

Church Farm Barn The Street Thorndon Suffolk Historical Building Survey



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Cover picture: Church Farm Barn from the southwest

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Church Farm Barn Thorndon, Suffolk

(TM 14186970)

Archaeological record

Summary

This report provides a written and photographic record of a redundant barn at Church Farm, Thorndon, prior to conversion for domestic use.

Introduction

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).

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.

Site Location

Thorndon is located 6 km south of Eye and 14 km north-east of Stowmarket in Suffolk. The site is located on a north-facing, gentle slope on the eastern edge of Thorndon (fig. 1), on soils developed from a chalky, pebbly, sandy clay over a formation of fine-to coarse grained sands and silts (BGS: Eye, sheet 190). A spot height for the site has a value of 50.10m OD. The site runs down a small river valley, which is a tributary of the River Dove, and is immediately to the north of the medieval church of All Saints. Before development the site was a disused barn orientated north-south and connected to an east-west orientated range of outbuildings on the barns north side forming a T shaped plan. These building were located in disused yard and garden of Church Farm House (fig 7).

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Figure 1: Site location.

(site located in yellow)

Geology and Topography:

The British Geological Survey maps the area as lying on chalky, pebbly, sandy clay over a formation of fine-to coarse grained sands and silts (BGS: Eye, sheet 190).

Archaeological and Historical Background

Archaeological Background

Thorndon has received one archaeological investigation (approximately 30 metres to the south-west of the development site) in the form of archaeological monitoring (SCCAS; HER No. THD 022), this revealed a large ditch of unknown date.

The H.E.R., records eleven entries of archaeological interest within the parish of Thorndon. A full list of these is given in appendix II.

Historical Background

Thorndon All Saints is a parish within the hundred of Hartismere, Suffolk, is three and a half miles south of Eye, being its postal town, and five miles east of Finningham railway station.

Thorndon is first mentioned in the *Domesday Book, 1086*, and is referred to as *Tornetuna*. Of note is an entry for Aelfric, a freeman, commended to St Edmund of Bury, Aelfric, Reeve of St Edmundsbury (Little Domesday, 1086; ref: 371r).

Church Farm Barn appears to be part of Church Farm, a farmhouse dating to the sixteenth century with possible medieval origins and the house is grade II listed (Images of England; IoE Number 281379). By 1844, The village of Thorndon is mentioned in a local directory as: 'A large, scattered village with many neat house, has in its parish 732 souls and 2680A, 33p.of land, 51A, 3R, 36p (acres, rods and poles of land), of common land, etc'. (History, Gazeteer and Directory of Suffolk, 1844)

The church is called *All Saints*, the earliest detail is the N. Doorway c. 1200 or a little later. (Pevsner, N., 1974)

Cartographic Evidence



Figure 2: Hodskinsons map of Thorndon 1783
(no buildings shown where Church Farm should be; scale: one inch to the mile)

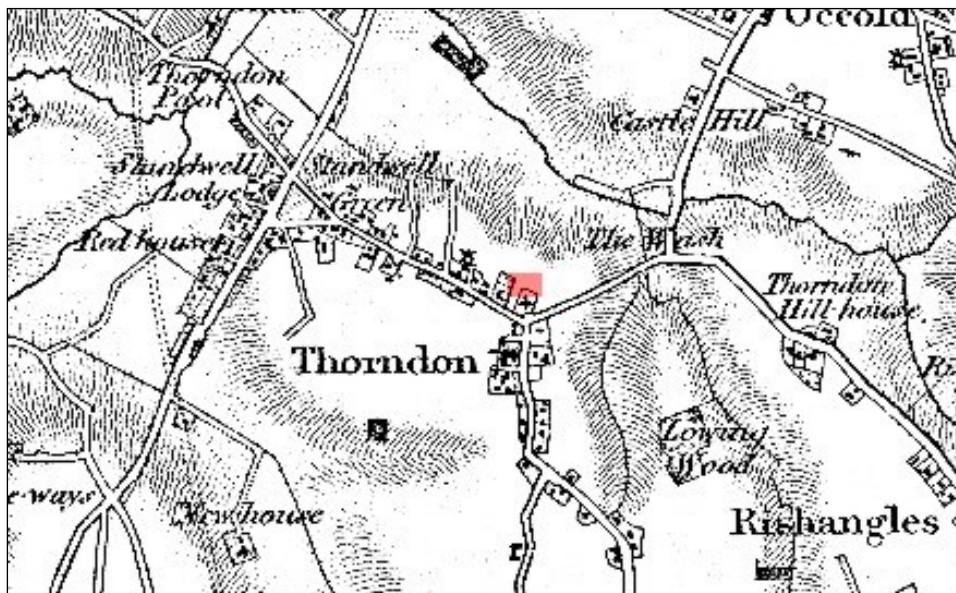


Figure 3 Old Series, 1837, Ordnance Survey of Thorndon,
(area of site in red; scale approximately one inch to one mile)

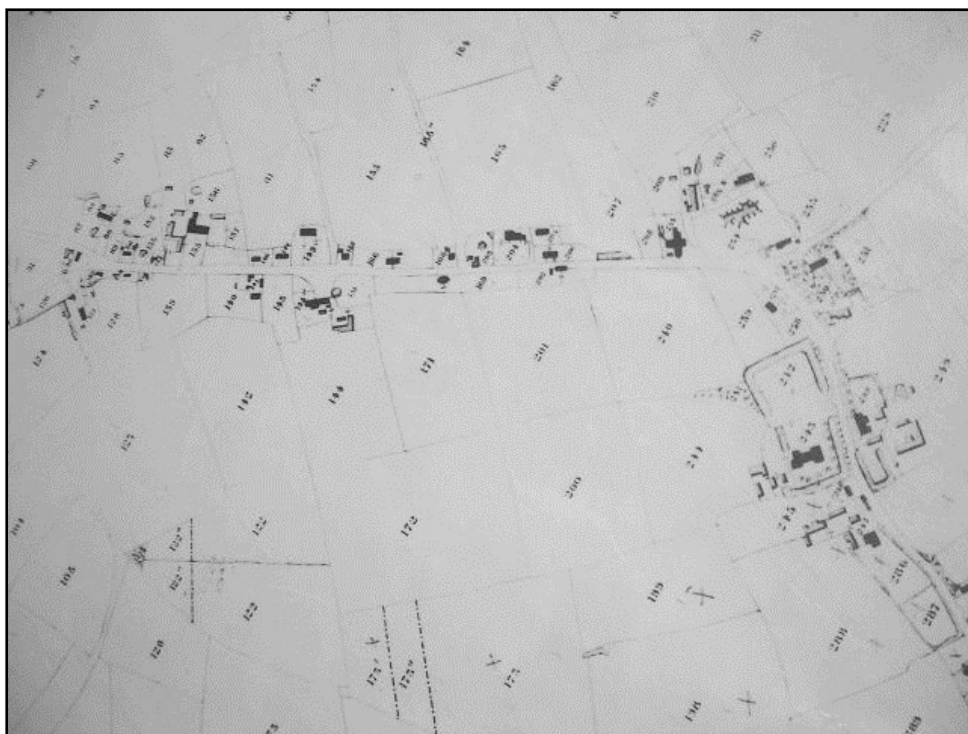


Figure 4: The Tithe map for Thorndon, dated 1843 (original scale: 20.32 m to 1 inch)



Figure 5: 1880's map of Thorndon, scale 1:63360

(showing Church Farm to the immediate north of All Saints Church -site highlighted in red)

Discussion of map evidence

The first map by Hodkinson, 1783, does not show any buildings on the site of Church Farm, nor does the 1837 Ordnance Survey show any buildings either. It is not until the 1880's Ordnance Survey that Church Farm appears, including the barn, in the correct place. The earlier map evidence is misleading and shows that many omissions must have been made as, clearly, many smaller properties and associated land-holdings are shown; and it can only be that the cartographer for the 1837 map omitted to show Church farm, possibly even plagiarising Hodkinson's omission here also?

The 1880's Ordnance Survey was the first to show accurately – even to a modern standard - topographical details, etc, hitherto not shown before in detail.

Methodology

A level 2 (English Heritage 2006) photographic record was undertaken to a brief designed by the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Dr Jess Tipper, ref: Church Farm Barn, Thorndon Suffolk, 2008, dated 13th June 2007).

A visual inspection was carried out and notes were taken on the features, construction and dimensions of the barn and its associated out-buildings. A series of photographs were taken externally and internally of the barn with external photographs only of the associated out-buildings. The photographic record comprised of digital, black and white print and colour transparencies, where possible a three metre scale bar was used in the photographs.

Building analysis

Proportions and Framing

Church Farm Barn is aligned on an approximately north-south axis, and is 20m to the west of Church Farmhouse and is of typical box-frame timber construction. The original (phase 1) timber framed structure of the barn extends to 15 m in length by 5.6m in width (excluding the extension and connecting range), and rises to 2.73 metres to the eaves from a brick plinth of 0.4 metres high. It comprises of four bays, which measure 4m long for the most northerly bay and 3.5 m in length for the remainder, delimited by 0.19 m girth storey posts, which, each in turn, would have supported an original truss (no longer extant). Each of the storey posts are secured to the horizontal (modern) tie beams by way of bolted knee-braces replacing earlier arched braces. Evidence for the earlier arched braces can be seen with the sawn-away mortice and tennon joints still visible, partly behind the present later knee joints

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 largely secured by hand-made cut nails. The wall plate and sill plate of the structure are largely made up from re-used timbers from other dismantled buildings and are generally 0.20m in girth.

The brick plinth upon which the whole structure is erected, consists of traditional hand-made red brick, and is built using Flemish and Header bonds.

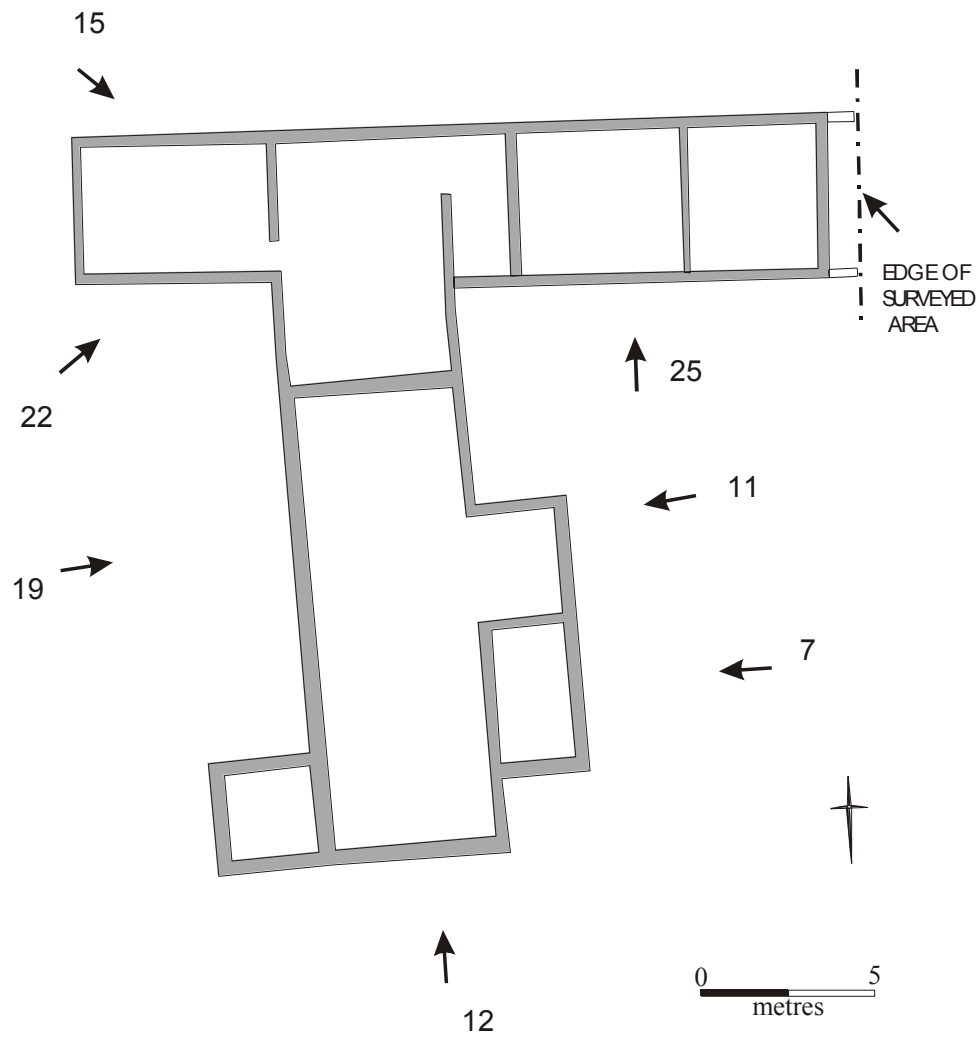


Figure 6: plan of Church Farm Barn
(arrow numbers refer to digital images in appendix III)

Key:

- 1 Storage shed (phase 3)
- 2 Phase 1 of original barn
- 3 Adjoining storage shed
- 4 Lean-to storage shed
- 5 Connecting range and barn extension (phase 2)
- 6 East facing porch with farmyard entrance
- 7 Connecting range of storage sheds as (1) (phase 3)

The bricks (without any inclusions) measure a standard 23cm in length by 6cm in width, typical of late seventeenth- eighteenth century manufacture.

The doors to the barn are of the traditional opposing double door type. The west facing door measures 3.5 metres wide by 2.8 in height and for the east-facing door, 3.56m high by 3.5 m wide metres high is the larger of the doorways (this is also the entrance with the porch).

Roof

The roof structure is pitched to approximately 45°, which might suggest that the barn roof was originally thatched or tiled; however, this is a recent roof construction and may not be the original pitch. It is now covered in pantiles. The supporting roof structure is composed of sawn timbers of modern construction.

Wall coverings

The outer covering of the barn is weather-boarding with a black, bitumen finish, and appears original. The interior finish of the walls and timber-frame infill was lathe and plaster, some of which still survives in the west wall.

Other details

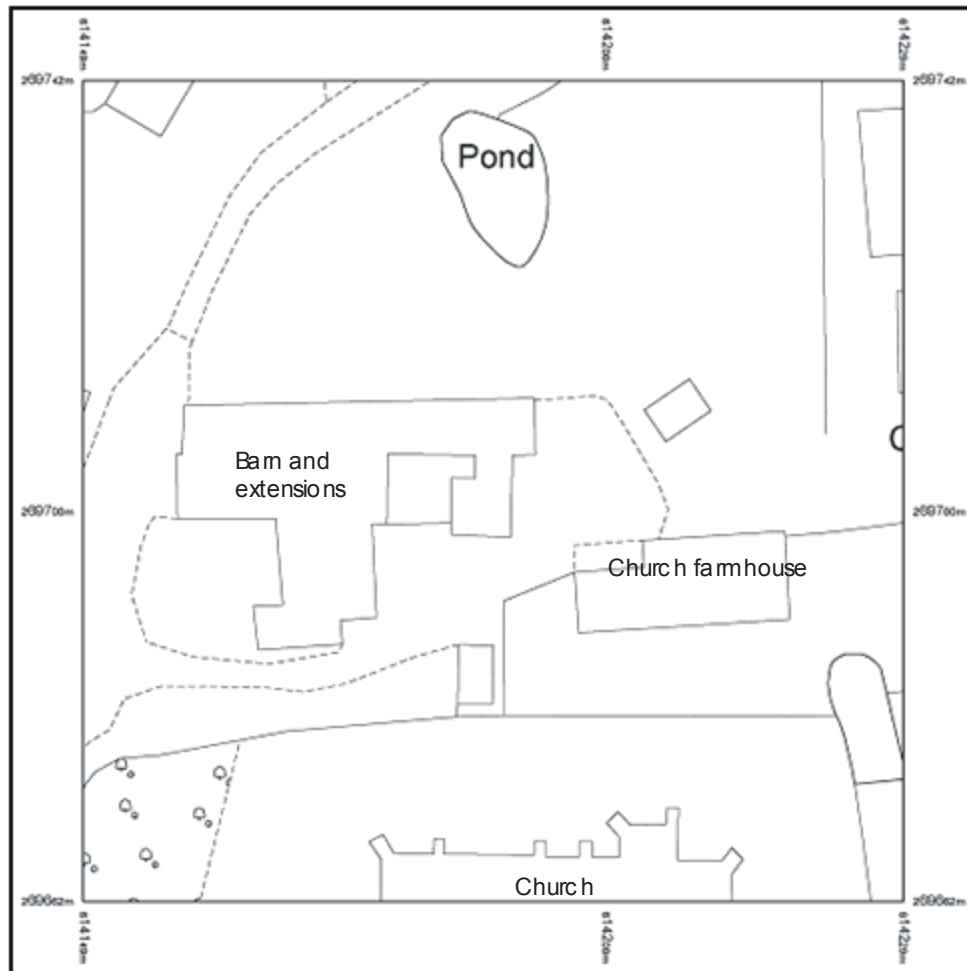
Both end gable walls have a loft door, presumably allowing access to hay lofts at each end of the barn (no longer extant). The north-facing hayloft door was converted to a window, now partially blocked by the connecting range or barn extension, while the south-facing hayloft door still retained its original pair of doors. A lead fire insurance plaque was also noted high up on the south-facing gable end wall.

Connecting Range of outbuildings

Immediately to the north of the original barn (2, phase 1) is the connecting extension (5, phase 2). Phase 2 appears to have been possibly longer originally as two internal walls, on the same alignment of the connecting range, continue into 7 (phase 3 of the connecting east-west range. Evidence for this extension having been at least as long as to the north wall of the east-west range is shown by the remains of a brick plinth for the right hand wall, exposed during renovation work, precisely where it would be if the extension wall had continued to this point. The connecting east-west range may have been built as one build – demolishing part of the extension (5) in the process, but may also have been added, in parts, at different times. The overall construction of this range retains the same building method, using the same materials throughout, and if indeed it was built in a piecemeal fashion it would all be of a similar date. The east-west range continues for the length of another small bay to the east; not within the surveyed area and belonging to the neighbouring property- that of Church Farm itself.

Phase 2 immediately to the north of the original barn stands on a brick plinth, is part brick and part clay lump construction, weather-boarded in the same fashion as the rest of the barn

and roofed in pantiles. The east-west range is of the same construction with the exception of some of the foundations are constructed of flint and mortar.



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Figure 7: Block plan of Church Farm Barn
(geo-referenced for scale)

Interpretation of the barn and connecting outbuildings

Church Farm Barn and its associated out-buildings possibly represent a complete refurbishment of a working farm dating from around the late seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century. Refurbishments of existing barns, as is the case here, often 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. Certainly, there is evidence for expansion with the east-west range, possibly, being added around the time of the Corn Law introduction. It is also possible that the bolted knee braces were added around this time, within the original barn, replacing the earlier braces that would have restricted the passage of higher laden carts then entering the barn. The east facing porch may also have been added, yet it appears to be contemporary with the main structure. The connecting bay (5) was certainly built before the east-west range

and appears to be an extension of the barn, possibly dating to around 1800 with its part brick and clay lump construction.

The origins of the main barn (2) are likely to be c. late seventeenth-early eighteenth century. This can be evidenced by the mixture of nail fixings for the scantling and peg joints for the main box frame, and suggests a cross-over of the two jointing methods seen in buildings of this date. Remains of the original lathe and plaster infill were noted, and are also typical of this period, with cut willow vertical poles retained by twine and covered with a daub render. Further evidence that the barn was either refurbished or completely rebuilt over an existing barn structure was seen from the archaeological monitoring report for this site. The report showed that a stone course, possibly an earlier footing, was recorded below the connecting range, also an organic deposit was recorded in two areas of the footings, which could be evidence for an earlier building being used for stock holding.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Mr Craig Beech and Miss Ruth Paternoster, the owners of Church Farm Barn Farm, for allowing access to the property and funding this report. The site work and report were completed by Dennis Payne.

The National Archive www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

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Sources:

The Suffolk County Council Historic Environment Records office, Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds Suffolk

The Thornham village web-site: <http://.thorndon.com>

Appendix I:

Black and white Photographic archive
(Full photographic archive on accompanying CD)

Table 1: Black and White Photographic archive

| Frame No. | Description | Photographer | Date |
|-----------|---|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | View of East-west range from the south | D.Payne (1-15) | 06/06/09 (1-15) |
| 2 | Detail of sawn off mortice and tennon joint for earlier brace on storey post in main barn (2) | | |
| 3 | Detail of partially exposed sawn off joint for earlier brace behind bolted knee brace in barn (2) | | |
| 4 | Interior view of connecting range (5), immediately to the north of the main barn, from the north | | |
| 5 | Interior of the connecting range (5) from the south-west | | |
| 6 | Interior of the east-west range (7) from the west | | |
| 7 | East-west range (7) from the south | | |
| 8 | The barn, south facing gable end showing hayloft door | | |
| 9 | Detail of hayloft door on south-facing gable end of barn | | |
| 10 | Interior of extreme right-hand bay of east-west range (7) | | |
| 11 | The barn from the west | | |
| 12 | East-west range – western bay (7) | | |
| 13 | The barn door west-facing | | |
| 14 | Detail of modern roof construction in main barn | | |
| 15 | Detail of studwork in the main barn, looking south-east | | |

Appendix II

Index to Colour Slide Photographic Archive
(Full Photographic archive on accompanying CD)

| Slide No. | Description | Photographer | Date |
|-----------|--|--------------|----------|
| 1 | NO SLIDE | D.Payne | 06/06/09 |
| 2 | Detail of bolted knee brace over sawn off brace joint in main barn | (1-21) | (all) |
| 3 | Detail of bolted knee brace over sawn off brace joint in main barn | | |
| 4 | NO SLIDE | | |
| 5 | NO SLIDE | | |
| 6 | Detail of west facing porch on main barn | | |
| 7 | East-west range from the south | | |
| 8 | VOID | | |
| 9 | Interior of connecting range (5) | | |
| 10 | Interior of east-west range (7) | | |
| 11 | East –west range, north-facing elevation from the east | | |
| 12 | Western most bay of east-west range from the south-east | | |
| 13 | Main barn, west-facing elevation | | |
| 14 | Detail of interior studwork and brick plinth in main barn | | |
| 15 | Interior detail of studwork in main barn | | |
| 16 | Interior detail of lathe and plaster wall infill in main barn | | |
| 17 | Detail of bolted knee brace in main barn | | |
| 18 | Doorway into barn, west-facing | | |
| 19 | Doorway into barn, interior | | |
| 20 | Detail of modern roof construction in main barn | | |
| 21 | Interior of south gable end wall in main barn | | |

Appendix III:

Index to Digital Images

(Full photographic record on accompanying CD)

| Image Ref. No. | Description | Photographer D.Payne | Date 06/06/09 |
|----------------|---|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Detail of sawn away brace joint in main barn | | |
| 2 | Detail of sawn away brace joint in main barn | | |
| 3 | Detail of interior south gable end wall in main barn | | |
| 4 | Interior of west facing door in main barn | | |
| 5 | Detail of bolted knee brace in main barn | | |
| 6 | Detail of studwork in main barn | | |
| 7 | Main barn from the east | | |
| 8 | East-west range from the west | | |
| 9 | Clay lump construction of connecting range (5) | | |
| 10 | Interior of east-west range (7) | | |
| 11 | The barn, east-facing elevation showing porch | | |
| 12 | South-facing gable end wall with hayloft door | | |
| 13 | Interior of east-west range | | |
| 14 | Remains of connecting range wall (5) brick plinth seen in the north wall of the east-west range (7) | | |
| 15 | Exterior of east-west range | | |
| 16 | Detail of sawn away brace joint in storey post | | |
| 17 | Detail of bottom plate suspended in main barn | | |
| 18 | Detail of modern roof trusses | | |
| 19 | Doorway, west-facing of main barn | | |
| 20 | Interior detail of lathe and plaster wall infill adhering to weather-boarded exterior | | |
| 21 | Detail of base plate and brick plinth of main barn | | |
| 22 | Western bay of east-west range from the south-west | | |
| 23 | Interior of connecting bay (5) looking south into main barn beyond stud wall | | |
| 24 | Interior of east-west range (7) looking east | | |
| 25 | Exterior of east-west range from the south | | |
| 26 | Connecting bay from the east showing barn to the left and cross (east-west) range to the right | | |
| 27 | Exterior detail of hayloft door on the south gable end wall of main barn | | |
| 28 | Detail of remains of brick plinth for connecting bay (5) wall having continued on into where the north wall (7) of the east-west range is now sited | | |
| 29 | Detail of lathes above an interior wall the of east-west range (7) | | |

Appendix IV:
Selected Digital Images

Digital photographs of Church Farm Barn and connecting outbuildings



Image 11, The barn and porch facing east



Image 26, connecting bay, facing east



Image 20, Detail of lathe and plaster wall
in main barn



Image 19, west facing door of barn



Image 2: Detail of sawn away brace in storey post of main barn



Image 27: Hayloft door on south facing gable end of barn



Image 8: East-west range from the west



Image 23: Interior of connecting bay (5)



Image 13: Interior of east-west range (7)



Image 5: Detail of bolted knee brace in main barn