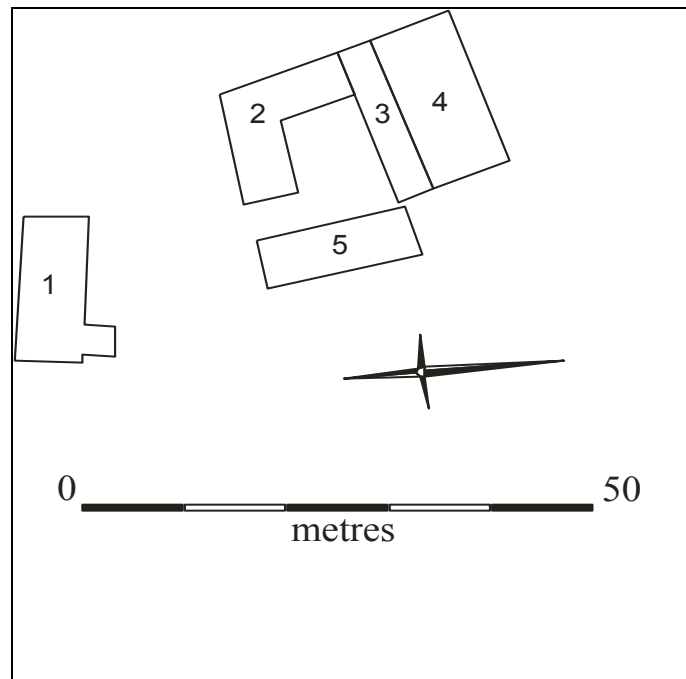
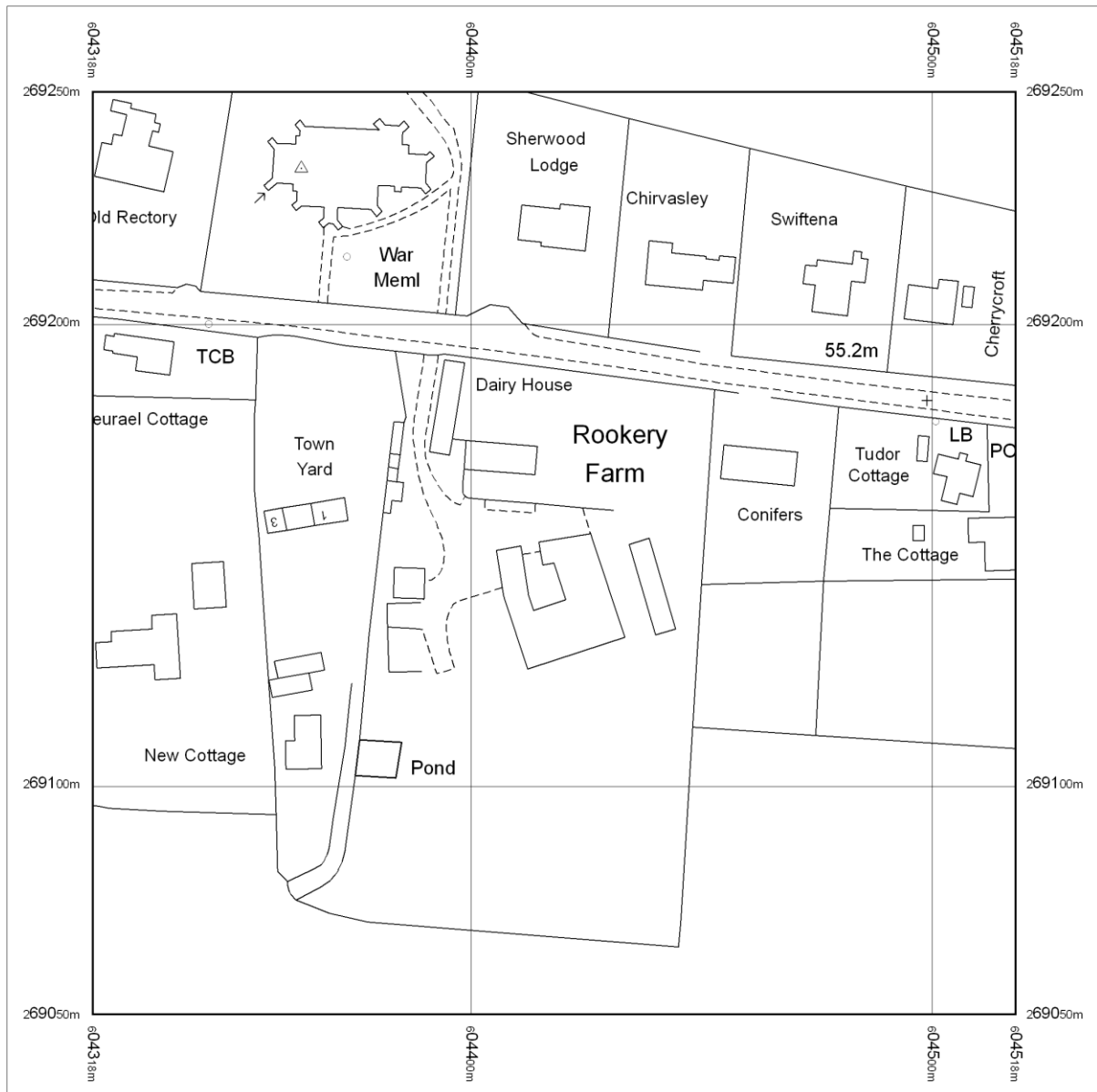


Figure 8

Block Plan of Site Showing Rookery Barn (4) and other related buildings

- 1. Rookery Farmhouse.**
- 2. Outbuildings attached to the barn**
- 3. Milking pen, attached to the north-facing wall of the barn**
- 4. Rookery Barn.**
- 5. Outbuilding, possibly used for farm equipment storage**



**Figure 9. Block plan from modern Ordnance Survey showing village location,
scale 1:1250**

Building analysis

Rookery Farmhouse (1)

Rookery Farm House is a building of important architectural interest, being grade II listed and is thought to date from the mid-late fifteenth century and possibly was once a guildhall. The reason for this assumption is due to some fine carved timbers found on the ground floor, in what would have been the original hall. Its probable importance can also be seen with the opposing jowled-storey posts with early Perpendicular moulded corbels which is a very

unusual feature for what appears to be a normal farmhouse. A crown post is also present, which can only be viewed from the first floor. In addition, the corbelled mouldings contribute to the unusual features of this building. The west facing elevation was once jettied, the under-cut of which, has been filled in. Other than the Historic building record, no other information could be found on Rookery Farm in the Suffolk Record Office.

Outbuildings and Milking pen (2 & 3)

The range of out-buildings (2) attached to the barn are built of part brick, part flint and part clay lump, weather boarded to the north wall and roofed in corrugated iron. They are erected on a brick plinth similar to that of the barn. These structures, built in two phases - within similar time spans - appear to be storage sheds and were most likely used for a variety of other purposes. The two phases can be seen as the two limbs of the L-shaped plan of these structures (fig.2). The structure on a north-south axis extends by 12.5 metres in length by 5.25 metres wide, the smaller attached shed being 6.45metres in length by 5metres wide, on an east-west alignment. This shed is mainly weather-boarded and has a pan-tiled roof. The mixture of building materials and the light framing of the structures suggest that both buildings are of a similar date or are slightly later than the barn.

The milking pen (3) attached to the north-facing wall of the barn, 17.1metres long by 3.4 metres wide, is a later addition to the barn. This structure would have been built to cater for a greater emphasis in pastoral farming and extends along the full length of Rookery barn. It is built of light-framed timber with lathe and plaster infill, a corrugated roof and the outer, north wall of breeze block. This structure was certainly added on to the barn with its abutting walls evident, which in turn possibly represents the second phase of buildings attached to the barn. The milking pen was still in use until the 1970's, according to the present owner.

Rookery Barn (4)

Proportions and Framing

Rookery Barn is aligned on an approximately east-west axis, and is 26m to the south-east of Rookery Farmhouse. Its timber framed structure extends to 17.1 m in length by 4.8m in width (excluding the milking pen along the north elevation), and rises to 3.30 metres to the eaves from a brick plinth of 0.9 metres high. It comprises of five bays, each of 3.4 metres between the storey posts and these are secured to the horizontal tie beams by way of bolted knee-braces. In addition to the tie beams a corresponding set of collar beams are also present which make up part of the roof truss. Two of the bolted knee-braces have been removed to provide a new and larger entrance in the same position as the original north doorway. This has created an interesting feature as the re-sited door- frame (appendix IV, plate. 9.) is now positioned to the inside of the barn's north doorway with traces of red paint not seen elsewhere within the barn. This door frame may have originally been erected to a front porch as, during the recent monitoring of the trenches a brick foundation wall was noted in

the correct position under the door posts and this could be evidence for there having been a porch (further details will be available within the archaeological monitoring report)

The individual studs between the posts are of the traditional light-framing type seen in late timber-framed buildings from the late seventeenth century onwards, with verticals and diagonals evenly spaced throughout and these are all secured by nails. In the main, the scantling is of poor quality with many studs not having been hewn into shape. The wall plate and sill plate of the structure are largely made up from re-used timbers from other dismantled buildings, as is often the case with low status farm buildings. The brick plinth upon which the whole structure is erected, consists of traditional hand-made red brick, and is built using a variety of Flemish, English and Stretcher bonds. The bricks measure a standard 23cm in length by 6cm in width, typical of late eighteenth- early nineteenth century manufacture. The doors to the barn are of the traditional opposing double door type. The south door, 3.5 metres wide by 3.2 metres high is the larger of the doorways to allow for winnowing and entry for well-laden carts into the barn, while the north door, which is 3.5 metres wide by only 2.4 metres high, is the smaller, allowing access into the farmyard.

Roof Structure, infill and covering

The roof structure is pitched to approximately 45°, which suggests that the barn roof was originally tiled; it is now covered in corrugated iron. The roof structure is of very poor construction with irregular placing of the common rafters, many being roughly hewn pieces of timber with very little regularity. The incoherence of the roof structure makes it difficult to differentiate between common and principal rafters; the purlins seem to be used in a discontinuous fashion with many gaps. The whole roof structure is very crude and may have been erected to support the corrugated iron covering, replacing the original timbers that had supported the tiled roof. It is, therefore, unlikely that the existing roof timbers are original.

The outer covering of the barn is weather-boarding with a black, bitumen finish, and appears original. The interior infill was lathe and plaster, which can still be seen in some small remote areas of the walls, and whether this was used throughout between the main posts remains unclear.

Farm utility building (5)

This building is of single storey construction and contains a hayloft to its north and south gable end walls. Although the original purpose of this building is uncertain it was probably used as a stable or possibly for carts, or simply for storage. The building is on a north-south alignment, measures 10.8 metres in length by 6.9 metres in width. This structure is built of part brick, part lathe and plaster and weather-boarded to the north and south elevation walls, both of which incorporate hayloft doors. The roof is of corrugated iron, and was probably tiled to begin with. The building has two entrances on the west-facing, possibly to allow smaller horse drawn vehicles to be stored. The varied construction methods used on this building, as with the other out-buildings, suggest they are of a similar date, of around the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. This building is present on the *tithe* map of Westhorpe, dated 1810

Conclusion

Rookery Farm Barn and its associated out-buildings represent a complete refurbishment of the working farm dating from around the late eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century, leaving no trace of any earlier buildings or features. Later developments of this nature took place during the introduction of the *Corn Law* (1815-46), when many farms benefited from higher corn prices with the abolition of cheaper foreign corn imports, thus creating higher incomes for farms and landowners alike. It is unlikely that Rookery Farm was developed for this reason as the barn, and the utility building to the north-west and a further building immediately to the west of the barn are clearly shown on the 1810 tithe map. The tithe map may show an earlier building on the site of the present barn, but as it appears to be the same in size and plan as the existing barn it is therefore unlikely to be an earlier building.

Rookery farm has probably been a working farm since the seventeenth century or possibly even earlier. Rookery Farmhouse is approximately five hundred years old and is of both historical and architectural importance. If it had been a guildhall then the farm may have been a later development of that building. Certainly, earlier farm buildings should have existed, but it can only be assumed that these were demolished when the current barn and range were built. Although Rookery barn and its range of associated buildings are of a much later construction than the house, they are typical agricultural buildings of the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, as seen on many farms throughout East Anglia and the country as a whole. Therefore, Rookery Farm is an excellent example of agricultural development in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, and is of historical value and interest.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Mr and Mrs Gosling, the owners of Rookery Farm for allowing access to the property and funding this report. The site work and report were completed by Dennis Payne.

